Research on Methods to Improve University Students’ Ability in International Communication Based on SWOT Analysis

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Abstract. With the deepening of the progress of reform and opening-up, interaction between China and other countries has become more and more frequent and higher requirement for contemporary university students’ ability in international communication has been raised. Higher education in our country is heading for the goal of internationalization and the cultivation of international talents is also critical. Through SWOT-model-based analysis on the current situation of contemporary university students’ ability in international communication and the cause of it, this passage would elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats of the improvement of the ability in international communication. By doing so, one can understand the necessity to improve the ability, on the basis of which an effective scheme to enhance the ability is proposed.

Introduction

As a result of fast-growing science and technology, diverse and convenient methods of transportation, network with great capability and economic cooperation that is becoming more and more frequent, globalization has come into reality. While communication and cooperation tend to be more frequent, countries are getting more competitive. All of this means that contemporary university students are living in an open, diverse and changing world. Talents who have understanding of international knowledge, rules and culture and awareness of innovation, cooperation and competition are in greater demand of all sectors of society. Countries like the USA and the UK have already set the improvement of international communication skill as one of their goals when it comes to the cultivation of talents. In Outline of National Medium-and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development (2010-2020) issued by China in 2010, the cultivation of talents with international communication ability is put in a level higher than ever before.

With the influence of Chinese traditional culture, Chinese students are mostly reserved, which leads to weaker consciousness of self-expression and the lack of confidence, hindering normal international communication. In addition of what is mentioned above, many university students have little understanding of the culture of other countries and issues of common concern in today's world. As a result, there are quite some cases of misunderstanding. In the background of globalization, cooperation and conversation between international universities are getting more frequent. In this era of globalization, university students, without doubt, play an important of the bridges through which Chine goes to the world and the world get to know China. Therefore, improving students’ skill of international communication will be the imminent priority of modern higher education. As the concentrated carrier of well-educated talents, university should have realized that the cultivation of talents shouldn’t be limited to the development of students’ ability to learn and their awareness of innovation and the fostering of world-oriented mind and ability to carry out international exchanges and cooperation deserve more focus.

Realistic Analysis

SWOT analysis is proposed by Pro. K.J. Andrews, who is a professor in Harvard University, in his book The Concept of Corporate Strategy. In this method, S represents strength, W represents
weakness, O represents opportunity, T represents threat, when S and W are internal factors and O and T are external factors. Applying this method, one can carry out a throughout, systematic and precise research on the scenario that the subject is in and initiate a corresponding tactic, plan or countermeasure based on the result of the research. Therefore, we apply SWOT model in analysis of students’ strength, weakness, opportunity and challenge in their process of improving their ability of international communication. Subsequently, a proper project of cultivation will be proposed in order to achieve a further development of their international communication skill.

Analysis on Internal Factor of Strength (S)

① Contemporary university students have active mindsets and awareness of innovation and are more acceptable to new things. With the appearance of new media, it is easy to collect more information on exchange program and have a general understanding of features of foreign countries through the Internet.

② International exchange programs are favored by students. Most students have intention to go abroad to broaden their horizon, study advanced knowledge and technology, experience local customs and, furthermore, become an international talent.

③ Contemporary students have certain level of political and economic attainment. When it comes to attitude towards international exchange, most students are capable to embrace foreign things with an open mind when keeping their own national characteristic.

Analysis on Internal Factor of Weakness (W)

① Most students can only speak English in a poor proficiency with insufficient ability of listening and speaking. For example, in the daily usage of English, Chinese student tend to neglect the preciseness of the usage of certain words and such English in Chinese mindset will easily be an obstacle in international communication.

② Lack of understanding of international environment and different countries’ culture. With the acceleration of globalization, active learning of international knowledge and different national and cultural backgrounds is an indispensable element for college students, especially those who want to participate in international exchanges. In addition, many contemporary college students lack the sensitivity to pay attention to the hot topics in the world, and lack the cultural awareness of different countries and nationalities.

③ Most students know little about manners in foreign country, which might lead to misunderstanding during communication. In the process of communication, not knowing the common sense of foreign etiquette and not being able to follow local customs might give people a feeling of acting inappropriately, or even worse, bring serious international disputes.

Analysis on External Factor of Opportunity (O)

① Leading of nation’s encouraging policy under the guidance of significant foreign policy like The Belt and Road Initiative, international communication and cooperation is becoming increasingly close and domestic universities view the enhancement of communication and exchange with other countries as a duty of great importance.

② Deepening of the level of internationalization in higher education. In addition to convening and participating in international academic conferences, short-term visits and exchanges, exchanges and cooperation between universities, especially the joint inter-school student training program and the United Nations student internship program, are also increasing, which provide many platforms for students to exchange abroad.

③ Increase in number of international talents coming to our country. With the deepening of globalization, some colleges and universities have deepened international exchanges and cooperation by setting up specific curriculum systems and building an Internet cooperation platform, attracting a large number of foreign talents to develop in China.
Analysis on External Factor of Threat (T)

① It is difficult to both make plans for exchange program and to carry out the plan, hindering students’ planning of their future. In current process of students applying international exchange, there are several procedures in design, approval and execution of plans, which might take a rather long time and leads to postponement or termination of some plans.

② Small number of programs with uneven quality reduce the attractiveness to students. Due to different degrees of attention paid by different school, investment and support for international exchange program might differ. Thus, most students’ aspiration for foreign exchange cannot be satisfied. Besides, different international program signed by different school have different level, causing limited achievement in participating in exchange program.

③ The imperfect school management system restricts the development of students’ international exchanges. Certain procedures have to be perfected, for example, transparent process of election and the calculation of credit after exchange. A regulated mechanism can ensure students’ exchange without the worries behind. Most exchange program inclined to favor outstanding students, resulting in plenty of students being unable to participate in international exchange program to improve their ability.

④ Expense for exchange is daunting for a lot of students. Currently, most international exchange program doesn’t include reduction or concessions, which may not be affordable for student with financial difficulty. Meanwhile, support from society is also limited and unable to sustain the amount and quality of international exchange program.

⑤ The atmosphere of international communication in campus isn’t that strong and students have a hard time contacting foreign teacher or simply communicate with foreign friends. As a result, there are less chance to practice oral English and know about foreign culture. There are a number of students haven’t had a daily conversation with foreigners before graduation.

Countermeasure Choosing

Based on SWOT model, the countermeasures proposed to improve contemporary university students’ ability in international communication are as follow.

Countermeasure SO: Play Advantage and Seize the Chance

① Better the atmosphere of international communication in campus. Design the imperceptible campus international exchange culture. While carrying out international exchange projects such as visiting and learning, and cooperative education experience projects with international friendly schools, we should increase investment, improve the working and learning environment of universities and attract international talents to work and communicate with domestic universities, so that students can even communicate with foreign talents even if they don't go abroad, and add an international atmosphere into the campus.

② Promote the diversification of methods of education and enrich platform for international communication. Increasing the way of international education and building a new network learning position through new media make it easier for students to understand the courses of foreign universities and experience the cultures of different countries.

Countermeasure ST: Play Advantage and Avoid Risk

① Regulate the system of international exchange management. By setting up an unified and coordinated mechanism, university can raise its efficiency in organizing international exchange. Meanwhile, more students can get to know and participate in programs when publication of information is carried out in a unified platform. In this way, stable support and system guarantee can be provided for the development of international exchange and students’ interest can be protected to the utmost. In this case, students are able to perform a proper schematization based on their own situation.
②Enrich exchange programs between universities. Through the increase of cooperation with foreign university, realizing credit transfer between international universities, domestic universities can set up relevant majors with partner university and initiate study to foreign universities. In addition, considering the uneven level of English among students participating in international exchange and different characters that different programs have, students with different needs should be equipped with different programs so that they can have more autonomous choices.

**Countermeasure WO: Minimize Weakness and Seize the Chance**

①Improve the ability of university students to listen and to express themselves and break the limitation of the understanding of foreign etiquette norms. In education, more focus should be put into the cultivation of students’ language skills so that they can perform smooth communication aboard. By carrying out activities like social practice and exchanges, university students’ cognition of etiquette in different nation should be cultivated, developing a decent style of communication and promoting the smooth process of international exchange.

②Cultivate students’ consciousness of international communication. Through the reform and innovation of the university's training objectives, curricula and teaching methods, it is its mission to train high-level talents with international awareness, international exchanges and international competitiveness to adapt to the economic globalization, to enhance students’ concept of international exchanges, and to promote students’ own abilities, by which can also promote the overall competitiveness of the university.

**Countermeasure WT: Minimize Weakness and Avoid Risk**

①Cultivate students’ mindset to be open and active using cultural communication as platform When communicating with foreign friends, don't be too rigid and pay attention to the speech and behavior in the process of dialogue. One should have an understanding of foreign habits and traditional code of conduct in advance and enhance our competitiveness in the process of international exchanges with an open mind and inclusive approach.

②Enhance the financial support for student exchange program. More chance for students to participate in exchange program can be created through ways like cooperation between university and corporation, graduate funds and setting up scholarship specifically for international exchange with support from society.

**Conclusion**

As the process of internationalization is speeding up, countries are cooperating more closely and communication in economy and culture is becoming more frequent. In this case, our country has a greater and greater demand of international talents. Under the background of national policy encouraging students to go out and universities responding positively, international exchanges among college students are not only a collision between cultures, but also a link between local and local areas, as well as friendly exchanges between countries. Colleges and universities should follow the pace of the times, respond to the call, broaden students’ international horizons, understand the cultural differences between different countries, and rationally sort out and orient themselves through project introduction, resource integration, curriculum development and other international exchanges. While learning advanced knowledge and technology abroad to enhance self-worth, we should bring our initiative and creativity into full play, bring excellent things back to our country, and grow into a new type of talents to help our country's construction.

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