Research on Cross-Cultural Communication from the Perspective of Mass Media

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Abstract. Intercultural communication is all the communication that happens when people from different cultural backgrounds share thoughts, feelings and information with each other. Nowadays, the combination of culture and modern media is emitting its unique charm. With the emergence of social media, cross-cultural communication among different nationalities is closer than before, but cultural conflicts are still inevitable. In this context, giving full play to the role of media in promoting culture and having a vision beyond cultural limitations to push cultural collision, exchanges and integration are vital. This is a new era for both mass media and cross-cultural communication.

1. Introduction

With the advent of economic globalization, cross-cultural communication has become an important basis for the communication of trade, education, science and technology among various countries. Due to differences in cultural background and history, different countries and nationalities have formed diverse cultural forms. Under this background, it is imperative to promote mutual exchanges and learning between civilizations.

As an emerging discipline, *intercultural communication* began from the United States and Japan in the mid-1970s, then it spread to various regions of the world. It includes language communication, non-verbal communication, cultural customs and other aspects, which also involves disciplines such as pedagogy, sociology, media, literature, etc. The interaction and influence of these related disciplines have promoted the rapid development of cross-cultural communication research. In terms of the definition of intercultural communication, scholars have different views on it. The term '*intercultural communication'* was first put forward by the American anthropologist E.T. Hall in his 1959 book *Silent Language*, and as a result, researchers from various countries started to study on cross-cultural communication and developed it into a relatively mature discipline. So in this article, it is generally understood that people with different cultural backgrounds engage in the process of intercultural communication called cross-cultural communication.

In the book *Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, it is proposed that the main research subject of intercultural communication is the relationship between culture and communication. Semiotics summarize the relationship between the two as "culture is frozen communication, while communication is flowing culture".[1] On the one hand, from the perspective of culture, culture is the core of intercultural communication. With varied cultures, respecting cultural differences and enhancing cultural identity is the right attitude to promote cultural diversity. On the other hand, from the perspective of communication, intercultural communication can be divided into conscious and unconscious communication, verbal and non-verbal communication. In the process of communication, due to the influence of the mother tongue, we cannot make good use of a second language to understand the thinking mode and habits of foreigners. Therefore, language learners can utilize the language rules of their own mother tongue and some gestures to comprehend the foreign language that they hear.

In a word, in the era of economic globalization and rapid development of new media, cross-cultural communication is an important bridge for people to exchange their thoughts and feelings. Only by having a vision beyond cultural limitations and understanding the meaning of cross-cultural communication can we better inherit our own culture, understand other culture and promote the development between countries.

2. the Relationship between Cross-Cultural Communication and Mass Media

2.1 the Definition of Mass Media

Mass media means the intermediary between professional communicators and the public in the process of information communication. From its material, composition to the mode of communication, mass media can be divided into printing and electronic one. Traditional print media mainly refer to magazines, newspapers, books, etc, while electronic media mainly include film, television, Internet, radio programs, etc. In the information age, a series of new social software such as Weibo, Twitter, LINE, etc. are springing up, where people can communicate and interact with each other. So both traditional print media and new media are the main means of communication. With fast propagation speed and great influence, they can spread across regions and time, and finally realize globalization.

2.2 the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Communication by Mass Media

2.2.1 *Mass Media Enriches the Way of Cross-Cultural Communication*
From the perspective of mass media in the new era, with a wide use of Internet, people from different countries and cultural backgrounds can communicate through a variety of mediums. In a general way, the development stage of media is from traditional media to new media. These media have broadened people's communication channels: the public can not only use traditional media to know global information, but also use new electronic media for cross-cultural communication.

Yuan Guobao, founder of Chinese New Media Alliance, once said, "Currently, China has the highest proportion of social media users in the world, with the average person spending 5.8 hours online every day. In the past, the main sources of information for the public were television, newspapers, magazines and radio, but now the public get more information through Weibo, Wechat, QQ, BBS and other social software." According to the latest figures from the ITU (The International Information Union), more than half of the world's population is now online. At the end of 2018, 51.2 percent of individuals, or 3.9 billion people, were using the Internet. This represents an important steps towards a more inclusive global information society.[2]

The spread of the Internet and mass media facilitates communication and learning among people who speak different languages. In the past, when mass media was not developed, people were only limited to know the information of their own country. With the deepening influence of new media, today is an era of mobile Internet and cross-cultural communication.

