



AI Empowerment and Role Transformation of College English Teachers: A Cross-Cultural Governance Perspective

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Abstract: The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has ushered in a new era for college English education. Unlike traditional computer-assisted language learning tools that merely supplemented classroom instruction, modern AI systems are capable of navigating personalized learning paths, providing real-time feedback on linguistic accuracy, and even simulating authentic conversational scenarios for language practice. This technological leap enables educators to excel at handling repetitive, rule-based tasks but it cannot replicate the nuanced humanistic guidance that lies at the core of language teaching—such as fostering patriotic sentiments, promoting cross-cultural awareness, cultivating critical thinking, and addressing students' emotional problems in the learning process. From the perspective of cross-cultural governance—an approach focused on coordinating cultural interactions, resolving cross-cultural conflicts, and safeguarding cultural diversity—this paper explores the role transformation of college English teachers, analyzing the opportunities and challenges brought by AI for their professional development and classroom teaching innovation. Through a case study approach (involving two typical universities in China) and comparative analysis of teaching practices before and after AI integration, the paper summarizes the five key roles teachers need play in AI-assisted classrooms: curating cross-culturally responsive learning resources to complement AI-generated content, mediating student-AI interactions to ensure cultural integrity, evaluating students' language proficiency from a holistic perspective integrating intercultural competence, mentoring students' academic planning with global career readiness in mind, and alleviating students' negative emotions and stress related to cross-cultural communication and technological adaptation. The paper underlines that AI empowerment is not about weakening teachers' importance but redefining their core responsibilities to focus on the cross-cultural and humanistic aspects of language teaching that AI cannot replace. It ends with concise recommendations for teachers to embrace AI as a powerful ally in advancing cross-cultural governance, offering practical insights for educators adapting to AI-driven language education.

Keywords: AI Empowerment; College English Teachers; Role Transformation; Cross-Cultural Governance; Case Study; Intercultural Competence

1. Introduction

Entering the 2020s, AI tools such as ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google AI), Deepseek, and Doubao have experienced explosive development, ushering in the era of large models and permeating fields such as education, healthcare, and finance in an all-round manner. The advent of the artificial intelligence era has inevitably triggered an unprecedented paradigm shift in global higher education, with college English teaching standing at the crossroads of this transformative wave.[1] As a core

curriculum that bridges linguistic proficiency, cross-cultural communication, and academic competence, college English education is no longer confined to the traditional boundaries of textbook-based lectures, grammar drills, and standardized test preparation. Instead, it is being reshaped by the integration of cutting-edge AI technologies—from adaptive learning platforms and generative AI writing assistants to speech recognition evaluation systems and big data-driven student analysis tools. This technological revolution is not merely a superficial addition of teaching aids; it is a profound reconstruction of the entire educational ecology, touching upon the essence of teaching objectives, the redefinition of teacher roles, and the fundamental transformation of student learning modes.

Against this backdrop, cross-cultural governance has emerged as a critical framework for guiding language education reform. Cultural governance is an important component of the national governance system, with its core lying in embedding cultural elements into governance practices; social governance goals are achieved by integrating cultural resources and optimizing service supply, and a new form of mutual embedding between governance and culture can be achieved in the process.[2] Cross-cultural governance, in its most simple definition, refers to the ways organizations and groups manage themselves when they involve people from different cultural backgrounds. It's about recognizing that different cultures have different ways of thinking, communicating, and doing things, and taking these differences into account when making decisions and setting policies.[3] In other words, cross-cultural governance is a process of coordinating interactions between diverse cultural groups, resolving cross-cultural conflicts, and promoting equitable exchanges while protecting cultural diversity—essentially “setting rules and policies, building bridges and passages, and resolving conflicts and contradictions” for global cultural interaction. In the AI era, this framework has become increasingly urgent: AI-generated content often carries Western-centric biases, the digital divide exacerbates cross-cultural educational inequality, and over-reliance on technology risks homogenizing cultural expression. Orientalism is a critical theory proposed by Edward W. Said (Said, 1978). It refers to the way in which the West constructs the Orient as an irrational, backward, and mysterious “Other” in knowledge production and cultural representation, so as to establish its own civilizational superiority and provide ideological support for colonialism and hegemony.[4] In the era of artificial intelligence, training data and algorithmic logic often perpetuate a Western-centric perspective, giving rise to a new form of “algorithmic Orientalism” or “data Orientalism.” College English teachers, as frontline facilitators of language and cultural learning, are uniquely positioned to advance cross-cultural literacy and critical awareness through their role transformation.

To explore this transformation, this paper adopts a case study approach, selecting two universities with distinct characteristics: Xi'an University of Science and Technology (a science and engineering-focused university, emphasizing cross-cultural application in professional scenarios) and Guizhou Normal University (a normal university serving ethnic minority students, facing resource constraints but with rich cultural diversity). Through an analysis of teaching practices, teacher interviews, and student feedback at these two institutions, this paper identifies the core roles of college English teachers in advancing cross-cultural governance under AI empowerment. The research aims to answer: How can college English teachers leverage AI to fulfill cross-cultural governance responsibilities while adapting to technological change? What practical strategies can be derived from real-world teaching cases?

Therefore, college English teachers are facing a dual landscape of unprecedented opportunities and enormous challenges, a situation that demands in-depth exploration and systematic reflection to

navigate the path forward for high-quality college English education reform—one that aligns with the goals of cross-cultural governance.

2. The Key Roles of College English Teachers in the AI Era: A Cross-Cultural Governance Perspective

In the AI-empowered teaching and learning environments, there are five key roles that college English teachers should play, which are distinct from their traditional roles as knowledge transmitters, question answerers, or exam trainers. Each role is rooted in cross-cultural governance principles and illustrated through case study findings.

2.1 Cross-Culturally Responsive Learning Resource Curators

In the era of educational digitization and student-centered teaching reform, college English teachers should no longer be mere deliverers of textbook knowledge but act as professional cross-culturally responsive resource curators. This role addresses the homogeneity of traditional English teaching materials, the cultural bias in AI-generated content, and the diversified learning needs of students from different majors and cultural backgrounds—core pain points in cross-cultural governance.

A qualified resource curator conducts targeted screening and integration of resources based on teaching objectives, students' disciplinary characteristics, and cross-cultural balance. For instance, for engineering students, teachers can curate technical English articles that include cross-cultural collaboration cases (e.g., Chinese and Western engineering teams cooperating on renewable energy projects, highlighting differences in communication styles and work norms). For liberal arts students, they can select classic literary excerpts from diverse cultural traditions (e.g., African English novels, Chinese minority literature in English translation) and cross-cultural communication cases that reflect non-Western perspectives. These curated resources go beyond the limitations of general textbooks and AI-generated content, helping students connect English learning with real-world cross-cultural scenarios.

Resource curation also involves classifying and optimizing multi-form resources to construct a hierarchical and interactive learning system. In addition to textual materials, teachers can collect high-quality audio-visual resources such as TED Talks on cultural diversity (e.g., talks by Chinese scholars on “cultural soft power” or African activists on “indigenous knowledge”) and interactive online resources like virtual cross-cultural exchange platforms. They should classify these resources by learning modules (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and difficulty levels, and label them with cultural context notes (e.g., “This material reflects Western individualistic values; compare with Chinese collectivist norms”).

Furthermore, as cross-culturally responsive curators, teachers need to continuously update and evaluate resources to ensure their timeliness, authenticity, and cultural balance. They should track the latest developments in academic English research and cross-cultural communication, incorporate cutting-edge topics such as AI ethics and cultural diversity into resource banks, and regularly collect students' feedback to adjust resource types and difficulty levels.

