

Research on Pathways for Developing Intercultural Communication Competence of Foreign Language Professionals in the Ceramic Cultural Tourism Industry under the Industry-Education Integration Context

Lingli Wang^{a,*}, Huanhuan Feng^b

School of Foreign Languages, Jingdezhen Vocational University of Art, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China
^a1476929884@qq.com, ^b64352674@qq.com

**Corresponding author*

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Abstract: The ceramic cultural tourism industry integrates traditional Chinese culture with modern tourism and plays a key role in cultural inheritance, international communication, and regional development. However, rapid internationalization has revealed the limitations of traditional foreign language talent cultivation. Current training models fail to produce interdisciplinary professionals with strong language proficiency, intercultural competence, and the ability to interpret and promote ceramic culture. On the basis of literature review, questionnaires, and interviews with Jingdezhen-based enterprises and universities, this study identifies key issues: unclear training goals, weak intercultural orientation, fragmented curricula, superficial industry-education collaboration, insufficient intercultural expression skills, and limited digital communication competence. To address these challenges, the study proposes an industry-education integrated cultivation pathway, including: (1) industry-oriented talent goals; (2) a modular “foreign language + ceramics + communication” curriculum; (3) practical teaching combining project-based learning with physical and virtual scenarios; and (4) a diversified evaluation mechanism. This study provides both a response to industry needs and a reference for reform in vocational foreign language education and interdisciplinary talent cultivation.

1. Introduction

The ceramic cultural tourism industry integrates China’s outstanding traditional culture with modern tourism, not only carrying rich historical and cultural information but also playing a significant part in promoting local economic development and international cultural exchange. With the rapid pace of industry internationalization, traditional models of language teaching and tourism management talent cultivation can no longer meet the demand for compound foreign language professionals. Such talents are supposed to possess solid language proficiency and intercultural communication competence as well as the ability to understand various culture and spread the information. Therefore, they can effectively take part in international exchanges, cultural promotion,

and tourism services.

However, numerous challenges exist in the cultivation of ceramic cultural tourism talents. On one hand, the supply of specialized foreign language professionals is insufficient to support the diversified development of the industry. On the other hand, cultivation pathways and curriculum designs lack specificity and systematicness, making it difficult to effectively enhance students' intercultural and practical abilities. Moreover, the absence of scientific competency standards and evaluation systems makes it hard to quantify and optimize the outcomes of cultivating talents continuously. Therefore, exploring systematic pathways for developing intercultural communication competence among foreign language talents under the context of industry–education integration can not only meet the urgent talent needs arising from the internationalization of the industry but also enhance reform and innovation in vocational foreign language education, which is helpful for promoting the development of distinctive programs in local universities, and strengthening the integration of education and industry.

2. Literature Review

Research on Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) began relatively early in Western academia and has gradually developed into a mature theoretical framework. In the 1950s, American scholars first introduced the concept of ICC when examining the work of overseas technicians. Subsequently, ICC research expanded to areas such as expatriate adjustment, immigration adaptation, culture shock, international management, and international student counseling. Scholars have commonly defined ICC as an individual's ability to appropriately and effectively mobilize cognitive, affective, behavioral, and pragmatic resources in intercultural contexts, emphasizing that ICC is both teachable and developable [1].

Among existing theoretical models, Michael Byram's "European model" has been widely recognized and applied. Byram conceptualized ICC into four core components, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness, thus providing a systematic and pedagogically practical framework that has laid the foundation for subsequent research and instructional design [2].

In recent years, the integration of artificial intelligence, big data, and virtual reality (VR) technologies has opened new avenues for ICC development. VR technologies, for example, have been employed to simulate intercultural communication scenarios [3], while big data enables personalized learning pathways and adaptive feedback through the analysis of learner behaviors. These technology-enhanced approaches provide innovative insights for the cultivation of ICC, particularly within vocational and industry-specific educational contexts. However, scholarly work focusing on ICC in the specific context of the ceramic cultural tourism industry remains limited.

