

Exploring Intercultural Communication Through Identity Construction: A Case of YouTube Comments

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Abstract

This exploratory study examines the strategies used by commenters in the YouTube comment section to facilitate intercultural communication through identity construction in the digital space. Based on critical discourse analysis and the framework of identity regarding indexicality and othering, the study has analyzed 8 extracts selected from 7,000 comments under one YouTube video talking about political stuff. The findings suggest that individuals could employ explicit ethnicity labeling, rhetorical questioning, othering processes, and humor as key strategies to showcase their cultural identity in intercultural arena. The purpose is to seek support or challenge viewpoints through personal experiences, with the aim of achieving acceptance. The study highlights the challenges posed by digital spaces in intercultural communication and emphasizes the need for further research to address the potential misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.

Keywords: intercultural communication, identity, strategy, YouTube comments

1. Background Introduction

As an open platform and video-sharing site on the internet, YouTube embraces various cultures and peoples from different part of the world. The non-registered users are allowed to watch the uploaded videos and the registered users can not only watch but also upload and comment on the videos. Its worldwide accessibility and unprecedented social impact make it possible to form online intercultural communication thus facilitating globalization. Its highly interactional nature (Herring, 2013) contributes to various comments under YouTube videos and moreover, YouTube comment sections present multimodality since it supports both text and emojis. As Benson (2015, p. 7) suggests that the interaction in comment box is not only restricted to single R (response) or I (initiation) move to the videos but also concerning the exchange of I and R move to the comments below. This interactional act is commonly found since that the interactants are constantly negotiating for meaning or stance (Benson, 2015, p. 9) so to express (dis)agreement or share an opinion. One thing to be noted is that communication in comment boxes on YouTube is characterized by (pseudo-)anonymity or (pseudo-)familiarity (Wentker & Schneider, 2022, p. 5) since registered users do not necessarily know each other. This (pseudo-)anonymity can thus inevitably reveal the boldness of commenters to give various comments. Based on the mentioned features, it is possible to examine the linguistic feature the commenters presented by examining identity construction process since it is general recognized that language is a reflection of identity. Computer mediated communication has “tremendous potential for intercultural communication as well as discursively generated identity work” (Thorne, 2010, p. 6, cited in Chen, 2016). Inspired by this comment, considering the features of online comments, this project aims to identify intercultural interaction through the process of identity construction.

The study considering the identity construction within digital space is not new and there is fruitful research. There are scholars discussed about identity through the lens of lexical choices (Myers, 2010), through the dynamic use of various languages regarding translanguaging (Benson, 2015) or code-switching (Wentker & Schneider, 2022), some may go even far to look at the comments from a broader aspect, like the use of rhetorical strategies (McCambridge, 2022). From these studies, it can be noted that most of the research lies in the area of pragmatics, thus how about the relationship between identity construction and intercultural communication? As “identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 587), in this paper, the study will mainly focus on what strategies commenters use to construct their identity within the field of sociolinguistics which is an underexplored area.

In view of the relevant introduction, a key question would be addressed in this exploratory paper which is: How do commenters strategically use linguistic resources to construct and perform their identities in intercultural online interactions, more specifically, YouTube comment box?

2. Literature Review

The emergence of digital technology and the pervasive usage of the internet enable individuals to communicate with people from different cultures and construct identities in virtual environments. As YouTube has its worldwide accessibility, it thus provides opportunities for intercultural communication especially in the highly interactional comment section. This trend facilitates the study of identity and intercultural communication on YouTube. Scholars have approached identity mainly from the aspect of linguistic resources with relatively less attention given to the exploration of a broader aspect concerning the intercultural value embedded in identity expressions within YouTube comments.

Benson (2015) has examined the commenters' exchange structure of information in the collected 8,850 comments from the perspective of discourse analysis, finding that translanguaging triggers rich comments relating to language and culture. One thing to be noted is that the YouTube video presents intercultural nature in essence like the frequent use of "Cantonese" "擦鞋仔" "Asia", which to some extent already present the culture differences and thus we are able to presume the cultural-stance comments in this English dominated forum—YouTube. The findings in the paper contribute to framing the question in this paper: what strategies do the commenters use to construct their cultural identity?

