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Bryant University
The Graduate School
College of Arts & Sciences

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDY ON INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY,
ETHNOCENTRISM, AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION
AMONG CHINESE STUDENTS

A Thesis in Communication

by

Yiran Dong


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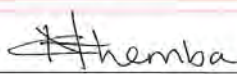
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FACULTY APPROVAL

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Abstract

Because of globalization, internationalization and diversification, abetted by the rapid development of science and technology, geographic distance is becoming a less influential factor in communication. As more and more international students go to study in different countries all over the world, it is inevitable for native students to communicate and interact with those students from different cultural backgrounds. Under such circumstances, it is vital to understand the factors that contribute to students' intercultural sensitivity and the impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension among Chinese students (in the case of this study) for the sake of developing their proficiency as intercultural communicators in college. Using Chinese university students who study English as their academic major and Chinese university students who are not majoring in English as the samples, the purpose of this study is to investigate the fundamental state of ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students who major in English. The predictability of a measurement of intercultural sensitivity on students' ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension is also tested in the Chinese university education context. An online survey was conducted using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS), the Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) and the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA) to measure the three variables. The results indicated that intercultural sensitivity is negatively related with ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Students majoring in English have higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, lower

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levels of ethnocentrism and lower levels of intercultural communication apprehension compared with students who do not major in English. Further discussion, limitations and suggestions for further researches are provided.

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The Impact of English Language Study on Intercultural Sensitivity, Ethnocentrism, and
Intercultural Communication Apprehension among Chinese Students

With the rapid advancement of digital technology, geographic distance is no longer a barrier for communication. People can travel from the Eastern Hemisphere to the Western Hemisphere within a single day and they can communicate with any person in any place at any time via the internet. With all these conveniences, study abroad has become an increasingly preferred choice for many students around the world, and the same is true for Chinese students.

According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE), ever since the implementation of the Open Door Policy in the 1980s, every year thousands and thousands of Chinese students go abroad to study in developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany and Great Britain. At the same time, many foreign students have come to study in China. Data from the MOE (2016) show that in 2015 there were 397,635 foreign students from around the world studying in Chinese universities, and the population is still growing.

With such a large number of international students studying in different Chinese universities, there is a huge possibility for native Chinese students to meet with international students from different countries both inside and outside class. And it is inevitable for them to communicate and interact with those students from different cultural background, requiring some degree of skill as intercultural communicators.

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Successful intercultural communication typically requires certain level of foreign language proficiency. However, according to the annual report released by EF Education (2016), in 2016, the average EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) score for adults in Mainland China is 50.94, ranking 39 out of 72 countries in the world, which is lower than that in Asian countries / regions such as South Korea (54.87), Hong Kong (54.29), Vietnam (54.06), Taiwan (52.82), Japan (51.69), and Macau (51.36). In other words, the English proficiency level of Mainland Chinese adults is relatively low. The EPI also indicates that the highpoint of Mainland Chinese's English proficiency spans from the age of 18 to the age of 24, and then it starts to regress. But, such regression does not happen until age 35 on average in Asia. All this indicates that Chinese adults' English proficiency level is lower than the world's average level, even among young people.

Similarly, according to Jigang Cai's report (2015), in various trades, the English proficiency level of Chinese employees is significantly lower than the world average. For example, in the Information Technology field, the English proficiency of Chinese employees scores 46, far lower than that in Vietnam (62), Taiwan (58), South Korea (55) and Japan (54). Similar situations can be found in trades such as finance and manufacturing industry (Cai, 2015). All these data reveal that the English proficiency level of present Chinese University students does not fit China's strategy of internationalization.

Why is this the case? According to Cai (2015), for a long time, College English education in China put more effort in building students' language base and developing students' language skills. How to use these language skills in daily life is ignored. In other words, instead of

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learning English as a communication tool, English itself becomes the goal of study in China.

That explains why once passing College English Test (CET) Band 4 and 6, which are required for graduation in many universities, students become less motivated. Many even stop learning English, unless they need it for postgraduate entrance exams or they plan to apply for schools in other countries. Learning English in order to pass the exam or to get scholarship, ignoring its primary function as a communication tool, has negative effects on students' attitudes towards how to learn English and how to use English.

To make a change, the *Requirements of College English* issued by MOE in 2007 sets the following standards:

College English represents systematic teaching of knowledge and skills in English language, intercultural communication and learning strategies. It should be carried out under the guidance of foreign language teaching theories, and realized by means of various teaching modes and methods. The goal of College English education is to cultivate students' comprehensive competence in using English, especially their listening and speaking ability. It aims to enable students to use English for effective communication in their future study, work and social intercourse, while enhancing their self-learning ability and improving their comprehensive cultural quality. College English education should meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges. (p.1)

Under such circumstances, increasing students' awareness of using English as a

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communication tool and developing students' proficiency as intercultural communicators have now become major concerns of college English education in China. To achieve these goals, it is urgent to create a better living and educational environment for both native Chinese university students and international students in China. And it is quite necessary to study the impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension among these students.

The Nature of Being an English Major in China

Because this study aims to investigate the fundamental state of ethnocentrism and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students who major in English together with the predictability of a measurement of intercultural sensitivity on students' ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension based on the Chinese university education context, it is vital to know the nature of being an English major student in China before going into the literature review.

As mentioned above, in the new century, the course design of college English education in China needs to meet the country's social development and international exchanges. Therefore, the *Requirements of College English* issued by MOE in 2007 also provided a detailed guideline on how the college English courses should be designed.

According the requirement (2007), when designing college English courses, the two most important English skills for effective oral communication—the listening skill and the speaking

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skill—should be fully considered. College English, as designed, is not only a language course that provides basic knowledge about English, but should also be a capacity-enhancement course that helps students broaden their horizons and learn about different cultures. Therefore, when designing College English courses, it is vital to consider the development of students' cultural capacity and the teaching of knowledge about those cultures.

Based on the above knowledge, Chinese students who study English as their academic major not only need to take English courses that have higher requirements on enhancing their basic skills in English (listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar) compared with non-English major students, but they also have to take courses that enhance their knowledge of Western countries and Western culture. For example, English major students in China University of Geosciences (CUG) will have to take cultural courses including but not limited to the History of Western Culture, the History of British and American Literature, A General Survey of English Speaking Countries, Intercultural Communication Competence (from the language learning/acquisition perspective), Appreciation of British and American films and Appreciation of British and American Literature. Based on different branches (e.g., Business English major and English Translation major), students who major in specific English fields also need to take additional courses such as Western Politics, International Finance and Global Communication (from language acquisition and language use perspective). These courses are all taught in English.

However, for non-English major students, the only requirement is to take the Basic English course during their freshman and sophomore years. Cultural courses and advanced English

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courses are electives for them. And it needs to be mentioned that there are a variety of different electives available from dozens of different disciplines. Therefore, not many students would choose these courses, especially if they stopped learning English after their sophomore year or after they passed CET-4 and CET-6.

