



# Empirical Study on Cross-cultural Communication and Context-based Teaching in High School English Reading

Zihan Wang

Faculty of Foreign Language, Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China

E-mail: 2643970756@qq.com

**Abstract.** This study explores the effects of integrating contextual and intercultural knowledge instruction in the English reading classroom on students' interest level, reading strategies, and reading competence and their use of it by using a questionnaire, a learners' reading level test, and a structured interview. The results show that under the guidance of teachers analyzing context, as well as providing instruction on cross-cultural knowledge, students' interest in reading significantly increased. They also demonstrated a more flexible and varied use of reading strategies, highlighting the potential of this model of reading instruction to improve reading skills. The application of reading strategies showed a significant positive correlation with sub-dimensions of reading abilities. Specifically, the active analysis of cross-cultural factors and explanation of the cultural dimensions were significantly correlated with all sub-dimensions of reading abilities. The explanation of texts in context was significantly correlated with two sub-dimensions of reading strategies. Moreover, students' independent thinking and comparative analysis of cross-cultural phenomena significantly correlated with two dimensions of teachers' instruction.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication; context; high school English; reading teaching

## 1 Introduction

In the context of internationalization of higher education, interculturally competent foreign language learners possess "specific competencies, attitudes, values and cultural knowledge". A deeper intercultural relationship with the reading text can be established and the learner is able to persevere and make a determined effort to understand in order to gain an internal perspective. This plays an extremely crucial role in breaking down intercultural communication and reading barriers[5]. Additionally, the new curriculum imposes higher demands on English teaching, emphasizing the need for teachers to guide students to integrate language knowledge comprehensively in meaningful language applications based on contexts. It explicitly states the goals of reading instruction and cultural awareness[2]. There is a relative lack of representative studies on the introduction of multiple contexts and cultural elements into high school English teaching, and the existing viewpoints are fragmented. Therefore, this study takes the integration

© The Author(s) 2024

I. A. Khan et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2024 2nd International Conference on Language, Innovative Education and Cultural Communication (CLEC 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 853, [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-263-7\\_60](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-263-7_60)

of context teaching and cross-cultural education as the entry point to examine and analyze students' reading interest, reading strategies, and reading abilities, providing a reference and inspiration for improving students' reading levels and constructing effective reading classrooms.

## **2 Research Design**

### **2.1 Research Questions**

This study will explore the following research questions:

- 1) what is the impact of contextualized and intercultural reading instruction on students' reading interest?
- 2) what is the impact of contextualized and intercultural reading instruction on students' reading strategies?
- 3) what is the impact of contextualized and intercultural reading instruction on students' reading competence?

### **2.2 Research Subjects**

The subjects of the study were two randomly selected classes of about 40 students each from the sophomore class of a high school. According to the independent samples t-test on the reading level test papers distributed to them, there was no significant difference in the level of the students in the two classes ( $p > 0.05$ ), so they were the ideal subjects for the study.

### **2.3 Research Tools**

#### **The reading questionnaire**

There are 16 items, including 4 dimensions, in the form of a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.8$ ) and validity ( $KMO = 0.764$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) of the final questionnaire showed that the questionnaire had good reliability and validity.

#### **Structured Interviews**

The interviews consisted of four main questions:

- 1) What factors should be included in a successful intercultural communication?
- 2) In what ways do you think analyzing cultural factors in reading contributes to the comprehension of the reading materials?
- 3) How effective is the incorporation of different contexts, such as languages, cultures, and situations, for you to improve your reading skills?
- 4) What is your attitude toward teaching intercultural knowledge and context in reading classes?

### 3 Results of the Research

#### 3.1 The Impact of Integrating Contextual and Intercultural Knowledge Instruction on Students' Interests

Table 1 shows that the mean values of students' importance and interest in reading learning were 4.18 and 3.29 respectively (total score of 5), indicating that the attitudes towards reading learning were in the middle to high range. When examining the concepts of context and intercultural communication, the mean values were 3.07 and 2.89 respectively, reflecting that teachers focus on explaining in context in the reading classroom, and less on comparative analysis of intercultural communication, and the students are relatively deficient in this aspect of the knowledge structure. They strongly recognized the importance of context for reading comprehension (4.04) and were willing to explore cultural factors in depth when cultural content was involved in the reading materials (3.76), for example, some students also talked about "intercultural knowledge is an expansion of basic learning, which makes my knowledge broader."

