

Innovating English Language Teaching: Incorporating Cross-Cultural Communication in Project-Based Learning Curricula

Linna Yang

Global Language Center, Xi'an Eurasia University, Xi'an, Shaanxi 710065, China

ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization, English teaching has evolved beyond traditional language knowledge to emphasize cross-cultural communication skills, which is driven by the deep interdependence of language and culture. Recent years, project-based learning (PBL) has emerged as an effective approach to integrate cross-cultural communication into English teaching. Merging cross-cultural communication with project-based learning courses requires proper goal-setting, careful theme-selecting, suitable teaching methods-choosing. Beyond this, class activities, evaluations and staff preparation are critical in the forming of collaborative operation mode.

KEYWORDS

English teaching; cross-cultural communication; project-based learning; collaborative model

In the wave of globalization, English, as the core language of international communication, has always been a popular subject in teaching research. Traditional English teaching focuses on the imparting of language knowledge, which can no longer meet the current needs of multicultural communication. The integration of cross-cultural communication and project-based learning has opened up a new path for English teaching. Language and culture are deeply dependent, and the goal of English teaching has expanded to cross-cultural literacy, which affects all teaching links. Project-based learning can be integrated into cross-cultural communication, which requires unique design principles and collaborative operation modes.

1 Analysis of the intrinsic connection between cross-cultural communication and English teaching

1.1 Language and culture: deeply interwoven interdependence

Language carries the core connotation and values of culture intuitively and importantly. Relevant research shows that more than 80% of English vocabulary is full of cultural heritage. The Western "castle" is not only a building, but also symbolizes the power and territory of the feudal nobility, and plays a key role in the military and political aspects of medieval Europe.

The corresponding "mansion" in China embodies the family's honor and social status, reflecting the differences between the East and the West in power structure and social class concepts. From the perspective of language structure, the English subject-predicate-object sentence structure is rigorous, which fits the Western thinking of emphasizing logical deduction and clear order. Academic writing often relies on this structure; the Chinese semantic structure is flexible, emphasizing semantic coherence, highlighting the characteristics of the East that emphasizes overall perception and light formal logic. Ancient poetry creation is an example. This difference from vocabulary to structure highlights the interdependence and indivisibility of language and culture.

1.2 Cross-cultural communication: the key to reshaping English teaching goals

Under globalization, English has become the dominant language for international communication, and its teaching goals have changed accordingly. Today, more than 70% of international business and academic activities use English as a communication tool. English teaching is no longer limited to imparting language knowledge, but focuses more on cultivating comprehensive language application skills, with cross-cultural communication skills becoming the core^[1]. In international business negotiations, knowing the Japanese bowing etiquette, the greeting style of Arab countries, and the differences in negotiation styles between the straightforwardness of the United States and the implicitness of India is of great significance to avoiding cultural misunderstandings and breaking the deadlock in negotiations. Therefore, the goal of English teaching should be set around cross-cultural communication skills, cultivating students' keen perception of cultural differences, understanding and tolerance of multiculturalism, and the ability to use English expressions appropriately and effectively in a cross-cultural context, so as to achieve a leap from traditional language skills to cross-cultural literacy.

1.3 Cross-cultural communication: throughout the entire process of English teaching

The listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation links of English teaching are closely integrated with cross-cultural communication. In listening teaching, with the update of teaching concepts, listening materials have become more diverse, and there are more dialogues covering different accents and multicultural backgrounds. For example, BBC's reports on British social culture and people's livelihood can enable students to understand the actual application of English and enhance their perception of cultural differences. Oral teaching often sets up cross-cultural communication scenes, such as simulated United Nations conferences, where students can combine their understanding of different countries' cultures, use English to express their views and interact, and exercise their cross-cultural expression skills. When reading, students need to analyze the cultural background behind English literary works, newspapers and magazines, and the cultural factors reflected by the behavior of characters, so as to deepen their understanding of cultural connotations. When writing and translating, students should consider the cultural characteristics of the target language, avoid Chinese English, and ensure that they conform to English cultural habits^[2]. For example, when translating Chinese classical poetry, they should take into account the transmission of cultural images and the acceptance of English culture, so as to achieve the deep integration of cross-cultural communication in the whole teaching process.

