



# Research on the Organizational Development Model for Intercultural Communication Competence

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## Abstract

On the basis of the three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in intercultural communication competence, constructed index system of intercultural communication competence. Through the survey of 350 DL University’s undergraduates, the overall level of their intercultural communication competence is 3.34 by SPSS software, Knowledge factor, motivation factor and skills factor are 3.16, 3.62 and 3.24. The data shows that the DL University’s undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence is at the medium level, and the attitude or requirement of the undergraduates in DL University to expect or participate in intercultural communication are relatively strong, but the knowledge and skills of intercultural communication are inefficient. Finally, put forward the organizational development model with the integration of knowledge, motivation and skills based on the data analysis results.

**Key words:** Intercultural; Intercultural communication competence; Organizational development

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization speeding up, people in different regions, different cultural backgrounds contact frequently, intercultural communication competence has become an important force for organizations to strengthen regional exchanges, promotes cultural integration and expands the overseas market. Organization as an important factor in the development of the society, its intercultural communication competence development has far-reaching significance for internationalization of China.

## 1. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE FACTORS SYSTEM BUILDING

Intercultural communication competence factors system is the key to organizational development model research, only analyze the intercultural communication competence factors system accurately and completely, can be targeted to study the organizational development model of intercultural communication competence. On the basis of the three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in intercultural communication competence, we put forward intercultural communication competence factors system.

### 1.1 Intercultural Communication Competence Factors

In 1976, the American scholar Ruben first puts forward the concept of intercultural communication competence. Comprehensively compare the viewpoint of the leading scholars at home and abroad, such as Chen Guoming, Lusting & Koester and Wiseman, etc., the concept of intercultural communication competence can be defined as follows: Intercultural communication competence is the ability to communicate with people in different cultural

backgrounds appropriately and effectively in certain circumstances (Yang, 2009).

Spitzberg and Cupach in 1984 put forward the three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in intercultural communication competence, namely the intercultural communication competence includes knowledge, motivation and skills: Knowledge factor refers to the information they need to make proper and effective communication, it is the necessary content of intercultural communication competence (Chen, 2009); motivation factor refers to the emotion, willingness, demand and power to expect or participate in intercultural communication, it is the internal driving force of intercultural communication competence; Skills factor refers to the skills required for proper and effective communication, it is the explicit conduct of the intercultural communication competence and practical tools of communication. The theory widely shared in academia, and subsequent studies are mostly continue to use or development the three factors theory of intercultural communication competence: Gudykunst, Byram, Ting-Toomey and Deardorff has supplemented specific abilities of the three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills; Chen Guoming specialized the three factors theory as intercultural understanding, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural effectiveness from the perspective of communication; Byram divided intercultural communication competence into skills, knowledge, attitude, interpreting and associating skills, finding and interacting skills, expanded the research perspective of intercultural communication competence.

Most scholars in our country have some innovation on the basis of the three factors of knowledge, motivation and skills. Jia (1997) divided the intercultural communication competence into four systems: Basic communication competence system, relationship competence system, plot competence system and strategy competence system. Yang and Zhuang (2007) argued that intercultural communication competence includes four systems: global consciousness, cultural adjustment, knowledge and communication practice. Xu Lisheng considered that any comprehensive communication should incorporate five factors: Motivation, knowledge, skills, contexts and the outcomes, the intercultural communication competence should also include the five factors. Scholars' understanding of intercultural communication competence factors vary due to different disciplines background, but Chinese scholars' research perspective of intercultural communication competence is mainly still Western-oriented (Zhang & Yang, 2012).

The author summarized the domestic and foreign scholars' points of view about the intercultural communication competence factors, and found that there are three shortcomings: First, the knowledge factor, lack of further divided from the perspective of culture, and the

cognition of the intercultural communication competence is insufficient, integrity needs to be improved; second, the motivation factor, behavioral science research perspective is obviously insufficient, instructional function for intercultural communication competence practice is not enough; third, skills factor, the scholars' view point about the connotation of the skills factors is difficult to reach an agreement, skills needed in the intercultural communication are mostly in form of enumeration, the integrity remains to be verified. In view of this, the author took "culture" as the breakthrough point of the knowledge factor division, analysed the connotation of motivation factors from the perspective of behavioral science, divided skill factors into learning ability and application ability, to build the intercultural communication competence factors system.

