Research on Teaching Framework and Practice of Intercultural Communication Based on OBE Concept

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Abstract

The course of Intercultural Communication cultivates students' intercultural communication ability and enhances their intercultural communication awareness, which contributes to the achievement of our education objectives. Based on the concept of OBE, this study selects the topic-based and discussion-centered unit teaching contents through two semesters' teaching practice, which is suitable for the elective course of intercultural communication with fewer class hours, and establishes the unit teaching practice model of intercultural communication. Practical teaching proves the teaching effectiveness, and students can "produce" their own cross-cultural analysis.

Key words: OBE concept; Cross-cultural communication; Unit teaching framework; Teaching practice model

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the world is becoming increasingly multi-polar, economic globalization, cultural diversity and social information development. Mankind faces both opportunities and challenges in its development. Today, with the future of mankind increasingly intertwined, it is increasingly necessary to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and deepen ways for civilizations to get along. The development of China is in urgent need of a group of international talents with strong cross-cultural communication and communication skills.

The College English Teaching Guide (2020 edition) requires us to conduct intercultural education for students, and cultivate their intercultural communication ability and enhance their intercultural communication awareness (Ministry of Education College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee, 2020). The teaching purpose of *Cross-cultural Communication* is to develop students' intercultural communication ability and cultural awareness, broaden their horizons, enlighten their thinking, and enable students to learn to carry out smooth and effective communication and communication between different cultures.

In 2022, the author's university began to offer the elective course *Cross-cultural Communication* for non-English majors. This study attempts to use the concept of OBE (Outcomes-baced Education) to construct and practice the *Cross-cultural Communication* teaching framework, aiming at improving the teaching effect and talent training quality, and providing references for such courses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of OBE (Outcomes -Baced Education) was put forward by spider in 1981. At present, it has formed a relatively complete theoretical system and is regarded as the correct direction of pursuing excellence in education. OBE refers to the model of inverting learning requirements and curriculum based on learning outcomes. The teaching concept of OBE has three meanings: result-oriented, student-centered and continuous improvement.

The research on *Cross-Cultural Communication* teaching in China began in the 1980s and has been fruitful at present. A total of 23,123 results were retrieved from the knowledge network with the word Cross-cultural Communication as the key words , among which 1270 were related to college English teaching. A total of 14,206 articles with the title of Cross-cultural Communication were retrieved, of which 675 were related to college English teaching. On the condition that the abstract contains Cross-cultural Communication , 42,409 results were retrieved (all retrieved on February 6, 2023). Scholars mostly explore the cultivation strategies of Cross-cultural Communication competence and specific teaching strategies of Cross-cultural Communication courses from the perspective of the importance and necessity of Cross-cultural Communication. However, systematic and comprehensive teaching model research on Cross-cultural Communication teaching based on a certain theory is relatively scarce.

In view of this, this study builds a teaching framework of Cross-cultural Communication units based on OBE theory, so as to improve students' learning drive, enhance their pragmatic and communicative abilities, and finally form the productive ability to solve problems. This paper focuses on the teaching practice of *Cross-cultural Communication* and tries to answer the following two questions: 1) How to build the *Cross-cultural Communication* teaching framework based on OBE theory? 2) How effective is the teaching framework?

3. DESIGN OF *CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION* UNIT TEACHING FRAMEWORK BASED ON OBE

3.1 Background

The author teaches in a public security and political science and law college, which opened a public elective course of Cross-*Cultural Communication* with only 24 class hours in 2022. At the end of the first round, I asked the class of 90 students to turn in their study logs. The study of students' learning logs shows that, before learning this course, most of the students did not know much about this course, had weak cross-cultural communication experience, and lacked recognition of different cultural values and behaviors. Their main motivation for choosing courses was to get credits. However, after four weeks of study, students' cognition has been expanded, and students have learned the cultural differences, concept differences and ideological differences between China and the West. What they gain is that they respect other cultures, develop their own cultural self-confidence, and tolerate the impact brought by different cultures. Some theories, such as stereotypes, collectivism and individualism, ethnocentrism, in-group and out-group impressed

students; Some students say that they unconsciously remember a strange word, the vocabulary is really much more, their English level has improved; One third of the students had a low level of English and said that they could not understand the English textbooks, but they were still interested in learning the course in Chinese and had a good harvest. Many students are interested in the cultural differences between China and the west in architecture, food, clothing, etiquette, classroom and other aspects. They are very interested in sharing the classroom experience of a student who once studied in Canada, and they like the interactive, communicative and integrated classroom. According to learning situation, we need to design a public elective course of *Cross-cultural Communication* which is suitable for non-English majors. We need appropriate course coverage and effective unit teaching framework from the perspective of curriculum objectives, students' cognitive rules and language learning rules.

