

# Research on the Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence in Higher Vocational English in the Context of Globalization

Na Wang\*

Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou 571126, Hainan, China

*\*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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**Abstract:** With the deepening of economic globalization, international exchanges and cooperation have become increasingly frequent, making cross-cultural collisions and integration a common phenomenon. As a vital pathway for cultivating applied talents, higher vocational education bears the responsibility of delivering high-quality professionals with intercultural communication competence to society. English, as the universal language of international communication, holds a pivotal position in higher vocational education. However, traditional English teaching in vocational colleges often focuses on language knowledge transmission while neglecting the cultivation of students' intercultural communication skills, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts caused by cultural differences in practical interactions. Therefore, enhancing the development of intercultural communication competence in vocational English education has become an urgent issue requiring resolution. This paper aims to explore the current status, challenges, and countermeasures for cultivating intercultural communication competence in vocational English education under globalization, providing references for teaching reform in vocational English education.

**Keywords:** Globalization background; English for higher vocational education; Intercultural communication competence; Cultivation methods

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## 1. Cross-cultural communication needs under the background of globalization

### 1.1. Characteristics of the era of globalization

In the age of globalization, humanity's destinies are inextricably linked. Whether confronting natural disasters, economic downturns, or inherent human biases, nations must strengthen communication and collaboration to collectively address challenges<sup>[1]</sup>. This shared sense of interconnectedness drives countries worldwide to prioritize cross-cultural exchanges and cooperation for mutual development. The rapid proliferation of the internet has enabled instant communication across time and space. This transformation in communication methods not only accelerates the globalization process but also creates new platforms for cross-cultural

interaction.

## **1.2. Definition and importance of cross-cultural communication**

Intercultural communication refers to the study of people's communication behavior in different cultural backgrounds. It pays attention to the influence of language, non-language, and cultural differences on communication, explores communication and understanding in the process of intercultural communication, and studies the cultivation of intercultural communication competence and cultural adaptation.

Cross-cultural communication helps break down cultural barriers and foster exchanges and cooperation among diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby driving the prosperity and development of international trade, technological collaboration, and cultural exchanges. It cultivates a global perspective, enabling individuals to better adapt to international environments in the era of globalization. By understanding and respecting cultural diversity, people can play a greater role on the global stage. This communication helps reduce misunderstandings and conflicts arising from cultural differences, avoiding unnecessary disputes. Moreover, cross-cultural communication not only enhances international exchanges and cooperation but also promotes social progress and development, ultimately advancing comprehensive societal advancement <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2. The current situation of cultivating intercultural communication competence in English in higher vocational colleges**

### **2.1. Curriculum setting and teaching content**

In vocational English education, the cultivation of intercultural communication competence has gained increasing attention, yet there remain shortcomings in curriculum design and teaching content. While vocational English programs now recognize the importance of integrating intercultural competence into instruction, practical implementation often prioritizes vocational aspects of English learning, disrupting the balance between language instruction and cultural literacy development. Many courses still focus on language skill training—such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while intercultural competence development is frequently treated as a supplementary element to language teaching, lacking systematic integration.

While language and cultural instruction have gained significant traction in curricula, several challenges persist. On one hand, introductions to British and American cultures often remain superficial, lacking the depth that prevents students from developing a comprehensive understanding. On the other hand, the cultivation of intercultural communication skills lacks clear teaching objectives, resulting in students struggling to apply acquired knowledge effectively in real-world interactions.

### **2.2. Teachers and teaching methods**

Vocational college English teachers are a crucial factor in cultivating intercultural communication competence. However, most of them currently lack practical experience in intercultural communication, making it difficult for them to effectively impart such knowledge in their teaching. Moreover, many teachers' understanding of intercultural communication remains superficial, with insufficient theoretical research and practical exploration in this field <sup>[3]</sup>.

In terms of teaching methods, the English teaching in higher vocational colleges is still too traditional and conservative, lacking innovation. Many teachers still use traditional teaching methods such as the lecture method and translation method, ignoring the individual needs of students. This teaching method is not only difficult to stimulate students' interest in learning, but also difficult to cultivate students' intercultural

communication ability.

