

Effects of Intercultural Communication Apprehension on Satisfaction of Foreign Students

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the purpose of determining the levels of intercultural communication apprehension and satisfaction of the foreign students studying at Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism in the 2014-2015 academic year. Firstly, a total of 49-item questionnaire consisting of 14 items for measuring the levels of intercultural communication apprehension and of 35 items for clarifying the dimensions of daily and academic life that reflect the level of satisfaction was applied to the foreign students at the Faculty. After determining the level of intercultural communication apprehension and satisfaction, at the second stage, it was searched whether students' satisfaction levels related to dimensions of daily and academic life showed differences according to intercultural communication apprehension levels. Within the scope of the study, after the analysis of the data acquired through the surveys which are conducted for foreign students, the results are construed. In the findings of the study, firstly demographic information is presented, then among expressions concerning the content of daily and academic life of students, the highest and lowest-averaged ones are presented. As a result of t test, intercultural communication anxieties of students and differences on daily and academic life contents considering from which they come are construed. Lastly, as a result of the regression analysis, it is found out that daily and academic life contents of the participants are affected by their intercultural communication anxieties. In the conclusion part of the study, analysis results are construed and some suggestions are made for the following studies.

Key words: *Tourism, communication, intercultural communication apprehension, satisfaction, foreign students*

1. Introduction

Culture helps people to determine the way of perceiving the perspectives on world, incidents and individuals and to construe their way of attitude, behavior, belief and life which are shared by the individuals of the same society and passed down from one generation to another (Ünalp, 2007). As an important issue for all people, involved in the foundation of the social life and, and constituting the basis of organizational structure (Seyitoglu & Yüzbaşıoglu, 2015) communication, on the other hand, may be defined as an activity which helps people to know themselves and their environment better and to interact with people in order to develop compatible relationship with other people (Çetin, 2009). Reflecting the same or different cultural structure in which individuals are raised into the communication process is regarded as the first step to intercultural communication (Selçuk, 2005).

Through the advancing communication and transportation technologies, interactions of people with different culture structures are gathering pace. As a result of that interaction, of other concepts, the concept of intercultural communication is encountered. The concept of intercultural communication is defined as a communication process which occurs between people or groups with different cultures (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998). These people or groups who are stated to be different from each other in terms of world perspectives, values and norms, behavior patterns (Güvenç, 1997) may be sometimes reluctant to communicate with each other or be anxious during the process of communication due to cultural differences in the intercultural communication process (Gudykunst, 1995). That anxiety is named as intercultural communication anxiety.

In another definition, intercultural communication anxiety is defined as fear and anxiety of people who are or may be in the face of communicating with a person or people with different culture (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Intercultural communication anxiety may emerge or increase in certain cases. What is important here is uncertainty and anxiety caused by uncertainty. People with high anxiety feel themselves in an uncertain situation as during the intercultural communication process, the person or situation they encounter is new and different; thus, it causes their anxiety levels to increase more (Buss, 1980). Gudykunst (1995) collects components affecting the level of that uncertainty feeling under five titles. These are: social belonging, the similarity between people communicating, the shared communication network and the noticeability between foreigners communicating. If the individual in the intercultural communication media is capable of realizing the culture different from his, he may be less shy and accordingly feel less communication anxiety (Olaniran & Williams, 1995).

It is suggested that people with self-confidence and high-willingness on communicating are the ones who feel intercultural communication anxiety less; at the same time, while their

anxiety levels are lower, their content levels for communication are higher in terms of intercultural communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1989); and moreover, people with high-anxiety avoid communicating with people coming from a different culture, taking the floor and participating in the environment at which they are present (Neulip & Ryan, 1998). In this context, it may be asserted that effective communication skills are in directly proportion with management skills of anxiety and uncertainty (Gudyunst, 1995).

As another issue, the student mobility is supported by universities and governments (Yağcı, Çetin & Turhan, 2013). Although it may be a distressed experience for foreign students to leave their comfortable environment in their houses for studying in a different country and adapt to a new language and culture, the number of students participating in international circulations is increasing day by day (Yağcı, Çetin & Turhan, 2013).

Today, the number of foreign student coming to Turkey to study is also increasing and reaching significant numbers. These students having come to Turkey begin their study processes through different training programs, one of which is the most widely known one, Erasmus Programme. It is an important EU student exchange programme which promotes European higher education institutions to collaborate with each other and meets educational needs of foreign students in Turkey (Yağcı, Çetin & Turhan, 2013). Having been conducted in many European countries since 1987, the aim of this programme is to improve the quality of high education in Europe and to strengthen its Europe aspect. In accordance with statistical information obtained by Turkish National Agency, during 2012-2013 Academic Year, 5262 students came to Turkey through Erasmus Programme (Turkish National Agency, 2013).

