

Original Article

## **Intercultural Sensitivity and Willingness to Listen among Student Journalists in Public Elementary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen among elementary student journalists in public elementary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was applied to survey 134 student journalists during the 2025-2026 academic year. Intercultural sensitivity was measured through interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Willingness to listen was measured through speaker, listener, task, and topic dimensions. Data were analyzed through mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. Results showed that intercultural sensitivity was very high overall ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), with interaction engagement as the highest-rated domain. Willingness to listen was also very high overall ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), with listener as the highest-rated domain. Pearson correlation showed a high positive relationship between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen ( $r = 0.82$ ,  $R^2 = 0.67$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Regression analysis showed that all five intercultural sensitivity domains significantly predicted willingness to listen, with interaction confidence as the strongest predictor. The findings indicate that intercultural sensitivity is a central communicative resource for student journalists and that journalism instruction should integrate culturally responsive dialogue, source engagement, and structured reflection to strengthen attentive and ethical communication.

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## **1. Introduction**

Campus journalism is an early site where learners practice public communication, source engagement, verification, and civic expression. In the Philippine basic education context, the Campus Journalism Act of 1991 recognizes school publications as avenues for journalistic development and press freedom among learners (Republic Act No. 7079, 1991). The annual schools press conference system also sustains a formal mechanism through which student journalists can learn news values, editorial judgment, media ethics, and responsible public discourse (Department of Education, 2023). These policy structures position student journalism not merely as a writing competition or publication activity but as a formative communication practice that shapes how learners listen to others, evaluate diverse accounts, and present information with fairness.

The social demands placed on young journalists have become more complex. Journalism education now requires students to move beyond technical writing and toward ethical engagement with people whose experiences, speech styles, identities, and cultural assumptions may differ from their own. UNESCO (2018) frames journalism education as a response to a media environment marked by disinformation, contested truth claims, and public distrust, while later guidance on digital journalism education emphasizes learner competence in dialogue, verification, collaboration, and responsible use of media platforms (UNESCO, 2023). For elementary student journalists, these expectations begin with a foundational communicative ability: to listen before they write, to understand before they quote, and to respect cultural difference before they interpret meaning.

Intercultural sensitivity provides one lens for the development of such communicative readiness. Chen and Starosta (2000) described intercultural sensitivity as the affective dimension of intercultural communication competence, and their scale identified the domains of interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Deardorff (2006) likewise argued that intercultural competence involves attitudes of respect and openness, knowledge of cultural difference, and internal outcomes that allow persons to communicate effectively and appropriately across contexts. More recent validation work confirms that intercultural sensitivity remains relevant to educational settings, although its dimensions may operate differently across sociocultural contexts (Gomez Yepes et al., 2023; Chen & Hu, 2023). In student journalism, this construct is especially important because source interaction requires the young reporter to notice cultural cues, suspend premature judgment, and approach unfamiliar narratives with care.

Willingness to listen is a related but distinct communicative construct. It refers to a learner's readiness to attend to spoken messages even when the speaker, task, topic, or language condition makes comprehension difficult. Akdemir (2016) developed the willingness-to-listen construct for second-language contexts and identified speaker, listener, task, and topic as core dimensions. Karakas and Boonsuk (2024) later showed that willingness to listen is shaped by learner motivation, task demands, prior knowledge, speaker features, and classroom experiences. Although much listening research has focused on adult interaction, organizational settings, and language learning, its relevance to student journalism is direct: reporting depends on the intentional effort to hear accurately, probe respectfully, and hold attention even when a source provides complex or unfamiliar information.

The theoretical link between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen can be traced to the role of affect, openness, and attention in communication. High-quality listening has been shown to create conditions for lower defensiveness, stronger relational connection, and deeper reflection (Itzchakov et al., 2018; Itzchakov et al., 2022). Kluger and Itzchakov (2022) further argued that listening is not a passive reception of sound but an interpersonal act that signals attention, understanding, and positive intention. In intercultural encounters, these listening qualities depend on the listener's capacity to respect difference, tolerate ambiguity, and remain attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues. Thus, a student journalist with high intercultural sensitivity may be more prepared to listen to speakers with unfamiliar accents, vocabulary, cultural references, or viewpoints.

