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Thoughts on AIGC Acting in Cross-cultural Communication in Different Environments from the Perspective of Generation Z

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Abstract: The development speed of generative artificial intelligence is altering how cross-cultural communication is carried out. Generation Z are both digital natives and AI natives, and they are now leading the changes in this field. This paper takes the digital media behaviour of Generation Z as its observation object and investigates how AIGC functions in cross-cultural communication through three aspects: the enhancement of cultural translation efficiency, the elimination of cultural discount by digital memes, and the formation of decentralized communication networks. At the same time, the participation of AIGC in cultural production also gives rise to several serious problems: the algorithmic recommendation logic reduces the space for cultural diversity; the algorithmic knowledge of Generation Z has not been converted into corresponding critical actions; and platform power has redefined the active boundaries of young cultural actors. AIGC is an efficient tool and a structural change in cross-cultural communication, according to the study. Its effectiveness relies on the joint construction of technological independence and the critical consciousness of young people, rather than being a problem of technical application alone.

Keywords: Generation Z; AIGC; Cross-cultural Communication; Digital Meme; Cultural Discount.

1. Introduction

By 2025, the total amount of AI-generated video and audio content will have surpassed 2 billion, an increase of over 14 times from the previous year; among the surveyed, 54% frequently watch AI short videos, and more than half of online audio-visual users have been exposed to AI-generated content. Based on the above data, AIGC has been introduced into many fields of content creation and distribution at a large scale and is now widely used. Concurrently, the media practice of Generation Z has shifted. As a generation that grew up with the Internet, they have had wider access to information and culture, and different ways of interacting socially compared with previous generations. No longer content to be passively exposed to filtered and institutionalized materials, they are more likely to spontaneously spread cross-cultural ideas on social media through symbols such as memes, short videos and emoticons [1]. Thus, it has a low barrier to entry and spreads quickly through the absence of traditional overseas communication channels. Together, these two trends are causing a change in the form of practice for cross-cultural communication from "institutional dominance and linear transmission" to "individual participation and multi-directional interaction".

This change is not in line with the linear development of technology. The advantages of AIGC in reducing language barriers and improving the efficiency of cultural content production are self-evident; however, structural limitations still exist, such as cultural bias in the training data of generative models, selective attention given by algorithmic recommendations, and copyright and ethical issues arising from AI remixing. These problems are not due to a lack of technology; rather, they arise from the fundamental conflict of cultural power and platform interests and institutional norms. Generation Z has received the benefits of technological development but is also exposed to the risks mentioned above. This paper selects the media practice of Generation Z as the observation entry point to examine the specific mechanisms and internal tensions of AIGC's impact on cross-cultural communication, and then discusses how a relationship can be formed between technological empowerment and youth subjectivity.

2. Digital Media Practices and Cross-Cultural Communication Role Transformation of Generation Z

Generation Z refers to people born from 1995 to 2009. With the spread of the Internet and the development of social media, these young people have become "digital natives". The change in the information-processing and cultural-participation methods of the current generation compared with previous generations is what truly distinguishes them. They are used for piecemeal, visual and emotionally pleasing forms of information consumption and dissemination; they are not interested in grand narratives or top-down propaganda discourse, and are more likely to be attracted to authentic-seeming content that encourages participation [2]. Due to this reason, a particular ecosystem of "digital memes" has emerged. Generation Z uses emojis and other Internet language to communicate with people around the world. The connections among these symbols and their meanings are relatively weak; therefore, they are easy to translate and learn.

The communication ecosystem has drawn the attention of scholars at home and abroad. Shi Anbin and Zheng En from Tsinghua University have pointed out in their research that the digital meme culture in line with the information needs of Generation Z is forming a decentralised and fragmented new model for cross-border communication. The traditional model of cross-cultural communication was carried out by professional organisations, and the number of recipients was relatively small. Generation Z is both the creator of and the disseminator in the digital meme economy. The mode of communication is no longer linear; emotion and visual effects

are used to spread information. Digital memes are "weak cultural background symbols" that can reduce the "cultural discount" and thus decrease the appeal of local cultural products in cross-cultural communication [3].

