

Exploring the Reasons of Willingness to Engage in Intercultural Communication Among College Students in China

Junying Lu^{1,*}

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu, Sichuan 611756, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 1549649378@qq.com

ABSTRACT

With the development of international understanding education, the cultivation of intercultural willingness has also been paid more attention to colleges and universities. Therefore, the paper conducted a questionnaire analysis of students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication in a university in Sichuan Province against the background of international understanding education, and explored the reasons that affect students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication. Combining the results of statistical analysis and international understanding education, the paper puts forward corresponding suggestions to improve students' willingness to communicate across cultures.

Keywords: College students, International understanding education, Willingness to engage in intercultural communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the era of globalization, international understanding education has received more concerns in the field of higher education in various countries around the world. International understanding education refers to the sum of various related educational activities based on the concept of "international understanding". The purpose is to enhance the relationship between people of different cultural backgrounds, races, countries and religious beliefs.[1] In July 2010, the Outline of Educational Planning issued by China clearly stated: "Strengthen international understanding education, promote cross-cultural communication, and enhance students' knowledge and understanding of different countries and different cultures".[2] In 2016, international understanding was further defined as one of the core qualities that promote the development of Chinese students.[3] Carrying out international understanding education has become an essential strategy for Chinese universities to promote international education. Improving students'

awareness of cross-cultural communication is an indispensable part of the international understanding education. In the process of cultivating students' cross-cultural communication awareness, students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication affects the effect of cross-cultural communication education to a large extent. Therefore, the paper conducted a questionnaire analysis of students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication in a university in Sichuan, exploring the reasons that affect students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication, and proposing corresponding suggestions to improve students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The theory of planned behavior (TPB), proposed by an American scholar Ajzen, was originated from the theory of rational behavior and has been used to explain and predict various human behaviors. It has been widely used in the fields of psychology, management, sociology, political participation, and environmental protection. In the field of education, TPB is mainly used to predict

*Fund: "Inquiry Learning Based on MOOC and Cultivation of College Students Intercultural Competence" project, supported by Higher Education Press, P.R.China.

the behavior of teachers and students. The paper mainly explores the psychological attribution of students' willingness to engage in cross-cultural communication and predicts students' cross-cultural communication behavior. Therefore, it will analyze students' willingness to communicate across cultures from three aspects of TPB theory: Behavior Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control.

Behavior Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic evaluation of one's behavior. If the individual has a positive attitude towards the behavior, he or she is more inclined to do it. For example, if students have a positive and motivated attitude towards cross-cultural communication, their cross-cultural communication behaviors and learning would be more common in daily life.

Subjective Norm is the pressure from the external society that the individual feels before acting, and this pressure is often generated by the social relationship in the social structure on the individual.[4] Whether others perform this behavior or whether others believe that this behavior should be performed will regulate the individual's willingness to behave. Due to the existence of norms, if there are more students engaged in cross-cultural communication learning and practice, in order to avoid negative psychological feelings such as impaired self-esteem and shame, they often prefer to choose to engage in cross-cultural communication.

The meaning of Perceptual Behavioral Control is more consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy, both emphasizing the degree of control over specific behaviors. [4] Specifically, it refers to the individual's ability to judge whether oneself can successfully complete the expected goal and subjective behavioral feelings and faith.[5] Individual behavior is strongly influenced by their understanding of their own abilities in the execution process. If students have strong control over their perception and behavior of their own cross-cultural communication skills, they are more willing to engage in cross-cultural communication activities.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Preliminary Preparation of Research Tools

The paper uses a questionnaire survey method to analyze the willingness of college students to

communicate across cultures. The questionnaire is mainly divided into two parts. The first part is the degree of willingness to intercultural communication. This questionnaire, consisting of 12 questions, mainly uses the intercultural communication willingness scale developed by Kassing, which has high credibility (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.91$).[6]

