



Research on Digital Narratives of Chinese Cultural Communication from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract. Telling China's story well is an important task for enhancing China's international communication capabilities. It plays a significant role in shaping the national image. Therefore, improving cross-cultural awareness of college students is particularly important for the international dissemination of China's story. College English, with its instrumental, humanistic and international characteristics, has distinct advantages in telling China's story. Students can use short video platforms to tell real stories about themselves and their surroundings in English, directly participating in real external communication practices. By encouraging students to directly participate in the construction of China's external discourse system, they enhance their English language proficiency through the unity of knowledge and action, while also improving critical thinking, cultural confidence and fostering a sense of patriotism and global mindset.

Keywords: China's story; cross-culture; international communication; digital narratives.

1 Introduction

The practice of concepts such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" and "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" requires talents with cross-cultural capabilities. In October 2022, the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to "enhance the communication power and influence of Chinese civilization... accelerate the construction of China's narrative system, tell China's story well and present a credible, lovable, and respectable image of China" (Xi Jinping, 2022)¹. The "Guidelines for College English Teaching (2020 Edition)"² clearly require the integration of cross-cultural communication skills into college English teaching, highlighting the integration of knowledge impartation, capability cultivation and value guidance. In the context where everyone is a storyteller of China's story, college students proficient in foreign languages, due to their strong language advantages, should undoubtedly undertake the historical mission and responsibility of telling China's story well (Sun Shuguang, 2021)³. Digital storytelling, namely, narrating personal life stories through short videos, and foreign language digital narratives, which involves cross-cultural narration of personal real stories in a foreign language (Yang Hua, 2021)⁴, can

serve as an effective way for college students to tell China's story well. Foreign language digital narratives are inherently linked to foreign language education and ideological-political education. Encouraging students to use English as the narrative language and digital storytelling methods to create works and publish them through appropriate media to other cultural audiences allows them to directly participate in the construction of China's external discourse system. This process enhances their practical application of the English language, critical thinking and cultural awareness, while fostering a sense of patriotism and global perspective.

2 Cross-Cultural Narrative Research Review

"Digital storytelling" has many different definitions, but generally, it integrates digital graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video and music to present information on a specific topic. Digital storytelling usually completes the story within 5 to 10 minutes and has various uses, including telling personal stories, narrating historical events, or serving as a way to promote or provide guidance on a specific topic (Robin, 2006)⁵. Kristiawan et al. (2022)⁶ further explored the cultural aspect of foreign language digital storytelling, discovering that it helps enhance students' interest in and identification with their native culture when telling local cultural stories in a foreign language. Additionally, some scholars have constructed a framework for college students' foreign language digital storytelling abilities based on the practice of telling real-life stories through short videos. This framework draws on narrative theory, foreign language competence theory and cross-cultural competence theory, providing a reference for further exploring ideological-political education based on foreign language digital storytelling and telling China's stories in a foreign language (Yang Hua, 2021).

Telling China's stories to the world is a new approach for college students to grow and develop, serving as an essential path for enhancing their ideological awareness and core competencies (Han Xueqing, 2019)⁷. Therefore, it has become a crucial topic to explore how college students can achieve value shaping, enhance cultural confidence, and improve cultural awareness and moral qualities by telling China's stories in a foreign language. This paper will explore the practice of college students' foreign language digital storytelling and elucidate the intrinsic connection between foreign language digital storytelling practice and moral education, constructing pathways and methods to enhance college students' ability to tell China's stories through foreign language digital storytelling.

3 Pathways and Methods for Enhancing College Students' Foreign Language Digital Storytelling to Tell China's Story

Huang Guowen and Xiao Qiong (2021)⁸ started from a "problem-based" approach and explored the six elements of ideological-political education in College English courses: why, what, who, when, where, and how. Among these, "what to do" in ideological-political education is an important question for us. Only by clarifying "what to do" can

we discuss "how to do it." The practice of integrating ideological-political education into College English ultimately revolves around "what to teach" and "how to teach." The teaching design is vital in the teaching process, which requires teachers to explore how to promote students' English digital storytelling abilities both inside and outside the classroom, considering the storyteller, content, methods, audience and effects. This involves clarifying teaching objectives, carefully selecting teaching content, activating the teaching subject, diversifying teaching methods and making scientific teaching evaluations.