A case from Xi'an University of Science and Technology is elaborated as follows. Some teachers from this University used Deepseek or Doubao to generate initial technical English materials (e.g., international project management documents) but then revised them to address cultural biases: for example, adding notes on Chinese business culture (e.g., the importance of “guanxi” in partnership building) to AI-generated Western-style project proposals. Students reported that the materials helped them “understand not only technical terminology but also how to communicate with foreign colleagues in real work scenarios.” A mechanical engineering student noted: “The AI-generated materials were too

rigid and Western-focused, but the teacher's revised versions included examples from Chinese projects—now I know how to explain our technical standards to foreign partners respectfully.”

In a word, the role of cross-culturally responsive resource curators empowers college English teachers to bridge the gap between English teaching and real-world cross-cultural application, between unified teaching requirements and individualized student needs, and between AI-generated cultural bias and cultural diversity—highlighting the student-centered teaching philosophy and core goals of cross-cultural governance.

2.2 Student-AI Interaction Mediators for Cultural Integrity

With the rapid integration of generative AI into higher education, college English teachers are confronted with the imperative to evolve into professional student-AI interaction mediators for cultural integrity. This role is pivotal to maximizing the pedagogical value of AI tools while mitigating inherent risks in cross-cultural teaching—such as students' over-reliance on AI, inability to identify cultural bias in technology-generated content, and homogenized cultural expression.[5]

This role first manifests in guiding students to select and deploy AI tools with academic appropriateness and cultural awareness. In the realm of English learning, numerous AI applications are accessible to students, but unregulated use often leads to over-reliance: students may depend on AI to complete essay drafts without independent thinking, or use AI translation tools as a substitute for active vocabulary accumulation—risks that undermine cross-cultural critical thinking. As mediators, teachers can categorize AI tools based on learning modules (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and proficiency levels, and instruct students on how to leverage AI for targeted cross-cultural learning. For example, students can use AI writing assistants to polish sentence structures but not generate full texts; they can utilize oral practice simulators to refine pronunciation after preparing scripts that reflect their own cultural background.

Generative AI tools are prone to producing content with factual errors, logical inconsistencies, or cultural biases (e.g., depicting non-Western cultures through stereotypes), which are detrimental to students' academic English writing and cross-cultural competence. Thus, teachers should act as evaluators and revisers of AI-generated content, guiding students to verify cultural accuracy. For instance, after students use AI to generate a cross-cultural communication email, teachers can lead them to check for cultural appropriateness (e.g., whether the tone is too direct for Asian recipients, or whether cultural references are respectful and accurate).

More importantly, teachers shoulder the responsibility of cultivating students' ethical awareness and cross-cultural literacy in AI-aided learning, emphasizing academic integrity and critical engagement with technology. This includes teaching students to recognize cultural bias in AI outputs (e.g., how ChatGPT's training data leads to Western-centric recommendations) and encouraging them to integrate their own cultural perspectives into AI-assisted work.

Another case from Guizhou Normal University is illustrated as follows. This university serves a large number of ethnic minority students with rich cultural traditions. From the perspective of ethnic distribution, among the freshmen of the 2019 academic year, there were a total of 28 ethnic groups. Among them, there were 3,680 Han freshmen, accounting for approximately 56% of the total number of freshmen. The top five ethnic minority freshmen were the Miao people with 758 individuals, the Tujia people with 570 individuals, the Dong people with 391 individuals, the Buyi people with 377 individuals, and the Yi people with 184 individuals.[6]The Smart Teaching Platform of Guizhou Normal University has been fully integrated with DeepSeek to create an upgraded version of the smart teaching platform.[7] Teacher Fu Haiyan from the International Tourism and Culture College held a

lecture themed "Teaching Innovation in English Tour Guide Script Creation and Practice with the Aid of AI on April 26, 2025. She emphasized the relationship between culture and people, and its crucial role in cross-cultural communication. She also taught students to quickly identify the key points when dealing with different cultures, and to understand the underlying logic behind cultural differences.[8] It should be admitted that college English teachers play a vital part in fostering students' digital literacy and cross-cultural critical thinking through this mediation role.

