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## Intercultural Communication Conflict Between British and Americans in TikTok Memes

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to help provide an understanding of intercultural communication as a social interaction in the form of communication between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. This study connected conflict in intercultural communication. It is considered a problem that arises due to ineffective communication and social interaction among individuals due to differences in cultural backgrounds. This research uses visual methodology to identify the concept of Intercultural Communication Conflict Between British and American in five TikTok Memes. Based on the research findings, intercultural communication conflicts are portrayed in video memes as a difficulty or confusion in communication between Americans and British due to a number of different circumstances. A lack of intercultural knowledge among speakers, disparities in terminology and dialects, and variances in the purpose of the conversation are all examples of these problems. The occurrence of intercultural communication conflict in several situations can be caused by one side's lack of cultural awareness, the existence of different goals in communication between each other, the perception of one party who feels that they are superior to the other, as well as a lack of tolerance in the cultures of different countries, and lack of knowledge about culture when visiting other countries.

**Keywords:** American culture, British culture, intercultural communication conflict, TikTok memes.

### 1. Introduction

Memes are a part of modern-day communication (Lievrrouw, 2013). TikTok, one of the most popular apps, is well-known for its act-out memes and lip-sync videos, in which users remix music and sound clips. TikTok's design is informed by a memetic logic that prioritizes spreading an idea rather than giving credit to the original creator, while most social media sites are places for users to present themselves and manage their online identities (Darvin, 2022). In this context, the videos are considered parodies, and according to Hutcheon (Hutcheon, 2000), parodies are supposed to be similar to the original in some ways while also being easily distinguishable from it (Hirsch, 2019). We can find that in TikTok, there are a lot of meme videos parodying the intercultural communication conflict between the British and the Americans. These videos demonstrate how cultural differences can impede effective communication even when two parties share a common language. According to Vallaster (Vallaster, 2005), when people from different cultural backgrounds approach the same problem from different perspectives, a "shared understanding" is more difficult to achieve.

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Meeting one another, sharing one's culture with one another, working together, and talking to one another across cultural divides are all characteristics of an intercultural society (Lukesová, 2015). This distinction can be seen as a chance for growth and prosperity, but it can also be a major point of contention. Misunderstandings and conflicts between cultures often result from ineffective communication and interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Lü, 2018).

In investigating the study of intercultural communication conflict, it is necessary to examine other studies that relate as references and considerations. We found three studies that are equivalent to this study. I.A. Ndiayea, and B. Ndiayea examine the influence of mass media in the perspective of social life. They try to analyze the way mass media in Poland portray the image of Africa and its influence on people's social life. I.A. Ndiayea, and B. Ndiayea (Ndiayea, Ndiayea, 2014) argued that the Polish media picture of Africa leads to negative assessment of Africans living in Poland, seriously ruining intercultural communication. M. Lukešová examines the intercultural conflict. The analysis is motivated by the diversity of students at Czech Universities, such as cultural background and personality. Lukešová has 97 respondents who are students as research samples and uses a questionnaire to collect data. C.S.T. King and K.S. Bailey examine intercultural communication. They try to analyze intercultural communication from the perspective of international students in the US and their responses about the universities in helping international students. C.S.T. King and K.S. Bailey (King, Bailey, 2021) found that in the perspective of international students in the US, intercultural relations are carried out well, especially with US students. The faculty has a big role in this relationship because it provides space for international students to play an active role. The extent to which communication barriers arise is a major factor in determining the success of intercultural communication. A wide range of barriers will certainly arise in the course of any communication activity. The presence of barriers might impact the efficiency of any communication activity.

This study obtained several things from research that discusses intercultural topics. This study makes a difference from previous research and examines intercultural communication conflict. The study's objectives were to examine the existence and frequency of British-American communication conflicts. This study uses TikTok memes and examines them using a visual methodology. Because this study discusses intercultural studies and has diversity and variety. Fortunately, this study uses TikTok memes. So, no research has examined the conflict of intercultural communication on TikTok memes.