2.2.2 *Mass Media Enhances the Influence of Cross-Cultural Communication*
Since the birth of new media, when individuals had the ability to spread, the traditional media began to gradually collapse. Over the past decade, traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television were the masters of information dissemination, so public opinion was in the hands of these media. But now with the use of network media platform, people get information channel is no longer confined to traditional media and everyone is a transmitter of information.

A Chinese book called *ShangShu* mentioned that "The sound of speech is used to convey meaning", indicating words are the voice of the heart. People tend to exchange thoughts and feelings with each other in daily life, and due to continuous expansion of new media, every single individual can express his own idea on social software so that the influence of cross-cultural communication is increasing. Different ethnic groups have different ways of thinking, when individuals are able to achieve freedom of speech, the transmission of culture will be accelerated and the understanding of cultural diversity will be deepened.

2.2.3 *Mass Media Improves the Timeliness of Cross-Cultural Communication*

In the past, timeliness was restricted by the social life and information transmission technology. At present, with the development of mass media, different countries and nationalities can timely understand the information of science, technology, trade, education, culture and other aspects in various regions of the world.

In the process of cultural transmission, the media should keep pace with the society and give full play to its timeliness, so as to make the content of cross-cultural communication is the latest development trend of various countries. In this way, the political, economic, cultural communication and cooperation among countries can be strengthened. Nowadays, the combination of cross-cultural communication and modern media is showing its unique charm, and timeliness is one of the significant features between them. The communication mode keeping pace with the times is an important way to carry forward traditional culture, which is also a major channel for various countries to achieve cultural prosperity through mutual friction, collision and integration of new cultures.

3. Problems of Cross-Cultural Communication in the Context of Mass Media

3.1 Cultural Differences

Communication cannot be separated from the culture on which people live. In a multicultural background, people have different thoughts, values, and living habits, etc, so that the conflicts between cultures are ineluctable. In terms of human nature, since ancient times, China advocated the theory of "goodness in human nature", that was, "people are born good". However, the United States, influenced by Christianity, has put forward the theory of "original sin", believing that everyone is guilty before god.

In mass media age, the communication on we-media platforms is much more convenient and efficient, but cultural shock can also cause the estrangement among people. For example, some films are evaluated differently because of the diverse aesthetic perspectives of audiences in various countries. *Black Panther*, the 2018 marvel superhero film, was not as good as expected in China. Previous superhero films had never grossed less than 700 million yuan, while this film's rating on DouBan (A social software in China) had been falling to 6.8, with nearly half of Chinese audience giving it three stars. By contrast, it got high reviews on ROTTEN TOMATOES (A social networking site in the United States) and was the number one box office hit in North America for less than four weeks.

Highly developed new media technology has become a sharp "double-edged sword", providing a new fast channel for cross-cultural communication but also causing the imbalance of its pattern.[3] In intercultural communication, seeking common ground and reserving differences is the right attitude to promote cultural diversity.

3.2 Nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology or movement centered on national interests. It is a proper group feeling within a certain range, beyond which extreme patriotism is bound to arise. With the progress of human thought, the possibility of narrow sense nationalism is becoming less. But as the objective existence of national interests, ethnic conflicts among various countries are inevitable, and Middle East Problem is a typical representative of it.

During the process of cross-cultural communication, national prejudice still exists. Excessive nationalism and cultural differences lead some people to make inappropriate remarks on the Internet. For example, belittling other nations or enhancing the superiority and pride of their own. This will not only affect the friendly coexistence among nationalities, but also affect the peaceful development among countries. Most countries in the world today are multiracial communities, and the alleged different nationalism mainly refers to how to understand the nature of the nation and the relationship between the nation and individual rights. In the mass media age, it is necessary to advocate rational nationalism and promote the development of the world, nations and countries.

3.3 Gender Bias

Gender culture refers to the system of beliefs, values and behaviors prescribed by the society for different genders. Every country has a clear division of labor on gender roles in its social activities. However, since ancient times, both western and eastern countries emphasized the idea that women are inferior to men. In spite of the strong promotion of gender equality in the world today, some job recruitment still tends to favor men, and the deep-rooted traditional ideas lead people to subconsciously believe that men have more advantages and abilities than women.

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, there are various kinds of linguistic sexism in different cultures. Take Mr, Mrs and Miss in English language as an example. Mr does not refer to male marriage or age information, but Mrs and Miss can be classified as married or unmarried women. With the development of feminist movement, the word "Ms" gradually appeared that did not show female marital problems.[1]

In the new era of multimedia, gender bias is another difficult problem in cross-cultural communication. Some advertisements may involve words that are not friendly to female, thus causing the dissatisfaction among a majority of women. In order to avoid this conflict in cross-cultural communication, the media should play its good function of public opinion guidance and avoid sexist words and phrases.