Concerning a more specific use of linguistic features, Myers (2010) has conducted more extensive research to examine the role of stance taking of commenters in blogs and the related comments, focusing on the marking of individual stance with the specific use of adverbs and verbs. The data used in the study contains five popular blogs followed by lots of responses with each containing more than 10,000 words and another comparison sample around 50,000 words from a different web discussion site. The two types of data form a rather large corpus containing more than 100,000 words. Utilizing a corpus concordance tool Wmatrix, he found that adverbs were used to show contrast and the verbs to show a connection with others. More importantly, beyond words, the ironic sentences were also used to show opposites. This paper highlights the importance of nuanced linguistic resources in negotiating identity. The findings are consistent with Benson's argument that commenters can use stance markers to showcase the "cognitive activity" (cognitive verbs), "status of knowledge" (adverbs) and "sources of evidence" (references, like *read, told*) (2015, p. 10).

Adopting a mixed-method approach, Wentker and Schneider (2022) has examined the identity construction process through code-switching in comment section with a quite large corpus including 6,474 comments under a video. One strength of this research is that it has used content analysis and key word in context searches to quantitatively describe the data and then it has conducted the qualitative discourse analysis to make the results more convincing. Their findings highlight that commenters tend to position themselves through cultural and linguistic labelling and quoting strategies of CS. The result implicates that CS has the potential to bridge intercultural gaps.

Followed by Hyland's (2005) stance model, McCambridge (2022) has analyzed bullying rhetorical strategies online with 2,000 comments under a video of political topic. It should be noted that all the comments are manually coded using ATLAS.ti software. This quantitatively generated nuanced data support the qualitative analysis of the comments thus making the results more feasible and convincing. The results reveal that commenters' expressions are featured by teasing voice. This kind of voice is shaped by continual repetition, exclamation marks and capitals. While hedging is rarely found in this dataset.

These studies remind us that studying identity construction with YouTube comments is indeed feasible. Furthermore, the research methods used in the above studies indicate that qualitative study is still the mainstream to explore identity within online comment. Building upon these studies, this project will use critical discourse analysis method to investigate how commenters engage in intercultural communication through identity construction by examining the strategies that they employed within comments.

3. Theoretical Framework: Identity Construction Through Indexicality and Othering

Identity is a multifaceted concept that involves not only individuals' self-orientation but also other's ascription (Zhu, 2019, p. 229). In this sense, defining the term "identity" is a challenging task because of its intricate nature and its implicated meaning (Zhu, 2019, p. 212). It has been extensively studied in various fields, like linguistics, psychology and anthropology, etc. In this project, the notion of identity is mainly based on Bucholtz and Hall's (2022, p. 19) argument that identity is an "emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon". With this argument in

mind leading to the question: how to construct our identity. According to Zhu (2019), participants have a range of linguistic and interactional resources at their disposal to do identity work. In this sense, YouTube comment section is a platform for examining identity with rich written linguistic resources. Bucholtz and Hall (2022, p. 21) argue that identity relations can be achieved through (a) explicit reference of identity labels; (b) implicit meanings and assumptions about one's own or others' identity positions; (c) evaluative judgements about ongoing discourse; (d) use of linguistic features with specific groups. Based on these arguments, "our very sense of who we are, where we belong and why, and how we relate to those around us, all have language at their center" (Joseph, 2010, p. 9).

In the social context, like YouTube comments, social identity refers to "the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2022, p. 18). As a broader term, social identity encompasses an individual's ethnicity, nationality, gender and occupation, etc.. In social context like YouTube comments, social identity is normally avowed by the commenters themselves, like their ethnicity and occupation. Ethnicity, which is central to cultural identity (Zhu, 2015, p. 215), is a marker of difference, reinforcing the idea of "self" & "other", and by presenting "other" create more awareness of "self" (Udah & Singh, 2019, p. 845). "Othering is a process through which people construct or define themselves in reference to the *Other*" (Udah & Singh, 2019, p. 846), and thus it is like through the *Other* that one sees and defines *Self*.

