

I-ROLE 2023**International Conference of Research on Language Education****INTEGRATING CHINESE CULTURE IN COLLEGE ENGLISH
TEACHING — A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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Abstract

With the increasing cultural exchanges between China and other countries, the significance of intercultural competence has become more visible in College English teaching. Many studies have analyzed and synthesized the target culture affecting one's intercultural competence. However, reviewing intercultural competence from a specific perspective of native culture teaching has been neglected. Thus, this study systematically reviews integrating Chinese culture to improve intercultural competence in English teaching and learning in colleges. In this systematic review, 29 articles have been selected from the period between 2012 and 2021 from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure Net (CNKI) and the Google Scholar databases. Five main foci have been identified, namely (a) the general trend; (b) research methods; (c) the type of participants; (d) the widely used theories and models; (e) the factors influencing Chinese college students' intercultural competence. The review shows that there is a growing trend in research from 2018 to 2020. Mixed methods are the most prominent, while quasi-experimental studies are rare. Despite the research on the intercultural competence of Chinese college students, few studies have been conducted on English majors. Most theories and models are briefly discussed in the literature. However, much research still does not mention any theories or models. Furthermore, regarding the factors influencing Chinese college students' intercultural competence, attention is primarily on learners' attitudes, knowledge, skill, and awareness. A specific perspective of Chinese culture is seldom. Based on the findings, in-depth discussion and implications for future studies are given.

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Keywords: Chinese culture, intercultural competence, college English teaching, systematic literature review (SLR)

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, the research on intercultural competence has continued to expand. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) use the term “intercultural competence” to refer to the performance to communicate effectively and appropriately. Studies have then gradually moved from the perspective of definition to construct theoretical models such as the Constructive Formula (Chen & Starosta, 1996), the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 2009; Hammer, 2011), the model of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), the Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009), and other theoretical models (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). In reverse, these theoretical models also elaborate on diverse definitions of intercultural competence.

With the ever-increasing cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries, the phenomenon of Chinese cultural aphasia is emerging. Cong (2000) first introduces the concept of “Chinese cultural aphasia” (CCA) in foreign language teaching. It refers to the phenomenon of students’ lack of knowledge of Chinese culture and their inability to express Chinese culture in English during intercultural communication (Cong, 2000). Previous research (Duan, 2019; Guan et al., 2018; Mu & Yu, 2021; Ma, 2021; Xu, 2019) therefore suggest that there is a need to integrate culture teaching into English language teaching to enable students to engage in successful intercultural communication. Therefore, native culture teaching and target culture teaching are of equal importance in college English teaching. Only when learners are familiar with the native culture can they comprehensively and objectively treat the target culture and achieve understanding and tolerance (Kong, 2022).

With “globalization” already becoming a common word worldwide, the significance of intercultural competence has become more visible in Chinese college education, especially in College English teaching (Hu, 2013). In the last decade, about 20 universities in China have developed intercultural competence (IC) centers to improve IC teaching. These universities have fully realized that language and culture are inseparable and have put intercultural communication in a vital position. Therefore, western culture is particularly flourishing while studying Chinese culture has not received proper attention. As a result, this has led to the phenomenon that many students cannot express Chinese culture clearly and freely in English during intercultural communication, which often causes communication barriers or communication failure. Hence, scholars have conducted many related studies on Chinese cultural aphasia in college English teaching since the 2010s. As a result, the studies make some pedagogical suggestions for integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching: cultivating students’ cultural consciousness, preparing reasonable syllabus, arranging appropriate teaching material, enhancing teachers’ cultural competence and teaching methods, increasing Chinese cultural content in exams, and so on (Chen, 2013; Shao, 2015; Yang, 2020).

