

# Application of Blended Teaching in English Cross-Cultural Classrooms

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**Abstract:** Blended teaching combines the self-study mode of the Internet with the offline classroom to offer a new way of doing English cross-cultural teaching. At present, there are many restrictions on the integration of resources, forms of interaction, and assessment systems in English cross-cultural classrooms, so it is difficult to fully achieve the practical effect of cultivating cross-cultural competence. According to the values embedded in blended teaching, this paper will identify the actual problems of English cross-cultural classroom teaching and put forward three stages of optimization paths for the construction of resource banks, interactive scenario creation, and evaluation mechanisms, etc., to provide a reference for reforming English cross-cultural classroom teaching.

**Keywords:** Blended teaching; Cross-cultural teaching; English classroom; Teaching strategies

**Online publication:** August 13, 2026

## 1. Introduction

The two goals of English classes are to train students' language skills and cultivate their sense of cross-cultural awareness; thus, the quality of English teaching has begun to be evaluated based on cross-cultural communication ability. The popularization of information technology has provided conditions for the transformation of teaching methods, and blended teaching has broken through the limitations of traditional classrooms in terms of time, space, and resources; thus, the inheritance of cross-cultural knowledge is no longer restricted by the length of a forty-five-minute class. Based on English teaching practice, it has been found that blended teaching still has many practical problems in terms of cross-cultural content presentation, organization of classroom interaction, and learning outcome evaluation, which urgently need to be systematically sorted out and improved. Based on the analysis of relevant literature and reflection on teaching practice, this paper aims to put forward some practical and feasible optimization suggestions for addressing the above problems in frontline English teaching of cross-cultural education.

## **2. Value implications of blended teaching in English cross-cultural classrooms**

### **2.1. Increase the path for collecting cross-cultural knowledge by solving the issue of only having one classroom**

Due to the fixed selection of textbooks and limited class time, traditional English classes have mainly presented cross-cultural knowledge in the form of simple vocabulary annotations and brief introductions to cultural backgrounds; therefore, students cannot form an organized and three-dimensional sense of culture. Blended teaching can take advantage of platforms for online learning, digital resource banks, and mobile terminals to extend the space of cross-cultural study beyond the classroom and enable students to access more foreign cultural materials outside of class freely, such as customs and etiquette, historical origins, social habits, etc. When the boundaries of time and space are broken, students will be able to acquire cross-cultural knowledge without being restricted by the speed of the teacher's explanation or the length of the textbook; according to their own interests and level of understanding, they can select a specific cultural topic for in-depth study and form a personalized cognitive path. Therefore, the classroom instruction section will no longer be solely about the transmission of knowledge but will focus on clarifying key points and difficulties and the collision of ideas to enhance both the overall teaching efficiency and the depth of cultural literacy, thus creating more space for the cultivation of cross-cultural literacy <sup>[1]</sup>.

### **2.2. Integration of online and offline resources: Expanding the forms of cross-cultural teaching materials**

The effectiveness of cross-cultural teaching is determined to a large extent by how rich and attractive the materials themselves are; if it is only text descriptions, students will be unable to experience the concrete expressions of foreign cultures. Blended teaching will use various forms to present cross-cultural teaching materials, such as online audio-visual materials, virtual scenarios, and multimedia courseware; at the same time, offline physical displays, situation re-enactments, and teacher-student discussions will also be applied. Online resources can directly show authentic scenes of foreign festivals, daily life, and language exchange to address the lack of sensory experience in the classroom; at the same time, the offline part is guided by teachers and peer interaction to have students organize, compare, and analyze the cultural information obtained online, thus integrating it into their own knowledge structure <sup>[2]</sup>. The two types of resources are in harmony and support each other to make the abstract ideas of culture tangible and easier to comprehend. Students' understanding of foreign cultures increases at the level of symbols and also reaches the level of values and ways of thinking; thus, the educational function of cross-cultural teaching materials is fully realized <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.3. Motivate students to study on their own and improve their cross-cultural communication skills**

