

Original Research Article

The Current State of Communication Skills in the Multicultural Environment of High School Students

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Abstract: The article discusses the state of communication skills in the multicultural environment of high school students. Data was collected through a survey using a questionnaire from 521 students in 6 high schools across the country. The results show that the state of communication skills in the multicultural environment of high school students is at a moderate level (2.3) with various specific manifestations. There are differences in the manifestation of communication skills in the multicultural environment between urban and rural students. While communicating in a multicultural environment, high school students face difficulties such as difficulty controlling emotions, lack of refusal skills, and difficulty reconciling differences in personality and preferences with their peers.

Keywords: Communication skills, multicultural environment, high school.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is the result of human civilization and an objective trend that emerged around the years 1870-1913. It has become increasingly prevalent and dynamic in all aspects of social life to this day. The impact of globalization on Vietnamese culture and its people is a reality that is currently taking place, with both positive and negative effects. Globalization promotes closer connections between nations, stimulates exchanges and interactions, and enhances global understanding, awareness, and individual and collective development. Alongside these positive impacts, globalization also has negative consequences, making various aspects of human activities and lives less secure, including the economy, finance, culture, society, environment, politics, national security, and individual safety. Particularly, in terms of society, globalization poses a risk of losing the cultural identity of nations and enables negative international phenomena such as drug trafficking, prostitution, the importation of deviant lifestyles, and terrorism.

Cultural globalization is the process of cultural interchange, assimilation, penetration, and mutual enrichment among different ethnic groups, breaking down the limitations of regional and national cultural models. It exerts pressure on modern education systems and the development of individuals' character. Global citizens must possess new thinking, attitudes, and

abilities to quickly adapt to complex global issues and be capable of embracing different cultures during the process of integration, while also preserving their cultural heritage.

One of the essential skills during the period of globalization and international integration is communication skills. In a multicultural environment, individuals come from diverse cultural backgrounds, each ethnic group, nation, and region has its own culture. If individuals possess good communication skills, they can easily adapt, accept, learn, and enhance the quality of social relationships. Conversely, if communication skills in a multicultural environment are not good, it becomes a limitation and creates difficulties for individuals, impacting their quality of life, academic achievements, and interactions.

For high school students, communication is an important and necessary activity that helps them improve their learning abilities, exchange experiences, and acquire knowledge, especially in the present era where they have access to various mass media channels. Students have many opportunities to access a wide range of knowledge sources and different cultures from around the world. The development of communication skills for high school students is currently emphasized and has achieved significant results. However, the development of communication skills in a multicultural

environment, which enables students to have good communication skills in such an environment, is relatively new, lacking a comprehensive implementation, and the achieved results are not yet high. The development of communication skills in a multicultural environment for high school students is currently mainly implemented by integrating them into the content of subjects and extracurricular educational activities, with less emphasis on experiential activities within the school. In order to contribute to a deeper understanding of communication skills in the multicultural environment of high school students, the author conducted a survey on the current situation in several high schools nationwide.

RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. Data Collection Method

The data was collected through a direct survey of 521 students, using a random sampling method from three grades (10th, 11th, and 12th) from six high schools nationwide: Le Duan High School in Dak Lak province; Tran Phu High School in Da Nang; Le Chan High School in Quang Ninh; Dan Phuong High School in Hanoi City; Hoang Dieu High School in Soc Trang province; Tan Thanh High School in Soc Trang province. A questionnaire was used to assess 45 indicators of cross-cultural communication competence. The Likert-3 scale was employed, where students could choose a score ranging from low to high, with the lowest score being 1 and the highest score being 3. The value of the distance between the maximum and minimum scores, $(\text{maximum} - \text{minimum})/n$, was

calculated as $(3-1)/3 = 0.6$. Therefore, the scale levels were distributed as follows: I have never done this (1.0-1.6); I occasionally do this (1.7-2.3); I frequently do this (2.4-3.0).

