

Evaluation of the Cultural Content of College English Textbooks from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

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Abstract: The communication between people with different cultural backgrounds around the world is becoming more and more frequent. Cultural conflict has become the main topic of cultural exchange today. Under this background, the goal of Chinese English education curriculum reform has changed to develop students' cultural awareness and intercultural communication ability. The purpose of this thesis is to study the cultural content evaluation of college English textbooks from the perspective of intercultural communication. This paper analyzes the main achievements of the research on the evaluation and cultural content of English teaching materials at home and abroad, defines the main concepts of teaching materials and intercultural communication, and introduces the theoretical basis of this paper. Taking college English textbooks as the research object, this paper studies and evaluates the content of cultural knowledge. The results show that the textbook plays a particularly important role in promoting cultural exchange, helping to enhance cultural knowledge and cross-cultural communication skills.

1. Introduction

With more and more cross-cultural communication in the world, people gradually realize the unique significance of "culture" in the process of communication. Culture is subtly influencing the way people think and communicate [1-2]. Although many people have good English pronunciation and rich vocabulary, they often encounter difficulties and feel confused in cross-cultural communication, unable to convey their own ideas, or unable to understand the meaning of others [3-4]. Only learning English knowledge and mastering the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing cannot guarantee the "effectiveness" and "appropriateness" of future intercultural communication. In Chinese English teaching, textbooks are not only the main foundation of teaching, but also important teaching content providers [5]. Therefore, we should implement this idea when we choose English teaching materials. By analyzing the cultural texts of the textbook, we can understand the cultural types in the textbook content, whether the distribution of cultural regions is balanced and comprehensive, and whether students' cross-cultural sensitivity can be improved [6-7].

From the perspective of corpus language, Gamze Kaya aims to compare the two sets of textbooks used in Vietnamese secondary schools and assess the effectiveness of the new textbooks, focusing on lexical resources at the lexical level, especially individual words and phrasal verbs. For the overall comparison of word lists, Antconc software analyzed two sets of corpus-extracted word lists in two sets of textbooks, and then compared the two sets of word lists to understand their similarities and differences. His research reveals a quantifiable evaluation of etymology, explores mutually exclusive words, and examines the etymological complexity of two sets of textbooks. Unlike traditional textbook review, which focuses on grammar, one of his first attempts to assess textbook efficiency from the perspective of corpus language, which in turn helps improve Vietnam's current English textbooks, is a considered indicator for curriculum design around the world [8]. Mohamed Benhima's research aims to explore how communicative approaches can be used in textbook design to assimilate Pakistani English textbooks. The advantages, disadvantages and necessary modifications of English language textbooks in Pakistan were considered. Checklists based on the principles of CLT were developed for the analysis of textbooks in order to answer research questions. The items in the checklist relate to the sequence of physical attributes, objectives, content, supported material, and language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. To better understand the results of each textbook unit, qualitative and quantitative discussions are conducted using list parameters. The results show that English textbooks need to be revised according to the latest communicative language teaching model [9].

With the development of society, it becomes more and more important to develop effective cultural education and cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness. Textbook is an important part of culture teaching. The cultural content of the textbook is very important. In this study, we mainly use qualitative and quantitative research to explore the Chinese and foreign cultural elements in English textbooks. According to the results of the questionnaire survey, it can also be seen that the students have a positive evaluation of the Chinese and foreign cultural content in the textbook, and believe that learning the cultural content in the textbook can cultivate a certain degree of cultural awareness.

2. A Study on the Cultural Content Evaluation of College English Textbooks from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication

2.1 English Teaching Materials

Textbook is a widely defined educational term. The general definition of a textbook is, literally, the basic material needed for education and instruction. Due to the wide variety of materials contained in textbooks, the three most common concepts are: a textbook is a textbook; the content of each course is the textbook; Subject knowledge and skill system are textbooks [10-11].

