

An Introduction to
Intercultural Communication

跨文化交际教程新编

曹湘洪◎主编

针对英语学习者对外交往和语言学习的需求，进行多方位的文化对比，介绍处理不同语境下跨文化交际问题的基本知识和技巧。通过案例分析，使学习者了解中西文化差异和文化冲突，加深对语言、文化和交际之间关系的理解，从而提高对交际误区的洞察力和跨文化交际能力。



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前 言

跨文化交际是一项自古延续到今的人类交际活动。随着现代通讯手段和航空事业的快速发展,全球经济一体化的冲击以及近年一些国家移民高潮的出现,跨文化交际在世界范围内变得日益普遍。自20世纪60年代起,国外学者从人类学、心理学、语言学和文化学的角度开始研究不同文化交际的差异和跨文化交际的动态多变现象,并且取得了可喜的成果。我国的跨文化交际研究起步于20世纪80年代。学者们一方面介绍和引进国外的新理论和新观点,另一方面又从语言的实际出发,对比不同文化在语言和非语言方面的差别,以及指出文化是如何影响人们交际的。国内外学者在跨文化交际研究方面做出的努力促使了该学科快速发展,其理论研究和实证探索日趋成熟。

在20世纪80年代末,跨文化交际课程被引入中国高校的课堂。到目前为止,我国已有几十所大学的外语院系开设了这门课程。根据2000年《高等学校英语专业教学大纲》的精神,跨文化交际课属于英语专业知识必修课,老师应针对英语学习者对外交往和外语学习的需要,进行多方位的文化对比和分析,使学生了解中英文化差异和文化冲突所在,提高他们对交际误区的洞察能力,进而提高他们的跨文化交际能力。基于此,我们编写了《跨文化交际教程新编》这本教材。本教材力图遵循理论和实践结合的原则,吸收和借鉴西方学者在该领域的最新成果,以跨文化交际学的基本理论和主要内容为基本理论框架,结合其他相关理论知识,阐明文化和语言之间的相互关系、文化价值观对语言和交际的影响作用、言语及非言语方面的主要跨文化差异,以及在不同交际场合中的不同文化差异现象。此外,本教材还以真实案例分析和交际失误分析练习诠释理论,以此加深高校英语学习者对语言、文化和交际之间关系的理解,帮助他们解决跨文化交际中因文化差异所产生的困惑和问题,提供处理不同语境下的跨文化交际问题的基本知识和技能,最终提高其跨文化交际的意识和能力。

本教程主编新疆师范大学外国语学院曹湘洪教授担任设计和全稿统筹,并负责修改、增删及定稿。本教材共分七个单元,各单元编写分工如下(新疆师范大学外国语学院教师):

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李学民（新疆医科大学语言文化学院）、迪丽努尔·阿不力孜——第五单元的编写。

王慕、刘丽——第六单元的编写。

陈华英——第七单元的编写。

在本教程编写过程中，新疆师范大学澳新英语培训中心高级培训官 Frank Donnelly 对本书进行了通读校正，新疆师范大学外国语学院 2007 级硕士研究生杨建新、袁敏和 2008 级硕士研究生康倩也积极为本书搜集资料，在此一并表示衷心的感谢。

由于本教程涉猎内容广泛，恐有不少疏漏与可商榷之处，还望专家与同行批评指正。

编 者

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Contents

前言	i
Unit 1 Intercultural Communication	1
1.1 Definition of Intercultural Communication	2
1.2 Forms of Intercultural Communication	3
1.3 Reasons for Increasing Intercultural Communication	4
1.4 The Importance of Studying Intercultural Communication	7
1.5 The Rise and Development of Intercultural Communication Study	11
Summary	15
Exercises	16
Unit 2 Culture and Communication	20
2.1 Culture	20
2.2 Communication	32
2.3 Intercultural Communication Shocks	35
Summary	40
Exercises	41
Unit 3 Culture and Language	44
3.1 Language	44
3.2 The Relationship Between Language and Culture	49
Summary	66
Exercises	67
Unit 4 Intercultural Differences in Verbal Communication	71

