



Sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence: A model test

Lily A. Arasaratnam^{a,1}, Smita C. Banerjee^{b,*}

^a Alphacrucis College, 40 Hector Street, Chester Hill, NSW 2162, Australia

^b Communication and Health Issues Partnership for Education and Research, Rutgers University, 4 Huntington Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 14 July 2010

Keywords:

Intercultural communication competence

SEM

Sensation seeking

Ethnocentrism

ABSTRACT

Following findings from previous studies, the present study further explores the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communicative behaviours, specifically by investigating the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence and re-testing a model introduced in a previous study. It was hypothesised that: (1) when mediated by variables associated positively associated with intercultural communication competence, there is a positive relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence, and (2) even in the presence of variables that are positively associated with intercultural communication competence, there is a negative relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence. Survey data were gathered from participants ($N=231$) and structural equation modelling was performed. The results supported both hypotheses, as well as findings from previous studies. The implications are discussed.

Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Even though sensation seeking as a variable is more commonly known in health communication research (Stephenson & Palmgreen, 2001; Stephenson & Southwell, 2006; Yanovitzky, 2006), recent research reveals a distinct relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication behaviours. This connection is further examined in this study by exploring the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence. The present study is particularly informed by the findings of Arasaratnam and Banerjee (2007). Working with a model which demonstrated that sensation seeking (along with related variables) predicted intercultural contact-seeking behaviour, Arasaratnam and Banerjee discovered that the introduction of ethnocentrism into the model weakened the relationships between all the variables. In other words, the extent to which each variable in the model acted as a predictor of intercultural contact-seeking behaviour was statistically weakened when ethnocentrism was introduced into the model. The present study explores the relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence and the effects, if any, of introducing ethnocentrism into the mix of variables before addressing the details of the present study, it is necessary to outline the recent findings related to sensation seeking in the context of intercultural communication.

1. Sensation seeking

As illustrated by a vast body of literature in health communication, sensation seeking is a personality variable that is associated with adventure/thrill seeking, risky health behaviour, and a thirst for novelty (Everett & Palmgreen, 1995; Zuckerman, 1983, 1994). High sensation seekers enjoy physiologically stimulating experiences and the intense emotions

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 914 607 2903.

E-mail addresses: lily.arasaratnam@alphacrucis.edu.au (L.A. Arasaratnam), smitach@rutgers.edu (S.C. Banerjee).

¹ Tel.: +61 2 9645 9000.

associated with such experiences. Research reveals that high sensation seekers are at more risk for drug and alcohol abuse and other risky behaviours that may adversely affect one's health, due to their affinity for new and thrilling experiences. Despite this sobering pre-disposition in high sensation seekers, they also seem to be predisposed to more socially acceptable forms of novelty-seeking, such as seeking contact with people from other cultures, as revealed in recent research. Morgan and Arasaratnam (2003) found preliminary evidence that high sensation seekers exhibited attitudes that are conducive for building intercultural friendships, and Arasaratnam's (2004) follow-up study on these findings supported the prior findings. Following these studies, further research revealed evidence to suggest that sensation seeking is related intercultural contact-seeking behaviour and even levels of sojourner satisfaction (Arasaratnam, 2005; Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007). These findings provide significant insight into the communication habits of high sensation seekers, revealing that the very affinity for novelty and adventure which drives high sensation seekers to pursue potentially dangerous behaviours (such as drug use and high risk recreational activities) also motivates high sensation seekers to look for opportunities to communicate with culturally different others. This may explain why some people are more likely to volunteer at international student services on university campuses or sign up for study abroad programs compared to others. What is yet to be tested, however, is a direct relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence. That is, though previous studies in this line of research have established that high sensation seekers possess attitudes that are conducive for the formation of intercultural friendships and are more likely to look for opportunities to interact with people from other cultures, it is not clear whether once they find these opportunities they are able to communicate effectively and appropriately. The present study endeavours to address this.

2. Intercultural communication competence (ICC)

Though there is much debate on the precise nature of intercultural communication competence (ICC), there appears to be consensus among researchers that ICC has to do with effectiveness (ability to accomplish one's goals) and appropriateness (to exhibit expected and accepted behaviour in context) in intercultural situations (Arasaratnam, 2007; Bradford, Allen, & Beisser, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In recent research, Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) developed a model of ICC based on the premise that ICC should be studied from the perspective of the "other" (as opposed to self-reported perceptions of one's own ICC), incorporating multiple cultural perspectives. The researchers used an inductive approach to arrive at five variables related to ICC, based entirely on the participants' responses. The relationship between these variables was later tested to arrive at one of the few models of ICC which incorporates multiple cultural perspectives (Arasaratnam, 2006). The model identifies experience, listening skills, positive attitudes toward people from other cultures, motivation to interact with people from other cultures, and ability to empathise (engage in cognitive and emotional role-taking behaviour) as variables contributing to ICC.

As Arasaratnam's (2006) model reveals, positive attitude toward people of other cultures, leads to motivation to communicate with such people which in turn leads to more experience in intercultural communication and contributes to ICC. Similarly, the ability to empathise enables a person to listen well which in turn contributes to being perceived as a competent intercultural communicator. Empathy also contributes to positive attitudes toward people of other cultures. In other words, the five variables identified in the model interact to produce a result which is ICC (as perceived by the "other").

Apart from the multiple theoretical approaches to studying ICC (and finding consensus in these approaches), researchers have also been faced with the challenge of measuring ICC in a satisfactory manner. Developing instruments that translate well into multiple cultural contexts presents unique challenges to the researcher, compared to instruments developed for use in culturally homogeneous populations (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Based on the theoretical foundation of Arasaratnam's (2006) model of ICC, a new instrument of ICC was developed and successfully tested on a culturally diverse pool of participants (Arasaratnam, 2009). It is this instrument of ICC that is used in the present study, to explore the relationship between ICC and sensation seeking.

3. Sensation seeking and ICC

Given high sensation seekers appear to possess attitudes that are conducive for intercultural contact and given high sensation seekers are motivated to look for intercultural contact, one can argue that, assuming opportunity for intercultural interactions exist, high sensation seekers would have more experience in interacting with people from other cultures compared to low sensation seekers (because high sensation seekers appear to actively pursue such opportunities). Arasaratnam's (2006) model of ICC shows a relationship between intercultural experience, motivation to interact with people from other cultures, and positive attitudes toward people from other cultures, all leading to ICC. Based on this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. When mediated by variables associated positively associated with ICC, there is a positive relationship between sensation seeking and ICC.

One of the variables that have been associated negatively with ICC in past research is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the attitude that one's own culture is central to or superior to that of others (Neuliep, 2002). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue that high levels of ethnocentrism may lead to ineffective communication because an ethnocentric person tends to interpret others' behaviour based on his/her own cultural perspective, thus arguably distorting the meaning behind the

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات