The Utilization of Multimodal Digital Resources in University Students' English Cultural Learning: Processes, Strategies, and Outcomes: A Case Study of Yixue Platform

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Keywords: Multimodal, Digital Resources, Cross-Cultural Learning.

Abstract: With the acceleration of globalization, English, as an international lingua franca, has seen the importance of English cultural learning become increasingly prominent. This paper aims to explore the current status and effectiveness of college students utilizing multimodal digital resources for English cultural learning. The focus is on the application scenarios of multimodal learning strategies in English cultural learning. However, questions remain regarding whether multimodal learning truly enhances college students' English cultural literacy, as well as the actual processes, strategies, and outcomes of utilizing multimodal digital resources. Through academic performance analysis and interviews, this study examines whether the use of multimodal digital resources by college students' aids in English cultural learning and the specific effectiveness of cross-cultural business communication learning. Overall, multimodal platforms provide a new approach to English cultural learning for college students, warranting further exploration.

1 INTRODUCTION

The utilization of multimodal digital resources in college students' English learning is becoming increasingly widespread. As international cultural exchanges continue to expand, the importance of college students learning cross-cultural business communication has become more evident. Firstly, it fosters trust and integration between different cultures. Cross-cultural communication enables different ethnic groups to seek common ground while respecting differences, enhancing their understanding of other cultures based on a deeper comprehension of their own, and promoting mutual tolerance for cultural disparities. Secondly, it facilitates interactions among people from diverse cultural backgrounds, helping to eliminate prejudices and misunderstandings. Exploring cultural significance is a key objective in cultivating the cross-cultural communication skills of the younger generation. In the current era of promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, actively advancing cross-cultural exchanges holds significant practical importance. Regarding learning models, some students embrace traditional teaching methods, while others utilize multimodal digital platforms for their studies. Cross-cultural critical thinking skills are essential competencies for high-quality talent today, and independent learning is also a key ability that the nation aims to cultivate in students.

In view of the lack of research on the effectiveness of the use of multimodal digital resources on specific platforms, the author will take the Yixue platform as an example, and observe the effectiveness of the students' learning through the analysis of the learning situation. The author will explore the real process, strategy and success of using multimodal digital resources. These issues are very meaningful for intercultural communication learning.

This study investigates and analyses the effectiveness of a multimodal digital platform for learning intercultural communication based on a multimodal teaching model of university English for intercultural critical thinking skills development. An attempt is made to put the multimodal digital platform, the effectiveness of university English cultural learning concerns under the test of objective data.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of globalization, people from different countries have increasingly frequent exchanges, and

different cultures collide, communicate and integrate with each other. Strong intercultural communication ability is the key to promoting smooth communication among people of different countries (Yuan, 2023). Whether it is to meet the challenges facing human society or to achieve the development goals of various countries, the "community of human destiny" formed by countries and people cannot be separated from cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication refers to the cultural exchange and communication between people with different cultural backgrounds, which is mainly manifested as the cultural interaction and mutual learning between the parties involved in the exchange, and is the dialogue between the parties involved in cultural exchange. Cross-cultural communication has strongly promoted the friendly relations and ethnic integration of various countries in history, and it plays an important role today (Zhao, 2014).

The high speed of economic and technological development and the continuous progress of modern information technology directly determine that intercultural communication will become a new normal in the daily life and work of the general public, and intercultural communication ability will become a basic ability that every citizen should have (Yu & Wang, 2022). Cultural differences might lead to miscommunication, but they might also become a competitive advantage for global companies (Luo, 2016). The notion of national culture includes many diversified factors that shape people's behaviour, lifestyle and attitudes (Lifintsev, Denys & Wellbrock, Wanja, 2019). One of the key cultural elements in the way that both individuals and companies operate is communication. People communicate in varied ways using different languages and carrying different values and norms. (Bartosik-Purgat, and Rakowska, 2025)

Moreover, as carriers of culture, in the process of learning English knowledge and skills, English learners will inevitably encounter the problem of how to deal with the problem of learners' identity with two different cultures (Qin, 2024). University English should actively carry out cross-cultural teaching and deeply integrate language teaching with the cultivation of cross-cultural communicative competence (Yu & Wang, 2022). The cultural differences between English and Chinese directly affect the structure and application of the two languages of English and Chinese, and may even affect the future course of development (Yu & Wang, 2022). The specific components of intercultural communicative competence are four parts:

knowledge, ability, attitude and literacy (Zhao, 2014). The components of intercultural communicative competence are interrelated, interpenetrating and complementary (Liu, 2018). The traditional English classroom learning model is constrained by space and time, and also has certain limitations in cultivating cross-cultural competencies (Guo, 2024). As network technology becomes increasingly integrated into the field of education, students are encountering new developmental opportunities for fostering cross-cultural critical thinking skills in English teaching through multimodal teaching platforms. The construction of a multimodal learning environment serves as a crucial support and vehicle for achieving the goal of cultivating students' cross-cultural critical thinking abilities (Zhang, 2024). Moreover, this composite classroom teaching model can fully stimulate students' interest in learning, providing an effective pathway for the cultivation of cross-cultural critical thinking in English education (Guo, 2024).

