

English as a Lingua Franca in Mainland China: An Analysis of Intercultural Business Communicative Competence (IBCC)

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Abstract

The rapidly-globalized economy of China indicates that intercultural business communication (IBC) between people from China and the rest of the world has been broadened and deepened. However, in general, limited empirical studies are available on English as a lingua franca in business contexts of Mainland China. Based on a survey to Chinese business professionals who are engaged in IBC, this paper reports the preliminary findings of the needs of English use in China-based workplaces and discusses intercultural communicative competence in business contexts (IBCC). English use at work shows a tendency to increase in both frequency and variety since China's entry of WTO in 2001. Moreover, it is found that IBCC consists of six components: four in the culture perspective (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligence) and two in the language perspective (pragmatic and strategic competence). Subsequently, a model of IBCC is proposed with implications to IBC theory, practice, and education.

Introduction

Communicative competence, as a theoretical construct, has been extensively investigated by scholars from a range of fields of discipline such as applied linguistics (e.g. Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), communication studies (e.g. Chen, 2014; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), and international business and management (e.g. Earley & Ang, 2003; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Chomsky (1965) introduced the concept of "linguistic competence" in his elaboration of generative grammar, claiming that competence is exclusively attributed to the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by ideal speaker-listeners and is supposed not to be affected by cognitive and sociocultural factors during actual linguistic performance (Rickheit, Strohner, & Vorweg, 2008). Thus, he claimed that competence (linguistic knowledge) is distinguished from performance (the actual use of language in communication) and that performance is not a direct reflection of competence because "a record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on" (Chomsky, 1965, p. 4). Among others, Hymes (1972) critiqued Chomsky's linguistic competence theory and rejected his rigid dichotomy between competence and performance by contending that competence in fact involved both "(tacit) knowledge" and "(ability for) use" and that *performance* in fact involved both "competence underlying a person's behavior" and the observable part in actual behavior (p. 282). Hymes's definition of *competence* aligns with that by Widdowson (1996) and Peterwagner (2005), both of whom expressed that *knowledge* and *ability for use* were indeed inseparably connected. In addition, psychologists and communication scholars also contributed a great deal to numerous definitions of communicative competence, among which they all mentioned the

ability to interact appropriately and effectively in communication (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), as Spitzberg (1988) defined:

Competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs (p. 68).

Apart from these two criteria, establishing and maintaining relationships has become a third important criterion used in measuring the success of intercultural communication in general and intercultural business communication (IBC) in particular, in today's globalized society (Zhu, 2014). Furthermore, with the current "world flattening" (Friedman, 2007) phase of economic globalization comes the need to recognize the importance of languages and cultures in IBC (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2013). One of the languages that have drawn much attention from IBC studies is English. English has gradually become the lingua franca (ELF) of the language used by business professionals coming from various cultural backgrounds and speaking different national languages. English has become a worldwide business language, or rather, a business lingua franca (Ehrenreich, 2010; Evans, 2013; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). Building on the concept of ELF, BELF has been defined as a shared language used in the business domain by speakers with different mother tongues (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005).

In response to the increasing popularity of BELF, there is a surge of interest among scholars across a wide range of issues with regard to language selection and use in the progressively globalized business and professional worlds (Evans, 2013), however, very few of which have focused on the role of BELF in China-based workplaces. Pang, Zhou, and Fu (2002) conducted an extensive investigation into the influence of China's WTO membership on business professionals and college English education one year after China's entry. Data were collected from two similar self-report questionnaires administered respectively to the personnel of administrative departments and business professionals working in the trading or financial organizations in the five cities of Ningbo, Hangzhou, Taizhou, Wenzhou, and Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province. Based on the research data, reading, listening, and speaking were considered to be the most important skills in the workplaces and the use of those skills were embodied in four main areas of use of English, i.e. personal promotion, specialist literature reading, surfing the internet, and communication with foreign counterparts. However, regardless of acknowledging the importance of English skills, the participants reported that, in fact, English was not frequently used at work because the counterparts of a majority of Chinese international trading companies were overseas Chinese who often used Cantonese or Putonghua in their oral communication. Moreover, the study showed that e-mails, contracts, faxes, and printed documents were the major tasks that required using English in written communication, but tasks of this kind were often assigned to a couple of professionals with high English competence within the institution. Thus, most business professionals' use of English was basically no more than just filling in forms with numbers or with set words and phrases. Nevertheless, it has been more than a decade and a half since the survey was conducted and the rapid development of the globalized business world has certainly brought tremendous changes to the role of English played in the domains of international trade and economy in China, about which, however, we almost have no real data so far.

Wu (2013) examined studies on BELF teaching and research in China based on a thorough literature review of 12 Chinese major academic journals¹ in the field of foreign languages in China, using the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database. She found that the research was on the increase since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), covering a diversity of aspects, such as BE teaching methodology (e.g. Li, 2011), BE learning strategies (e.g. Wen, 2010), BE syllabus design (e.g. Dou & Cao, 2006), BE tests and assessment (e.g. Chen, 2010), translation studies (e.g. Li, 2009), and discourse studies (e.g. Li, 2007). Nevertheless, some drawbacks and limitations were also identified. For instance, the fact that there were few empirical studies among these papers showed a strong need to improve the quality of BELF research literature. By the same token, scholars such as Huang (2010) and Zhang and Wang (2011) were concerned that, in spite of a growing amount of literature, most of locally published papers were poor in quality and were seldom seen to get published in international academic journals. In this sense, there seems to be no specific research either investigating the nature of BELF use and practice, or examining obligatory communicative competence for using BELF in IBC in the context of Mainland China. Given the distinct characteristics and prominent role of BELF, it is necessary to conduct such research in the context of Mainland China where the business environment has undergone underlying changes since China conducted economic reform with the instigation of the "Open Door" policy in 1978.

The rapidly-globalized economy of China has indicated that IBC between people from China and the rest of the world has been broadened and deepened, involving not only intercultural business negotiations and visits but also an increasing number of people from other countries to work in China-based multinational companies and indigenous Chinese organizations (Du, 2015). In such a multilingual and multicultural environment, companies tend to choose English as the medium of communication to cope with the challenges of control and coordination (Charles, 2007), and the multinational companies in China have made the same decision (Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Li, 2012; Yuan, 2009). In other words, in today's business world in China, professionals need to communicate with both native English speakers (NES) and, to a larger extent, non-native English speakers (NNES). Under such circumstances, it would be very valuable to conduct studies focused on professionals who work in multinational companies, joint-ventures, and trading companies to examine the nature of English used in China's growing business sectors (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). Thus, in response, my study aims to explore the nature of BELF used in business environment of Mainland China and identify what elements are obligatory for constructing communicative competence for IBC so as to develop a theoretical model of IBCC. This study is expected to fill in the research gaps in three aspects. First, the study explores the BELF use in the context of Mainland China where BELF is used broadly while the empirical studies conducted on the issue are quite few. Second, the study investigates the communicative competence of business professionals involved in IBC in their motherland. It is different from other intercultural studies that mostly focus on expatriates' competences to adjust to a new culture. Therefore, presumably, the competences required for these two kinds of respondents should be different. Third, the study examines the roles of both culture and language played in IBC rather than just focusing on one perspective. Thus, it can better inform students, training practitioners, and organizations of what IBCC is, what is required to be equipped with IBCC, and what should be involved to improve IBCC. In this way, they can have a better idea of how to invest time and resources necessary to achieve an advanced level of IBCC.

¹. Foreign Language World; 2. Foreign Language and Literature; 3. Foreign Languages Research; 4. Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice; 5. Modern Foreign Languages; 6. Foreign Language Research; 7. Shandong Foreign Language Teaching Journal; 8. Journal of Foreign Language; 9. Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages; 10. Foreign Language Education; 11. Foreign Languages and Their Teaching; 12. Foreign Language Teaching and Research

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section will review previous studies on the construct of communicative competence, and studies on BELF use and practice in IBC, so as to decide on the theoretical framework of communicative competence for the present study.

Literature Review

In a recent article, Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang (2009, p. 511) indicated that business people involved in an intercultural setting have to be trained to develop “knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) such as greater awareness of cross-cultural differences; knowledge of appropriate behaviors when working with people from different cultures; specific business knowledge, such as international finance and project management; and the ability to converse in a different language”. By the same token, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) study, particularly focused on the ability of actual language use, explored the communicative competence required for IBC. They developed a model of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) by investigating the business professionals' perceptions regarding the components of GCC required for professional communication in a global business context. GCC is conceptualized as a construct composed of three layers: multicultural competence, BELF competence and business know-how. With GCC in the innermost layer, the first surrounding layer is multicultural competence, which refers to the knowledge and accommodation skills (such as respect and tolerance towards each other's differences) in managing interactive situations with business practitioners of different national, organizational, and professional cultures. The second surrounding layer is competence in BELF, which requires competence in English language, knowledge of business genres, and communication strategies (e.g. asking for clarifications, making questions, repeating, and paraphrasing) concentrating on preciseness, conciseness, directness, and politeness to achieve successful communication. The third outermost layer is business knowhow, which is fundamental and taken-for-granted for GCC because it is shared knowledge among business professionals, so it affects all the other layers. Such competence refers to business-specific knowledge and combines two essential elements: the specific domain of business practice and the overall goals, customs and strategies of business shared by the business community.

