

# Constructing a New College English Teaching Model with Language Ability, Thinking Ability and Cross-cultural Ability as the Target

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**Abstract.** With the increasingly complex international communication environment, college English teaching face new tasks and challenges. This paper tries to put forward a new paradigm of English teaching. Its basic connotation is to build a cooperative inquiry learning community through the integration of language and knowledge in College English teaching, so as to simultaneously improve language ability, critical thinking ability and cross-cultural ability. Based on this idea, this paper focuses on the new model of College English teaching aiming at the cultivation of linguistic competence, critical thinking competence and cross-cultural competence.

## Introduction

The outline of the National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and development plan (2010-2020) proposes to "cultivate a large number of internationalized talents with international vision, knowledge of international rules and ability to participate in international affairs and international competition". From the perspective of educational objectives, foreign language education should not only achieve the instrumental goal of improving students' comprehensive ability to use foreign languages, but also achieve the humanistic goal of higher education, such as improving students' critical thinking ability, autonomous learning ability and comprehensive cultural literacy. High-level requirements and diversified objectives make college English teaching face new tasks and challenges.

## Critical and Cross-Cultural Competence are the Key Elements of Foreign Language Competence.

Based on the "expert consensus" put forward by Delphi Report, an interdisciplinary expert group organized by the American Philosophical Society, Sun Youzhong concluded that at the emotional attitude level, critical thinking refers to: diligent learning, rational belief, respect for facts, prudent judgment, fair evaluation, sensitive to inquiry and persistent pursuit of truth. [1] On the level of cognitive skills, critical thinking ability refers to the ability to elaborate, analyze, evaluate, reason and explain the elements of evidence, concept, method, standard and background, and to reflect and adjust one's own thinking process consciously. Higher linguistic competence should obviously include the above-mentioned critical thinking competence.

In addition to speculative competence, higher-level language competence needs to be supported by cross-cultural competence. It can be said that there are three realms of language competence, the first one is "veracity of words", which is grammatical accuracy; the second one is "rationality of words", which is eloquent and powerful at the level of logical argumentation; the third one is "courtesy of words", which is able to communicate appropriately and effectively across cultural barriers. [3] Language teaching needs to be guided by cross-cultural concepts. Its purpose is not to impose a set of foreign, monopolistic social-pragmatic norms on students, but to cultivate learners' different ways of experiencing and observing the world, enhance their self-and other-awareness in cross-cultural communication, and understand how culture is constructed in language. Without a deep understanding of the complex relationship between language and culture, it is impossible for learners to truly master a foreign language and use it for effective cross-cultural communication,

business negotiation and academic dialogue, thus reaching the highest level of mutual learning and civilization.

### **Language, Critical Thinking and Intercultural Competence are Mutually Reinforcing and Improving.**

Under the background of College English education, intercultural competence can be defined as: respecting world cultural diversity, having intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness; mastering basic theoretical knowledge and analytical methods of intercultural research, understanding the basic characteristics and similarities and differences of Chinese and foreign cultures; being able to interpret and evaluate different cultural phenomena, texts and products; and being able to effectively and appropriately conduct intercultural activities. In short, language competence with cross-cultural thinking ability can be truly effective.

The goal of college English courses should not stay at the level of enlarging vocabulary, mastering sentence patterns and rhetoric skills, improving reading speed and understanding the surface information of the text, but should further include the emphasis of learning to discuss, question and evaluate different views and discussions; learning to cross-disciplinary or cross-text [3]; learn to synthesize information from different sources, weigh the importance and relevance of different evidence; learn to refute the views in the text; learn to put forward and defend new ideas. The goal of oral English teaching is not only to learn the idioms and sentence patterns of situational communication and speak standard English fluently, but also to learn to give in-depth speeches and debate on complex political, economic, social and cultural issues for different audiences. Even in the seemingly simple listening class, its teaching goal should go beyond accurately obtaining information in listening materials, and then analyze and evaluate the opinions, facts and reasoning heard. Only by integrating language teaching with critical teaching can foreign language teaching truly and effectively improve students' language competence.

### **The Framework of the New College English Teaching Model**

In order to improve students' language competence, it is necessary to cultivate their intercultural competence synchronously so as to integrate language teaching with intercultural teaching. English education is to learn culture, understand the world and cultivate the mind, not English teaching. Today, when we advocate cross-cultural foreign language teaching, we should take a more profound consideration. The culture mentioned here should not be limited to the culture of the target country, but should also include the culture of our own country, and should also be appropriately involved in the multiculturalism of the world. Cross-cultural foreign language teaching is essentially to create a "third space" [4] between native culture and foreign culture, or between self and others. In this space, students are not forced to assimilate into the social language norms of foreign languages, but open cross-cultural exploration under the guidance of teachers and active cross-cultural pairing between themselves and others. This also means that foreign language teaching from a cross-cultural perspective is empowerment for learners, because learners no longer take language as an objective set of language symbols to passively absorb, but take language as a tool or media to actively carry out colorful social and cultural construction activities.

In addition, for cross-cultural foreign language teaching, the most important thing is not to learn specific cultural knowledge, but to cultivate critical cultural awareness. [5] The purpose is not only to require students to master the basic skills of language or knowledge of language, literature and culture, but also to require them to master foreign cultural phenomena, texts and products, as well as their own countries. Cultural phenomena, texts and products are explained in depth from the perspective of comparison between China and foreign countries, exploring the hidden cultural reasons behind them, and conducting critical examinations, so as to improve cross-cultural critical thinking ability. When foreign language teaching is ultimately upgraded to the use of the acquired language to interpret, analyze, evaluate and recreate various forms of texts from different cultural

perspectives, the development of foreign language learners' linguistic competence, critical thinking competence and cross-cultural competence can be achieved the same wonderful state. [6]

## Summary

This paper puts forward a new model of foreign language teaching. This model not only focuses on the integration of language learning and humanistic education, but also on the simultaneous improvement of critical thinking and cross-cultural competence. Following the new model, students' English level and cross-cultural thinking ability can reach a new level.

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