

Cultivating and Exploring Students' Intercultural Communication Skills in Middle School English Teaching under the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: *The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)* (from now on referred to as "the new standards") mentions students' intercultural communication many times in the curriculum objectives. Under the requirements of the new standards, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' intercultural communication awareness and ability. In the era of economic globalization, diversified modes of thinking, and information networking, the practice and exploration of cultural self-confidence have become vital prerequisites for cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Therefore, this paper explores the enhancement and development of junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence from the aspects of the meaning of intercultural communicative competence, the problems and challenges encountered in cultivating students' intercultural communication, the current situation of the cultivation of junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence, the necessity of improving junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence, the principles of the cultivation of junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence, as well as the strategies of the cultivation of junior high school students' intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: Intercultural communication skills, Middle school English teaching, Cultural confidence.

1. Introduction

Since our country's reform and opening up in the 1980s, our interaction and cooperation with the international community have penetrated various fields such as politics, economy, culture, and education. At the same time, when communicating and interacting with other countries, we must understand each other's language and culture, politics and economy, or other aspects related to cooperation. Especially after the concept of Belt and Road has been put forward and implemented, the exchanges between China and other countries have become closer. Under the environment of the community of human destiny and globalization of the economy, there are more cases that people need to work abroad, Chinese companies doing business across borders, foreign companies being stationed in China, etc. They inevitably have to deal with the cultures and customs of different countries. Therefore, under the Belt and Road Initiative background, if we want to achieve positive cooperation with all countries and deepen our dealings with them, we need to continuously improve students' intercultural communication awareness and intercultural communication ability.

2. Meaning

2.1. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is an essential factor in social activities, human survival, and cultural inheritance, which promotes communication among human beings and plays a vital role in the continuation of human beings. Communication is indispensable in people's daily life, from small children playing and interacting with their peers to adults interacting with clients in the business world; all these are called communication. Intercultural communication refers to people's interaction with others in a different cultural

environment; as China continues to open up to the outside world in all aspects, students, business people, and government officials have more and more opportunities to communicate and interact with various cultural groups. However, due to the different living environments, different ways of thinking, different language expressions, and even significant differences in values, some misunderstandings may arise when groups of different cultural backgrounds communicate, leading to the failure of the talks between the two sides or unpleasantness. Therefore, a timely and effective solution to overcome such obstacles is essential in realizing intercultural communication.

2.2. Intercultural communication awareness

Intercultural awareness refers to sensitivity to different cultures. This sensitivity is a prerequisite for effective communication, and it emphasizes that when people communicate with different cultural groups, they accept the differences between them and their own cultures and can adjust themselves according to the characteristics of the cultural groups. Intercultural awareness, therefore, does not only mean sensitivity to different cultures but also emphasizes the need to self-regulate the culture by the target language when using the language. People with intercultural communication awareness can overcome the language gap caused by different cultural backgrounds when communicating with other cultural groups, understand other cultures based on their own culture, and know themselves and others to complete a successful intercultural communication.

2.3. Intercultural communication skills

The relationship between language and culture is complementary and inseparable. On the one hand, language reflects the culture and is an essential part of the culture. On the other hand, language is the carrier of cultural transmission and an essential means of cultural preservation. Therefore, in

English language learning, learning a language is learning British culture. Intercultural communicative competence emphasizes linguistic competence on the one hand and cultural competence on the other. Linguistic competence refers to the ability to express yourself fluently and accurately so that the other party can accurately receive what you want to express. At the same time, we also need to have cultural competence, cultural competence means that we need to understand the cultural characteristics of different countries and regions, and when communicating with them, we need to avoid some behaviors or topics so as not to violate the other party's cultural beliefs and cultural awareness, which will lead to a communication failure. Enhancing intercultural communication competence needs to be based on linguistic and cultural competence.

