

The Reform Model and Practical Pathways of College English Teaching from the Perspective of Transcultural Communication

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Abstract. The paper takes transcultural communication theories as analytical tools to open up the systemic bottlenecks of college English teaching across China. Through an analysis of everyday classroom operations and teaching materials, the study finds out that current mainstream teaching tends to adopt a static understanding of culture, which treats cultural knowledge as static, transmittable facts rather than as dynamic symbols freely negotiable by different groups. This distorted approach to understanding and teaching culture creates a crude and unfair imbalance in course content, with textbooks burdening teachers with predominantly Anglo-American teaching materials, while remaining overly enthusiastic about Western cultural narratives and largely insensitive to indigenous Chinese cultural elements. This distorted approach to understanding and teaching culture creates a crude and unfair imbalance in course content, with textbooks burdening teachers with predominantly Anglo-American teaching materials, while remaining overly enthusiastic about Western cultural narratives and largely insensitive to indigenous Chinese cultural elements. Psychologically, the one-sided account of Chinese culture in textbooks makes students feel detached, uninterested, and disengaged from the learning process. This undermines students' appreciation for their own cultural heritage while simultaneously eroding their ability to communicate autonomously across cultural boundaries. Hence, the paper puts forward practical optimization strategies which include broadening the range of teaching resources, adopting interactive and learner-centered classroom designs, and implementing multi-level, real-time assessment schemes. All these targeted improvements can eventually establish an inclusive and creative college English teaching framework which caters for different views of cultural discourse power.

Keywords: Transcultural communication, cultural discourse power, college English, teaching reform

1. Introduction

English is a global lingua franca, but its norms are always being "produced" by English speakers in various settings. In Chinese higher education, college English still puts British and American English varieties above the rest as the only legitimate ones, neglecting World Englishes, and

ignoring students' capacity to express Chinese cultural viewpoints. This puts learners in a mostly passive position in cultural contact, rendering them virtually unable to engage in equal conversation. Transcultural communication theory offers the best way forward. Different from the simplified East–West dichotomy, it emphasizes cultural hybridity, mutual negotiation, mutual construction of meaning. Integrating its ideas into college English reform encourages instructors to move beyond cultural essentialism and attend to the complicated interactions. Against this background, the present study diagnoses the perennial dilemmas in present-day practices from a transcultural perspective and puts forward a reform model suitable for Chinese colleges and universities systematically.

2. Core factors leading to deficiencies in current teaching

Problems in college English teaching are not a few isolated teaching mistakes, but systematic dilemmas built on history, from management and teachers' inherent cognitive limitations formed on the long years of exam-oriented training. According to transcultural communication theory, this paper also sorts out two key points of two interrelated causes for classroom predicaments widely existing.

First, old theories result in cultural essentialism and Western centralism. Existing teaching conceives culture as a closed, static system with fixed traits; teachers mechanically incorporate Hofstede's cultural dimensions to put complex culture differences into simple binary labeling, labeling culture groups, and leaving culture consciousness building with students to insufficient and superficial levels. Other than this, Kachru's three circles theory dominate the present teaching in China, bringing Anglo-American English as unique language standard, forming an unequal center-periphery biased hierarchical structure extremely excluding Chinese culture and non-native culture voices all over the world [1].

Second, teaching materials carry imbalanced cultural discourse power. Mainstream textbooks are flooded with Anglo-American content while lacking systematic interpretations of Chinese and Global South cultures. Chinese culture is merely presented as superficial symbols such as festivals, cuisine and martial arts, packaged as exotic novelties to cater to Orientalist biases. Such biased content arrangement fails to realize equal two-way cultural dialogue and becomes a barrier to sincere mutual cultural understanding between China and the world.

Third, most college English teachers received training under a Western culture-oriented teaching system. They face a dilemma: on one hand, they need to abide by native-speaker language norms; on the other hand, they hope to pass on Chinese cultural characteristics to students. Many teachers suffer from the so-called "Chinese cultural aphasia", lacking stable and accurate English expression methods for unique Chinese concepts [2]. Besides, exam-oriented evaluation systems push teachers to adopt conservative teaching strategies: they only teach fixed, test-related knowledge and dare not organize open cultural discussion activities. Under such pressure, the classroom can hardly be an "experimental ground" for transcultural communication practice.

