

Innovative Research on English Reading Teaching in Universities under the Background of Intercultural Communication

Nan Cao*

Liaoning University of International Business and Economics, Dalian 116052, Liaoning, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: The globalized era has posed new demands on English teaching in universities, emphasizing the cultivation of students' intercultural communication skills and the delivery of innovative, practical, and high-quality English talents needed in the new era. Based on this, English reading teaching in universities should transform educational concepts, innovate educational models, enrich the cultural attributes of reading teaching, and guide students to understand cultural backgrounds and differences, so as to showcase their talents in intercultural communication. This article explores the innovation of English reading teaching in universities against the background of intercultural communication, analyzes the connotation and importance of intercultural communication, and further proposes practical strategies for the innovation of English teaching in universities.

Keywords: English reading teaching in universities; Intercultural communication; Innovation

Online publication: October 16, 2025

1. Introduction

Language is the most direct tool for humans to express thoughts and disseminate knowledge, and it is a necessary means for humans to communicate and exchange with each other. As an international language, English plays an important role in international communication. English reading teaching in universities should enable students to understand English, experience cultural differences, and better participate in international exchanges. However, in traditional reading teaching, teachers focus on imparting language knowledge points while ignoring intercultural communication in reading, which affects students' reading quality. In order to meet the new challenges faced in the new era, English reading teaching in universities should update concepts, transform traditional teaching methods, and carry out reading teaching from the perspective of intercultural communication, allowing students to recognize cultural differences, improve language skills, consolidate learning achievements, and become high-quality talents.

2. Analysis of the connotation of intercultural communication

Intercultural communication refers to the interactive process between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds (such as language, values, customs, beliefs, etc.). It includes both cross-border exchanges (such as international business, diplomacy) and cultural collisions arising from differences in geography, ethnicity, occupation, etc.^[1]. Its essence is to cross the boundaries of cultural systems, transmit information through verbal and non-verbal symbols, and understand each other's thinking patterns and behavioral logic. In other words, intercultural communication involves not only language interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, but also interactions in multiple fields such as concepts, customs, and social norms. When individuals or groups come from the same cultural environment, shared values and behavioral guidelines usually make communication smoother. However, when individuals or groups come from different cultural environments, differences in cultural concepts, behaviors, and values become apparent, leading to cultural collisions. Through these collisions, a deep interpretation of culture is generated, enabling "cultural translation" and effective communication.

In college English reading instruction, students also face difficulties in cultural understanding. Cultural differences and discontinuities have a non-negligible impact on students' reading comprehension. The lack of cultural knowledge can lead to reading obstacles and even misinterpretations. Therefore, college English teaching in the context of intercultural communication requires students to deeply understand communication norms and habits in different cultural backgrounds, flexibly adjust their communication strategies in intercultural exchanges, effectively communicate in English with people from different cultures, and respect multiculturalism. Based on this, reading instruction also needs to emphasize cross-cultural teaching to enhance students' learning outcomes.

3. The significance of conducting college English reading instructional practices in the context of intercultural communication

3.1. Cultivating students' intercultural communication skills and enhancing international competitiveness

In the current globalized context, international exchanges and cooperation are increasingly close, and English talents with intercultural communication skills have become an important force in international exchanges and cooperation. Intercultural communication promotes the integration and innovation of different cultures, forming a diverse and symbiotic global cultural ecology. Integrating into this cultural ecology is a prerequisite for effective exchanges and cooperation. College English reading instruction in the context of intercultural communication can cultivate students' reading skills while guiding them to understand textual content from an intercultural perspective, fully interpret different cultural backgrounds, and implicitly cultivate intercultural communication skills. This way, students can showcase themselves in international cultural exchanges, possess distinct advantages, effectively adapt to the current multicultural ecology, interpret cultural information, enhance their international competitiveness, and become talents with comprehensive literacy, prominent abilities, and intercultural communication skills.

