Research on Cultivating the Ability of English Majors in Higher Education to Effectively Narrate Chinese Stories in English

Yuan Zhang[*]

Liaocheng University, Liaocheng, 252000, China
[*]Corresponding author: zhangyuan@lcu.edu.cn

Abstract: *Against the backdrop of increasingly profound global cultural exchanges, cultivating the ability of English majors in higher education to effectively narrate Chinese stories in English has become a significant educational task. The present study adopts intercultural narrative competence as the core theoretical framework. It first elucidates the theoretical connotations and core components of this competence, clarifying it as a comprehensive literacy that integrates cultural understanding, narrative construction, and intercultural negotiation. Subsequently, the study examines the current state of cultivating this competence within English major education, pointing out deficiencies in aspects such as conceptual orientation, curricular support, and evaluation mechanisms. Finally, the study proposes systematic optimization strategies. These include restructuring competency-oriented curriculum objectives, integrating narrative themes and language skills into teaching content, innovating pedagogical models that promote meaning negotiation, and constructing a multidimensional evaluation system. The aim is to provide theoretical reference and practical pathways for the reform of English major education.*

Keywords: *intercultural narrative competence; Chinese stories; English major; competence cultivation; curriculum and instruction*

Introduction

In the context of intertwining globalization and localization, how to effectively convey the essence of Chinese culture and promote mutual learning among civilizations through effective narration has become a significant challenge for English major education in higher education. Narrating Chinese stories well involves not only the external dissemination of cultural content but also deeper intercultural meaning negotiation and empathetic understanding, which places higher demands on the comprehensive literacy of English majors. However, the current English major education has yet to systematically address this need in its conceptual framework, curriculum design, and evaluation mechanisms. The cultivation of intercultural narrative competence remains marginalized. Therefore, based on theories of intercultural communication, narratology, and sociocultural perspectives, this study delves into the theoretical connotations of intercultural narrative competence, examines the current state of its cultivation, and proposes optimization strategies for curriculum and pedagogy. It aims to provide a theoretical foundation and practical framework for enhancing the ability of English majors to narrate Chinese stories effectively in English, combining both theoretical value and practical necessity.

1. Theoretical Connotation and Core Components of Intercultural Narrative Competence

1.1 Conceptual Definition and Theoretical Evolution of Intercultural Narrative Competence

Intercultural narrative competence is a composite concept that transcends the scope of traditional language skills. It refers to the comprehensive literacy of an agent in constructing, conveying, and interpreting narrative texts within intercultural contexts to achieve effective meaning negotiation and cultural understanding. The proposal of this concept originates from the paradigm shift in narrative theory, moving from a text-centered approach to the domains of reader response and cultural exchange. It not only focuses on the linear telling of a story but emphasizes the nature of narrative as a

sociocultural practice—namely, how symbolic resources are mobilized to construct a shared space of meaning within dynamic interactive processes. This competence requires the narrator to possess dual awareness: the ability to delve into the internal fabric of specific cultural contexts to grasp the deep structure and cultural conventions of narratives, while also stepping beyond their own cultural framework to anticipate and mediate potential interpretive differences among audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds[1].

The theoretical foundation of this competence is interwoven with multiple strands from intercultural communication studies, narratology, and sociocultural theory. Intercultural communication provides the core framework concerning cultural dimensions, identity negotiation, and communication models, emphasizing the interactive and situated nature of competence development. The contribution of narrative theory lies in offering tools for analyzing story structure, perspective, and reliability, viewing narrative as a fundamental mode of organizing human experience. Sociocultural theory further posits that narrative practice is a mediated activity; through the cultural tool of language signs, individuals not only convey information but also participate in the reproduction of social culture. The trajectory of theoretical evolution reveals a shift from static comparisons of cultural knowledge towards a focus on dynamic, constructive intercultural praxis, offering a new theoretical lens for analyzing the complex interplay between language and culture within the context of globalization.

1.2 Core Component Structure of Intercultural Narrative Competence

The core components of intercultural narrative competence constitute an interconnected organic system. The primary component is deep cultural understanding and symbolic interpretive ability. This requires the narrator not only to be knowledgeable about cultural facts but also to comprehend the shared values, beliefs, and emotional structures of specific cultural communities, and to be capable of interpreting their deep cultural symbols such as myths, metaphors, and rituals. This kind of understanding is the cornerstone for narrative content to possess cultural authenticity and spiritual depth. Closely linked to this is the ability for narrative construction and discourse design. This involves the selection of narrative material, the arrangement of plot, the determination of perspective, and the mastery of narrative discourse style. The narrator must effectively recontextualize the story based on the cognitive habits and aesthetic expectations of the target cultural audience to achieve the intended communicative effect.

Another key component is intercultural perspective-taking and empathic ability. This refers to the narrator's capacity to temporarily suspend their own cultural stance, actively understand and experience the emotions and ideas from the perspective of another culture, thereby naturally integrating the observation of multiple perspectives into the narrative and dissolving potential narrative barriers arising from cultural centralism. Finally, there is strategic interaction and adaptive ability. This is demonstrated during the narrative exchange process, where the narrator can flexibly adjust narrative strategies and linguistic expressions in response to real-time feedback, addressing potential misunderstandings or cultural conflicts to ensure open communication channels and the effective transmission of meaning. These components work together to elevate mere linguistic output into a narrative practice endowed with cultural penetrative power and emotional resonance.

1.3 The Intrinsic Relationship Between Intercultural Narrative Competence and Narrating Chinese Stories Well

As a narrative activity aimed at promoting intercultural understanding and dialogue, the effectiveness of "narrating Chinese stories well" exists in a profound symbiotic relationship with the level of the narrator's intercultural narrative competence. Chinese stories carry rich historical traditions and contemporary social landscapes; their inherent cultural meanings and values require effective narrative transformation to be perceived and understood by audiences from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural narrative competence serves precisely as the key mechanism for achieving this narrative transformation. It determines whether the narrator can move beyond the superficial translation of cultural symbols to the level of shared meaning, transforming stories with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics into narrative texts possessing universal intelligibility and emotional appeal[2].

This intrinsic relationship is further manifested in that intercultural narrative competence provides a concrete practical pathway for achieving the goal of "narrating well." It guides the narrator in selecting story topics that explore narrative themes which both reflect cultural uniqueness and speak to shared

human destinies. In terms of narrative expression, it enables the use of internationally recognized narrative grammars to encapsulate local cultural cores, thereby avoiding reception barriers caused by differences in cultural frameworks. A lack of this competence may lead the narration of Chinese stories into a predicament of cultural monologue, where its dissemination degenerates into unidirectional information transmission, making it difficult to foster profound cultural dialogue. Therefore, cultivating intercultural narrative competence is not an additional task external to narrating Chinese stories well; rather, it is a core component and intrinsic requirement, directly influencing the ultimate efficacy and impact of intercultural narrative practice.

2. An Examination of the Current State of Cultivating Intercultural Narrative Competence in English Majors

2.1 The Conceptual Orientation and Goal-Setting for Cultivating Intercultural Narrative Competence

Within current English major training programs, the definition of intercultural competence often emphasizes adaptation and communication in intercultural interactions, while insufficient attention is given to narrative as a core cultural practice and mode of meaning construction. The cultivation philosophy remains, to a certain extent, dominated by instrumental rationality, which prioritizes language skills as the primary objective. It fails to systematically plan for intercultural narrative competence as a comprehensive literacy integrating cultural understanding, critical thinking, and creative expression. This ambiguity in conceptual orientation results in the cultivation of intercultural narrative competence failing to become a clear, guiding thread throughout the curriculum system. Consequently, its potential value has not been fully realized within the top-level design of talent development.