To distinguish self and other, people can use indexical like pronouns or gestures (Silverstein, 1998, p. 270). Indexicality refers to how linguistic and contextual signs are used to indicate specific contexts and meanings for those who are using them. In simpler terms, it is the ability of signs and language to point to situations or convey specific implications based on the context in which they are used (Silverstein, 1998). In the dataset, to indicate self and other, the commenter employs different strategies, like the use of personal pronouns "I" "they", the direct address of their ethnicity. Indexical expressions play a role in the construction and expression of identity. As explained by Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 594), that indexicality "is fundamental to the way in which linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions" since it "involves the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings".

Linguistic features concerning identity construction characterized by "markers" of social meaning and "othering" process. This project will focus on how commenters present their social identity through othering process and indexicality.

4. Methodology

The project is mainly exploratory oriented exploring evidence of linguistic features and intercultural communication in comments concerned with the role of discourse analysis tools in such investigations. Thus, the approach utilized in this paper privileges the interactional linguistic features of identity construction in online comments. The interdisciplinary perspective is embodied in the framework for analyzing intercultural communication concerning identity construction mainly from the perspective of indexicality and othering. To have an in-depth exploration of intercultural communication through identity construction and uncover underlying dynamics, this paper will focus on qualitative discourse analysis of some extracted comments.

5. Data

The data used in this paper are some extracted comments concerning comment response-chains under one video named "Why Africa choose China" published by Cyrus Janssen with 486, 000 followers. The YouTube vlogger makes a video about China's contribution to Africa and claims that China is the key to Africa's future. This video has sparked a lot of discussion. I must make a claim here that I purposefully chose this video as my starting point because of the abundant comments under it. By the time of extraction, this video has generated about 1.5 million views and about 7,000 comments. The comments related to identity construction have been selected to have a more in-depth exploration of intercultural communication through the lens of the individuals' use of various cues to construct their identity. The purpose is thus to present how commenters doing intercultural communication through identity construction. I admit that studying the entire set of comments would provide a comprehensive overview of identity construction in general, but in the 7000 comments there are lots of direct comments without concerning identity construction like "Good" "A very impressive video", which would bias the results. Therefore, carefully selecting diverse comments would make the research more targeted and manageable. One thing to be noted is that the language examined were limited to English and Chinese due to the language competency of the researcher.

6. Data Analysis

The following extracts capture the commenters' linguistic features centering on identity construction. "Language is our primary semiotic tool for representing and negotiating social reality, including social identity categories"

(Bailey, 2000, p. 341). Based on the theoretical framework analyzed previously, the following part will conduct analysis within this field. One key point to bear in mind is that the primary interest is examining intercultural communication through identity construction. The discussion does not involve any political stance. In this analysis, all extracted comments are presented in their original format by taking screenshots.

6.1 Intercultural Communication Through Explicit Ethnicity Labelling

The first extract is a lengthy one with the response chain under one reply posted by “blessingmasawi3616”. In this comment, the individual directly states his cultural identity by explicitly identifying as “*as an African*”, making his identity salient within the online discourse. This comment evokes 27 responses afterwards.

Extract 1

Main reply:

@blessingmasawi3616 3个月前

As an African that first sentence "the US has traditionally seen Africa as a problem to be solved, While China sees Africa as a place of opportunity" really does explain everything, call it culturism, 'standards' or.. 'racism'. That simple sentence is the core.

👍 230 🗨️ 回复

▲ 27 条回复

@xa-12musk8 2个月前

Selfish interests. That's your actual answer. America is the core of the core nations,China is the core of the periphery nations. Hence,China will exploit other countries to mutual benefit only as long as they are not the core of the core. Once they are,or would be,this exploitation would make China stagnant. It's all about selfish interest. But,Chinese investment in Africa has enormous benefit,of course.

