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Abstract

This study analyzed the effect motivation has on reported anxiety, communication apprehension (CA), and willingness to communicate (WTC) in interability interactions. As interability communication is a form of intercultural communication, the author employed the use of intercultural theories and scales. Participants chose one of two URL links and were either presented with a situation in which they were voluntarily engaging in interability communication, or were forced to engage in interability communication. All participants responded to the measures' questions with one of these scenarios in mind. Although the study's initial hypotheses were not supported, the rejection of Hypothesis Three, which predicted a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported anxiety, but resulted in a significant finding in the opposite direction, could mean that people who are willingly engaging in interability communication experience more anxiety due to their fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. Future research should expand the number of individuals surveyed, compare other demographic factors, and also look to explore ways to lessen anxiety among volunteers in interability communication situations.

Interability Commnuication Involves More than Just Motivation

The ability to communicate across barriers increases in importance as society becomes more diverse. One barrier that can be forgotten or overlooked is that of ability, and the corresponding importance of interability communication. Interability communication can be defined as communication between a person (or people) without disabilities and a person (or people) with disabilities, be those disabilities physical or developmental. While some studies have focused on interability communication in a medical context (Duggan, Bradshaw, Altman, 2010; Wilkinson, 2011; O'Halloran, Hickson, Worrall, 2008), the importance of everyday interaction requires more analysis. Camara and Orbe (2010) studied how individuals responded to discrimination in co-cultural interactions, but found that there was a lack of reported interability interactions and therefore, urged for more exploration into interability communication. As stated by Greenwell and Hough (year, as cited in Allen, 2011, p. 139), individuals with disabilities comprise the largest minority group in the US, due to about twenty percent of the population over the age of five having some sort of disability. With such a large part of the population living with disabilities, more research should investigate how to successfully navigate the barriers that can arise during interability communication.

Interability Communication

Interability communication matters because, as stated by Allen (2011), "They [people with disabilities] view themselves as members of a disabled community that is socially oppressed" (p. 155). This notion is important to recognize because feelings of oppression can lead to tension in communication. Wiseman, Emry, Morgan, and Messamer (1987) argue that communication, and not physical barriers are the most limiting for people with disabilities interacting in society today. Tension is felt in interability communication by not just the person

with disabilities, but the person without disabilities as well (Wiseman et al., 1987). To complicate matters further, this tension rarely goes unnoticed. According to Allen (2011), factors such as a shorter duration of communication, and less positive feedback cues such as smiling or eye contact are common in interability communication. Such deviations from a satisfactory communication pattern can hinder the success of any such conversation. In addition, many individuals have lower expectations of communication at an interability level (O'Halloran et al., 2008). All of these factors matter because, all people, regardless of ability, deserve a context in which effective communication can be achieved. As stated by Wilkinson (2011), "Communication is broader than speech, and communication goals are just as important as speech-related ones" (p. 18). Interability communication matters because there remains a tendency among people to see people with disabilities as different or as members of a separate group (Bishop & Poston, 2009). This inclination should not only be challenged, but improved.

So can interability communication be improved? The short answer is: yes. Interability communication can be improved when the correct practices are utilized (Wilkinson 2011). The success and satisfaction of interability communication arise from how that communication is carried out. According to Duggan et al., (2010), satisfaction in interability communication was influenced by the way in which a person without disabilities not only addressed a person with disabilities, but the addressed the disabilities themselves in a medical setting. In addition, O'Halloran et al. (2008), found that environmental factors can affect satisfaction in interability communication in a medical situation. However, studies have been conducted on a broader range than just in the medical field. A study by Mirenda (2008) found that individuals approaching an interability communication situation can change their expectations of communication by changing their perspective on the developmental disability itself. Interability communication can

also be improved through facilitation methods in social contexts, such as through the use of a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), which offers an alternative method for people with developmental disabilities to communicate (Simpson & Keen, 2010). These studies all point to hope for improvement in interability communication practices.

