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Intersubjective Communication Channels in Higher Education between China and the “Belt and Road” Countries: A Perspective of Cultural Semiotics

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Abstract

Under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, based on two communication channels of Lotman’s Cultural Semiotics, this study focuses on two intersubjective communication channels in higher education between China and the Belt and Road countries. It aims to explore “I-S/he” and “I-I” interpretation communication channels and tries to find the similarities and differences using the comparative and cultural semiotics methods. The major findings consist of three aspects. First, the “I-S/he” sign system includes bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication; Second, the “I-I” sign system consists of Chinese and foreign “I-I” intersubjective communication; Third, the similarities between the two communication channels are in the same semiosphere. Meanwhile, the differences between the two communication channels are time and space, subject and object, and variable and invariable. At the end of this study, the authors provide some references to scholars focusing on cultural semiotics and higher education between China and the Belt and Road countries.

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1. Introduction

Culture is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon covering all higher education. As culture and communication are inseparable, language dictates how communication proceeds in the culture (Khalel et al., 2021). Intersubjectivity was proposed by Edmund Husserl (1970) from phenomenology in the *Phenomenology of the Living World*. It plays an essential part in communication. Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) intersubjective principle is the dialogical relation between "I" and "The other". In the *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, Bakhtin (1984, p. 252) considers that "all else is the means; dialogue is the end". Intersubjective communication is not single-direction communication but double directions. For example, when an addresser (subject) sends a message to an addressee (object), an addressee is not only an object but also a subject. Furthermore, it is not the relationship of the subject and object but two equal subjects. Intersubjectivity means two subjects are mutually equal and respect, listen, understand, trust, interact, and reach a consensus (Wang et al., 2022). Although the subject and object relationship is pertinent, the degree of intersubjectivity depends on many factors. Strong intersubjectivity between two subjects is better for communication, and weak intersubjectivity should be improved. Besides intersubjectivity, there is another key term called "Belt and Road Countries". In September 2013, Chinese President, Xi Jinping, proposed the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) (Ume,

2018). The Belt and Road (B&R) countries are the countries along the B&R, including "Land Silk Road" countries and "Sea Silk Road" countries.

In June 2020, "the Opinions of the Ministry of Education" and eight other departments about "Accelerating and Expanding the Opening up of Education" in the New Era marked that China's opening of education has started a new phase (Li & Wang, 2018). Internationalization has become one of the main indicators of success and excellence in higher education institutions (De Wit, 2020). There are some studies on higher education between China and the "B&R" countries, but no study on intersubjective channels between higher education in China and the "B&R" countries, especially from the perspective of cultural semiotics. The proposal for intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries will fill a research gap in higher education between China and the "B&R" countries. This research tries to explore the two intersubjective communication channels and the similarities and differences between them.

2. Theoretical Framework

There are some connections between communication and culture in Yuri Lotman's (1990) cultural semiotics. It is a link between the theory of communication systems and various problems in studying language and culture based on Roman Jakobson's model. Figure 1 demonstrates Jakobson's famous model (Lotman, 1990).

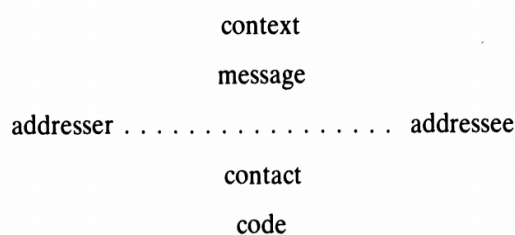


Figure 1

Communication Channel (Lotman, 1990)

In a cultural mechanism, two communication channels exist at least. The most typical communication channel is the “I-S/he” in which the subject and object are the “I” and “S/he” respectively. The “I” is an addresser (sender of information), while the “S/he” is an addressee (receiver of information). It means that “I” know some information, but “S/he” does not know before communicating. Except for “I-S/he”, the “I-I” is the second communication channel, which is a subject transmitting a message to himself/herself (Lotman, 1990; Lotman, 2020). In other words, “I” has become both the sender and receiver of information. In the mode of “I-I”, “I” transmits information to himself/herself. In this process, additional codes may be introduced so that the original information is re-encoded and new meanings are generated. This process is a process of self-reading and self-reflection (Lotman, 1990; Machado, 2011). According to Lotman (1990), self-communication is not only another mode of communication in principle but also the most important mode in many cases. In fact, in the information transmission process,

both sender and receiver of information have changed. The receiver of information is not only an addressee but also the creator of information. Simultaneously, the sender of information is not only an addresser but also a receiver of information.

