

# Curricularizing International Communication Competence in College English: Components, Generative Logic, and Implementation Pathways

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## Abstract

The cultivation of students' ability to communicate effectively with international audiences has become a pressing issue in College English reform within a general-education framework. Existing studies have largely focused on English-major programs or macro-level talent cultivation and have not sufficiently addressed the general-education nature and foundational positioning of College English. Nor have they offered a structured account of the constituent elements, generative mechanisms, and curricular implementation pathways of international communication competence (ICC) in this context. This study therefore clarifies the component structure of ICC in College English and systematically explicates its generative logic and curricular implementation pathways, with a view to providing theoretical support and practical reference for the foundational cultivation of such competence through College English.

## Keywords

College English, International Communication Competence, Curricularization.

## 1. Introduction

Recent policy and scholarly discussions in China have increasingly emphasized the need to improve the country's ability to communicate with international audiences, which has in turn pushed foreign language education beyond the cultivation of linguistic skills alone. In the current context, where the international discursive order and the distribution of communicative resources remain uneven[1], addressing the gap between China's growing international presence and its capacity to communicate effectively with global audiences is not only a macro-level concern in the development of international communication competence (ICC), but also a pressing challenge for university foreign language education, which is expected to offer more attainable and process-oriented pathways for student development. As international exchanges become increasingly commonplace, ICC should no longer be seen as the exclusive domain of a small group of specialists; rather, it has become a broadly applicable communicative competence[2]. Against this backdrop, one of the central questions in current foreign language education reform is whether College English, the most widely taught core general-education course in Chinese higher education, can equip students with the ability to communicate effectively with international audiences.

To address this question, it is necessary to situate College English reform within the policy and curricular framework that currently shapes the course. The *College English Teaching Guidelines* (2020) (hereinafter referred to as "the Guidelines") provide an important point of reference for the reform of College English. They introduce three major changes. First, College English is repositioned not merely as a public foundational course, but also as a core general-education

course[3]. Second, the objective framework shifts from “knowledge, ability, and comprehensive quality” to a three-dimensional orientation centered on “ability, quality, and literacy”[4]. Third, the Guidelines emphasize the integration of blended teaching and formative assessment[5]. Taken together, these changes suggest that College English should move beyond a narrow concern with linguistic correctness and instead address a broader set of capacities, including meaning-making, information processing, logical judgment, and effective expression. In this sense, the need to communicate China-related issues to international audiences in intelligible and context-sensitive ways must be incorporated into curricular practices that are teachable, trainable, and assessable.

From the perspective of competence cultivation, the curricular development of ICC requires that the broader questions of what to communicate, who communicates, and how communication takes place be translated into concrete course goals, content design, and task chains that can be implemented in general-education classrooms[6]. In Chinese scholarship, ICC is often discussed in relation to broader notions such as national discursive competence and national language competence[7]. For College English to respond meaningfully to the demand for international communication, the key therefore lies not in simply adding China-related themes to the classroom, but in integrating language education with communication education through curricularization, so that effective expression for international audiences becomes a teachable, trainable, and assessable learning outcome. Although existing scholarship has discussed the concept and macro-level cultivation pathways of ICC[1, 2, 8], most of this work has focused on professional training in English-major programs or international communication programs[9-11]. It has paid far less attention to the general-education character and foundational role of College English.

## 2. ICC in the Context of College English

### 2.1. From Language Proficiency to ICC

International communication is not simply the cross-border circulation of information. Rather, it is a form of communication oriented toward particular narrative purposes, shaped by audience comprehensibility and acceptability, and situated in intercultural contexts[12]. Accordingly, ICC should not be understood as merely an extension of foreign language proficiency or linguistic skill. Instead, it is better conceived as a comprehensive expressive competence oriented toward meaning-making for international audiences and toward effective communication[5]. It involves not only linguistic accuracy, but also appropriate discourse construction and strategic communicative choices. This includes, for example, the ability to frame China-related issues in ways that are intelligible and meaningful to international audiences, and to adapt expression to different audiences and communicative contexts. From the perspective of communication as a process, language-based communication involves at least the communicator, the audience, the content, the form of communication, and the feedback generated in the process[13]. Weakness in any of these dimensions may undermine communicative effectiveness. For this reason, ICC, when brought into the curriculum, should not be defined solely in terms of linguistic correctness. It should also be understood in terms of process-oriented components that can be taught, practiced, and assessed.

