

Research on the Application of the “Cross-Cultural Role Play” into “Sitcom-Based” English Teaching Methodology from the Perspective of Speech Act Theory

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Abstract

Following the New English Curriculum published by the **Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2022)**, students in junior high school are highly required to analyze the cultural similarities as well as discrepancies among different countries to cultivate both their awareness and competence in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, combined with the specialists’ recommendations of implementing drama-in-education (DIE) and the policy of the national “double reduction”, this paper intends to discuss effective measures of integrating “cross-cultural role play” into English sitcoms under the guidance of speech act theory, innovating a new students-centered teaching model based upon the case in F junior high school, N city. Drawing on the questionnaire answers which were completed by 166 second-year students in four parallel classrooms, this study aims to detect students’ current cross-cultural competence level while providing valuable theoretical and practical references for the future development and innovation of the “Sitcom-based” English Teaching Method, effectively cultivating junior high school students’ overall development through “cross-cultural role play” in both first-class and second-class.

Keywords

Cross-Cultural Role Play, The Speech Act Theory, “Sitcom-Based” English Teaching Method, Junior High School Students, New English Curriculum

1. Introduction

In 2023, Chinese President Xi proposed the Global Civilization Initiative in the

opening ceremony of the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting, emphasizing the importance of the diversity of world civilizations while advocating the promotion of international exchanges and cooperation. Furthermore, The New English Curriculum, which was reformulated and revised by China's Ministry of Education in 2022, had explicitly incorporated the cultivation of students' cross-cultural competence as an integral part of the overall goal of English teaching, announcing that "Through the study of English courses at the junior high school level, students should acquire the ability to develop cross-cultural communication and exchange." Thus, guided by this core teaching principle, the pedagogical methodology that fosters cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural competence in students has gradually set off a wave of heated concentrations among the innovation of English teaching in junior high schools.

Currently, the "double reduction" policy published by the General Office of CPC Central Committee and State Council in 2021 demands to effectively reduce both the heavy homework burden and after-school training burden of students in the stage of compulsory education, efficiently identifying the existing deficiencies and misconceptions in current English teaching, promoting a transformation and innovation in the teaching process and patterns.

The New English Curriculum (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022) requires "Fun English" and integration of the Aesthetic Education Concept, preferring an instructional design that is students-centered and will continuously penetrate cultural awareness appropriately. Therefore, English sitcom role-play has undoubtedly become a promising and appropriate communication platform for core competency enhancement of junior high school students. Moreover, considered a central theory in the research of pragmatics, the speech act theory proposed by J. Austin could effectively instruct the sitcom role play in the progression of writing, performance, and feedback through discourse analysis (Widdowson, 1978).

Given these circumstances, this study aims to find out the possibility and feasibility of conducting a practical survey to develop a "cross-cultural sitcom-based" English teaching model at F junior high school by analyzing participants' questionnaire responses. Therefore, the research objectives are assessing weak points rooted in students' current cross-cultural competency and construct a theoretical framework for the "cross-cultural sitcom-based" teaching model to find effective measures of students' cross-cultural competence enhancement under the guidance of speech act theory.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of the Speech Act Theory and Osgood-Schramm Mode

1) Definition

In the 1950s, the British philosopher J. Austin redefined the object of linguis-

tic study: the act performed by words and sentences, in his treatise *How to do Things with Words*. In light of this, the concept of speech act theory has originated for the purpose of studying the function of language in people's daily communications. More specifically, every speech act is constructed by three subordinate behaviors: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act (Austin, 1962).

In order to thoroughly testify the appropriateness and possibility of using speech act theory as the theoretical foundation, this research combined it with Osgood-Schramm model. It can be defined as a model of circular and bidirectional interactions for the analysis of interpersonal communication, which is prompted by W. Schramm, the father of communication. On the perspective of this model (Figure 1), both sides of the communicator are considered as the subject of the communication, acting according to their equal status from the perspective of the changing roles: encoder, interpreter, and decoder (Zhao, 2008).

