

Original article
UDC 378
doi: 10.17223/15617793/518/21

Strategies for overcoming the problems of intercultural communication in Chinese students' EFL teaching

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Abstract. This study investigates effective strategies to enhance intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among Chinese EFL learners through a mixed-methods approach. Drawing on Wen Qiufang's intercultural framework and China's 2020 EFL guidelines, we analyzed survey data from 255 undergraduates/graduates (128 males, 127 females) via SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, as one of the most influential statistical analysis software globally, it integrates data management, statistical modeling, and visualization into a full-process analytical platform) 27.0. Findings reveal that technology-integrated comparative cultural analysis significantly improves ICC ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.298$), while highlighting persistent challenges in balancing Western and Chinese cultural content. The proposed Third Space Teaching Approach demonstrates efficacy in fostering hybrid cultural literacy through cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies.

Keywords: EFL teaching, Chinese educational context, intercultural competence, teaching intercultural communication in China, strategies

For citation: Liyuan, Lin & Obdalova, O.A. (2025) Strategies for overcoming the problems of intercultural communication in Chinese students' EFL teaching. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta – Tomsk State University Journal*. 518. pp. 183–191. doi: 10.17223/15617793/518/21

1. Introduction

Continuous advancement of globalization and the sustained implementation of the Belt and Road Strategy (The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, aims to enhance regional connectivity and economic cooperation through infrastructure development, trade, and investment across Asia, Europe, Africa, and beyond) make it necessary to strengthen the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence for university students in the new era of multicultural society [1]. As one of the important languages for international communication, English is widely used in the process of international communication in life and work, and it is in great demand among contemporary Chinese university students. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages emphasizes that the purpose of teaching modern languages is to promote "mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identity and cultural diversity" through more effective intercultural communication [2]. Moreover, the Ministry of Education of China issued Guide to Teaching English at University (2020), which further proposes that EFL teaching at university should take into account its instrumental and humanistic nature [3], emphasizing the importance and urgency of developing intercultural competence in learners. It can be seen that language teaching nowadays is not only for language learning, but also for enhancing cultural integration and communication in the context of different cultural backgrounds and communicative contexts.

This update has marked a change in the goal of foreign language teaching and brought significant implications and challenges for pedagogical practices [4]. Now we will

examine some specific challenges in EFL teaching in China.

Due to the fact that English language teaching in Chinese universities has long been under the influence of traditional exam-oriented education there was an over-emphasis on the importance of the cultures of English-speaking countries. This, firstly, resulted in the lack of practical and applied teaching, when content mainly presents Western values in EFL teaching. Secondly, cultural differences between Chinese and English-speaking countries expand divergent cultural backgrounds, which cannot avoid cultural failures in mutual communication and cooperation. Thirdly, some EFL teachers do not have comprehensive cultural literacy in applying methodology of teaching focused on intercultural communication. They stick to the traditional paradigm of Western culture and lack the ability to excavate Chinese cultural elements in their teaching strategies [5]. All in all, these factors have been manifested in Chinese EFL learners' low-developed skills of intercultural communication with English-speaking people. The lack of their awareness of critical thinking about various cultures of English-speaking countries and insufficient understanding of the value and practical significance of rich national Chinese culture further contribute to the inadequacy of intercultural communicative competence in them.

The aim of this article is to explore the sociocultural background and methodology of EFL education in China and put forward effective strategies for Chinese students' intercultural communication that are in line with the goal of cultivating skillful speakers and communicators, who are capable to use appropriate language and non-verbal communication tools in accordance with the situation.

2. Literature review

Regarding intercultural communicative competence, although different scholars have different views on the constituent elements of intercultural communicative competence, a consensus has been reached on the trichotomy based on cognitive, affective/attitudinal and behavioral dimensions [6–9].

