

Practice and Reform of English Intercultural Communicative Competence in Universities in Yunnan under the Training Pattern of Application-oriented Talents

Yang Ping¹, Qian Shi², Zheng Min¹

¹School of Foreign Language, Kunming University, Kunming, Yunnan, 650214, China

²School of Fine Art and Design, Kunming University, Kunming, Yunnan, 650214, China

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Abstract: Intercultural communicative competence has not been given enough attention in universities in Yunnan. This paper reviews the research of intercultural communicative competence at home and abroad, analyses the necessity of its research and the problems existing in the traditional teaching pattern of intercultural communicative competence in universities in Yunnan. The author puts forward the training pattern of application-oriented talents, aiming at changing the prevalent problems which emphasize language and theory over culture and practice, and cultivating high-qualified intercultural communicative talents who can meet the needs of economic and social development.

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the knowledge, motivation, and skills needed to work properly and effectively with members from other cultures (Wiseman, 2003). It is a relatively new concept. The true globalization of the world, however, lasts only a few decades, this new concept has not yet formed a relatively mature training and evaluation system, and its evaluation method is not perfect. Domestic and overseas scholars have proposed many models for the components of intercultural communication competence. Although scholars still have different views on the specific connotation and constituent elements of intercultural communication competence, however, it is generally believed that intercultural communicative competence includes two major systems, namely knowledge and skills, and theory and practice.

2. Practice and application of intercultural communicative competence

2.1. International studies on intercultural communicative competence

There are many studies on intercultural communication abroad. Many scholars have studied intercultural communicative competence from different perspectives, and the results are quite rich. Most of them are the evaluation of intercultural communicative competence, the scale and test of intercultural communicative competence. For example, Ruben used testing methods to evaluate and predict intercultural communicative competence, Bennett proposed several stages of cultural sensitivity development in his DMIS model and Searle & Ward applied SCAS scale to the study of adaptability of the students from Malaysian and Singapore. The BASIC scale and Blum-kulka were designed to examine the listening and speaking abilities of the subjects with occupational characteristics. The DCT test was mainly used to examine the pragmatic abilities of the subjects. Despite the fact that there are many valuable references for people in the overseas studies of the definition and model of intercultural communicative competence, however, these studies can only provide a theoretical framework, and can not solve the practical problems in the communication between Chinese culture and other cultures, nor can they solve the problems in the assessment of Chinese English learners' intercultural communicative competence.

2.2. Domestic studies on intercultural communicative competence

The research on intercultural communicative competence in China started relatively late, but it developed rapidly and achieved remarkable results. More than 30 monographs have been published, and more than 2000 papers and articles have been published. Although most of the studies are aimed at Chinese EFL learners, the focus of the studies is different. Some focus on social and cultural competence, such as Wang Zhengya and Zhong Hua, while others focus on pragmatic competence, such as Liu Jianda. Generally speaking, these studies or tests are concerned about one or several aspects of intercultural communicative competence. They do not comprehensively test intercultural communicative competence, nor do they conduct in-depth research on the model of intercultural communicative competence. Although there are many articles on intercultural communicative competence, few of them are on the evaluation of intercultural communicative competence, and most of the studies on intercultural communication in China adopt the approach of “some point of view or theory + some examples + conclusions”, which has the characteristics of randomness. In addition, the research and development of intercultural communicative competence test or scale in China is still in its infancy.

In the whole foreign language education system in China, the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence has not been paid enough attention. It was not until 2015 that the Foreign Language Teaching Guiding Committee of Ministry of Education made a great adjustment to the curriculum structure and content in the College English Teaching Guidelines and divided the curriculum into three parts: General English, ESP and Cross-cultural Communication. This is the first time that intercultural communication has been taken as one of the contents of College English teaching in China.

2.3. Yunnan's research on intercultural communicative competence

Yunnan is located in the western border and the education is relatively backward. The opportunities of contacting with the outside world are relatively small, so the intercultural communicative competence has not received enough attention. Among the available data, universities in Yunnan pay more attention to the accumulation of cross-cultural knowledge, the study of examination-taking skills and strategies, and the study of the evaluation, practice and application of cross-cultural communication competence is relatively less. It is very necessary and promising to promote the improvement of related capabilities.

3. The necessity of research on intercultural communicative competence in Universities in Yunnan

3.1. The transformation of talent training mode from academic talented person to application-oriented talents

As far as the reality of Yunnan province is concerned, under the strategy of “one belt and one way”, Yunnan urgently needs to train a large number of high-quality foreign language talents who can adapt to the needs of economic and social development. However, at present, the main task of English teaching in universities in Yunnan is to train academic talented person with high marks but poor competence. Although they have strong basic knowledge of language, they lack the necessary skills and practice, so it is difficult for them to adapt to the actual needs of society. In response to the above needs, in recent years, a number of universities in Yunnan have made great efforts to transform into application-oriented universities. At this time, the teaching reform of application-oriented talents training mode is imperative. Applied talent refers to a specialized skill-based talent who can apply professional knowledge and skills to professional social practice. Exploring the transformation of talent training from academic mode to application-oriented mode is helpful to actively adapt to and serve the economic and social development of Yunnan and the layout of regional industries.

3.2. The cultivation of English intercultural communicative competence

The transformation to application-oriented universities has become the established direction of many universities in Yunnan, but what is the specific content? What are the methods and paths of implementation? They still need to be explored and enriched. Therefore, the research on the practice and teaching reform of English intercultural communicative competence in universities in Yunnan under the application-oriented talent training mode will greatly help to accelerate the development of the concept of intercultural communicative education and promote the substantial improvement of foreign language competence in universities in Yunnan. The reform of transformation to application-oriented universities has great academic significance and practical application value.