1.4 Cross-cultural perspective: screening and integration of teaching resources

Cross-cultural communication has a profound impact on the selection and integration of English teaching resources. The selection of textbooks pays more attention to multiculturalism. In addition to Anglo-American culture, it also includes literary works and cultural introductions from Africa, India and other regions to broaden students' cultural horizons. In terms of online teaching resources, cross-cultural learning websites and multimedia materials have become important supplements. The TED speech platform covers content in multiple fields, allowing students to intuitively experience different cultural expressions and thinking. Teaching auxiliary materials, such as English films and television, no longer focus only on language learning, but also pay more attention to the presentation of cultural connotations. "Friends" shows American modern urban culture, and "Downton Abbey" presents British aristocratic culture. Students can experience different cultural atmospheres through immersive viewing, realize the optimization of teaching resources under the cross-cultural concept, and provide strong support for teaching.

2 Design principles for integrating cross-cultural communication into project-based learning courses

2.1 Project goal setting guided by cross-cultural literacy

The goal construction of project-based learning courses must place cross-cultural literacy at the core. In terms of knowledge, students are required to study in depth no less than 8 different cultural systems. For example, students should not only be familiar with the religious significance and traditional customs of Christmas and Easter in Western Christian culture, but also explore fasting etiquette during the Islamic month of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Through systematic learning, a stable and diverse cultural knowledge framework is built to enable students to thoroughly understand the rich connotations of culture. In terms of skill training, emphasis is placed on training students to be sensitive to cultural differences. For example, the meaning of body language varies greatly in different cultures. In Western culture, nodding usually means approval, while in some Asian cultures, nodding may simply mean listening. Students need to master these nuances, including verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as social etiquette norms, to ensure accurate expression in cross-cultural communication. In terms of communication strategies, students should be able to skillfully use at least 4 effective strategies, flexibly adjust the expression content, tone and body language according to different cultural contexts, reduce cultural misunderstandings, improve cross-cultural literacy in all aspects, and lead the advancement of project-based learning courses.

2.2 Selection and organization of project content for multicultural integration

The selection of project content should widely integrate global multiculturalism. The theme setting focuses on global issues. Taking world trade cooperation as an example, different countries have significant differences in trade negotiation style, business etiquette and decision-making models. By participating in such projects, students can understand trade activities from a broad cultural perspective. In terms of content arrangement, follow cognitive laws^[3]. In the initial stage, guide students to deeply analyze a single culture, such as exploring the origin and development of Japanese Bushido culture and its profound impact on Japanese society. As learning deepens, multicultural comparisons are carried out to compare the differences in the ways in which elders and younger generations get along with each other in family culture and the distribution of family responsibilities in China, South Korea, and Japan, so as to encourage students to see

through the phenomenon and gain insight into the deep roots behind cultural diversity, achieve the organic integration and level improvement of project content, and help improve students' cross-cultural understanding ability.

2.3 Application of teaching methods based on cross-cultural situations

The teaching process is committed to creating a real and tangible cross-cultural situation. With the help of modern multimedia technology, by playing the debate video of the United Nations conference, students can observe the differences in speaking styles and diplomatic rhetoric used by representatives of different countries, or the negotiation strategies and body language of all parties in cross-border business negotiations. By watching these real scenes, students' perceptual cognition of cultural differences is enhanced. The group collaborative learning model is extremely critical. A learning group with diverse backgrounds is formed to arrange complex cross-cultural project tasks, such as planning a global virtual cultural exhibition. Team members need to complete the exhibition theme planning, exhibit selection and introduction, exhibition process design, etc. based on their respective understanding of different cultures, and effectively exercise cross-cultural communication and coordination capabilities in collaboration. Role-playing is also indispensable. By setting up a variety of cultural roles, students can simulate cross-cultural dialogues, such as the scene of tourists from different countries communicating at tourist attractions, flexibly apply cross-cultural knowledge and communication skills in practice, improve their practical ability to deal with real cross-cultural situations, and make the teaching method closely fit the core goal of integrating cross-cultural communication into project-based learning courses.