The Guidelines make it clear that College English should move beyond the teaching of isolated language points and place greater emphasis on the overall development of students' abilities and literacies[4]. This means that integrating ICC into College English should not be treated as an additional theme or a temporary task. Rather, it should be understood as an extension of the course's intended learning outcomes. On the basis of students' overall language development, effective expression for international audiences should be incorporated into concrete classroom goals and become an integral part of the course objectives.

## 2.2. Functional Positioning of College English

As a core public foreign language course in higher education, College English is marked by its instrumental and humanistic functions, its broad coverage, its foundational role, and its strong general-education character. This positioning means that its role in cultivating ICC is fundamentally foundational rather than professional. The purpose of College English is not to train communication specialists directly. Rather, through broadly applicable language education, it should help students develop a basic awareness of how to present and communicate China-related issues in intercultural contexts, and address different audiences in English, thereby laying the groundwork for their further development. From the perspective of the changing functions of foreign language education, the foundational significance of College English lies in equipping students with a general-education basis for both understanding the world and communicating China[14]. In this sense, it provides students with an initial ability to explain, interpret, and communicate with international audiences in wider contexts of study, work, and social interaction.

The Guidelines propose a three-tier progression of “basic,” “advanced,” and “proficient,” thereby emphasizing that competence development should be staged, developmental, and attainable. On this basis, the cultivation of ICC in College English should follow a gradual progression, turning requirements such as issue-based expression, discourse organization, and intercultural adaptation into tasks appropriate to different stages of learning. In this way, the course can avoid vague goals and unfocused implementation. At the same time, the Guidelines’ emphasis on blended teaching and on the shift from passive to active learning offers practical support for this foundational cultivation. Through sustained task chains and process-based output, students can gradually develop stable expressive competence through repeated cycles of input, processing, and output, rather than remaining at the level of general exhortation or fragmented supplementation.

## 2.3. Distinguishing Related Concepts

To avoid conceptual overgeneralization, it is necessary to distinguish ICC from several related concepts and thereby clarify its place in College English.

First, it differs from language competence. Language competence is a necessary basis for ICC, but the latter places greater emphasis on meaning-making and communicative effect in relation to specific audiences and contexts. In this sense, it is more closely aligned with what Zhu[15] terms cross-cultural discursive competence. For this reason, classroom practice should not be confined to isolated training in linguistic form. Instead, it should integrate language work with discourse organization, audience awareness, and contextual adaptation, so that language competence can develop in a more holistic way through authentic or quasi-authentic communicative tasks.

Second, it differs from translation or paraphrasing competence. Translation and paraphrasing are important in explaining Chinese concepts and experiences to the outside world, but they are more specifically concerned with accurate and appropriate cross-linguistic transfer. ICC, by contrast, also includes issue selection, narrative organization, genre strategy, and communicative adaptation. In the context of College English, translation and paraphrasing may serve as important training means, but they should be embedded in a broader expressive task chain of narrating, explaining, and communicating, rather than being treated as equivalent to ICC itself.

Third, it differs from intercultural communicative competence. Intercultural communicative competence emphasizes awareness of cultural difference and strategies of interactional negotiation[16-17], and it is undoubtedly an important component of ICC. However, the latter places greater emphasis on outward explanation and narrative expression, especially in relation to China-related issues. This distinction means that the humanistic dimension of

general education should not be reduced to the superficial insertion of Chinese cultural content into the classroom. Instead, it should return to the broader goal of whole-person education within general education[3], and strengthen students' capacity to communicate China-related issues in intercultural contexts through training in issue-based expression, narrative framing, and discursive strategy.

