Education Insights

Article

Value-to-Competence Transformation: A CQ-Anchored Instructional Design for Business English "Three Entries" Teaching

Jiajia Wang[1,*]

[1] School of Foreign Languages, Shanxi Datong University, Datong, China
* Correspondence: Jiajia Wang, School of Foreign Languages, Shanxi Datong University, Datong, China

Abstract: The "Three Entries" initiative has reached business English classrooms. It has also brought with it a question that teaching materials cannot settle on their own. Value content enters a syllabus easily enough. Whether it turns into anything a student can actually do across cultures is a different matter, and a much less attended one. This paper describes an instructional design rather than evaluating one. Using cultural intelligence (CQ) as the organizing construct, we built a "Three Entries–CQ–AI-assisted learning" framework for Comprehensive Business English 1 - a compulsory 64-hour course for first-year Business English majors - and ran it with two annual cohorts (2025 and 2026): four intact classes, N = 160, over two design cycles. The framework has three working parts. One is a unit-level matrix that pins each value theme to a focal CQ dimension, a language objective and an observable behavioral output. One is a diagnosis–instruction–transfer–evaluation loop. The third is a feedback arrangement that treats AI-assisted learning as infrastructure for feedback rather than as something to be taught. Local brand stories carry the content. That is what lets the value themes land on concrete tasks - an English promotional proposal here, an ecotourism proposal there, a coopetition strategy plan. What follows sets out why the design took the shape it did, what conditions it actually ran under, and where AI feedback stopped being useful. No quasi-experimental effect estimates are reported. Instead the paper ends with propositions about the dimension-selective route from value content to motivational and behavioral CQ. Testing those will take pre-registered designs, random assignment, delayed post-tests and fine-grained platform logs.

Keywords: global competence; cultural intelligence; Business English; "Three Entries"; instructional design; AI-assisted learning

Received: 25 August 2026
Revised: 04 October 2026
Accepted: 17 October 2026
Published: 24 October 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

The Governance of China into university programmes, textbooks and classrooms - the "Three Entries", as it is abbreviated throughout this paper - has now been under way in foreign language departments for some years. Textbook compilation and case design have moved a long way. What has moved much less is the classroom end of it. Value content enters the syllabus. But the step from having entered to having been taken in, and from having been taken in to showing up in what a student actually does across cultures, is where things stall. A good deal of current practice amounts to swapping the cases: Western examples come out, Chinese ones go in. Whether students' intercultural competence changes in any measurable way afterwards is a question the literature has not really answered. Three bodies of work sit side by side without quite meeting, which is why the problem is sometimes described locally as "three separate layers" (san zhang pi). Work on the "Three Entries" is strong on explicating values and thin on how values become competence. Global competence research has frameworks and assessments but rarely gets as far as the lesson plan. Business English reform keeps its attention on language skills; the value dimension and the intercultural dimension are still bolted on rather than built in.

Cultural intelligence gives us something to work with in the middle of that gap. Earley and Ang split it four ways - metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, behavioral [1]. The split is the useful part. Nobody can plan a lesson against "intercultural competence". Somebody can plan against "get the students to attempt an intercultural narration, then give them feedback on whether it landed". Ang and colleagues built a 20-item scale around that structure [2], and the Chinese adaptation has been checked for structural validity with mainland university students [3]. We administered it; Section 3.2 explains why the results are not reported as an outcome here. Two of the four dimensions carry most of the weight in what follows. Motivational CQ is about whether a person will put effort into intercultural contact at all. Behavioral CQ is about whether they can deliver an intercultural narration that reads as appropriate. Value education under the "Three Entries" ought to be aiming at those two. Conventional teaching skips both. Keep the value content at the level of cognitive CQ - knowing what China has, knowing where the cultural differences sit - and what you get is knowledge that can be recited in an exam and left at the classroom door.

