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Intercultural Communicative Competence in
China-based Corporations: An Analysis of
Chinese Professionals' Perceived
Communicative Needs, Challenges, and
Strategies

中國企業的跨文化交際能力：中國專業人
士對交際需求，挑戰，和對策的看法分析

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by

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In memory of my father

To my mother

With eternal love and appreciation

Abstract

China's expanding collaboration with the rest of the world entails an urgent need for numerous talents with excellent intercultural communication skills. Cultural sensitivity and a proficiency in foreign languages are recognized as vital and essential abilities for a successful international business career. However, little research has been conducted to investigate what aspects relate to foreign languages and culture influence regarding intercultural business communication at work in Mainland China. To bridge the gap, four research questions (RQ) were put forward to guide this current study: (1) What are the communicative needs related to BELF use faced by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication? (2) What are the communicative challenges related to BELF use identified by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication? (3) What are the communicative competences related to BELF use perceived as necessary by Chinese business professionals to achieve successful intercultural business communication? (4) How do Chinese business professionals deal with the challenges they encounter related to BELF use in intercultural business communication?

Drawing on prior studies in the areas of Applied Linguistics, Communication, and Business and Management, the study proposes a theoretical framework and generates ten sets of hypotheses. H1 – H4 were proposed to answer RQ1 by investigating the differences in BLEF use at work between professionals from companies of different ownership, companies of different size, and of different job ranks. H5 – H6 were aimed to answer RQ 2 by looking into the relationship between the possibility that Chinese business professionals find challenging to use English in intercultural business communication, and their English language proficiency and working experiences. H7 – H10 were put forward to answer RQ3 by exploring what factors of communicative competence are positively associated with professionals' performance in intercultural business communication.

Adopting a triangulated approach for the the research methodology, the data of the present study consists of both quantitative and qualitative data so as to offer a multifaceted, while complementary outlook on issues examined in the study. The quantitative data, derived from 227 online questionnaires finished by Chinese business professionals, focuses on answering RQ1 – 3, and the qualitative semi-structured interview data were gathered from 11 interviewees selected from questionnaire participants, answering RQ 1 - 4. The quantitative data were analyzed with ANOVA, MANOVA, *t*-test, correlation analysis, factor analysis, and regression analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed with NVivo to confirm, explain, and supplement the quantitative findings.

The findings show that English has played an increasingly important role in workplace communication in Mainland China, especially in multinational companies. Using English has become a business convention/culture in multinational companies, although the extent of its use differs depending on various contextual factors, primary among which are a professional's duties and foreign language competency. It is found that linguistically, there are four main reasons behind the communicative challenges: a lack of field-specific vocabulary, colloquial expression from native speakers of English, strong accents from non-native English speakers, and the incompetence in using English with appropriate formats, styles, and tones. Culturally, three challenges were found to be distinct in communication between professionals coming from different cultures: differences in working styles, a lack of culture knowledge, and various language expressions influenced by cultural diversity. In order to meet the communicative needs and cope with the communicative challenges at work, a toolkit of intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) was proposed, in which there are six factors of competence: metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, behavioral CQ, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence. Meanwhile, 17 communicative strategies were found to be frequently used and regarded as effective by Chinese business professionals to make up for communicative breakdown or facilitate communicative efficiency.

In addition to the aforementioned findings, the study also discussed the implications in terms of theory, methodology, and practice. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the research on intercultural business communication, and will have practical implications for business English teaching in Mainland China and in other educational settings with similar cultural and social backgrounds. The potential limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also presented.

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List of Abbreviations

ANOVA: One-way Analysis of Variance

BE: Business English

BELF: English as a Business Lingua Franca

CLA: Communicative Language Ability

CQ: Cultural Intelligence

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

ELF: English as a Lingua Franca

GCC: Global Communicative Competence

KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

IBCC: Intercultural Business Communicative Competence

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

MANOVA: Multivariate Analysis of Variance

MRA: Multiple Regression Analysis

NES: Native Speakers of English

NNES: Non-native Speakers of English

RQ: Research Question

WTO: World Trade Organization

Chapter 1 Introduction

The present study focuses on Chinese business professionals' intercultural communicative competence via an investigation of their use of English as a business lingua franca (BELF) in the workplace. Specifically, it addresses the communicative challenges encountered by Chinese business professionals in multicultural workplace settings, and the communicative competences and strategies which are essential to meet their communicative needs and are used to overcome these challenges. To begin, Section 1.1 introduces the background to the study. Section 1.2 then defines the terms used in the study. The need to clarify the meaning of key terminology emerges from the plentiful research studies of intercultural communication across cultures within different academic traditions (e.g., applied linguistics and communication studies) in recent years. There are often differences in how these terms are used by the researchers, and to avoid confusion, the meanings of the terms used in the present study are clarified. Section 1.3 presents a review the research conducted in the field along with a discussion of the motivation for the study to identify the research gap.

1.1 Background of research

The introduction of the “Open Door” policy in China in 1978 saw the nation embark on an economic reform program to transition from a centrally-planned economy to a market-based economy (Shen & Edwards, 2004). To further integrate into the world economy, China adopted a “go global” strategy in 1999 which aimed to promote Chinese companies internationally. In 2001, China successfully entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) after 15 years of difficult negotiations (Collins, 2013). These changes contributed to the augmentation of China's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) and inward FDI.