This limitation in philosophy is further reflected in the setting of specific cultivation goals. Existing goal descriptions are often overly broad, lacking decomposition and refinement of the various components that constitute intercultural narrative competence. Goal-setting typically remains at the level of "being able to engage in intercultural communication." However, it lacks operational, tiered descriptions detailing how to demonstrate cultural understanding and empathy through specific actions in communication, such as the selection of narrative strategies, the translation of cultural symbols, and perspective-taking. The connection between these goals and the specific narrative task of "narrating Chinese stories well" is not explicit enough. There is a failure to transform macro-level narrative materials related to the nation, society, and culture into a personalized system of narrative learning objectives that students can comprehend, operationalize, and produce.

2.2 The Supporting Pathways for Intercultural Narrative Competence in the Current Curriculum System

The primary supporting pathways for intercultural narrative competence within the existing curriculum system are dispersed across traditional courses such as Advanced English, Selected Readings in Literature, and Intercultural Communication. Literature courses, through the in-depth interpretation of narrative texts, provide students with a field for encountering and analyzing complex narrative structures, indirectly fostering narrative appreciation and critical abilities[3]. Intercultural Communication courses, on the other hand, explain cultural differences and communication strategies from a theoretical perspective, offering partial contextual knowledge for narrative activities. However, the relationships among these courses are mostly parallel and juxtaposed, lacking a vertical progression and horizontal integration centered on the development of narrative competence. Consequently, they fail to form a synergistic supporting force.

The support provided by course content for narrative competence exhibits a fragmented nature. Most courses focus on the analysis and comprehension of established narrative texts, namely narrative input, while dedicated training components for narrative construction and production, that is, narrative output, remain relatively weak. The systematic integration of English-language narrative materials related to Chinese themes into the curriculum is still insufficient. Consequently, students have limited opportunities for adequate practice in transforming local cultural knowledge into intercultural narrative texts. Discontinuities exist in the articulation of narrative themes and skill training across different courses. This results in a failure to effectively integrate the narrative knowledge and skills acquired by students into a transferable, comprehensive applied ability for tackling authentic intercultural narrative

tasks.

2.3 The Evaluation Mechanism for Intercultural Narrative Competence in Teaching Practice

In teaching evaluation, the focus on intercultural narrative competence currently leans heavily towards summative assessment, particularly evident in written examinations and oral presentations on fixed topics. Such evaluation methods typically prioritize the accuracy of language forms and the completeness of narrative content. However, the means for assessing dimensions such as cultural translation strategies during the narrative process, the intent behind perspective selection, and the anticipated audience reception effects remain relatively monolithic. Indicators within evaluation criteria related to "cultural appropriateness" and "narrative effectiveness" are often vaguely defined, relying on the subjective judgment of instructors based on their experience. There is a lack of systematic, shared grading rubrics that both teachers and students can consistently follow.

Formative assessment has yet to fully realize its diagnostic and guiding functions within the process of competence development. When students complete narrative tasks, such as writing stories on Chinese themes or delivering cultural presentations, the feedback they receive often focuses on superficial linguistic aspects like vocabulary and grammar. There is a lack of sustained, diagnostic, and specialized feedback regarding the ingenuity in narrative structure design, the accuracy of cultural connotation conveyance, and the demonstration of intercultural empathy. The evaluation subjects are also relatively homogeneous, predominantly relying on teacher assessment. There is a failure to effectively incorporate diverse evaluative entities such as peer evaluation and perceptual feedback from individuals with the target cultural background. Consequently, this limits students' opportunities to reflect upon and refine their own narrative practices from multi-dimensional perspectives.

3. Optimization Strategies for English Major Curriculum and Instruction Integrating Intercultural Narrative Competence

3.1 Reconstructing Curriculum Objectives Guided by Intercultural Narrative Competence

The reconstruction of curriculum objectives should be grounded in the multidimensional characteristics of intercultural narrative competence, employing the principle of "backward design." This approach starts with the desired narrative production ability as the endpoint and works backwards to derive the necessary supporting knowledge and skills. This reconstruction process requires translating abstract competency elements into concrete "performance objectives." These objectives assess the level of competence development based on students' observable behaviors in authentic narrative tasks. For instance, regarding the dimension of cultural symbol interpretation, objectives should specifically describe students' ability to identify and explain the symbolic meaning and emotional resonance of specific cultural imagery within intercultural contexts. At the level of narrative structure design, objectives must clearly state that students can flexibly employ narrative frameworks such as linear, circular, or multi-perspective structures according to different communication purposes and audience characteristics[4].