2) Classification

“Locutionary act refers to the act of uttering words, phrases, and clauses. Illocutionary act refers to the act of expressing the speaker's intention. Perlocutionary act refers to the act performed by or resulting from saying something.” (Dai, 2023: p. 82) For instance, in the case of uttering “the door is open” in freezing weather, the utterance formed by correct grama rules is a locutionary act, which means communicator A is the encoder; the intention of closing the door to keep warm is an illocutionary act, indicates that communicator B is the interpreter; the behavior closes the door and makes the speaker satisfied is a perlocutionary act, showing that communicator B is the decoder.

3) Evaluation

Based on these circumstances, it is not difficult to find similarities and multi-dimensional correlations between these two theory-oriented models in terms of interpersonal communication and cultural context transfer, since the author defined encoder as the initiator of locutionary act; interpreter as the receiver of illocutionary act; and decoder as the performer of perlocutionary act.

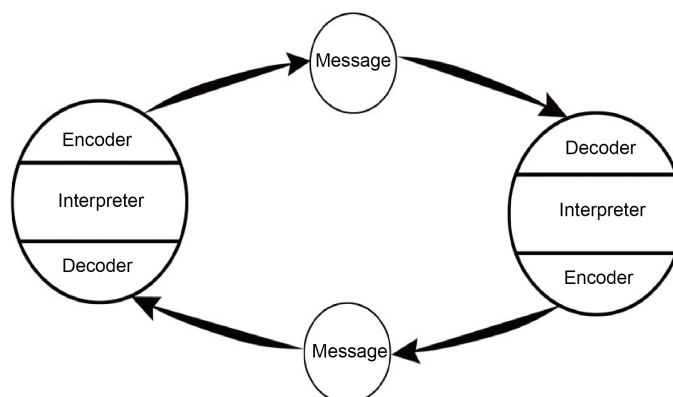


Figure 1. Osgood-Schramm Model (Schramm, 2007).

It is universally acknowledged that sitcoms contain intricate relationships and that the dialogue between characters often displays complexity, subtlety, and hidden meanings that transcend the ability to be explicitly expressed. In this context, speech action theory, which leverages behaviorist semantics to tightly integrate linguistic meaning with linguistic context, can be considered as one of the most effective methods for analyzing the intentions of others, giving appropriate responses in an unfamiliar setting while gradually assimilating to the target culture. Thus, we can see the significance of respecting, understanding, and assimilating the cultural background of the target communicator in order to achieve decent communication effects.

2.2. Overview of the “Sitcom-Based” Teaching Method

1) Definition

A sitcom is a more life-oriented drama that focuses on the daily lives of individuals, such as their work routines and family relationships. It usually conveys a great deal of verbal and non-verbal behavior and is considered one of the most effective ways to learn about local culture, consciously or unconsciously. In light of this, the “Sitcom-based” teaching method refers to the methodology that integrates sitcoms naturally into daily teaching procedures.

2) Classification

a) Studies abroad: Drama-in-education

After carefully browsing the works of literature, the author finds that there is no specific term to define the sitcom-based teaching method in Western countries since it is subordinate to drama-in-education (DIE) (Xiong, 2018).

In foreign countries, two educational concepts “Learning by doing” and “Learning by dramatic doing” originated in France in the 18th century gave birth to DIE and started using drama (including sitcoms) in daily teaching. As time went by, in the 1860s, Dorothy Heathcote formally introduced the term DIE and classified it as a pedagogical approach (Li, 1997). In the 1960s, DIE was also introduced as “process drama” since it focuses on the participation of the target students, letting them absorb new knowledge while internalizing previous learning (Zhang, 2009). Moreover, the flourishing development of DIE originated in 2006 and has continued to the present day, with numerous Western countries establishing relatively complete systems of practical teaching in DIE. For example, every school in the United States has a drama department that offers drama-based teaching and term-time drama performances.

