

# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AND THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN A STATE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN NUEVA VIZCAYA

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## Abstract

The study ascertained the intercultural communication apprehension and communication skills of indigenous communities in a state university of southern Nueva Vizcaya. Specifically, it determined the respondents' profile, their intercultural communication apprehension, their perceived factors causing this apprehension and their communication skills. The study further ascertained the significant relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and their communication skills. The study made use of descriptive method of research with 118 respondents who were chosen using purposive random sampling. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and were treated using frequency, percentage, weighted mean and correlation procedures. Findings unveil that Kalanguyas comprised the majority of indigenous community in the campus and of female dominance. They have moderate intercultural communication apprehension and perceived that certain factors fairly often cause their apprehension while they have moderate level of communication skills. Findings further reveal that intercultural communication apprehension generally relates with their communication skills. Significant findings provide baseline reference for educational institutions to help and assist students overcome their apprehension and appreciate their cultural distinctiveness. This study therefore provides benchmarking tool for instructional interventions to harness students' language skills.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication apprehension, communication skills, indigenous communities

## Introduction

As the world becomes highly technological and communication technology becomes more widespread, the chance for interactions between people of drastically different cultures also grows. Collaboration between nations and across cultures is an unavoidable necessity of modern living, with the success of endeavors hinged upon the competence with which each party interacts with the other. Further, these interactions can be beneficial, not just in terms of each group realizing their respective goals, but also at the level of the individuals involved. Persons that experience more intercultural interactions benefit not just by becoming more appealing job applicants to the growing number of employers seeking such experience (Saquing, 2018), but by building skills and breaking down barriers related to success in such interactions. As such, promoting beneficial intercultural contact is a priority for many institutions of higher education that are seeking to prepare their students for careers in an international and multicultural job market.

While communication exists in all cultures and subcultures, communication norms and exceptions may be vastly diverse due to the differences in culture (Bangayan-Manera, 2019). Communication is an ongoing process that involves constant changes within the people involved and their environment.

Communication apprehension was found to be one of the best predictors of willingness to communicate in both intracultural and intercultural contexts (Lin & Rancer, 2003; McCroskey & Richmond,

1987, 1991). More apprehensive individuals were not only less willing to disclose in intercultural interaction, but were also less able to adjust to a new cultural environment (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998; Tominaga, Gudykunst, & Ota, 2003).

Communication apprehension obviously affects communication skills. Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place to another. It may be vocally (using voice), written (using printed or digital media such as books, magazines, websites or emails), visually (using logos, maps, charts or graphs) or non-verbally (using body language, gestures and the tone and pitch of voice). Developing communication skills can help individuals in all aspects of his/her life, from professional life to social gatherings and everything in between. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly and as intended, is a vital life skill and something that should not be overlooked. It is never too late to work on your communication skills and by doing so improve your quality of life.

It is through communication and other symbolic activity in which cultures are developed and maintained. Like relationships, cultures are symbolic creations. Cultures influence the meanings that are given to words and the words that are actually used. Some cultural groups curse more than others do, for instance. You are so good at communicating culturally and are so skilled at moving seamlessly in and out of various groups that you may not even recognize that you are doing it (Bangayan-Manera, 2020)

In the local context, based on empirical data or observations, people who belong to indigenous community find themselves hesitant to socialize or mingle with other people. With the belief that their vernacular language may influence or affect their way of communication, this prompted some of them to evade from interacting with others especially of different culture from theirs. Hence, this creates intercultural communication apprehension.

Premised on the aforementioned concepts, this study ascertained the intercultural communication apprehension and communication skills of indigenous communities in a state university of Southern Nueva Vizcaya – the Nueva Vizcaya State University, Bambang Campus.

### **Research Methodology**

Data were gathered through a questionnaire on intercultural communication apprehension from the Personal Report Communication Apprehension (PRICA) questionnaire developed by Neuliep, J.W., & McCroskey, J.C. (1997). On the other hand, items on factors affecting communication apprehension were derived from the study of Tom et al (2013) while items on communication skills were adopted from Pierrette (1999). Frequency, percentage, weighted mean and the correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) was used to statistically treat the data gathered.