After reading the literature, the author clarified the importance of English cultural learning and the importance of using multimodal digital platforms in intercultural communicative learning. Cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence needs to follow the pace of the times and use multimodal learning knowledge integration to help students recognise and understand the differences in how people with different cultural backgrounds face and deal with affairs (Wang, 2020). However, there is unknown about how exactly the digital platform is applied and its effectiveness.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Step

This study takes the Yixue platform as an example. Initially, interviews were conducted with students before they used the platform. Subsequently, an analysis of learning conditions was performed based on the platform's backend usage data. The data for this study were derived from the exported backend data of the Yixue platform, with the survey subjects being junior students majoring in Business English (a total of 98 students). Follow-up interviews were conducted with the same students after they used the platform to explore changes in their proficiency levels and perspectives. Finally, the student's final exam results were used as a basis to observe the effectiveness of the platform and the students' learning outcomes.

3.2 Interview Method

3.2.1 Interviewees

The interview subjects of this study consisted of six individuals, including one academic representative and one class officer from the junior year Business English major, as well as four other students (two females and two males). All interviewees were informed and consented to participate.

3.2.2 Interview Content

The content of the interviews was adapted specifically for this cross-cultural training platform. Compared to other analytical methods, face-to-face interviews provide a more in-depth understanding of the changes observed among the students. The interview questions primarily focused on the students' comprehension of cross-cultural communication knowledge and their perceptions and awareness of English culture.

The interviews were conducted in two phases: the first round took place on September 1, 2024, prior to the use of the platform, and the second round was conducted on December 5, 2024, after the platform had been utilized. The interview outlines are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Interview outline.

Interview outline 1 (before using the platform)	Interview outline 2 (after use of the platform)
Do you like English intercultural communication learning? Why?	1.Do you like the Yixue platform? (If so, which part do you prefer?)
How much do you know about the cultural knowledge of China and other countries through your previous studies?	2.After a semester of study, how do you now see the position of culture in English learning?
How do you usually learn about the cultures of different countries?	3.Do you think your intercultural learning has changed compared to before?
Do you know anything about communication strategies or communication skills?	4.How much have you increased your knowledge of the cultures of China and English-speaking countries?
5. Are you willing to communicate with members of other cultures?	5. What do you know about communication strategies or skills, and can you give specific examples?
	6. Are you willing to communicate with members of a different culture?

3.2.3 Interview Process

Interviews were approximately 10-15 minutes in length and were conducted by the interviewer who recorded the students' interview responses directly on the computer. Interviewee numbers were taken from the student's initials to avoid duplication, e.g., Student T.

4 RESULT

4.1 Results of The First Interview (2024-9-1)

Before being introduced to the Yixue platform, 50% of the respondents did not have a particularly in-depth understanding or interest in cross-cultural communication. The main reasons cited were a lack of exposure or the perception that it was not particularly helpful in daily life. The other 50% of respondents, however, expressed an interest in and attention to cross-cultural communication. Below are some of the responses from the interviewees.

"I don't really like it, and I haven't learned much about it." (Student L)

"It's okay, but I feel like it's rarely useful in my real life." (Student T)

"I like it, it's much more interesting than the other contents." (Student W)

"I really enjoy learning about cross-cultural communication in English. As an English major, I realize that cross-cultural communication skills are crucial for my future career. It not only improves my practical use of English but also helps me better understand and adapt to international environments." (Student Z)

Before being introduced to the Yixue platform, when asked about how students usually learn about or explore the cultures of different countries, most respondents cited movies or short video platforms as their primary sources. Below are some of the responses from the interviewees.

"Browse-watch videos." (Student W)

"Watch TV shows, films, documentaries." (Student G)

"I don't pay much attention to it usually. I guess, maybe I'll learn a little bit about it on online platforms." (Student N)

"I usually learn about different cultures through English courses, reading English original works, watching English movies and documentaries, and participating in cultural exchange activities organized by the school." (Student Z)

66.7% of the respondents also said they knew less about communication skills.

4.2 Backend Student Data Statistics of the Yixue Platform

Table 2: Statistics on platform learning hours of Business English students.

Statistics of Business English Students' Platform Learning Hours			
Statistical time: 2024-11-17 20:19			
Learning Duration	Maximum Study Duration	Minimum Study Duration	Average Study Duration
	99: 59: 59	0: 00: 00	9: 51: 37

As shown in Table 2, as of November 17, 2024, there is a significant disparity in the learning durations among the 98 students majoring in Business English. In terms of chapter tests, the score distribution for the section on understanding cultural differences is as follows: basic concepts (10%), cultural patterns (40%), verbal communication (25%), and non-verbal communication (25%). The highest total score is 100.0, the lowest score is 0.0, and the average score is 56.83. Among these, the mastery of basic concepts is the best, with an average score of 71.27, while non-verbal communication is the lowest, with an average score of 53.00.