In the 21st century, a large number of Western educators have further analyzed and refined the function of DIE, mainly by incorporating Constructivist and Cooperative Learning theories. Therefore, the effectiveness of role-play has been witnessed. For instance, Toivanena, Komulainen, & Ruismakia (2011) pointed out that “The game, role-playing and improvisation of creative drama provides life-based learning and the permanence of knowledge.” Anna Hui and Sing Lau’s (2005) research finds that the DIE teaching method offered students

opportunities to construct conceptions through their pre-existing knowledge. In the fields of specific subjects, Roy et al. (2015) found drama's pedagogical functions in supporting adolescents' identity development by combining it with masks and self-discrepancy theory: "DIE, as applied through a constructivism perspective, can also be used as a pedagogical tool through the self-discrepancy theory". Arzu Saka et al.'s (1997) research shows the promising feature of creative drama's application in the area of biology.

b) Studies at home: "Sitcom-based" Teaching Method

"Sitcom-based" teaching model is priorly proposed by psychology as a psychiatric therapy for traumatized patients which gradually spread to China in the 1980s. It is initially recognized and internalized by domestic clinical medical and psychological counseling experts, who refined and created psychodramas tailored to the psychological conditions of patients in China. Subsequently, this format spread to the field of pedagogy, where Chinese educators applied campus daily lives as well as the compulsory subjects as the main contents to create diverse school-based teaching sitcoms (Xiong, 2018).

As time went by, domestic scholars have substantiated the feasibility of integrating various disciplines into sitcom-based teaching and the mainstream of the study could be divided into two aspects. For one thing, researchers have used sitcoms as an effective means of conducting ideological and political research in the field of higher education. For instance, Xie and Zhang (2016) take *Conspectus of Chinese Modern History* as an example, discussing the practical effect of historical melodrama on the positive effect of college students' political and emotional attitudes and historical experience, advocating them to absorb the Chinese historical legends while telling the Chinese story to the world. For another, sitcoms are used as a scaffold to assist the implementation of group work in the universities' English classes in order to enhance specific language competence (listening, speaking, reading, writing). For example, Gu et al. (2004) presents the theoretical possibilities of using sitcom-based teaching methods to fill the gap of insufficient communicative practice in domestic colleges' oral English teaching and classified four forms: exemplary conversation practice, supportive conversation practice, improvisation, and minor-size dramatic performance (Gu, 2003).

3) Evaluation

In light of all these circumstances, it is clear that within the field of existing research orientations and achievements in sitcom-based teaching methods, domestic research lacks a practical and applicable teaching system in terms of pedagogical practice and specific instructional examples. In addition, only a few articles in the elementary education field have illustrated ways to incorporate sitcoms into English classes, while using realistic and specific elementary schools as examples.

At the same time, the author searched the English Internet on CKNI for the topics "cross-cultural & drama" and "Cross-cultural & role play", only finding

20 articles and 5 articles respectively, and rarely of them are in the area of education, which refers to the situations that sitcoms, though being regarded as a promising an appropriate platform to convey cultural in different areas, are not been completely used in the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence nowadays.

2.3. Overview of the Cross-Cultural Competence

1) Definition

The systematic exploration of cross-cultural competence has its roots in the 1980s, while specialists in different disciplines have illustrated various opinions and concluded several modes of evaluation. In 1996, [Chen and Starosta \(1996\)](#) illustrated cross-cultural competence as “a decent and effective communication ability to negotiate meanings and identify cultural identities in specific circumstances”. In China, some scholars defined this term as a competence that constantly cultivates universal humanistic values, improves personality, and realizes productive identity. However, despite the existence of some distributions, there is a relatively accepted notion recognized by the academic community: cross-cultural competence is the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with members from different cultures in a variety of situations ([Deardorff, 2004](#); [Dai, 2018](#)). And the components of cross-cultural communication must include emotion, recognition, and behavior ([Dai, 2022](#)).