## 1.2 Index System of Intercultural Communication Competence

Based on the three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in intercultural communication competence, the author builds the index system of intercultural communication competence, as shown in Table 1. Intercultural communication competence includes the three factors of knowledge, motivation and skills, in which knowledge factor includes the cognition of "own" culture, the cognition of "other" culture, and the cognition of intercultural communication competence; Motivation factor includes the attitude of the intercultural communication, the demand of the intercultural communication and external induction and stimulation; skills factor includes learning ability and application ability of intercultural communication competence.

First of all, the knowledge factor contains three dimensions: The cognition of "own" culture, the cognition of "other" culture, and the cognition of intercultural communication competence. This paper studies the cognition of "own" culture and the cognition of "other" culture from five aspects: basic values, basic belief structure, main social customs, main dietary habits, basic dress codes, etc.. The cognition of the intercultural communication competence mainly includes connotation, basic factors, and basic requirements etc. of the intercultural communication competence.

Second, behavioral science believes that the generation of motivation includes internal and external causes, namely the attitude and demand of the intercultural communication, and external induction and stimulation. Therefore, this paper divided the motivation factor into three dimensions: the attitude of the intercultural communication, the demand of the intercultural communication and external induction and stimulation. The attitude of the intercultural communication includes three aspects: Be confident in "own" culture, respect for "other" culture and accept each other's differences; the demand of the intercultural communication mainly means

the willingness of communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds; external induction and stimulation includes family, school, enterprise, society, etc..

Third, skills factor includes two dimensions: learning ability and application ability of intercultural

communication competence. Learning ability refers to learning methods and techniques, including learning “other” language, “other” culture, and intercultural communication skills; application ability means applying “other” language proficiently, adapting “other” culture, and mastering intercultural communication skills.

**Table 1**  
**Index System of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)**

| Factors           | Dimension  | Remarks  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Knowledge factor  | The cognition of “own” culture                         | Values, beliefs, customs, etiquette, diet, dressing, etc.  |
|                   | The cognition of “other” culture                       | Values, beliefs, customs, etiquette, diet, dressing, etc.  |
|                   | The cognition of ICC                                   | The connotation, basic factors and basic requirements, etc.  |
| Motivation factor | The attitude of intercultural communication            | Be confident in “own” culture, respect for “other” culture and accept each other’s differences, etc.             |
|                   | The demand of the intercultural communication          | The willingness of communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds                                   |
|                   | External induction and stimulation                     | Family, school, enterprise, society, etc.  |
| Skills factor     | Learning ability of the intercultural communication    | Ability of learning “other” language, “other” culture, and intercultural communication skills                    |
|                   | Application ability of the intercultural communication | Ability of applying “other” language, adapting “other” culture, and mastering intercultural communication skills |

## 2. RESEARCH ON UNDERGRADUATES’ INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN DL UNIVERSITY

College students are an important part of the social high level of talents. On the one hand, their intercultural communication competence is the achievement of higher education, representing the university’s intercultural communication level; on the other hand, they are about to go to work, their intercultural communication competence is key to expand overseas markets and enhance the level of internationalization for the enterprises. Therefore, research on undergraduates’ intercultural communication competencies of great significance for universities, enterprises and other organizations.

The author based on the framework of the index system of intercultural communication competence above-mentioned, designed the “undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence in DL University questionnaire”, the questionnaire contains two parts: The first part is the basic information of subjects and whether they had international experience, etc.; the second part is 27 questions, designed to get the basic information of the subjects’ intercultural communication competence. Subjects need to select a number from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the lowest level, 2 represents the lower level, 3 represents the general level, 4 represents the higher level, and 5 represents the highest level. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, 316 valid questionnaires were eventually recovered, and the recovery rate was 90.3%. Effective questionnaires’ internal reliability was tested, results showed Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.885$ , indicating that

this questionnaire had good reliability.

### 2.1 Analysis of the Overall Situation of Intercultural Communication Competence

Overall condition of undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence in DL University has been shown in Table 2.

The above table shows that the mean of intercultural communication competence is 3.34, indicating undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence in DL University is at the middle level, this may have a close relationship with our country’ undergraduates lacking of international experience, namely lacking of intercultural communication practice, and this judgment was supported by the survey data of the question “whether you have international experience”. The survey shows that DL University’s undergraduates who have international experience accounted for 8.3%, but the author investigated some undergraduates in a Taiwan’s university which is at a similar level with DL University and found that they have strong ability to communicate internationally, and students who have international experience accounted for 53%. International experience is not only a great opportunity to practice foreign language, but also a valuable experience to learn “other” culture comprehensively and directly. It could inspire students’ curiosity of the “other” culture, encourage them to absorb essence of “other” culture and to propagandize “own” culture’s marrow, and establish their national self-confidence. Consequently, international experience plays an important role on enhancing undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence.

