



RESEARCH ON ENGLISH MAJOR GRAMMAR TEACHING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

In the new era, amidst the trends of curriculum ideological and political education, new liberal arts construction, and telling China's stories well to the world, how traditional English grammar courses can break free from constraints such as being boring and tedious, seize opportunities, and make breakthroughs is a new challenge and opportunity facing university English teachers. This paper explores three approaches - content-based, situation-based, and authentic materials-based - to integrate cross-cultural international communication with university English major grammar teaching. Through combining English, grammar, discourse, ideological and political education, culture, and international communication, it is significant to cultivate international talents with Chinese depth, global breadth, and humanistic height, as well as cross-cultural communication leaders while solidifying students' grammar foundation.

KEYWORDS: English Major, Grammar Teaching, New Liberal Arts, Cross-Cultural Communication, International Communication

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the vigorous development of curriculum ideological and political education has injected new momentum into university English grammar courses. President Xi Jinping pointed out that each discipline and course should carry the banner of ideological and political education, and university English grammar courses are no exception. President Xi has also repeatedly emphasized the need to "tell China's story well to the world". University students are the main force in telling China's story and spreading Chinese culture through cross-cultural international communication. Keywords such as English, grammar, discourse, ideological and political education, culture, and international communication have achieved integrated convergence in the context of the new era and new liberal arts construction. Wang (2021) believes that under the background of new liberal arts construction, foreign language education should be based on the new needs of the times, actively exploring new majors/directions, new training models, new curriculum systems, and new theoretical constructions through self-intersection, internal intersection, internal-external intersection, and external-internal intersection forms, highlighting the characteristics of "new", "cross", and "culture" to promote innovative development of foreign language education and play an important role in new liberal arts construction.

Under current circumstances, there is an urgent need to cultivate international talents with Chinese depth, global breadth, and humanistic height, as well as cross-cultural communication leaders, to promote China's better integration with the world and help the world better understand China. Based on this, this paper explores combining cross-cultural international communication with university English major grammar teaching as a new attempt at grammar teaching.

2. CROSS-CULTURAL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Cross-cultural international communication includes cross-cultural communication and international communication. Wang (2021) defines "cross-cultural communication": In the most general sense, cross-cultural communication occurs when a member of one culture produces information for consumption by a member of another culture. More



specifically, cross-cultural communication refers to communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are sufficiently different to alter the communication event. The term cross-cultural communication is often used to refer to communication between people from different cultures. Factors affecting cross-cultural communication can be divided into emotional issues, attitude issues, and translation issues. These specifically include anxiety and uncertainty, assumed similarity, ethnocentrism, stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and translation issues (Yan, 2009, p. 127). The influence of one culture in cross-cultural communication depends on its similarity to another culture. The more similar the two cultures are, the less impact on communication and the less information change. Misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication often arise from this Hu (2006). Qualified communication competence is a social ability, referring to appropriate communicative behavior that can meet situational expectations and requirements, and is also a personal ability, including behaviors and skills to control individual social environments. Cross-cultural competence refers to the ability to understand and adapt to other cultures without ignoring one's own culture, and includes sensitivity to cultural diversity. Cross-cultural communication competence refers to the ability to effectively and appropriately complete cross-cultural communication when communicating with people from different cultures (Yan, 2009, pp. 319-320).

From the perspective of communication studies, international communication ability refers to the ability of cross-cultural information exchange and communication through mass media across national boundaries with strong political attributes (Lu, 2020). Wen (2022) defines international communication ability as: the ability of governments or mass media or self-media representing national will to use discourse as the main means to introduce to the world the country's culture and history, theories and practices of state governance, innovative scientific and technological knowledge, etc., with the purpose of safeguarding national interests, enhancing international discourse power, international status and international influence. Hu (2016) believes that China's international communication includes two aspects: First is communicating factual information, taking China as the communication object, focusing on reporting China's economic, political, and social changes and rich Chinese culture to meet the world's cognitive needs of contemporary China. Second is communicating viewpoint information, taking China as the communication subject, independently explaining and clarifying Chinese events and international information with Chinese perspectives and voices, expressing China's views and propositions. Li (2024) proposes that the core competencies of international communication talents include political literacy, pattern literacy, humanistic literacy, knowledge integration, and practical ability. Among them, political literacy, pattern literacy, and humanistic literacy are the key capabilities of international communication, implying the value orientation and fundamental cognition required by international communication talents. Knowledge integration and practical ability constitute the external expressiveness of international communication talents, manifesting in their cross-cultural communication practices and determining the methods and effects of cross-cultural communication practices by international communication talents. Knowledge integration mainly includes political theory knowledge, comprehensive professional knowledge, and cross-industry knowledge, while practical ability includes discourse expression ability, cross-cultural communication ability, and information communication skills. Wen (2022) believes that cultivating international communication talents should be an important mission of foreign language majors (including international Chinese education majors). To successfully complete this mission, it is recommended to adopt a "dual-drive" strategy and adjust teaching content to organically integrate "language education" with "communication education". Ye (2024) discussed the teaching of "Advanced English" courses based on international communication ability under the background of new liberal arts, suggesting improvements in three aspects: expanding teaching materials to enhance cross-cultural ability; innovating teaching models to adapt to information age requirements; and integrating multiple courses to cultivate comprehensive language application ability. She believes that international communication ability is a comprehensive language application ability, and qualified international communication English talents should possess multiple skills such as cross-cultural communication, Chinese and English writing, foreign translation, and discourse expression. Therefore, "Advanced English" courses must be combined with writing, listening, speaking, translation, and other courses to achieve multi-dimensional cultivation of international communication ability. This has commonalities with the grammar course teaching from the perspective of cross-cultural international communication discussed in this paper. English major students should first possess cross-cultural communication ability and global vision, placing themselves in an international multicultural environment while learning grammar and English. At the same time, as successors of socialism, contemporary college students should possess international communication ability to tell China's story well to the world.



3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTEGRATING CROSS-CULTURAL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION INTO ENGLISH MAJOR GRAMMAR TEACHING

In a recent questionnaire survey on English grammar learning problems and expectations conducted in the author's freshman English major class, students' issues can be divided into micro and macro aspects. Micro aspects generally include some common grammatical key points and difficulties, such as tenses, subjunctive mood, various clauses, connectors, and phrases. There are also many minor grammar points like word formation, imperative sentences, prepositions, infinitives, emphatic sentences, non-finite verbs, determiners, indefinite pronouns, interrogative sentences, singular and plural nouns, third person singular verbs, synonym discrimination, part of speech conversion, passive voice, apposition, collocation, prefixes and suffixes, sentence patterns, etc. Macro aspects are manifested in: unfamiliarity with grammar terms, too many grammar points, lack of systematicity, difficulty in identifying grammar test points, difficulty in flexible application, etc. Students' expectations mainly include: hoping to flexibly apply learned grammar, improve grammar issues in writing, write advanced complex English sentences, speak grammatically correct sentences, analyze long and difficult sentences in articles to understand them. That is, they hope to achieve grammar improvement in basic English skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. Some also expect to master scientific and correct grammar learning methods and learn grammar knowledge in a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere.

From the questionnaire results, we can see that the English grammar learned by students in high school is fragmented, mainly focusing on vocabulary and sentence pattern grammar. Some foundations are not solid enough. Influenced by exam-oriented education, flexible application is relatively weak, and grammar integration into discourse has not received attention. English grammar learning has also been traditionally considered boring. In Professor Zhang Zhenbang's *New English Grammar Course*, the English grammar concept advocated and implemented is Grammatical Hierarchy. Hierarchy is the essential attribute of language, and English hierarchy is manifested in five levels in grammar: morpheme, word, phrase, clause, and sentence; in discourse structure, it is manifested in three levels: sentence, paragraph or sentence group, and discourse. Zhang (2022) particularly emphasizes the importance of connecting grammar with discourse, believing that as a pedagogical grammar, it should not only impart grammar knowledge but also be conducive to readers' appropriate use of grammar knowledge. The quality of a sentence is determined not only by whether its grammatical structure is correct but also by whether it is appropriate in specific usage occasions. He tends to break through the barriers of sentence structure and enter the field of discourse analysis in grammar teaching.

