



Enhancing Intercultural Competence in Chinese Senior High School English Education: A Research Report on a Pilot Study of Pedagogical Strategies

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Abstract

This assignment investigates the ways in which successful teaching techniques might potentially improve intercultural competency among senior students in Chinese high schools, especially those students who are pursuing studies in foreign languages. The research places an emphasis on having informed interactions, intercultural competence, and direct comparisons between different cultures. In order to get insight into the techniques and experiences of experienced international education instructors, qualitative approaches, such as semi-structured interviews, are used. In addition to this, the research evaluates the teaching techniques of the course materials. Specifically, the findings indicate that students' cultural knowledge and respect are enhanced by the use of organized interactions and comparative cultural studies. The research also emphasizes that in order for instructors to use these strategies, they need to have intercultural competence. In order to better prepare students for academic and professional success on a global scale, cutting-edge pedagogies should be incorporated into conventional curricula in order to strengthen the application of intercultural competency in Chinese high schools.

Keywords

Intercultural Competence; English Education; Pedagogical Strategies; Chinese High Schools

1. Introduction

While studying in the UK, I noticed major disparities between Eastern and Western schooling. One of the biggest differences was the emphasis on international competencies, especially for study abroad students. In China, education is teacher-centered and content-focused, while in the UK, pupils learn intercultural competence, critical thinking, and analysis. This contrast showed the relevance of intercultural ability in Chinese high school English instruction. Inclusivity and globalization require such skills. This qualitative study investigates effective pedagogical strategies for developing intercultural competence in Chinese high school English education. Teachers will learn how to apply these methods from the findings (Bennett, 1993).

2. Knowledge of Intercultural Competency and Context from Literature

To interact with individuals from other cultures, intercultural competency requires awareness, sensitivity, and adaptability. Power distance and individuality are Hofstede's (1984) cultural factors that help explain and address cultural

heterogeneity. Teachers must adapt their methods to varied cultural viewpoints (Hofstede, 1984).

Bennett's 1993 DMIS describes six phases from ethnocentric to ethnorelative worldviews. Role-playing, guided conversation, and critical evaluation may help students proceed through these phases and develop intercultural competency. These theoretical frameworks help educators improve intercultural proficiency and establish inclusive, supportive classrooms (Bennett, 1993).

I began with a teacher-centered strategy after three years of teaching English in China. My UK academic experience revealed that student-centered instruction improves critical thinking and intercultural skills. The large gap between Chinese and British educational paradigms stresses the need for intercultural competence in Chinese secondary schools. This research examines successful intercultural education for Chinese high school students. The results should shape classrooms and policy to prepare students for global citizenship.

3. Methodology

This section discusses the research technique, including semi-structured interviews, research goals, and data collection and analysis.

3.1 Why Semi-structured Interviews Are Used for Research

Semi-structured interviews are flexible and deep enough to investigate intercultural competency in high school English education. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) suggest asking more questions depending on participants' replies and adaptability (Cohen et al., 2018). When investigating context-specific intercultural competence training methods, responsiveness is essential (Burgess, 1984).

Semi-structured interviews show how instructors accommodate ethnic diversity. Some instructors employed role-play to simulate foreign contacts, while others taught cultural differences and critical thinking. These insights may not come from careful interviews.

Rich, narrative data from this technique completes the instructional methods' story. Teachers changed a literature course to contrast Chinese and Western storytelling or utilized corporate case studies to show intercultural communication. Excellent intercultural competence practices and classroom applications are shown here.

Semi-structured interviews are excellent for this study since they are adaptable, deep, and can gather accurate perspectives. This model allows for extensive teaching method research and informs intercultural competence-focused policy and pedagogy.

3.2 Research Goal and Question

This research seeks effective strategies to educate Chinese senior high school English students' intercultural competency. Globalized education requires students—especially those studying abroad—to negotiate diverse cultures.