In China, research on ICC started relatively late and initially centered on conceptual clarification and theoretical exploration. Scholars examined ICC from the perspectives of intercultural communication and communication studies, elaborating on its components and connotations. Some researchers differentiate between narrow-sense interpersonal intercultural communication and broad-sense international communication [4], while others discuss its relationship with international discourse and communication [5], thus contributing to a more multidimensional understanding of ICC.

With the deepening of industry–education integration, research in China has gradually shifted from theoretical discussion to practical application, particularly in the cultivation of foreign language talents. Nevertheless, most studies still focus on topics such as cultural integration and tourism development. There remains a big gap in research regarding ICC models and systematic cultivation pathways tailored to foreign language talents within the ceramic cultural tourism sector.

3. Current State in the Cultivation of Foreign Language Talents for Ceramic Culture and Tourism

Under the impetus of policies such as the Double High Plan, Pilot Program for Vocational Undergraduate Education, certain achievements have been made in the cultivation of foreign language talents for ceramic culture and tourism. However, there remain numerous deficiencies in the cultivation of intercultural communication competence. Based on interviews and data analysis from vocational undergraduate institutions and ceramic culture-tourism enterprises in Jingdezhen, this paper summarizes the following main issues.

3.1 Vague Talent Training Objectives and Lack of Intercultural Orientation

Currently, most foreign language programs related to ceramic culture and tourism in institutions still adhere to the “language plus tour guide” or “language plus foreign trade” training models, failing to take “intercultural communicator” as the training goal. Measurable indicators and evaluation mechanisms are lacking. For instance, the training objectives of a vocational undergraduate English program focus primarily on English proficiency and foreign-related reception skills, with no clear requirements for explaining ceramic craftsmanship and cultural meanings in English or handling intercultural conflicts. Intercultural communication competence is neither a core curriculum objective nor systematically assessed.

3.2 Fragmented Curriculum with No Connection between Ceramic Culture and Language Courses

The current curriculum system exhibits a clear dualistic divide [6]. On the one hand, language courses such as Comprehensive English, Interpretation, Writing, etc. focus on linguistic skills but lack ceramic cultural content. On the other hand, ceramic culture and tourism courses such as History of Ceramics, Scenic Area Operations, etc. are primarily taught in Chinese and offer limited training in foreign language expression. Courses in foreign languages, ceramics, and communication often belong to different departments, operating in isolation without effective integration.

Students struggle to synthesize fragmented knowledge into comprehensive problem-solving abilities. Surveys indicate that only 28% of the surveyed students reported having “used English to introduce the Jingdezhen Porcelain to foreign tourists,” while 65% believed they had not mastered the professional English vocabulary and terminology related to ceramics and tourism (such as glaze, kiln transformation, craftsmanship techniques, scenic spot introductions, etc.). Furthermore, over 80% of students felt unable to clearly explain the cultural story behind a ceramic piece to a foreign friend in English.

3.3 Insufficient Practical Teaching Platforms and Lack of Depth in Industry-Education Collaboration

Although most institutions have established internship bases with ceramic enterprises and scenic spots, the cooperation often remains superficial, presenting the following problems. Firstly, enterprises pay more attention to tour-guiding and reception skills but neglect intercultural thinking training. Secondly, on-campus practical training often involves simulated interpretation and guided dialogue, lacking authentic cross-cultural communication scenarios.

In addition, students participate more in pottery-making activities but seldom engage in bilingual short video production, international promotion events, or real-world communication projects. Only

28% of students have participated in industry-education integration projects organized by schools or enterprises such as International Ceramic Expos, reception of foreign guests, internships in international travel agencies, international workshops.

In an interview, a manager from a ceramic enterprise remarked that students speak English well, but when introducing ceramics, they just say “this is a vase” and do not know how to convey the cultural story behind it.

3.4 Weak Intercultural Communication and Expression Competence

The survey shows that over 70% of students exhibit strong interest in learning about the ceramic culture and art of other countries and find communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds enjoyable and rewarding. This reflects that students generally possess a willingness for cross-cultural understanding and an open, inclusive cultural attitude.