Integrating fragmented English grammar points into discourse teaching can effectively prevent students from "seeing the trees but not the forest" throughout the grammar learning process and is also conducive to improving their foreign language practical application ability. The appropriateness of discourse selection will also affect the effectiveness of grammar teaching. When selecting discourse, comprehensive consideration should be given to era characteristics, international environment, national needs, student level and preferences, etc. Liu & Rao (2022) believe that under the unprecedented changes in a century, ideological and cultural exchanges are more frequent globally, and competition in soft power between countries is more intense. Therefore, strengthening our country's international communication capacity building, telling China's story well, and spreading China's voice well are not only the inherent requirements for enhancing national cultural soft power and creating a good international public opinion environment for our country's development but also the necessity for promoting civilizational exchanges and mutual learning and promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. In view of this, to better serve national strategies and accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative systems, China's higher foreign language education urgently needs to actively respond to changes and innovate knowledge systems, curriculum systems, and textbook systems.

4. PATH ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATING CROSS-CULTURAL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION INTO UNIVERSITY ENGLISH GRAMMAR TEACHING

Integrating cross-cultural international communication into university English major grammar teaching can start from three paths: content-based, situation-based, and authentic materials-based, achieving comprehensive integration. The following is a specific analysis combined with the author's teaching:



4.1 Content-Based

Traditional grammar teaching pays excessive attention to language form while neglecting the content carried by language. In the latter half of the 20th century, the reform and innovation movement in the field of language education promoted the formation and development of CBI (Content-Based Instruction) (Mohan 1986; Brinton et al. 1989; Grabe & Stoller 1997; Kasper 2000), which advocates "organizing teaching around the content or information students need to acquire (rather than around language or other forms of syllabus) (Richards & Rodgers 2001) to achieve mutual promotion and joint improvement of content teaching and language teaching [(Chang, 2014, p. 24). Chang (2014) believes that CBI advocates the integration of content and language. Meaningful knowledge content, new knowledge information, and students' personal needs are all concerns of CBI. Finding connection points between two professional courses and two textbooks, making their knowledge content accessible, striving to achieve the integration of grammar and discourse, simultaneous development of ideological and political ability and English ability, and internal and external integration of Chinese culture and global vision.

In the teaching process, the author breaks through the gap between courses and textbooks. Based on Zhang Zhenbang's *New English Grammar Course* as the main textbook for grammar classroom teaching, Liu Moxiao and Rao Qiaoying's *Cross-cultural International Communication English Course* is used as the main book for students' after-class self-study, supplemented by a series of reference books on cross-cultural communication such as: *Communication Between Cultures* (Third edition) (Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter, Lisa A. Stefani, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Thomson Learning Press, 2013), *Foundations of Intercultural Communication* (Guo-Ming Chen, William J. Starosta, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2007), etc. The clever combination of *New English Grammar Course* and *Cross-cultural International Communication English Course* makes them no longer separate. *New English Grammar Course* covers all grammar points of English learning, including 40 lectures, with many sub-topics under each lecture, totaling 497 pages, which is very suitable as a reference book but too complex as a one-semester teaching material. Therefore, based on Zhang Zhenbang's grammatical hierarchy concept of book compilation, the author carefully selected chapters related to students' demands in the first class of the semester, and comprehensively considered difficult points and test points in grammar points, finally determining 13 teaching chapters, namely: Introduction, Lecture 1 Grammatical Hierarchy, Lecture 2 Clause Structure and Basic Sentence Patterns, Lecture 3 Clause Components, Lecture 13 Verb Tense and Aspect (1), Lecture 14 Verb Tense and Aspect (2), Lecture 15 Future Time Expression, Lecture 17 Hypothetical Meaning Expression, Lecture 22 -ING Participle, Lecture 23 -ED Participle, Lecture 32 Subordinate Structure, Lecture 33 Conditional Sentences, Lecture 40 From Clause to Text. The rest is left for students' extracurricular self-study. Since students have basically completed all English grammar in high school, after entering university, the knowledge and ability teaching objectives of English major grammar courses mainly include systematizing all grammar knowledge, filling gaps, consolidating and strengthening, familiarizing with grammar terminology in Chinese and English, analyzing sentence grammatical components using English terminology, understanding some grammar concepts and theories not covered in high school, understanding deeper reasons behind grammar, improving English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation abilities at a higher level, analysis and comprehensive application, preparing for future TEM-4, TEM-8, teaching qualification examinations, graduation thesis academic writing, etc. *Cross-cultural International Communication English Course* includes six unit themes, both ancient and modern, namely Chinese traditional culture, poverty alleviation, Beijing Winter Olympics, fighting COVID-19, addressing climate change, and building a community of shared future for mankind. Based on these six themes, considering that students have 13 weeks of classes in one semester, corresponding to 13 grammar points, the author particularly added 7 new themes: Chinese cuisine, cultural heritage protection, Chinese medicine, China's new energy, red culture, Chinese education, Chinese elderly care, and Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. These include both Chinese traditional cultural content and content about various aspects of China's development that foreigners are more concerned about. Because Zhaoqing University, where the author works, is located in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Bay Area theme closely related to students was specifically chosen for cross-cultural international communication. To cultivate students' grammar application ability from vocabulary to sentence to text, the author implements the teaching concept of "learning by using" and "using while learning" that emphasizes language practice, taking "telling China's story in English" as the content of personal sharing in grammar class. Assignments are arranged in advance, requiring students to download the *China Daily* App on their phones, read related theme articles extensively before class, then summarize and retell in their own words, write a 150-200-word English short story, and try to incorporate the grammar points learned that week. In the classroom sharing session, students are required to learn some storytelling