Research into cross-cultural competency in EFL teaching began in the 1990s. In terms of pedagogy, it is defined as developing a student’s ability to acquire concepts of cultural specificity and universality in cross-cultural contexts, as well as the ability to perform specific tasks through appropriate and effective negotiation between the home culture and the target culture ([Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013](#)). Some western scholars also research on the EFL educators’ cross-cultural competence enhancement by integrating multicultural literature in their training curriculum ([Rass, 2020](#)). And in [Tracey et al.’s \(2007\)](#) research, the significance of peer teaching in a cross-cultural circumstance has been exemplified: “There was also a notable increase in their levels of confidence as evident from their greater participation in asking questions and giving comments in a cross-cultural environment.”

Moreover, Chinese scholars have designed different modalities for cross-cultural competence assessment based on different perspectives of China’s existing circumstances. The modal in the perspective of teacher ([Dai, 2022](#)) proposed five aspects of cross-cultural communication, including open and respectful attitude, domestic and international cultural knowledge, multi-cultural awareness, verbal and non-verbal skills, and global habit of mind. Another teaching reference framework ([Zhang & Wu, 2022](#)) divided cross-cultural competence into knowledge, attitudes, and skills and pointed out the capacity that students in junior high school are required: Understanding the cultural connotations of vocabulary in the target language and its pragmatic rules across different

contexts; gaining insight into the lifestyle, communication style, thinking patterns, and values of the cultural groups featured in the instructional materials.

2) Evaluation

All perspectives of cross-cultural communication, including its categorization, motivation, and evaluation modalities conveyed by papers published overseas and at home, have formed a rich theoretical foundation in this area. In light of these, the promising expectation for the development of high-quality cross-cultural competence is to acquire cultural knowledge in both source and target countries in order to achieve natural communication.

Compared with the functions of the “Sitcom-based” teaching method, it is clear that this teaching methodology, subordinate to the situational teaching method, could naturally simulate a proper social circumstance including both verbal and non-verbal behavior for students to find out cross-cultural knowledge through analyzing others’ acts and strengthen this knowledge through performing them. Therefore, the author proposed the concept of “cross-cultural sitcom-based” role play and illustrated it as a circular interactive mode in which several performers continuously initiate locutionary act, interpret illocutionary act, and perform perlocutionary act based on the Osgood Schramm Model in a cross-cultural circumstance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Objectives

This study will investigate several frequently used English teaching models in F junior high school in N city, evaluate junior students’ current cross-cultural competence level and formulate targeted countermeasures for the existing issues. To be specific, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- 1) What is the current cross-cultural competence level of junior high school students?
- 2) What are English teacher’s opinions about enhancing students’ cross-cultural competence?
- 3) What are the obstacles and feasibility of applying “cross-cultural sitcom-based” teaching method into students’ first-class and second-class?

3.2. Research Subjects

The targets of this experiment were 166 eighth-grade junior high school students in F school, N city. Founded in 1956, School F is a typical municipal-affiliated junior high school with a long history of teaching English in the elementary education field. It was committed to cultivating junior high school students with a solid foundation in English language proficiency, who could soon adapt to a more advanced and challenging English teaching environment after the high school entrance examination, or even be taught by foreign teachers. As a result, the students were annually admitted to both top high schools and general high schools in N city, including several international schools.

The 166 eighth-graders came from four parallel classes, each with a similar average performance on the final seventh-grade English test. And because of China's local junior high school admissions policy, the targets embrace basically similar backgrounds, relatively the same social interaction experience, and relatively similar English proficiency. Therefore, the research can avoid as much as possible deviations caused by the large discrepancies in social experience and English level.

Combined with the spot interview of the English teachers and the students' scores in the last term's final exam, several specialties have been analyzed:

1) The target students have acquired a certain amount of vocabulary for daily communication, and have embraced the ability to communicate with others in English with the help of some contexts.

2) The target students are tired with the pressure of high school entrance examination and not willing to thoroughly concentrate on the whole class if it is teacher-centered.