Variables and invariables differ in two communication channels. In the “I-S/he” communication channel, the framing elements of the model are variables, while code and message are invariables. The message and the information contained in it are constant, while the bearer of the information may change. However, in the “I-I” communication channel, the bearer of the information remains the same, but the message is elucidated again and acquires new signification during communication. It is the result of introducing a supplementary code 2; the original message is recoded into elements of its structure and thereby acquires characteristics of a new message (Lotman, 1990). Figure 2 for “I-I” communication channel illustrates the communication process between “I” and “I”.

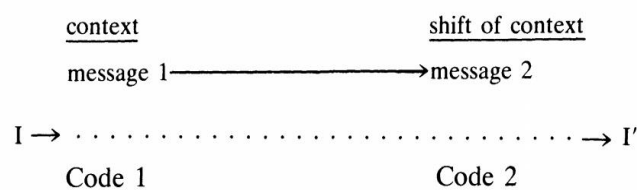


Figure 2
“I-I” (Lotman, 1990)

Two communication models coexist in all cultures. The “I-S/he” model is more dynamic, but it has a negative tendency to rely on external information. The mode of “I-I” innovates and sublimates the spirit and thought of culture through self-communication, but it often disconnects with the development and needs of the whole human society. They fight and complement each other, and neither side can

completely replace or overcome the other. Lotman (1990) proposed that culture is a message transmitted to oneself by the collective “I” of human beings. Therefore, human culture is an instance of self-communication on a large scale.

Lotman distinguished two different modes of cultural communication: The “I-S/he” mode and the “I-I” mode, attaching more importance to the latter. This is because, on the one hand,

Lotman (1990) thinks that in past research, more emphasis was placed on the “I-S/he” model, while the “I-S/he” model neglected the investigation of the “I-I” model.

In all, the laws of constructing the artistic text are very largely the laws of constructing culture as a whole. Hence culture itself can be treated both as the sum of the messages circulated by various addressers, and as one message transmitted by the collective “I” of humanity to itself. From this point of view, human culture is a vast example of auto-communication. So Lotman’s (1990) cultural semiotics could be the theory for intersubjective communication.

3. Methodology

The current study adopted a qualitative approach. According to the research objective and research questions, the contexts were selected, and the necessary data were collected. Finally, the authors analyzed the data with semiotics and the comparative method.

3.1. Context

Higher education in China and the B&R countries were analyzed, including single, bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation. In order to ensure the validity and representation of the context, the current study selected higher education in China and the B&R countries, such as China, Central Asia, Europe, Southeast Asia, Asia-Pacific, Arab Countries, and America.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Data Collection

All the data collected were downloaded online from Web of Science, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Elsevier, Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), ijscl.net, and yidaiyilu.gov.cn. The data collection was divided into two stages. Firstly, the authors searched the key terms of intersubjective

communication, higher education, China, “Belt and Road” countries, and cultural semiotics, chose the related literature according to the title of the current study and deleted the unrelated data. Secondly, the authors classified the data into theory and practice. To be specific, the theory refers to Lotman’s (1990) communication channels, and the practice refers to single, bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

The authors analyzed the data using cultural semiotics and the comparative method. Lotman’s (1990) cultural semiotics is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) idea of dualism, such as language/parole, synchronicity/diachronicity, signifier/signified, and syntagm/paradigm. While borrowing from Saussure’s semiology, Lotman also absorbed Charles Sanders Peirce’s (1839-1914) semiotics. Lotman (1990) absorbed the research methods of two schools (Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce) of modern semiotics, trying to break down the barriers between the two schools. The concept of cultural semiotics can be understood as the study of cultural phenomena using semiotics. It is the combination of culture and semiotics. The former is the research object, and the latter is the research method. According to Lotman (1990), signs are closely connected with culture, and are the most basic and primitive components of culture.

The data analysis included two procedures. The first procedure was to analyze the interpretation of “I-S/he” intersubjective communication in higher education, which was bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication, and analyze “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education, including Chinese and foreign higher education. They were analyzed using Lotman’s (1990) cultural semiotics. The second procedure was to analyze the

similarities and differences between “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education using the comparative method.

4. Results

This study was to explore the interpretation of “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication channels in higher education and try to find their similarities and differences. After analyzing the data with cultural semiotics and comparative method, the results follow below.