Therefore, we can make the obvious conclusion that Chinese students who study English as their academic major have greater familiarity with the English language, the communicative value of the language, and the cultures from which it comes. And according to the literature reviewed below, all these are factors that reduce ethnocentrism and anxiety often produced by intercultural communication.

Why would this be so? What the literature tells us is that ethnocentrism and anxiety are reduced by increased contact with, exposure to, and knowledge of other cultures. According to Larry Samovar, Richard Porter, Edwin McDaniel and Carolyn Roy (2017, p.241), ethnocentrism is universal; it is an essential element for the maintenance of culture; and it “provides members of a culture with feelings of identity and belonging.” But negative and extremely negative levels of ethnocentrism will result serious problems during intercultural communication. Thus, to know how to reduce these negative impacts of ethnocentrism is crucial. Fortunately, much research demonstrates that increasing culture diversity, interaction, and understanding can significantly reduce individuals’ degrees of ethnocentrism (for example, Case, 2007; Berry, 2011; Dejaeghere, Hooghe, & Claes, 2012; Dong, Day, & Collaço, 2008; Cargile & Bolkan, 2013).

Chapter 1 Literature Review

The literature review section is divided into three parts. The three variables of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension will be introduced and the related literatures will be reviewed. The first part deals with intercultural sensitivity. Two important models, the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) and the ABC model of attitudes will be introduced and previous research on how intercultural sensitivity and culture are related will be reviewed. The second part is about ethnocentrism. Literature on how being exposed to different cultures impacts people's level of ethnocentrism will be reviewed here. The last part is about intercultural communication apprehension. The relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism will be reviewed here.

1.1 Defining Intercultural Sensitivity

In order to communicate effectively in a more culturally diverse world, a very important component of intercultural communication, intercultural sensitivity, has become both theoretically and practically essential for intercultural communication studies and training.

One of the key scholars in this area is Milton J. Bennett (1986, 1993a, 1993b), whose studies have explored people's reactions to cultural difference. In these studies, he defined the phenomenon of intercultural sensitivity. According to Bennett (1993a), intercultural sensitivity is "the way people construe cultural difference and...varying kinds of experience that accompany different constructions" (p. 24).

Bennett (1986) agreed with George A. Kelly's (1963) opinion that people do not respond directly to events but instead respond to the meaning they attach to them. He also held the belief that cultural difference is the core concept in intercultural sensitivity because it is culture that fundamentally differentiates the way people create and maintain their own meaning of the world. Based on these principles, Bennett offered the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) to provide a continuum to reflect people's reactions to cultural differences.

1.2 The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Bennett (1986) made this important theoretical advancement by examining intercultural sensitivity from a development perspective and created the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) in 1986. In this model, skillful intercultural communication can be seen as cross-cultural adaptation or cross-culture learning process. According to Bennett (1986, 1993a, 2004), there are six stages in cross-cultural adaptation: denial stage (refuse to admit that there is difference), defense stage (against difference), minimization stage (minimize the difference), acceptance stage (accept that there is a new way of seeing), adaptation stage (accept that there is a new way of acting) and integration stage (accept that there is a new way of being). According to Bennett (2004) these six stages can be described as follow:

Denial Stage: People refuse to admit that there is cultural difference. That is, one believes that one's own culture is the only real or true culture. Other cultures are either not noticed or they are construed in ambiguous ways. There are two reasons people may remain in this stage. One is

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the isolation of physical circumstance. Under this circumstance, the individual has limited access to or experiences of dealing with culturally diverse people. Another reason is mental separation. This means people may intentionally establish some physical or social barriers to create distance from cultural difference or avoid dealing with culturally different people.

Defense Stage: At this stage, people are aware that there is cultural difference, but this awareness couples with negative evaluations of those whose cultures are different. People at this stage usually see their own culture or the culture they adopted to as the only good way to live and their culture is the most advanced form of civilization. According to Bennett (1986, 1993a), three situations may rise in this stage: Denigration, superiority; and reversal. Denigration refers to the “negative stereotyping” in which people denigrate other cultures; superiority emphasizes the importance of one’s own culture; reversal is the situation where people denigrate their own culture but see other cultures as better.

Minimization Stage: This stage indicates the situation where people are aware that there is cultural difference but think their own cultural worldview is perceived as universal. The denial of cultural difference is reduced because people assume that all mankind is ruled by common basic principles. One believes that the values and beliefs of one’s own culture can go across the cultural boundaries and be shared by other cultures as well. In other word, people are aware that there are similarities between one’s own culture and other cultures. They magnify these similarities to minimize the weight of cultural difference. Thus people at this stage have higher tolerance for cultural difference and cultural diversity, but at the same time, they ignore deeper

cultural difference.

Acceptance Stage: People at this stage have the ability to recognize and accept cultural difference. This stage is different from the minimization stage because this awareness and evaluation of cultural difference is equal. In other words, one sees his or her own culture as just one of the complex worldviews that equally exist in the human world. People at this stage show curiosity and respect to cultural difference; they may have negative judgement about other cultures, but this negativity is not ethnocentric.

Adaptation Stage: Developed from the acceptance stage, people at the adaptation stage start to respect the integrity of cultures both from others and their own and generate appropriate empathic questions about cultural difference from the perspectives of the other side. Their intercultural experience yields perception and behavior appropriate to the host culture. People actually extend their repertoire of beliefs and behavior rather than assimilate their culture to the host culture or substitute the host/dominate culture for their own culture

Integration Stage: At this stage, one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. People intend to integrate different aspects of their identity into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal. Bennett (1993a, 2004) proposed that people raise judgements of cultural difference of relative goodness that are specific to some identified contexts and people also experience their own selves as constant creators of their own realities.

According to Bennett (1986; 1993a; 2004), these six stages can be divided into two categories. He proposed that these two categories are the two sides of the dynamic and continual development of effective intercultural communication.

Turning back to DMIS, the first three stages are labeled ethnocentrism. This means if people's intercultural sensitivity is at the stage of denial, defense or minimization, they probably tend to be more ethnocentric because they have the tendency to defend cultural difference, to defend their own/other's cultural identity or to take a universalist position to minimize the difference (Bennett, 1986, 1993a).

The other three stages, taken together, are labeled ethnorelativism. Bennett (1986, 1993a) proposed the term *ethnorelativism* to name this category because he wanted to reflect people's acceptance, adaption or even integration to cultural difference. In these three ethnorelative stages, people's own culture is viewed in the context of other cultures.

Although Bennett divides the six stages of DMIS into two categories, the DMIS model itself offers an integrated process to focus on people's intercultural experiences and their intercultural sensitivity development rather than suggesting six static stages. As he explains, "There seemed to be six distinct kinds of experience spread across the continuum from ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism" (Bennett, 2004, p.1). In addition, Bennett (2004) highlighted two theoretical concepts in the DMIS model, which are cognitive constructivism and cognitive complexity. The former underlines that people do not understand things and get experience directly; rather, their

experience is built up through the categories that they use to organize their perception of social phenomena (Brown, 1972; Kelly, 1963; Von Foester, 1984). The latter emphasizes that more cognitively complex individuals organize their perceptions into more differentiated categories. As such, these more cognitively complex people can make better discriminations among phenomena in a particular domain (Delia, 1970; Loevinger, 1978).