2.4 Cross-cultural emotional attitude shaping

Focus on cultivating students' positive and open emotional attitudes towards multiculturalism. Through classroom discussions, guide students to explore the unique artistic expressions in different cultures, such as traditional dances of African tribes and Bollywood movies in India, so that students can feel the charm of various cultures. Organize cultural experience activities, such as holding international food festivals, where students personally make and taste special foods from different countries, understand the cultural stories behind the food, and stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in cross-cultural communication. Encourage students to abandon cultural prejudices and stereotypes, accept cultural differences with an inclusive attitude, actively explore the commonalities and individuality between different cultures, cultivate a global perspective and cross-cultural empathy, lay a solid emotional foundation for cross-cultural communication, and encourage students to more actively integrate cross-cultural elements into project-based learning.

3 The collaborative operation mode of cross-cultural communication-driven project-based learning in English teaching

3.1 Integration of cross-cultural communication and project-based learning goals

In the framework of English teaching, the key is to achieve the deep integration of cross-cultural communication goals and project-based learning goals. From the perspective of knowledge goals, students need to systematically master the core elements of no less than 10 English-speaking countries' cultural systems. This not only covers the profound historical and cultural origins behind traditional festivals such as American Thanksgiving and British Christmas, but also involves the unique social customs and values of each country. For example, in-depth exploration of elements such as totem worship and traditional dance rituals in Australian Aboriginal culture can build a systematic and comprehensive cross-cultural knowledge system. At the skill goal level, focus on cultivating students' ability to accurately identify and interpret cultural differences. This includes the language level, such as distinguishing the completely different connotations of English words in different cultural contexts, such as the difference in the numerical value represented by "billion" in British English and American English; and the non-language level, such as understanding the subtle differences in the use of body language and spatial distance in different cultures, such as the relatively close physical distance when people communicate in Latin culture, while maintaining a longer distance in Nordic culture^[4]. Students are required to be able to skillfully analyze at least 5 groups of typical cases of language and non-language differences in cross-cultural communication, so as to be sensitive to and effectively respond to various cultural differences in the cross-cultural context, promote the coordinated development of cross-cultural communication and project-based learning in the target dimension, and lay a solid foundation for subsequent learning.

3.2 Project-based course content design based on cross-cultural communication

The design of course content should be closely centered on cross-cultural communication. The selection of topics focuses on topics that are at the forefront of the world and rich in profound cultural connotations. Taking global

sustainable energy development as an example, different countries have significant differences in energy policy formulation, energy development and utilization methods based on their own cultural background, resource conditions and development concepts. By participating in such projects, students can deeply understand the problems in this field from a broad cross-cultural perspective. In terms of content arrangement, the principle of gradual progress and from single to multiple is followed. In the initial stage, guide students to delve deeply into a specific cultural field, such as in-depth analysis of Japanese tea ceremony culture, not only to understand every detail of its ritual process, but also to understand the spiritual connotation of "harmony, respect, purity and tranquility" contained therein. As the learning process progresses, multicultural comparisons are carried out, such as comparing the similarities and differences in agenda setting, decision-making methods, and social etiquette norms in business conference organization between the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, so as to encourage students to deeply understand cultural diversity in comparative analysis, so that the course content can be organically integrated and hierarchically improved under the drive of cross-cultural communication, and help students deepen their understanding and cognition of multiculturalism.

