

Research on the Cultivation Strategies of Cross-cultural Communicative Competence in Etiquette Service Module of Hotel English Course in Higher Vocational Education

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Abstract: With the advancement of globalization and internationalization, the demand for high-quality service personnel in the hotel industry is increasing. In the hotel management program of higher vocational colleges, especially in the hotel English courses, how to effectively cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence has become the key to enhancing their employment competitiveness. This study focuses on the etiquette service module in hotel English courses of higher vocational education. By analyzing the current situation, it discusses the necessity and practical challenges of cultivating cross-cultural communicative competence and proposes specific strategies, aiming to provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for the teaching reform of hotel management program.

Keywords: Etiquette Service Module; Cross-cultural Communicative Competence; Hotel English

I. Introduction

With the advancement of globalization, the hotel industry is facing an increasing number of customers from diverse cultural backgrounds, making the cross-cultural communicative competence of service personnel an important indicator of their professional quality. As the training base for high-quality talents in the hotel industry, higher vocational colleges shoulder the important task of cultivating students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Especially in the etiquette service module of hotel English courses, it is not only necessary for students to master basic service etiquette and standards, but also to understand communication habits and taboos in different cultures in order to enhance their cross-cultural service abilities.

II. Overview of the Etiquette Service Module in Hotel English Courses in Higher Vocational Colleges

Hotel English courses in higher vocational

colleges generally consist of two parts: basic English language skills training and specialized English for hotel services. As one of the core contents, the etiquette service module focuses not only on the basic use of the English language but also on how students can effectively communicate with guests from different cultural backgrounds in hotel services. The etiquette service module in hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges includes the following main contents:

(1) Basic service etiquette, covering etiquette norms in hotel front desk reception, catering services, room services, etc. For example, students need to learn how to use standardized greetings, reception, and directions in English.

(2) Cross-cultural service etiquette, which has received increasing attention in hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges. Clients from different cultural backgrounds have different needs and behavioral habits, and service personnel need to understand and respect these cultural differences

to provide services that better meet clients' needs. Course content typically covers table etiquette, greeting styles, polite expressions, etc., across different countries and regions.

(3) English communication skills. Hotel service personnel must not only have fluent spoken English but also possess flexible communication skills. How to adjust language expression according to clients from different cultural backgrounds, how to handle client complaints, and how to express empathy and professionalism in English are all important teaching contents of this module.

III. Overview of Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Etiquette Service Module

Intercultural communicative competence refers to an individual's ability to understand and respect cultural differences when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds and to adopt appropriate behaviors and languages for communication (Deardorff, 2006). In the etiquette service module of hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges, the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence should permeate the entire teaching process, helping students better cope with service challenges in a multicultural context. In hotel services, intercultural communicative competence involves not only language skills but also cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and non-verbal communication skills. The following are the main components of intercultural communicative competence:

(1) Linguistic Ability. Linguistic ability is the foundation of intercultural communicative competence. For service personnel in the hotel industry, fluent spoken English is the most basic requirement. However, intercultural communication involves not only the accuracy of language expression but also factors such as the occasion,

tone, and intonation of language use. In front of customers from different cultures, the flexible use of linguistic ability can effectively eliminate cultural conflicts and avoid misunderstandings. For example, when facing guests from Western countries, concise and direct expressions may be more appropriate, while for some Asian cultures, polite and euphemistic language is more important.

(2) Cultural Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity. Cultural awareness refers to the ability to recognize one's own cultural differences from others and to understand and respect these differences. Cultural sensitivity refers to the ability to appropriately identify and respond to cultural differences in actual communication. For example, people from different countries may use different body language and polite expressions when greeting. Hotel service personnel need to have cultural sensitivity to avoid unpleasant guest experiences caused by unintentional cultural conflicts. Students need to cultivate cultural awareness in hotel English courses by learning about cultural backgrounds, etiquette habits, and communication styles from around the world to increase their sensitivity to cross-cultural differences.

