Original Paper

On the Cultivation of Cross-cultural Communication Ability in the Digital Age

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Abstract

With globalization and the rapid development of digital technology, cross-cultural communication has become an indispensable part of modern society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the connotation, importance and cultivation strategies of cross-cultural communication ability in the digital age in order to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for related education and practice.

Keywords

digital age, cross-cultural communication, research

I. Introduction

Driven by global economic integration and internet technology, there are more and more exchanges and cooperation between countries. The digital age has made such cooperation and exchange more convenient and efficient across geographical boundaries. It provides a broader platform for the dissemination and exchange of different cultures. Through cross-cultural communication, people can better understand and appreciate the uniqueness of different cultures, promote cultural diversity and inclusion, enhance understanding and respect between different cultures, and promote the prosperity and development of global cultures. However, with the increasing globalization of the world economy, any economic activity will be affected by different cultures from various countries. Differences in behavior, values, language, etc., between cultures, make communication difficult. Foreign higher education institutions emphasize that in addition to focusing on cultivating talents' solid professional qualities, they should also increase their efforts to cultivate their cross-cultural communication ability. The domestic linguistics community has also carried out research on how to improve students' cross-cultural communication and communicative ability, and has achieved rich research results, including theoretical and empirical studies on the composition of intercultural ability (Yang & Zhuang, 2007), and some study the factors affecting college students' cross-cultural communication ability in terms of attitude and

cultural sensitivity. It goes without saying that the cross-cultural communication ability in the digital age is important. The digital age has not only changed the way of information dissemination, but also profoundly affected the mode and effect of cross-cultural communication, and cultivating talents with cross-cultural communication ability has become an important task in the field of education. How to rationally use digital technology to carry out college English education to adapt to the development of the times has become a hot spot in the practice and research of college English education.

2. The Connotation of Cross-cultural Communication Ability and the Characteristics of the Digital Age

2.1 The Connotation of Cross-cultural Communication Ability

Cross-cultural communication ability has always attracted the attention of academic circles at home and abroad, especially in foreign language circles. Experts and scholars at home and abroad have carried out research from different fields and perspectives. Byram's definition of intercultural ability is the most widely recognized, referring to "the ability dimensions of knowledge of other cultures, cross-cultural communication ability, linguistic communication ability, cognitive and interactive ability, valuing and respecting the values, beliefs and behaviors of different cultures, critical cultural awareness and self-awareness that play a key role in the effective and appropriate communication and interaction of individuals with people from different cultures in a given intercultural environment" (Byram, 1997). Experts and scholars at home and abroad have agreed on the main components of intercultural ability. Cross-cultural communicative ability encompasses three levels of ability, namely cognitive, affective and behavioral ability. Cognitive ability refers to the fact that in addition to general cultural knowledge, communicators must also have specific cultural knowledge and knowledge of humanities, history, geography, customs, religion and other aspects of their own country and other countries. Affective ability refers to the communicator's sensitivity, tolerance, respect for cultural differences, and deep understanding of the country's culture. Behavioral ability refers to the various abilities of communicators, including verbal ability, non-verbal ability, ability to handle interpersonal relationships and adaptability. Cross-cultural communication ability is rich and multi-dimensional, and it involves the comprehensive ability of individuals to communicate across different cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the connotation of cross-cultural communication ability can include the following aspects:

Language ability, the basis of cross-cultural communication, is the ability to be proficient in at least one foreign language, to express one's thoughts accurately, clearly and fluently, and understand the language of the other party. Nonverbal Communication ability is equally important in cross-cultural communication, which includes body language (e.g., posture, gestures, facial expressions), voice characteristics (e.g., pitch, volume, speed of speech), perceptions of time, space, and personal distance. Cultural awareness and sensitivity is at the heart of cross-cultural communication ability. The United Kingdom linguist Malinowski has said that language is deeply rooted in cultural realities and the customs of the people of that people, and that language research cannot be separated from this broad linguistic

behavior environment (Malinowski, 1923). To understand language, it comes down to understanding the speaker's entire cultural background and lifestyle. Being culturally aware means being able to recognize the differences between different cultures, including values, beliefs, customs, social norms, etc. At the same time, it is also necessary to be culturally sensitive, i.e. to be able to respect and understand these differences in the process of communication, and to avoid unconscious offense or misunderstanding. Cross-cultural communication is not only about the transmission and reception of information, but also about the interpretation and evaluation of information. People with critical thinking ability are able to think independently when receiving information, analyze the authenticity and reliability of information, and evaluate the cultural biases and positions behind information, which helps to make informed decisions in cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication ability is multifaceted and requires individuals to be able to develop verbal, non-verbal, culturally aware, critical thinking, and problem-solving ability.

2.2 Learning Characteristics in the Digital Age

"Digital learning refers to the process of learning in a digital learning environment, using digital learning resources, and learning digitally. It consists of three essential elements: the digital learning environment, the digital learning resources, and the digital learning method." (Li, 2001). Digital environment refers to the fact that through the use of networking technology in the information age, the information source is digitally encoded to form a digital model and processed by the computer, and then through mobile phones, televisions, computers and other digital terminal equipment to transmit information and affect the external conditions of people's survival and development. (Cheng, 2011) There are a variety of the types of digital learning resources, including: e-books, such as various e-books, PDF documents, etc.; online courses, such as video lessons, audio lectures, interactive teaching, etc., allowing learners to flexibly arrange their learning according to their needs and time; multimedia teaching resources, such as teaching videos, animations, audio files, etc., which present teaching contents through images, sounds, animations and other ways to make learning more vivid and interesting. In addition, digital library and database provide a large number of electronic literature, academic papers, patents and other resources, support retrieval, downloading and reading, and provide rich material support for learning and research. Digital learning refers to a new type of learning method that uses digital resources and tools for self-directed learning, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based learning. This method makes full use of modern information technology means such as the internet, multimedia, and artificial intelligence, and provides learners with a more flexible, convenient and efficient learning path. Learning in the digital age has the following characteristics.

(1) Convenience

In the digital age, students have more access to information, and abundant learning resources have broadened their horizons and knowledge. Students can learn online anytime, anywhere, regardless of time and location. "Textbooks are not exhaustive of what we want students to learn, but only provide samples of language, and in this sense textbooks are the means. Compared with the traditional teaching

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mode, online assisted English teaching makes students more enthusiastic and motivated to learn, and has full access to new language materials, which is convenient for teachers to better manage students' learning" (Gu, 2006). Therefore, in the digital environment, teachers need to read and query online frequently, collect extensive information and organize materials reasonably and scientifically, and link relevant knowledge as much as possible to form a relatively complete system.

(2) High efficiency

With its pictures, texts and sounds, multimedia can vividly, intuitively and realistically display the learning content in front of students, which greatly optimizes the teaching environment of college English classrooms. With its convenient links, the network extends the limited knowledge contained in the text, increases the classroom capacity, enriches the teaching content, and improves the efficiency of classroom teaching. In the digital age, instant messaging tools such as WeChat, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc. have become the main means of cross-border communication. These tools break the limitations of time and space, allowing people to communicate with people around the world in real time anytime, anywhere and greatly improving communication efficiency.

(3) Diversity

The internet provides a vast amount of information resources, and people can easily access knowledge about other countries and cultures through search engines, online courses, cultural blogs, and other channels. At the same time, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. not only provide a space for people to share their lives and express their opinions, but also become an important channel for cross-cultural communication. On social media and online forums, people can interact and communicate directly with people from different cultural backgrounds. Through social media, people can easily access information from different cultural backgrounds, broaden people's cultural horizons, help eliminate misunderstandings and prejudices, deepen knowledge and understanding of other cultures, enhance mutual understanding, respect and awareness of each other's cultures.

(4) Interactivity

Digital learning platforms often support real-time interactive features, such as online chat rooms and instant messaging systems, etc. These features allow learners to communicate with teachers or other learners at any time during the learning process to ask questions, share insights, or ask for help. This instant feedback mechanism helps to solve the confusion in learning, deepen understanding, and enhance the motivation to learn. Digital learning resources tend to be highly interactive. Interactive learning tools, such as virtual labs and simulation software, also provide hands-on opportunities for learners to acquire knowledge and ability through hands-on experiences. At the same time, digital learning platforms often provide real-time learning feedback and assessment mechanisms. With features such as online tests, assignment submission, and automatic grading, learners can stay up-to-date on their learning outcomes and shortcomings. At the same time, teachers and systems can also provide personalized feedback and suggestions based on learners' performance, which helps learners maintain a sense of motivation and direction in their learning, and promotes their continuous improvement.

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3. The Impact of the Digital Age on Cross-cultural Communication

The digital age has provided more convenient and efficient channels for cross-cultural communication, such as social media, video conferencing, online translation tools, etc. However, it also brings new challenges:

(1) Information Overload

With the popularity of the internet and the rapid development of technology, we are surrounded by a huge amount of information every day, which comes from multiple channels such as social media, news websites, emails, job notifications, etc. Information overload can not only overwhelm us, but also negatively impact our attention, decision-making, and mental health. The sheer volume of information makes it difficult to sift through and discern through it, increasing the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts and feeling confused and uneasy when making decisions. Information overload can also lead to psychological stress and anxiety, feeling like you can't keep up with the pace of information, worrying that you'll be left behind or miss out on some important opportunities. Information overload in the digital age is a cause for concern. We should go through sound strategies such as sifting through information sources; set priorities; organize information on a regular basis; develop the ability to cope with information overload and protect your concentration, decision-making, and mental health.

(2) Virtual Communication

Virtual communication refers to the non-face-to-face communication using media such as digital technology, internet platforms, and social media. It breaks the time and space constraints in traditional communication, allowing people to have instant information exchange any time and anywhere. Due to the lack of the face-to-face communication, virtual communication lacks real emotional communication and the transmission of non-verbal messages such as body language. Misunderstandings, ambiguities, or miscommunication may occur. At the same time, personal privacy and information security face certain risks, such as information leakage, network fraud and other problems. Some people may become overly reliant on virtual communication, leading to a decline in the interpersonal ability in the real life. Therefore, depending on the content and the object of communication, people can choose the appropriate communication methods, such as text, voice or video call, pay attention to protecting personal privacy and information security, and avoid leaking sensitive information or participating in unsafe online activities.

(3) Culture Clash

With the popularization of the internet and the rapid development of digital technology, exchanges and collisions between different cultures are becoming more and more frequent, which promotes mutual understanding and integration of cultures. However, this blending is often accompanied by cultural clashes and collisions. Cultural clash in the digital age is a multidimensional, complex, and evolving phenomenon. In the process of cultural exchange, differences in values, beliefs, and habits between different cultures can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Through the internet and social media, countries can disseminate their cultural products and values more widely. However, this has also led to

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fierce competition between countries for cultural exports. Hollywood movies, pop music and technological innovations in the United States have a huge global impact, while Chinese TV dramas, variety shows and online novels are also widely popular in some regions. This competition for cultural exports has affected the global cultural and ideological competition landscape. In addition, there are significant differences and conflicts between the younger and the older generation in terms of culture, perceptions and behaviors. We can only address this challenge through strategies such as respect, understanding, dialogue, learning, cooperation, and increased cybersecurity awareness to promote harmonious coexistence and common development among different cultures.

(4) Communication Barriers and Challenges

In face-to-face communication, people can convey emotions and attitudes through non-verbal messages such as facial expressions and body language. But in the digital communication, this information is often difficult to convey and can easily lead to misunderstandings or emotional barriers. Because both parties may come from different cultural backgrounds, areas of expertise, or age levels, their understanding and interpretation of the same information may differ. This difference is especially noticeable in digital communication, where there is a lack of immediate feedback and clarification. In the digital age, the amount of information people receive on a daily basis is huge, resulting in easy distraction. In the process of communication, if both parties are working on other information or tasks, it can lead to communication disruption or lack of concentration, which can affect the effectiveness of communication. Digital communication relies on a variety of technological devices and network platforms. If the technology fails or the equipment performance is insufficient, it can lead to problems such as broken communication, lost information, or delayed delivery. Therefore, people should learn how to effectively use digital tools to communicate, maintain an open and inclusive mindset, ensure good device performance, stable network connection, and ensure the safety and reliability of the content communicated.

4. Strategies for Cultivating Cross-cultural Communication Ability in the Digital Age

In the digital age, cross-cultural communication ability requires not only language ability and cultural awareness, but also good digital literacy, proficiency in the use of various digital tools and platforms, the ability to distinguish the authenticity of information and protect personal privacy. Individuals need to have a high degree of intercultural adaptability when dealing with people they communicate with in different cultural contexts. In the face of a large amount of information, individuals need to have critical thinking ability, think independently, analyze the intentions and biases behind the information, and understand and evaluate other cultures in a more objective and comprehensive way.

(1) Raising Students' Intercultural Awareness

The development of business communication ability requires students to have a certain degree of intercultural awareness. In the digital age, raising students' intercultural awareness is an important and urgent task. In teaching, it is extremely important to develop students' cross-cultural awareness in order to develop their business communication ability. Teachers should make students correctly understand the

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importance of cross-cultural awareness in business communication, and fully consider their own culture while understanding and respecting the culture of other countries. In addition, teachers should cultivate students to have a tolerant attitude towards different worldviews and values. Effective business communication with people from other cultures is only possible with a proper understanding of cross-cultural communication and its influencing factors. "The key to cross-cultural language teaching is to train learners to become cross-cultural speakers or intermediaries, to raise cross-cultural awareness, to have multiple identities, and to avoid a patterned attitude towards non-native cultures because of a single identity" (Hu, 2013).

Classroom instruction can be directed to the use of online resources, such as dedicated cultural exchange platforms and multilingual learning websites, which not only provide language learning functions, but also incorporate rich cultural background knowledge to help students learn about different cultures naturally in language learning. Students are encouraged to access digital libraries and databases to find books, articles, and video materials about different countries and cultures, helping students gain insight into the history, social customs, values, and more of a particular culture. Multimedia technology, such as video, audio, pictures, etc., is used to show the customs, festivals, and art forms of different cultures, so that students can feel and understand the charm of different cultures more intuitively. Students should be organized to participate in virtual international exchange programs, such as online international student forums, transnational cooperation projects, etc. which allow students to communicate and collaborate in real-time with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds, leading to mutual understanding and friendship. Moreover, students should be guided to develop a respectful and inclusive attitude, learn to appreciate and accept the differences of different cultures, and avoid prejudice and discrimination. The digital age provides a wealth of resources and easy access to increase students' intercultural awareness, effectively enhancing students' cross-cultural awareness and ability.

(2) Updating the Teaching Concept

Language and culture being inextricably linked, learning a language is inseparable from a specific language environment, and the premise of learning and mastering a language is to have a deep understanding of the cultural background of the language. The addition of socio-cultural courses to the curriculum does not mean that students' cross-cultural communication ability can be greatly improved, and socio-cultural courses can provide students with knowledge of geography, history, culture and other aspects of western countries, which is helpful to cultivate their cross-cultural communication ability, but it is only at the level of improving cognition, and it is difficult to truly cultivate students' cross-cultural communication ability by only providing knowledge (Hu, 2013). The introduction of target language culture covers history, geography, architectural style, literature and art, customs, folk customs and other aspects, and through the comparison of the two cultures, learners can understand the differences between the target language culture and the mother tongue culture, deepen the understanding of the two cultures, help to avoid the negative transfer of the mother tongue culture, and reduce the occurrence of pragmatic errors in cross-cultural communication. The fresh information about the target language country in the

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textbook will stimulate learners' desire for knowledge, mobilize their enthusiasm and initiative in learning, and improve learning efficiency.

(3) Dynamic Situational Teaching

Professor Shaojie, Zhang said that "From the purpose of reform, university English education should realize the transformation from language ability to professional knowledge-based teaching mode. Foreign language ability is undoubtedly a necessary condition, but the sufficient condition for becoming an international talent is professional knowledge and practical ability." (Zhang, 2012). Therefore, college English education must change from language ability to professional knowledge, so that through the combination of professional knowledge, the purpose of learning is to improve the application ability of English and to master English knowledge in professional fields. English can become a means of learning and mastering professional knowledge. Digital devices are undoubtedly the perfect means of combining professional knowledge and language ability. "Audio-visual media, more than language and visual symbols, can provide students with concrete and easy-to-understand experiences, and can break through the limitations of time and space, and make up for the shortcomings of other direct experience methods." (Shen, 2000).