4.1. The Interpretation of “I-S/he” and “I-I” Intersubjective Communication in Higher Education

Over the past ten years since the BRI, the mechanisms for educational intersubjective communication and cooperation between China and countries along the B&R have grown. The current intersubjective communication mechanisms mainly include bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication. In the “I-S/he” intersubjective communication channel in higher education between China and the B&R countries, “I” indicates China, while “S/he” indicates one country or more than one country. When “S/he” is one country, it is a bilateral intersubjective communication mechanism; When “S/he” is a region, it is a regional intersubjective communication mechanism; When “S/he” is some countries, it is a multilateral intersubjective communication mechanism. Bilateral intersubjective communication is the most flexible among the three forms, while multilateral intersubjective communication is the most complicated. “I-S/he” intersubjective communication is the most typical model in higher education between China and the “B&R” countries. However, “I” in “I-I” for Lotman as a symbol itself means the existence of another “I”. The dialogue between “I” and “I” is not a simple change of meaning but produces unexpected meaning. “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher

education includes “I-I” intersubjective communication in China-China and “I-I” intersubjective communication in foreign countries-foreign countries in higher education.

Bilateral intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries refers to higher education intersubjective communication between China and a specific country along the B&R in this study. From the perspective of content, the current bilateral intersubjective communication, in addition to higher education cooperation agreements, mainly includes higher education intersubjective communication seminars, China-foreign higher education leaders’ forums, and higher education alliances. Regional intersubjective communication in higher education refers to intersubjective communication between China and the regions along the B&R. Like bilateral intersubjective communication, the form of regional intersubjective communication mainly includes higher education intersubjective communication seminar, China-foreign university leader’ forum, and higher education alliance.

The multilateral intersubjective communication mechanism has a multi-level cooperation framework but is still weak. Multilateral intersubjective communication in higher education in this paper refers to cooperation between China and some B&R countries in this study. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the multilateral intersubjective communication mechanism between China and countries along the B&R has not been accomplished. Currently, the multilateral intersubjective communication between China and the B&R countries in higher education mainly includes two ways: multilateral intersubjective communication seminars and university alliances.

The types of “I-I” intersubjective communication in Chinese higher education are in three

categories: academic intersubjective communication, school-running intersubjective communication, and teacher-student intersubjective communication. The “European Universities Initiative” cooperation mode in the type of “I-I” intersubjective communication among foreign higher education breaks through the traditional flow caused by teachers in physical space, gives full play to their advantages, and promotes the balanced development of the higher education cooperation of countries and regions along the B&R (Adrian et al., 2020). The B&R cooperation of countries and regions of the competent administrative department for education fully absorbs the advantage of the European Universities Initiative, planning level and cultivating cooperation pattern project of the future ecological university, explores a new model of higher education cooperation suitable for the national and regional conditions of countries and regions along the B&R

cooperation, enhances the mutual cultural understanding, lays a foundation for in-depth cooperation in other fields, and provides a platform framework for larger scale and higher-quality talent training (Adrian et al., 2020). Russia, the United States, Turkey, and other countries have cooperated in setting up regular universities in Central Asia (Li, 2018), while China has not yet established a university in Central Asia. It can be said that it is a short board to be overcome.

4.2. The Similarities and Differences between “I-S/he” and “I-I” Intersubjective Communication in Higher Education

Lotman (1990) absorbs Saussure’s binary thinking. His pluralism is based on duality. Some similarities and differences coexist between “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries as the “Eight Diagram of Yin and Yang” in Figure 3.

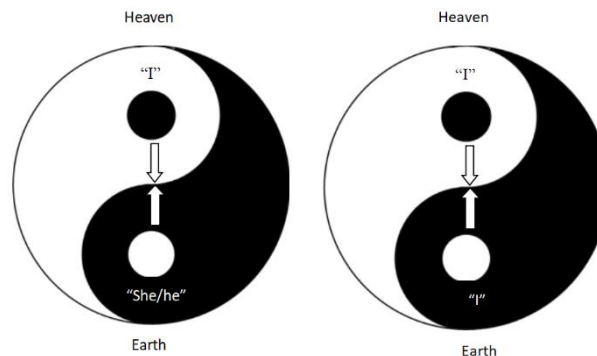


Figure 3

Communication Model

Similarities exist in “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries. Both “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries are between heaven and earth. That is, bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication

in higher education along the B&R exists between heaven and earth, while “I-I” intersubjective communication in Chinese higher education and “I-I” intersubjective communication in foreign higher education along the B&R coexist between heaven and earth. In other words, they are parts of the unity

of heaven and earth belonging to the same big semiosphere (culture space).