In short, textbooks contain human knowledge in natural societies and are artificially written into curriculum content acceptable to students at different levels. A textbook is an extraction of material. Textbook is one of the indispensable elements of teaching tools. English teaching materials include those specially designed for English teaching and related multimedia resources.

2.2 Cross-cultural Communication Theory

The communication process is a two-way interactive and equal process. If one party takes the target language and culture into consideration and ignores the communication role of mother tongue culture in communication, such communication will lose equality and inevitably lead to communication contradictions. Foreign language teaching is essentially cross-cultural education. In the actual teaching process, teachers' preference for target language and culture or mother tongue

culture will lead to the imbalance of students' intercultural communicative consciousness, which violates the requirement of cultivating students' cultural consciousness[12-13].

2.3 Third Space Theory

The third space theory focuses on the interaction between target language and mother tongue in intercultural communication. According to the third spatial theory, in the process of cross-cultural communication, learners will create a new communicative space between "mother tongue + culture" and "target language + culture" through communication. This space is not single and stable, but dynamic, complex, full of contradictions and conflicts. Under the influence of such space, the language culture history of the second language learners and the language culture background of the language users are no longer inherent and invariable, but gradually integrate on the basis of continuous strengthening, forming an innovative and equal mode of cross-cultural communication.

Compared with other intercultural communication modes, the third space theory breaks away from the fixed and unequal communication mode based on the linguistic and cultural mode of the target language and emphasizes that both sides must identify with their own language and culture and cooperate on this basis to ensure equality. The theory of the third space gives learners the ability to reconstruct communicative identity. By critically comparing the contradictions and connections between different languages and cultures, they can innovate cross-cultural communication models that take into account the cultural advantages of both sides[14-15].

According to the third space theory, schools should consider the following three aspects when implementing cultural teaching:

(1) Cultural teaching should include mother tongue culture and target language culture, strengthen students' understanding of our culture on the basis of cultivating students' language and culture ability, and critically look at the cultural differences behind languages.

(2) The textbook reform should increase the content about Chinese excellent traditional culture to help students understand the national culture in a comprehensive way. At the same time, the comparative theme of Chinese and Western cultures in the scientific systematic design textbook helps students to understand the cultural differences from a superficial perspective.

(3) In the process of practical teaching, teachers should adopt situational and invasive teaching methods according to students' cognitive level and language and cultural rules, and use multimedia teaching tools and flexible teaching methods to help students express our culture on the basis of existing knowledge.

3. A Survey and Research on the Cultural Content Evaluation of College English Textbooks from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

3.1 Research Object

The research object of this paper is a college English textbook. This set of textbooks includes students' books, homework books and teachers' books, among which students' books are the main body. Tutorial books provide plenty of exercises and activities and are an important part of textbooks.

3.2 Questionnaire Survey Method

The study distributed 200 questionnaires to English students using the textbook and collected 180 valid questionnaires. The results of the questionnaire mainly answer the question whether the teaching material is helpful to improve students' intercultural communication ability. The

effectiveness of textbooks in improving intercultural communication competence is measured from three aspects (knowledge, skills and cultural awareness). The questionnaire contains 17 questions, of which 1 to 10 relate to the knowledge dimension, 11 to 14 relate to the mapping skill dimension, and 15 to 17 relate to the mapping awareness dimension. The questionnaire asked students to choose a number "1-5" to indicate their level of agreement with each item stated, with 1 being the lowest level of agreement and 5 the highest. The research results will be presented in three aspects: knowledge, skills and cross-cultural awareness.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

In this paper, SPSS 22.0 software was used to make statistics and analysis on the results of the questionnaire survey, and t test was conducted. The T-test formula used in this paper is as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu}{\frac{\sigma X}{\sqrt{n}}} \quad (1)$$

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)S_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}} \quad (2)$$

Formula (1) is the single population test, s is the sample standard deviation, and n is the number of samples. Formula (2) is a double population test.