Engaging in intercultural interactions can be a difficult and complex experience [9, 10]; the root cause lies in the "cultural filter" effect of information transmission – the decoding of the same information by the sender and receiver may be biased due to cultural cognitive differences [11]. As the subconscious framework of cultural cognition, ethnocentrism makes individuals instinctively judge different cultural phenomena based on the mother tongue culture, leading to the distortion of meaning [12]. Anthropologist Edward Hall says that humans are inherently ethnocentric, which means that other cultures are analyzed and judged based on their native culture, which is considered the standard culture [13]. For example, high context cultures (such as China) rely on context and relationship to convey implicit information, while low context cultures (such as the United States) focus on the explicit expression of the language itself. This difference often makes the former misunderstood as "vague expression" and the latter as "lack of euphemism". Therefore, no one in a particular culture can draw unbiased conclusions about the values, behavior, customs, and traditions of another culture. Cultural differences and impediments to comprehension not only result from the complexity and variety of languages, the deeper difference lies in the division of thinking patterns, that is to say, how individuals recognize information sources of knowledge and engage in structured thinking [14]. Intercultural research based on cognitive psychology shows that Chinese cultural groups tend to have holistic cognition and dialectical thinking, emphasizing the relevance of things (such as "the unity of heaven and man") [15]; the English cultural group is better at analytical thinking, focusing on conceptual decomposition and logical deduction [16]. At the linguistic level, the differences are as follows: Chinese parataxis (dependent on semantic coherence) vs English "hypotaxis" (depending on grammatical structure), Chinese "hint" vs. English "definiteness" [16, 17]. In nonverbal communication, English cultural individuals communicate through high-frequency eye contact (to convey trust) and rich expressions (to strengthen emotional expression), while Chinese cultural individuals tend to restrain explicit emotions and rely on situational cues (such as social distance and identity level) to maintain harmonious relationships [18, 19].

Consequently, foreign language teaching (FLT) entails not merely the transmission of linguistic knowledge and skills, but more crucially, the cultivation of students' communicative competence and their ability to engage in intercultural communication through a foreign language [20, 21]. Chinese scholar Wen Qiufang, in the *Guide to Teaching English at University* (2020), articulates six dimensions of ICC in English as a foreign language (EFL) education: 1) respecting cultural diversity while

maintaining critical awareness of potential Western value orientations embedded in discourse; 2) mastering foundational theories and analytical frameworks of intercultural studies to transcend limitations of Western-centric theories and resist the formation of Eurocentric thinking patterns; 3) identifying both surface-level and deep-rooted similarities/differences between Chinese and foreign cultures through comparative analysis; 4) interpreting and evaluating diverse cultural phenomena, texts, and products; 5) achieving effective and context-appropriate intercultural communication by adhering to situational norms; and 6) developing intercultural inclusiveness and reflexive awareness [22].

Notably, EFL teaching currently suffers from the issue of Chinese cultural aphasia – a neglect of Chinese cultural discourse in intercultural communication [23, 24]. Unbalanced cultural instruction has distorted Chinese students' knowledge structures, leading to three critical issues: 1) blind mimicry of foreign cultures, 2) insufficient appreciation for global cultural diversity, and 3) alienation from indigenous traditions [25]. Furthermore, the dominance of Western intercultural theories and methodologies in FLT curricula risks imposing implicit value biases, potentially shaping students' thinking into Western molds and even fostering prejudices against their own national culture [26]. Educators lacking solid Chinese cultural literacy often overemphasize English-language cognitive patterns, rigidly applying Western cultural paradigms without integrating Chinese cultural elements into pedagogy. This inadvertently positions them as disseminators of Western culture, sidelining the cultivation of students' national identity, ethical character, and cultural spirit [5].

A compounding problem lies in the fragmented implementation of intercultural programs in FLT. Due to the absence of a comprehensive, evidence-based framework defining ICC objectives, curricular contents, pedagogical methods, and assessment criteria, these initiatives often yield suboptimal outcomes [27].

In response to the aforementioned challenges, Chinese scholars have extensively proposed pedagogical strategies, synthesized experiences in instructional concepts and modalities, and validated classroom practices through analyzing intercultural communication assessments spanning 2000–2020 [28]. Recent scholarship on these strategies has primarily focused on five interrelated domains: teaching methodologies, curricular materials development, instructional content design, curriculum architecture, and educator competencies, among others: 1) technology-infused pedagogy: driven by digital transformation, teaching methodologies now integrate technology with cultural mediation functions. For instance, Li Zhe (2022) conceptualized a "real-virtual fusion" hybrid model for intercultural communication courses, combining face-to-face interactions with digital simulations [29]. Wang Jijun et al. (2021) leveraged virtual reality (VR) to construct immersive intercultural communicative scenarios in experimental teaching [30], while Cai Yan and Lin Zhang (2022) established smart learning communities for language majors using intelligent classrooms and cloud platforms, enabling adaptive cultural knowledge