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics on the Influence of Students' Interest (N=82)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Importance of reading	1	5	4.18	0.931
Interest of reading	1	5	3.29	1.071
Understanding of context	1	5	3.07	0.953
Understanding of cross-culture	1	5	2.89	0.832
Importance of context in reading	2	5	4.04	0.909
Interest of cross-culture	1	5	3.76	1.013

#### 3.2 The Impact of Integrating Contextual and Intercultural Knowledge Instruction on Students' Reading Strategies

The average scores of the students' three items in Table 2 were around 3.0, indicating that most of the students' ability to read cross-cultural factors was limited to thinking and understanding of shallow meanings, failing to fully digest cross-cultural knowledge into the reading questions, accustomed to exerting the discourse function of contextual factors in interpreting the meaning of the text (4.05), and that the awareness of taking the initiative to analyze the cross-cultural factors of the reading text needed to be strengthened (2.96). However, some students also recognize that "reading texts need to be combined with the context of the times and the cultural background to deepen comprehension and make up for the information gap caused by differences in cultural backgrounds". Thus, they integrate themselves into real-life contexts to deepen their understanding of knowledge and form their own unique cross-cultural awareness.

In the dimension of pedagogical usage, teachers analyze and interpret texts in relation to the context (4.09) and with the culture of the original language (3.68), both exceeding the average requirements, indicating that teachers are paying more and more attention to cultivating students' mastery of cross-cultural knowledge, adaptability and

communicative competence, paying attention to the importance of the context in foreign language teaching, and giving full play to the diverse functions of the context[4].

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Reading Strategy Impact and Instructional Use (N=82)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Guessing meaning based on context	2	5	4.05	0.683
Analyze cross-cultural factors	1	5	2.96	0.949
Underline the cross-cultural factors	1	5	2.91	1.009
Identifying cross-cultural phenomena	1	5	3.02	1.030
Teacher’s context interpretation	1	5	4.09	0.804
Teacher’s cultural explanation	2	5	3.68	0.873

### 3.3 The Impact of Integrating Contextual and Intercultural Knowledge Instruction on Students’ Reading Proficiency

With reference to the five-point Likert scale whose mean value is greater than or equal to 3.5 as the high-frequency level, contextual teaching and intercultural knowledge teaching have a high level of overall improvement of students’ reading ability (the total mean value is 3.93) in Table 3, and the reading ability shows a stepped-up trend of information-thinking-comprehension, which is in line with the general pattern of the development of students’ reading level. The overall improvement of students’ reading ability, and the reading ability showed a stepped-up trend of information-thinking-comprehension, which was in line with the general law of the development of students’ reading level. The students said about the new teaching mode, “I think it is very helpful and educational, which makes me more interested in learning English and doing reading questions more targeted to hit the key points directly.”

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Students’ Reading Skills (N=82)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Quickly access overall information	2	5	3.83	0.914
Thinking and discernment	1	5	3.91	0.849
Critical reading	1	5	3.95	0.901
Overall reading comprehension	1	5	3.98	0.846

### 3.4 Relationships Between Different Reading Dimensions

Table 4 shows that the active analysis of cross-cultural factors is significantly positively correlated with all four sub-dimensions of reading ability, reflecting the effect of the organic combination of cross-cultural factors in the attitude dimension, knowledge dimension and skill dimension in promoting students’ reading ability. Attention to cross-cultural factors in reading texts and thinking about them to explore and quickly capture key information in the text are inseparable from the teachers’ penetration of context and cross-cultural knowledge in the classroom[1], with significant positive correlations for all three sub-dimensions, indicating that the teachers take into account both the internal

context of the language (factors affecting comprehension) and the external context of the language (knowledge of the cultural background) in their teaching and comprehend what is behind the new skills and methods that their students must learn[6].