In sum, ICC in the context of College English may be understood as a comprehensive competence grounded in the integrated use of language, centered on discursive expression, shaped by audience and contextual adaptation, and oriented toward communicative effect. Its cultivation does not consist in simply adding new content to the course, but in systematically rethinking course objectives, content organization, task design, and mechanisms of assessment and feedback.

### 3. A Six-Component Framework for ICC

Given the nature and positioning of College English, the cultivation of ICC cannot remain at the level of broad slogans or occasional thematic activities. It needs to be articulated as an operational framework that can guide teaching and learning. In response to the contemporary demand to "communicate" China more effectively to international audiences, competence-building at the general-education level should help students develop both a grounded understanding of China and a broader awareness of the world[1], while also enabling them to communicate across languages and mediate between Chinese and international perspectives[18]. Taking into account the general-education nature and classroom conditions of College English, ICC can be understood in terms of six interrelated core components.

Issue and knowledge competence provides the foundation for meaningful communication in international contexts. It requires students to be able to present facts, explain concepts, supply relevant background, and select appropriate information when addressing China-related issues, so that their expression is grounded in content that is accurate, intelligible, and expandable. Given the Guidelines' positioning of College English as a core general-education course that supports students' disciplinary learning and overall development, issue selection should follow a graded model combining general themes with discipline-related topics. This means covering both broadly communicable issues that help international audiences understand China and issues connected with students' own academic fields, thereby aligning what students can talk about with situations in which such communication may be needed.

Stance and value competence concerns the ability to construct meaning in international communication. It requires students to develop a basic capacity to articulate positions and make value judgments, so that factual narration can be turned into communicable interpretation and responses to misunderstanding, bias, or controversial questions can be supported by evidence and reasoning rather than reduced to slogans. In terms of communicative disposition, this competence may be described as combining a global outlook with a grounded sense of China[8]. In intercultural communication and global public discourse, issues do not always arise in contexts of mutual goodwill or shared understanding. Classroom training should therefore prepare students for communication in contexts that may involve misunderstanding, disagreement, or even "contesting" interpretations[19], rather than assuming ideal conditions of mutual understanding.

Discourse and genre competence concerns how communication is organized and delivered. At the level of competence structure, discourse competence may be further divided into contextual competence, genre competence, and textual competence[20]. Its core lies in students' ability to choose appropriate narrative frameworks and genres in light of communicative purposes and to organize content with clarity and coherence. This includes narrative structures such as cause-and-effect, comparison, and problem-solution, as well as genre awareness in forms such

as exposition, commentary, speech, and short-video scripting. In classroom practice, genre training should align with the Guidelines' graded requirements: the basic stage emphasizes factual presentation and clear explanation; the advanced stage focuses on viewpoint expression and argumentative structure; and the proficient stage introduces more complex tasks involving debate, critique, and expression across different communicative contexts. In this way, genre competence can develop alongside increasing issue complexity and provide stable organizational support for effective expression.

Language and recontextualization competence concerns the translingual realization of international communication. Its core requirement is not limited to formal correctness; rather, it is oriented toward effective communication. Students need to be able to recast concepts, institutions, and experiences embedded in Chinese-language contexts into English expressions that are intelligible to international audiences. This includes concept explanation, summary and retelling, restructuring, bilingual paraphrasing, and explanatory reformulation in English. Functionally, this competence is especially reflected in the basic literacy involved in "translating China"[21]: not simply rendering information into another language, but making concepts clear, arguments coherent, and tone acceptable. In classroom practice, such training can be embedded in a task chain involving concept explanation, example supplementation, contrastive clarification, and conclusion building, with emphasis on clarity, naturalness, and conformity to English discourse norms. It should also, as far as possible, present Chinese concepts and experiences through language, discourse, and lines of reasoning that are readily intelligible to international audiences[1].