(3) Nonverbal Communicative Competence. In addition to verbal expression, nonverbal communication also plays a crucial role. Research shows that different cultures have different interpretations of nonverbal behaviors (Hall, 1976). For example, eye contact in Western culture usually represents honesty and trust, but in some Asian cultures, excessive eye contact may be considered impolite. Body language, facial expressions, and personal distance also play important roles in cross-cultural communication. Hotel service personnel need to understand and flexibly use these nonverbal communication skills to ensure the smooth progress of cross-cultural service.

(4) Intercultural Adaptability. Intercultural adaptability refers to an individual's ability to adjust their behavior, mindset, and communication style when facing different cultural situations and flexibly respond to cultural differences. In the hotel industry, service personnel need to quickly adapt to different cultural situations. For example, when welcoming customers from different countries, they should adjust their reception attitudes and etiquette behaviors according to the customers' cultural backgrounds. Service personnel with strong intercultural adaptability can effectively manage their emotions and behaviors, improving service adaptability and customer acceptance.

IV. The Importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Hotel English Courses in Higher Vocational Education

The importance of intercultural communicative competence in the hotel industry is increasingly prominent. With the increase in international tourists, hotel service personnel need to frequently interact with guests from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 2004). Research shows that service personnel's intercultural communicative competence is closely related to customer satisfaction. Good intercultural communication can not only reduce misunderstandings and conflicts but also enhance customers' experience, thereby winning reputation and loyal customers for the hotel brand (Chen & Starosta, 2005).

A. A Key to Enhancing Customer Satisfaction and Hotel Brand Reputation

Customer satisfaction is one of the key factors for success in the hotel industry. Research indicates that hotel service personnel with strong intercultural communicative competence can effectively reduce misunderstandings caused

by cultural differences, improve the quality of interaction with customers, and thus enhance their overall satisfaction (Gudykunst, 2004). In the context of globalization, hotel service personnel often need to interact with guests from different cultural backgrounds, and cultural differences may lead to different service experiences. For example, guests from some countries may prefer direct and concise communication, while those from other countries may focus more on polite and implicit expressions. By cultivating intercultural communicative competence, hotel service personnel can flexibly adjust their service methods in different cultural contexts to meet guests' personalized needs and reduce unnecessary communication barriers and cultural conflicts. This not only helps improve customer satisfaction but also promotes customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth for the hotel brand. The role of intercultural communicative competence is particularly prominent when dealing with complex service scenarios. For instance, when facing cross-cultural customer complaints, if hotel service personnel can effectively use appropriate cultural communication strategies, such as employing a more gentle tone, appropriate body language, and emotional resonance, they can often calm customers' dissatisfaction and turn crises into opportunities, thereby bringing higher customer loyalty to the hotel (Chen & Starosta, 2005).

B. A Key to Enhancing Students' Career Competitiveness and the International Development of Hotels

Intercultural communicative competence has a profound impact on students' future career development. Firstly, students with good intercultural communicative competence can better adapt to the international hotel environment and have a competitive advantage in entering global enterprises. Secondly, the importance of

intercultural communicative competence in the hotel service industry lies in its ability to help hotels achieve more efficient global customer communication, thereby improving service quality and management efficiency (Deardorff, 2006). Therefore, the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence is not only an enhancement of students' personal professional qualities but also directly related to the international development and competitiveness of hotels.

V. Current Situation and Issues of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Hotel English Courses in Higher Vocational Education

Despite the increasing importance of intercultural communicative competence in hotel English courses, there are still numerous issues in cultivating this competence in hotel English courses in many higher vocational colleges. This paper analyzes the current curriculum design, teaching methods and faculty, points out the main challenges, and proposes possible directions for improvement based on existing literature.

A. Inadequate Curriculum Design

Although hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges have incorporated some cultivation of intercultural communicative competence, the overall curriculum design remains inadequate. Most existing courses focus on improving students' English language skills, with course content often centered on basic English vocabulary, grammar, conversation, and service etiquette, lacking practical application in cross-cultural contexts (Bennett, 1993). The content related to intercultural communication is limited, mainly confined to simple introductions to cultural differences and case analyses, and students do not receive sufficient practical

training. Many courses do not systematically address how to respond to the diverse needs of guests from different cultural backgrounds or deeply explore how to avoid cultural misunderstandings in the service process. The root of this problem lies in the design of the curriculum system, which is still constrained by traditional teaching modes, with course content focusing on language and etiquette training, neglecting the cultivation of students' coping skills and cultural adaptability in cross-cultural environments (Fantini, 2009). Therefore, existing courses need further refinement, incorporating intercultural communication as an independent and important module and designing it specifically based on actual international hotel service needs.

