

Review Article

Intercultural Communication Competence

Nguyen Thi Anh Thu^{1*}

¹University of Education – Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Article History

Received: 19.05.2024

Accepted: 26.06.2024

Published: 27.06.2024

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: In the context of globalization and international integration, individuals must adapt to a multicultural environment characterized by the convergence of diverse cultures. This necessitates the development of intercultural communication competence to survive and thrive. This article aims to clarify the concept, structure, and manifestations of intercultural communication competence. Firstly, the article defines intercultural communication competence as the ability to understand, respect, and effectively use different communication methods from various cultures. It then analyzes the structure of this competence, encompassing skills such as cultural sensitivity, the ability to adjust communication behaviors appropriately to cultural contexts, and the capacity to manage cultural conflict situations. Finally, the manifestations of intercultural communication competence are illustrated through practical examples that demonstrate how individuals can show respect and understanding towards different cultural values and customs. The article provides a comprehensive view of the importance and aspects of intercultural communication competence, emphasizing its role in helping individuals adapt and grow in an increasingly culturally diverse world.

Keywords: Communication competence; environment characterized; intercultural; cultural.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution **4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)** which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasingly profound globalization and international integration, interactions between different cultures have become more prevalent than ever. This cultural convergence creates significant opportunities for collaboration and development but also poses substantial challenges to communication and mutual understanding. Intercultural communication competence, therefore, emerges as a crucial factor for individuals and organizations to sustain and thrive in a culturally diverse world. Intercultural communication competence goes beyond merely using language or understanding various cultures; it encompasses the ability to recognize and adjust communication behaviors to fit specific cultural contexts. This includes respecting cultural differences, demonstrating empathy, and managing cultural conflicts effectively.

However, the development and application of intercultural communication competence remain significant challenges for many individuals and organizations. Existing research often focuses on isolated aspects of this competence, rarely considering a comprehensive approach to its development and practical application. This paper aims to address this gap

by clarifying the concept, structure, and manifestations of intercultural communication competence and providing practical examples of enhancing and applying this competence in today's global context.

The objective of the study is to construct a theoretical and practical framework for intercultural communication competence, aiming to help individuals and organizations better understand the role and importance of this competence and offer specific guidelines to develop and apply it effectively in multicultural settings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Competence is the combination of various individual attributes, developed through activities, to meet the demands of specific tasks and ensure successful outcomes. Communication is the process of interaction between individuals, where people master themselves and understand others to exchange information and emotions, impacting and influencing each other. Communication competence involves the combination of various personal attributes in the process of interaction, enabling individuals to control themselves and perceive their communication partners to exchange

information and emotions effectively. It meets the requirements of communication activities and ensures their appropriate and effective execution.

A.I. Akh-Nor-Dov states that “The cultural environment is a stable totality of material and personality elements through which individuals interact. These elements influence the exploration and creation of cultural values, spiritual needs, interests, and value orientations. The cultural environment is not merely an aggregate of material cultural elements but also includes culturally present people”. Nguyễn Thanh Tâm (2017) argues that “The cultural environment is a totality of cultural products, cultural programs, cultural behaviors, institutions, means, and cultural landscapes that individuals encounter throughout their lives and interact with”.

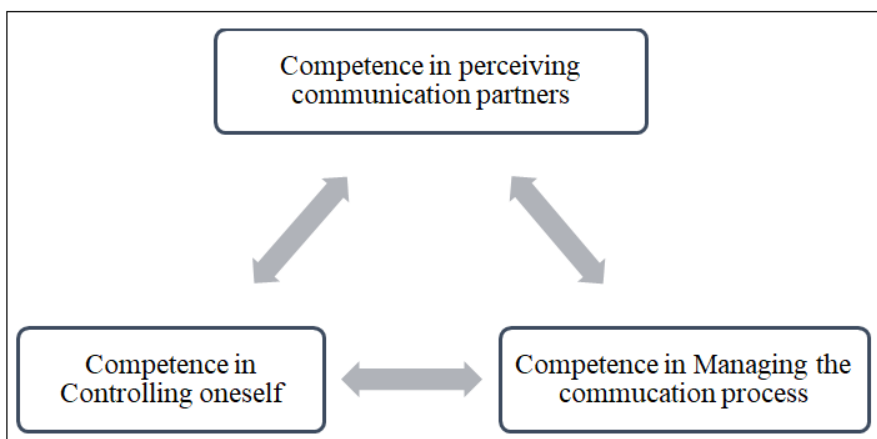
From these perspectives on the cultural environment, the author uses the concept: The cultural environment is a dynamic totality of tangible and intangible cultural factors surrounding individuals, interacting with and influencing people in a specific space and time, promoting harmonious and comprehensive human development, where people play the role of both subjects and the most significant products of it. Multiculturalism is understood as the coexistence of multiple cultures, cultural forms, and expressions in various regions, either in a specific area or globally. Based on the concepts of cultural and multicultural environments, the article defines “A multicultural environment as one where multiple cultures, cultural forms, and various cultural expressions coexist in a specific region or the world at large.” The multicultural environment is a characteristic of human

