A Study of Wechat’s Effects on College Students’ Interpersonal Communication and the Educational Countermeasures

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ABSTRACT

Based on the features of Wechat and the particularity of college students, this paper makes an analysis of the negative effects that Wechat has on college students’ interpersonal communication, and in the context of the mobile Internet era, we believe that the educational countermeasures to college students’ interpersonal communication should focus on the following three aspects, that is, strengthening the basic education of interpersonal communication, promoting the combination of network and reality, and caring about and helping those suffering from micro-anxiety.

1 Introduction

Network, since the day when it was born, has been continually affecting the ways of people’s interpersonal communication. [1] The emergence and popularity of the mobile Internet will bring about revolutionary changes to people interpersonal communication. Wechat, launched by Tencent Company and also known as China’s emerging micro-media representatives, was a free program providing instant messaging service. Obviously, it has led to many revolutionary changes to the traditional ways of interpersonal communication, and even of the interpersonal communication in network. According to statistics, by the end of January, 2013, its registered users have reached more than 300 million, covering more than 100 countries. [2] Nowadays, Wechat has been breaking the traditional interpersonal mode at an unprecedented rate, leading to the changes to the people’s daily communication. Admittedly, college students have active minds, so that they are the most active group that is willing to accept the new knowledge and information in the society. What’s more, this group also occupies the highest proportion of the use of Wechat. Wechat is very popular among college students in that it is characterized by its convenience and fastness, self-expressing, privacy protection and low cost. It has speeded up its steps of changing the way of interpersonal communication.

2 Wechat Makes Close Interpersonal Communication Easier Among College Students

Before the advent of the network, the traditional ways of interpersonal communication among college students are face-to-face chat,

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telephone, letters and parties. With the popularity of the network, the ways of interpersonal communication among college students have broken through the physical limitations of time and space, showing the characteristics of “open, interactive, rich, fast, extensive, and virtual”. [3] As the emerging micro-media representative, Wechat has the support of cross-communication operators and of the cross-operating system platform, integrating many advantages of the existing communication modes. While with its fast-growing development, it is also constantly enlarging the effect of network on the students’ interpersonal communication. For instance, the interpersonal communication circle of freshmen is often restricted to students, teachers, relatives and friends, so it may cause some gaps in geospatial distance. Micro letter SNS are able to bring the convenience for them to maintain and strengthen the existing interpersonal circle. However, SNS of Wechat brought convenience for them to maintain and strengthen the existing interpersonal circle. Moreover, there is no boundary among Wechat friends, QQ friends, Tencent micro blogging and mobile phone address book in which all the original interpersonal communication object can be almost found one by one. Meanwhile, the new students and strangers could possibly be the new interpersonal communication object by using “shake” of Wechat. Because Wechat is universal and boundless, it can create the condition for meeting new friends and expanding communication circle in a large scale.  

In additional to the fact that Wechat can break the limits in time and place, its anonymity can also help those who are overly concerned about their image in interpersonal communication, also known as psychological closed, overcome difficulties in interpersonal communication. Compared with QQ, Renren and microblog, Wechat supports group chat, voice messaging, video, pictures and text. It is no exaggerating to say that nowadays Wechat has been a chat tool combining many advantages of We Media, which can greatly meet college students’ desire to communicate with people and to show themselves. It makes students to make friends easier and let them form a close relationship between interpersonal communication object. According to the survey of the students in a college, the coverage of present Wechat users occupies 87.5%, the proportion of low grade student users is higher than that in high grade students. The facts show that Wechat has helped students maintain and strengthen the interpersonal relationships that the traditional interpersonal communication failed to do, extended the interpersonal range for college students, provided them with a lot of different practicing roles and ideal interpersonal communication space, and enhanced students’ interpersonal communication initiatives.

3 The Negative Impact of Wechat on College Students’ Interpersonal Communication  

Network has a negative impact on college students’ mental health, reducing their perception, and resulting in an over-simplistic and one-sided interpersonal communication. [4] What the college students experienced through Wechat is often in a mass reproduction. What’s worse, the flooding of insincerity also makes a shallow interpersonal communication. Due to lack of a face-to-face interaction, the information from interpersonal communication is transmitted sorely by such static way as voice and words that the non-verbal information is filtrated, which makes those users present an alienation phenomenon and jeopardizes the way of interpersonal communication among college students in reality. The extreme thing is that the roommates may use Wechat to communicate with each other instead of verbal communication. If college students are exposed to that situation for a long time, and especially when they are confronted with realistic contradiction, they may present negative emotion, depressive anger and anxiety. All these tend to present a serious impact on college students’ mental health and have a negative effect on social relationships. Rapid communication mode and endless communication objects make college students feel lonelier and cut off the real meaning of social communication. Besides, the virtual network also brought about a variety of problems, such as the damaged emotion and credibility between people and the losing collective acceptance and belongingness. The network tool like Wechat occupies most of the spare time of college students and some individuals with personality defects may be overly depend on cellphones followed by various addictions. It failed to help them to organize a healthy social network in real world: Instead, they would sink deeper and deeper into an isolated world. The fact that in Wechat people are free to add others to be their friends at will expose them to annoying harassment and deception.

