

Research on the Cultivation of College Students' Intercultural Communication Competence in the Context of Digital Transformation

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Abstract—This paper puts forward strategies for fostering Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) among college students in the digital context, which are categorized into three dimensions: teaching concepts, teaching methodologies, and evaluation systems. Prior to proposing these strategies, the study first clarifies the concept, connotation, and constituent elements of ICC, and further explores the necessity of cultivating college students' ICC against the backdrop of digital transformation. The ultimate purpose of this research is to provide practical references for colleges and universities to develop high-caliber, interdisciplinary talents in the era of digital transformation.

Keywords—intercultural communication competence, digital transformation

I. INTRODUCTION

The current intercultural communication competence of college students is not promising, as noted by Gu [1]. This is partly because traditional teaching has not attached sufficient importance to cultivating such competence, and partly because learners struggle to accurately grasp cultural differences and construct the social significance of knowledge due to time and space constraints and a lack of real contexts [2].

China places great emphasis on advancing digital transformation. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Term Objectives for 2035 advocates accelerating digital development to build a "Digital China". For the first time, the Report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) included "promoting digital education", a major strategic arrangement by the Party Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core, which clarifies an action plan for the future of digital education and is of great significance.

The 2023 Work Points of the Ministry of Education stressed the need to accelerate the digital transformation of higher education and create new forms of higher education teaching. Adapting to new needs and changes through digital transformation has become a new opportunity for innovation and reform in foreign language education. The College English Teaching Guidelines clearly requires the cultivation of students' intercultural communication competence.

Against this backdrop, this paper starts by analyzing the necessity of cultivating college students' intercultural communication competence in the context of digital transformation. It then aims to help students better adapt to the demands of the digital globalization era and enhance their survival and competitiveness in complex, evolving

cross-cultural environments by developing training strategies, expanding cultivation pathways, and improving evaluation systems.

II. THE NECESSITY OF CULTIVATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation has been a key driver of global social, economic, and cultural changes since the 21st century. It has revolutionized information and communication methods, profoundly affecting people's lives and work, driven by the rapid development of emerging technologies such as cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and mobile computing. In this context, cultivating college students' intercultural communication competence is increasingly vital.

Digital transformation has deepened globalization first. Technological progress has facilitated cross-border communication and exchanges, making effective intercultural communication essential for college students to participate successfully in a globalized society.

Moreover, digital transformation has intensified global talent competition. In a globalized world, enterprises and organizations increasingly value intercultural communication skills to gain an edge in the international market. College students with such skills are more likely to integrate into diverse teams, demonstrate their potential, and increase their employment and career development opportunities.

The technological tools and platforms brought by digital transformation have also presented unprecedented opportunities and challenges for intercultural communication. For example, virtual teamwork and remote work have become common, and social media and online communities have made intercultural communication more widespread and frequent. Thus, college students must adapt to new technologies and use their advantages to expand communication scope and depth.

Additionally, digital transformation has reshaped how culture is formed and disseminated. Culture is no longer limited to specific geographic regions but is transmitted across time and space via the internet and digital media. College students need to understand the backgrounds, values, and customs of different cultures to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, while also showing cultural awareness and respect.

Finally, intercultural communication skills are not only a job market demand but also key to solving global problems.

Universities should integrate digital tools with innovative intercultural education approaches to help students build necessary communication bridges and promote more open and inclusive cultural understanding at both individual and societal levels.

In short, digital transformation brings new challenges and opportunities for cultivating college students' intercultural communication competence. In a globalized era, college students need strong intercultural communication skills to adapt to and lead changes. Both university education and students themselves should prioritize cultivating such competence to advance personal career development and social progress.

III. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Digital transformation has had a profound and growing impact on global education, especially in intercultural communication. The following aspects can be explored to analyze the influencing factors:

The impact of media literacy and digital skills on intercultural communication is significant. Media literacy and digital skills are core in digital transformation. Students need to effectively use digital media to retrieve, process, evaluate, and create information, as well as understand the social and cultural impacts of digital media. For example, cultural differences may affect communication styles, information presentation, and communication etiquette on social media platforms in different countries [3].