3.2. Cultivating students' cultural tolerance and establishing correct values

UNESCO emphasizes that "cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and is crucial for development." On the one hand, cultures have their respective differences, forming a diverse landscape. On

the other hand, cultures are also in a gradual process of integration. Research on cultural evolution theory indicates that the main trend of cultural evolution is convergence, meaning that as cultures develop, they increasingly tend to unify. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate students' awareness of cultural tolerance, which can promote cultural development. Conducting college English reading instruction in the context of intercultural communication allows students to encounter different cultures in their reading, experience cultural diversity, and also seek cultural commonalities, appreciate the charm of multiculturalism, gradually recognize the uniqueness of other cultures, and develop a deeper understanding of their own cultural attributes, fostering a sense of cultural identity. Additionally, it enables students to respect, appreciate, and tolerate multiculturalism, cultivating cultural tolerance. By drawing nourishment from culture, students can establish correct values and achieve personal growth ^[2]. Simultaneously, in an educational environment that embraces multiculturalism, students develop a broader global perspective, significantly enhancing their intercultural communication skills and better adapting to the diversified society of the future.

3.3. Enrich the connotation of reading teaching and enhance educational effects

Traditional reading teaching often focuses on vocabulary and grammar instruction, emphasizing the explanation of knowledge points and the improvement of reading ability, while ignoring the interpretation of cultural backgrounds and lacking in-depth exploration. This leads to students having a one-sided understanding of the content of reading texts, without a comprehensive analysis of cultural connotations, and thus obtaining limited nutrients from it. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, college English reading teaching places greater emphasis on cultural understanding, thereby filling the “skeleton” of reading with the “flesh and blood” of culture, making the entire teaching process become three-dimensional, transparent, and richer in connotation. The integration and mutual complementarity of language knowledge, learning, and cultural experience significantly enhance students' interest in learning, enabling them to participate in cultural exploration and cross-cultural communication, and cultivating their language ability and cultural awareness.

4. Practical strategies for innovating college English reading teaching under cross-cultural communication

4.1. Create cultural context conflicts, stimulate reading motivation, and prepare for reading

Reading preparation includes aspects such as language preparation, psychological preparation, and reading motivation, among which motivation is the key. Teachers should be guided by addressing reading difficulties, starting from students' academic situations, and helping them prepare for reading ^[3]. Before designing reading teaching activities, teachers need to understand learners' schematic knowledge, diagnose, activate, or fill in gaps, while cleverly stimulating students' reading motivation and interest in learning. In the context of cross-cultural communication, teachers can activate students' reading motivation from the perspective of “cultural conflict”, transforming traditional reading teaching modes, innovatively introducing cultural situations, creating cultural context conflicts, and activating students' cultural awareness. Cultural context conflicts that are not obviously related to the reading content, in essence, can stimulate students' cross-cultural communication awareness, making them pay attention to cultural content in subsequent reading. This teaching method also promotes innovation in reading teaching, effectively introducing case analysis and situational teaching, enriching educational content, innovating educational modes, and injecting new vitality into English reading.

In college English reading instruction, after realizing that students lack experience in cross-cultural communication before class, teachers have set a new teaching objective: “Helping students understand cultural differences and improving their cross-cultural communication skills.” Before reading instructions, teachers introduce authentic cross-cultural communication scenarios, create cultural context conflicts, and stimulate students’ reading motivation. Teachers first introduce problems or phenomena through cross-cultural cases, such as communication barriers caused by accents and cultural differences, conflicts arising from different cultural customs, and frustrations encountered during cultural transmission. This progressively guides students to deeply consider issues and key points in cross-cultural contexts, enhances their awareness of cross-cultural communication, and sharpens their cultural sensitivity. Teachers also design scenario simulation activities before reading, allowing students to role-play people from different cultural backgrounds and enact problems that arise during communication, thereby understanding the importance of cross-cultural communication. After preparing for the reading, the teacher conducts a creative reading class with the theme “Crossing the cultural divide”, guiding students to think and communicate cross-culturally while reading, improving their communication skills in a multicultural environment, and boosting their confidence in cross-cultural communication. After reading, teachers design a role-playing activity called “Cultural Conflict Mediator”, connecting it to the cultural context conflict before reading. This allows students to apply what they have learned from reading to mediate cultural conflicts, achieving continuity before and after class. This approach innovates English reading instruction, enabling students to experience the importance of culture and the charm of multiculturalism through an integrated learning experience.