According to the 2018 World Investment Report by UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), China was ranked the world's second largest

FDI recipient after the United States (US). China was also rated the second most attractive destination for multinational companies (MNCs) during 2017-2019, after the US. Moreover, the liberalization of trade and investment had transformed China into a major trading economy, with merchandise exports and imports growing dramatically from \$29.4 billion in 1979 to \$4306.3 billion in 2014 (Morrison, 2015). China's rapidly increasing trade volume saw it emerge as a major trading partner with the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and with many countries such as the US, Japan and South Korea (Morrison, 2015). In turn, China's expanding economic collaboration with the rest of the world both broadened and deepened the nature of intercultural business communication between people from China and other countries. The new business communications not only involved intercultural business negotiations and visits, but also required an increasing number of international business professionals to work in MNCs located in China and in indigenous Chinese organizations (Du, 2015).

China's broadening intercultural business landscape urgently required Chinese business professionals with the competences to successfully conduct various intercultural business communications. To realize successful intercultural communication, it is essential to recognize the importance of languages and cultures (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013). A study conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2010 reported that cultural sensitivity and language proficiency are recognized as essential skills for a successful international business career. Another study by the EIU (2012) suggested that insensitivity to different cultural traditions or misunderstandings arising from language deficiencies can be the greatest threats to the cross-border business deals undertaken by organizations. Both surveys indicated that cultural sensitivity and foreign language proficiency are vital for a business professional to possess to have a successful international business career.

English has drawn much attention from intercultural communication studies and has gradually become the business lingua franca (BELF) of international business used by professionals from various cultural backgrounds (Ehrenreich, 2010; Evans, 2013;

Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). In addition to language, the current “world flattening” (Friedman, 2007) phase of economic globalization highlights the role of culture in intercultural communication. The EIU (2010) reported that 73 percent of business professionals believed cultural sensitivity to be the most important trait for success in the international arena. Therefore, to meet China’s pressing need for talented business professionals with proficient communicative competences to perform successfully in today’s multicultural workplaces, the dynamics of language skills and cultural sensitivities development in the business context is worthy of scholars’ attention.

1.2 Terminology

In this section, the terms used by scholars are reviewed and the terminology relevant to this thesis is clarified. Five key terms associated with this thesis are: ‘culture’, ‘intercultural communication’, ‘communicative competence’, ‘intercultural communicative competence’, and ‘BELF’.

1.2.1 Culture

Culture is a complex construct and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Culture is defined as “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.”(Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.25). People learn culture when they interact with others in different social environments, in which cultural differences (e.g., different values, symbols and rituals) manifest themselves in people’s different social behaviors (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). However, culture is also conceptualized as dynamic and fluid, meaning that culture is prone to gradual change with the development of human, society, and technology (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). Furthermore, culture consists of many levels and sublevels. Generally, there are “large cultures” signifying ‘ethnic’, ‘national’ or ‘international’ cultures, and there are also “small cultures” denoting the cultures of any cohesive social grouping (e.g., organizational and team cultures) (Holliday, 1999, p.237). In the present study,

culture is considered as a construct that is both stable and fluid. For example, in terms of national cultures, values that reflect traditions are generally seen as stable over time although they will change slightly and slowly from generation to generation. On the other hand, since social practices are constantly changing and people learn new practices throughout their lifetime, culture change can be fast when people acquire new symbols and communicate through new rituals (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

1.2.2 Intercultural communication

Terms such as international, cross-cultural, and intercultural are frequently used interchangeably, so it is necessary to make certain distinctions among them. International communication refers to formal and ritualized communication between nations and governments rather than individuals such as the dialogue at the United Nations (Fortner, 1993). Intercultural communication, first used by Edward T. Hall in 1959, is defined as communication between people of different cultures. It involves “analysis of what is happening at the point when communication is taking place” (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p. 29). Lastly, cross-cultural communication focuses on comparisons of communication across cultures and is a major area of research “within the broad rubric of intercultural communication” (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 2). Gudykunst’s view thus implies that cross-cultural studies are a subfield of intercultural studies.

Considering the different points of focus in the three modifiers, the modifier ‘intercultural’ was chosen for use in the study as it is concerned with communication between people from different cultures rather than comparing communication between two cultures. Based on this approach, intercultural business communication, as a comparatively new term in the business world, is defined as communication between and within businesses involving individuals from more than one culture (Chaney & Martin, 2014).

1.2.3 Communicative competence

Communicative competence, as a theoretical construct, has been extensively investigated by scholars from diverse fields including 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).

In the field of Applied Linguistics, Chomsky (1965) introduced the concept of 'linguistic competence' in his elaboration of generative grammar. He claimed that competence is exclusively attributed to the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by ideal speaker-listeners, and that it is not affected by cognitive and sociocultural factors during actual linguistic performance (Rickheit, Strohner, & Vorwerg, 2008). Thus, Chomsky claimed that competence (linguistic knowledge) is distinguished from performance (the actual use of language in communication). Moreover, 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 by rejecting his rigid dichotomy between competence and performance. He contended that competence in fact involved both '(tacit) knowledge' and '(ability for) use', and that performance involved both "competence underlying a person's behavior" (p. 282) and the observable part in actual behavior. Furthermore, Hymes suggested that the following four questions should arise if linguistic theory is to be incorporated with theories of communication and culture (p. 281):

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful), in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;

4. Whether (and to which degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what doing it entails.

The question of formal possibility means that, according to the rules within a formal system, grammatical and cultural rules manifested in verbal or other communicative behaviors can be evaluated. The question of feasibility refers to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral constraints based on features of the human body and the physical environment. The question of appropriateness is associated with the type of communicative behavior that can be expected in a specific social environment. Lastly, the question of actual performance suggests that it is necessary to study communicative competence via the empirical observation of certain communicative actions such as workplace communication and social interaction.

