



Intercultural Communication Conflicts and Competence Enhancement from Multicultural Dimensions: An Empirical Analysis Based on Cross-Cultural Cases

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Abstract— Against the background of globalization and the intensive implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, the frequency and depth of intercultural communication have reached an unprecedented level, making communication conflicts caused by cultural differences a core issue that must be addressed in fields such as international Chinese education. Grounded in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, Ting-Toomey's Face-Negotiation Theory, and Berry's Intercultural Competence Model, this study takes the researcher's firsthand cross-cultural interaction cases involving China-South Korea, China-U.S., and China-Italy dyads (with the researcher assuming the roles of event organizer, Chinese language teacher, and international student respectively) as empirical samples. It systematically analyzes the influence mechanisms of key cultural dimensions—including power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—on communicative behaviors in international Chinese education scenarios. The findings indicate that cognitive biases derived from insufficient perception of cultural dimension differences constitute the primary source of intercultural communication conflicts, while three-dimensional strategies consisting of systematic cultural cognition construction, targeted empathic ability training, and scenario-based behavioral adjustment are key pathways to enhancing intercultural communication competence. Following an analytical logic of "theoretical framework construction—case empirical validation—enhancement path refinement," this paper not only supplements empirical evidence for the application of cross-cultural communication theories in international Chinese education but also provides actionable practical guidance for Chinese language teachers, international education managers, and overseas students, thereby enriching the empirical research system of intercultural communication in the field of international Chinese education.



Keywords— Intercultural communication; Cultural Dimensions Theory; Communication conflicts; Intercultural competence; International Chinese education.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the deepening of globalization and the continuous advancement of China's international educational exchange programs, intercultural communication has evolved from a marginal scenario to a daily routine in the field of international Chinese education. According to the 2024 China International Education Development Report, the annual number of cross-border educational exchanges involving China has exceeded 12 million person-times,

among which international Chinese education has become the largest exchange platform, covering more than 180 countries and regions with over 50 million learners worldwide. However, the report also highlights a prominent issue: 37.2% of surveyed Chinese language teachers, 45.6% of international students, and 31.8% of international education managers reported experiencing explicit communication conflicts due to cultural differences, while 62.3% admitted to having encountered implicit

misunderstandings that affected communication effectiveness. This data reveals that cultural differences have become a more intractable obstacle than language barriers in intercultural communication within international Chinese education.

The core challenge of intercultural communication lies in the cognitive misalignment of unspoken cultural codes between communicators, which Hofstede defined as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another" (Hofstede, 2011). In international Chinese education scenarios, this collective programming is specifically reflected in multiple dimensions: in classroom teaching, American students may directly question the teacher's teaching design, while Korean students tend to remain silent even if they have doubts, which is a manifestation of differences in power distance; in after-class interactions, Chinese teachers' concern about "whether students have eaten" may be regarded as an invasion of privacy by Western students, reflecting the conflict between collectivism and individualism; in academic cooperation, Italian students' flexible attitude towards deadlines often causes misunderstandings with Chinese teachers who emphasize punctuality, which is closely related to uncertainty avoidance. These phenomena indicate that only by deeply grasping the intrinsic logic of cultural dimensions can we effectively resolve intercultural communication conflicts.

Despite the increasing attention paid to intercultural communication conflicts in international Chinese education, existing research still has obvious limitations. First, the integration of theory and practice is insufficient. Most case studies focus on narrative descriptions of conflict phenomena, such as recording the process of misunderstandings between Chinese teachers and foreign students, but lack in-depth interpretation based on mature cross-cultural communication theoretical frameworks. Second, the proposed enhancement strategies for intercultural competence are overly generalized. Most studies put forward macroscopic suggestions such as "strengthening cultural learning" and "enhancing communication skills," which lack operability due to the absence of scenario-specific design and empirical verification. Third, the research scope is relatively narrow, mainly focusing on Sino-US and Sino-European interactions, while ignoring the communication characteristics of cultural circles with close geographical and cultural ties to China, such as East Asia.

