The Impact of Immersive Teaching Strategies on Non-Native Learners' English Language Sense and Intercultural Communication Competence

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Abstract：This paper focuses on the impact of immersive teaching strategies on non-native learners' English language sense and intercultural communication competence. Through a review of relevant theories and analysis of empirical research, it reveals the unique advantages of immersive teaching in creating authentic language environments and facilitating natural language acquisition. The study finds that immersive teaching can significantly enhance non-native learners' English language sense, strengthening their intuitive perception and application ability of the language. Simultaneously, in cultivating intercultural communication competence, it prompts learners to gain a deeper understanding of the target culture, improving cultural sensitivity and the ability to employ communication strategies. This paper provides a theoretical basis and practical guidance for the effective application of immersive teaching strategies in English language teaching.

Keywords：Immersive Teaching; Non-native Learners; Intercultural Communication Competence

1 Introduction

In today's accelerating process of globalization, the importance of English as an international lingua franca is self-evident. For non-native learners, how to efficiently enhance English proficiency, particularly English language sense and intercultural communication competence, has become a focal point in the field of education. Traditional English teaching models often emphasize grammar and vocabulary instruction, neglecting the cultivation of practical language application skills and cross-cultural awareness. The emergence of immersive teaching strategies offers a new approach to solving this problem. Immersive teaching emphasizes creating an almost authentic target language environment for learners, enabling them to naturally acquire the language through osmosis. This approach not only helps improve language skills but also promotes the development of intercultural communication competence. Therefore, an in-depth study of the impact of immersive teaching strategies on non-native learners' English language sense and intercultural communication competence holds significant theoretical and practical importance.

2 Overview of Immersive Teaching Strategies

2.1 Definition and Connotation of Immersive Teaching

Immersive teaching refers to placing learners entirely within a target language environment, where the target language is used exclusively for instruction, communication, and interaction throughout the teaching process. This allows learners to unconsciously acquire the language within a natural linguistic setting. This teaching model breaks down the boundaries between the mother tongue and the target language characteristic of traditional teaching, enabling learners to be exposed to and use the target language comprehensively, as if they were in a native-speaking environment. For example, in an immersive English classroom, the teacher uses English for explaining knowledge, organizing activities, and daily communication, and students must respond in English, thereby creating a strong English atmosphere.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Immersive Teaching

2.2.1 Language Acquisition Theory

Krashen's (1982) language acquisition theory posits that language acquisition occurs through abundant comprehensible input. In an immersive teaching environment, learners are exposed to rich, authentic language input that is slightly above their current level (i+1), presented in a natural and coherent manner. This helps learners unconsciously absorb linguistic knowledge while understanding the meaning, thereby achieving language acquisition. For instance, students watching English movies or participating in English discussions gradually grasp language structures and expressions by understanding context and engaging in interactive communication.

2.2.2 Situated Learning Theory

Situated learning theory emphasizes the close connection between learning and context, arguing that knowledge is constructed through practice and interaction within authentic situations. Immersive teaching creates realistic language use contexts for learners, enabling them to apply the language to solve problems and complete tasks in practical situations, leading to better understanding and mastery of linguistic knowledge. For example, in a simulated English shopping scenario, students need to use English for inquiries, bargaining, payment, etc. In this process, they not only learn relevant shopping expressions but also improve their language application skills and communication strategies.

2.3 Characteristics of Immersive Teaching

2.3.1 Authenticity of the Language Environment

Immersive teaching focuses on creating authentic language environments, ensuring the language materials and communication scenarios learners encounter are as close to real life as possible. For instance, using authentic English advertisements, news reports, movie clips as teaching materials, organizing field trips, role-playing activities, etc., allows students to experience and use English in real situations, enhancing the practicality and enjoyment of language learning.

2.3.2 Interactivity of the Learning Process

In immersive teaching, interactions between teacher and students, and among students, are frequent and deep. Through group discussions, cooperative learning, classroom debates, etc., students have more opportunities to express their ideas orally, listen to others' viewpoints, and continuously refine and improve their language expression through interaction, enhancing the accuracy and fluency of language use.

2.3.3 Comprehensiveness of Teaching Content

Immersive teaching not only focuses on imparting linguistic knowledge but also emphasizes cultivating students' comprehensive language application abilities. The teaching content covers language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), linguistic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, phonetics), cultural knowledge, and intercultural communication competence. This enables students to understand the target culture and enhance cross-cultural awareness while learning the language.