construction [31]; 2) culturally anchored curriculum design: curricular materials and content development emphasize intercultural literacy – balancing global perspectives with indigenous knowledge systems. Textbooks are now designed to not only showcase cultural diversity but also systematically embed Chinese cultural heritage [21, 32], ensuring learners can identify and articulate endogenous cultural elements. Instructional content adopts a comparative framework, integrating linguistic pedagogy with dialectical analyses of sino-foreign cultural interactions. This requires educators to avoid simplistic cultural dichotomies; instead, they should foster critical thinking by interrogating Western theoretical paradigms through the lens of cultural self-consciousness – to promote reflexive understanding of one's own cultural roots [5, 33]; 3) teacher competency enhancement: the efficacy of intercultural education hinges on teachers' dual roles as curriculum designers and cultural mediators. Scholars emphasize the need for educators to: master intercultural teaching methodologies that center on learners' national cultural identities [26, 34]; develop digital-humanistic literacy-integrating technological fluency (e.g., smart classroom tools, AI-driven language platforms [35, 36]) with deep cultural expertise; facilitate virtual collaborative projects (e.g., Sino-English online exchanges [37]), where digital human technologies like Sad Talker are employed to enhance nonverbal communication training. By synchronizing audio-visual data, converting emotional cues into life like facial expressions, and embedding these interactive elements into curricula, teachers can create authentic intercultural communicative scenarios that bridge linguistic and nonverbal competence gaps [38].

From the historical perspective of China's foreign language teaching development, we can state that China's foreign language education is characterized by connotative and stage-specific features, in other word, the relationship between foreign language education and the development of the country's macroscopic policy has been always closely linked [39]. After China's integration into the wave of globalization in the 21st century, the enhancement of intercultural communication awareness and intercultural communicative competence has become an important EFL teaching objective. The objectives of English teaching at university level also include the development of students' ability for independent learning and the enhancement of comprehensive cultural literacy, so that they can use English effectively in their studies, life, social interactions and future work, and to meet the needs of the country, society, the university and personal development [40].

Holliday states the fact that essentialized intercultural teaching that focuses exclusively on national or ethnic cultures can also easily lead to reductionist overgeneralization and ethnocentric otherization [41]. Kramsch (1997) introduced the theory of 'third space' into intercultural communication competence and foreign language teaching [42], and scholars such as Lo Bianco et al. and Dobinson followed this theory to explore the identity construction of second language learners in the dominant culture [43, 44]. Bhabha uses the concept of 'third space' in his discussion of cultural identity in the

postcolonial era, criticising the polarisation of intercultural communication as not-me-as-you or not-you-as-me, and arguing that the two cultures merge with each other in the process of contact to form a hybrid culture between the thresholds of subconsciousness and self-perception [45].

Therefore, we advocate the use of an intercultural teaching approach to integrate a two-way cultural teaching framework to form a third cultural space. According to problems arise in developing intercultural communication competence in EFL teaching, in order to put the six aspects of intercultural communication competence formation into practice, we emphasize the need for the development of intercultural communication competence in EFL teaching to be based on non-essentialism, that is, developing in an emerging, dynamic, and consultative nature, and to focus on the co-constructive aspects of learning [46, 47]. It will help to create an integrated teaching approach for building the third cultural spaces, when Chinese characteristics of culture are taken into account, and China's national conditions and cultural context are integrated into EFL teaching. However, there is little research on how to better utilize features and similarities and differences in a two-way cultural EFL framework teaching to create a third cultural space in teaching Chinese students. Consequently, this study aims to explore the way of the integration culture of teaching approach to overcome the mentioned groups of the problems in the EFL teaching in order to facilitate the development of students' intercultural communicative competence. The integrated teaching approach in the third cultural space primarily refers to the objective and rational comparative analysis of Chinese culture and English-speaking countries' culture based on cultivating the cultural third perspective of learners and constructing the third cultural space of their own.