### **Results and Discussion**

1. Respondents' profile reveals that 76 or 64.4 percent are female while 42 or 35.6 percent are male indicating the dominance of female respondents. A detailed account on the respondents' cultural affiliation as represented by the university's accredited indigenous communities is shown in the table below:

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile According to Ethnic Affiliation.*

Cultural Affiliation/Indigenous Communities	Frequency	Percent
Ifugao Student Alliance (IFSA)	28	23.7
Kankana-ey/Ibaloi Student Alliance (KISA)	30	25.4
Kalanguya Student Organization (KSO)	42	35.6
Bugkalot Student Organization (BUGSO)	10	8.5
Others (isinays, gaddangs)	8	6.8
Total	118	100.0

The table reflects that 28 or 23.7 percent belong to IFSA, 30 or 25.4 percent belong to KISA, 42 or 35.6 percent were KSO, 10 or 8.5 percent were BUGSO and 8 or 6.8 percent belong to other ethnic affiliations. It further shows that most of the respondents in this study were affiliated with the KSO cultural group.

The figure indicates that the population of students belonging to the indigenous group of Nueva Vizcaya State University, a state university in southern Nueva Vizcaya is dominated by the KSO or the Kalanguya's followed by the KISA or the Kankana-ey/Ibaloi tribe. The IFSA or Ifugao group comes third then the BUGSO or Bugkalot tribe and lastly the group of other tribes which consists of Isinays and the Gaddangs.

It is inferred that the university reflects diverse culture among students as its direct clientele.

- The respondents moderately agree of their intercultural communication apprehension evident by the area mean of 3.34, qualitatively described as a moderate level of intercultural communication apprehension.

The data in the table indicate that the respondents have normal level of intercultural communication apprehension or anxiety. Significantly, the respondents strongly agree in one of the indicators which reveal that they generally feel comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures with a mean of 4.28. This therefore implies that in spite of cultural differences, the respondents find ease and comfort interacting with others of different culture.

Table 2 below illustrates instances where respondents experience intercultural apprehension.

Table 2

*Mean of the Respondents' Intercultural Communication Apprehension*

	Mean	Description
1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.	4.29	Strongly Agree
2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.	2.93	Moderately Agree
3. I like to get involved in group discussions with others who are from different cultures.	4.04	Agree
4. Engaging in group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous.	2.96	Moderately Agree

5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.	3.83	Agree
6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I get nervous.	2.77	Moderately Agree
7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.	3.66	Agree
8. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with person from a different culture.	2.83	Moderately Agree
9. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.	3.79	Agree
10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.	3.70	Moderately Agree
11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.	2.60	Moderately Agree
12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.	3.71	Agree
13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.07	Moderately Agree
14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.	2.61	Moderately Agree
AREA MEAN	3.34	Moderate

When dealing with a person or people of different culture, the respondents agree on their intercultural communication apprehension along getting involved in group discussions; being calm and relaxed in interacting; ordinarily very calm and relaxed in conversations ; they face the prospect of interacting with confidence; and having no fear of speaking up in a conversation with means of 4.04, 3.83, 3.79, 3.71 and 3.66, respectively.

On the other hand, as the respondents further interact with different cultures, they moderately agree of their communication apprehension along conversing which make them feel very relaxed; thoughts become confused and jumbled ; engaging in group discussion makes them nervous ; being tense and nervous ; ordinarily feeling very tense and nervous in a conversation ; participating in a conversation makes them nervous ; communicating with people makes them feel uncomfortable and afraid to speak up in conversations with corresponding means of 3.70, 3.07, 2.96, 2.93, 2.83, 2.67, 2.61 and 2.60.

The findings imply three significant points. First, the respondents apparently demonstrate intercultural communication apprehension which is found midpoint level which is considerably leading to high apprehension through the moderately agree to agree responses. Second, they, as members of indigenous communities manifest positive viewpoint and attitude towards interaction with persons and people across varying culture. And third, although respondents reveal positive stand point in dealing with intercultural communications, negative emotions also exist but least manifested by them.

