The Teaching Transformation Enabled by Generative AI in Foreign Language Intercultural Education

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Abstract: Generative large language models bring new opportunities, such as resource expansion, situational simulation, and personalized learning to foreign language intercultural communication education, promoting the transformation of intercultural teaching from text study to human-AI collaborative practice. However, large language models are limited by training data and have risks such as Western-centric cultural bias, cultural stereotypes, and factual illusions, which interfere with students' cultural cognition construction and weaken their intercultural critical discrimination ability. This paper explores the intrinsic value of AI empowering intercultural education, analyzes the teaching dilemmas brought about by technological intervention, and takes the core of human-AI interactive negotiation competence as the handle, proposing to integrate intercultural critical thinking and AI discrimination ability into teaching goals. From the four dimensions of teaching goal reconstruction, classroom task design, evaluation system innovation, and improvement of teachers' digital literacy, it explores the educational transformation path of foreign language intercultural teaching in the AI era, achieving the subordination of technical tools to the value of intercultural education.

Keywords: Generative AI; Foreign Language Intercultural Education; Intercultural Critical Thinking; Human-AI Interactive Negotiation Competence

1. Introduction

Under the background of the deep integration of globalization and digital intelligent technologies, the "Action Plan for 'Artificial Intelligence + Education'" points out that it is necessary to optimize the development ecosystem of "Artificial Intelligence+Education" and create a future educational space that integrates virtual and real elements[1]. Intercultural communication competence is the core competence of foreign language talents. The "College English Teaching Guidance (2020 Edition)" clearly requires that foreign language teaching should also take into account the cultivation of language skills and the shaping of international perspectives and cultural critical thinking[2]. Traditional intercultural teaching mainly relies on textbook texts and audio-visual materials to conduct comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures, and has practical limitations such as slow update of teaching resources, lack of real communication scenarios, insufficient cultural participation of students, and insufficient personalized cultural critical thinking training.

The rapid popularization of generative AI represented by large language models provides technical tools for the innovation of foreign language intercultural teaching: AI can quickly generate multilingual cultural materials, simulate intercultural communication dialogues, and conduct cultural topic analysis, effectively compensating for the shortcomings of traditional teaching resources and scenarios. However, new technologies have always been a double-edged sword. The existing large language models have limitations in their training data, and the output content may have potential Western cultural centrism biases, fixed cultural stereotypes, and even generate false cultural information. If students do not critically analyze and directly accept the output of AI, they will instead distort cultural cognition and undermine the effectiveness of cultivating intercultural critical thinking.

Current academic research mostly focuses on the application scenarios of AI enabling intercultural teaching, and the exploration of the inherent cultural risks of the technology and the cultivation of students' AI discrimination ability needs to be deepened. Wen Qiufang and Liang Maocheng proposed the human-AI interactive negotiation competence(HAINC) model, which includes five elements: understanding AI, setting

goals, issuing instructions, analyzing feedback, and adjusting strategies.[3] It emphasizes the dominant position of humans in human-AI interaction, providing an important theoretical framework for this study. Foreign language intercultural teaching cannot simply embrace technological tools, but should prioritize educational values, cultivate students' intercultural critical thinking and AI discrimination ability, and avoid the cognitive traps caused by algorithmic cultural biases.

2. Opportunities and Challenges of Generative AI in Foreign Language Intercultural Teaching

2.1 Opportunities of Generative AI in Foreign Language Intercultural Teaching

Firstly, traditional classroom intercultural materials are highly dependent on textbooks, with limited content capacity and lagging updates. Generative AI can quickly present social customs, value systems, and communication pragmatic cases of different nations according to the instructions, generating intercultural comparison texts, debate topics, and multimodal scripts; students can independently pose questions to AI, compare the pragmatic differences of the same communication behavior in different cultural contexts, obtain fresh cultural cases beyond textbooks, and broaden their cultural observation horizons. Combined with multimodal tools, cultural short-video scripts and virtual communication scripts can also be generated to achieve multi-symbol linkage of text, audio, and script, and implement multimodal intercultural learning.

Secondly, in our nation’s university foreign language teaching, there are scarce real intercultural communication opportunities, and most students lack practical practice opportunities. AI, as conversational partners, can simulate different cultural identities, restore communication scenarios such as business communication, daily social interaction, and cultural conflicts, and conduct real-time foreign language conversations with students. Students can repeatedly practice intercultural communication, try different expression strategies, observe the communication feedback brought by different speech patterns, and conduct trial errors and simulated practical training in a low-pressure virtual environment to improve cultural sensitivity and communication adaptation, and make up for the lack of real intercultural practice channels.