3. Research questions

From the reviewed literature, it becomes clear that there are problems in Chinese students' EFL teaching methodology in modern conditions. Within the framework of this article, we pose the following research questions:

What is an effective teaching approach that facilitates the construction of the teaching and learning processes with an emphasis on the development of intercultural communicative competence in Chinese students?

(1) What are the strategies of verbal and non-verbal communication that allow Chinese students: (a) to overcome difficulties in intercultural EFL communication; (b) to equip them with knowledge about the intercultural differences between China and English-speaking countries; (c) to maintain effective communication and personal contact?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

In the current study, we utilized qualitative analysis (content analysis) to define the causes and problems that hinder students' intercultural communicative competence development in EFL teaching. Apart from that, we apply

quantitative analysis (questionnaires and correlational studies) to explicate an effective teaching approach that facilitates the construction of the teaching-learning process with the emphasis on the development of intercultural communicative competence, as well as to examine the elements influencing the growth of intercultural communicative competence and particular strategies for resolving intercultural communicative problems. We used a questionnaire which includes four parts. Chinese English learners' basic information is covered in the first part; the second part measures the main factors that affect the improvement of Chinese English learners' intercultural communicative competence. These factors are examined and analyzed primarily in three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The analysis is based on Professor Wen Qiufang's interpretation of intercultural communication in China in conjunction with the Guide to the Teaching English at Universities (2020). The third part identifies and compiles the problems that arise when teaching intercultural communication in an EFL classroom. The fourth part investigates how satisfied students are with the intercultural teaching approaches they have encountered.

4.2. Participants

This investigation covers data collected from studies of students studying at leading Chinese universities (Top 100 comprehensive universities according to ABC University Rankings in China), including Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Henan University etc. The target group included master and doctorate students as well as juniors and seniors at the undergraduate level at those universities. The total number of 255 questionnaires were collected, which included 128 males and 127 females.

4.3. Data collection and analysis

Students were asked to score the significance of the teaching approaches listed on the 5-point Likert scale (Anchors are defined as: 1 = not at all important, 2 = not important, 3 = fairly important, 4 = important, 5 = completely important) as questionnaire's satisfaction measure with intercultural teaching approaches. Besides, we investigated an effective EFL intercultural teaching approach for Chinese university students using SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 27.0 for the descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire data.

Descriptive statistical analyses (Table 1) revealed that the mean scores of all survey items across dimensions ranged between 3.00 and 4.00 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a moderate-to-high level of student satisfaction with the intercultural communication-oriented teaching approaches implemented in the EFL curriculum. The standard deviations (SD) for these variables fell within the range of 1.00 to 2.00, indicating limited dispersion in responses and a general consensus among participants regarding the perceived efficacy of the teaching approaches. These findings collectively imply that the intercultural communication competence-focused teaching approaches adopted in this study were broadly effective in meeting students' learning expectations.

Notably, comparative cultural analysis emerged as the most favorably evaluated method, achieving the highest mean score (M = 3.65, SD = 1.298). The negative skewness value (Skewness = -0.733) for this variable further demonstrates that the distribution of responses was asymmetrically concentrated toward the higher end of the scale, with only a small subset of students reporting dissatisfaction (e.g., ratings ≤ 2). This marginal divergence may be attributed to individual differences in prior cultural exposure, learning preferences, or contextual barriers (e.g., limited access to authentic intercultural interaction opportunities).

4.4. Interpretation and implications

Mean scores in the upper-middle range (3-4) are consistent with Byram's theoretical framework of intercultural competence that suggests structured comparative cultural teaching approaches can increase learners' dynamic cognitive awareness of intercultural and critical thinking [48]. The prominence of two-way comparative cultural analyses confirms Bennett's (1993) assertion that sensitivity to differences between native and target cultures reduces ethnocentric bias [49]. However, the considerable standard deviation (SD = 1.298) underscores the need for differentiated instructional approaches to accommodate heterogeneous learner characteristics.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of Chinese university students' satisfaction with intercultural communication teaching approaches in EFL teaching

	Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Exploring intercultural communication teaching approaches in EFL teaching	Comparative cultural analysis	3.65	1.298	-0.733	-0.55
	Real context simulation	3.49	1.391	-0.528	-1.012
	Role-playing	3.56	1.37	-0.643	-0.831
	Sharing of cultural experiences	3.56	1.287	-0.63	-0.667
	Case study method	3.61	1.305	-0.686	-0.66
	Game-based learning	3.51	1.313	-0.606	-0.782
	Cultural project	3.57	1.338	-0.584	-0.915
	Reflective journal	3.53	1.3	-0.592	-0.732

Note: The 5-point Likert scale uses anchors where **1 = not important at all** and **5 = completely important**. The higher the value, the more important respondents perceived this teaching approach to be.

