

# The Research on Enhancing International Communication Capacity of Foreign Language Majors in Generation Z

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## ABSTRACT

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. China urgently needs to show and guard its positive national image in international society. So cultivating skilled communicators is the key to narrating China's stories. Accordingly, in this study, a qualitative in-depth interview is employed to analyze the group features and the ability of communicative literacy of foreign language majors in Generation Z. 16 graduate and undergraduate interviewees are asked questions like cognitive expression, communication awareness, and media use. The results show that these representatives of Generation Z unanimously agreed that foreign language majors should have outstanding abilities in innovative thinking, expression ability, cross-cultural communication awareness, and a strong aptitude for adapting to various media platforms. However, the study also shows these students are facing challenges in language learning, such as insufficient comprehensive language application ability and the inadequate capacity to "tell China's stories well." Therefore, the paper suggests that higher education should respect the identified group characteristics and competency composition of foreign language majors in Generation Z, prioritize the cultivation of students' comprehensive understanding of China's stories, and build their cultural confidence. Meanwhile, foreign language majors urgently need to reinforce their language proficiency, international communication capacity, and digital technique application ability. Generally, foreign language majors in Generation Z will inevitably and eventually become a new force in spreading China's international influence.

**Keywords:** *Generation Z, Foreign language majors, Telling China's stories well, International communication capacity.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As globalization continues to deepen, uncertainties and instability factors in the international situation are gradually increasing. In this context, it is particularly important to tell China's stories well and form an international discourse power that matches China's comprehensive national strength and international status. President Xi Jinping pointed out that "The future of the world belongs to the younger generation." Whether from the perspective of group size, character traits, or ability accomplishments, the foreign language majors in Generation Z who have grown up in the digital and globalized era are an important group in promoting international

communication. They have the obligation and responsibility to participate in international communication practices and undertake the mission entrusted to them by the new era.

With the growth of the Internet, instant messaging tools, and smart mobile devices, foreign language majors today possess distinct personality traits, cognitive patterns, and behavioral tendencies unlike those of previous generations of language learners. Consequently, employing outdated models of international communication capacity building in talent development may lead to inefficiency and resource waste. Therefore, this paper focuses on the characteristics of foreign language majors in Generation Z, analyzing the group features and the ability of communicative literacy to identify the

current challenges in building their international communication capacity, particularly in the context of "tell China's stories" initiatives. Moreover, this paper proposes new approaches tailored to the needs of foreign language majors in Generation Z in international communication capacity building.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Through qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews, this study completed the collection of views of foreign language majors in Generation Z and drew conclusions by analyzing the texts collected from the interviews.

Regarding the selection of interviewees, this study employed purposive sampling and identified

16 graduate and undergraduate foreign language majors from Generation Z in China in May 2024. The selection aimed for diversity in terms of gender, region, school, grade, and age (basic information of interviewees is shown in "Table 1"). Both online and face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather insights into the interviewees' perspectives and attitudes. The interview topics mainly centered around "media use," "foreign language learning," "understanding of China's national context," and "international communication practices." Interview durations ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. With the interviewees' consent, the researcher transcribed the interviews after each session, resulting in approximately 95,000 words of textual material after filtering out irrelevant information.