### **2.3. Students' intercultural communication awareness and ability**

Students are the primary agents in developing intercultural communication competence. However, vocational college students currently demonstrate generally weak intercultural awareness. On one hand, long-term exposure to exam-oriented education has led students to prioritize language skill training while neglecting cultural literacy development. On the other hand, misconceptions persist regarding intercultural communication, with some mistakenly viewing it as merely understanding foreign cultures or mastering basic conversational phrases.

## **3. Challenges in cultivating intercultural communication competence in English for higher vocational education**

### **3.1. Challenges of cultural differences**

Cultural differences stand as one of the most significant challenges in developing intercultural communication skills for vocational English education. Students from diverse geographical, ethnic, and social backgrounds often interpret cultural phenomena through different lenses. These differences manifest not only in values, beliefs, and customs but also permeate the nuances of language use. For instance, expressions considered polite in one culture might be perceived as offensive or irrational in another. Moreover, cultural disparities can create cognitive barriers when students attempt to comprehend foreign cultures. Their struggle to adapt to foreigners' thought patterns and behavioral norms may lead to communication obstacles. Such confusion and misunderstandings not only hinder language acquisition outcomes but may also dampen students' motivation to learn.

### **3.2. Challenges of language skills**

Language serves as both the medium and foundation for cross-cultural communication. However, vocational college students often demonstrate deficiencies in language proficiency, which significantly hinders their development of intercultural communication competence. On one hand, their limited vocabulary and shaky grasp of grammar make it challenging for them to articulate ideas or understand others. On the other hand, their relatively weak listening and speaking skills often prevent them from engaging in fluent verbal exchanges in real-life situations. These language skill gaps not only undermine their language learning outcomes but also limit their effectiveness in cross-cultural communication scenarios.

### **3.3. Challenges of cultural conflict**

In cross-cultural communication, cultural conflicts are an inevitable phenomenon. Due to differences between cultures, students may encounter such conflicts during interactions, which can manifest as language misunderstandings, behavioral clashes, or disagreements in values. These conflicts not only affect communication effectiveness but may also negatively impact students' psychological well-being and emotional health <sup>[4]</sup>.

## **4. Methods of cultivating intercultural communication competence in English for higher vocational education in the context of globalization**

### **4.1. Optimizing curriculum and teaching content**

Add courses related to intercultural communication: To systematically develop students' intercultural

communication competence, vocational English curricula should incorporate a series of courses closely related to cross-cultural communication. For instance, introducing a “Cross-Cultural Communication” course that employs case analysis and role-playing methods to help students master effective communication skills across different cultural contexts. Additionally, establishing an “International Etiquette” course will familiarize students with fundamental norms of international interaction, thereby enhancing their global engagement capabilities. The implementation of these courses will help students build a comprehensive framework for intercultural competence, providing robust support for their international exchanges and collaborations.

Enrich teaching content by incorporating cross-cultural elements: In vocational English education, the concept of intercultural communication should be integrated throughout the teaching process. Vocational colleges should prioritize selecting textbooks rich in cross-cultural elements, allowing students to naturally encounter knowledge from diverse cultural backgrounds during language learning. Additionally, teachers should organize discussions and exchanges on current hot topics and cultural differences to stimulate students’ interest. For example, guiding students to explore variations in behavioral habits and value systems across different cultural contexts can help them develop understanding and respect for diverse cultures.

## **4.2. Strengthening the construction of teaching staff**

Vocational colleges should prioritize the professional development of English teachers in intercultural communication education. Through systematic training and advanced programs, institutions should comprehensively enhance their teaching capabilities and professional expertise. Specifically, colleges should organize English teachers to participate in international exchange activities such as academic conferences and overseas research programs. These experiences not only allow teachers to immerse themselves in diverse cultural environments, fostering deeper understanding and respect for foreign cultures, but also broaden their global perspectives and enrich their intercultural knowledge. By engaging in in-depth exchanges with educators and scholars worldwide, vocational teachers can acquire advanced intercultural communication pedagogical concepts and methodologies, providing robust support for educational reform and innovation upon their return to China.

