

# Research on Intercultural Communication Competence of English Majors in the Information Age

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## ABSTRACT

Through questionnaire survey, this paper analyzes the node factors and main obstacles of intercultural communication conflicts among English majors, and finds that only a few students have a strong awareness of intercultural communication, and most students have little understanding of intercultural communication. The main influencing factors are the lack of language environment for students to exercise and the school's insufficient attention to intercultural communication. Finally, some effective suggestions and training programs are put forward for the cultivation of English majors' intercultural communication ability.

**Keywords:** English majors, Intercultural communication, Language environment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the development of globalization, cultivating intercultural communication ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds has a great impact on overseas study, economic cooperation and academic exchange. This survey aims to understand the knowledge and comprehension of intercultural communication among English majors in Changsha Medical College, we find out the current situation of students' lack of intercultural communication ability and the existing problems in learning, and put forward effective solutions and strategies to help students improve their intercultural communication ability.

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH- MAJOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire survey is conducted on the Internet, and selects English majors in Changsha Medical College as the subjects. According to the questionnaire data collection, a total of 200 questionnaires are distributed, out of which 115 are

effectively received, with effective recovery of 57.5%. It meets the requirement of the survey. This questionnaire is divided into three parts, including students' English level, self-perception of intercultural communication competence, and the importance of intercultural communication competence.

From the survey results, in terms of self-perception of intercultural communication competence, 21% of the surveyed students have excellent intercultural communication competence. 40% of the students are at the average level of intercultural communication competence, and can speak decently and politely in most situations. In addition, 39% of the students think their intercultural communication competence is poor, and when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, they can not accurately express their views. Among these surveyed students, 83% of the students think intercultural communication is very important, and they believe that intercultural communication will play an important role in their future career. 11% of the students think that they will not be engaged in this field in the future, so they think that intercultural communication is not very important. And 6% of the students think that intercultural communication has nothing to do with them and

learning intercultural communication has no significance for their future development. (See

"Figure 1")

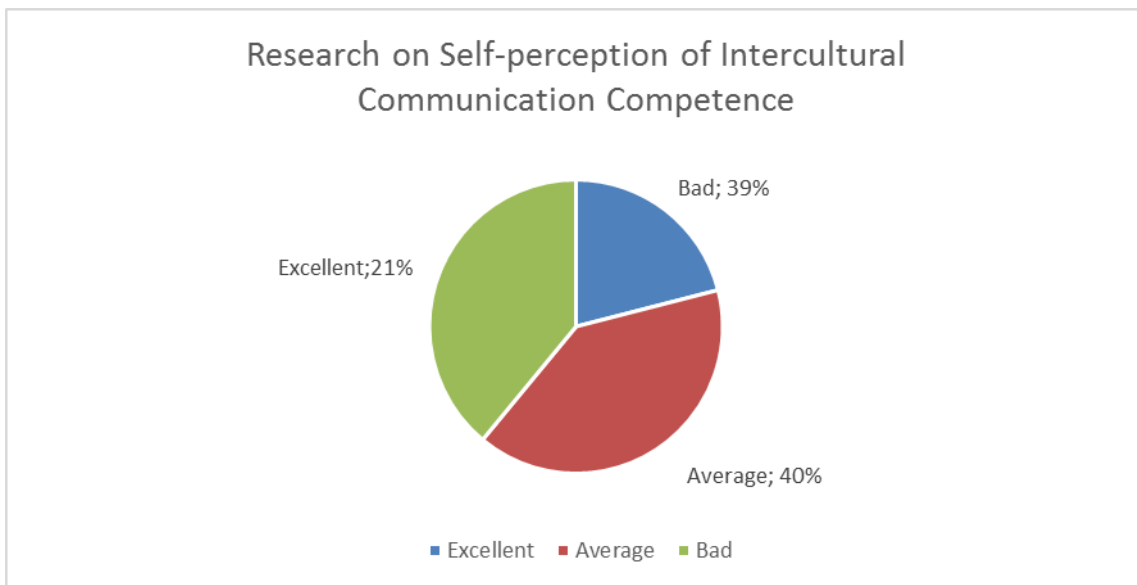


Figure 1 Research on self-perception of intercultural communication competence.