Audience and intercultural competence is central to the adaptive dimension of international communication[22]. It requires students to develop basic audience awareness and intercultural sensitivity so that they can adjust information density, examples, explanatory strategies, and tone according to the audience's background knowledge, cultural experience, and concerns, rather than speaking only from their own frame of reference. In line with the principle of staying close to China's realities, overseas audiences' informational needs, and overseas audiences' ways of thinking in external communication, students need to incorporate audience awareness into expressive design. From the perspective of intercultural meaning-making, the encoding of communicators and the decoding of audiences may diverge, and such divergence is often closely related to specific communicative contexts[23]. For this reason, classroom training should not be limited to linguistic conversion between Chinese and English. Instead, it should incorporate audience awareness into expressive design by helping students decide what background information to provide, how to reformulate concepts, which examples are more likely to invite empathy, and how to avoid culturally sensitive pitfalls. Through explanation, clarification, and negotiation, communication can thus move from simple information delivery to the achievement of communicative effect.

Media and multimodal competence concerns the expansion of expressive forms in the information age. Its core does not lie in training students in complex technologies, but in enabling them to shift expression across different media and multimodal forms—for instance, turning an explanatory text into a speech outline, converting a position statement into poster copy, or recasting issue interpretation as a short-video script. The increasingly mobile, social, and visual nature of today's communication environment means that classroom training should help students understand both the constraints and the affordances that different media bring to information compression, narrative pacing, and symbolic presentation. The cultivation of this competence may therefore focus on the reshaping of expression across media and on adaptation to platform-specific discourse contexts. Without overemphasizing technology, students should be guided to develop a basic understanding of how social media, big data, artificial intelligence, and other emerging communication technologies reshape expressive

forms[10], so that classroom outputs are better aligned with real-world communication scenarios.

#### 4. The Generative Logic of ICC Components

In line with the Guidelines' positioning of College English as a core general-education course and their emphasis on the integration of instrumental and humanistic functions, the development of ICC may be understood as a systematic reorganization of course goals, content, learning processes, and assessment. More specifically, this process can be explained in terms of five interrelated mechanisms: goal guidance, content provision, task-based development, evaluative feedback, and their interaction in a closed curricular loop.

Course goals determine the direction and focus of classroom practice. By drawing on *China's Standards of English Language Ability*, the Guidelines organize learner development into three levels—basic, advanced, and proficient—while also foregrounding critical thinking and communicative effectiveness. This shift suggests that the goals of College English should move beyond an exclusive focus on language knowledge and skills and place greater emphasis on learning outcomes and effective expression. Within this goal structure, the six components take on different but related functions. Issue and knowledge competence and stance and value competence correspond to the content and meaning of expression; discourse and genre competence and language and recontextualization competence concern organization and translingual realization; audience and intercultural competence and media and multimodal competence relate to adaptation and presentation. As a core general-education course for non-English majors, College English should therefore frame ICC in ways that are foundational, broadly applicable, and realistically attainable. In this sense, layered goals are not merely a matter of pedagogical sequencing; they are also a way of ensuring that the cultivation of ICC remains both educationally feasible and socially relevant.

The development of competence also depends on stable and meaningful content provision. The Guidelines call for College English to move beyond the model of a single course and toward a more systematic curriculum, with a more balanced distribution of general English, English for specific purposes, and intercultural communication. Against this background, content provision for ICC should move beyond the patchwork use of scattered China-related materials. Instead, it should be organized around relatively stable thematic clusters, such as national image, institutional practice, social development, scientific and technological innovation, and cultural life. At the same time, these thematic clusters should be accompanied by expressive resources, including English explanations of key concepts, recurrent explanatory frames, and contrastive templates. In this way, students are not only given something to talk about, but are also provided with resources for how to talk about it. As part of a core general-education course, content organization should also move beyond a merely outward-looking orientation and become more reflective, linking language learning with the communicable interpretation of Chinese experience. This helps foster a more transferable expressive competence that can connect general education with students' disciplinary backgrounds.