Table 1. Table1: Basic information of interviewees

Number	Name	Gender	Region	School	Major	Grade	Age
1	ZY	Female	Shanghai	Shanghai International Studies University	Corpus Research	First Year of Graduate	23
2	YJW	Female	Beijing	Beijing Forestry University	English	Senior	22
3	FYW	Female	Hubei	Wuhan University of Technology	English& French	Junior	21
4	WJY	Female	Zhejiang	Wenzhou University of Technology	English	Junior	21
5	XST	Female	Zhejiang	Communication University of Zhejiang	English	Junior	21
6	YJR	Female	Zhejiang	Zhejiang Ocean University	English	Junior	21
7	ZHZ	Female	Hubei	Wuhan University of Technology	French	Junior	21
8	ZJY	Female	Hubei	Wuhan University of Technology	Japanese	Junior	21
9	ZYN	Female	Jiangsu	Suzhou University	English	Junior	21
10	CCX	Female	Shanghai	Shanghai International Studies University	Italian	Sophomore	20
11	LJJ	Male	Jilin	Northeast Normal University	English	Junior	21
12	LZ	Male	Hebei	Hebei University of Technology	English	Junior	21
13	ZYJ	Male	Zhejiang	Zhejiang Gongshang University	English	Junior	21
14	HST	Male	Sichuan	Sichuan University	Spanish	Sophomore	20
15	CYS	Male	Zhejiang	Zhejiang University	Germany	Freshman	19
16	WST	Male	Jilin	Jilin International Studies University	English&Spanish	Freshman	19

Based on the sample provided above, through in-depth interviews with foreign language majors in Generation Z, this study aims to analyze their group features and ability accomplishments, as well as understand the challenges they face in international communication practices, thus exploring the path of

integration between foreign language majors and international communication.

Specifically, this study seeks to address the following questions:

- 1. In terms of group features analysis, what advantages do foreign language majors in

Generation Z have in the practice of international communication compared with other generations and majors, and how to make full use of these advantages to carry out communication practice?

- 2. In terms of dilemma analysis, what are the deficiencies in the current talent cultivation of foreign language majors in Generation Z, and how do these deficiencies affect them?
- 3. In terms of path exploration, how can higher education effectively enhance the international communication capacity of foreign language majors in Generation Z? How to build a bridge between foreign language majors and international communication and fully unleash the potential of foreign language majors in Generation Z to "tell China's stories well?"

### **3. ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPETENCIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS IN GENERATION Z**

As the first generation of "digital natives" in human society, Generation Z (also known as the "Internet Generation" [1]) is playing an increasingly important role on the world stage. According to the world population data released by the United Nations and the World Bank in 2022, the population of Generation Z born between 1995 and 2009 is about 2.1 billion, accounting for 27.6% of the world's total population, making it the largest generational group in the world [2]. Growing up in the digital and globalized era, Generation Z exhibits distinct characteristics in terms of thoughts, behaviors, preferences, and more compared to previous generations.

As a key major in the development of the country to cultivate foreign language talents and promote communication between countries, foreign language majors play an important role in cultivating talents to "tell China's stories well" [3]. Foreign language majors in Generation Z not only have the typical characteristics of the Generation Z youth group, but also have good foreign language literacy. Compared with the talents of other generations and other majors, they have greater potential and advantages in the ability to "tell China's stories well."

#### **3.1 Foreign Language Majors in Generation Z Possess Outstanding Innovative Thinking and Expression Abilities**

Foreign language majors in Generation Z have had a variety of channels and ways of acquiring information since childhood. The massive amount of information and diverse cultures enable Generation Z to possess an open-minded attitude and a penchant for innovation. Furthermore, the Internet's openness, anonymity, and interactive nature have encouraged them to develop distinct personalities and engage in active self-expression while placing importance on group identity. Additionally, the fundamental goal of foreign language education is to equip students with basic language skills and practical knowledge, which lays a solid foundation for the expression ability of foreign language majors in Generation Z.

Firstly, economic prosperity, social stability, and educational advancements have made foreign language majors in Generation Z more confident, intellectually agile, and globally aware than previous generations. The development of the Internet has had a positive impact on Generation Z. Interviewee CCX stated, "*The Internet has broken down information barriers, making it very easy to access information and find knowledge in many areas of interest.*" Interviewee FYW added, "*The Internet allows me to encounter different perspectives and gain diverse insights.*" Therefore, the constantly evolving wealth of knowledge on the Internet provides Generation Z with new perspectives and approaches to understanding and reshaping the world, thus stimulating their desire for exploration and innovation, as well as nurturing their ability to engage in innovative practices [4]. When asked about how to better achieve external communication, all 16 respondents proposed novel perspectives and methods, "*I think we can try to create our own personal IP and innovate in communication methods*" (LZ), "*Incorporate culture into Internet communication and disseminate it in a soft way*" (ZYJ), "*Leverage the role of international students studying in China and spread Chinese culture from the perspective of others*" (ZY).