3.4 Personal Factors

Personal factors refer to the differences among individuals in cross-cultural communication, which mainly include the followings:

1) Personal cognitive impairment. People are used to accepting their familiar environment and unwilling to know the outside world. Some may even have low learning ability that confine their cognition of foreign culture.

2) Personality traits. During a conversation, extroverts tend to be more talkative while introverts tend to be reticent. People also have different topics of interest, which undoubtedly aggravates the difficulty of communication.

3) The effect of first language. Mother tongue is the language that people tend to use in daily life, which leads to the fact that people's thinking in fixed language mode influences the results of communication in the process of cross-cultural communication.

4. Measures to Strengthen Cross-Cultural Communication in the Context of Mass Media

4.1 Respect Cultural Diversity and Enhance Exchanges between Different Cultures

Diverse cultural factors are permeated in intercultural communication. Western governments which represent multicultural groups within their national boundaries have two main policy options towards multiculturalism: Assimilation and Integration.[4]

Today, various countries have reached a consensus on multiculturalism policy: On the basis of opposing the assimilation theory, they advocate understanding "cultural differences" and respecting ethnic minorities' rights to maintain their unique cultural identity.[5] As the growing diversity of race, culture and religious identities has led to social and political changes, scholars have different views on multiculturalism. There are few mono-ethnic countries in the world and most regions are where various ethnic groups merge, which means every language and culture should be respected and understood. In the era of mass media, carrying forward our own culture and strengthening the exchanges between different cultures through multimedia platform seem the fasted way to promote cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, nations are equal to each other and ethnocentrism will cause the sense of distance in communication. Only by eliminating ethnic prejudice can make people put down their guard and interact with different nationalities.

4.2 Avoid Cultural Conflicts and Pursue Equality of Speech in Transgender Communication

Gender topic has always been a sensitive topic in cross-cultural communication. Due to differences in physiological structure, way of thinking, life habits and other characteristics of both sexes, men

and women have different topics of interest in conversation. Women pay more attention to dressing, emotion, entertainment news, etc., while men pay more attention to career, political news, automobile, etc. It means that gender communication within the scope of mother tongue will inevitably produce these contradictions, and the integration of cultural, ethnic, national and other factors in cross-cultural communication will generate a more friction.

With the emergence of a large number of social software, like Weibo, Twitter, Facebook, etc., cross-country and cross-gender communication should follow the principle of equal expression. People need to use neutral words as much as possible and give consideration to both sexes. Secondly, in the field of advertising, film and television, the culture transmission should respect the gender difference and avoid the dissatisfaction of the public or even the country caused by the unfriendly treatment of the two sexes. People should also realize that it is the existence and complementation of the two sexes that makes communication more attractive.

4.3 Respect the Differences between People and Improve Cross-Cultural Communication Awareness

People are different from each other, and each individual is unique, which may cause conflicts in communication due to some personal factors. For example, in the discussion of a certain news in today's society on multimedia social platforms, some people support while others may oppose, so the collision of different ideas will lead to disputes. In daily communication, people from different countries may also cause friction while interacting because of personal preferences.

During interpersonal communication, the rules should be followed by sincerity, tolerance, understanding, etc., and smile is also an important element that will reduce the sense of distance from each other. Furthermore, people should break their familiar social circle and make full use of the platform of multimedia (movies, TVs, Internet, etc) to understand the customs, cultures and languages of various countries, improving their awareness of cross-cultural communication and promoting interaction and integration between different cultures. Information exchange is a process of encoding and decoding, which belongs to the social circle of different cultures and respecting differences can conflicts be avoided as much as possible.

5. Conclusion

In cross-cultural communication, cultures will clash with each other due to different situations and occasions, which means that seek common ground and reserve difference on this issue is vital. Nowadays, with the combination of cross-cultural communication and mass media, interaction among different nationalities is much more convenient. During this process, we should make full use of the advantages of mass media: carry forward and inherit our own culture; learn the excellent cultures from other ethnic groups; promote cross-country, cross-cultural and cross-ethnic exchanges and integration. However, many problems such as cultural differences, racial prejudice, gender bias and personal factors are still inevitable. Only with an international vision, breaking the fortress of cultural limitations and respecting various cultures can communication achieve the best results. The future is the era of multimedia and cross-cultural communication.

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