2.3 Holistic Evaluators of Language Proficiency and Cross-cultural Competence

Amid the transformation from knowledge-oriented to competency-oriented college English education reform, college English teachers must transcend the traditional role of score-focused examiners and assume the identity of holistic evaluators of language proficiency and intercultural competence. This role transformation is vital to nurturing students' comprehensive linguistic and cross-cultural competence—core to cross-cultural governance—and adapting to the demands of interdisciplinary academic exchanges and globalized career development.

It is universally acknowledged that conventional evaluation mechanisms prioritize standardized test scores in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating, ignoring the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication (e.g., grammar-perfect expressions that offend due to cultural insensitivity). In contrast, holistic evaluation focuses on the full spectrum of students' language abilities and intercultural communication competence, also accounting for their learning attitudes, collaborative skills, and respect for cultural diversity. Specifically, in evaluating oral English proficiency, teachers can move beyond grading pronunciation and grammar to assess students' performance in real-time interactive cross-cultural scenarios—such as group debates on global issues (e.g., "Cultural Preservation in the AI Era"), role-playing of cross-cultural business negotiations (e.g., a Chinese ethnic minority student promoting local products to foreign buyers), and academic presentation Q&A sessions with international peers. In these scenarios, the ability to express ideas logically, respond to others flexibly, and adjust communication strategies according to cultural context matters most.

As holistic evaluators, teachers also emphasize the integration of formative assessment and summative assessment to achieve a dynamic, process-oriented evaluation cycle.[9] They can collect and analyze evidence of students' learning progress throughout the semester, such as their performance in AI-assisted cross-cultural group tasks, drafts of essays with revisions reflecting cultural insights, records of AI-assisted oral practice with cultural adaptation, and reflections on cross-cultural communication experiences. By combining these process-based indicators with final exam results, teachers can provide students with personalized, diagnostic feedback to identify their strengths and weaknesses in both language and cross-cultural competence.

Moreover, evaluators must tailor criteria to students' disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. For engineering students, evaluation can emphasize the accuracy of technical English expression and the ability to interpret professional literature across cultures; for ethnic minority students, it can focus on their ability to express their own cultural traditions in English and engage with diverse perspectives respectfully.

With the targeted, discipline-integrated evaluation framework, college English teachers are able to safeguard students' academic and career development and maintain the student-centered philosophy of modern education reform, ultimately promoting the cultivation of versatile talents with solid language proficiency and cross-cultural competitiveness—key contributors to cross-cultural governance.

2.4 Mentors of Academic Planning for Global Cross-Cultural Readiness

As the integration of globalization and interdisciplinary development deepens, college English teachers

need to take on the responsibility of being mentors of academic planning for global cross-cultural readiness. This role evolution is not only a response to the student-centered education reform but also a practical requirement for fostering versatile talents with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication capabilities—talents who can advance cross-cultural governance in their future careers. Different from professional academic advisors who focus on the overall framework of students' majors, college English teachers can integrate language learning with academic planning guidance based on their in-depth understanding of students' language proficiency, learning habits, academic aspirations, and cultural backgrounds. In daily teaching practice, they can observe students' performance in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating modules, identify their strengths and weaknesses in cross-cultural language application, and then provide tailored suggestions. For example, if students excel in academic writing and critical thinking, teachers can recommend participating in English academic essay competitions on cross-cultural topics, applying for international exchange programs, or engaging in interdisciplinary research projects that require English as a working language—helping them tap into their potential and expand their cross-cultural academic horizons.

As for students who struggle with oral English but have a strong interest in cross-cultural communication (e.g., ethnic minority students at Guizhou Normal University), teachers can guide them to join English debate clubs focused on cultural diversity, attend international academic lectures on campus, or use AI-assisted oral practice tools like Doubao. They can also advise students to lay a solid foundation for their future careers by choosing courses related to cross-cultural communication, ethnic education, or international cooperation.

In addition, teachers can play a bridging role between students' language learning and their long-term academic and career goals by analyzing employment trends and academic requirements that demand cross-cultural competence. For engineering students, the importance of technical English reading and writing skills can be highlighted—skills needed to understand international industry standards, participate in global engineering projects, and publish academic papers in international journals while respecting cultural differences. For liberal arts students, teachers can highlight the value of cross-cultural communication competence for engaging in international cultural exchanges, translation and interpretation work, comparative literature research, or ethnic cultural preservation.