Furthermore, foreign language majors in Generation Z who simultaneously study two or more languages need to constantly understand the differences between the languages and further explore the different values, thinking modes, and cultural customs that they entail. When asked about

cultural differences in the language learning process, interviewee YJW said, *"Cultural differences indeed challenge my inherent beliefs, but on the other hand, they bring freshness and inclusiveness. Learning foreign languages has made me a sharper and more liberated person."* It is worth mentioning that foreign language majors in Generation Z often possess interdisciplinary professional literacy and perspectives, which will also help them understand cultural differences and resolve cultural conflicts. In the response of interviewee LZ, he mentioned his understanding of the concept of "empathetic communication" in the discipline of journalism, *"Empathy provides a buffer zone for our communication, especially in the face of conflicts... When facing cultural differences, or even cultural conflicts, as a foreign language major, I can empathize and seek solutions under the premise of mutual understanding."* It can be seen that in the process of comparative studies, foreign language majors can extensively explore and critically absorb various cultural elements, understand cultural diversity, continuously improve their sensitivity to cultural differences, and thus have a stronger cultural inclusiveness. This rich cultural background makes foreign language majors more likely than students in other majors to perceive things from a diverse perspective, thus making it easier for them to spark innovative thinking and better achieve empathetic communication, that is, forming, transmitting, and spreading common or similar emotions and feelings.

Additionally, foreign language majors in Generation Z who are in the process of finding their own identity, emphasize the realization of self-worth and the pursuit of individual freedom. Born into a modern society characterized by high levels of atomization and loneliness, direct emotional communication between individuals has become a luxury. The lack of discourse in expressing emotions in real life has led Generation Z to turn to virtualized online spaces for emotional fulfillment. The public network space, with its unique mechanisms of dialogue, sharing, and interaction, is increasingly becoming an important space for Generation Z to expand their social circles, enhance their self-worth, and express their individuality. Besides, compared to students in other majors, foreign language majors have the opportunity to explore literary works from different countries, including novels and poetry, in their coursework, thus gaining an understanding of diverse modes and means of expression. For example, interviewee FYW mentioned a poem "A Leaf Falls Loneliness,"

which she studied in a course on European and American literature. *"(It) made me realize that poetry could be written in such a way, so I will also try to express my thoughts in a more novel way in my daily life."* Another interviewee, HST, expressed a similar experience, *"Once when I was posting on social media, I really wanted to imitate the most classic opening of 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'."* Through their coursework, foreign language majors learn how to express their thoughts using non-native language logic, thereby developing the ability to transcend national boundaries and explore universal emotional values.

### **3.2 Foreign Language Majors in Generation Z Demonstrate Remarkable Cross-Cultural Communication Awareness**

The foundation of civilization dialogue and cultural exchange lies in understanding and carrying forward one's own national culture. To tell China's stories well, it is important to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture on the basis of firm cultural confidence and to promote the organic interaction and integration of Chinese civilization with the achievements of other human civilizations. Based on a survey of college students in Generation Z from 11 countries, including China, the United States, and Russia, there are differences in the focus of attention on various issues among Generation Z from different countries. Foreign students are more concerned with "freedom" and "justice," while Chinese students are more concerned with "rule of law" and "patriotism" [5], indicating a stronger national identity among China's Generation Z. Additionally, foreign language education serves as an important place for the exchange, collision, and mutual learning of cultures, social systems, and ideologies among different countries. This enables foreign language majors in Generation Z to possess a broad international vision, as well as a sense of social responsibility and awareness of the human destiny community.