Through statistical analysis, this investigation further validates that comparative cultural analysis has emerged as a pivotal teaching approach in EFL education at Chinese universities, particularly in fostering students' intercultural communication competence. By systematically examining the dynamic interplay of similarities and differences between target and native cultures, this methodology enables learners to navigate intercultural interactions with greater awareness, adaptability, and reflexivity. Within the domain of intercultural pedagogy and cultural comparison research, Chinese scholars have made significant theoretical and empirical contributions, offering frameworks that bridge global perspectives with localized educational contexts, for example, the Integrated Model for Chinese Students' Intercultural Competence Development (IMCSICD), constructed by Professors Zhang Hongling and Yao Chunyu, is based on the Chinese context and oriented to the cultivation of global citizenship, which highlights bicultural, even multicultural, understanding of differences and structured analysis of non-verbal communication patterns in order to mitigate pragmatic errors and improve learners' ability to negotiate meaning in intercultural environments [50]. Here are some particular measures and procedures to structure the process of intercultural comparison:

– Defining the analytical framework: in order to compare cultural dimensions, choose appropriate cultural dimensions or theoretical models, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (power distance, individuality vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation).

– Data collection: It includes literature research, case studies, surveys, etc.:

1) literature research: use artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT to refer to books, research papers, and reports about the target culture in order to gain knowledge of its values, history, thinking paradigm, customs, behavioral characteristics, etc.;

2) fieldwork: gather pertinent cultural data by means like online interviews, surveys, or direct observation;

3) case study: examine particular instances of intercultural communication to see how cultural variations affect communication.

– Conduct a comparison: creating a table or chart that compares and analyzes the characteristics of two-way culture in various dimensions. For example, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the form of cultural comparison is constructed (Table 2).

Table 2

Comparison of Chinese culture and the culture of English-speaking countries

Cultural dimension	Chinese culture	Culture of English-speaking countries
Power distance	High power distance index. The usual response to inequalities in the distribution of power is a high degree of acceptance, and it emphasizes on hierarchy	Low power distance index. The culture of English-speaking countries is weakly hierarchical and clearly oriented on individual rights
Individuality vs. collectivism	Collectivism, where the interests of the team as a whole take precedence above individual sentiments	Individual liberties and rights are often emphasized in individuality.
Uncertainty avoidance	High level of uncertainty avoidance. Stability is prized in Chinese culture	Low level of uncertainty avoidance. People are more receptive to uncertainty in their lives
Long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation	China is a typical country with a long-term orientation. "Taking stock of the past, building on the present, and grasping the future" is what we advocate. We prioritize establishing and preserving long-term connections because we think that long-term planning has greater significance than short-term planning	English-speaking countries tend to have a short-term orientation, focusing on the current situation

– Cultural sensitivity and adaptation training: students can experience and gain a deeper understanding of emotion, cognition, and behavior in a particular cultural setting through role-playing that incorporates Metaverse technology, and game-based learning. Through conversation and communicative negotiation, students deconstruct personal identity and create a third identity in a transformed communicative background that encompasses both national cultural identity and self-reconstructed personal identity.

– Reflection and conclusion: 1) composing a reflection: in order to improve intercultural self-awareness and understanding, the instructor encourages students to record their triumphs and errors and to consider how cultural differences affect communication after the exchange; 2) a synopsis of the report: to summarize the results and offer suggestions for own future intercultural communication, and a report on the comparative cultural analysis is created.

– Practice and feedback: 1) practice application: using the cultural knowledge and competence acquired in authentic communication and assessing the results; 2) feedback collection: to enhance next comparative cultural studies and communication tactics, real feedback is gathered from participants and cultural object.