4 Change and Constant: Wechat is Limited to Change the Interpersonal Communication Among College Students  

The advancement of communication technology makes it possible that such new social communications as text message, Renren, blog, microblog and Wechat are increasingly changing the ways of social communication among college students, but their communication ability and deficiency remain the same as before. On the one hand, in the traditional interpersonal relationship, the capable students whose abilities in expressing and understanding, interpersonal fusion, problem-solving could be fully developed though there is a change in the way of social communication. On the other hand, those with personality deficiency kept the defects although they were using the new ways of communication. Say, the courteous students in the traditional communication attached great importance to the etiquette that made other happy. Similarly, those who are used to resorting to harsh words in face-to-face talks kept their original style in interpersonal communication through Wechat.  

The New communication tool had a great but limited impact on students’ interpersonal communication. College students’ creativity, capacity expansion and the communication ability in interpersonal relationship and the relationship maintenance skill will not change
though there are some changes in the micro-letters and other network platform. Grasping this change and constant is the basis of students’ interpersonal communication education in the context of the mobile Internet era.

5 The Educational Countermeasures to College Students’ Interpersonal Communication in the Context of the Mobile Internet Era

5.1 Strengthen interpersonal basic education

The traditional interpersonal or modern network of interpersonal relationships, those basic habits and the ability like students’ interpersonal communication etiquette, expression, understanding and communication are the basis of achieving a successful interpersonal communication no matter it is in the context of traditional or modern way. Priority should be given to strengthen the basic education of college students’ communicative ability in educational strategies of college students interpersonal communication. Universities should develop students’ healthy personality, so that they could learn to respect other in interpersonal communication, being able to exchange point of view, and learn to think about the value and significance of interpersonal communication. All the plans can start with the lessons. The school may set some theory course, training session and salon session to assist college students to achieve the perfection of personality growth and change into a mature individual in the society. It also can be done by building a positive campus culture to promote positive interpersonal communication, to enhance class collective and club building, to establish a harmonious interpersonal culture, and to improve the comprehensive ability of students’ interpersonal communication with the help of loved characteristics of group activities.

5.2 Promoting the combination of network and reality

Network communication and realistic communication have its own strengths and weaknesses, and both are important way of interpersonal communication among people nowadays. Colleges and universities should use the relevant, development, and dialectical vision to look at network communication and realistic communication, promote the combination of the two. Guiding students to establish a network of interpersonal communication is an effective supplement in real exchanges rather than a replacement. College interpersonal education itself can combine both network and reality to make interpersonal education more attractive and appealing. In addition to the traditional education platform, educators can also use such advantages in micro letter as the center of interactive, informative and rich resources, rapid spread, wide coverage, diverse forms to show the students the vivid, direct and words-illustrated concept of human interaction skills, using relaxed, active, pleasant way to stimulate the curiosity and imagination of college students, so that students may accept interpersonal education in the combination of vivid blend of sound and feeling.

5.3 Care and help individuals with micro-anxiety and other defects

For those who already have over-reliance on the network communication, educators need to actively appeal to the parents, teachers and friends, students to have extensive contacts and in-depth exchanges with these students, and fully meet their various needs in learning, life, and psychology. Based on those positive and negative facts, cases, we may guide these students to establish a rational concept of Internet and communication mentality, so that they put more emphasis on the real life. Meanwhile, it can use group psychological counseling to help them feel the intimacy and trust of real human interaction.

6 Conclusion

The continuous development and popularization of mobile Internet technology will promote a continuous innovation and development of communication tool, including micro letter. These new tools combining all advantages many traditional means of communication and the modern network communication are in a rapid growth and development, at the same time, they will continue to enlarge the influence that the network have on college students’ interpersonal communications and form a new trend. It is both a challenge and opportunity for students’ interpersonal communication education. Universities, when putting forward the related education countermeasures, should gain a clear picture of the fact that the new tools have a great but limited effect on college students’ interpersonal communications. Through creating the guideline “strengthen interpersonal basic education, promote the combination of network and reality, care about and help individual with micro-anxiety and other defects”, universities should go with the tide, and rationally and dialectically, take practical measures to help students achieve a good interpersonal communication.

References