Firstly, the shifting international pattern of "East rising, West declining" has influenced the worldview of Generation Z. China's Generation Z is a generation that continuously witnesses China's rise while experiencing the clash of domestic and foreign discourses [6]. When asked to evaluate China's current international image, almost all respondents gave positive assessments, such as

*"emphasizing peace" (CCX), "a responsible major power" (WST), "actively participating in international affairs" (CYS), "capable, profound, and magnanimous" (YJR), "broad cultural influence" (XST), and "As a volunteer for the Asian Games, when serving foreign friends, they expressed appreciation for the athletic abilities of Chinese athletes and the wisdom behind China's urban development plans" (ZYJ).* The 40th anniversary of Reform and Opening Up, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, China's achievements in fighting the epidemic, the Beijing Olympics, the Hangzhou Asian Games, and other events have shaped the young generation's sense of identity with the country and the nation. Works rich in elements of excellent traditional Chinese culture, such as *Genshin Impact*, *The Longest Day in Chang'an*, and *Li Ziqi's short videos*, have sparked a craze and inspired cultural confidence among young people. It's worth mentioning that foreign language majors in Generation Z are not blindly enthusiastic supporters, they also offer many insightful and constructive suggestions. *"China's overall communication volume in the international community is still relatively small compared to Western countries and needs active improvement" (LZ), "China will still be subject to malicious denigration, and the road to shaping its international image remains long and arduous" (ZYN), "The vocabulary differences between Chinese and foreign languages in external propaganda remind us that in the process of shaping our external image, we can appropriately adjust the subject-object relationship and avoid presenting a posture of forced output" (ZY).*

Furthermore, with the continuous development and deepening of globalization, foreign language majors in Generation Z, aided by their study of foreign languages, have more diverse perspectives and more opportunities for choice compared to other generations and majors. They easily access information about various countries around the world through the Internet and social media platforms. The collision and exchange of diverse cultures drive this group to participate in discussions on international topics and express their viewpoints. When asked about recent hot topics under discussion, interviewees CYS mentioned *"Japan's release of nuclear wastewater,"* FYW mentioned *"Israel-Palestine conflict,"* LZ mentioned *"Columbia University incident,"* and ZHZ mentioned *"Russia-Ukraine conflict."* It can

be seen that foreign language majors in Generation Z have a high level of concern for international affairs, focusing on discussions surrounding peace, environmental protection, human rights, and other issues, demonstrating their strong international perspective and awareness of a shared human destiny.

Additionally, with the development of advanced transportation and logistics networks, international exchanges for learning and work have become more common, creating favorable conditions for Generation Z to experience the world firsthand. Among the 16 respondents, all of them have practical experience in face-to-face communication with foreigners, with six of them having participated in international exchange programs abroad. *"During the study visit to Singapore, I experienced multiculturalism" (ZJY), "The Dragon Boat Festival event held by our school invited foreign teachers to participate, and during the process of making rice dumplings, I explained traditional customs to them" (WJY), "My cross-cultural project required us to communicate with African exchange students, and when encountering cultural differences, we would engage in mutual communication" (ZHZ).* Therefore, it can be seen that multidimensional and frequent international exchanges and practical activities enable the foreign language majors in Generation Z to possess a broader international vision and a more solid cross-cultural communication foundation.

### **3.3 Foreign Language Majors in Generation Z Exhibit Strong Aptitude for Adapting to Media Platforms**

Growing up in the era of the Internet and big data, the foreign language majors in Generation Z are often equipped with mobile smart devices, fragmented information, and fragmented time [7]. They demonstrate a higher dependence on media and exhibit diversified usage of media platforms.