Another important student programme is Foreign Student Test (YÖS) which is performed for ones wanting to get a high education in Turkey. This major student project initiated by Turkey is regarded as an important step in terms of securing education sector's position (Kıroğlu, Kesten & Elma, 2010).

This mobility of foreign students in Turkey naturally causes cultural and economic problems as well as language and education-related problems (Kıroğlu, Kesten & Elma, 2010). An effective communication process is required in order that foreign students can continue their education in a healthy and comfortable way. At this point, it is conferred that intercultural communication is important considering the sustainability of education. When foreign students are in a culture different from theirs, it may be very helpful to determine to what extent they feel comfortable about communication and what their anxieties are. Therefore, when students participate in a different culture environment, they may be averted to seclude themselves from the environment and may enable to communicate effectively, determining if they have communication anxiety (Bozkaya & Erdem Aydın, 2010).

Increasing student mobilities and accordingly the increasing number of foreign students coming to Turkey necessitate to reveal daily and academic content levels and intercultural communication anxieties of foreign students when they continue their education. Thus, to what extent the intercultural communication anxiety of the comers affect also daily and academic life content. The aim of this study is to examine content levels concerning daily and academic life of the foreign students who has studied at Faculty of Tourism of Akdeniz University during 2014-2015 education year and to present if the content perception of participants has changed considering their homeland and intercultural communication anxieties. Lastly, it is aimed to determine that at what rate intercultural communication anxieties of foreign students affect their daily and academic life contents.

2. Methodology

For this study, before the questionnaire was implemented, a literature review has been conducted. The questionnaire was conducted on foreign students of Akdeniz University Faculty of Tourism. The scales developed by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) and Yağcı et al. (2007) were used in the preparation of questionnaire form. The questionnaire of the study consists of two sections. The first section consists of demographical information of the participants (age, gender and country). The second section consists of two different scales (Neuliep & McCroskey 1997; Yağcı et al., 2007) as follows: Personal report of intercultural communication apprehension (PRICA) (14 questions) and Satisfaction levels on the daily and academic life (35 questions), and. 5-Point Likert scale was used for the answers of the participants. This scale consists of statements corresponding to the degree of agreement of the participants as follows: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree.

Population of the study consists of foreign students of Akdeniz University Faculty of Tourism. Total foreign students from 2014-2015 academic year was 91. We tried to reach all of the population but the number of accessed students were 73. 65 questionnaire forms in total were usable at the end due to the lack of information in some forms. The data gathered were interpreted at the end of frequency analysis and regression analysis. The reasons to choose Akdeniz University Faculty of Tourism included the popularity and importance of Antalya in terms of tourism in Turkey and the important contribution of Faculty of Tourism to the sector in terms of personnel.

3. Findings

The study used 65 questionnaire forms filled out by the students of tourism. Cronbach's alpha values of all the scales were calculated to calculate the reliability of the scale, and the scales of the present study are found to be reliable at an acceptable level since the values obtained from these scales were over 70% as seen from Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Reliability

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Statements
Personal report of intercultural communication apprehension	.817	14
Satisfaction levels on the daily and academic life	.907	35

3.1 Demographical Information

The related questions were subjected to frequency analysis to determine demographical characteristics of the participants and the results are given below.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Tourism Students

Gender	n	%
Female	19	70.8
Male	46	29.2
Total	65	100.0
Age Distribution		
21 or younger	32	49.2
22 and above	33	50.8
Total	65	100.0
Country		
European	31	47.7
Turkish Republics	34	52.3
Total	65	100.0

According to the data, participants are 70.8% female and 29.2% male. 49.2% of students are 21 or younger and rest of them are 22 or above. European foreign students are 47.7% and Students from Turkish Republics are 52.3%.

3.2 Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA)

This scale consist of 14 questions. To compute the PRICA score, There are three steps to calculate the level of intercultural communication apprehension. The steps are (Appendix 1):

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

According to this calculation, it is determined that among the sample group with 65 people, while 34 people has lower level, 31 people has mid-level communication anxiety.

3.3 Satisfaction Levels on the Daily and Academic Life

As it is seen from Table 3, among the expressions for daily and academic life content of foreign students who study at Faculty of Tourism of Akdeniz University, the highest and lowest-averaged ones are construed.

