

Taiwanese University Students'
World Perceptions– A Case Study of Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages
and Other Universities

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Abstract

The necessity of world perceptions, particularly for university students, has been widely recognized, but less study has been devoted to the analysis of world perceptions for Taiwanese university students (TUS). This study focused on notions of world perceptions for Taiwanese university students. The paper first presents the motivation and importance of world perceptions to university students. It then seeks to analyze the current state of 'world perceptions' in the light of different traditions of thought. The researcher showed the four main factors affecting students' world perceptions, which are 1) International Education, 2) News Media, 3) Reading Habit, and 4) Language Ability. The present study employed on-line questionnaire survey as a method that had derived quantitative data of 105 questionnaires during January 10th to March 8th of 2014. The result found that most of the Taiwanese university students agreed that they lack world perceptions (WP). Through comparing and contrasting Wenzao's students and those from other universities, further results showed that both groups provided different ideas towards mass media factor and language ability factor while they also held the same idea on the factor that educational system and reading habits affect world perceptions.

Keywords: World perceptions, university students, Wenzao

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Introduction

In the age of globalization, the needs and demands for people to have world perceptions are increased. The attention of many scholars has been drawn to the study of world perceptions which can also be known as international perceptions. The Vice President of National Chengchi University, Lin, Pi-Chao once mentioned that the international perception consists of 1) possession of specialized knowledge 2) comprehension of world news 3) international concern 4) sense of humanistic quality (Lin , 2010). In the international community, to have a broad view of the world we inhabit in and to gain international perceptions is necessary for strengthening international connections. To possess well-developed international perception involves many aspects. Through accessing international news media, educational system, and traveling, people can obtain international perceptions. However, in Taiwan, people tend to be considered lacking international perceptions due to various reasons. In this research paper, the researcher aims to find out whether the university students in Taiwan really lack international perceptions, or it has happened in the opposite way. To learn more about the above question, the researcher examines the possible cause from five aspects 1) News Media 2) International Education 3) Reading Habit 4) Language Ability to do research, hoping to have a better understanding of the connection between Taiwanese university students and world perceptions and to provide potential solutions as well.

Literature Review

2.1 Perception in the International Community

With the development of globalization, we have a far more short distance towards events happening around the world, which is also known as the international community. Among some of the literature works, the term “international community”

is used to describe the entire international system, the international citizens and their international relations. However, when we further examine the general usage, the ‘international community’ seems to be more frequently employed to represent the repository of interests that surpassed the egoistic interests of individuals (Simma, & Paulus, 1998). Living in such repository, I regard it important to know how to be a civic citizen in the international community. Therefore, the perception of the international community is required. Since the international community is not just about personal and individual, knowing events occurring around the community is inevitable. Perception in the international community is just like the key to the door of your house; without it, we cannot reach home; with it, we can have access to home with ease.

2.2 Four Main Factors affecting Perception of International Community

In this part, I illustrate the four main factors that affect the perception of international community : (1) International Education (2) News Media (3) Reading Habits (4) Language Ability

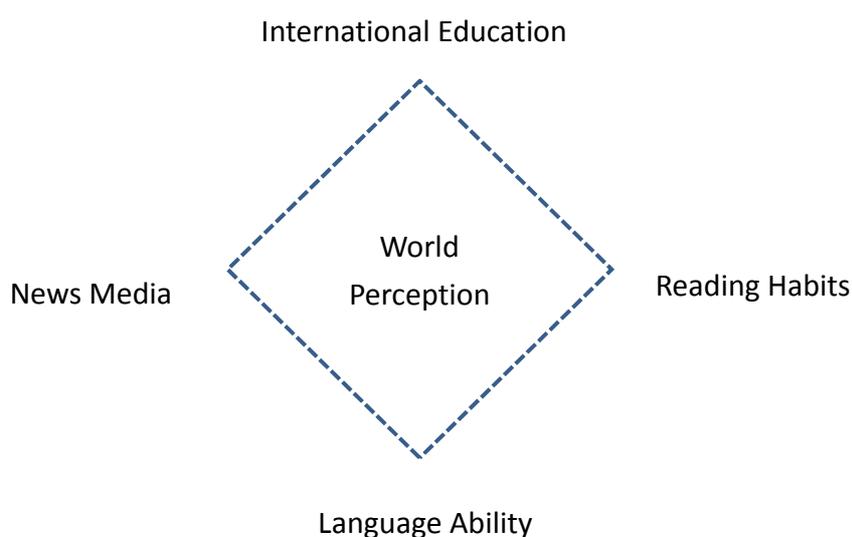


Figure 1. Four Main Factors of Perception of International Community

International Education

Cambridge and Thompson (2004), elaborate on the term 'international education', as "not only a practical development of comparative education but also a philosophy of education informed by an ideology of international understanding," (p. 163) which shows international education is not just an educational system but requires understanding of the international community. Also, Röhrs (1970) emphasizes international education should contain international-mindedness and aim to let students be willing and able to understand other nations. Therefore, world perception in the international community should be required since the understanding of other nations is necessary in international education.