What's more, as mentors, teachers need to pay attention to the dynamic adjustment of students' learning plans and provide continuous guidance. Students' academic aspirations and learning needs may change with the accumulation of knowledge and the expansion of horizons, and teachers can maintain regular communication with students to adjust guidance strategies in a timely manner. This continuous and personalized guidance not only helps students avoid detours in their academic development but also enhances their learning initiative and sense of direction, enabling them to grow into talents who can meet the needs of the times and contribute to cross-cultural governance.

2.5 Alleviators of Students' Cross-Cultural and Technological Anxiety

With the escalating pressure of academic competition, the diversified demands of language learning, and the challenges of cross-cultural communication, college English teachers need to take on the responsibility of alleviating students' cross-cultural and technological anxiety. This role transformation is both an inherent requirement of student-centered education reform and a key guarantee for improving the quality of college English teaching and promoting students' holistic development—essential for creating an inclusive environment that supports cross-cultural governance.

Language learning is a long-term and arduous process in which negative emotions and academic stress are common, especially in the AI era. Unlike other subjects with clear-cut evaluation criteria, English

proficiency improvement is often incremental and imperceptible, making it easy for students to fall into the predicament of “paying much but gaining little.” Specifically, students may struggle with cross-cultural communication anxiety (e.g., fear of making mistakes when speaking to native speakers or expressing their own cultural traditions in English), technological anxiety (e.g., feeling overwhelmed by AI tools or worried about being replaced by technology), or frustration with standardized tests such as CET-4/6 or IELTS.

According to Stephen Krashen (1985), the process of language acquisition is not merely determined by the quantity and quality of comprehensible input ($i+1$), but is significantly mediated by learners’ affective states, which function as a “psychological filter” that either facilitates or impedes the absorption of input.[10] A high affective filter, triggered by low intrinsic motivation, poor self-efficacy, or debilitating anxiety (e.g., fear of being ridiculed for cultural differences in language use), acts as a barrier to effective learning. Conversely, a low affective filter, fostered by strong learning motivation, positive self-perception, and a supportive classroom atmosphere, enables learners to acquire language naturally through authentic cross-cultural interaction.

College English teachers, who are in close contact with students in daily teaching activities, are uniquely positioned to detect these emotional signals in a timely manner. Through in-class observation, after-class conversations, and the analysis of students’ learning portfolios, teachers can identify the root causes of students’ anxiety—whether they stem from inappropriate learning methods, unrealistic learning goals, fear of cultural misunderstanding, or lack of confidence in using AI tools—and then provide targeted interventions and support.

Teachers also created a relaxing classroom atmosphere by normalizing “cultural mistakes” as learning opportunities. For example, when a student from Xi’an University of Science and Technology used a metaphor that was unfamiliar to Western listeners, his teacher turned it into a discussion about cultural metaphor differences rather than criticizing the error. The student reported: “At first, I was terrified of speaking to foreigners—what if they didn’t understand my technical terms or my accent? But practicing with AI first and then getting supportive feedback from my teacher and peers helped me realize that communication is about understanding, not perfection.”

In addition to timely detection, teachers can adopt diversified teaching strategies and emotional guidance methods to alleviate anxiety. They can optimize classroom teaching design by replacing rigid teacher-centered lectures with interactive activities such as cross-cultural role-playing and group discussions, which reduce the fear of public speaking. They can also implement a hierarchical teaching approach, setting differentiated learning goals and assessment criteria for students with different proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds, ensuring every student experiences a sense of accomplishment.

Furthermore, teachers can play a bridging role between students and the school’s psychological counseling system, forming a joint force to alleviate severe anxiety. This multi-level support system helps students alleviate immediate negative emotions and cultivate their ability to cope with setbacks independently, ultimately laying a solid psychological foundation for their future academic and career development—including confident participation in cross-cultural interactions.

