

An Analysis of Current Situation and Strategies of College Students' Intercultural Communication Competence in the New Media Era

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ABSTRACT

Since 2015, China has implemented the “the Belt and Road” economic development strategy, held high the banner of peaceful development, actively developed economic partnerships with countries along the Belt and Road, and jointly built a community of interests, a community of destiny, and a community of responsibilities featuring political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural inclusion. Therefore, China’s economic and cultural exchanges with countries around the world have become increasingly frequent, and cross-cultural communication has become more frequent and widely used. However, due to the differences in the historical and cultural backgrounds of the two sides of the communication reflected in the way of thinking and interpersonal relations in cross-cultural communication, people are increasingly aware of the insurmountable cultural differences in cross-cultural communication. This analysis expounds the importance of intercultural communication competence in detail, surveys the current situation of college students’ intercultural communication competence through questionnaires and other ways, and puts forward targeted measures to cultivate and improve intercultural communication competence.

Keywords: *Intercultural communication competence, Psychological barriers, Strategic research.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of intercultural communication competence can be traced back to the 1970s, when it was first proposed by the American scholar Hymes(1972), who argued that communicative competence should be a language user’s ability to use the language and to judge whether an utterance is grammatically correct and in a communicative situation, which includes grammatical correctness, linguistic feasibility, linguistic appropriateness and linguistic realism. Since then, Canale and Swain have divided communicative competence into grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, all of which have equally important roles to play and cannot be achieved without one another. Spitzberg argues that the essence of intercultural communication competence is to communicate appropriately and effectively between two parties with different cultural backgrounds

according to the specific context in which the communication takes place, and to be able to express the intended meaning of the communication effectively. Kim suggests that “every communicator should have some potential intercultural communication skills to help both parties communicate smoothly in case of cultural differences, unfamiliarity, negative attitudes and other situations that affect communication in intercultural communication”.

There are many different opinions about the connotation of intercultural communication competence, but according to the views of scholars, the basic conditions of intercultural communication competence include (1) communicative parties from different cultural backgrounds, (2) intercultural communication situations, (3) the effectiveness and appropriateness of communicative behavior, that is, the ability of communicators to demonstrate appropriate and

effective communicative behavior in the process of communication in a specific context. Successful communication is demonstrated by the communicator's ability to make the communicator accept his or her point of view in a pleasant manner, to achieve the purpose of communication and to produce certain influence.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

With the continuous advancement of globalization and the deepening of China's the Belt and Road international cooperation, the ties between countries are getting closer and closer, and the requirements for the intercultural communication competence of college students in the new era are also getting higher and higher. In addition, the development of new media such as online TV, mobile phone magazines and other new media has changed the communication mechanism of traditional mass media, bringing tremendous changes to social life, especially intercultural communication. People's communication between cultures and races is no longer limited by distance. They can communicate more freely and conveniently at the level of knowledge, thought and emotion. It can be said that the development of new media has influenced and promoted intercultural communication. In order to flexibly cope with the complex cultural information emerging in the new media era, and to better realize the interaction and sharing of information in the collision of foreign cultures, the significance of cultivating intercultural communication competence in the current era is self-evident.

College students in the new era, as the main force of inheritors and promoters of Chinese culture, can broaden their horizons, change their perspectives, improve their media literacy, and better develop together with other cultures by understanding the cultural characteristics and differences of different countries through the mass media dominated by the Internet, so as to achieve one of the purposes of intercultural communication: eliminate cultural prejudice, establish a correct understanding of the image of foreign countries attitude and behavior. At the same time, as a foreign language major, keeping up with the globalization situation of the continuous development of intercultural communication in the new media era, and striving to improve their own level of language use and intercultural communication ability, can contribute to China's

better "going out", and make a solid foothold on the international stage.

The current situation of college students' poor intercultural communication competence requires that in the new media era, it is urgent to improve their competence through various means, such as reforming foreign language learning courses. Today's college students' English learning objectives are mainly test-oriented, and they do not have the awareness of cultivating their intercultural communication competence through English learning, which leads to their acquisition of only rigid English knowledge. In the face of the real intercultural communication situation, it is bound to be at a loss, nervous and cramped, which makes the function of promoting the exchange, reference and integration between different cultures brought by intercultural communication too weak. In addition, most of the nations in the world believe that their own culture is more superior. Because of the existence of this common thinking habit, most of our students believe that China has a long history as an ancient civilization, and Chinese culture is also more national superiority, and this so-called sense of national superiority leads people to take it for granted that all behaviors in different cultures are wrong. However, this kind of communication in the face of different cultures directly puts them in an unequal position with their own culture, which is bound to fail to achieve the effect of good intercultural communication, and then forms our stereotype and prejudice against foreign cultures. In short, both the poor intercultural communication competence caused by rigid English learning and the poor effect of intercultural communication competence caused by the sense of national superiority reflect the current situation of students' poor ability. Therefore, cultivate students' intercultural communication competence to meet the requirements of the new characteristics of intercultural communication in depth and breadth in the current new media era. It is urgent to achieve the integration of different cultures.