The construct of GCC model aligns with the knowledge, skills, abilities that business people have to be trained to develop (Ng et al., 2009). However, both BELF competence and multicultural competence in the GCC model requires a more explicit description of its sub components for a better understanding of what knowledge and abilities indeed contribute to intercultural business communication, because cultural sensitivity and language proficiency are recognized as vital and essential abilities for a successful international business career (EIU, 2010).

Earley and Ang's (2003) study partly deal with the limitation of GCC model by developing a conceptual construct of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), in response to the need of understanding why some people manage to thrive in globalized organizations and culturally diverse workplaces while others do not (Erez & Earley, 1993; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). They defined CQ as a specific form of an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in intercultural settings, following the conceptualization of general intelligence by Schmidt (2009). Drawing on Sternberg and Detterman's (1986) perspective of multidimensional intelligence, Earley and Ang (2003) theorized that CQ is a multidimensional construct that includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions. Metacognitive CQ refers to “an individual's level of conscious cultural awareness when involved in intercultural interactions.” It represents “higher-level cognitive processes,” while “cognitive CQ focuses on the

knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures that has been acquired from educational and personal experiences.” Motivational CQ refers to “the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences.” Behavioral CQ refers to “the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures” (Soon & Dyne, 2008, p. 5-7). It suffices to say that the conceptual construct of CQ illustrates the components of intercultural competence required for IBC because it is essentially theorized as a specific form of an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in intercultural settings. Nonetheless, language, as one of the important elements in IBC, is only explicitly mentioned in the component of behavioral intelligence of the CQ framework, so what constructs BELF competence is still left unknown. In fact, besides behavioral intelligence, language also plays a fundamental role in other three intelligences: in acquiring and understanding information (metacognitive intelligence), in transmitting knowledge (cognitive intelligence), and in providing main communication support in unfamiliar situations (motivational intelligence) (Salvi, 2011).

The studies of applied linguistics employed a linguistically-oriented approach to interpreting the intercultural communicative competence. A large number of scholars, such as Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995), contributed much in this regard.

Based on Hymes’s (1972) concept of communicative competence which includes both grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a theoretical model of communicative competence that linked foreign language teaching and learning. Their model was later slightly revised by Canale (1983) as composed of four perspectives: “grammatical competence: features and rules of language such as sentence formation, phonology and vocabulary (p. 7); sociolinguistic competence: knowledge of appropriately producing and understanding utterances in different sociolinguistic contexts (p. 7); discourse competence: knowledge of handling the relations between grammatical forms and meanings to produce and understand spoken and written texts in different genres (p. 9); strategic competence: knowledge of verbal and non-verbal compensatory strategies to either compensate for breakdowns in communication or improve the effectiveness of communication (p. 10-11)”.

Later, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed an updated and pedagogically-motivated model to describe communicative competence within the context of second language learning and teaching. Their model was built on the work of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). Figure 1 illustrates the chronological evolution of the latest model and also the difference from the previous models. It shows that there is one major and two minor changes made in the latest model. Two terminological differences, one is that they replaced “grammatical competence” with “linguistic competence” so as to indicate clearly that this component includes lexis and phonology besides syntax and morphology. The other was that they used the term “sociocultural competence” instead of “sociolinguistic competence” to better distinguish it from another component “actional competence” (due to the fact that contextualized language functions traditionally were included in the sociolinguistic dimension of communicative competence), and also to underline that sociocultural knowledge was imperative for bringing into effective action the resources of other components (actional, linguistic and discourse components). Thus, sociocultural competence was defined as the speaker’s knowledge of language use in line with the pragmatic factors within the general sociocultural contexts of communication. One major change was that Celce-Murcia et al. added a new component called “actional competence” into their model. Actional competence was defined as knowledge of communicating and understanding communicative intention by performing and interpreting speech acts, similar to the concept of

“functional knowledge” defined by Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 69) in their framework of language ability, as knowledge of interpreting relationships between utterances and language users’ intentions.

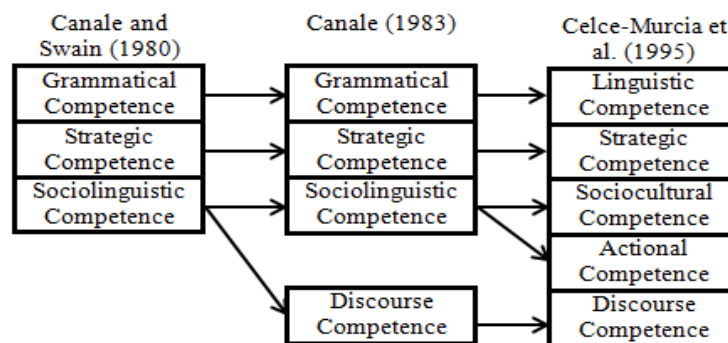


Figure 1. Comparison of the three models, cited from Celce-Murcia et al. (1995, p. 11).

In the same token, BELF studies reached similar findings to those in applied linguistics. Among the majority of BELF studies, the series conducted by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008, 2010) are particularly prominent and their findings provide comprehensive insights into BELF use and practice in IBC, focusing particularly on its use in intercultural business meetings in Europe. Rogerson-Revell’s (2007) study explored the impact of using English as a common language in relation to the professional effectiveness of NNES, with special attention to the language issues that NNES have in communicating during international meetings. Those meetings were annually held by an international organization, the Groupe Consultatif Actuariel European (GCAE), with whose cooperation, the questionnaire data for the study were collected during an external formal meeting where GCAE members got together to have a discussion on key topics and a review on business of the previous year. A range of specific difficulties encountered in such international gatherings were summarized by the NNES participants, from comprehension problems due to fast or quiet speech, production problems due to vocabulary limitations, to incompetence in managing interactions appropriately such as how to properly interrupt other speakers or present a particular point of view during high-speed meeting discussions. Although people were expected to speak a common language (notably English) in such multicultural and multilingual contexts, they did not necessarily speak this language in the same way, considering the fundamental variance in socio-cultural conventions and/or variance in language proficiency. Furthermore, the survey uncovered that participants actually had the awareness that some strategies could be employed to overcome their communication challenges and frustrations.

In the follow-up analysis of meeting discourse in another study, Rogerson-Revell (2008) provided some support for the issues raised in the previous survey, particularly regarding the levels of participation. She concluded that the uneven participation was probably because of a combination of linguistic challenges and procedural limitations, or of other external factors, such as a lack of professional know-how or status.

Building on her previous studies, Rogerson-Revell (2010) employed a multi-method approach to exploring more deeply the issue of communicative accommodation by observing and analyzing three international meetings. She investigated what, if any, communicative strategies that both business people of NES and NNES used to alleviate language differences and challenges encountered in multilingual meetings to promote communicative effectiveness. From the data, she identified two types of accommodation strategies, namely, normalization strategies and convergence strategies. In fact, the

use of normalization strategies by lingua franca speakers was first observed by Firth (1996) in his study of telephone negotiations among lingua franca users. Firth found that participants made a great effort to understand each other all the time and also used a combination of conversational strategies to make “extraordinary, deviant, and sometimes ‘abnormal’ linguistic behavior” seem unproblematic and understandable (Firth, 1996, p. 237). Rogerson-Revell’s study noted that participants used two different normalization strategies, “let it pass” and “make linguistic difference explicit,” in meetings (pp. 442, 444). In the case of the first strategy, “let it pass,” participants tolerated or simply ignored linguistic anomalies occurring in the meetings as long as the message content was understandable in the context. In other words, the content of a message outweighs its form. Thus, Rogerson-Revell suggested that speakers would show an acceptance of mutual differences, which was beneficial for facilitating the interaction and, more importantly, managing rapport with other professionals. In the second case, “make linguistic difference explicit,” participants explicitly requested clarification or interpretation if they perceived that an “abnormal” language usage occurred. One way was that NNEs might ask NEs for clarification in situations in which NNEs’s L2 competence was not proficient enough to understand the complex content of NEs’s messages. Another way involved how NNEs might code-switch to their first language when they had problems finding the equivalent words in English.

Two convergence strategies Rogerson-Revell identified in the meetings were “procedural formality” and “careful speech style” (pp. 446, 449). Procedural formality strategies were most often observed when participants were doing their best to comply with the procedural rules of formal meetings, with regard to turn taking procedures and following the agenda, for instance. Rogerson-Revell suggested that such strategies could help accommodate non-native participants who may not be linguistically competent enough to self-claim the floor or to interrupt, which were usually regarded as challenges by the NNEs participants. The second convergence strategy noted – “careful speech style” – was employed mainly by native speakers who adapted their speech delivery in various ways (e.g. by speaking more slowly or pronouncing very clearly), and avoided using culturally specific idioms, collocations, or metaphors, etc. Although native speakers’ language use is not the focus of my study, insights from the study could play a vital role in raising awareness among NEs who are involved in multi-party group encounters with NNEs.

