

An Analysis of the Impact of Social Media on International High School Students' Cross-cultural Ability

Jialin Mo^{1,a,*}

¹*Bigger-mind International Course, Beijing, 102212, China*

a. 3413381692@qq.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: With globalization and comprehensive development in Chinese society, the importance of cross-cultural competence has become evident. Based on the existing literature, this article discusses the correlation between cross-cultural competence and social media among international high school students. The paper analyzes the significance of cross-cultural competence and explores the impact of internet-mediated social media on two international high school students. The study reveals the crucial role of cross-cultural competence in facilitating communication, understanding, and personal growth and development among high school students. Social media offers opportunities for communication with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, enhancing awareness of different cultural values, beliefs, and perspectives, and promoting cross-cultural exchange and interaction. Using social media can strengthen cross-cultural communication and understanding. Key aspects to improve in enhancing cross-cultural competence include cross-cultural communication skills, cultural sensitivity, adaptability, respect for others' differences, open-mindedness, and learning about different cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: cross-cultural ability, social media, network, teenagers

1. Introduction

Since the diffusion of personal computing in the 1980s and the expansion of the Web in the 1990s, digital technology has been a catalyst for social change in contemporary societies [1]. The internet, therefore, has garnered attention across different age groups, and its rapid development has had a profound impact on social interaction, communication, and globalization. Social media platforms and online communities have fostered virtual connections, changing the way people interact and share information globally [2]. Identifying and measuring digital skills has become an important area of inquiry related to education. Cross-cultural competence is significant for individuals and organizations alike. Understanding how social media can enhance cross-cultural competence is necessary as an increasing number of students lack this ability, leading to strong cultural shock.

Choi explores how luxury brands match appeal and attitude on social media in a cross-cultural environment. The study adopts both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. This paper shares a connection with the previous work on social media and cross-cultural competence as both touch on the influence of social media on student behavior [3]. However, the difference lies in the focus, with this paper exploring the role of social media while the latter emphasizes the impact of social media on consumer behavior in a cross-cultural context. Another

study investigated the effects of COVID-19 specific body-positive and diet culture-related social media content on body image and mood among young women. This research employed a comprehensive approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods [4]. In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with some of the participants. These qualitative research methods allowed for a more in-depth exploration of participants' personal experiences, emotions, and reactions to social media content related to body-positive images and food culture. Considering the question of how students can enhance cross-cultural competence based on social media usage, this paper employs interviews to explore the topic. The author interviewed two international high school students with study abroad experience, obtaining insights into the social media platforms they use and how they enhance cross-cultural competence, particularly in English. This research can contribute to improving students' cross-cultural awareness, competence, and ability to effectively communicate and collaborate across cultural differences, enhancing their adaptability and inclusiveness, and providing broader opportunities and possibilities for their career development and personal growth.

2. Social Media and Cross-Cultural Competence

Social media is prevalent and widespread, especially among adolescents [5]. It acts as a channel for individuals to exchange information, enabling them to understand and learn about the perspectives, thoughts, and experiences of people from various geographical and cultural backgrounds. The extensive use of social media has created a global social platform, facilitating direct communication and interaction among individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Social media platforms offer real-time and instantaneous features, allowing users to share their daily lives and knowledge with the outside world, while other users can respond. This real-time aspect makes social media a rapid information dissemination tool, making it one of the primary modes of communication today. Additionally, social media provides privacy settings, enabling users to control the audience for their shared content based on their preferences and even block certain users.