3. Opportunities Faced by College English Teachers in the Context of AI Empowerment

From intelligent teaching platforms to generative AI tools, from data-driven learning situation analysis to immersive language scenario construction, technological empowerment provides unprecedented opportunities for college English teachers to break through the bottlenecks of traditional teaching, realize the upgrading of professional capabilities, and deepen the value of educating people—all while

advancing cross-cultural governance. These opportunities are not only reflected in the improvement of teaching efficiency but also run through multiple levels such as the innovation of teaching models, the transformation of role positioning, and the expansion of educational dimensions.

3.1 Innovation of Teaching Models: From "One-Size-Fits-All" to "Precision Cross-Cultural Teaching"

Traditional college English teaching is limited by class size, class hour arrangements, and teachers' energy, often adopting a standardized model that ignores individual differences in students' language foundations, learning rhythms, professional needs, and cultural backgrounds—undermining cross-cultural equity. Emerging technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and big data provide technical support for “teaching students in accordance with their aptitude,” promoting the transformation of teaching models from “experience-driven” to “data-driven” and building a personalized cross-cultural teaching ecology.

By means of learning situation diagnosis, AI systems can conduct full-dimensional data collection and precise analysis of students' learning behaviors and cross-cultural competence, providing teachers with visualized learning portraits. For example, intelligent platforms can track students' performance in cross-cultural tasks (e.g., how often they use culturally appropriate expressions, their performance in AI-simulated cross-cultural conversations) and identify weaknesses such as “lack of knowledge about non-Western cultures” or “difficulty adjusting communication style for different cultural contexts.” Based on these insights, teachers can design differentiated cross-cultural learning goals and content—such as assigning ethnic minority students tasks that involve expressing their cultural traditions in English, or engineering students tasks focused on technical cross-cultural communication.

AI technology has also promoted the transformation of teaching organization forms from “fixed classroom teaching” to “mixed teaching combining online and offline,” expanding opportunities for cross-cultural interaction.[11] Online platforms can provide students with AI-assisted cross-cultural resources (e.g., adaptive vocabulary learning focused on cultural terms, virtual cross-cultural exchange rooms), while offline classrooms focus on interactive activities such as cross-cultural debates and role-plays. This model optimizes the allocation of teaching resources, enabling teachers to focus more on cultivating students' higher-order cross-cultural abilities rather than simple knowledge repetition.

3.2 Promotion of Professional Development: From "Passive Learning" to "Active Cross-Cultural Governance Competence"

The empowerment of AI technology has promoted college English teachers to change from “passive learning” driven by job requirements to “active growth” driven by professional interests and cross-cultural governance needs, helping to build a high-quality learning-oriented teacher team. In the AI era, teachers' professional development is no longer confined to the accumulation of textbook content or teaching experience but has transformed toward interdisciplinary integration—combining language teaching, cross-cultural studies, and educational technology.[12]

AI provides teachers with rich professional learning resources and platforms for cross-cultural teaching. Online learning platforms such as MOOCs and teacher training websites offer courses on AI-assisted cross-cultural teaching, cross-cultural competence assessment, and cultural bias mitigation. AI-based teacher communities have also emerged, where teachers from different regions and cultural backgrounds can communicate and share best practices—such as how to curate culturally diverse resources or mediate student-AI interactions for cultural integrity. For example, AI also promotes teachers to carry out educational research on cross-cultural governance. In the process of AI-assisted teaching, teachers encounter new problems such as “how to measure the impact of AI on students’

cross-cultural competence” or “how to address cultural bias in AI tools,” which can be explored through action research and teaching experiments.

In brief, the empowerment of AI technology has brought profound and far-reaching opportunities for college English teachers in teaching model innovation and professional development—opportunities that enable them to better fulfill their cross-cultural governance responsibilities and meet the needs of cultivating high-quality talents with international perspectives and comprehensive language abilities in the new era.