So the study is a design-based inquiry, not an evaluation of effects. Three design questions drive it. DQ1: how do the value themes of the seven units get aligned with focal CQ dimensions, language objectives, and behavioral outputs that someone could actually observe? DQ2: how is a diagnosis–instruction–transfer–evaluation loop to be organized so that the tasks and the feedback pull toward the intended dimensions? DQ3 is about limits - where does AI-assisted feedback stop working, if it is treated as feedback infrastructure rather than as a subject to be taught? The model ran with two annual cohorts of first-year Business English majors (2025 and 2026), four intact classes in total (N = 160, roughly forty a class), at a regional university, across two design cycles. The empirical material below is formative and illustrative. It is there to explain why the design took the shape it did and what it was working against, not to estimate an effect size. Testable propositions are set out at the end.

2. Theoretical Framework: From "Content Entry" to "Dimensional Progression"

2.1. CQ as a Mediator between the "Three Entries" and Global Competence

OECD's PISA framework [4] describes global competence as four things a student can be seen doing: examining global and intercultural issues from beyond one's own vantage point; understanding others' perspectives from within their cultural standpoint; interacting across marked cultural distance in ways that are open, appropriate and effective; and acting for collective well-being and sustainable development. Read as a specification rather than a definition, it is a demand for observable performance - the same demand this design makes of value content. The correspondence with CQ is close. Examining and planning need the strategic mentality metacognitive CQ describes. Understanding where a perspective comes from needs the knowledge base cognitive CQ covers. Open interaction will not happen without the volitional drive motivational CQ names. Taking action is behavioral CQ - performance, not disposition. Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence [5] and Deardorff's work on assessment [6] had already cleared the ground for competence-oriented teaching in language classrooms. What CQ adds to that inheritance is measurement, and measurement is what turns a competence aim into something a teacher can plan against. That double role is the point. CQ is not only a way of measuring global competence; it is also a way of organising a "Three Entries" syllabus, because every unit then has to answer two questions - which dimension is this theme meant to activate, and what would a student have to do before anyone could say it had been activated.

There is a theoretical payoff as well, and it has to do with causal assumptions. Value education tends to run on a chain: if students know, they will identify; if they identify, they will act. CQ cuts across that. On the CQ account, cognition, motivation and behavior are relatively independent channels - more knowledge does not automatically strengthen motivation, and stronger motivation does not automatically improve behavior. So the

thing to optimise in a "Three Entries" unit is not how much value content gets covered. It is what moves on each dimension, and whether that movement can be seen. One clarification, because the rest of the paper depends on it: CQ functions here as a design framework for selecting value themes, tasks and feedback arrangements, not as an outcome variable. No CQ scores are analyzed or reported. The claims about dimensional change in Section 6.1 are propositions for later testing. They are not findings.

2.2. Behavioral Anchoring and AI Feedback: Instructional Conditions for Transformation

Two hard requirements follow from that dimensional independence. The first is behavioral anchoring: a value theme has to land on something a student produces. Discussing "the significance of rural revitalization" will not touch behavioral CQ on its own. Drafting an English brand promotion proposal for a local speciality agricultural product might, because doing it forces the student to draw on whatever understanding of China's rural development they actually hold. Anchoring does two things at once. It gives an abstract identification an observable shape. And it moves evaluation off the question of whether students were moved and onto the question of whether they can do it.

The second requirement is feedback, and this is where conventional classrooms run out of capacity. No teacher can give whole classes sentence-by-sentence response on whether their intercultural narration reads as culturally appropriate. AI-assisted tools do give something usable - quick response on vocabulary, fluency and basic grammar - and that covers the lower end of the loop. What it buys is time. Class hours go to cultural standpoint and value deliberation instead, which is where a teacher cannot be replaced. Wen Qiufang's Production-Oriented Approach sets out a motivating–enabling–assessing cycle [7]. In this model that cycle turns up as an unremarkable classroom sequence: a behavioral task motivates, AI and teacher enable together, assessment comes at three levels.