Simultaneously, differences between “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education exist in China and the B&R countries. In “I-I” intersubjective communication in Chinese and foreign countries’ higher education along the B&R, both subject and object are “I”. However, in bilateral, regional, and multilateral “I-S/he” intersubjective communication in higher education, the “I” is

the subject of the communication and the possessor of the information, while the “S/he” is the object and the addressee. There was a message known to “I” and not known to “S/he” before communication. In addition, in the “I-S/he” communication channel, information is transferred in space, but it is transferred in time in the “I-I” (Lotman, 1990). In all, the differences between the two communication channels in higher education are time and space, subject and object, and variable and invariable. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

The Differences Between Two Communication Channels

“I-She/he”	“I-I”
“I” is the subject of the communication, the possessor of the information, while the “she/he” is the object, the addressee, and the addressee is addresser simultaneously.	Both subject and object are “I”.
Information is transferred in space.	Information is transferred in time.
The message and the information contained in it are constants, while the bearer of the information may alter it.	The bearer of the information remains the same, but the message is reformulated and acquires new meaning during the communication process.

Culture can be treated both as the sum of the messages circulated by various addressers, and as one message transmitted by the collective “I” of humanity to itself. From this point of view, human culture is a vast example of auto-communication. The “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communications in higher education coexist in auto communication in human culture.

5. Discussion

After analyzing the data, the major findings of this study consist of three aspects. (1) “I-S/he” intersubjective communication channel includes bilateral, regional, and multilateral communication; (2) “I-I” intersubjective communication channel consists of Chinese and foreign “I-I” intersubjective communication; (3) the similarities of “I-S/he” and “I-I”

communication channels are in the same semiosphere. Meanwhile, the differences are time and space, subject and object, and variable and invariable. Some problems should be discussed when it relates to previous literature based on Lotman’s (1990) cultural semiotics.

5.1. “I-S/he” Intersubjective Communication in Higher Education

5.1.1. Bilateral Intersubjective Communication Mechanism in Higher Education

Each country is inextricably bound to its rich culture (Pishghadam et al., 2020), in which bilateral intersubjective communication, including higher education seminars, higher education leader forums, and higher education alliances, plays an important role.

(1) Seminar on higher education intersubjective communication improves the development of higher education. The seminar on higher education intersubjective communication is a booster for communication between China and the B&R countries, which will help expand cooperation between higher education, strengthen research communication, and promote coordinated development (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019). Since the BRI was put forward, the number, scale, and level of seminars on higher education intersubjective communication have constantly increased (e.g., “2015 China-Mongolia Expo Higher Education Development Forum” (Huo, 2015), “2016 China-Greece Higher Education and Research Cooperation Seminar” (Xinhua News Agency, 2016), and “2017 International Symposium on Cooperation and Development in Higher Education between China and Belarus under the Framework of the BRI”). During these seminars, many cooperation agreements between Chinese and the B&R governments and universities were signed, which is conducive to expanding education openness, promoting personnel training and in-depth communication in scientific research, promoting teaching reform, improving personnel training quality, and cultivating inter-disciplinary talents (Zhou et al., 2018).

(2) China-foreign higher education leader forum is a high-level intersubjective communication. The China-foreign higher education leader forum is an essential model for bilateral intersubjective communication between China and the B&R countries, strongly promoting bilateral intersubjective communication (Sagintayeva & Kurakbayev, 2016). The higher education leader forum is a high-level intersubjective communication on university spirit and innovative ideas between China and the B&R countries and an interactive platform for sharing wisdom and building consensus. So far, China has successfully held several higher

education leader forums with the B&R countries (Wang & Yang, 2017), such as China-Israel University Leader Forum, China-India University Leader Forum, China-Indonesia University Leader Forum, and China-Poland University Leader Forum.

(3) Higher education alliance is an essential mode of bilateral intersubjective communication between China and the B&R countries. Higher education alliance refers to an organization established by various contracts of higher education through resource sharing and project cooperation to achieve the strategic objectives of improving academic level, reducing the cost of university management, and jointly solving the significant problems in the development of higher education (Dong & Shen, 2006). The higher education alliance established between China and the B&R countries gathers resources from higher education on both sides, aims to promote communication and improve the level of scientific research, and achieves practical results in establishing a cooperative partnership in higher education between the two sides, such as “the establishing China-Russia Comprehensive University Alliance in 2016”, “the China-Poland University Alliance under the BRI in 2017” (Ministry of Education, 2017), and “Alliance of China-Thailand Universities” (Khon Kaen University, 2021).

5.1.2. Regional Intersubjective Communication Mechanism in Higher Education

Since China established dialogue relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the 1990s, the two sides have established “strong links” in intersubjective communication in higher education. In addition, China has conducted in-depth cooperation with the League of Arab States, South Asia, Asia-Pacific, and other regions (Li, 2017).

