

Research on Strategies for Unipus to Promote Students' Intercultural Competence under the Production-Oriented Approach

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of educational opening-up and the growing demand for cross-cultural talent, this paper adopts Production-Oriented Approach (POA) and leverages Unipus to explore how college English teaching can integrate instrumental and humanistic aspects, thereby enhancing students' intercultural competence. The study identifies current issues in intercultural teaching via U-Campus and proposes specific strategies, offering practical insights for reforming college English teaching and cultivating cross-cultural talent.

KEYWORDS

Unipus; Intercultural competence; Production-oriented approach

1 Introduction

With the deepening strategy of "Going Global" and increasingly frequent global cross-cultural exchanges, there is an urgent demand for interdisciplinary talents who possess integrated language skills, cross-cultural competence, and professional expertise. The Ministry of Education in the "Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding Education Opening-up in the New Era" emphasized the need to incorporate cross-cultural education into talent development programs and enhance students' cross-cultural awareness and communicative abilities through teaching reforms ^[1]. As a core component of general education in higher education, college English bears the dual responsibility of language training and cross-cultural education. However, the traditional teaching model often prioritizes knowledge acquisition over competency and emphasizes instrumental language skills at the expense of humanistic cultural understanding, making it difficult to meet the talent development requirements of the new era.

The Production-oriented Approach (POA), as a localized foreign language teaching theory, facilitates students' active production through its "objective-teaching-evaluation" closed-loop design ^[2], while the Unipus smart teaching platform provides technical support for instruction via its digital functions. However, existing research remains insufficient in exploring how the two can synergistically promote the development of cross-cultural competence. Therefore, this study aims to systematically analyze the integration path of POA and the Unipus platform to construct effective teaching strategies for enhancing students' cross-cultural literacy and improving the quality of college English teaching.

2 The significance of POA and unipus in fostering students' cross-cultural competence

This study extends the application of POA to cross-cultural competence development, while the Unipus platform provides crucial support for implementing this teaching model. In practice, the research addresses key challenges in cross-cultural education. For students, the platform's blended learning environment facilitates the transformation of cultural knowledge into practical communication skills; for educators, it offers a "POA plus digital platform" teaching framework that overcomes limitations in resources, interaction, and assessment inherent in traditional instruction.

Moreover, the complete practice process, from diagnosis to evaluation and the specific strategies developed in this study possess strong potential for replication. They can serve as a reference for teaching reforms in similar institutions and provide evidence for educational policy-making and platform optimization, thereby contributing to the scalable and high-quality development of cross-cultural talent cultivation.

3 The current problems in cultivating international foreign language talents

Despite the theoretical advantages of combining the Production-oriented Approach with the Unipus, several prominent issues persist in its practical application.

3.1 Lack of integration of cross-cultural competence in production-oriented

Objective System

Although the Production-oriented Approach has been partially introduced in college English teaching, instruction remains predominantly focused on linguistic knowledge as the core objective, failing to break down cross-cultural competence into measurable output indicators. While the Unipus platform includes relevant intercultural resources, teachers have not utilized the “knowledge-ability-literacy” framework to categorize cross-cultural competence into specific dimensions such as cultural cognition, understanding, application, and reflection^[3]. Furthermore, the design of teaching objectives does not incorporate discipline-specific characteristics to create targeted output tasks, resulting in a disconnection between cross-cultural instruction and students’ actual needs, which fails to stimulate their learning motivation.

3.2 Failure to turn technological advantages into cross-cultural teaching

Effectiveness

Although Unipus is equipped with functions such as scenario simulation, interactive collaboration, and data tracking, its application in cross-cultural teaching remains largely at a superficial level of resource distribution^[4]. Instructors primarily use the platform to distribute cultural reading materials and assign exercises without employing its virtual simulation function to create cross-cultural communication scenarios (e.g., study abroad experiences, international business negotiation settings), or hardly leverage the group collaboration to facilitate cross-cultural thematic discussions or project-based learning. Consequently, the platform’s advantages in interactivity and experiential learning remain untapped.

