Study on the Differential Impact of International Adaptation on Income: An Empirical Analysis based on CGSS2018 Data

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Abstract. This paper examines how English proficiency and international perspective, as indicators of international adaptation, influence the economic income of urban residents in China, and how this varies by education, profession, and occupation. Using data from the 2018 China General Social Survey (CGSS2018) and a multiple linear regression model, this paper analyzes the overall and heterogeneous effects of these variables on income. The results show that English proficiency and international perspective have a positive and significant impact on income, which increases with education level. Moreover, this paper finds significant differences in the impact of these variables across professions and occupations. Science, engineering and non-governmental workers benefit more, while liberal arts and domestically oriented service workers benefit less. In the conclusion and discussion section, the paper compares the results with existing literature and offers a new perspective for understanding the determinants and disparities of urban income.

Keywords: English Proficiency; International Perspective; Income; Population Differences.

1. Introduction

China has experienced rapid development of international education, with millions of students studying abroad and learning English[1]. Previous studies have shown that English proficiency can increase income significantly, especially for immigrants[2]. However, these studies have not examined the effects of English proficiency for different groups or the role of individual work experience in specific cultural contexts. Moreover, previous studies have focused on the impact of international experiences on individual capacity, but not on how subjective international attention affects income. To address these gaps, this study investigates the impact of internationalization on individual income, using subjective international attention and personal English proficiency as indicators. Given that OLS is still widely adopted in the current research in this field[3], the study uses micro-level data from the CGSS2018 social survey and constructs an OLS econometric model to analyze the data. The study's main innovations include considering the moderating effect of education level, examining the impact of English proficiency and international perspective on income for different professional backgrounds and occupations, and improving the selection structure of controlled variables.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

Previous studies have mainly examined the impact of past international experiences on individual career development. Button et al. reviewed the literature on the impact of international exchange on nursing learning and practice from 1980 to 2003 and found that international exchange programs can affect participants' lives and practices[4]. Lee and Nancy's research also suggests that direct international experience can enhance student confidence, development, and growth. However, they note that this effect depends on the individual challenges and attention involved in international programs[5]. Engle and Crowne's research used the contact theory to analyze a short-term project and found that international experience can improve participants' cultural intelligence in four dimensions: metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behavior[6]. Cultural intelligence is an individual's ability to communicate effectively across cultures[7]. Other studies have shown that cultural intelligence is measurable, developable, and positively related to job performance and cross-

cultural adjustment[8]. Ang et al. emphasized the role of motivational cultural intelligence in cross-cultural success[9]. Jyoti and Kour's research suggested that cross-cultural adjustment mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence and individual performance[10], which is influenced by individual international experience[11].

Marschak first analyzed language issues using economic theory and methods and showed the economic characteristics of language as a human tool [12]. Empirical research from various regions has confirmed that English proficiency affects individual income significantly. Early foreign studies focused on the income gap between immigrants and natives due to language issues. Studies have found that English proficiency improves immigrants' education, training, competitiveness, and mobility in the labor market [13][14][15]. Most studies from mainland China also support this view [16,17,18], and some studies target university graduates specifically [19] [20]. Recent studies have found that the positive effect of English on income is significant by measuring the four skills of English and using OLS models and instrument variable tests to address endogeneity, but the effect varies by group [21][22][23].

Pendakur K & Pendakur R's research has shown that multilingual individuals have more job opportunities and are more likely to get full-time jobs[24]. Studies suggest that language proficiency influences individuals' careers, job content, and employment forms. However, previous studies have not analyzed the effects of English proficiency and income for different professions and occupations. Similarly, international topic attention may influence other factors such as cross-cultural adjustment and international experience, which may affect income differently depending on the profession or occupation. To investigate the impact of English proficiency and international topic attention on personal income while taking into account other factors such as occupation, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1(2): International topic attention (English proficiency) has a positive and significant impact on individual income.

H1(2)a: The impact of international topic attention (English proficiency) on income is smaller for humanities and social sciences graduates than for science and engineering graduates.

H1(2)b: The impact of international topic attention (English proficiency) on income is smaller for government officials and staff in public institutions than for enterprise employees.

H1(2)c: The impact of international topic attention (English proficiency) on income is smaller for state-owned enterprise employees than for non-state-owned enterprise employees.