For journalism students, intercultural communication competence also has professional implications. Mykytenko et al. (2022) emphasized that intercultural communicative competence should form part of journalism training because journalists must work with language, culture, context, and public meaning. Even at the elementary level, campus journalism introduces learners to these practices through interviews, collaborative editorial tasks, school-based reporting, and exposure to local community concerns. If student journalists lack cultural sensitivity, they may misinterpret sources, exclude minority voices, or write stories that reproduce bias. If they lack willingness to listen, they may fail to gather sufficient information, overlook nuance, or privilege their own assumptions over evidence from others.

Despite the conceptual connection between these variables, empirical work that examines intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen among elementary student journalists remains limited. Existing studies have often examined intercultural sensitivity among university students or language learners, while willingness to listen has been explored mainly in second-language and interpersonal communication contexts (Akdemir, 2016; Chen & Hu, 2023; Karakas & Boonsuk, 2024). There is a need to study these constructs among younger learners who participate in campus journalism, particularly in public elementary schools where classroom diversity, local language variation, and community-based reporting can shape communicative behavior. The present study addresses this gap by examining the level of intercultural sensitivity, the level of willingness to listen, their statistical relationship, and the

influence of intercultural sensitivity domains on willingness to listen among elementary student journalists in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte.

## **2. Methodology**

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to examine intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen among elementary student journalists. The design was appropriate because the study measured existing levels of the two constructs, determined the direction and magnitude of their relationship, and tested the predictive contribution of the intercultural sensitivity domains without manipulation of variables. Consistent with quantitative survey logic, the study relied on structured responses that could be summarized through descriptive statistics and examined through inferential procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research did not establish causal effects; rather, it tested whether statistically significant associations and predictive patterns were present within the surveyed group.

The respondents were 134 elementary student journalists from public elementary schools in Sto. Tomas District, Division of Davao del Norte during the 2025-2026 academic year. Participants were selected through convenience sampling based on availability, accessibility, enrollment in public elementary schools within the district, and active involvement in campus journalism activities such as school publication work, writing tasks, editing, or related media activities. The inclusion of learners with journalism exposure ensured that responses were anchored in experiences relevant to reporting, peer editorial work, and school-based communication. Students who were not involved in campus journalism or were enrolled outside the selected public elementary school context were excluded from the study.

The survey questionnaire had two main measures. The intercultural sensitivity section was adapted from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale tradition of Chen and Starosta (2000), as reflected in later validation work by Gomez Yepes et al. (2023). It assessed five domains: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. The willingness to listen section was adapted from the willingness-to-listen construct developed by Akdemir (2016) and applied in later work by Karakas and Boonsuk (2024). It assessed four domains: speaker, listener, task, and topic. Both sections used a 5-point Likert response format, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement and higher levels of the measured construct. Descriptive interpretation followed the rating scale used in the thesis: 4.20 to 5.00 as very high, 3.40 to 4.19 as high, 2.60 to 3.39 as moderate, 1.80 to 2.59 as low, and 1.00 to 1.79 as very low.

The instrument underwent expert validation for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. A pilot test with 30 elementary student journalists preceded the main data collection to assess item clarity and internal consistency. The pilot reliability coefficients were high, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.965 for the 24-item intercultural sensitivity measure and 0.938 for the 19-item willingness to listen measure. These coefficients indicated strong internal consistency and supported the

use of the finalized questionnaire for the main survey. Minor wording refinements were made to ensure age-appropriate and context-sensitive language without changing the intended constructs.

Data collection began after institutional approval and research ethics clearance had been secured. Authorization was obtained from the relevant school authorities in the Division of Davao del Norte and from participating schools. The researcher coordinated with school administrators and designated teachers to administer the questionnaire to eligible student journalists. Participants and guardians were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw, and the measures for privacy and confidentiality. Only students with consent and assent were included. No personally identifying information was used in the analysis, and responses were coded before data entry.

Completed questionnaires were screened for completeness, encoded, and verified before analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen by item, domain, and overall composite score. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the influence of interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness on willingness to listen. The level of significance was set at 0.05. The values reported in the source analysis were retained in the manuscript tables to preserve the original statistical results.

