# The Importance of Improving Intercultural Communicative Competence in College-English Teaching

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*Abstract: With the advancement of the science and technology and the development in transportation and telecommunication, the intercultural exchanges have been on the rise dramatically. Thus there is a great demand for the people with great intercultural competence working in the multinational environment. It is high time that measures should be taken to improve the intercultural awareness and competence for college students.*
*Keywords: Intercultural Competence, College-English Teaching*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It's undoubted that English has established itself as the universal language with the process of globalization. The people with abundant intercultural awareness and competence are in great need in the rapidly-developing society. However, the problem of neglecting culture awareness inputting in current college English teaching is apparent. Great importance is attached to linguistic skills which took a lion's share in college English class. The students with little or no cultural knowledge and competence, as the outcome of this way of teaching, often encounter countless intercultural frustrations and failures in the frequent contact during this time of globalization. Therefore, cultivation of the college students' intercultural communicative ability permits no delay.

## 2. THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

It's difficult to define culture for the boundless and complex aspects it concerns such as groups, human societies, systems, behavior and activities. "There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture."(Hall,1990)Wu li (1989) and Zhang Zhanyi (1999)divide culture into two categories from the perspective of intercultural communication study: the verbal & non-verbal cultural  elements which do not have direct influence on successful communication and the ones that have the direct influence on successful communication. The former contains the cultural knowledge such as economy, education, religion, law, arts and literature while the latter reflects people's values and beliefs, true and false standards, social

customs etc., which may result in real communicative obstacles in the communication in intercultural surroundings.

## 3. CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The relationship between culture and language is so intimate that we could not use a language natively without concerning its corresponding cultural background. To some extent, language is a part of culture and serves as one of the carriers and primary medium of transmitting culture, making it come down from generation to generation; culture influences, determines and shapes language, making it indispensable to language in many perspectives. "Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded".(Rivers,1981).

The fundamental aims of English teaching includes improve learners' language proficiency as well as students' intercultural competence, which are inseparable with each other. Firstly, the era of globalization is full of multinational cooperation and integration, which set a high demand on the people's intercultural communication competence, thus culture studies are necessary to the university students who will face the international arena after graduation, helping people of different cultures feel comfortable while interacting and avoid misunderstandings. Secondly, cultivating the students' cultural awareness can enhance the students' scope of knowledge and broaden their vision so that they could be endowed with a deeper insight into the world. Input with the intercultural knowledge, the students take part in the classroom activities (as well as the extracurricular ones) devised to improve the intercultural communication competence with more solid theoretical foundation and more delicate skills. Thus their healthy personality and more mature outlook on world and values are formed. Thirdly, cultural studies can serve as the accelerator to motivate the students to learn the language harder by arousing their interest. By immersing the students in the foreign culture learning, the teacher can help students feel less alienated from the target culture. Learning the practical and intriguing knowledge of the foreign culture, the students are more likely to accept, digest, and apply the knowledge that they are more interested in. At the same time, their desire for learning more is stimulated and class atmosphere is enlivened. Last but not least, cultivating the university students' cultural awareness can strengthen the friendship and understanding among nations as well as individuals coming from different cultural background. In the intercultural contact they can choose the appropriate style, register and manner to use for effective communication in that particular situation, equipped with the dynamic nature of the target culture. Students can also avoid making inadvertent mistakes that cause mistakes, thus the embarrassing situation of arousing hostility from native speakers is avoided.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In all, with the current trend of globalization, an increasing number of people are involved in intercultural communication, and the responsibility of fostering the university students' intercultural communicative competence is crucial. "It helps avoid the stereotypes and enable

learners to take control of their own learning as well as to achieve autonomy by evaluating and questioning the wider context within which the learning of the target language is embedded" (Tomalin&Stempleski,1993).Thus immediate measures should be taken to improve the students intercultural awareness. The old way of explaining the language material exclusively and exhaustively should be replaced by the approach of combining the language teaching with the target culture inputting and ways of fostering the students' intercultural communicative competence, thus they will fulfill the tasks with a more comprehensive perspective in the multinational arena, avoiding the negative stereotypes and misunderstandings due to the lack of target culture.

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