Based on three studies by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008, 2010), it is important for BELF speakers to have a mastery of a combination of communicative competences such as socio-cultural competence, linguistic competence, actional competence and strategic competence, as well as professional know-how, in order to realize communicative efficiency in IBC.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, from the language perspective, IBCC should be correlated with three components of language use capability, which are discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence. As indicated in the studies by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008, 2010), business professionals should have a combination of competences in order to realize communicative efficiency and rapport maintaining in IBC, i.e. linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence, actional competence and intercultural competence. To be more concise, the study adopts “pragmatic competence” as an umbrella term that integrates sociocultural competence, linguistic competence and actional competence. In effect, the notion of pragmatic competence was included early on by Canale and Swain (1980) as one important component of their framework of communicative competence, although it was identified as sociolinguistic competence by them in their study (Rueda, 2006). Later in Celce-Murcia et al.’s (1995) framework, pragmatic competence was also a crucial component integrating the capacity to use the language to express a diversity of functions and

understand their illocutionary force in a wide range of sociocultural contexts. More explicitly, Bialystok (1993) has suggested that the pragmatic competence entails an array of abilities related to the use and understanding of language in contexts: 1) the speaker's ability to use language for different purposes; 2) the listener's ability to understand the speaker's real intentions beyond the sentence-level meaning (e.g. indirect speech acts, irony and sarcasm); and 3) the mastery of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse (p. 43). In this sense, pragmatic competence can be used as a substitutive umbrella term for these three competences. Thus, a set of hypotheses is proposed to investigate the possible correlations between the identified BELF competence of Chinese business professionals and their communicative effectiveness in IBC.

H1: English language ability positively correlates with overall communicative success in IBC.

H1a: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of pragmatic competence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

H1b: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of discourse competence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

H1c: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of strategic competence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

As for culture, four components (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligence) of the cultural intelligence construct developed by Earley and Ang (2003) are referred to for the present study. One reason is that in the GCC model, the affective, cognitive and behavioral factors are not explicitly elucidated in the conceptualization of multicultural competence, though implicitly by interpreting that "Multicultural competence stems from the acknowledgement of factors related to national, corporate, and/or professional cultures as fundamentals of any communicative event, and enables the flexibility and tolerance needed for GCC to succeed" (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 259). Another reason is that what seems to be missing in the GCC model has been well conceptualized and developed by Earley and Ang's study. Thus, the second set of hypotheses is proposed to investigate the correlations between the identified intercultural competence of Chinese business professionals and their communicative success in IBC.

H2: Intercultural competence positively correlates with overall communicative success in IBC.

H2a: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of metacognitive intelligence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

H2b: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of cognitive intelligence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

H2c: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of motivational intelligence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

H2d: Chinese business professionals with a higher level of behavioral intelligence achieve better intercultural business communicative competence.

Based on the discussion above, Figure 2 summarizes the interrelations of the dependent and independent variables in the present study.

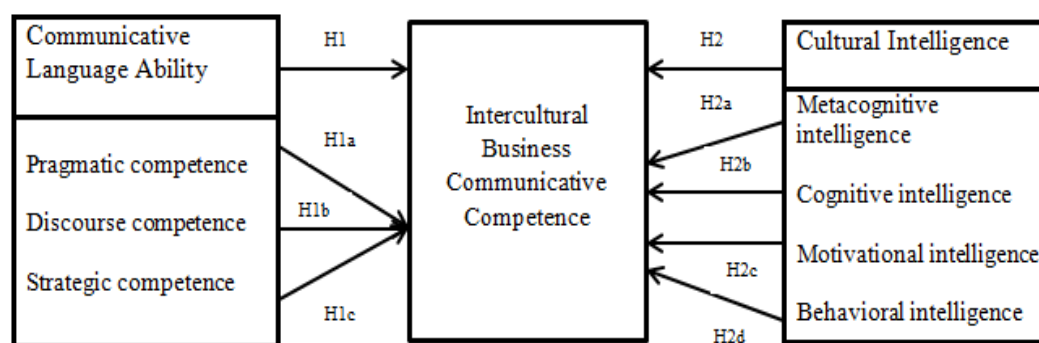


Figure 2. A proposed research model.

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was employed to data collection: a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. Such a combination of instruments helps to ensure that both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered and used to offer a multifaceted while complementary outlook on issues pertaining to Chinese professionals' use of BELF in workplaces, and the interrelations between the traits of IBCC construct. However, in this paper, only quantitative part will be reported.

At the initial stage of piloting, I invited four people to participate. One of them was not expert in the field so that he could help locate unnecessary jargons; others are those who were no stranger to questionnaire research or who had profound knowledge of the target population. I asked them to provide feedback about their feelings and the answers they gave. Based on the suggestions and comments received from the initial piloting, I could generally formulate a final version of the questionnaire.

The baseline data for the study was collected by using an online questionnaire survey, which applied a quantitative-deductive approach that hypotheses were developed based on already-known theories. Also, this was a cross-sectional design characterized by the feature of the large amount of data collected within a short time frame, which is used probably most frequently in linguistics research (Rasinger, 2013). The online survey was composed of three parts: Communicative needs analysis, IBCC measurement and demographic information. Needs analysis was conducted to investigate Chinese professionals' BELF use in the workplaces and IBCC measurement was used to examine their communicative competences of dealing with intercultural business communication. Additionally, selected demographic information were collected from each respondent. Considering that my participants' first language was Chinese, the language used in the questionnaire was Mandarin Chinese. According to Oscarson (1997) if the items are conveyed in the subjects' first language, they can more truthfully self-rate their performance compared to when the items are conveyed in their target language.

Followed by a snowball sampling method (Dornyei, 2007), convenience sampling was first applied as a way of selecting participants in that those potential participants were my acquaintances, so they were relatively accessible to me. All those potential participants were working in workplaces involving IBC,

such as multinational corporations, joint ventures, trading companies, or those that were involved in international business.

Instruments

The questions in the survey investigating the BELF use at work were adapted from the study by Chan (2014), exploring language needs analysis in the workplaces. The questions were answered by choosing a response option from a six-point Likert scales (1 = *never*: < 5% of such communication conducted in English; 2 = *rarely*: 5-10% of such communication conducted in English; 3 = *sometimes*: 10-30% of such communication conducted in English; 4 = *often*: 30-50% of such communication conducted in English; 5 = *usually*: 50-80% of such communication conducted in English; 6 = *always*: > 80% of such communication conducted in English).

To examine Chinese professionals' IBCC, three instruments were employed to measure their differences. The set of instruments included the scale of Communicative Language Ability (CLA) (Bachman & Palmer, 1989), the Language Strategy Use Survey (LSS) (Cohen, Oxford, & Chi 2002), the scale of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) (Ang et al., 2007) and the scale of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011).

Communicative Language Ability Scale (CLA)

In the present study, the scale of CLA developed by Bachman and Palmer (1989) was used. The reasons of using their measurement are: (1) it was a statistically validated self-rating measurement assessing learners' perceived communicative language ability, with coefficient alpha greater than 0.75 for each component; (2) it was used by many other scholars (e.g. Salamoura & Williams, 2006, 2007; Williams, 2006) in their research after Bachman and Palmer's (1989) study published; (3) the questionnaire form of the measurement can be better aligned with other instruments used in my study by using the same Likert scale; (4) the model of language proficiency that their measurement was based on is similar to the construct of communicative competence of my study in terms of language ability. The details of the CLA instrument are introduced below.

The scale of CLA is a trait structure of an experimental self-rating assessment of communicative language ability. The model of language abilities that Bachman and Palmer attempted to measure consisted of three main traits: grammatical competence, pragmatic competence, and socio-linguistic competence (see Figure 3), which was an extension of Canale and Swain's (1980) work. They used different question types to ask about three traits of participants' language proficiency. For each question type, different questions were asked to assess each of the sub-traits under each competence. The first was 'Ability to use trait' question type: Participants were asked to measure their ability to use the trait on a four-point scale. For instance, within the trait 'pragmatic competence,' subjects were asked questions such as, 'Can you organize a speech or piece of writing in English with several different ideas in it?' (i.e. ability to control organization). The second was 'Difficulty in using trait' question type: Subjects were asked to evaluate their difficulty in using the trait on a four-point scale. For instance, concerning the trait 'pragmatic competence,' subjects were asked questions such as 'How hard is it for you to organize a speech or piece of writing in English with several different ideas in it?' (i.e. organizational competence). The third was 'Recognition of input' question type: Subjects were asked to rate the extent to which they could recognize the trait in others' utterances. For instance, within the trait 'pragmatic competence,' subjects were asked questions such as 'When you hear or read something

in English, how easy is it for you to tell how well it is organized?’ (i.e. recognition of indicators of organization in input).