Compared with "static learning", for instance, listening with ears, seeing with eyes, rote memorization, and mechanical training, "dynamic learning" pays more attention to the integration of theory with practice, emphasizing that subject knowledge should be related to students' physical and mental characteristics, life experiences and social development. With an emphasis on hands-on experiences, students are guided to solve problems and gain true knowledge through inquiry. "The situational method is that the teacher uses modern teaching media to reproduce the situation required for the teaching content, so as to help students understand and remember what they have learned." (Shen, 2000). Any kind of learning activity must be carried out in a certain environment, and it is undoubtedly a realistic choice to create a virtual space with the help of digital devices in a limited classroom environment. By creating illustrated, vivid and real professional scenes, students have an immersive feeling, in which teachers become the organizers, guides, coordinators, designers, and developers of students' learning. It highlights the students' learning in the learning process, fully mobilizes students' learning enthusiasm and creativity, improves learning efficiency, and at the same time better realizes the connection between language ability and professional scenes and expression, which is conducive to cultivating students' comprehensive ability and improving their comprehensive quality.

(4) Organic Combination of Information Technology and Teaching

In the teaching work of colleges and universities, computer information technology is widely used in the teaching field, and the use of learning software for teaching has become commonplace. Smart technology is also playing an increasingly important role in student learning. With the help of modern networks and information technology, students are able to gain more and more knowledge of foreign cultures. Virtual reality (VR) technology, online simulation platforms and other tools are used to create virtual cross-cultural situations, allowing students to practice cross-cultural communication in a simulated

environment in which students learn how to identify and respond to common problems and challenges in cross-cultural communication by analyzing real-life cross-cultural communication cases. In the process of teaching, teachers should strive to guide students to use network information technology reasonably, and use information technology to discover cultural knowledge and improve English communication ability. To improve the effectiveness of teaching, teachers can guide students to provide regular feedback on their learning and share with each other the materials they have collected about English communication (Yang, 2020). Teaching in the digital era should make full use of digital equipment and modern multimedia technology, such as audio recording, video recording, VCD, computer, slide projector, computer software, courseware production and other different forms and auxiliary means to operate language teaching, conduct demonstrations, and then carry out self-operation and practice after students observe and learn, so as to promote the improvement of listening and speaking ability through the interaction of listening, speaking and watching.

(5) The Use of School-Enterprise Cooperation

The school can carry out the school-enterprise joint education, extend the teaching from the school to the front line of companies and enterprises, and cooperate with local well-known enterprises to cultivate talents. Teachers can also lead students to participate in business fairs and various business fairs to improve their business communication ability in the practice of business activities. Schools can work with companies to design and develop courses related to cross-cultural communication. Covering the fundamentals of different cultures, communication ability, conflict resolution strategies, these courses are designed to help students build understanding and respect for multiculturalism and master effective cross-cultural communication methods by incorporating practical aspects into the course content, such as simulated international business negotiations, cross-cultural team projects, etc. These hands-on activities allow students to experience the challenges of communication in different cultural contexts and practice their cross-cultural communication ability. At the same time, schools and enterprises can jointly organize special training on cross-cultural communication, invite experts or scholars with rich cross-cultural work experiences to teach, and help students deeply understand the key elements and ability in cross-cultural communication through case analysis and role-playing. Moreover, the school can provide students with overseas internship and exchange opportunities. School-enterprise cooperation has unique advantages and roles in improving students' cross-cultural communication ability, which can continuously improve students' cross-cultural communication ability and lay a solid foundation for their future development.

5. Summary

To sum up, the digital age has brought unprecedented opportunities and challenges for cross-cultural communication. Cultivating talents with cross-cultural communication ability is an important guarantee for adapting to the trend of globalization and promoting international cooperation and development. Good cross-cultural communication ability can help students better understand and respect each other's

cultural differences and enhance international competitiveness. In addition, it can promote cultural diversity and inclusion, improve personal quality and career development so as to promote smooth cooperation and communication and better adapt to the needs of the digital age.

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