Building on the assumptions of H1 and H2, this study incorporates educational level as a moderating variable. According to the Information Processing Theory, human thinking is like a computer or information processor, rather than behaviorism that assumes people simply react to stimuli. Long-term memory can be stored and retrieved for future use after appropriate encoding, in contrast to sensory memory and working memory (short-term memory) that are fleeting and easily forgotten [25]. Craik and Lockhart emphasized that the extent to which information is processed or elaborated in various ways (perception, attention, labeling, and meaning) can greatly affect the ability to access information later. In other words, the level of detail of information will influence the degree of learning of the information [26]. Therefore, educational level may greatly influence the size of an individual's long-term memory that can be accessed, thereby potentially playing a moderating role in the process of the effects of international attention and English proficiency on individual income. Specifically, individuals with higher educational levels may have a broader international perspective and related information, thus better understanding and paying attention to useful details in international events. At the same time, highly educated individuals may have more professional skills and knowledge, and thus are more likely to be in environments where they can effectively use their English abilities. In fact, language, as an important form of human capital [27], has been discussed in the literature on the relationship between language and income in terms of complementarity of human capital. Based on the above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: Educational level plays a significant positive moderating role in the relationship between international attention and individual income.

H4: Educational level plays a significant positive moderating role in the relationship between English proficiency and individual income.

3. Data Source and Variable Measurement

3.1 Data Source

The data used in this study is derived from the 2018 China General Social Survey (CGSS). The project was led by the Sociology Department of Renmin University of China and conducted 12 large-scale random sampling surveys nationwide. The survey strictly follows scientific sampling rules, and the interviewers conduct field surveys based on the questionnaires, ensuring that the data is representative and can accurately reflect the situations of the respondents.

3.2 Variable Measurement

Table 1. All the variables involved are summarized

Type	Variable	Measurement Topic	Measure
Dependent Variable	Personal Income	Total personal income	Continuous
Independent Variable	International Vision	Frequency of discussing international topics	1-never, 2-about once a year, 3-several times a year, 4-about once a month, 5-about once a week, 6-several times a week, 7-almost every day
	English Level (EnglishLV)	Ability: Listen	1-very bad, 2-bad, 3-normal, 4-good, 5-very good
		Ability: Read	
		Ability: Chat	
		Ability: Write	
Moderator	Education	Current highest level of education	0-No education at all, 3-Literacy class, 6-Elementary school, 9-Junior high school, 13-Vocational high school, 12-Ordinary high school,13-Technical secondary school, 13-Technical school, 14-Specialized adult higher education, 15-Specialized regular Higher education, 16-undergraduate adult higher education, 17-undergraduate formal higher education, 20-graduate and above
Control variable	Sex	Gender	0-female, 1-male
	Age	Date of birth	Continuous
	Religion	Religion	0-not believe in religion, 1-believe in religion
	Household Registration	Household registration	0-rural, 1-urban
	Party	Political landscape	0-non-Communist, 1-Communist
	Ethnic	Ethnic	0-minority, 1-Han
	Working Years	Years from first off-farm job to current job	Continuous

This study aims to examine the effect of attention to international topics and English proficiency on personal income, and to investigate the moderating role of education level. The independent variables are attention to international topics and English proficiency. Since occupational income may not fully capture the income returns of personal attention to international topics and English, as it only accounts for formal labor remuneration and neglects possible potential benefits, this study adopts the individual annual total income level as the dependent variable. Previous studies have controlled for the effect of personal ability on income by incorporating variables such as parental education level

and college entrance examination scores [28]. Besides selecting basic demographic characteristics as control variables, this paper also includes working years in a special cultural background to further control for the effect of personal ability on income. All the variables involved are summarized in Table 1.

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for all variables in the study are presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, the gender ratio of the selected sample is roughly balanced, and people of different age groups are covered. The youngest individual in the sample is 18 years old, while the oldest is 118 years old. The average educational level is junior high school graduation, and the average work experience is 13.5 years, which is in line with the general population in Chinese society. Additionally, the religious beliefs, political backgrounds, and ethnic compositions of the sample are similar to the distribution of the general population, with most of the sample coming from urban areas. Overall, the sample has a relatively low level of interest in international topics and English proficiency. In general, the sample in this study is representative and can reflect the general real situation of the population.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics for all variables in the study