The diversity of educational technology platforms and tools and their educational implications is another factor. With the advancement of educational technology, platforms and tools have become increasingly diverse. Students are no longer restricted to printed materials and traditional classrooms; they can learn through online courses, mobile applications, and interactive software. These resources have expanded learning boundaries, enabling personalized learning plans and distance education. For instance, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Small Private Online Courses (SPOCs) offer flexible learning pathways and opportunities to interact with scholars worldwide [4]. However, the complexity of technology and uncertainty in its application require teachers to have certain technical knowledge and application capabilities.

The advancement of digitally assisted language learning also plays a role. Language is a key tool for intercultural communication, and digital technology integration has significantly optimized language learning. Online language platforms, intelligent vocabulary software, and one-on-one video sessions with foreign teachers have enhanced learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. These tools allow learners to study at their own pace and meet their needs, while providing non-native teachers with more resources and methods. However, technology is not omnipotent; successful language learning requires educators and learners to make appropriate humanized adjustments to teaching content and methods. For example, online platforms should provide more interactive and inductive learning experiences to help learners integrate into real linguistic and cultural environments.

Furthermore, increased cultural diversity brings

opportunities and challenges. Multicultural online communication platforms and virtual teams force students to learn to communicate and collaborate in multicultural contexts, which is both an opportunity and a challenge. Colleges and universities must actively respond to this transformation, adjust strategies flexibly, and use digital tools to help students enhance their intercultural awareness and improve their communication competence through specific language practice and cross-cultural interpretation.

IV. RESEARCH ON CULTIVATION STRATEGIES FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Innovative educational concepts and teaching methods are needed to cultivate college students' intercultural communication competence in the context of digital transformation. This paper proposes strategies from the perspectives of teaching objective design, teaching implementation, and teaching organization.

A. *Design of Progressive Teaching Objectives*

Educators need to design a clearly structured, progressive system of teaching objectives to help students better understand, absorb, and apply intercultural communication knowledge and skills.

Basic Mastery Stage: In the early course stages, teachers should focus on cultivating students' basic understanding of intercultural communication concepts. Using video materials, engaging quizzes, etc., students can grasp basic principles and functions and identify cultural similarities and differences. Digital media resources like cultural comparison documentaries and communication simulation software can enrich content.

Basic Application Stage: After mastering basic intercultural communication theories, students should practice through simulated scenarios, case analyses, and role-playing. For example, international video conferences can be organized via online platforms to allow students to express views in cross-cultural contexts.

In-depth Development Stage: In advanced teaching, educators should help students enhance cross-cultural adaptability and critical thinking. By combining online and offline methods, real international exchange projects can strengthen adaptability in complex environments. Advanced simulation training in cross-cultural negotiation, such as simulated international conferences and debates, can also be introduced.

Independent Application Stage: Students are required to independently apply acquired knowledge and skills in real situations. Combining academic research and social practice, they should participate in international cooperation projects, study intercultural communication cases, or engage in multicultural community service.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF TARGETED TEACHING METHODS

Targeted teaching methods should be adopted at each stage to achieve progressive objectives.

Basic Mastery Stage: Interactive e-textbooks, combined with educational games and multimedia content, can help students sort out basic intercultural concepts in an engaging way.

Basic Application Stage: Online role-playing games and simulated social platforms allow students to participate in intercultural communication. Digital tools can collect feedback and analyze communication processes to improve interaction and problem-solving abilities.

In-depth Development Stage: Online practical activities and team projects can improve students' intercultural communication skills. Virtual Reality (VR) technology can create immersive learning environments to enhance experience and presence.

Independent Application Stage: Teachers should encourage students to use online resources and databases for individual or group research, improving independent work and academic abilities, and applying skills in actual cross-cultural environments.

VI. SCENARIO-BASED TEACHING ORGANIZATION

Scenario-based teaching creates specific situations for learning in simulated real environments, helping students deeply understand and apply intercultural communication knowledge.

Remote Collaboration Tools: Using tools like Microsoft Teams and Zoom, students can collaborate with international peers on projects or discussions without physical constraints.

Online Learning Platforms: Designing online courses allows students to participate in intercultural activities anytime, interacting with global peers. Building online communities and forums can increase cross-cultural interaction frequency.

Virtual Reality and Multimedia Resources: VR technology can create virtual cities, institutions, or conference venues for students to practice communication skills. Multimedia can develop teaching videos and interactive cases, conveying intercultural communication complexities through videos, animations, and diagrams.

