

On the Strategies and Principles of Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communication Competence in English Reading Teaching in Senior High school

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Abstract: Under the background of globalization, people from different countries are easier and closer to communicate than before. At the same time, education takes an important role in cultivating talents and future elites of country. Therefore, it is necessary for senior high school English teachers to pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence in teaching practice. At present, there existing many problems in senior high school English teaching, such as the old educational concept around exam-oriented education, the lack of intercultural communication environment and the lack of awareness of cultural learning among students themselves, resulting in the cultivation of senior high school students' intercultural communication competence being a mere formality. Based on the above problems, it is imperative to find feasible strategies to foster senior high school students' intercultural communication competence.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication Competence, Senior High School English Teaching, Cultivating Talents and Future Elites of Country.

1. Introduction

General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition) proposed that the core competence of English subject mainly includes linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Among them, cultural awareness reflects the value of the subject core competence. The cultivation of cultural awareness can be conducive to students' enhancement of their national identity and family-country feelings and heightening their cultural self-confidence as well as the community consciousness of human destiny so that they will learn to do and grow up to be persons with sense of social responsibility and civilization accomplishment. Therefore, under the background of quality education, English teaching of senior high school should not only be limited to the explanation of language knowledge in reading texts, but also pay attention to cultivating students' intercultural awareness and competence, developing their core competence. In order to achieve this goal, teachers should attach importance to the introduction of reading texts and integrating western cultural elements, deeply analyze the structure of reading materials and guide students to explore English thinking pattern, supplement comparative learning materials and provide students with a deeper understanding of cultural differences, appropriately organize classroom activities and integrate them into specific cultural situations, improve teachers' own intercultural communication competence and impart knowledge accurately, take the evaluation of intercultural communication competence as an important part of formative evaluation.

2. The Concept of Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication is a kind of communicative behavior. Hall (1959), an American anthropologist, first proposed the concept of intercultural communication competence. And he believed that intercultural

communication competence is the ability of communicators with a certain cultural identity to communicate with other language groups. According to Spitzberg (2000), intercultural communication competence is "behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context." While Kim offers a more detailed definition when she notes that intercultural communication competence is "the overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely, cultural differences and unfamiliarity, inter-group posture, and the accompanying experience of stress." All these definitions suggest that being an intercultural competent communicator means analyzing the situations and choosing the right code of behavior.

The basic parts of intercultural communication competence include motivation, knowledge, skills. Motivation means that if someone wants to be a successful communicator, she or he should be involved as a part of intercultural communication. Knowledge, which works in tandem with motivation, refers to the ability to augment and expand knowledge about people from cultures different from your own. And skills are the specific behaviors you engage in to make the communication encounter a successful one.

All in all, intercultural communication competence refers to the ability of an individual to effectively and appropriately communicate and exchange across cultural boundaries under different cultural backgrounds, which involves the ability to understand and adapt to different cultural values, beliefs, customs, languages, social behaviors and other aspects. Therefore, intercultural communication competence is not only limited to linguistic competence, but also includes sensitivity to cultural differences, respect and tolerance, and the ability to resolve cultural conflicts and misunderstandings.

When it comes to the intercultural communication competence of senior high school English, it refers to the interpersonal communication competence based on the knowledge of senior high school English. This kind of ability can be expressed in interpersonal communication, as well as in the communication between individuals and groups. In the

communicative context of different cultures, if the common topics of communication between people are reduced, the differences in their perceptions of each other will increase. Intercultural communication ability can facilitate people's better communication. Senior high school English intercultural communication competence is specially manifested in the students' ability and attitude to deal with the cultural differences between China and foreign countries and the strangeness of foreign cultures. This competence includes both the appropriateness of communicative behavior and the effectiveness of communicative results. Good intercultural communication ability can help students achieve their communicative goals, help them to understand foreign cultures in textbook knowledge, and thus improve their learning efficiency. At the same time, education takes an important role in cultivating talents and future elites of country. Therefore, it is necessary for senior high school English teachers to pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence in teaching practice.

3. The Significance of Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communication Competence in English Teaching of Senior High School

3.1. The Importance of Cultivating Students' Awareness and Competence of Intercultural Communication in Senior High School

3.1.1. To Deepen Students' Cognition of Their Own Culture and Enhance Students' Cultural Self-confidence

In the senior high school English course books of different versions in China, in addition to a lot of cultural knowledge of native English-speaking countries, there is also a lot of teaching content based on the local customs, history and culture of different parts of China. Therefore, through learning the content of senior high school English course books, students can not only master the English language expression habits and skills, but also learn a lot of cultural knowledge of our own country, which can promote students to have a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture, so as to enhance cultural self-confidence and establish personal and cultural identity.

