

A Correlation Study on the Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity of English Majors in an Ethnic University

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Abstract: Under the background of “cross-cultural thinking education”, one of the innovative development of foreign language education theories proposed by Professor Sun Youzhong, this paper further confirmed the foundation and significance of cross-cultural competence in the education of foreign language majors, as well as the vital role of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity to intercultural competence training. This paper used the questionnaire survey method to investigate the current situation of the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of English majors in a certain ethnic university in Northwest China, and analyzed the correlation between the two dimensions. The research results show that: 1. The overall level of the cross-cultural pragmatic competence of English majors in this ethnic university is not optimistic, while the overall level of cross-cultural sensitivity is medium to high compared to other ordinary universities. 2. There are significant differences in the levels of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of subjects in different grades. The level of significant differences in cross-cultural pragmatic competence is significantly higher than that of cross-cultural sensitivity. There is a significant and strong correlation between the level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity and the grade at the P value of 0.01, and the significance is both 0.04. 3. There is no correlation between the overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity, while the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels of subjects in different grades have a P value of 0.05. There is a significant correlation between cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level only in junior year ($R=.285^*$, $P=.045$). ($R=.285^*$, $P=.045$). Among them, there is a significant and strong correlation between the three factors (interaction engagement, confidence and respect for cultural difference) and cross-cultural sensitivity. The three factors are also the three main decisive factors affecting intercultural pragmatic competence.

1. Introduction

In the context of foreign language education innovation theory-“cross-cultural thinking education” [1], the importance of cross-cultural competence training has reached a general consensus in foreign language academic circles. It is gradually permeating all aspects of foreign language professional talent training. The academic community is also actively exploring how to cultivate foreign language talents in different majors, and how to integrate the cultivation of cross-cultural thinking ability from the three levels of language, literature and culture into the setting, teaching objectives, content, methods and evaluation of different professional courses. The cultivation of cross-cultural competence is the basis of “cross-cultural thinking and education”.

Cross-cultural competence refers to those basic communicative competences used in all cross-cultural situations [2]. Looking at the cross-cultural competence models built by scholars at home and abroad, the common components of cross-cultural competence include three levels of cognition, emotion, and behavior, involving three categories of motivation, knowledge, and skills. Cognition corresponds to cultural knowledge, emotion corresponds to cross-cultural sensitivity, and

behavior is manifested as cross-cultural effectiveness. Cross-cultural sensitivity refers to the ability of individuals to understand and appreciate different cultures. It can promote the adaptability and effectiveness of behavior in cross-cultural communication, and generate positive emotions [3].

Pragmatic competence, as one of the important key components of cross-cultural communicative competence, refers to the ability to use language to communicate with others, including expression and understanding [4]. Cross-cultural pragmatic competence focuses more on the ability to use language appropriately in the context of cross-cultural communication. Especially in the context of cross-cultural communication in which English is the international lingua franca, the original pragmatic norms based on native speakers of English are no longer suitable for guiding current cross-cultural communication that occur in the context of communication between native speakers and non-native speakers, or that among non-native speakers [5]. Therefore, in view of the importance of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity in the cultivation of cross-cultural competence, the situation that there are few domestic and foreign investigations on the current situation of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of English majors in ethnic colleges and universities, and the empirical research status of relationship between the two dimensions, this paper explored the status quo of its level and the correlation between the two dimensions through the questionnaire survey method.

2. Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following questions through quantitative analysis:

- 1) What is the overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and cross-cultural sensitivity of English majors in ethnic colleges and universities?
- 2) Are there differences in the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels of subjects in different grades?
- 3) Is there a correlation between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level of English majors in ethnic colleges and universities? If so, how is the relevance?