An Introduction to Intercultural Communication	
4.1 Cultural Differences at Lexical Level	72
4.2 Cultural Differences in Idioms, Proverbs and Sayings	78
4.3 Cultural Differences at Syntactic Level	79
4.4 Cultural Differences at Discourse Level	80
4.5 Cultural Differences at Speech Act Level	82
Summary	88
Exercises	89
Unit 5 Intercultural Differences in Non-verbal Communication	93
5.1 Non-verbal Communication	93
5.2 Non-verbal Communication and Culture	108
5.3 Interpretation and Management of Non-verbal Communication in Cultures	120
Summary	123
Exercises	124
Unit 6 Intercultural Differences in Business and Educational Contexts	128
6.1 Context and Communication	128
6.2 Intercultural Differences in Business Context	130
6.3 Intercultural Differences in Educational Context	140
Summary	144
Exercises	145
Unit 7 Globalization and Cultural Diversity	148
7.1 Globalization	148
7.2 Cultural Diversity	155
Summary	166
Exercises	167
References	171

Unit 1 Intercultural Communication

Studying a second language without learning the culture is like learning how to drive a car by studying a driver's manual and never getting behind a steering wheel.

—K. J. Irving

Intercultural communication is not something new. As a matter of fact, it is as old as humankind and has existed ever since people from different cultures have been contacting one another. “From wandering tribes to traveling traders and religious missionaries, people have encountered others different from themselves” (Samovar & Porter 2007: 7). A typical example from Chinese history is the role of the famous “Silk Road”, beginning before 200 B. The Silk Road enabled people from Asia, Africa, and Europe to interact with one another. Another case in point was Marco Polo’s travel to China with his father and uncle along the Silk Road from Venice in Italy during the 13th century. His book *The Book of Travels* gave Europeans some of their earliest information about China. These are just two of the many examples of intercultural communication in the history of China in particular.

Today, we are living in a quite different world in which people from different cultures have increasing interaction with each other due to the changes in technology, travel, economy, political systems and immigration patterns. It naturally follows that intercultural contact has become more frequent, more abundant, and more important than ever before (Zhang Ailing 2003). Whether we like it or not, those interactions will continue to increase all over the world.

Such encounters require the development of communication skills and abilities that are suited to a multicultural society and to life in a global village. How does one manage oneself in the presence of diverse cultures? Do we know what to say or how to behave in a new environment? How is cultural diversity reflected in our daily lives? Are we aware that studying

intercultural communication and developing the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures is of greater importance now than ever before and will enrich the lives of each of us?

1.1 Definition of Intercultural Communication

Theoretically speaking, intercultural communication is a broad concept which has broad application: it may refer to communication between different races, nations or countries and between different political and economic systems; it may refer to communications between different genders, age groups, occupations, social classes or educational levels; it may also refer to communication between different regions of one country.

For Samovar et al. (2000: 48), “Intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alert the communication event.” (跨文化交际是指文化知觉和符号体系的不同足以改变交际事件中人们之间的交际。)

The Chinese scholar Jia Yuxin (1997) views intercultural communication as the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. Robinson (2007) regards intercultural communication as complicated communication full of excitement and frustration.

Byram (as cited in Yu Weihua 2006) thinks the term Intercultural Communication has its narrow sense and broad sense. In its narrow sense, intercultural communication refers to a peculiar communication situation: the various language and discourse strategies people from different cultural backgrounds use in direct, face-to-face situations. As this term became more popular, it was also used to refer to studies in translation, in contrastive linguistics, in reading foreign literature or in comparative analysis of cultural meanings. In its broad sense, the term Intercultural Communication has been criticized because similar studies had been carried out previously, using the same methodological tools and therefore, this labeling did not introduce

important new issues to the respective fields. Although this is correct, research and its applications in the narrow sense of the term developed into a specific field of interest, namely, the discourse analysis of communicative events, where people from different cultural backgrounds engage in face-to-face communication. More often, people use the term cross-cultural communication with a focus on the comparison and analysis of the differences between cultures when referring to communication between people from different cultures.