Lastly, present college English assessment is dominated by objective multiple-choice items, adhering to grammatical rules fit for pragmatic usage. Classroom teaching relies on drilling, just as exams do, leaving little time for students to reflect on and evaluate diverse cross-cultural differences. Moreover, few assessments are themselves comprehensive enough to capture such nuanced understanding. Skills such as cultural critical awareness and transcultural creative thinking cannot be quantified through simple numerical grading. The disconnect among teaching, student learning, and assessment breaks the feedback loop. Without effective information being fed back into instruction, teachers are unable to cultivate the transcultural qualities that the curriculum aims to develop in students [3].

3. Integrated four-dimensional transcultural teaching framework for college English

Building on the preceding illustration of classroom drawbacks, the study built a holistic reform system in four different related dimensions in this essay. Instead of making superficial adjustments to individual teaching components, the framework reshapes the core logic behind college English instruction. On the basis of transcultural theories derived from Homi Bhabha's notion of "Third Space", the model constructs the classroom as an interactive cultural contact zone where different cultural discourses collide and intermingle, generating fresh symbolic meanings. Its primary purpose is to replace frozen cultural essentialist consciousness with a flexible and creative instructional community.

3.1. Restructuring curriculum resources to build a multi-centric cultural knowledge system

First and foremost, teaching resources must outgrow Anglo-American cultural centrality. Course syllables must involve diversified varieties of English from Kachru's Outer and Expanding Circles. For instance, such diverse resources include post-colonial fictions by V.S. Naipaul, news articles published by the Nigerian press and local dramas from Singapore. Through comparison, students unpack the complex dynamics of power relations and challenging resistances under standard and local varieties of English [4]. Such diversified input collapses the myth of native-speaker superiority and enables learners to observe that English is a hybrid linguistic symbol shaped by a rich tapestry of varied cultural backgrounds.

Meanwhile, textbooks need materialized Chinese culture compilations rather than household recipes. On the teaching side, instructors may also incorporate reading materials that include English translations of classical Chinese texts—such as the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Tao Te Ching*—alongside contemporary readings on China's economic rise and technological advancement. The teaching focus shifts from repetitive translation drills to cultural translation exercises, in which students learn to render familiar Chinese concepts—such as *tianxia* and *hé ér bù tóng*—into internationally intelligible and natural English expressions, while avoiding excessive simplification or exoticization of their own cultural traditions. This change makes one-way cultural exporting into equivalent two-way cross-cultural communications.

Besides material optimization, the curriculum needs cultural thinking training. Teachers can introduce Gramsci's hegemony theory, Said's Orientalism and Spivak's subaltern theory to guide students to dig out hidden stereotypes and ideological biases in textbooks [5]. Students are expected to shift from passive receivers of cultural content to critical analysts who can identify unequal power relations behind cultural descriptions.

3.2. Transforming teaching modes from knowledge infusion to co-creation of meaning

Only adjusting textbook content cannot achieve teaching reform; classroom interaction modes need fundamental changes. Transcultural communication theory and social constructivism converge on the view that both knowledge and cultural identity are shaped through social interaction, rather than being innate. Thus, task-based language teaching and project-based language learning are core teaching methods, and authentic cross-cultural tasks are the main carrier. Teachers will set classroom tasks such as classroom simulations of UN organs, case analyses of cross-cultural conflicts, and productions of trans-cultural digital stories. In classroom task-based activities, learners are not simply passive recipients of preset knowledge; rather, they actively co-produce unique cultural meanings.

Future digital instruments stretch the scope of transcultural practice still wider. A university may use MOOC platforms and overseas social media to open-up online paired-class communication among domestic and overseas learners. For instance, classroom discussions could center on algorithmic content filtering online and the varied digital cultures found across different countries. Such interactive courses equip students with the digital transcultural competency to decode cultural symbols across virtual networks and to reflect on how digital technologies drive cultural de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

The study also examines the educational meaning of linguistic "divergences". Transcultural thought rejects rigidity of linguistic purism, arguing that utterances that diverge from established language norms often generate new kinds of cultural effects. Teachers should also set up error-tolerant classrooms that support China English and other localization of English. Assessment goals of such class should be good communication ability and creative cultural negotiations, instead of strictly conforming to the grammatical rules of native English. This means not lowering teaching standards, but building a testing ground for students to produce discourse that is localized yet internationally understandable.