Cambridge et al (2004) indicate that schools offering international education tend to be multifaceted because "each reconciliation is unique to the historical, geographical and economic circumstances of each institution." (p. 173). The multifaceted educational environment can create new perceptions to the learners. However, whether the education system in Taiwan is helpful, just like the international education, to build up the knowledge of global issues or create the concept that one should pay attention to current events occurring around the international community is one key factor that affects university students in Taiwan connect to the world community. It is obvious that schools with international education practiced are frequently with "cultural pluralism" and "multiculturalism", not just because of the diversity of nationalities appeared among the students but also because of the synthesis of a 'third culture' (Useem, 1976; Langford, 1998). In other words, international education would stir the will of gaining world conceptions on account of the fact that it requires comprehension of other nations. Even though the white paper on international education does not make a clear definition on international education, it still aims on the idea that through the international education system, students should have the recognition of country, international

quality, global competitiveness, and global responsibility (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.4). These notions should be based on the fundamental essence, which is to acquire world conceptions.

News Media

We are now living in a world with bombarding information around us every day. News on the TV, newspapers and on-line websites can easily be found anytime and almost anywhere. Accordingly, with such convenient accesses to news, the bombardment of the mass media enables people to receive information around the world much more easily. Hence, news media in Taiwan plays the key role to affect the public, including university students in Taiwan. However, the main purpose for the media is to enhance their ratings. Therefore, when media people select the news, they accommodate to the taste for sensational news and consequently, news media just loses the function of education and information. In addition, the international news broadcasted in Taiwan is not as professional as Western countries. There are translators who are in charge of translating and composing the international news in Taiwan's newspaper agency. Because foreign news agencies are mainly focusing on English news, the flow of international news was monopolized (Fenby, 1986, p.8). Moreover, the international news was not paid much attention, so most of the newspaper agencies take translators as the main international journalists as well and only assign special correspondents in some important countries.

However, the phenomenon causes the ambiguity of all content broadcasting, and most of the viewpoints are from the angles of Western countries. This problem buries the news power which should reflect the multicultural opinions (Su , 1988). Lo, Liu, and Yeh illustrate another situation in Eastern countries by the figure below. This figure shows that when less experienced editors being assigned to write and translate a piece of international news, they are prone to follow the likes and dislikes of the

media owners and the obedience level would be high. On the contrary, sophisticated editors tend not to follow the way how the media owners ask them to report and the obedience level would be low. This figure also informs us the instable information may be offered when news being broadcast in Eastern countries.

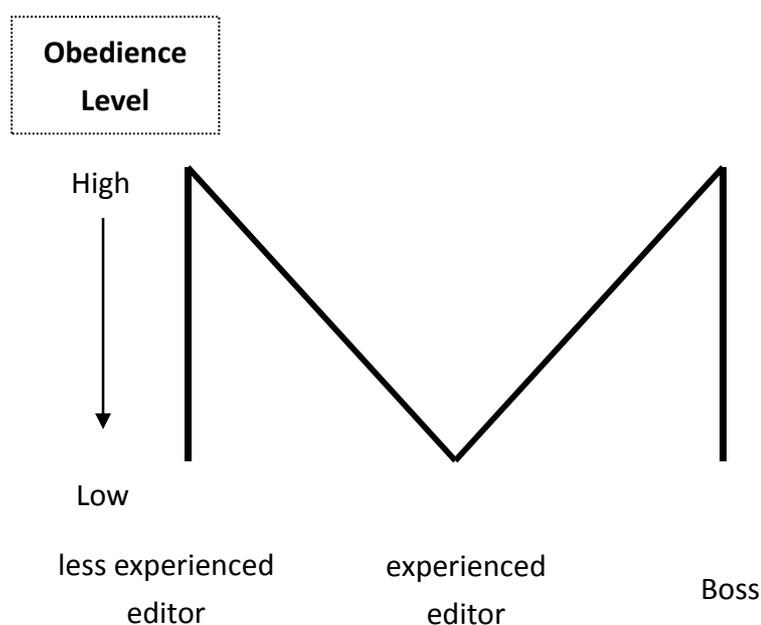


Figure 2. M image of Editor's Recognition and Conduct of Autonomy (Lo, Liu, & Yeh, 2010)

Reading Habit

A Chinese proverb goes, "If you don't read for three days, you will become unattractive", which tells us the importance of reading. Reading habits of the students in Taiwan have been widely concerned by most people in Taiwan. News reading is also one of the reading habits. To enhance the knowledge of international community, newspapers, journals, editorials and books related to world issues are inevitably related to university students. Nevertheless, the time college students spend on reading varied widely, ranging from 2.5 to 4.75 hours per week on average (Blackwood, Flowers, Rogers, & Staik, 1991; Gallik, 1999; Sheorey & Mokhtari,

1994). With such little time to do extra reading, it may turn out that college students only focus on the school work or even are isolated from the international community.