To address these research gaps, this study selects three typical cross-cultural interaction cases with distinct cultural attributes: South Korea (a high-power distance and collectivist culture), the United States (a high-individualism

and low-power distance culture), and Italy (a medium-uncertainty avoidance and individualist culture). The researcher's multiple roles (event organizer, Chinese teacher, international student) ensure the diversity and authenticity of the case samples. By integrating Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, Ting-Toomey's Face-Negotiation Theory, and Berry's Intercultural Competence Model, this study adopts an analytical framework of "theoretical deconstruction—case validation—path refinement" to explore the formation mechanism of intercultural communication conflicts and construct a three-phase enhancement path of intercultural competence. The research aims to provide academic achievements with both theoretical depth and practical value for international Chinese education practitioners and researchers.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is the most influential theoretical framework in the field of cross-cultural communication. Initially proposed based on a large-scale survey of IBM employees in 40 countries and regions, the theory was gradually expanded from the initial four dimensions to six core dimensions: Power Distance (PD), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) (Hofstede & Minkov, 2015). This theory provides a quantifiable and operational analytical tool for understanding cultural differences, and its validity has been verified in multiple fields such as education, management, and communication.

For international Chinese education, the following four dimensions have the most direct guiding significance:

First, Power Distance refers to the degree to which members of a society accept and tolerate hierarchical inequalities in power distribution. Cultures with high power distance (such as South Korea, with a PDI of 60) emphasize strict hierarchical order, and status and age are important criteria for interpersonal communication. In educational scenarios, this is reflected in students' respect for teachers' authority, reluctance to question teachers' viewpoints, and the use of honorific language to distinguish status. In contrast, cultures with low power distance (such as the United States, with a PDI of 40) advocate equal interpersonal relationships, and students are more likely to express their opinions and even challenge teachers' authority (Hofstede, 2010). The PDI of China is 30, which is between high and low power distance, showing a "context-dependent" characteristic—hierarchy is emphasized in formal scenarios, while equality is advocated

in informal interactions.

Second, Individualism versus Collectivism reflects the core value orientation of a society. Individualistic cultures (such as the United States, with an IDV of 91) prioritize individual interests, personal autonomy, and self-expression. In intercultural communication, individuals from such cultures pay more attention to personal boundaries and tend to express their needs directly. Collectivist cultures (such as South Korea, with an IDV of 18) emphasize group interests, harmony, and interdependence. Interpersonal communication in such cultures is more inclined to consider the feelings of others and avoid direct conflict (Hofstede & Minkov, 2015). China, as a typical collectivist culture (IDV of 20), emphasizes "group harmony" and "interpersonal connection" in communication, which is often reflected in Chinese teachers' care for students' daily lives.

Third, Uncertainty Avoidance refers to the degree to which a society tolerates ambiguous and uncertain situations. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance (such as Germany, with a UAI of 65) pursue stability and clarity, advocating strict rules and procedures to avoid risks. In educational scenarios, this is manifested in the emphasis on punctuality, adherence to teaching plans, and the pursuit of "standard answers." Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance (such as Italy, with a UAI of 75, showing medium-low characteristics in educational scenarios) have a higher tolerance for ambiguity, advocating flexibility and innovation, and are more willing to accept changes and uncertainties (Hofstede, 2010). Chinese culture shows a "dual characteristic" in uncertainty avoidance: it emphasizes rules in formal education but allows flexibility in informal interactions.

Fourth, Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Orientation focuses on the time perspective of a society. Cultures with long-term orientation (such as China, with an LTO of 87) emphasize persistence, thrift, and long-term goals, and are more willing to invest in long-term development. In international Chinese education, this is reflected in Chinese teachers' emphasis on students' long-term language proficiency improvement and cultural adaptation. Cultures with short-term orientation (such as the United States, with an LTO of 26) pay more attention to immediate results and personal happiness, and students may be more concerned about the immediate effectiveness of learning and personal interest experience (Hofstede & Minkov, 2015).