3. Problems and Challenges of Intercultural Communication

Under the advocacy of the sense of community of human destiny, communication between China and different cultural groups is facing new challenges and crises.

3.1. Fixed cultural concepts

Due to the differences in cultural backgrounds, economic, political, humanistic, and cognitive constraints, people have certain inherent perceptions and concepts of a specific culture, e.g., when you think of Japanese people, words such as prudent and restrained appear in your mind. When you think of Koreans, words like kimchi and ramen come to mind. When you think of Americans, words like accessible and forthright come to mind. All of these words are inherent in thinking about each cultural group. This inherent cultural thinking can hinder the process and outcome of intercultural communication. When learning each language, it is vital to change the inherent thinking about the culture, to understand and experience other aspects of the culture, and to refine one's understanding of the different cultural groups.

3.2. Closed Cultural Circle

Since all countries and regions have special geographical features, different political systems, unique religious beliefs, different ideologies, particular customs, and traditions, etc., people usually use their own cultures to measure other cultures, thus resisting and resisting the understanding of others. A closed cultural circle will not only limit the development of one's own country but also hinder the pace of great integration in the world. We must face up to our culture and other cultural groups and treat different cultural differences properly. In the past 100 years, the Qing government has learned a bitter lesson, and China has also proved the evil consequences of the closed-door policy with its bitter and arduous century-long struggle. Cultural diversity, diffusion, and inclusiveness are prerequisites for development. A culture with a long history must be open, inclusive, and inherited, not closed, backward, and blind.

3.3. Poor communication skills in cultural sharing

Under the constraints of historical background, cultural practices, economic and political, etc., people with different cultural backgrounds have different understandings of the same thing, or there is no corresponding reference thing in one culture for a specific thing in another culture, thus leading

to difficulties in cultural sharing and cultural communication. For example, Chinese and Westerners understand colors - red and white. For the Chinese, the color red means festivity, hilarity, joy, revolution, spiritual inheritance, and so on. In China, people wear red dresses when they get married and hang red lanterns and red spring scrolls for the New Year. For Westerners, red means evil, war, violence, and extremism. White in Chinese culture means death, sadness, etc., but in the West, it means pure love, angels, and beautiful things. The different meanings of colors in different cultures also reflect cultural differences, and people need to improve their intercultural communication awareness to understand different cultural differences and promote smooth intercultural communication.

3.4. Feelings of superiority among different peoples

When people of one ethnic group believe that their own culture is superior to all other ethnic cultures, then there are potential barriers to their acceptance and adaptation to other cultures. Such a sense of national superiority can breed into racism, believing that one's own culture is the best and rejecting or suppressing other peoples' cultures. When such a sense of national superiority prevails in the minds of the people, then the country loses the principle of peaceful coexistence and puts itself on a pedestal, with all other cultures needing to serve it. Such a sense of superiority hinders cross-cultural interpersonal communication and the progress and development of one's country.

4. The Current Situation of Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence in Junior High School English Teaching

4.1. Low Emphasis

The importance of teaching affects the teaching effect. The lack of intercultural communicative competence cultivation in the teaching process will lead to the irrational arrangement of teachers' teaching energy and the school's teaching curriculum, affecting the students' absorption of knowledge. The importance of intercultural communicative competence is affected by many aspects. Parents of secondary school students usually pay more attention to their students' examination results, so they pay less attention to cultivating their students' comprehensive quality and personal ability. As a result, parents tend to take students' examination results and the quality of the schools they enter as the criteria for evaluating schools and teachers, which also prompts schools to pay more attention to students' examination results and neglect students' other aspects of development, which inadvertently puts tremendous pressure on schools and affects their curriculum arrangements. Teachers, they are also more concerned about students' performance. The improvement in students' performance can be seen according to the score. However, the development of students' habits, character, ability, and so on is difficult to measure with the standard, so no matter whether it is from the enhancement of students' academic performance to help teachers' title evaluation, or to help teachers to teach the improvement of self-confidence, focusing on students' test scores, ignoring the development of students' ability has become a problem of the current stage of

education. The problem is that it is difficult to measure students' abilities' development.