Beyond international exchange programs, vocational colleges should proactively organize cross-cultural communication seminars and lectures. These events should feature leading experts and scholars from both domestic and international fields, who will share their latest research findings and practical teaching methodologies. By attending these sessions, vocational English teachers can gain an in-depth understanding of core concepts, fundamental principles, and practical techniques in intercultural communication. Moreover, such workshops provide a platform for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences, fostering a vibrant academic atmosphere and cultivating a positive teaching environment <sup>[5]</sup>.

To encourage English teachers to conduct in-depth research and practical exploration in intercultural communication teaching, vocational colleges should establish corresponding incentive mechanisms. For example, setting up special research funds to support teachers in conducting research projects related to intercultural communication teaching, and establishing awards for outstanding teaching achievements to recognize and reward teachers who have made significant accomplishments in this field. These incentive measures can stimulate teachers’ enthusiasm and creativity, driving them to continuously achieve new breakthroughs in the research of intercultural communication teaching.

Furthermore, vocational colleges should enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange among English teachers. Institutions should regularly organize teaching seminars and collaborative lesson planning sessions,



enabling educators to collectively address challenges in intercultural communication instruction while sharing successful teaching practices and case studies. Through mutual learning and knowledge sharing, teachers can continuously refine their pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies, ultimately elevating the quality of intercultural communication education.

### **4.3. Innovative teaching methods**

**Integrate multicultural content:** In vocational English education, instructors should proactively integrate cultural knowledge to help students better understand the cultural customs and historical context of target language countries. This approach not only broadens students' perspectives and enhances learning enjoyment but also deepens their understanding of diverse cultural systems. For instance, vocational English teachers can utilize multimedia to showcase the customs, historical backgrounds, and artistic achievements of different countries, providing students with an initial understanding of cultural diversity. Additionally, teachers should incorporate cross-cultural communication cases related to course content, allowing students to experience cultural differences in real-world scenarios and improve their cross-cultural sensitivity.

**Use diversified teaching methods:** Traditional teaching methods often focus on language knowledge transmission while neglecting the cultivation of intercultural communication skills. Therefore, teachers should adopt diverse teaching approaches such as role-playing, situational simulations, and group discussions to help students learn and improve their intercultural communication abilities through practical experience. Through role-playing, students can personally experience communication styles from different cultural backgrounds, enhancing their intercultural communication skills. Situational simulations allow students to practice real-life intercultural exchange scenarios, developing their adaptability and problem-solving abilities. Group discussions enable students to share insights and perspectives on intercultural communication, broadening their horizons and fostering mutual understanding<sup>[6]</sup>.

**Use Internet resources:** In today's era of rapid information technology development, educators should fully leverage abundant online resources and advanced technologies to create contemporary online courses and interactive platforms. For instance, teachers can introduce cross-cultural communication courses to enable students to learn intercultural knowledge anytime, anywhere. By establishing cross-cultural communication platforms, educators facilitate real-time interactions with international students, thereby enhancing cross-cultural communication skills. Additionally, leveraging social media and blogs, teachers should share professional expertise and practical experiences in cross-cultural communication to stimulate students' learning interest and motivation.

### **4.4. Cultivating students' intercultural communication ability**

**Provide practice opportunities:** Practice serves as the ultimate test of truth and a vital pathway to develop students' intercultural communication skills. Vocational colleges should encourage students to participate in international exchange programs, volunteer activities, and internships, allowing them to experience cross-cultural interactions firsthand. Through these engagements, students gain deeper insights into diverse cultural customs, value systems, and behavioral patterns, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural adaptability and communication competence. Additionally, institutions should organize intercultural events such as international cultural festivals and speech competitions, providing practical opportunities for students to learn and refine their cross-cultural communication skills.

**Cultivate independent learning ability:** Self-directed learning is pivotal for developing intercultural

competence. Vocational colleges should encourage students to conduct independent cross-cultural research, such as reading specialized books on intercultural communication and tracking academic developments in this field. Through self-directed learning, students can gain deep insights into the essence and characteristics of different cultures, thereby enhancing their intercultural awareness and comprehension. Additionally, participating in intercultural seminars and online forums allows students to broaden their perspectives while acquiring relevant knowledge and practical skills.