(1) Seminar on higher education intersubjective communication between China and Arab

countries prompted regional intersubjective communication. In terms of higher education intersubjective communication seminar, the intersubjective communication between China and the B&R regions is mainly represented by the China-Arab States (10+1) higher education intersubjective communication seminar. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, communication between China and Arab countries in higher education has developed gradually since establishing diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1956 (Alemu, 2018). By exchanging students and teachers, China and Arab countries have gradually developed into intersubjective communication in higher education and made an agreement on mutual recognition of academic degrees and diplomas. In-depth intersubjective communication has been carried out in scientific research projects, teacher exchanges, and cooperative education (Zhang, 2019).

In 2008, the Ministry of Education held the "China-Arab States Higher Education Cooperation Seminar", which was an important measure taken by the Ministry of Education to further build a platform for China-Arab States education communication and improve the mechanism of China-Arab States education communication (Li, 2017). Since the BRI was proposed, the intersubjective communication between China and Arab countries in higher education has been accelerating. The number of students studying in China has increased rapidly in recent years, the communication in scientific research has become increasingly close, and constructing "Data, Information, Intelligence, Solution" (DIIS) in China and Arab countries has been constantly improved, further strengthening practical cooperation in education. However, the China-Arab States have not signed any agreement of mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas (Li, 2017), and it should be paid attention to by mutual government and higher education.

(2) China and B&R regional countries have held multiple higher education leader forums. The China-Arab States university leader forum has been held four times. Universities in Ningxia have signed cooperation agreements with more than 20 universities in Arab countries and established the first Confucius Institute in the Gulf country in Dubai (Ministry of Education, 2015). In addition, China and ASEAN have held several China-Asean university leader forums and the China-Central Asian countries university leader forums, aiming to build a more open and international higher education cooperation system and cultivate international talents needed for the BRI.

(3) Higher education alliance enriched regional intersubjective communication. Regarding higher education alliances, ASEAN University Alliances and Asia-Pacific University Alliances have gradually become enriching in the forms of higher education communication between China and the B&R regions. One of the representatives is the China-Central Asian University Alliance. In 2016, 51 universities from China, Central Asia, and seven B&R countries jointly launched the "China-Central Asian Countries University Alliance", aiming to build an open and international interactive platform and deepen science and education communication along the B&R (Xinhua News Agency, 2016). This has played a positive role in the sharing and full utilization of teaching, scientific research, and other resources between higher education in China and seven B&R countries and promoted the complementarity of all parties.

In the blueprint of the BRI, Xinjiang, Fujian, and Guangdong provinces are important geographical regions. Colleges and universities use their geographical advantages and actively make regional educational communication with neighboring countries and regions, such as

opening Confucius Institutes in Southeast Asia, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, sending teachers to each other countries, exchanging educational visits, and deepening academic exchanges (Huang & Alan, 2014). The connection and interaction between Xinjiang and Central Asia in cultural inheritance, ethnic integration, religious belief, and cross-border ethnic relations provide rich historical accumulation and profound disciplinary background for Xinjiang's higher education to study Central Asian issues (Ma, 2015). Xinjiang University and Xinjiang Normal University, with certain advantages, influence Central Asia regarding scientific research, language talents, academic heritage, and literature. Similarly, for Southeast Asian countries, universities in Guangdong and Fujian have accumulated a certain practical basis and different degrees of resource advantages in higher educational research, exchanges, and joint education. In all, the communication between these provinces in China and the B&R regions in higher education is multi-level.

5.1.3. Multilateral Intersubjective Communication Mechanism in Higher Education

Multilateral intersubjective communication aims to promote intersubjective communication in scientific research, academic communication, and personnel interaction among different countries by jointly exploring significant cooperation in higher education and taking advantage of the current situation (Yuan & Zhang, 2021). Multilateral intersubjective communication in this study consists of a seminar and higher education alliances.

(1) Seminar on multilateral intersubjective communication has been organized. Seminar is one of the manifestations of a multilateral intersubjective communication mechanism between China and the B&R countries. Since the BRI was put forward, there have been an

increasing number of multilateral intersubjective communication seminars, including those initiated by the government and the people (Sun et al., 2020), such as the Singapore-China-India Higher Education Seminar and the Belt and Road Education Dialogue Seminar. Some universities or research institutes also organized many seminars spontaneously; for instance, the Beijing Institute of Technology has held three B&R international seminars on higher education (focusing on research). These multilateral seminars not only attracted many higher education researchers and practitioners from the B&R countries to participate in the seminar but also promoted cooperation in research and practice. They also innovated the mode of education communication, promoted cultivating excellent international talents, and laid solid public support for the BRI (Miro et al., 2021).