### **3. Results**

Table 1 presents the level of intercultural sensitivity among student journalists. The results show that the overall level of intercultural sensitivity was very high ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ). Among the indicators, interaction engagement obtained the highest mean score ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), followed by interaction confidence ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ) and interaction attentiveness ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ). Respect for cultural differences also received a very high rating ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), while interaction enjoyment obtained the lowest mean score but remained very high ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ).

**Table 1.** Level of intercultural sensitivity among student journalists.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Level</b>
Interaction engagement	0.50	4.36	Very High
Respect for cultural differences	0.55	4.33	Very High
Interaction confidence	0.56	4.34	Very High
Interaction enjoyment	0.60	4.31	Very High
Interaction attentiveness	0.55	4.34	Very High
Overall	0.55	4.34	Very High

Table 2 presents the level of willingness to listen among student journalists. The results show that the overall level of willingness to listen was very high (M = 4.34, SD = 0.59). Among the indicators, listener obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.36, SD = 0.56), followed by task (M = 4.34, SD = 0.55), speaker (M = 4.33, SD = 0.55), and topic (M = 4.32, SD = 0.68). Although topic obtained the lowest mean score, it was still described as very high.

**Table 2.** Level of willingness to listen among student journalists.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Level</b>
Speaker	0.55	4.33	Very High
Listener	0.56	4.36	Very High
Task	0.55	4.34	Very High
Topic	0.68	4.32	Very High
Overall	0.59	4.34	Very High

Table 3 presents the correlation between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen. The computed correlation coefficient was  $r = 0.82$ , with  $R^2 = 0.67$  and  $p = 0.000$ . The degree of relationship was reported as high, the relationship was marked significant, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3.** Correlation results.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Intercultural sensitivity	0.82	0.000
Willingness to listen		

Table 4 presents the multiple linear regression results for the influence of intercultural sensitivity domains on willingness to listen. The model summary showed  $R = 0.82$ ,  $R^2 = 0.67$ ,  $F = 92.15$ , and  $p = 0.000$ . All five domains were significant predictors. Interaction confidence had the largest standardized beta value (Beta = 0.21), followed by respect for cultural differences (Beta = 0.19), interaction attentiveness (Beta = 0.18), interaction engagement (Beta = 0.17), and interaction enjoyment (Beta = 0.15). The retained regression equation was: Willingness to Listen =  $0.95 + 0.20(\text{Interaction Engagement}) + 0.22(\text{Respect for Cultural Differences}) + 0.24(\text{Interaction Confidence}) + 0.18(\text{Interaction Enjoyment}) + 0.21(\text{Interaction Attentiveness})$ .

**Table 4.** Regression results.

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Constant	0.95	0.30		3.17	0.000
Interaction engagement	0.20	0.26	0.17	2.65	0.000
Respect for cultural differences	0.22	0.27	0.19	2.81	0.000
Interaction confidence	0.24	0.28	0.21	2.94	0.000
Interaction enjoyment	0.18	0.25	0.15	2.50	0.000
Interaction attentiveness	0.21	0.26	0.18	2.70	0.000

#### **4. Discussion**

The findings show that the student journalists reported a very high level of intercultural sensitivity. This result indicates that the respondents generally perceived themselves as open, respectful, confident, positive, and attentive during interactions with culturally different people. The pattern is consistent with Chen and Starosta's (2000) view that intercultural sensitivity is an affective readiness for appropriate intercultural communication. It also aligns with Deardorff's (2006) model, where respect, openness, and self-awareness serve as prerequisites for effective interaction across difference. In the present sample, the uniformly high ratings suggest that student journalists already possess favorable self-perceptions in the key domains that support culturally responsive reporting.

Interaction engagement obtained the highest mean among the intercultural sensitivity domains. This result is important because journalism is relational before it becomes textual. A student journalist must approach sources, sustain attention during interviews, ask follow-up questions, and remain open to accounts that may differ from personal assumptions. Chen and Hu (2023) found that intercultural sensitivity is shaped by exposure to multicultural settings and language-related experience, while Gomez Yepes et al. (2023) showed that interaction-based dimensions of intercultural sensitivity remain meaningful in educational contexts. The present result therefore suggests that campus journalism activities may provide learners with repeated opportunities to engage with others, although the descriptive design cannot prove that journalism participation caused the high score.

