

# Effective Teaching Research on Cross-Cultural Understanding in English at Vocational Schools from the Perspective of Core Competencies

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the importance and strategies of teaching cross-cultural understanding in English at vocational schools from the perspective of core competencies. Integrating the concept of core competencies into English education fosters students' overall quality and provides a foundation for cross-cultural understanding. The research emphasizes students' cross-cultural needs, examines the relationship between cross-cultural understanding and vocational competence, and assesses its impact on English courses at vocational schools. Teaching strategies encompass goal setting, material selection, classroom teaching methods, assessment, and teacher training. Through these strategies, vocational school students can better adapt to the global job market, enhance their overall quality, and promote cultural exchange and cooperation.*

**Keywords:** *core competencies; vocational schools; English cross-cultural; teaching research*

## 1. Introduction

English education at vocational schools should focus not only on nurturing vocational skills but also on the overall development of students' qualities. Core competencies, as a comprehensive educational concept, emphasize cultivating students' interdisciplinary abilities, innovative thinking, cultural awareness, and social responsibility, garnering widespread attention globally. In this context, cross-cultural understanding becomes an indispensable component of English education at vocational schools. It not only helps students better integrate into professional fields in a globalized society but also enhances their cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication skills. This study explores teaching strategies, assessment, and reflection based on core competencies, aiming to provide practical guidance for English teachers at vocational schools on how to better promote students' cross-cultural understanding. Through this research, we hope to offer valuable insights and suggestions for the continuous development and optimization of English education at vocational schools.

## 2. The Significance of Core Competencies in English Teaching

### 2.1 Concept and Definition of Core Competencies

Core competencies represent a comprehensive educational concept aimed at cultivating students' holistic abilities that go beyond the boundaries of traditional subject knowledge. They encompass dimensions such as innovative thinking, critical reasoning, communication skills, teamwork, cultural awareness, and social responsibility. Core competencies are not merely about the accumulation of knowledge and skills; they are about an individual's capacity to understand, respond to, and adapt to the ever-changing real world.<sup>[1]</sup> In English teaching, core competencies emphasize that language learning encompasses not only vocabulary and grammar but also the development of cross-cultural understanding, cultural exchange, and critical thinking skills.

### 2.2 The Role of Core Competencies in Fostering Students' Overall Quality

The application of core competencies in English education contributes to the development of students' overall quality. By emphasizing innovative thinking, students are better equipped to tackle challenges in their future careers and propose innovative solutions. Core competencies also emphasize teamwork, which is particularly important in English education at vocational schools, as students need

to collaborate within teams to complete project tasks. Additionally, the social responsibility aspect of core competencies aids in nurturing students' professional ethics and social engagement awareness, making them valuable contributors to society.<sup>[2]</sup>

### ***2.3 Insights from Core Competencies for English Teaching at Vocational Schools***

Core competencies provide valuable insights for English teaching at vocational schools. Teachers can integrate the concept of core competencies to design more inspiring and interactive teaching activities, helping students develop interdisciplinary abilities and overall qualities. Furthermore, core competencies stress cultural awareness, which is beneficial for students at vocational schools to understand professional practices and international cooperation in different cultural contexts.<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, incorporating core competencies into English teaching can better prepare students to meet the demands of the global job market, enhancing their competitiveness and career prospects.

## **3. The Position of Cross-Cultural Understanding in English Teaching at Vocational Schools**

### ***3.1 Cross-Cultural Needs of Vocational School Students***

Students at vocational schools often engage in professional practices at an earlier stage, requiring them to possess cross-cultural understanding skills. Modern professional fields frequently involve international collaboration, multinational corporations, and diverse multicultural work environments, necessitating students' ability to comprehend and adapt to various working methods, values, and communication styles across different cultural backgrounds.<sup>[4]</sup> Thus, the cross-cultural needs of vocational school students are pressing, as they must master not only language skills but also cultural sensitivity to integrate into and contribute effectively to the global job market.