1.3 The ABC Model of Attitudes

Although the DMIS model can be used to illustrate people's level of intercultural sensitivity, how to place people in a particular stage of intercultural sensitivity at a particular time cannot be completed merely by itself. Another conceptual tool, the ABC framework is necessary.

Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta (1996) indicate that in the ABC Model of Attitudes, there are three components: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner and Adrian Furnham (2001) explained the function of each component.

Affective component refers to the emotional reactions people have toward an attitude object. When people are exposed to an unfamiliar setting, emotional reactions such as fear, avoidance and uncertainty may arise. Researchers call these reactions affective responses.

Behavioral component refers to the way people act when exposed to an attitude object. When people are exposed to an unfamiliar setting, those who lack culturally relevant social skills may behave in inappropriate ways; these could cause cultural misunderstandings.

Cognitive component refers to the thoughts and beliefs one has about an attitude object.

Culture contains shared meanings that vary from culture to culture. When people are exposed to an unfamiliar setting, consciously or unconsciously, they will come across the shared meanings that are unfamiliar to their own culture's shared meaning; how they interpret these shared meaning is what the cognitive components explains.

According to Ward and her collages, the ABC model tries to explain that the unfamiliar new cultural environment is the fundamental "trigger" that causes people to generate affective, behavioral and cognitive difference.

Chen and Starosta's (1996) concept clarifies the relationship between affective, behavioral and cognitive components. They suggested that intercultural sensitivity operates on the affective level in the ABC model, which refers to an individual's willingness to initiatively understand, appreciate, and accept cultural differences. Intercultural effectiveness operates on the behavior level, which refers to an individual's ability to complete tasks and achieve communication goals in an intercultural communication context. It also operates on the cognitive level, which refers to an individual's ability to understand both one's own culture and other cultures and the similarities and differences between them. Chen and Starosta (1998) summarized the previous research studies on the conceptualization of intercultural sensitivity and pointed out that there were concept confusions directly impacting the evaluation of intercultural training programs. To develop a valid and reliable measurement tool for intercultural sensitivity, they conceptualized intercultural sensitivity as "a person's ability to develop a positive emotion toward understanding

and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (Chen & Starosta, 1997, p.5). Chen and Starosta (2000) proposed six elements that account for intercultural sensitivity: Self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement and non-judgement. In other words, individuals with high level of intercultural sensitivity are optimistic, out looking, confident, have the ability and willingness to adjust to the new cultural environment, are willing to disclose the selves in different cultural environment, are able to accept cultural difference and will not judge another’s culture before fully understand it.

Chen and Starosta (2000, 2010) suggested that intercultural sensitivity is one of the essential factors for effective intercultural communication, which itself consists of five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect of cultural differences, intercultural confidence, interaction enjoyment, and intercultural attentiveness. Their research provides some theoretical foundations for the evaluation of intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, their concept of intercultural sensitivity will be used in this thesis.

1.4 Relevant Studies on Intercultural Sensitivity

After the establishment of theoretical models, researchers in different fields published studies in various research settings including business, education and cultural training. These explorative studies increased understanding of intercultural sensitivity and generated valuable insights into intercultural education and training.

1.4.1 Relevant Studies in Western Countries

The research on intercultural sensitivity has become an important academic interest in Western countries. Many studies have been conducted in the intercultural education field in order to create relevant training and to produce communicators with better intercultural communication skills. According to the literature reviewed below, many researchers found that culture plays a role in impacting individual's level of intercultural sensitivity.

Christa Lee Olson and Kent R. Kroeger (2001) carried out a survey to test the level of intercultural sensitivity among 52 staff members in New Jersey City University. The relationship between their international experiences, global competencies and level of intercultural sensitivity were studied. The research results indicated that both second language proficiency and substantive experience abroad independently increased the level of intercultural sensitivity. They concluded that intercultural knowledge (second language proficiency) and intercultural experience (substantive experience abroad) can positively impact one's level of intercultural sensitivity. Similarly, David A. Straffon's (2003) found that individuals' level of intercultural sensitivity is positively correlated with the length of time exposed to cultural difference. Straffon (2003) tested the level of intercultural sensitivity among 336 international high school students from over 40 countries. The result of this research indicated that intercultural sensitivity was positively correlated with the length of time students had attended international schools.

Lisa Altshulera, Nan M. Sussmanb and Elizabeth Kachur (2003) did a survey to test the level

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of intercultural sensitivity of 24 physician trainees at an American medical center after a 24-hour intercultural training intervention. The result indicated that participants showed low levels of denial and defense, moderate levels of acceptance and adaptation, and high levels of minimization. Although the sample is relatively small, their research findings indicated that intercultural training does improve intercultural sensitivity. Sandra L. Mahoney and Jon F. Schamber (2004) conducted a survey to test the influence of curriculum interventions on the development of intercultural sensitivity among freshman. Two curriculum approaches on different cognitive levels were undertaken. The research results showed that curriculum interventions had influence on the development of intercultural sensitivity. The researchers also indicated that curricula employing analysis and evaluation of cultural difference are more effective in improving intercultural sensitivity than are those employing mere comprehension of cultural differences. These findings have important implications for developing curricula to assist students with learning to negotiate cultural differences.

Patricia Anne Armfield (2004) examined the relationship between study abroad students' interaction with host nationals and their development of intercultural sensitivity. The result indicated participation in study-abroad programs enhances intercultural sensitivity. Philip H. Anderson, Leigh Lawton, Richard J. Rexeisen and Ann C. Hubbard (2006) carried out a longitudinal study among 23 seniors in a college management course to explore the impact of study abroad programs on their intercultural sensitivity. The research result indicated that short-term study abroad programs had a positive impact on the development of intercultural

sensitivity. These programs improve students' ability to accept and adapt to cultural differences.

Chen Guo-Ming (2010) conducted a survey exploring the relationship between intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Four hundred thirty-two students at a mid-sized university in the northeastern area of the United States were asked to answer the survey. The results indicated that the relationships between intercultural sensitivity and the other two variables are negative. People with a higher degree of intercultural sensitivity were less ethnocentric and apprehensive in intercultural interaction. However, this study was conducted under the context of American culture, which is a multinational country with a lot of immigrants. As such, we can ask if the validity and reliability of the research result should be reconsidered if applied to single-nation countries or single-ethnic countries such as in China. The same concern can be applied to the above literature as well because even though most of the research results indicate that interaction with others' culture has a positive impact on the development people's intercultural sensitivity, these studies were developed in a multicultural context. Therefore, how different might the results be if the measurement in these studies applied to single-nation countries or single-ethnic countries such as in China?

1.4.2 Relevant Studies in China

The research on intercultural communication in China began in the early 21st century. Most of the research in this field focuses on foreign-language education and exploring the relationship between language and culture. In the field of foreign-language education, it now seems to be the

consensus that the ultimate goal of foreign-language teaching is to develop people's proficiency as intercultural communicators. And as a very important part of intercultural communication, many researchers were attracted to study the intercultural sensitivity. Chinese scholars have conducted a good number of empirical studies on intercultural sensitivity and came up with some valuable results.