(2) Higher education alliance has been carried out. There was no multilateral higher education alliance between China and the BRI before the BRI. After the BRI was proposed in 2013, Xi'an Jiaotong University established the "New Silk Road University Alliance" in 2015, leading nearly 100 universities in the B&R countries and regions to carry out cooperation. In the same year, an academic seminar on cultural inheritance and innovation was held in Gansu Province. Forty-seven universities from eight B&R countries and regions jointly released the "Dunhuang Consensus" and established the "Strategic Alliance of Colleges and Universities of the B&R" (Zhang et al., 2015). Establishing relevant alliances has not only reached a consensus on multilateral intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries but also accelerated intersubjective communication in higher education through institutional measures. However, the alliances' operation is uneven at present. In contrast, other alliances have carried out substantive

communication in personnel training and flow and scientific research cooperation (Andrew & Michael, 2013).

In 2006, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States signed “the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Communication in Education” in Shanghai, which established the legal basis for multilateral governmental cooperation for establishing the University of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (USCO) (Li & Lv, 2020). In 2007, at the SCO Heads of State Summit in Bishkek, President Putin proposed establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization University, a non-entity cooperation network among higher education of the SCO member states. In 2008, “the Letter of Intent of the Ministries of Education of the SCO Member States on Further Concerted Action for establishing a SCO University” was signed in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. In 2009, the five-member states agreed through consultation that regional studies, ecology, energy, IT, and nanotechnology are the priority disciplines for cooperation. The first group of universities selected are ten from Kazakhstan, seven from Kyrgyzstan, ten from China, sixteen from Russia, and ten from Tajikistan (a total of 53) (Li & Lv, 2020). In 2010, a Memorandum of Cooperation among institutions of higher learning of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of Tajikistan on establishing a USCO was signed in Moscow. At present, 82 institutions from five SCO member states are involved in the program, covering seven major areas. The concept of “education without borders” promoted by USCO is conducive to establishing interdisciplinary innovation clusters across borders (Zeng, 2021).

Currently, China has carried out numerous multilingual and interdisciplinary-oriented

talent cultivation projects of international communication. It includes degree education and collective study (Liu & Xiao, 2018). However, due to weak theoretical research, strategic planning, discipline setting and teacher construction, few internship channels, and imperfect systems, further solutions need to be found (Secretariat of the National Commission, 2015).

To sum up, China can promote the transfer, appointment, and promotion of talents in international organizations through education diplomacy through close ties with SCO members, by promoting China-foreign communication in running schools, deepening non-physical education cooperation networks and building innovative clusters of disciplines, while effectively enhancing the capacity of professional talents in disciplines.

5.2. “I-I” Intersubjective Communication in Higher Education

“I-I” intersubjective communication in higher education in this paper, includes “I-I” intersubjective communication in Chinese and foreign higher education.

5.2.1. “I-I” Intersubjective Communication in Chinese Higher Education

The “I-I” intersubjective communication in Chinese higher education has negative effects. Recently, the trend of cultural confinement and conservatism has spread in China, which has brought some negative effects on Chinese culture “going global”, for example, advocating the establishment of a “Confucian Country” (Jiang, 2015). In this case, cultural conservatism, instead of protecting cultural traditions, will cause opposition between culture and social order due to its stubborn conservatism.

Academic intersubjective communication as institutions of spreading knowledge and specialized scientific research is the center of

foreign communication. Various academic intersubjective communication activities are very active. The main forms of academic intersubjective communication are speech, special reports, and cooperation. Shaanxi's rich and colorful culture has profound connotations. Through academic intersubjective communication, colleges, and universities in Shaanxi invite senior experts in a certain culture to give special reports or lectures. Academic intersubjective communication also uses network information technology and broadcasts on the college and university websites and activities. In addition, setting up a learning program will launch a class video of colleges and universities on the website, including the different countries and regions, the interpretation of culture, or a special report on the video culture subject. Uploading public lectures or reports on Shaanxi culture to the official website can overcome the geographical limitations of live lectures. Some research projects and topics can also be set up by Shaanxi Universities and other local universities to carry out cooperation, such as the origin and branch of Shaanxi paper-cut culture, paper-cut culture innovation, the regional differences of Shaanxi folk songs, and the study of the range of foreign folk songs (Wang, 2013).

The content of school-running intersubjective communication can be the major setting, talent training plans, and teaching. In this way, communication is generally in the form of groups, such as short-term or long-term communication programs between schools, and some activities for cultural investigation can be added. Compared with academic intersubjective communication, the atmosphere of such communication is more relaxed, and international students can experience Shaanxi culture by themselves. For Shaanxi cultural project settings, Shaanxi higher education can take an active part in undertaking and creating some exchange programs, such as hosting a

camp, using summer vacation time to recruit some international students to come to Shanxi, and arranging some courses about Shaanxi culture (Wang, 2013). In addition, exchange students or short-term projects students prefer to travel to various parts of China in their spare time (Biney & Cheng, 2021). Higher education in Shaanxi in the league can set up some travel tips or travel plans introducing Shaanxi culture or several favorable design schemes for tourism projects. International students in Shaanxi are encouraged to go out of campus to experience the colorful culture of Shaanxi.