3.1.2. To Improve Students' Understanding and Awareness of the Culture of Native English-speaking Countries

The historical development backgrounds and the geographical positions of the native English-speaking countries are not similar to our country's, which brings up the cultural differences between our country and the native English-speaking countries. For example, there are many differences between China and the native English-speaking countries in terms of living habits, customs, etiquette, language expressions and so on. These differences may result in some problems in communication and exchange between the East and the West, and even may cause some unnecessary misunderstandings due to the failure to understand the other side's meaning without knowing their culture in communication. Therefore, in senior high school English teaching practice, teaching students' intercultural knowledge

and cultivating students' intercultural awareness can help students have a deeper understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries, effectively avoid and eliminate misunderstandings in intercultural communication, and promote the development of international exchanges.

3.1.3. To Improve Students' Core Competence and Enhance Their Ability to Apply English in Practice

As an international language, English plays an extremely important role in promoting cultural, economic and political exchanges and development among countries. So English is included in our education system as a main subject.

In recent years, with the development of the international situation, intercultural communication has become a hot topic in the field of foreign language education in China. In the field of foreign language education, educators have realized that traditional English teaching is far from being able to meet the requirements of the times for students' core competence. The English curriculum proposed that the core competence of English subject mainly includes linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Therefore, it is the ultimate goal of foreign language education. In addition, *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)* clearly puts forward the needs for developing students' intercultural communication awareness and competence. And the specific requirement is that form intercultural communication awareness and its competence, further broaden the international vision, and enhance patriotism and national spirit. It is hoped that through the cultivation of intercultural communication competence, students' comprehension and practical application skills will be improved, laying a solid foundation for the use of English in the future.

3.2. The Relationship between Intercultural Communication and English Teaching

To a certain extent, the language of a country reflects its culture, and the basic content of culture is often expressed in the language. Language and culture are interdependent, and culture has a certain restricting effect on the expression of language. If the essence of culture is injected into language, giving language a heavy cultural connotation. Therefore, to learn a language well, students need to learn the culture of the country.

Many Chinese researchers have built intercultural communication competence models for foreign language teaching, including linguistic, pragmatic and behavioral competence. Among them, linguistic competence includes pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and semantic competence. Pragmatic competence includes contextual competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and sociocultural awareness. And the behavioral competence includes three aspects: social competence, non-verbal communication competence and cultural adaptability.

In senior high school English teaching, comparing and contrasting knowledge, traditional Chinese and foreign cultures, customs, economy, culture and sports in British and American countries have always been the focus of teaching. By reading different contents of these cultures, students can increase their knowledge of other countries and enhance their cultural understanding of other countries, thus improving their intercultural awareness and its competence. According to *General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition)*, the content of senior high school English course books should be centered around three major themes:

human and self, human and society, and human and nature. The context of these themes should include Chinese and foreign cultural categories. When designing the teaching plan, teachers should first analyze the teaching content, collect relevant cultural knowledge, cultural habits or behaviors, and integrate the design with teaching activities, so that students can understand the cultural knowledge imperceptibly.

Therefore, English teaching is to develop students' language ability, and the cultivation of intercultural communication competence just requires students to apply English knowledge that they have learned to communicate. In other words, it means that English teaching promotes the cultivation of it, and at the same time the cultivation of it also facilitates English teaching. By cultivating students' cultural communication competence, teachers can guide students to understand the language expressions and emotions in different contexts through cultural differences and cultural meanings, so that enable students to output more ideas with deeper thinking value and cultural forms when expressing in English, which is conducive to improving students' ability to apply language knowledge.

To sum up, English teaching should not only develop students' English skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, but more importantly, develop students' intercultural communication competence, so that students can learn to cross cultural boundaries through English learning, transcend the differences in language and culture and become intercultural communicators. By cultivating students' intercultural communication competence, teachers can enhance students' ability to communicate in a specific language environment, which is of great help to students' learning. In addition, English teaching should be an important part and means of cross-cultural quality education. In order to achieve the goal of cross-cultural teaching, teachers will infiltrate cultural background and knowledge in the process of English teaching, which is conducive to senior high school students' better understanding of the world's cultures, enriching students' understanding of countries all over the world, broadening students' horizons, and having a positive significance to the formation of their open-mindedness.

4. Problems Existing in the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Awareness and Competence in Senior High School English Teaching

4.1. The Old Educational Concept Around Exam-oriented Education

In traditional English teaching, teachers often emphasize the accurate mastery of English words, sentences and grammar, and advocate the mechanical repetition and memorization of language under the examination-oriented education system. Teachers' classroom teaching only focuses on language points, which makes English teaching develop into Chinglish teaching, and it is seriously disconnected from the use of English language. In fact, this is the embodiment of the teacher's adherence to the cramming teaching mode. The teacher only focuses on the mastery of language itself, ignoring the development of students' core competence, and let it alone the cultural awareness and ability behind the language. Because the current relationship between countries in business and culture is getting closer and closer, and the

requirements for compound talented person will get to be higher and higher, which reflects an important direction of English teaching reform in China. This requires English teachers to get a good grip of the cultivating requirements of talents and adjust cultivating methods according the requirements. Besides, teachers should rethink about the meaning of language, recognize English language as culture learning, adopt teaching methods around culture education, and concentrate on the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence. Only in this way can they achieve the goals of ideal intercultural communication competence cultivation in innovative teaching.

4.2. Lack of Intercultural Communication Environment

In the process of cultivating students' English intercultural communication competence, only by constructing a good intercultural communication environment can the activities of intercultural communication competence cultivation be promoted smoothly and achieve more and more ideal cultivating results. But from the actual senior high school English teaching, many teachers lack such awareness, and do not provide students with opportunities to communicate in English after class. First of all, students have no chance to have real communication with people from English-speaking countries, and Chinese teachers' understanding of English culture is very limited. Secondly, it is not possible to provide suitable English learning resources for every student. Finally, the construction of the library and media room of the school may be not perfect, which will narrow the scope of students' contact with English cultural knowledge.

4.3. Lack of Awareness of Cultural Learning among Students Themselves

Students' own attitude towards English culture will also have a great impact on their own English intercultural communication competence. According to the current attitude of senior high school students towards English cultural learning is concerned, it is showed that most students only learn the English culture transmitted by teachers in class and do not have the awareness of active learning after class, which cannot make the consolidation of students' intercultural communication competence.

5. The Strategies of Intercultural Communication Competence Cultivation in Senior High School English teaching

5.1. Attaching Importance to the Introduction of Reading Texts and Integrating Western Cultural Elements

In reading class teaching, teachers should naturally integrate western cultural elements into the leading-in process, which can not only stimulate students' interest in interpreting the discourse, but also enable them to focus on history, politics, philosophy and other aspects in the process of comprehending the discourse, so as to promote the cultivation of their intercultural awareness. So it is a helpful and effective way for teachers to naturally combine the discourse with cultural elements through presenting pictures, eliciting stories and play English songs related to western culture which can make the teacher-student dialogue be carried out smoothly,

arouse students' learning motivation and activate their schema of relevant learning content.

Taking the reading text *A Short History of Western Painting* in *Unit 1 Art* from the English course book of senior high school published by *People's Education Press* as an example, in the introduction of the class, the teacher can present some typical famous Western paintings and famous Chinese paintings with the help of multi-media. And students are asked to observe and find out the differences between the Western paintings and Chinese traditional paintings with the help of hints from styles and characteristics. On this basis, students are guided to think about the symbolic meaning of western paintings and Chinese paintings. After that, students are required to fill in the KWL chart related to the topic of the text, which can help students arouse cultural awareness and facilitating their better understanding of western art. In this process, the teacher naturally introduces techniques and different styles of western paintings and other relevant background information to help students understand the details of the text, expand the cultural knowledge reserve, and get a good grip of the styles and characteristics of western paintings. Through the effective introduction, students' the awareness can be developed through exploring western art and the contrast with Chinese paintings.

5.2. Deeply Analyzing the Structure of Reading Materials and Guiding Students to Explore English Thinking Pattern

A person's pattern of thinking has a great impact on his or her language habits. The western mode of thinking tends to be logic and analytic, which is characterized by linearity and a kind of thinking activity without domain dependence. While eastern societies, especially Asian cultures and societies, are not accustomed to the logic and analysis like western culture. The thinking pattern of the eastern is known for our intuitive wholeness and harmonious dialectic. The Chinese are accustomed to dividing things into two opposing aspects such as ying and yang. The two aspects are seen as an inseparable whole, and they are mutually conditioned and interdependent.