3.3. Restructuring teacher identities from knowledge givers to transcultural facilitators

The success of the above reform depends on changing teachers' classroom roles. Teachers are no longer mere providers of fixed answers in language teaching, but rather trans-cultural coordinators and boundary-crossing brokers. They design scenarios for cultural encounters and help students navigate the confusion of cultural differences. This is what meta-cultural sensibility entails: teachers' ability to consider issues from multiple cultural standpoints and help students engage in balanced dialogue amid unequal power relations. Schools need long-term systems for teacher training, not occasional short-term training. Interdisciplinary communities of teachers—from literature, communication, and sociology—can conduct classroom action research through workshops that use real teaching cases as their research subjects. The ultimate purpose of teacher training is to improve teachers' literacy in transcultural teaching, so that they can design classroom activities that truly foster Third Space dialogue, rather than merely making cultural introductions about superficial aspects of language classes.

3.4. Innovating evaluation system to construct diversified dynamic assessment standards

Firstly, schools should build multi-angle scoring standards covering linguistic competence, cultural hybridity ability, cross-cultural negotiation strategies and innovative expression capacity. The proportion of objective test questions needs to be reduced, while situational practical assessments are increased, including cross-cultural conflict case analysis and bilingual cultural creation such as short videos and digital stories. The core evaluation standard no longer judges whether students memorize cultural knowledge accurately, but evaluates their ability to create smooth and innovative expression schemes when facing ambiguous cultural boundaries.

Moreover, each student needs to build a digital transcultural learning portfolio, which stores cultural reflection diaries, cross-cultural project reports, original English podcasts and short videos, as well as screenshots of online cross-border communication. The portfolio accumulates materials dynamically online, with 3–4 fixed submission nodes every semester. This assessment method conforms to transcultural communication's emphasis on identity construction: students do not own fixed cultural identities, but reshape their cultural cognition in every cross-cultural exchange. The final score adopts a comprehensive scoring system combining standardized scoring rubrics, student

self-evaluation, peer mutual evaluation and teacher overall assessment to guarantee assessment reliability.

4. Specific implementation paths of transcultural teaching reform

Transcultural communication breaks the traditional source-target cultural binary logic in intercultural education, focusing on mutual penetration, hybridization and new symbolic generation during cultural contact, namely Bhabha's Third Space where meanings are jointly created rather than simply exchanged. To translate theoretical frameworks into operable classroom practice, this paper puts forward five layered implementation paths from institutional top-level design to specific classroom operation.

4.1. Top-level curriculum design: clarifying transcultural teaching objectives

Reform starts with curriculum standard revision. Universities should revise teaching objectives to clearly define transcultural competence as a core training target. This ability does not only refer to adapting to foreign cultural norms, but navigating hybrid cultural contexts, negotiating cultural differences and creating new cultural expressions independently [6]. Curriculum objectives need to abandon vague statements about international vision and set clear training outcomes: recognizing cultural fluidity, deconstructing cultural stereotypes and producing native cultural narratives acceptable to global audiences.

Institutional policy support is essential. Academic affairs departments can set up special funds for transcultural teaching reform to encourage the development of school-based textbooks and digital teaching resources. Without sustained institutional support, innovative teaching attempts can only remain scattered small-scale experiments instead of systematic overall reform.

4.2. Optimizing textbook compilation: building interconnected cultural meaning networks

Textbook reform is the key link connecting theory and practice. The compilation logic should follow the vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, which avoids both Western centrism and narrow cultural nationalism, and advocates equal interactive communication among all civilizations.

Wen Qiufang pointed out that current textbooks display cultural knowledge as fragmented museum exhibits without internal logical connections [7]. To solve this problem, textbooks should transform scattered knowledge points into interconnected cultural meaning networks, taking individual, social, national and global value dimensions as organizational clues to form progressive cognitive levels and reflect the internal correlation between different cultural backgrounds. The meaning network must realize two-way equal dialogue rather than one-way Western cultural input. Traditional textbooks regard Chinese culture as auxiliary exotic supplements to Anglo-American main content, which directly leads to students' cultural aphasia. Textbooks designed under transcultural thinking strike a balance between Chinese and foreign cultural narratives. They frame two sets of cultural viewpoints as equal dialogue partners instead of separate, disconnected modules.

For instance, a series of scholars led by Chen Zhengfeng insist that the emphasis of teaching should be moved from "understanding world cultures" to "telling Chinese stories". They mean, in other words, a move from receptive language abilities to creative active output ability of culture. A textbook can help learners understand other cultures, and also systematically train them to analyze China's development, traditions, and philosophies through an international language and standard

communicative norms. Ideological and political education is firmly connoted in content design, trying to foster students' cultural awareness and international communication competence instead of undertaking a type of mechanical indoctrination.

