

Correlations of Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Effectiveness in Micro-interaction Contexts

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Abstract: Intercultural communication has attracted many researchers with globalization. According to Chen and Starosta who are best known in intercultural communication studies in the U.S.A. intercultural communication can be explored from three perspectives: cognitive, emotion and behaviors. The studies of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness are emotional and behavioral aspects respectively. This paper is to explore the correlation between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness, beginning with defining the concepts. College students' intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness scales are researched and analyzed. It is concluded that there is a positive correlation between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness in micro-interaction contexts. Suggestions are given to improve students' intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness.

Definitions of the Concepts

Micro-interaction Contexts in the study refers to classes attended by Chinese and American students, extracurricular activities which Chinese and American students co-work in, lectures given by American professors and classes which Chinese and American professors co-teach in.

Intercultural Sensitivity is defined by Chen and Starosta as the subjective wishes or willingness to understand, appreciate and accept cultural differences, which includes interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness.

Intercultural Effectiveness refers to the ability developed in intercultural interactions to complete the tasks and communicate with others, which includes behavioral flexibility, interaction relaxation, respect for interactants, message skills, identity maintenance and interaction management.

Influences of Improving Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Effectiveness on Intercultural Communication

To improve intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness boosts cultural communication, helps different nationalities in modern society express their viewpoints without the limitation of complexion, nations and races, and enhances the comprehension and tolerance during intercultural communication.

To improve intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness is also beneficial to integration of diverse cultures. More people are aware of their own low cultural levels, and the shortage of cultural sensitivity and effectiveness in the frequent intercultural communication. But

with the thorough learning, people improve their cultural levels and enhance the understanding to another culture, which results in the mutual development of diverse cultures. The improvement of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness and the frequency of intercultural communication are bound to affect each one in the society who unconsciously obtains the competence of intercultural communication.

What's more, to improve intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness helps shorten the distance among different nations. Different culture also leads to different interpersonal distance. For instance, the interpersonal distance is very close in Arab countries. So it is very incredible for us to see Arabs kiss each other's face, while it is considered as the expression of friendliness to the local Arabs. But in Japan and China, the distance among people is often far on average, with less body contact. Their social communication is mainly in form of handshake, and even a hug is less seen among family members. To improve intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness is good for understanding different customs and shortening the distance among different nations.

Status Quo of College Students' Intercultural Sensitivity

Certain survey data show that college students have high respect for cultural differences and interaction engagement. 95% college students agree the existence of huge differences between Chinese and Western culture, and can take many examples. 87% college students show their willingness to communicate with foreigners actively.

As a beginner, learning a second language commonly aims to communicate with it. But most Chinese students tend to firstly learn grammar and words, and ignore training their language communicative ability. About 89% respondents have lower interaction confidence in intercultural communication.

Interaction enjoyment can directly influence the effect of intercultural communication. Einstein once said "Interest is the best teacher". Many students realize the interest of intercultural communication, and are willing to communicate and exchange, thus their intercultural sensitivity is improved correspondingly. On the contrary, if the students experience the stress and anxiety during intercultural communication, which will restrain the capability development of intercultural communication. According to the findings of the survey, 65% respondents have less sense of joy in communication.

To learn whatever majors as well as intercultural communication, the most important is the learning attentiveness. So during the intercultural communication, it is necessary to ask college students to know foreign culture and arouse their interest to culture, then to show their real concerns. On the basis of their real concerns, students' interaction attentiveness will be developed. But the survey shows that the level of Chinese college students' interaction attentiveness is only intermediate.

Status Quo of College Students' Intercultural Effectiveness

In communication, the majority of college students are in tense when confronted with communicators from foreign cultures, so their behavioral flexibility in intercultural effectiveness is limited. Generally speaking, in China's higher education, more emphasis is placed on students' knowledge and little attention is paid to students' behavioral ability. However, the students in our country have received good moral education and accumulated a wealth of knowledge since they were very young. Therefore, they are often more courteous, more tolerant, and more respectful to their interactants in the intercultural communication. What's more, on account of their limited

knowledge reverse and language competence, a great number of students could not realize interaction relaxation in communication, which require students to enrich their knowledge and improve their language competence.

The interaction management of most Chinese students is poor during their interactive communication with native English speakers. They can't initiate conversation or dialogue, but mainly passively respond. Meanwhile, they do not possess the awareness of identity maintenance and cannot apply flexible message skills in communication. Besides, the majority of Chinese students are unable to express themselves exactly and apply proper non-verbal communication behaviors in intercultural communication.

The Correlation of Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Effectiveness

The IS and IE of the students stay at a moderate levels with IE lower than IS. There is a positive correlation between IS and IE. Generally speaking, the students scoring high in IS score high in IE. An individual with a high IS better recognizes which behaviors are most proper while in an intercultural interaction. The students who can appropriately self-monitor their behaviors can exhibit self-control over emotional expressions, and be able to learn what is proper in a given situation. It is concluded that there is a positive correlation between Intercultural Sensitivity and Intercultural Effectiveness.

Phase one is disapproval which belongs to initial education stage. In this stage, all teachers and students are more native-culture-centered; they reject foreign culture and custom. Faced with this kind of situation, teachers are supposed to help their students realize that the disapproval is natural and gradually help them blur it. Finally, students are equipped with knowledge of different cultures and custom.

Phase two is defense, in which college students have the ability to identify foreign culture and literature but their intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness is not established. It is possible for them to reject foreign culture. Therefore, teachers are required to assist their students realize every culture has its pros and cons. By this comparative study, their guard psychology would be gradually dispelled.

Phase three is minimum, in which culture differences are narrowed and students begin to be more open to and tolerant of foreign culture. However, they may still be confused about religious and political beliefs. Faced with this, teachers may as well not force their students to accept that. On the contrary, they'd better help the students seek common ground while reserving differences in communication and help them realize culture differences objectively exist.

Phase four is acceptance, in which students' intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness is established. They have identified with the complexity of international community, and tolerated culture differences. Their knowledge of foreign culture is developed. At this time, students can experience intercultural communication with the help of the teachers.

Phase five is adjustment, in which students present the positive attitude in cross-cultural communication. It is easier for them to have culture identity. Students begin to understand different cultures and diverse world view. Under this kind of circumstance, what teachers can do is to help students adjust.

Phase six is fusion, which is hard for the second language learners to achieve. In this stage, language learners blend their native cultural thinking with foreign cultural concept, form unified thinking, and maintain high intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness.

Conclusion

College students' intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness is researched and correlative theories are reviewed in this paper. Based on this, the suggestion of how to cultivate intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness in our college education is proposed, which is to cultivate it at different stages. The author hopes that the findings of this paper can promote intercultural communication and enrich correlative intercultural communication theories.

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