3.2 Teaching Content Framework

In 2022, the Cross-cultural Research Center of Shanghai International Studies University released the final version of the Reference *Framework for Cross-cultural Competence Teaching of Foreign Language Education in China,* which defines and describes the content and objectives of Cross-cultural competence teaching at the university level (Shanghai International Studies University Cross-cultural Research Center, 2023) (Table 1).

The Chinese University MOOCs platform offers MOOCs with " Cross-cultural Communication" as the main topic from 15 universities (as of February 1, 2023). For example, Northwest University's *Cross-cultural Communication* (Northwest University - Chinese University MOOCs, n.d.) course is a "cultural" course suitable for intermediate and advanced English learners; Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University's Cross-cultural Communication (Northwest A&F University - China University MOOC, n.d.) is professional, interesting, practical and inspiring. It covers basic knowledge of culture, communication, intercultural communication theory and skills, and aims to improve intercultural communication sensitivity, cultural criticism awareness, intercultural communication competence and cultural confidence. Jiangsu University focuses on international Chinese education (Jiangsu University - Chinese University MOOC, n.d.). By comparing the syllabus of these MOOCs, it can be seen that the teaching content of Intercultural Communication in these universities is "large and comprehensive". What we should do first is to refine, give students as much basic knowledge as possible within the limited 24 class hours, and then guide them to further understand the content they are interested in and want to know after class. Enrich my knowledge of cross-cultural communication. Secondly, respect the students' foundation, and only by teaching on the basis of their

cognition can students selectively accept new knowledge. Therefore, combined with the reference framework for the teaching of Intercultural Competence in foreign Language Education in China, after the first round of courses and adjustments, we established a topic-based and discussion-centered unit teaching framework (Table 2).

Table 1
Reference Frame for the Teaching of Cross-cultural Competence in Foreign Language Education in China (University Level)

Competence Dimension		University
Cognitive Understanding	Foreign Cultural Knowledge	To understand the history, geography, social culture, politics, economy, literature and art of all countries in the world; To understand the social and cultural phenomena contained or reflected in foreign language discourse; A broad and in-depth understanding of the lifestyle, communication styles, ways of thinking and values of different cultural groups in the world.
	Chinese Cultural Knowledge	Familiar with Chinese history, traditional culture, philosophy, classic works, etc. Understand the important role of contemporary China in world political, economic, scientific and technological development and its contribution to global governance; Understand the diversity of Chinese culture and have a deep understanding of socialist core values.
	General Cultural Knowledge	Understand the linguistic diversity and cultural diversity of the world and their significance, master cross-cultural communication, cultural values, cultural identity and other theories, and deeply understand the concept of the community of human destiny and the common values of mankind.
Emotional Attitude	Cultural Consciousness	Respect cultural differences, take the initiative to think in other people's views, deepen the understanding of Chinese cultural identity based on the understanding of Chinese history and culture and the development of contemporary China, be willing to get along with and cooperate with people of different cultures, and have strong empathy.
	National Identity	Actively participate in people-to-people and cultural exchanges with other countries, have the courage to respond to prejudices, misunderstandings and doubts about China in international exchanges, spread China's voice, enhance international understanding, and demonstrate our national feelings and sense of mission.
	Global Perspective	Understand the meaning of the era of globalization and internationalization, and identify the concept of the community of human destiny, help represent the country to participate in international cooperation and global governance.
Behavior Skill	Cross-cultural Recognition	On the basis of extensive contact and learning world culture, deepen the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures, gradually enhance cross-cultural and speculative ability, and can use foreign languages to describe and analyze and compare different cultural groups in thinking methods and values.
	Cross-cultural Dialogue	Able to have cross-cultural conversations with people from different cultures in foreign languages; When encountering cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, be able to analyze problems from the perspective of cultural differences, actively adopt coping strategies to solve problems, and establish and maintain harmonious relationships.
	Cross-cultural Exploration	After repeated practice, summary, reflection and evaluation, be able to master and flexibly apply the general principles of cross-cultural communication in practice, independently explore unfamiliar cultures, and form a certain awareness and ability of cultural research.