Intersubjective communication between domestic and internal teachers and students is the most relaxed and free one of the three communication ways. It may hold culture communications, student culture salons, and regular reports and encourage more international students to participate, or the student can set Bulletin Board System (BBS) publishing the cultural understanding of introducing courseware. The main part of a university is students, who are also the most active group in daily activities. Therefore, students should be given maximum freedom. A student delegation represents students' interests, takes charge of work between higher education and students, and regularly plans and organizes some social activities and sports competitions. Students can also set up their cultural clubs, where students or teachers discuss their research and understanding of culture. Higher education should encourage international students to participate more in Chinese club activities. Group travel activity is a kind of intersubjective communication. The cultural exchange activities initiated by students have a relaxed and active atmosphere, without the sense of serious academic communication and urgency to complete tasks in school-running communication, which can help international students understand and accept the imperceptible culture. The new Silk Road once

took place at the university alliance “students cultural festival”, mainly based on students as the subject, showing their own country’s music, dance, dress, dietary. This activity was held successfully, and the teachers and students gave much praise. With the development of the New Silk Road University Alliance, communication in higher education in China will gradually deepen, and there will be many opportunities to hold cultural festivals together.

Marxist philosophy holds that practice, as an objective activity, determines the formation and development of cognition. Practical teaching is an essential part of ideological and political education in higher education. The Ministry of Education has emphasized the principle of “combining political theory education with social practice” (Zeng & Zhang, 2021). Practicing the theory of the textbook can help college students improve their ability to observe and analyze social phenomena.

Higher education along the B&R needs to carry out experience-oriented practical activities. The “Sea Silk” culture must be deeply felt and experienced by oneself. (1) Students visit Fujian Yongding Tulou, Quanzhou Port, Luoyang Bridge, Xiamen Port, Song Dynasty Ships, Shenzhen-Shanghai Bay, Chaozhou Ancient Port, Loulan Ancient City, and so on. Through visiting Kaiyuan Temple, Qingjing Temple, and Maritime Transportation Museum, we can see that different religious beliefs can work together under the influence of the “Sea Silk”. We can be deeply impressed by the integration and evolution of different religions and feel the inclusiveness of the “Sea Silk” culture. (2) Students listen to some songs about the spirit of the sea, such as “The Silk Road Wind”, “Silk Road”, and “Dare to Fight”, so that students can cultivate their character and feel the sea culture through listening and appreciation. (3) Students enjoy the song and dance drama “Searching for Dream in Sea Silk”,

enjoy a cultural feast, and edify sentiment. “Searching for Dream in Sea Silk” depicts the story of Quanzhou sailors in the Song Dynasty. It depicts a thousand sails to compete at Quanzhou port, the Chinese and foreign trade and cultural communication, and profound friendship, and it can help understand the prosperous scene of the Sea Silk Road. The experiential image is real, which can enhance the initiative of college students and make them have a strong interest in the knowledge. However, to carry out the teaching activities smoothly, colleges and universities need to comprehensively consider the time, practice base, and content and do overall planning. Reasonable teaching objectives and teaching arrangements should be set up, and field visits should not become mere formalities.

5.2.2. “I-I” Intersubjective Communication in Foreign Higher Education along the B&R

In the face of the cultural differences in Europe, high-quality and weak universities adopt the cooperation model of the ecology-level future university to establish a relationship and jointly build a campus across time and space. The main purpose of the flow of teachers in higher education is to promote teaching level and education quality in weak colleges and universities with high-quality teacher resources and to promote academic communication and cooperative innovation in the process of the flow (Egetenmeyer et al., 2019). The flow of teachers from the physical space level is promoted to the flow of teachers from the virtual network level. The ownership, position, and interests of high-quality teachers remain unchanged. However, students from weak schools enjoy relatively high-quality teaching resources on a virtual campus. Within the framework, mechanism, and platform of cooperation, the purpose of academic crossover and cooperative innovation can also be realized simultaneously. The “European University

Initiative” proposes to build a new type of university campus spanning time and space. It is based on the progress of modern technology, including intelligent terminals, mobile Internet, Internet of things, artificial intelligence, big data technology, and the modernization of education technology (Hooghe, 2018). Therefore, guided by the “European Universities” mode of cooperation, the B&R cooperation of countries and regions will develop digital education and improve higher education information levels. Education information, as an endogenous variable of education system reform, supports the education modernization development and promotes the education idea renewal, model transformation, and system reconstruction.