4.2. Single teaching mode

The diversity of teachers' teaching methods and means directly affects the classroom atmosphere and the degree of students' absorption of classroom knowledge, so teachers must strengthen the accumulation and innovation of education methods, education methods, and education means. First-line junior high school English teachers often take the way of oral narration or the help of multimedia using PPT to present knowledge to students, but often copy the knowledge in the book to the PPT, which is not a rich means of teaching. Junior high school students' attention could be more focused. Other things in class easily attract them; they need to be patient and like to challenge new things and new challenges. On the one hand, a single teaching method will make students lose interest in English and affect the enthusiasm and effect of English learning.

On the other hand, using a single teaching method will affect the elaboration of intercultural communication content and students' understanding of intercultural communication. Compared with other English teaching contents, intercultural communication emphasizes cultural understanding and learning, which is abstract and requires teachers to use different teaching methods and means to help students understand and realize. If it is only taught orally, students may need help understanding the connotation and essence of intercultural communication, which may affect the improvement of students' awareness and ability of intercultural communication.

4.3. Narrow content coverage

When communicating with people from other countries and regions, it is necessary to understand each other's cultures fully. However, in the actual teaching of junior high school, the teaching of intercultural communication is too little, and the scope of content is too narrow, so the students need more cultural reserves to carry out smooth intercultural communication when facing intercultural communication. Moreover, when introducing foreign cultures, most teachers explain more about Western countries' cultural practices and less about other regions' cultures, which will lead to students' less cultural knowledge reserves and more significant limitations. At the same time, teachers in the teaching process more about a country's customs, national festivals, etc., but less about the way of thinking, non-verbal behaviors, values, etc., but these factors are essential to intercultural communication, so to a certain extent, it will affect the improvement of students' intercultural communication skills.

4.4. Lack of Teachers' Teaching Ability

Teachers' teaching ability and teaching quality are crucial to the teaching effect, some teachers lack professional teaching training and teaching training, thus lacking theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication, and their understanding of intercultural-related content is not comprehensive and profound enough if they judge the impact of intercultural communication knowledge on students only by digging out a small amount of intercultural communication knowledge infiltrated in the teaching materials. It will limit students' Understanding of foreign cultures. Teachers' neglect of intercultural communication knowledge will inevitably affect students' acquisition of intercultural communication

awareness and competence if they fail to provide students with sufficient intercultural knowledge reserves in the teaching process. From another point of view, most junior high school English teachers need to gain experience in studying abroad, use English infrequently, and have little practical experience in intercultural communication, so there are many problems in communicating with others. The lack of practical experience makes teachers' teaching stay at the theoretical level, and the content of intercultural communication taught will be very different from the actual situation.

4.5. Value leadership needs to be further embodied

Teachers' teaching content usually focuses on the four dishes of life in Western countries, and the teaching usually reflects Western countries' customs, cultural practices, and values. However, teachers do not incorporate Chinese customs and values into language teaching, and socialist core values are seriously undermentioned in the teaching process. When students face the collision of various ideas and cultures, if they cannot look at Chinese and foreign cultures dialectically, they will develop a blind pursuit and worship of foreign cultures and produce severe ideological misunderstandings. At the same time, in the usual teaching process, students are mostly exposed to the lifestyle, learning and working styles, humanistic landscapes, and gastronomic customs of people in Western countries. They pay less attention to and know less about Chinese social life, and the lack of Understanding of Chinese culture will lead to severe misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Teachers also lack the awareness to guide students to analyze and compare Chinese and foreign cultures and lack the penetration and promotion of Chinese culture.