Besides, resource integration is fragmented. The cultural resources on Unipus mostly consist of scattered articles and videos. Teachers have not adopted the production-oriented, task-driven approach to organize these resources into thematic packages, such as cross-cultural conflict resolution or promoting Chinese culture globally, resulting in a lack of systematic learning for students and hindering the formation of a comprehensive knowledge framework of cross-cultural understanding^[5].

Moreover, there is a notable lack of data application. While the platform can track real-time student data such as learning duration and participation, teachers fail to analyze this information to identify specific weaknesses in students’ cross-cultural learning. This inability to implement precision teaching significantly reduces the targeted effectiveness of cross-cultural instruction.

3.3 The gap between online and offline learning in forming a closed loop

Current cross-cultural teaching utilizing the Unipus platform continues to face the disconnection between online and offline instruction and a separation of theory from practice^[6]. Specifically, the online learning component are lack of inadequate guidance. After posting cross-cultural learning tasks, instructors often fail to provide structured pre-class guidance, such as clarifying key cultural knowledge points and posing critical thinking questions, nor do they offer timely responses to students’ questions during the cultural learning process. This results in a predominantly passive browsing mode of online engagement, preventing students from developing a deeper understanding of cultural connotations.

Meanwhile, the offline instruction lacks production-oriented interactive design. Teaching remains predominantly focused on one-way knowledge transmission about cultural content, without incorporating output-driven activities such as cross-cultural scenario simulations or cultural case debates. Consequently, students are unable to effectively transform the cultural knowledge acquired online into practical communicative competence.

These deficiencies in both online and offline phases ultimately prevent the formation of a coherent and effective “online preparation - offline production - online extension” closed loop in cross-cultural teaching.

3.4 Deficiencies in the evaluation of cross-cultural competence

Current cross-cultural teaching evaluation exhibits significant limitations, including overemphasis on product over process and preference for quantitative over qualitative measures^[7]. The evaluation content focuses primarily on cultural knowledge tests and exercise accuracy while neglecting crucial dimensions such as performance in cross-cultural scenarios, cultural project outcomes, and collaborative contributions, thus failing to provide comprehensive assessment of students’ cross-cultural competence. Furthermore, evaluation methods lack diversity. Despite utilizing Unipus automated assessment, the system fails to incorporate multiple perspectives through teacher evaluation, self-assessment, and peer evaluation, nor does it track students’ learning processes through platform data, resulting in compromised objectivity. Additionally, feedback is consistently delayed, with instructors providing only summative assessments at the end of the semester without using Unipus to offer timely feedback on specific learning challenges, thereby hindering students’ ability to adjust strategies and impeding continuous development of cross-cultural competence.

4 Strategies for promoting students' cross-cultural competence through POA and unipus

To effectively address the current challenges in cross-cultural teaching, it is imperative to develop strategies that integrate the theoretical framework POA with the technological advantages of Unipus. These approaches will help form an interconnected teaching improvement pathway aimed at comprehensively enhancing students' overall cross-cultural competence.

4.1 Establish an output-centred cross-cultural competence framework

Guided by the "whole-person education" philosophy of the Production-oriented Approach and leveraging the resource and functional advantages of Unipus platform, a teaching objective system for cross-cultural education based on "knowledge, ability, and literacy" should be reconstructed.

In terms of knowledge objectives, instructors should utilize the Cultural Resource Database on the platform and guide students to have a better understanding of cultural symbols, values, and cross-cultural communication principles. The resources such as knowledge point check-ins and online quizzes can be employed to ensure students master this essential cultural knowledge^[8].

Regarding ability objectives, cross-cultural competence should be broken down into four key output indicators: cultural cognitive ability, cultural expressive ability, cultural collaborative ability, and cultural reflective ability. Differentiated tasks aligned with students' academic majors must be designed, for instance, creating international patient communication simulation tasks for medical majors or Sino-foreign artistic culture comparison presentation tasks for art majors.

