A Comparative Study of Intercultural Communication in China and Japan

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Abstract. This paper presents the current situation of intercultural communication research in China and Japan in terms of the publications, theoretical constructs, the activities of the Institute and the configuration of intercultural communication courses. The purpose is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in comparison, and then to explore feasible approaches for the development of intercultural communication research in China. It is found that China can further promote the research in this field by increasing funding for theoretical research, introducing classic original works, involving professionals in translation and encouraging multidisciplinary and sustainable development.

Keywords. Intercultural communication studies, theoretical constructs, multidisciplinary, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication exists in every corner of human life. *The Silent Language*, written by Edward Hall in 1959, first used the concept of intercultural communication and made an in-depth analysis of verbal communication behaviour. It can be called the foundation work of intercultural communication. It is generally accepted that intercultural communication research began in Europe and the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Since then, after six or seven decades of refinement and continuous exploration by many scholars, intercultural communication research has made significant progress and gradually become an independent discipline, as characterized by the publication of a large number of academic works, the convening of related academic conferences, the establishment of research and education societies, and the setting of university curricula, especially the theoretical framework is gradually clear and the content is constantly enriched. Intercultural studies in both China and Japan began after the United States had already achieved certain results. Japan was about 20 years ahead of China, starting with a large number of translations of European and American treatises on the subject and developing them as they were introduced, studying both other countries and their own, until they developed into a new period with a relatively complete system from popular science to theory. This paper will make a comparison from four aspects: the books written, the theories created, the activities of the Institute's research and the intercultural communication-related courses offered in universities.

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2. Papers and Books on Intercultural Communication

The authors conducted a search on CiNii using the keyword "Intercultural Communication" and counted the number of papers from 1980 to 2020, as shown in Figure 1. As Ro Tao pointed out, Japan's research in this field experienced the exploration period in 1980s and the development period in 1990s [1]. However, at the same time, the rapid development in the early 21st century was also very evident until the momentum of development slightly weakened and gradually stabilised around 2013.
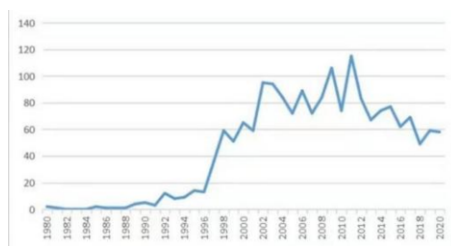

Figure 1 Statistical Table of IC Papers in CiNii, Japan

The authors counted a total of 98 articles in CiNii in 2017 and 2016, covering 26 articles on intercultural communication (including various aspects such as methods, basic concepts, behaviors, etc.); 22 articles on foreign language teaching, learning and research, and 17 articles on intercultural understanding, education and communication; 5 articles on intercultural adaptation (including nursing, training, parenting, etc.); 3 articles on identity; 7 articles on reports on overseas studies; 3 articles on foreign students' education; 3 articles on cultural comparison, and other contents such as diplomatic war, Japanese theory, etc. The following years also witness the multidisciplinary nature of research in this field. It is also interesting to note that from 2008 to 2020 Junko Aoki has been working on "'Fictional World' and 'Real World': Connecting the act of reading fiction with the act of learning intercultural communication". From fictional depictions of separation, death and reality given to children to homosexuality and even the two struggles of Hillary and Clinton, it is examined in a comprehensive manner in a series of discourses.

In terms of books, a number of scholars, such as Satoshi Ishii and Richiko Ikeda, have worked for many years to produce a complete system of books in this field in Japan, ranging from introductory books with the nature of popular science, the development of research methods, the study of practical training activities to the construction of a theoretical system. For example, the book *Intercultural Communication: The New Intercultural Conditions* covers the basic concepts of communication and also intercultural communication education, etc. [2] The book *Intercultural Communication Research Methods* introduces the general research methods of intercultural communication, each chapter accompanied by citations and references to facilitate extended study and research [3]. In the book *Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, whether it is the explanation of concepts or the dynamics of intercultural contact in specific scenes, it is limited to two pages, which are full of content [4]. The book cites classics, reviews and prospects, and has rich connotations. In addition, there is *The History and Present of Intercultural Contact*, which examines the history and present of intercultural contact from a historical perspective

[5]; *Theories of Intercultural Communication*, which critically interprets existing theories related to intercultural communication[6]; and *Intercultural Understanding and Communication 1&2*, which deals with communication from various perspective, is divided into two volumes: *Language and Culture*[7]*;* and *People and Organisations*[8]*.*

In the research, the authors found that a large number of foreign original works and translations in this field were published in Japan. Just take the book *Introduction to Intercultural Communication* as a popular science academic works that advocates self-learning, self-thinking, and independent creation of (knowledge) systems, for example, the text is annotated with a bibliography of books referenced by the editors, including 48 original titles and 104 translations (translations involving nearly 100 scholars and 42 publishers). This has contributed to the simultaneous development of intercultural communication research in various fields.