👍 5 🗨️ 回复

Response chains:

@YcaroAlvesGarcia 1个月前 (修改过)

@xa-12musk8 Neither the US or China are saints but in these days is 10x better to be an economic partner with China than the US.

China doesnt need to invade the country and forcing it to follow its policys and ideologys like US and Europe does. They dont also make empty promises.

China doesnt see these countrys as colonies or vassals but she see's them as new opportunities for self and out growth(ldk how to say this in english but in capitalism more competition = more money)

as a Brazillian i dont want to see my country dependent on China but there is no reason to not accept China deals when they are beneficial for both sides/If any of yall say something about "Debt trap" them explain why she forgive the African countrys debt

收起

@user-dc2zh2il3w 2个月前

@xa-12musk8 I'll say as an American. I hope China does. I think you all assume racism but the reality is. We kinda have a lot on our plate with maintaining the sea lanes and stopping Europe from blowing up the world. So it's not that America sees Africa as "a problem to be solved" It's more like America see's Africa as "One more problem it needs to solve." Your lower down in the priority que for two reasons. Firstly we were founded by Britain and gained our independence with the help of France. Meaning to Americans these two peoples mean something. The rest of Europe can suck a dick they are just annoying to us. The second reason is that Africa can't kill everyone by nuking the world.

From the perspective of America post world war 2. Everyone around the world is a needy kid but, Europe was an angry needy kid with a gun. You always have to remember the entire international rules based order. Only exists because the U.S. uses it blue water navy the largest and most powerful in the world to keep the seas open to trade. The only reason China can even help Africa or was able to get to it's feet is because of American aid and American power.

This is the issue Americans face. Again "Africa isn't a problem." "Africa is just one more problem among many." If someone can help you without us. Good it's a lot off our plate. Our concern with China is not their investments in Africa. It's they're behavior in the South China sea. The reason we don't want you working with them isn't because we don't respect or don't like you. It's because they constantly talk about invading Taiwan and wiping Japan off the map. Either way those things aren't Africa's problem and if the aid helps I would take it.

收起

👍 8 🗨️ 回复

@xa-12musk8 2个月前 (修改过)

@user-dc2zh2il3w By Europe nuking things you should say Russia. Don't be the stereotypically ignorant American. But Europe, while still very powerful, isn't as high up as it used to be, and now countries like Vietnam and China are growing, basically. America repositions itself because China is a one party, aggressive state basically, with no democracy. The USA needs Europe. Not as much as Europe needs the USA but the USA does need Europe. Europe (excluding Russia) still has a big ass economy and is a very important part of NATO.

The USA doesn't get enough credit. In East Asia the view is more accurate. They see America defending countries like Japan and Taiwan from China. They see the awesome economic power and innovation of the most powerful nation ever. Vietnam is actually the most pro American country today—they say "We fought America for 10 years, and China for 1000." Isolationism is the chief threat to America, along with a coup like Trump's.

收起

👍 2 🗨️ 回复

@xa-12musk8 2个月前

@user-dc2zh2il3w And also, we should note because of Western trade China got rich in the first place! Making products for Apple and the like.

👍 🗨️ 回复

@xa-12musk8 2个月前

@user-dc2zh2il3w I appreciate you articulating your opinion. Greetings from transatlantic Ireland by the way 🇮🇪

🔗 📄 🗨️

In the response chain, the commenter “xa-12musk8” is putting forth his or her personal opinions, which then prompts individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to share their own perspectives afterwards, creating an active exchange of views across national and cultural lines. The intercultural communication is through an explicit claim of ethnicity, like “as a Brazilian” “as an American”. To respond “user-dc2zh2il3w”’s claim as an American, he even challenges the American as a supportive American for this scenario by saying that “don’t be a stereotypically ignorant American”. In this interaction practice, the user “xa-12musk8” relies on linguistic impoliteness to distance himself from a rejected identity—his so called “ignorant American” and in doing so, emphasizes the argument that identity is shaped by group dynamics and the distinction between “us” and “them” (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 211). At last, after a lengthy explanation the commenter “xa-12musk8” presents his ethnicity as a citizen from Ireland through explicit ethnicity labelling and multimodal resource—picture, to indicate his ethnicity. This process of constructing identity demonstrates that the Irish commenter intentionally distances himself from the other American commenter so to make clear that he is not from America, Africa or China, just an outsider in this context. It is like saying that “I am saying the truth, I am unbiased because I am an outsider.”