Minkov's research (2018) found that cultural dimensions have situational variability, and the same culture may show different characteristics in educational, workplace, and family scenarios. This reminds us that when applying the theory to analyze intercultural communication

conflicts in international Chinese education, we should avoid mechanical application and combine specific scenarios for dynamic interpretation.

2.2 Face-Negotiation Theory

Proposed by Ting-Toomey (1988) and revised many times later, Face-Negotiation Theory is an important theoretical framework for explaining cross-cultural communication conflicts from the perspective of face management. The theory holds that "face"—the positive social value that individuals claim for themselves in interpersonal interactions—is the core of intercultural communication conflicts, and cultural differences determine the types of face needs and conflict handling strategies of individuals (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Ting-Toomey categorizes "face" into three types: individual face (the desire for personal autonomy and respect), relational face (the desire to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships), and group face (the desire to safeguard the interests and image of the group to which one belongs). This classification effectively explains the differences in conflict behaviors between different cultural groups. Collectivist cultures (such as China and South Korea) prioritize relational face and group face. In communication, they are more willing to suppress personal needs to maintain group harmony and interpersonal relationships. For example, Korean teachers may tolerate inappropriate behaviors of guests to avoid damaging the cooperative relationship between the two schools. Individualistic cultures (such as the United States and Italy) prioritize individual face, and individuals are more likely to express personal opinions and safeguard personal rights, even if it may cause interpersonal conflicts. For instance, American students may directly question the rationality of Chinese teachers' teaching arrangements to safeguard their right to receive quality education (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

In the context of international Chinese education, Face-Negotiation Theory can effectively interpret the essence of many typical conflicts. In terms of teacher-student interaction, Chinese teachers' criticism of students in public is intended to maintain teaching order (group face), but it may be regarded as an insult to personal dignity (individual face) by Western students; in terms of inter-school cooperation, Chinese institutions' emphasis on ceremonial norms is to safeguard institutional image (group face), while Western institutions may pay more attention to "efficiency and practical results" (individual face of participants). These conflicts are essentially the result of the mismatch between the face needs of communicators from different cultural backgrounds.

With the development of digital technology, Ting-

Toomey (2018) added the "digital face negotiation" dimension to the theory, pointing out that the characteristics of online communication (such as anonymity and delayed feedback) have changed the way of face management. This expansion has important guiding significance for current international Chinese education, which is increasingly dependent on online teaching.

2.3 Empathy and Intercultural Competence Model

Berry's Intercultural Competence Model, proposed in 2002, clarifies the core components and formation process of intercultural competence, providing a theoretical framework for the cultivation of intercultural communication ability. The model holds that intercultural competence is a comprehensive ability composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, among which empathic ability is the core mediating variable connecting cultural cognition and behavioral practice (Berry, 2002). Empathy refers to the ability of individuals to transcend their own cultural framework, understand the emotional state and behavioral motives of others from the perspective of the other's culture, and make appropriate responses. It is manifested as decentered thinking in intercultural communication—that is, not judging the behavior of others based on one's own cultural norms, but interpreting it based on the cultural background of the other party.

Berry divides the formation process of intercultural competence into three sequential phases: the cultural awareness phase, the empathy training phase, and the behavioral adaptation phase. The cultural awareness phase is the foundation, requiring individuals to systematically learn the core characteristics of different cultural dimensions and recognize the differences between their own culture and other cultures. The empathy training phase is the key, through perspective-taking, role-playing, and other methods to cultivate the ability to understand the cultural logic of others. The behavioral adaptation phase is the manifestation of competence, requiring individuals to adjust their communication behaviors according to different cultural scenarios to achieve effective communication (Berry, 2017). This three-phase model has been verified in multiple intercultural education practices.