2.2. Data Analysis and Processing Method

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze basic data regarding the characteristics of the research sample, such as grade level, school, region, parents' occupations, etc. Additionally, the SPSS software was utilized to analyze the correlation between cross-cultural communication competence and factors such as grade level, region, and the difficulties students encounter in cross-cultural communication.

RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Characteristics of the Research Sample Through the survey, a total of 521 valid responses (with complete information in the questionnaire) were obtained

Among the six high schools, Tran Phu High School had the highest participation rate, accounting for 22.6%, while Tan Thanh High School had the lowest rate at 9.8%. There was not a significant difference in the number of surveyed students across the three grade levels (10th, 11th, and 12th). Grade 11 had the highest proportion at 37%, while grade 10 had the lowest at 28.8%. However, there was a considerable disparity in the distribution of students based on their place of residence. Urban students constituted 70.6%, while rural students accounted for 29.4%. (Table 1)

Table 1: Description of the Research Sample Characteristics

	Research sample	Amount	Tỷ lệ %
Schools	Dan Phuong High School – Hanoi	74	14,2
	Hoang Dieu High School - Soc Trang	65	12,5
	Tan Thanh High School - Soc Trang	51	9,8
	Le Chan High School - Quang Ninh	100	19,2
	Le Duan High School - Dak Lak	113	21,7
	Tran Phu High School - Da Nang	118	22,6
Class	10	150	28,8
	11	193	37
	12	178	34,2
Address	Countryside	153	29,4
	City	368	70,6

3.2. Status of Cross-Cultural Communication Competence among High School Students

The survey results indicate that the average level of cross-cultural communication competence among high school students is 2.3, falling into the category of "I occasionally do this." Among these indicators, the highest average score is observed in the aspect of "Clearly identifying one's own gender and sexuality" (2.76), which falls into the category of "I frequently do this." The second-highest ranking indicator is "Respecting the differences in appearance and personality of others (without discrimination,

ridicule, or mockery)" (2.719). The third-ranking indicator is "Valuing the dreams of others (not mocking or ridiculing, but encouraging and inspiring others to pursue their dreams)" with a score of 2.699 (Table 2). These are the most favorable indicators of cross-cultural communication among high school students.

The indicator with the lowest average score (ranked 45th) is "Understanding and speaking the languages of different ethnic groups in their own country" (1.695). The second-lowest average score (ranked 44th) is "Learning to speak the languages of

students from different regions, ethnicities, and countries" (1.902), followed by the third-lowest average score (ranked 43rd) for "Communicating fluently in one or more commonly spoken foreign languages" (1.958). Additionally, three indicators, namely "Being confident in one's appearance (personal style, attire, physical appearance)", "Understanding the differences in

language among students from different regions, ethnicities, and countries", and "Boldly expressing personal opinions and viewpoints" also ranked relatively low with low average scores, ranking 41st (2.083), 42nd (2.05), and 40th (2.131), respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Status of Cross-Cultural Communication Competence among High School Students