Shiyong Peng (2006) explored the relationships between five factors of the intercultural sensitivity scale developed by Chen and Starosta in 2000. In this study, he also tested the degree to which the relationship was reflected by different levels of English language proficiency among 200 college students. The result showed that significant differences exist. For students with high English language proficiency, respect for cultural differences and interaction confidence both affect interaction engagement. For students with low English language proficiency, interaction engagement was affected by the other four factors. Also, students with high English proficiency felt interaction enjoyment more easily than students with low English proficiency.

Shiyong Peng (2007) later examined the validity of the intercultural sensitivity scale by exploring the correlation among the five factors. One hundred seventy-three students majoring in English were asked to participate in this study. The result indicated that the intercultural sensitivity scale had high internal validity and offered multidimensional measurements that can predict possible differences in deep structure of intercultural sensitivity.

Xinying Zhou (2007) conducted a survey to evaluate the level of intercultural sensitivity

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among 91 college students in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. The result showed that the students' intercultural level was medium. Among the five factors of intercultural sensitivity, students showed the highest ability at respect for cultural differences, following with the interaction engagement as second and interaction enjoyment as third. The fourth was interaction attentiveness and the lowest was interaction confidence.

Xinying Zhou and Xueming Peng (2007) did research among 107 students from the international school of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. They examined the influence of cultural learning on intercultural sensitivity. The result indicated that cultural learning improved students' level of intercultural sensitivity. Students who participated in this study made progress in respect for cultural differences and interaction engagement.

The literature on the relevant studies of intercultural sensitivity in China was mostly related to the relationship between language and culture. Instead of focusing on designing instruments and testing the validity and reliability in different cultural settings as researchers in Western countries did, researchers in China tended to adopt the instruments developed by Western researchers to test intercultural sensitivity, which proved the validity and consistency of those instruments in the Chinese context. Their findings provide some evidences to the conclusion that as a reflection of people's proficiency as intercultural communicators, people's level of second language proficiency (here specified as the English language proficiency) effects how they perceive different cultures; people with high second-language proficiency have higher ability at respect for cultural difference and find it easier to gain joy from intercultural communication.

What Zhou and Peng (2007) found also indicated that as in Western countries, knowledge of culture also has a positive impact on intercultural sensitivity in China.

However, as observed, researches are not very diversified in China; most of the work focuses on foreign-language education. Therefore, in further research, more attention and effort should be directed to different questions.

1.5 Ethnocentrism

The idea of ethnocentrism was first mentioned by William Graham Sumner in 1940 in his book *Folkways*. In this book, Sumner defined ethnocentrism as “the technical name of this view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it...Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders” (p.12). Robert A. LeVine and Donald T. Campbell (1997) supported this concept by defining ethnocentrism as Sumner did. They indicated that individuals have the tendency to view their own cultures as the center of everything, and use their own cultures as the standard rule to measure everything else. James W. Neuliep and James C. McCroskey (1997b) developed the Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE), which is broadly used in intercultural communication research. According to Neuliep and McCroskey, a certain level of ethnocentrism is beneficial to and necessary for the survival of a culture. It is a vital element for the existence of patriotism and the maintenance of national pride. But when ethnocentrism surpasses a certain limit, it becomes a barrier to intercultural

communication.

Ethnocentrism is beneficial for the development and maintenance of one's cultural identity. However, Yang Lin, Andrew S. Rancer and Oana Trimbilas (2003) indicated in their study that ethnocentrism may result in a negative stereotyped image which reduces individuals' willingness to communicate. Chen and Starosta (2004) indicated that cultural sensitivity can be conducive to the cultivation of one's ability to respect cultural differences, promote cultural diversity and motivate people to overcome the negative influence of ethnocentrism.

Although few studies can be found directly related to the relationship between second-language proficiency and ethnocentrism, researchers have provided evidence demonstrating that there is a relationship between ethnocentrism and culture. James W. Neuliep and Kendall M. Speten-Hansen (2013) conducted an experimental study testing the influence of ethnocentrism on social perceptions of nonnative accents. They divided 93 participants into two groups: experimental group and control group. After measuring their level of ethnocentrism, the researchers exposed both groups to a video with the same speaker delivering the same message. The difference between these two groups was that the experimental group heard the speaker with a nonnative accent but the control group didn't. The result indicated that ethnocentrism negatively influences the social perceptions, attractiveness, credibility, and homophily of the speakers with nonnative accents. Moreover, as ethnocentrism increases, positive evaluations of the same speaker's speech decreased proportionately. However, when presented with a speaker with a standard American accent, ethnocentrism has little to no influence on the social

perceptions of the speaker or evaluation of the speaker's speech. According to Neuliep and Speten-Hansen (2013), this indicates that ethnocentrism is correlated with strong in-group identification. This in-group identification leads to in-group bias, outgroup derogation, and outgroup discrimination.

Terry F. Pettijohn and Ginny M. Naples (2009) conducted an experimental study on whether taking cross-cultural psychology courses would significantly reduce students' level of ethnocentrism. A total of 59 undergraduate students participated in their study, where 31 of them enrolled in one section of Cross-Cultural Psychology and 28 students enrolled in one section of Introductory Psychology. All participants' levels of U.S. ethnocentrism and generalized ethnocentrism were measured at both the beginning of the course and the end of the course. The research result suggested that college students' ethnocentric attitudes were reduced by completing and actively participating in a specific Cross-Cultural Psychology courses.

Besides the evidence provided above that cultural interaction may reduce people's level of ethnocentrism, more studies were conducted comparing the ethnocentrism level of people from different cultural backgrounds.

James W. Neuliep, Michelle Chaudoir and James C. McCroskey (2001) conducted research that included 372 Japanese college students in Tokyo and 173 American liberal arts college students from the mid-western United States. Students were asked to fill out the generalized ethnocentrism scale developed by Neuliep and McCroskey in 1997. The research results

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indicated that Japanese students have significantly higher score on ethnocentrism compared with American students. Since Japan is a single-nation country (the nation of Yamato), Japanese culture is more anti-foreign compared with American culture, which is a mixture of cultures from multiple nations.

Yang Lin, Andrew S. Rancer and Onan Trimbitas (2005) conducted a survey among 110 Romanian college students and 151 American college students. In this study, students' level of ethnocentrism and their intercultural willingness to communicate were tested and measured. The research results showed that the Romanian college students have higher scores on ethnocentrism compared with American college students. Since the U.S. is a typical multinational country with a lot of immigrants and Romania is single-nation country similar to Japan, the results of these two studies indicate that people from multinational countries have lower levels of ethnocentrism compared with those from single-nation countries, demonstrating the idea that cultural interaction and ethnocentrism is closely related.

Qingwen Dong, Kenneth D. Day and Christine M. Collaço (2008) conducted a survey among 419 undergraduate college students in the western United States. They wanted to explore whether intercultural communication sensitivity and multiculturalism can significantly predict the reducing of ones' ethnocentrism. The result suggested that the promoting of intercultural communication sensitivity and multiculturalism is a possible measure to overcome ethnocentrism and reduce conflicts among intergroup interactions. Their study provides some evidence that intercultural sensitivity is related to ethnocentrism under certain cultural context.