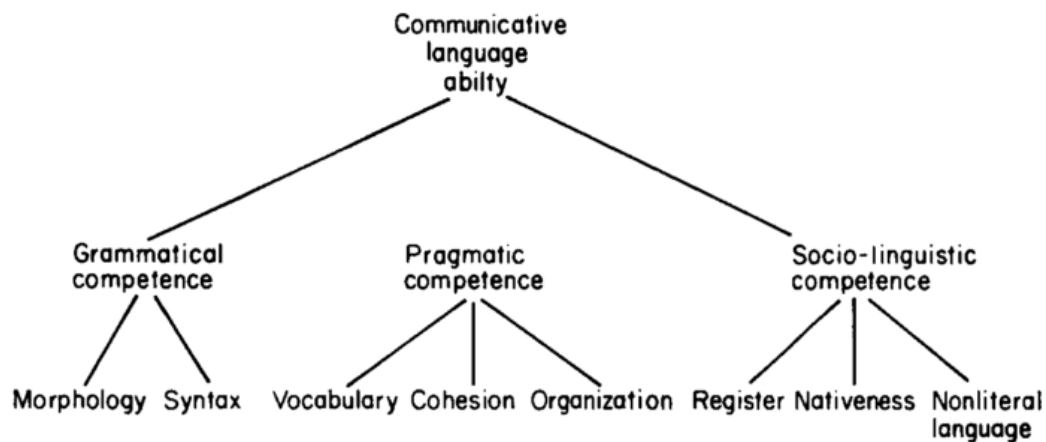


Figure 3. Model of communicative language ability (Bachman & Palmer, 1989, p. 17).

One hundred and sixteen non-native English speakers participated in the study and the results indicated that all the self-reported measures had strong loadings on a general factor, which suggested that self-ratings could be considered valid and reliable as measures of communicative language ability. Of three question types designed, Bachman and Palmer (1989) reported that language learners were more capable of identifying what they found challenging to use a language than what they found unchallenging. Thus, it appeared to be that ‘Difficulty in using trait’ question type was the most effective measure by asking about subjects’ perceived strain on various aspects of the language, while the least effective was the ‘can-do’ question.

Thus, following Bachman and Palmer’s study, I used ‘Difficulty in using trait’ question type to probe subjects’ perceived difficulty in the following language traits in my study. Three components of communicative language ability were examined: discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence. The statements exploring the former two competences, i.e. pragmatic competence and discourse competence, were adapted from Bachman and Palmer’s (1989) measurement, and the statements examining the last competence (strategic competence) were adopted from The Language Strategy Use Survey (LSS) developed by Cohen, Oxford, and Chi (2002). LSS is one of the approaches used as an assessment instrument for students who attempt to seek education abroad in terms of their language learning and language development (Paige & Stallman, 2007). It is a self-rated instrument in which language learners report the frequency of using a variety of language learning strategies. The statements comprise the strategies used in the four main skills of language learning and using (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as vocabulary and translation skills. LSS is later developed and revised for a research project, Maximizing Study Abroad: The Students’ Guide (MAXSA) (see Cohen, Paige, Shively, Emert, & Hoff, 2005). The MAXSA research project investigated five empirically generated LSS factors: learning structure and vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening, and asking for clarification. In statistical analyses, these factors were found to possess sound validity and reliability. As a result, I adapted three statements from LSS to investigate the language strategies used in terms of three language skills (listening, speaking, and writing), with one statement corresponding to one skill. In order to align with the items adapted from CLA, three statements were altered to the form of ‘Difficulty in using trait’ question type in the survey.

Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)

CQS (Ang et al., 2007) is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale started with 53 items for the initial item pool, based on their operational definitions for the four CQ components. They consulted a panel of three faculty and three experienced international executives for independently assessing 53 items in random order for their intelligibility, readability, and definitional reliability. They finally retained 40 best-quality items with ten for each dimension. After the item pool generation, Ang et al. conducted a set of studies to further measure and validate the scale. In the first study, 576 business school undergraduates in Singapore completed the initial version of CQ questionnaire. In their analysis with CFA, they confirmed a four-factor structure reflecting the four theoretical dimensions of CQ and deleted items with low factor loadings, low item-to-total correlations, high residuals, and extreme means. Accordingly, a 20-item CQ questionnaire was retained with the strongest psychometric properties: four items for meta-cognitive CQ, six for cognitive CQ, five for motivational CQ, and another five for behavioral CQ. In the second study, they continued to measure CQS by asking another sample of 447 undergraduate students in Singapore to finish the 20-item questionnaire. The Structural Equation modeling (SEM) analysis revealed an internal consistency of the data to the hypothesized four-dimension model and the robust relationships between items and the corresponding dimensions. In the third study, they validated the 20-item CQ questionnaire across time by analyzing the temporal stability of the CQS. They asked a subset of subjects ($n = 204$) from the Singapore cross-validation sample in Study 2 to complete the questionnaire again four months later and identified four identical latent variables in two measurement occasion matrices, with the unique variances of same items correlated across time. In the fourth study, they reported the equivalence in the number of factors of CQ construct by comparing the result from the questionnaires used across countries (U.S. vs. Singapore). In the fifth study, they used multiple assessors of CQ to examine the generalizability across methods (self-ratings and observer/peer-ratings) by applying MTMM techniques to measure convergent, discriminant and criterion validity. Their analysis provided sufficient evidence to indicate that the result of self-rating CQ questionnaire was parallel to that of the peer-rating one. In summary, Ang et al. (2007) critically examined the issue of the psychometric traits of the CQ construct and the measurement invariance of its four dimensions across time, countries, and methods.

In the present study, I included 12 items of CQ scale in the survey so that, under each dimension of CQ, there were three items, which is the minimum number of items required for each trait to do a factor analysis. I excluded the items that had relatively lower factor loadings based on Ang et al.'s (2007) studies in order to keep the length of the survey as short as possible and prevent participants from being too tired and giving up halfway.

Intercultural Business Communicative Competence (IBCC)

To measure Chinese professionals' IBCC for the present study, four items used in Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) survey were adopted. Their survey instrument was designed to ask individuals to rate their responses on a slider (0%-100%) when estimating the percentages and on a five-point Likert scale when estimating the extent of agreement/disagreement with a certain statement. The respondents of their survey were mainly involved in intercultural business communication with non-native speakers (70.2%) and native speakers (24.7%). The items in their survey depicted the perceptions of the subjects on possible features of successful intercultural business communication, which are appropriate to be used as outcome variables for the present study. Thus, from each trait of their GCC model, I adapted one statement with the highest percentage of perceived importance by the

respondents to measure each component of IBCC, i.e. BELF competence; business knowhow; multicultural competence; and the overall ability in intercultural business communication.

All questions asked in both CQ and IBCC scales were answered by choosing a response option from a six-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree* and 6 = *strongly agree*), while in CLA scale, it was 1 = *very hard* and 6 = *not hard at all*. The reason of using an even number of responses was that the tendency of choosing the middle category can be associated with the cultural characteristics of respondents (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). For example, in Chen, Lee, and Stevenson's (1995) study, they reported that Asian students were inclined to use the middle category for more times than their North American counterparts. Thus, bearing in mind such concern, the scale of the instruments used in the study was a six-point response option, omitting the neutral category.

Findings

This section reports findings obtained from the questionnaire, including (a) needs analysis of using English in the workplaces, (b) correlations between IBCC and the identified components of both CQ scale and CLA scale, (c) principle component analysis of both CQ scale and CLA scale, (d) regression analysis, and (e) implications for IBC theory, IBC practice and education.

Subjects

The questionnaire, which came in soft form, was completed by 248 Chinese business professionals. Since the criterion of subject selection is that the subjects should be Chinese business professionals who need to use English at their workplaces, twenty-one subjects who answered that they did not use English at all (0%) in their jobs were not included in any statistical analysis. Thus, in total, a sample of 227 subjects' questionnaires (Female: N=134; Male: N=93) were applied into data analysis. Most of the subjects were in the age groups of 20 to 25 years old (N=59), 26 to 30 years old (N=98) and 31-35 years old (N=54). In terms of their job ranks, about half of them (50.22%; N=114) were mid-level staff members, 42.29% (N=96) of them were junior, and 7.93% (N=18) were senior members of staff. The subjects were working in the state-owned companies (N=71), privately-owned companies (N=57), or multinational companies (MNC) (N=99) (the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Japan, Korea, etc.) in the cities of Shanghai (53%), Guangdong province (16%) and others (see Figure 4). Those companies are specialized in a range of professions, such as Information Technology and Telecommunications (N=54), Trading and Logistics (N=35), Banking and Financial services (N=16), and other professional services (N=16), etc. (see Figure 5). The survey data were analyzed by using SPSS Statistics 23.0.