Three research questions lead this study. What teaching strategies increase intercultural competency in Chinese high school English classrooms? This subject seeks ways to help pupils understand and engage in other cultures. Teachers, how can they teach intercultural competence? This involves examining how instructors incorporate multicultural elements into curriculum, lesson preparation, classroom activities, and resources. How do internationalized teaching approaches affect students' cultural awareness and adaptability? This topic evaluates students' perspectives, engagement, and cultural awareness and adaptability, per Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017).

3.3 Data Generation Method Selection

Semi-structured interviews were used to assess high school English teachers' attitudes toward intercultural competency in their teaching. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility in adjusting questions based on participants' responses, capacity to acquire detailed information about experiences and opinions, and exploratory research potential.

Data generation had numerous essential steps. First, a detailed interview guide was created to cover basic topics and allow for new themes. Second, English teachers with three years of Chinese high school experience were recruited. With participant consent, 60-minute face-to-face or online interviews were audio-recorded.

Data management and ethics were also considered. For privacy, interviews were recorded verbatim and anonymised. Data analysis identified intercultural competency and teaching methodology patterns using systematic

coding and thematic analysis. Ethics, including informed consent and participant confidentiality, were prioritized throughout the research procedure.

3.4 Data Creation

To fully comprehend study questions, qualitative research requires systematic data generation. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study due to their flexibility and contextual richness. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) note that this approach enables for full examination of participants' experiences and views. Data production had multiple steps. A detailed interview guide with open-ended questions on intercultural competencies and teaching methods was created first. Sample questions included "Could you outline the specific methods you use to enhance intercultural competence in your teaching?" and "What challenges have you encountered in incorporating intercultural competence into your teaching?" Creswell (2014) recommends carefully crafted questions for qualitative data collection.

Face-to-face or online interviews lasted 60 minutes. The setting was meant to make participants feel comfortable voicing their opinions. Burgess (1984) highlighted that real reactions require a comfortable atmosphere. With participant consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, including non-verbal signals. Data management ensured privacy and security. Anonymous, password-protected transcripts were stored. The study used pilot interviews and data triangulation to ensure data correctness and dependability. All participants gave informed consent and knew their rights, including the opportunity to withdraw, to ensure ethics. These ethical protocols follow research standards (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This systematic approach to data generation collects qualitative data that sheds light on intercultural competency in high school English teaching (Burgess, 1984; Cohen et al., 2018).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential to qualitative research because it yields important insights. This study's conclusions were verified by a systematic analysis of semi-structured interview data.

3.5.1 Transcript

Qualitative research requires transcription, which converts audio recordings into written text. This stage ensures accurate data gathering, preserving participants' delicate responses for analysis. The transcription process follows qualitative research methods to ensure data integrity and reliability (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2014).

The transcription process begins with a careful review of the recorded materials. To capture every spoken word, including pauses and non-verbal signs, every interview recording was carefully scrutinized. Maintaining qualitative data richness and participant subtleties requires a complete evaluation (Creswell, 2014). Participants' words were transcribed verbatim without editing. This includes recording unnecessary words, disturbances, and colloquialisms to ensure authenticity. However, the appendix transcripts have been edited to remove unnecessary words and highlight key points (Burgess, 1984). The transcriptions were carefully checked for accuracy and completeness. This procedure helped find and fix errors and omissions, ensuring that the transcripts matched the recordings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Transcripts were anonymized to protect participant privacy. The anonymized data was stored in password-protected folders with backups. This step protects participant confidentiality throughout the research process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The Chinese interview addendum was transcribed into English and translated back into Chinese for verification. The careful process ensured data accuracy and confirmed participant responses (Creswell, 2014). Transcription ethics are essential. Recording and transcribing interviews required participant consent. All transcripts were anonymized to protect participant identities. Data was also securely kept to prevent unauthorized access. These actions followed Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) and Creswell (2014) standards. The research outcomes are more reliable due to careful transcription (Burgess, 1984; Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2014).