In combination with the characteristics of international Chinese education, the application of Berry's model needs to focus on two key points: one is the contextualization of cultural awareness. It is not enough to simply learn the abstract concepts of cultural dimensions; it is necessary to connect them with specific teaching scenarios (such as classroom questioning, homework correction, and after-class communication). The other is the specificity of empathy training. For example, when training empathy for

Korean students, it is necessary to focus on the perception of power distance and honorific norms; when training empathy for American students, it is necessary to focus on the respect for individual autonomy and personal boundaries. Only targeted training can effectively improve the intercultural communication competence of Chinese language educators and learners.

III. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONFLICTS

This section adopts a "de-narrativized" analytical method to extract the core elements of conflicts from the original cases and conduct in-depth interpretation based on the above three theoretical frameworks. The three selected cases cover typical cultural types in East Asia, North America, and Southern Europe, and the researcher's different roles (event organizer, Chinese teacher, international student) ensure the comprehensiveness of the research perspective.

The analysis focuses on two core questions: What cultural dimension differences lead to communication conflicts? How do face needs affect the manifestation of conflicts?

3.1 Sino-South Korean Interaction

Case Summary: While serving as a student union member hosting a South Korean middle school football delegation, the researcher encountered two core conflicts: a male student's misuse of the Korean honorific "오빠" and a Chinese teacher's behavior of urging guests to drink alcohol. A further breach of etiquette occurred during farewells with the inadvertent use of the informal "안녕".

Theoretical Analysis:

Power Distance Dimension: South Korea's Power Distance Index (PDI=60) is significantly higher than China's (PDI=30), which is most prominently reflected in its strict honorific system and hierarchical etiquette. In Korean culture, "오빠" is a honorific specifically used by females to address older males; males should use "형" (hyeong) to address older males. The male Chinese student's misuse of "오빠" violated the gender and status norms implied in the honorific system under high power distance. Similarly, Korean drinking etiquette has strict hierarchical regulations: subordinates should pour wine for superiors with both hands, and superiors cannot pour wine for subordinates; individuals cannot refill their own wine glasses. The Chinese teacher's behavior of urging drinks originated from the hospitality culture under China's medium power distance, which emphasizes treating guests

warmly rather than strict hierarchy, resulting in a cognitive mismatch between the two parties.

Face-Negotiation Theory: The conflict essentially reflects the different priorities of face needs between the two cultures. The Chinese teacher's use of high-end Maotai liquor and repeated toasting was an attempt to uphold "group face"—showing the sincerity and hospitality of the Chinese side through generous arrangements. The Korean teachers' reluctant acceptance of the toast was to maintain "relational face"—avoiding direct refusal to damage the cooperative relationship between the two schools. However, both parties ignored the "individual face" needs of the other party: the Chinese side did not realize that forced toasting violated the individual autonomy of the Korean teachers, and the Korean side did not clearly express their discomfort due to the need to maintain relational face, resulting in latent conflict.

Cultural Adaptation Gap: The root cause of the conflict lies in the self-cultural projection of the Chinese side—applying China's medium power distance norms to interactions with South Korea, a high power distance culture. Before the interaction, the organizer only paid attention to the arrangement of logistics and activities but lacked systematic training on Korean honorific etiquette, drinking norms, and other cultural details, leading to the failure to anticipate potential conflict points. This also reflects the common problem in international Chinese education exchange activities: overemphasizing the form of exchange while ignoring the cultivation of intercultural communication competence.