society, essential for development and even survival. Multiculturalism in life is the source of identity, innovation, and creativity, linking people worldwide. It drives development, enriching not only economic growth but also intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual life.

Communication competence in a multicultural environment: From the concepts of communication competence and the multicultural environment, the author defines communication competence in a multicultural environment as: “Communication competence in a multicultural environment is the combination of various individual attributes in the communication process, enabling individuals to control themselves, perceive their communication partners, and effectively manage the communication process in a multicultural environment.” Thus, it can be observed that: This competence is formed and developed in a multicultural environment. Communication competence in a multicultural environment combines multiple personal attributes. To achieve communication competence in a multicultural environment, individuals must: perceive their communication partners, control themselves, and manage the communication process effectively in a multicultural context.

Structure of communication competence in a multicultural environment

There are various perspectives on the structure of communication competence. However, in this article, the author relies on the communication competence structure proposed by authors Nguyễn Văn Lữ and Lê Quang Sơn (2017), which suggests that communication competence comprises three components:



Competence in perceiving communication partners: This includes recognizing the basic emotional states of the communication partners, and identifying their intentions and attitudes.

Competence in Controlling Oneself in the Communication Process: This is demonstrated through the ability of self-awareness, value determination skills,

emotional control skills, stress coping skills, confidence display skills, and assertiveness skills.

Competence in managing the communication process: This includes the ability to use communication tools (verbal and non-verbal), conflict resolution skills, help-seeking skills, and refusal skills. Based on the structure of communication competence, which includes

these three components, the thesis identifies specific criteria for each component competence as follows:

Table 1: Criteria for communication competence

Component Competence	Criteria
1. Competence in Perceiving Communication Partners	1.1. Perception of the gender of the communication partner
	1.2. Perception of the psychological attributes of the communication partner
	1.3. Perception of the physical characteristics of the communication partner
2. Competence in Controlling Oneself in Communication	2.1. Self-awareness skills
	2.2. Value determination skills
	2.3. Emotional control skills
	2.4. Stress coping skills
	2.5. Confidence display skills
	2.6. Assertiveness skills
3. Competence in Managing the Communication Process	3.1. Skills in using communication tools
	3.2. Conflict resolution skills
	3.3. Help-seeking skills
	3.4. Refusal skills

Structure of communication competence in a multicultural environment

Based on the structure of communication competence combined with the theory of the multicultural environment, the author identifies the structure of communication competence in a multicultural environment as comprising three components: competence in perceiving communication partners in a multicultural environment, competence in controlling oneself in communication in a multicultural environment, and competence in managing the communication process in a multicultural environment. Specifically: Competence in Perceiving Communication Partners in a Multicultural Environment is the ability to recognize the physical characteristics, psychological

attributes, and cultural traits of the communication partners; Competence in Controlling Oneself in Communication in a Multicultural Environment is the individual’s ability to self-awareness, appropriately orient values, control emotions well, maintain confidence, and handle stress effectively when communicating in a multicultural environment; Competence in Managing the Communication Process in a Multicultural Environment is the individual’s ability to effectively use communication tools, identify and resolve difficulties and conflicts arising during communication in a multicultural environment.