Previous research shows that it is necessary to integrate Chinese culture into college English teaching so that college students would carry out successful intercultural communication. However, although previous research has analysed the factors that influence intercultural competence, such as oral ability, communicative skills and target language culture, little attention has been given to Chinese culture integration. From the perspective of the empirical study, there is little research on specific teaching models to improve college students’ intercultural competence. Therefore, this SLR is timely and significant, as it makes an updated collection of research for the field of intercultural competence in

college English teaching between the years 2012 to 2021. Moreover, it provides an essential reference for follow-up research to explore an appropriate and effective culture teaching model for improving Chinese college English majors' intercultural competence. The SLR establishes the foundation for research questions as follows:

- i. (1)What are the general trends in the number of relevant publications?
- ii. (2)What research methods are used in the studies of improving intercultural competence?
- iii. (3)What type of participants in the studies on improving intercultural competence?
- iv. (4)What are the widely used theories and models adopted for improving Chinese college students' intercultural competence?
- v. (5)What are the factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural competence?

2. Research Methods

Aiming at comprehensively review the topic of integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching for improving intercultural competence, articles from two databases covering the years 2012-2021 were searched electronically.

2.1. Database and search terms

Google Scholar was chosen as a significant resource for collecting relevant academic articles. In addition, this SLR also search articles from CNKI, which is the most comprehensive integrated knowledge resource system in China. This review concentrated on articles ranging from the year 2012 to 2021. Since the articles relevant to integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching for improving intercultural competence are limited, the terms “intercultural communication” and “intercultural communicative competence” were added to broaden the scope of intercultural competence. Similarly, the term “ESL teaching” and “EFL teaching” were searched as well as “college English teaching”. Based on this, this review used the following combinations of search terms: 1. Chinese culture (native culture, Chinese native culture) and; 2. College English teaching (ESL teaching, EFL teaching) and; 3. Intercultural competence (intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competence). Articles were selected by titles, keywords and abstracts in Google Scholar and the CNKI.

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To get the right and suitable articles that would answer the research questions, six specific selection criteria were developed to index optimal literature. Articles were to be considered appropriate for inclusion had to conform to the following six criteria:

- i. Articles must be published in English;
- ii. Articles must include abstracts;
- iii. Research published in peer-reviewed journals in the Google Scholar;
- iv. The participants must be college ESL and EFL learners in China;
- v. Articles should have been published between 2012 and 2021;

- vi. Studies reported data from empirical studies using qualitative, quantitative, single subject or mixed methods designs.

2.3. Data selection

The search started in October 2021 and ended in January 2022. 292 articles were collected based on the identified search terms in Google Scholar. Since there are fewer published articles, thesis or dissertations are also disregarded as qualified resources. After considering only the abstracts, the number dropped to 72 publications. For the CNKI, the initial search yielded 1305 publications and bibliographic entries. After considering the selection criteria, 14 publications remained. Table 1 shows the number of publications found in two databases after applying the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Selection

Stage	Data Selection		
	Google Scholar	CNKI	Total
Identifying (Identified based on key terms and relevant synonyms; duplicates were excluded)	N=292	N=1305	N=1597
Screening (selected based on their abstracts)	N=72	N=117	N=189
Analyzing (selected based on inclusion criteria)	N=15	N=14	N=29

Based on Table 1, there are three stages involved in data selection. These are identifying, screening, and analyzing. In identifying literature, searches were conducted on two databases, Google Scholar and the CNKI. These two databases are comprehensive and provide vital information for the selected protocol review. According to Table 1, after excluding the duplicates and applying five criteria, 29 publications were identified as qualified. These final 29 publications include journal papers and thesis or dissertations.

2.4. Analysis

Publications that met the inclusion criteria were reviewed using quantitative and qualitative methods to categorize content for further systematic interpretation. Content related to research questions was filtered and coded to classify research findings. The data were then analyzed using quantitative methods to identify research trends over the past decade. Knowledge about research over the past decade was analyzed using qualitative methods.