1.6 Intercultural Communication Apprehension (ICA)

Intercultural communication contains uncertainty. When facing cultural differences, people usually feel fearful and anxious. This is intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) provided a clear definition of intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). They identified ICA as “the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people from different groups, especially different cultural or ethnic groups” (p. 147). Based on this understanding, they developed the measurement tool for this fear and anxiety in 1997. They named this broadly used measurement tool “the personal report of intercultural communication apprehension (PRICA).” They explained that anxiety has a negative effect on people’s proficiency as intercultural communicators., which is mainly represented by communication avoidance or holdback. Problems will arise during intercultural communication for people with high level of ICA because of their fear or anxiety.

As with ethnocentrism, not many studies can be found directly examining the relationship between ICA and second-language proficiency. However, many researchers have found that intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism are closely related.

Wei Dong Chen (1993) did an investigation among 120 Chinese students who were studying in England about how they use English in their daily life, work and study. The result showed that instead of using English to communicate or interact with natives, Chinese students prefer to “listen to the radio or watch TV” to improve their English communication skills. When facing

difficulties in study, they prefer to “read books and find solutions by themselves” instead of communicating with their professors. This indicated that Chinese students in an English speaking/English cultural context have high levels of intercultural communication apprehension. They tend to avoid intercultural communicative interactions. The research results supported the idea that high levels of intercultural communication apprehension reduce people’s proficiency as intercultural communicators.

Jason S. Wrench, Michael W. Corrigan, James C. McCroskey, and Narissra M.

Punyanunt-Carter (2006) explored the relationship among ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, religious fundamentalism, homonegativity, and tolerance for religious disagreements. They wanted to demonstrate their concept that religion is an important factor in intercultural communication. Though they didn’t find a relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and religious fundamentalism, the research did indicate that there is a positive relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

Michael W. Corrigan, Barbara Penington, and James C. McCroskey (2006) carried out two experimental studies to explore whether taking an intercultural communication class influences students’ intercultural communication apprehension and their ethnocentric attitudes towards other cultures to a significant level. The first study explored if people’s pre-existing levels of ethnocentrism and ICA effect the resulting levels of ethnocentrism and ICA over a semester of intercultural communication class. However, there was no statistical difference shown in the first

study. Study two explored if an intercultural communication class can affect people's level of ethnocentrism and ICA. Statistically significant results were provided that taking intercultural communication class did affect people's level of ethnocentrism and ICA. The result of the research indicated that the increase of people's proficiency as intercultural communicators may reduce the level of ethnocentrism and ICA.

Yang Lin and Andrew S. Rancer (2003) conducted a survey exploring the relationships between ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, intercultural willingness-to-communicate, and college students' intentions to engage in an intercultural dialogue program. The generalized ethnocentrism scale (GENE) and the personal report of intercultural communication scale (PRICA), both developed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a, 1997b), were included. Three hundred thirty-nine students enrolled in basic communication courses in a large mid-western university were asked to answer the survey. The research indicated that intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism were positively related. These two variables together influence the intercultural willingness to communicate. However, ethnocentrism and intercultural willingness to communicate directly influenced people's intention to participate in an intercultural dialogue program. Thus, high levels of intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism will negatively impact people's intercultural communication willingness, which then results in the avoidance of participating in an intercultural communication dialog program. This result also indicated that ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension reduce people's proficiency as intercultural

communicators.

James W. Neuliep (2012) did an experimental research study on the relationship among intercultural communication apprehension, ethnocentrism, uncertainty reduction, and communication satisfaction during initial intercultural interaction based on the Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM). The research hypothesized that intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism would negatively affect uncertainty reduction and communication satisfaction during initial intercultural encounters. One hundred and seven participants from a mid-western liberal art college were divided into two groups, the experimental and the control groups. They were first asked to answer the personal report of intercultural communication apprehension scale (PRICA) and the generalized ethnocentrism scale (GENE), then participants in the experimental group were paired with people from cultural groups other than their own and participants in the control group were paired with people from their same culture. After 10 minutes, all participants were separated and their levels of uncertainty and communication satisfaction were measured. The research result showed that in the experimental group, measures of ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension were significantly negatively correlated with measures of uncertainty. But in the control group no correlation was shown. Neuliep (2012) then concluded that ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension are barriers to reducing uncertainty during initial intercultural encounters, producing a reduction in communication satisfaction. Neuliep (2012) implied that based on AUM, reducing and managing uncertainty is the prerequisite for

meaningful and effective communication, but high levels of intercultural communication and ethnocentrism caused anxiety and uncertainty among people raising avoidance tendency to intercultural communication. This impedes the uncertainty reduction process and reduces communication satisfaction. Thus, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism have negative influence on people's proficiency as intercultural communicators.

Based on the literature reviewed above, intercultural communication apprehension and ethnocentrism are positively related and they both have a negative effect on people's proficiency as intercultural communicators. However, as mentioned above, intercultural sensitivity is an important component that has positive effect on people's proficiency as intercultural communicators. As such, the first hypothesis for this study is:

H1: Intercultural sensitivity is negatively related to ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

Also, this study aims to investigate the fundamental state of ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students who study English as their academic major and Chinese university students who speak English but do not formally study the language as their academic major, to determine the predictability of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension under the Chinese culture context. As such, the second hypothesis for this study is:

H2: Chinese students who study English as their academic major will show higher levels of

intercultural sensitivity than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major.

As this study also argues that formal study of a language and culture increases intercultural sensitivity and that intercultural sensitivity produces several beneficial outcomes, a third and fourth research hypotheses are:

H3: Chinese students who formally study English as their academic major will show lower levels of ethnocentrism than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major.

H4: Chinese students who formally study English as their academic major will show lower levels of intercultural communication apprehension than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major.

Chapter 2 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to expand intercultural communication research in the context of Chinese culture. The main object is to explore the fundamental state of ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students based on whether they are English majors or non-English majors with the hope of increasing Chinese university students' proficiency as intercultural communicators and improving the quality of second-language education or training in China.

To test the four hypotheses listed above and to achieve the main object of this study, an online survey research was conducted. Three intercultural communication scales were to develop the survey and a pre-test was run to ensure that the survey is free from translation error.

2.1 Pre-test

Because the targeted sample population is Chinese students, to guarantee that their answers can truly reflect their real reaction, the survey is written in Chinese. All the scales used in this survey were carefully translated into Chinese and were sent to a linguist who is proficient in both Chinese and English for improvement. To ensure that the survey was free from translation error, a pre-test was run before the survey was sent to the participants.

2.1.1 Participants

Participants for this pre-test are 20 international students at Bryant University who are both fluent in both Chinese and English. Considering that there are just a small number of international students who can speak both Chinese and English fluently at Bryant University, student participants are selected based on the reachability of the researcher.