However, only 39% of students believe their cross-cultural communication skills are sufficient to handle work related to international ceramic culture tourism, indicating a significant gap in their practical ability to express and convey ideas across cultures. Specific manifestations include: on one hand, students struggle to accurately and appropriately communicate the connotations and values of Chinese ceramic culture in cross-cultural contexts; on the other hand, they often encounter difficulties such as incoherent expression, misinterpretation of cultural symbols, and weak contextual adaptation during intercultural interactions. This disconnection between “willingness to engage” and “practical competence” hinders students’ effective participation in the international dissemination of Chinese ceramic culture and foreign-related ceramic tourism services, while also revealing shortcomings in practical cross-cultural communication training within current teaching approaches.

3.5 Inadequate Digital Communication Skills and Singular Modes of International Communication

In the era of new media communication, platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Xiaohongshu have become new channels for Chinese ceramic culture to go global. However, students’ digital communication skills remain inadequate. Only 19% of students had attempted to create bilingual short videos on ceramic themes. Moreover, most institutions do not offer courses on Digital Storytelling, Intercultural New Media Communication, or AI-enhanced cultural dissemination. Existing promotional materials from enterprises are mostly in Chinese or directly translated English, with logic that does not align with the cognitive patterns of international audiences.

Furthermore, digital resources such as AI translation and intelligent explanation equipment have not been integrated into teaching, and there is a lack of training mechanisms for “AI plus ceramic culture communication” talents.

4. Cultivation Pathways for Intercultural Communication Competence in the Context of Industry-Education Integration

To address the aforementioned problems in cultivating students’ intercultural communication competence, it is essential to rely on industry-education integration platforms and break down the barriers between universities and industries, constructing a systematic and closed-loop cultivation path [7]. This approach aims to achieve efficient alignment between talent cultivation objectives and the needs of the industry.

4.1 Industry-Oriented Development to Define the Training Orientation of Interdisciplinary Talents

Universities should proactively collaborate with ceramic industry associations [8], leading cultural tourism enterprises, cultural and museum institutions and cross-border e-commerce platforms to jointly establish a “Professional Development Steering Committee for Ceramic Culture Tourism.” Through corporate interviews, job position research, and field investigations, an in-depth analysis should be conducted into the specific requirements for language proficiency, cultural literacy, and intercultural communication skills in various positions along the ceramic cultural tourism industry chain, such as international tour guiding, foreign-related ceramic exhibition planning, cross-border e-commerce operations, cultural diplomacy, and artist-in-residence exchanges.

On this basis, talent cultivation objectives should be precisely defined, highlighting characteristics of “application-oriented, interdisciplinary, and innovative” education, with the goal of nurturing high-quality international communication professionals who are proficient in foreign languages, knowledgeable about ceramic culture, and capable of effectively telling China’s stories, ensuring alignment between talent development and industry needs.

4.2 Building a Modular Curriculum System of “Foreign Language + Ceramics + Communication”

To break down traditional and disciplinary boundaries, a cross-disciplinary and modular curriculum system should be constructed to achieve integrated training in language, professional knowledge, and communication competence.

The first module is language core module. This means being based on general English courses, specialized subjects such as Ceramic English, Tourism English, Intercultural Communication and Negotiation should be added to strengthen students’ professional foreign language expression and intercultural understanding. The second is professional knowledge module. Courses such as History of Chinese Ceramics, Ceramic Technology, Appreciation of Ceramic Art, and Comparative Studies of World Ceramic Cultures should be offered. Intangible cultural heritage inheritors, master craftsmen, and industry experts should be invited to give lectures, imparting skills and cultural connotations to solidify students’ professional foundation.

The third module is communication practice module. Courses like Introduction to Cultural and Creative Industries, New Media and International Communication, Intercultural Narrative and Translation, and Brand Storytelling should guide students in mastering content creation, media operation, and international communication skills. The last module is comprehensive innovation module. Interdisciplinary Project-Based Learning (PBL) courses should be established, such as Design of Ceramic Cultural Creative Products for Overseas Markets and Their English Promotion Plans, enabling students to integrate knowledge and engage in innovative practice through real-world tasks.

