

The Integration of Cross-Cultural Communication in Performing Arts: A Short Video Making Project

Peishi Weng, Taipei University of Marine Technology, Taiwan
Yijie Ou, Taipei University of Marine Technology, Taiwan

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Abstract

Recently, under the influence of the internationalization of universities, many international students have been attracted to study in Taiwan. Therefore, the opportunities for students to interact and communicate across cultures on campus have gradually increased; however, most Taiwanese students still have insufficient cross-cultural experience when facing international students. Due to the above problems, the purpose of this study is to explore how international students can complete a short video project with Taiwanese students' assistance. This is an one-semester project with 20 students' involved (10 international students and 10 Taiwanese students). Those students are all from Innovative Design College of a University in Northern Taiwan. With on-site observation, post-interviews and "Intercultural Competence Scale" questionnaires, the researcher collect both students' feedback related to cross-cultural communication, trying the figure out the challenges between international students and Taiwanese students in the learning process. The findings will help to understand the impact of cross-cultural cooperation on the development of students' cross-cultural communication skills, provide relevant suggestions for future studies and finally create a friendly international campus environment.

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1. Introduction

With the increased globalization and rapid information spread in modern society, transnational and cross-cultural interactions become more frequent. Driven by the New Southbound Policy in Taiwan, there are more and more international students willing to study abroad, which has resulted in an influx of students from different countries on campus. Faced with the integration of multiculturalism, we must think deeply and solve the problem of how to effectively understand the cultural differences between the two sides.

Recently, Taiwan's universities have made significant progress in internationalization, attracting many international students to study. The resulting opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges have gradually expanded. However, despite this, Taiwanese university students still have relatively insufficient cross-cultural experiences on campus (Lu Mulin et al., 2014). So far, although we are committed to improving students' international cultural competence (ICL) in general education courses, most of them focus on the cultivation of foreign language abilities (Zhang Shanli, 2015), while courses with cross-cultural experience as the theme are still relative scarcity (Zhou Wanqing, 2017; Huang Wending, 2019). Therefore, teachers should think about how to establish an international teaching environment in the classroom so that students have the opportunity to truly experience cross-cultural interaction and engage in self-reflection to cultivate their international cultural abilities and enhance cultural understanding on both sides.

With cross-cultural communication, we can learn each other's cultures, sharing each other's experiences. However, there are still challenges existed. As Chi (2016)'s study, it showed that the challenges people from both cultures faced while working with others. The challenges included different working styles, different language levels, and non-verbal communication. Also, misunderstanding is the foremost barrier to communication in a multicultural environment. Jenifer and Raman (2015) described that it is common among people of different cultural backgrounds whose values and beliefs vary. The variation always results in anxiety and uncertainty and finally the misunderstanding occurs. Thus, based on the cases, it is significant of getting language and cultural awareness training and doing the observation to other cultures while having communication and relation with different people in the different culture.

2. Method

2.1 Research Structure

Nowadays, new southbound policy currently implemented by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan mentions the importance of talent exchange and resource sharing. It is expected that through in-depth cultural introduction, students can understand cultural differences, share their own culture with others, and enhance cultural understanding. Therefore, this study integrated cross-cultural communication into a video-making project. The purpose is to break the limitations of traditional teaching and through cooperation learning by international students and Taiwanese students, and assist students from both sides to use a cooperative learning method with campus experience and life as the theme. Through a series of learning activities, students can learn and understand foreign cultural experiences on campus, enhance students' international perspective, and create a friendly international campus.

2.2 Research Design

This study adopts a research method with qualitative and quantitative data. Through pre- and post-test questionnaires, students' attitudes towards the integration of cross-cultural communication into the topic were obtained, and students' understanding of their own and other cultures was explored. In addition, after-class interview questionnaires are supplemented, and more detailed information can be obtained through open questions. Finally, students' attitudes towards cross-cultural learning can be summarized and summarized from the students' interview data.

2.3 Participants

This is an one-semester project with 20 students' involved (10 Pilipino students and 10 Taiwanese students). Those students are all from Innovative Design College of a University in Northern Taiwan. It mainly focuses on collecting the learning process of students' project production and understanding the development of cross-cultural communication skills of students from both sides.

2.4 Research Instruments

Two of the factors of Chao's (2014) Intercultural Communication Competency Scale was adopted in this study: Affective orientation to intercultural interaction and Behavioral performance in intercultural interaction, with 13 questions on a 5-point Likert scale. Students will be tested once before and after the project to investigate if students' cross-cultural communication competences changed.

In addition, qualitative data used in this study to investigate students' attitudes toward cross-cultural learning. The open questions are as follows:

Q1: What are your experiences on working with students of different nationalities on special projects?

Q2: After this project is completed, will it help to understand foreign cultures and improve learning motivation?

Q3: During communication and coordination, do you encounter learning difficulties? Can they be solved?

3. Result and Discussion

Collected data were analyzed and discussed based on the purpose of this study. First, the researcher presented the results of satisfaction on Intercultural Communication Competency Scale Survey to investigate the difference. Then, to get detailed information, the researcher used open questions to get students' feedback.

The pre-and post- Intercultural Communication Competency Scale Surveys results showed that students were willing to learn each other's cultures, share each's cultures, and develop communication strategies. The descriptive statistics were provided in the following.

