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# Sensation Seeking, Ethnocentrism and Intercultural Communication Competence: An Empirical Study Based on SPSS

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**Abstract:** The 21st century has seen an unprecedented increase in globalization, with various cultures and nations becoming more interconnected through trade, technology, and education. This global landscape has created a growing need for effective cross-cultural communication, as individuals and organizations engage with people from diverse backgrounds. China's global role has recently transformed, emerging as a major player in international trade, diplomacy, and education. With a surge in Chinese students studying abroad and the international expansion of Chinese businesses, it is imperative that Chinese college students possess both academic and cultural competence to navigate the intricacies of cross-cultural communication. Chinese college students, as part of this globalized world, must acquire the skills and attitudes necessary for successful interaction with people from different cultures. This study, taking Chinese college students as the research subjects, discusses the basic situation of sensation seeking and ethnocentrism of Chinese college students, as well as the relationship between the two and cross-cultural communication competence, in order to provide references for domestic cross-cultural communication investigation, and boost the domestic cross-cultural communication research. The findings are as follows: (1) contemporary college students are willing to accept different cultures, respect the habits of other cultures, and have strong feelings of tolerance; (2) sensation seeking was negatively correlated with ethnocentrism, but positively correlated with intercultural communication competence; (3) sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism have significant predictive ability on cross-cultural communication competence, and the predictive ability of ethnocentrism is higher than that of sensation-seeking.

**Keywords:** Sensation Seeking, Ethnocentrism, Intercultural Communication Competence, SPSS26.0

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## 1. Introduction

With the accelerating process of globalization, the cultures of various ethnic groups are interwoven with each other, facing not only the challenges of world multiculturalism, but also broader opportunities for development. Cultural globalization is inevitably accompanied by cultural diversification. Of course, cross-cultural communication always plays a pivotal role in the process of mutual interaction, collision and integration of various national cultures. Intercultural Communication is a kind of communication behavior. In terms of communication types, it can be interpersonal communication, or the communication between individuals and the public (group). Kim [6] gives a more specific definition for Intercultural Communication

Competence: cross-cultural communication competence is an individual's inherent ability to deal with key issues in cross-cultural communication, such as cultural differences, cultural strangeness, attitudes within the cultural group, and the ensuing psychological pressure. At present, domestic researches on intercultural communication competence can be roughly divided into three categories. The first category consists mainly of book review articles. This kind of research mainly introduces foreign books related to cross-cultural communication, such as "Research and Application of cross-cultural Communication Theory", "Research on the Cross-cultural Communicative Competence of English Talents", "Inquiry into College English Teaching in the Context of Cross-cultural Communication", etc. [4, 7], and [15], which clarify the latest results of relevant foreign studies

to domestic scholars, so as to build a bridge of communication with foreign counterparts. The second type of research mainly focuses on meaning exploration. Relevant scholars carry out meaning research on teaching Chinese as a foreign language, cross-cultural communication of business English majors, cross-cultural communication of the Belt and Road, etc., and improve the cross-cultural communication ability of different research subjects based on current politics [5, 11]. The third type is empirical inquiry, which mainly focuses on cross-cultural name perception and cross-cultural language attitude [13]. The research subjects are mostly foreign language teachers, students with language majors, and ethnic minority students [3], and the research methods are mostly quantitative research such as questionnaire survey. It can be seen that few domestic scholars have explored the relationship between sensation-seeking, ethnocentrism and cross-cultural communication competence and other variables. Foreign scholars have already carried out a series of studies to deeply explore the relationship between the three, and put forward various models of intercultural communication competence, which has promoted the continuous development of intercultural communication studies.