3.3 Organization of project-based teaching activities oriented towards cross-cultural communication

The organization of teaching activities must be oriented towards cross-cultural communication. Make full use of multimedia resources and play videos of real scenes such as international academic exchange conferences and cross-border cultural exchange activities for students. For example, by watching the performances of speakers from different countries at the TED Global Speech Conference, students can intuitively observe their differences in language expression style, body language use, and time control, and enhance their perceptual understanding of cultural differences. Students should watch such videos for no less than 15 hours each semester. The group cooperative learning model is crucial in this process. Form a learning group with a multicultural background and arrange complex and challenging cross-cultural project tasks, such as planning a simulated international cultural exchange week. Team members need to comprehensively consider the cultural characteristics of different countries, complete a series of tasks such as determining the theme of the activity, arranging the program, and arranging the venue, and effectively improve cross-cultural communication and teamwork capabilities in the process of collaboration. Role-playing activities are also indispensable. Set up a variety of cross-cultural communication scenarios, such as simulating the scenes of business people from different countries in international business negotiations^[5]. Students play different cultural roles to communicate and dialogue, and flexibly apply the cross-cultural knowledge and communication skills they have learned in practice. Participate in role-playing activities at least 8 times per semester to fully train students' coping ability in real cross-cultural situations and ensure that teaching activities are closely aligned with the needs of cross-cultural communication.

3.4 Construction of project-based learning teaching evaluation of cross-cultural communication effectiveness

The construction of the teaching evaluation system should focus on the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. At the knowledge assessment level, the designed test paper should comprehensively cover the details of different cultural knowledge, analysis of cultural differences, etc., in order to examine students' mastery of cross-cultural knowledge, of which cross-cultural knowledge-related questions account for no less than 60% of the test paper. In terms of skill evaluation, by carefully observing students' actual performance in simulated cross-cultural communication activities and group project collaboration, their skill levels such as cultural difference identification and communication strategy application are evaluated. Detailed and scientific scoring rules are formulated to score from multiple dimensions such as the accuracy and appropriateness of language expression, the rationality of non-verbal behavior, and the ability to deal with cultural differences. Process evaluation should also not be ignored, focusing on students' participation in the project-based learning process and their contribution to teamwork, such as recording the frequency of students' speeches in group discussions and the number of innovative cross-cultural insights proposed. Comprehensively combining multi-dimensional evaluation results, comprehensively and accurately measure the implementation effectiveness of project-based learning in English teaching driven by cross-cultural communication, and provide a strong basis for the continuous improvement of teaching.

3.5 Construction of a teaching staff for cross-cultural communication ability training

The teaching staff is an important guarantee for the effective implementation of cross-cultural communication-driven project-based learning in English teaching. Teachers need to have a solid foundation in English language skills and a rich reserve of cross-cultural knowledge. Schools should regularly organize teachers to participate in cross-cultural education training courses and invite experts and scholars in the field of cross-cultural research to give lectures and training,

covering in-depth interpretations of different cultural systems, cross-cultural communication theories and practical applications, etc. Teachers are encouraged to participate in international academic exchange activities, communicate and cooperate with foreign counterparts, broaden their international horizons, and understand international cutting-edge teaching concepts and methods. Teachers themselves should also continuously improve their cross-cultural teaching ability, and be able to skillfully integrate cross-cultural communication elements into project-based learning activities in classroom teaching, and provide professional guidance and guidance for students. At the same time, teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of their own cross-cultural awareness, set an example, treat diverse cultures with an open and inclusive attitude, create a positive cross-cultural learning atmosphere for students, and promote the comprehensive improvement of students' cross-cultural communication ability.

4 Conclusion

The English teaching model that integrates cross-cultural communication into project-based learning breaks the limitations of traditional teaching. By closely linking language and culture, following specific design principles, and building a collaborative operation model, new vitality is injected into English teaching. In the future, continuing to explore this innovative path will further enhance students' cross-cultural literacy and comprehensive English application ability, and promote English teaching to a new height.

About the Author

Linna Yang (October 1994), female, Han ethnicity, native of Xi'an, Shaanxi, China. Education: Master's degree. Title: Teaching Assistant. Research fields: English teaching, project-based learning, cross-cultural communication, and applied linguistics.

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