4.3. Three-tier classroom implementation model for transcultural training

This research breaks down classroom transcultural education into three consecutive steps, leading learners from passive receivers of cultures to autonomous creators of cultures:

Tier 1: Cognitive Deconstruction to Eliminate Cultural Essentialism

As the core task here, teachers would undo students' ingrained essentialist mindset, which relates fixed traits to entire cultural groups—for example, calling Germans "rugged" and the Chinese "collective". Rather than pretending that learners completely dismiss these generalized impressions, teachers enable learners to unravel such imbalanced power structures masked by those stereotypes. When interrogating biased international news stories, students need to identify the recurring coded terms in the text, learn to classify groups portrayed as the norm or as underdeveloped, and uncover voices that are shut out by the text. Their critical analytical practices help to solidify a sound platform for authentic cultural negotiation in subsequent classes.

Tier 2: Cultural Negotiation and Cognitive Restructuring

Teachers facilitate students' understanding of cultural meanings being negotiated through social interactions rather than existing pre-scheduled fixed content. Take Singapore English's "Can or not?" structure for example: students will observe the borrowing of syntactic logic from Chinese, and see that many forms of English have arisen out of trans-cultural contact [8]. Once they own non-standard variant forms in English as legitimate (apropos the specific claims made in the Third Space), they have acquired the basic personal negotiation skill required of the Third Space.

Tier 3: Transcultural Creative Output

Finally, the last step takes learners beyond the theorising step to practice creation. Transcreation stands for creation of brand-new discourse forms that preserve local culture meanings but fit a universal global communication logic. The National Contest for Telling the Chinese Stories Well is an excellent example of this: the contestants weave together local culture words/phrases into universal international discourse logic. This process will not dilute cultural authenticity; on the contrary, it realizes the meaning creation function of Third Space. After releasing original works on international social media and collecting real overseas feedback, students complete a closed-loop practice of cross-cultural negotiation and secondary creation.

4.4. Expanding practical platforms to build real cross-cultural communication scenarios

Simulated classroom activities cannot fully cultivate transcultural competence; students need face-to-face communication with foreign cultural subjects. Universities can establish sister class cooperation projects with overseas institutions, carrying out real-time video communication around youth globalization and other shared topics. Chinese and foreign students exchange local cultural perspectives, conduct repeated cultural translation and negotiation, and jointly form integrated viewpoints beyond single cultural backgrounds, which is the most authentic form of transcultural practice.

Besides online exchanges, schools should expand off-campus social practice channels, including volunteer services for international conferences and internships in multinational enterprises. Students need to record their experience of coordinating foreign cultural logic while sticking to native cultural standpoints. Through continuous reflective records, students gradually form hybrid

cultural identities, completing the transformation from simple cross-cultural adaptation to harmonious transcultural coexistence.

4.5. Dual-drive incentive mechanisms for teachers and students

Smooth reform implementation requires institutional incentive systems to mobilize the initiative of both teachers and students.

For teachers, the core transformation is changing their professional positioning from knowledge imparters to learning experience designers. Teacher training, job evaluation and reward systems should focus on teachers' ability to design cross-cultural interaction activities rather than pure knowledge teaching. Schools can support teachers to convert their cross-border research projects and international workshop experience into classroom teaching materials, breaking the separation between teaching and scientific research.

For students, schools can include transcultural practice activities into extracurricular credit management. This policy provides institutional recognition for students' cross-border communication and cultural creation, instead of setting meaningless administrative thresholds. Driven by tangible credits, students will take the initiative to transform from passive cultural learners to cultural bridge builders with flexible multi-cultural thinking ability.

5. Conclusion

The core viewpoint of this paper is clear: transcultural communication theory can not only diagnose the systematic defects of domestic college English teaching, but also provide feasible reform paths. The dilemmas of current teaching are not simple classroom operation problems, but structural contradictions between rigid cultural cognition, unequal cultural discourse power and the hybrid, fluid cultural environment of globalization.

Through reconstructing teaching content, transforming teaching modes, upgrading teachers' literacy and optimizing evaluation systems guided by transcultural theories, colleges can break three major restrictions: static cultural essentialism, asymmetric cultural power gap and Chinese cultural aphasia. The reform redefines the training orientation of college English: the course is no longer limited to basic language skill training, but shoulders the task of shaping students' cultural identity and cultivating global dialogue competence.

This teaching reform is far more than a simple update of teaching methods; it represents an ethical transformation of foreign language education. It positions Chinese college students as equal, confident and open participants in global cultural co-creation, rather than passive learners of foreign languages. The reform echoes the national strategic demand of telling Chinese stories to the world and conducting equal international dialogue, and cultivates a group of outstanding cross-cultural communicators who can contribute to building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

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