Cross-cultural competence refers to the ability of individuals to communicate, understand, and learn from others in different cultural contexts. It encompasses knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable individuals to adapt to and accept cultural differences in different geographical regions, thereby establishing positive connections in cross-cultural environments. Cross-cultural competence can be divided into six main aspects: Cultural Awareness: This involves knowing and understanding the cultures, values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors of different geographical regions, including respecting and supporting one's own culture and others. Cross-Cultural Communication: This aspect emphasizes the importance of effective cross-cultural communication, including non-verbal communication, language expression, listening skills, and understanding others' perspectives. Cultural Adaptability: Adapting to and understanding different cultures can be challenging. It involves flexible learning, observation, adaptation, and coping with cultural shocks when faced with cultural differences. Cross-Cultural Problem-Solving: Solving problems in cross-cultural environments requires cross-cultural sensitivity, creative thinking, and a multi-perspective approach. Cultural Wisdom: Developing sensitivity and understanding towards cultural differences to avoid biases, stereotypes, and discrimination. Cultivating cultural wisdom also involves being inclusive, understanding, and respectful of other cultures. Cultural Learning: Continuous learning to enhance understanding and knowledge of other cultures. "The cultural information conveyed by the language is an important part of the content of English language teaching and learning" [6]. By enhancing and developing cross-cultural competence among young people, they can better adapt to and integrate into a diverse social environment. There is a close connection between cross-cultural competence and social media.

3. Methodology

3.1. Interview Introduction

This article adopts the method of interviews, where the author interviewed two international high school students. It is suggested that meaningful social interactions with host people can help international students acquire and develop culture-specific social skills that facilitate efficient cross-cultural interactions [7]. The interview consisted of a total of 13 questions, covering basic information such as age, grade, and gender, as well as the frequency and functions of the software they frequently use. Both students share the commonality of having more than two years of study abroad experience and being familiar with certain software that can enhance their abilities. They are aged between 16 and 18, with one male and one female. The reason for interviewing them is to gain insights into their real-life study and living experiences abroad, understand the challenges they faced, the strategies they employed to cope, and the achievements they attained. Through this representative interview, valuable experiences and advice can be obtained.

3.2. Results Analysis

The interview results reveal that these two individuals have enhanced their cross-cultural abilities through social media as they engage with foreign friends, exchange information, and learn new languages, thereby improving their language skills and insights. Social media plays a significant role in cultivating and developing cross-cultural capabilities. International high school students are often digital natives, highly proficient in using technology and software. They frequently use various applications, including social media, communication tools, entertainment platforms, and learning apps. While both students use social media almost daily, the frequency and time spent on these platforms vary according to individual habits and needs. They engage in diverse content, such as short videos, images, and user-generated content on social media, and may also watch movies, TV shows, music videos, and content from influencers on entertainment platforms. Additionally, they may use learning applications to access educational videos, online courses, and academic resources. Social media platforms offer diverse options, and they provide users with an online space to create virtual profiles and share content, such as pictures, text, and videos, with others. These platforms encourage user interaction and communication through likes, comments, and shares, fostering social connections and communication. This virtual space also allows users to expand their social circles and connect with people from different countries.

Firstly, social media provides people with opportunities to understand and connect with other cultures. This virtual cross-cultural exchange broadens people's horizons and promotes understanding of other cultures. "Cross-cultural communication is extensive content, which is different human groups out of their cultural circles to contact other activities, and this process will produce different cognition, values, and schemas." [8]. Secondly, social media offers convenience and real-time interaction for cross-cultural communication. This real-time interaction deepens cross-cultural communication, strengthens cultural connections, and fosters friendships. Moreover, social media platforms facilitate cross-cultural collaboration and cooperation. People can collaborate with individuals from different cultures through social media, working together to solve problems, undertake projects, or create content. This cross-cultural collaboration develops cooperative skills, problem-solving abilities, and experience in cross-cultural teamwork. However, it's important to note that social media may also lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. Due to the fast-paced nature of information dissemination, content may be misinterpreted or presented in a biased manner, leading to cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings. Therefore, cultivating critical thinking and cross-cultural communication skills are crucial to avoiding

cross-cultural conflicts and promoting effective communication in the social media environment. In conclusion, social media plays a significant role in promoting cross-cultural capabilities. It provides a platform for understanding, communication, and cooperation, broadening people's cross-cultural perspectives and facilitating cultural connections and interactions. However, individuals need to maintain an open mindset and actively develop cross-cultural communication skills to better cope with the challenges and opportunities of cross-cultural communication in the social media context.