2.1.2 Procedure

In this pre-test, participants were asked to go over the Chinese-English bilingual version of the survey. They were asked to read every question carefully both in Chinese and English. For each question, they need to mark a check if they agree that the meaning of both the Chinese

version and the English version of the question are the same and a cross if they think the meaning of the two versions does not match. All questions need to reach at least 90% (which is 18 student participants) check to be considered successfully translated; If not, the question will be sent back to the researcher to revise and sent to other Chinese students to review until the questions reaches 90% of check.

2.1.3 Result

After collecting all 20 student participants' responses, all 64 questions reached 100% "check", which means all 20 student participants agree that the Chinese version of these questions has the same meaning as the English versions. The results of this pre-test guaranteed that the questions and scales translated and used in this survey are free from translation error and participants who take this survey would have no difficulty clearly understanding each questions asked in it.

2.2 Main Test

2.2.1 Participants

This research investigates students in various majors studying at the China University of Geosciences (CUG), a key state-owned university in Wuhan, Hubei Province, which is located in Central China. According to the design of the English major program in CUG and most other Universities in China, during freshmen year, English major students are taking general college English courses together with non-English major students. They start taking English courses that

are designed specifically for English major students in their sophomore year. Therefore, to guarantee the validity and reliability of the data, all participants were selected from junior, senior, graduate or higher level to ensure that they have already taken at least one year of English courses that are designed specifically for English major students. Therefore, participants were all recruited from junior, senior or higher level (graduate and Ph.D.) classes.

A total of 347 survey answers were collected, after data cleaning, a total of 222 valid survey answers remained. According to the 222 valid survey answers, the number of student participants who have English as their academic major is 106, which counts as 47.7% of the entire sample population. The number of Non-English major students who participated in this study is 116, which counts as 52.3% of the sample population. Student participants include 73 males, which counts as 32.9% of the entire sample population, and 149 females, which counts as 64.1% of the sample population. Most of the participants in this study are between 18 to 25 years old, which contribute to 61.2% of the entire sample population. The average age of the participants is 27.94, the mode age is 24 and the median age is 24.

2.2.2 Instruments

To explore ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students based on their majors, three measurement tools were introduced into this study: the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA), the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) and the Generalized

Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE). These three scales were integrated into one survey. Participants were informed that the research is about examining the value of intercultural communication study, but they were not informed as to which questions were designed for measuring which variables.

2.2.3 Measurement of Variables

Intercultural sensitivity. To evaluate the level of intercultural sensitivity, participants were asked to answer the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) in the survey. The ISS was developed by Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta in 2000. This 24-item, 5-point Likert type multidimensional scale measures individuals' level of intercultural sensitivity on the basis of five factors: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness. Chen and Starosta (2000) specified the scale as follow:

Interaction Engagement: items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24,

Respect for Cultural Differences: items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20,

Interaction Confidence: items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10,

Interaction Enjoyment: items 9, 12, and 15

Interaction Attentiveness: items 14, 17, and 19

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Participants were asked to read each statement and choose “1” if Strongly Disagree, “2” if Disagree, “3” if do not agree nor disagree, “4” if Agree or “5” if Strongly Agree. Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20 and 22 needed to be reverse coded in SPSS. Therefore, the higher score a participant has for ISS, the higher level of intercultural sensitivity he or she has in intercultural communication.

According to the two researchers, the validity and the reliability of the scale has been proved stable in different cultural contexts and this scale has the ability for generalization. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.86 in the original study and 0.88 in this study.

Ethnocentrism. To measure the level of ethnocentrism, participants were asked to answer the Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale (GENE) in the survey. The GENE was developed by James W. Neuliep and James C. McCroskey in 1997. This 22-item, 5-point Likert type unidimensional scale measures individuals’ level of generalized ethnocentrism.

Participants were asked to read each statement and choose “1” if Strongly Disagree, “2” if Disagree, “3” if do not agree nor disagree, “4” if Agree or “5” if Strongly Agree.

Neuliep and McCroskey (1997b, 2002) mentioned that items 3, 6, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19 are not scored because they are included just to balance the number of positively and negatively worded items. Also, items 4, 7 and 9 needed to be reverse coded in SPSS. Therefore, the higher score a participant has for GENE, the higher level of ethnocentrism he or she has in intercultural communication.

The original study has also proved the reliability and validity of the scale with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92 and 0.83 in this study.

Intercultural communication apprehension (ICA). To measure the level of ICA, participants were asked to answer the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA) in the survey. The PRICA was developed by James W. Neuliep and James C. McCroskey in 1997. This 14-item, 5-point unidimensional Likert scale measures individuals' level of communication apprehension under the intercultural context.

Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) mentioned that scores can range from 14 to 70. Scores below 32 indicate low intercultural communication apprehension. Scores above 52 indicate high intercultural communication apprehension. Scores ranging between 32 and 52 indicate a moderate level of intercultural communication apprehension.

Participants need to read each statement and choose "1" if Strongly Disagree, "2" if Disagree, "3" if do not agree nor disagree, "4" if Agree or "5" if Strongly Agree.

Neuliep and McCroskey (1997a) had also proved the stability as well as the validity and reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale in their original study was 0.92 and 0.93 in this study.

Majors. Because this research explores ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity among Chinese university students based on whether they are English major or non-English major students, a question was asked at the very

beginning of the survey to have the participants indicate whether they are/were English major students or not. The question was “Are/ were you a student who majored in English?”

Participants were asked to answer either “yes” or “no” to identify whether they were English major students or non-English major students.

Gender and age were the only two demographic questions that were asked in the survey just for statistical use. No other personal information was needed or asked in the survey.

2.3 Procedures

The advisors of the CUG classes were contacted and the purpose and the procedure of the study were clearly explained. They were then asked to help the researcher spread the online survey link to their classes. All participants in this study were volunteers. Students would either copy or type the online survey link into their computer browsers and the link would lead them to the anonymous online survey. The consent form was provided at the very beginning of the survey; the purpose and the procedure of the study were clearly stated; and the researcher’s contact information was listed at the end of the form. All participants were informed that they can choose whether or not to take the survey based on their own willingness and the survey would not start until they click the “Agree” button at the end of the consent form. They were also informed ahead that their replies were collected and analyzed anonymously. Any information obtained in connection with this study remained confidential and would not be disclosed to the general public in a way that can be traced to them. In any written reports or publications, none of

them would be identified; only anonymous data will be presented. The survey questions needed to be answered only once. There was no follow-up contact with participants after they completed or decided not to complete the survey.

All survey answers were collected between January 15th and February 20th, 2018. The survey and the data collection procedure were submitted and verified by the IRB committee from both Bryant University and CUG. The survey submitted to Bryant IRB was written in English and the survey submitted to CUG was translated into Chinese.

2.4 Statistics

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 was used to analyze the data collected for this study. All measurements used in this study are 5-point liker type scales. In order to find out the relationship between intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension (H1), Pearson's correlations were run between ISS, GENE and between ISS and PRICA. And in order to examine the difference between English major students and non-English major students both on their degree of ISS, GENE and ICA (H2, H3 and H4), three independent sample t-tests were conducted.