and speech techniques in advance, pay attention to the importance of non-verbal behavior, not only exercise students' abilities in speaking English in public, public speaking, oral expression, flexible response, overall control, staying calm in emergencies, etc., but also cultivate courage, strength, optimism, positivity, upward character, etc. At the same time, using online writing platforms such as Pigai, after-class assignments are arranged for students to expand the writing of English stories shared that week, gradually increasing the word count requirement to 300, 500, 800, and 1000, allowing students' English writing, thinking, expansion ability, expression ability, etc. to be fully exercised, improving grammar ability in this process.

4.2 Situation-Based

American educator John Dewey believes that "situation" is the environment in which things exist, including social environment and natural physical environment, and is also the background whole in which experience is generated. An isolated object, event, or series of objects and events do not have meaning in themselves; to make them effective, they must enter the scope of the situation (Hou, 2019). Situational teaching has important significance for grammar learning, which has always been considered boring, and also meets students' expectations for a lively and interesting classroom atmosphere. At the same time, going out of campus after class and combining grammar knowledge with social practice, integrating knowledge into situations, is more conducive to the internalization and application output of knowledge. Combining grammar knowledge, social situations, and cross-cultural international communication can better achieve the knowledge objectives, ability objectives, and ideological and political objectives of this course teaching.

In the first class of the semester, the author divided all students into 12 small groups according to the number of weeks in the semester for weekly English presentation and communication of Chinese traditional culture. The student in charge of class study serves as the grammar course representative, responsible for grouping, selecting group leaders, and supervising the submission of weekly PPT reports, etc. Each report should not exceed 10 minutes and can be shared by one or multiple people on stage. The group leader is responsible for the overall coordination of after-class report work and task allocation. Under the leader's convening, all group members jointly discuss and decide on their group's report theme, then divide the work and cooperate, encouraging field research and interviews to deeply understand the selected cultural theme. Some are responsible for material collection, some for picture collection, some for English writing, some for PPT production, and some for on-stage sharing. In this process, independent learning ability and cooperative learning ability are improved. The scoring rules follow a layered responsibility system: group members' scores are decided by the group leader, the group leader's score is decided by the course representative, and the course representative's score is decided by the teacher. Each week's group report theme is decided by each group independently, and the cultural themes of later groups cannot be the same as those of previous groups. The theme can be about Chinese traditional culture, hometown culture, or culture that the group is interested in. The PPT report can incorporate videos, audio, pictures, etc., presented in English. The English text is written by each group after referring to online and other related materials, requiring the integration of grammar points learned that week. Some cultural themes chosen by the groups involve Chaoshan local culture, Foshan local traditional culture, Henan local traditional culture, etc. These themes are the result of students' combination with their hometowns, personal experiences, and field research. When discussing Chaoshan culture, the group introduced food like red peach cake, Chaoshan beef balls, Yingge dance, Chaozhou opera, Han Wengong Temple, Guangji Bridge, etc. When discussing Foshan culture, the group introduced food like Sanshui white cut chicken, blind man's cake, Qinghui Garden, Foshan Ancestral Temple, Foshan kungfu culture, etc. When discussing Henan culture, the group introduced food like Heluo noodles, Luoyang tri-colored glazed pottery, Luoyang palace lanterns, etc. Each group focused on using English to spread local traditional culture internationally, avoiding those well-worn major cultural themes, choosing niche and unique materials, emphasizing hometown culture communication, reflecting strong patriotic sentiment. These materials have relatively few English references, which is a challenge for students but also training, as English major students indeed need this type of material to prove their capabilities.