However, one factor that can still hinder interability communication is that people can rarely recognize ability to be a category of diversity. According to Bishop and Poston (2009), their students appreciated analyzing ability as a category of diversity as a way to widen their understanding of diversity in general. Understanding ability as a form of diversity is the first step in realizing interability communication to be a form of intercultural communication. To return to Allen's (2011) assertion that people with disabilities consider themselves to be part of a community that is not included in mainstream society, adds to the argument for interability communication to be viewed as a form of intercultural communication. In addition, Wiseman and Emry (1985) argued that interability was, indeed, intercultural communication, and studied it as such (as cited in Wiseman et al., 1987). In addition, Wiseman et al., (1987) studied interability communication through the lens of intercultural communication. This way of looking at interability communication is important because it opens the entire discipline up to the well-studied realm of intercultural communication.

Anxiety

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management. By classifying interability communication as a type of intercultural communication, this study was able to consider interability communication through the lens of intercultural communication theories. The first considered is Gudykunst's (2005) Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM). Many studies have used AUM as a starting point for examining anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural communication (Neulip, 2012;

Gauthier, 2009), and anxiety and uncertainty have been shown to have significance in effective intercultural communication (Ni & Wang, 2008). However, there has been a call for more study of AUM in relation to specific cultures (Neulip, 2012). One of the main ideas behind AUM is that an individual's anxiety must remain between a maximum and minimum threshold in order for that person to succeed at effective communication (Gudykunst, 2005). If the level of anxiety is too high or too low, the person is either be too anxious to communicate, or not inclined enough to do so. Anxiety is related to uncertainty in that an increase in uncertainty leads people to experience more anxiety (Neulip, 2012). In other words, entering into a situation in which the outcome is unknown will increase an individual's anxiety. In addition, anxiety in communication stems most often from negative expectations (Gudykunst, 2005). To go along with the notion, Smith and Downs (2004) found that a predictor in maintaining international friendships was an individual's positive expectations of future contact. Both of these studies support that anxiety is affected by a person's expectation upon entering into intercultural communication.

     Communication Apprehension. A theory closely tied to AUM is that of communication apprehension (CA). McCroskey (1992) defines communication apprehension as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 16). Studies done on intercultural communication have found that CA is a barrier to reducing uncertainty, and therefore anxiety (Neulip, 2012). Roach and Olaniran (2001) found that CA was positively correlated with anxiety in an intercultural context. This means that as CA increased in intercultural communication, so did anxiety. As stated by Bruneau, Cambra, and Klopf (1980), "Those who have a high degree of apprehension experience fear or anxiety in almost every communication encounter or anticipated encounter" (p. 46). In a specific intercultural context,

high levels of CA can make an individual less likely to communicate with someone of a different

culture and also decrease his or her ability to manage the uncertainty and anxiety of the

intercultural interaction (Neulip, 2012). These findings show the close relationship of CA and

anxiety that this study explored.

Willingness to Communicate. A third component related to the overarching concept of

anxiety is that of willingness to communicate (WTC). Roach and Olaniran (2001) state that in

general, WTC is a behavior that US culture values. However, WTC is a broad concept. For the

purpose of this study, a more specified lens was necessary. Kassing (1997) is a forerunner in

Intercultural Willingness to Communicate (IWTC) and defined the theory as "one's

predisposition to initiate intercultural communication encounters" (p. 400). In other words,

individuals with high IWTC will be more likely to initiate intercultural communication than

individuals with low IWTC. Going along with that idea, individuals with higher IWTC might be

more apprehensive or less equipped to manage the stress brought about by the uncertainty and

anxiety of intercultural communication (Kassing, p. 400). The need for a differentiation between

WTC and IWTC is justified because, "people in different cultures vary concerning their

predispositions towards initiating communication, but they do not necessarily reflect the degree

to which people would or would not initiate intercultural communication encounters" (Kassing,

2007, p. 399-400). Different studies have been carried out in an effort to pinpoint factors that

influence IWTC. Mertins and Baus (2010) argue that environment can influence an individual's