The concept of intercultural communication is defined as a communication process, which occurs between people or groups with different cultures (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998). These people or groups who are stated to be different from each other in terms of world perspectives, values and norms, behavior patterns (Güvenç, 1997) They may be sometimes reluctant to communicate with each other or be anxious during the process of communication due to cultural differences in the intercultural communication process (Gudykunst, 1995). People with high anxiety feel themselves in an uncertain situation as during

the intercultural communication process, the person or situation they encounter is new and different; thus, it causes their anxiety levels to increase more (Buss, 1980).

3. The respondents fairly often agree on the factors that may cause their communication apprehension evident by the area mean of 3.20. The table that follows clearly depicts the perceived factors causing their communication apprehension.

Table 3

*Mean on Respondents' Perceived Factors Causing Communication Apprehension*

	Mean	Qualitative Description
1. I always prepare carefully before I do any English presentation.	3.85	Often
2. I always rehearse my talk before any English presentation.	3.70	Often
3. I know the format/ organization of an individual presentation.	3.31	Fairly Often
4. I know several ways to begin my talk/presentation.	3.59	Often
5. I know several ways to end my talk/presentation.	3.54	Often
6. I feel nervous and tense even when I speak using my first language.	2.81	Fairly Often
7. I feel uncomfortable talking in front of my classmates of different gender and culture.	2.88	Fairly Often
8. Because I am laughed at whenever I speak English, I do not like to speak the language.	2.49	Seldom
9. I think I cannot project my voice clearly during a talk or presentation.	2.94	Fairly Often
10. I think I cannot produce my words in English clearly.	2.94	Fairly Often
AREA MEAN	3.21	Fairly Often

It can be gleaned in the table that the respondents fairly often perceived that there are factors which may cause comprehension apprehension with an area mean of 3.21.

Noticeably, the respondents often perceived that the respondents often prepare carefully before they do any English presentation with the highest mean of 3.84 among other indicators. This is followed by rehearsal of their talk before any English presentation; knowing several ways to begin the talk/presentation ; and knowing several ways to end the talk/presentation with the means of 3.70, 3.59, 3.54, respectively.

On the other hand, the respondents fairly often perceive the factors causing communication apprehension such as knowing the format /organization of an individual presentation; cannot project their voice clearly during a talk or presentation and cannot produce their words in English clearly ; feeling comfortable talking in front of their classmates of different gender and culture; feeling nervous and tense even when they speak using their first language with means of 3.30, 2.94, 2.94 2.88 and 2.81, respectively.

It is significant to note that the lowest mean on the factors causing communication apprehension is evident in the indicator "Because I am laughed at whenever I speak English, I do not like to speak the language" with a mean of 2.49, described as seldom. This could be inferred on the respondents' self-confidence and capacity to intercultural communicate.

It is further revealed that there are certain factors which cause comprehension apprehension. Preparations and knowledge are perceived as greatly causing this apprehension while technical knowledge on format as well as voice projection, ease and comfort arise as least factors causing communication apprehension

A tendency to be anxious when communicating may be specific to only a few settings (e.g., public speaking) or may exist in most everyday communication situations, or may even be part of a general anxiety trait that arises in many facets of an individual's life" (Bangayan-Manera et.al, 2020).

4. The respondents' communication skills level is high evident by the area mean of 3.83. Most of the respondents assess their communication skills as often.

A detailed account of the respondents' communication skills is shown in the table below.

Table 4

*Mean on Respondents' in terms of Communication Skills.*

	Mean	Description
1. I pay attention to the nonverbal clues of others	3.71	Often
2. I attempt to understand ideas that are different from mine	3.96	Often
3. I attempt to understand the other person's frame of reference	3.92	Often
4. I can accurately paraphrase another's words.	3.47	Often
5. I am at ease in the world of emotions	3.42	Often
6. I accept suggestions from people with whom I am working.	4.24	Very Often
7. I asked for more details and clarifications	4.20	Very Often