Sensation Seeking, a psychobiological personality trait widely used to document an individual's need for novelty and complexity, is a strong predictor of thrill-seeking activities such as bungee jumping, skydiving, hang gliding, rock climbing and dangerous driving, including driving while driving. In addition, sensation seeking is associated with a range of thrill-seeking activities that are often defined as problematic behaviors, including sexual risk-taking, unprotected sex, alcohol, smoking, and drug use. This thrill-seeking experience activates the release of dopamine, as well as serotonin, which stimulates the emotional response of sensation seekers. Therefore, sensation seeking is closely related to cross-cultural communication. Measurement of individual sensation seeking can reflect individuals' attitudes towards cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication competence to a certain extent. Foreign scholars have conducted a series of researches on sensation seeking and cross-cultural communication. For example, Arasaratnam [2] explored the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communicative behavior, especially by investigating the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communicative competence and retesting the model introduced in previous studies. Nadeem [10] re-examines the relationship between sensation-seeking, attitudes towards other cultures (ATOC), and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) introduced by Western researchers. Some scholars have pointed out that sensation-seeking and attitudes towards other cultures have a direct impact on intercultural communication competence, and the study found that attitudes towards other cultures in the Malaysian context mediate the relationship between sensation-seeking and intercultural communication competence. Nadeem [10] further tested the integrated model of Intercultural Communication competence (IMICC) in the Malaysian cultural background and found that

sensation-seeking directly affected the intercultural communication competence of international students.

Ethnocentrism is a sociological term first proposed by American sociologist Sumner [12]. He defined ethnocentrism as "a certain nation regards itself as the center of the world and regards its own culture as the frame of reference for other ethnic cultures. If we judge other peoples' behaviors, communication styles, social customs and values by our own cultural standards, we will laugh at the different social customs of other groups." It can be seen from this definition that ethnocentrism is self-centered and judges other ethnic cultures based on their own national culture. Because of its characteristic, ethnocentrism often affects cross-cultural communication. Based on this, foreign scholars have carried out relevant studies on ethnocentrism and cross-cultural communication. For example, Neuliep, Chaudoir & McCroskey [9] compared the level of ethnocentrism among American and Japanese college students and found that Japanese college students got higher scores due to their narrow and xenophobic thoughts. Lin, Rancer & Trimbitas [8] found that the level of ethnocentrism among Romanian college students was higher than that of American college students, because they believed that Romania had conflicts with Hungary in the history and belonged to the extreme country. Therefore, ethnocentrism is closely related to cross-cultural communication, so it is of great practical significance to explore the relationship between ethnocentrism and cross-cultural communication competence of college students.

In conclusion, this study aims to investigate the basic situation of sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism among Chinese college students, as well as the relationship between them and cross-cultural communication competence, in order to provide references for domestic cross-cultural communication investigation and research, and promote new research on cross-cultural communication in China. This paper explores the main factors that affect the cross-cultural communication ability of Chinese college students, so as to provide theoretical guidance for cross-cultural teaching and enrich cross-cultural related research.

## 2. Research Design

### 2.1. Research Questions

Through the quantitative analysis, this paper tries to answer the following three key questions: (1) What is the basic situation of sensation-seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence of Chinese college students? (2) What is the relationship among sensation-seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence of Chinese college students? (3) How do Chinese college students' sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism predict their intercultural communication competence?

### 2.2. Research Instruments

The questionnaire used in this paper is based on the

compilation and integration of three questionnaires. The sensory needs scale developed by Michael T. Stephenson [11] (8 items in total), the ethnocentrism scale designed by James W. Neuliep [9] (19 items in total) and Lily A. The intercultural communication competence survey scale developed by Arasaratnam [1] (15 items in total). The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and was modified repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of the study. The questionnaires was on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Due to the impact of the coronavirus epidemic, this study mainly distributed questionnaires and collected data through the online platform "Sojump", and recorded the survey data into SPSS26.0 for the data collation and analysis of the above questions.

**2.3. Research Participants**

The subjects selected in this study are 2019, 2020 and 2021 undergraduates from School of Electrical Engineering, Yancheng Institute of Technology, with majors covering automation, electrical engineering, energy science, etc. On July 2, 2021, with the assistance of school counselors, the completed questionnaire was distributed to students of three grades through the online platform "Sojump". Students would click "Submit" directly after filling in the questionnaire. Excluding the invalid questionnaires, 581 valid questionnaires were obtained in this study. Among the effective samples, the age of the subjects mainly concentrated in the 20 years old and below, among which

56.28% were 20 years old and below, 42.34% were 21 to 25 years old and only 1.28% were 26 to 30 years old. The subjects were all Han, including 434 male students, accounting for 74.4%, and 147 female students, accounting for 25.3%.