Language Ability

Knowing a language is like having access to a window, through which you can have another insight of global issues. Whether lack of language learning will affect our international perception towards current issues or not is definitely a huge concern for world citizens now. "A substantial literature has emerged, providing ample demonstrations of the intimate relationship between language and perception"(Klemfuss, Prinzmetal & Ivry, 2012, p. 1), from which it shows the closeness of language and perception. From the context "the words we speak simultaneously reinforce and compete with the dynamic world we perceive and experience "(Klemfuss et al 2012), we can learn that language ability offers the power of perceiving and experiencing the world. Once the language skills are no longer being used or are short of notice, the power of accessing to the world will be weakened. In the international community, language ability is one base to the conception.

Methodology

3.1 Target and Method

The research utilized questionnaires to investigate the world perception of university students in Taiwan. The method of collecting the data was online questionnaire survey, and the target of this questionnaire is Taiwanese university students. Through quantitative methods, the researcher aimed to make this study much fairer and more objective.

3.2 On-line Questionnaire

Via the questionnaire survey, the researcher could easily gather huge amounts of data in short time. The researcher designed an on-line questionnaire which was faster to know the result of the survey and which could have a more representative composition of subjects from different universities in Taiwan. The questionnaire centered on the possible causes that affect the subjects' perception of the international community. It involved 200 questionnaire respondents from different universities. The time period for data gathering was from January 10th to March 8th of 2014.

Data Analysis

4.1 Insufficient World Perception

Data were collected by using a self-administered on-line questionnaire survey. 105 questionnaires were completed and only 92 questionnaires were valid. 13 questionnaires were invalid because the questionnaire respondents were not university students. The following scores show the degree of agreement or disagreement by the criteria of 1= totally agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5=totally disagree. The average of the responses from the questionnaire respondents is 1.9417, which is close to 2. It indicates that most of the participants in the research agreed that university students in Taiwan have insufficient world perceptions.

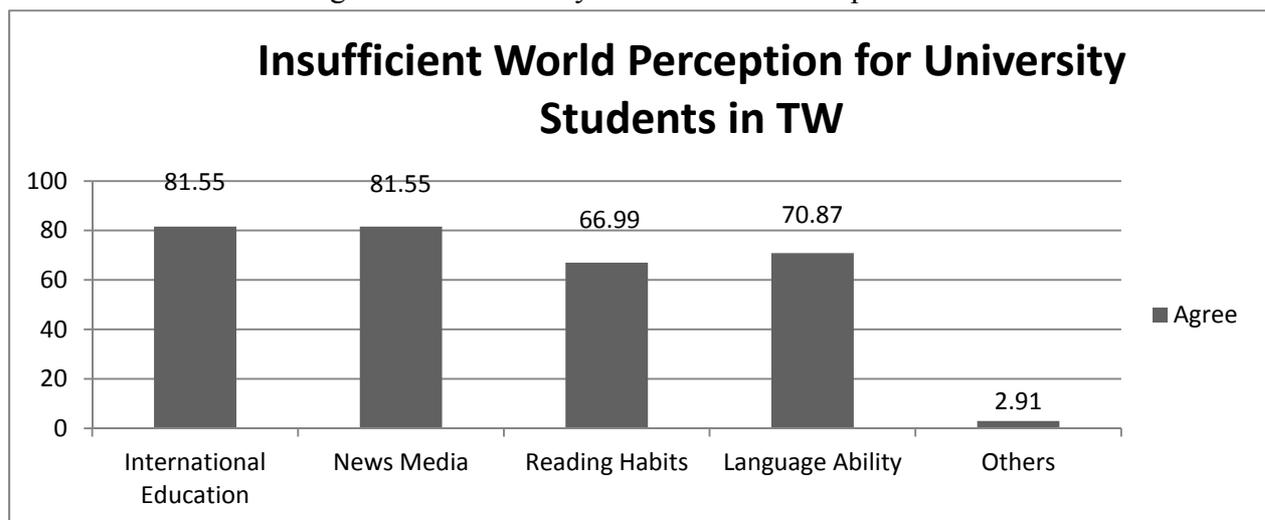
4.2 Attitude towards the Four Main Factors

81.55% of the questionnaire respondents were in favor of the idea that international education and mass media affected the world perception of university students in Taiwan (see Figure 3). In addition, 70.87% of the questionnaire respondents considered that language ability may affect the world perception as well. By contrast, reading habits was less influential than the other three factors. Moreover,

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2.91% of the questionnaire respondents pointed out that there were still other possibilities affecting university students' world perceptions. From their responses, it is clear that that family education and the Internet usage also matter to university students' acquiring world perceptions.