Grounded in empirical investigations conducted across Chinese universities and informed by the intercultural teaching framework that synthesizes two-way cultural paradigms (Chinese and Anglophone), this study proposes a Third Space Teaching Approach (TSTA) for comparative cultural analysis. Drawing on Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of the "third space" as a liminal zone of hybridity and negotiation, Third Space Teaching Approach transcends monocultural didacticism by fostering co-constructed intercultural literacy [45]. To address persistent challenges in EFL-based intercultural communicative education, including cognitive insufficiency, affective resistance, and pragmatic incompetence, this study delineates tripartite strategies targeting cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of learning:

– Cognitive perspective: teachers should place emphasis on students cultivating an intercultural dialectical and critical thinking awareness: 1) cultural awareness training: the teacher regularly hosts workshops and seminars to make students gain insight into Chinese and English cultures. The focus is on the broad cultural differences in values, norms, communication styles, social

customs, and etiquette, etc. as well as comparative analyses to explain and assess cultural phenomena, texts, and products (cultural products) across a range of narrowly defined cultural dimensions through group discussions and presentations. In order to ensure that the cultural implication ingrained in Chinese and English-speaking languages are sufficiently reflected in teaching and learning, students are also encouraged to compare and contrast cultural elements or dimensions using intercultural theoretical frameworks; 2) critical thinking development: to illustrate intercultural misconceptions, the teacher uses case studies and real-world communication scenarios in class. This encourages students to consider and provide workable solutions. In order to avoid blindly accepting cultural outputs with their own underlying value orientations and to cultivate macro-level critical thinking, students are asked to keep reflective journals on their intercultural experiences and learning after the course, which requires students to learn to extract and analyze the core concepts of two-way culture, for example, ethnic ideology, as well as further comprehend communication norms and standards when integrating cultures in a particular situation.

– Affective (emotional) perspective: the self-construction and other-construction of students in intercultural contexts need to be valued: 1) empathy building activities: students use role-playing exercises to adopt various viewpoints from two-way culture with applying digital technology to construct theme-specific situations aimed to immerse themselves in cultural and communication differences and foster empathy and emotional understanding. Teachers can also urge students to tell personal stories about their cultural experiences for building emotional connection and ideological resonance, combined Chinese and English speaking countries cultural value systems; 2) positive emotional climate: we first build an inclusive teaching environment, which is intended to construct a classroom climate that values diversity and promotes the open expression of thoughts and emotions. Second, students establish their own peer support groups with the assistance of the teacher where they may talk about their intercultural communicative triumphs and challenges; 3) cultural immersion experiences: universities and teachers organize and coordinate more short-term or virtual exchange programs students to facilitate direct cultural exposure and encourage students to engage and work together more authentically with students from English-speaking nations. They can also collaborate on cultural events to help students develop a thorough understanding and appreciation of various cultural patterns and behavioral traits firsthand.

– Behavioral perspective: teachers should attach importance to cultivating students' self-directed learning and adaptive learning capabilities while balancing their digital and humanistic literacy: 1) behavioral adaptation training: universities conduct a cultural norms workshop or design a cultural norms curriculum that explores norms and standards of behavior in two-way cultural circumstances, including nonverbal communication indicators (body language, facial expressions) to establish intercultural communication through proper and effective interaction,

and respect one another values and behavioral conventions. First, when students face intercultural miscommunications and disputes, teachers should guide students to analyze problems from the perspective of cultural differences, actively use coping mechanisms to resolve problems, and preserve harmonious relationships. Then, students can explore unfamiliar cultures independently once they have mastered and flexibly used the universal principles of intercultural communication through repeated communication, summarization, reflection, and assessment. This is accomplished not just through national and regional cultural identities but also through the creation of personal identities through consultation with communication partners or through self-construction through dialogue and communication. Students have a certain intercultural autonomy and cultural research as a consequence. Teaching method should also focus on the full use of new technologies, such as digital and information technology, with the main objective of developing students' personal development and holistic humanistic literacy while also fully enhancing their composite skills; 2) personal goal setting and monitoring: whether at the social or university level, motivate students to set personal development plans independently by set specific goals related to intercultural communicative competence and teachers act as a direct monitor to track their progress in implementing their goals throughout the course and in their learning. Additionally, students are paired to hold one another accountable for practising their intercultural communicative competence outside the classroom.