As interpreted above, Hymes' notion of 'communicative competence' emphasizes that, in addition to a knowledge of grammatical rules, cognitive, emotional, and social factors should be taken into consideration when determining appropriateness in communicative actions (Rickheit et al., 2008). This is because competence includes both knowledge (of a language) and ability for use (of that language), which, in practice, are connected to each other (Peterwagner, 2005).

Along with applied linguists, psychologists and communication scholars have also contributed to the numerous definitions of communicative competence. Notably, they all mention the ability to interact appropriately and effectively in intercultural communication contexts (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) defined communicative competence as the ability to perform in a way that is considered both appropriate and effective in a given situation. Later, Spitzberg (1988) refined this definition and described competent communication as an "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).

Evidently, effectiveness and appropriateness are the two most important criteria of communicative competence as identified by communication specialists (Chen, 2014; Rickheit et al., 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The effectiveness criterion is a functional attribute, relating to the ability to infer a speaker's utterance meaning and the goal behind this intent (Rickheit et al., 2008). The criterion implies that meaning is co-construed by interlocutors during dynamic complex interactions and is of crucial importance to understanding and managing the processes (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). As pointed out by Spitzberg and Cupach (1989), "Effectiveness derives from control and is defined as successful goal achievement or task accomplishment" (p. 7). The appropriateness criterion indicates the importance of context and the speaker's ability to be situationally flexible in their behavior (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). As such, it indicates an assortment of relations between communicative actions and their social contexts (Rickheit et al., 2008).

In addition to appropriateness and effectiveness, establishing and maintaining relationships has emerged as a third important criterion for application when measuring the success of intercultural communication, particularly in intercultural business communication (Zhu, 2014). This is because rapport is an essential element in the quality of relationships with customers and colleagues in today's globalized society (Campbell and Davis, 2006). As Byram argued (1997), "successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships" (p. 3). In this sense, the success of communication depends on establishing, maintaining and enhancing business relationships with business stakeholders such as customers, collaborators, and employees.

Based on the conceptualizations of communicative competence by scholars from different disciplines, it is important for business professionals to apply three key criteria in order to realize intercultural communication efficacy. Appropriateness is related to the propriety of languages and the suitability of behaviors in a given social context. Effectiveness is concerned with achieving communication goals and getting

things done. The third criterion relates to establishing and maintaining sound business relationships.

1.2.4 Intercultural communicative competence

The term communicative competence was discussed in Section 1.2.2. A similar term, communication competence, is, however, frequently used in the field of communication studies (e.g., Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Collier, 2015). Applied Linguistics scholars (e.g., Byram, 1997; Canale & Swain, 1980) tend to use ‘intercultural communicative competence’ following Hymes (1972); whereas, Communication Studies scholars tend to use the term ‘intercultural communication competence’ derived from Ruben (1976, 1989).

Studies in the field of Applied Linguistics view people who are engaged in communication as language learners and assign focus onto whether their language use is appropriate in a given intercultural context. In the field of Communication Studies however, people who are engaged in communication are viewed as interactants, and the research focus is on whether and how their communication is effective and appropriate. As Judit (2013) suggested, except for the focus of research, “there is hardly any difference between the constructs of intercultural communication competence and intercultural communicative competence” (p. 36). Given that this study focuses on language use in the context of intercultural business communication, the term intercultural communicative competence is used, reflecting recent trends in Applied Linguistics.

1.2.5 English as a business lingua franca

The original *lingua franca*, also called *sabir* (Haberland, 2011) derived from a language variety spoken along the south-eastern coast of the Mediterranean from the 15th to the 19th centuries. The language facilitated trade or social interactions between people who did not speak in the same mother tongue (Meierkord & Knapp,

2002). This lingua franca was distinctive because it was a pidgin language with no native speakers (Haberland, 2011). Furthermore, it was most probably based initially on Italian dialects and included elements of a number of languages such as Arabic, French and Spanish for example (Meierkord & Knapp, 2002).

The definition of lingua franca was extended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1953 to “a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them” (p. 46). Drawing on this definition, a lingua franca may have native speakers and any language may be used as a lingua franca (Haberland, 2011). For example, English has been used as a lingua franca since the countries of the Outer Circle (Kachru, 1985) were first colonized in the late 16th century (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011).

English as a lingua franca (ELF) was defined as “an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages” (Seidlhofer, 2001, p.146). This definition suggests that “it [ELF users] does not exclude native speakers of English (henceforth NESs), since ELF is not the same as English as a Native Language and must therefore be ‘additionally acquired’ by NESs too” (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p 283). ELF users “typically find themselves in situations where discourse norms are not clear, given, or monocultural... There is no obvious target culture or linguistic authority” (Mauranen, 2018, p. 114).