This study was conducted to help provide an understanding of intercultural communication as a social interaction in the form of communication between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. This study connected conflict in intercultural communication. It is considered a problem that arises due to ineffective communication and social interaction among individuals due to differences in cultural backgrounds. This study is also intended as a reference for other researchers who are interested in this discussion. This study also requires further development. The main focus of this study is to explain how intercultural communication conflicts between British and Americans are portrayed on TikTok memes.

## 2. Materials and methods

This research uses visual methodology to identify the concept of Intercultural Communication Conflict Between British and Americans in TikTok Memes. According to R. Gillian (Gillian, 2018), the basic structure developed in this methodology is to analyze the visual objects according to the four sites: the site of production, which is where an image is made; the site of the image, which its visual content; the site of circulation, which is where it circulates, and the site of audiences, which is the visual image faces the spectators or users (Aulia, Rosida, 2022). Regarding The Intercultural Communication Conflict, the main problem is understanding the language communicated to us, either English to other languages or English to English, just like British to American or American to British, and for that, the communication must be well spoken by the speaker and well understood by the audience.

Communicating with someone new to the English language requires more than talking loudly and slowly and exaggerating our facial expressions (Farnsworth, 2021). It requires extra effort when we talk to someone who is not a native English speaker. However, it does not mean that talking to natives will be that easy. It also takes effort, and if we cannot deliver our words well or understand other people's words well, conflict in communication might arise. This research uses 5 TikTok meme videos between British and American.

### 3. Discussion

Language and culture are an inseparable unity in human life. Language and culture are important aspects of human communication, both of which have a significant influence on communication with other people who have different cultures and languages or the same but different languages.

The first video meme reflects the intercultural communication conflict between American and British cultures in regards to responding to someone's thank you or gratitude. From the short video, we can see that there are cultural differences between Americans and Britishers in responding to someone's thank you. The use of different languages in responding gives us an understanding that the two are different as shown in the dialogue ([Table 1](#)).

**Table 1.** American (A) and British (B)

B: <i>Hey, could you pass that on to me, please?</i>	A: <i>Yeah! Here you go!</i>
B: <i>Brilliant, thank you!</i>	A: <i>Yep!</i>
The Britishman repeated his "thank you" and was taken aback by the American's curt response.  B: <i>I said thank you!</i>	A: <i>Yeah... I heard you the first time.</i>
B: <i>Oh, sorry... I just thought you said "yep".</i>	A: <i>I did</i>
B: <i>Oh, a bit rude... don't you think?</i>	A: <i>Is it?</i> (The American considered his response to be adequate and unlike the British said his response was "a bit rude").
B: No, it's fine... most people respond with "you're welcome" or "no problem", d'you know what i mean?	A: Oh, well... Thank you for educating me.
B: Oh, well... Thank you for educating me (Repeating what the American said).	A: Yep

The British think that "thank you" should be answered with "you're welcome" or "no problem" because most British people do this. While Americans are not like that, they return thanks in a more curt manner, which is considered perfectly normal. The British people in the dialogue above seem in disbelief and shock at the response given and become a bit emotional. "Individuals who come from honor cultures will react more strongly to insults that threaten their social image than will individuals from dignity cultures" ([Maitner et al., 2017](#)). According to Culpeper ([Culpeper, 2021](#)), the British consider politeness in speech acts important as "politeness speech acts that were particularly important in polite society."

The second video meme shows the cultural shocks experienced by British people while living in America. One of the existing culture shocks is the existence of a culture of giving small talk with other people even though Americans do not know that person.

**Table 2.** American (A) and British (B)

A: <i>Hi, good morning!</i>	B: <i>Do i know him?</i> (Confused face)
A: <i>Hey good morning my friend!</i>	B: <i>Why is everyone talking to me?</i> (More confused face)

And another similar case in a different version is when the British go shopping.