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Personal Income	12047	41465.45	192459.2	0	9950000
International Vision	4173	2.34	1.87	1	7
EnglishLV	4173	1.44	0.72	1	5
Education	12047	9.32	4.36	0	20
Sex	12047	0.47	0.50	0	1
Age	12047	52.11	16.84	18	118
Religion	12047	0.11	0.31	0	1
Household Registration	12047	0.71	0.45	0	1
Party	12047	0.11	0.32	0	1
Ethnic	12047	0.93	0.26	0	1
WorkingYears	10945	13.50	14.34	0	72

4. Regression Results

4.1 Full Sample Regression

Considering that the explanatory variables selected in this study are not simply personal wages or professional income, this paper constructs a new Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) econometric model based on previous research, instead of using the Mincer earnings equation[29]. The basic regression results using the OLS method are shown in the table below. Table 3 shows that international topic attention and English proficiency have a positive and significant impact on individual income. From Model 1, international topic attention increases individual income by 5,346.95 units per unit, supporting hypothesis H1. From Model 2, English proficiency increases individual income by 26,376.33 units per unit, supporting hypothesis H2. From Models 3 and 4, the coefficients for the interaction terms between educational level and international topic attention and English proficiency are both positive and significant at the 1% level, indicating that educational level moderates the relationship between international topic attention, English proficiency, and individual income positively and significantly, supporting hypotheses H3 and H4.

Table 3. The basic regression results using the OLS method

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
InternationalVision	4281.52*** (4.54)		-9771.15*** (-5.11)	

EnglishLV		24085.28*** (8.80)		-15131.11** (-2.32)
Education Mix InternationalVision			1226.65*** (8.42)	
Education Mix EnglishLV				2229.36*** (6.61)
Sex	17590.47*** (5.14)	20546.17*** (6.06)	17275.59*** (5.09)	18900.85*** (5.59)
Age	-702.96*** (-6.60)	-305.20*** (-2.61)	-376.84*** (-3.35)	-107.17 (-0.89)
Religion	730.98 (0.13)	1586.92 (0.29)	3438.39 (0.64)	3779.59 (0.70)
Household Registration	16343.73*** (3.98)	10858.62*** (2.62)	10920.96*** (2.65)	7278.05* (1.75)
Party	20471.87*** (3.61)	17577.12*** (3.13)	9286.05 (1.61)	9284.11 (1.62)
Ethnic	6607.17 (1.01)	6614.16 (1.02)	6437.75 (0.99)	7443.14 (1.15)
WorkingYears	513.46*** (3.72)	616.45*** (4.53)	466.15*** (3.41)	525.34*** (3.86)
Constant	31066.68*** (3.48)	-12700.63 (-1.21)	22310.44** (2.50)	3347.18 (0.31)
Observations	3784	3784	3784	3784
R-squared	0.057	0.071	0.074	0.082

Note: *P<0.1, **P<0.05, ***P<0.01, t values in brackets

4.2 Endogeneity Test

Table 4. The IV regression results

	InternationalVision	EnglishLV
Hausman Test	51.59 (0.000)	63.38 (0.000)
F test	51.46 (>10)	266.53 (>10)
Sargan	1.52 (0.2172)	0.27 (0.6033)
Basman	1.51 (0.2177)	0.27 (0.6038)
Hansen J	2.45 (0.1174)	0.55 (0.4575)
2SLS Result		
Coefficient	63001.40*** (7.66)	86370.70*** (10.42)
Control Variables	YES	YES
N	3778	3778
R-squared	0.1319	0.3691

Note: *P<0.1, **P<0.05, ***P<0.01, t values in brackets

This paper uses Instrumental Variables (IV) to test and control for endogeneity, which may bias the results of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) in language economic returns research. Endogeneity may arise from unobserved factors, such as intelligence, that affect both income and international attention or English proficiency. Endogeneity may also arise from reverse causality, such as income affecting international attention or English proficiency. The selection of IVs requires that they are unrelated to the error term and dependent variable, but related to the independent variable. Based on the

questionnaire and previous research, we use the number of family members and international friends as potential IVs. The number of children in a household is often used as an IV, which has no direct correlation with wage levels [30][31], and its impact on English ability is unclear [32]. Similarly, the number of international friends may depend on various factors such as culture, tourism, education, and work, and may have different impacts on income depending on the type of social interaction. Therefore, both IVs are suitable for basic selection criteria.

