

Cultivation Global Minds: Pedagogical Strategies for Enhancing Intercultural Competence in Chinese Senior High School English Teaching: A Research Report on a Pilot Study

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Abstract: This assignment looks into how well-designed instructional practices can help Chinese seniors in high school, especially those who want to study overseas, become more interculturally competent. The study concentrates on techniques including direct cultural comparisons, intercultural competency building, and reflective conversations. The study offers in-depth insights into the techniques and experiences of experienced international education teachers through the use of qualitative methodologies, which include semi-structured interviews. The research also examines instructional methodologies that are described in course materials. The results show that methods such as structured conversations and comparative cultural analysis greatly enhance students' understanding and respect of other cultures. The study also emphasises how important it is for teachers to be interculturally competent in order to apply these strategies successfully. One of the recommendations is to incorporate cutting-edge pedagogies into conventional curricula in order to better prepare students for success in international academic and professional settings.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, English Teaching, Pedagogical Strategies.

1. Introduction

While I studied in Britain, I observed notable disparities between Eastern and Western educational methodologies. The focus on cultivating international proficiency, particularly for individuals seeking study abroad, was particularly notable. In China, the educational approach is centred around the teacher and focuses on the topic being taught. In contrast, in the UK, there is a greater emphasis on building students' intercultural competence, which includes critical thinking and analysis skills. This emphasised the significance of integrating intercultural proficiency into English teaching in Chinese high schools. These skills are essential for fostering inclusiveness and effectively managing the process of globalisation. This study aims to examine effective teaching strategies for enhancing intercultural competency in Chinese high schools using qualitative research methods. The findings of this study will offer practical guidance for teachers in implementing these strategies.

2. Literature-informed Understanding of Intercultural Competence and Context

Intercultural competency entails skilfully interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, demonstrating understanding and sensitivity towards cultural differences. According to Deardorff (2006), it refers to the intellectual, emotional, and behavioural skills required to successfully negotiate intricate cultural settings[1]. Hofstede's (1984) cultural aspects, such as power distance and individuality, serve as a basis for comprehending cultural differences[2]. Teachers have the ability to tailor teaching approaches in order to cater to a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) delineates six stages of advancement from ethnocentric to culturally related stages[3]. Engaging in activities such as role-playing and critical reflection assists students in advancing through these stages, enhancing their ability to function effectively in diverse cultural settings. By incorporating these theoretical concepts into instructional approaches, students are prepared for interactions with individuals from different cultures and a welcoming classroom environment is fostered.

Having accumulated more than three years of experience instructing English in China, I originally employed a teacher-centered pedagogical method. My time in the UK highlighted the significance of shifting towards a student-centered approach, fostering critical thinking and intercultural competences. The contrast between Chinese and British educational approaches emphasises the necessity of integrating intercultural competence into Chinese secondary schools. The objective of this study is to examine effective teaching methods that can enhance the intercultural skills of high school students. The findings of this research will provide valuable information for educational practices and policies in China.

3. Methodology

This section explains the research methodology, including the rationale for using semi-structured interviews, the research aims, and the data collection and analysis processes.

3.1. Rationale of Choosing Semi-structured Interviews as the Research Method

The choice to use semi-structured interviews as the main approach for collecting data in this study is based on the requirement for adaptability and thoroughness in examining

the incorporation of intercultural competency in high school English instruction. This approach facilitates a thorough comprehension of teachers' tactics and encounters, as emphasised in educational research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018[4]).

Semi-structured interviews provide an adaptable method, enabling the interviewer to modify questions in response to participants' responses. The ability to adapt is crucial for examining the diverse and situation-dependent elements of instructional approaches associated with intercultural competence (Burgess, 1984)[5]. During the interviews, I could further explore how teachers modify their lessons to address cultural disparities or effectively handle classroom diversity. This methodology allowed me to discover specific instances and tactics that may not have been revealed in a more organised interview style. The level of information obtained from semi-structured interviews is highly advantageous for qualitative research due to its depth. They let participants expand upon their experiences and ideas using their own language, providing a thorough comprehension that structured approaches may overlook. The abundance of data is essential for examining the many ways in which teachers incorporate intercultural competency into their teaching (Creswell, 2014)[6]. One teacher provided a specific instance of using role-playing activities to enable students to imitate real-life situations they may encounter while overseas, so improving their practical intercultural abilities. A different teacher has described her approach of integrating conversations on cultural disparities and analytical reasoning into her teaching plan, which aids students in comprehending and valuing a wide range of viewpoints.

Participants are given the chance to articulate their experiences and thoughts in their own language, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding compared to scripted techniques. Teachers, for instance, offered comprehensive narratives of their encounters with different instructional resources and approaches. A teacher elucidated her process of modifying a particular lesson plan to incorporate cultural juxtapositions between Chinese and Western literature, thereby facilitating students' comprehension of the disparities in storytelling techniques and cultural backgrounds. Another teacher elucidated the utilisation of case studies including authentic situations to exemplify the significance of multicultural communication in professional environments. These particular examples showcase successful approaches to promoting intercultural proficiency and illustrate the tangible implementation of instructional techniques in many educational settings.

Overall, the selection of semi-structured interviews is justified due to its flexibility, thoroughness, and capacity to collect extensive and detailed data. This methodology enables a versatile yet organised way to gather data, offering comprehensive and intricate understandings of teaching methods associated with intercultural competency. These findings are crucial for establishing pedagogical approaches that effectively foster intercultural competency, providing useful information for educational research and practice.

3.2. Research Aim and Research Question

The main objective of this study is to investigate effective instructional methods for enhancing intercultural competence among Chinese senior high school students in English classes. As education becomes increasingly globalized, students need skills to navigate diverse cultural contexts effectively,

particularly those planning to study abroad.

The study addresses three main research questions. First, which teaching strategies are most effective in developing students' intercultural competence in English teaching at Chinese high schools? This question aims to identify specific teaching methods and activities that successfully improve students' ability to understand and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Second, how do teachers integrate intercultural competency development into their teaching approaches? This explores how teachers incorporate intercultural competency into their curriculum, lesson planning, and classroom activities, examining their practical methods, tools, and materials. Third, how do students respond to different international teaching methods, and how do these approaches affect their cultural understanding and adaptability? This question, drawing on insights from Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017), focuses on student perspectives regarding multicultural teaching approaches, examining their engagement levels and ability to understand and adapt to different cultural contexts[7].

3.3. Selecting the Method of Data Generation

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method to examine high school English teachers' perspectives on integrating intercultural competency into their teaching practices. Semi-structured interviews were selected for their key advantages: flexibility in modifying questions based on participants' responses, ability to gather detailed information about experiences and perspectives, and suitability for exploratory research.

The data generation process involved several crucial stages. First, a comprehensive interview guide was developed to ensure coverage of essential topics while allowing freedom to explore emerging themes. Second, participant recruitment focused on selecting English teachers with at least three years of experience in Chinese high schools. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, and were audio-recorded with participant consent.

The process also included careful attention to data management and ethical considerations. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymized to protect participant privacy. Data analysis involved systematic coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns related to intercultural competency and teaching methodologies. Throughout the research process, ethical principles were prioritized, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality.

3.4. Data Generation

Data generation is a crucial component of qualitative research, involving systematic information gathering to deeply understand research questions. This study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, chosen for their flexibility and ability to gather rich contextual information. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasize, this approach allows for comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. The data generation process involved several key stages. First, a detailed interview guide was developed with open-ended questions focusing on intercultural competency and teaching methodologies. Sample questions included: "Could you outline the specific methods you use to enhance intercultural competence in your teaching?" and "What challenges have

you encountered in incorporating intercultural competence into your teaching?" According to Creswell (2014), such carefully crafted questions are essential for gathering meaningful qualitative data.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, lasting approximately 60 minutes each. The setting was designed to ensure participant comfort and openness in sharing their perspectives. As noted by Burgess (1984), creating a comfortable environment is crucial for obtaining authentic responses. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim, including non-verbal cues where relevant. Data management involved careful attention to privacy and security. Transcripts were anonymized and stored securely with password protection. The study implemented various measures to ensure data accuracy and reliability, including a pilot interview phase and data triangulation. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the process, with all participants providing informed consent and being informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time. These ethical protocols align with established research practices (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This systematic approach to data generation ensures the collection of comprehensive qualitative data that offers valuable insights into incorporating intercultural competency into high school English teaching.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data analysis phase is a crucial step in qualitative research, as it entails analysing the gathered data to produce significant insights. The data obtained from semi-structured interviews was analysed in a systematic manner to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings in this study.

3.5.1. Transcription

Transcription is an essential stage in the qualitative research procedure, where spoken interviews are transformed into written text through the conversion of audio recordings. This stage guarantees the precise collection of data, maintaining the intricate details and subtleties of the participants' responses for later analysis. The transcription procedure adheres to known qualitative research methodologies in order to ensure the integrity and dependability of the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2014).

The initial step in the transcription process involves the thorough examination of the recorded materials. Every interview recording was thoroughly examined to guarantee the precise capture of every spoken word, including pauses and non-verbal signals. A comprehensive evaluation is crucial for upholding the depth of the qualitative data and safeguarding the subtleties of the participants' answers (Creswell, 2014). The transcription method entailed transcribing the precise verbatim utterances of the participants without any modifications. This encompasses the recording of extraneous words, disruptions, and colloquial expressions in order to guarantee genuineness. Nevertheless, the transcripts included in the appendix have been modified to eliminate superfluous words and emphasise the crucial details (Burgess, 1984). The transcriptions underwent rigorous scrutiny to verify their precision and comprehensiveness. This process facilitated the detection and rectification of any inaccuracies or exclusions, guaranteeing that the transcripts accurately reflected the original recordings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In order to safeguard the

privacy of the participants, any identifying details were eliminated from the transcripts. The anonymized data was securely kept in folders protected by passwords, and backup copies were created to prevent any loss of data. The purpose of this phase is to uphold the confidentiality of the participants throughout the research procedure (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Material in the appendix of the interviews conducted in Chinese was transcribed into English and subsequently translated back into Chinese for the purpose of verification. The meticulous procedure guaranteed the precision and dependability of the data, upholding the authenticity of the participant's initial answers (Creswell, 2014). Maintaining ethical standards during transcription is crucial. Consent from the participants was acquired in order to record and transcribe the interviews. In order to safeguard the identity of the participants, all transcripts were anonymized. Furthermore, the data was securely stored to prevent any unauthorised access. These measures were taken in accordance with the guidelines provided by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) and Creswell (2014). The careful and thorough method of transcribing enhances the overall accuracy and trustworthiness of the research results.

3.5.2. Coding

Prior to commencing the coding process, it is imperative to have a comprehensive understanding of the transcribed data. This necessitates thoroughly analysing each transcript through many readings in order to comprehensively grasp the content and context. During the initial reading, the researcher takes notes and makes initial observations regarding possible codes and themes (Creswell, 2014). Following the process of becoming familiar with the subject matter, the subsequent step involves creating preliminary codes. This entails methodically analysing the transcripts and pinpointing sections of text that pertain to particular research inquiries or themes. Codes are concise expressions or tags that succinctly convey the fundamental nature of the data segment. The coding process for each transcript involves analysing and categorising each line to ensure that all important information is recorded (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Illustration of Initial Codes:

Cultural Awareness: Sections in which people engage in conversations about comprehending diverse cultures.

Teaching Strategies: Explanations of techniques employed to impart intercultural competency.

Student Engagement refers to situations in which individuals discuss the ways in which students interact with the curriculum.

Challenges: Statements pertaining to the complexities of instructing intercultural competency.

After the original coding is finished, the codes undergo a process of evaluation and refinement. This stage entails merging comparable codes, removing duplicate ones, and verifying that the codes precisely reflect the data. In this stage, codes can be organised into bigger categories or themes that encompass more complete characteristics of the data (Burgess, 1984). Once the codes have been refined, the subsequent task is to create themes and categories. Themes are overarching patterns that arise from the codes and offer a more abstract and comprehensive comprehension of the data. Categories are clusters of interconnected codes that belong to a more overarching theme. The technique is arranging the codes into a cohesive framework that directly tackles the research inquiries (Creswell, 2014).

Illustration of Themes and Categories:

Improving Cultural Awareness: Comparative Approaches
 Actual situations or circumstances that occur in reality.
 Customised instructional resources
 Facilitating Multicultural Learning: Classroom
 Discussions to Foster Student Engagement
 Exercises that enhance critical thinking skills
 Engaging and participatory exercises
 Addressing Teaching Obstacles:
 Dealing with student reliance
 Adjusting to a curriculum that focuses on preparing
 students for exams.

Promoting autonomous cognition
 Ensuring the dependability and accuracy
 In order to guarantee the dependability and accuracy of the
 coding procedure, the subsequent measures were
 implemented:

Triangulation refers to the process of utilising many data
 sources and methods to validate and confirm the findings,
 hence ensuring a thorough comprehension of the study issues
 (Creswell, 2014). Although the coded data is usually
 comprehensive and intricate, below is a condensed sample of
 how the processed coded data may appear: Transcript Excerpt:
 'I believe it is crucial to engage in conversations about
 cultural disparities within the educational setting.' As an
 illustration, I employ actual situations to facilitate students'
 comprehension of the functioning of many cultures. This
 approach has proven to be highly successful in augmenting
 their cultural consciousness.

Cultural awareness is crucial for engaging in discussions
 about cultural differences.

Real-world Scenarios: 'Utilise practical situations from
 everyday life'

Efficient Approaches: 'approach has proven to be highly
 effective'

Topic: Improving Cultural Awareness

This study guarantees that the qualitative data are
 thoroughly examined and understood by adhering to these
 specific coding standards. This ensures that the insights
 generated and the research questions addressed are based on
 a strong and reliable foundation.

3.5.3. Categorizing

Categorization is the subsequent step in qualitative data
 analysis after coding. This stage is categorising the initial
 codes into overarching themes and categories to create a
 cohesive framework that addresses the research questions.
 Classification facilitates the arrangement and analysis of data
 in order to recognise noteworthy patterns and gain valuable
 insights (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2014).

Once the initial codes have been generated and refined, the
 subsequent phase involves reviewing and categorising them
 into more comprehensive groups. This entails the process of
 recognising patterns and correlations among various codes
 and grouping comparable codes into clusters. The objective is
 to establish categories that encompass the primary concepts
 conveyed by the codes (Creswell, 2014). For instance: The
 category "Cultural Awareness" encompasses codes that
 pertain to comprehending many cultures, such as "importance
 of cultural awareness" and "recognising cultural differences."
 Theme Development. After categorising the codes, the
 subsequent task is to construct comprehensive themes.
 Themes are overarching concepts that arise from the
 categories and offer a more abstract degree of understanding.
 The data is captured and the bigger patterns and meanings
 within it are understood (Burgess, 1984). For instance: The

area of "Cultural Awareness," together with topics such as
 "Teaching Strategies" and "Student Engagement," can
 contribute to the overarching theme of "Enhancing
 Intercultural Competence." Data triangulation should be
 performed to assure the accuracy and dependability of the
 categories and themes. This entails the use of several data
 sources, including interview transcripts, pertinent literature,
 and teaching materials, to corroborate the findings.
 Triangulation enhances the comprehensiveness and depth of
 comprehension of the study topics (Cohen, Manion, &
 Morrison, 2018).

Through meticulous categorization methods, this study
 guarantees the systematic organisation and interpretation of
 qualitative data. This approach establishes a strong basis for
 generating significant insights and addressing the research
 questions. Illustration of Categorised Data Topic: Improving
 Intercultural Competence. Category: Cultural Awareness
 Topics: Significance of cultural awareness, Identifying
 cultural disparities. Cultural competence refers to the ability
 to comprehend and acknowledge cultural distinctions and
 their significance within a multicultural environment.
 Exemplary Quote: "Engaging in conversations about cultural
 differences is of utmost significance within the classroom."
 As an illustration, I employ actual situations to facilitate
 students' comprehension of the functioning of many cultures.
 Teaching Strategies: Comparative techniques, Real-life
 scenarios, Targeted teaching materials. Definition:
 Pedagogical techniques and strategies employed by teachers
 to cultivate intercultural proficiency among students.
 Exemplary Quote: "I integrate my personal experiences into
 the instructional process, engage in conversations about
 cultural disparities, and create tailored educational
 resources." Category: Student Engagement Methods:
 Classroom discussions, Critical thinking exercises,
 Interactive activities. Definition: The manner in which
 students engage with and react to intercultural instructional
 approaches. Exemplary Quotation: "I motivate students to
 explore cultural disparities by involving them in captivating
 subjects."

4. Research findings

Semi-structured interviews with two skilled English
 teachers, Tina and Alice, reveal intercultural competency
 pedagogy for Chinese high school students. Results fall into
 three categories: enhancing cultural awareness instruction,
 incorporating students in multicultural classrooms, and
 overcoming intercultural competence barriers.

4.1. Improving Teaching Strategies for Cultural Awareness

Both Tina and Alice underscored the significance of
 intercultural ability for students, particularly those intending
 to pursue studies overseas. They emphasised the importance
 of students comprehending and adjusting to cultural
 disparities in order to excel in foreign academic and
 professional settings.

Tina's observations: Tina's definition of intercultural
 competence is the capacity to comprehend and adjust to
 cultural disparities among nations. She emphasised the need
 of cross-cultural understanding for students, regardless of
 their intention to travel overseas, as it enhances their
 prospects for work in international companies. Tina integrates
 her personal experiences into the instructional process,

creating tailored educational resources that juxtapose the criteria for writing academic papers in China and other countries. This approach facilitates the development of students' intercultural competencies through the comprehension of diverse academic norms and methodologies.

Alice's Observations: Alice observed that the majority of her students will be pursuing education in foreign countries, emphasising the importance of enhancing their understanding of different cultures in addition to their language proficiency. She stressed the importance of acknowledging cultural disparities and adjusting to unfamiliar cultural settings as crucial for their academic pursuits and well-being. Alice employs instructional resources that incorporate authentic situations involving international students, such as collaborative dialogues and aptitudes in leadership, which hold significance in Western education but are hardly addressed in China.

Summary: Both interviewees emphasise the crucial significance of improving students' cross-cultural awareness. They utilise comparative methodologies to facilitate students' comprehension and adjustment to diverse educational approaches and societal norms through the use of practical illustrations and simulations. This approach is consistent with Deardorff's (2006) definition of intercultural competence, which encompasses the capacity to comprehend, appreciate, and adjust to cultural disparities.

4.2. Involving Students in a Multicultural Classroom

Active engagement of students in the study of many cultures is essential for the development of intercultural competency.

Tina's observations: Tina prioritised engaging in conversations on cultural disparities in her instruction and elucidating the rationales behind specific customs, such as the cultivation of critical thinking skills. She has developed specialised courses to tackle cross-cultural disparities, instructing students not just in constructing arguments but also in incorporating their own perspectives and engaging in conversations.

Tina use role-playing exercises to replicate authentic scenarios that students may face while overseas, so augmenting their pragmatic intercultural competencies.

Alice's Observations: Alice fosters student engagement in thought-provoking subjects to facilitate discussions on cultural disparities. As a result of her online teaching method, she is unable to engage in face-to-face activities such as role-playing. However, she does facilitate talks between herself and the students. Alice chooses educational resources that incorporate authentic situations involving international students and use intercultural communication frameworks to facilitate students' comprehension and application of these frameworks.

Summary: Each teacher employs distinct approaches to actively include students in cross-cultural learning. Tina prioritises classroom discourse and exercises that encourage critical thinking, while Alice advocates for student involvement through the use of real-world situations and intercultural examples. According to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), these tactics are successful in improving students' comprehension and admiration of many cultures.

4.3. Addressing Obstacles in the Integration of Intercultural Competence

Incorporating intercultural competency into the curriculum poses numerous difficulties, especially in a test-focused educational system such as China's. Both Tina and Alice delineated particular obstacles and deliberated on their tactics to surmount them.

Tina's Observations:

Tina emphasised the necessity for students to possess cross-cultural understanding in order to thrive in future employment with foreign corporations. She observed that the Chinese education system prioritises exams and places teachers in positions of authority, while Western education systems are more inclusive and show respect towards students.

In response to this issue, Tina promotes autonomous cognition and offers pragmatic methodologies for students to comprehend and adjust to diverse cultural environments.

Alice's observations: Alice saw that certain students lack original ideas and rely on the teacher to supply answers, which reflects the dependence encouraged by the Chinese educational system. She tackles this issue by promoting student autonomy, guiding them to explore their own areas of interest, and equipping them with clear instructions and effective methodologies. Alice leverages her position as a teacher to motivate students to enhance their intercultural aptitude, given that Chinese students are more inclined to heed their teachers.

Summary: Both teachers recognised that student reliance on others and the emphasis on exams in the Chinese educational system are significant obstacles to incorporating intercultural competency. To tackle these issues, they promote autonomous thinking and offer pragmatic approaches, so adhering to the principles of effective intercultural education emphasised by Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017).

5. Conclusion

The pilot study demonstrates that well-designed educational strategies significantly improve intercultural competency in Chinese senior high school students. A comprehensive strategy incorporating cultural comparisons, exercises in intercultural competence, and hands-on participation enhances students' readiness for global settings. The findings offer valuable recommendations for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers to incorporate intercultural competency into secondary education, preparing students to succeed in a diverse society.

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