Table 2
Teaching Contents of the Unit Cross-cultural Communication in Our University

No.	Teaching Content
1	Unit 1 Introduction to Intercultural Communication Emphasis: The theory of intercultural communication; Communication and the concept of culture and language
2	Unit 2 Cultures and Values （1） Emphasis: Collectivism and individualism
3	Unit 3 Cultures and Values （2） Emphasis: high context and low context, obscure and direct
4	Unit 4 Languages and Cultures Emphasis: colors, animals bring different meanings of association; Use language metaphor correctly in different situations; The use of taboos and euphemisms in different situations.
5	Unit 5 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Emphasis: Understand the differences between greetings and goodbyes, relative address, gratitude and praise in Chinese and Western languages; Master the differences between Chinese and western nonverbal communication methods, such as gestures, bowing and eye contact.
6	Unit 6 Social Customs and Interactions Emphasis: Understand the differences between Chinese and Western food and gift giving; Understand the different attitudes of China and the West towards establishing family relationship and friendship
7	Unit 7 Stereotypes and Ethnocentrism Emphasis: Stereotypes and Ethnocentrism
8	Unit 8 Improving Intercultural Communication Competence Emphasis: in-group and out-group; Master the different methods of intercultural communication

These eight teaching topics are in line with the requirements of the Reference Framework, as shown in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3
Correspondence Between Teaching Topics and Reference Frame

Teaching Reference Frame / Teaching Topic	Cognitive Understanding			Emotional Attitude			Behavioral Skill		
	Foreign Cultural Knowledge	Chinese Cultural Knowledge	General Cultural Knowledge	Cultural Consciousness	National Identity	Global Perspective	Cross-cultural Recognition	Cross-cultural dialogue	Cross-cultural Exploration
1 Introduction to Intercultural Communication	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
2 Cultures and Values（1）	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
3 Cultures and Values（2）	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
4 Languages and Cultures	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
5 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
6 Social Customs and Interactions	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
7 Stereotypes and Ethnocentrism	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
8 Improving Intercultural Communication Competence	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

4. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION UNIT TEACHING PRACTICE MODEL BASED ON OBE

According to the Guide to College English Teaching (2020 edition), "Teaching of college English courses can adopt task-based, cooperative, project-based and inquiry-based teaching methods... Make the teaching process realize the transformation from focusing on teachers' teaching 'to focusing on students' learning' (Ministry of Education College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee, 2020)." Under the framework of OBE education concept, combining the characteristics of students and courses, the teaching design scheme of each unit should reflect three key words: student-centered, result-oriented and continuous improvement. In just 24 class hours, the goal is to let students master the basic concepts and basic methods of cross-cultural communication; Understand the basic characteristics and similarities and differences of Chinese and foreign cultures; Respect for the diversity of world cultures, while strengthening critical cultural awareness, and can explain and evaluate different cultural phenomena at home and abroad, improve students' cross-cultural communication ability. To achieve this goal, teaching practices need to be carefully designed.

First, establish a student-centered classroom, where teachers create an inclusive and relaxed environment and atmosphere that encourages students to share personal ideas and exchange views.

Second, the teaching route adopts the BOPPPS teaching model, including six teaching links: Bridge-in, Outcome, Pre-test, Participation, Post-test, and Summary (Li, A., n.d.). The first B is case introduction and question introduction, which can trigger thinking. Through the introduction, students can understand the learning focus and learning goal of this lesson. Then, in the participative and interactive learning, problem-oriented method, task-driven method, thematic discussion method, group discussion method, inquiry method and other learning-centered classroom effective means to involve students, continue to carry out more case analysis, and match cases for each knowledge point. This is followed by practice activities that are output-oriented, interactive, multi-cognitive, and go beyond superficial understanding to test whether the student has mastered it, which is the post-test. The pre-test is the students' correct understanding and their analysis and interpretation when the case is introduced; S is the summary of students. After class, students should be assigned some interesting tasks, such as writing small papers, shooting videos by themselves, and looking for related videos on the Internet. They should internalize the superficial knowledge learned in class, analyze and summarize the tasks by themselves, and become their own things, which is the process of organizing students' thinking. This is the embodiment of the student-centered emphasis of OBE: students test, students think, students understand the learning goal, students solve their own doubts, students examine their own results, students strengthen the knowledge point, students write papers to organize their thinking. Step by step teaching steps form a closed loop of students' understanding, students' cognition, students' correction, students' mastery, students' application and students' growth.