IWTC. Also, a variety of studies have focused on how ethnocentrism is related to IWTC

(Massengill & Nash, 2009; Butcher & Haggard, 2010; Yang & Rancer, 2003). Yang and Rancer

(2003) focused a portion of their study on how intentions in intercultural communication are

related to IWTC. They found that though IWTC can influence intentions to engage in

intercultural communication, there was no significant correlation for intentions influencing

IWTC (Yang & Rancer, 2003). This study explored how IWTC is related to anxiety and CA in

an interability setting and analyzed the effects of motivation and contact on interability

communication.

Motivation

A main thrust of this study is to determine if motivation affects an individual's anxiety,

CA and WTC in interability communication. Therefore, an exploration of research previously

conducted on motivation is necessary. The decision to engage in interpersonal communication

often stems from the desire of the initiating individual to accomplish some kind of goal

(Beisecker, 1970). Hullman (2004) supports and expands this notion saying that motives are

often an incarnation of personal need and, consequently, are often foundations for goals. The

idea of seeing motivation as a means to fulfill a need is termed the uses and gratifications

approach (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974), and it is a common lens through which one can

analyze motivation. There are six kinds of motivations that are accepted by academia: inclusion,

affection, control, pleasure, relaxation, and escape (Rubin, Perse & Barbato, 1988). Any reason

that an individual engages in interpersonal contact can be explained by one of these six

categories, but the simplicity of six concrete categories does not diminish the complexity of

motivation as a whole.

Motivation is an important factor of communication to consider because it can "set the

tone" for interpersonal communication (Step & Finucane, 2002, p. 95). In addition, Rubin and

Rubin (1992) state, "Motives, and the needs on which motives are predicated, determine people's

choices of communication channels and content" (p. 306). Why a person chooses to engage in

interpersonal communication affects how that individual structures their message. In this way,

motives have an impact on interpersonal communication. Not only do motives affect message

structure, Hullman (2004) studied and found that motives impact how competent a

communicator is perceived. Also, Hullman, Mougeotte & Goodnight (2009) found that among

studied college students, "people display behaviors congruent to the reason for which they are

communicating" (p. 13). Yet again, the six motives for interacting influence how the message is

packaged and delivered. In this way, motives matter because in everyday interpersonal

interactions specific motives can be linked to specific outcomes of conversation (Step &

Finucane, 2002). However, these studies focused on motivation in interpersonal communication

and did not expand to explore how additional layers, such as intercultural or interability

situations, are affected by motives.

Contact

This study also examined contact, specifically to see if a higher quantity or amount of

contact over time of interability contact has an impact on the results. This area is valid to include

based on the contact hypothesis, which states that contact between members of different groups

can decrease the amount of prejudice felt between the groups (Brewer, 2000). This means that

though there might be initial prejudicial feelings between different groups, those feelings can be

diminished through interpersonal contact. This hypothesis has been the subject of a vast number

of studies relating to intergroup contact (Pettirew & Tropp, 2000). Allport (1954) was at the

forefront of contact theory and asserted that certain measures needed to be in place to ensure that

contact would reduce prejudice among groups. These factors were then added to by later studies

(Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000).

More recently, some studies have focused on the role that increasing diversity in today's

world affects intergroup contact theory. Tropp and Bianchi (2006) found that an individual's

awareness and importance placed upon diversity can predict that person's intergroup contact interest. Binder et al., (2009) also wanted to further the scope of intergroup contact theory by focusing on both the majority and minority groups in intergroup interaction. They studied long term effects of intergroup contact in three different countries and concluded that contact did, in fact, reduce prejudice between different groups (Binder et al., 2009). These studies all support the assertion of contact hypothesis that intergroup prejudice can be decreased with intergroup contact, if that kind of contact meets certain specifications. According to numerous studies (Allport, 1954; Dovido, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000) done on contact theory, the intergroup contact must be conducted in an environment in which all parties feel equal, and have common goals for the motivation, practice, and outcome of the communication.

