

# **Title: Mediating the Message: African Students as Conduits for Chinese Cultural Phenomena**

Author : YOUBE DAHMANE & EL KEBIR EL MOCTAR

## **Abstract**

In an era of intensifying Sino-African relations, the role of international students as non-state actors in public diplomacy and intercultural communication has become increasingly significant. This research paper investigates the multifaceted role of African students in China as cultural mediators who actively interpret, frame, and transmit Chinese cultural phenomena to their home communities. While existing literature acknowledges the growing presence of African students in China, a significant gap remains in understanding the nuanced processes through which they become conduits for cultural information and influence. This study addresses this gap by employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, exploring the lived experiences of African students and analyzing how these experiences shape their communication practices. The paper posits that these students are not passive recipients of cultural knowledge but are active agents who engage in a complex process of selection, interpretation, and dissemination, thereby shaping perceptions of China in their home countries. Core communication theories, including agenda-setting, framing, and media dependency, are adapted to an interpersonal and transnational context to provide a robust theoretical framework for this analysis. Findings reveal that students navigate complex media ecologies, reconcile official narratives with personal realities, and strategically frame their experiences for diverse audiences through digital and social platforms. The study concludes that African students function as crucial, yet often overlooked, mediators in the Africa-China relationship, whose personal narratives contribute significantly to the cross-cultural discourse. This research offers critical insights for the fields of intercultural communication, media studies, and public diplomacy, highlighting the micro-level dynamics that underpin macro-level international relations.

## **References**

Mulvey, B... (2020). International higher education and public diplomacy: A case study of Ugandan graduates from Chinese universities. Higher Education Policy.  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41307-019-00174-w>

- Mulvey, B. & Lo, W... (2021). Learning to 'tell China's story well': the constructions of international students in Chinese higher education policy. Globalisation. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14767724.2020.1835465>
- Liu, Y... (2025). International students' acculturation and adaptation in China. Handbook on Migration to China. <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap-oa/book/9781035332700/chapter8.xml>
- Li, A... (2021). African students in China: research, reality, and reflections. The Changing World and Africa. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-4983-7\\_21](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-4983-7_21)
- Liu, X., Xu, Z., & Wang, H... (2025). ... Intelligence and Linguistic Confidence: The Mediating Roles of Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Interpersonal Communication Competence in International Students in .... SAGE Open. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/21582440251336507>
- Bai, Q., Nam, B., & English, A... (2024). Acculturation and linguistic ideology in the context of global student mobility: A cross-cultural ethnography of anglophone international students in China. Educational Review. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131911.2023.2285253>
- YAN, K... (2023). Studying Chinese soft power in Thailand through higher educational exchange. [ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th](https://ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th). [http://ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th/thesis/2024/TU\\_2024\\_6531090063\\_17747\\_29078.pdf](http://ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th/thesis/2024/TU_2024_6531090063_17747_29078.pdf)
- Lin, F. & Xu, Z... (5185). Theoretical Frameworks in Empirical Research on International Publishing by Multilingual Scholars: A Literature Review. Available at SSRN 5185334 - [papers.ssrn.com](https://papers.ssrn.com). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=5185334](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5185334)
- Liu, G., Ma, C., Bao, J., & Liu, Z... (2025). Toward a model of informal digital learning of English and intercultural competence: A large-scale structural equation modeling approach. Computer Assisted Language Learning. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09588221.2023.2191652>
- Mao, Y... (2025). Exploring factors associated with international students' academic adjustment in mainland China: A systematic review from 2005 to 2023. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00220221251320348>
- Wu, X., Tao, J., Zhu, L., Lin, J., & Jiang, H... (2025). The acquisition of intercultural competence among international and domestic students in China through an internationalisation at home programme. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14708477.2024.2326122>

Zhou, S. & Yin, J... (2025). International students' social media use: An integrative review of research over a decade. *Journal of Studies in International Education*.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10283153241275037>

Sustarsic, M. & Cheng, B... (2022). Public diplomacy and exchange programs at a secondary school level: Alumni experiences. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147176722000207>

Maina, K... (2021). Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Promoting Economic Development in Africa. A Case Study of Kenya. [erepository.uonbi.ac.ke](https://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke).

<https://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/160438>

Mungai, Q... (2019). Cultural Factors And Foreign Relations In Africa.

[erepository.uonbi.ac.ke](https://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke). <https://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/108177>

Khawaja, N. S., Raza, S., & Yousaf..., M... (2025). Teaching Pedagogies for Students' Sustainable Development in Universities: The Underlying Mechanism of Cross-Cultural Communication. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Naima-Andleeb/publication/391757171\\_Teaching\\_pedagogies\\_for\\_students'\\_sustainable\\_development\\_in\\_universities\\_The\\_underlying\\_mechanism\\_of\\_cross-cultural\\_communication/links/6828f9cadf0e3f544f550c70/Teaching-pedagogies-for-students-sustainable-development-in-universities-The-underlying-mechanism-of-cross-cultural-communication.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Naima-Andleeb/publication/391757171_Teaching_pedagogies_for_students'_sustainable_development_in_universities_The_underlying_mechanism_of_cross-cultural_communication/links/6828f9cadf0e3f544f550c70/Teaching-pedagogies-for-students-sustainable-development-in-universities-The-underlying-mechanism-of-cross-cultural-communication.pdf)

Ivanova, I... (2021). Relevance of Contemporary Communication Theories in Comprehending Media Influence and Cultural Dynamics. *Social Science Chronicle*.