Thirdly, students' language foundation and cultural cognition levels vary greatly. Traditional classrooms are difficult to accommodate individual differences. AI can adjust the difficulty of cultural tasks according to students' levels: simplify cultural concept explanations for students with weak foundations; throw out controversial intercultural topics for high-level learners to guide multi-angle thinking. AI can provide feedback on cultural adaptation problems beyond language expression, and point out details in students' expressions that are prone to cause cultural misunderstandings, achieving personalized cultural learning assistance and reducing the pressure of teachers' massive individual tutoring.

Intercultural communication is not simply learning about foreign cultures; it also involves telling Chinese stories well in a foreign language. AI can assist students in polishing Chinese culture external communication texts, hinting at the expression difficulties in intercultural communication, assisting students in adjusting narrative perspectives, and practicing converting traditional Chinese customs, values, and concepts into foreign language expressions that are easy for overseas audiences to understand. Meanwhile, AI can assist students in training their awareness of equal two-way intercultural dialogue, avoiding the "one-way Western gaze" mistake in intercultural learning [4].

2.2 Potential Challenges of Generative AI in Foreign Language Intercultural Teaching

In the existing mainstream large language models, the proportion of English Internet resources is relatively high, which is prone to output Western-centered value presuppositions and have a simplistic and labeled stereotypical interpretation of Chinese culture. In intercultural teaching classrooms, if students receive all AI conclusions without discrimination, they will subconsciously accept the cultural bias carried by the algorithm and have difficulty establishing an objective, equal, and diverse intercultural perspective, which violates the educational goal of intercultural teaching that pursues cultural respect and equality. [5]

Large language models are based on statistical probability to generate text and do not have a true cultural knowledge base memory. They may fabricate non-existent cultural customs,

historical anecdotes, and social cases, that is, AI hallucinations. When dealing with cultural knowledge of some small-scale nations, AI may generate incorrect content that is somewhat plausible. Students are likely to take AI output as an authoritative standard answer and internalize false cultural information, causing cultural cognition errors. If teachers do not verify it, incorrect information will flow into the classroom teaching process [6].

Currently, AI can generate complete cultural comparisons and viewpoint analyses in one click, which may induce students to directly copy AI-generated viewpoints and skip the cognitive process of consulting original materials, independent thinking, and comparing and analyzing. The core of intercultural literacy lies precisely in critical thinking, empathy, and multi-perspective examination of differences. Therefore, if students overly rely on the ready-made conclusions of AI, it will lead to the absence of active critical thinking, ultimately resulting in their passive acceptance of ready-made viewpoints and losing the ability to independently analyze cultural information. Therefore, the training of intercultural critical thinking becomes merely a formality.

3. Education Transformation: Cultivating Intercultural Critical Thinking and AI Discrimination Skills

In the face of both opportunities and risks, foreign language intercultural teaching cannot reject AI, nor can it allow AI to dominate the classroom. AI has promoted the transformation of the traditional "teacher-student" binary structure into a "teacher-student-AI" triadic structure [7]. We should establish a teaching model that is led by teachers, with students as the main body, and with AI as an auxiliary. We should formally incorporate intercultural critical thinking and AI discrimination skills into teaching objectives, and rely on the five elements of human-AI interactive negotiation competence[3] to reshape teaching design, task activities, evaluation systems, and teacher capacity building, in order to achieve the goal of educational service.

3.1 Reconstructing Teaching Objectives

The traditional intercultural teaching objectives focus on the memorization of cultural knowledge and the mastery of communication strategies. While in the AI era, we should expand the three-dimensional objective: embedding AI literacy into the framework of intercultural competence.

In the knowledge dimension, in addition to mastering core cultural concepts of China and foreign countries, one also needs to understand the working mechanism of large language models and be aware of the inherent limitations of AI, such as cultural biases. In the skill dimension, while enhancing intercultural communication practice skills, one should also master the human-AI interactive negotiation competence, such as learning to precisely issue instructions to AI, and focusing on training the AI discrimination ability: being able to identify cultural and value biases and verifying AI content with authoritative literature and original materials. In the value dimension, one should establish the awareness of cultural equality, respect cultural diversity, establish the subjectivity of local culture, and dialectically view the culture of other countries.

3.2 Innovating Classroom Task Design

Based on the outcome-based teaching concept, the design of classroom tasks should fully respect the cognitive development laws of students, place students' independent thinking at the forefront of human-AI interaction, avoid the learning misunderstanding of directly entrusting AI to do the work, and guide students to view AI as an auxiliary tool for expanding their thinking horizons rather than a channel for obtaining ready-made answers.

During the actual teaching process, teachers should actively intervene before class, select intercultural reading materials that contain cultural stereotypes and one-sided value judgments, and hand them over to class groups for joint study and analysis. Students need to identify various cultural cognitive biases and factual errors in the text, complete the presentation of evidence by relying on textbook discussions, authoritative academic literature, and first-hand documentary materials, and then correct and improve the inappropriate expressions in the AI text. The purpose of this practice is to help students establish clear cognition in the analysis of specific text cases, be able to consciously distinguish between subjective expressions generated by AI and objective cultural facts, and gradually develop the thinking habit of multi-angle examination and the courage to question the content output

by AI.