At the classroom level, competence development depends largely on how learning tasks are organized. The Guidelines stress that teaching should shift from a focus on what teachers teach to a focus on what students learn and gain, and they explicitly emphasize student-centered development supported by teacher guidance[6]. Under this principle, ICC cannot be developed through one-way knowledge transmission alone. Rather, it requires a complete task chain of input, processing, and output in which students participate actively. At the input stage, issue understanding and information selection activate issue and knowledge competence. At the processing stage, stance formation, value interpretation, and structural organization strengthen stance and value competence as well as discourse and genre competence. At the

output stage, translingual expression, audience design, and media presentation promote the integrated use of the remaining components. In line with the Guidelines' emphasis on informatization, blended teaching, and learner autonomy, this task chain should also be integrated into a transformed mode of learning: classroom time should focus on guidance, modeling, and higher-order support, while out-of-class learning can rely on digital platforms for autonomous work and collaboration. In this way, the task chain extends across time and space, allowing the six components to become increasingly internalized through repeated output across different genres and audience settings.

The cultivation of competence further requires an appropriate assessment mechanism. The Guidelines stress that new forms of teaching should be supported by a complete system covering content, method, process, and outcome, with formative assessment embedded throughout[24]. From the perspective of communication, assessment also functions as a way of examining communicative effect at the classroom level: whether students' expression actually helps audiences understand and accept the message, and whether the intended communicative purpose is achieved. In this sense, assessment helps avoid situations in which communication breaks down because speakers and audiences effectively talk past one another[8]. Assessment criteria therefore need to go beyond linguistic correctness alone and include such dimensions as audience comprehension, discourse organization, and strategic adaptation. In this way, communicative effect can be turned into something observable and actionable in classroom feedback. In the digital age, learning platforms can provide additional support by making learning trajectories and process records more visible, thereby enabling teachers to identify weaknesses and provide more targeted feedback. At the same time, technology should not be used for its own sake. Assessment design should make use of digital affordances while still preserving room for interpersonal interaction and classroom exchange, so that assessment not only measures students' performance and learning outcomes but also shapes the learning process itself.

Taken together, these dimensions form a closed curricular loop through which ICC can be developed in a sustained and coordinated manner. Goals provide direction and establish progression. Content offers a stable basis through thematic clusters and expressive resources. Task-based processes create opportunities for cross-training and integration. Assessment supplies iterative feedback that helps students consolidate and refine what they have learned. When this loop functions effectively, College English can move the cultivation of ICC beyond abstract advocacy and turn it into an implementable curricular mechanism. In this way, students are supported in a gradual process of development: from being able to say something, to being able to explain it, and ultimately to being able to communicate it effectively.

## 5. Curricular Pathways for Cultivating ICC

Based on the six-component framework and the developmental logic outlined above, the cultivation of ICC in College English should not be approached as a matter of simply adding new themes or isolated activities to existing teaching. Rather, in line with the positioning and orientation set out in the Guidelines, it needs to be built into the course itself through the integration of language education and communication education. What is needed, therefore, is a curricular arrangement in which goals are clear, content is sustained, processes are workable, assessment is meaningful, and support is durable.

The first step is to reformulate course objectives in competence-based terms. While retaining the central place of comprehensive language ability, College English should incorporate ICC into its objectives in the form of concrete learning outcomes. Effective expression for international audiences should no longer remain a general aspiration; it should be translated into outcomes that are teachable, attainable, and assessable. These outcomes should align with the six

components identified above: issue organization and concept explanation at the level of content; value interpretation and critical reasoning at the level of meaning; genre choice, discourse construction, and translingual reformulation at the level of organization and expression; and audience awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and multimodal presentation at the level of adaptation and representation. Through this alignment, competence cultivation gains a clearer curricular structure and is less likely to be weakened by vague goals, scattered teaching focus, or unfocused assessment.

A second pathway lies in the organization of content. In a general-education course, content design should move beyond occasional additions of relevant materials and instead develop relatively stable thematic clusters. By organizing progressive clusters of China-related issues suitable for classroom use, the course can provide students with a sustained basis for both input and repeated processing. At the same time, thematic content should be accompanied by expressive resources, thereby forming an integrated system of issues and expression. Such resources may include templates for explaining key concepts in English, common patterns for contrastive explanation, recurrent argumentative structures, and genre-based models of expression. In this way, course content no longer consists merely of isolated reading materials; rather, it becomes an expressive scaffold that supports student output and provides a reusable basis for training the six components in a coordinated way.

