

On the Enhancement of Cross-cultural Communication Skills of Contemporary College Students through Project-based Learning: A Case Study of "FLTRP•ETIC Cup" Short Video Contest

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Abstract: Based on the "FLTRP•ETIC Cup" short video contest, this paper examines the connotation and characteristics of project-based learning (PBL), analyzes the current status and problems of college students' cross-cultural communication competence, and explores how PBL enhances such competence, aiming to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for universities to conduct cross-cultural teaching through contests.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Cross-Cultural Communication, Short Video Contest

1. Introduction

The "FLTRP•ETIC Cup" Short Video Contest, a national event aimed at spreading Chinese culture and building cross-cultural communication bridges, encourages students to create works on contemporary China while considering the cognitive tendencies of diverse cultural audiences, making cultural transmission more accurate and appealing. It serves as an applied assessment of cross-cultural communication abilities. [1] Currently, cross-cultural education in universities suffers from monolithic teaching approaches and lack of practice. Many students exhibit cognitive biases and weak communication skills. PBL, centered on learning through practice, aligns perfectly with the contest's practical nature, bridging theory and practice to enhance students' cross-cultural competencies.[2] This paper examines the mechanism and practical pathway of applying PBL in cross-cultural competency development through this contest.

2. Introduction to Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL), developed in the

U.S. in the 1960s, is a pedagogical model grounded in constructivist learning theory, Dewey's learning-by-doing theory, and cooperative learning theory. Its core idea is using the project as the medium, the student as the focus, and practice as the center.[2] Unlike conventional teacher-centered instruction, PBL guides students through the entire process of project development, implementation, and outcome presentation via teamwork, self-discovery, and hands-on work, ensuring active knowledge construction and holistic development.

PBL has several core features that align with cross-cultural communication skill development:

1.Contextualization. Project tasks stem from real-life situations or practical needs, moving beyond abstract theoretical indoctrination.

2.Task-driven. Specific project tasks define learning goals and content, directing students to actively explore, collaborate, and practice, thereby boosting participation motivation.

3.Collaborative. Group collaboration is essential. Students divide labor, communicate, and cooperate closely to accomplish tasks, developing communication and teamwork skills.

4.Practical. Emphasis is placed on practical application and tangible outcomes. Students transform theoretical knowledge into practical actions through creative work and result demonstration.

5.Diverse assessment. Assessment involves teachers, students, and peers, focusing on both project outcomes and the learning process, organically integrating process and outcome evaluation.

In cross-cultural communication competence cultivation, PBL offers unique advantages. Its contextualization immerses students in intercultural scenarios, acquainting them with diverse communication patterns. Its collaborative nature teaches effective

communication, cultural appreciation, and conflict resolution. Its practicality enables students to transform theoretical understanding into practical skills, compensating for shortcomings of traditional instruction.

3. Current Status of Cross-Cultural Communication Skills of College Students

Overall, college students' cross-cultural communication skills are developing positively. Due to globalization, students have increasingly diverse access to various cultures through the Internet, films, television, and international exchange programs, gaining preliminary cross-cultural cognition. As digital natives, they adeptly use new media tools like short videos and social media, readily engage in cross-cultural communication, and demonstrate high participation motivation and learning interest.

3.1 Deviations in Cross-Cultural Cognition and Insufficient Cultural Tolerance

Some college students possess only superficial cultural understanding, focusing on customs and food while lacking deep knowledge of history, values, and mindsets, which easily leads to cultural stereotypes.^[3] For instance, some students understand Western culture only through fragmented sources like movies and the Internet, resulting in distorted views. Meanwhile, others lack cultural equality and inclusiveness, evaluating other cultures by their own standards, making it difficult to appreciate cultural diversity and creating cognitive barriers.

3.2 Weak Cross-Cultural Communication Competence and Lack of Effective Skills

Some students have serious shortcomings in this area. On one hand, their foreign language expression is insufficient. Although some have basic foreign language knowledge, they cannot express cultural information fluently and sometimes misinterpret information. On the other hand, they lack cross-cultural communication strategies and are unaware of communication principles and etiquette conventions of different cultures, struggling to adapt strategies to the audience's cultural context, often leading to miscommunication and conflicts.

3.3 Insufficient Cross-Cultural Collaboration Skills

Cross-cultural collaboration is crucial in the globalization era, yet many students need further enhancement in this regard. Some cannot communicate and cooperate efficiently with peers from different cultural backgrounds due to cultural differences and language barriers. They lack awareness of listening to others' views and respecting cultural practices, leading to unreasonable task distribution and work inefficiency. Others exhibit poor team spirit, focusing on individual interests over group goals, making it difficult to establish effective cross-cultural collaboration.