Rationale

To summarize, interability communication is a form of intercultural communication, and as such, can be examined and understood using theories anxiety/uncertainty management, communication apprehension, and willingness to communicate. The aim of this study is to analyze the relationships among those phenomena in an interability context. Based on the assembled research, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be a negative correlation between compelled interability communication and reported willingness to communicate (WTC).

H2: There will be a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported communication apprehension (CA).

H3: There will be a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported anxiety.

H4: There will be a negative correlation between anxiety and CA, and WTC.

H5: There will be a negative correlation between individuals with previous interability contact

and reported anxiety, CA, and WTC.

Methods

Participants

Participants for this study were 36 individuals with an age range of 16 to 50 years old.

The mean age for the participants was 22.56 years old with a standard deviation of 4.9 years.

Eleven of the participants were male and 25 of the participants were female. Other

demographics collected from participants included the number of days they experienced contact

with someone who has developmental disabilities and the number of people they know who have

developmental disabilities. Participant's reported from zero to 383 days (some participants

reported more than 365 days due to interability contact pre-dating the interval of time in

question) of interability contact in the past year (x = 92, SD = 145), and between zero and 23

people they knew with developmental disabilities (x =3, SD = 5). Participation was voluntary

and confidential.

Procedures

Participants were solicited from among the 'friends' on the author's social media

program, Facebook. Upon entering the online survey environment, each participant was

presented with two different survey URLs and asked to click just one of them. Clicking one of

the URLs presented a scenario in which the participants were to answer survey questions

envisioning that they were voluntarily interacting with a person who had developmental

disabilities. The other URL presented a scenario in which participants were to answer questions

while envisioning that they were forced to interact with a person who had developmental

disabilities. Except for the instruction to envision the two different scenarios, the two survey versions were identical.

Measures

Participants completed Kassing's (1997) Intercultural Willingness to Communicate Scale, Stephan and Stephan's (1992) Intercultural Anxiety Scale, and Neulip and McCroskey's (1997) Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale. Each scale's items were altered as appropriate from references to "people from different cultures" to "people with developmental disabilities." These measures were selected because they measure intercultural communication and, as shown in the review of literature, interability communication is a form of intercultural communication. These three particular scales were also chosen because they allowed for simple re-wording to focus the results on interability communication. Cronbach's Alpha for the Willingness to Communicate Scale was .75, but strengthened to .95 when the last question of the scale, "Talk with someone who communicates differently than I do," was dropped. This could be accounted for by the fact that the particular question did not directly mention people with developmental disabilities. The Anxiety Scale (Cronbach α = .87) and the Communication Apprehension Scale (Cronbach α = .95) showed high internal consistency when using all of their respective questions.

Results

Hypothesis One predicted a negative correlation between compelled interability communication and reported willingness to communicate (WTC). Analysis revealed no significant correlation between those two variables *(r = .14, p = .89)*. Hypothesis One was not supported. Hypothesis Two predicted a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported communication apprehension (CA). Analysis revealed no

significant correlation between those two variables ($r = 1.01$, $p = .32$). Hypothesis Two was not supported. Hypothesis Three predicted a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported anxiety. Analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between those two variables ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Hypothesis Three was not supported. Hypothesis Four predicted a negative correlation between anxiety, CA, and WTC. Analysis revealed only a significant positive correlation between CA and WTC ($r = .43$, $p = .013$). Hypothesis Four was not supported. Hypothesis Five predicted a negative correlation between individuals with previous interability contact and reported anxiety, CA, and WTC. Analysis revealed no significant correlation between those variables [(anxiety: $r = -.058$, $p = .742$), (CA: $r = .54$, $p = .001$), (WTC: $r = .003$, $p = .984$). Hypothesis Five was not supported.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to see if motivation had an effect on anxiety, communication apprehension (CA), and willingness to communicate (WTC) in interability communication. Hypothesis One predicted a negative correlation between compelled interability communication and reported willingness to communicate (WTC), and was not supported. This could be explained by Yang and Rancer's (2003) study that found no significant correlation for intentions influencing intercultural willingness to communicate (IWTC).