4.3 Implementing a “Project-Guided, Reality-Virtual Integration” Practical Teaching Model

Industry-education integration should be embedded throughout the entire teaching process to create immersive training environments that combine physical and virtual platforms [9].

Real projects from enterprises should be introduced, such as collaborating with international travel agencies to develop multilingual commentary and guided tour plans for “in-depth ceramic culture tours,” or creating overseas social media content for ceramic enterprises. Completing these authentic tasks significantly enhances students’ ability to solve practical problems in complex

intercultural contexts.

Moreover, high-quality internship and training bases should be established jointly with renowned ceramic manufacturers, museums, and cultural tourism sites. A dual-mentor system of corporate instructors and university teachers should be implemented, allowing students to gain experience in real work environments under the guidance of both academic and industry mentors. Specific practices include scenario-based foreign language practice in cultural tourism contexts, such as providing multilingual guided tours at scenic spots, serving as foreign language volunteers at ceramic exhibitions, participating in international reception for intangible cultural heritage events and international communication workshops for ceramic culture.

It is of great significance to fully utilize modern information technologies like VR/AR [10] and the Metaverse to develop immersive teaching platforms such as “Virtual Ceramic Museums,” “Online Pottery Workshops,” and “Simulated Intercultural Communication Scenarios.” Students can conduct training for simulated guided tours, emergency response handling, and interactions with virtual “international visitors,” safely and efficiently enhancing their on-the-spot adaptability and intercultural communication competence.

4.4 Establishing a Diverse and Dynamic Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism

This fundamentally transforms the traditional assessment method reliant solely on written exams. University teachers, enterprise mentors, industry experts, and international audiences should jointly participate in the assessment process to ensure alignment between evaluation standards and industry practices. Undoubtedly, the focus should shift from knowledge-based testing to competence-based assessment, emphasizing students’ overall performance in project practice, case analysis, creative works, and internship performance.

Meanwhile, a graduate tracking system should be established. This channels information on employment quality, employer satisfaction, and new industry trends continuously back into the talent cultivation process, forming an effective closed-loop system that drives the continuous dynamic optimization and iterative upgrading of the entire cultivation path.

5. Conclusion

Confronted with the urgent needs arising from the internationalization of the ceramic cultural tourism industry, constructing a systematic and effective cultivation path for intercultural communication competence is crucial. By analyzing the current situation, this study has identified core deficiencies in current talent cultivation regarding objective positioning, curriculum design, practical platforms, and competency assessment. Addressing these problems necessitates deep reliance on industry-education integration to break down the barriers between universities and industries.

The conclusion emphasizes that cultivating interdisciplinary foreign language talents suited to the ceramic cultural tourism sector requires key transformations and integrations in four areas. First, in objective positioning, the focus must shift from training traditional single-skill talents to cultivating interdisciplinary talents centered on the role of “Intercultural Communicators”. Second, in the curriculum system, it is essential to dismantle the current dichotomy between “language” and “specialty” and build a modular, integrated curriculum cluster around “Foreign Language + Ceramics + Communication”. Third, in practical teaching, moving beyond superficial internships is vital. This involves introducing real-world projects, co-building training bases, and utilizing technologies like VR/AR to create immersive, blended reality-virtual scenarios, thereby comprehensively enhancing students’ practical abilities. Fourth, in the evaluation mechanism, reforming the reliance on written examinations alone is imperative. A dynamic competency

assessment and feedback system involving multiple stakeholders must be established to ensure the sustained alignment of talent cultivation quality with industry development.

In summary, constructing and implementing this systematic, closed-loop talent cultivation path, with industry-education integration at its core, will not only directly empower students to become high-quality international talents proficient in foreign languages, knowledgeable about ceramic culture, and skilled in intercultural communication and dissemination, thus enabling them to tell China's ceramic stories to the world in a better way, but will also provide a practical paradigm for innovating and reforming vocational foreign language education. Furthermore, it will vigorously promote the deep integration and synergistic development of the educational chain, talent chain, and the ceramic cultural tourism industry chain.

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