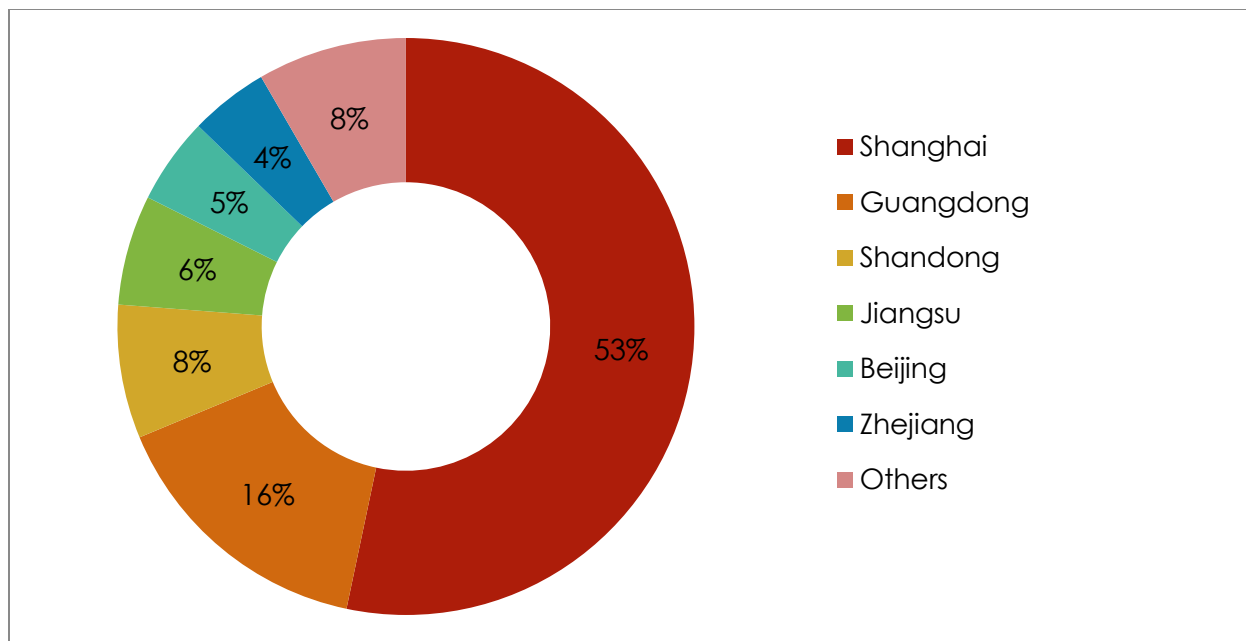


Figure 4. Sources of data.

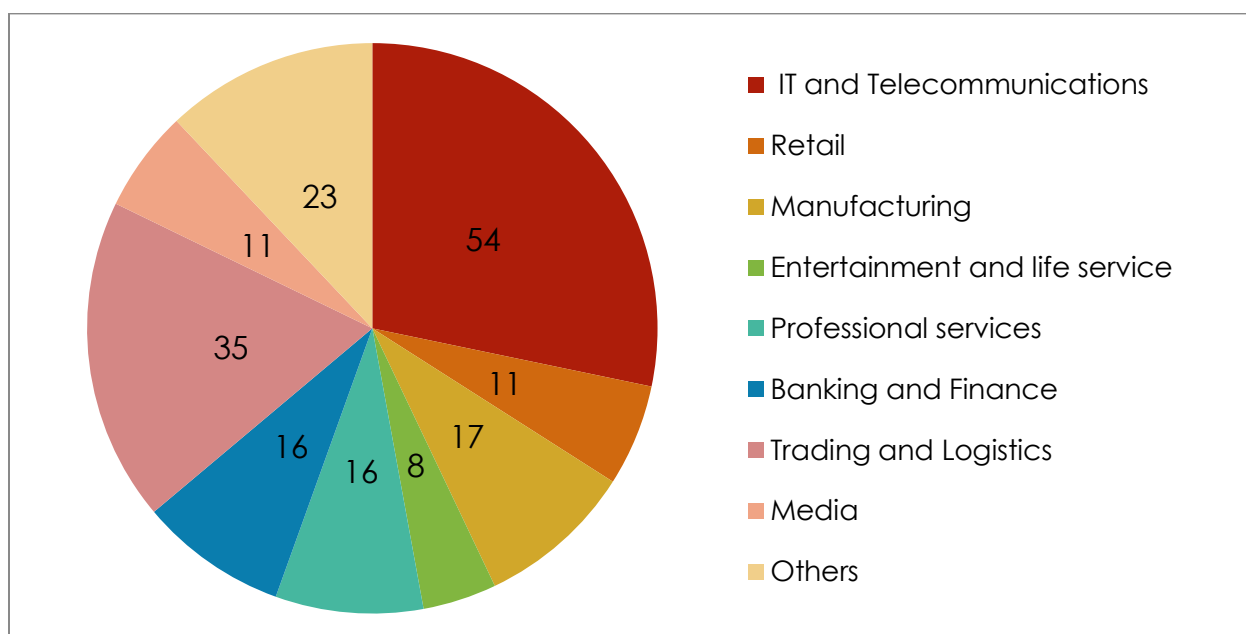


Figure 5. Professions of the companies.

Language Needs in the Workplaces

The reliability of the needs analysis instrument was determined by Cronbach's alpha tests ($\alpha = .968$), indicating a "very good" degree of reliability. Concerning the use of English by Chinese business professionals at workplaces, several salient features were identified: (1) by using one-way ANOVA analysis, it showed that there was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in the percentage of using English

vis-a-vis Chinese between the non-multinational companies (state-owned companies and privately-owned companies) and multinational companies (see Figure 6); (2) it was found that English was mostly used with NNEs rather than with NESs; in other words, the language dominating the intercultural business interactions could be characterized as BELF (see Figure 7); (3) the frequency with which Chinese professionals need to communicate in English (both in written and spoken form) has increased across a range of communicative activities since China's accession to the WTO in 2001 (see Figure 8 and 9) and certain forms of communicative activities such as faxes, which was identified as one of the major media in which English was used by Pang et al.(2002), has almost not used nowadays. On the other hand, new communicative activities like instant messaging (e.g.: Wechat) has emerged as one of the frequently-used forms of written communication in English by Chinese professionals; (4) it was also found that the time spent on different communicative activities varied, though not considerably. On average, the respondents estimated that, on a regular working day, English was mostly used in emailing and having meetings and discussions.

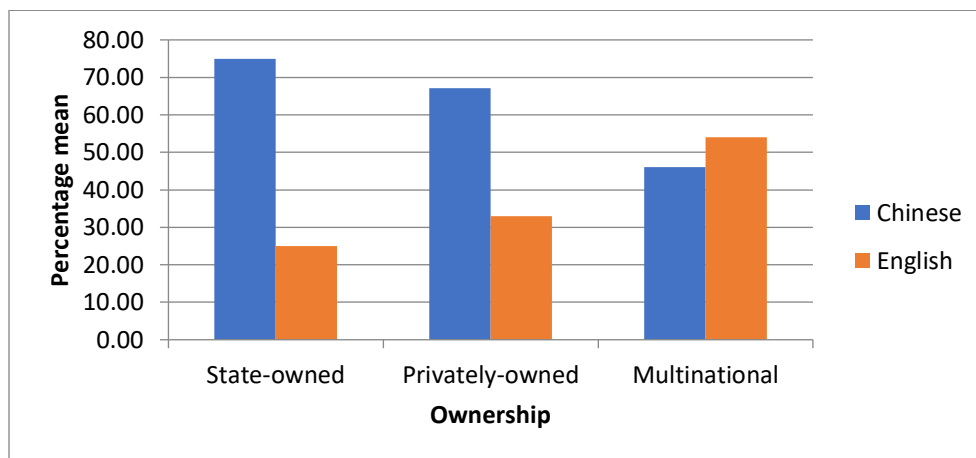


Figure 6. The proportion of Chinese vis-a-vis English used at workplaces.

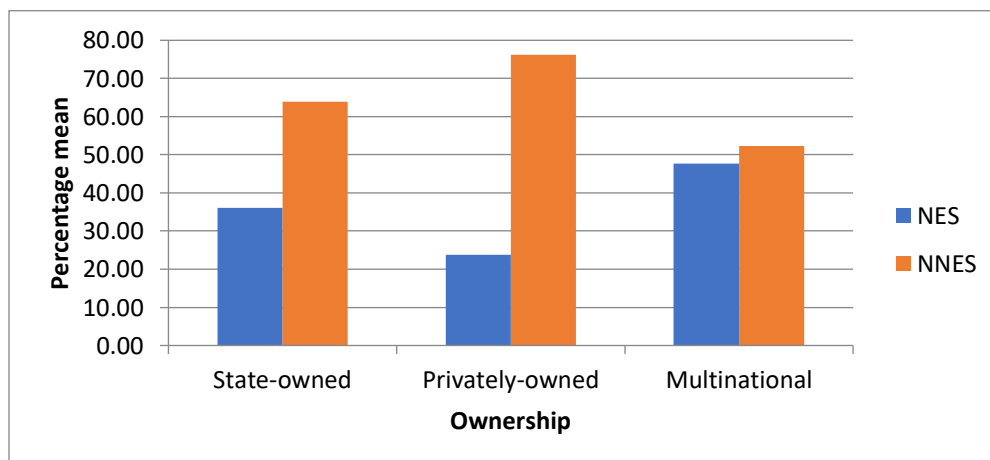


Figure 7. The proportion of NES vis-a-vis NNEs.