Thirdly, teaching should be carried out under the guidance of goals. Teachers and students should give timely feedback, teachers should adjust according to students' feedback and performance, do interventional teaching, and continuously improve to achieve goals. Let students write self-evaluation, learning log, let him feel the harvest.

In addition, optional courses should not just rely on one textbook. On the basis of effective use of textbooks, we should match teaching content through auxiliary resources and supplement independent learning resources for students, including paper textbooks, various electronic resources, such as Chinese university MOOCs, B-stations, videos, and even Tiktok, etc. Searching these resources can make students' knowledge increase virtually.

As for the comprehensive evaluation of the course, we should pay attention to the students' learning attitude and class participation.

Therefore, the teacher established the teaching practice model as follows (Figure 1).
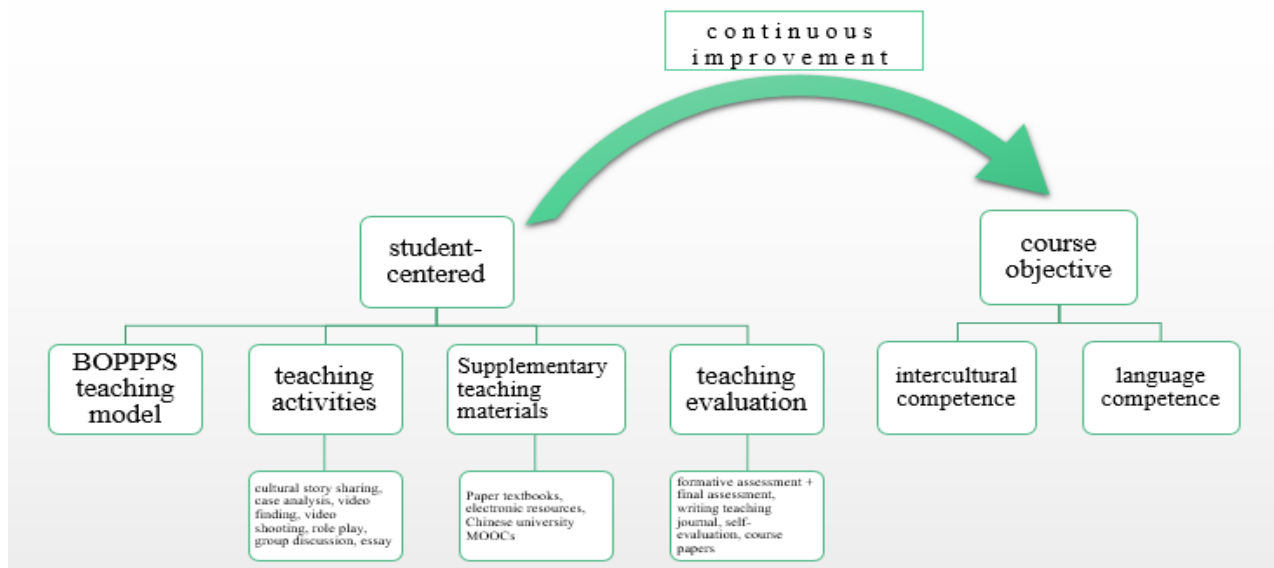
Figure 1
Teaching Practice Model of Intercultural Communication

5. TEACHING EFFECT TEST

In this study, students' recognition of teaching and achievement of teaching objectives are combined to test the teaching effect. This study used classroom observation, in-depth interview, learning log, self-evaluation and other methods to explore the recognition degree of 100 students in the second round of unit teaching in improving internal driving force and output ability and the achievement degree of cultural and language goals.