3.2 Sino-American Interaction

Case Summary: While teaching a US student one-on-one, the researcher's suggestion to "drink more hot water" for menstrual discomfort or a cold was questioned by the student, revealing a conflict rooted in differing health beliefs

Theoretical Analysis:

Individualism/Collectivism Dimension: The core of this conflict is the difference in value orientation between individualistic and collectivist cultures. The United States has the highest Individualism Index (IDV=91) in the world, and personal autonomy and individual rights are regarded as the core values. In the student's view, drinking habits and health management are purely personal affairs, and the teacher's advice is an inappropriate interference with personal autonomy. In contrast, China's collectivist culture (IDV=20) emphasizes interpersonal care and mutual assistance. The researcher's advice was not an attempt to interfere with personal choices but a manifestation of collective care in Chinese culture—caring for the student's health as a member of the learning group. This difference in

value orientation led to the complete misinterpretation of the communicative intent between the two parties.

Cultural Metaphors of Human-Nature Relationship: Behind the health advice lies the deep-seated cultural metaphor difference between China and the United States. The researcher's advice is based on the traditional Chinese concept of "yin-yang balance," which regards the human body as a part of nature and believes that drinking hot water can "supplement yang qi" to maintain the balance of the body's internal environment—a typical harmony with nature cultural metaphor. The American student's insistence on drinking iced coffee is influenced by the "mastery over nature" cultural metaphor prevalent in Western culture, which holds that humans can conquer and transform nature through technology and rationality, and that personal lifestyle has nothing to do with the laws of nature. This difference in cultural metaphors makes the health advice, which is considered "well-intentioned" in Chinese culture, become "unreasonable interference" in American culture.

Lack of Empathic Ability: The researcher's initial failure to resolve the conflict was due to the lack of targeted empathic training. Before the interaction, the researcher did not conduct in-depth research on the core values and cultural metaphors of American students, and directly applied the "collectivist care template" to the individualistic cultural context. After the first conflict occurred, the researcher did not analyze the root cause from the perspective of cultural dimensions but repeated the same advice, further intensifying the conflict. This indicates that empathic ability is not a natural quality but requires systematic training based on cultural cognition.

3.3 Sino-Italian Interaction

Case Summary: As a student in an Italian professor's course, the researcher felt self-blame for submitting work late or arriving late, but the professor demonstrated flexible time management. The professor's encouragement of open debate and traditional Chinese admission of not knowing something contrasted with teacher-student dynamics

Theoretical Analysis:

Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension: Italy's Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI=75) is at a medium level, but it shows obvious situational variability in educational scenarios. In terms of academic deadlines, Italian universities show low uncertainty avoidance characteristics, tolerating delays caused by objective reasons and believing that the quality of academic work is more important than time constraints. In contrast, Chinese higher education is influenced by high uncertainty avoidance culture, emphasizing strict compliance with deadlines and regarding punctuality as an important quality of students. This situational difference in uncertainty avoidance led to the

researcher's unnecessary self-blame and the professor's calm response. In terms of knowledge exploration, Italian professors' tolerance for "knowledge uncertainty" (admitting not knowing the answer) also reflects low uncertainty avoidance, while Chinese culture emphasizes that teachers should "be proficient in their subject" and avoid showing "ignorance" in front of students.

Cultural Construction of Teacher-Student Relationship: The conflict in teacher-student interaction essentially reflects the different cultural constructions of teacher-student roles. Chinese teacher-student relationship is rooted in the Confucian concept of "respecting teachers and valuing teaching," with obvious high power distance characteristics—teachers are regarded as "knowledge authorities," and students should show respect and obedience. The Italian teacher-student relationship is based on the concept of "equal dialogue," with low power distance characteristics—teachers and students are "co-explorers of knowledge," and questioning and discussion are regarded as important ways to promote academic progress. The professor's requirement to turn on the camera is also based on this equal concept: "turning on the camera" is a symbol of "active participation" and "respect for others," while Chinese students' reluctance to turn on the camera is influenced by the collectivist norm of "reserved expression," fearing that their inappropriate performance will attract negative evaluations.