5. Strategies for Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communication in Middle School English Teaching

5.1. Teachers' Perspective

5.1.1. Updating Teaching Philosophy

In order to solve the current problems in cultivating students' intercultural communication, schools should start by renewing their educational concepts and include the cultivation of intercultural communication in their teaching programs from top to bottom. Schools should pay attention to the importance of intercultural communication for students' development, recognize the significance of intercultural communication for students' personal growth and development, change the traditional language teaching mode, abandon the focus on teaching English language knowledge, and take the cultivation of intercultural communication as an essential part of English language teaching, and change the previous educational bias to pay more attention to and focus on intercultural communication. Updating the teaching concept is not only to make schools and teachers pay attention to intercultural communication but also requires schools to make substantial measures to improve the cultivation of students' intercultural communication ability. Schools should strengthen the input of resources related to intercultural communication and provide guarantees and support for teachers to carry out intercultural communication teaching. At the same time, the proportion of the school's input should be

appropriate and reasonable, not too much and not too little; too little input can not meet the teachers' requirements for related resources, and too much input will affect the regular teaching activities, which requires the school to neglect the teachers to carry out a general assessment and consideration after specific discussion and practice.

5.1.2. Broaden teaching content

The scope of knowledge in textbooks is minimal; more than dozens and hundreds of pages are needed to record a nation's culture, including some non-recordable non-verbal behavior. In traditional English language teaching, teachers have long focused on transmitting language knowledge, emphasizing English grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, and so on, thus neglecting the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative skills. Such teaching methods have enabled students to acquire mute English, being able to read and understand the articles but needing to be able to understand or speak them when communicating with foreigners, and this is by far the biggest problem of English language teaching in China. Due to the limitations of the teaching materials, teachers need to change their concepts; they should not limit themselves to the knowledge in the textbooks, they should actively change the teaching methods, broaden the teaching content, use modern teaching technology to increase the knowledge that students are exposed to, and they should combine the new knowledge with what they have learned. First of all, teachers should fully explore the intercultural communication knowledge involved in the teaching materials, help students better understand intercultural knowledge with the help of multimedia tools, and organize classroom practical activities to apply what they have learned. Secondly, the time in the classroom is minimal, and more than the teacher's time alone is needed for students to learn about other cultures. Therefore, teachers should teach students to learn independently and use class time to teach students to read, study and acquire learning resources independently. Students should use their spare time to read Western monographs, literature, and magazines to expand their knowledge. Again, teachers should strengthen the popularisation and education of intercultural communication, enrich students' knowledge reserve by absorbing Western culture, which enables students to understand and express their information completely and accurately when communicating with them, making the communication process more fluent and easy, and at the same time completing an excellent intercultural communication, not only applying the learned intercultural knowledge in practice but also increasing the relationship between the two sides. The relationship between the two sides can also be increased. Moreover, in junior high school, English is the second foreign language in China; teachers should not only introduce the language and culture of English-speaking countries but also introduce the language and culture of other countries and regions to students in the teaching process to broaden students' horizons and enrich their knowledge reserves. Finally, in addition to broadening students' knowledge base, teachers should also teach students some communication skills, which are conducive to students' ability to communicate with foreigners when they encounter emergencies; they can adopt avoidance strategies, borrowing strategies, and compensation strategies to improve student's communication skills and intercultural communication skills.

5.1.3. Improving teaching ability

Teachers' teaching ability and the quality of the whole teaching team play an essential role in the teaching effect of

students. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of the teaching team and improve the teachers' comprehensive quality and overall level. First, schools should give teachers opportunities for further study and training. Schools need to organize their training for intercultural communication courses and provide teachers with high-quality training resources, as well as strive for opportunities for teachers to enter colleges and universities for further study and give spiritual and material support for teachers' further study to raise the importance of teachers' intercultural communication from the perspective of ideology. Secondly, schools should improve the overall level of teachers to help students cultivate intercultural communication.