The IV regression results are shown in Table 4. The results indicate that there is endogeneity in the explanatory variable, and the IVs satisfy the weak identification test and the over-identification test. At the same time, the results are consistent with OLS, but the IV regression coefficients are generally larger than the OLS regression coefficients, indicating that measurement errors are much larger than the bias caused by omitted variables, which is consistent with previous research [33].

4.3 Categorical Regression Results

Table 5. Divides the sample into two categories according to professional background

VARIABLES	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
InternationalVision	2513.84 (0.88)	11074.55*** (3.47)			9029.61*** (3.95)	9958.68*** (6.78)			-85.46 (-0.08)	2576.19** (1.98)		
English LV			18925.78*** (3.03)	29728.43*** (3.48)			26726.97*** (5.11)	35771.03*** (10.18)			8591.34* (1.92)	15076.99*** (2.89)
Sex	10024.71 (0.90)	26134.14* (1.95)	14029.79 (1.28)	37843.61*** (2.77)	-4522.12 (-0.51)	24707.11*** (4.55)	8893.18 (1.02)	32484.20*** (6.12)	6437.60 (1.39)	900.92 (0.18)	7450.23 (1.61)	3803.46 (0.75)
Age	-654.76 (-0.79)	-843.91 (-0.98)	-508.41 (-0.62)	-10.38 (-0.01)	-882.17 (-1.52)	-1287.74*** (-4.11)	-351.67 (-0.60)	-620.81** (-1.97)	14.34 (0.07)	49.20 (0.27)	137.13 (0.61)	220.50 (1.16)
Religion	-12485.81 (-0.61)	48305.80 (1.60)	-9469.57 (-0.47)	54107.26* (1.79)	16645.70 (0.81)	15730.80* (1.69)	25931.58 (1.29)	17366.52* (1.91)	-6599.60 (-0.93)	-9071.77 (-1.24)	-6543.40 (-0.93)	-8325.94 (-1.14)
Household Registration	9720.83 (0.36)	52865.59 (1.54)	1454.61 (0.05)	26009.37 (0.74)	32485.34** (2.07)	27594.22*** (3.42)	24688.40 (1.59)	19453.38** (2.45)	15749.33* (1.72)	8637.72 (1.47)	14321.71 (1.57)	5446.01 (0.91)
Party	-5902.66 (-0.43)	37573.77** (2.37)	-3891.63 (-0.29)	45104.64*** (2.90)	24666.81*** (2.66)	29206.97*** (2.92)	23768.43*** (2.62)	25944.38*** (2.67)	3931.13 (0.72)	48103.43*** (5.88)	3266.43 (0.61)	45295.21*** (5.49)
Ethnic	3965.86 (0.18)	-12228.98 (-0.49)	3337.15 (0.15)	1813.54 (0.07)	19307.58 (1.13)	7268.34 (0.61)	17591.40 (1.05)	8918.72 (0.77)	-1043.15 (-0.09)	-344.16 (-0.03)	-1444.43 (-0.12)	2532.88 (0.25)
WorkingYears	1827.24* (1.89)	1125.74 (1.05)	2105.20** (2.19)	1139.27 (1.06)	323.45 (0.56)	329.97 (1.04)	648.48 (1.15)	552.22* (1.77)	631.61** (2.82)	292.41 (1.40)	596.25** (2.66)	269.64 (1.30)
Constant	61610.89 (1.51)	927.46 (0.02)	21314.39 (0.50)	-58634.30 (-1.22)	19392.41 (0.65)	43086.75** (2.51)	-29692.23 (-0.93)	-20952.40 (-1.14)	5335.02 (0.32)	2021.67 (0.16)	-11668.43 (-0.62)	-21823.50 (-1.35)
Observations	397	259	397	259	227	1171	227	1171	464	425	464	425
R-squared	0.029	0.125	0.050	0.125	0.165	0.105	0.201	0.146	0.055	0.141	0.062	0.150

Note: *P<0.1, **P<0.05, ***P<0.01, t values in brackets. Models 5 and 7 correspond to humanities and social sciences, and models 6 and 8 correspond to science and engineering. Models 9 and 11 correspond to government units, and models 10 and 12 are non-government units. Models 13 and 15 correspond to state-owned enterprises, and models 14 and 16 correspond to non-state-owned enterprises.