Based on the above definitions, we hold that intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. Such people may come from different countries on the other side of the earth or from the same country. Intercultural communication is not exclusively a single-party activity; rather, it requires mutual and complementary involvement of all parties in the communication event in order to achieve its highest and most successful practice.

1.2 Forms of Intercultural Communication

According to Samovar et al (2000), there are three forms of intercultural communication.

1.2.1 Interracial Communication

Interracial communication occurs when the source and receiver are from different races (跨种族交际是指信息源和信息接收者来自不同的种族。). The major difficulty encountered in interracial communication is racial prejudice, a problem that can often be traced to ethnocentrism. Strong prejudice leads to stereotyping and suspicion, both of which prevent meaningful interaction. Another barrier to interracial communication is the use of power by the dominant culture to control the degree to which racial groups are accepted into the main stream.

1.2.2 Interethnic Communication

Interethnic communication refers to communication between people of the same race but



different ethnic origins or backgrounds (跨民族交际是指同一种族不同民族背景的人们之间的交际。). Ethnic minorities usually form their own communities in a country or culture. Cubans living in Miami, Mexicans in San Diego, and the Chinese in San Francisco might all be citizens of the United States, but they have quite different backgrounds, perspectives, goals and languages.

1.2.3 Intracultural Communication

Intracultural communication is defined as communication between members of the same culture, including racial, ethnic and other co-cultures. Generally, people who are of the same race, political persuasion and religion or who share the same interests, communicate intraculturally (同一主流文化内不同群体之间的交际。总的来说,同一种族、政治倾向、宗教或者具有同样兴趣的人们之间的交际就是同一主流文化内的交际。). Although the term can define the exchange of messages between members of the dominant culture, it is usually applied to communication in which one or both of the participants hold dual membership. In these cases, racial, ethnic, or other such factors also come into play.

1.3 Reasons for Increasing Intercultural Communication

The worldwide interest in intercultural communication grows out of tremendous changes in technology, economy, immigration patterns and the emergence of multiculturalism.

1.3.1 Advancement in Technology

New technology, in terms of transportation and communication systems, has speeded up intercultural contact. Passengers used to spend days, weeks or even months to go from one place to another, but now it just takes them a few hours thanks to the fast and convenient transport systems, which make it possible for tourists, businessmen, or government officials to enjoy breakfast in one country and dinner in another, all on the same day.

Advanced communication technologies have also encouraged cultural communication. The Internet computer network, mobile phones, interactive cable TV transmission equipment, digital switching networks and so on permit people throughout the world to share and exchange information and ideas instantaneously. For example, we sit in our living room, but at the same time, either via the Internet, the World Wide Web, or a CCTV news broadcast, we learn how the South African election is going, which country's football team has won the World Cup match, or the situation in Palestine. "We begin to desire information about other places and to cultivate contacts with people we have met along the information highway" (Chen & Starosta 2007a: 5).

1.3.2 Increase of Cultural Migration

Changes in population migration have also contributed to the development of increasing intercultural contact. People from all over the world leave their own country for one reason or another to find peace, to seek jobs, to receive better education or to begin a new life. Countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and so on have become the destination of choice for such people.

Within the boundaries of the United States, people are redefining and rethinking the meaning of the word "American" because the United States has become a truly multi-cultural society marked by unparalleled diversity. The 1994 U.S. Census reveals that 8.7% of Americans were born in other countries. "Children in multicultural classrooms and workers in multinational corporations look for ways to learn and work efficiently in settings that are no longer defined exclusively by mainstream norms and rules" (Chen & Starosta 2007a: 6). The previous image of the United States as a melting pot has been replaced more recently by that of the "tossed salad", in which each ethnic group retains its own "flavor". This multiethnic composition calls for an understanding of the dynamics of the communication among people of diverse national and ethnic origin.

