Abstract

This study investigated the predictive relationships between cultural/personality factors and online speaking behaviours. First, when reporting online discussion behaviours, previous studies often emphasized the collective group processes, minimizing the individual perspective within the group. The current study conceptualized and tested several individual communicative acts of online speaking behaviours as outcome variables. Individual communicative acts will help us identify the inner workings of group processes that will expand our understanding of discussion behaviours in nuanced ways. Second, previous studies relied heavily on demographic characteristics to predict online discussion behaviours. Often, studies used the citizenship of students as a proxy for cultural characteristics and assumed their online discussion behaviours to be monolithic across the collective, ignoring their individual differences. These concerns were addressed by directly assessing cultural values and personality traits that were hypothesized to be causally proximate to online speaking behaviours. The current study used specific scales to directly measure those factors at an individual level—something that has often not been considered in previous studies. Finally, multilevel modeling procedures were used to predict relationships between cultural/personality factors and online speaking behaviours. It is important to account for group interactions in online discussions, but was often neglected in previous studies. Results of the study confirmed that a student’s level of certain cultural/personality factors (conscientiousness, agreeableness and low context-based cultural values), significantly predicted multiple online speaking behaviours. Results also documented several interaction effects between collectivist values, individualistic values and openness to experience traits, with students’ local discussion groups on multiple online speaking behaviours. Extroversion, low power distance, and neuroticism were identified as potential predictors for future exploration. In conclusion, results of the study confirmed cultural and personality factors to be useful predictors of online speaking. Personality traits in general directly predicted several online speaking behaviours. However, cultural values did not. Further, the local discussion group context of students significantly moderated cultural and personality factors in predicting online speaking behaviours.

Keywords: Cultural Values; Personality Traits; Online Speaking Behaviours; Quantity of Speaking; Quality of Speaking; Interaction Effects.