The development of cross-cultural communicative competence is not only achieved through passive practice of language and cultural experience by students but also by using language to recognize differences and resolve misunderstandings in real life <sup>[4]</sup>. Blended teaching gives students more time for independent study, so they can set their own study plans and repeatedly apply communicative strategies in various ways, such as role-playing, situation simulation, and cross-cultural case studies, to test and improve their own understanding of foreign cultures through practice. Self-study is also a way for students to develop cross-cultural sensitivity; through repeated attempts and reflections, they learn to view problems from various

cultures, become aware of cultural differences in communication, and respond appropriately to such differences<sup>[5]</sup>. The classroom section can focus on the communication problems that occur during students' independent study, provide concentrated practice and teacher feedback to help solve these problems, so that the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence is based on practical language application and cultural practice, and does not stop at learning theoretical knowledge<sup>[6]</sup>.

### **3. Current application status of blended teaching in English cross-cultural classrooms**

#### **3.1. Lack of integration between online and offline resources, fragmentation of cross-cultural content**

Many English classes have introduced online teaching platforms, but there is a lack of unified planning and connections between the online resources and the offline classroom. There is no connection between the cultural materials teachers present before class and the focus areas of classroom teaching; after students have reviewed the online materials, classroom instruction does not link to or expand upon this content, and thus cross-cultural knowledge remains at the level of superficial information accumulation and cannot form a systematic system of cultural understanding<sup>[7]</sup>. The selected materials by some teachers are random; there is no in-depth, continuous research, nor do they offer the same cultural topic from multiple perspectives, which results in disconnected cross-cultural content for students and cannot create a connection among various pieces of knowledge. Currently, there is a problem of fragmented resource integration; thus, the advantages of time and space expansion in blended teaching cannot be fully utilized to promote in-depth cross-cultural understanding, and students' awareness of foreign cultures is at a superficial level, failing to achieve the aim of systematic cultivation of cross-cultural literacy<sup>[8]</sup>.

#### **3.2. Monotonous forms of classroom interaction and a lack of cross-cultural scenario construction**

The classroom part of blended teaching should be used to help students practice cross-cultural knowledge through language application, but most of the classroom interaction is still in the traditional model of teachers asking questions and students answering, and there is a lack of scenario design that can motivate students to communicate cross-culturally. Teachers often have students merely recite the cultural knowledge they have learned online when planning classroom activities and do not design scenarios that require students to apply cross-cultural knowledge for judgment and response; thus, they are unable to convert cultural cognition into communicative competence<sup>[9]</sup>. Class discussion segments are also frequently shallow, and the students' answers are often just simple restatements of what they have learned; there is little exchange of ideas or cultural comparisons. The uniformity of interaction forms cannot fully achieve the goal of classroom teaching, and situation sensitivity and adaptability are needed for cross-cultural communication, but they cannot be cultivated in such an environment; thus, students' cross-cultural learning remains at the cognitive level and never reaches a practical communication stage<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### **3.3. Lagging construction of evaluation mechanisms and lack of a cross-cultural competence assessment system**

At present, the English curriculum's assessment system is dominated by tests of vocabulary, grammar, and

reading; cross-cultural communication skills are still considered secondary in terms of assessment, and there is no specific or regular evaluation system for them. Although blended teaching has expanded the scope of cross-cultural learning for students, due to the slow speed of the evaluation mechanism, it is impossible to objectively record and provide feedback on students' level of engagement, depth of thinking, and degree of cultural understanding during the online autonomous study period, thus preventing teachers from assessing the development of students' cross-cultural literacy<sup>[11]</sup>. There are no formal assessment criteria for how well classrooms are conducted in cross-cultural teaching, and teachers often just give general praise based on their own feelings; they do not specify how students have demonstrated cultural sensitivity or employed communicative strategies. The evaluation system is too slow to respond; as a result, it cannot accurately reflect the actual effects of blended teaching. Teachers are unable to revise their teaching plans promptly in response to this information, and thus, the overall quality of cross-cultural competence education is declining<sup>[12]</sup>.

