

The “Nonverbal Soft Power” Generation Mechanism in Cross-Cultural Communication for Art Students

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Abstract: *With the increasing frequency of international art exchanges, cross-cultural communication skills have become a core competency for art students' career development. Nonverbal soft power in cross-cultural communication serves as a key to overcoming language barriers, conveying artistic concepts, and achieving cultural dissemination. Based on this, this paper explores the generation mechanisms and cultivation value of nonverbal soft power. Addressing issues such as insufficient content alignment, evaluation challenges, and limited practical scenarios in current training processes, targeted solutions are proposed. These measures aim to optimize the content framework, refine the teaching evaluation system, and enrich practical scenario offerings, thereby enhancing teaching resources and teacher capabilities to support the cultivation of nonverbal soft power among art students.*

Keywords: Art students, Cross-cultural communication, Nonverbal soft power, Generation mechanism.

1. Introduction

The “nonverbal soft power” in cross-cultural communication among art students is their core competency to overcome language barriers and achieve effective cultural exchange [1]. Traditional English teaching for art majors primarily focuses on language knowledge transmission, lacking systematic design for cultivating students' nonverbal communication skills, which struggles to align with the characteristics of art disciplines and fails to meet the practical cross-cultural communication needs of art students. Most existing research addresses the professional development needs of general students by guiding cross-cultural communication, while systematic studies on the cultivation of art students' professional traits and nonverbal soft power remain scarce. Based on this, the article explores the mechanisms of nonverbal soft power generation for art students' cross-cultural communication needs, establishing a training system to better enable art students to convey Chinese artistic voices on the international stage and promote bidirectional cultural exchange.

2. The Formation Mechanism and Cultivation Value of “Nonverbal Soft Power” in Cross-Cultural Communication for Art Students

2.1 The Formation Mechanism of “Nonverbal Soft Power” in Cross-Cultural Communication Among Art Students

The “non-verbal soft power” in cross-cultural communication for art students encompasses the ability to translate artistic symbols, aesthetic empathy, and cultural body language expression. Compared to students in general disciplines, art students need to accurately identify semantic differences in visual, auditory, and physical artistic symbols across cultural systems and perceive aesthetic preferences of audiences in diverse cultural contexts. They convey cultural connotations through body posture, demeanor, and movement rhythms, adapting to the communication etiquette of various cultural

settings. Art students' cross-cultural communication must align with the selection of artistic symbols to transmit their creative concepts, avoiding cultural misinterpretation. Based on shared artistic aesthetic principles across cultures, they convey the emotional value of their works, build bridges for communication, and eliminate cultural cognitive biases. This capability does not rely on direct linguistic output but is a unique, implicit form of communication that art students develop in cross-cultural contexts [2].

From the perspective of the generation mechanism, the development of nonverbal soft power requires continuous input of multiple elements, which serves as the prerequisite for capability formation. The knowledge elements after input must undergo multi-scenario training to enable students to internalize and integrate these elements. The internalized capabilities need to be exercised and externalized in various specific contexts to achieve effective spillover, ultimately forming perceivable nonverbal soft power. Art students must systematically absorb the symbolic semantics, aesthetic differences, and communication rules of diverse cultures through English and cross-cultural courses, establishing foundational cross-cultural cognition and completing the sedimentation of cultural understanding. Through targeted exercises such as cultural symbol translation training, aesthetic empathy training, and body expression training, fragmented knowledge elements are matched to corresponding communication scenarios. Through continuous trial and adjustment, habits of nonverbal expression adaptation are formed, internalizing various knowledge into stable nonverbal communication capabilities. In cross-cultural interactions within the art field, personalized nonverbal communication content is transformed into one's cultural influence and persuasive discourse.

2.2 The Cultivation Value of “Nonverbal Soft Power” in Cross-Cultural Communication for Art Students

In current international art exchange activities, nonverbal communication accounts for an extremely high proportion. Whether in art exhibitions, collaborative creations,

international competitions, or artistic work interpretations, all require the completion of tasks through symbolic expression and physical communication—nonverbal pathways. Nonverbal competence directly determines the practical effectiveness of art students' cross-cultural communication. Compared to verbal output, the cultural transmission of artistic symbols, aesthetic resonance, and bodily expression carries greater impact. It can be said that “nonverbal soft power” serves as the core vehicle for art students' cultural dissemination capabilities, enabling them to effectively share Chinese art stories in cross-cultural contexts and mitigate the discounting effect in cultural communication [3]. Cultivating “nonverbal soft power” also helps art students compensate for the shortcomings of traditional English learning and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills.

3. Challenges in Cultivating “Nonverbal Soft Power” for Art Students in Cross-Cultural Communication

The cultivation of “non-verbal soft power” holds significant value, yet it presents considerable challenges.