Respect for cultural differences also received a very high rating. This finding has ethical significance for journalism education. UNESCO (2018) emphasizes that journalism education must help learners evaluate information responsibly, include diverse perspectives, and resist practices that can distort public understanding. A student journalist who respects cultural difference is more likely to treat sources as persons with context rather than as mere providers of quotes. This respect can reduce ethnocentric interpretations and support more accurate story construction. In elementary settings, such respect is a foundation for responsible participation in school publications and press conference activities supported by the Campus Journalism Act

of 1991 and Department of Education journalism programs (Department of Education, 2023; Republic Act No. 7079, 1991).

Interaction confidence emerged not only as a highly rated domain but also as the strongest predictor in the regression model. This result is conceptually plausible. Confidence can reduce the hesitation that students may feel when they talk with people whose language, accent, cultural practices, or opinions differ from their own. Alzoubi and Alsalhi (2025) found that intercultural sensitivity is associated with cognitive flexibility in multicultural university settings, which suggests that confident intercultural engagement may help learners adjust their thinking when they encounter new perspectives. For student journalists, confidence may allow them to ask clarifying questions, maintain composure during interviews, and continue to listen even when the interaction is unfamiliar or challenging.

Interaction enjoyment recorded the lowest mean among the intercultural sensitivity domains, although it remained very high and was still a significant predictor of willingness to listen. This relative position deserves attention. Enjoyment reflects the positive emotional response that students feel during intercultural encounters. Even when students respect cultural difference and feel confident, they may still experience fatigue, uncertainty, or discomfort when communication requires extra effort. The regression result shows that enjoyment matters, but its smaller beta value suggests that positive affect alone may not be as powerful as confidence, respect, or attentiveness for listening readiness. In practice, schools may strengthen this domain through supportive multicultural activities, peer interviews, and guided reflection rather than one-time exposure to cultural topics.

The very high willingness to listen score indicates that respondents perceived themselves as ready to listen across speaker, listener, task, and topic conditions. This finding supports the argument of Akdemir (2016) that willingness to listen includes more than general attentiveness; it also involves readiness to listen despite difficulty in speaker delivery, learner background, task complexity, and topic demand. Karakas and Boonsuk (2024) similarly noted that willingness to listen can improve through sustained listening courses and reflective learning experiences. In the present study, the highest domain was listener, which points to students' strong self-reported readiness to use their own effort, strategies, and prior knowledge to support comprehension.

The topic domain had the lowest mean within willingness to listen, although it remained very high. This result is understandable because topic-based listening requires students to process dense, abstract, long, or grammatically complex input. For elementary student journalists, difficult topics may include school policy, community issues, disaster reports, health matters, cultural events, or interviews with adults. Such tasks demand not only attention but also background knowledge, vocabulary, and inference. The result points to a need for journalism instruction that prepares learners to handle complex topics through pre-interview research, vocabulary support, story mapping, source triangulation, and note organization.

The correlation analysis revealed a high positive relationship between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen. This finding means that students with higher intercultural sensitivity tended to report higher willingness to listen. The result is consistent with contemporary listening theory. Kluger and Itzchakov (2022) describe listening as an interpersonal behavior that communicates attention, understanding, and positive intention. Pregoner et al. (2024) also showed that high-quality listening can reduce social anxiety and support deeper reflection. In intercultural contexts, the capacity to listen well is likely supported by respect for difference, confidence in contact, attentiveness to cues, and a positive disposition toward interaction. Thus, the strong correlation in this study is theoretically coherent.

The regression results further clarify this relationship. Together, the five domains of intercultural sensitivity accounted for 67 percent of the variance in willingness to listen. This is a substantial proportion and suggests that intercultural sensitivity is not peripheral to listening readiness among student journalists. The model result corresponds with broader evidence that perceived listening relates to relationship quality, cognition, affect, and performance-relevant outcomes (Kluger et al., 2024). Although that evidence comes largely from adult and workplace contexts, the underlying mechanism is relevant to education: a listener who is perceived as open, attentive, and nonjudgmental creates a better communicative environment. In student journalism, that environment can improve source trust, accuracy of information, and fairness in representation.