3.5.2 Coding

Prior to coding, it is imperative to comprehensively grasp the content and context of the transcribed data by reviewing each transcript numerous times. In the preliminary reading, the researcher identifies potential codes and themes

(Creswell, 2014). Upon familiarization, initial codes are generated through a thorough analysis of the transcripts, pinpointing segments pertinent to the study questions or topics. Codes are succinct statements or labels that encapsulate chunks of data. Each transcript is analyzed by assessing and classifying each line to encapsulate all relevant information (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Initial codes may encompass “Cultural Awareness: dialogues regarding comprehension of diverse cultures,” “Explaining methodologies for teaching intercultural competency,” “Student Engagement: discourse on student interactions with content,” and “Challenges in the instruction of intercultural competency.” Upon completion of initial coding, the codes undergo review and refinement through the consolidation of like codes, elimination of redundancies, and verification of precision. Codes can thereafter be classified into overarching categories or themes that contain additional aspects of the data (Burgess, 1984). Themes are patterns extracted from codes that offer a more abstract and holistic comprehension of the data, whereas categories are collections of linked codes that encompass a shared concept. Structuring codes using this paradigm efficiently addresses the study questions (Creswell, 2014). Examples of themes and categories include “Enhancing Cultural Awareness: comparative methodologies, practical scenarios, tailored instructional resources,” “Multicultural Education: classroom dialogues to engage learners, critical analysis tasks, cooperative endeavors,” and “Confronting Pedagogical Challenges: managing student reliance, adjusting to examination-centric curricula, promoting autonomous learning.” To guarantee coding precision and dependability, triangulation is utilized by employing many data sources and approaches to verify and substantiate findings, so ensuring a thorough comprehension of the study’s concerns (Creswell, 2014). For instance, a transcript snippet articulating, “I contend it is imperative to participate in discussions regarding cultural disparities within the educational environment.” I employ real-life events to enhance students’ comprehension of various cultures, significantly augmenting their cultural awareness, as evidenced by codes such as “discussing cultural differences necessitates cultural awareness,” “real-world scenarios,” and “effective approach.” This study adheres to coding criteria to guarantee qualitative data are meticulously analyzed and understood, thereby solidifying concepts and research inquiries.

3.5.3 Classifying

Categorization follows coding in qualitative data analysis. Categorizing the original codes into topics and categories creates a framework that answers research questions. Classification helps identify patterns and obtain insights by organizing and analyzing data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2014).

After creating and refining the codes, review and categorize them into larger groupings. This involves finding patterns and correlations in codes and clustering similar codes. Categories should contain the codes’ main ideas (Creswell, 2014). For instance, “Cultural Awareness” includes codes like “importance of cultural awareness” and “recognising cultural differences.” Theme Development. Construction of complete themes follows code categorization. Categories lead to themes, which provide a more abstract understanding. Capturing and understanding data patterns and meanings (Burgess, 1984). For instance, “Cultural Awareness,” “Teaching Strategies,” and “Student Engagement” can contribute to “Enhancing Intercultural Competence.” Data triangulation should be done to ensure category and theme accuracy and reliability. To support the findings, interview transcripts, relevant literature, and teaching materials are used. Triangulation deepens study understanding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

This study organizes and interprets qualitative data using careful categorization. This method provides valuable insights and answers to study issues. Increasing Intercultural Competence. Cultural awareness’s importance, cultural inequalities. Cultural competence means understanding and accepting cultural differences in a multicultural setting. Exemplary Quote: “Engaging in conversations about cultural differences is of utmost significance within the classroom.” I use real-life scenarios to help kids understand different cultures. Teaching methods: Comparisons, real-life examples, targeted materials. Definition: Teaching methods that foster intercultural competence in students. Example: “I integrate my personal experiences into the instructional process, engage in conversations about cultural disparities, and create tailored educational resources.” Student Engagement Methods: Classroom discussions, Critical thinking exercises, and Interactive activities. Definition: How students react to multicultural instruction. Example: “I motivate students to explore cultural disparities by involving them in captivating subjects.”