On one hand, Generation Z demonstrates a strong dependency on media. Surveys indicate that the average age for acquiring their first smartphone among Generation Z is before 12 years old. 85% of Generation Z prefer to communicate through mobile devices [8]. On the other hand, due to the nature of their field of study, students majoring in foreign languages consciously or unconsciously engage with content produced on foreign social media platforms during their learning process. Interview results reveal that out of 16 respondents, the average daily Internet usage time ranges from 7

to 11 hours, with 3 to 5 hours spent on social media. Apart from using domestic platforms like WeChat, Weibo, Bilibili, and Little Red Book, they also listen to foreign broadcasts such as BBC and VOA, read foreign periodicals like *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and *Le Figaro*, and utilize foreign social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and X (interviewees' media use

is shown in "Table 2"). The frequent use of media platforms enables students majoring in foreign languages to better adapt to foreign media platforms, giving them an advantage in understanding the operational patterns of foreign media platforms and perceiving differences between domestic and foreign media platforms.

Table 2. Interviewees' media use

Number	Name	Average daily internet usage time/h	Average daily time spent on social media/h	Primary accessed media platforms or apps
1	ZY	10	5	Wechat/Weibo/Instagram
2	FYW	10	4	Wechat/Weibo/Little Red Book/VOA
3	YJW	8	3	Wechat/Weibo/Bilibili/Instagram/YouTube
4	WJY	8.5	4.5	Little Red Book/Wechat/Tiktok/The New York Times
5	XST	9	4	Wechat/Weibo/BBC
6	YJR	7.5	3	Wechat/Weibo/Little Red Book/Tiktok
7	ZHZ	8	4	Wechat/Weibo/Le Figaro
8	ZJY	8	5.5	Tiktok/Bilibili/YouTube/X
9	ZYN	7	3	Weibo/Little Red Book/Bilibili/Tiktok
10	CCX	8	4	Weibo/Tiktok/Little Red Book
11	LJJ	9	4.5	Wechat/The Economist
12	LZ	10.5	6	Wechat/Little Red Book/Twitter
13	ZYJ	8	3.5	Weibo/Bilibili/X/Instagram/Tiktok/YouTube
14	HST	9	4	Wechat/Tiktok/Little Red Book/Twitter
15	CYS	7.5	3	Weibo/Wechat/Little Red Book/China Daily
16	WST	11	5	Wechat/Tiktok/Little Red Book/CGTN

The "2022 Analysis Report on China's Online Public Opinion Environment" points out that netizens in Generation Z have begun to enter the online public opinion arena and have gradually become one of the main forces in shaping public discourse on hot topics. As of June 2022, netizens aged 10 to 29 accounted for 30.5% of China's total Internet users, reaching a scale of 320 million. Furthermore, in recent years, with the rapid development of new media platforms such as Bilibili, Weibo, and TikTok, new forms of communication, such as short videos, and live streaming, have emerged, providing excellent channels for Generation Z to participate in media. More than 80% of respondents stated that they

possess a variety of media operation skills and literacy, such as video editing, poster design, live broadcasting, and other new media skills. It is evident that Generation Z, growing up in such a media environment, has already become the most important information producers, service consumers, and technology drivers in the online realm [9].

#### **4. THE CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN CULTIVATING INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION CAPACITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS IN GENERATION Z**

##### **4.1 *Cultivating a Comprehensive Understanding of China's Stories and Build Cultural Confidence***

The "Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Curriculum in Colleges and Universities" clearly states that literature courses should promote curriculum construction to guide students to deeply understand the core socialist values and consciously promote China's excellent traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture. To tell China's stories well, the first thing is to fully understand and accurately condense its connotations, and then express them in an appropriate and innovative way.

However, at present, there are still some shortcomings in the setting of foreign language disciplines in China. The courses offered by foreign language majors in colleges and universities mostly revolve around Western literature and linguistics, with fewer courses related to Chinese culture. With the rise of "China-Chic," although students have deepened their emphasis on Chinese culture compared to before, the restless social psyche of the Internet era still leaves most students with only a superficial understanding of Chinese culture. Worse, some simply follow trends without genuine interest. In regard to the level of understanding of Chinese culture, the majority of respondents expressed a lack of profound insight: "I am interested in some aspects of it, but my understanding of them is far from sufficient" (CYS), "I feel that my understanding of Chinese culture is still stuck in a somewhat stereotypical state, only knowing some mainstream but somewhat cliché things" (HST), "I know its importance, but after high school, there has been limited external input, and upon entering university, there are few related courses for me to explore further" (ZYN). Both subjective and objective reasons contribute to the shallow understanding of contemporary youth towards Chinese culture. This further leads to students lacking strong support when telling China's stories, only able to interpret the superficial meanings of "China's stories," neglecting the exploration of their deeper values. Consequently, the content they create for external dissemination becomes