The actual effect of this role change is to create alternative channels for the dissemination of folk culture. A video of the American Internet celebrity "Jia Kang Ge" in China has gained the attention of people abroad on social media. It is not that there is no planned communication for the content; rather, the absence of additions and spontaneous reactions can also serve to counter the existing stereotypes. He said that the 5G signal in the high-speed rail tunnel was good, and this scene itself was more attractive content for "amplification of deviance" than a promotional video. The idea of "amplification of deviance" in communication studies is that content in contrast to existing cognition is more likely to attract attention. The cross-cultural communication ability of Generation Z is shown in this "memeification" process of turning daily life into shareable symbols.

3. Core Mechanism and Real Cases of AIGC Enabling Cross-Cultural Communication

If the digital meme ecosystem is the spontaneous communication initiative of Generation Z, then the intervention of AIGC has advanced this initiative to a more organised and practical level. The application of AIGC to cross-cultural communication has gone from theory to practice, and some results have been observed in content translation, production cooperation and communication adaptation. Roughly speaking, the three lines of development are: Cultural translation has shifted from literal translation to cultural transcoding; Content production has moved from professional monopoly to human-machine collaboration; Communication adaptation has shifted from mass distribution to scenario matching.

Traditional translation at the level of cultural adaptation only aims for semantic equivalence. Some important words and expressions in the culture may have lost their original meaning. AIGC can build a large-scale corpus and context model to achieve context-aware restructuring of cultural connotations in translation. In May 2025, the Beijing Xicheng District released a multilingual edition of the Beijing Opera theme song "Five Continents Singing the Bond of Opera", which was created by the AI model "Zhiyun Jingsheng" [4]. This is the world's first multilingual opera song created by an AIGC multimodal large model. Multiple language versions have been released simultaneously in many places around the world, and the ability of AIGC to handle high-context cultural content has begun to show signs.

In light of the improved efficiency of cultural translation, the content production stage is also changing. The overseas expansion of micro-dramas offers a model for human-machine collaborative production. In April 2025, the first large-scale intelligent translation centre for micro-dramas in Changsha Malanshan was opened. At the foundation of this is an AI large model for video-to-text translation, which has over 100 text translations and more than 20 voice-out options. Gan Weihao, the director of the Media Application Enablement Department at the Malanshan Audio-Video Laboratory, mentioned that for a 120-minute micro-drama, traditional manual dubbing would take 1-2 weeks; however, AI intelligent dubbing is only about 3-4 hours. Wu Wanxuan, the business vice president of Hangzhou Xiaoying Innovation Technology Co., Ltd., also reported that the AI translation service can complete over 1,000 translations per month at a cost of only 300-500 yuan per piece. Due to changes in efficiency and cost, some small- and medium-sized content creators are now able to engage in cross-cultural communication.

Lia, the world's first multilingual cultural tourism vertical virtual blogger created by the CCTV Asia-Africa Center, has shown the power of dissemination adaptation at all stages of production and distribution. In December 2025, the Tourism Bureau of Thailand named "Lia" a "Experience Officer" for Thai tourism culture and gave the first official endorsement by Thai authorities to the value of digital IPs in tourism promotion. "Lia" can immerse the audience in a first-person experience and then communicate with fans in both directions, meeting the demand for authenticity and participation among Generation Z [5].

4. The Elimination of Cultural Discount and the Implicit Constraints of Algorithm Logic

The above case shows the actual effect of AIGC in cross-cultural communication. The main reason is that there is no "cultural discount". Hoskins and Mirus proposed this idea in 1988, referring to a decrease in the appeal of cultural products after cross-cultural dissemination due to differences in language, values and aesthetics. Artificial intelligence can be employed to reduce language barriers and adapt cultural materials to local conditions. However, an increase in technical efficiency does not automatically result in an improvement of communication effects. Implicit constraints of algorithm logic on cultural expression constitute a structural conflict.