4. Discussion

If the volume of data increases, it usually has an impact on the results. More data can provide comprehensive information, such as by studying non-verbal communication in cross-cultural interactions, including body language, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, thereby increasing the reliability and statistical significance of the results. A larger dataset can help reduce sample bias and provide more representative results. In the process of enhancing cross-cultural abilities, students need to maintain a respectful, open, and learning attitude, cultivate cross-cultural communication skills, increase their understanding and sensitivity to other cultures, and continuously improve through practice and experience. Additionally, nowadays, children may lack cross-cultural abilities to some extent due to several factors.

Firstly, cultural homogeneity exists in some regions or communities, resulting in students being exposed to a singular culture, limiting their understanding and learning of diverse cultures and possibly leading to prejudice against other cultures. Secondly, students may lack digital socialization. With the rise and prevalence of social media and digital culture, children tend to prefer playing and communicating with peers who have similar family and cultural backgrounds. This phenomenon can limit their exposure to other cultures and cause missed opportunities for understanding and learning about other cultures. Thirdly, there may be shortcomings in the education system. Some educational institutions may lack comprehensive attention and focus on cross-cultural education. They might prioritize academic achievements, neglecting the enhancement of students' cross-cultural communication abilities. Fourthly, students may lack international experiences. Due to various reasons, some students may not have the chance to participate in international exchanges, cultural trips, and other activities, which also restricts their cognitive understanding of cross-cultural aspects.

Various measures can be taken to enhance cross-cultural abilities among young people. In this article, seven methods are proposed to enhance students' cross-cultural capabilities, including advocating multicultural education, increasing cross-cultural exchange programs, promoting multilingual learning, organizing cultural experiential activities, fostering cross-cultural sensitivity, conducting cross-cultural collaborative activities, and providing international exchange opportunities.

Firstly, schools can offer diverse educational courses, including the history, customs, and values of different cultures, to enhance students' understanding and respect for other cultures [9]. It acknowledges cultural differences and the need to respect cultural ties, language, and the identities of communities. Secondly, students can be encouraged to participate in cross-cultural exchange projects and similar activities. In these events, students can exchange ideas, engage in cultural communication, and learn from peers from different countries, experiencing other cultures and enhancing cross-cultural communication and adaptability.

Thirdly, encouraging students to learn multiple languages can help them better understand and communicate with people from other cultures. In this regard, schools and educational institutions can provide language courses and promote language exchange while also improving the professionalism of teachers [10]. The results of this study highlight the need to improve teacher training in cultural competence and the importance for institutions of higher learning of

understanding the cross-cultural experiences typical of the regions from which they draw their students. Fourthly, organizing students to participate in cultural experiential activities, such as visiting observatories and museums, attending art exhibitions to learn about artworks from different periods and countries, and tasting food from other cultures, can increase students' awareness and interest in other cultures. Fifthly, guiding students to reflect on their own cultural biases and barriers fosters their sensitivity and respect for other cultures. Through learning and discussion, students are encouraged to adopt an open and inclusive attitude towards different cultural perspectives. Next, organizing students to participate in cross-cultural collaborative projects and working in groups with students from different cultural backgrounds, can help them learn cross-cultural cooperation and view different cultures from diverse perspectives. Lastly, encouraging students to participate in international exchange activities, such as student exchange programs and international academic conferences, provides opportunities for students to interact with people from different countries and cultures, broadening their international horizons and enhancing their cross-cultural abilities. Through these methods, students can enhance their cross-cultural abilities, cultivate respect and understanding for diverse cultures, and lay the foundation for future international interactions and career paths.