**Improve language learning:** Language serves as a bridge for cross-cultural communication. In vocational English education, teachers should focus on developing students' language proficiency and practical application skills. By enhancing language learning, students can better master English as a global lingua franca and improve their cross-cultural communication abilities. Vocational colleges should provide diverse language learning resources, such as language corners and guidance from foreign instructors, encouraging students to actively listen, speak, read, and write to boost their language expression and communication skills. Additionally, teachers should organize language exchange activities that allow students to interact with peers from different countries, thereby strengthening their cross-cultural communication capabilities.

**Group learning:** Group cooperative learning serves as an effective approach to enhance students' intercultural communication skills. Through collaborative group work, students can support and inspire each other while addressing challenges in cross-cultural exchanges. By dividing tasks and working together, they develop teamwork abilities and cross-cultural communication competencies. Moreover, this learning method fosters critical and creative thinking, cultivating students' intercultural awareness.

#### **4.5. Establishing an intercultural communication evaluation system**

With the deepening of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become an indispensable part of modern society. For vocational college students, mastering intercultural communication skills not only enhances personal competitiveness but also facilitates better integration into the global community, promoting cultural exchange and collaboration. Therefore, establishing an intercultural communication evaluation system can objectively and comprehensively assess students' intercultural communication abilities, provide feedback for teaching improvement, and ultimately guide instructional enhancements to elevate students' overall competencies<sup>[7]</sup>.

A cross-cultural communication evaluation system should encompass multiple dimensions. Educators should assess students' ability to communicate effectively in English across diverse cultural contexts, including both verbal and written communication. The evaluation should examine students' understanding and respect for different cultures, as well as their adaptability and flexibility in multicultural environments. It should also assess students' proficiency in using nonverbal communication (such as body language and facial expressions) and effective communication strategies in cross-cultural interactions. Additionally, the system should evaluate students' capabilities in living, studying, and working in foreign cultural settings, as well as their capacity to address challenges arising from cultural differences.

To comprehensively assess students' intercultural communication competence, educators should simulate authentic cross-cultural scenarios requiring oral presentations, thereby evaluating their language proficiency and cultural adaptability. Teachers should assign writing tasks addressing cross-cultural themes to assess students' cultural comprehension, analytical thinking, and expressive abilities. Organizing intercultural group activities allows educators to observe students' teamwork performance, evaluate their collaboration skills, communication effectiveness, and cultural adaptability. Additionally, providing cross-cultural case studies for analysis and

discussion helps assess students' problem-solving capabilities and cultural sensitivity.

Teachers should integrate intercultural communication assessment systems into daily teaching practices. By employing perceptual training methods, case analysis, role-playing activities, and other instructional approaches, educators can stimulate students' interest in cross-cultural communication and enhance their intercultural competence. Additionally, personalized listening, speaking, and translation skill assessments should be provided based on students' individual needs, helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses. Regular evaluations of students' intercultural communication abilities are essential to monitor learning progress and address existing challenges. Based on assessment results, teachers should group students and develop customized teaching plans and evaluation schemes tailored to different proficiency levels, thereby implementing differentiated instruction. Following assessments, teachers should promptly provide feedback highlighting students' strengths and areas for improvement in intercultural communication, while encouraging self-reflection and summarization to clarify learning objectives and directions for effort. Through teacher-student interactions and mutual evaluations, both educators and learners can collaboratively advance students' intercultural communication capabilities<sup>[8]</sup>.

With the acceleration of globalization and deepening cross-cultural exchanges, the evaluation system for intercultural communication requires continuous optimization and refinement. Vocational colleges must keep pace with the times by adopting innovative assessment methods and tools to enhance accuracy. At the same time, they should address students' individual differences and diverse needs by providing more personalized and differentiated evaluation services. Furthermore, these institutions should strengthen collaboration with domestic and international organizations, learn from best practices, and continuously improve the scientific rigor of their intercultural communication evaluation systems.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, cultivating intercultural communication competence in vocational English education holds significant practical value in the context of globalization. As globalization advances, vocational English education must keep pace with the times, continuously innovate and evolve to nurture more high-quality skilled professionals with global perspectives and cross-cultural communication capabilities, thereby making greater contributions to the nation's prosperity and development.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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