3.3. The cultivation of cross-cultural communication talents

Under the strategic background of “one belt and one way”, Yunnan needs a large number of high-quality foreign language talents who can meet the needs of economic and social development and have intercultural communicative competence. Under this situation, the practice and application of English intercultural communicative competence in universities in Yunnan under the training mode of applied talents will be helpful to promote the reform of traditional teaching methods in universities in Yunnan, which emphasize knowledge and theory in the teaching mode and neglect practice and application, and greatly improve the efficiency of foreign language teaching in universities. The efficiency of training high-quality talents with intercultural communicative competence has broad practical application prospects and expanding prospect. The exploration and research of this teaching reform has great academic value and obvious practical significance.

4. Problems in the Teaching of English Intercultural Communicative Competence in Universities in Yunnan

In the traditional educational framework, emphasis is placed on language rather than on culture, on theory rather than on practice, which leads to the neglect of the practice and application of intercultural communicative competence.

4.1. The influence of instructional design.

In the whole foreign language educational system in China, intercultural communication teaching has not been paid enough attention. It was not until 2015 in China that intercultural communication is formally regarded as one of the learning content in college English teaching for the first time .

4.2. The influence of examination-oriented system.

The current examination-oriented system is not very reasonable, which can not fully reflect the students' ability to use the language in practice, nor can it reflect the cultivation of the awareness of cultural differences between China and the West. These tests mainly focus on the basic knowledge of language and pay little attention to culture. Under this examination-oriented system, universities in Yunnan are busy with various language tests, such as CET-4 and CET-6, HSK and so on. Examination results have become a hard indicator to evaluate the quality of foreign language teaching in universities. In order to enable more students to pass the exams, the teachers focus on the cultivation of language knowledge and competence, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, pragmatic competence and discourse competence. Therefore, little time has been spent on the practice and application of intercultural communication.

4.3. The influence of traditional teaching mode.

Under the traditional teaching mode, the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence mainly depends on classroom teaching. Limited classroom time is mainly used to impart knowledge and theory of intercultural communication. There are few opportunities for classroom interaction, discussion and group cooperation. Practice teaching does not account for a large proportion of curriculum settings. Students lack sufficient time and opportunities to apply their knowledge and

theory of intercultural communication into practice.

4.4. The influence of regional cultural and geographical factors.

Yunnan is located in the western frontier, and has relatively few opportunities to contact with the outside world, especially foreigners. The purpose of learning foreign languages is mainly for the needs of examinations, thus forming the current situation that cross-cultural communication teaching emphasizes the inculcation of examination-oriented skills and neglects the practical application of language.

5. Strategies for the reform and practice of English intercultural communication teaching in Universities in Yunnan

5.1. Improve the teaching design and adjust the teaching process.

Teachers ask students to take advantage of the convenience brought by modern information technology to learn cross-cultural knowledge in the form of video and other media before class, and use the teaching time to answer questions, do experiments, discuss and do project training and teamwork to complete tasks. Adjusting the teaching process (pre-class learning and classroom exercises) can make up for the shortcomings of the traditional English intercultural communicative competence training in universities in Yunnan, such as insufficient classroom interaction time, weak language output ability and communicative ability.

5.2. Diversification of teaching resources.

In addition to the conventional teaching materials, teachers should supplement new form of teaching resources centered on multimedia and micro-video according to the students' actual English proficiency (the material should be as authentic and representative as possible) and make full use of and tap the existing network teaching resources as a useful supplement to students' learning. This can improve the efficiency of teaching, help students to further expand their cultural knowledge and make up for their "cultural deficiency" problem so as to promote the smooth development of their intercultural communication competence.

5.3. The curriculum system, curriculum standards, teaching content and teaching evaluation system should be linked with the cultivation of students' professional ability.

Emphasis should be placed on the study of economic and social changes, the needs of students' employment, the combination of theory and practice, and the needs for elective and compulsory courses which are practical. In the process of teaching, teachers actively and comprehensively apply participatory, discussion and interactive teaching methods, and always maintain the combination of teaching content and practice. In addition, the teaching evaluation system should include not only written examination, oral examination and homework, but also classroom discussion, group cooperation and practical training.

5.4. Create a cross-cultural environment and strengthen the practice and application of cross-cultural communication competence.

In the teaching of intercultural communication, attention should be paid to the construction of communication environment and the design of diverse teaching activities.

Universities should emphasize practice and application, encourage qualified students to study abroad, strengthen contacts and exchanges between students and foreign teachers and students, increase contacts with foreigners, and strengthen and even expand intercultural communication activities within and among schools. Students are encouraged to participate in foreign language activities at school level, provincial level and national level. Universities should also increase the proportion of internship, hold internship seminars, exchange internship experience, actively build in-school practice platforms, off-campus practice bases and platforms, as well as the platforms of production-study-research cooperation, so that graduates can quickly adapt to employment.

5.5. Improving the teaching mode, coordinating the language knowledge learning, cultural learning and its practice and application of intercultural communicative competence.

If the universities in Yunnan can combine the knowledge learning, cultural learning and the practice and application of intercultural communicative competence, it will help students realize the transformation from academic talents to application-oriented talents.

6. Summary

By reforming the traditional teaching of English intercultural communicative competence in universities in Yunnan, people can achieve the goal of transforming students from academic talents to application-oriented talents on the basis of strengthening the practice and application of intercultural communicative competence. It is hoped that this essay can provide reference for improving the efficiency of intercultural communication teaching in universities in Yunnan, and provide reference for cultivating talents with high intercultural communicative competence needed for economic and social development of Yunnan.

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