Put together, the model starts from "Three Entries" value themes, aims at CQ dimensions, uses behavioral tasks as the vehicle, and treats AI feedback as accelerant. What it does not assume is that value content radiates downward into the competence layer by itself. Every step in that chain counts as an instructional event. Each one has to be evidenced, or at least made open to evidence. One further decision deserves stating, because it separates this design from most of the AI literature in language teaching. AI is not a topic here. No class hour goes to teaching students how to use the tools, and no assignment asks them to evaluate one. The tools sit underneath the tasks, handling the feedback a teacher has no capacity to give, so that the hours left over can go to standpoint and deliberation. That is what keeps the value themes at the centre of the syllabus instead of competing with a technology module for space.

3. Design and Implementation of the Instructional Model

3.1. Resource Matrix: Restructuring Unit Themes Along "Values–CQ–Behavior"

Comprehensive Business English 1 is a compulsory course for Business English majors here: 64 class hours, four credits, second semester, taught as thirty-two two-hour sessions across sixteen weeks. The textbook is Experiencing Business English: A Comprehensive Course (Higher Education Press, 2020). Working from its seven units, the teaching team rebuilt each one around four items: a value theme, a focal CQ dimension, a language objective, and a behavioral output (Table 1). The rule we set ourselves was one or two dimensions per unit. "Cultivating intercultural competence" as a general aim was ruled out from the start, on the grounds that it tells a teacher nothing about what to do on Monday morning. The units are not equally weighted either - Brands, Organization, Money and Competition get ten class hours apiece, Travel, Human Resources and Cultures eight. That weighting constrained the tasks: a behavioral output had to be finishable inside the hours its unit actually has, which is part of why the outputs differ in form, a rehearsed video script where there is time and a written scheme where there is not. Unit 1 "Brands" anchors to behavioral and motivational CQ and ends in an English promotion proposal for a Chinese brand. Unit 2 "Travel" takes cognitive and behavioral

CQ, with an English ecotourism proposal as the output. Unit 4 "Money" brings in the value narrative of a local speciality medicinal-material brand and anchors to cognitive CQ and business-ethics judgment. Unit 6 "Competition" goes to motivational and behavioral CQ through a coopetition strategy proposal. The closing unit, Unit 7 "Cultures", anchors to motivational and behavioral CQ and asks for a local cultural story presented in English; at that point "telling China's stories well" is the assignment itself rather than a framing device. The local cases are what make any of this operational. Students are not being asked to narrate a China they have only read about. They are narrating a brand they can visit, ask people about, and check.

Table 1. The Unit-Level "Three Entries–CQ" Resource Matrix (All Seven Units).

Unit	Value Theme	Focal CQ Dimension	Behavioral Output	Local Case
Unit 1 Brands	Cultural confidence and the rise of Chinese brands	Behavioral CQ, Motivational CQ	English promotion proposal for a Chinese brand	Huawei, BYD
Unit 2 Travel	Green mobility and global ecological responsibility	Cognitive CQ, Behavioral CQ	English proposal for ecotourism	Datong daylily ecotourism
Unit 3 Organization	Collective consciousness and self-identity	Metacognitive CQ	Team-building scheme design	CATL
Unit 4 Money	Rational view of wealth and business ethics	Cognitive CQ	Proposal for rational consumption and financial management	Brand value of Hengshan Astragalus
Unit 5 Human Resources	Innovation awareness and professional competence	Motivational CQ	Career development plan	Huawei talent development
Unit 6 Competition	Healthy coopetition and a holistic outlook	Motivational CQ, Behavioral CQ	Coopetition strategy proposal	BYD's competitive strategy
Unit 7 Cultures	Mutual learning among civilizations and telling China's stories well	Motivational CQ, Behavioral CQ	English presentation of a local cultural story	Datong daylily and Hengshan Astragalus cultural stories

Note. To protect the identifiability of the research site and case subjects, some brand names have been anonymized; unit numbers follow the teaching sequence of Experiencing Business English: A Comprehensive Course.