Extract 2:

@MoonHeax md6mp 6个月前

As a White South African Farmer I fully understand and agree with China's involvement in Africa. Africa had been exploited by the Anglo American Empire and the French ever since colonization.


👍 4 🗨️ 回复

In this comment, the commenter (probably a white immigrant or descendants of other Western countries) adds ‘White’ suggests that he is different from the Other black African who are the dominant group taking account about 84% in Africa (Wikipedia). “Whiteness—being identified as white or having white skin—has continued to mark and name white people as native and belonging” (Udah & Singh, 2019, p. 846). In this way, a different “South African” is formed, functioning to make his argument more convincing and more supportive of the Africa-China policy.


6.2 Intercultural Communication Through Othering


The process of “othering” involves the strategic construction of identities through the use of marked linguistic registers, such as humor or parody (Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). This also encompasses the practice of naming or labeling the referent in ways that symbolically dehumanize them, such as referring to them as “dog” “serpent”. Additionally, othering often involves making accusations that the “other” engages in stupid or irrational behavior. These discursive techniques serve to distance the in-group from the out-group and reinforce the social and psychological boundaries between them.


Extract 3**Main reply:**

 @steventan2550 9个月前
 "When US leaders visit Africa they talk about China but when Chinese officials visit Africa they talk about trade and development"
 5640 回复
 316 条回复

Response chains:


 @otis3015 8个月前 (修改过)
 The difference is
 America talk about the people and China is talking about making money.
 18 回复

 @AllanQuatermain152 8个月前 (修改过)
 @otis3015 Talking about people without providing them the opportunity of having a better life. Good that you acknowledge that you guys just give lectures.
 52 回复

 @icemike20071 8个月前
 They coming back to help we taught them first.
 2 回复

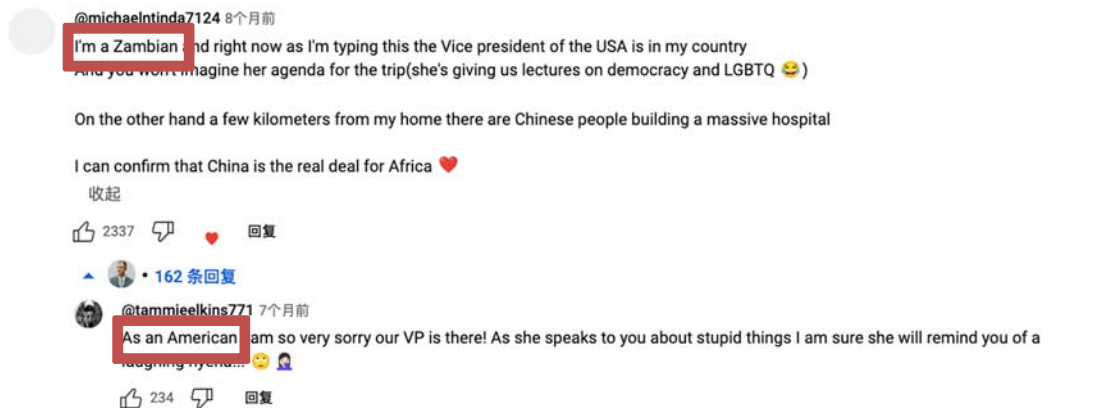
Under this comment posted by ‘steventan2550’, there are 316 responses. Despite that some comments like “100%”, we also find some comments representing identity construction in intercultural communication through othering process. The user “Allanquatermain152” use “them” to refer to Africans and “you” to American people. Subconsciously, the commenter is suggesting that he is from different country, not African or American. The commenter “icemike20071” also uses “they”, but there is a “we” for contrast. According to the context, “they” refers to Chinese people (who helps Africans), while “we” refers to American. By commenting “we taught them”, the commenter is in a superior position. Thus, both commenters overtly reveal their identities through the process of “othering” with multiple ethnicities involved.