3) The target students are curious about the knowledge outside of their daily learning in school.

Moreover, there are two reasons for choosing students from F school as target students. For one thing, School F is a typical junior high school that is directly under the authority of the Bureau of Education in N City, which means that teachers at this school may be more sensitive to changes in the educational syllabus and teaching orientation. On the other hand, the quality of teaching at this school and the admission rates to prestigious secondary schools are average within the region, and therefore the collection and analysis of its data render the findings of the study applicable across the local province.

3.3. Research Instrument

The questionnaire research conducted by author is mainly divided into three parts: EFL learning, cross-cultural competence, and the acceptance of sitcom-based teaching methods (first-class and second-class). The whole questionnaire was in accordance with Likert Scale, offering five dimensions (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to express individual's tendency. After the implementation of all cross-cultural sitcom-based teaching procedures, the same questionnaire will be repeated to collect numerical data for comparison.

The first part includes five questions (1 - 5), aims to investigate students' EFL learning habits and examine the learning depth of those students, in other words, they are "learn knowledge" or "acquire knowledge". The second part embraces six questions (6 - 10) to evaluate students' current cross-cultural competence level while find out the main causes root in the situation to formulated targeted countermeasures. The third part have 11 questions, 11 - 16 for the first-class and 17 - 21 for the second-class respectively, collecting the facts of the frequently used teaching model as well as students' opinions about integrating "cross-cultural sitcoms" role play and "process cross-cultural sitcoms" in the real

class.

3.4. Research Programs

After collecting and analyzing the questionnaire data to find out the appropriateness and feasibility of the integration, further research instruments are planning to be conducted to establish and apply this teaching model in details.

1) Interview

Several students will be randomly interviewed at the initial, mid- and post-study stages to state their impressions of cross-cultural communication knowledge as part of the formative assessment and to express their views on teaching methods. Teachers will also be interviewed at the initial, intermediate and post-study stages to express their observations. Any deficiencies in this teaching model proposed by the participants or identified by the author will be refined and innovated in a timely manner.

2) Observation

During the “cross-cultural sitcom-based” role play, teachers are highly required to pay attention to students’ performance to discover the effective topic of “Fun English”. For example, the utterances of the performer, the actions induced by the analysis of the illocutionary actions of another communicator, and the facial expressions of the audience are all within the scope of observation. The teaching and performing contents will be adjusted through the observations.

3) Action research

This section will be divided into four aspects: online, first-class, second-class and social practice.

Online: Students gather together on an online social media platform called “Theater Youth Community” to search and acquire specific information about cross-cultural sitcoms.

First-class: Students perform as several targeted characters in the cross-cultural sitcom content given by the teacher, which is related to several units in the textbook, to consciously acquire and strengthen several cross-cultural knowledge.

Second-class: Students participated in the “process cross-cultural sitcoms” launched by the school English corner, choosing a specific character and performing with others in accordance with a semi-open content, consciously and unconsciously uttering personal opinions while analyzing others’ speech of acts.

Social practice: Well-performed sitcoms will be posted to the social media together with contents. Performers from popular sitcoms will tour different municipalities in Zhejiang province.

4. Results and Discussion of the Research

4.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire research conducted by author is mainly divided into three parts: EFL learning, cross-cultural competence, and the acceptance of sitcom-based

Table 1. Students' acceptance of "Sitcom-based" teaching model (first-class).