**3. Results and Discussions**

**3.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis**

The data collected in this study are mainly divided into three sub-modules: the first part is sensation seeking measurement, the second part is ethnocentrism measurement, and the third part is cross-cultural communication competence measurement. Therefore, the statistical analysis tool SPSS26.0 should be used to test the reliability and validity of the above three parts.

Firstly, the reliability analysis is carried out. Opening the IBM SPSS Statistics, entering the interface, and importing the collected data into it; Then, in the analysis menu bar, selecting the "Reliability analysis" option in "Measurement" to open the reliability analysis window. In the opening "reliability analysis" window, the above three dimensions are selected successively as variables, and then the Alpha analysis model is selected to obtain the reliability analysis results of the three dimensions of sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1. Reliability statistics of sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence.*

Reliability Analysis					
Sensation seeking		Ethnocentrism		Intercultural communication competence	
Alpha	Number of item	Alpha	Number of item	Alpha	Number of item
.888	8	.916	15	.915	19

Alpha coefficient value range and reliability effect: 0.80 ~ 0.90 is very good; 0.70 ~ 0.80 is quite good; 0.65 ~ 0.70 minimum acceptable value; 0.60 ~ 0.65 is better not; Therefore, it can be seen from the above table that the reliability of the questionnaire is quite good.

The validity analysis mainly uses factor analysis. In the

analysis menu bar, selecting the option of "Factor" in "Dimension Reduction", and the option of KMO/ extraction, lithograph/rotation, maximum variance method/and exclude small coefficients, then clicking to obtain the KMO values as shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. Validity analysis of Sense-seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence.*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO's sampling appropriateness measure		.947
	Approximate cardinality	17845.012
	Degree of freedom	861
Bartlett's sphericity test	Significance	.000

By means of SPSS26.0, the significance and KMO value need to be analyzed. The significance is less than 0.05, indicating that the questionnaire data is suitable for factor analysis, and then concentrating on the KMO value. If the value is higher than 0.8, it indicates the high validity. If the value is between 0.7 and 0.8, it indicates that the validity is good. If the value is between 0.6 and 0.7, it indicates the acceptable validity; if it is less than 0.6, it indicates the poor validity. It can be seen that the collected data have the high validity.

To sum up, the data collected in this study have the high reliability and validity, so the discussion of the above issues has a certain reliability, and can more objectively reflect the basic situation and correlation of Chinese college students' sensation-seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence.

**3.2. Basic Situation Analysis**

The basic situation of sensation seeking of 581 subjects is

shown in Table 3. It can be seen that the average value of the fifth question "I want to explore unfamiliar places" is the highest, with an average value of 4.07. The average values of the other seven questions were 3.55, 3.52, 3.45, 3.25, 3.40, 3.37 and 3.23, with the scores fluctuating between 3 and 4. According to the mean score of the fifth question "I want to explore unfamiliar places", the contemporary Chinese college students are full of exploring spirit and like to search for the strange places with the purpose of having a good knowledge of strange territories. This also shows that the contemporary college students prefer to actively communicate with others and are willing to step out of their comfort zones and look forward to meeting different cultures. The sixth question, "I want to go on an unplanned trip", ranked second in the

average score, which also reflects the active psychology of the contemporary college students in communication. The third highest average score is the seventh question: "I like to do exciting things". Today's college students like to do new and exciting things. They are willing to participate in all kinds of interesting things and try different things. The average score of the ninth question is the lowest, "I love raves", mainly for two reasons: First of all, compared with Western college students, Chinese college students are more conservative, do not like to participate in parties, and other activities; Secondly, influenced by traditional culture, Chinese college students prefer to participate in various social activities with people they are familiar with.

*Table 3. Descriptive statistical analysis of sensation seeking survey.*

Description Statistics					
	N	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation
5. I want to explore unfamiliar places.	581	1	5	4.07	.962
6. I want to go on an unplanned trip.	581	1	5	3.55	1.201
7. I like to do exciting things. (e.g. bungee jumping, roller coaster, etc.)	581	1	5	3.52	1.197
8. I want to try skydiving.	581	1	5	3.45	1.349
9. I love raves.	581	1	5	3.25	1.294
10. I like new and exciting experiences, even if I have to break the rules.	581	1	5	3.40	1.233
11. I get restless if I stay at home for too long.	581	1	5	3.37	1.284
12. I prefer to make friends with people I have never met.	581	1	5	3.23	1.291
Number of valid cases (column)	581	1	5	3.48	1.083

