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Promoting Intercultural Communication Among University Students: An Evaluation Study of New Media Platforms in the Internet Era (Post-print)

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the rapid development of the Internet, various new media platforms have gradually become the primary channels for university students to engage in cross-cultural communication. However, due to the imperfect construction and management systems of some new media platforms, university students encounter various obstacles and problems when conducting cross-cultural communication. The project team obtained the following data and information through survey methods such as questionnaires and targeted interviews: the frequency of university students using new media platforms for cross-cultural communication, obstacles encountered in the process of using new media platforms for cross-cultural communication, and the advantages and disadvantages of five major types of new media platforms (instant messaging platforms, self-media video platforms, information sharing platforms, global shopping platforms, and music platforms). Simultaneously, based on the analysis and research of extensive data results, the project team proposes relevant constructive suggestions for platform providers and university students.

Full Text

Preamble

Promoting Intercultural Communication Among University Students: An Evaluation Study of New Media Platforms in the Internet Era

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Abstract: With the rapid development of the Internet, various new media platforms have gradually become the primary channels for university students to engage in intercultural communication. However, due to incomplete construction and management systems in some new media platforms, students encounter multiple obstacles and challenges in their intercultural exchanges. Through questionnaire surveys and targeted interviews, this research team obtained data on: the frequency of university students' use of new media platforms for intercultural communication, the barriers encountered during such usage, and the advantages and disadvantages of five major types of new media platforms (instant messaging platforms, self-media video platforms, information sharing platforms, global shopping platforms, and music platforms). Based on extensive data analysis, the team proposes constructive recommendations for both platform operators and university students.

Keywords: intercultural communication; new media platforms; university students; Internet; management system

Funding: This paper represents partial research findings from the 2020 Beijing Municipal College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program at Beijing Forestry University (Project ID: S202010022359).

1. Current Research

Since American anthropologist Edward Hall first proposed the concept of cross-cultural communication in the 1950s, linguistics experts worldwide have conducted intercultural communication research for over half a century, yielding substantial scholarly achievements. Intercultural communication can generally be understood as the process of interaction among people from different cultural backgrounds, a process influenced by multiple factors. In cross-cultural contexts, exchanges are affected by differing values, modes of thinking, and verbal behavioral patterns between parties. Additionally, the key elements of communication involve senders, messages, media, receivers, and effects. Meanwhile, as we have entered the era of digital and network media, “media hybridization” has intensified. Through various online new media platforms, interactions among different regions and ethnic groups worldwide have deepened continuously, with communication transitioning from simple language comprehension to the understanding and transmission of cultural values, leading to more profound recognition of the characteristics, values, and methods of intercultural communication competence.

Research by Duus, Rikke, Muditha Cooray, and others demonstrates that exposure to practical intercultural knowledge can be enjoyable for students, build their confidence in mastering a range of skills, and prepare them for future employment. Currently, rapidly evolving new media network platforms serve as crucial sources for university students to acquire intercultural knowledge and cultural information, with positive new media content being more conducive to

the construction of students' cultural cognition. Simultaneously, leveraging the broad influence of new media platforms can orient their content toward better facilitating university students' learning of both Chinese and Western cultures.

YouTube, for instance, is a self-media video platform primarily based on audiovisual language that emphasizes novel, refined, distinctive, and highlight-worthy content. Consistently producing original content represents one advantage for social short-video creators in external communication. However, from the perspective of communication objectives, social short-video creation and distribution primarily aim to generate income through traffic monetization, with commercial traffic being the fundamental goal of short-video creators. Consequently, the disadvantages of relying on new media platforms for intercultural communication become apparent. Some bloggers, seeking to attract attention, publish unhealthy, negative, or culturally inappropriate content to increase viewership and clicks. Even though university students have formed relatively systematic worldviews and values, long-term exposure to such inappropriate content inevitably hinders the establishment and development of their correct cultural values, thereby reducing their motivation and capacity for intercultural communication.

Current literature indicates a domestic research gap regarding university students' autonomous motivation for intercultural communication and studies on new media internet platforms that facilitate such communication. To address this gap, this research team employs multiple investigation and data collection methods to propose beneficial ideas and recommendations.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Content

This study examines three main aspects: the current state of Beijing university students' use of different types of online new media platforms for intercultural communication, the obstacles they encounter, and the advantages and disadvantages of five major platform categories (instant messaging platforms, self-media video platforms, information sharing platforms, global shopping platforms, and music platforms) in facilitating intercultural exchange.

The five platform types are defined as follows: Instant messaging platforms such as WeChat and QQ enable real-time communication and exchange. Self-media video platforms like Bilibili (www.bilibili.com), Douyin, and Kuaishou allow bloggers/content creators to independently produce and upload videos. Information sharing platforms such as Weibo and Zhihu enable users to share relevant information autonomously. Global shopping platforms like Amazon and Tmall International facilitate shopping and transactions among buyers and sellers worldwide. Music platforms such as QQ Music and NetEase Cloud Music allow for the distribution, listening, and commenting on music from around the world.

The investigation of obstacles focuses on language communication barriers, platform translation quality, cultural differences, and personal psychological factors. The evaluation of platform advantages and disadvantages examines user demographics, content quality, communication methods, and interaction costs.

2.2 Research Methods and Process

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. The research team surveyed 102 Beijing Forestry University students using single-choice and multiple-choice questionnaires. Following data collection, Microsoft Office Excel and SPSS software were used to integrate and analyze all data, with results presented through statistical charts and textual descriptions. To obtain more authentic and specific data, the team also conducted detailed online interviews with selected student representatives from each college who had completed the questionnaire. These interviewees elaborated on the advantages and disadvantages of current intercultural communication platforms based on their academic backgrounds and previous intercultural experiences, and provided recommendations for future platform development.