In order to clarify the current situation of this field in China, the authors searched CSSCI papers from 1989 to 2020 on Wanfang Data Knowledge Service Platform with "intercultural communication" as the key word, and the statistical results of the number of papers are shown in Figure 2. In the 21st century, China has successively hosted the Beijing Olympic Games, the World Expo and the G20 Summit, and the "Chinese element" has gained a remarkable status in the international arena. At the same time, investment in scientific research has increased significantly and the number of papers in various disciplines has soared, benefiting intercultural communication research as well. It can be said that intercultural communication research in China was in its infancy in the 1980s and 1990s, and has since rapidly entered a period of rapid development, with the year 2000 as the boundary, and has shown a marked decline in recent years.
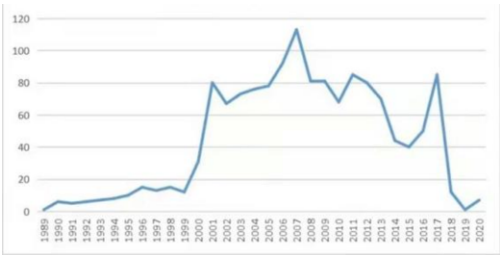

Figure 2 Statistical Table of CSSCI IC Papers on Wanfang Data Knowledge Service Platform, China

In terms of books, there are many classic works, such as *Intercultural Communication Research*, which can be called a guide to communication with British and American people, closely follows foreign research results [9]. Besides, there is *Intercultural Communication Studies*, which interprets the concept of intercultural communicative competence from a multidisciplinary perspective and discusses it through facts and figures [10]; *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication Studies*, which is an introductory guide in this field [11]; and *Intercultural Communication Theory*, which systematically reviews the classical theories of today, taking the core issues of intercultural communication as a framework [12]. In general, however, the books with the title "intercultural communication" are mostly textbooks for university general education, foreign language education and Chinese as a foreign language education. Searching the English version of books, there are *Communication Between*

Cultures [13] and the photocopied and adapted version of *CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION* (8th edition) [14], but the number is extremely limited.

Despite the rapid development of theses and books, the problems that have existed over the years have not yet been resolved. Hu Wenzhong, when counting some of the books and collections of papers published in China from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, pointed out that the research at that time focused on "1) the relationship with verbal communication; 2) non-verbal communication; 3) comparison of Chinese and Western customs; 4) comparison of Chinese and Western business management modes; and 5) studies on nationality. There has also been some discussion of the theories and research methods of intercultural communication studies, but, in general, there have been fewer works in this field [15]."

However, the development in the next decade is still not optimistic. Peng Shiyong discussed the current situation of intercultural communication research in China by analyzing the contents of 1,109 papers on intercultural communication published in 564 domestic academic journals from 1994 to 2003, and pointed out the main problems: poor theoretical research, narrow research scope, many articles of "shallow discussion", "tentative discussion" and "brief discussion", and few empirical research results [16]. To solve these problems, we must promote and encourage the use of scientific research methods for intercultural communication research.

Then, from the research of Liao Caizhi, it is found that after more than 30 years of intercultural communication research, the problem was the same as ever [17]. Taking "intercultural studies" as the key word, he counted and analyzed 3,854 papers on intercultural communication collected from January 1, 2002 to January 1, 2012, published by 500 domestic journals, conference papers and newspapers and included in China Academic Journal Network Publishing General Database, China Academic Journal Full-text Database, China Important Conference Papers Full-text Database and China Important Newspapers Full-text Database, etc. The problems found are as follows: the research in various fields is extremely unbalanced, the research scope is narrow, the inherent thinking mode is partial, the theoretical research is relatively poor, and scientific research methods are lacking.