monotonous, focusing on grand narratives but lacking sincere emotional expression and vivid detail portrayal. Even with innovative communication methods and advanced technological means, works lacking spiritual essence are difficult to resonate deeply with audiences. Ultimately, this will lead to the "deactivation" of "China's stories" on domestic and international communication platforms.

To cultivate a comprehensive understanding of China's stories and build cultural confidence among foreign language majors in Generation Z, this paper proposes the following suggestions:

Firstly, it is imperative to integrate excellent Chinese culture into foreign language teaching at colleges and universities. As guides for students, teachers should solidify their knowledge of Chinese culture, enhance their own cultural literacy, and focus on the accumulation and improvement of cultural connotations. Textbook compilers should optimize the content of textbooks, increase the proportion of Chinese culture in them, and incorporate excellent examples of introducing Chinese culture in English.

Secondly, colleges and universities should actively carry out both in-class and extracurricular practical activities to create real-life scenarios for students and assign them specific roles. For example, students could act as curators to plan an exhibition on "Traditional Chinese Clothing" for incoming foreign visitors, or they could be organized to experience the role of English interpreters in museums and study foreign language translations in museums.

##### **4.2 *Solidifying Language Fundamentals and Improving Translation Capacity in Ancient and Modern Cultures***

The construction of a discourse system for translating Chinese culture abroad is an important carrier for the exchange and dissemination of culture [10]. However, at present, there are still the following shortcomings in this field: First, the quality of Chinese cultural discourse translation varies, and a comprehensive corpus with high-quality cultural translation materials has not yet been fully established, lacking compound talents with solid foundations in translation. For example, in the process of communicating with foreigners, respondents encountered difficulties: "I found that I didn't know how to express the grip posture in teaching foreigners to write Chinese calligraphy"

(FYW), "When translating '小年' ('off year'), I couldn't accurately translate it and could only use 'piccolo Capodanno,' which means 'small new year,' for literal translation and then provide specific explanations" (CCX). Second, the construction of discourse systems for translating outstanding cultural achievements in contemporary China is insufficient. Based on national identity and historical responsibility, China has focused more on the external dissemination of Chinese historical culture in the process of constructing discourse systems for translating Chinese culture abroad, to some extent neglecting the important role of contemporary Chinese culture. When asked about the topics they first think of when promoting Chinese culture, respondents most frequently mentioned "traditional culture," with very few topics related to contemporary culture. When contemporary culture was mentioned, respondents' evaluations were: "I think it's too difficult to promote them and it's meaningless" (ZHZ), "We rarely involve translation practices of new cultures in our classes" (YJR). As respondent HST said, "Maybe traditional culture like Confucianism has been emphasized too much in recent years, and it feels like the content of each study is almost the same, lacking innovation, and everyone seems to ignore China's contemporary new ideas and cultures." Therefore, constructing a high-quality discourse system for translating Chinese culture that combines historical and contemporary elements is an important proposition in the context of the new era.

To solidify language fundamentals and improve translation capacity in ancient and modern cultures among foreign language majors in Generation Z, this paper proposes the following suggestions:

Firstly, it is essential to emphasize the instrumental function of foreign languages. The cultivation of students should prioritize the training of their basic language skills to improve the accuracy of translation processes. Therefore, foreign language majors in colleges and universities should consolidate students' basic skills in foreign language listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, continuously enhancing personal, social, and national language abilities, laying a solid language foundation for "telling China's stories" effectively.