### ***3.2 Relationship between Cross-Cultural Understanding and Vocational Competence***

Cross-cultural understanding is closely related to vocational competence because, in professional domains, individuals need to interact not only with colleagues but also with clients or partners from diverse cultural and background contexts. Cross-cultural understanding enhances students' vocational competence, including effective communication skills, cultural sensitivity, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork skills. Success in the workplace often depends not only on technical abilities but also on individuals' capacity to understand and respect different cultural perspectives and establish positive cross-cultural relationships.<sup>[5]</sup>

### ***3.3 The Impact of Cross-Cultural Understanding on English Courses at Vocational Schools***

The impact of cross-cultural understanding on English courses at vocational schools is profound, requiring curriculum diversification and a real-world orientation. Firstly, curriculum design should incorporate more cultural content to enable students to comprehend the differences and commonalities between various cultures. This fosters cultural sensitivity and respect, providing a foundation for students' future performance in multicultural workplaces. The emphasis on cross-cultural understanding makes cultural exchange and conflict resolution integral parts of the curriculum. Students need to engage in simulated cultural exchange activities to enhance their cross-cultural communication skills.<sup>[6]</sup> Additionally, students should learn how to effectively address cross-cultural conflicts to facilitate cooperation and teamwork. Teachers must serve as mentors for cross-cultural understanding, guiding students in both in-class and out-of-class cross-cultural learning and practice. They need to continually enhance their own cross-cultural education competence to better instruct students.

## **4. Teaching Strategies for English Cross-Cultural Understanding in Vocational Schools Based on Core Competencies**

### ***4.1 Setting Teaching Objectives: Integration of Core Competencies and Cross-Cultural Goals***

In English teaching at vocational schools, the establishment of teaching objectives plays a pivotal role. These objectives should not only revolve around imparting language skills but should also comprehensively consider the requirements of core competencies and cross-cultural understanding. This holistic approach to teaching aims to provide students with a well-rounded education to meet the

diverse demands of modern professional fields. The concept of core competencies emphasizes students' all-round development, including abilities in innovative thinking, critical reasoning, teamwork, and social responsibility. In vocational school English courses, this means that educational objectives should encompass not only language skill enhancement but also the cultivation of students' overall qualities. For instance, students should learn how to collaborate within teams, employ critical thinking to solve problems, and demonstrate social responsibility throughout their careers. Cross-cultural understanding should also be an integral part of these teaching objectives. Vocational school students often face cross-cultural challenges early in their careers, making it crucial to develop their cross-cultural communication and cultural adaptability. Educational objectives can explicitly reflect this, such as students' ability to understand and respect colleagues and clients from different cultural backgrounds and effectively communicate and collaborate in international cooperation projects.

#### ***4.2 Selection of Teaching Materials and Resources: Careful Selection of Cultural Content***

In English teaching for cross-cultural understanding at vocational schools, the choice of teaching materials and resources plays a critical role. Thoughtfully selecting teaching materials and resources is essential to ensure that students gain profound insights into and respect for different cultures. Teaching materials should encompass a wide range of cultural content, covering various countries, regions, and cultural backgrounds. This helps students gain a comprehensive understanding of cultural differences and similarities. Through diverse materials, students can better cultivate their cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding. Furthermore, the selection of materials should reflect the realities of today's globalized society, covering cultural content relevant to students' future professional fields. Multimedia resources and cross-cultural case studies can enrich the curriculum. By utilizing videos, audio clips, images, and other multimedia resources, teachers can showcase real cultural scenarios and cross-cultural communication contexts to students. This aids students in vividly comprehending cultural differences, increasing their interest and engagement. Cross-cultural case studies also enable students to delve into and analyze interactions and challenges between different cultures, enhancing their critical thinking skills. Hands-on experiences are also valuable resources. Organizing students to participate in cross-cultural exchange projects, cultural festivals, or international cooperation practices allows them to experience cross-cultural interactions firsthand, bridging the gap between classroom theory and practical application. Such experiential learning can profoundly impact students, fostering their cultural adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills.

#### ***4.3 Classroom Teaching Methods: Strategies to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Communication and Understanding***

In vocational school English teaching, employing effective teaching methods to promote cross-cultural communication and understanding is crucial. Group discussions are a commonly used teaching strategy that fosters interaction among students and the exchange of cultural viewpoints. Teachers can divide students into cross-cultural groups and encourage them to discuss specific topics or cases together. Such interactions allow students to listen to perspectives from different cultural backgrounds, facilitating a better understanding of cultural differences and commonalities. Role-play is a dynamic way to immerse students in cross-cultural situations. Teachers can design role-play activities where students simulate cross-cultural communication scenarios, such as international business negotiations, cultural exchanges, or international cooperation projects. By assuming various cultural roles, students can gain a deeper understanding of cultural differences, enhancing their cultural adaptability. Cultural exchange projects and cross-cultural dialogues are also beneficial teaching methods. Teachers can organize students to participate in cultural exchange projects, such as cultural exhibitions, international collaborative assignments, or cultural festivals. These projects actively involve students in cross-cultural activities, enabling them to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds and gain insights into other cultures. Cross-cultural dialogues can help students practice their cross-cultural communication skills by simulating real cross-cultural communication situations, role-play, or cultural exchange projects. Teachers should encourage students to reflect on themselves, helping them to deeply consider their cultural biases and experiences. Through self-reflection, students can gain clearer insights into their cultural viewpoints and attempt to understand other cultures' perspectives. This self-awareness and increased cultural sensitivity are crucial for cross-cultural understanding.

#### ***4.4 Assessment and Evaluation Methods: Diverse Assessment Tools***

In English cross-cultural understanding teaching at vocational schools, using diverse assessment methods and tools is essential to accurately reflect students' comprehensive qualities and abilities. While traditional written and oral exams can assess students' language skills, cross-cultural understanding goes beyond these, necessitating a variety of assessment methods and tools. Project assessments are an effective evaluation method. Teachers can require students to participate in cross-cultural projects, such as simulating international business negotiations, cultural exchange activities, or international cooperation projects. Students need to apply their language skills and cross-cultural understanding to solve real-world problems in these projects. Project assessments better reflect students' performance in real-world scenarios, encouraging them to apply what they have learned comprehensively. Cultural comparative analysis is another valuable assessment method. Teachers can ask students to compare specific aspects of different cultures, such as values, etiquette norms, or communication styles. Students can present their analysis through essays, presentations, or group discussions. This method helps cultivate students' cultural sensitivity and analytical skills, enabling them to better comprehend cultural differences and commonalities.

#### ***4.5 Teacher Role and Training Needs: Teachers' Cross-Cultural Education Competence***

In English cross-cultural understanding teaching at vocational schools, the role of teachers is crucial. They should not only be language education experts but also possess cross-cultural education competence to ensure that students develop cross-cultural understanding fully. Teachers should serve as guides and motivators in cross-cultural understanding teaching. They need to encourage active participation in cross-cultural activities, promote cultural exchange, and provide necessary guidance and support. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions, ponder different cultural viewpoints, and reflect on their cultural biases. This guiding role helps nurture students' cross-cultural sensitivity and critical thinking abilities. Teachers need to continuously improve their cross-cultural education competence. This includes gaining knowledge and understanding of different cultures' history, values, traditions, and social customs to better comprehend students' cultural backgrounds and effectively guide them. Teacher training and professional development programs can provide guidance on cross-cultural communication skills, teaching material selection, curriculum design, and training in cross-cultural conflict resolution techniques. This continuous learning and improvement process helps teachers better fulfill their roles. Teachers should also set an example in cross-cultural education. Their words and actions should reflect cultural sensitivity and respect, encouraging students to emulate them. Teachers can do this by sharing their own cross-cultural experiences in class, encouraging diverse viewpoints, and respecting students from different cultural backgrounds, thereby setting a role model image.