On the one hand, schools can invite famous experts in related fields to hold lectures to improve teachers' intercultural awareness and simultaneously attract excellent teachers' resources. On the other hand, schools should open up various ways to conduct open recruitment to select talents with intercultural communication teaching practice, study abroad experience, and excellent professional strength. Finally, besides having excellent teaching skills, solid professional knowledge, and good teaching quality, teachers should strengthen communication and exchange with other teachers, share their teaching experience, and learn from each other's excellent teaching experience and methods. At the same time, reflecting on the difficulties and shortcomings encountered in the teaching process can help improve their intercultural communication skills and promote the construction and improvement of the whole teacher team.

5.2. Student perspective

5.2.1. Emphasis on basic knowledge training

The cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence requires students to accumulate linguistic and cultural knowledge related to the subject matter and to be able to flexibly use what they have learned to receive information and convey messages in context according to the actual situation. In daily English activities, teachers should pay attention to the practice of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. However, teachers should pay attention to the need to grasp the way and extent of training, teachers do not need to organize too many training activities, but students need to reflect on their learning results, think and summarise the difficulties in their learning.

In the training of solid fundamental knowledge of students, teachers need to introduce practical activities. For example, take "When is your birthday?" in the first book of the seventh grade of the Renjiao version of junior high school English as an example; the teaching content is centered on how students can use the month, ordinal number words, place nouns, and other related topics. In the practical activity, the teacher designs a self-selected task to use the vocabulary. After each group has chosen and completed the task, they invite a few groups to present it and let the rest of the students act as judges. After completing the practical activity, the teacher should organize a reflection exercise in which students can reflect on their performance and on the performance of other students. At the end of the task, the teacher will collect the students' reflection records and provide targeted guidance to consolidate their basic knowledge and lay a solid foundation for intercultural communication activities.

5.2.2. Explore the meaning of vocabulary

Vocabulary is a bridge to understanding culture, but most teachers teach vocabulary from the perspective of sound,

shape, and meaning, ignoring the more profound meaning and hidden meaning of vocabulary. Therefore, in vocabulary teaching, teachers should explain vocabulary from the perspective of cultural meanings and explore the cultural meanings contained in vocabulary. In the process of vocabulary teaching, teachers need to use a variety of teaching methods to make learning enjoyable. For example, when teaching students the vocabulary of colors, different ethnic groups will give specific cultural meanings to different colors. For example, the colors red and white, red in China represents festivity and joy, but in the West, it represents blood and violence. White represents death and sadness in China but purity and love in the West. Therefore, teachers should guide students to understand what colors mean in different countries. By introducing vocabulary exploration games, teachers can use this as an entry point to explore the connotations of vocabulary. For example, when explaining the words "black," "green," "blue," etc., design-related phrases: "black tea," "black," "green," "blue," etc. tea, "green-eyed," and "blue day." The Chinese meanings of these phrases are black tea, green-eyed, and blue day. The same color will have different cultural meanings in different countries.

5.2.3. Organize English activities

After learning basic language knowledge and understanding the meaning of the vocabulary, students should organize and carry out relevant practical activities with the help of teachers to improve their intercultural communication skills. For example, when learning about foreign festivals, students can organize a poster competition comparing Chinese and foreign festivals. Students can compare foreign and domestic festivals, which not only allows them to learn about foreign cultures but also allows them to spread Chinese culture. Teachers should help students to sort out the characteristics of festivals and analyze the similarities and differences between the two festivals in terms of the time of celebration, the way of celebration, and the purpose of celebration, to promote cultural exchanges, and guide students to reflect and summarize after the activity.

6. Summary

Under the guidance of the new curriculum, schools, teachers, parents, and students need to recognize the importance of intercultural communication competence, which helps students acquire language knowledge and improves their overall quality and personality. While teaching students the basics is also necessary to help them internalize and apply intercultural communication knowledge in practical teaching activities. Under the background of economic globalization, letting students understand the culture of different countries and regions will help them develop themselves, spread the country's culture, and live in harmony with the world.

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