A third pathway concerns the organization of learning processes. The cultivation of ICC needs to become a process that students actively experience, rather than remaining at the level of teaching ideals. Given the integrated and contextual nature of this competence, classroom implementation should use tasks as its basic organizational unit and rely on a chain of input, processing, and output to promote the development and integration of the six components. At the input stage, students engage in issue-based reading and information selection; at the processing stage, they work on stance formation, value interpretation, evidence organization, and genre choice; at the output stage, they focus on translingual expression, audience adaptation, and multimodal presentation. Within this process, variant output is especially important for strengthening transfer. Reworking the same issue for different audiences, genres, and media forms helps students make their audience awareness and discourse strategies more explicit, enabling them to move from expression alone toward adaptation and communicative effectiveness. In terms of teaching form, blended teaching can support this process by giving students more time and space for extended input, information gathering, and product revision, thereby improving the continuity and repeatability of training.

Assessment constitutes another essential pathway. The assessment of ICC should not be reduced to linguistic accuracy alone. Instead, it should be organized around the six-component framework and address six dimensions: content, meaning, organization, expression, adaptation, and presentation. More importantly, assessment should do more than judge learning outcomes; it should also facilitate the development of competence through targeted and usable feedback. Whether issue information is accurate and sufficient, whether key concepts are properly explained, whether narrative structure is coherent, whether language and reformulation are natural and appropriate, whether audience design is effective, whether intercultural sensitivity is handled appropriately, and whether multimodal presentation highlights key points—all of these should become observable dimensions of classroom assessment. Formative assessment should therefore play the leading role. Through peer review, teacher feedback, revision, rewriting, and secondary output, the cycle of feedback, revision, and re-expression can be built into the task chain. In this way, students gradually integrate the six components and consolidate their expressive strategies through repeated revision, making communicative effect a concrete and improvable dimension of course learning.

Finally, the sustainability of curricular reform depends on adequate support mechanisms. If the cultivation of ICC depends solely on the experience and enthusiasm of individual teachers,

implementation is likely to become uneven, repetitive in resource development, and fragmented in its outcomes. For this reason, stable organizational and pedagogical support mechanisms need to be established at the level of course construction. On the one hand, course teams should coordinate the basic framework of objectives, issue resources, task templates, and assessment rubrics in order to ensure a minimum degree of consistency and replicability. On the other hand, beyond teacher communities, it is also important to strengthen a teacher-student academic community characterized by substantial student participation[2]. Through case co-construction, shared evaluation of student work, resource sharing, and peer support, students' learning experiences, expressive difficulties, and audience feedback can be incorporated into regular teaching development, thereby continuously improving teachers' competence in issue selection, genre guidance, intercultural explanation, and feedback design. At the same time, a rolling accumulation and updating mechanism for school-based teaching resources should be established so that issue materials, expressive resource packages, and exemplary student work can become reusable and renewable curricular assets. Through such organizational coordination and continued resource development, the cultivation of ICC can move from short-term experimentation to a regular and sustainable part of College English practice.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has argued that the cultivation of ICC in College English requires more than the addition of China-related themes or isolated communicative tasks. Instead, it calls for a curricular approach in which competence is systematically embedded in course goals, content design, learning processes, assessment, and support mechanisms. By clarifying the component structure of ICC, explaining its developmental logic, and outlining corresponding curricular pathways, the study seeks to provide a more structured account of how ICC may be cultivated within a general-education course. Even so, the framework proposed here remains primarily conceptual and requires further testing in diverse teaching contexts. Its applicability across different regions, institutional settings, and student populations still needs to be examined through sustained pedagogical practice and empirical inquiry. Future research should therefore focus on how this framework operates in actual classroom settings and how different tasks, assessment practices, and modes of expression may shape the development of ICC in different ways. Such work would help refine the present framework and provide a stronger empirical basis for the curricular cultivation of ICC in College English.

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