Specifically, the literature review consisted of three steps

- i. Review all 29 selected articles to determine their value in relation to the research questions.
- ii. Categorize the results to answer the research questions.
- iii. Summarize the reviews so that they become valuable references for readers and researchers.

3. Findings

This section aims to present the main findings of the reviewed literature on the development of research on culture teaching models for improving Chinese college students' intercultural competence. Thus, the author answers the research questions through a systematic literature review.

Research question 1: What are the general trends in the number of relevant publications?



Figure 1. Frequency of studies by year published (N=29)

This section demonstrates the developing trend in Chinese culture teaching research from 2012 to 2021. Based on Google Scholar and the CNKI search results pages, 189 related publications have been chronologically classified, and finally, 29 publications were identified as qualified. Since many related studies on Chinese cultural aphasia in college English teaching have been conducted since the 2010s (Chen, 2013; Shao, 2015; Yang, 2020), Chinese culture teaching publications started to increase in 2012 (see Figure 1). However, the amount of research grew slightly from 2012 to 2021. With the issue of Chinese culture teaching beginning to attract scholars' attention, there was a sharp increase in the number of studies on Chinese culture teaching from 2018 to 2020. The number of publications in 2021 was also projected, as the data was collected in October 2021. Many publications may be awaiting indexing and publication.

Research question 2: What research methods are used in the studies of improving intercultural competence?

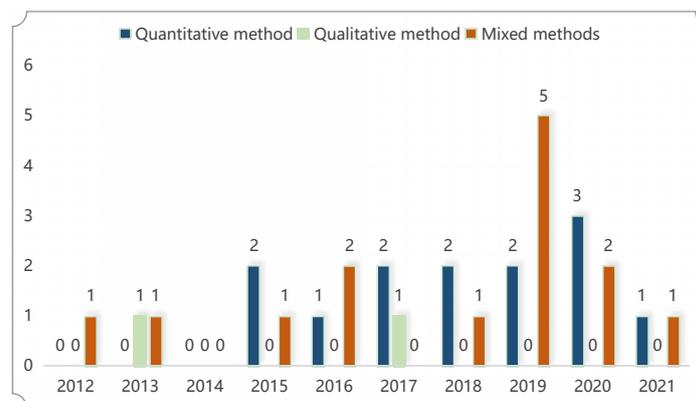


Figure 2. Research methods in Chinese culture teaching(N=29)

For the research method aspect, from Figure 2, it can be seen that, compared to the quantitative and mixed method, the 29 studies were rarely using qualitative analysis, which shows only one in 2013 and another in 2017. The number of quantitative methods has remained steady from 2015 to 2021. There is no quantitative method between 2012 and 2014 among the 29 reviewed literature. Mixed methods are the most prominent, which is more than 48%. However, the quasi-experimental study is seldom, which means that researchers lack to emphasize the empirical experience in both experimental environments and real scenarios.

Research question 3: What type of participants in the studies on improving intercultural competence?

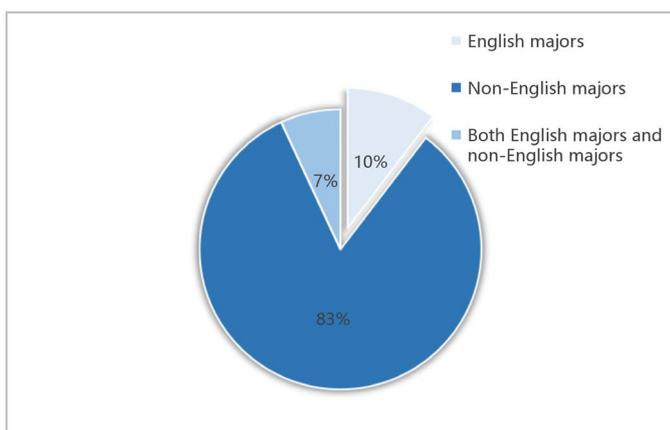


Figure 3. Participants in the studies of improving intercultural competence (N=29)

Figure 3 shows that from 2012 to 2021, non-English major students take the lead in the studies of improving intercultural competence, accounting for 83 per cent of all the participants. Next comes English majors, whose percentage is higher than that of both English majors and non-English majors. Only 10% of participants are students majoring in English. Thus, little research was conducted on English majors. Furthermore, the number of individual participants ranged from 16 to 280, with some studies defining students according to their level of education and others according to their major.