4. An Analysis and Research on the Cultural Content Evaluation of College English Textbooks from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication

4.1 Knowledge Dimension

Table 1 reflects the survey results of questions 1-4, that is, whether the textbook contains enough cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, including historical geography, social and political knowledge, lifestyle, social etiquette knowledge and cultural taboos knowledge.

Table 1: Knowledge dimension evaluation

Question No	Mode	mean value
1. Historical geography	3	3.55
2. Social politics	4	4.38
3. Lifestyle	4	4.63
4. Social etiquette	4	4.51
5. Cultural taboos	3	3.27

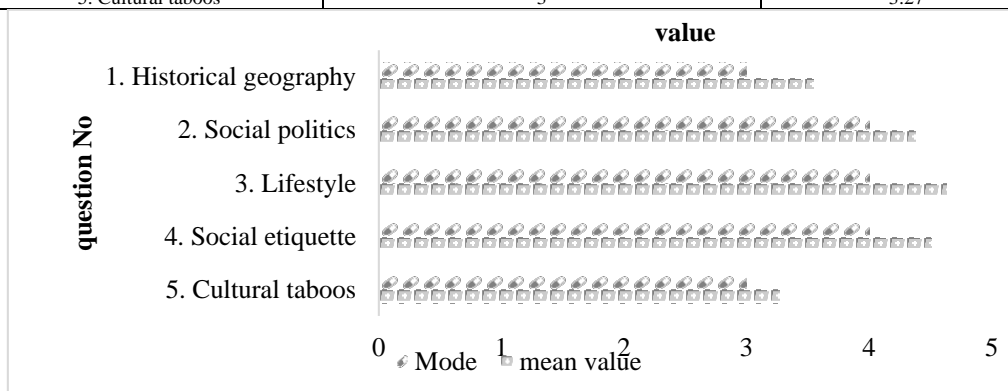


Figure 1: Survey results of knowledge dimension (cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries)

It can be seen from the above table that the mode of questions 2-4 is "4", which represents the largest number of students with "relative identification". The average agreement range of students ranged from 3.27 to 4.63, indicating that students were more inclined to agree with the content expressed in questions 1 to 5, as shown in Figure 1. In other words, the students agreed that the textbooks improved their knowledge of various cultures in English-speaking countries.

In addition, the average value of question 5 is only 3.27, which is lower than the average value of other questions, indicating that there is relatively little knowledge about ethnic English cultural taboos in textbooks.

Figure 2 shows the survey results of questions 6-10, that is, whether the introduction of Chinese cultural knowledge in the textbook is sufficient. The survey covers China's historical geography, social and political knowledge, life style, social etiquette knowledge, cultural taboo knowledge, etc.

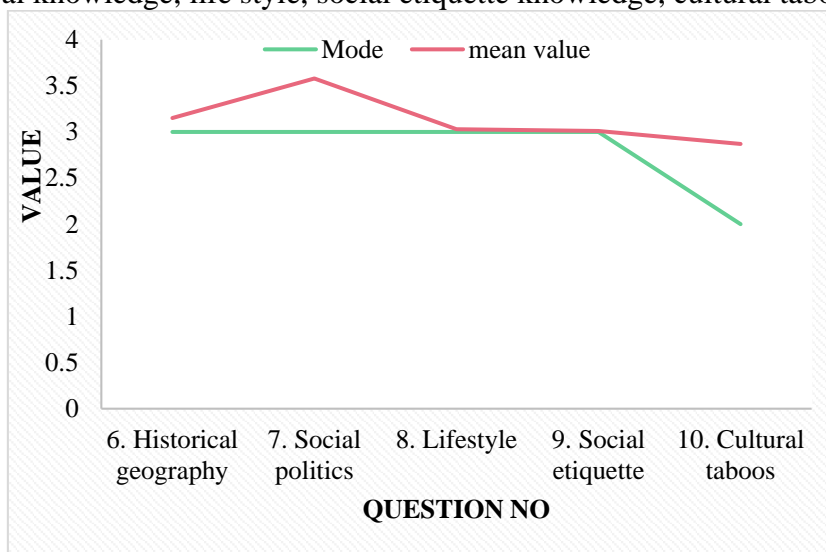


Figure 2: Knowledge dimension survey results (Chinese cultural knowledge)

