

Master's Thesis (Abstract)

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A Study of Chinese Non-English Major University Students' Intercultural
Communicative Competence

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Abstract

As the world is developing, communication between people from different backgrounds becomes more and more important. Research on teaching English as a lingua franca (ELF) emphasizes the need to consider cultural diversity and intercultural communicative competence (hereafter referred to as ICC). ICC has been taken as one of the major goals in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in China. There are several studies on ICC in ELF but very few studies have been done in the area of ICC among non-English majors. This thesis investigated the ICC of non-English major university students in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China. For this purpose, 149 non-English major students' ICC levels were identified by using an adapted version of Fantini's (2007) questionnaire, and ten students' attitudes about ICC were collected through interviews. The study's findings indicated that Chinese non-English major students' ICC was in the upper-middle level in XUAR, and the attitude dimension of ICC had the highest mean score of the four components. Other results showed that students with intercultural experience had a significant advantage in the attitudes dimension of ICC compared with students without intercultural experience, while gender and native language had no effect on the ICC. The sample of this thesis is only from one region of China and therefore cannot represent the current situation of Chinese non-English major students' ICC in other regions of the country.

Keywords: China, non-English major students, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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Appendix I: Questionnaire Form

Student Questionnaire

Part 1. Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Native Language: Chinese Uyghur Kazakh
 Other _____ (please specify)
3. College Major: Literature and History Science and Engineering
4. English Level: CET-4 CET-6 Neither CET-4 Nor CET-6
 Other _____ (please specify)
5. Did you have any intercultural experience? Yes No
If yes, please choose where it happened: China/Xinjiang Abroad
6. Do you have any plans to go abroad? Yes No

Part 2. The Questionnaire

Directions: Please respond to the items in each of the four categories (knowledge, attitude, skills, awareness) below, using the scale from 1(Not at all) to 5 (Extremely high).

Knowledge

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I could cite a definition of culture and describe its components and complexities					
2	I know the essential norms and taboos of British and American cultures (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviors, etc.)					
3	I could contrast important aspects of British and American cultures with Chinese culture					
4	I recognized signs of culture stress and some strategies for overcoming it					
5	I could contrast my own behaviors with those of English-speaking people in important areas (e.g., social interactions, basic routines, time orientation, etc.)					
6	I could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape Chinese culture and British and American cultures					
7	I could cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adapting to British and American cultures					
8	I could discuss and contrast various behavioral patterns in Chinese culture and British and American cultures					
9	I know some techniques to aid my learning of English and the culture					
10	I could describe how people interact in social and professional areas in China (e.g., family roles, team work, problem solving, etc.)					

Attitude

	While in a different country/ culture I demonstrate my willingness to:	1	2	3	4	5
11	interact with different culture members (I didn't avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots)					
12	try to communicate in English and behave in "appropriate" ways					
13	deal with my emotions and frustrations with different cultures					
14	take on various roles appropriate to different situations (e. g., in the family, as a volunteer, etc.)					
15	show interests in new cultural aspects (e.g., to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.)					
16	try to understand differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles of different culture members					
17	adapt my behavior to communicate appropriately in the English conversation (e.g., in non-verbal and other behavioral areas, as needed for different situations)					
18	deal with different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving					
19	interact in alternative ways, even when quite different from those to which I was accustomed and preferred					
20	suspend judgment and appreciate the complexities of communicating and interacting interculturally					

Skills

		1	2	3	4	5
21	I would be able to demonstrate flexibility when interacting with persons from other cultures					
22	I would be able to adjust my behavior, dress, etc., as appropriate to avoid offending people from other cultures					
23	I would be able to contrast other cultures with Chinese culture					
24	I would be able to use strategies for learning English and English-speaking countries' cultures					
25	I would be able to demonstrate a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations in other cultures					
26	I would be able to use appropriate strategies for adapting to English speaking countries' cultures and reducing stress					
27	I would be able to monitor my behavior and its impact on my learning, my growth, and especially on English speaking countries					
28	I would be able to use culture-specific information to improve my style and professional interaction with others					
29	I would be able to help to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings when they arose					
30	I would be able to employ appropriate strategies for adapting to Chinese culture after returning home					

Awareness

	while in a different country/culture, I realize the importance of:	1	2	3	4	5
31	differences and similarities across Chinese culture and British and American cultures					
32	my negative reactions to these differences (e.g., fear, ridicule, disgust, superiority, etc.)					
33	how varied situations in British and American cultures required modifying my interactions with others					
34	responses by British and American cultures (such as differences in race, class, gender, age, ability, etc.)					
35	my choices and their consequences (which made me either more, or less acceptable to others)					
36	diversity in British and American culture (such as differences in race, class, gender, age, ability, etc.)					
37	dangers of generalizing individual behaviors as representative of the whole culture					
38	varying cultural styles and language use, and their effect in social and working situations					
39	my own level of intercultural development					
40	factors that helped or hindered my intercultural development and ways to overcome					

Appendix II Students' Semi-Structured Interviews

Questions:

1. What is your definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?
2. As a Chinese, do you think it is intercultural communication when you talk to ethnic minorities (such as Uyghur, Kazakh)? Why/ why not?

As an ethnic minority, do you think it is intercultural communication when you talk to Han Chinese? Why/ why not?

3. Do you think that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is important in language learning and teaching? Why/ why not?
4. Are you taught any cultural content in your ELT courses?
5. Do you consider yourself interculturally competent? Why/ why not?
6. What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with people from English-speaking countries?
7. What kind of intercultural knowledge do you want to get the most in English class?
Why?