These strategies help college students master and improve intercultural communication competence in a digitally transformed environment, enabling them to understand diverse cultural values and communication styles and become international professionals adapting to globalization challenges.

VII. RESEARCH ON CULTIVATION PATHWAYS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

A. *Personalized and Diversified Cultivation Pathways*

Students should be encouraged to participate in practical projects and exchange opportunities with diverse cultural backgrounds, such as international volunteer programs and language-culture clubs. These activities let them apply knowledge in real cross-cultural environments, deepening understanding and application.

Colleges and universities should offer various intercultural communication-related courses, such as international relations and intercultural communication, for students to choose based on interests and career plans. These courses should integrate online and offline teaching, using digital technology to expand content and methods like simulated United Nations negotiations and online

international seminars.

Additionally, personalized intercultural competence development plans should be designed, with professional guidance and consulting services. Teachers and instructors can provide customized strategies based on students' majors, language proficiency, and cultural experiences.

B. *Cultivation Pathways Integrating In-School and Out-of-School Resources*

Digital technologies like social media, online forums, and virtual learning communities offer multiple channels for intercultural exchanges. Students can interact with people worldwide through these platforms, enhancing understanding and respect for other cultures.

Contemporary university education should go beyond traditional classrooms and utilize off-campus resources—social, cultural, and digital—to build broader learning platforms.

Colleges and universities can collaborate with foreign schools, international organizations, and enterprises to build communication bridges, providing overseas study and internship opportunities. Participating in international exchange programs lets students immerse in different cultures, learning to communicate effectively with diverse people.

Colleges and universities should also incorporate social practice and volunteer projects into training programs. These activities strengthen students' social responsibility, practical abilities, and capacity to handle challenges in diverse cultural environments.

C. *Interdisciplinary and Lifelong Learning Cultivation Pathways*

Lifelong learning means education is a continuous process, not a limited stage. Universities can establish online learning platforms, offering courses and seminars to enable students to continue learning and updating knowledge and skills after graduation.

Cultivating college students' intercultural communication competence is a long-term, interdisciplinary process [5]. On one hand, interdisciplinary education programs provide multiple perspectives, fostering the ability to solve complex problems. For example, integrating literature, history, sociology, and linguistics knowledge helps students understand the profound connotations of multiple cultures while learning languages.

VIII. RESEARCH ON THE EVALUATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE CULTIVATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Technological advancements have provided more tools and methods to evaluate and cultivate students' intercultural communication competence, verifying the effectiveness of such cultivation.

Online communication platforms and social media are part of modern students' daily communication and key for assessing intercultural skills. Analyzing students' speeches and interactions here show how they apply skills in real life, including participation, online collaboration, and acceptance of diverse cultural perspectives. Teachers can evaluate daily

application by monitoring participation frequency, discussion quality, and attitudes toward diverse cultures.

Targeted questionnaires can cover students' intercultural awareness, adaptability, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities. For example, they can include questions on understanding cultural values and customs, and multiple-choice questions on solving simulated intercultural conflicts. Collecting self-evaluations and feedback from students with different academic and cultural backgrounds helps teachers understand the overall competence level and self-awareness alignment.

Multimedia technology popularization has made video, audio, and screen recording effective for documenting student behavior. These records are valuable for reviewing intercultural communication training. Recorded materials help analyze communication details like tone, posture, facial expressions, and language choices, comprehensively evaluating non-verbal skills and cultural difference sensitivity. They also reveal logical and creative thinking in solving cross-cultural problems.

Virtual Reality (VR) technology and simulation platforms provide a more realistic and engaging immersive intercultural environment than traditional classroom simulations. Students can interact with virtual characters from diverse cultures, facing cultural conflicts, incorrect communication assumptions, and non-verbal differences. Teachers can assess practical application of skills and adaptability in real scenarios based on performance here.

IX. CONCLUSION

Digital transformation is a dynamic and complex systemic change, not a simple process, requiring continuous learning, adaptation, and innovation. For college students, developing intercultural communication competence means confidently expressing themselves on the global digital stage and building deep connections and collaborations with diverse

cultural backgrounds.

In this process, educational institutions, teachers, and students must collaborate, continuously exploring best practices to fully leverage digital technology advantages, develop effective training programs, and help students thrive in an evolving digital world.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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