Table 3: Satisfaction Levels on the Daily and Academic Life

Expressions	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Indoor and outdoor areas of the university is safe	4.09	0.879	65
The transportation is easy between the university and the accommodation area	3.89	1.017	65
Indoor and outdoor areas of the university are clean and well maintained	3.88	0.966	65
There are various social, cultural, sporting events in university that students can participate	3.86	1.059	65
Health Services are offered to meet the requirements effectively	2.92	1.080	65
Required aid and assistance are given in finding a place to stay	2.85	1.278	65

Table 3 shows expressions with high and low average which are asked in order to determine content levels concerning daily and academic life. According to the table, the highest-averaged expression with 4,09 is “Indoor and outdoor areas of the university is safe”. The lowest-averaged one is “Required aid and assistance are given in finding a place to stay”. As understood from the expressions, it may be stated that while Akdeniz University is a suitable place in terms of safety, foreign students intending to study are not helped and supported adequately with respect to finding an accommodation. “Health services are effectively performed enabling to meet the needs” is also another low-averaged expression.

Apart from those, considering the averages of other expressions, accessibility between the residence and the university, clean and well-cared areas at the University various social, cultural, sportive activities which students can participate/watch are among the high-averaged expressions.

Table 4: Significance test according to the country of origin of the participants (T-Test)

Expressions	Mean		Significance
	Europe	Turkish Republics	
Meals are nutritious and healthy	3.16 (n:31)	3.68 (n:34)	.025*
Eating areas are suitable in terms of hygiene and quality	3.39 (n:31)	3.82 (n:34)	.036*
Food costs are reasonable	3.84 (n:31)	3.03 (n:34)	.008*
There are various social, cultural, sporting events in university that students can participate	3.52 (n:31)	4.18 (n:34)	.011*
Students can take part in social and cultural activities accordance with their structures of cultural, religious, ethnic etc	3.48 (n:31)	4.09 (n:34)	.016*
Indoor and outdoor areas of the university are clean and well maintained	3.55 (n:31)	4.18 (n:34)	.007*
The lecturers are concerned with the problems of foreign students	3.68 (n:31)	2.82 (n:34)	.003*
Course instructors comply with the start and finish times of the course	3.32 (n:31)	4.09 (n:34)	.004*
Faculty members are using adequate material and technological tools in class	3.52 (n:31)	4.06 (n:34)	.031*
The library is physically enough	3.32 (n:31)	3.85 (n:34)	.034*

It is researched if there is any difference in content perceptions concerning daily and academic life of participants of the study according to where they come from. Therefore, t-test is utilized and expressions which are different in terms of statistical interest are displayed on Table 4. When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that “Food costs are reasonable” (3.84) and “The lecturers are concerned with the problems of foreign students ” (3.68) perceptions of the participant students from European countries have higher than those from Turkish republics. In the other expressions (“Meals are nutritious and healthy”, “ Eating areas are suitable in terms of hygiene and quality”, “ There are various social, cultural, sporting events in university that students can participate”, “Students can take part in social and cultural activities accordance with their structures of cultural, religious, ethnic etc”, “Indoor and outdoor areas of the university are clean and well maintained”, “Course instructors comply with the start and finish times of the course”, “Faculty members are using adequate material and technological tools in class” and “The library is physically enough”), perceptions of students from Turkish republics are higher compared to the ones from European countries.

Table 5: Significance test According to the Intercultural Communication Concerns of the Participants (T-Test)

Expressions	Mean		Significance
	Low	Moderate	
Indoor and outdoor areas of the university is safe	4.41 (n:34)	3.74 (n:31)	.002*
Lesson instructors, can be installed easily with communication	3.91 (n:34)	3.13 (n:31)	.002*
Teaching staff are fair and impartial in their behavior towards students in class	4.09 (n:34)	3.29 (n:31)	.002*
Faculty members come prepared to class	4.12 (n:34)	3.39 (n:31)	.005*
Faculty members are happy to do their duties	4.06 (n:34)	3.32 (n:31)	.001*
The teaching staff makes a fair and impartial evaluation	4.00 (n:34)	3.23 (n:31)	.000*

It is researched if there is any difference in content perceptions concerning daily and academic life of the participants of the study according to the level of intercultural communication anxiety. Through this aim, t-test is utilized and expressions which are different in terms of statistical interest are displayed on Table 5. When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that including 6 expressions, the perception of participants with low level of intercultural communication anxiety is higher compared to the ones with medium level of intercultural communicational anxiety.

3.4. Impact of Intercultural Communication Apprehension on Satisfaction Levels on the Daily and Academic

Problem: To what degree the intercultural communication apprehension of foreign students of Akdeniz University Faculty of Tourism predict their satisfaction levels on daily and academic life?