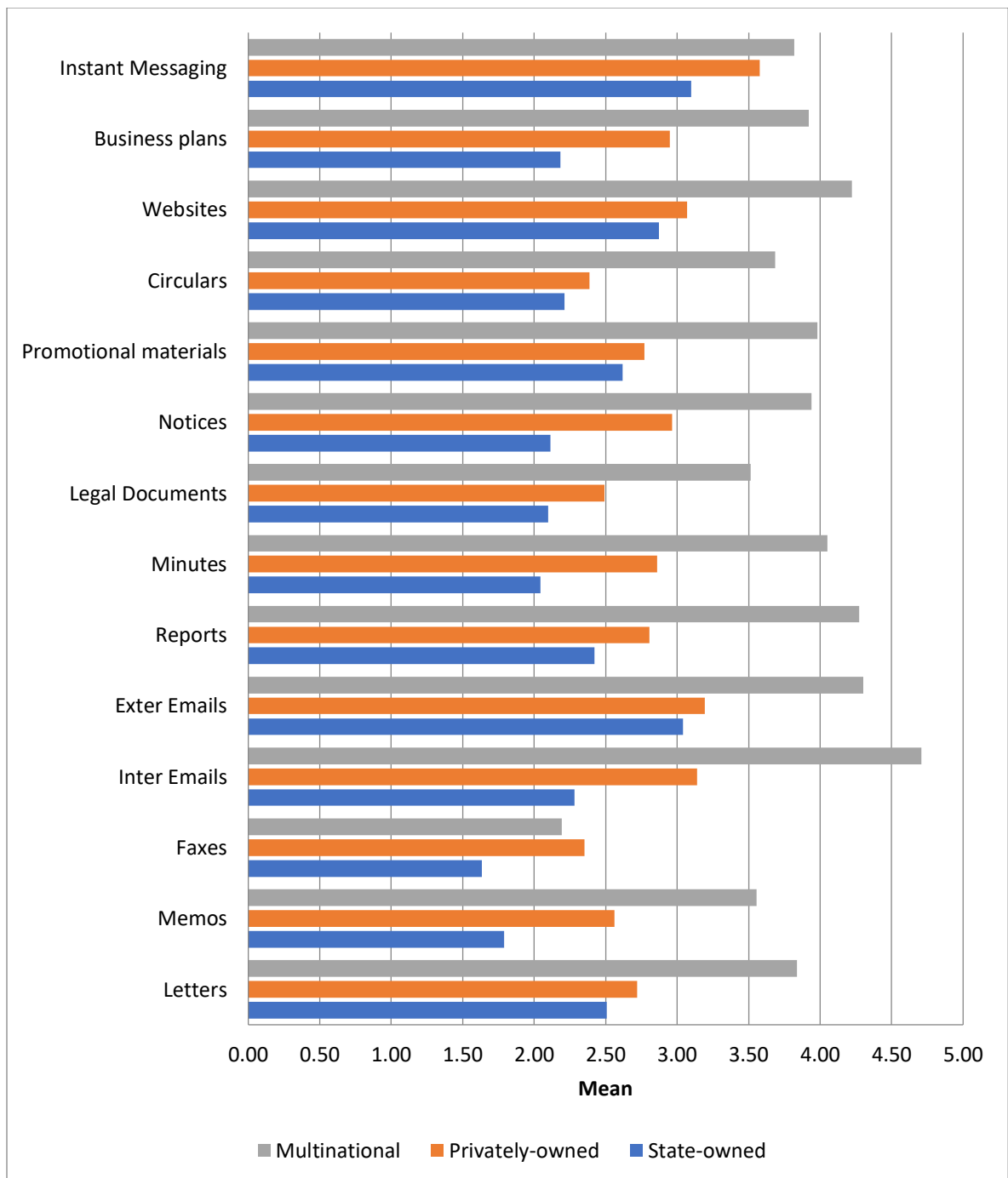


Figure 8. Language needs in the workplace: Written communication.

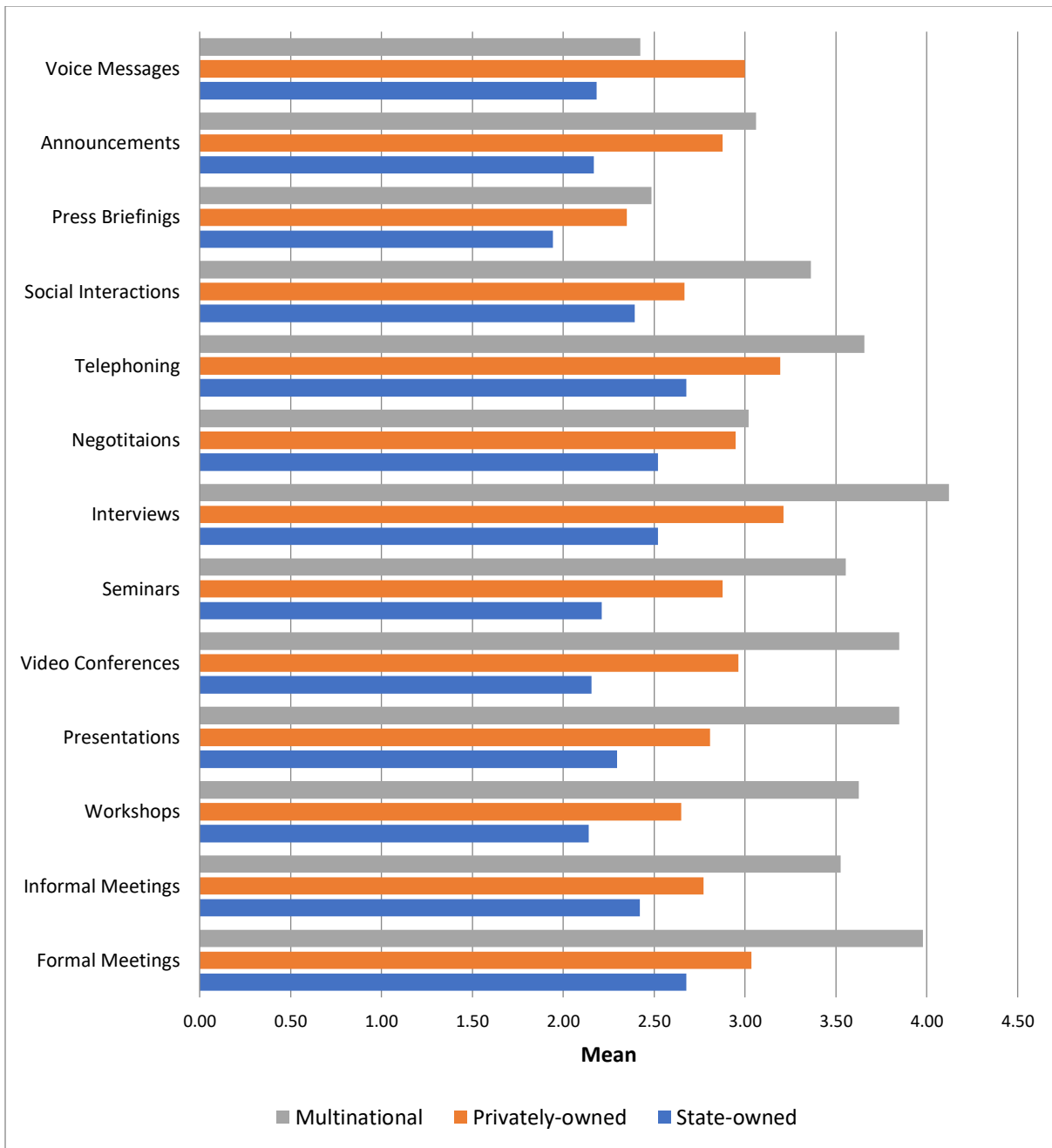


Figure 9. Language needs in the workplace: Spoken communication.

Principle Component Analysis

A principle component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 12-item CQ scale with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO= .887 ('great' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were > .81, which was well above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity Chi-Square (66) =1340.76, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Four components had eigenvalues over Jolliffe's

(1986) criterion of more than 0.7. (see Table 1) and in combination explained 76.23% of the variance. Although the most widely used criterion may be the eigenvalue greater than one, given that the original construct of CQ scale is composed of four intelligences and that the aim of doing PCA is to overcome multicollinearity problems in the following regression analysis, so, four is the number of components that were retained in the final analysis. Table 1 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same components suggest that component 1 represents metacognitive intelligence, component 2 cognitive intelligence, component 3 motivational intelligence and component 4 behavioral intelligence.