The second part of the questionnaire, which contains a total of 13 questions, is about the reasons that affect the degree of willingness to engage in intercultural communication. According to the TPB, the dependent variable involved in this study is willingness to participate in cross-cultural communication, and the independent variables are Behavior Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control. Behavior Attitude refers to the positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic evaluation of an individual's behavior. In this research, it mainly refers to the attitude evaluation of college students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication. The topics involved are: "I support cross-cultural communication in life", "Cross-cultural communication is good for me", and "I am very interested in cross-cultural communication." Subjective Norm refers to the social pressure felt by individuals to perform or not perform some behaviors. In this research, it mainly refers to the views and behaviors of college students on the willingness to engage in intercultural communication. The topics involved are: "The students around me are very active in cross-cultural communication." Attitudes and behaviors will affect me" "I generally follow in everyone's footsteps in cross-cultural communication", and "I am a person who cares more about the opinions of others". Perceived Behavioral Control is the degree of control or control that an individual expects to feel when taking a specific behavior. In this study, it refers to people's perception of the difficulty of cross-cultural communication. Accordingly, the relevant measurement topics designed in this study are: "I have the knowledge and abilities required for cross-cultural communication", "I am very confident in my cross-cultural communication skills", and "The learning environment in which I live can help me improve my cross-cultural communication skills."

3.2 Optimization of Research Tools

In order to optimize the research tools, the researchers collected 58 valid questionnaires from college students, the research subjects, by letting

them fill out the questionnaire online. The Likert five-point scale was used to measure the two parts of the questionnaire for each observation index, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", assigning 1-5 points respectively. The reliability test result of the willingness to engage in intercultural communication in the first part of the questionnaire is 0.886; the validity test result of the second part of the questionnaire shows that the

factor loading value of question 22 ("I am a person who cares more about others' opinions") is less than 0.5. Wu Minglong pointed out that the factor loading value should be between 0.50 and 0.95 and the larger the better, so question 22 was deleted.[7] The reliability and validity analysis results of the remaining questions after deleting question 22 are shown in the following "Table 1":

Table 1. Results of reliability and validity analysis of variables

Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach α
Behavior Attitude	16-18	0.82-0.90	0.902
Subjective Norm	19-21	0.65-0.88	0.861
Perceived Behavioral Control	23-25	0.74-0.82	0.853

3.3 Sample and Methods

After the exclusion of question 22, the number of test questions in the formal questionnaire was reduced to 24. The survey was then conducted by the researchers among the students of a university in Sichuan by requesting them to fill out the questionnaire online, and a total of 140 questionnaires were received. The samples reveal the following variables with their corresponding number and percentage: 77 males (55%), 63 females (45%); 83 science students (59.3%), 57 arts students (40.7%); 85 undergraduate students (60.7%), and 55 students with a master's degree or above (39.3%). After the data collection is completed, SPSS26 is used to carry out the dependent samples test, correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis of each variable.

3.4 Results

The results of dependent samples test shows that the differences in majors are not related to the

degree of willingness to engage in intercultural communication ($P=0.975>0.05$); moreover, the differences in academic qualifications are also not related to the degree of willingness to engage in intercultural communication ($P =0.347>0.05$). The analysis of the reasons for the differences in majors and the willingness of cross-cultural communication shows that there is no difference in Subjective Norm between science students and arts students ($P=0.343$), but in Behavior Attitude ($P=0.019$) and Perceptual Behavioral Control ($P=0.030$), there are significant differences between science students and arts students, and the scores of science students are higher, as shown in "Table 2" and "Table 3". The results of the analysis of differences in academic qualifications and willingness to engage in intercultural communication show that there is no difference in Behavior Attitude ($P=0.302>0.05$), Subjective Norm ($P=0.504>0.05$), and Perceptual Behavioral Control ($P=0.306>0.05$) between undergraduate students and postgraduate students or above.

Table 2. Significance test of variables

Variables	Sig.(2-tailed)
Behavior Attitude	0.019
Subjective Norm	0.343
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.030

Table 3. Mean of each major

Variables	Major	M
Behavior Attitude	Science student	5.7108
	Art student	4.9474
Subjective Norm	Science student	7.0602
	Art student	6.6842
Perceived Behavioral Control	Science student	7.5542
	Art student	6.7018

Through SPSS26, the correlation analysis of the three factors of Behavior Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control and the willingness of intercultural communication is

shown in "Table 4". Because the correlation of each factor is greater than 0.4, the dependent variable and the three independent variables are all related.