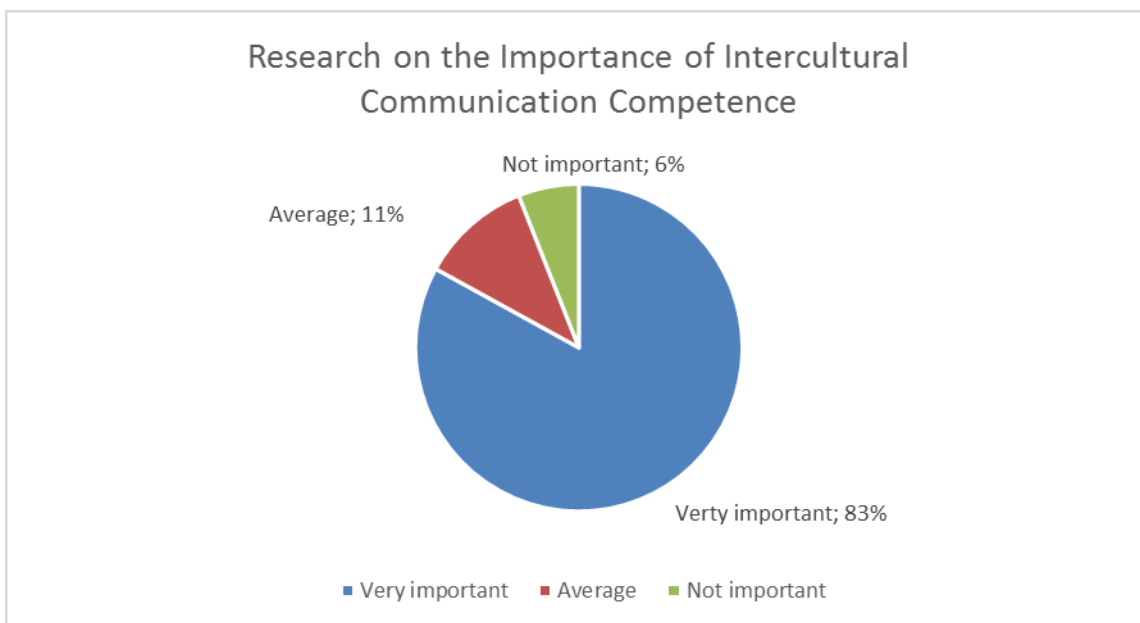


Figure 2 Research on the Importance of Intercultural Communication Competence.

According to "Figure 2", the students surveyed have a series of problems such as unclear and one-sided understanding of intercultural communication competence. And many students have no access to learn about intercultural knowledge in daily life. In addition to classroom indoctrination, only a few students take the initiative and often pay attention to intercultural communication.[1]. While studying intercultural communication courses, there are still

many students who do not know how to improve their intercultural communication skills, and lack the language environment to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, intercultural communication competence is a difficult problem for English majors.

### **3. CAUSES FOR UNSATISFACTORY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS**

Nowadays, English teaching in colleges in China pays more attention to basic words, grammar and reading, but rarely involves the cultivation of culture in teaching. And students do not have adequate knowledge about western culture, western thinking and common expressions in the process of communication[2]. Students' professional knowledge is always limited to textbooks. They fail to apply what they have learned in class to practice, and always think that their intercultural knowledge reserve is not enough. As a result, they have negative mentality and are unwilling to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. There are also huge differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Students can't help but use Chinese thinking in the process of learning English, resulting in Chinese English. This will inevitably cause embarrassment in the process of English communication. In the process of intercultural communication acquisition, students almost have no chance to communicate with foreigners, and lack the language environment to practice their oral English and intercultural communication skills.

Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds are different. That is, the communication parties come from different cultural environments, and naturally have great discrepancies in expression habits, values and ways of thinking. At this time, when the same language has different meanings in the two language systems, misunderstanding or conflict may occur, resulting in the meaning cannot be effectively conveyed, and ultimately resulting in communication barriers or communication failures[3]. Students will be increasingly reluctant to communicate with foreigners because of communication barriers, thus entering a vicious circle. In addition, the way students learn intercultural knowledge will also affect their intercultural communication skills. Books, Internet, TV and other channels are of great importance for English majors to accumulate intercultural knowledge. They should pay more attention to the practical use of language, actively and effectively combine the knowledge learned with practice.

### **4. STRATEGY OF IMPROVING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS**

Optimizing learning methods and stimulating students' interest in learning is an important way for teachers to improve students' intercultural communication competence. The rise and development of multimedia teaching has injected new vitality into traditional classroom teaching. Teachers can create a real English language environment by using intuitional teaching and audio-visual teaching equipment. Students can establish a direct connection between what they see and what they hear, which is helpful for students to think in English and further understand different cultural knowledge[4]. In addition to learning professional knowledge, students can follow English-related WeChat official accounts or download apps to read original English novels and directly understand foreign art, history and local customs. This can not only cultivate students' English reading habits, but also maximize their knowledge of English culture and understand cultural differences. English is a subject that requires continuous learning. Besides classroom learning, students should take advantage of various opportunities to learn about foreign cultures as much as possible. For example, students should communicate with foreign students in schools and foreign employees in local enterprises. In the process of communication, they can not only improve their oral ability but also enhance their awareness of intercultural communication.

In college English classroom teaching, due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, teachers should not only explain English knowledge content, but also make a corresponding comparison between the two cultures, so as to improve students' intercultural communication ability and promote their English application ability[5]. Teachers also need to guide students to deeply understand the meaning of words, help students master the composition of English thinking, so that they can recognize different cultural differences with an inclusive attitude, and effectively improve students' intercultural communication ability in English.

In the new era of economic globalization and cultural diversity, high-quality innovative talents must be proficient in language, have intercultural communication awareness and master intercultural communication skills. In intercultural

communication with people from different countries, students should know how to empathize and try to understand their cultural customs in different ways, but should not blindly follow them. Students should actively participate in various international exchange activities and English competitions, such as the "National Talent Cup" speech competition, the "intercultural communication" competition of the Foreign Teachers' Club Cup, etc. By constantly exercising their language skills and speech skills, they can improve their interpretation and critical thinking ability of the cultural differences between the East and the West, and improve their intercultural communication ability. They can also work as a team to create English scripts of Chinese cultural stories for lectures or role plays. Through the process of writing English commentaries, revising English manuscripts, collecting or creating video materials, and practicing commentaries, a complete stage play is finally presented in the form of video. This will not only improve students' cultural literacy and cultural confidence, and spread the local culture, but also enable more foreigners to understand Chinese culture through this.

Teachers can select the English videos about volunteers in the Chinese people's resistance to the novel coronavirus, introduce students to English expressions such as "Heroes in harm's way" and "Lands apart, shy shared", and conduct language skills training, so that students can tell the story of Chinese people's solidarity in fighting COVID-19 in English [6]. By translating Chinese hot entries into English, students can avoid adopting Chinese thinking when translating.

## 5. CONCLUSION

On the basis of summarizing the theoretical concepts of intercultural communication competence, this paper explores how to cultivate and improve students' intercultural communication competence in the process of English learning, and improve students' intercultural communication competence by actively participating in competitions, reading English books and understanding foreign cultures. At present, the improvement of intercultural communication competence focuses on students themselves. However, society, education departments, schools, teachers and students must realize that the cultivation of intercultural communication competence of college students is a complex and

long-term project, which requires unremitting joint efforts[7].

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Jiayi Li is responsible for questionnaire design, data analysis and the manuscript, Yan Guo contributed to revising and editing.

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