<https://socialsciencechronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2021-007.pdf>

Zhang, J., Mahamed, M., & Yaakup..., H... (2023). The Literature Review of Traditional Chinese Moral Civilization in the Field of Agenda Setting Theory.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/15b1/188719a5b667d25835cc9e30ce282e11d9f7.pdf>

Du, Y... (2009). Mass media's agenda-setting function in the age of globalization: a multi-national agenda-setting test. [cdr.lib.unc.edu](https://cdr.lib.unc.edu).

<https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/concern/dissertations/hd76s0766>

Liu, S., Gallois, C., & Volcic, Z... (2023). Introducing intercultural communication: Global cultures and contexts. [torrossa.com](https://www.torrossa.com).

<https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5543051&publisher=FZ7200>

Siapera, E... (2010). Cultural diversity and global media: The mediation of difference.

[books.google.com](https://books.google.com).

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=F9NI36QX5BkC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=agenda+setting+theory+cultural+transmission,+framing+theory+cultural+phenomena,+media>

[+dependency+intercultural,+cultivation+theory+cultural+understanding&ots=SPia3pFYtW&sig=UtlU--3rv4Y-ANbdp6CDxxyx\\_jl](#)

Mooij, M. D... (2013). Theories of Mass Communication and Media Effects Across Cultures. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-01249-0\\_11](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-01249-0_11)

McPhail, T... (2010). Global communication: Theories, stakeholders, and trends. [books.google.com](#).

[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=heEppDtfkNoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=agenda+setting+theory+cultural+transmission,+framing+theory+cultural+phenomena,+media+dependency+intercultural,+cultivation+theory+cultural+understanding&ots=Q1\\_LwnRptb&sig=DH5h6mxXTBK7dAMqjq4q-ZtRhQM](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=heEppDtfkNoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=agenda+setting+theory+cultural+transmission,+framing+theory+cultural+phenomena,+media+dependency+intercultural,+cultivation+theory+cultural+understanding&ots=Q1_LwnRptb&sig=DH5h6mxXTBK7dAMqjq4q-ZtRhQM)

Zyglidopoulos, S. & Symeou..., P... (2012). Cultural agenda setting: Media attributes and public attention of Greek museums. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0093650210395747>

Brennen, B... (2021). Qualitative research methods for media studies. [taylorfrancis.com](#). <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003122388/qualitative-research-methods-media-studies-bonnie-brennen>

Usman, A., Al-Hendawi, M., & Bulut, S... (2025). Approaches to qualitative research: A narrative literature review. Advances in Medicine. <https://hal.science/hal-04745107/>

Tracy, S. & Gist-Mackey, A... (2024). Qualitative Methods in Organizational Communication. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Om4NEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA85&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=X7Mm931HJq&sig=QUyoLlr8pgE2T\\_1wLTJWF\\_8gY1w](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Om4NEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA85&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=X7Mm931HJq&sig=QUyoLlr8pgE2T_1wLTJWF_8gY1w)

Ngenye, L. & Kreps, G... (2020). A Review of Qualitative Methods in Health Communication Research... Qualitative Report. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iNpsbuyHhqRgeu5Vot5Xbv383CpMTpjl/view>

Faulkner, S. & Atkinson, J... (2024). Qualitative methods in communication and media. [books.google.com](#). [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=uTHaEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=F0mu7Zl5rT&sig=qskh-VuoMAFIPX99pyrL\\_x3bY3A](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=uTHaEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=F0mu7Zl5rT&sig=qskh-VuoMAFIPX99pyrL_x3bY3A)

Tracy, S... (2024). Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact. [books.google.com](#). <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EVwcEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA17&dq=qu>

[alitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=h8CvLihEd5&sig=ueN5PF05ja9wlmISVw5HmAvNLB0](#)

Sorce, G... (2019). Institutional ethnography for communication and media research. The Communication Review.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10714421.2019.1659703>

Berger, A... (2018). Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches. [books.google.com](#).

[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=6CFoDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=A1gJFA\\_I0c&sig=hQUXp\\_SyuD5JCmNeefE3zE8fB-g](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=6CFoDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=A1gJFA_I0c&sig=hQUXp_SyuD5JCmNeefE3zE8fB-g)

Pitts, M... (2017). Qualitative methods in intergroup communication. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication.

<https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-382>

Lindlof, T. & Taylor, B... (2017). Qualitative communication research methods.

[books.google.com](#).

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=I288DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=qualitative+methods+media+communication,+ethnographic+communication+research,+narrative+analysis+cultural+studies,+phenomenological+communication+research&ots=9dPLxr7p3V&sig=7IH3FJ3HtqQLci59gmt4k2qIMDM>