Among the predictors, interaction confidence had the strongest standardized beta value. This finding implies that students' self-assurance in intercultural contact may be the most important intercultural domain for willingness to listen. A confident student journalist may be less likely to avoid a difficult speaker, more likely to request clarification, and better able to sustain attention during unfamiliar exchanges. However, confidence should not be interpreted as dominance or over-assurance. In the context of ethical journalism, confidence must be balanced with humility, caution, and respect for source meaning. Mykytenko et al. (2022) emphasized that journalism education must integrate intercultural communicative competence because journalists work through language and culture. The present findings extend this argument to elementary student journalism by showing that confidence in intercultural interaction is tied to listening readiness.

Respect for cultural differences was the second strongest predictor. This result reinforces the ethical dimension of listening. A student may hear words without truly listening if the student dismisses the cultural background or viewpoint of the speaker. Itzchakov et al. (2022) explain that high-quality listening and perceived responsiveness share the elements of understanding, positive regard, and care. Respect for cultural difference provides the attitudinal base for these elements. For campus journalism, this finding supports instruction that teaches learners to avoid stereotypes, check assumptions, ask culturally sensitive questions, and represent sources with contextual accuracy.

Interaction attentiveness, interaction engagement, and interaction enjoyment also significantly predicted willingness to listen. Their combined role shows that willingness to listen is not only a cognitive skill. It also involves contact, attention, and affect. Moin et al. (2024) found that listening can improve relational experience for both speaker and listener, which suggests that listening in student journalism can be taught as a shared interaction rather than a private comprehension task. Student journalists should therefore practice interviews not only as question-and-answer drills but also as exercises in presence, observation, paraphrase, clarification, and ethical response.

These results carry practical implications for public elementary schools. Campus journalism programs should integrate intercultural sensitivity and listening outcomes in training modules, not treat them as incidental traits. Advisers may design activities where student journalists interview peers from different backgrounds, compare multiple accounts of the same event, practice nonjudgmental paraphrase, and reflect on how cultural assumptions affect questions and story angles. The same skills can support participation in school press conferences and publication work because journalism tasks require accuracy, fairness, and attention to diverse voices. Such activities are aligned with UNESCO's (2023) view that journalism education should adapt to evolving media contexts through interactive, ethical, and collaborative pedagogy.

The study also has limitations that should guide interpretation. The sample came from one district and was selected through convenience sampling, so the findings should not be generalized to all student journalists. The data were self-reported, which can produce inflated scores due to social desirability, especially because the respondents were elementary learners. The study was correlational, so causal claims cannot be made. The regression model retained all reported values, but future studies should include additional diagnostics, such as multicollinearity checks, residual analysis, and model validation with larger samples. Qualitative interviews or classroom observations could also clarify how students enact intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen during actual journalistic tasks.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study concludes that elementary student journalists in the selected public schools demonstrated very high intercultural sensitivity and very high willingness to listen. Interaction engagement was the highest-rated intercultural sensitivity domain, while listener was the highest-rated willingness to listen domain. The results indicate that respondents perceived themselves as open, respectful, confident, attentive, and ready to listen across varied communicative conditions.

A high positive and statistically significant relationship was found between intercultural sensitivity and willingness to listen. The regression model showed that all five intercultural sensitivity domains significantly influenced willingness to listen, with interaction confidence as the strongest predictor. These findings support the view

that student journalists who are more prepared to interact across cultural difference are also more willing to listen to speakers, manage demanding tasks, and process complex topics.

For campus journalism education, the findings point to the need for structured learning experiences that combine intercultural communication and listening practice. Public elementary schools can strengthen student journalism by providing guided interviews, multicultural peer dialogue, reflective source analysis, and adviser-led feedback that trains learners to listen with attention, respect, confidence, and care. Such instruction can help student journalists produce more accurate, inclusive, and ethical school-based reporting.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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