There are two mechanisms for the elimination of the cultural discount. One is the correctness of language translation. AIGC can learn the cultural customs and expression habits of the target audience to reduce meaning loss [6]. The other is the adaptation of content form. At the AI training camp for ASEAN students in Guangxi Laibin, the Vietnamese student Nguyen Thuy Hong uploaded Yao ethnic embroidery patterns to the AI platform and generated a design poster that combined tradition with modernity. Her Yao ethnic weaving video was shared 10,000 times on the Vietnamese social platform. Artificial intelligence can turn traditional cultural symbols that require expert knowledge and high-context awareness into visible and interactive visual materials for the public.

The introduction of algorithm logic will also change the boundaries of cultural expression. An increase in technical efficiency does not automatically result in parity of cultural expression. Text-to-image models will probably generate culturally neutral or English-biased results for multilingual prompts. The reason is that the structure of cultural expression in the model is deficient. According to the audit results of the algorithm, when the large model generates Chinese scenes, the three types of problems that occur are element errors, cultural misinterpretations and style contamination. Some scholars have described this phenomenon as "statistical monoculture", and the commercial model reduces the output under the same prompt to about 10 out of 768 effective dimensions, and the diversity of a minority culture under CLIP embedding is 17% lower than that of a majority culture.

The Algorithm Recommendation Mechanism is also worth learning about. Associate Professor Myojung Chung of Northeastern University in the United States interviewed 348 young people in the United States aged 18-25 and found that those with greater knowledge of algorithms were less likely to spread false information or engage in discussions with opposing views. This phenomenon is called "algorithmic cynicism" [7]. Understanding how an algorithm works does not lead to good digital citizenship behaviour; instead, it may increase one's sense of alienation. For Generation Z to participate in the cultural activity of AIGC, they need both technical access and the ability to think critically about and apply algorithmic logic.

5. Ethical Tensions in AIGC Cultural Production and Governance Responses

In addition to the hidden limitations of algorithms, AIGC has also raised a number of ethical problems in cross-cultural communication. The above ethical problems are not merely technical problems but rather a system of conflicts among the logic of technology, culture and politics, and the legal system. Among them, copyright infringement by AI-assisted remixing and the risk of cultural misrepresentation are very serious problems.

The copyright disputes over AI remixes broke out in 2024 at the end of the year. Many videos of "magically altered" classic film and television works have appeared, and absurd content, such as "Lin Daiyu uprooted the willow tree" and "Zhen Huan pulled out a Gatling gun", has spread rapidly. The Boundary between creative freedom and copyright protection has become a problem. The two main problems were whether it was appropriate to use copyrighted works for training AI models and who owned the copyright of the AI-generated works [8]. National People's Congress representative Wan Li has indicated that whether AI-generated works should be regarded as "works" and who is entitled to the rights have become extremely difficult legal problems in this field at present. In December 2024, the Network Program Management Department of the National Radio and Television Administration issued a "Management Notice (AI Magic Modification)", stating that these videos "aim to attract traffic, are completely without boundaries and desecrate classic IPs, violate traditional cultural cognition, contradict the core spirit of the original works, and are suspected of constituting infringement", and required relevant provincial authorities to urge the platforms in their jurisdiction to conduct inspections and cleanups and strictly implement the content review responsibility for generative artificial intelligence.

Cultural Misunderstandings must also be avoided. When AIGC processes foreign cultural materials in an entertaining and spectacular way, the original cultural labels are often lost [9]. Wang Yukai, a staff member of the Beijing Internet Information Office, pointed out in the "AI Shan Hai Jing" phenomenon that "The 'AI Shan Hai Jing' originated from a type of video called the 'brain rot meme' on foreign social platforms in early 2025". These videos use foreign languages, such as Italian, have attractive sound effects, randomly combine animals, objects and human features with AI image generation tools, and are not related to the ancient Chinese classic "Shan Hai Jing". Its generation logic is focused on visual effects and spreading efficiency to lower the cognitive barrier for cultural expression.

In addition to the general framework of AI governance, specific norms for cultural communication scenarios in cross-cultural communication need to be established. For example, a mechanism of expert review can be established for AIGC containing cultural symbols, and various cultural corpora are introduced during model training to offset the systematic bias of a single cultural perspective.