Therefore, teachers can guide students to focus on the analysis of discourse structure from high school English course book, which is conducive to the exploration of English expression habits and thinking patterns. English expression habits just reflect the way of thinking in Western countries where English is the mother tongue. This not only helps students to improve their English written expression level, but also helps them to understand the differences between Chinese and Western ways of thinking, and promotes the improvement of intercultural awareness and competence. When analyzing the structure of discourse, teachers should guide students to interpret the structure of articles, paragraphs and sentences, so that they can quickly recognize the differences between Chinese and English expression habits, and thus get familiar with the thinking habits of people in Western countries.

Taking *Unit 4 Information Technology* from the second required English course books of Beijing Normal University edition as an example, when teaching *Lesson 3 Internet and Friendships*, the teacher can encourage students to analyze the structural characteristics of the reading text. It is not hard for students to find out that the use of the logical connectors such as firstly, secondly and thirdly. These logical connectors is used to link each paragraph together. Then, students can be guided to analyze the structure of the main paragraphs of the

text, realizing that the text usually takes the first sentence as the topic sentence of the paragraph, which is helpful to predict the content of the paragraph only by reading the first sentence of the paragraph. What's more, the teacher should make a summary to help students understand that the western always integrate their linear thinking mode into their expression habits while creating discourse. However, many Chinese articles attach importance to spiral writing skills, demonstrating the author's views in the perspectives from far to near, from the outside to the inside. In this way, students can accumulate authentic English expressions and apply English thinking patterns when writing essays in English. In addition, when analyzing reading texts, teachers can also help students understand the different expression habits of Chinese and Western countries by comparing and analyzing the word order of English sentences, so as to find out and get a better understanding of the differences between English and Chinese thinking patterns.

5.3. Supplementing Comparative Learning Materials and Providing Students with a Deeper Understanding of Cultural Differences

In the process of senior high school English reading teaching, teachers can appropriately supplement learning resources apart from the textbook itself, so that students can make a comparison of Chinese and foreign cultures and deeply understand cultural differences when learning supplementary learning materials. And teachers should develop appropriate teaching strategies to make students feel the charm of our national culture, help them establish cultural self-confidence, improve their intercultural communication competence and strengthen the awareness of actively spreading our culture in the process of understanding cultural differences.

Taking the reading text *A Short History of Western Painting* in *Unit 1 Art* from the English course book of senior high school published by *People's Education Press* as an example, the teacher can design the teaching activity of appreciating Chinese paintings, inspiring students to make a comparison and contrast of western paintings and Chinese paintings. Because many students can summarize and tell the styles and characteristics if western painting in different period through the introduction of these western paintings, it is meaningful and not difficult for students to take the appreciating activity. In this way can students not only be deeply impressed by western paintings but also get a knowledge of our own national art characteristics such as white space and inscription which are usually used in Chinese paintings. And there is something teachers should pay attention to that when encouraging students to appreciate art works of different countries, teachers should guide them to give rational and objective comments whether on Chinese or western works, developing the consciousness of respecting different cultures. On this basis, the teacher asks students to write three short passages from three aspects: What does the painting show? What may have inspired the painter? And what did the artist think or say about the painting? In this process, not only can students further enhance their awareness of the differences between different works, but also make them further think about the English thinking habits in the writing process. At the same time, when carrying out writing exercises, the teacher should guide students to seriously think about how to present the charm of Chinese paintings in the essay, so that

they can establish cultural self-confidence and national identity, speeding up the process of internationalization of Chinese culture.

5.4. Appropriately Organizing Classroom Activities and Integrating Them into Specific Cultural Situations

Teachers should incorporate cultural contexts into students' interpretation of the texts, which can help students better develop their intercultural awareness, enrich the forms of reading teaching. Teachers should also organize the teaching activities such as debate competitions, recitation and speech contest, drama performance and so on, so as to strengthen the understanding of cultural elements in the discourse and also improve students' ability of applying language. Teachers can choose some poems, plays and literature in English textbooks and encourage students to recite or perform them according to students' own understanding and teachers give appropriate guidance and help when necessary. For example, in the process of reciting the poem *The Road Not Taken*, students can feel the characteristics of American poetry culture, be involved in the specific context, strengthen their understanding of the connotation of poetry, and realize the difference between Chinese and Western poetry culture. In order to help students better involved in the cultural context by reading aloud, the teacher can provide some background knowledge, helping students analyze what images Robert Frost use in the poem. In this way, students can better comprehend the characteristics of English poetry and understand the differences between English poetry and Chinese traditional poetry.