During the second round of classes, students' attention and participation in class were observed in each class. After each class, the teacher will conduct a 1-2 minute interview with individual students. At the end of the course, the class of 100 students handed in their study logs and self-evaluations.
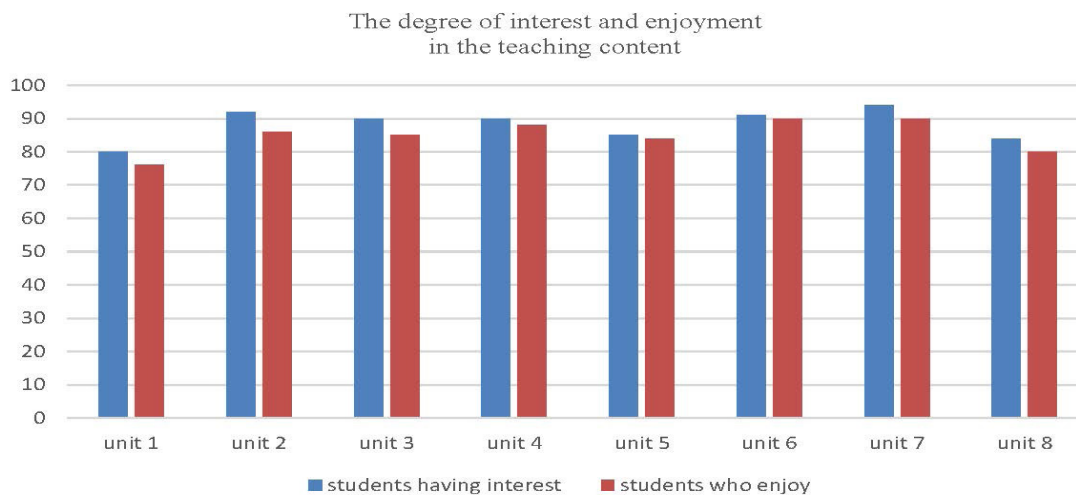
Figure 2
Students' Interest and Liking in the Teaching Content

After a comprehensive analysis of the interview recordings and the students' self-statements in the reflection logs and self-evaluations, the following conclusions can be drawn: more than half of the students are interested in what they learn in class, and they have a high satisfaction with this course, with a strong interactive atmosphere in the class. Almost every student expressed their learning gains.
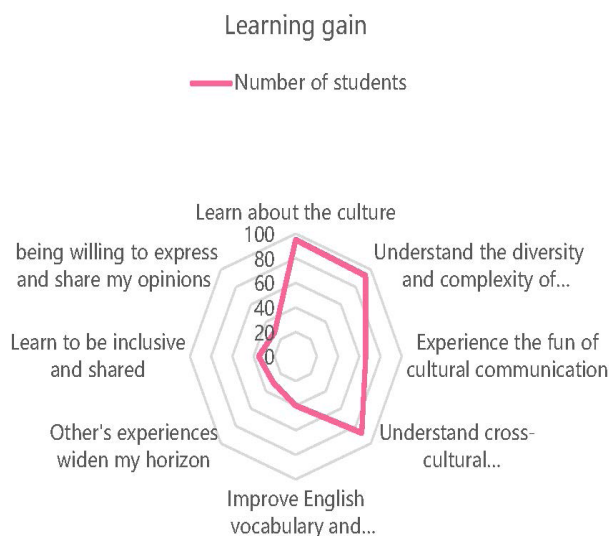
Figure 3
Students' Learning Gains

6. CONCLUSION

More than 80% of the students have not received cross-cultural education in the middle school stage, and it is extremely necessary to set up cross-cultural communication elective courses in the university stage. Based on the concept of OBE, this study builds a teaching framework for intercultural communication units and carries out practice. Students' learning logs and self-evaluation confirm the effectiveness of the teaching, and the teaching content can organically meet our goals. However, due to the limited number of class hours, too many class members and other reasons, the teaching content is not comprehensive enough, classroom activities are not enough and can not be fully carried out; In addition, students lack the English pragmatic ability to communicate fluently on cross-cultural communication topics. According to the requirements of students, more video resources and cases can be added in the future, the course public account can be built to support students' universal learning, and effective practical ways of intercultural communication with real context can be explored to better cultivate students' intercultural communication ability and integrate value shaping, knowledge imparts and ability cultivation.

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