3.2. The Teaching Loop: Diagnosis–Instruction–Transfer–Evaluation

The course was already blended before this design was added to it. Online work carried preview discussion, background reading on culture, pronunciation correction, vocabulary extension, and reading of business cases and writing materials; face-to-face sessions went to text instruction, group presentations, exercises and quizzes. The loop below was built on top of that arrangement, not in place of it. Before class, the Xuexitong platform pushed micro-videos and preview tasks, and an AI-generated word cloud gave a semantic read on the preview discussion. That read was not decorative. In Unit 1, 63% of the 328 preview posts had narrowed "brand" down to logo and advertising. That told the teacher exactly where to begin in class: the cultural narrative function of brands, not brand mechanics. In class, short AI quizzes surfaced comprehension deviations, the teacher re-taught wherever the errors clustered, and the session then moved to case

seminars, role plays or simulated negotiations. After class came tiered behavioral tasks - a two-minute English promotional video, a 150-word script - with the AI speaking partner giving immediate response on pronunciation, fluency and keyword coverage. The individual learning profile the system built then fed into the diagnosis stage of the next cycle.

Assessment ran on three levels at once: AI automated scoring on fluency, keyword coverage and grammatical accuracy; peer assessment on content completeness and value integration; and a teacher final assessment on business logic and on how deeply the value content had actually been integrated. The course already required formative assessment through five channels - audio-video learning, discussion, group work, assignments and quizzes - and the three-level scheme was built to sit inside those rather than alongside them. Platform behavior data were collected throughout. The CQS was administered, but only as a teaching-diagnostic instrument. Its results are not analyzed here and are reported separately. Two lines of existing work are close enough to name: the "learning–using integration" argument made for POA-based smart teaching of Business English courses with ideological and political education [8], and the "motivating–enabling–assessing" pathway proposed for rebuilding foreign language procedures around "telling China's stories well" [9].

4. Implementation Context and Design-Based Inquiry

4.1. Implementation Site and Participants

The site was the School of Foreign Languages of a regional university, and the students were first-year Business English majors from two annual cohorts, 2025 and 2026 - four intact classes, N = 160, about forty per class. One teacher taught all four, with the same textbook, the same unit pacing and the same value themes. Since this is design-based work rather than effect evaluation, no class was labelled experimental or control, and no between-group estimates appear anywhere in the paper. All four classes went through one design cycle. The cycle was then run again with the next cohort, and the point of the second run was to test the revisions the first run had produced, not to repeat the original design. Where students responded in unexpected ways, that response was used formatively, to revise tasks, scaffolds and feedback. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data went to instructional research only. Identifiers were stripped before any analysis.

4.2. Data Sources for Design Iteration

Three kinds of material fed the iteration. Platform diagnostic traces - word clouds from preview discussions, micro-video viewing records, submission records - were read before class to locate semantic gaps. Behavioral outputs (promotional proposals, ecotourism proposals, team-building schemes, strategy plans) were reviewed against a formative rubric covering accuracy of cultural information, appropriateness of narration, and how naturally the value content sat in the text. Those scores drove feedback and task revision. They were never used to estimate an effect. Then there were the reflective texts students wrote after each behavioral task, plus semi-structured interviews with a subset of volunteers. These were coded thematically, and the coding is what surfaced the design tensions reported in Section 5. Extracts are cited by identifier - "Reflective text R15", "Interview [08]" - with all personal identifiers removed. One more thing should be explicit: the CQS is not an outcome in this paper, and no pre-/post-test or inferential statistics are reported.