3. Research Objects

The subjects of this survey were all 169 students from three grades of English major in a certain ethnic university in Northwest China. The distribution of the questionnaire was completed with the assistance of their teachers. A total of 169 questionnaires were distributed. Because the questionnaire of the study was conducted when the seniors were leaving school after graduation, senior students weren't been sampled in this survey. Before the test, the students were explained about the purpose of the test and promised that the data were kept confidential for research purposes only. It took the students about 20 minutes to fill out the form. After the test, 169 questionnaires were returned, with a recovery rate of 100%. Among them, 6 questionnaires were missing due to missing data in some test questions. The final valid questionnaire was 163, and the effective recovery rate was 96.45%. The background information of valid subjects is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Status and Percentage of Valid Subjects

Gender		Grade			Oversea experience		English level			
Male	Female	Fresh year	Sophomore year	Junior year	Yes	No	CET 4	CET 6	TEM 4	None
17	146	53	60	50	7	156	83	30	20	30
10.4%	89.6%	32.5%	36.8%	30.7%	4.3%	95.7%	50.9%	18.4%	12.3%	18.4%

4. Research Tools

(1) The cross-cultural pragmatic proficiency test paper was designed according to Ran Yongping [7] and Liu Jianda's DCT test [8]. This test consists of two parts: the first part contains 20

multiple-choice questions, and the second part contains 5 true or false judgment questions. The items for testing pragmatic language ability are 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24; the items for testing social language ability are 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25. In order to ensure the reliability of this test paper, the author randomly selected a class (a total of 25 students) majored in English in that university to do a pilot study. The overall reliability of the test paper (Cronbach's Alpha) coefficient is 0.854. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2 the Pc Test Reliability of the Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Proficiency Test Paper

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of terms	Valid number of terms
Pragmatic language competence	0.893	12	12
Sociolinguistic competence	0.837	13	13
PC Test	0.854	25	25

(2) The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale adopts the ISS developed by Chen & Starosta in 2000, and makes appropriate changes to the test-related information content of the scale. This scale is one of the few cross-cultural sensitivity test scales in the world that is suitable for different cultural backgrounds and has high reliability [9]. It includes 5 variables including interaction engagement, respect for cultural difference, interaction confidence, enjoyment, and attentiveness, with a total of 24 items. This questionnaire used Likertscale, which requires the subjects to choose the degree of agreement based on their actual situation. 1 means strongly disagree, 2 means disagree, 3 means not sure, 4 means agree, 5 means strongly agree. The author also repeatedly verified the reliability of the scale in this study, and the overall reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) coefficient is 0.782, as shown in Table 2 [10].

Table 3 Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Measurement Table Iss Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	Number of items
.782	.790	24

5. Data Collection and Analysis

The scale data was entered into SPSS 19.0 software for data sorting and reverse question re-scoring. Then, the descriptive statistics, one-way variance and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of the English majors of the university and the correlation between the two dimensions.

6. Research Results and Discussion

6.1 Analysis of the Overall Level of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity

6.1.1 An Analysis of the Overall Level of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence of the Test Subjects

The cross-cultural pragmatic proficiency test paper is divided into two parts, a total of 25 questions, each with 4 points, and a total score of 100 points. As shown in Table 4, the highest score of the test subjects was 92, the lowest score was 63, and the average score was 69.23. It indicates that the overall level of intercultural pragmatic competence of English majors in this university is not optimistic. There is much room for improvement. Moreover, the internal differences of the subjects are large (SD=9.981).

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean value	Standard deviation
Pragmatic Competence	163	40	92	69.23	9.981
Valid N (list status)	163				

6.1.2 Analysis of the Overall Level of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity of the Test Subjects

The cross-cultural sensitivity questionnaire has 24 questions, each with 5 points and a total score of 120 points. As shown in Table 5, the highest score of the subjects was 112.00, the lowest was 63.00, and the average score was 89.3190. It indicates that the cross-cultural sensitivity of English majors in this university is at a moderate level. There are large internal differences in the subjects ($SD=7.87613$). Among them, the sense of respect for cultural difference is the strongest ($M=4.3497$), the degree of interaction engagement is the next strongest ($M=3.8624$), and the interaction confidence is the weakest ($M=2.9387$).