The average score of ethnocentrism is 59.47 (out of 95), with the highest score of 95 and the lowest score of 19, indicating that the ethnocentrism of the contemporary Chinese college students is at a relatively low level. This reflects that the contemporary college students are basically able to accept different cultures and appreciate different excellent cultures without judging other cultures based on their own cultural values and standards, and are gradually transitioning to national relativism. Among them, question 24 "I respect the values and customs of other cultures" has the highest mean value, with a score of 4.19, indicating that the contemporary college students are willing to accept different cultures, respect the habits of other cultures, and have strong feelings of inclusiveness. Question 19, "I don't respect the values and customs of other cultures", scored the lowest, with an average of 2.22, which is the reverse of question 24 and also in sharp contrast to the data obtained.

The average score of intercultural communication competence is 52.6 (full score 75), with the highest score 75 and the lowest score 15, indicating that the contemporary Chinese college students' intercultural communication competence is in the middle level. Among them, the highest score is 45 "Most of my friends are from Chinese culture", with an average of 4.17. It can be seen that the main reason why contemporary Chinese college students have a relatively low level of cross-cultural communication ability is that their social circle is mostly limited to their own cultural circle, and they seldom take the initiative to communicate with or even make friends with people from other cultures. However, the

reverse question "Most of my close friends are from other cultures" has the lowest mean score ( $M=2.69$ ), which also reflects the reliability and authenticity of the data analysis of question 45.

### ***3.3. The Relationship Between Sensation Seeking, Ethnocentrism and Intercultural Communication Competence***

The results of correlation analysis showed that sensation seeking is negatively correlated with ethnocentrism ( $r=-0.501$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), and positively correlated with intercultural communication competence ( $r=0.584$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). It is worth noting that ethnocentrism is also significantly negatively correlated with intercultural communication competence ( $r=-0.692$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). This means that the higher the level of sensation-seeking, the lower the level of ethnocentrism and the higher the intercultural communication ability, while the higher the level of ethnocentrism, the lower the intercultural communication ability.

Sensation seeking is a continuum with high and low levels. People with low level of sensation seeking tend to stay in their comfort zone, are unwilling to communicate with others and lack the spirit of active exploration, so the corresponding level of national relativism is higher. On the other hand, the high level sensation seekers are more active in communicating with others and realize the importance of going out, so their level of ethnocentricity is lower. In terms of ethnocentrism, the low-level nationalists accept different cultures, treat other

cultures equally, and appreciate the intrinsic value of different cultures, which is national relativism. National relativism starts from people's acceptance of cultural differences. When people

are aware of the differences between different cultures and know that this phenomenon is inevitable, their cross-cultural communication ability will be improved accordingly.

**Table 4.** Correlation analysis of sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural Communication competence\*\*. At level 0.01, the correlation was significant.

Correlation		Sensation seeking	Ethnocentrism	Intercultural Communication Competence
Sensation Seeking	Pearson correlation	1	-.501**	.584**
	Sig.		.000	.000
	Number of cases	581	581	581
Ethnocentrism	Pearson correlation	-.501**	1	-.692**
	Sig.	.000		.000
	Number of cases	581	581	581
Intercultural Communication Competence	Pearson correlation	.584**	-.692**	1
	Sig.	.000	.000	
	Number of cases	581	581	581

### 3.4. The Prediction of Sensation Seeking and Ethnocentrism on Intercultural Communication Competence

The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis show that sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism are the significant variables entering the regression equation to predict intercultural communication competence. As can be seen from the table, both the sensory needs and ethnocentrism have the significant predictions on the intercultural communicative competence, with significance of 0.000, far less than 0.05, indicating that the sensory needs and ethnocentrism can predict the intercultural communicative competence of college students. From the standardized

regression coefficient, the higher the absolute value of Beta, the stronger the ability to predict intercultural communication ability. The standardization coefficient Beta of sensory need is 0.317, while that of ethnocentrism is -0.533. Combined with the above analysis of the significance of variables, it shows that the sensory need has a positive impact on intercultural communication competence, that is, the higher the level of sensory need of contemporary college students, the higher their intercultural communication competence. Ethnocentrism has a negative impact on intercultural communication competence, that is, the higher the level of ethnocentrism, the lower the intercultural communication competence of contemporary college students.