For the scale of CLA, PCA was also conducted on the 9-item scale with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO= .91('superb' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were > .88, which was well above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity Chi-Square (66) = 1340.76, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Two components had eigenvalues over Jolliffe's (1986) criterion of more than 0.7. (Table 2) and in combination explained 74.67% of the variance. As the same reason mentioned in the previous PCA for the CQ scale, two was the number of components that were retained in the final analysis. Table 2 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same components suggest that component 1 represents pragmatic competence, component 2 strategic competence.

The results from PCA of two scales generally aligned with previous theories of the construct of CQ and that of CLA. One difference was that, for the construct of CLA, statistical analysis showed that pragmatic competence was not independent of discourse competence. As Bialystok (1993) suggested, "pragmatic competence entails an array of abilities related to the use and understanding of language in contexts, including the mastery of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse" (p. 43), which partly explained the reason why two competences were not identified as two separate components from PCA. Also, a small number of items used in the questionnaire for measuring each component could be another potential reason for the result. Based on the PCA results, two components (pragmatic competence and strategic competence) were identified as compulsory factors in terms of communicative language ability and thus were applied into the follow-up correlation and regression analysis.

Table 1.

Factor Loadings for Principle Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Cultural Intelligence Scale

| Rotated Component Matrix | | | | |
|--|---------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Items | Component | | | |
| | Metacognitive | Cognitive | Motivational | Behavioural |
| I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds. | .83 | | | |
| I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me. | .82 | | | |
| I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions. | .76 | | | |
| I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me. | | .80 | | |
| I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me. | | .76 | | |
| I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures. | | .73 | | |
| I know the marriage systems of other cultures. | | | .87 | |
| I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures. | | | .86 | |
| I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviours in other cultures. | | | .62 | |
| I change my non-verbal behaviour when a cross-cultural situation requires it. | | | | .83 |
| I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it. | | | | .83 |
| I change my verbal behaviour (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it. | | .47 | | .56 |
| Initial Eigenvalues | 5.98 | 1.32 | .98 | .87 |
| % of Variance | 49.83 | 11.04 | 8.14 | 7.26 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | .84 | .83 | .81 | .83 |

Note. Factor loadings over .40 appear in the table.

Table 2.

Factor Loadings for Principle Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Communicative Language Ability Scale

| Rotated Component Matrix | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Component | |
| | Pragmatic | Strategic |
| How hard is it for you to make no grammar mistakes in English? | .86 | |
| How hard is it for you to use different kinds of English with different kinds of people (for example, a colleague, a boss, a customer)? | .85 | |
| How hard is it for you to organize a speech in English with several ideas in it? | .76 | |
| How hard is it for you to put several English sentences together in a row? | .67 | |
| How hard is it for you to tell how well it is organized when you hear something in English? | .64 | |
| How hard is it for you to tell how polite English-speaking people are by the kind of English they use? | .60 | .47 |
| How hard is it for you to use gestures as a way to try and get your meanings across when you can't think of a word or expression? | | .89 |
| How hard is it for you to ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't clear to you? | | .87 |
| How hard is it for you to look for a different way to express the idea, like using a synonym when you can't think of a word or expression? | .46 | .73 |
| Initial Eigenvalues | 5.73 | .99 |
| % of Variance | 63.65 | 11.01 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | .91 | .88 |

Note. Factor loadings over .40 appear in the table.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Since the data collected was not normally distributed, Kendall's tau b analysis was conducted for correlation analysis. It showed that all six factors (metacognitive intelligence, cognitive intelligence, motivational intelligence, behavioral intelligence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence) identified from PCA were significantly correlated with IBCC (see Table 3). In addition, a multiple regression was conducted to see if the components identified from two scales can significantly predict subjects' IBCC. Using the enter method, it was found that six factors jointly explained a significant amount of the variance (65%) in the value of IBCC, $F(6, 200) = 61.2$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .65$ (see Table 4 Model 1). Furthermore, although the analysis showed that both cognitive intelligence and pragmatic competence did not significantly predict IBCC (see Table 5 Model 1), a combination of the other four components did, at the level of $p < .05$ (see Table 5 Model 1 and 2). The combination of those four components (metacognitive intelligence, motivational intelligence, behavioral intelligence, and strategic competence) can explain 64.2% of the variance in the value of IBCC, $F(4, 202) = 90.38$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4 Model 2). Thus, although the variance explained by Model 1 was a bit more than by Model 2, with a higher F value, Model 2 was accepted as a better model with predictors of IBCC.

Discussions and Conclusions

In this paper, I have presented a theoretical discussion of the concepts of “communicative competence,” the construct of intercultural communicative competence, and the findings of a study that investigated the language use by Chinese business professionals and the elements of communicative competence required in their intercultural business communication. Now, in this section, I will first suggest implications for communication theory and then introduce the implications for business communicative practice and education. In conclusion, I will discuss the limitations of the study and possible further aspects for research.

SPSS Output for Correlation Analysis

Table 4.

| Model Summary | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | | Durbin-Watson |
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change | |
| 1 | .81 | .65 | .64 | .46 | .65 | 61.2 | 6 | 200 | .00 | 2.18 |
| 2 | .80 | .64 | .63 | .46 | .64 | 90.38 | 4 | 202 | .00 | 2.17 |
| a. Predictors for Model 1: (Constant), Strategic, Cognitive, Metacognitive, Motivational, Behavioural, Pragmatic | | | | | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors for Model 2: (Constant), Strategic, Metacognitive, Behavioural, Motivational | | | | | | | | | | |
| c. Dependent Variable: IBCC | | | | | | | | | | |

Coefficients of the Predictors of IBCC

a. Dependent Variable: IBCC

Implications for Communication Theory

Based on the constructs of intercultural communicative competence developed by scholars from different disciplines, i.e., second language acquisition, BELF studies, and business and management, I justified the use of Earley and Ang's (2003) CQ construct as the main categories in which the data of respondents' intercultural competence were examined, and the use of Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) communicative competence framework in which the data of respondents' communicative language ability were measured.

Grounded in the theoretical framework applied for the analysis and the findings of the empirical study, I may propose a construct for intercultural communicative competence in a business context (IBCC) (see Figure 10). The results of regression analysis showed that four factors significantly predicted IBCC. Thus, four rectangular boxes in the circle respectively represent one factor. Among four factors, three (metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral intelligence) were from the construct of CQ and one (strategic competence) from the construct of CLA. However, since the results of the correlation analysis indicated that, in addition to those four factors, another two (cognitive intelligence and pragmatic competence) were positively correlated with IBCC as well, each element is displayed by an individual triangle in line of dashes. The different colors in the figure represent different perspectives of communicative competence, with green standing for the language perspective while blue for the culture perspective. Furthermore, agreeing with Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), both culture and language abilities should be included in business knowhow so that in the present proposed construct, business knowhow is located as a surrounding cycle containing all traits of IBCC. Each trait in the cycle will be briefly discussed.

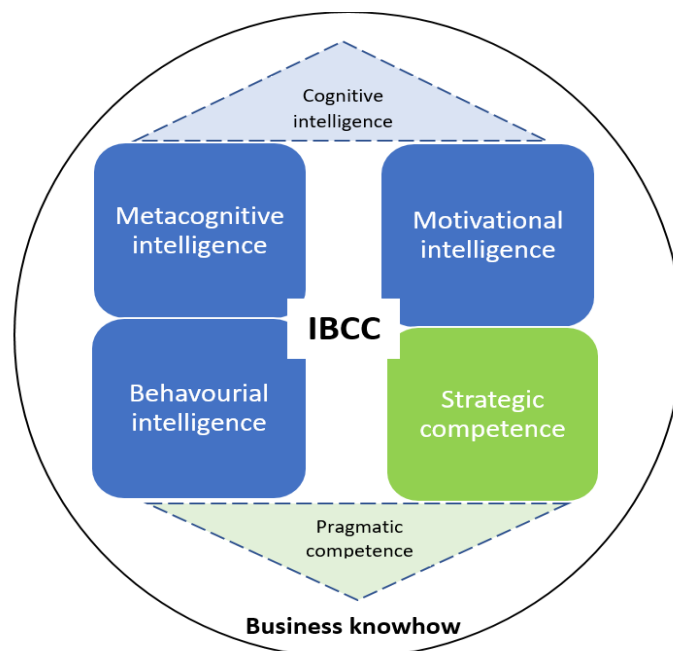


Figure 10. The construct of intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC).

First, from the culture perspective, a business professional needs to have adequate metacognitive intelligence for intercultural communication to succeed. It stems from the communicator's awareness of

and sensitivity toward cultural differences such as differences in national cultures, cooperation cultures, or even community cultures. Metacognitive intelligence also refers to the acknowledgement of “different ways of doing things” (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta’s, 2011, p 255), which necessitates the flexibility and tolerance in dealing with IBC. Motivational intelligence is another integral capability that a business individual needs to be equipped with. It is closely related with how much motivation one has to be involved in intercultural communication, especially for those who have relatively low language proficiency. A willingness of directing effort and energy into intercultural communication can lead to more exposure to such activities either aiming for getting the work done or for establishing rapport, which will in turn facilitate the improvement of IBCC. In addition to metacognitive and motivational intelligence, behavioral intelligence also plays a vital role in functioning in intercultural business communication. It refers to appropriately adjusting one’s verbal or non-verbal behavior to meeting the needs of specific interaction contexts. It is imperative for business professionals to have a high level of behavioral intelligence so that they are able to handle unexpected situations.

Moreover, it should be noted that just because cognitive intelligence did not significantly predict IBCC does not mean it is not important. Correlation analysis did indicate a positive relationship between cognitive intelligence and IBCC. The reason of its statistical insignificance may be that the subjects of the study were those who were working in their home country and they were quite familiar with the local culture. Thus, it is not of necessity for local business professionals to adapt themselves to their home culture, unlike expatriates who may need to familiarize themselves with the target culture for adjusting to the work and life in another country. However, several respondents participating in the following interviews did mention that acquiring the knowledge of your audience’s cultural background can surely facilitate the rapport building and maintaining, which will in turn promote IBC.

Second, from the language perspective, it is of much importance for business professionals to have a good mastery of strategic competence when dealing with intercultural communication, especially for those who have a low proficiency in speaking a foreign language. Moreover, pragmatic competence may also contribute to the success of IBC, although not in a statistically significant way. It is because strategic competence per se in fact implicates a good mastery of pragmatic competence otherwise one cannot employ the strategies well to either smooth the way for interaction or prevent communication breakdowns by properly connecting linguistic forms with meanings. Moreover, according to Birner (2013), pragmatic competence is usually implicit, and it is not generally available for explicit assessment but known at certain level. Thus, strategic and pragmatic competences entail the ability to always find appropriate and effective ways to clarify and convey messages, and repair communicative breakdowns. In fact, interview participants ascertained that in some situations, it was common that speakers with limited linguistic recourses were able to communicate with each other in spite of plenty of linguistic errors because they often use highly specialized technical terms and shared standardized concepts so that, in their case, very basic English seems to be adequate for each business interaction. Even if communication broke down, they could always seek to find a way to compensate for their language proficiency, such as asking the interlocutor to repeat the utterances, using gestures, or searching the specific words they did not know from the telephone dictionary.

The IBCC model is conducive to present what competences are required for business communication in terms of the ability of culture and language. It is shown that culture and language are two integral parts of IBCC and cannot be separated from each other. In addition, the field-specific professional competence, or business know-how is equally important and is mostly regarded as default knowledge shared by business professionals in their specific domains (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Thus, IBCC is a multifaceted capability in practice. It has drawn upon research into second/foreign language acquisition, BELF studies, and business and management for its theoretical insights. Furthermore, IBCC model is contextualized in intercultural business communication so that it may not be valid in another context. It illustrates the elements needed for successful intercultural communication in today's globalized business world.

Implications for Practice and Education

There are implications related to all six elements of IBCC model in IBC practice. Instead of investing resources in flawless language proficiency, the attention should be paid to knowledge and abilities that would contribute to enhancing students' and professionals' IBCC more effectively. In this respect, four aspects need special emphasis. First, for those who are involved in IBC in their mother lands, the focus should be put on raising the awareness of cultural differences (i.e. metacognitive intelligence). Since communicators need to show tolerance toward differences between their cultural backgrounds and language proficiency, they should ideally receive training for enhancing their awareness of these differences and for adjusting to these differences, such as different expressions, accents, or intonations, etc. On the other hand, for expatriates and those who are intended to achieve more than just getting work done, like knowing more about each other to promote rapport building and maintaining, being conscious of cultural differences only is not enough and it is necessary for them to understand what those cultural differences are and what adjustments should be made to reach a balance between the target culture and home culture (i.e. cognitive intelligence). Second, language learners and users should be encouraged and motivated to be engaged in intercultural communication as much as they could (i.e. motivational intelligence), which in turn may improve their communicative skills through practice. Third, intercultural communicators need to be trained to use appropriate strategies to facilitate communication and prevent breakdowns in communication caused by linguistic deficiency or cultural differences (i.e. behavioral intelligence and strategic competence). The strategies include both verbal and non-verbal ones such as adjusting speech speed, checking for understanding, and asking for clarifications, etc. Fourth, emphasis should be simultaneously attached to having pragmatic competence, which is associated not only with the knowledge of speech acts (Searle, 1969), routines (Coulmas, 1979), and implicature (Grice 1975) but also with the ability to use such knowledge in the practice of intercultural (business) communication.

Furthermore, the model of IBCC that I have proposed has interesting implications in syllabus design and materials development. Drawing attention to the importance of intercultural competence in today's business communication, I suggest that the (inter)cultural content should be given equal weight in second language teaching. Adopting an intercultural approach to second language education aims not to achieve a "native speaker competence" but instead an "intercultural (business) communicative competence" (e.g. Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003). On the other hand, syllabus design and materials writing should be driven by needs analysis. The needs analysis reported in the paper provides a clear picture of what and how often the communicative activities are required for business professionals to use English in the China-based companies of three different ownerships (state-owned, privately-owned, and multinational companies). Such target-situation analysis enables students to have a clear view of the target needs before they begin their learning journey. Only when target needs are well informed can learners' needs be well analyzed. Only when the language use in business settings is revealed can business English practitioners design an appropriate syllabus and teaching and learning materials, as Belcher (2009) suggested. Furthermore, with the trend that English has played an increasingly important role in workplace communication in Mainland China, especially in multinational companies, for all those who aim to seek positions in those companies, it is imperative to master the specific knowledge and

skills for performing the required communicative activities such as writing emails, making presentations, and keeping good cooperative relations with colleagues.

Last but not the least, the IBCC model proposed has implications for assessing language learning within an intercultural perspective. It sheds light on a site of considerable unresolved controversy: communicative language testing (Corbett, 2003) and partly answers the question of what exactly is the connection between language, culture, and intercultural (business) communicative competence. If we can accept a mode in which equal classroom time would be distributed to language and culture rather than a “language-centered” mode, then the intercultural component taught should be assessed as an integral part of the assessments that examine learners’ capability of communication. Therefore, it calls for a reconceptualization of the assessment design. In other words, embedded in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the six elements of IBCC model are supposed to be integrated with assessing the language itself and also to guide the selection of assessment rubrics and acceptable proficiency levels at different stages of second language learning.

In general, the IBCC model depicts that intercultural component is as equally important as language component for intercultural (business) communication, which requires to give equal weight to culture teaching in language learning classrooms. Putting it differently, the teaching of culture should be moved from the margins to the center within curricula whose primary leaning outcome still remains for learners to be linguistically proficient (Corbett, 2003). Additionally, the model also renders that competences in both culture and language are indispensable parts of business know-how required for working in business and management.

Limitations and Further Study

Along with the nonstop debate about the advantages and disadvantages of gathering performance-based data versus self-reported data, the present study has the typical limitations of using self-rating questionnaire survey. Nevertheless, the general criticisms of self-reported methods have been found exaggerated (Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Spector, 2006) and empirical evidence has suggested that people are capable of providing information by reflecting on their communication behavior on their own (Riggio & Riggio, 2001). In addition, the self-reported instruments used in the present study have empirically proved to be valid and thus are a forceful method for examining learners’ abilities. In other words, the risk of participants’ over or under rating their level of competencies for the current study is low.

Another limitation to this research is the common method biases, which means that the measures of the predictor and criterion variables are obtained from the same sources (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In order to lessen such kind of potential bias, some procedural remedies were implemented in this study. Firstly, the respondents’ privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed throughout the process of research. Moreover, the items measuring respondents’ communicative language ability, cultural intelligence and IBCC were displayed at separate pages. Items used in the instruments were different in the statement type. Some of them were expressed by ‘difficulty in using’ question type, and others were by ‘can-do’ statement type. Furthermore, the online form questionnaire can prevent respondents from going back to previous pages to edit answers once a new page enters. These procedures may all contribute to minimize the effects of common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

A third limitation is related to the rigid structure and the questions of the survey, which were set at the beginning of the research and which could not be changed since. Finally, the respondents of the study were all Chinese business professionals who were working in their motherland. Although part of them had experiences of either learning or working abroad, it still implies a bias of research context.

The suggestions for further study are closely connected to the limitations. First, the subject population could be expanded to other geographical areas or to certain particular professional groups. For example, comparisons could be made between professionals with engineering degrees and those with business degrees. Second, quantitative analysis has its limitations of unable to provide in-depth details concerning intercultural business communication such as how those professionals employ strategies to negotiate meanings or compensate for their language deficiency. Thus, qualitative methods such as discourse analysis should be a useful tool for further study to achieve a better understanding of what actually happen when professionals are involved in IBC. For example, under the effect of rapidly advancing communication technologies, business practitioners tend to communicate by instant messaging and voice messages. What characteristics such types of business discourses have are worth exploring for further understanding IBC practices.

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