Therefore, building on the concept of ELF, the term BELF used in this study means a shared language used in the business domain by speakers with different mother tongues (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005). BELF users include both NESs and non-English native speakers (NNESs) who engage in business communications. In addition, BELF is characterized as a dynamic professional language that can create new operational cultures on the basis that language and culture are regarded as interconnected (Charles, 2007). Since speakers of different

first languages and cultures use languages following different socio-pragmatic rules (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005), they bring their own cultural characteristics into the BELF communication. In this sense, “BELF communication is inherently intercultural” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p. 205).

1.3 Motivation of research

English as a business lingua franca, as a de facto world language of business, has drawn much attention from scholars who have focused on a wide range of issues regarding language selection and use in progressively globalized professional worlds (Evans, 2013). One notable feature of the body of work is that researchers are based in geographically diverse contexts: Malaysia (e.g., Kassim & Ali, 2010; Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012), Japan (e.g., Cowling, 2007), South Africa (e.g., Hill & Zyl, 2002), Korea (e.g., Huh, 2006; Kim, 2013), Taiwan (e.g., Spence & Liu, 2013), Hong Kong (e.g., Chew, 2005; Du-Babcock, 2013; Du-Babcock & Tanaka, 2013; Evans, 2010, 2013; Evans & Green, 2003; Weninger & Kan, 2013), Mainland China (e.g., Han, 2010; Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2002; Wu, 2012; Zhang & Guo, 2015), and many European countries such as Finland (e.g., Charles & Marschan-piekkari, 2002), France (e.g., Neeley, 2013), and Germany (e.g., Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006). Europe has become a fertile site for studies examining various aspects of BELF in recent years; namely, English for specific purposes (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Nickerson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008), business communication (Charles, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2010; Harzing & Feely, 2008; Janssens, Lambert, & Steyaert, 2004), world Englishes (Deneire, 2008; Erling & Walton, 2007), language policy (Angouri, 2013) and business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002).

Notwithstanding the constellation of research on BELF in recent years, relatively few studies have focused on the role of BELF in China-based workplaces. Wu (2013) examined BELF research on China via 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. The author found that the research covered a diversity of aspects such as Business English (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). Therefore, it is noticeable that several studies have focused on issues related to BE teaching and learning at school, rather than BELF use and practice in Chinese workplaces.

The few empirical studies focusing on BELF use in the Chinese business context confirms the importance of conducting further research in the field given that English plays a significant role in workplace communication in China. Kettunen, Lintunen, Lu and Kosonen's (2008) study shows that English is used as communication medium of internal communication activities in multinational companies based in China. Indeed, English language proficiency has emerged as a key recruitment criterion. Moreover, a nationwide search conducted by this researcher on 9 March 2019 for 'English' on 51job.com, one of China's leading job search engines, found 93,260 jobs (not including English teachers) advertised over a three-day period. The job positions required applicants to have good English language skills, demonstrating the prevalent use of English in China's professional workplaces.

Moreover, Du-Babcock (2012) claims that the use of BELF in most Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan, and South Korea) is different to European business contexts due to the different levels of English proficiency between business professionals from Asian and European countries. She further suggested the need for field research with an Asian focus on the communication contexts in which business professionals use English for intercultural communication. This is to find a way to "enhance the communication efficacy between individuals who possess varying degrees of English language proficiency and who speak with various accents and sentence structures"

¹1. 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

(Du-Babcock, 2012, p. 22).

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate Chinese business professionals' English use at work for three reasons. First, studies focusing on BELF practices at work in Chinese contexts are few. Second, English language proficiency is an increasingly sought-after skill in business professionals seeking employment in the Chinese job market. Third, there is a pressing need to enhance Chinese business professionals' communication efficacy via an investigation of the ways in which they communicate in real-world business contexts. Given these circumstances, there is value in conducting studies which focus on professionals who work in multinational companies, joint-ventures, and trading companies to examine the nature of English use in China's growing business sectors (Bolton & Graddol, 2012).

This study helps to address the research gap through its aim to explore the nature of BELF used in the business environment of Mainland China. Specifically, it aims to analyze Chinese business professionals' communicative competences for intercultural business communication with the secondary objective to propose a conceptual model of intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC). The proposed model will, in turn, have implications for intercultural business communication theory, practice, and Business English education. With a better understanding of the communicative competences required to perform as a successful professional in an internationally-operated organization, both future students in the school and those business professionals at work can gain insights into the best ways to invest the time and resources necessary to achieve an advanced level of IBCC.

More specifically, this study contributes to addressing the research gaps in three ways. First, it explores BELF use in Mainland China where it is used broadly, but which has received only limited empirical examination. Second, the study investigates the communicative competences of business professionals involved in intercultural business communication in their motherland, China. This differs from most intercultural communication research conducted to date which has primarily placed

the focus on examining respondents' learning or working in a foreign country such as international students and expatriates (Kealey, 2015). Therefore, the competences required for these two types of respondents would be different. Third, this study examines the roles that both culture and language play in intercultural business communication rather than just focusing on one perspective. This is important considering that the role of language used in global business appears to have been ignored in previous communicative competence studies (Du-Babcock, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

1.4 Research questions

Based on the issues discussed in the background information and considering the research motivation, the present study aims to address four key research questions (RQ) as follows:

RQ1: What are the communicative needs related to BELF use faced by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication?

RQ2: What are the communicative challenges related to BELF use identified by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication?