6. The Power Struggle between the Platform and Young Activists: Cultural Production Reconfiguration in the AIGC Era

Based on the analysis above, AIGC is reshaping the force of cultural production in cross-cultural communication; although the traditional "center-periphery" model has weakened to some extent, new power centers have emerged at the platform level. Generation Z lives in a time of change, is highly expressive, but is also subject to many soft algorithmic restrictions.

The technical standard has been reduced in recent years. In the past, for cross-cultural communication, language, equipment and channels were necessary, and content production was almost exclusively done by institutions. Generation Z now uses AI translation and generation tools to create multilingual content in a few hours, which used to take a team several weeks. Open-source strategies of domestic large models, such as DeepSeek, and the training of Chinese language corpora offer a path for the Global South to achieve technological self-reliance [10]. Empowerment is not universal; at the level of technology, the chosen model language will also change the visibility of different cultures in the algorithm space.

Research by Malaysian scholars on young people from different ethnic groups has found that they do not passively accept algorithm arrangements but actively engage in strategic negotiation of information flow. However, the contradiction is that the negotiation space itself is determined by algorithms, and although young people can choose from the available options, they cannot alter the options themselves [11].

Generation Z is exploring the new role of "cultural mediators". As "digital natives" and "AI natives", they have become the new "prosumers" of cross-cultural communication and driven the evolution of communication from "cross-cultural" to "transcultural". The multilingual AI-guided tour system of Quanzhou Kaiyuan Temple and the AI restoration of Chinese-Malaysian students' ancestral letters are typical cases: The technology users themselves are cultural bearers, and the dominance of cultural meaning in human-machine collaboration is maintained.

However, this lead is not automatic. Open-source models have provided a space for marginal cultures, but the recommendation logic of mainstream platforms still focuses on participation, which may result in an emotional and spectacular form of cultural expression. The initiative of Generation Z lies in whether they can make conscious judgments among tools, content and platforms, rather than being led by algorithmic feedback; otherwise, the feedback mechanism of the platform will be internalised as self-regulation, and creators will unconsciously adjust cultural expression according to algorithm preferences.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the intersection of Generation Z and AIGC has created new spaces for cross-cultural communication. From the dissolution of cultural discounts by digital memes and the lowering of the threshold for overseas expansion by AI translation, to the practice of youth negotiation, the impact of technological empowerment has already been manifested. However, the direction and degree of empowerment are determined by the power-configuration relationship.

Based on the above analysis, the effect of AIGC on cross-cultural communication cannot be explained by the idealised goals of "efficiency enhancement" or "democratisation of technology". The bias of Western-centric models, the compression of cultural diversity in algorithm recommendations, the copyright disputes of AI remixing, and the persistent existence of cultural misinterpretation are all dark sides of the narrative of technological empowerment. The deeper problem is whether the technological capabilities gained by young activists are sufficient to offset the centralizing effect of platform power in the shift of cultural production from traditional institutions to algorithm platforms. It has not been resolved.

The cross-cultural communication behavior of Generation Z shows a willingness to explore outside the institutional route and also indicates a disconnect between algorithm literacy and critical thinking. Research has found that younger people with a deeper understanding of algorithms are less likely to engage in corrective behaviour; thus, the transmission of algorithmic knowledge alone is insufficient to inspire positive cultural participation. The future of cross-cultural communication depends on whether a constructive tension can be created between tool efficiency and subject consciousness; Generation Z needs not only more powerful AI tools but also cultural judgment and ethical awareness to learn to use these tools.

Cross-cultural communication in the era of AIGC is gradually shifting from "translating China" to "interpreting China" at a larger scale. Technology can increase efficiency, but the definition, interpretation and dissemination of cultural meanings still need to be managed by people. Some scholars have proposed that "large model hallucination" and the "digital divide" are becoming new problems for the cross-cultural communication of the new generation of young people. Therefore, AIGC is to extend the scope of possibilities rather than to provide a replacement for human judgment.

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