3.4 Lack of Cross-Cultural Reflective Competence

Reflective ability is essential for students to continuously improve their cross-cultural communication behavior. Currently, some students lack the awareness to actively reflect on their cross-cultural experiences, making it hard to identify their weaknesses in cognition, communication, and teamwork. Even when reflection occurs, it tends to remain superficial, failing to thoroughly examine root causes. Consequently, they cannot apply reflection outcomes to improve their communication strategies, hindering continuous improvement.^[4]

3.5 Insufficient Cross-Cultural Communication Practice

Cross-cultural education in universities primarily focuses on theoretical instruction with few real-life communication opportunities and practical platforms. It is challenging for students to transform theoretical knowledge into actual communication abilities. Some universities have organized cross-cultural exchange programs, but these suffer from limited formats and coverage, failing to meet students' needs. Moreover, some students lack initiative in engaging in cross-cultural practice, preferring passive reception of theoretical education, further widening the gap between theory and practice.

4. The Positive Effect of Project-based Learning on Cross-cultural Communication Ability

By integrating PBL's core features and implementation procedures with the practical basis of the FLTRP · ETIC Cup short video contest, PBL can enhance college students' cross-cultural communication skills across four

core dimensions: cross-cultural cognition, communication, collaboration, and reflection.

4.1 Constructing Authentic Scenarios to Enhance Cross-Cultural Cognition

PBL is built on real-world situations, correcting cross-cultural cognitive biases and improving cognitive skills.^[2] The short video contest provides real-life cross-cultural communication opportunities. During project implementation, students must research Chinese culture while actively learning about the history, cognitive traits, and interests of different nations, overcoming their own cultural stereotypes.^[5] For example, when creating short videos, students must consider cognitive disparities among different cultural populations regarding Chinese culture, adjusting content and form to ensure accurate cultural interpretation and reception.

4.2 Task-Driven Practice to Enhance Communication Skills

PBL uses task-oriented and practical creation to improve cross-cultural communication training and develop communication skills.^[6] Cross-cultural communication skills cannot develop without specific training. In the short video contest, students execute tasks including topic research, recording, editing, dubbing, subtitling, and publication, each requiring cross-cultural communication practice. At the research stage, students interact with peers and teachers from diverse cultures to gather varied cultural perspectives. During creation, they apply appropriate language (Chinese, bilingual Chinese-English) and non-verbal signs (images, music) to convey Chinese culture correctly, developing language and media expression abilities. In distribution, they engage with people of different cultural backgrounds via social media, responding to audience queries and improving cross-cultural communication competencies.^[8]

4.3 Group Collaborative Inquiry to Cultivate Collaborative Awareness

PBL develops cross-cultural cooperation awareness and competencies through group collaborative exploration.^[9] The short video contest offers an excellent opportunity for students with diverse cultural backgrounds and study areas to form groups and engage in cross-cultural collaboration. During project

implementation, team members reasonably allocate tasks: some handle topic selection and research, others filming and editing, others dubbing and subtitling, and others distribution and promotion. Each member utilizes their strengths, works closely together, and accomplishes tasks. During collaboration, team members from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Chinese and international students) may encounter cultural mismatches and language barriers. They must resolve conflicts and reach consensus through active communication, mutual listening, and respect. For instance, Chinese and international students incorporate their cultural perspectives to offer creative alternatives; discussion and exchange produce an integrated perspective, optimizing work quality.

4.4 Reflection on Achievements to Enhance Reflective Competence

PBL promotes cross-cultural reflective awareness and capability through achievement presentation and evaluation reflection. The short video contest's implementation phase fosters students' reflective ability. In achievement presentation, students showcase their works, receive feedback from judges, instructors, peers, and audiences, and identify strengths and weaknesses in cross-cultural communication, especially in conveying cultural information and adapting expression. In evaluation reflection, students deeply examine their project implementation process, work creation, and cross-cultural communication behavior using diversified evaluation responses. They critically assess their shortcomings in cross-cultural cognition, communication, and teamwork, identifying underlying causes. For example, students may realize through reflection that insufficient understanding of a particular culture led to miscommunication in their work, prompting them to actively supplement cultural knowledge.

4.5 Stimulating Enthusiasm for Practice and Addressing Practical Shortcomings

PBL effectively encourages college students' enthusiasm for cross-cultural communication practice, addressing the existing gap and the disconnect between theory and practice in traditional cross-cultural education. Unlike conventional unidirectional education that emphasizes theory and undermines practice, PBL takes practice as its main direction and

result output as significant support. It removes the constraints of abstract theory indoctrination, enabling students to truly experience the value and enjoyment of cross-cultural communication through real-life project execution. Gradually, they abandon passive knowledge acceptance and actively participate in cross-cultural communication practice.^[6] Under PBL implemented through the short video contest, students play an active role in every step from topic selection and research to actual shooting, editing, subtitle translation, and result dissemination.

5. Summary

By creating authentic cross-cultural communication scenarios, PBL guides students to understand cultural differences and similarities, overcome cognitive biases, and develop cultural inclusiveness. Through task-driven learning, it engages students in the entire practice process, enhancing cross-cultural communication training in areas such as short video creation, subtitle translation, and result dissemination, thereby improving expression and communication skills. Group collaborative exploration cultivates cross-cultural cooperation awareness and conflict management abilities, meeting the requirements of cross-cultural teamwork. Through diverse assessment and reflection, PBL helps students promptly recognize their weaknesses, refine communication strategies, and develop cross-cultural reflective capacity, ultimately achieving deep integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application in cross-cultural communication.

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