4.3. Implementation Procedure and Formative Analysis

Implementation cycled through the seven units in the same order each time: pre-class diagnosis, in-class case discussion and role play, post-class behavioral task, teacher-team review. After each unit the team went back over the diagnostic traces and the student outputs, looked for problems that kept recurring, and adjusted the scaffolds, modelling and feedback arrangements for the unit coming next. Analysis was descriptive and

thematic throughout. Its purpose was to show how the design behaved under ordinary classroom conditions and which boundaries showed up - not to put a number on learning gains. The revised design then carried into the following cohort, so the second cycle tested the revision rather than replicating the original.

4.4. Formative Observations and Design Refinements

Three observations did most of the work in shaping the design, and each of them changed something in the version that followed.

The first came out of semantic diagnosis, and it was a narrowing. In Unit 1, 63% of 328 preview posts had reduced "brand" to logo and advertising. The in-class entry point moved accordingly, toward the cultural narrative function of brands, and a local-brand case went into the materials.

The second was a gap in what students produced. Cultural information was mostly accurate. What they could not manage was narrating it appropriately, or working value content into a text so that it did not sound grafted on. Scaffolds went in as a result - audience analysis, model scripts, sentence frames, and peer review organised around what to say, what not to say, and how to say it. One student's reflective text traces the shift better than a summary could:

"At first I thought promoting Hengshan Astragalus in English would be really hard, and I just wanted to run it through machine translation and be done with it. But to do a good job on the video assignment, I revised my pronunciation and intonation over and over with the AI. By the end, I suddenly realized I was no longer fixating on whether my grammar was right or wrong-instead I was actively thinking about how to adjust my sentence structure so that foreign clients would really understand and recognize the value of this medicinal herb of ours." (Reflective text R15)

The third observation was about where AI feedback stops. Low-stakes practice with AI did appear to take the fear out of speaking, and students rehearsed more than they had before. One interviewee was blunt about the reason:

"I used to handle assignments about introducing local specialties by writing a script and memorizing it by rote, terrified of drying up in front of my classmates. But practicing with the AI, if I got something wrong I could just start over, and it wouldn't laugh at me. After practicing a lot, I naturally developed a framework in my head for how to explain things to foreigners." (Interview [08])

What the AI could not do was judge cultural stance, or say whether a piece of value framing was appropriate to the situation. That judgment stayed with the teacher, and the design was revised to keep it there.

These observations are formative. They are here to show what the iteration was responding to, not to stand in for effect estimates.

5. Design Tensions and Pedagogical Boundaries

5.1. Dimensional Selectivity as a Testable Proposition

What holds the framework together is a proposition, not a demonstrated effect: value content does not spread evenly across CQ dimensions. Getting content into the syllabus may lift cognitive CQ reasonably quickly. Motivational and behavioral CQ are likelier to need something else - behavioral tasks, low-stakes output, and feedback aimed at whether the narration is appropriate. The proposition follows from CQ theory and it guided the design. It has not been tested here. One feature should be flagged for anyone who does test it: of the seven units, only Unit 3 "Organization" anchored to metacognitive CQ, and it carried the lightest behavioral load of the seven. A test of dimensional selectivity would therefore be wise to treat metacognitive CQ as under-dosed here rather than as having failed to respond. The pre-registered version of this study should ask whether motivational and behavioral CQ move more than cognitive and metacognitive CQ.

5.2. AI as Feedback Infrastructure and Its Boundaries

AI sits in this design as feedback infrastructure, not as content. Its job is to lower the interpersonal risk of producing intercultural output, and to give immediate language feedback while the student is still working. The hypothesis worth testing is that AI practice tracks with motivational and behavioral CQ rather than with cognitive or metacognitive CQ. Direction of causation cannot be read off design-based material, and we do not try. Nor can AI stand in for a teacher's judgment on cultural stance, or for a student's own metacognitive reflection on which intercultural strategy they reached for and why.