### **5. Evaluation and Reflection in English Cross-Cultural Understanding Teaching**

#### ***5.1 Methods and Tools for Teaching Evaluation***

In English cross-cultural understanding teaching, selecting appropriate evaluation methods and tools is a key factor in ensuring that students can develop their cross-cultural understanding abilities comprehensively. While traditional written and oral exams can assess students' language skills, cross-cultural understanding goes far beyond that. Therefore, diverse evaluation methods and tools are needed. Project assessment is an effective evaluation method. Teachers can require students to participate in cross-cultural projects, such as simulating international business negotiations, cultural exchange activities, or international cooperation projects. Students need to apply their language skills and cross-cultural understanding to solve real-world problems in these projects. Project assessments can better reflect students' performance in real-life situations and encourage them to apply their acquired knowledge comprehensively. Cultural comparative analysis is another valuable assessment method. Teachers can ask students to compare specific aspects of different cultures, such as values, etiquette norms, or communication styles. Students can present their analysis through essays, presentations, or group discussions. This method helps cultivate students' cultural sensitivity and analytical skills, enabling them to better understand cultural differences and commonalities.

### ***5.2 Student Outcomes and Feedback***

An important goal of teaching evaluation is to provide students with feedback on their achievements and development directions in cross-cultural understanding. This helps stimulate students' interest in learning and encourages them to continuously improve. Teachers should provide specific and detailed feedback. Feedback should emphasize students' successes in cross-cultural understanding, such as their outstanding performance in cultural comparative analysis, cross-cultural dialogues, or projects. At the same time, feedback should also point out areas for improvement, which may include language use, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, or critical thinking, among others. Specific feedback helps students better understand their strengths and challenges, as well as the direction for further improvement. Timely feedback is crucial for students' learning. Teachers should strive to provide feedback promptly after students complete tasks or projects so that students can promptly correct errors and enhance their performance. Timely feedback can also boost students' interest in learning and increase their self-confidence. Encouraging students to engage in self-assessment is also essential. Students can use self-assessment to examine their own performance, identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This helps foster students' self-reflection and self-improvement skills, enabling them to independently enhance their cross-cultural understanding abilities.

### ***5.3 Reflection and Improvement of Teaching Effectiveness***

Reflection and improvement of teaching effectiveness are critical components of English cross-cultural understanding teaching. They help ensure that teaching quality continuously improves to meet students' needs. Teachers should regularly assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. This can be achieved by collecting feedback from students, analyzing student performance, and observing the teaching process. Student feedback is highly valuable and can provide insights into students' views on course content and teaching methods, as well as their needs and opinions. Simultaneously, analyzing student performance can help teachers understand which aspects need improvement and which have been successful. Teachers should pay special attention to the development of students' cross-cultural understanding abilities. This can be assessed through evaluating students' performance in cultural comparative analysis, cross-cultural dialogues, project reports, among other areas. Teachers can compare students' performance at the beginning and end of the course to determine their progress in cross-cultural understanding. This helps teachers gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum and enables them to formulate corresponding improvement plans. Teachers should continuously learn and accumulate more cross-cultural education experience. Knowledge and understanding in the field of cross-cultural education are continually evolving, so teachers need to maintain up-to-date educational competence. Participating in cross-cultural education training, seminars, and professional development activities can help teachers continually enhance their knowledge and educational skills to better meet students' needs.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this study, we have delved into effective teaching of cross-cultural understanding in vocational schools from the perspective of core competencies. The concept and definition of core competencies emphasize the cultivation of comprehensive qualities, with cross-cultural understanding playing an indispensable role in English education in vocational schools. Vocational school students need to possess cross-cultural skills to meet the challenges of the global workplace, and the principles of core competencies provide valuable guidance for education. By establishing clear teaching objectives, selecting appropriate teaching materials and resources, employing effective teaching methods, diverse assessment tools, and continuously enhancing teachers' cross-cultural education competence, we can better nurture the cross-cultural understanding abilities of vocational school students. This will not only make them more competitive in their professional fields but also enable them to better integrate into a multicultural society, promoting cultural exchange and international cooperation.

In summary, English education in vocational schools should focus on developing students' core competencies and cross-cultural understanding abilities to meet the demands of the modern professional arena. This not only contributes to students' personal development but also fosters diversity and globalization in society. By continually improving educational methods and strategies, we can provide better support and opportunities for the future success and career development of vocational school students.

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