On one hand, the subject span of “non-verbal soft power” teaching content is relatively broad. It requires English teachers to master the symbolic systems and aesthetic logic of various art disciplines. This implies that English teachers need to possess considerable artistic expertise and be familiar with the non-verbal communication rules of different cultures. Currently, many English teachers in art schools and majors have a knowledge structure based on the professional English teaching system, making it difficult to meet the interdisciplinary art teaching needs. The professionalism and adaptability of the teaching content they provide struggle to fulfill the “non-verbal soft power” demands of art students in cross-cultural communication.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of cultivating “non-verbal soft power” needs to be demonstrated in real cross-cultural communication scenarios, making quantitative evaluation extremely challenging. Most manifestations of “non-verbal soft power” are implicit and dynamic, making it difficult for traditional written tests and single interviews to assess students' accuracy in symbolic translation, the adaptability of their empathy, or the standardization of their body language. Consequently, teachers struggle to rely on evaluation results to adjust teaching content and form a closed-loop feedback system. Without effective teaching feedback, students find it hard to sustain learning motivation.

In addition, the cultivation of “non-verbal soft skills” relies on practical scenarios, but most art institutions currently lack sufficient practical settings for English teaching. Most English instructors still employ traditional teaching methods such as in-class lectures, student memorization, and homework completion. Both teachers and schools offer limited real-world cross-cultural scenarios, leaving students with few opportunities to repeatedly train their “non-verbal soft skills” and develop cultural memory. The international art exchange resources available to schools are relatively scarce, making it difficult for most students to gain consistent hands-on experience in non-verbal communication, which in turn hinders the effective transformation of these skills into

practical abilities.

4. Strategies for Cultivating “Non-Verbal Soft Power” in Intercultural Communication for Art Students Based on Its Generative Mechanism

4.1 Establish a Cross-cultural Communication Curriculum System

4.1.1 Form a modular curriculum matrix

College English teachers should collaborate with art teaching and research departments and cross-cultural research centers to design a curriculum system that allows students to deepen their understanding, expression, and application of different cultures through layered curriculum modules. Add compulsory courses on cross-cultural nonverbal communication in the general basic module, open to all art students, to systematically explain the semantics of globally common artistic symbols, etiquette of different cultural body expressions, and the laws of aesthetic commonality. The total class hours of the basic module in cross-cultural courses should be at least one-third, and it is open to all art majors in their first and second year. The professional adaptation module is mainly aimed at art students in different fields such as art, music, dance, drama, etc. Design corresponding segmented courses to enable students to choose elective courses based on their major to learn core skills. Each course should include theoretical and practical courses. The advanced enhancement module is a targeted course designed for senior students with international exchange needs. Focusing on high-end scenarios such as international curation, cross-border project negotiations, and international art competitions, we develop nonverbal strategy training for students, combined with practical teaching activities such as simulated sand tables, case deduction, and nonverbal communication practice, so that students can apply what they have learned.

4.1.2 Dynamically update course content

College English teachers need to collaborate with art teachers to form a collaborative lesson preparation mechanism, carry out joint teaching and research, and have art teachers sort out the core symbol system and aesthetic logic of different art directions, organize industry expression norms. English teachers then refine them into English teaching content, connect with cross-cultural communication rules and the characteristics of art contexts in different cultures, jointly polish the curriculum, ensure that the curriculum system is updated in a timely manner, and meet the laws of cross-cultural communication and the needs of art students' professional learning. English teachers also need to continuously enrich the course content, form a dynamic iterative mechanism, collect more art exchange cases, nonverbal communication rules in different cultural and artistic fields, and update the content. Dynamically update the course content based on the different needs of fresh graduates, participating students, and competition students. In addition, teachers should also build an online shared course resource library and work together with the teaching and research team.

Integrate art symbol comparison tables from different majors, art aesthetic preference guidelines from various countries, international art exchange scenes, nonverbal expression videos, etc., and open these resources to students to facilitate independent learning and effective exploration. The resource library can serve as a supplement to classroom teaching, constantly updated dynamically, and coordinated with classroom teaching content, providing more support for students' self-directed learning.