4. Research Findings

Tina and Alice, two experienced English teachers, explain intercultural competency pedagogy for Chinese high school students in semi-structured interviews. Results include improving cultural awareness instruction, incorporating students into multicultural classrooms, and overcoming intercultural competence challenges.

4.1 Enhancing Cultural Awareness Instruction

Tina and Alice stressed the importance of intercultural skills for students, especially those studying abroad. They stressed that students must understand and adapt to cultural differences to succeed in international academic and professional settings.

Intercultural competence, according to Tina, is the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences between cultures. Cross-cultural understanding improves students' chances of working in foreign companies, regardless of whether they plan to travel. Tina uses her personal experiences to create customized teaching resources that compare Chinese and international academic paper writing standards. This method helps students acquire intercultural competencies by understanding different academic standards and methods.

Alice's observations: Alice noted that most of her pupils will study abroad, emphasizing the significance of cultural awareness and language proficiency. She underlined that identifying cultural differences and adapting to unknown cultures were vital for academic success and well-being. Alice uses educational resources that include authentic circumstances involving overseas students, such as collaborative dialogues and leadership skills, which Western education emphasizes but China rarely does.

Summary: Both interviews stress the need for cross-cultural awareness in pupils. They employ comparison methods and practical illustrations, and simulations to help students understand and adapt to different educational approaches and social standards. This method fits Deardorff's (2006) definition of intercultural competence as the ability to understand, appreciate, and adapt to cultural differences.

4.2 Engaging Multicultural Classroom Students

Students must actively study many cultures to gain intercultural proficiency.

Observations: Tina prioritized discussing cultural differences and explaining norms like critical thinking throughout her instruction. She has created specialized classes to address cross-cultural differences, teaching students to build arguments, include their own ideas, and have conversations.

Tina uses role-playing to simulate foreign situations for pupils, improving their pragmatic intercultural skills.

Alice's Observations: Alice engages students in thought-provoking topics to analyze cultural differences. Her online teaching prevents her from role-playing. She facilitates discussion between herself and students. Alice selects instructional resources that employ authentic international student circumstances and intercultural communication frameworks to help students understand and apply them (Chen & Du, 2024).

Summary: Teachers use several methods to engage pupils in cross-cultural learning. Alice uses real-world events and intercultural analogies to engage students, whereas Tina emphasizes critical thinking and classroom discourse. Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) says these methods help pupils understand and appreciate many cultures (Smith & Zhang, 2023).

4.3 Addressing Intercultural Competence Integration Obstacles

In China's test-focused education system, including intercultural competencies in the curriculum is tough. Tina and Alice identified challenges and planned how to overcome them.

Observations by Tina: Tina stressed the importance of cross-cultural awareness for students to succeed in overseas corporate jobs. She said that Chinese education prioritizes exams and places teachers in charge, while Western education is more inclusive and respects students.

In response, Tina encourages autonomous cognition and provides practical ways for pupils to understand and adapt to other cultures.

Alice's observations: The Chinese educational system encourages dependence, as some students lack creative ideas and rely on the teacher for solutions. She addresses this issue by encouraging student autonomy, letting them pursue their interests, and providing clear instructions and effective methods. Since Chinese students listen to their professors, Alice uses her position as a teacher to encourage intercultural competence (Zhang & Smith, 2024).

Summary: Both professors agreed that student dependence and the Chinese school system's focus on exams hinder intercultural competency. They use autonomous thinking and pragmatic techniques to address these difficulties, following Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith (2017)'s intercultural education concepts.

5. Conclusion

The pilot study shows that well-designed instructional practices boost Chinese senior high school students' intercultural proficiency. Students are better prepared for global contexts with cultural comparisons, intercultural competence exercises, and hands-on participation. The findings help teachers, curriculum designers, and politicians integrate intercultural competency into secondary school to prepare pupils for a varied society.

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