Based on the overall OLS regression, Table 5 divides the sample into two categories according to professional background. It was found that the impact of international topic attention and English proficiency on individual income showed significant differences between graduates in humanities and social sciences and those in science and engineering. From models 5 and 6, it can be seen that for humanities graduates, the increase in international topic attention does not have a significant impact

on income change, while for science and engineering graduates, income will increase significantly, which verifies hypothesis H1a. From models 7 and 8, it can be seen that science and engineering graduates obtain an income that is higher than that of humanities graduates for every unit increase in English proficiency, which verifies hypothesis H2a. From models 9 and 10, it can be seen that non-governmental workers obtain an income that is higher than that of government workers for every unit increase in international topic attention, which verifies hypothesis H1b. From models 11 and 12, it can be seen that non-governmental workers obtain an income that is higher than that of government workers for every unit increase in international topic attention, which verifies hypothesis H2b. From models 13 and 14, it can be seen that the change in income of state-owned enterprise employees is not significant for every unit increase in international topic attention, while the income of non-state-owned enterprise employees will increase significantly, which verifies hypothesis H1c. From models 15 and 16, it can be seen that non-state-owned enterprise employees obtain an income that is higher than that of state-owned enterprise employees for every unit increase in English proficiency, which verifies hypothesis H2c.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

China has become more integrated with the world since it reformed its economy and joined the WTO in 2001. It now plays a key role in global economic development and governance. This paper explores how mainland Chinese citizens' interest in international issues and their English skills affect their income. It also examines how this knowledge can help individuals improve themselves in a changing world and inform policy making and development strategies for the country and society. Using micro-level data and various statistical methods, the paper tests the economic benefits of English. It finds that people who pay more attention to international issues and have better English skills earn higher wages. This supports previous studies that showed cultural intelligence can enhance task performance and that English proficiency can boost personal income. The paper also finds that education level strengthens this effect, confirming previous research on human capital complementarity.

In addition, while most previous studies have focused on exploring the overall impact of international experience or English proficiency on the population, this study further reveals that the impact of international topic attention and English proficiency on personal income level is heterogeneous. The economic returns of science and engineering graduates, non-governmental sectors and non-state-owned enterprise employees are more significant in comparison. Science and engineering graduates often engage in more international cooperation and rivalry, and need to stay updated with the latest advances and innovations in technology. Hence, their awareness and flexibility in the face of globalization and their skill in using English as a lingua franca have a considerable positive effect on their income growth. In contrast, the work of humanities and social sciences graduates may rely more on the local cultural and social context, and their interest in international issues and English competence may not be crucial factors affecting their income. Non-governmental workers are more exposed to the market and international competition, and have to pay more heed to the opportunities and challenges of globalization, and interact more with international players. Therefore, their focus on international issues and English competence have a larger impact on their income than governmental workers, whose work is more restricted by policies and regulations, and whose personal international outlook has limited sway on their income. Private sector workers face more stress from the global market and international competition, and have to pay more attention to the shifts in the global market patterns and sustain collaboration with international clients and partners. Thus their focus on international issues and English competence have a larger impact on their income than state-owned sector workers, whose work may be more safeguarded and supported by the government.

At the same time, the impact of international topic attention on income is weaker than that of English proficiency in all groups. Apart from the fact that subjective international attention may have

certain limitations in its impact on personal cultural intelligence growth compared to objective international experience, it may also be related to its different degree of importance in the current job market compared to English proficiency. Through standardized assessment systems such as language exams, English proficiency has a mature measurement system, so people's English proficiency is often more objective and comparable, and it is also easier for human resource managers to use it as an effective basis for selection and evaluation, bringing more job opportunities and higher salaries for skilled people; at the same time, English as an international common language may be able to effectively eliminate the barriers between countries, thus attracting more foreign direct investment. In contrast, international topic attention may be difficult to quantify and evaluate, so its impact on income may be more difficult to determine, and its importance in some fields or industries (such as local governments that only face a single language region) is relatively low, so its impact on the income of the entire population is relatively small. But this does not mean that improving English proficiency is always the most important. As a form of human capital, the externality of English proficiency leads to differences in its impact on income returns in different industries. Workers with higher English proficiency are more likely to choose industries with high human capital intensity, and also have more opportunities to enter larger companies. This is very likely to cause excessive accumulation of human capital in some industries, ultimately leading to talent waste in the whole society. This problem is becoming increasingly serious in China with the rapid development of higher education. Therefore, further understanding of other components of personal ability in the process of internationalization, such as the impact of subjective international topic attention on personal income studied in this paper, is also of great significance for understanding personal development and labor force optimization allocation in the process of globalization.

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