RQ3: What are the communicative competences related to BELF use perceived as necessary by Chinese business professionals to achieve successful intercultural business communication?

RQ4: How do Chinese business professionals deal with the challenges they encounter related to BELF use in intercultural business communication?

RQ1 and RQ2 aim to investigate the communicative needs and challenges related to BELF use by Chinese business professionals at work. RQ3 and RQ4 explore the

competences regarded as essential for Chinese business professionals to deal with the communicative needs and challenges encountered at work. This is an exploratory study as there does not appear to be previous rigorous empirical studies to have focused on this issue. There is no doubt that no single study can answer all the pertinent questions around BELF-related communicative competences by business professionals in China given the nation's huge population and wide range of industries. Nonetheless, it is the hope of this researcher that this research can be a meaningful beginning.

1.5 Structure of dissertation

This dissertation includes six chapters. Chapter 1 has outlined the research background, defined key terminologies, identified the motivation for the research, and introduced the research questions. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on intercultural communicative competences and studies on BELF use and practice in the workplace. The literature review presents the background for the development of the theoretical framework applied in this research and the research hypotheses generated. Chapter 3 provides details of the research methodology employed for data collection and analysis in this study. Chapter 4 introduces the result of the data analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the main findings to emerge from the data analysis results and compares them with those reported in previous research. Chapter 6 concludes this dissertation with a presentation of the contributions, implications, and limitations of the study, ending with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 2 provides a review of the studies relevant to the present study. It begins with an overview of the development of and research into Business English in Mainland China. This is followed by a review of the communicative competence construct and BELF uses and practices at work, which subsequently informs the development of the conceptual framework for this study. Based on the review of the literature, hypotheses are then generated to guide the study towards proving rich and detailed answers to the four research questions.

2.1 Development and research of Business English in Mainland China

According to Bolton (2006), the presence of English in Mainland China can be traced back to the early 17th century and the first documented account of linguistic and cultural contact in South China. In 1862, *Tongwen Guan* was founded in Beijing, signifying China's initiatives in teaching English (Adamson, 2002). *Tongwen Guan* was the first foreign language school sponsored by the Chinese government and provided technical subjects such as anatomy, geology, and chemistry along with foreign language learning. These schools were afterwards founded in other cities of China such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. In response to the needs of Shanghai's growing business community, Shanghai's Foreign Language School (*Waiguo Yuyan Wenzhi Xueguan*) taught a host of courses including foreign languages, history and Chinese studies (Bolton & Graddol, 2012).

New trends in foreign-language teaching emerged after the founding of the PRC in 1949. Chinese education, from the 1950s to the 1990s, went on a roller-coaster ride of policy changes in foreign language education. Initial activities in the early 1950s led the development of the BE field in China such as language skills courses, and Foreign Trade English became available which prepared students on how to engage in business correspondence (Zhu, Peng, Zhang, & Yi, 2011). However, during the same period when the Chinese Communist Party turned to the Soviet Union for mentorship,

many English teachers were required to teach Russian, which significantly impeded the development of BE. From 1954, due to the political schisms which developed between the PRC and the Soviet Union, the Russian teachers were retrained to teach English, particularly from 1961 to 1966 (Adamson, 2002). Between 1966 and 1976, when the Cultural Revolution was at its peak, the learning of English was outlawed in many parts of the country. This remained the case until the social-political movement ended with the passing away of Mao Zedong in 1976.

Following Deng Xiaoping's ascension to power in the 1980s, China implemented a 'Reform and Opening-up' policy. This coincided with the revival of teaching English and other foreign languages including Russian, French and Japanese (Adamson, 2002). From the 1980s to 1990s, the international trade and tourism sectors in China hired growing numbers of interpreters and translators, leading to tremendous growth in the popularity of English (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). During the 1990s, the globalization of the Chinese economy and the rapid development of foreign trade saw the BE skills become progressively more popular in society. Accordingly, more universities began to offer business courses with embedded language skills subjects to cultivate graduates' written and spoken English competences, resulting in BE gradually replacing Foreign Trade English (Zhu et al., 2011).

During the early 2000s there was the increasing need for employees to possess excellent language skills, especially after China joined the WTO in 2001. BE was officially integrated into the higher education curriculum with an aim to cultivate highly skilled graduates with combined language and business skills (Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2013). Moreover, 2007 witnessed a significant breakthrough in the history of BE teaching in China when the Ministry of Education permitted a Chinese university to offer a BE program as an undergraduate major option. BE is now recognized as an umbrella concept that includes a range of subjects used in fields such as trade, management, and finance (Wang, Chen, & Zhang, 2011). Indeed, it combines "three essential fields – subject knowledge, business practice and language skills" (Zhang, 2007, p. 406). More importantly, the BE major also aims to cultivate in the students intercultural communication abilities. The abilities refer to

“an international outlook, familiarity with Chinese and foreign cultures and etiquettes, abilities to follow international practices in international business, handle various relations, and negotiate and transact.” (Wang, Chen, & Zhang, 2011, p.34). At present, BE is one of the most popular disciplines in China (Zhang & Wang, 2011). According to Education Online (www.eol.cn), a platform for China's educational information service accredited by the Ministry of Education, as of 2018 there were more than 650 universities and colleges offering a BE program for undergraduates in China.