3. THE CURRENT SITUATION

In order to understand the extent of college students' knowledge of intercultural communication and their communicative ability, a questionnaire is designed with reference to various new media platforms commonly used by college students, including instant messaging platforms, self-media video platforms, and information sharing platforms. The survey analyzed four aspects,

including the degree of knowledge of intercultural communication, the degree of understanding of western communication customs, the attitude of interacting with foreigners, and the psychological factors affecting their active interaction in intercultural communication.

The total number of participants in this survey was 187, and a total of 187 questionnaires were distributed, 174 of which were validly returned, with a return rate of 93%. The results were

objective and reliable because of the anonymous method. The type of questions was single or multiple choice. After the questionnaire survey, all the data were integrated and analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel and other software, and the results of data analysis will be presented in the form of statistical charts and text.

The results of the survey are as follows: (“Table 1”, “Table 2”, “Table 3”)

Table 1. On New Media Platforms Frequently Used

	WeChat, QQ and other instant messaging platforms	Self-media platforms such as Bilibili, Tiktok	Information sharing platforms such as Zhihu and Weibo
Most frequently used new media platforms	47.23%	30.56%	22.21%

Table 2. Levels on the Impact of Psychological Barriers on Intercultural Communication

	Very well	Fairly consistent	Not quite	Does not match
Understand intercultural communication	6.94%	24.73%	37.64%	30.69%
Understand social customs of others	14.81%	19.74%	42.85%	22.6%
Feel nervous when talking with foreigners	27.78%	36.91%	24.93%	10.38%
Timid about intercultural communication because of language barrier	16.67%	41.27%	21.83%	20.18%
Use a translator when communicating	25.36%	39.42%	22.96%	12.26%
Barriers during communication due to stereotypes	10.83%	33.96%	24.36%	30.85%
Willing to interact with foreigners	36.76%	33.21%	20.71%	9.32%
Can feel the cultural differences between people from different cultures	33.65%	21.98%	22.03%	22.34%

Table 3. Influence on Motivation

	Mistake mentality	Introvert mentality	Inferiority complex	Other
Influence on motivation	43.84%	32.57%	18.61%	4.98%

4. CAUSES AND ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Hereafter, it is proper to explore the causes of problems of intercultural communication with the somehow detailed analysis of such causes.

4.1 *Problems of Intercultural Communication in the New Media Era*

The problems of intercultural communication in the new media era can be roughly concluded as follows:

4.1.1 *Insufficient Understanding of Intercultural Communication*

Understanding intercultural communication is a prerequisite for learning and mastering intercultural communication skills and improving intercultural communication competence. Only by understanding intercultural communication can college students have the right attitude towards intercultural communication and thus learn more about intercultural knowledge. The summary of the answers to questions 6 to 9 and 13 and 14 of questionnaire shows that contemporary students do not have a good understanding of intercultural communication. About 68.33% of the students do not know much about intercultural communication. Many university students demonstrate a lack of understanding of their own culture, and many of them admire foreigners. Many students believe that they only need to understand Western culture to be at the forefront of the world and refuse to understand their own culture in depth. This inability to understand their own culture leads to a long and difficult road to intercultural communication.

There are also some university students who are unable to treat other countries' culture correctly. With the increasing cultural self-confidence in China, many university students begin to attach importance to their own culture, but there are also some university students who misunderstand the cultural self-confidence. As a result, many university students have started to be blindly confident and unable to look at their own culture in a dialectical way. They think that they only need to study their own culture and that they do not need to pay too much attention to the culture of other countries. This kind of thinking undoubtedly increases the resistance to intercultural exchange from the very beginning.

4.1.2 *The Impact of Psychological Barriers on Intercultural Communication*

Psychological barriers have always been a difficult mountain to overcome in communication, and their impact on interpersonal communication has a profound effect on intercultural communication. To a certain extent, the new media environment can contribute to the severity of the problem for students with psychological barriers, who appear to be more closed to communication and more resistant to intercultural communication. The results of question 10 show that about 70% of the students are willing to engage in intercultural communication. However, the results of questions 13 and 16 show that psychological barriers have a profound impact on intercultural communication. The main psychological barriers to intercultural communication are mistake making and introversion.