5.3. The Similarities and Differences between “I-S/he” and “I-I” Intersubjective Communication

The similarities and differences coexist between “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication as “Eight Diagrams of Yin and Yang”. Shao Peiren in Zhejiang University proposed the harmonious earth propagation mode inspired by the traditional “Eight Diagrams of Yin and Yang” (Zhou, 2020) in Figure 3. It has a half-large white part for “Yang” (subject), and the rest of a large area of black part “Yin” (the object), emphasizing the “Yin and Yang” as a whole. The communicator is not a communication controller who only takes himself as the medium but a communication process-oriented by the object of communication. At the same time, the top of its harmonious communication mode represents heaven (Qian), the bottom represents earth (Kun), and man in the middle (communication subject and communication object), implying the harmonious concept of the unity of heaven, earth, and human (Vo & Cao, 2022). Accordingly, it is essential to avoid any misunderstanding that may result due to the language and culture barrier (Othman, 2020).

“I-S/he” is just “Yang and Yin” belonging to external dualism, while “I-I” is also like “Yang and Yin” belonging to internal dualism. “I-S/he” and “I-I” are dual on the form, but they are integrated into the whole.

Simultaneously, “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication differ in higher education in China and the B&R countries. In the “I-S/he” intersubjective communication in higher education, the framing elements of the model are variables, while code and message are invariables. The message and the information contained in it are constants, while the bearer of the information may change it. However, in the “I-I” intersubjective communication in higher, the bearer of the information remains the same, but the message is elucidated again and acquires new signification during the intersubjective communication process.

The “I-S/he” intersubjective communication allows one only to transmit a constant quantity of information, whereas the “I-I” intersubjective communication qualitatively transforms the information, which leads to a restructuring of the actual “I” itself. In the “I-S/he” system, the addresser sends a message to another person. However, the addresser communicates with him/herself in the “I-I” system (Lotman, 1990).

The idea of “a community with a shared future” (heaven-earth-human) has promoted cultural communication between China and the B&R countries. The unity view emphasizes the unprecedented degree of interdependence among countries. Human beings live in the same global village and form a big family with each other. “A community with a shared future” is a community of shared interests (Ding & Cheng, 2017). Just like the higher education between China and the B&R countries, they can become a community of shared future because they share joint interests, although some differences exist among them. The idea of a

community with a shared future is a basic proposition that guides current international communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries. Under its guidance, cultural communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries can be more smooth and in-depth and play a positive role in cultural development.

Higher education as “a community with a shared future” is interdependence. A 2014 speech at United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters, Chinese President Xi Jinping said, “today, humankind is living in a world of different cultures, races, and religions. People of all countries have formed a community with a shared future” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples’ Republic of China, 2014). These words of President Xi Jinping reflect the differences in today’s world and the interdependence of countries. The “community with a shared future” mentioned here refers to a collection of countries and nations with many differences that have a vital destiny, linked interests, and interdependence. The thought of a “community with a shared future” has two basic contents. One is the view of difference emphasizing and acknowledging the diversity and differences of the world, and the other is the view of unity. Diverse Colleges and universities may be big or small, weak or strong, but they, as a unity, should have the same rights and be equal in choosing their development paths.

Based on Lotman’s “I-S/he” and “I-I” intersubjective communication channels, bilateral, regional, and multilateral intersubjective communication in the “I-S/he” system and Chinese and foreign “I-I” intersubjective communication in “I-I” system coexist in higher education between China and the B&R countries. They are not single communication directions from subject to object but intersubjective communication. That

is to say, there are two equal subjects in intersubjective communication. Though there are some similarities and differences between the two intersubjective communication channels, they exist in the same semiosphere (cultural space). The major findings of this study can culturally benefit the scholars of cultural semiotics and the higher education cooperation along the B&R countries. The limitation of this study is covering a large area; future scholars may choose Southeast Asia or Central Asia along the B&R. The B&R includes “Land Silk Road” countries and “Sea Silk Road” countries, future studies may narrow the line. Furthermore, digital communication channels could be studied since it is much easier and more convenient than traditional communication channels. In addition, every region has different culture; therefore, comparing regional communication channels could be studied in the future. The idea of a community with a shared future is a basic proposition that guides current intersubjective communication in higher education between China and the B&R countries. Higher education in the B&R countries should build an educational community and a comprehensive education intersubjective communication system.

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