Previous studies (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2013; Bolton, 2006; Bolton & Graddol, 2012) have reported in detail the growth of English language courses in Chinese education. Little is known however about the role of English in the workplaces in China. Evans (2010) conducted a large-scale, multifaceted investigation into the use of BELF in Hong Kong's four key service industries, providing a complete and comprehensive picture of the nature of BELF use in Hong Kong workplaces. However, Kachru (1985) points out that Mainland China is categorized as an Expanding Circle of territories where English has traditionally played a limited role in society. That is, English is primarily learned as a foreign language in schools, thus being distinctive from Hong Kong where English, especially written English, plays a fundamental role in business communicative activities, even after the handover in 1997 (Evans, 2010, 2013). Furthermore, Graddol (2006) asserts that China, as a rising giant economy, would “determine the speed at which other Asian countries, such as Thailand, shift to a global English model” (p. 94). This alludes to the significance of conducting research on English use in China.

In the context of Mainland China, Pang et al. (2002) conducted an extensive investigation into the influence of China for business professionals and college English education one year after the nation's membership into the WTO. Data were collected from two similar self-report questionnaires administered to administrative department personnel and business professionals working in trade or finance organizations in Ningbo, Hangzhou, Taizhou, Wenzhou and Shaoxing, five cities in the Zhejiang Province. A total of 126 questionnaires were returned from administrative personnel or human resources offices and 360 were returned from the

above-mentioned institutions. Based on the research data, reading, listening and speaking were considered the most important skills in the workplace and the use of those skills were embodied in four main areas of English use; namely, personal promotion, specialist literature reading, surfing the internet, and communication with foreign counterparts. However, regardless of the acknowledgement of the importance of English skills, English was, in fact, not that frequently used at work because most Chinese international trading companies employed overseas Chinese nationals who often used Cantonese or Putonghua in their oral communication. Moreover, written communications such as emails, contracts, and faxes were often assigned to professionals with high English competence.

Contradicting the research findings of Pang et al. (2002), Evans (2010) contended that “as far as workplace communication is concerned – the language (English) is increasingly being used both externally and internally in many Expanding Circle contexts” (p. 155). One possible reason for this contrasting result is that the study was conducted over 15 years ago, and over this time period the role of English in China’s workplaces has changed due to the rapid development of technology and globalization. As Li and Moreira (2009, p. 41) contended since 2001 “the knowledge of English as an international business language is becoming more crucial than ever” in China’s enterprises. There is an increasing requirement to use English in a range of areas in tandem with China’s accession to the WTO such as carrying out business negotiations, attending business meetings, and receiving foreign counterparts (Pang et al., 2002).

More recently, Zhang and Guo (2015) investigated Chinese professionals’ linguistic choices among the options of Mandarin Chinese, English, and dialects² in large state-owned petrochemical companies in the cities of Xi’an and Beijing. Using both questionnaires and follow-up interviews, Zhang and Guo identified several noticeable attributes regarding the professionals’ linguistic choices. First, the Chinese language functions as the usual medium of communication in the workplace and the interplay between Mandarin Chinese, English, and dialects was pragmatic, thereby facilitating transaction making and relationship building. Second, echoing

² Mandarin Chinese is the official language of China and there are other dialectal groups such as Min, Wu and Yue. Under each group are many individual dialects. For example, Cantonese is the standard form of Yue Chinese.

Pang et al. (2002), they found that English was not as frequently used as was originally imagined in the context of economic globalization. When there was the requirement to speak a foreign language, other staff would be asked to handle the communication rather than the professionals themselves. However, Zhang and Guo's study only provided a glimpse into how English was used in state-owned companies. With multinational companies being excluded, their findings hardly provide comprehensive insights into the linguistic landscape of Chinese business world today.

Thus, it is necessary to explore the communicative needs related to BELF use faced by Chinese business professionals working in different types of companies in Mainland China (RQ1). To answer RQ1, the following four corresponding hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The frequency of using English at work is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) of different job ranks in a company.

H2: The frequency of English written communication use is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) of different job ranks in a company.

H3: The frequency of English spoken communication use is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) of different job ranks in a company.

H4: The frequency of English written communication use is likely to be different from that of English spoken communication use in companies of different ownership:

(a) state-owned companies³, (b) privately-owned companies, and (c) multinational companies.

In addition, according to Pang et al.'s (2002) findings, most staff members were not satisfied with their present level of English proficiency. The problems and challenges they faced, however, in relation to their communication requirements were not further identified. Therefore, it is hard to provide practical measures for staff to enhance their communicative competences. In this sense, it is important to investigate the communicative challenges related to BELF use faced by Chinese business professionals during intercultural business communications at work (RQ2). To answer RQ2, the following two corresponding hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Chinese business professionals who have higher English proficiency are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

H6: Chinese business professionals who have more related work experience are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

2.2 Construct of intercultural communicative competence

Since 1989, the pace of globalization has increased significantly. This is evidenced in the construction of a single Europe, the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the creation of the WTO (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). In response, scholars found it imperative to explore how to help people enhance their intercultural communicative competences when engaging in intercultural interactions, so as to meet the challenges arising from the rising wave of globalization (Chen, 2014).

³State-owned companies in China account for around 35% of total GDP and about 20% of total employment. Those companies control key industries in China such as oil and gas, electricity, and airlines, derived from the State Department's Office of Investment Affairs' Investment Climate Statement: <https://www.export.gov/article?id=China-State-Owned-Enterprises>).