4.2. Enrich English reading materials and build a multicultural reading classroom

From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, college English reading instruction should innovate reading content by introducing multicultural reading materials. Starting from the reading content, teachers should further innovate reading instruction and build a multicultural reading classroom. This allows students to understand different cultural knowledge, read texts with different cultural backgrounds, experience cultural diversity, and improve their cross-cultural communication skills. Teachers can collect relevant reading materials from various aspects, such as cultural customs, cultural values, and ways of thinking, to build a cross-cultural reading classroom. Simultaneously, teachers can encourage students to compare Chinese and foreign cultures while reading, fostering a sense of cultural inclusivity, further cultivating cultural confidence, and actively promoting Chinese culture in future cross-cultural communication.

In the practical implementation of English teaching in higher education, traditional teaching methods have been reflected upon, and diverse cultural reading materials have been introduced to construct a new reading paradigm and achieve innovation, starting from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. Schools have innovated at the curricular level, designing courses for cross-cultural reading, supplementing relevant cultural knowledge, and introducing learning practices for cultural comparison and cultural exchange. In specific course teaching, teachers emphasize the improvement of students’ reading comprehension skills and comprehensive language application abilities. Through multicultural texts and supporting activities, students’ awareness of cross-cultural communication is enhanced. Teachers provide students with cross-cultural reading materials, such as articles introducing culture, English literary works related to culture, and news reports with cultural topics. For example, teachers introduce a theoretical article titled “Identity and Culture” to enable students to deeply reflect during reading, understand the connection between identity and culture, and cultivate

a sense of cultural identity. Teachers also introduce relatively vivid and intuitive cultural reading materials. For instance, by connecting Chinese tea culture with English tea culture, teachers introduce two texts, “Chinese Tea Culture” and “The British Tea Culture: More Than Just a Drink”, allowing students to engage in cross-cultural communication and generate their own thoughts while reading. Teachers provide guidance such as “Pay attention to the similarities and differences between the two cultures” and “Focus on the concluding sentences after transitional conjunctions”, enabling students to master reading skills and improve their reading abilities based on cultural understanding. With the help of reading materials, students recognize the profoundness of Chinese culture, experience the role of cross-cultural communication, understand cultural dissemination and integration, and thus view different cultures with a more tolerant attitude.

4.3. Effectively utilizing information technology to fully innovate reading teaching models

In college English reading teaching, the utilization of information technology is crucial as it can enhance the quality of education, promote independent learning and thinking among students, and improve reading efficiency. In the context of cross-cultural communication, teachers can maximize the use of information technology, fully realize technology-driven innovation in reading teaching, and enable students to understand culture and improve their reading abilities through intelligent and immersive learning^[4]. Teachers can allow students to participate in reading practices with the help of online dictionaries, online search tools, and artificial intelligence, solving vocabulary problems and promptly understanding relevant cultural content, thereby improving reading efficiency. On the other hand, multimedia technology and virtual reality technology can also create rich cultural contexts for students, display diverse reading content, and assist students in experiential learning. Teachers can also organize online cross-cultural communication activities, allowing students to experience culture in real language practice, transfer and apply what they have learned from reading, and enhance their English proficiency.

