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Comparison of Communication Medium Preferences in Two Different Cultures

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Abstract

Young people have many mediums for interpersonal communication; among them, Twitter, Facebook (FB), Instant Messaging (IM), face-to-face (FTF), telephone, email, Short Message Service (SMS) and Discussion Forums (DF). In our study we examine the impact of different cultures on the personal communication medium preferences of young people in three specific scenarios: communicating with peers, lecturers or with parents. We conducted a survey among university students in two countries, China and New Zealand, who may be seen, to some extent, as representatives of Eastern and Western cultures.

The results show that medium preference is different in different scenarios. In Western cultures, people are more likely to use telephone, face-to-face, SMS and IM to discuss personal problems with their parents and peers. However, they are more likely to choose telephone, face-to-face, DF and email as their most preferred tools to talk with higher authorities or under the supervision of the authorities. In Eastern cultures there are no significant differences between three scenarios. People are more willing to use telephone, face-to-face, SMS and IM to discuss problems with their parents, peers and lecturers. In general, our survey results show that FTF, telephone and IM were the most preferred mediums for most activities in both cultures. For people in the East, SMS is still a very popular communication tool, whereas DF, RenRen, Weibo and email are the least preferred mediums for most activities. For Western people, email, SMS, DF and Facebook are very common communication tools, regardless of who they communicate with, while Twitter is the least preferred medium.

Keywords: communication medium preferences, culture difference
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... ii  
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................ v  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................. ix  
Chapter 1: Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1  
Chapter 2: Literature Review ..................................................................................................... 3  
  2.1 Interpersonal communication ........................................................................................... 3  
  2.2 Cross-cultural studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC) ......................... 4  
  2.3 Research questions ........................................................................................................... 6  
  2.4 Summary ........................................................................................................................... 7  
Chapter 3: Methodology ............................................................................................................. 8  
  3.1 Data ................................................................................................................................... 8  
  3.2 Measures ........................................................................................................................... 8  
  3.3 Demographics ................................................................................................................... 9  
Chapter 4: Experimental Results .............................................................................................. 11  
  4.1 Years of using online communication tools ................................................................. 11  
  4.2 Results of Section A ....................................................................................................... 18  
    4.2.1 Question one ............................................................................................................ 18  
    4.2.2 Question two ............................................................................................................ 19  
    4.2.3 Question three .......................................................................................................... 20  
    4.2.4 Question four ........................................................................................................... 21  
    4.2.5 Question five ............................................................................................................ 22  
  4.3 Results of Section B ....................................................................................................... 24  
    4.3.1 Activity 1: Schedule a group meeting in 1–2 weeks’ time ........................................ 24  
    4.3.2 Activity 2: Convince your classmates/group of the suitability of an idea that you  
                   have ....................................................................................................................... 26
4.3.3 Activity 3: Need urgent clarification from a course mate/classmate on a class assignment

4.3.4 Activity 4: Reply to an enquiry from another class/group member regarding your class assignment progress

4.3.5 Activity 5: Ask the lecturer question(s) concerning your class/group assignment

4.3.6 Activity 6: Discuss a problem with your classmates/group under the supervision of the lecturer-in-charge of the course