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8. I make sure I distinguish between fact and opinion.	3.96	Often
9. I encourage others to clarify their thoughts	3.86	Often
10. I give critical feedback when necessary	3.49	Often
11. I emphasize action or behavior that I appreciate	3.83	Often
12. I am aware of the effects of my behavior on others	3.86	Often
13. I accept critical feedbacks from others	4.03	Very Often
14. I openly acknowledge my errors.	4.21	Very Often
15. I ask others for critical feedbacks.	3.89	Often
16. I adapt myself to the individuals with whom I am interacting	3.89	Often
17. I take the initiative in settling misunderstandings as soon as they arise	3.69	Often
18. When I am challenged, I am able to discuss it calmly.	3.80	Often
19. I clearly express my disagreement	3.47	Often
20. When appropriate, I apologize without excessive justification	3.67	Often
Area Mean	3.83	High

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The table further shows that the highest evaluation of the respondents on their communication skills is evident on the indicators “I accept suggestions from people with whom I am working” with a mean of 4.32; “I asked for more details and clarification” with a mean of 4.20; “I accept critical feedback from others” with a mean of 4.03; and “I openly acknowledge my errors” with a mean of 4.22. This shows that the respondents accept suggestions, feedbacks, and they know how to acknowledge their mistakes which is important in learning and interacting with others.

Meanwhile, it shows in the table that that the respondents often pay attention to the nonverbal clues of others (3.71); often attempt to understand ideas that are different from themselves (3.95); often attempt to understand the other person’s frame of reference (3.93); often accurate paraphrase another’s words (3.46); often be at ease in the world of emotions (3.42); often make sure to distinguish between fact and opinion (3.9576); often encourage others to clarify their thoughts (3.85); often give critical feedback when necessary (3.49); often emphasize action or behavior that they appreciate (3.83); often aware of the effects of their behavior on others (3.86); often ask others for critical feedback (3.88); often adapt themselves to the individuals with whom they interact (3.88); often take initiative in settling

misunderstandings as soon as they arise (3.6949); often challenged and able to discuss it calmly (3.79); often clearly express their disagreements (3.47); often apologize without excessive justification (3.66).

Therefore, based on the respondents' evaluation of their communication skills, it is clearly shown that they have good communication skills and they can interact with others with ease. Being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly and as intended, is a vital life skill and something that should not be overlooked.

Communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. 2000). One can share meaning in what he/she says and how he/she says it, both in oral and written forms.

5. Intercultural communication apprehension significantly correlates with communication skills.

Table 5

*Correlation Analysis between the Respondents' Intercultural Communication Apprehension and Communication Skills.*

		Intercultural Communication Apprehension mean	Communication Skills mean
Intercultural Communication Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
Communication Skills	Pearson Correlation	.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	

It shows from the table that there is a significant relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and communication skills at .01 level of significance with a Pearson correlation at .292.

The intercultural communication apprehension of the respondents clearly relates with their communication skills.

According to Dodd (1991), intercultural communication is a scientific field whose object of interest is the interaction between individuals and groups from different cultures, and which examines the influence of culture on who people are, how they act, feel, think and, evidently, speak and listen. In support to this, Stephan, Stephan and Gudykunst (1999), said that "when individuals who come from different groups interact, they experience in one way or another a certain preoccupation. This preoccupation can be due to the possibility of not being sufficiently able to remain detached, fear of being negatively affected by the encounter, apprehension about being the victim of misunderstanding, confrontation, etc. The anxiety generated by all these possibilities can in and of itself create difficulties for the interview and generate effects which negatively affect the relationship between speaker and listener."

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The Kalaguyas representing the Kalanguya Student Organization comprised the majority of indigenous community in the campus which is of female dominance.
2. The respondents' intercultural communication apprehension level is moderate.



3. The respondents' fairly often perceived that there are factors causing communication apprehension.
4. The respondents have an average communication skills.
5. There is a significant relationship between intercultural communication apprehension and communication skills.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Intercultural communication apprehension may be addressed by recognizing and appreciating the culture of indigenous communities. This can be further realized by acknowledging students' cultural differences and offer classroom and school- based activities that could help them overcome their anxiety in interaction through public exposure and engagements in various forms of oral discourse.
2. Students on the other hand may actively participate in any class and school activities to help students value themselves and others and harness their confidence level.
3. Educational institutions may consider initiating instructional interventions in order to develop the language skills among indigenous communities.
4. A similar study may be conducted focusing on direct testing of the level of communication apprehension and communication skills among indigenous communities while respondents from non-indigenous communities may likewise be considered.

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