## 2.2 Analysis of the Three Factors Composed of Knowledge, Motivation and Skills

The survey indicates that the mean value of the DL University's undergraduates' intercultural communication competence in knowledge, motivation and skills factor were 3.16, 3.62 and 3.24, the mean of motivation

factor was the highest, knowledge factor the lowest and skills factor in the middle. It shows that the attitude or requirement of the undergraduates in DL University to expect or participate in intercultural communication is relatively strong, but the knowledge and skills of intercultural communication are inefficient.

**Table 2**  
**Overall Situation of Intercultural Communication Competence ( ICC )**

|  | Mean   | Maximum | Minimum | Variance | Standard deviation |
|--|--------|---------|---------|----------|--------------------|
| Overall level of ICC                               | 3.3400 | 4.94    | 1.77    | .328     | .57251             |
| 1. Knowledge factor                                | 3.1565 | 5.00    | 1.44    | .390     | .62432             |
| The cognition of "own" culture                     | 3.5810 | 5.00    | 1.40    | .545     | .73815             |
| The cognition of "other" culture                   | 2.8368 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .522     | .72229             |
| The cognition of ICC                               | 3.0519 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .769     | .87696             |
| 2. Motivation factor                               | 3.6227 | 5.00    | 1.36    | .532     | .72914             |
| The attitude of intercultural communication        | 3.7450 | 5.00    | 1.33    | .752     | .86707             |
| The demand of intercultural communication          | 3.9016 | 5.00    | 1.00    | 1.248    | 1.11725            |
| External induction and stimulation                 | 3.2214 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .682     | .82602             |
| 3. Skills factor                                   | 3.2407 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .515     | .71777             |
| Learning ability of intercultural communication    | 3.3037 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .674     | .82071             |
| Application ability of intercultural communication | 3.1778 | 5.00    | 1.00    | .740     | .86047             |

The mean value of the knowledge factor is 3.16, which is the lowest in the three factors. Both the cognition of "own" culture and "other" culture contain five aspects: basic values, belief structure, social customs, dietary habits, and dress codes, the undergraduates' mean value of the cognition of "other" culture in DL University is only 2.84, indicating that their cognition of "other" culture is very deficient. Media and network are the main source of undergraduates' cognition of "other" culture, and the opportunities directly communicating with people from different cultures are very slim. This is an important cause leading to the low level of the knowledge factor of undergraduates in DL University.

The mean value of the motivation factor is 3.62, which is the highest in the three factors. The DL University's undergraduates have positive attitude and demand for intercultural communication eagerly. The mean values of the attitude and demand are 3.90 and 3.75, indicating that they are very interested in different countries' lifestyle and values and be willing to communicate with people in different cultural background; they have self-confidence in "own" culture and would like to introduce their "own" culture to others; they could respect "other" culture and accept the differences between each other. It deserved to note that the undergraduates' mean value of the external induction and stimulation in DL University is 3.22, which is insufficient in their intercultural communication competence cultivating. Students have positive attitude

and strong demand, but families, schools and society does not provide strong support for them, it's an important reason for students lacking of intercultural communication competence.

The mean value of the skills factor is 3.24, which is in the middle of the three factors. The mean values of the learning ability and application ability of undergraduates' intercultural communication competence in DL University are 3.30 and 3.18, indicating that the students could learn foreign languages, knowledge of the "other" culture and some intercultural communication skills, but their application ability is relatively weak compared with the learning ability, the knowledge they learned cannot be applied in international communication, maladjustment and non-coordination between "own" culture and "other" culture still exist. It shows that the application ability is the weak link in undergraduates' intercultural communication competence in DL University.

## 3. RESEARCH ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Through data analysis the author found that undergraduates' intercultural communication competence in DL University as a whole is in the middle level,

motivation factor is relatively strong, but the knowledge factor and skills factor remain to be improved. Students have positive attitude and strong demand, but the cognition of “other” culture, external induction and stimulation, and application ability of intercultural communication are pending enhancement. Therefore, the author put forward the organizational development model with the integration of knowledge, motivation and skills based on summarizing the scholars’ viewpoints about the organizational development model for intercultural communication competence.