**Table 4.** Results of bivariate Spearman correlation analysis

	Guessing meaning based on the context	Analysis of cross-cultural factors	Underline cross-cultural factors	Thinking of cross-cultural issues	Teacher's context interpretation	Teacher's cultural explanation	access information	thinking	critical reading	Overall reading comprehension
Guessing meaning based on the context	1.000									
Analysis of cross-cultural factors	0.181	1.000								
Underline cross-cultural factors	0.214	.652**	1.000							
Thinking of cross-cultural issues	.368**	.507**	.647**	1.000						
Teacher's context interpretation	0.162	0.111	.290**	.223*	1.000					
Teacher's cultural explanation	0.045	.219*	.288**	.312**	.388**	1.000				
access information	0.162	.238*	0.181	.306**	.231*	.443**	1.000			
thinking	0.096	.268*	0.107	0.180	0.155	.396**	.785**	1.000		
critical reading	0.060	.261*	0.042	0.131	0.154	.299**	.622**	.760*	1.000	
Overall reading comprehension	.221*	.274*	.219*	.238*	0.147	.344**	.663**	.625*	.681*	1.000

\*\*Significantly different at the 0.01 level; \*Significantly different at the 0.05 level

Both the teaching of contextual and intercultural knowledge in the text in the teachers' use cases showed significant positive correlations with the reading proficiency dimension, establishing a harmonious pairing and complementarity between the two, and positively contributing to the improvement of students' reading proficiency. It shows that the importance of context theory for discourse comprehension and the explanatory, predictive and inspirational nature of cross-cultural teaching of reading texts together contribute to the enhancement of the cognitive effects of language[3].

### 3.5 Findings From A Structured Interview Study With Three Students

In the post-course interviews with the three students, regarding the factors involved in successful intercultural communication, Student A said that communication must be carried out in culturally inconsistent situations; Student B thought that not only the level of oral expression, but also the ability of written expression should not be neglected, and that the students' comprehensive literacy skills should be mobilized; and Student C added that the degree of mastery of the cultural traditions was a key factor, which should be supplemented by the appropriate linguistic skills. In response to the teachers' analysis of cultural factors in reading and the effect of the new reading teaching mode

of contextualization on their reading comprehension. Student B said, “The combination of cultural background and vivid simulation has made me understand the text more thoroughly, and English learning has become more interesting.” Student A thought that not only did she learn about her own culture, but she was also able to discover new perspectives and generate new ideas about foreign cultures in comparison. Finally, they talked about their attitudes towards this new mode of reading teaching, and all three students expressed their support. Student C said that the teacher’s introduction of cultural analysis in the classroom enabled me to discuss with my classmates about different points of view, and many of my entangled problems were solved without my realizing it.

## 4 Conclusions

Upon conducting a multidimensional analysis, this study has discovered that in the face of the uncertainty and complexity of discourse meaning, context can facilitate the differentiation of the significance of the same sentence across various contexts. During the reading instruction process, educators should proactively guide students to focus on the information conveyed by the context in the discourse, including relevant situations and cultural nuances. By doing so, teachers can enhance students’ sensitivity to linguistic information and cultivate their cultural awareness in language expression, so that students can perceive the reading problems in the first time, and gradually improve their reading interest and expand their reading strategies, thus achieving a significant leap in their reading proficiency.

## References

1. Byram, Michael. Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited. *Multilingual matters*, 2020.
2. Jankova Alagjovska, Natka, and Simona Serafimovska. “The Importance of Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Learning.” 9th International New York Academic Research Congress On Social, Humanities, Administrative, and Educational Sciences Proceedings Book. BZT Turan Academy, 2024.
3. Nafisah, Shofia, et al. “Teachers’ Perception and Practices of Intercultural Communicative Competence Integration in EFL Classroom: A Systematic Literature Review.” *Educalitra: English Education, Linguistics, and Literature Journal* 3.1 (2024): 1-19.
4. Pennington, Martha C., and Jack C. Richards. “Teacher identity in language teaching: Integrating personal, contextual, and professional factors.” *RELC journal* 47.1 (2016): 5-23.
5. Tsadik Getu, G., G. kidan Mebrahitu, and Goitom Yohannes. “Effects of Context-Based Teaching Chemistry on Students’ Achievement: A Systematic Review.” *Jurnal Pijar Mipa* 19.2 (2024): 190-197.
6. Xo’jamuratova, Gulimxan. “Applying authentic materials for developing intercultural communicative competence in teaching.” *Modern Science and Research* 3.1 (2024): 1-3.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