Secondly, the latest achievements of Marxism with Chinese characteristics should be injected into the teaching and training process, enabling students to actively expand their knowledge of

contemporary Chinese culture while understanding the essence of Chinese history and culture. Colleges and universities should adapt to the requirements of the new era, adjust talent training objectives reasonably, and offer interdisciplinary courses such as "Materials + Foreign Language," "Automobile + Foreign Language," "Navigation + Foreign Language," etc., to strengthen interdisciplinary interaction and integration. This approach aims to cultivate versatile talents with cross-disciplinary expertise, enabling students majoring in foreign languages to have substantial content to convey and creating basic conditions for presenting a comprehensive image of China in the process of international communication.

### **4.3 Enhancing Cross-cultural Communication Awareness and Leverage Agenda-setting Abilities**

The external communication of culture is the interactive cross-cultural communication. Due to differences in culture and values between countries, China often faces a dilemma during external communication. This is primarily due to the narrative dilemma of high- and low-context communication contexts in presenting the Chinese narrative abroad. By placing the communication between information senders and receivers on a contextual ladder and conducting a comprehensive analysis from cultural perspectives and application scenarios, it can be observed that there are differences in discourse contexts between domestic and international settings, leading to a misalignment in the international community's perception of China. When conveying "China's stories," students majoring in foreign languages need to master essential cross-cultural communication methods and enhance their language ability. However, during their training, students face issues such as inadequate mastery of cross-cultural communication theory, lack of practical opportunities, and weak agenda-setting abilities. When asked about the difficulties encountered in cross-cultural communication processes, interviewee WJY stated, "The main difficulty lies in the communication barriers caused by cultural differences, which easily lead to misunderstandings and biases in the process of information transmission and communication." When asked for suggestions on topics related to China's stories, more than half of the interviewees remained silent for a long time before giving a response, with some expressing, "It's difficult."



*I've never thought about this issue before*”(CYS), and *“I think it definitely requires innovative topics, but I haven't figured it out yet*”(FYW).

To enhance the intercultural communication awareness of foreign language majors in Generation Z and give full play to their agenda-setting abilities, this paper proposes the following suggestions:

Firstly, the teaching goal of foreign language majors should be transformed from cultivating one-way communication skills to two-way intercultural communication skills. In the existing curriculum design, students' understanding of foreign languages and cultures should be consolidated. On this basis, comparative study of Chinese and foreign cultures, regional and country study should be strengthened, and teaching resources for national cultural comparison should be designed and developed.

Furthermore, it is necessary to create a situational teaching model, using information technology and big data to empower and create an immersive experience classroom, so that students can collide with inspiration in cultural exchanges and cultivate their critical thinking as well as inclusive sentiments.

Additionally, colleges and universities should actively carry out more open and more diverse online and offline international exchange activities, attract resources and youth power from all parties, and provide an application platform for intercultural communication skills.

On this basis, the intercultural communication ability will be gradually transformed into the ability of "telling China's stories well." It is necessary to encourage students to discover China's stories from the perspective of national conditions comparison and intercultural communication, that is, to set topics reasonably, and then follow the thinking pattern and acceptance habits of the communication recipients to "tell China's stories well." When setting agendas, it should be noted that Generation Z is more accustomed to a decentralized media environment [11], and attaches importance to group identity. Therefore, it is advisable to approach with an egalitarian stance, pinpointing common empathy points. It should not only focus on topics of interest to Generation Z, but also explore topics of common global concern, such as ecological protection, civilization exchange, and scientific and technological development. For example, in

September 2023, the *Escape from the British Museum* series of videos received a warm response on the Internet. The video uses the form of anthropomorphic storytelling of cultural relics, taking people's attention to national cultural relics and their feelings for their country as the underlying emotions, based on common life experiences and spiritual perceptions, and is a typical example of integrating Chinese stories into world stories. In addition, students majoring in foreign languages should leverage their professional advantages to achieve sincere exchanges and equal dialogues among young people from different countries through a combination of online and offline methods, and explore universal issues, thereby stimulating group identity and achieving empathetic communication.