### 3.1 The Overview of the Research on the Organizational Development Model for Intercultural Communication Competence

The aim of organizational development is to improve the performance of the entire organization, Lloyd. Byars and Leslie W. Rue defined organizational development as “organizationwide, planned effort managed from the top, with the goal of increasing organizational performance through planned interventions and training experiences.” (Byars & Rue, 2003) Gary (1994) thinks that organizational development is a plan motivating employees to work together to improve the organizational performance by changing their attitudes, values and beliefs.

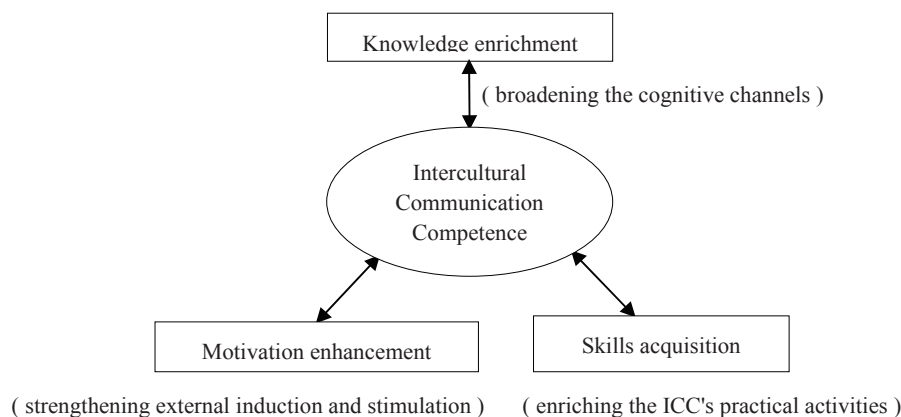
There is few literature researching on the organizational development model for intercultural communication competence, most literature pay more attention to the cultivation of intercultural communication competence. Gao (1998) insisted that there are three cultivating modes of intercultural communication competence: Three points constitute mode, behavior centered mode, and knowledge centered mode. Three points constitute models the mainstream way which is based on the classic three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in cultivating intercultural communication competence (Gao, 1998), such as Paige mode ( 1986 ) and Martin mode (1987), etc.. Behavior centered mode focus on the results of the communicative behavior with the aim to cultivate the practice of intercultural communication competence, namely “ validity”, validity generally

includes three parts: Individual adaptation in intercultural context, interpersonal interaction, and task completion, the most important part of the three is task completion, such as Berry’s intercultural adaptation model and Gudykunst’s anxiety and uncertainty model (1995), etc.. Knowledge centered mode which is mainly based on imparting knowledge of foreign languages and understanding foreign cultures emphasizes the importance of teaching and testing cultural knowledge, it is widely applied in the field of foreign language teaching, a representative is Byram model (1997).

The diversity of the cultivation of intercultural communication competence manifests the scholars have different focus in the process of their study, but the mode seeking to enhance intercultural communication competence of the entire organization from the perspective of management and organizational behavior is still rare. Therefore, the author put forward the organizational development model with the integration of knowledge, motivation and skills to provide a reference for organizations to improve the intercultural communication competence.

### 3.2 The Organizational Development Model With the Integration of Knowledge, Motivation and Skills

On the basis of three factors theory composed of knowledge, motivation and skills in intercultural communication competence, combined with the survey of DL University’s undergraduates’ intercultural communication competence, this paper build the organizational development model with the integration of knowledge, motivation and skills which contains knowledge enrichment, motivation enhancement, and skills acquisition (see Figure 1). The model could help organizations realize the knowledge enrichment by broadening the cognitive channels, achieve the motivation enhancement by strengthening external induction and stimulation, and implement skills acquisition by enriching the intercultural communication practical activities, and provide feasible solutions for all types of organizations ultimately.