Non-verbal Communication Differences: The camera conflict also involves differences in non-verbal communication codes between Chinese and Western cultures. Hall's High-Low Context Theory can provide supplementary interpretation: Chinese culture is a high-context culture, and non-verbal communication pays attention to reservation and implication—avoiding direct eye contact and excessive expression to show modesty. Western culture is a low-context culture, and non-verbal communication emphasizes clarity and directness—eye contact is regarded as a symbol of "sincerity and attention." The professor's emphasis on turning on the camera is to obtain direct non-verbal feedback (such as facial expressions and eye contact), while Chinese students' reluctance to turn on the camera is to abide by the non-verbal norms of high-context culture (Fisher-Yoshida, 2005).

IV. THEORETICAL PATHWAYS AND EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT

Based on the above case analysis and theoretical discussion, and integrating Berry's three-phase Intercultural Competence Model, this section constructs a "three-phase

progressive" enhancement path for intercultural communication competence, and puts forward specific implementation strategies combined with international Chinese education scenarios. This path breaks through the limitations of previous experiential summaries and realizes the organic combination of theoretical guidance and practical operation.

4.1 Deepening Cultural Cognition

The core goal of this phase is to help communicators move from superficial cultural understanding to systematic cultural cognition, breaking the limitations of self-cultural projection. The key method is to establish a cultural dimension-scenario associative database, connecting abstract cultural dimensions with specific international Chinese education scenarios.

First, theoretical empowerment with scenario orientation. It is necessary to carry out targeted cultural dimension training for different communication objects. For example, when training Chinese teachers who teach in South Korea, focus on explaining the high power distance and collectivism dimensions, and clarify the specific manifestations of these two dimensions in classroom teaching (such as honorific usage, questioning methods), after-class interaction (such as gift-giving etiquette), and parent-teacher communication (such as reporting student performance). When training teachers who teach in the United States, focus on the "high individualism" and "low power distance" dimensions, and interpret the cultural norms of personal boundary respect, direct expression of opinions, and equal teacher-student dialogue. The training can adopt the method of "theoretical explanation + case comparison," such as comparing the differences in teacher-student interaction between China and the United States under the power distance dimension through video materials.

Second, empirical accumulation with dimension tagging. Encourage international Chinese education practitioners to establish a personal cross-cultural conflict case library, and tag each recorded case with corresponding cultural dimensions and face needs. For example, tag the Sino-US "hot water advice" case with "individualism/collectivism," "cultural metaphor of human-nature relationship," and "individual face/relational face." The case library should include not only conflict phenomena and causes but also solutions and reflection summaries. Institutions can regularly organize case sharing meetings to promote the exchange and sharing of empirical experience. For example, Beijing Language and Culture University has established an online case database for international Chinese teachers, which has collected more than 500 tagged cases and achieved good practical results.

Third, tool support with quantitative analysis. Introduce Hofstede's cultural dimension index as a reference tool for pre-communication preparation. Before carrying out cross-cultural communication activities (such as receiving foreign delegations, starting online teaching for foreign students), query the cultural dimension index of the target country/region, and formulate communication plans based on the index characteristics. For example, when communicating with students from high uncertainty avoidance countries (such as Germany), it is necessary to provide detailed teaching plans and assessment standards in advance; when communicating with students from low uncertainty avoidance countries (such as Italy), it is necessary to maintain appropriate flexibility in teaching arrangements.

4.2 Cultivating Empathic Capacity

Empathic ability is the core of resolving intercultural communication conflicts. This phase adopts a "three-step training method" of "pre-conflict anticipation, in-conflict adjustment, and post-conflict reflection" to cultivate communicators' decentered thinking ability.

Pre-conflict cultural perspective-taking. Before formal communication, carry out role reversal imagination to predict the possible cultural logic and face needs of the other party. For example, before advising American students on health issues, imagine: "If I were an American student who values personal autonomy, what way of expression would I accept?" Based on this, adjust the expression from the direct advice of "you should drink more hot water" to the option-based communication of "I know you have your own health habits. There is a traditional Chinese health method that is to drink hot water to relieve discomfort. Would you like to understand it?" This way of expression not only respects the individual face of the other party but also achieves the purpose of caring.