Research question 4: What are the widely used theories and models adopted for improving Chinese college students' intercultural competence?

Table 2. Distribution of commonly addressed theoretical frameworks(N=29)type your title

Theoretical Frameworks	Total
Cultural Schema Theories	1
Krashen's Input Hypothesis	2
Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis	1
Social Cultural Theory	1
Constructivism Learning Theory	1
Ausubel's Meaningful Learning Theory	1
The Triangular Model of ICC	1
Process-oriented Intercultural Teaching Mode	1
Byram's Intercultural Competence Model	4
New Model of Intercultural Competence	2
Baker's ICA Model	1

Integration of “Knowing and Doing” Model	1
ADDIE Teaching Model	1
Wen Qiufang’s Model	1
Not Mentioned	11

Table 2 shows that the theories and models considered in studies of intercultural competence are often borrowed from general theories of second language learning, such as Krashen’s input hypothesis, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Ausubel’s meaningful learning theory, social-cultural theory and constructivism learning theory. Besides, cultural schema theories are also applied in the reviewed studies. There are many models included for the aspect of the model, such as the triangular model of ICC Process-oriented intercultural teaching mode, Byram’s intercultural competence model, Baker’s ICA model, integration of “Knowing and Doing” model, ADDIE teaching model and Wen Qiufang’s Model. Among these models, Byram’s intercultural competence model was widely used. In addition, two studies adopted a new model of intercultural competence. However, although theories or models guide more than 60% of the studies, 11 (40%) still did not mention any theories or models. Research without a theoretical framework means that there is no link to theory, which indicates the possibility of methodological flaws.

Research question 5: What are the factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural competence?

Table 3. Distribution of factors influencing Chinese college students’ intercultural competence (N=29)

Factors Influencing Chinese College Students’ Intercultural Competence	Total
Chinese Culture Input	8
Attitude, Motivation and Awareness	8
Teachers’ Competency	6
Teaching Syllabus	7
Cultural Knowledge	2
Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral	2
Teaching Method	2
Linguistic Competence and Sociocultural Competence	2
Language learning environment	1

Table 3 presents the factors influencing Chinese college students’ intercultural competence. According to the results, nine factors were mentioned in the reviewed studies. The most frequently used indicators were Chinese culture input (n=8), attitude, motivation, and awareness (n=8). These factors are closely correlated with Chinese college students’ intercultural competence. For the Chinese culture input, Ellis (2003) put forward his view that two aspects influence second language acquisition: input frequency and comprehensible input. As Guan et al. (2018) state, culture teaching cannot be neglected in language teaching. The culture here refers to not only the foreign culture, but also the native culture” (p. 56). Xu (2019) concludes: “It is necessary to integrate Chinese culture in college English teaching, which not only helps students to deeply understand Chinese culture, but also effectively enhances their cultural identification ability” (p. 57). Therefore, sufficient language knowledge and cultural information contribute to smooth and comfortable intercultural communication.

Attitude, motivation, and awareness are also essential factors influencing Chinese college students' intercultural competence. Xu (2019) writes: "more Chinese cultural content should be integrated into the English class, and continuing efforts should be made to enhance students' willingness and motivation to learn English to export the home culture and import the target culture" (p. 120). Overall, these studies (Duan, 2019; Huo, 2015; Lin, 2017; Yu & Van, 2018; Wu & Miller, 2021; Xu, 2019) demonstrate that attitude, motivation, and cultural awareness positively influence students' intercultural competence.