2.2.1 The contribution of Communication studies

In the field of Communication Studies, Chen and Starosta (1996) extended the previous definition of communication competence. They emphasized that competent interactants must know how to achieve communicative effectiveness and appropriateness when interacting with people and environment, as well as how to respect and accept mutual multi-level cultural identities when fulfilling their communication goals during intercultural interactions. In other words, communicators need to have intercultural communicative competence. In turn, the authors developed a model (see Figure 2.1) on how to promote “interactants’ ability to be qualified for their global citizenship” (p. 362).

As illustrated, Chen and Starosta’s (1996) triangle model treated intercultural communicative competence as an entity comprised of three interrelated and equally important dimensions: cognition, affection and behavior. Although they further

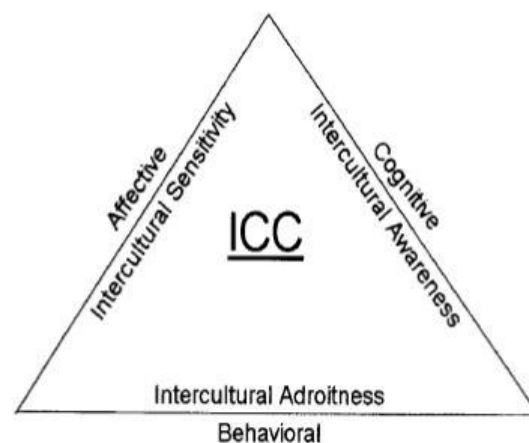


Figure 2.1: A model of ICC (intercultural communicative competence) (Chen, 2014, p. 19)

developed a more detailed model of global communication competence including four components: global mindset, mapping the culture, upholding the self, and aligning the interaction (Chen, 2005), the triangle model is regarded as a more heuristic and

precise model because it embodies a more comprehensive synthesis of the previous literature (Chen, 2014). As is shown in Figure 2.1, the cognitive construct of intercultural communicative competence is represented as intercultural awareness; the affective construct is represented as intercultural sensitivity; and the behavioral construct is represented as intercultural effectiveness/adroitness.

Chen and Starosta further explored each aspect of their ICC model. In Chen and Starosta's (1997) study, they first examined the affective aspect of the model by conceptualizing the concept of intercultural sensitivity, which was defined as “an individual’s ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (p. 5). Later, Chen and Starosta (2000) identified five factors comprising the affective construct: interaction engagement, interaction enjoyment, interaction confidence, respect for cultural differences, and interaction attentiveness. Second, as in the cognitive perspective of the ICC model, Chen and Starosta (1998) conceptualized intercultural awareness as “the understanding of the distinct characteristics of our own and others’ cultures” (p. 30). Finally, intercultural effectiveness/adroitness was defined as “the ability to get the job done and attain communication goals in intercultural interaction” (p. 367) through behavioral performance (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Portalla and Chen (2010) developed and validated a 20-item instrument and found six factors: message skills, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, interactant respect, identity maintenance and interaction relaxation.

Therefore, the main findings reported in communication studies revealed that the individual’s success in intercultural communicative situations is impacted by (1) affective, (2) cognitive and (3) behavioral aspects, and that their intercultural communicative competence is influenced by individual difference variables such as (1) intercultural awareness, (2) interaction engagement, (3) interaction confidence and (4) interaction management.

As indicated above, ‘language’ is typically included as an element in the behavioral perspective of ICC models such as ‘message skills’ in Chen (2007) and ‘linguistic competence’ in Spitzberg and Cupach (1984). However, communication-oriented studies have generally taken a holistic approach toward communicative competence rather than focusing on the actual language used in intercultural communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Nevertheless, language, either in written or spoken form, is the main medium of various types of corporate communication (Salvi, 2011). High proficiency language skills are considered necessary for business professionals participating in various types of communication with both native and non-natives speakers (Taillefer, 2007). Thus, given the importance of language in intercultural business communication and the lack of attention to its actual use in previous communication studies, the present study examines intercultural communicative competences by drawing on linguistic and second/foreign language acquisition (S/FLA) theories. The next section discusses the notion of communicative competence as conceptualized by applied linguists and S/FLA specialists, who generally adopt a linguistically-oriented approach.

2.2.2 The contribution of Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Acquisition

The interpretation of communicative competence in S/FLA studies has been undertaken by numerous scholars including Hyme (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), van Ek (1986), Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995), and Byram (1997).

Based on Hymes’ (1972) concept of communicative competence, which includes both grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a theoretical model of communicative competence to guide foreign language teaching and learning. Their model was later revised slightly by Canale (1983) to comprise four perspectives, which are briefly introduced as follows:

1. Grammatical competence: features and rules of language such as sentence formation, phonology and vocabulary (p. 7).
2. Sociolinguistic competence: knowledge of appropriately producing and understanding utterances in different sociolinguist contexts (p. 7).
3. 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). This competence was originally subcategorized to sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Swain's (1980) model.
4. 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).