In-conflict dynamic adjustment. During the occurrence of communication conflicts, it is necessary to abandon the "defensive thinking" of "defending one's own cultural norms" and adopt a problem-solving oriented communication strategy. The core step is to suspend judgment and seek clarification—when sensing the other party's dissatisfaction or misunderstanding, take the initiative to use open-ended questions to explore the other party's cultural logic. For example, in the Sino-US health advice conflict, after the American student expressed dissatisfaction, the researcher could adjust the communication strategy by asking: "I'm sorry if my suggestion made you uncomfortable. I just wanted to share a Chinese health method. Could you tell me your views on health advice between teachers and students?" This kind of inquiry not only eases the tense atmosphere but also helps

to understand the other party's emphasis on personal autonomy from the source. At the same time, it is necessary to use face-saving language to maintain the other party's face needs. For collectivist cultural communicators (such as South Koreans), use "we-oriented" language to emphasize group harmony; for individualistic cultural communicators (such as Americans), use "you-oriented" language to respect personal choices.

Post-conflict systematic reflection. After the conflict is resolved, it is necessary to carry out dimension-based reflection to extract experience and lessons. The specific method is to fill in the "cross-cultural conflict reflection form," which includes four core columns: conflict scenario description, cultural dimension involved, face need mismatch point, and improved communication strategy. Taking the Sino-Italian camera conflict as an example, the reflection content should include: "Scenario: The professor required turning on the camera in online classes, but Chinese students were reluctant to do so; Cultural dimension: Power distance (teacher-student relationship) and high-low context culture (non-verbal communication); Mismatch point: The professor regarded turning on the camera as 'respect for others' (individual face), while Chinese students regarded it as 'excessive exposure' (relational face); Improved strategy: Before online classes, explain the cultural connotation of turning on the camera to Chinese students, and suggest that students can adjust the camera angle to reduce discomfort, while communicating with the professor about the reserved characteristics of Chinese students' non-verbal communication." This structured reflection can transform scattered experience into systematic competence.

4.3 Behavioral Adaptation

Behavioral adaptation is the final manifestation of intercultural communication competence, which requires transforming cultural cognition and empathic ability into specific communication behaviors. The key is to develop scenario-specific communication strategies for typical scenarios in international Chinese education, realizing the contextualization of competence application.

First, classroom teaching scenario: Adaptive design based on cultural dimensions. For high power distance cultures (such as South Korea), teachers should adopt a "authoritative and respectful" teaching style: use honorific language when addressing students, arrange questions in advance to give students sufficient preparation time, and avoid public criticism. For low power distance cultures (such as the United States), adopt a equal and interactive teaching style: design group discussion links to encourage students to question, and use "constructive feedback" to replace one-way criticism. For high uncertainty avoidance

cultures (such as Germany), provide detailed teaching outlines and assessment criteria in advance, and explain the logical relationship between knowledge points clearly; for low uncertainty avoidance cultures (such as Italy), appropriately increase open-ended tasks and encourage students to explore innovative answers. A teaching experiment conducted by Beijing Language and Culture University showed that after adopting adaptive teaching strategies based on cultural dimensions, the classroom participation rate of international students increased by 35%, and the satisfaction with teaching increased by 28%.

Second, after-class interaction scenario: Boundary management based on value orientation. For collectivist cultural students (such as South Koreans), strengthen relational connection through group activities, such as organizing traditional Chinese festival experience activities to enhance group identity; when caring for students, pay attention to the timeliness and indirectness of expression, such as asking "Is there anything we can help with together?" instead of directly inquiring about personal matters. For individualistic cultural students (such as Americans), respect personal boundaries and avoid excessive interference in private life; when providing help, adopt a "request-oriented" approach, such as saying "If you need help with Chinese learning, I am willing to provide guidance" instead of taking the initiative to arrange help. In gift-giving interactions, for high power distance cultures, choose gifts that conform to hierarchical norms (such as exquisite stationery for teachers); for low power distance cultures, choose personalized gifts (such as handwritten Chinese calligraphy works) to highlight individual care.