**Figure 1**  
**The Organizational Development Model With the Integration of Knowledge, Motivation and Skills**

### 3.2.1 Knowledge Enrichment

Knowledge is the necessary content of intercultural communication. Broadening the cognitive channels for “other” culture and increasing the knowledge reserve of intercultural communication are basic conditions for the organizational development of intercultural communication competence in various kinds of organizations, such as universities, enterprises, government, social organizations, etc.. Colleges and universities should guide students to make full use of international network resource, art exhibitions, and films to enrich the cognition of the “other” culture during the process of the organizational development of intercultural communication competence. Enterprises, especially export-oriented enterprises, should base on combining their own cultural background and business needs, and be targeted to cultivate employees’ organizational development of intercultural communication competence. For instance, Japanese enterprises should raise their employees’ awareness of Japanese values, customs, manners, etiquette and the belief structure by increasing their understanding of enterprise culture background to enhance the employees’ cognition of intercultural communication competence. With the speeding pace of China’s opening to the outside world, international exchanges and cooperation in all levels of government increasingly frequent, it puts a higher request on the staff, government organizations can design related training courses explaining knowledge of “other” culture and intercultural communication skills for them, in order to achieve systematic upgrade of intercultural communication cognition. Social organizations can carry out cultural exchanges and interactive activities to enrich the team members’ knowledge of intercultural communication through radio, television, newspapers, internet or other media, and strive for creating a good atmosphere for intercultural communication competence.

### 3.2.2 Motivation Enhancement

Motivation is the inner power of intercultural communication competence, strengthen external induction and stimulation and enhance the intercultural communication’s motivation is the source of power for organizational development in various types of organizations, such as colleges and universities, enterprises, government, social organizations, etc.. Colleges and universities are an important part of social bonding, should bear the burden of cultivating students’ intercultural communication competence, and fully stimulate students’ interest by arousing teachers and students who have intercultural communication experience, help students to develop a better understanding of intercultural communication, and provide qualified intercultural communication talents for our country. For export-oriented enterprises, enhancing the level of internationalization is the key way to

become bigger and stronger; the enterprise’s intercultural communication competence is directly related with the vital interests of the enterprises. Therefore, the enterprise should regard intercultural communication competence as an essential quality of the staff, and stimulate intercultural communication motivation of employees from jobs to make the staff on the track of intercultural communication talents by setting good examples and rewarding the advanced. Government organizations have a certain degree of particularity, their intercultural communication motivation is mostly derived from development needs or policy-oriented, thus, the key point of motivation enhancement is guiding staff to set up the right attitude to intercultural communication instead of strengthening external induction and stimulation. Government’s staff should not only have self-confidence with the “own” culture but also respect the difference between the “own” culture and the “other” culture, achieving the purpose of intercultural communication by constantly enhancing mutual understanding. Social organizations can take an interactive approach between organizations or associations to carry out intercultural communication activities associated with the exchanges of experience to foster members’ interest of intercultural communication.

### 3.2.3 Skills Acquisition

Skills are explicit conduct of intercultural communication, strengthening application ability of intercultural communication and improving the skills level are the ultimate goal of organizational development in colleges and universities, enterprises, government, and social organizations. Enhancing intercultural communication competence is inseparable from the practical activities of intercultural communication; therefore, increasing the practice of intercultural communication is an essential way to improve the intercultural communication competence. Application ability of intercultural communication contains not only applying foreign language skillfully to communicate with others but also the ability to adapt to each other’s culture and communicating in an acceptable way. It also required overcoming cultural differences with flexible use of intercultural communication skills, and achieving intercultural communication objectives ultimately. In the organizational development of intercultural communication skills, colleges and universities should pay attention to both the cultivation of students’ learning ability and providing students with opportunities to practice as much as possible, help students improve their application ability and master intercultural communication skills. Considering own development needs, enterprises could set several specific intercultural communication skills as employees’ training objectives, such as interpreting ability, foreign document writing ability, and carry out targeted training for staff to enhance intercultural communication skills effectively. Government organizations have higher requirements

for intercultural communication competence; they can design some training courses regarding intercultural communication for staff. Meanwhile, intercultural communication competence could be incorporated into the working performance evaluation index system in order to stimulate the learning enthusiasm of the staff. Social organizations can strengthen exchanges and cooperation with foreign organizations to achieve resource sharing, advantages complementing, learning from each other and improving together, in order to enhance the organizations' intercultural communication competence.

In conclusion, the deepening of globalization makes intercultural communication become norm, the importance of intercultural communication competence has become increasingly prominent. Enhancing the organization's intercultural communication competence requires individuals to strengthen repeatedly and improved gradually in the three links: Knowledge enrichment, motivation enhancement, and skills acquisition, and it also need to create a great atmosphere for multicultural communication within the organization and provide crucial guarantee for

intercultural communication competence improvement of the individuals and organizations.

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