

外国語要旨

学位論文題目 Effects of reducing prejudice through international communication via the Internet.

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The advantages of intergroup contact that occurs via the Internet include 1) the ease of implementing projects, 2) a low level of intergroup anxiety, 3) the generalization of positive attitude change, and 4) the establishment of relationships through sharing common interests. Although the practice of international communication programs via the Internet has been reported sporadically, few studies have examined whether international communication via the Internet generates the effect of reducing prejudice.

The first purpose of this study is to have participants engage in an international communication program through the Internet and investigate whether it reduces prejudice or improves their attitudes toward people from other countries with whom they interact. The second purpose entails investigating the effectiveness of unintentional international contact via information and communications technology (ICT) tools such as social networking services (SNS) in natural settings. The third purpose is to examine whether some features of ICT tools that seem to be effective in international communication programs (e.g., the ease of self-disclosure and cooperation) are useful in reducing prejudice.

To accomplish the first purpose, I have conducted two experiments to investigate the effectiveness of international communication via a 3D multi-user dungeon (3D-MUD) without the use of language (Study 1) and a chat system incorporating machine translation (Study 2). Study 1 shows that compared with subjects in the control group, subjects who were engaged in the cooperation task through the 3D-MUD positively changed their attitudes toward the people from other countries whom they had contacted. Similarly, Study 2 shows that after participating in the program, subjects positively changed attitudes toward the people from other countries whom they had contacted and exhibited willingness to further communicate with these people.

To accomplish the second purpose, I conducted two panel surveys to investigate the effectiveness of international contact in virtual space (Study 3) and through SNS (Study 4). Study 3 shows that international contact, especially cooperative contact, in virtual space did not reduce prejudice. Study 4 shows that international contact through SNS engendered improvement in the subjects' intimate images regarding foreign people. Furthermore, observing their Japanese friends who contact foreign friends through SNS improved the subjects' intimate images and partially intelligent images of foreign people.

To accomplish the third purpose, the features of a valid international communication program via the Internet are explained by summarizing the results. The communication program, which has high acquaintance potential (Study 2), proved more effective in reducing prejudice—as measured by diverse scales (such as the IAT, a feeling thermometer, images regarding foreign people, and willingness to contact)—compared with the cooperative

communication program (Study 1). In addition, cooperative contact in virtual space does not have any effect regarding improving prejudiced attitudes (Study 3). However, people have a more positive attitude toward foreign people with an increase in contact through SNS (Study 4). Hence, international communication via the Internet, which features high acquaintance potential, is more effective than cooperative contact in reducing prejudice.

Finally, I suggest a model based on the technological features of the Internet and some conditions of valid intergroup contact for reducing prejudice through international communication programs via the Internet.

The technological advantages of the Internet (such as automatic machine translation, text-based conversation, limited visual cues, low cost in time and money) seemingly increase opportunities for international communication and lessen the burden of participation, thus encouraging more people to participate in international communication programs. In addition, the use of automatic machine translation and text-based conversation is likely to facilitate self-disclosure, and consequently high acquaintance potential communication, which is one of the valid conditions of intergroup contact. Moreover, the advantage of being able to change the salience of a group category by changing visual cues (e.g., an appearance of an avatar) on the Internet accords equal status which means that people from both countries engage equally in the relationship to international communication programs, which is useful in nurturing international friendships based on common interests. To summarize, due to the increasing number of opportunities of contacting people internationally and varied ways of nurturing international friendships, international communication via the Internet is expected to reduce prejudice.