**Table 3.** American (A) and British (B)

<i>A: Can I help you finding anything sir?</i>	<i>B: No, thanks. Just browsing</i>
<i>A: T-shirts are 2 for 1 and I can show you the 50% off section</i>	<i>B: I'm fine really, thank you</i>
<i>A: Are you being helped?</i>	<i>B: Bloody hell!</i>
<i>B: I'd like to buy this please</i>	<i>A: The total is \$ 21.20</i>
<i>B: It said \$ 20 over there</i>	<i>A: That's without tax</i>
<i>B: How much is this one? (showing money coin)</i>	

Discussing where this meme was produced, this meme video was produced on the TikTok platform, which has a lot of users from all over the world with different cultures, proving that this meme circulates to many people from all over the world, with the hope that many of them will "understand" or know that circumstances like those in the video meme also happened to them. This video's intended audience consists of Americans and British who may have similar communication difficulties. Groups of people form national cultures, and as we all know, these groups will have their own different spiritual goals and cultural traditions, which will, in turn, shape their national culture in unique ways. Therefore, there will be significant distinctions between the cultures of the United Kingdom and the United States (Zhang, 2022). This video meme is about the cultural difference between Americans and British. The American is studying at Leicester in England. She informed an English buddy that where she lived, Las Vegas, was a cool location but not as cool as Paris. The British responded that Paris was generally fair, and then the conflict ensued:

**Table 4.** American (A) and British (B)

<i>A: If you said you went to Paris at my school in the US it's like really cool, anywhere from Europe really</i>	<i>B: Oh really? (Confused face)</i>
<i>A: Yeah. I mean people think it's really cool that I studying in Leicester</i>	<i>B: Really? (More confused face)</i>

Traveling or studying in Europe is cool and exciting to Americans. People's knowledge is another crucial component in intercultural communication (Jhaiyanuntana, Nomnian, 2020). Thus, because of the British's lack of knowledge of the group, this lack of knowledge can trigger communication conflicts (Peresada et. al., 2022; Sukma and Kartika, 2022). The fourth video meme shows the intercultural communication conflict between Americans and British in terms of differences in language or accents in English, resulting in a failure to fulfill the goal of communication (in this case, informing something). Concerning where this meme was created, it was created on the TikTok platform, which is connected to many people from various countries and cultures. This demonstrates that this meme is circulating among audiences who may be experiencing the same phenomenon as in the video. Both of their languages are English, but variances in vocabulary and accents cause intercultural communication issues. This fourth video meme depicts a conversation between an American and a British cleaning lady.

The conversation above highlights the existence of intercultural communication conflicts that disturb the discussion goals due to misunderstandings and misperceptions on one side. The term "hoover" is unfamiliar to the average American; in the United States, the term "vacuum" is used to refer to a similar kind of cleaning equipment. "Closet" is the American word for a small storage space, while "cupboard" is the British term for furniture with doors and shelves used for storing dishes, food, and

clothes. This conflict stems from the fact that American and British English have different word usage and accents. Despite the fact that the United States is also a country that speaks English, the culture in the United States is quite unique, and as a result, American English has developed (Zhang, 2022; Zhang, 2018). The Americans lack knowledge of British culture in terms of words and accents.

**Table 5.** American (A) and British (B)

B: Hello, I put the Hoover in the cupboard	A: You put the what in the cupboard?
B: The vacuum	A: Which cupboard?
B: In the office room	A: There are no cupboards in there?
B: The closet	A: Ok

Like some of the meme videos above, the fifth video meme also shows the intercultural communication conflict between Americans and the British. Even though the people in the video meme are in English, there is a conflict in the communication. The conflict occurs when a British guest experiences different cultures in an American restaurant. Thus, communication appears not achieved in informing or receiving information. This meme video is on the TikTok platform and is enjoyed by many people from different countries and cultures. TikTok is the most popular social media platform, with 689 million users from 150 countries and 100 million users in the US (Basch et al., 2021). Many viewers indicate that this meme video is circulating and being watched by people who experience a similar phenomenon. In detail, this video meme depicts a British guest having dinner at an American restaurant and conversing with a server.