Table 1: Pre-intercultural Communication Competency Scale Survey Results (N =20)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Strongly agree
Factor: Affective orientation to intercultural interaction					
1. I enjoy communicating with people from different cultures	0	0	0	80%	20%
2. I am willing to acquire knowledge regarding different world cultures.	0	0	20%	75%	5%
3. I am willing to manage emotions and frustrations when interacting with people from different cultures.	0	0	25%	75%	0
4. I am willing to demonstrate my interest in understanding people of other cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	0	0	10%	80%	10%
5. I am willing to modify my attitude and behavior for interacting appropriately with people of other cultures.	0	0	25%	60%	15%
6. I am willing to communicate with people of other cultures to broaden my worldview.	0	0	10%	80%	10%
Factor: Behavioral performance in intercultural interaction					
7. I can effectively use target to communicate with other people of different cultural backgrounds.	0	50%	40%	10%	0
8. I can eat what others eat in culturally diverse situations.	0	0	40%	30%	20%
9. I can use functional languages (e.g., invitation, refusal, and apology) flexibly for achieving appropriate intercultural communication.	0	40%	25%	35%	0
10. I can develop appropriate interactive strategies (e.g., directness and face-saving) to adjust to the diverse styles of intercultural communication.	0	50%	40%	10%	0
11. I can modify the way I dress when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	50%	40%	10%	0
12. I can change my verbal behavior (e.g., speed, accent) when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	20%	40%	20%	0
13. I can change my non-verbal behavior (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	10%	60%	30%	0

Table 2: Post-intercultural Communication Competency Scale Survey Results (N =20)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Strongly agree
Factor: Affective orientation to intercultural interaction					
1. I enjoy communicating with people from different cultures	0	0	0	60%	40%
2. I am willing to acquire knowledge regarding different world cultures.	0	0	0%	65%	35%
3. I am willing to manage emotions and frustrations when interacting with people from different cultures.	0	0	20%	80%	0
4. I am willing to demonstrate my interest in understanding people of other cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	0	0	0%	85%	15%
5. I am willing to modify my attitude and behavior for interacting appropriately with people of other cultures.	0	0	20%	65%	20%
6. I am willing to communicate with people of other cultures to broaden my worldview.	0	0	0%	20%	80%
Factor: Behavioral performance in intercultural interaction					
7. I can effectively use target to communicate with other people of different cultural backgrounds.	0	40%	40%	20%	0
8. I can eat what others eat in culturally diverse situations.	0	0	40%	40%	20%
9. I can use functional languages (e.g., invitation, refusal, and apology) flexibly for achieving appropriate intercultural communication.	0	35%	30%	35%	0
10. I can develop appropriate interactive strategies (e.g., directness and face-saving) to adjust to the diverse styles of intercultural communication.	0	40%	50%	10%	0
11. I can modify the way I dress when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	35%	55%	10%	0
12. I can change my verbal behavior (e.g., speed, accent) when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	5%	60%	35%	0
13. I can change my non-verbal behavior (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) when it is necessary in intercultural situations.	0	0%	70%	30%	0

The Willingness in Cross-Cultural Communication

Among 20 participants, before this project started, all of the participants were willing to communicate with each other. In the factor “Affective orientation to intercultural interaction,” participants enjoyed to know more each other, and showed the interest to understand foreign culture. As Ho (2000) claimed the interaction process between the two parties and the teacher's role in this process were collected and investigated. This study indicated that during the communication process, the process of questions and answers between students helps students acquire specific cultural knowledge of each other's countries. Therefore, through authentic communication, it can indeed enhance Students have cultural exchanges and gain a deeper understanding of other cultures. Here are some responses and feedbacks form the open questions:

“I like to make friends from different countries. I would like know more about other cultures.” (A, June 19, 2024)

“This is my first time to study abroad. I want to know more about Taiwan's culture and enjoy my life here.” (B, June 19, 2024)

Challenges in Cross-Cultural Communication

However, in the analyzed cases, there were illustrations of the difficulties that students faced when solving language and cultural problems. Factor” Behavioral performance in intercultural interaction” showed that there are some challenges existing during communication. The language barrier was the most important issue. Language barrier is the greatest problem encountered in multi-cultural communication. Most participants reflected that the did not have enough language level to communicate with each other, so that the misunderstanding would happened. Finally the frustrations would appeared. Communication becomes more accessible when participants speaking in different languages, if not impossible. Even when people speak the same language, differences in dialects, accents, and idioms can confuse them. Sometimes, people may speak the same language but with different meanings for certain words or phrases.

“I am not good at English. Sometimes I can not express myself, so that I avoid speaking, just use my body language.” (C, June 19, 2024)

“During the learning process, because of my poor English, I am too shy to speak. I think I need to learn English more.” (D, June 19, 2024)

4. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, understanding and appreciating the cultural differences would be a main issue during the learning process. Both sides of the students were willing to know and share each other's cultures. However, due to language barriers, students faced challenges and difficulties. Thus, language training should be given for those who have more chances of coming into contact with foreigners. Thus, for improving cross-cultural communication, there are some suggestions for educators: Avoid stereotypes and assumptions, learn more about cultures, improve language proficiency, and use non-verbal communication. Effective cross-cultural communication requires understanding cultural differences, language barriers, and stereotypes. By active communication, we can overcome the challenges and finally communicate effectively across cultures.

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Contact email: paigerabbit@gmail.com