Questions	Choices	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I am interested in the English class that incorporates sitcoms	Strongly Disagree	14	8.4%
	Disagree	18	10.9%
	Neural	40	24.1%
	Agree	50	30.1%
	Strongly Agree	44	26.5%
I think "sitcom-oriented" English classes could effectively improve my English learning interest	Strongly Disagree	10	6.0%
	Disagree	18	10.9%
	Neural	37	22.3%
	Agree	56	33.7%
	Strongly Agree	45	27.1%
I think "sitcom-oriented" English classes offer me more opportunities to express my opinions in English	Strongly Disagree	9	5.3%
	Disagree	17	10.3%
	Neural	35	21.1%
	Agree	64	38.6%
	Strongly Agree	41	24.7%
My English teacher often creates situations by means of verbal phrases and multimedia	Strongly Disagree	29	17.5%
	Disagree	32	19.3%
	Neural	42	25.3%
	Agree	30	18.1%
	Strongly Agree	33	19.8%
My English teacher has launched several times of role-play in class	Strongly Disagree	49	29.5%
	Disagree	40	24.1%
	Neural	42	25.3%
	Agree	17	10.3%
	Strongly Agree	18	10.8%
I am willing to learning English in enjoyable ways beyond the 45-minute classroom sessions.	Strongly Disagree	9	5.4%
	Disagree	11	6.6%
	Neural	44	26.5%
	Agree	48	28.9%
	Strongly Agree	54	32.5%

teaching methods (first-class and second-class) to inspect the target students' current level while thoroughly demonstrating the feasibility of the teaching model. Among the 166 second-year students in four parallel classes in F junior high school in N city, roughly 110 students expanded their English vocabulary solely through mechanical memorization of word lists or completing exercises, resulting in an increase in negative vocabulary rather than positive vocabulary,

leading to the fact that only 24 students embrace adequate confidence to communicate with native speakers. In addition, even half of the students confessed that if the entire English class was teacher-centered, they were likely to fall asleep.

Unfamiliarity with the target communicator's cultural background and a lack of adequate communication skills are also major barriers to conversational effectiveness among junior high school students, as illustrated by the results that only 22.9% are aware of a large number of conventional customs in Western countries; Very few students had the confidence to bring their communication expertise to full strength or to make both parties accurately understand each other's intentions during cross-cultural interactions, 31.3% and 18%, respectively.

Table 1 draws a clear picture of the target students' acceptance and background knowledge of the "sitcom-based" teaching method. We can see that the model proposed by the authors has gained popularity among students, with more than 56.6% expressing an aspiration to experience it in person and more than 24% expressing a willingness to try it. Furthermore, its positive functions are also recognized by those students since 60.8% and 63.3% of them pointed out the advantages of "effectively improving the enthusiasm for English learning" and "offering more opportunities to express personal opinions in English" respectively. Nevertheless, combined with the situation that just several students often have the experience of immersing themselves in a situational teaching class (only 36.7%) and perform a role-play as in-class activities (only 21.1%), it seems that applying "cross-cultural sitcoms role play" in first-class embraces its own uniqueness and perceptiveness.

Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that more than 61.4% prefer to spend extra time to acquire English knowledge outside the 45 minutes in the classroom, and are willing to participate in role-playing sessions (more than 71%) and process cross-cultural sitcoms (more than 74%). Combined with the English corner and campus art festival regularly launched by school, it seems that applying "cross-cultural sitcoms role play" in the second-class obtained its acceptance and feasibility.

4.2. Discussion of the Research

In this part, the results of the questionnaire are concluded and discussed. The survey on junior high school students' habits of English learning, communication skills with foreigners, and experience of the practical English class aims to comprehensively examine visual shortcomings in the research-relevant area while evaluating the viability of applying "cross-cultural role play" to "sitcom-based" English teaching method in a practical situation. Based on this research data, there are several discussions of this teaching model illustrated in this paper with the guidance of specific policies and theories.

English is not only a language subject that includes vocabulary, but a language bridge for users, both native and non-native, to connect and communicate with

each other since it conveys specific Western cultural awareness. Moreover, combined with the context of the “double reduction” policy which advocates Fun English in all teaching procedures, English teachers in junior high school are highly expected to integrate cultural awareness both in the source language and target language into daily classes, cultivating students’ cross-cultural competence in order to further adapting the fast-changing world.