1.3.3 Economic Globalization

Globalization can be defined as the process by which countries all over the world become

connected or similar, because large companies are doing business in many different countries. After World War II, the United States emerged as the first military and economic superpower in the world. In the past decades, the advancement of communication and transportation technology has made world markets more accessible and world business more globally interdependent. This trend of economic globalization has further brought people and products together. As we have entered the 21st century, the expansion in globalization has resulted in thousands of transnational corporations with staffs from different backgrounds and countries participating in various international business arrangements. In the face of economic globalization, nations must remain competitive on the one hand, and must find ways to promote their products and services on the other. Such economic interdependence calls for more skillful interaction across linguistic and national boundaries. Each country's economy is tied to the economy of other countries. For example, if the New York Stock Exchange drops one day, Asian stock markets may decline as well. This shows the interconnectedness of the world economy.

1.3.4 The Trends of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the view that the various cultures in a society merit equal respect and scholarly interest, describing the coexistence of many cultures in a locality, without any one culture dominating the region. By making the broadest range of human differences acceptable to the largest number of people, multiculturalism seeks to overcome racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. The term is almost always applied to distinct cultures of immigrant groups in developed countries, not to the presence of indigenous peoples.

According to Johnston and Packer (as cited in Chen & Starosta 2007b), there are five demographic trends in the United States that will affect organizational life in the 21st century:

1. The population and the workforce will grow more slowly.
2. The average age of the population and the workforce will decline.
3. More women will enter the workforce.
4. More non-mainstream workers will enter the workforce.

5. Immigrants will make up the largest share of the workforce since the 1920s.

For Johnston and Packer, these trends will make classrooms and workplaces not defined by predominant ethnic culture or gender. People will need more intercultural communication skills to smooth the transition to bicultural, bi-dialectal classrooms and to multi-national boardrooms and to multi-ethnic neighborhoods. We must acknowledge and adjust to differences but build on commonality. We must recognize the culturally defined qualities in all people but not raise one set of qualities above any other. Such adjustments do not always come easily because they go against the attempts of some people to keep their position of privilege.

1.4 The Importance of Studying Intercultural Communication

With the globalization of the world economy and wide use of the internet which is tearing down national boundaries, intercultural communication has become part of our everyday life. As a result, understanding other cultures is indispensable and the need for intercultural knowledge and skills that lead to intercultural communication competence become critical if mankind and society are to survive in this age of intercultural contact. The importance of studying intercultural communication cannot be overstated.

1.4.1 Increasing Cultural Awareness

Firstly, studying intercultural communication can help to increase our cultural awareness because such awareness is the first step toward intercultural communication competence. We must be able to acknowledge, respect, tolerate and integrate cultural differences in order to become an enlightened global citizen. Chen & Starosta (2007: 347-350) define intercultural awareness as the “cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence that refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect thinking and behavior.” Simply, intercultural awareness can be viewed as a cognitive process of understanding other people’s values, attitudes, beliefs and outlooks. This definition emphasizes the changing of personal

thinking about the environment through understanding of the distinct characteristics of one's own and the other's cultures.

Intercultural awareness can be divided into three levels: Level 1 is awareness of superficial cultural traits; Level 2 is awareness of important and subtle cultural traits that have a sharp contrast with each other; Level 3 is awareness of how another culture feels from the insider's viewpoint. Level 1 is the understanding of another culture based mainly on stereotypes. So the awareness at this level tends to be superficial and partial because people get information about different cultures through the public media, tourism books, textbooks and so on. Level 2 shows how significant and subtle cultural traits differ greatly from one's own thought through direct or secondhand experience. At this level, people proceed from culture shock to acceptance and respect for the new culture. As a result, they develop sensitivity toward cultural differences. Level 3 requires the ability to see the culture from an insider's perspective. To gauge "what is inside another's mind" and to empathize with their experience helps one to interpret more accurately behavioral patterns and the state of mind in people of other cultures. Intercultural awareness emphasizes the changing of personal thinking about the environment through the understanding of the distinct characteristics of one's own and the other's cultures. Thus, intercultural awareness functions as the minimum condition for an interculturally competent individual in the global society.