4.2 Improve the Non-verbal Soft Power Assessment System

4.2.1 Build a quantitative evaluation system involving multiple stakeholders

The evaluation of nonverbal soft power should comprehensively consider three core dimensions: the accuracy of symbol translation, the adaptability of empathy ability, and the standardization of bodily expression. English teachers should comprehensively focus on the generation mechanism of nonverbal soft power, grasp the core dimensions, and design quantifiable hierarchical evaluation indicators. For example, in the dimension of "symbol translation", specific sub items such as cultural semantic matching, compliance with symbol usage, and clarity of expression can be examined, and students' performance can be quantitatively scored on a scale of 0-10 points. The dimension of "empathy ability" needs to examine students' audience emotional feedback matching, timely response to cultural differences, effective conflict resolution, and physical expression dimensions, focusing on students' etiquette norms, consistency in conveying body information, and naturalness of cultural presentation. More detailed evaluation indicators need to be set under each core dimension to comprehensively eliminate subjectivity. The specific scoring of each dimension should adopt a multi subject participation model, allowing teachers, students, and third-party foreign art practitioners to jointly score students' nonverbal soft power, in order to break the limitations of single subject scoring, comprehensively evaluate the professionalism of students' ability application, as well as the perceived effectiveness of communication and the rationality of cultural adaptation. Based on the scores given by different subjects and a scientifically reasonable proportion, generate an evaluation report on students' nonverbal soft power, form a personal profile, label the specific scores of students in each dimension, point out students' weaknesses, and based on this scoring result, teachers can give students key breakthrough points for future learning, form effective learning suggestions, and also help students clarify their future learning direction.

4.2.2 Strengthen the tracking of students' non-verbal soft power learning process

English teachers should comprehensively evaluate the process and results of students' learning, pay attention to the entire process of students' nonverbal soft power generation and change, and record students' learning performance. Schools should establish a capability assessment data platform to record students' performance in every classroom training, simulation scenario, and assessment practice activity since their freshman year. Both written test results and relevant

video improvement records are required to generate personal ability profiles for students, comprehensively reflecting their growth curve and generating dynamic assessments. At the end of each semester, teachers should point out the weak areas of students' nonverbal soft power based on the fluctuation of their dynamic growth curve. Teachers will adjust the proportion of content for different courses in the next semester based on students' common problems. Increase the frequency of class hours and training corresponding to weak modules, supplement more case analysis content, and help students focus on breakthroughs. Every semester, teachers should provide students with two or more feedback reports on their ability development, helping them understand their specialized resources and corresponding improvement paths in non-verbal soft power growth. During the teaching process, teachers should also encourage students to bravely break through weak areas, give corresponding honors and awards as cross-cultural communication ability stars to students who have significantly improved, provide students with opportunities for artistic exchange practice, and form effective incentives to help students strengthen their motivation for non-verbal soft power learning. For students who improve slowly, teachers can also provide one-on-one targeted guidance to help them hone their skills through continuous practical training.

4.3 Enrich Non-verbal Soft Power Practice Scenarios

4.3.1 Build training scenarios based on virtual simulation

Supported by modern digital technology, college English teachers need to collaborate with information technology teaching departments and art professional laboratories to build a virtual teaching simulation platform. Integrating different types of digital twin resources such as international art exhibitions, cross-border project negotiations, international art competitions, and cross-cultural art workshops into the digital simulation platform, allowing students to use these resources to complete virtual exchange interactions, play different roles, and immerse themselves in various scenarios through VR devices. The virtual simulation platform can automatically score students' nonverbal soft power such as symbol selection, body expression, empathy response, etc., and prompt students of different degrees of errors. After completing the prescribed duration of virtual simulation training, students will enter the credit training score, which will be included in the process assessment results. Teachers can also collaborate with the school's international exchange office and art clubs to create practical scenarios within the school. Organize an international art exchange salon, inviting foreign teachers, international students, and visiting artists as guests to evaluate students' exchange works, guide students to conduct art themed discussions and small-scale joint exhibitions, and enable students to complete high-frequency practical training in low-pressure scenarios, forming stable cultural memories.

4.3.2 Multi level integration of on campus and off campus resources

The generation of nonverbal soft power is a dynamic and long-term process, and English teachers should establish stable practical cooperation mechanisms with local cultural

and tourism departments, foreign-related art institutions, international art exhibition organizers, and other types of resources. Schools should also strive for more international art exhibition volunteer services, reception of foreign-related art activities, cross-border art project assistants and other practical quotas for art majors, so that students can participate more in various practical activities, encourage students to participate, give corresponding course credits to participating students, and deduct practical proof. English teachers can take the lead in building a cloud based joint practice platform for Chinese and foreign art students, allowing domestic art majors to establish long-term and stable cooperation with students from foreign art colleges, engage in online joint creation, online work evaluation, cross-cultural art theme seminars, etc. Encourage students to sign up and participate in real cross-border communication scenarios to exercise nonverbal expression and complete practical training operations. Schools can also set up cross-border exchange funds to support art exchange projects, provide students with certain financial support, and provide teachers with relevant project funding.

5. Conclusion

The development of non-verbal soft power in intercultural communication for art students constitutes a process progressing from knowledge input to ability internalization and subsequently to practical application. Educational institutions should strengthen the cultivation of non-verbal soft power among art students through three primary approaches: optimizing the curriculum system, refining evaluation mechanisms, and enriching practical scenarios. This entails deeply integrating the professional advantages of art students with the competency requirements of intercultural communication, thereby enhancing their core competitiveness in intercultural communication contexts. Furthermore, optimizing the English curriculum system cultivates talents for international exchange, supplying more highly qualified professional art personnel for the "Going Global" initiative of Chinese culture.

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