4.5. Methodological considerations

While the negative skewness indicates overall favorable ratings, the presence of anomalous responses (e.g., low ratings) warrants a qualitative investigation of potential systemic or individual factors that undermine instructional effectiveness. Future research should triangulate these findings using observational data or longitudinal assessments to mitigate the self-report bias inherent in Likert scale surveys.

5. Discussion

The development of intercultural communicative competence among university students has been one of the key pedagogical aims in EFL instruction in the age of close international interaction. When it comes to transnational communication, we should not only concentrate on the host language but also attempt to interact and express emotions in their way, which requires interculturalists to possess language-related knowledge and skills. In order to successfully, appropriately, and critically integrate the culture of the target country without losing one's own national cultural roots, one must be able to transcend cultural differences, which are the primary focus of intercultural communication. The largest barrier to seeing things from a different perspective is the communicators' inability to recognize the host's worldview and transcend their own native paradigm. Accordingly, in order to

develop the intercultural communicative competence of Chinese university students, we investigated the notion of integrating a two-way cultural approach to comparative analysis in EFL teaching. This point of view is comparable to the proposal made by Professors Zhang Hongling and Yao Chunyu to implement a comprehensive and varied teaching approach. The latter group focuses on examining and contrasting multiculturalism based on various contexts and global citizenship from the standpoint of Chinese university students' comprehension of Chinese, world, and universal culture as well as their modes of expressing cultural knowledge [50]. In addition to Professor Fantini's multicultural viewpoint, he proposed that the primary goal of interculturalism is to grasp the emic view of another culture [51].

On the basis of the relevant theoretical research and results of this empirical analysis, we can find that the comparative analysis approach of integrating two-way cultures places greater emphasis on the third perspective of cultural integration to create a third space of culture, through the comparative analysis of various cultural dimensions. It also highlights the self-construction of cultural value systems and national cultural value systems in the third space of culture. This means that learners must be able to maintain Chinese cultural attributes while accepting, adapting to, and assimilating the cultural characteristics of the English-speaking countries. Additionally, they must be able to continuously structure, deconstruct and reconstruct themselves through the process of cultural objects, cultural contexts, and various cultural values in order to promote the construction of self-worth integration and ultimately achieving two-way cultural negotiation. Obviously, this is a dynamic, adaptable, and productive process [52].

In China, the earliest references to the third cultural space of two-way cultural integration date back to the comparative cultural analyses proposed by Professors Jin Kemu and He Daokuan in the 1980s. Since then, some Chinese scholars have applied the theories of the third space, intergroup contact, power distance, and cultural adaptation to the study of intercultural communication.

These theories unquestionably elaborate on the significance of communication and the need to foster the intercultural communicator's third perspective of culture in teaching EFL. The development of learners' macro-thinking skills to integrate the cultures of their own native and English-speaking countries is therefore necessary for successful intercultural communication.

The generalizability of this teaching approach needs to be further verified, as the respondents are students from China's leading university, there is a lack of survey of students from average and top universities. And to confirm the validity, reliability and difference of variables that affect teaching approach as well as the correlation between the variables, this conclusion also requires further empirical analysis.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, first, students are required to not only root themselves in the ideological meanings of China's excellent traditional culture, but also extract, compare, analyze, interpret, deconstruct, and reconstruct the input of English-speaking cultures, clarify cultural differences, improve critical thinking, repeatedly practice and reflect through the use of new technologies such as digital and information technology in order to resolve cultural conflicts and independently construct the ideological value system and negotiated personal identity of Chinese and Western cultures. Second, students should be positioned within the broader context of human civilization, have the concept of building a community of human civilization, foster intercultural awareness and improve their cultural identity, comprehension, and adaptability as national or regional identities. We have suggested corresponding strategies to overcome intercultural problems from the perspectives of cognition, emotion, and behavior in order to further enhance Chinese university students' intercultural communication competence as well as to support their overall humanistic literacy and personal development.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

*Статья поступила в редакцию 23.04.2025;
одобрена после рецензирования 26.05.2025; принята к публикации 30.09.2025.*

*The article was submitted 23.04.2025;
approved after reviewing 26.05.2025; accepted for publication 30.09.2025.*