3. Findings

3.1 Current Usage Patterns of Different Online New Media Platforms for Intercultural Communication Among Beijing University Students

Survey results reveal that among Beijing university students (using Beijing Forestry University as an example), instant messaging platforms (such as WeChat and QQ) are the most frequently used for intercultural communication, with 65.38% of respondents using them—well over half. All other platform types were used by less than half of respondents, with music platforms being the least used at only 15.38%. Overall, current engagement with new media platforms for intercultural communication among Beijing university students remains limited.

3.2 Obstacles in Using Different Online New Media Platforms for Intercultural Communication

Data analysis shows that 96.15% of university students have encountered obstacles when using new media platforms for intercultural communication. The most significant barrier, reported by 52.56% of respondents, is difficulty understanding cultural symbols and customs from other countries. Language barriers requiring translation tools were reported by 43.59% of students, while 35.9% cited inadequate intelligence of existing translation tools as a communication obstacle. Other notable challenges include applying Chinese cultural concepts to understand foreign cultures (46.15%), inappropriate timing or communication styles (35.9%), stereotypes creating barriers when communicating with foreign friends (19.23%), and psychological factors such as confusion, rejection, or fear

creating communication obstacles (21.79%). Only 3.85% reported never having encountered intercultural communication obstacles online.

3.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Five Platform Types in Intercultural Communication

Survey data analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel and SPSS provides reference percentages for each platform category.

3.3.1 Instant Messaging Platforms The greatest advantage of instant messaging platforms, cited by 82.35% of respondents, is immediate communication and reply, offering convenience and efficiency. Additionally, 80.39% appreciated that exchanges through text, voice, video, and files reduce the economic costs of intercultural communication. The primary disadvantage, reported by 68.63% of students, is potential misunderstanding of abbreviations or slang from other countries due to different cultural backgrounds.

3.3.2 Self-Media Video Platforms The most significant advantage of self-media video platforms, identified by 90% of respondents, is the vast user base enabling communication with more foreign friends. Secondary advantages include using video as a communication bridge that is more relaxed and interesting (76.67%) and wide-ranging video topics covering multiple aspects of intercultural communication (70%). The major disadvantage, cited by 73.33% of students, is uneven video quality that may provide incorrect background information for intercultural communication.

3.3.3 Information Sharing Platforms The primary advantage of information sharing platforms, reported by 74.07% of respondents, is comprehensive social platform functions enabling intercultural communication through comments, private messages, live streaming, and other methods. Additionally, 70.37% valued the broad user base for connecting with more foreign friends. The main disadvantage, also cited by 70.37% of students, is that issues related to race, gender, and international relations can easily trigger disputes.

3.3.4 Global Shopping Platforms The greatest advantage of global shopping platforms, identified by 87.5% of respondents, is that increasing participation in online shopping, especially cross-border purchases, helps users learn more about foreign product information and cultural symbols. The primary disadvantage, reported by the same percentage (87.5%), is that communication is limited to product inquiries, lacking diversity.

3.3.5 Music Platforms The main advantage of music platforms, cited by 75% of students, is that music transcends national boundaries, attracting music enthusiasts from different countries and enabling users to find like-minded

foreign friends. The most significant disadvantage, reported by 66.67% of respondents, is that intercultural communication is limited to discussions in music comment sections without private messaging options, resulting in weak communicative functionality.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

With the rapid development of the Internet in recent years, new media platforms have become the primary source of cultural information and an important channel for intercultural communication among Beijing university students. However, research findings indicate that current intercultural communication frequency among university students remains relatively low, with insufficient competence in relevant skills such as language proficiency and cultural knowledge reserves.

The analysis reveals that while new media platforms offer rich forms of intercultural communication, convenient interaction, and large, diverse user populations, they also suffer from uneven quality of videos and blog posts, lack of popular science content about different national cultures and customs, and insufficient channels for intercultural communication in some platforms. The most significant obstacle in current new media-based intercultural communication is communication barriers caused by differing cultural customs, followed by personal language barriers and inadequate platform translation intelligence.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 For Platform Operators Beijing university students face language communication difficulties when using new media platforms for intercultural communication, particularly on self-media video and information sharing platforms where content demands higher language proficiency from audiences, hindering cross-cultural exchange. We recommend that such platforms recruit professional translation subtitle teams or develop compatible translation plugins to optimize intercultural communication functions. Additionally, platforms need improvement in popularizing knowledge about cultural differences. Certain cultural differences, popular expressions, and communication styles require substantial social and cultural knowledge reserves, and misunderstandings easily arise when university students from different countries engage in intercultural communication. We suggest developing timely cultural knowledge search engine plugins and adding multilingual introductions to facilitate intercultural communication among users from various countries. Furthermore, some platforms suffer from homogenized content themes, identical content, and incorrect cultural values in videos, blog posts, and other materials, diminishing students' interest in intercultural communication and even fostering narrow culturalism and ethnocentrism. Therefore, we recommend strengthening content monitoring of uploaded works and promoting and incentivizing innovative works that

propagate correct cultural values to enhance university students' willingness and quality of intercultural communication.

4.2.2 For Universities and Students In the era of rapid new media development, intercultural communication competence has become one of the fundamental literacies for contemporary university students. However, survey results show that current intercultural communication frequency among university students is relatively low, with insufficient language proficiency and cultural knowledge reserves. Research indicates that English newspaper reading significantly promotes intercultural communication awareness, knowledge, and critical thinking skills, while MOOCs positively influence learning motivation and comprehensive English proficiency. Therefore, we recommend that university students utilize multiple channels and formats to learn intercultural knowledge, expand their knowledge base, and improve intercultural communication awareness and competence.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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