4.3 Results of the Second Interview (2024-12-5)

During the second round of interviews, the students' perspectives on the platform revealed that the majority were particularly drawn to the engaging aspects, with their primary interests lying in the case analysis and video sections. Some of the interviewees' responses are as follows:

"I really like the platform, especially the interactive learning experience and the rich case studies it provides, which have greatly enriched my knowledge of intercultural communication." (Student Z)

"It's okay, more interested in the video part of the case studies." (Student L)

"It's not bad, I like the video part more, I can understand it intuitively." (Student N)

In terms of awareness, regarding how students now perceive the role of culture in English learning, they have gradually come to recognize the significance of cross-cultural learning. Partial responses to this question are as follows:

"After this period of study, I have become more aware of the importance of culture in English learning. Culture is not only the carrier of language, but also the key to understanding the deeper meaning of language." (Student Z)

"I think the relationship between culture and the learning of English is complementary." (Student L)

"It feels important. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the basics, and culture is what is really important in communicating with other people." (Student N)

Moreover, most respondents believe that their understanding of Chinese and English-speaking countries' cultural knowledge has improved. Some respondents can even provide examples related to communication strategies or skills.

"Yes, for example, in France, 'OK' means zero, and in Bulgaria, nodding means refusal, while shaking the head means agreement." (Student G)

"Yes, I have learned that in Iran, giving a thumbs-up means 'screw you,' which is a negative gesture; in Australia, it also represents a rude gesture."(Student T)

The analysis of the respondents' answers confirms the effectiveness of using the Yixue platform for intercultural business communication learning, as well as the fact that the use of multimodal digital resources by university students contributes to the learning of English culture.

4.4 Final Exam Scores for Students in "Cross-Cultural Business Communication"

Table 3: Statistics on the distribution of final grades of business English juniors in the Yixue platform exams.

Statistical time: 2024-12-11									
A(90-100)		B(80-90)		C(70-80)		D(60-70)		Fail(0-60)	
Number of people	proportion(%)	Number of people	proportion(%)	Number of people	proportion(%)	Number of people	proportion(%)	Number of people	proportion(%)
88	89.8	4	4.1	4	4.1	1	1.0	1	1.0

The data indicates that 89.8% of the students achieved excellent grades (Grade A) in the final exam (Table 3). This demonstrates that the effectiveness of learning cross-cultural content through the multimodal Yixue platform is relatively significant. The objective data confirms the reliability of the respondents' answers. After a period of learning on

the Yixue platform, the respondents' understanding and proficiency in English culture have improved.

5 DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of students using multimodal platforms for cross-cultural business communication learning can be attributed to the following reasons:

First, the Yixue platform presents information through multimodal formats such as audio and video, engaging multiple senses of the students, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Second, the platform integrates cultural content from various English-speaking countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and 16 others), including members of the G20, BRICS, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This helps students understand cultural differences across regions, broadens their cultural horizons, and strengthens their cross-cultural communication skills. Third, the chapter tests on the platform provide instant feedback, enabling students to correct mistakes promptly, practice repeatedly, and consolidate their learning outcomes. Fourth, the platform offers a wealth of learning resources, such as case studies, helping students understand cross-cultural business communication from multiple perspectives. Fifth, multimodal digital resources can be accessed anytime and anywhere, offering high flexibility. This learning approach is particularly suitable for university students to engage in self-directed learning and cultural exploration during their spare time. Sixth, the platform provides a extensive of resources that offer multifaceted insights into cross-cultural communication. Seventh, the multimodal learning platform utilizes data analysis to track students' learning progress and performance, helping both students and teachers identify weak areas. This facilitates the optimization of learning paths and improves learning outcomes.

6 CONCLUSION

This paper examines students 'questions about whether multimodal learning contributes to the enhancement of college students' English cultural literacy, as well as the real processes, strategies and effectiveness of the use of multimodal digital resources, by means of interviews combined with the analysis of objective data and learning situations. The study found that the effectiveness of intercultural

business communication learning and the use of multimodal digital resources by university students contributed to English cultural learning. Students increased cultural awareness about English. Culture is an inseparable part of language, and language, as a carrier of culture, has rich cultural connotations. The future trend shows that the development trajectory of cross-cultural business communication is shifting from merely addressing language barriers to comprehensively focusing on cultural differences, and from theoretical research to practical application. The multimodal digital platform not only enhances language proficiency, but also helps students to deeply understand the cultural connotations of English-speaking countries, enhances cross-cultural communication skills, and lays a solid foundation for future academic and professional development.

Therefore, it is suggested that college students can learn English culture and cross-cultural business communication by using multimodal digital resources.

However, this study also possesses certain limitations, such as an insufficient sample size of respondents and a strong regional focus, which preclude the inclusion of all university students utilizing multimodal digital resources for learning English culture. It is hoped that future research will expand the number of interviewees and cover a broader range of regions. Additionally, aspects such as the lack of authentic scenario simulation experiences on the Yixue platform could be incorporated in the future to facilitate a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances of English-speaking countries and enhance practical operational skills.

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