1.4.2 Reducing Communicative Barriers

Secondly, studying intercultural communication can reduce communicative barriers and facilitate adaptation to global and domestic workplace diversity. We live in an increasingly complex world. One element of this complexity is the mixing of different cultures, languages and faiths. Whether we like it or not, we are now thrust into contact with many people who often appear different, strange, and perhaps even fascinating. Knowing the grammar and vocabulary of a language is not enough to communicate successfully because different cultures have different communication styles. Let's compare conversational styles between East and West. A

western-style conversation between two people is like a game of tennis. If you introduce a topic, a conversational ball, you expect the other side to hit it back, that is, to add something — a reason for agreeing or disagreeing. If there are more than two people in the conversation, then it is like doubles in tennis, or like volleyball. There is no waiting line. You are responsible for taking your turn and no one person has the ball for very long. Immediate response and active involvement are essential in a western-style conversation. A Japanese-style conversation, however, is like bowling. A typical feature of the Japanese-style conversation is that everyone has to wait for his turn. It depends on such things as whether you are older or younger, a close friend or a stranger to the previous speaker, in a senior or junior social position, and so on. It is impossible to get a western-style conversation or discussion going with Japanese students of English because there is never any back and forth.

So, when communicating with people from other cultures, we need an understanding of each other's culture as well as a language in common. Just as Samovar et al. (2000: 15) point out: "Whether negotiating a major contract with the Chinese, discussing a joint venture with a German company, being supervised by someone from Mexico, counseling a young student from Cambodia, working alongside someone who speaks no English, or interviewing a member of a co-culture for a new position, we encounter people with cultural backgrounds that are often strikingly different from our own." Understanding these backgrounds and differences is essential if we are to have effective communication between colleagues from different cultural backgrounds, and if we want to ensure that a team is working harmoniously.

1.4.3 Reducing Communicative Conflicts

Thirdly, studying intercultural communication can help to reduce communicative conflicts. Conflict is inevitable in all social and personal relationships. Conflict connotes a state of lack of agreement or collision between two forces or systems. This state can be expressed either openly or subtly. In the context of intercultural encounters, conflict is the perceived actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties

from different cultures over substantive or relational issues (Ting-Toomey 2007). Meetings of peoples of differing ethnicity, from the earliest times to our present age, have often resulted in confusion and/or hostility. One factor that leads to conflict is miscommunication because of cultural differences. Conflict is likely to be greater if the two cultures differ greatly than if they are similar. This difference is called “cultural distance” (Triandis 2007: 19). Cultural distance can be created by different languages, different social structures, different religions, and different standards of living. To avoid miscommunication and manage conflict effectively, we should be sensitive to the differences between and similarities of different communication patterns. We also need to learn to be tolerant of external differences so that we do not let these differences impede communication. Harmonious relationships are necessary in all aspects of human effort if people are to get along with one another and accomplish the requirements of life and society.

1.4.4 Widening People's Vision and Improving Intercultural Competence

Fourthly, studying intercultural communication can widen our vision and improve our intercultural competence. A Chinese proverb says: “A closed mind is like a closed book, just a block of wood.” (封闭的思维如同封闭的书本, 仅仅是木头一块。) (Reynolds & Valentine 2004: 11) The proverb suggests the best tool for understanding intercultural communication is to be open and flexible. Openness does not mean that one talks to every stranger one meets; rather, it implies that one is willing to accept change and is open to new ideas. Flexibility also means willingness to use various ways to communicate. Each culture creates a worldview, a unique perspective of reality, a distinctive set of beliefs, values and attitudes. We must know about both our own culture and the culture of the one with whom we are communicating. As we increase our knowledge of intercultural communication, we will be able to appreciate a perspective different from our own and achieve some understanding of these unique worlds; we will try to view the differences with delight and wonderment rather than dismay, and we will avoid stereotypes.