B. Monolithic Teaching Methods

The current teaching methods for intercultural communication in hotel English courses in higher vocational education are relatively monolithic. Most teaching still adopts the traditional lecture mode, relying on textbooks and theoretical explanations, lacking practical operation and interactivity (Fantini, 2009). Although this teaching method can impart certain knowledge, it often fails to effectively enhance students' adaptability and cultural competence in real situations. Practice has shown that the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence requires more interactive and situational teaching. Role-playing, simulated service, and intercultural communication workshops enable students to experience and handle practical problems in simulated cross-cultural scenarios, thereby improving their intercultural communicative competence (Deardorff, 2006). For example, students can simulate interactions between Western and Eastern customers in dining scenarios to experience how to adjust

service methods according to customers' cultural backgrounds. Through this method, students can not only improve their practical intercultural communicative competence but also enhance their cultural sensitivity.

C. Limitations in Teacher Quality

Teachers' intercultural competence is one of the key factors in the success of the course. However, many teachers of hotel English courses lack experience and knowledge in intercultural communication, making it difficult to effectively conduct cross-cultural education. Most existing teacher training systems focus on English language teaching and basic hotel management knowledge, neglecting the enhancement of intercultural communication skills (Fantini, 2009). Another issue arising from teachers' lack of intercultural teaching experience is that many teachers often struggle to effectively address cultural conflicts or misunderstandings in the classroom when faced with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Research shows that teachers' intercultural sensitivity and practical experience have a significant impact on the effectiveness of students' cross-cultural education (Gudykunst, 2004). Therefore, enhancing teachers' intercultural communicative competence and teaching methods will be a crucial step in improving students' intercultural competence.

VI. The Cultivation Strategies of Cross-cultural Communicative Competence in Etiquette Service Module of Hotel English Course in Higher Vocational Education

To effectively enhance students' intercultural communicative competence in hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges, educators and course designers need to adopt a series of comprehensive

strategies. From optimizing course content to improving teaching methods, from strengthening practical teaching to enhancing teacher quality, the following are several practical strategies to promote the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence.

A. Optimize Course Content and Teaching Materials

Currently, many hotel English courses in higher vocational colleges have certain limitations in cultivating intercultural communicative competence. The course content is overly focused on basic language skills training, lacking in-depth explanations of cultural differences and intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the design of hotel English courses should focus on the following aspects:

1. Increase the Proportion of Intercultural Content

Hotel English courses need to incorporate more intercultural content on the existing basis. For example, based on the cultural backgrounds of different countries or regions, course content can be designed to include actual service scenarios, such as how to receive guests from different cultural backgrounds and how to resolve cultural conflicts. Additionally, case analysis can be used to help students better understand practical issues in intercultural communication, such as cultural conflicts, misunderstandings, and communication barriers.

2. Utilize Diversified Teaching Materials

In selecting teaching materials, more attention should be paid to the practicality and contextuality of intercultural communication. Besides traditional grammar and vocabulary books, specialized intercultural communication textbooks can be selected, such as "Intercultural Communication: A Reader" and "Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Communication." These materials can help students better understand communication styles and

etiquette norms in different cultural contexts.

3. Integrate Modern Technology and Multimedia Tools

With the rapid development of information technology, online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and multimedia teaching resources have become important tools for intercultural education. Teachers can use videos, audios, situational simulations, and virtual reality to present hotel service scenarios from different cultural backgrounds to students. For example, using virtual simulation exercises on online course platforms allows students to interact with "clients" from different cultures through videos, thereby enhancing their practical abilities.

B. Enhance Practical Teaching

The cultivation of intercultural communicative competence not only relies on theoretical learning; practical activities are crucial in improving students' abilities to respond to intercultural service situations. The following practical teaching methods can effectively enhance students' intercultural communicative competence:

1. Situational Simulation and Role-Playing

Role-playing and situational simulation are important methods for cultivating intercultural communicative competence. Teachers can design customer service scenarios with different cultural backgrounds and let students interact with clients by playing the roles of hotel service personnel and customers. For example, when simulating receiving Western clients, students need to demonstrate a more concise and direct communication style, while when simulating receiving East Asian clients, students need to adopt more polite and indirect expressions. This situational simulation can help students experience service needs in different cultural contexts personally, enhancing their intercultural sensitivity and adaptability.

