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Intercultural Communication Competence: Unraveling the Role of Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Factors

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Abstract: Globalization makes the interaction between cultures, different ethnics, national background are inevitable. The competency to communicate across these cultures is crucial more than ever. The purpose of this article is to develop hypotheses regarding the relationships between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors in order to explore how these three components affect an individual's intercultural communication competence (ICC). The research is based on online literature sources such as Google Scholar, Mendeley, and other academic online platforms. The research method utilized is library research, utilizing e-books and open-access e-journals. The analysis conducted is qualitative and descriptive. The findings of this article are as follows: 1) Cognitive factors have an influence on intercultural communication competence; 2) Affective factors have an influence on intercultural communication competence; and 3) Behavioral factors have an influence on intercultural communication competence. However this research does not suggest those three components as only factors for ICC and should not be perceived as the exclusive determinants.

Keyword: Cognitive, Affective, Behavior, Intercultural Communication Competence

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the encounter between cultures is inevitable. National, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences are found everywhere. Citizen of the world today is not only interacting with their friends at home but with all of the connected people around the globe. For example, doing business, international trade today is more than 40 times larger than in 1913 (Ortiz-Ospina et al., 2014). Moreover, the digital era nowadays also increase the interaction of people that come from different cultural, or even national background. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc accommodate us to do that. Data from Statista shows 66 percent of the global population were active internet users in 2022 (Burgess, 2020).

There seems to be a borderless chance of people communicating with each other with all those affordances. However, exchanging messages with people from a different culture is not easy as it sounds. There needs to be a certain competency to communicate effectively across

cultures. Therefore, this article tries to explore the meaning of intercultural communication competence (ICC) and the components that influence it. This article discusses the impact of Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Skills on Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), presenting a literature review study in various scientific fields.

METHODS

The method used in writing this Literature Review article is qualitative descriptive and literature review or library research, sourced from online applications such as Google Scholar, Mendeley, and other academic online platforms. In qualitative research, the literature review should be consistently used in line with methodological assumptions. This means that it should be used inductively, so as not to guide the questions posed by the researcher. One of the main reasons for conducting qualitative research is that it is exploratory in nature (Ali, H., & Limakrisna, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Intercultural Communication Competence can be broadly defined as the ability to behave appropriately and effectively well in a particular context. (Samovar et al., 2014). On the other hand, Barker (2015) provides an understanding of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) as the ability to interact effectively with the culture encountered, which also requires sufficient language skills, knowledge, and a willingness to understand the host culture.

Research on this topic has also been done. For example, Williams (2005) studied study-abroad students and their intercultural skills. It is found that exposure to other cultures, having foreign friends, and consuming foreign movies increase their ICC. Zimmerman (1995) found the process of ICC skills has to do with the frequency of interaction with the host culture. O'Dowd (2007) also added that we should understand culture more than arts, heritage, or literature. A set of beliefs, values, and ways of behaving are also part of the culture in developing ICC.

The question arises of what are actually concrete components of intercultural communication competence. There are many factors in intercultural communication competence, Chen (1990) explained what components need to be in intercultural communication competence. Based on the accumulated research, Chen gave these 4 components: personality strength, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness. While Wiseman et al. (1989) conceptualize ICC as a multidimensional construct that sees knowledge of the host culture and attitude toward it as the key factors of ICC. However, Kim (2000) came up with three popular facets of intercultural competence: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. We will focus to explore the latter to be studied as a component that affects intercultural communication competence.

Cognitive Skill

Cognitive skill is the mental capacity to comprehend meanings, messages, and knowledge in a particular culture (Kim, 2000). One of the most obvious factors in cognition is the language of the culture, but that does not mean only the basic linguistic features, but also a contextual language that culture possesses. Someone outside Indonesia may know the meaning of Indonesian words, but might not understand their usage in different situations. It captures the ability of communicators to see from an insider's point of view in understanding values, beliefs, societal patterns, and interaction norms (Barker, 2015).