5.5. Improving Teachers' own Intercultural Communication Competence and Imparting Knowledge Accurately

Not only students should be developed their intercultural communication awareness and competence, but also English teachers should improve their own intercultural communication competence. English teachers are of great significance to the cultivation of senior high school students' intercultural communication competence. The effective communication between native and non-native languages is influenced by the cultural traditions, history, culture and social system of different nationalities, which requires English teachers to have profound English cultural accomplishment. If English teachers do not have enough intercultural knowledge and talents, students will not understand the cultural connotation of English language. There are many differences between Chinese and English expressions, such as the expression of animals, plants, color words, addresses, numbers and other contents, with different cultural connotations. In order to communicate fluently with native English speakers, high school English teachers need to change their old-fashioned teaching concepts. They should not only focus on English grammar and vocabulary training, but also devote themselves to the culture behind the English language. In order to give students a bowl of water, English teachers need to have a bucket of water, which means teachers should have plenty of knowledge reserve before they foster students' intercultural communication competence. So teachers need to keep pace with the development of society, make use of various learning channels, and become the main force of English curriculum reform. Only by constantly

updating teachers' own knowledge and possessing the ability of bicultural understanding, innovation and criticism, can English teachers make their students have sufficient learning interest in English teaching and turn the English language learning process into an intercultural communication process.

5.6. Taking the Evaluation of Intercultural Communication Competence as an Important Part of Formative Evaluation

The new curriculum standard advocates the combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation, which is concentrated on both the result and the process. Formative assessment can help students timely and effectively regulate their learning process, so that students can gain a sense of achievement and enhance their self-confidence. According to the requirements of the new curriculum standards and the cognitive characteristics of senior high school students, teachers can take the evaluation of intercultural communication competence as an important content of formative evaluation, and record the development of students in intercultural communicative competence by using descriptive evaluation, rating or grading. Through classroom questioning, individual presentation, group activities, and display of intercultural communication competence in certain situations, the students' ability of collecting and processing information in comprehensive language tasks is paid attention to, and their intercultural communication competence in discussion, cooperation, communication, coordination and other aspects is tested.

6. Principles for Cultivating Students' Intercultural Communication Competence in Senior High School English Teaching

Language is a tool to carry culture, which is endowed with dual attributes of instrumental and humanity. Therefore, English language teaching in senior high school should be closely combined with cultural teaching, so that senior high school students can deepen their understanding of the culture values and outlook on life carried by language while learning English. In the process of cultivating students' intercultural communication competence, teachers are required to follow the principles of practicability, step by step and ideological principles.

6.1. The Principles of Practicability

As a language course, English teaching should not be separated from students' practical application. Because the ultimate goal of cultivating students' intercultural communication ability is to enable students to use English for better communication. Therefore, in the specific teaching process, teachers' teaching must be combined with real context, so that students can have a sense of immersive learning, which can help students have a better experience and understanding of intercultural communication, especially for those communication rules and speech behavior modes that are obviously different from Chinese culture. And teachers should provide students with ample opportunities to practice.

6.2. The Principles of Step by Step

The cultivation of intercultural communication competence of senior high school students cannot be accomplished in a very short time, but must go through a stage

of development. Therefore, in the process of cultivating students' intercultural communication competence, teachers should design intercultural communication activities step by step according to the characteristics of textbook preparation and students' cognitive characteristics. Only in this way can students really absorb what they have learned from simple to complex. Only with a better understanding of the cultural knowledge behind the English language can students develop their intercultural communication competence.

6.3. Ideological Principles

It is very important to follow the ideological principle in the process of cultivating the intercultural communication competence of senior high school students. Although it seems that senior high school students are continuously growing, their minds are still not fully developed and mature, and they are still in the formation stage of world view, philosophy and values. Therefore, senior high school English teachers should not just simply introduce and interpret English knowledge and English culture but also ensure that students are exposed to positive cultural knowledge. At the same time, senior high school teachers should consciously guide students to criticize the inactive and decadent cultural content, so that students can realize the diversity of culture and the world through the process of language and culture learning, which can better help students establish a comprehensive and correct world view, philosophy and values.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, in the teaching of English reading in senior high school, teachers should attach importance to the introduction of reading texts and integrating western cultural elements, deeply analyze the structure of reading materials and guide students to explore English thinking pattern, supplement comparative learning materials and provide students with a deeper understanding of cultural differences, appropriately organize classroom activities and integrate them into specific

cultural situations, improve teachers' own intercultural communication competence and impart knowledge accurately, take the evaluation of intercultural communication competence as an important part of formative evaluation, making students form the correct values and emotional attitude, and become a person with civilized accomplishment and social responsibility.

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