3. The Construction of Intercultural Communication Theory

Pei Bei divides the study of intercultural communication theory into three stages in terms of chronology, namely, the early research, the 1960s-1980s and the 1980s-present [18]. On this basis, this paper presents the theoretical construction of China and Japan in these stages respectively. In terms of theoretical construction, the United States has always been at the forefront of intercultural communication research. Early research can be traced back to the post-World War II to the mid-1950s, in order to adapt foreigners to American culture, cultivate pro-American groups and conduct cross-cultural training for American diplomats and people who are going to work overseas. At this time, theoretical research on intercultural communication was mainly a comparative study of differences between different cultures. The most representative are American anthropologist Hall's cultural behavior composition and high and low context culture theory, Kuluckhohn&Stordtbeck's cultural value orientation theory and Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions. By this time, the Japanese scholar Tetsuro Watsuji had denied the 'individualism' of Western philosophy and proposed the concept of 'interpersonalism', which focuses on the relationship between human beings

[19], which laid the foundation for the contextualism put forward by Eshun Hamaguchi [20]. The theoretical construction of this period in China has not yet begun.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the United States began to study the many problems that young people who participated in the Vietnam War and peacekeeping forces displayed during their exposure to overseas cultures and their readjustment to their own cultures after returning home, followed by practical training in mainstream cultural adaptation and intercultural adaptation for international students, international business people, immigrants and others, and began to experiment with theoretical research. On the basis of early research results scholars put forward a series of related theories centred on cultural adaptation, including the intercultural adaptation cycle theory, which uses the communicator's psychological and emotional factors as a basis for measurement and provides a one-way, linear depiction of the adaptation process (e.g. Lysgarg's U-curve model, Gullahorn et al.'s W-curve model, Junaman's six-stage theory of intercultural adaptation, etc.); from the macro level, it reveals Berry's intercultural adaptation strategy of diversity and multidimensional cultural adaptation process and Kim&Ruben's comprehensive and three-dimensional intercultural adjustment theory by putting forward a "third culture". The theoretical construction of this aspect lags behind slightly in Japan, which developed its own theory on the basis of studying European and American theories. For example, Yoshiyasu Uno defined Everett M. Roger's "re-invention" as "transcultural refraction" [21]; Hirobumi Sakaki developed the concept of "Pre-refraction" [22].

After the 1980s, the whole academic circle began to focus the core issues of intercultural communication theory on a certain level of communicative process such as identity, meaning and competence. For example, Cupach & Imahori understand identity as an interpretative framework with an empirical dimension, where identity provides expectations and motivations for individual behaviour, and any individual has multiple identities, but their cultural and relational identities are central to identity management. When discussing identity interaction, it focuses on analyzing the face behavior of communicative individuals, and holds that the behavior of maintaining face is the concrete behavior of identity management. Ting-Toomey proposed a theoretical model of face-negotiation linking cultural differences with conflict management strategies around the issue of identity conflicts in intercultural communication [23]. Milton J. Bennett created a model for the development of intercultural communicative sensitivity that focuses on national superiority (the predominance of one's own cultural worldview) and national relativism (accepting many standards and customs and consciously adjusting behaviour and judgement standards in intercultural situations) [24, 25]. Darla K. Deardorff advocated the pyramid model[3] of intercultural adaptability including internal and external results. Chinese and Japanese scholars have also made a breakthrough in their research on "identity" and "competence" [26]. Japanese scholar Eshun Hamaguchi's contextualism, under the influence of Ruth Benedict's extreme dichotomy of collectivism and individualism, focuses on the relationship between people, introduces the perspective of "the relatum" and redefines the definition of "collective" as "the sum of relational entities" [19].

Chinese scholars have also made many attempts in the theoretical construction of intercultural communicative competence, and have developed a number of ideas and theories of reference value. Lin Dajian explains the three dimensions of intercultural communicative competence: 'behaviour, knowledge structure and moral ethics' [27]; Gao Yihong uses "Tao and Instrument" to interpret the connotation of intercultural communicative competence [28]; Xu Lisheng identifies our dimensions of intercultural

communicative competence: grammar, social language, discourse and strategy [29]. Chen Guoming thinks that communicative competence is similar to intercultural communicative competence. The only difference is that intercultural communicative competence emphasizes contextual context. Besides the effectiveness and appropriateness of interpersonal interaction, it also pays great attention to the interaction between people and the communicative environment and the cultural identity of both parties [30]. In addition, there are Gao Yongchen's moderate principle of cultural empathy and the intercultural communication evaluation system including knowledge system and performance system [31]. The above-mentioned scholars have either focused on the principles of linguistic rules or refined their own culture to explain the connotations of intercultural communication, which has contributed to the theoretical research in this field in China.

Besides, the research results of Chinese and Japanese scholars on their own culture and their own people are also very remarkable, such as Chie Nakane's *Japanese Society: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Japanese Mindset & Culture* which emphasizes the particularity of the Japanese[32]; Takeo Doi's *The Anatomy of Dependence*[33], Takeo Funabiki's *Reconsideration of Theories of Japanese Culture*[34]; Jia Yuxin's "The Concept of Harmony and Difference", which emphasizes the characteristics of Chinese culture[10]; Chen Guoming's "Harmony" concept in Chinese interpersonal communication[35]; Hu Chao's "Oneness with the Universe", which is the core of the structure of intercultural communication[36]. They have played a positive role in promoting the development of intercultural communication research in both countries.

