

Examining the Correlation between English Proficiency and Cross-Cultural Conflicts among Chinese University Students

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Abstract:

Learning a new language may have a profound influence in shaping learners' cultural identity because language learning involves not solely the acquisition of linguistic knowledge, but also ways of thinking and behaving. In China, public school students learn English as a foreign language (EFL) starting third grade. In most cases, Chinese university students have learned English for at least 9 years to establish a certain level of proficiency. It is the hypothesis that the higher the English proficiency, the more linguistic and cultural exposure students may have, and the more competent they are in dealing with cross-cultural conflicts. This quantitative investigation examines how the level of English proficiency of Chinese university students influence the ways in which they deal with cross-cultural conflicts with strangers or friends both online and offline. Data was collected from 1010 questionnaires of undergraduate students in Chinese public and Sino-foreign joint venture universities. Findings of this research indicate that students with higher English proficiency tend to be more open-minded and less patriotic; whereas students with lower proficiency are more likely to actively defend home culture. Ultimately, this study addresses the role of multilingual identity in interpreting and reacting to cross-cultural conflicts for Chinese university students.

Keywords:

multilingual identity, cross-cultural conflicts, language proficiency, Chinese university students.