Table 4. Correlation analysis results of variables

Variables	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation
Behavior Attitude	0.000	0.637
Subjective Norm	0.000	0.442
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.000	0.437

Finally, a multiple linear regression analysis is performed, and the coefficients are shown in "Table 5". Because Tolerance>0.1 and VIF<10, there is no multicollinearity among the three independent variables. The regression coefficient results show that the linear equation between the willingness of

intercultural communication and its reasons can be expressed as: willingness to intercultural communication=0.522 * Behavior Attitude + 0.11 * Subjective Norm + 0.12 * Perceived Behavioral Control.

Table 5. Coefficients^a

Model	Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
		β	Tol	VIF
	Behavior Attitude	0.522	0.673	1.487
	Subjective Norm	0.110	0.626	1.596
	Perceived Behavioral Control	0.120	0.642	1.557

a Dependent Variable: willingness to intercultural communication

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the TPB, the paper constructs a theoretical model that affects students' willingness to communicate across cultures. Through empirical analysis, the main conclusions are as follows: (1) Differences in majors are not related to the willingness of cross-cultural communication, and differences in academic qualifications are not related to the willingness of cross-cultural communication, The difference in professional direction are also not related to the degree of willingness to engage in intercultural communication; the analysis of the reasons for the difference in professional direction and the degree

of willingness to engage in intercultural communication shows that there is no difference in Subjective Norm between science students and arts students, but in terms of Behavior Attitude and Perceptual Behavioral Control, there are significant differences between science students and arts students, and science students score higher; (2) The three factors of Behavior Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceptual Behavioral Control are positively correlated with the willingness to engage in intercultural communication; (3) The results of multiple regression analysis show that Behavior Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control all have an impact on the degree of willingness to engage in intercultural

communication. The standardized regression coefficients of the three are 0.522, 0.11, and 0.12, respectively. Based on the results, it can be seen that: Behavior Attitude > Perceived Behavioral Control > Subjective Norm, indicating that Behavior Attitude is the strongest influencing factor of the willingness of cross-cultural communication, indicating that the more positive students' attitudes towards cross-cultural communication is, the more willing they are to participate in cross-cultural communication.

Based on the above conclusions and the connotation of international understanding education, this research suggests the following measures to improve students' willingness to communicate across cultures:

4.1 Improving Teachers' Educational Attainment of International Understanding, and Optimizing the Cultivation Methods of Intercultural Communication for Arts Students

In the research results, the scores of Behavior Attitude (Mean=5.71) and Perceptual Behavioral Control (Mean=7.55) of science students are higher than those of arts students (Mean=4.95) and Perceptual Behavioral Control (Mean=6.70). This is contrary to previous researches revealing that arts students are generally willing to communicate with different people, while science students lack the active temperament in the process of interpersonal communication because they are too rational.[8] Arts students, especially language students, are perceived to have more cross-cultural communication learning and activities in daily communication than science students, but this study shows otherwise, revealing that arts students actually have a more negative attitude towards cross-cultural communication and their cross-cultural communication skills. To this end, teachers should be encouraged to further improve their teaching skills of international understanding of education, and to use multi-ethnic and multi-cultural examples to emphasize the contributions of people from different ethnic groups to common knowledge wealth and existing quality of life when teaching. Through these ways, students can feel the rights and dignity shared by human beings and consciously safeguard them in the process of intercourse with other peoples; At the same time, it is necessary to improve students' frustration ability in cross-cultural communication, helping students understand that there is a process to increase their

cross-cultural communication skills, so as to improve students' attitudes towards cross-cultural communication and their understanding of cross-cultural communication skills.