4.3 Authentic Materials-Based

According to situational cognition theory, learning has characteristics such as situationality, practicality, authenticity, inquiry, initiative, and interactivity (Liu & Gao, 2010). Learning is best done in authentic environments, so the knowledge acquired is profound and meaningful because the learning process is a continuous process of constructing knowledge meaning (Wu & Cheng, 2007). The most effective way to improve cross-cultural communication ability



is direct contact with heterogeneous cultures and direct communication with native speakers who have that cultural background (Hu, 1999). English has been a major international language for a long time, and today's internet era brings great convenience to English majors' teaching and learning. According to statistics, over 90% of information in current international information networks is in English. Abundant network information can help foreign language teachers and students fully utilize authentic, first-hand, native English materials produced by English native speakers, allowing them to fully immerse in authentic English usage situations while experiencing the impact of multiple cultures, always keeping pace with international standards, creating conditions for cross-cultural international communication.

When preparing lessons, teachers can fully utilize the international version of Bing official website and other resources to find authentic lesson preparation materials provided by English native speakers. The mind maps there systematize and organize many fragmented and complex grammar points, while the visual effects of pictures and colors, vivid and interesting examples, and unique layout all help students understand, learn, and remember. In grammar classroom teaching, traditional single-modal large chunks of text presentation, regardless of which language, are not conducive to the complete learning and mastery of obscure and difficult grammar points, and will also affect students' classroom enthusiasm and engagement. Using the international version of Bing official website and other resources, searching extensively, converting from previous text-dominated to color-rich pictures, charts, animated characters and animals, symbols, and even short teaching micro-videos as the main focus, supplemented by text, introducing multimodal teaching methods, can greatly improve the effectiveness of English grammar teaching. For example, when teaching the introduction part about "What is grammar?", the author captured a segment of Khan Academy grammar course teaching video from the Bing official website, which simply and clearly answered the above question, leaving a deep impression on students and helping them learn about the internationally renowned Khan Academy, watch teaching videos together with people from different cultural backgrounds around the world, facilitating future online grammar self-learning. Khan Academy, founded by Bangladeshi-American Salman Khan, is an educational non-profit organization aimed at providing free high-quality education to learners of different ages and stages worldwide through online videos, considered to be opening the dawn of "future education". Each teaching video at Khan Academy is about ten minutes long, starting from the most basic content and progressing from easy to difficult in an advancing way that connects with each other (360 Baike, 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

In the new era context, curriculum ideological and political education, new liberal arts construction, and telling China's story well to the world have put forward new requirements for foreign language compound talent training. This paper explores English major grammar teaching from the perspective of cross-cultural international communication, suggesting that traditional English grammar teaching can be combined with cross-cultural international communication to achieve a leap from sentence to discourse. Specifically, it can start from three paths: content-based, situation-based, and authentic materials-based. In terms of content support, breaking through the gap between courses and textbooks, finding connection points between two textbooks, striving to achieve the integration of grammar and discourse, simultaneous development of ideological and political ability and English ability, and internal and external integration of Chinese culture and global vision. In terms of situation support, combining grammar knowledge, social situations, and cross-cultural international communication to achieve this course's teaching knowledge objectives, ability objectives, and ideological and political objectives through students' extracurricular practice. In terms of authentic materials support, letting students contact English-speaking country websites, fully immerse in authentic English usage situations while experiencing the impact of multiple cultures, keep pace with international standards, and create conditions for cross-cultural international communication.

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