The mentality of making mistakes is reflected in the fear of making mistakes and being afraid to communicate. In intercultural communication, this is manifested by the fear of mispronunciation, grammatical errors and expression errors. The introvert mentality is anxiety in communicating and is highly sensitive and unable to communicate comfortably. In intercultural communication, this is reflected in a nervousness and fear of making mistakes when communicating with foreigners and choosing to communicate something that you are familiar with but not what you want to say. They are unable to express their views and opinions correctly and confidently. These psychological barriers can make some intercultural communication impossible from the outset.

4.1.3 *Intercultural Communication Is Superficial*

In the age of the Internet, information is updated very quickly. The problem is that people can only see the superficial differences between their own culture and that of other peoples for a short time. After the fever of the Internet hot stems has passed what is left for university students is a bubble. Students only see some cultural differences on short video platforms, but students don't look deeper into the cultural background behind these differences, which leads to some students seeming to understand many cultural differences, but in reality, they still know very little about the deeper cultural history and background differences behind them.

4.2 Causes of Intercultural Communication Problems

The causes of intercultural communication problems are mainly analysed as follows:

4.2.1 Current Intercultural Communication Curriculum Is Inadequate

The current English curriculum and objectives in many universities continue to be primarily oriented towards College English Test-4 and College English Test-6. This has led to many students still aiming to pass exams. They do not have the awareness and ability to communicate across cultures. They only have a rigid and rigid knowledge of English and are unable to apply it properly in intercultural communication. As a result, they are unable to extract and apply their knowledge in real intercultural situations. The scarcity of the curriculum and the lack of understanding of the culture and communication habits of other countries make it impossible for students to communicate in depth with respect and understanding of other cultures. The lack of demand for intercultural communication courses also indirectly results in the teachers teaching this course being of varying standards and unable to teach it properly to students.

4.2.2 Decrease in Face-to-Face Intercultural Communication

In the context of the Corona Virus Disease 2019, opportunities for cross-cultural communication exercises, which are already lacking, become even more scarce and valuable. Most foreign teachers return to their home countries and the lessons are conducted only through the Internet of Things, which is much less effective. At the same time, it has become more difficult to travel abroad, as the economic costs and security factors have increased and reduced, making intercultural communication practice more difficult nowadays. Practice is the most effective way for students to engage in intercultural communication, not only to improve their intercultural knowledge base, but also, and more importantly, to improve their intercultural communication skills at a rapid pace. The lack of intercultural practice will make the theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication that students have learnt reduced to paper talk.

4.2.3 Incorrect Influence Brought by Some Internet Software

With the increasing use of the Internet today, various social networking software such as WeChat, QQ and TikTok have become an integral part of our lives. Cross-cultural communication through the Internet is also increasing. The Internet has brought a lot of convenience to people's intercultural communication, but at the same time, it has also brought some wrong effects to students' intercultural communication. Self-mediated video platforms such as TikTok and Weibo have provided misinformation for intercultural communication, which in this age of complex information has undoubtedly had a misleading effect on university students who have not yet formed a mature judgement system. This adds another obstacle to the already difficult path of intercultural communication.

5. STRATEGIES FOR CULTIVATING AND IMPROVING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Therefore, it is urgent to cope with the problems analysed above. The following is contributing to strategies to cultivate and improve intercultural communication competence.

5.1 Fully Understanding Cross-cultural Communication, and Proficiency in Communication Language

Understand and explore the national excellent culture, be inclusive, respect and learn from other cultures. Culture represents history, national cohesion and the value orientation of the whole country. Therefore, before students communicate, they must explore the characteristics of our own culture, think about how culture affects our behavior and values, so as to have a deeper understanding of culture and show a sense of cultural identity in the process of communication. On this basis, they will learn to explain our excellent culture in other languages, better let foreigners understand Chinese culture, and improve the efficiency of cross-cultural communication. In the process of cross-cultural communication, they are bound to be exposed to different cultures and different values. In the face of these differences, they should be tolerant, adapt to other countries'

cultures and respect their cultures. For example, when eating in western restaurants, they will charge some extra fees as tips, while in some Asian countries, they do not have the habit of tipping, so in communication, they should actively adapt to and respect other countries' cultures, and think about the problems of our own culture in communication, keep the essence, goes the dregs. Each culture has its own specific background, and there will inevitably be some misunderstandings due to culture in the exchange. At this time, only they can continue to communicate with each other through mutual tolerance, and then they can deeply understand the culture of other countries.