Figure 3: Factors May Affect World Perception



4.3 Comparison and Contrast of Wenzao's Students and Others

The following results present comparison and contrast between students at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages and those at other universities in Taiwan. From Graph 1, the researcher discovered that significance of tem 1 is 1(>0.05), and 2 tail p. 0.776(>0.05). Therefore, it can be assumed the data to be the same and there was no significant difference between the two groups of subjects in terms of world perceptions. The researcher identified four main factors of the reasons for causing TUS lack of WP and analyzed them separately.

4.3.1 Mass Media

The first part is the mass media factor. According to item 2 below, most

questionnaire respondents agreed that mass media shifted the focus of world perceptions to local current affairs and only considered the TV rating points as the priority. From item 2, the researcher found out that the significance is 0.011(<0.05), and the 2-tail p is 0.271(>0.05). Therefore, it is obvious that the students at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages and those at other universities had different variance.

4.3.2 Language Ability

The second part is about language ability factor. Most questionnaire respondents considered it helpful to have better world perception when having better language ability. Also, from item 3, the significance showed the number of 0.827(>0.05) and with the number of 0.222(>0.05). The students from other universities and students at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages held a slightly different attitude towards the question, and the variance is not the equal.

4.3.3 Reading Habits

The third part is about the reading habit factor. Most questionnaire respondents indicated that the reading time and habit were relevant to development of world perception. Moreover, based on the tablet 11, the researcher noticed that the significance of the question that the influence of the reading time towards world perception is 0.05($=0.05$) and 2-tail p is 0.215(>0.05). Therefore, the variance should be different.

4.3.4 International Education (Educational System)

The last part is about educational system factor. As university students, most questionnaire respondents thought the educational system in Taiwan did not offer

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sufficient information of world affairs. Item 5 shows that the significance is 0.376(>0.05) and the 2-tail p is 0.129(>0.05), which means the variance is the same. Hence, there was not much difference between either students from Wenzao or students from other universities. They both held the same ideas and opinions towards this issue.

	School	Number	Average	Standard Deviation	Significance	2-tail P
Item 1: I consider Taiwanese university students lack of world perception.	Wenzao	47	1.9362	.67258	1.000	.776
	Others	45	1.9778	.72265		.776
Item 2: Mass media shifts the attention of world perception	Wenzao	47	1.9149	.90481	.011	.275
	Others	45	2.0667	.78044		.271
Item 3: One's language ability affects university students' world perception.	Wenzao	47	1.8298	.78903	.827	.222
	Others	45	1.6444	.64511		.220
Item 4: One's reading habits affects university students' world perception.	Wenzao	47	1.8085	.64735	.381	.098
	Others	45	2.0444	.70568		.099
Item 5: Time of one's reading affects university students' world perception.	Wenzao	47	2.8085	1.15417	.005	.219
	Others	45	2.5556	.75545		.215

Item 6: Educational system in Taiwan offers not enough international information and knowledge.	Wenzao	47	1.7447	.73627	.376	.129
	Others	45	1.9778	.72265		.129

Graph 1: Comparison and Contrast of Wenzao's Students and Others

Conclusion

The definition of possessing world perceptions has been ambiguous in Taiwan for decades, and it has been viewed that university students should have more world perceptions with the reason that many of them lack WP. In this paper, the researcher discovered that most of Taiwanese university students agreed that they lack WP with the fact that 81.9 percent of the questionnaire respondents agreed university students in Taiwan lack of WP, and 17.15 of the questionnaire respondents stay neutral. However, only 0.95 of the questionnaire respondents replied with disagreement that university students in Taiwan possess WP. Furthermore, compared to students from OUT, students from WUUL agreed possessing good language ability may affect WP more. With students having language interest, it is not hard to think of the reason why students from WUUL take more emphasis on language ability than OUT. On the contrary, students from OUT agreed mass media more influential than students from WUUL. Interesting enough, both students from WUUL and OUT think educational system does something to do with WP. Apart from these, this paper concluded with suggestions for future study related to Taiwanese students' world perceptions. These suggestions are not aimed to be all-encompassing, and still, there is much to learn about the best approaches in this field. Future research should endeavor to further and advanced test and consolidate the findings of the research with additional experimental and empirical evidence.

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