Moreover, prior studies have also noted the importance of teaching syllabus (Chen, 2013; Ma, 2021; Shao, 2015; Yang et al., 2018; Wei, 2017; Wu, 2019; Zhang & Sun, 2013) and teachers' competency (Chen & Peng, 2015; Huo, 2015; Ma, 2021; Shao, 2015; Xu, 2019; Zhang & Sun, 2013). In addition, a number of studies have examined the role of cultural knowledge (Lin, 2017; Wu, 2019), cognitive, affective and behavioural (Li, 2016; Yang, 2020), and teaching method (Mu & Yu, 2021; Shao, 2015), linguistic competence and sociocultural competence (Duan, 2019; Li & Kim, 2020) and language learning environment (Wu, 2019).

3.1. Discussions

Previous studies have highlighted the positive role of Chinese cultural input in improving intercultural competence among Chinese EFL learners. New trends such as the culture teaching model (Zhang & Yao, 2020) may inspire more English teachers to integrate Chinese culture in college English teaching to improve intercultural competence. Further studies may be conducted to investigate the correlation between Chinese cultural aphasia and intercultural competence. Other pragmatic issues are investigated as follows.

First, despite the abundant research on intercultural competence, only 10% of participants are students majoring in English among the 29 selected publications over the years between 2012 to 2021. Thus, more studies may be conducted to investigate English majors' intercultural competence further.

Second, there is no feasible culture teaching model for improving intercultural competence. Culture teaching is unsystematic. As a result, it affects the quality and effectiveness of foreign language education (Zhang & Yang, 2012). Therefore, it is urgent to construct a Chinese students' intercultural competence development model (Dai, 2019).

Third, studies on integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching for improving intercultural competence still have not been conducted sufficiently. In theoretical research, most studies emphasize Western culture teaching in English class, while few studies focus on teaching Chinese culture. As for the empirical study, there is no quasi-experimental study on the culture teaching model for improving college students' intercultural competence.

Generally, integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching helps improve intercultural competence, especially if the Chinese culture is being expressed effectively and with appropriate strategies in intercultural communication. Besides, the attitude, motivation, cultural awareness, teaching syllabus and teachers' competency, linguistic competence and language learning environment are beneficial for cultivating intercultural competence in English majors. More innovative teaching methods to incorporate Chinese culture in the teaching of English at college would enhance students' ability to introduce Chinese culture into English.

4. Conclusions

This systematic literature review aims to describe developments in the research of integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching for improving Chinese college students' intercultural competence. A comprehensive review and literature analysis were conducted to ensure a detailed discussion of the research questions and further investigation. This review presented the general trend of the number of related publications in recent ten years, discussed the types of research methods in the studies of improving intercultural competence, explored the participants where the studies of improving intercultural competence are implemented, investigated theories and models adopted in the studies, demonstrated the factors influencing Chinese college students' intercultural competence. Many broadened terminologies associated with intercultural competence were added to broaden the scope. Then the researcher analyzed the results according to each research question. Articles from two credible databases were analyzed, and 29 out of 1597 publications were selected. The two primary forms of research methods adopted in these studies are mixed methods and quantitative methods. The majority of participants in the chosen studies are non-English major students. The most widely used theory is Krashen's input hypothesis. The most frequently adopted model is Byram's intercultural competence model. However, no specific theories and models focus on integrating Chinese culture in college English teaching to improve intercultural competence. Therefore, for further suggestion, more empirical studies need to be conducted, Chinese college English major students need to be paid more attention and a culture teaching model that fits in a specific context to enhance college students' intercultural competence needs to be constructed.

The review results suggest that more empirical studies need to be conducted. In addition, Chinese college English major students need to be paid more attention. Furthermore, a culture teaching model that fits a specific context to enhance college students' intercultural competence needs to be constructed. Based on the above discussion, this study is expected to be a valuable reference for researchers designing future studies on integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching for improving Chinese college students' intercultural competence.

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