#### ***4.4 Prioritizing the Application of Digital Techniques and Innovating Narrative Styles in External Communication***

With the advancement of information technology, multimode and multimedia discourse patterns are becoming increasingly common in the process of cultural exchange and mutual learning. Therefore, for foreign language majors who belong to the "Internet Generation," the ability to integrate different communication modes is required when narrating "China's stories," enabling the transformation of diverse cultural codes. Additionally, they should also grasp new communication technologies, adjust discourse forms, and innovate narrative expression methods. However, there are several shortcomings in the current training process for foreign language majors: Firstly, students of Generation Z tend to share daily life activities on social media and have a weaker awareness of international communication, believing that external communication and shaping national image are responsibilities of official media. Among the 16 interviewees, all stated that they mostly share topics related to personal life and learning experiences on social media. When asked about the driving force behind international communication, only 3 interviewees identified it as "youth groups" or "general public," while the rest mentioned "mainstream media," "diplomats," "top foreign language talents," and "journalists." Secondly, the curriculum of foreign language majors in colleges and universities emphasizes the cultivation of thinking but lacks practical skills training. Students have limited opportunities to practice international communication, resulting in outdated narrative skills. As mentioned by

interviewee LZ, *"What foreign language students lack most is a practical platform, especially for international communication. In fact, we don't have many opportunities to get involved in this field."* Interviewee ZY also stated, *"I have limited practical experience in this area, so I lack confidence. I believe some people can do better than me."*

To strengthen the digital techniques application capabilities among foreign language majors in Generation Z and innovate their narrative styles in external communication, this paper proposes the following suggestions:

Firstly, higher education should actively implement teaching reforms, change from "teacher-led" to "student-centered," actively carry out activities, and encourage students to "tell China's stories" by performing situational dramas, dubbing, shooting videos, designing posters, etc., so that students can not only enhance their awareness in the process of participating in activities but also learn relevant new media skills. For example, the *Taste of Memory* series of reports by the School of English at Shanghai International Studies University has brought together international communication works created by students from all over the country and abroad based on their own experiences. It has been serialized for several issues, which not only exercises students' practical ability but also achieves the purpose of spreading Chinese local culture [12]. At the same time, colleges and universities are encouraged to offer theoretical and practical courses on international communication and cultivate students' external communication capabilities through platforms such as laboratories and research centers.

Secondly, it is necessary to encourage foreign language majors in Generation Z to actively participate in international communication practice, make full use of their active thinking and pursuit of individuality, create narrative styles and modes with Generation Z personality, and subtly integrate the essence of the socialist core values into their works. First, integrate grand and abstract ideas and concepts into the small things around us, make them concrete, and see the big from the small. Second, in the expression and narrative, adopt the methods that are popular with netizens around the world, such as short videos, emoticons, etc., so that the communication form has a net feeling. Third, put Chinese stories in an international perspective, cultivate the ability of foreign language majors to objectively understand China through the

perspective of international comparison and cultural perception, spread Chinese culture from the perspective of others, and use the defamiliarization effect to enhance the credibility of communication. Fourth, take the initiative to understand the communication tone of foreign media platforms, and actively put their own works on foreign social media platforms.

## 5. CONCLUSION

To strengthen the international communication capabilities of foreign language majors in Generation Z and cultivate their ability to "tell China's stories well," it is essential to closely align with the demands of the times and deeply understand the characteristics of this group. Currently, higher education is increasingly emphasizing the cultivation of students' international perspectives and international communication abilities. In the process of constructing the training system, foreign language majors should leverage their cultural advantages, focusing on cultivating students' cultural confidence, and enhancing their language proficiency, cross-cultural communication abilities, as well as digital technique application abilities. It is crucial to encourage students to express themselves and showcase their country to the world, applying what they have learned in practical situations. Only through such efforts can young foreign language majors play a unique role in presenting a genuine, multi-dimensional, and comprehensive image of China to the world.

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