4. Challenges Faced by Contemporary College English Teachers

In the tide of AI-driven educational reform, while embracing unprecedented development opportunities, college English teachers are also confronted with a series of profound and intricate challenges—challenges that directly impact their ability to advance cross-cultural governance. These challenges are not merely technical obstacles in the application of AI tools but also involve the reconstruction of teaching concepts, the upgrading of professional competence, the rebalancing of educational ethics, and the adaptation to the new pattern of teacher-student interaction.[13]

4.1 The Urgent Need for Professional Competence Upgrading: The Gap in Cross-Cultural AI-driven Teaching Skills

The most direct and prominent challenge faced by college English teachers in the AI era is the huge gap between their traditional teaching skills and the new requirements of AI-integrated cross-cultural teaching. According to the Opinions of the Ministry of Education of China and Other Eight Departments on Accelerating the Advancement of Education Digitalization, improving the digital literacy and skills of teachers and students is imperative. [14] For cross-cultural governance, this means teachers need not only technical skills but also the ability to integrate cross-cultural principles with AI tools—an area where many teachers lack proficiency.

For a long time, most college English teachers have been proficient in interpreting linguistic knowledge and designing classroom activities based on experience, but they lack training in identifying cultural bias in AI content, curating culturally diverse resources, and assessing intercultural competence. This is particularly challenging for teachers at resource-constrained institutions like Guizhou Normal University for Nationalities, who must navigate limited AI access while serving culturally diverse students. For example, many teachers reported struggling to use AI tools to adapt materials for ethnic minority students or lacking the skills to analyze student data on cross-cultural competence.

The rapid iteration of AI technology further intensifies this pressure. New tools and platforms emerge constantly, requiring teachers to engage in lifelong learning to keep up with cross-cultural AI applications. However, many schools provide only fragmented AI training, lacking long-term professional development mechanisms focused on cross-cultural governance. This gap risks widening the digital and cultural divide between teachers in urban and rural areas, undermining educational equity—a core goal of cross-cultural governance.

4.2 The Confusion of Teaching Concept Reconstruction: The Conflict Between AI Efficiency and Cross-Cultural Values

Language teaching is not only the transmission of linguistic knowledge and skills but also the cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence, critical thinking, and humanistic literacy—core values of cross-cultural governance. However, the core advantage of AI technology lies in its high efficiency and standardization, which can easily lead to the tendency of “instrumentalization” and “simplification” of language teaching, challenging teachers’ original teaching concepts and educational beliefs.

The application of AI technology is prone to making teaching fall into the trap of “efficiency first,” ignoring the individual differences and cultural uniqueness of students. AI systems pursue the optimization of teaching efficiency and standardized learning results, which can suppress students’ cultural expression and homogenize their communication styles.[15]For example, adaptive learning systems may push all students toward the same cross-cultural communication norms (e.g., Western directness) rather than valuing diverse cultural styles. Teachers are often caught in a dilemma: using AI to improve efficiency while protecting cultural diversity and humanistic values.

Additionally, the conflict between AI’s “rational calculation” and language teaching’s “emotional and cultural experience” is a major confusion. College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 Edition) explicitly states that “language is the carrier of culture and an integral part of culture itself,” emphasizing the core status of cross-cultural education.[16]AI can analyze the structure of a literary work or correct grammatical errors in a cross-cultural email, but it cannot convey the emotional or cultural connotations behind the text. Teachers must reaffirm their role as facilitators of emotional and cultural resonance, but the pressure to use AI for efficiency can lead them to over-rely on technology’s rational analysis, sidelining cultural and humanistic guidance.

4.3 The Dilemma of Educational Ethics: Cultural Bias and Privacy Risks in the AI Era

In addition to technical and conceptual challenges, college English teachers also face ethical dilemmas in AI application that impact cross-cultural governance—most notably cultural bias in AI tools and the protection of students’ cultural and personal privacy.

Generative AI tools often embed cultural biases (e.g., Western-centric perspectives, ethnic stereotypes) that can reinforce cultural inequality if unaddressed. Teachers are faced with the ethical responsibility of identifying and mitigating these biases, but many lack the training to do so effectively. For example, a teacher at Guizhou Normal University for Nationalities reported that an AI tool generated a description of ethnic minority cultures that relied on outdated stereotypes, requiring her to spend significant time revising the content—time she did not have in a heavy teaching schedule.