Table 5 Cross-cultural sensitivity and descriptive statistics of 5 factors					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean value	Standard deviation
ISS	163	2.63	4.67	3.7216	.32817
Interaction engagement	163	2.29	5.00	3.8624	.47351
Respect for cultural difference	163	2.83	5.00	4.3497	.41788
Interaction confidence	163	1.40	5.00	2.9387	.53302
Interaction enjoyment	163	1.67	5.00	3.6074	.63712
Interaction attentiveness	163	1.67	5.00	3.5562	.49143
ISS total	163	63.00	112.00	89.3190	7.87613
Valid N (list status)	163				

6.2 A Comparative Analysis of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity Levels of Test Subjects in Different Grades

6.2.1 Analysis of the Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence Level of Test Subjects in Different Grades

As shown in Table 6, the pragmatic proficiency level of junior English majors of this university was the strongest in the three grades ($M=71.12$), the second strongest was students in the sophomore year ($M=70.93$), and the weakest was the freshmen ($M=65.51$). The results of this study conform to objective laws. The higher the grade, the stronger the level of intercultural pragmatic competence. As shown in Figure 1, the pragmatic competence of the third and second grades was similar, and the pragmatic competence of the first grade was slightly lower. The pragmatic competence of the three grades was basically the same, showing a horizontal pattern.

Table 6 Comparison of Mean Values of Pragmatic Competence of Subjects in Different Grades					
Pragmatic Competence					
Grade	Mean value	N	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1	65.51	53	10.175	40	88
2	70.93	60	9.135	48	92
3	71.12	50	9.841	40	88
Total	69.23	163	9.981	40	92

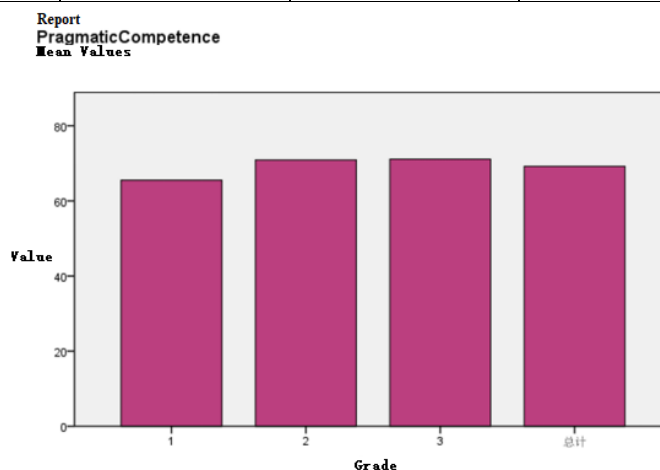


Fig.1 Comparison of the Mean Values of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence of Subjects in Different Grades

6.2.2 Analysis of the Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Level of Subjects in Different Grades

Table 7 Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Descriptive Statistics of 5 Factors of Subjects in Different Grades							
Grade		Interaction engagement	Respect for cultural difference	Interaction confidence	Interaction enjoyment	Interaction attentive-ness	ISS Total
1	Mean value	3.9326	4.5031	3.0830	3.6415	3.6038	91.6981
	N	53	53	53	53	53	53
	Standard deviation	.36914	.37051	.47464	.61272	.43391	6.62044
2	Mean value	3.8381	4.2917	2.9067	3.6500	3.6111	88.9333
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Standard deviation	.49450	.43788	.54675	.69006	.49543	8.15292
3	Mean value	3.8171	4.2567	2.8240	3.5200	3.4400	87.2600
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50
	Standard deviation	.54229	.40295	.55053	.59917	.53214	8.24079
total	Mean value	3.8624	4.3497	2.9387	3.6074	3.5562	89.3190
	N	163	163	163	163	163	163
	Standard deviation	.47351	.41788	.53302	.63712	.49143	7.87613

As shown in Table 7, the cross-cultural sensitivity level of English majors in their freshman year of this university was the highest ($M=91.6981$), the second highest was the sophomore students ($M=88.9333$), and the weakest was the juniors ($M=87.2600$). This is quite different from the author's research expectations. Among them, the three dimensions of the five factors of cross-cultural sensitivity in the freshman year ranked first in the grade, namely, interaction engagement ($M=3.9326$), respect for cultural difference ($M=4.5031$) and interaction confidence ($M=3.0830$). There were significant differences in the level of cross-cultural sensitivity of subjects in different grades, and there were significant differences in the two dimensions of respect for cultural difference and interaction confidence in cross-cultural sensitivity [10].

6.2.3 A Comparative Analysis of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity Levels of Subjects in Different Grades

Table 8 Comparison of the Mean Values of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity of Subjects in Different Grades			
Grade		ISS	Pragmatic Competence
1	Mean value	91.6981	65.51
	N	53	53
	Standard deviation	6.62044	10.175
2	Mean value	88.9333	70.93
	N	60	60
	Standard deviation	8.15292	9.135
3	Mean value	87.2600	71.12
	N	50	50
	Standard deviation	8.24079	9.841
Total	Mean value	89.3190	69.23
	N	163	163
	Standard deviation	7.87613	9.981

As shown in Table 8, here are some data: the mean value of cross-cultural sensitivity in the first grade ($M=91.6981$) and the mean value of pragmatic competence ($M=65.51$); the mean value of cross-cultural sensitivity in the second grade ($M=88.9333$) and the mean value of pragmatic competence ($M=70.93$); the average value of cross-cultural sensitivity in the third grade ($M=87.2600$), and the average value of pragmatic ability ($M=71.12$). As shown in Figure 2, the

order of cross-cultural sensitivity levels of subjects at different grades is: freshman> sophomore> junior; and the order of pragmatic competence levels of subjects in different years is: junior> sophomore> freshman. This unexpected and interesting research finding is quite different from the author's research expectations. Because according to habitual thinking, this kind of ability development trend does not conform to objective laws, and further interviews are needed to explore the underlying reasons.

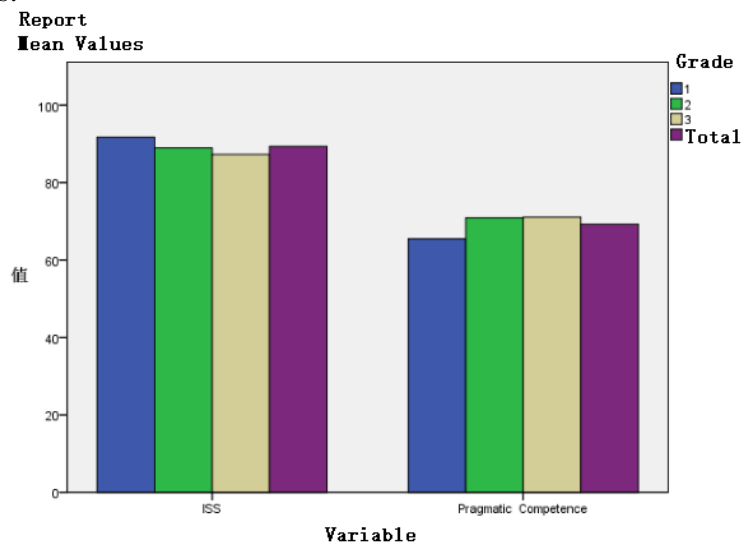


Fig.2 Comparison of the Mean Values of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Pragmatic Competence of Subjects in Different Grades

One-Way ANOVA was used to analyze whether there are significant differences in the F value between groups and the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels among the three grades to further verify the validity of the above research results. Because, only when the significance is less than 0.05, can it prove that there is a significant difference between different grades. As shown in Table 9, there were significant differences in the levels of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of subjects at different grades. The level of significant differences in cross-cultural pragmatic competence was significantly higher than that of cross-cultural sensitivity. Among them, the cross-cultural pragmatic competence F value was 5.774, and the significance level was .004. The cross-cultural sensitivity F value was 4.373, and the significance level was .014. The results of the one-way analysis of variance once again confirmed the validity of the analysis results with large differences in cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels within the subjects.

Table 9 One-Way Analysis of Variance						
		Quadratic sum	df	Mean square	F	Significance
ISS	Inter groups	520.888	2	260.444	4.373	.014
	Inner groups	9528.523	160	59.553		
	total	10049.411	162			
Pragmatic Competence	Inter groups	1086.343	2	543.171	5.774	.004
	Inner groups	15052.259	160	94.077		
	total	16138.601	162			

6.3 Correlation Analysis of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity

6.3.1 Correlation Analysis between Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Overall Sensitivity

Table 10 Correlation Between Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Pragmatic Competence and Grades				
		ISS	Pragmatic Competence	Grade
ISS	Pearson correlation	1	.098	-.225**
	Significance (bilateral)		.215	.004
	N	163	163	163
Pragmatic Competence	Pearson correlation	.098	1	.226**
	Significance (bilateral)	.215		.004
	N	163	163	163
Grade	Pearson correlation	-.225**	.226**	1
	Significance (bilateral)	.004	.004	
	N	163	163	163
**. Significantly correlated at the .01 level (two-sided)				

As shown in Table 10, there was a non-significant correlation between cross-cultural pragmatic competence and the overall level of sensitivity. However, there was a significant correlation between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels of subjects in different grades. The overall level of intercultural pragmatic competence was significantly positive with the grade level at a P value of 0.01 ($R=.226^{**}$, $P=.004$), indicating that the level of intercultural pragmatic competence increases or decrease with the grade level. There was a significant negative correlation between the overall level of cross-cultural sensitivity and grade at the P value of 0.01 ($R=-.225^{**}$, $P=.004$). It shows that the higher the grade, the lower the level of cross-cultural sensitivity. On the contrary, the lower the grade, the higher the level of cross-cultural sensitivity. The P value between the two and the grade was 0.04 at the level of 0.01, showing a significant and strong correlation. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the correlation between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity levels of subjects in different grades.

6.3.2 Correlation Analysis between Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity Level of Subjects in Different Grades

Table 11 Correlation Between Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence and Sensitivity of Subjects in Different Grades				
Grade			ISS	Pragmatic Competence
1	ISS	Pearson correlation	1	.014
		Significance (bilateral)		.922
		N	53	53
	Pragmatic Competence	Pearson correlation	.014	1
		Significance (bilateral)	.922	
		N	53	53
2	ISS	Pearson correlation	1	.175
		Significance (bilateral)		.182
		N	60	60
	Pragmatic Competence	Pearson correlation	.175	1
		Significance (bilateral)	.182	
		N	60	60
3	ISS	Pearson correlation	1	.285*
		Significance (bilateral)		.045
		N	50	50
	Pragmatic Competence	Pearson correlation	.285*	1
		Significance (bilateral)	.045	
		N	50	50
*. Significantly correlated at the 0.05 level (two-sided)				

As shown in Table 11, at the level of P value 0.05, only the intercultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level of the junior grade were significantly correlated ($R=.285^{*}$, $P=.045$), while the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level of the freshmen and sophomores were not significantly correlated. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the correlation between the level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of juniors, as well as the inter-dimensional relationship between cross-cultural sensitivity. As shown in Table 12, through the multi-dimensional correlation analysis of the cross-cultural sensitivity of juniors, it can be

concluded that there is a significant and strong correlation between the three factors of interaction engagement, confidence and respect for cultural difference and the level of cross-cultural sensitivity ($R=.834^{**}$, $R=.693^{**}$, $R=.604^{**}$). However, there is a significant sub-strong correlation between the two dimensions of interaction attentiveness and enjoyment and the level of cross-cultural sensitivity ($R=.529^{**}$, $R=.479^{**}$). The results of the study show that although the cross-cultural pragmatic competence of the junior year is insignificantly correlated with the internal dimensions of cross-cultural sensitivity, it is the top three dimensions that are significantly and strongly correlated with the internal sub-factors of cross-cultural sensitivity. That is, the degree of interaction engagement, confidence and respect for cultural difference are precisely the three main factors that affect the junior students' cross-cultural pragmatic competence.

Table 12: Correlation Between Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence, Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Internal multi-dimensionality in the Third Grade

		PC	Interaction engagement	Respect for cultural difference	Interaction confidence	Interaction enjoyment	Interaction attentiveness	ISS
PC	Pearson correlation	1	.190	.257	.212	.185	.055	.285*
	Significance (bilateral)		.186	.071	.140	.198	.706	.045
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Interaction engagement	Pearson correlation	.190	1	.390**	.421**	.104	.493**	.834**
	Significance (bilateral)	.186		.005	.002	.471	.000	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Respect for cultural difference	Pearson correlation	.257	.390**	1	.088	.450**	.018	.604**
	Significance (bilateral)	.071	.005		.542	.001	.903	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Interaction confidence	Pearson correlation	.212	.421**	.088	1	.304*	.377**	.693**
	Significance (bilateral)	.140	.002	.542		.032	.007	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Interaction enjoyment	Pearson correlation	.185	.104	.450**	.304*	1	-.106	.479**
	Significance (bilateral)	.198	.471	.001	.032		.462	.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Interaction attentiveness	Pearson correlation	.055	.493**	.018	.377**	-.106	1	.529**
	Significance (bilateral)	.706	.000	.903	.007	.462		.000
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
ISS	Pearson correlation	.285*	.834**	.604**	.693**	.479**	.529**	1
	Significance (bilateral)	.045	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

*. Significantly correlated at the 0.05 level (two-sided)

**.. Significantly correlated at the .01 level (two-sided)

7. Conclusion

1). The overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence of English majors in this ethnic university is not optimistic. There is much room for improvement. The overall level of cross-cultural sensitivity is at an intermediate level compared to other ordinary universities, and

there are big differences between the two within the subjects.

2). For the overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence in different grades of English majors in this university, the strongest were juniors ($M=71.12$), the second strongest were sophomores, ($M=70.93$), and the weakest were freshmen ($M=65.51$). The order of the pragmatic competence level of the subjects in different grades is as follows: junior > sophomore > freshman. For the overall level of cross-cultural sensitivity, the highest were freshmen ($M=91.6981$), and the second highest were sophomores ($M=88.9333$). The juniors were the weakest ($M=87.2600$). The order of the cross-cultural sensitivity of the subjects in different years is as follows: freshman > sophomore > junior. The results of one-way analysis of variance show that there are significant differences in the levels of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity of subjects at different grades, and the level of significant differences in cross-cultural pragmatic competence is significantly higher than that of cross-cultural sensitivity.

3). There is no correlation between cross-cultural pragmatic competence and the overall level of sensitivity, but there is a significant and strong correlation between cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity and grade at the P value of 0.01, and the significance is both 0.04. Among them, the level of intercultural pragmatic competence increases or decreases with the grade level. There is a significant negative correlation between the overall level of cross-cultural sensitivity and grades. It shows that the higher the grade, the lower the level of cross-cultural sensitivity, on the contrary, the lower the grade, the higher the level of cross-cultural sensitivity.

4). The results of the correlation analysis between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level of the subjects in different grades show that, at the P value of 0.05, there is a significant correlation between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and sensitivity level of the subjects in the third grade ($R=.285^*$, $P=.045$). Further research on the correlation between the cross-cultural pragmatic competence and the level of sensitivity, as well as the inter-dimensional analysis of the intercultural sensitivity of juniors shows that there is a significant and strong correlation between the three factors of interaction engagement, interaction confidence and respect for cultural difference and the level of cross-cultural sensitivity. Although there is no significant correlation between cross-cultural pragmatic competence and the internal dimensions of cross-cultural sensitivity, the first three significantly correlated inter-dimensions, namely, interaction engagement, confidence and respect for cultural difference, are the three main factors that affect the cross-cultural pragmatic competence of juniors. Therefore, from the perspective of teaching implication, we can help juniors majoring in English improve their cross-cultural sensitivity and further enhance their cross-cultural pragmatic competence by cultivating their interaction engagement, interaction confidence and respect for cultural difference.

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