Affective Skill

If cognitive is related to thinking, then affective has to do with emotional and motivational drives toward successful communication. It is the ability to be open to challenges and uncertainty adapting to the environment of culture. A positive attitude toward the host culture will reduce the psychological distance that also eases the understanding of each other (Kim, 2000). It is also the ability to empathize, respect, and be aware or sensitive to cultural differences (Barker, 2015).

Behavioral Skill

This dimension is closely linked with one’s ability to behave appropriately and effectively in a given situation, and the competency to exchange meaning with the host culture. Communication skills usually are used of how this skill measured (Kim, 2000). A person’s cognitive skill will affect this dimension by mastering the language of the culture both verbal or non-verbal and using it in interaction as well as affective in putting ourselves among people in the host culture (Yunlong, 2014).

Table 1. Relevant Previous Research Results

No	Author (Year)	Research Result	Similarities with this Research	Differences with this Research
1	(Williams., 2005)	Cognitive skills positively affect ICC	Cognitive skills correlated with ICC	Studying abroad significantly helps to increase ICC
2	(O’Dowd., 2007)	Cognitive skills positively affect ICC	Cognitive skills correlated with ICC	The role of people in host culture is also important factors
3	(Zimmerman., 2009)	Affective Skills positively affect ICC	Affective skills correlated with ICC	Through which channel the message is conveyed is also correlated with ICC
4	(Wawra., 2009)	Affective Skills positively affect ICC	Affective skills correlated with ICC	Putting affective skills as the central component
5	(Ilie., 2019)	Behavioral Skills positively affect ICC	Behavioral skills correlated with ICC	It’s much easier if both parties cooperate for intercultural communication
6	(Eisenclas & Trevaskes., 2007)	Behavioral Skills positively affect ICC	Behavioral skills correlated with ICC	There is an intervention from the university to create interaction space

Discussion

Cognitive Skill on Intercultural Communication Competence

As cognitive is the skill to comprehend meaning within a culture then it is very influential in intercultural communication competence. When encountering different cultures one must understand the codes that are agreed in that culture. The language, verbal and non-verbal meaning. Then the competence of intercultural communication can happen from this start of understanding. In short, cognitive skill is correlated with ICC.

Affective Skill on Intercultural Communication Competence

It is the affective side of someone that supports whether he/she will be smooth in adapting to the culture. We have seen that the factors of open-mindedness, maintaining emotional instability, and positive attitude toward culture significantly influence intercultural communication competence. When someone can face this, then the rest of the challenge can be overcome.

Behavioral Skill on Intercultural Communication Competence

The skill of communication and interaction is the most important thing in Intercultural communication. As the research has shown, people that have more ability on communication skills will face intercultural encounters much easier. Speaking with their language, listening, and understanding their point of view so one can interact again appropriately.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to explore the components of intercultural communication competence (ICC) by Kim (2000) which are: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. We have studied how these three components affect ICC in a significant way. In conclusion, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected due to globalization and digital advancements, intercultural communication has become an essential aspect of daily life. The encounter between diverse cultures is inevitable, and individuals find themselves communicating with people from different national, ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. While the opportunities for cross-cultural communication have expanded, it is evident that effective intercultural communication requires a specific set of competencies.

The research conducted a literature review from various scientific fields to understand these components better. The findings reveal that cognitive skills play a crucial role in intercultural communication competence as they enable individuals to comprehend the meanings, messages, and knowledge within a particular culture. Affective skills, on the other hand, are closely related to emotional and motivational drives that contribute to successful communication, fostering openness, empathy, and respect for cultural differences. Lastly, behavioral skills, such as effective communication and interaction, are essential in navigating intercultural encounters, as they facilitate the exchange of meaning with individuals from different cultures.

However, this research does not suggest limiting the factors of ICC only what Kim (2020) proposed. There is more research needed in the future to keep exploring intercultural communication competence and its variables.

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