The collection and use of students’ learning data by AI systems also raise privacy concerns related to cultural identity. AI teaching systems may collect data on students’ cultural backgrounds, language use, and cross-cultural interactions, which could be misused or leaked, compromising students’ cultural privacy (e.g., sensitive information about ethnic traditions or personal cultural beliefs). Many teachers lack awareness of data privacy laws or how to assess the safety of AI tools, putting students at risk.

4.4 The Reconstruction of Teacher-Student Interaction Pattern: Maintaining Cultural Connection in AI-Mediated Teaching Process

In traditional college English teaching, face-to-face interaction fostered deep emotional and cultural connections between teachers and students—connections that are vital for cross-cultural learning. However, with the popularization of AI technology, more and more teacher-student interactions are mediated by AI tools, making the interaction process more indirect and instrumental, and weakening cultural connection.

Students can get answers to linguistic questions, homework feedback, and even learning plan guidance through AI tools, reducing the need for face-to-face communication with teachers. While efficient, this lacks the emotional warmth of human interaction that is critical for addressing cross-cultural anxiety and building cultural confidence. For example, a student struggling with how to express their ethnic identity in English may benefit more from a teacher’s personal guidance and cultural affirmation than from AI’s generic suggestions.

Teachers also face the challenge of finding time for face-to-face cultural interaction amid the heavy

workload of operating AI tools, analyzing data, and designing personalized teaching plans. This can lead to a “tool-oriented” teacher-student relationship, where students see teachers as task managers rather than cultural mentors—undermining the trust and connection needed for effective cross-cultural learning.

To sum up, the empowerment of AI technology has brought enormous challenges to college English teachers in terms of professional competence upgrading, teaching concept reconstruction, educational ethics, and teacher-student interaction pattern reconstruction. These challenges are interrelated and mutually influential, forming a complex system that cannot be solved by a single measure. To meet these challenges, college English teachers need to actively change their teaching concepts, strengthen the learning of new technologies and cross-cultural governance principles, enhance their sense of educational ethics, and attach importance to the maintenance of emotional and cultural connection with students. At the same time, colleges and education-related departments also need to provide systematic support, including improving the training mechanism for teachers’ professional development, establishing a sound educational ethics supervision system and data privacy protection mechanism, so as to help teachers better adapt to the AI-driven educational reform and realize the organic integration of AI technology and college English teaching—advancing cross-cultural governance in the process.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations: Navigating the AI-Driven Transformation of College English Teaching for Cross-Cultural Governance

It is apparent that the journey of college English teachers amid this technological revolution has emerged as a defining narrative of modern language education reform—one that is inseparable from the goals of cross-cultural governance. This exploration of the opportunities and challenges presented by AI empowerment has revealed a landscape in which innovation and dilemma coexist, and progress and reflection intersect. Far from being a mere addition of technical tools to the classroom, AI’s integration into college English teaching represents a profound restructuring of educational ecology—one that motivates teachers to transcend the limitations of conventional pedagogy, embrace new professional identities rooted in cross-cultural governance, and strike a delicate balance between technological efficiency and the humanistic essence of language education. To harness the full potential of AI for cross-cultural governance, college English teachers must adopt a growth mindset, actively engage in professional development to acquire the skills needed to navigate the digital landscape and cross-cultural teaching, and collaborate with peers to share best practices. Colleges and educational institutions should provide systematic support, including targeted training on cross-cultural AI teaching, funding for culturally diverse resource development, and clear ethical guidelines for AI use.

To conclude, college English teachers should proactively complete this role transformation, adapting to new teaching scenarios while upholding the core values of cross-cultural governance. By doing so, they can not only enhance the quality of AI-assisted language education but also cultivate English learners and users who are culturally competent, ethically aware, and committed to equitable global exchange—talents who can meet the needs of national development strategies and contribute to a more inclusive and connected world.

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