5.3. Implications for "Three Entries" Teaching

The practical unit of design changes: from theme coverage to behavioral evidence. For each value theme an instructor should be able to say what observable intercultural behavior students will produce, and which CQ dimension that behavior is anchored to. In a course like this one, that specification drops into planning that already happens - the syllabus already allocates hours per unit and already names language objectives, so the value theme and the behavioral output can go on the same line rather than being added as a separate column. Evaluation is best done by cross-validating behavioral evidence against competence scales. Whether behavioral output is in fact the more sensitive indicator remains, at this point, a hypothesis. One caution for anyone adapting the design: the local cases carry the heaviest load, and they work because students can reach them. A case drawn from somewhere the students cannot visit, interview or verify tends to collapse back into the second-hand narration the design was built to get away from.

6. Limitations

Several things limit what can be claimed. The study is single-site and design-based, reports no between-group estimates, and cannot support causal claims at all. Beyond that, the design went in as a package - value themes, behavioral tasks, AI feedback and three-dimensional assessment were introduced together - so no single component's contribution can be isolated. Only the package effect can be claimed. A competing explanation also stays open, and it is an awkward one: AI feedback here was both more immediate and more frequent than teacher feedback in a conventional class, so any improvement could simply be feedback immediacy doing the work, with the cultural and value content of that feedback incidental. Classes were intact and cohorts sequential, which means cohort effects and the teacher's growing familiarity with the design both remain possible. And with two cycles at one site under one teacher, generalisation is not on offer. Random assignment, delayed post-tests, fine-grained platform logs and pre-registered hypotheses are what the next study needs.

7. Conclusion

No claim is made here that the model raised anyone's CQ. What the paper offers is a CQ-anchored way of designing Business English "Three Entries" teaching, and three propositions that can be tested. P1: content entry on its own is likelier to move cognitive CQ than motivational or behavioral CQ. P2: anchoring value themes to behavioral outputs, with feedback aimed at those outputs, is likelier to activate motivational and behavioral CQ. P3: AI feedback can lower interpersonal risk and support motivational and behavioral CQ, but cultural stance and metacognitive reflection still need a teacher. The implication for practice is a change of question - from what value content should be covered to what behavioral evidence students can be asked to produce. Testing the three propositions properly will take pre-registered designs, random assignment, delayed post-tests and fine-grained logs.

Funding: This paper is one of the outcomes of the 2025 university-level teaching reform project of Shanxi Datong University (No. XJG2025256), "Business English Teaching Reform from the Perspective of CQ Development: Empowering Students' Core Competitiveness in the Global Workplace".

References

1. P. C. Earley and S. Ang, *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.
2. S. Ang, L. Van Dyne, C. Koh, et al., "Cultural Intelligence: Its Measurement and Effects on Cultural Judgment and Decision Making, Cultural Adaptation and Task Performance," *Management and Organization Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 335–371, 2007.
3. Q. Q. Wang, N. Y. Tang, and H. Meng, "Structural Validity of the Cultural Intelligence Scale Among Chinese University Students," *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, vol. 22, no. 9, 2008, doi: 10.3321/j.issn:1000-6729.2008.09.007.
4. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Preparing Our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World: The OECD PISA Global Competence Framework*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2018.
5. M. Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1997.
6. D. K. Deardorff, "Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization," *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 241–266, 2006.
7. Q. F. Wen, "Constructing the Theoretical System of the Production-Oriented Approach," *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 547–558, 2015.
8. R. Cheng, "An Empirical Study of POA-Based Smart Teaching of Business English Courses with Ideological and Political Education: The Case of Comprehensive Business English (I)," *Overseas English*, no. 6, 2024.
9. B. Yue, Y. D. Hou, and T. L. Yao, "Reconstructing the Foreign Language Teaching Procedure for 'Telling China's Stories Well' Based on POA and Its Practical Efficacy," *Educational Research*, vol. 9, no. 8, 2025, doi: 10.32629/er.v9i8.7303.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Publisher and/or the editor(s). Publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.