Third, academic cooperation scenario: Process management based on uncertainty avoidance. For high uncertainty avoidance cultures (such as Germany), establish strict work schedules and division of labor, and report progress regularly to reduce uncertainty; when revising academic works, provide detailed modification basis and theoretical support. For low uncertainty avoidance cultures (such as Italy), maintain flexible work plans and allow appropriate adjustments according to the progress; focus on the exchange of core ideas during the cooperation process, and encourage creative exploration. In cross-cultural academic meetings, for high-context cultures (such as China), use "indirect expression" to put forward different opinions, such as "Your viewpoint is very insightful. We can also consider another perspective"; for low-context cultures (such as the United States), use direct expression to clarify viewpoints, such as "I have a different opinion, and the reasons are as follows".

Fourth, digital communication scenario: Norm construction based on digital face needs. With the

popularization of online teaching and cross-border communication, digital intercultural communication has become a common scenario. For individualistic cultural communicators, respect their "digital autonomy" and avoid sending non-work-related information outside working hours; when using video conferences, turn on the camera to show sincerity. For collectivist cultural communicators, maintain digital relational connection and send holiday greetings appropriately; when using group chat tools, use collective address (such as "Dear classmates") to enhance group identity. At the same time, it is necessary to be familiar with the digital communication norms of different cultures, such as avoiding using emojis with strong emotional colors in formal communications with high power distance cultures, and using concise and direct language in communications with low uncertainty avoidance cultures.

V. CONCLUSION

Against the backdrop of increasing cross-cultural exchanges in international Chinese education, this study integrates Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, Ting-Toomey's Face-Negotiation Theory, and Berry's Intercultural Competence Model, along with three representative cases of Sino-South Korean, Sino-American, and Sino-Italian interactions, to investigate the formation mechanisms of intercultural conflicts and pathways for enhancing intercultural competence.

The findings reveal that the root cause of intercultural conflicts lies in cognitive biases stemming from insufficient awareness of cultural dimension differences. Mismatches in dimensions such as power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long/short-term orientation directly trigger conflicts. For instance, Sino-South Korean conflicts arise from power distance differences, Sino-American conflicts are driven by individualism/collectivism value disparities, and Sino-Italian conflicts are associated with situational variability in uncertainty avoidance. Second, mismatched face needs are a direct manifestation of conflict: collectivist cultures emphasize relational and group face, while individualistic cultures prioritize individual face. Overlooking such differences often leads to misinterpretation of communicative intent. Third, a three-phase progressive pathway—"deepening cultural awareness → fostering empathy → behavioral adaptation"—can effectively enhance intercultural competence, with cultural awareness as the foundation, empathy as the core mediator, and behavioral adaptation as the practical outcome.

The theoretical contributions of this study include the integration of multiple cross-cultural theories within the

context of international Chinese education and the extension of Hofstede's framework by revealing the situational dynamics of cultural dimensions, such as Italy's varying expressions of uncertainty avoidance in academic deadlines versus knowledge exploration. Practically, it offers instructors methods for linking cultural dimensions to specific scenarios and empathy training strategies, suggests that administrators incorporate intercultural competence into training systems and establish case-sharing platforms, and provides overseas students with guidance on systematic cultural learning and reflective practice.

This study also has limitations include a limited range of cultural cases, a lack of large-sample quantitative validation, and insufficient attention to emerging digital contexts. Future research should expand case selection to include cultures such as those in Africa and the Middle East, combine qualitative and quantitative methods to develop an intercultural competence scale, and examine intercultural communication features in emerging digital scenarios such as metaverse-assisted teaching and human–AI collaborative interaction to further refine intercultural training systems.

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