STT	Expression	Average	Standard deviation	Rank
1	Understanding gender and gender differences	2,503	,6267	13
2	Understanding the differences among LGBT people (gay or lesbian)	2,286	,7264	30
3	Understand the difference between people with strong personalities (in terms of appearance, opinions, interests...)	2,315	,6361	27
4	Understand the differences in people's needs, interests, dreams, and ideals	2,271	,6692	31
5	Understand differences in appearance (height, weight, structure of body parts...)	2,551	,5995	9
6	Understanding the differences of people with disabilities	2,505	,6478	12
7	Understand the cultural differences of each locality, region, and country you study with (including taboos in customs and traditions)	2,134	,6180	38
8	Understanding the differences in the voices of students from different regions, ethnic groups and countries	2,083	,7009	41
9	Be confident in your own appearance (personal style, clothes, body shape...)	2,050	,7081	42
10	Clearly identify gender and gender identity	2,760	,4946	1
11	Understanding your own strengths and weaknesses	2,396	,6663	21
12	Understanding your own needs, interests, dreams, and ideals	2,453	,6724	14
13	Tendency to choose and participate in activities that promote their strengths and improve their weaknesses	2,161	,6511	37
14	Tends to choose cultural values with traditional identity (such as respect for the religion, the spirit of studiousness, tolerance, compassion, solidarity...)	2,313	,6415	28
15	Selectively acquire non-traditional cultural values (such as discipline, freedom, cooperation, confidence,...)	2,405	,6069	17
16	Performing acts in accordance with the cultural identity of the locality, ethnicity, and country	2,447	,6121	15
17	Using words or behavior appropriate to those in the LGBT community	2,397	,7054	20
18	Don't force others to follow their preferences if they don't want to	2,511	,7019	10
19	Appreciate everyone's dreams (Do not mock, ridicule, bring other people's dreams into jokes, but always encourage and encourage you to fulfill your dreams)	2,699	,5401	3
20	Respect the difference in appearance, personality of people (no discrimination, ridicule, ridicule)	2,719	,5175	2
21	Helping people with disabilities. Using words or behaviors suitable for people with disabilities	2,605	,5591	5
22	Do not make fun of, ridicule your customs (clothes, habits, language...)	2,637	,5923	4
23	Flexibly accepting customs and habits where friends live	2,365	,6661	22
24	Learn to speak the language of students from different regions, ethnicities and countries	1,902	,7017	44
25	Do not make fun of you when you have language differences (dialects, lisp...)	2,566	,6354	7
26	When there are cultural differences, put yourself in your shoes and accept them	2,399	,6429	19
27	Keep a calm, courteous attitude, listen if there are cultural differences while communicating with you	2,509	,5952	11
28	Always ready to cooperate with all of you in school and class activities (regardless of gender, personality, region, ethnicity...)	2,564	,5686	8
29	Tendency to negotiate, convince you when opinions disagree	2,211	,6306	35
30	Make decisions based on respecting the views of friends	2,342	,6127	25
31	Tends to change the subject of communication with you when there is tension	2,355	,6670	24
32	Understanding and having a positive view of cultural differences in	2,411	,6172	16

STT	Expression	Average	Standard deviation	Rank
	communication (understanding why you have such behavior and words, easy understanding and acceptance)			
33	Actively communicating, reflected in the use of clear and loud spoken language	2,132	,6820	39
34	Boldly present personal views and opinions	2,131	,6844	40
35	Being friendly with people, open in communication, giving people a feeling of closeness and warmth	2,403	,6375	18
36	Always be consistent with personal views and opinions. Give appropriate arguments to convince people to understand and empathize with your point of view	2,269	,6145	32
37	Willing to change personal opinion when people give convincing arguments or find it inaccurate or inappropriate	2,361	,6327	23
38	Fluently use the language of their own country and ethnicity	2,603	,5730	6
39	Flexibly adapting to new words, positive slang words	2,298	,6581	29
40	Fluent communication in one or several common foreign languages	1,958	,7352	43
41	Listen, understand and speak the languages of a number of different ethnic groups in their country	1,695	,7105	45
42	Sensitive, quickly recognizing difficulties arising in the communication process	2,242	,6348	33
43	Quickly identify resources, select objects and means that can assist in solving difficulties in the communication process	2,175	,6125	36
44	Skilled in refusing when necessary with a firm but tactful attitude	2,236	,6354	34
45	Sensitive, aware of the dangers in the process of communication. From there, there are ingenious measures to get out of danger, protect yourself	2,322	,6199	26

Expressions of communication competence in a multicultural environment exhibit differences between urban and rural areas. Considering the top five expressions ranked highest in the communication competence ranking at level 3 "I often do this," it can be observed that high school students in urban areas have a higher percentage compared to those in rural areas across all five expressions. Among them, the expression with the highest percentage difference is expression 10

"Clearly identifying one's gender and sexual orientation," with urban students accounting for 82.1% and rural students accounting for 71.9%, resulting in a difference of 9.9%. The expression with the lowest percentage difference is expression 19 "Valuing the dreams of others (not mocking or ridiculing, but always encouraging and motivating others to pursue their dreams)," with a percentage difference of 2.8 (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of expressions of communication competence in a multicultural environment between urban and rural high school students (Top five expressions ranked highest)

