

<b>Dissertation Title</b>	Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence among Higher Education Students at a General University in China by Using Triad-layers ICC Model
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## ABSTRACT

In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures is an essential skill for language learners. However, in China, significant disparities persist between ranked universities (RUs) and general universities (GUs) in terms of access to structured intercultural communicative competence (ICC) instruction and international exposure. This research addresses this gap by first exploring Chinese undergraduates perceived challenges and needs in developing ICC and subsequently designing and evaluating the Triad-Layers ICC instruction model (TLICCM) to support ICC development in resource-constrained university settings.

The initial needs analysis employed a mixed-methods design involving an ICC self-rating scale (n=87) and needs analysis semi-structured interviews (n=12) with English as a foreign language (EFL) students at a GU in Yunnan Province. Findings revealed four main challenges: limited active engagement despite positive attitudes towards other cultures; strong knowledge of the source culture but gaps in international cultural knowledge; openness to changing views yet limited communicative flexibility; and competence in identifying misunderstandings but lower adaptability in resolving conflicts. Additionally, non-verbal communication and knowledge of cultural taboos were underdeveloped.

Based on these findings, the TLICCM was developed grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivism, with each component of the model intentionally designed to address the specific gaps and challenges identified in the needs analysis. The three-layer structure—comprising MOOCs for pre-class preparation, interactive in-class

activities, and post-class reflective tasks—was tailored to foster active engagement, expand international cultural knowledge, enhance communicative flexibility, and strengthen both non-verbal communication skills and awareness of cultural taboos. By leveraging social constructivist principles, the model emphasizes experiential learning that enable students to progressively build intercultural awareness and practical skills through guided interaction and reflection, thereby directly responding to the deficits uncovered in the NA phase. Forty students out of eighty-seven from the needs analysis (NA) research participated in an instructional intervention comprising MOOCs for pre-class preparation, interactive in-class activities, and post-class reflective tasks. The model was then validated through the students' pre- and post-test, scores on ICC, model validation interview, class observation and reflective writing. The results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis indicate notable improvements, including active engagement, international cultural knowledge, communicative flexibility, conflict resolution adaptability, non-verbal communication, and knowledge of cultural taboos. Specifically, quantitative results showed significant improvements in ICC, particularly in source cultural knowledge and skills. Qualitative data further indicated enhanced student engagement, improved conflict navigation abilities, and a reconceptualization of intercultural communication as opportunity rather than barrier. The model also helped mitigate Chinese Cultural Aphasia (CCA) by reinforcing cultural self-awareness.

This study contributes meaningfully to the pedagogy of ICC in under-resourced educational settings and to the promotion of internationalization at home. Based on the findings, several practical implications are proposed. First, source and international cultural content should be integrated in a balanced and contextually appropriate manner effectively foster students' cultural identity and ICC. Second, students' preparedness for MOOCs-based pre-class learning should be assessed at the outset to ensure meaningful engagement during in-class activities. Finally, experiential, student-centred instruction should be emphasized throughout the learning process, including when introducing theoretical frameworks, to enhance both understanding and application of ICC.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Communicative Competence, Source Culture, Triad-Layers ICC Model, International Culture, Chinese Culture Aphasia, Non-verbal Communication, Needs Analysis, Internationalization at Home, Communicative Flexibility