Extract 4:

 @infinitewriter8135 8个月前
 I have many African friends here in the US, Nigerians, Ghanaian, and Zimbabweans, and they are doing very well here, moreover than alot of Americans, they are very determined people and true to their nations, in no political chaos let alone how political talks take place, but I think if they can come here and Thrive wit a little help they should be able to do so in their own countries,so if China is helping them to do that so be it..
 5 回复

In this comment, the commenter puts forward that his friends from various parts of the world, which are dependent on China’s help, are “doing very well” than “a lot of Americans”. The use of “they” in contrast to “I as an American” highlights that the commenter is redressing the stereotype about those people in less affluent countries. They live happily according to the commenter’s personal experience. Othering used in this part is used as a strategy to make a sharp social comparison between US, an affluent country, and less affluent ones so to challenge the negative stereotype of those African people. This way, the commenter can seek support and recognition of his neutral statements, thereby fostering positive connections and relationships with others who stand with the vlogger.

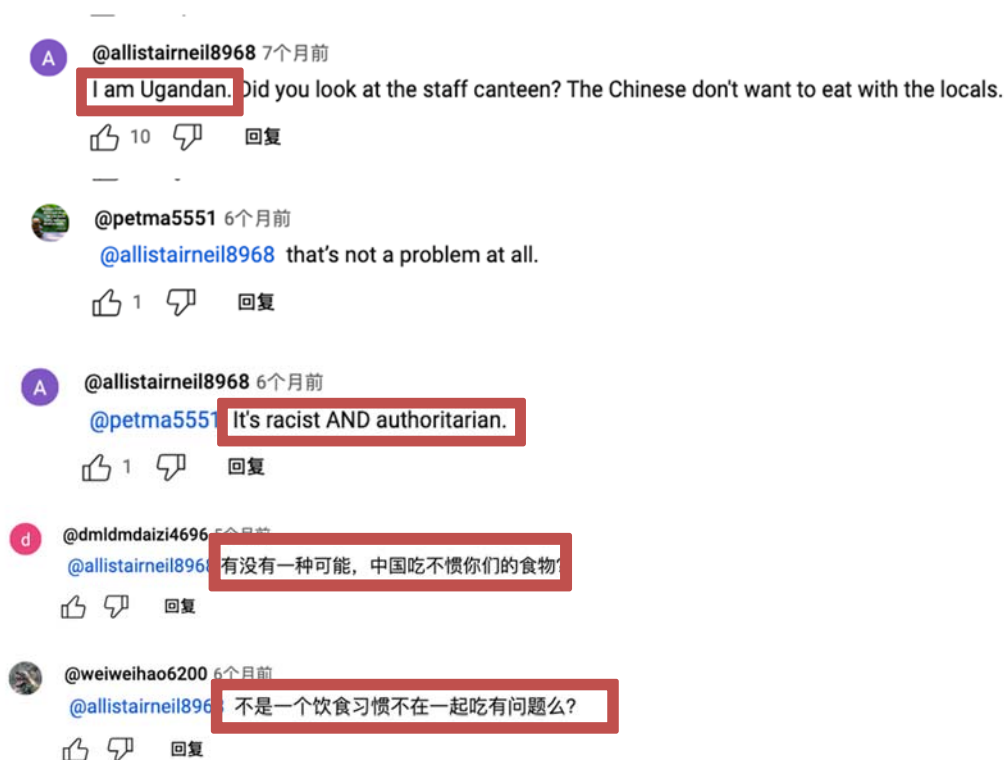
6.3 Intercultural Communication Through Humor Effect**Extract 5:**