2.5 Results

H1 predicted that a negative relationship exists between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism. A Pearson's correlation coefficient test was conducted to find out the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism. According to the result, $p < 0.01$, $r = -0.593$,

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there is a significant correlation between intercultural sensitivity and ethnocentrism and these two variables negatively correlated with each other.

H1 also predicted that a negative relationship exists between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension. Therefore, another Pearson's correlation coefficient test was conducted to find out the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension. Finding in showed that $p < 0.01$ $r = -0.653$, which indicated that there is a significant correlation between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication apprehension and these two variables were negatively correlated with each other.

H2 predicted that Chinese students who study English as their academic major will show higher levels of intercultural sensitivity than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the intercultural sensitivity (ISS) scores for the students who have English as their academic major and students who do not major in English. According to the result, there was a significant difference in scores for students who have English as their academic major ($M = 92.33$, $SD = 9.44$) and students who do not major in English ($M = 85.62$, $SD = 9.65$); $t(220) = 5.23$, $p < 0.05$.

H3 predicted that Chinese students who formally study English as their academic major will show lower levels of ethnocentrism than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the ethnocentrism (GENE) scores for the students who have English as their academic major and

students who do not major in English. According to the result, there was a significant difference in scores for students who have English as their academic major ($M=32.06$, $SD=6.87$) and students who do not major in English ($M=35.85$, $SD=6.88$); $t(220)=-4.11$, $p<0.05$.

H4 predicted that Chinese students who formally study English as their academic major will show lower levels of intercultural communication apprehension than will Chinese students who do not formally study the language as their academic major. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) scores for the students who have English as their academic major and students who do not major in English. According to the result, there was a significant difference in scores for students who have English as their academic major ($M=33.73$, $SD=9.38$) and students who do not major in English ($M=41.53$, $SD=8.56$); $t(220)=-6.48$, $p<0.05$.

Chapter 3 Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension among Chinese University Students. The study also wanted to find out if studying English as academic major could impact students' degree of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Based on the results of the study, all four hypotheses were supported. That is, intercultural sensitivity is negatively related with both ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. This means students with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity will show lower levels of

ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension during intercultural interactions. Also, English majors scored higher on intercultural communication sensitivity and lower on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension compared with students who do not major in English.

Overall, the results of this study have once again supported Chen's (2010) finding that intercultural sensitivity is an important and necessary element for people to be competent in intercultural communication. Intercultural sensitivity is negatively related with ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, which are the two main barriers for intercultural communication; therefore, increasing people's intercultural sensitivity is important for them to become more competent in today's globalized society. These results also show the importance of language and cultural education in increasing students' intercultural sensitivity and decreasing their level of ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. These impacts may help students in developing their global perspective and increasing their skill in intercultural communication which may help them adapt into the rapidly globalizing world better.

Chapter 4 Limitations

Because of the time limit for doing this research, the geographical difficulty for the researcher to reach China from U.S., as well as the difference of academic calendar between U.S. and China, there are some limitations that should be mentioned. Moreover, intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension are just three broad

dimensions for intercultural communication, therefore, further studies can examine other aspects of this important concept.

First is the generalization issue. This research investigates students from only one university in one city. Although CUG has approximately thirty thousand students from various regions of China, it still cannot stand for all the universities in the country. Therefore, the generalizability for this study needs to come from further studies. For further research, data should be collected from various universities in different regions of China and the number of participants should be larger.

Individuals' English proficiency level can be another factor that may impact the accuracy of the research result. The online survey conducted for this study was designed to contain a question that measures participants' English proficiency level by asking them whether they have passed CET-4, which is an English proficiency exam required for college level student. The original intention for designing a question like that was to divide non-English major students into two groups: those who can speak the language and those who don't. However, this question was poorly designed because the researcher didn't realize that many students wait until the last minute (when they are going to graduate) to take the exam. Therefore, there were a certain number of students who can speak English but have not taken the exam yet. In realizing this problem, this research did not include whether individuals' level of English proficiency would impact one's level of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension as a variable. Therefore, for further research studies, non-English major students

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can be divided into two groups: those who can speak the language and those who can't speak the language.

The third issue is the problem of self-selection. Even though the results of this study supported all four hypotheses and English major students have higher degrees of intercultural sensitivity and lower degrees of ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, it's still hard to tell if it is because English major student have taken those cultural courses designed specifically for them that make them more proficient in intercultural communication, or it is because they themselves inherently have the tendency to get to know more about other languages and other cultures that makes them more proficient than others. In other words, this study may not be able to state definitively whether it is being an English major that influenced these students so they are more open to intercultural communication or if it is people who are inherently open to intercultural communication who decided to choose English as their academic major.

Therefore, in further research, a test can be run within freshman and sophomore students who have not yet taken courses that are designed specifically for English major students and check their degree of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension.

Last but not least are the similarities between survey questions. The survey developed for this study is mainly conducted using three scales previously developed by other researchers; they

are Intercultural Sensitivity scale, Generalized Ethnocentrism scale and Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension scale. All three scales have been proved valid and reliable by their developers and many other previous research studies (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997a; Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997b; Chen & Starosta, 2000; Chen, 2010; Hu, 2011; Jia, 2014; Lin, Rancer, & Trimbitas, 2005; Lin & Rancer, 2003). However, many questions in these three scales are overlapping. Many participants reported that they felt there were some questions that were similar but they might have chosen a different answer. While translating these scales into Chinese, similarities between questions were recognized, but due to the need for the already-accepted calculation for each scale, this research decided to keep and translate all the questions in these three scales and have the participants answer all of them. This might have resulted in participant bias when they saw questions that looked very similar to the previous ones. Therefore, for further research, it is recommended that the researcher could do some pre-tests to pick those similar questions out and do some modification to the survey to avoid participant bias.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Living in today's increasingly globalizing, internationalizing and diversifying world, proficient intercultural communication has become essential, especially for college students who are about to graduate and start a new stage of life. The ability to properly interact with people from different countries, regions and cultural backgrounds has become one of the most important competitive skills for them to quickly and better adapt to this culturally diversifying society.

Due to this urgent need of knowledge of intercultural communication, researchers from various disciplines have put their attention on it and have done a good number of studies about intercultural communication from different perspectives. However, based on the literature reviewed, no matter in Asia or in America, not many researchers have explored whether learning a language as an academic major—with its attendant study of the culture that use that language—would influence individuals' levels of intercultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, especially among Chinese college students. Also, language learning seems to have been separated from intercultural communication study since many researchers consider it belongs to the literature or linguistic research field. But as this study has demonstrated, using English as an example, learning a language as an academic major provides more opportunity for individuals to learn and gain deeper understanding about the differences between cultures and learn about how to properly deal with them. This thus increases their levels of intercultural sensitivity, decreases their levels of ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension, and ultimately promotes their proficiency as intercultural communicators.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature in both foreign language education and intercultural communication from the intercultural communication perspective. It also provides evidence to China's language educators of the importance of intercultural studies when teaching a language. This study wants to tell the language educators that to make Chinese students more competitive in the international arena, having them know the language and pass exams is not

enough; the most important thing in learning a language is to know how to use it in daily life, how to use it to communicate, and to know the culture behind it.