As an important medium of intercultural communication, they must master the communicative language. There are so many kinds of languages in the world that they may not all know them, but at least they should master the international common language — English. But it is not enough to complete daily communication with people. They also need to know the language differences with other countries. For example, the word “力大如牛” in Chinese becomes “as strong as a horse” in English, the reason for this difference is that the Chinese relied on cattle for farming in the early days, while the British relied on horses. Therefore, in the process of language learning, they need to understand the culture behind the language. There are also differences between different words. In Chinese, “获得” can be translated into English, such as acquire, attach, gain, gain, etc. they need to distinguish the subtle differences between different words to avoid mistakes in cross-cultural communication.

5.2 Making Full Use of the Characteristics of New Media to Conduct Deep Cross-cultural Communication

The development of new media information technology has realized the convenience and universality of cross-cultural communication and achieved cross-cultural communication in various ways at all ages. The emergence and development of new media have made people realize the diversity and diversity of culture, and more and more network software has been born along with it. It helps the public to obtain social channels and knowledge more efficiently in a shorter time, at the same time, it alleviates the problems of the public in communication to a certain extent, and greatly promotes the development of cross-cultural communication. In the context of the new media era,

when they conduct cross-cultural communication through social software, they should pay attention to the in-depth exploration of cultural background, make a correct analysis of the differential application of different languages in different cultural backgrounds, pay attention to the impact of cultural differences on cross-cultural communication, and strengthen our understanding of other national cultures. Intercultural communicators should improve their awareness of cross-cultural communication, actively learn other national cultures, use online social channels, such as WeChat Official Account, app, search engine, etc. to understand the characteristics and differences of different cultures, accept the influence of different languages and cultures, enrich their own cross-cultural communication knowledge, understand the values held by different cultures and people's lifestyle, and communicate with them. In terms of education, new media provides language learners with a variety of ways to acquire knowledge, not limited to books. People can access relevant video and other network resources through search engines. While watching the video, they can subtly accept the influence of different cultures. After watching the video, they can also share their thoughts and feelings or ask questions for answers. The new media era pays more attention to the knowledge input of the network to learners, this form of communication has promoted cross-cultural communication to a large extent, prompting learners to improve their cross-cultural knowledge and ability in the process of deep exposure to multiculturalism.

5.3 Paying Attention to the Practical Application of Cross-cultural Communication and Enhancing the Awareness of Cross-cultural Communication

School education plays an important role in the cultivation of college students' intercultural communication ability. The current situation of university teaching shows that intercultural communication is still not given enough attention. At present, many college English courses and objectives are still based on passing exams. Under the guidance of traditional teaching objectives, some teachers are unwilling to innovate teaching programs or try unfamiliar teaching models, thus ignoring the effective use of knowledge and the significance of cross-cultural communication. First of all, college students should formulate long-term

learning objectives and clarify their fundamental purpose of learning knowledge and skills. They should not only participate in teaching activities organized by teachers mechanically, but also learn knowledge according to teachers' teaching requirements. As intercultural communicators, college students should enhance their enthusiasm for thinking, actively learn and think about intercultural communication knowledge and use it to avoid the waste of knowledge resources. Secondly, teachers should keep abreast of the times, innovate teaching methods and enrich classroom content. Teachers should realize the importance and inevitability of cross-cultural communication in their minds, actively use new media technology to carry out micro-class and other teaching activities, promote the complementary advantages of online and offline teaching, and pay attention to strengthening the cultivation and training of students' intercultural communication ability in teaching practice. Schools should also attach importance to the practical significance of cross-cultural communication, set up courses and social practice activities that are really dedicated to cultivating and improving the intercultural communication ability of college students, and actively organize cross-cultural communication activities on the premise of ensuring the personal safety and life health of students, for example, social activities with foreign friends, inviting experts to share relevant experiences etc. and provide students with more efficient ways of learning and practice, and promote students to learn and practice effective intercultural communication skills in the epidemic environment.

6. CONCLUSION

In present information age, the emergence and development of new media make the connection between various parts of the world increasingly close. People from different cultural backgrounds can communicate across cultures through the use of new media. As cross-cultural learners and communicators, college students should keep up with the pace of the times, constantly expand their intercultural communication knowledge and skills, constantly improve their intercultural communication competence, and give full play to the advantages of the development of new media, so as to promote the rich development of multiculturalism and the interaction and sharing of global information in cross-cultural communication.

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