For example, in the innovation of college English reading teaching under cross-cultural communication, schools actively update teaching tools in foreign language institutes, repair multimedia facilities, introduce new equipment, build an intelligent educational environment, and promote a three-tiered teaching ecology that is “student-centered, teacher-guided, and practice-driven.” This optimizes traditional teaching methods and brings students a new and highly immersive learning experience. Teachers use the internet to present intuitive reading content to students, while also allowing them to read using online tools. For instance, while reading texts about “Western festival culture”, students recognize the close connection between Western festival culture and their religious customs. They inquire with artificial intelligence online to learn relevant cultural knowledge, independently solve doubts during the reading process, and expand their learning of cultural knowledge. Teachers also effectively use multimedia technology to show students clips from movies like “The Joy Luck Club”, “Gua Sha”, and “Crash”, allowing students to recognize the importance of cultural communication through concrete experiences. Through sensory experiences, students become more active in reading English texts and offer their own suggestions from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, promoting cultural exchange. Teachers not only impart language knowledge but also cultivate students’ cross-cultural thinking. Teachers also utilize diverse online tools, such as the campus smart teaching cloud platform, to construct a multi-dimensional, comprehensive, and multi-modal virtual teaching space. This simulates specific scenes of cultural exchange, enabling students to travel through time and space with the help of technology for cross-cultural communication. Through profound experiences, students recognize the charm of Chinese culture and

become aware of the unique characteristics of different cultures through exploration.

4.4. Innovating interactive learning models and integrating cultural experience activities

The essence of the reading teaching process is interaction, requiring organized cooperative learning. In the process of reading teaching, teachers should innovate teaching methods, introduce interactive learning models, and improve the effectiveness of reading teaching through student communication. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, teachers can innovate interactive learning models and integrate cultural experience activities. This allows students to participate in learning practices and cultural exchanges through cooperation, showcasing their personalized learning achievements. In collaboration, students complement, communicate, and help each other, applying their English reading knowledge to participate in cross-cultural communication. Teachers should also adjust teaching activities in a timely manner based on students' learning situations, promoting the construction of a new-style reading classroom through effective teacher-student and student-student interactions.

Reading comprehension is a highly individualized thought process, and effective interactive and group activities can foster mutual inspiration and assistance among students, as well as cultivate their sense of cooperation. In English reading instruction, teachers innovate effectively from traditional cooperative teaching models, integrating various cultural experience activities to enable students to engage in diverse interactions. For instance, a teacher might conduct a reading lesson themed “A Culinary Journey”, introducing reading materials about world cuisine. This allows students to embark on a journey of cultural exploration through food, experiencing the charm of multiculturalism. Teachers encourage students to express their viewpoints and design practical activities such as introducing hometown cuisine or experiencing Western cuisine, enabling them to understand culture through immersive experiences and diverse interactions.

Higher education institutions also design international cooperation and exchange programs based on the backdrop of international exchanges, offering short-term study visits and internship opportunities. These programs enable students to participate in international collaborations, conducting cross-cultural communication through authentic practices and broad interactions. Students can engage in a wider range of cultural exchanges and experiential activities, elevating their reading skills and English proficiency in real-life language situations. On the foundation of understanding and respecting diverse cultures, students contribute to cultural exchange and integration. Through diversified interactive learning practices, students gain a deep understanding of the linguistic logic, thinking patterns, and behavioral habits of different cultures, showcasing their talents in cross-cultural communication.

5. Conclusion

In summary, cultivating students' intercultural communication skills in college English reading teaching is of great significance and is an important topic in the new era. This article proposes innovative strategies for college English reading teaching from a cross-cultural perspective. Teachers should actively innovate teaching methods, stimulate students' subjectivity and creativity, enhance their intercultural communication awareness and cultural perception abilities, and further cultivate high-quality talents in the new era with solid basic English skills, strong intercultural communication skills, and a broad international perspective.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Liu DD, 2025, The Practice of English Reading Teaching in Universities from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication. *English Teachers*, 25(8): 30–32 + 41.
- [2] Sun X, 2024, Analysis of College English Reading Teaching Model Incorporating Cultural Awareness Training. *Modern English*, 2024(13): 35–37.
- [3] Wang Y, 2024, Research on College English Teaching Strategies Based on Intercultural Communication Theory. *English Square*, 2024(15): 56–59.
- [4] Lv JJ, 2023, Research on the Practice and Innovation of College English Teaching. Cultural Development Press, Beijing, 165.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.