4.2 Strengthening Subjective Norm and Optimizing Students' Attitudes Towards Cross-cultural Communication

The research results show that the degree of willingness to intercultural communication is affected by Subjective Norm ($\beta=0.11$) and Behavior Attitude ($\beta=0.522$), and Behavior Attitude has the strongest influence on the degree of willingness to engage in intercultural communication. Therefore, an atmosphere for students to engage in cross-cultural communication should be created, meanwhile it is very important to strengthen the Subjective Norm of the positive group to students in order to improve students' attitudes towards cross-cultural communication. Xiong Mei and Wang Min pointed out that international understanding education should break the regional limitations and expand the scope of international exchanges.[9] Faced with the current development trend of the international society and the future development of society and the country, the future development of international understanding education is necessary to break the limitations of regions and organizations. To this end, while being aware of the importance of students participating in cross-cultural communication in the context of international education, colleges and universities should build a platform to provide cross-cultural communication opportunities for students of different ethnicities and different countries, by conducting cross-cultural practical applications such as youth cross-cultural dialogue, foreign company internships, overseas study visits, so that students can communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, and deepen their understanding of the differences between different cultures. At the same time, colleges and universities have also set up typical cases and examples of participating in cross-cultural communication, allowing students to feel the charm of cross-cultural communication, and optimizing students' attitudes towards cross-cultural communication, so as to be internalized as a driving force for their own active participation.

4.3 Providing a Diversified Cross-cultural Communication Learning Platform to Improve Students' Sense of Control in Cross-cultural Communication

Students' willingness to engage in intercultural communication is also affected by perceptual behavioral control ($\beta=0.12$), that is, the perception of the difficulty of cross-cultural communication. If students' cross-cultural communication skills improve, it will be more conducive to improving students' willingness to communicate. For this reason, while infiltrating cross-cultural communication knowledge in the curriculum, colleges and universities should also provide students with more diversified cross-cultural learning platforms through online learning methods such as MOOCs, especially for science students, as it is a more efficient and convenient way to learn cross-cultural knowledge. At the same time, in the process of explaining cross-cultural content, colleges and universities should also deeply understand the relationship between cross-cultural communication and international understanding education. Under the premise of the principles of integration, systematicness, effectiveness, school-based and constructiveness, international understanding education should be integrated into the cross-cultural communication curriculum, to update the content of cross-cultural explanations constantly.

Today, with the deepening of communication and cooperation between countries, the international understanding education of universities has also been paid more attention, which requires people to further enhance the awareness of cross-cultural communication. For this reason, this study applies the TPB to the study of college students' willingness to communicate across cultures, providing a better explanation for students' willingness to communicate across cultures and some suggestions for improving students' willingness to communicate across cultures. At the same time, there are several study limitations. The first is this study's specific context, as the survey subjects is only concentrated in Sichuan Province. The second limitation relates to the method. The factors affecting students' willingness to communicate across cultures still have other variables besides the variables concerned by the TPB. For example, variables such as the students' specific majors and the courses they have learned, researchers still need to pay attention to the influence of other variables on students'

willingness to communicate across cultures in the future.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Junying Lu.

REFERENCES

- [1] Zhang Lianjun. The Meaning and Prospect of "International Understanding Education" [J]. Journal of Weifang Education College. 2003, (1):21-22. (in Chinese)
- [2] Guo Feng. Establishment of Strategies for Education for International Understanding in Universities in the Era of Globalization[J]. Educational Research.2012,33(04):64-69. (in Chinese)
- [3] Lin Chongde. To Construct Sinicized Core Competencies and Values for Student Development[J]. Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Science Edition). 2017(1):66-73. (in Chinese)
- [4] Ajzen, I. The Theory of Planned Behavior[J]. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes. 1991, 50(2), 179-211.
- [5] Bandura, A. Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory[J]. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1986.
- [6] Kassing, J. W. Development of The Intercultural Willingness to Communicate Scale[J]. Communication Research Reports, 1997, 14(4):399-407.
- [7] Wu Minglong. Structural Equation Model: AMOS Operation and Application [M]. Chongqing: Chongqing University Press. 2010. (in Chinese)
- [8] Song Ningli. A Survey of Chinese College Students' willingness to Communicate in Cross-cultural Communication-a Comparison of English Majors, Arts and Science Students[J]. Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition).2011,24(02):124-126. (in Chinese)
- [9] Xiong Mei, Wang Min. Education for International Understanding: Review and Prospect Advocated by UNESCO. 2018,45(12):112-122. (in Chinese)