**Table 5.** The predictive ability of sensory needs and ethnocentrism on intercultural communication competence a. Dependent variable: intercultural communication competence.

Coefficient	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardization coefficient Beta	t	Significance
	B	Standardization error			
(constant)	1.111	.091		12.176	.000
Sensation Seeking	.233	.024	.317	9.885	.000
Ethnocentrism	-.503	.030	-.533	-16.597	.000

This result shows that the level of ethnocentrism can better predict the intercultural communication ability of college students than the level of sensory need. It is reflected from the side that the higher the level of ethnocentrism, the more they reject other cultures, thus denying and contradicting other excellent cultures and refusing to communicate and exchange with people from other cultures. Ethnocentrism makes students always have a negative attitude towards different cultural behaviors, and it is easy for us to have prejudice against other cultures. Contemporary college students should have a sense of difference, recognize and respect other cultures, and should take national relativism as the goal. Therefore, cross-cultural teaching should not blindly teach excellent Chinese culture while ignoring excellent foreign culture, but should adhere to the principle of equal emphasis on Chinese and Western culture, so that more students can experience the differences between different cultures, deepen

their cognition of different cultures, and cultivate their tolerance and sensitivity to Chinese and Western culture.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper takes Chinese college students as the research subjects, uses the quantitative research method of questionnaire survey and the quantitative analysis tool of SPSS26.0 to explore the relationship among sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence. From the basic situation of sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication ability, the contemporary Chinese college students are willing to accept different cultures, respect the habits of other cultures, have strong tolerance feelings, and like to communicate with others actively, willing to go out of their comfort zone, looking forward to meeting different cultures. From the

perspective of the relationship between sensation seeking, ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence, sensation seeking is significantly negatively correlated with ethnocentrism, but positively correlated with intercultural communication competence. That is, the higher the level of sensation seeking, the lower the level of ethnocentrism, and the higher the corresponding intercultural communication competence. From the prediction of sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism on intercultural communication competence, it can be seen that sensation-seeking and ethnocentrism have significant predictive ability on intercultural communication competence, and the predictive ability of ethnocentrism is higher than that of sensation-seeking.

Based on the above research analysis, we think that the cross-cultural teaching should realize the following changes in the future:

(1) Multi-language teaching to broaden students' vision.

At present, most cross-cultural teaching in China takes English as the teaching language, which leads most students to believe that cross-cultural learning is limited to understanding the similarities and differences between Western culture and Chinese culture. Therefore, our cross-cultural teaching should realize the change of teaching language, develop a multi-language cross-cultural education model, encourage the use of Japanese, Spanish, French and other minor languages in the classroom, in order to cultivate students' diversified vision as its own mission, improve the students' cross-cultural communication ability.

(2) Improve the curriculum content to serve the national foreign language planning strategy.

Nowadays, there are many problems in cross-cultural teaching content, such as ignoring the introduction of other cultural customs and habits, and outdated teaching materials. Students' cross-cultural knowledge is completely disconnected from the social development of western countries, and students cannot understand the customs of other countries, which to a certain extent affects the improvement of students' cross-cultural communication ability. Therefore, China's intercultural teaching should aim at improving students' intercultural communication ability, take serving the national foreign language planning strategy as its own mission, train more intercultural communication talents, and boost the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics under the background of unprecedented changes in a century.

(3) Pay attention to the national conditions and promote the cultivation of students' cross-cultural competence under the background of Chinese culture.

China's cross-cultural teaching should not only borrow the existing educational theories and experiences, but also consider the existing experiences and special problems of contemporary Chinese education, so as to find and analyze the intercultural competence training mode and characteristics with Chinese characteristics and promote the intercultural competence training of students under the Chinese cultural background.

This study also has certain limitations. In terms of

methods, this paper only adopts the quantitative research methods, and the survey subject is limited to one university, so the universality of the research results still needs further discussion. In the future, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can be adopted to combine the research methods of questionnaire survey with qualitative research methods such as interview and thinking aloud, so as to comprehensively investigate the factors affecting the intercultural communicative competence of college students.

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