3.1 Teaching Content

The first problem we should deal with is to determine "what to teach?" Enriching the humanistic content of undergraduate English textbooks to enhance students' ability to express Chinese culture in a foreign language. English textbooks should relatively balance the presentation of Chinese and foreign cultural content, allowing Chinese learners to not only study the essence of world civilizations but also tell Chinese stories to the world in English, spreading Chinese culture (Wen Qiufang, 2019)⁹. However, existing research results indicate that the insufficient integration of Chinese elements and Chinese culture is a common issue in current university textbooks (Zhang Hong et al., 2021)¹⁰. In the process of foreign language digital storytelling, cross-cultural awareness is comprehensive and implicit, and to a certain extent, it can determine the structural arrangement and discourse expression of foreign language digital storytelling (Yang Hua, 2021). However, survey results show that insufficient emphasis is placed on cultivating cross-cultural awareness in foreign language classrooms, and students' lack of cross-cultural awareness is a major issue in university students' foreign language digital storytelling of telling Chinese stories to the world. Currently, most teachers are influenced by traditional teaching methods, and classroom teaching still focuses mainly on imparting language knowledge (Xu Haining et al., 2020)¹¹. In classroom teaching, teachers should not only impart language knowledge but also strengthen the input of Chinese cultural knowledge, conduct cultural comparisons and emphasize the cultivation of students' cross-cultural awareness. Additionally, students should be provided with more opportunities for external communication and cross-cultural practice to effectively enhance their cross-cultural abilities. Therefore, in the selection of teaching materials, there should be a conscious integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture, an appropriate increase in the proportion of authentic English articles related to Chinese culture and stories in foreign language textbooks, allowing students to deeply understand and pay attention to Chinese culture. Through immersion, students can enhance their understanding and interpretation abilities of Chinese culture and their ability to express Chinese culture in a foreign language, thus better telling Chinese stories to the world. At the same time, it is advisable to establish a thematic and material library of Chinese stories outside the textbook, matching and complementing the materials inside the textbook. Themes can focus on the real lives of university students, emphasizing the personal real-life experiences and reflections of contemporary Chinese university students. Stories can also be extracted from Chinese traditional culture, customs and values to convey the wisdom, diligence, lovability and amiability of the Chinese

people. Students can also introduce the characteristics of their hometowns and teachers can inspire students to collect excellent folk traditional stories. Teachers and students can collaborate in collecting, selecting and organizing distorted interpretations of China and Chinese culture from domestic and international news, self-media and social platforms, responding positively in a targeted manner through digital storytelling as a form, based on these themes and perspectives.

3.2 The Presentation of Cross-Cultural Digital Narratives

After solving the problem of "What to teach?", we need to address the question of "How to present?" It mainly involves issues such as the presentation forms of Chinese stories (digital narrative methods), students' willingness to produce works using digital methods, and how to effectively master relevant skills. Students use English as the language for video narration or dialogue to tell personal and local stories, record short videos on platforms like TikTok, aiming to naturally convey personalized Chinese stories to foreign audiences, and demonstrate the broad significance and value of Chinese culture. Additionally, Chinese students lack a sufficient reservoir of knowledge about Chinese culture. Given this issue, teachers should fully utilize the exemplary role of unit materials, supplement related reading and audio-visual materials, help students develop good habits of staying informed, accessing information in English, and lifelong learning. Moreover, through collaborative efforts, teachers and students can collect and organize successful cases of English digital storytelling about Chinese stories from both domestic and international sources, deeply analyze and summarize their storytelling methods and characteristics, draw inspiration from them, and thus enhance English digital narrative skills more effectively. Throughout the pre-production, production, and post-production stages of students' video creation, teachers should be involved and provide timely guidance, and English native speakers can also be invited to participate in this process. This approach can effectively enhance students' foreign language proficiency and narrative skills, especially in writing and oral storytelling. Contemporary university students generally possess a certain level of digital narrative literacy, and the majority of students are highly enthusiastic about using digital formats to showcase their storytelling works, recognizing the positive significance of learning and improving this skill.

3.3 Diversified Evaluation Methods

The assessment should extend beyond language proficiency to encompass evaluations from the perspectives of ideology, values, and attitudes (Zhang Jingyuan, Wang Na, 2020)¹², forming a multi-dimensional evaluation of language, culture, and values. Therefore, when evaluating student works, specifically the digital narrative approach to telling Chinese stories, the focus should be on language expression and cross-cultural strategies. Additionally, incorporating authentic feedback from other cultural audiences is essential to assess students' proficiency in foreign language digital storytelling.

Secondly, given the subtle nature of ideological-political education, the evaluation of its effectiveness should primarily be formative, covering the entire learning process

of telling Chinese stories in English through digital means. Evaluation information should be gathered from various sources such as teachers, students and audiences, emphasizing the diagnostic and process-oriented nature of evaluation to achieve a "learning through assessment" and "learning from assessment" approach. At the end of the course, feedback should be obtained through joint reflection between teachers and students, teacher observations, student interviews, surveys, etc., to continuously iterate and optimize course design, improve teaching effectiveness, and facilitate the genuine enhancement of students' English digital storytelling abilities.

Furthermore, we rely on the evaluation functions of online platforms in conjunction with teacher assessments to document and measure students' performance both in and out of the classroom. Students are encouraged to provide feedback and evaluations on course content, activity arrangements and teaching implementation.

4 Conclusion

Learning a language involves studying the related culture. Cross-cultural education is an essential component of university English teaching. Universities should emphasize the cultivation of cross-cultural competence to enhance students' intercultural communication skills. The narrative ability of English learners is a crucial component of their language production skills and an organic part of their overall English proficiency. The cultivation and practice of English digital storytelling skills represent a beneficial integrated approach to learning and application. This approach not only promotes the learning and application of English knowledge and skills but also encourages students to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional culture and national conditions, subtly enhancing cultural awareness and moral cultivation. Teachers extract cultural elements from textbooks, focus on current events to ensure a simultaneous cultural input and output, assign authentic tasks to generate and drive outcomes, and provide students with opportunities to participate directly in constructing China's external discourse through filming and producing short videos. Consequently, this approach helps students boost cultural confidence, cultivate a sense of patriotism and develop an international perspective.

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