“Cross-cultural sitcom-based” teaching method will offer various chances for students to consolidate and expand their positive vocabulary while cultivating effective interactive expertise in a relaxed and pleasant way through simulated cross-cultural role-play scenarios. The implementation of this teaching model is in line with the call of the new English curriculum to integrate drama into the junior high school classroom. It innovatively combines intellectual, moral, and aesthetic education effectively and entertainingly, effectively expanding the application paradigm of integrating the five domains of human development in the field of elementary education.

Under the guidance of speech act theory, students in the first-class are consciously absorb other countries’ conventional culture through uttering the given phrases following the contents written by themselves and unconsciously comparing similarities and discrepancies between Chinese culture. Therefore, both respect for other countries and the national pride of our country will be effectively established. Furthermore, during the “process cross-cultural role play” launched in students’ second-class, they will not only experience the procedures mentioned above but try to deduce other participants’ intentions while adjusting their own utterances and behaviors since there is no specific script content in characters’ performing. It can also be regarded as an effective means of formative evaluation.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion of the Research

The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research instruments to investigate the practical pedagogy used in junior high school English classes while assessing the current level of cross-cultural competency of elementary school students. After concluding and analyzing a set of research-related data offered by 166 students in the questionnaire, several major findings could be summarized.

First, the cross-cultural competency of junior high school students is still at a low level, and there is still plenty of room for enhancement. A lack of knowledge about different cultures, fear of communicating in a non-native language, and inexperienced communication skills are among the major causes that are rooted in the phenomenon. These issues are also consistent with teachers’ teaching strategies that over-emphasize the importance of vocabulary memorization and test scores, as the cross-cultural competency rating scale has not yet become widespread.

Second, most English classes in junior high schools still adhere to the conventional teaching model. This type of teachers-centered class only fulfills the requirement of “learning and understanding”, without “applying and practicing”, “transferring and innovating” raised by the core competencies of junior high school English subjects, reducing opportunities to carry out fun English teaching, as well as the integration of drama. Moreover, while many schools regularly organize campus cultural festivals and role-playing activities, the lack of integration between first-class and extracurricular activities leads to insufficient educational impact.

In a nutshell, cross-cultural competence is an entirely significant part of the well-rounded development of junior high school students, as it is closely related to language competence, thinking quality, and cultural awareness, almost every aspect of core competencies. Integrating “cross-cultural role play” into “sitcom-based” English teaching is a promising teaching model confirmed by multiple educational theories, which effectively expands the application scope of speech act theory. It delves into the potential value of English sitcoms in language education and assists students to better adapt to the new era by serving as a bridge for cultural exchange.

5.2. Prospects for Future Research

With a clear understanding of the current cross-cultural competence level of the students while investigating the feasibility of applying cross-cultural sitcom-based role play to practical English class, a case control study will be implemented in School F for future research. In this research, the 166 eighth-graders will be divided into two groups. One is randomly appointed as the Experimental Group (EG), and the other is the Control Group (CG). There were 83 participants in the experimental group and control group, respectively. The experiment will last a semester.

The target students in EG will get involved in the cross-cultural role play in person and experience a cross-cultural sitcom-based teaching in their first-class offered by their English teacher at each unit. Teachers are highly expected to prepare several sitcom topics that fall somewhere between the contents of the textbook and cross-cultural knowledge. The opinions of the whole class will determine the direction of the sitcom and at least one group (including 5 students) are required to write the sitcom script and give a role-play. Self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation will be carried out after watching and a summary of cross-cultural knowledge you learnt in today’s class will be written by each student. Moreover, a process sitcom-based role play will be held every two weeks in the school’s English corner during the second period, with scripts given by the authors.

Students’ cross-cultural competence and core competence will be continuously tested by oral tests and the same questionnaire in the mid-term and the end of this semester. The test scores of each unit as well as the final exam scores will al-

so be collected as data for the study. After summarizing, analyzing and comparing the data, the role of the cross-cultural sitcom-based teaching methodology in improving the cross-cultural competence of students will be further demonstrated and illustrated.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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