Rank	Expression	City		Countryside		Difference %
		Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage	
01	10	302	82,1	109	72,2	9,9
02	20	281	76,4	110	71,9	4,5
03	19	275	74,7	110	71,9	2,8
04	22	266	72,3	97	63,4	8,9
05	21	243	66	91	59,5	6,5

Furthermore, when considering the five expressions ranked lowest in the communication competence ranking at level 1 "I have never done this," it can be seen that rural students have a higher percentage of "never done this" expressions compared to urban students in most of these expressions. The highest difference is found in expression 40 "Communicating proficiently in one or more common

foreign languages," with a percentage difference of - 5.9%. This indicates that urban students have better proficiency in using one or more common foreign languages. However, in expression 9 "Being confident in one's appearance (personal style, clothing, physical appearance, etc.)," urban students have a lower expression compared to rural students, with a percentage difference of 4.3% (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of expressions of communication competence in a multicultural environment between urban and rural high school students (Top five expressions ranked lowest)

Rank	Expression	City		Countryside		Difference %
		Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage	
41	8	72	19,6	36	23,5	-3,9
42	9	88	23,9	30	19,6	4,3
43	40	101	27,4	51	33,3	-5,9
44	24	109	29,6	47	30,7	-1,1
45	41	162	44	73	47,7	-3,7

3.3. The current difficulties faced by students in communicating in a multicultural environment

Based on the survey, high school students encounter several difficulties when communicating in a multicultural environment. Among these, the greatest difficulty is "Emotional control" with an average score

of 2.26. The second-ranked difficulty is "Lack of refusal skills" with an average score of 2.29. Students feel the least difficulty in "Accepting the differences of classmates due to cultural variations" with an average score of 2.5, ranking 9th (Table 5).

Table 5: The current difficulties faced by students in communicating in a multicultural environment

STT	Difficulta	Average	Rank
1	Difficult to find common ground due to gender and gender differences	2,49	8
2	Difficult to accept your differences due to differences in customs and practices	2,5	9
3	Difficulty in listening comprehension and expression due to language differences	2,48	6
4	Difficult to reconcile with you due to differences in personality and interests	2,3	3
5	Difficult to reach consensus due to differences of opinion	2,49	7
6	No persuasion skills	2,38	5
7	Lack of trust and initiative in communication	2,33	4
8	No rejection skills	2,29	2
9	Difficulty controlling emotions	2,26	1

CONCLUSION

The research findings on the current state of communication competence in a multicultural environment among high school students indicate that their communication competence is moderate, with various expressions. Urban students demonstrate better communication competence in a multicultural environment compared to rural students. The highest levels of communication competence are displayed through expressions such as being able to clearly identify one's gender and sexual orientation, respecting the differences in appearance and personality of others (without discrimination or mockery), valuing the dreams of others (not ridiculing but encouraging), not teasing or mocking the customs and habits of others (clothing, habits, language), and helping people with disabilities by using appropriate language and behavior. However, this competence is not well demonstrated in terms of understanding and speaking the languages of different ethnic groups within their own country, learning to speak the languages of fellow students from different regions, ethnic groups, and countries, communicating proficiently in one or more common foreign languages, being confident in one's appearance (personal style, clothing, physical appearance), understanding the differences in speech among students from different regions, ethnic groups, and countries, and expressing personal opinions and viewpoints confidently. While communicating in a multicultural environment, high school students still face several

difficulties, including common challenges such as difficulty in emotional control, lack of refusal skills, and difficulty in reconciling differences in personality and preferences with their peers.

This research has practical significance for educational activities aimed at developing communication competence in a multicultural environment for high school students. However, there are several limitations to this study that need to be considered. The research sample only includes high school students from six schools nationwide. If the research is expanded, the results can be more generalized and applicable on a broader scale. These are important considerations for future studies.

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