5. Conclusion

Cross-cultural competence refers to the ability to communicate and interact effectively in different cultural contexts. The rise and prevalence of social media have provided new platforms and opportunities for cross-cultural communication. As a global networking tool, social media helps to overcome some of the limitations of time and space in cross-cultural interactions. Students can engage in instant messaging, video chats, and online communities to communicate with people from different countries and regions, presenting opportunities for the development of cross-cultural competence. However, solely relying on social media is not enough for students to develop effective cross-cultural competence. The presentation of information on social media is influenced by individual preferences, platform algorithms, and content filtering, which may lead to biased and misleading information. Therefore, when using social media for cross-cultural communication, students should maintain critical thinking and continuously verify the authenticity and accuracy of information. In addition to social media, cultivating cross-cultural competence requires other approaches, such as participating in cross-cultural exchange activities, learning foreign languages, and reading cross-cultural literature. These practices can help individuals gain a more comprehensive understanding of and respect for cultural differences and adapt to communication styles and behavioral norms from different cultural backgrounds. The current research is mainly based on existing literature and interviews for analysis. Future studies should collect more empirical data to further explore the correlation between social media and cross-cultural competence among larger and more diverse populations.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, whose invaluable guidance and advice throughout the research process contributed significantly to the completion of this paper. Without his assistance, I would not have been able to accomplish this work. Secondly, I would like to thank my classmates for actively participating in the interviews, providing me with accurate data, and offering helpful support during the research process. Our discussions and exchange of ideas, as well as sharing our research findings, have been incredibly valuable to me. Their suggestions and feedback have positively impacted my paper, enabling me to continuously improve and refine my research content.

References

- [1] Scolari, C. A., Ardèvol, E., Pérez-Latorre, Ò., Masanet, M. J., & Rodríguez, N. L. (2020). What are teens doing with media? An ethnographic approach for identifying transmedia skills and informal learning strategies. *Digital education review*, (37), 269-287.
- [2] Gündüz, U. (2017). The effect of social media on identity construction. *Mediterranean journal of social sciences*, 8(5), 85.
- [3] Choi, Y. K., Seo, Y., Wagner, U., & Yoon, S. (2020). Matching luxury brand appeals with attitude functions on social media across cultures. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 520-528.
- [4] Parcell, L., Jeon, S., & Rodgers, R. F. (2023). Effects of COVID-19 specific body positive and diet culture related social media content on body image and mood among young women. *Body Image*, 44, 1-8.
- [5] Yuan, Changhuan. (2001). *English Language Teaching and the Cultivation of Students' Intercultural Communication Skills*. Curriculum, Teaching Material and Method (8), 4.
- [6] Luo, C., & Jiang, S. (2023). The knowledge map of gender equality in cross-cultural communication: A bibliometric approach. *Heliyon*, 9(6).
- [7] Sozen, A. I., Tanaka, T., & Nakano, S. (2020). Cross-Cultural Social Skills of Turkish Students in Japan: Implications for Overcoming Academic and Social Difficulties During Cross-Cultural Transition. *IAFOR Journal of Psychology & the Behavioral Sciences*, 6(1), 15-41.
- [8] Irodaxon, E., & Musharrafxon, Q. (2023). THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION. ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ НАУКА И ИННОВАЦИОННЫЕ ИДЕИ В МИРЕ, 20(3), 35-37.
- [9] Lie Ken Jie, Christopher HBScl; Finn, Yvonne F. MD2; Bish, Melanie PhD3; Carlson, Elisabeth PhD4; Kumlien, Christine PhD5; Chan, E. Angela PhD6; Leung, Doris Y.L. PhD7. Mechanisms Driving Postgraduate Health and Social Science Students' Cultural Competence: An Integrated Systematic Review. *Academic Medicine* 97(11):p 1707-1721, November 2022. | DOI: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000004714
- [10] Lopes-Murphy, S., & Murphy, C. (2016). The Influence of Cross-Cultural Experiences & Location on Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Competence. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 16(3), 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v16i3.19331>