Around controversial intercultural issues, the classroom can also conduct collaborative inquiry learning with human-AI interaction. The starting point of the inquiry activity must be students' independent thinking. Students form preliminary viewpoints based on their existing cultural accumulation, clarify their research direction, and then propose clear and specific inquiry demands to AI, obtaining diverse perspectives and supplementary evidence from AI. After receiving the feedback content from AI, the learning group conducts collective study and judgment, identifying one-sided and labeled expressions in the answer, marking doubtful viewpoints, and further consulting authoritative sources, such as academic papers and documentary materials, to complete cross-validation. Based on multiple information, students evaluate and correct the content provided by AI. After completing the data analysis, students integrate their original thinking, the reference materials provided by AI, and authoritative supporting materials to generate learning outcomes in the form of research reports, foreign language speeches, or cultural-themed short video scripts. The entire process strictly avoids directly copying the AI-generated output text. During the evaluation session, the focus of the teacher should not be limited to the fluency of language expression. Instead, it should be more concentrated on the complete critical thinking process of students in identifying and analyzing AI content, and on examining students' positions and logic when dealing with cultural issues.

In addition to text-based critical thinking tasks, virtual communication scenarios can be built with AI to conduct intercultural conflict communication training. Teachers can create communication scenarios with potential cultural misunderstandings and guide students to conduct meta-cognitive reflection. Students complete communication dialogues in a foreign language and they should attempt to resolve the cultural contradictions in the scenarios. Students need to reflect on the behavioral logic of the role played by AI in communication, judge whether there are obvious deviations in the simulation of the entire virtual scenario, and think about how to adjust the instruction prompts and modify the simulation settings, thereby exercising their judgment skills. The design of the entire task chain aims to integrate intercultural critical thinking training into all aspects of human-AI interaction, and implement the cultivation of AI discrimination ability in practice.

3.3 Reforming Evaluation System

The cultivation of students' intercultural critical thinking ability requires not only the reform of teaching objectives, course content, and classroom activities, but also the reform of the evaluation method that solely based on language output. It is necessary to implement process-based and multi-dimensional evaluation and incorporate intercultural critical thinking, AI discrimination performance, and human-AI negotiation process in the assessment indicators.

Grading assignments is merely about looking at the final manuscript. Students are required to submit a complete package of materials, including original thinking notes, original AI output text, the traces of students' identification and modification, the supporting materials they have consulted, and the final product. The focus of evaluation is on the process of students' discrimination and selection of AI content, rather than the final product. The evaluation of classroom performance adds dimensions to examine whether students can identify cultural biases in AI output and whether they can raise reasonable and well-grounded questions. Teachers should guide students clarify academic norms and view AI as an inspiring tool rather than a substitute for writing.

In summary, the evaluation of intercultural critical thinking and AI discrimination ability should take into account language proficiency, the depth of intercultural understanding, cultural stance, and human-AI negotiation skills. It should shift from emphasizing results to emphasizing the critical thinking process, achieving integrated assessment of knowledge, ability, and value.

3.4 Strengthening Teachers' Intercultural-Digital Composite Literacy

Teachers are the core of the “teacher-student-AI” triadic structure. Teachers need to possess dual abilities: intercultural professional literacy and AI teaching critical thinking literacy. First, teachers need to deeply understand the limitations of generative AI and be able to predict which cultural biases and factual errors are likely to occur in intercultural themes. Before class, they should conduct manual review of AI materials and not directly hand over the

original AI output to students. Second, the focus of teaching should shift from simply explaining cultural knowledge points to designing critical thinking tasks, demonstrating AI discrimination methods, and demonstrating how to question, verify, and select AI output, teaching students a set of practical methods for critically analyzing AI content. Third, teachers should play a role in value guidance, guiding students to establish an equal intercultural stance, strengthening the sense of Chinese cultural subjectivity, and being vigilant against the cultural narrative bias brought by algorithms.

4. Conclusion

Generative AI opens up entirely new possibilities for foreign language intercultural teaching. However, technology cannot replace human intercultural reasoning. The key to foreign language intercultural teaching in the AI era lies not in mastering how many AI tools to use, but in adhering to the educational purpose and fully leveraging the advantages of AI in resource provision, scenario simulation, and personalized assistance. At the same time, it is necessary to confront the inherent defects of large language models, such as cultural biases.

By constructing a "teacher-student-AI" triadic collaborative model, integrating human-AI interactive negotiation capabilities, intercultural critical thinking, and AI discrimination abilities into the teaching goals, classroom tasks, and evaluation system, students can be guided to make good use of AI without blindly following it. Only through foreign language intercultural teaching can AI technology be utilized to truly cultivate new era foreign language talents who possess language skills, a multicultural perspective, and digital critical thinking abilities.

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