Table 6: Mean Scores of the Scales

Intercultural Apprehension			Communication Satisfaction Levels on the Daily and Academic Life
N	Valid	65	65
	Missing	0	0
Mean		4.048	3.548
Std. Deviation		.56301	.51595

The average of scales (as shown in Table 6) were used to conduct linear regression analysis to determine the degree of prediction of satisfaction levels on daily and academic life of students of Akdeniz University Faculty of Tourism related to their intercultural communication apprehension. Linear regression analysis was conducted in order to test the impact of intercultural communication apprehension on satisfaction levels on the daily and academic life by using averages. Scores of the questions constituting each factor were

summed up and divided by the number of questions constituting the factor, average factor scores were calculated in this way and these average factor scores were included in regression analysis. Results of regression analysis are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The Effect of the Intercultural Communication Anxiety on the Daily and Academic Life Satisfaction

Independent Variable		B	t	p
<i>Constant</i>				
Intercultural Communication Apprehension		2.123	4.873	0.000*
		.352	3.304	0.002*
R²=0.148 F=10.919 p=0.000				

***p<0.05**

**Dependent Variable: Satisfaction levels on the daily and academic life

The results show that the model is significant as a whole (F=10,919 and p=0,000). The model explains 14,8% of the content. As understood from the model on Table 7, daily and academic life content is affected by intercultural communication anxiety. According to this model, daily and academic life content for the faculty may also change provided that intercultural communication anxiety level of foreign students studying at faculty of tourism is changed.

4. Conclusion

In this study, intercultural communication anxiety is stated, referring firstly to culture and intercultural communication terms. Following that, foreign student mobilities (Erasmus and YÖS (Foreign Student Test) student admission programs) are mentioned. In the study, examining content levels concerning daily and academic life of foreign students studying at faculty of tourism during 2014-2015 education year; revealing if their content perceptions change according to their homeland and intercultural communication anxiety; and determining to what extent intercultural communication anxieties of foreign students affect their daily and academic life contents are the focused. In accordance with these aims, foreign students who came to Turkey with the aim of studying at faculty of tourism of Akdeniz University are conducted a survey so as to evaluate intercultural communication anxiety and daily and academic life content; data collected from the surveys are analyzed and construed.

According to the analysis result in the study, it is determined that of the participants, while 34 people have low -level communication anxiety, 31 people have mid-level communication anxiety. It may be inferred that foreign students intending to study at university are not helped and supported adequately with regard to finding an accommodation. Furthermore, it is revealed that needs of health services are not met completely.

Students from European countries finding food costs more reasonable may be explained as the food costs in Europe are much more than the ones in Turkish Republics. The perception of "Instructors are concerned with the problems of foreign students" being higher may be

explained as the instructors at faculty of tourism are more concerned with the problems of students from Europe or as students from Turkish republics are much closer to Turkish culture, so the idea that they have also problems is ignored..

Considering the expressions of “the food is nutritious and healthy”, “Places for eating are suitable in terms of hygiene and quality”, “There are various social, cultural, sportive activities at university which students can participate/watch”, “Students may join in activities which are appropriate for their cultural, religious, ethnic etc. structures”, “Indoor and outdoor areas of the university are clean and well-cared”, “Instructors comply with the start and end time of class”, “Instructors utilize adequate material and technological devices in classes”, and “Library is physically adequate”, students from Turkish Republics having higher perceptions and similar culture and conditions as Turkey, it may be expressed that that results in much higher perceptions they get from the expressions.

Considering the expressions of “Outdoor and indoor areas of the university are safe”, “Instructors from whom lessons are taken are easily communicated”, “Instructors have fair and unbiased attitudes towards students during the class”, “Instructors are prepared for the class”, “Instructors enjoy performing their duties”, “Instructors make fair and unbiased evaluations”, students with low intercultural communication anxiety having higher perceptions may be construed as comfort resulting from the low level of uncertainty and anxiety and as a result, looking more positively.

Lastly, according to the result of the regression analysis (Table 7), daily and academic life content is affected by intercultural communication anxiety at the rate of 14,8%. According to this model, even if the exposure rate is nearly 15%, as long as intercultural communication anxiety of foreign students studying at faculty of tourism changes, daily and academic life contents for the faculty may also change.

For the present study, foreign students who have studied at Faculty of Tourism of Akdeniz University during 2014-2015 education year constitute the sample group. In the study, utilizing the survey, intercultural communication anxieties and daily and academic life contents of foreign students are intended to determine. In another study, meeting students one-to-one, it is aimed to reveal problems and difficulties which they have encountered during education and in general, their content for the university and faculty in a more detailed way.

In this study, 65 out of 91 students who have studied at Faculty of Tourism of Akdeniz University during 2014-2015 education year are communicated. Another study may be also performed more comprehensively, making contacts with foreign students who have studied at other departments.

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Appendix 1

Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA)

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; are 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 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.