From these component competences, the thesis identifies specific criteria:

Table 2: Structure of communication competence in a multicultural environment

Component Competence	Criteria
1. Competence in Perceiving Communication Partners in a Multicultural Environment	1.1. Perception of diversity in the gender of communication partners
	1.2. Perception of diversity in the psychological attributes of communication partners
	1.3. Perception of diversity in the physical characteristics of communication partners
	1.4. Perception of local, regional, ethnic, and national cultures of communication partners
	1.5. Perception of the language of communication partners
2. Competence in Controlling Oneself in Communication in a Multicultural Environment	2.1. Self-awareness of personal cultural identity
	2.2. Building personal values, and orientations in thoughts, actions, and lifestyle in a multicultural environment
	2.3. Preserving personal, regional, and national cultural identity
	2.4. Controlling personal emotions in communication in a multicultural environment
	2.5. Coping with stress in communication in a multicultural environment
	2.6. Displaying confidence in communication in a multicultural environment
	2.7. Maintaining personal stance and viewpoints in communication in a multicultural environment
3. Competence in Managing the Communication Process in a Multicultural Environment	3.1. Effectively using communication tools in communication in a multicultural environment
	3.2. Seeking support when encountering difficulties in the communication process
	3.3. Having refusal skills, and self-protection in communication in a multicultural environment
	3.4. Having conflict resolution skills in communication in a multicultural environment

Manifestations of communication competence

A multicultural environment is composed of three factors: territorial multiculturalism (national, regional), ethnic multiculturalism (ethnic groups), and individual multiculturalism. Each factor has its distinct manifestations: Territorial Multiculturalism (national, regional) has four manifestations: diversity in language, diversity in symbols, diversity in tangible culture, and diversity in intangible culture; Ethnic Multiculturalism (ethnic groups) has three manifestations: diversity in

cultural identity, diversity in lifestyle, ideals, and aesthetics, and diversity in customs, languages, clothing, architecture, literature, and arts; Individual Multiculturalism has three manifestations: diversity in gender and sex, diversity in personal psychological attributes, and diversity in living environments. Based on the above analysis, the author identifies the manifestations of the multicultural environment in the following table:

Table 3: Manifestations of the multicultural environment

Factor	Manifestation Through
1. Individual Multiculturalism	1.1. Diversity in gender and sex
	1.2. Diversity in personal psychological attributes
	1.3. Diversity in living environments
2. Ethnic Multiculturalism (Ethnic Groups)	2.1. Diversity in cultural identity
	2.2. Diversity in lifestyle, ideals, and aesthetics
	2.3. Diversity in customs, languages, clothing, architecture, literature, and arts
3. Territorial Multiculturalism (National, Regional)	3.1. Diversity in national languages
	3.2. Diversity in national symbols
	3.3. Diversity in tangible culture (clothing, cuisine, etc.)
	3.4. Diversity in intangible culture (dialects, signals, beliefs, etc.)

3.2. Manifestations of Communication Competence in a Multicultural Environment

The author identifies the manifestations of communication competence in a multicultural environment based on the criteria of communication competence and the multicultural environment. By reflecting the manifestations of communication competence through the multicultural environment and eliminating overlapping manifestations, the specific manifestations of communication competence in a multicultural environment are obtained.

Manifestations of competence in perceiving communication partners in a multicultural environment

This component competence includes eight manifestations:

Identifying differences in gender; Identifying differences among individuals from the LGBT community (gay or lesbian); Describing differences in individuals with strong personalities (in terms of appearance, viewpoints, preferences, etc.); Pointing out differences in needs, preferences, dreams, and ideals of people; Identifying differences in physical appearance (height, weight, body structure, etc.); Listing differences in people with disabilities; Presenting differences in the culture of each locality, region, or nation of classmates (including taboos in customs and traditions); Identifying differences in the language of students from different regions, ethnic groups, and countries.

Manifestations of competence in controlling oneself in communication in a multicultural environment