2. Intercultural Communication Workshops

Intercultural communication workshops are centralized training activities that help students understand and master the basic principles and skills of intercultural communication through group discussions, interactive games, situational drills, and other forms. For example, students can practice intercultural communication by simulating cross-cultural business negotiations, customer complaint handling, and other scenarios. Through collective reflection and feedback, students can better understand the manifestation of cultural differences in actual services, thereby improving their abilities to solve practical problems.

3. International Internships and Exchange Programs

Encourage students to participate in international internships and exchange programs to experience and practice intercultural communication personally. During the internship, students can not only interact with guests from around the world but also improve their intercultural adaptability through collaboration with international teams. For example, students can understand the local service culture and learn how to adjust service methods according to the local culture through internships in foreign hotels. Such programs can not only enhance students' intercultural communicative competence but also broaden their global horizons and international competitiveness.

C. Improve Teachers' Intercultural Literacy

Teachers are important promoters of intercultural education, and their intercultural communicative competence directly affects students' learning outcomes. To effectively improve teachers' intercultural literacy, the following strategies are particularly important:

1. Regularly Conduct Intercultural Training

Higher vocational colleges should regularly organize teachers to participate in training and seminars

on intercultural education. By learning the latest intercultural communication theories and practical experiences, teachers can continuously improve their intercultural literacy and incorporate these new theories and methods into classroom teaching.

2. Enhance Teachers' Intercultural Communication Experience

Teachers should encourage themselves to actively participate in intercultural communication activities in daily teaching, such as attending international conferences and conducting academic exchanges with teachers from foreign universities. Teachers' intercultural experience can not only enhance the practicality of their teaching but also provide students with more realistic cases and stories, helping students understand specific situations and challenges in intercultural communication.

3. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

In the teaching process of intercultural communicative competence, teachers can collaborate with teachers from other disciplines. For example, teachers in hotel management can work with teachers in foreign languages, cultural studies, psychology, and other disciplines to jointly design intercultural teaching content, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness and interdisciplinary nature of the course.

D. Carry Out International Cooperation and Exchange

International teaching cooperation and exchange provide students with authentic experiences of intercultural communication. Through cooperation with foreign hotel management institutions, participation in international conferences, and implementation of international internship programs, more opportunities for intercultural communication can be provided to students.

1. International College Collaboration

Higher vocational colleges can establish cooperative relationships with overseas hotel management colleges, providing students with abundant international exchange opportunities through student exchanges, cross-school course sharing, joint internships, and other methods. Through these cooperative projects, students can communicate and learn in different cultural backgrounds, thereby cultivating their cross-cultural communication abilities and adaptability.

2. Implementation of International Hotel Cooperation Projects

Schools can collaborate with globally renowned hotel brands to organize students for short-term internships or visits to overseas hotels, allowing students to directly experience the operations and service models of international hotels. Meanwhile, through these projects, students can engage in cultural interactions with classmates and employees from around the world, honing their cross-cultural communication skills.

VII. Conclusion

Intercultural communicative competence has become an indispensable part of the hotel English curriculum in higher vocational education. In the context of globalization, the hotel industry has placed higher demands on the intercultural communicative competence of service personnel. Therefore, cultivating high-quality hotel management talents with intercultural communicative competence is one of the educational objectives of higher vocational colleges. Through a series of strategies such as optimizing curriculum content and teaching materials, enhancing practical teaching, improving teacher quality, and conducting international cooperation and exchanges, higher vocational

colleges can effectively enhance students' intercultural communicative competence, help them adapt to the needs of the global hotel industry, and improve their professional competitiveness.

In the future, higher vocational colleges should continue to deepen the reform of intercultural education, keep abreast of the development trends of the international hotel industry, and promote the deep integration of hotel English courses with the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence. Only in this way can students stand out in the fierce job market and contribute to the sustainable development of the hotel industry.

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