

Intercultural Communication Competence of Students in Secondary Vocational Education

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Keywords: Intercultural Communication Competence, Secondary Vocational Education, Students

Abstract: Intercultural Communication Competence is an important part of core literacy in new curriculum standard. This study used a scale that investigated students' perceptions of Intercultural Communication Competence in Chinese secondary vocational education. Participants included 101 students from a vocational school in Shanxi province in China. The results revealed that the attitudes of student Intercultural Communication Competence were moderation and inclusiveness. Students showed an open attitude towards intercultural communication in some aspects. Major and gender did not have significantly different in intercultural communication. The findings of the study could help educators identify Intercultural Communication Competence in professional development workshops in secondary vocational education and recommend that schools and teachers adopt various methods to push pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Vocational education is receiving more and more attention in China. As an important part of vocational education, secondary vocational education also plays an irreplaceable role. One of the core qualities of the latest secondary vocational school syllabus is cultivating students' cross-cultural communication abilities. Intercultural competence is the ability of people from different cultures to interact and talk, involving diverse cultural backgrounds and identities^[1]. Taken together, teaching language should not be separated from culture and thinking. Some studies guided students to learn the general theories and methods of cultural analysis and learned to use these general theories and methods to solve the specific problems in cross-cultural communication^[2,3]. Many studies focused on the intercultural communication competence of university students^[4]. However, few studies related to the intercultural communication competence of vocational school students. In order to push cross-cultural communication skills, overall learning of intercultural communication competence was needed.

This survey focused on the intercultural communication competence of secondary school students. Specifically, the survey intended to address the following questions:

What are secondary vocational students' overall perceptions of intercultural communication competence?

How do intercultural communication competence differ between cruise majors and motor repair majors?

How do intercultural communication competence differ between males and females?

2. Method

Researchers created an online survey by WJX and sent QR code to all students. The survey of intercultural communication competence's scale was analyzed to better understand secondary vocational school students' competence. A quantitative analysis method was used to survey the multiple choice survey items. We described participants' information and computed overall descriptive statistics and descriptive statistics category. We also reported reliability of category. In addition, we compared gender using independent t-test. We also used the same way to compare majors.

Data collect by way of sending out scales to participants. Intercultural Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) developed by Dai Xiaodong^[5], contains three dimensions: cognition, emotion and behavior. The scale takes a form of a 7-point Likert scale. Among the 101 secondary vocational students who participated in this study, 46 (45.54%) were majors in cruise, and 55 (54.46%) were majors in auto repair. Among the 101 students, 84 (83.17%) were males and 17 (16.38%) were females. Male was larger than female, that was to say, Male was nearly four times more than female (Table1).

Table 1: Participants' Information

Demographics		N	%
Gender	Male	84	83.17
	Female	17	16.38
Major	Cruise	46	45.54
	Auto Repair	55	54.46

We analyzed data and reported results by cognition, emotion and behavior for major and gender. In order to ensure the content validity of the instrument, researchers examined the reliability of the instrument and calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three categories. Nunnally and Bernstein^[6] reported an alpha coefficient of 0.70 is an acceptable level within the study of category. The coefficients ranged from 0.70 to 0.79 (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability of Category

Category	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale
Cognition	5	0.71	1-7
Emotion	5	0.79	1-7
Behavior	5	0.69	1-7

3. Results

This survey explored overall descriptive statistics all the questions were on 7-point scale, which was created by Arasaratnam^[7]. The questions included three dimensions, and each of the dimensions contained five items. A 7 score point indicated strongly agree; oppositely, a 1 score point indicated strongly disagree (Table3). For example, if a student reported 7 points, it meant that he/she strongly agreed with the item. Mean of I6=4.80, it was the highest mean score, which meant that most students supposed they could be taught many valuable things from other cultures. Minimum of I10=3, that was to say, the choice of all the students was above 3. They appreciated people who were open to other culture.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
I1	101	1	7	3.93	1.306
I2	101	1	7	3.96	1.348
I3	101	1	7	4.10	1.396
I4	101	2	7	4.51	1.205
I5	101	1	7	3.69	1.535
I6	101	2	7	4.80	1.312
I7	101	2	7	4.54	1.196
I8	101	1	7	4.59	1.365
I9	101	2	7	4.59	1.097
I10	101	3	7	4.50	1.083
I11	101	1	7	4.09	1.258
I12	101	1	7	4.33	1.242
I13	101	3	7	4.53	1.073
I14	101	1	7	4.37	1.181
I15	101	1	7	4.57	1.169
Valid N(list wise)	101				

The survey reported descriptive statistics category, Intercultural Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) was used as an instrument of the survey. The instrument had three dimensions, including cognition, emotion and behavior (Table4). For example, Mean \geq 4.04, that was to say, most students kept an inclusiveness attitude about intercultural communication.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Category

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Cognition	101	2.20	7.00	4.04	.92478
Emotion	101	3.00	7.00	4.61	.89305
Behavior	101	3.00	7.00	4.38	.78938
All	101	2.93	7.00	4.34	.72668

To further explore whether there were differences between major and gender, we calculated independent t-test. The results showed that students were inclusiveness about intercultural communication, with all three categories having a mean larger than 4.20. It meant that they could accept different cultures in cognition, emotion and behavior. The average mean point was above 4 points. That was to say, their attitude about intercultural communication was moderation. Among the four mean, females got 4.40 points and males got 4.24 points (Table5). It meant that females had higher desire than males in intercultural communication.

Table 5: Major Group Statistics

	G	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Major	1	46	4.24	.70077	.10332
	2	55	4.28	.76669	.10338
Gender	1	84	4.24	.77160	.08419
	2	17	4.40	.50553	.12261

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed 0.662 and 0.328, Sig. $>$ 0.05. T-test for Equality of Means reported 0.800 and 0.410, Sig.(2-tailed) $>$ 0.05 (Table6). Results indicated that major and gender did not have significant differences in intercultural communication competence.

Table 6: Independent Sample Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Major	Equal variances assumed	.192	.662	-.254	99	.800	-.03750	.14735	-.32986	.25487
	Equal variances not assumed			-.257	98.192	.798	-.03750	.14616	-.32754	.25255
Gender	Equal variances assumed	.967	.328	-.828	99	.410	-.16190	.19551	-.54984	.22604
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.089	33.221	.284	-.16190	.14873	-.46442	.14061

4. Discussion and Conclusion

There are several conclusions regarding intercultural communication competence that can be drawn from the survey. First, the attitudes of student intercultural communication were moderation. All three dimensions are inclusiveness. They did not deny other cultures. Second, students showed some open attitudes towards cultural communication in some aspects. Third, major in cruise and motor repair did not have significantly different in intercultural communication competence. Fourth, males and females also did not have a significantly different in intercultural communication competence.

5. Limitation and Recommendation

The survey had several limitations. One major limitation was that we examined only one secondary school and just related two majors. We recommend that trying to balance gender is needed. Another limitation was related to gender, the number of males was larger than females. We recommend that the range be wider, for example, enlarge the number of schools and majors. In addition, this survey reported only quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis method could be combined with quantitative analysis method in the further survey. The mixed research method could be forceful and helpful in researching deeply. Finally, owing students' moderation attitude towards intercultural communication competence, we recommend that schools and teachers adopt various methods to push pedagogy.

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