This component competence includes twenty-nine manifestations: Confidence in personal appearance (personal style, clothing, physique, etc.); Clear

identification of personal gender and sex; Presenting personal strengths and weaknesses; Identifying personal needs, preferences, dreams, and ideals; Tendency to choose and participate in activities that enhance strengths and improve weaknesses; Tendency to choose values with traditional cultural identity (such as respect for teachers, learning spirit, tolerance, kindness, solidarity, etc.); Selectively adopting non-traditional cultural values (such as discipline, freedom, cooperation, confidence, etc.); Behaving in ways that align with the cultural identity of their locality, ethnic group, or nation; Using appropriate language or behavior with people from the LGBT community; Not forcing others to follow personal preferences if they are unwilling; Respecting the dreams of others (not mocking or using others' dreams as a joke, always encouraging and motivating friends to pursue their dreams); Respecting differences in appearance and personality of others (no discrimination, mocking, or ridiculing); Helping people with disabilities. Using appropriate language or behavior with disabled individuals; Not mocking or ridiculing customs and traditions of friends (clothing, habits, language, etc.); Flexibly accepting the customs and traditions of friends' living areas; Learning the language of classmates from different regions, ethnic groups, and countries; Not mocking friends for language differences (regional accents, speech impediments, etc.); When encountering cultural differences, putting oneself in the position of friends and accepting those differences; Maintaining a calm and courteous attitude, listening when cultural differences arise in communication; Being open with all classmates in school and class activities (no discrimination based on gender, personality, region, ethnicity, etc.); Tending to negotiate and persuade friends when opinions differ; Making decisions based on respect for friends' viewpoints; Tending to change the

communication topic with friends when tension arises; Understanding and having a positive view of cultural differences in communication (understanding why friends behave or speak in certain ways, easily sympathizing and accepting); Initiating communication, shown by using clear and loud language; Boldly presenting personal viewpoints and opinions; Being approachable, open, and warm during communication; Always maintaining personal viewpoints and opinions. Providing suitable arguments to persuade others to agree with personal viewpoints.

Willing to listen and accept personal viewpoints when others provide convincing arguments or when realizing they are inaccurate or inappropriate.

Manifestations of competence in managing the communication process in a multicultural environment

This component competence includes eight manifestations: Proficiency in using the language of one's own nation and ethnic group; Flexibility in adapting to new words and positive slang; Proficiency in communicating in one or several common foreign languages; Understanding and speaking the languages of various ethnic groups within one's country; Sensitivity and quick identification of difficulties arising in the communication process; Quickly identifying resources, selecting individuals and tools that can support problem-solving in communication; Having refusal skills when necessary, with a firm but tactful attitude; Being perceptive in recognizing dangers during communication, thereby having subtle measures to escape danger and protect oneself.

CONCLUSION

Communication competence in a multicultural environment is an essential capability for individuals in the trend of globalization and international integration. This competence includes three component competences: competence in perceiving communication partners in a multicultural environment, competence in controlling oneself in communication in a multicultural environment, and competence in managing the communication process in a multicultural environment. Each component competence has its own criteria and manifestations. Clearly identifying the structure and manifestations of communication competence in a multicultural environment will help individuals practice

and educators develop appropriate content and methods to enhance this competence in learners.

REFERENCES

- Dearsdorff, D. K. (2006). The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153062870>
- Grant, C. A., & Lei, J. L. (2001). *Global constructions of multicultural education*. Routledge.
- Grant, C. A., & Portera, A. (2011). *Intercultural and multicultural education*. Routledge.
- Larsen, K. S., & Lê, V. H. (2015). *Cross-cultural psychology*. Vietnam National University Press.
- Lê, T. B. (Ed.). (2007). *Typical psychological attributes of personality*. Education Publishing House.
- Mai, H. O. (2012). Discussion on the cultural environment. *Journal of Culture and Arts*, (334).
- Nguyễn, D. M. H. (2016). *Multicultural education in Vietnamese universities in the era of globalization* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City).
- Nguyễn, T. T. (2017). *Management of grassroots cultural activities in Vietnam in the context of globalization*. Vietnam National University Press.
- Nguyễn, V. L., & Lê, Q. S. (2017). *Pedagogical communication textbook*. Education Publishing House.
- Nguyễn, X. T. (2007). *General psychology*. Education Publishing House.
- Trần, K. Đ. (2014). *Education and human resource development in the 21st century*. Education Publishing House.
- Trần, T. T. (2001). *General psychology*. Education Publishing House.
- Dương, T. D. H. (2007). *Developmental psychology*. Education Publishing House.
- DomNwachukwu, C. S. (2010). *An introduction to multicultural education – From theory to practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence. In D. K. Dearsdorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 2-52). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987>

Cite This Article: Nguyen Thi Anh Thu (2024). Intercultural Communication Competence. *East African Scholars J Edu Humanit Lit*, 7(6), 190-194.