The reconstructed objective system should embody a spiral progression in cognitive logic, establishing differentiated competence requirements for different academic stages. The initial stage may focus on identifying basic cultural symbols and constructing simple narrative structures. The intermediate stage should emphasize narrative adaptation within simulated intercultural contexts. The advanced stage would then require the independent completion of narrative works possessing cultural depth and innovation. This hierarchical objective design ensures the continuity of competence cultivation while also providing a clear basis for curriculum implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, the articulation of objectives should reinforce the characteristic of interdisciplinary integration, explicitly indicating the requirement to synthesize knowledge from disciplines such as narratology, cultural studies, and communication studies. This aims to shift instructional objectives from singular language skill training towards the cultivation of comprehensive literacy.

3.2 Instructional Content Design Integrating Narrative Themes and Language Skills

The systematic integration of instructional content requires constructing a content matrix that uses cultural themes as its warp and weft, with narrative competence serving as its central axis. This matrix should encompass core cultural categories such as cultural heritage, social transformation, and value

systems. Under each category, several specific narrative units should be established. For instance, within the "social transformation" category, units like "urban memory" and "rural narratives" can be set up. Each unit should be equipped with corresponding primary source texts, audiovisual materials, and academic discourse, forming a multi-layered content support system. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on the systematic development of Chinese narrative resources. This involves curating narrative texts that embody cultural distinctiveness while also possessing universal value, encompassing diverse genres such as adaptations of classical literature, contemporary film and television works, and folk oral histories[5].

In terms of content organization strategy, a "project-guided and task-driven" integrated model should be adopted. This model reorganizes discrete language knowledge points into skill modules that serve the completion of a full narrative output. Taking the "Modern Narratives of Traditional Festivals" project as an example, students need to sequentially complete a series of tasks, including researching cultural backgrounds, integrating multi-source information, creating narrative scripts, and producing multimodal presentations. Throughout this process, training in core competencies such as academic reading, critical thinking, and collaborative communication is organically integrated. This design breaks down the content barriers of traditional courses, enabling the natural fusion of language learning, cultural understanding, and narrative construction within authentic task contexts. Furthermore, a dynamic mechanism for content updates should be established to promptly incorporate emerging cultural phenomena and social issues, ensuring that the teaching content remains synchronized with the development of the times.

3.3 Innovating Teaching Models to Foster Deep Experience and Meaning Negotiation

The innovation of teaching models should be grounded in sociocultural theory and constructivist learning perspectives, creating intercultural learning environments characterized as "liminal spaces." Digital storytelling, as a core pedagogical approach, should transcend its role as a mere technological tool and be elevated to a teaching philosophy that fosters cultural understanding. Instructors can guide students in conducting thematic projects such as "Digitizing Family Stories" and "Collecting Community Oral Histories." Through digital means like audio recording, video editing, and interactive design, students can deeply explore the cultural codes embedded within local knowledge[6]. Throughout this process, students are required to continuously engage in the transcoding of cultural symbols and the shifting of narrative perspectives. This practice of "dual decoding" significantly facilitates the development of intercultural thinking.

To enhance the authenticity and depth of meaning negotiation, a stable intercultural collaboration network should be constructed. By establishing a "Narrative Partnership" initiative with overseas universities, students can be organized to participate in intercultural collaborative creation projects. This allows them to test the effectiveness of their narratives through real audience feedback. The method of "critical digital humanities" should be introduced to guide students in conducting comparative analyses of narrative construction differences across various cultural contexts, thereby cultivating their cognitive habit of cultural relativism. Furthermore, techniques from drama education, such as "forum theatre," can be adapted. By setting up scenarios of cultural conflict, students can experience perspective-shifting through role-playing and improvisation. This embodied learning approach can effectively foster the development of intercultural empathy, forming a complete learning cycle that progresses from cognitive understanding to behavioral adaptation.