**Table 6.** American (A) and British (B)

First Conversation	Second Conversation	Third Conversation
A: "Let me fill that up for you, sir." (pointing to an empty drinking glass)	B: "Please, can I have eggs, bacon, and home fries?"	B: "Thanks, cheerio!" (close the bill)
B: "No thanks, I don't want another one."	A: "And how would you like your eggs?"	A: (open the tip, speechless, and disappointed)
A: "It's free refills."	B: (Confused face)	
B: "Free..!" (laughs), "Really?" (speechless)	A: "Over easy, sunny side up?"	
	B: (More confused)	

In the video meme above, there are three conversations between a British guest and an American waiter. The three conversations indicated the existence of intercultural communication conflicts. In the first conversation, the waiter offered to refill the drink. However, the British guest thought refilling the drink was paid, and he did not want his drink refilled. Whereas in America, refilling drinks is free (Roy, 2021). There was a conflict in intercultural communication, in which the guest did not receive the information properly. He made mistakes in receiving information by laughing at the waiter and being shocked because he did not believe that refilling drinks were free. In the second conversation, the British guest asked the waiter for some food, and one of them was eggs. The waiter asked again about the level of doneness of the eggs. The British guest was confused by the question because, in its place of origin, there was no specific question about the



level of doneness of the eggs. With a face still confused, the British guest is again offered various choices regarding the level of doneness of the eggs. The American terms about the level of doneness of eggs confused him even more because he did not understand the term. Data based on YouGov America shows that Americans like to eat eggs in various ways, such as scrambled eggs, over easy, sunny side up, and eggs over medium (Ballard, 2019). Conflicts arose in intercultural communication because the British guest did not receive information well, and the waiter did not provide good information and became a misunderstanding. The British guest finished the dinner and closed the bill in the third conversation. When closing the bill, he gave a tip to the waiter. In America, it is imperative to tip, and there is a nominal standard for tipping. According to Burgess, tipping is becoming the norm in the US (Burgess, 2012). The standard tip in US restaurants is 15 to 20 % (Lynn, 2006). In this conversation, a conflict arose in intercultural communication. After the British guest gave a tip to the waiter, he didn't show any happiness. It indicates that the nominal tip given by the British guest was not up to par.

#### 4. Results

This study has uncovered the cause and impact of intercultural communication conflict between Americans and British in a variety of video memes that circulate on the TikTok platform by utilizing visual methodologies. The memes in question were found on the TikTok platform.

According to the findings of this research, intercultural communication conflicts are portrayed in video memes as a difficulty or confusion in communication between Americans and British due to a number of different circumstances. A lack of intercultural knowledge among speakers, disparities in terminology and dialects, and variances in the purpose of the conversation are all examples of these problems. This leads to misconceptions and a restriction of intercultural communication, which can sometimes result in the goal of the conversation not being accomplished. For instance, the vocabulary used to describe the same thing in American English and British English might be somewhat different, which can lead to misunderstandings when trying to receive information in either of those languages.

#### 5. Conclusion

The existence of communication conflict as it is expressed in intercultural society is reflected in social media; one of the platforms that can reflect the intercultural communication conflict is Tik Tok. Conflicts in intercultural communication are depicted as difficulties or barriers in achieving communication goals between two or more people of different cultures. The five TikTok meme videos that we analyzed in this article are only a small part of the intercultural communication conflict between Americans and the British. The occurrence of intercultural communication conflict in several situations can be caused by a variety of factors, such as one side's lack of cultural awareness, the existence of different goals in communication between each other, and the perception of one party who feels that they are superior to the other, as well as a lack of tolerance in the cultures of other countries. Conflicts that occur are also caused by a lack of knowledge about culture when visiting other countries. Because not everyone understands who a tourist is or is not. Thus, it can lead to misunderstandings because they do not receive information properly or do not provide information clearly.

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