## **4. Practical paths for optimization of English cross-cultural classrooms with blended teaching**

### **4.1. Reconstruction of online and offline resources and construction of a systematic cross-cultural content bank**

In light of the problem of scattered cross-cultural content, educators need to break down the wall separating the online and offline spheres and create an all-encompassing cultural-themed content hub. Teachers should take the topics of textbook units as the framework, unify the background knowledge, language expressions, and communicative examples under the same cultural theme in the resource bank, ensure that the content pushed online and the focal points of classroom instruction are always in line with this main thread, and avoid disconnected content. The construction of the resource bank should also pay attention to hierarchical design; according to the cognitive patterns of students, cultural materials should be divided into different levels, such as basic cognition, deep understanding, and comparative reflection, to lead students to learn gradually from shallow to deep and from the surface to the essence<sup>[13]</sup>. The classroom teaching part should serve to organize, refine, and elevate the online resources; teachers need to integrate the cultural information that has already been introduced in class, guide students to discover the internal connections among various materials, so that the originally scattered knowledge points can form a complete, systematic picture of cultural understanding and improve the completeness and coherence of cross-cultural teaching<sup>[14]</sup>.

### **4.2. Innovative blended interactive forms and the creation of immersive cross-cultural scenarios**

To enhance the quality of classroom interaction, educators should have students genuinely apply cross-cultural knowledge in specific situations rather than just repeating and restating what they have learned. Teachers can make full use of the technical conditions of blended teaching to create communicative situations that require students to make judgments and choices based on cross-cultural cognition, such as forms of situational dialogue, role reversal, and viewpoint debates; thus, students will be motivated to use their own cultural knowledge in interactions and experience the differences in language application and communication methods in different cultures<sup>[15]</sup>. The creation of scenarios should have a certain level of complexity and openness; they should not be simple questions with only one correct answer, but rather lead students to consider and choose among several ways to answer in order to cultivate their ability to flexibly

adapt to cross-cultural communication<sup>[16]</sup>. At the same time, teachers should also take on the role of guides in the interaction, promptly identify students' misunderstandings of the culture in the scenario response, and through follow-up questions and pointers, prompt them to think; thus, the classroom interaction serves as a vital way to stimulate and improve cross-cultural communicative competence, rather than just a place for memorizing language knowledge<sup>[17]</sup>.

### **4.3. Expansion of the diversity of the evaluation system and construction of a good cross-cultural competence assessment system**

The cultivation results of cross-cultural competence should be reflected in a reasonable evaluation system that is in line with reality and truly shows this situation. Teachers should construct an all-round evaluation system for the whole process of online learning and offline practice, considering the time and effort students spend on learning online resources, the depth of their thinking, and their communication in offline classes in the assessment<sup>[18]</sup>. In addition to examining how well students master language knowledge, other specific indicators should be added to the evaluation, such as cultural sensitivity, the depth of cross-cultural understanding, and the use of communicative strategies; thus, the evaluation results will better reflect the development level of students' cross-cultural literacy<sup>[19]</sup>. Evaluation methods should also be varied; in addition to teacher assessment, other ways can be used to have students evaluate themselves and their peers, thereby enhancing students' awareness of what has been achieved and what needs to be strengthened in cross-cultural communication through joint reflection. Teachers should adjust the focus of teaching and the design of interaction in response to specific information from evaluation feedback in a timely manner; thus, evaluation should be used as a basis to drive improvements in teaching, rather than simply being a final assessment at the end of the semester, and through continuous evaluation feedback, the overall quality of cross-cultural competence cultivation will gradually be enhanced<sup>[20]</sup>.

## **5. Conclusion**

Blended teaching is a new way to reform the teaching of English in cross-cultural classrooms. It is to extend the scope of teaching time and space, to provide conditions for the systematic construction of cross-cultural knowledge, to conduct practical training in communicative competence, and to carry out scientific assessment of learning outcomes. The problems with current teaching are that resources are scattered, the forms of interaction are monotonous, and there is no evaluation system; teachers should work together to unify the content, create scenarios, and enhance assessments. Only through the true integration of online and offline resources, the transformation of classroom interaction into genuine cross-cultural communicative practice, and the embedding of the evaluation mechanism in the whole teaching process can the educational value of blended teaching be fully realized in English cross-cultural classrooms, and students' cross-cultural communicative literacy will achieve solid development.

## **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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