3.4 Constructing a Multidimensional Evaluation System Focusing on Narrative Process and Communication Effects

The construction of a multidimensional evaluation system needs to adhere to the principle of giving equal weight to both "process and outcome," establishing an assessment framework that covers the entire narrative competence workflow. Process evaluation should incorporate the concept of "developmental assessment." Tools such as narrative concept maps, cultural annotation logs, and revision track records should be used to capture the evolution of students' thinking and the development of their abilities during narrative construction. Particular emphasis should be placed on evaluating "cultural translation decision-making." Students should be required to explain, in a meta-narrative manner, their considerations in handling different cultural elements. This type of explicit assessment helps enhance awareness and capability in cultural transposition.

Outcome evaluation, on the other hand, should establish evidence-based assessment criteria by

developing a four-tiered scoring rubric encompassing linguistic, narrative, cultural, and communicative dimensions. Each dimension should include specific, observable behavioral indicators. For example, the cultural dimension can be subdivided into items such as cultural accuracy, symbolic appropriateness, and perspectival diversity. The evaluation subjects should transition from being singular to plural, forming an "evaluation community" that includes professional instructors, peer reviewers, international readers, and cultural advisors. Among these, incorporating feedback on narrative effectiveness from "native readers" with the target cultural background is particularly crucial. This can be achieved by designing intercultural comprehension questionnaires or organizing focus group discussions to collect authentic data on cultural reception. Such a multidimensional evaluation system not only comprehensively reflects students' level of intercultural narrative competence but also constitutes a significant learning experience in itself, motivating students to shift from passively receiving evaluation to actively engaging in intercultural adaptation.

Conclusion

Through theoretical explication, examination of the current state, and the construction of strategies, this study systematically explores the pathways for cultivating the intercultural narrative competence of English majors in higher education. The research indicates that intercultural narrative competence serves as the core support for narrating Chinese stories well. Its cultivation must transcend traditional language training models and achieve systematic reform from conceptualization to evaluation. By reconstructing curriculum objectives, integrating instructional content, innovating teaching models, and constructing a multidimensional evaluation system, students can be effectively supported in transforming cultural cognition into narrative practice characterized by resonance and dialogicality. Future research could further investigate the specific implementation effects of narrative instruction focused on different cultural themes, examine the influence of digital media on the development of intercultural narrative competence, and conduct long-term tracking to verify the effectiveness of the proposed cultivation strategies. This would contribute to the ongoing enhancement of the substantive development of English major education in the field of intercultural communication.

Fund Projects

References

[1] Wang, Y. Y. (2025). Exploring Pathways for Business English Majors to Narrate Chinese Stories Well in English. Huazhang, (07), 123–125.
[2] Peng, X. Y. (2024). A Study on the Language Ability and Narrative Competence of English Majors in Narrating Chinese Stories Well. Educational Observation, 13(19), 118–122.
[3] Ji, S. S. (2024). Research on the Current Status and Strategies for Cultivating College Students' Ability to Narrate Chinese Stories Well in English. Modern English, (08), 92–94.
[4] Peng, X. Y. (2024). Research on Strategies for Cultivating the Ability to Narrate Chinese Stories Well in College English Teaching. English Teachers, 24(21), 73–75.
[5] Tang, C. L. (2024). Research on Strategies for Cultivating English Listening and Speaking Abilities of English Majors from the Perspective of Narrating Chinese Stories Well in English. Modern English, (04), 103–105.
[6] Peng, N., & Zhang, Q. (2023). An Exploration of College English Oral Teaching Based on the Cultivation of Applied Talents—Taking Narrating Chinese Stories Well as an Example. In Foreign Language Department, Sichuan University of Media and Communications (Ed.), Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Conference on Technology Innovation and Education Development (Vol. 2) (pp. 212–214).