For literacy objectives, the platform should be used to assign thematic tasks such as Promoting Chinese Culture to the World (e.g., creating short English-language cultural videos). These tasks aim to cultivate students' cultural confidence and international perspective, explicitly integrating literacy requirements like patriotic sentiment and inclusive mindset into the output objectives, thereby achieving the synergistic enhancement of language skills and humanistic qualities.

4.2 Construct a three-dimensional blended teaching system of online-offline

Practice

Centred on the task-driven approach of POA and supported by Unipus, a closed loop for cross-cultural teaching is established, comprising online pre-class preparation, offline in-class production, and post-class practical extension [7]. In the pre-class phase, instructors distribute cross-cultural thematic task packages through the platform, which include study guides, cultural resources, and discussion tasks, helping students build a foundation of cultural knowledge. During in-class sessions, the online virtual simulation features are utilized to create authentic cross-cultural scenarios, facilitating output activities such as scenario simulations and case debates, while group collaboration functions enable the completion of cross-cultural project proposals, promoting the transformation of knowledge into practical skills. In the post-class phase, various practical tasks and platform-based output encourage students to extend their cross-cultural competence from the classroom to real-life contexts, thereby completing the learning cycle.

4.3 Develop a process-oriented evaluation system for cross-cultural

Competence Based on Platform Data

Guided by the concept of developmental evaluation and utilizing the data tracking function of Unipus, a multiple evaluation mechanism integrating quantitative and qualitative methods with equal emphasis on process and outcome is established. Regarding evaluation content, cross-cultural competence is divided into process indicators (e.g., learning duration, interaction participation) and outcome indicators (e.g., scenario simulation performance, reflection report quality), with detailed scoring criteria developed accordingly^[9]. In terms of evaluation methods, an integrated approach combining intelligent and human evaluation is adopted: the platform's automated assessment measures knowledge acquisition, while instructor evaluation focuses on practical performance, supplemented by student self-assessment and peer evaluation to ensure comprehensiveness. Furthermore, instructors regularly generate learning reports through the platform, provide timely feedback on specific issues, and adjust teaching strategies based on data analysis, forming a virtuous cycle of evaluation-feedback-improvement.

4.4 Enhance faculty development by building an interdisciplinary team

As a key factor in promoting cross-cultural teaching reform, educators should develop into interdisciplinary teaching professionals equipped with production-oriented teaching competence, cross-cultural literacy, and platform application skills through an integrated approach combining training, practice, and research.

Specifically, systematic training should be conducted by inviting POA theorists, platform technologists, and cross-cultural education specialists to deliver specialized sessions on theoretical integration and technological application, thereby enhancing instructors' comprehensive teaching capabilities. Furthermore, teaching practice innovation should be promoted through establishing cross-cultural teaching research groups that conduct collective lesson preparation and case design via the Unipus platform, refining instructional design through a continuous cycle of practice, feedback and optimization. Finally, diversified development platforms should be established by encouraging participation in academic exchange activities, sharing teaching experiences through platform communities, and deepening theory-practice integration via pedagogical research projects, forming a virtuous cycle of mutual enhancement between teaching and research^[10].

5 Conclusion

With deepening integration of globalization and educational informatization, it is imperative to reform college English cross-cultural teaching. Based on the theoretical framework of the Production-oriented Approach and leveraging the technological advantages of the Unipus, this study has constructed a model for cross-cultural education that combines theoretical guidance, technological empowerment, and practice-driven approaches.

It should be noted that the cultivation of cross-cultural competence is characterized by long-term and systematic development. Future research should further expand the scope of practice, explore differentiated implementation strategies for cross-cultural teaching across various disciplinary contexts, while closely monitoring advancements in new technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to continuously optimize the functional application of smart teaching platforms. Additionally, efforts should be strengthened in university-enterprise cooperation and international exchanges to build broader cross-cultural practice platforms. Ultimately, these initiatives aim to achieve the organic unity of knowledge transmission, competency cultivation, and value guidance, providing robust support for nurturing international talents in the new era.

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