3 The Impact of Immersive Teaching on Non-native Learners' English Language Sense

3.1 Connotation and Importance of English Language Sense

English language sense refers to the learner's intuitive perception and comprehension of the English language. It includes sensitivity to aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, collocation, grammatical structures, as well as natural fluency in language use. Good English language sense helps learners quickly comprehend linguistic information, accurately express their thoughts, and improves the efficiency and quality of language learning. For example, students with strong language sense can quickly judge the grammatical correctness and semantic plausibility of an English sentence upon hearing it, and can naturally use appropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns in oral expression.

3.2 Mechanisms of Immersive Teaching in Enhancing English Language Sense

3.2.1 Rich Language Input and Imitation

In an immersive teaching environment, learners are exposed to a large amount of authentic English expression daily, including the teacher's instructional language, peer communication, and original English materials. Through continuous listening and imitation, learners gradually become familiar with English pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and common

expressions, thereby developing correct language sense. For instance, students repeatedly listening to English broadcasts or watching English movies will unconsciously imitate the pronunciation and intonation, leading over time to more authentic pronunciation themselves.

3.2.2 Language Practice and Experience

Immersive teaching provides learners with ample opportunities for language practice, enabling them to apply learned linguistic knowledge in actual communication. During practice, learners gradually grasp the rules of language use and enhance their sensitivity to the language through continuous trial and adjustment. For example, in English Corner activities, students interact with foreign teachers and other English learners. In real conversational contexts, they gain a deeper appreciation for collocation, sentence pattern choice, and language appropriateness, thereby enhancing their language sense.

3.2.3 Context Creation and Understanding

Immersive teaching helps learners better understand the meaning and usage of language by creating various authentic contexts. In specific contexts, learners can accurately grasp the meaning of words and sentences by combining the surrounding text and the actual situation, deepening their understanding and memory of the language. For instance, when learning travel-related English, the teacher might show pictures or videos of tourist attractions and organize role-playing activities in travel scenarios. This allows students to learn and use travel expressions in concrete contexts, leading to a deeper understanding of this linguistic knowledge and a further enhancement of their language sense.

3.3 Empirical Research Findings and Case Analysis

Multiple empirical studies show that immersive teaching can significantly enhance non-native learners' English language sense. A comparative study in a middle school showed that after one semester, students in the immersive experimental class outperformed those in the regular class in pronunciation, intonation, collocation, and expressive fluency. Their language sense improved through full-English instruction and English extracurricular activities. Students at an international school, after three years of immersive education, demonstrated outstanding English communication and academic discussion abilities, with language sense far exceeding their peers, attributed to classroom interaction and immersion in an English environment after class.

4 The Impact of Immersive Teaching on Non-native Learners' Intercultural Communication Competence

4.1 Connotation and Components of Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively, understand, and respect people from different cultural backgrounds in cross-cultural situations. It mainly comprises four aspects linguistic competence, cultural awareness, communication strategies, and affective attitudes. Linguistic competence is the foundation, enabling learners to express and understand accurately in the target language; cultural awareness helps learners understand differences and characteristics of different cultures, avoiding cultural misunderstandings; communication strategies enable learners to respond flexibly to various situations and solve communication problems in cross-cultural exchanges; affective attitudes determine the learner's openness and respect towards different cultures.

4.2 Approaches of Immersive Teaching in Cultivating Intercultural Communication Competence

4.2.1 Integration and Learning of Cultural Knowledge

During immersive teaching, teachers not only impart linguistic knowledge but also integrate relevant knowledge of the target culture into the teaching content. By explaining aspects like the history, geography, customs, and values of English-speaking countries, students learn about differences and commonalities between cultures. For instance, when studying an English text, the teacher introduces the cultural background involved and organizes discussions on how different cultures manifest the same theme, enriching students' understanding of the target culture while learning the language.

4.2.2 Implementation of Cultural Experience Activities

Immersive teaching emphasizes providing students with opportunities to personally experience the target culture. By

organizing various cultural experience activities, such as hosting cultural festivals of English-speaking countries, inviting foreign teachers for cultural lectures, or arranging student participation in international exchange programs, students get close contact with and experience different cultures. In these activities, students can intuitively feel the cultural atmosphere of English-speaking countries and personally experience their customs, thereby strengthening their understanding and respect for different cultures. For example, at an English-speaking country cultural festival, students can sample characteristic foods, appreciate traditional music and dance, and participate in folk games, gaining an in-depth understanding of the cultural connotations.

4.2.3 Practice in Cross-Cultural Communication

Immersive teaching creates numerous opportunities for students to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Through interaction with foreign teachers, international students, or other English learners, students can practice their communication skills in authentic cross-cultural situations. During communication, students need to apply learned linguistic knowledge and communication strategies to address challenges arising from cultural differences, gradually improving their intercultural communication competence. For instance, in international exchange projects, students collaborate with peers from different countries to complete tasks. In this process, they need to understand each other's cultural backgrounds, communication styles, and thinking habits, constantly adjusting their own communication approach to achieve effective communication and cooperation.

4.3 Empirical Research Findings and Case Analysis

Numerous empirical studies confirm that immersive teaching positively impacts the development of intercultural communication competence in non-native learners. A longitudinal study of a university's overseas immersion program showed that participating students significantly improved in cultural awareness, use of communication strategies, and attitudes towards different cultures. Through interacting with local residents and learning about the local culture, they reflected on and adjusted their behavior in cross-cultural exchanges, gradually enhancing relevant abilities. An international department of a middle school adopted immersive teaching, providing rich communication opportunities by organizing international academic exchanges and remote collaboration with foreign schools. During one international academic exchange, students from this school could communicate fluently with scholars and students from various countries, accurately express their views, and demonstrated understanding and respect for cultural differences, showcasing strong intercultural communication competence and receiving high praise.

5 Application Suggestions for Immersive Teaching Strategies in English Teaching
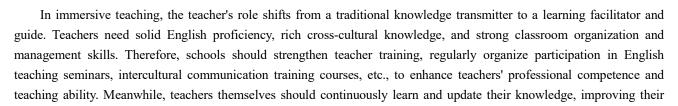
5.1 Creating the Teaching Environment

Schools and teachers should strive to create a comprehensive immersive English teaching environment. In terms of hardware, establish dedicated English learning classrooms decorated with English posters, slogans, book corners, etc., to foster a strong English atmosphere. Utilize campus broadcasting systems, electronic displays, and other equipment to play English news, songs, movie clips, etc. In terms of software, encourage teachers to use English exclusively in class, organize English-themed class meetings, English club activities, etc., ensuring students encounter and use English in various aspects of campus life.

5.2 Integration and Utilization of Teaching Resources

Teachers should fully integrate and utilize diverse teaching resources to provide students with rich and varied learning materials. Besides textbooks, select suitable authentic English movies, TV shows, documentaries, radio programs, English picture books, novels, etc., as supplementary resources. Simultaneously, leverage internet platforms to access online English courses, virtual language learning environments, and other resources to broaden students' learning channels. For example, teachers can recommend high-quality English learning apps like Liulishuo (English Speaking Practice) or Shanbei Words for students' self-directed learning during spare time.

5.3 Transformation of Teacher Role and Competency Enhancement

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In immersive teaching, the teacher's role shifts from a traditional knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator and guide. Teachers need solid English proficiency, rich cross-cultural knowledge, and strong classroom organization and management skills. Therefore, schools should strengthen teacher training, regularly organize participation in English teaching seminars, intercultural communication training courses, etc., to enhance teachers' professional competence and teaching ability. Meanwhile, teachers themselves should continuously learn and update their knowledge, improving their own intercultural communication awareness and competence to better guide students in immersive learning.

5.4 Design and Organization of Teaching Activities

Teachers should design diverse and engaging teaching activities based on students' age, interests, and language proficiency to stimulate learning interest and participation. For example, organize English drama performances, speech contests, debates, story creation activities, allowing students to practice language skills and intercultural competence in practice; implement group cooperative learning, enabling students to complete tasks together through interaction, fostering teamwork spirit and communication skills; design project-based learning activities, where students conduct in-depth research and exploration on a specific theme, improving comprehensive language application abilities and problem-solving skills through steps like consulting materials, field research, and report writing.

6 Conclusion

In summary, immersive teaching, by creating authentic language environments and providing rich input and practice, significantly enhances non-native learners' English language sense and intercultural communication competence. It can stimulate learning interest, improve efficiency, and help them adapt to the demands of globalization. However, its implementation faces challenges such as insufficient teaching resources and limited teacher capabilities, requiring multi-party collaboration to optimize the environment and promote teaching reform. Future research could explore how to optimize this strategy to enhance its applicability and effectiveness across different stages and learner groups, providing more support for English education.

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