The survey results show that the average number of questions 6-10 is 2.87-3.58, and the overall recognition degree is lower than that of questions 1-5, which is also at a low level in the whole questionnaire. This reflects the fact that textbooks introducing Chinese culture are relatively weak. The tenth question, in particular, had the lowest average score of 2.87. At the same time, this question is the only one in the questionnaire whose mode is "2", which fully indicates that the understanding of Chinese cultural taboos in textbooks is particularly insufficient.

4.2 Skill Dimension

Figure 3 reflects the results for the skill dimension. Questions 11-14 explore whether students have mastered the ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds and in English, to communicate with people in non-verbal ways, to avoid mutual offense, and to properly resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings.

As can be seen from the above table, the average of questions 11 to 14 ranges from 4.21 to 4.69. Slightly higher than the knowledge dimension and consciousness dimension. The slight difference between each average question indicates that the textbook promotes the improvement of students' intercultural communication ability level.

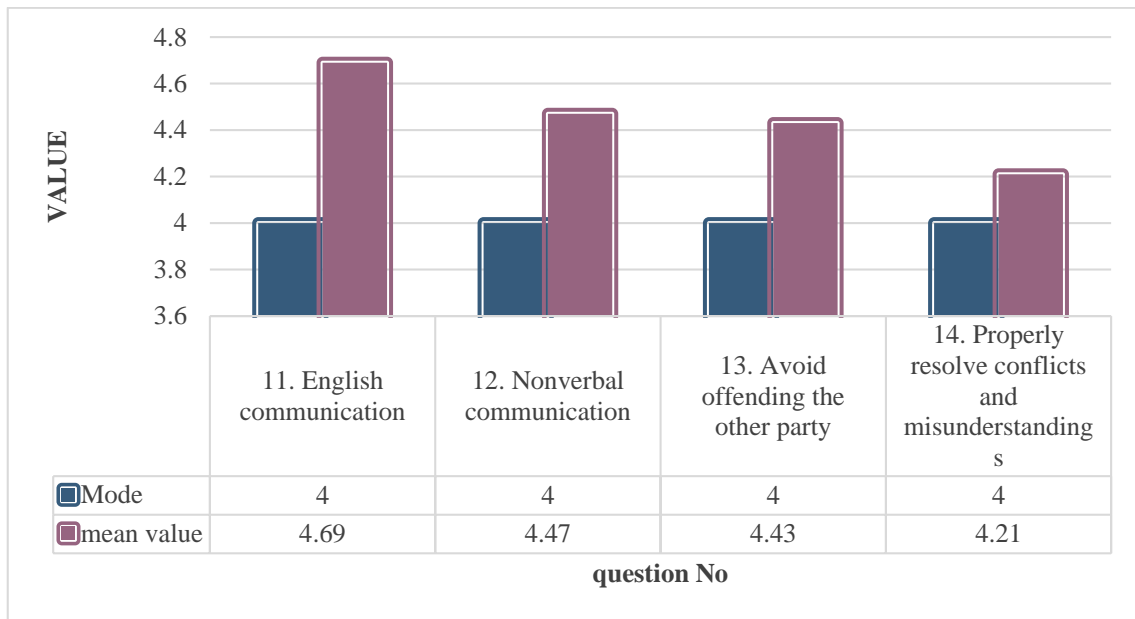


Figure 3: Results of skill dimension survey

4.3 Dimension of Consciousness

Questions 15-17 of the questionnaire focus on evaluating whether the teaching materials can help students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, help students objectively view and evaluate different cultures, and inspire students to use the intercultural knowledge they have learned to guide communicative behaviors. The corresponding results are reflected in Figure 4.