This study can provide some help for Chinese universities to improve their language class designs and also to create a better living and educational environment for both native Chinese students and international students in China.

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Appendices**Appendix A****Intercultural Sensitivity Scale**

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = uncertain, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.

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15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.
21. I often give positive responses to my culturally-different counterpart during our interaction.
22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.
23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse-coded before summing the 24 items.

Dimensions

- Interaction Engagement: 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24,
- Respect for Cultural Differences: 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20,
- Interaction Confidence: 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10,
- Interaction Enjoyment: 9, 12, and 15
- Interaction Attentiveness items: 14, 17, and 19

Appendix B**Ethnocentrism Scale**

This is the Revised Ethnocentrism Scale. Of the 22 items, 15 are scored. The other seven are included to balance the number of positively and negatively worded items. You can expect an alpha reliability estimate in the range of .80 and .90 in most cases. For validity information on this scale see: Neuliep, J. W. (2002). Assessing the Reliability and Validity of the Generalized Ethnocentrism Scale, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 31, 201-215.

Below are items that relate to the cultures of different parts of the world. Work quickly and record your first reaction to each item. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item using the following five-point scale:

Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5;

- _____ 1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.
- _____ 2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.
- _____ 3. People from other cultures act strange when they come to my culture.
- _____ 4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.
- _____ 5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.
- _____ 6. I am not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
- _____ 7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people in other cultures.
- _____ 8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.
- _____ 9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.
- _____ 10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.

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- _____ 11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
- _____ 12. I have many friends from different cultures.
- _____ 13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.
- _____ 14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.
- _____ 15. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
- _____ 16. I apply my values when judging people who are different.
- _____ 17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.
- _____ 18. I do not cooperate with people who are different.
- _____ 19. Most people in my culture just don't know what is good for them.
- _____ 20. I do not trust people who are different.
- _____ 21. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.
- _____ 22. I have little respect for the values and customs of other cultures.

Recode questions 4, 7, & 9 with the following format:

1=5

2=4

3=3

4=2

5=1

Drop questions 3, 6, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19

After you have recoded the previous questions, add all of the responses to the remaining 15 items together to get your composite ethnocentrism score.

Appendix C

Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA)

This measure was developed to address communication apprehension in the intercultural context.

This instrument is presumed to be better than the PRCA24 for this particular communication context. However, it is substantially correlated with the PRCA24. This suggests that intercultural communication apprehension is a sub-category of general communication apprehension. Alpha reliability estimates should be expected to be above .90 when completed by native English speakers, although they may be lower when this instrument is translated into another language because translations usually are less than perfect.

Directions: The 14 statements below are comments frequently made by people with regard to communication with people from other cultures. Please indicate how much you agree with these statements by marking a number representing your response to each statement using the following choices: **Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5**

_____ 1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.

_____ 2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 3. I like to get involved in group discussion with others who are from different cultures.

_____ 4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous.

_____ 5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different

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cultures.

_____ 6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I get

nervous.

_____ 7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.

_____ 8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with person from a different culture.

_____ 9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.

_____ 10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.

_____ 11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.

_____ 12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.

_____ 13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.

Scoring: To compute the PRICA score, complete the following steps:

Step 1. Add the scores for the following items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 12

Step 2. Add the scores for the following items: 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 14

Step 3. Complete the following formula: PRICA score = 42 - Total from Step 1 + Total from Step 2.

Scores can range from 14 to 70. Scores below 32 indicate low intercultural CA. Scores above 52

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indicate high intercultural CA. Scores ranging between 32 and 52 indicate a moderate level of intercultural CA.

Appendix E

Consent Form

1. Statement of purpose

You are invited to participate in a study of intercultural communication. You were selected as a candidate participant in this study because of your status as a university student. To participate in this research and to be qualified to answer the survey, you have to be over the age of 18 and you need to have full capacity for your action.

2. Description, Including Risks and Benefits

If you decide to participate, we will conduct a survey involving three communication scales regarding your intercultural communication competence. Each scale is between 14 and 24 items, and the survey should take no longer than 15 minutes. All the information will be collected and analyzed anonymously.

3. Confidentiality

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the general public in a way that can be traced to you. In any written reports or publications, no participant other than the researchers will be identified, and only anonymous data will be presented.

This consent form, with your signature, will be stored separately and independently from the data collected so that your responses will not be identifiable.

4. Statement that Participation is Voluntary

Your participation is totally voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with China University of Geosciences (Wuhan), Bryant University or their employees in any way. If you decide to participate, you are also free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships.

5. Persons to Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Yiran Dong at ydong@bryant.edu. If you have any additional questions later, we will be happy to answer them. You can have a copy of this form to keep.

6. Signature Indicating Informed Consent

By moving on to take the survey, you are agreeing to participate. This indicates that you are at least 18 years of age and have read the information provided above. This does not obligate you to participate, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Again, thank you very much for your help!

Appendix F**English Version of the Online Survey**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey, your answer for this survey will help us greatly for our research project. This survey will take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete. All answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality. Again, thank you very much for your help!

1. Gender: Which category best describe your gender?

Male

Female

2. Age: How old are you?

3. Are/ were you a student who major in English?

Yes

No

4. If you are not major in English, did you pass the CET-4?

Yes

No

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1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

3. I like to get involved in group discussion with others who are from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I get nervous.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with person from a different culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree

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Strongly agree

11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

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1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

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6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.

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Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

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21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

25. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

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26. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

27. People from other cultures act strange when they come into my culture.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

28. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

29. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

30. I'm not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

31. People in my culture could learn a lot from people of other cultures.

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Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

32. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

33. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

34. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

35. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

36. I have many friends from other cultures.

Strongly disagree

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Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

37. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

38. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

39. I'm very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

40. I apply my values when judging people who are different.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

41. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.

Strongly disagree
Disagree

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Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

42. I do not cooperate with people who are different.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

43. Most people in my culture just don't know what is good for them.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

44. I do not trust people who are different.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

45. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure
Agree
Strongly agree

46. I have little respect for the value and customs of other cultures.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Not sure

Agree

Strongly agree

Appendix G

IRB Approval from CUG



SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES 外国语学院
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**Comments from the IRB of the School of Foreign Languages
China University of Geosciences (Wuhan)**

This project plans to collect data in the form of a questionnaire without disclosing the privacy of the participants and without affecting the participants learning or daily life. By no means will the participants be at risk. The results of the study can be used for reference in English teaching among college teachers and cross-cultural exchange among college students. After serious review, the study has got the approval from the Institutional Review Board of the School of Foreign Languages, China University of Geosciences (Wuhan).

IRB of the School of Foreign Languages
China University of Geosciences (Wuhan)

Jan. 3, 2018
外国语学院
Fang Liu (X)

A red circular official stamp is placed over the text. The stamp contains the text '中国地质大学' (China University of Geosciences) at the top, '外国语学院' (School of Foreign Languages) at the bottom, and 'Jan. 3, 2018' in the center. A red star is positioned above the date. A handwritten signature in blue ink, 'Fang Liu', is written across the bottom of the stamp.