4.3.7 Activity 7: Get clarification from lecturer-in-charge for a critical issue of your individual/group project

4.3.8 Activity 8: Invite friends out for a meal or party

4.3.9 Activity 9: Discuss personal problems with your best friends

4.3.10 Activity 10: If you have to ask for money from your parents

4.3.11 Activity 11: Discuss personal problems with your parents

4.3.12 Activity 12: Update others on your daily life activities

4.4 Results of Section C

4.4.1 Preferred communication media and their advantages/disadvantages

4.4.2 Frequency of using media

4.5 Summary

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Future Works

6.1 Conclusion

6.2 Future Work

Reference

Appendix

Communication Media Usage Survey

SECTION A

SECTION B

SECTION C
List of Figures

Figure 1: Gender of respondents from New Zealand ................................................................. 9
Figure 2: Ages of respondents from New Zealand .................................................................... 9
Figure 3: Gender of respondents from China ............................................................................. 9
Figure 4: Ages of respondents from China .............................................................................. 10
Figure 5: Years of using Twitter for New Zealand respondents. ............................................. 11
Figure 6: Years of using Facebook for New Zealand respondents. ......................................... 12
Figure 7: Years of using IM for New Zealand respondents. .................................................... 12
Figure 8: Years of using email for New Zealand respondents ................................................. 12
Figure 9: Years of using SMS for New Zealand respondents .................................................. 13
Figure 10: Years of using DF for New Zealand respondents ................................................... 13
Figure 11: Years of using Weibo for Chinese respondents ...................................................... 14
Figure 12: Years of using Renren for Chinese respondents ..................................................... 15
Figure 13: Years of using IM for Chinese respondents ........................................................... 15
Figure 14: Years of using email for Chinese respondents ....................................................... 16
Figure 15: Years of using SMS for Chinese respondents ........................................................ 16
Figure 16: Years of using DF for Chinese respondents ............................................................. 17
Figure 17: New Zealand participants’ preferences for using online communication tools to ask questions ................................................................................................................................... 18
Figure 18: Chinese participants’ preferences for using online communication tools to ask questions ................................................................................................................................... 18
Figure 19: Online communication tools that contain communication cues – New Zealand.... 19
Figure 20: Online communication tools that contain communication cues – China ............... 20
Figure 21: Online communication tools that allow flexibility in using words – New Zealand20
Figure 22: Online communication tools that allow flexibility in using words – China ............. 21
Figure 23: Ease of communication tools to express feelings – New Zealand ......................... 21
Figure 24: Ease of communication tools to express feelings – China ..................................... 22
Figure 25: Affordability of communication tools – New Zealand .......................................... 22
Figure 26: Affordability of communication tools – China ....................................................... 23
Figure 27: Respondents’ preference for activity 1 – New Zealand .......................................... 24
Figure 28: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 1 – New Zealand

Figure 29: Respondents’ preference for activity 1 – China

Figure 30: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 1 – China

Figure 31: Respondents’ preference for activity 2 – New Zealand

Figure 32: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 2 – New Zealand

Figure 33: Respondents’ preference for activity 2 – China

Figure 34: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 2 – China

Figure 35: Respondents’ preference for activity 3 – New Zealand

Figure 36: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 3 – New Zealand

Figure 37: Respondents’ preference for activity 3 – China

Figure 38: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 3 – China

Figure 39: Respondents’ preference for activity 4 – New Zealand

Figure 40: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 4 – New Zealand

Figure 41: Respondents’ preference for activity 4 – China

Figure 42: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 4 – China

Figure 43: Respondents’ preference for activity 5 – New Zealand

Figure 44: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 5 – New Zealand

Figure 45: Respondents’ preference for activity 5 – China

Figure 46: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 5 – China

Figure 47: Respondents’ preference for activity 6 – New Zealand

Figure 48: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 6 - New Zealand

Figure 49: Respondents’ preference for activity 6 – China
Figure 50: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 6 – China ........................................................................................................................................ 35
Figure 51: Respondents’ preference for activity 7 – New Zealand .............................................. 36
Figure 52: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 7 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 36
Figure 53: Respondents’ preference for activity 7 – China .............................................................. 37
Figure 54: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 7 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 37
Figure 55: Respondents’ preference for activity 8 – New Zealand .............................................. 38
Figure 56: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 8 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 38
Figure 57: Respondents’ preference for activity 8 – China .............................................................. 39
Figure 58: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 8 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 39
Figure 59: Respondents’ preference for activity 9 – New Zealand .............................................. 40
Figure 60: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 9 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 40
Figure 61: Respondents’ preference for activity 9 – China .............................................................. 41
Figure 62: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 9 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 41
Figure 63: Respondents’ preference for activity 10 – New Zealand ........................................... 42
Figure 64: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 10 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 42
Figure 65: Respondents’ preference for activity 10 – China ............................................................ 43
Figure 66: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 10 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 43
Figure 67: Respondents’ preference for activity 11 – New Zealand ........................................... 44
Figure 68: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 11 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 44
Figure 69: Respondents’ preference for activity 11 – China ............................................................ 44
Figure 70: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 11 – New Zealand ........................................................................................................................................ 45
Figure 71: Respondents’ preference for activity 12 – New Zealand ........................................... 45
Figure 72: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 12 – New Zealand ................................................................. 46
Figure 73: Respondents’ preference for activity 12 – China ........................................ 46
Figure 74: The reason for choosing the medium as the preferred medium for activity 12 – China ................................................................. 47
Figure 75: Preferred media – New Zealand ................................................................. 48
Figure 76: Preferred media – China ............................................................................. 48
Figure 77: Frequency of using media – New Zealand ................................................. 49
Figure 78: Frequency of using media – China ................................................................. 49
List of Tables

Table 1: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – asking for money from your parents ............................................................................................................................................................................. 52
Table 2: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – discussing personal problems with your parents ............................................................................................................................................................................. 52
Table 3: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – discussing personal problems with your friends ............................................................................................................................................................................. 52
Table 4: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Activity 5 .................. 53
Table 5: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Activity 6 .................. 54
Table 6: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Activity 7 .................. 54
Table 7: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Question 1 .................. 55
Table 8: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Activity 1 .................. 56
Table 9: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Question 2 .................. 56
Table 10: Mean values of mediums in China and New Zealand – Activity 12 ............... 57