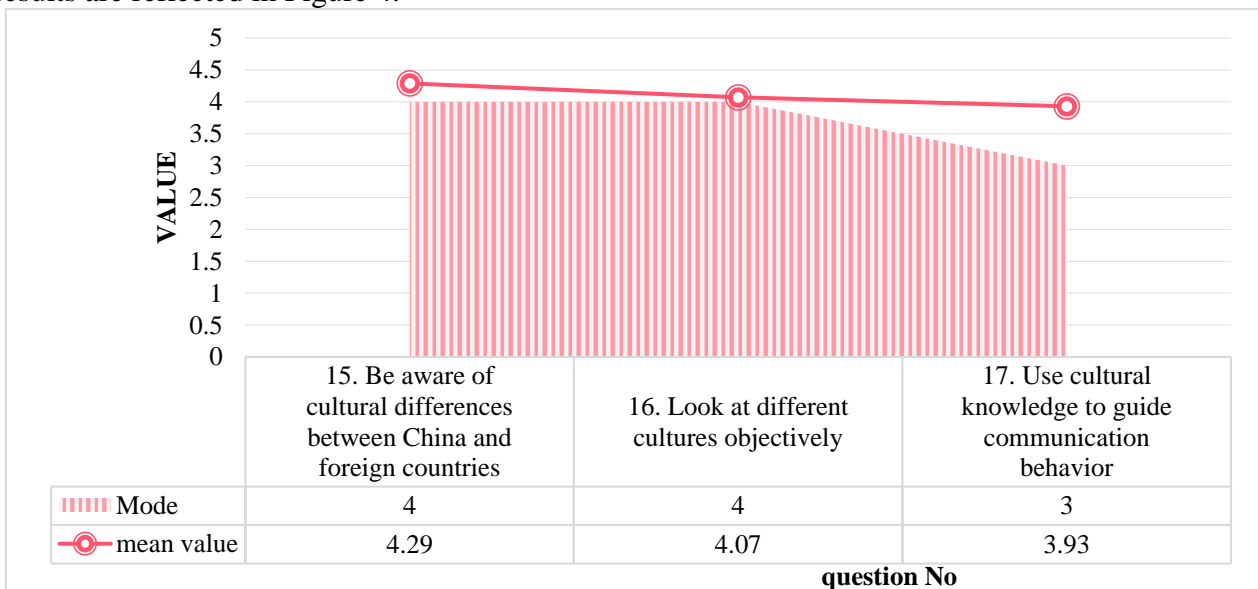


Figure 4: Survey results of consciousness dimension

The results show that the average degree of recognition of students is 3.93 and 4.29, indicating that teaching materials can also promote students' intercultural communicative competence in the dimension of consciousness. The item with the highest average score was question 15, reflecting

how helpful the textbook was in helping students understand the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures.

5. Conclusions

We live in an era of economic globalization. The rapid development of communication and transportation technology makes it more and more convenient for people to communicate with each other, and the cultural exchanges between countries are getting deeper and deeper. In this regard, the multidirectional flow of information, ideas and culture around the world is unprecedented. As a common language and medium, English has played an immeasurable role in modern times. More and more people in the world are participating in English cultural exchanges. This study investigates and interviews the users of English textbooks (students) to explore whether English textbooks can cultivate students' awareness of intercultural communicative competence, as well as their experience and feelings in using the textbooks, and then puts forward suggestions for the revision and use of the textbooks in the future. In order to teach cultural knowledge effectively, teachers must have some reserves of relevant cultural knowledge. Therefore, teachers must have a wealth of English knowledge and comprehensive cultural literacy. Teachers must also stick to their own path, constantly updating and supplementing their cultural knowledge.

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