4. Other Aspects Related to Intercultural Communication Studies

When it comes to intercultural communication research, the authors believe it is necessary to examine the resources that have contributed and facilitated the research. In Japan, the "Intercultural Communication Society" (SIETAR JAPAN for short) is quite influential. Founded in 1985, the Society is a branch of SIETAR International, which was founded in 1974. The society is mainly engaged in activities, research and practice, and cultivates smooth communication and cooperation between people and organizations of different cultural backgrounds. The Society holds monthly regular meetings and annual general meetings, and also edits and publishes the Society's minutes and the journal *Intercultural Communication*. In addition, the Institute of Intercultural Studies of Kanda University of International Studies, which is affiliated to the Kandagaigo Group, was established in 1983. From language, religion to economy, politics and education, the Institute edits and distributes the journal *Intercultural Communication Studies* for the purpose of engaging in various related research, education and enlightenment activities in this field. It was later merged with the University's Institute of International Studies in 2012 into the Institute of Global and Intercultural Studies. In addition, there are many resources available in Japan to facilitate research, namely, encyclopedia, websites and corpora and so on, such as 10 volumes *World Encyclopedia of Events* [37]; *Communication* (MSN Encarta Encyclopedia) [38]; *Multicultural Understanding Dictionary* [39]; *Heterocultural House* [40], etc.

In China, the first Intercultural Communication Symposium was held at Harbin Institute of Technology in 1995 and China Association for Intercultural Communication,

a national non-governmental academic organization affiliated to the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Branch of Chinese Higher Education Society, was established to hold a national/international academic symposium every two years. From 2016 onwards, the Association convenes a small high-end forum in every even-numbered year and a large international conference in every odd-numbered year. The Association edits and publishes the Journal of *Intercultural Studies Forum* [41]. Universities in China have established research institutes related to intercultural communication, such as the Institute of Intercultural Communication at Zhejiang University, now called the Institute of Intercultural and Regional Studies, which was formally established in 2004. In addition, as China's "Chinese culture going global" and "One Belt, One Road" communication is in demand, various associations and research institutions are actively building platforms to strengthen China's international communication capacity and accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system. These initiatives have contributed to the study of intercultural communication in China, but the aims and activities of these research institutions mentioned above show that they are mostly in areas where foreign language teachers are active and lack diversity. Within the scope of the authors' investigation, the current research tends to be empirical and no significant results have been seen in the construction of theory in this field.

In terms of curriculum, this paper draws lessons from the research results of Li Mingling et. al and makes a comparison between China and Japan. They used the keyword "Syllabus Intercultural Communication" in Yahoo Japan and input "Specified for a period of up to one year" to target the top 10 schools. The course is offered by departments such as Business Administration, Humanities, Education, Culture, Arts and Sciences, and Japanese Language Education and Research, and is mostly taught over two semesters at four credits. The aim of the course is to acquire the theory of intercultural communication, improve intercultural communication skills, and evaluate one's own abilities through experience, grasp, analysis and comparison. The language requirements for teaching focus on Japanese and English. It's characteristic that there can be international students among those who choose courses. The teaching content varies considerably between universities and is highly variable. The teaching methods are mostly discussions, training, presentations and group discussions. At the same time, they also made an investigation on the courses whose syllabus has been published on "China National Excellent Course Resource Network". It was noted that in 10 universities, nine of the courses were offered in the College of Foreign Languages and one in the College of International Education. The content of the course was mainly lectures, with a relatively small proportion of discussions, case studies and group activities. In addition, the course suffers from a lack of home-made domestic textbooks, a short start period, unclear objective setting, single teaching method, and a lack of experience of the lecturers [42]. The authors conducted a survey on issues related to the course "Intercultural Communication" for undergraduate Japanese language students in domestic universities through Questionnaire Star in October 2019, and found that the above deficiencies still exist [43]. They will certainly lead to limited breadth and depth of research in related fields, and even if entry points are found in teaching practice, the lack of a background of multidisciplinary and comprehensive class knowledge often leads to superficial research.

5. Conclusion

The study found that the quality of domestic intercultural communication research is still uneven, the number of original books and translations is obviously insufficient, researchers are specialized in a single field, and there are few theories with both international influence and Chinese characteristics. It is possible to promote intercultural communication research in China by increasing funding for theoretical research on intercultural communication; introducing classic original works; encouraging professionals in the field of sociology to participate in the translation of original works; strengthening the training of foreign language teachers and interdisciplinary development of Chinese as a foreign language teachers through societies or institutes; and adhering to sustainable development and other aspects.

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