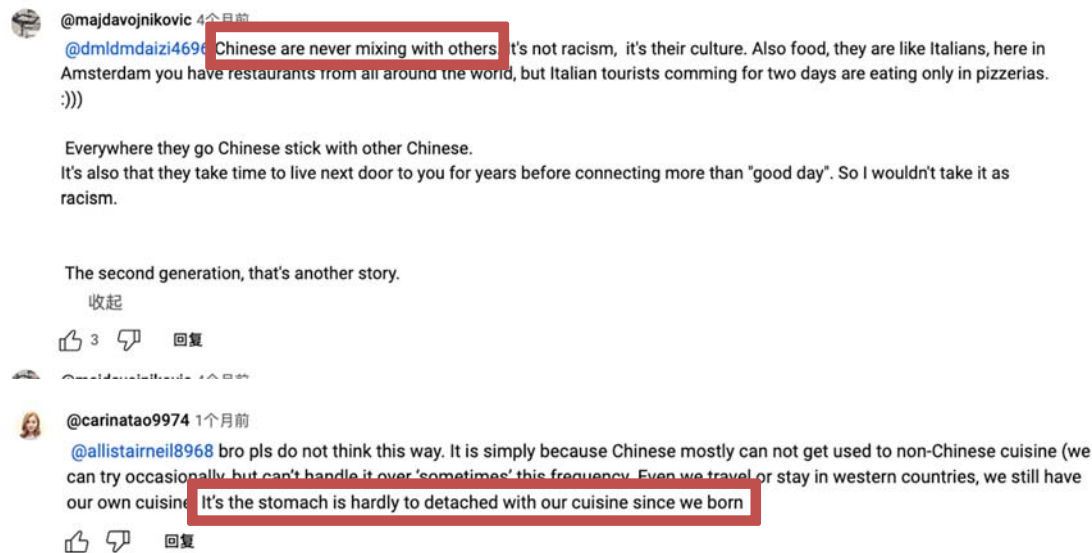


The commenter “michaelntinda” states that as a Zambian they are receiving American vice president’s lectures about LGBTQ. This topic is considered conservative for a country located in southern Africa. Considering the development needs in Zambia, the country could greatly benefit from assistance, such as support from China, in the form of constructing a massive hospital rather than the equality of human rights. The approaches taken by these two countries towards Zambia exhibit a stark contrast. The noted response to this comment is commenter “tammieelkins” statements. As an American, he boldly stated that the vice president is like “a laughing hyena”. The derogatory tone used in this metaphor is probably to express his criticism for the vice president’s incompetency. This identity construction process as a non-supportive American for the US’ foreign policy towards Zambia aims to distance himself from other supportive Americans. Thus, this avowed self is to show agreement with the commenter from Zambia.

6.4 Intercultural Communication Through Rhetorical Questioning

Extract 6:





The comment generated by “allistairneil8968” has initiated a heated discussion with people from different countries. By asking the question, “Did you look at the staff canteen?”, the commenter is prompting the other commenters to pay attention to a particular aspect of the situation—the behavior of the Chinese individuals in the canteen. The purpose is not to seek a response but to emphasize this behavior he observed. In response to the comment “that’s not a problem at all”, “allistairneil8968” refutes this comment by saying that Chinese people’s behavior is both “racist and authoritarian”. Another two commenters probably from China respond in Chinese characters by posing rhetorical questions: “is it possible that they have a different eating habit” so to express their disagreement with “allistairneil8968”’s claim. The Chinese ethnicity is thus presented using Chinese characters. An explanation for this phenomenon is posted by “carinatao9974” by saying that it is the stomach that making Chinese people stick together. The use of “we” indicate that this commenter is a Chinese. Another explanation refuting “allistairneil8968” opinion is an individual probably from Amsterdam by using the indexical “here”. The frequent use of indexical “they” appeared in the comment at least demonstrates that he is not a Chinese. This intercultural communication is thus presented through the explicit identity labelling and implicit identity construction process by using indexical and local language.

7. Discussions

The widespread accessibility of Internet to global regions has naturally enhanced the possibilities for intercultural communication (Tokunaga, 2009). However, the intercultural communication is complicated online which is characterized by the heightened risks of misunderstanding. Intercultural communication online through identity construction involves the use of various strategies such as explicit labeling, othering, rhetorical questions, and humor. These strategies effectively present the individuals identities in digital space thus impacting the dynamic intercultural communication.

The above discussion about explicit ethnicity labelling reveals that explicit labelling promotes cultural exchange leading to reinforcing stereotypes (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) like “ignorant American” or allowing individuals to share personal experience by stating the fact they encountered in their country. Thus, ethnicity labelling is not always functioning to marginalize others. In the specific context, it can also serve as a source for fostering a sense of community and facilitating intercultural communication by prompting more supportive comments.

From the data analysis, the commenters tend to alienate from people from other country through othering process because of the cultural differences. Othering creates barriers to intercultural communication by reinforcing an “us vs. them” “I vs you” mentality (Hall, 1996). In online interactions in this context, othering is manifested through prejudice like “we taught them” and redressing stereotype using positive comments like “they are doing very well”. Othering practices are prevalent in the collected data and they are normally intertwined with other strategies. Because of the anonymity and openness in YouTube comments, the commenters are free to express biased views and engage in hate speech even using impolite words like “fool” “stupid”. Scholars tend to agree that othering is a problem in intercultural communication thus advocating for the need to combat othering. From this perspective, digital place serves as an ideal platform for questioning, resisting, and challenging the portrayals of oneself and others (Sarrica et al., 2021). However, the findings of this project indicated that othering does not always have negative outcomes. In some instances, othering can actually elicit support and respect from others which coincides

with findings in Baleria (2019).

In this project, we also find that humor has a significant effect on bridging cultural differences. Researchers discovered that people having a sense of humor can be more skill in intercultural communication (Oshima, 2018). From the data, in response to the “American vice president’s LGBTQ talk” in Zambia, some commenters from America even employ multimodal resources—funny emojis to convey the perceived absurdity the action. Through humor, individuals from America show a support for the original commenter’s view. This way, they have embraced an against-VP American identity and this humor does facilitate connections and shared experiences among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Another potential finding related to intercultural communication concerning identity construction is the frequent use of rhetorical questions by commenters. Like the above analysis, the commenter posts a question that are not meant to elicit direct answers but to make a point to challenge the saying “China are doing good to the African countries”. Rhetorical questions can be strategically employed to engage others, provoke reflection, and encourage active interaction in digital space. Through personal experience, by rhetorical questioning the commenter can stimulate others’ thoughts about cultural differences so to promote deeper exploration of intercultural communication. Based on the data analysis, it is obvious that the rhetorical questions employed by the commenters are to express disagreement. This suggests that it is possible to examine the role of rhetorical questioning in intercultural communication online.

8. Conclusions

The core of this project is an exploratory study of strategies used by commenters to facilitate intercultural communication through the lens of identity construction in digital space. The project finds that the commenters in YouTube comment section tends to display their cultural identity with different strategies. The explicit ethnicity labelling, employment of rhetorical questioning, othering process and humor are commonly found in the collected data. The findings suggest that the process of negotiating identities in digital space generally revolves around seeking support or challenging viewpoints through personal experience, ultimately striving for a sense acceptance.

This study does have some certain limitations. Firstly, as Myers (2010, p. 7) points out that there is too much risk to select a few examples which are usually “unusual and striking” to make discourse analysis since the overall feature of the corpus would be biased. I confess that I purposefully extract some identity-related comments concerning the research goal. The paper is not to examine the linguistic features of all the comments but rather restricted to the language related to intercultural communication especially through identity construction. Secondly, the discussion elaborated in this study is about one specific genre—personal vlogging talking about political stuff. Politic is not the core of the study, but the material is of political color which makes the topic itself controversy thus the resulting judgement regarding ethnicity is very likely. If there are more types of data, the result would be more convincing. The results also remind us that digital space poses challenges for intercultural communication due to an increased likelihood of misunderstandings among people worldwide. Further research is necessary to explore online intercultural communication and address the issue of misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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