Hypothesis Two predicted a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported communication apprehension (CA), and was not supported. Though previous studies (Roach & Olaniran, 2001) found CA positively correlated with anxiety, they did not test for the effect of motivation so perhaps there is not a significant correlation among these phenomena.

Hypothesis Four predicted a negative correlation between anxiety and CA, and WTC, and was not supported. This could possibly be explained by Mertins and Baus' (2010) study that argued environment affected WTC. Though the survey asked individuals to imagine that they were being forced to engage in interability communication, there was no more specified environment given and therefore, participants could have imagined a variety of communication environments that could have influenced their WTC and been separate from CA and anxiety.

Hypothesis Five predicted a negative correlation between individuals with previous interability contact and reported anxiety, CA, and WTC, and was not supported. This finding could be because the questions regarding contact were not specified beyond quantity, and quantity alone has not been proven to decrease intergroup prejudice (Eller & Abrams, 2004). In addition, certain factors must be in place in order to reduce intergroup prejudice according to intergroup contact theory. According to Allport (1954) these factors are relatively equal status, common goals, and cooperative interdependence. Follow-up studies on intergroup contact theory added the opportunity for personal acquaintance between members and the development of intergroup friendships as well (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). The lack of significant finding for Hypothesis Five could be explained by participants in the study not imagining these factors in their interability contact.

There was a significant finding regarding Hypothesis Three, which predicted a positive correlation between compelled interability communication and reported anxiety, however the finding was in the opposite direction as predicted. This finding could possibly be explained by Gudykunst's (2005) assertion that anxiety can increase with an individual's desire to not be seen as prejudiced or rude. When someone voluntarily engages in interability communication, it could be that they are so aware of all the things they could do or say that might be seen as offensive,

the individual experiences more anxiety. An individual compelled to engage in interability

contact could also feel that because the experience is mandatory, he or she would not be judged

as harshly and therefore experience less anxiety than a volunteer.

The limitations of this study deserve attention as well, mainly the small sample size

analyzed (N = 36). A broader range of individuals might make more significant correlations

among the results. Also, due to the majority of respondents being in their twenties, future

research could analyze if age influences anxiety, CA and WTC. Such a small slice of the age

demographic did not take into account how age, might affect the observed phenomena. Another

limitation to the study could be tied to the fact that though quantity of interability contact was

surveyed, quality of interability contact was not really touched upon and according to intergroup

contact theory, quantity alone is not a determining factor (Eller & Abrams, 2004).

Conclusion

Though none of the proposed hypotheses were supported, this study offers implications at

both practical and conceptual levels. In a practical sense, interability communication is not

affected only by participants' motivations. Individuals who are going to be volunteering in an

interability setting should not expect that their choice to be there will diminish their feelings of

anxiety, nor should they expect that their anxiety be diminished due merely to a high quantity of

previous interability contact. However, the framing of interability communication as intercultural

communication could be helpful in giving individuals who, for whatever reason, are about to

engage in interability communication. This framing presents a new way to look at an interability

situation that an individual might not have previously considered.

For those who are interested in the continued study of interability communication, the

implications of this study present a door through which many opportunities for expansion exist.

The heightened anxiety among volunteers would be very interesting to study in terms of the duration volunteers experience heightened anxiety and when (if) that anxiety plateaus or decreases over time. Future studies could also include the best practices for combatting anxiety among volunteers, and perhaps expanding the demographics of surveyed participants. However, this study's findings show that motivation is not a singular determinant in interability communication. An expansion on the study's findings could also look into how different people presented with the same interability situation differed in situation outcome or satisfaction.

This study is only a small starting step on the path to further exploration of interability communication. Many factors influence interability communication, only some of which were touched on in this study, but the overall takeaway is that motivation is not a deciding factor in an interaction's outcome.

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