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed an updated and pedagogically-motivated model to describe communicative competence within the context of language learning and teaching. Their model was built on the works of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). Figure 2.2 illustrates the chronological evolution of the latest model. It is different from the previous models, showing one major and two minor changes. The two terminological differences included replacing 'grammatical competence' with 'linguistic competence' to clearly indicate that linguistic competence includes lexis and phonology in addition to syntax and morphology. They also replaced the term 'sociolinguistic competence' with 'sociocultural competence' to better distinguish it from the component, 'actional competence'. This was because contextualized language functions have traditionally been included in the sociolinguist dimension of communicative competence. Furthermore, using the term 'sociocultural competence' underlined that sociocultural knowledge is imperative to bring the resources of other components (actional, linguistic and discourse components) into effective action.

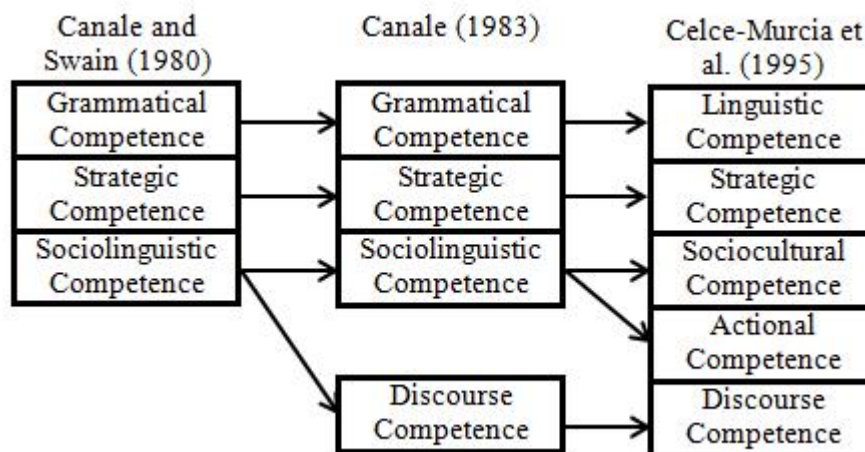


Figure 2.2 Comparison of the three models, cited from Celce-Murcia et al. (1995, p. 11)

Thus, sociocultural competence is defined as the speaker's knowledge of language use in line with the pragmatic factors in the general sociocultural contexts of communication. One major change is that Celce-Murcia et al. added the component, 'actional competence', into their model. Actional competence is defined as knowledge of communicating and understanding communicative intention by performing and interpreting speech acts or a combination of speech acts. This is similar to the concept of 'functional knowledge' defined by Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 69) in their framework of language ability, characterized as knowledge of interpreting relationships between utterances and language users' intentions.

Furthermore, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) schematically represent their model as a triangle surrounding a circle, surrounded by another larger circle (see Figure 2.3). The circle within the triangle represents discourse competence, while sociocultural competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence stand respectively at each point of the triangle. This construct representation places the discourse component at the center where it converges with the linguistic component that builds the lexical-grammatical blocks, the actional component that processes the communicative intent, and the sociocultural context that shapes the discourse. In turn, the discourse component also shapes the three components. The larger circle enclosing the triangle represents strategic competence, an inventory of practical skills

for facilitating interlocutors' strategic negotiation and compensating for deficiencies that may occur in any of the other competencies in the model.

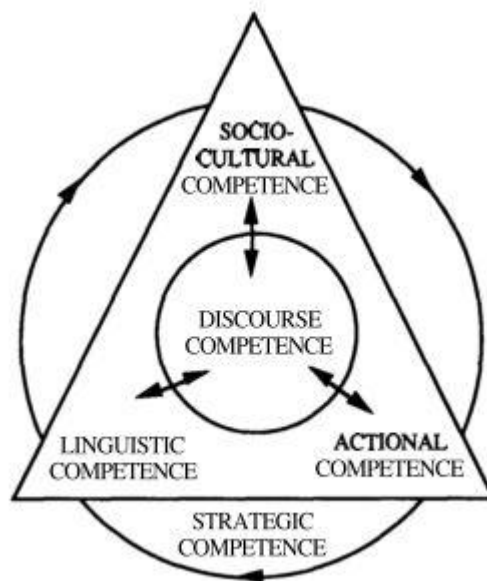


Figure 2.3 Celce-Murcia et al.'s model of communicative competence, cited from (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 10)

As indicated before in this section, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), as pioneering studies, explored the conceptualization and component identification of communicative competence in the field of Applied Linguistics, and S/FLA particularly. Building on Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) contributed a model with graphic representation to further illustrate the relationships among all communicative competence components. Nonetheless, although cited broadly in many studies (e.g., Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Van Compernelle & Williams, 2012), all models paid relatively little attention to intercultural competence when conceptualizing communicative competence (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The reason for the missing link to the cultural dimensions of competence has not yet been clarified (Byram, 1997). However, it is probably, as Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, and Street (2001) have speculated, because communicative language teaching (CLT) has been influenced more by speech act theory in the 1970s, later by discourse analysis in the 1980s, and task-based learning in the 1990s, rather than by intercultural communication theory.

To address the missing link, Byram (1997) focused specifically on this issue and systematically conceptualized intercultural communicative competence for improving S/FLA. He developed a conceptual framework of intercultural communicative competence (see Table 2.1) drawing heavily on van Ek's (1986) framework of communicative ability. In Byram's framework, intercultural competence was added as an independent element in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences. This supplement enhances the conceptualization of intercultural communicative competence.

Table 2.1 Byram's framework of intercultural communicative competence (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 66)

Components		Description
Linguistic competence		The ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language.
Sociolinguistic competence		The ability to give to the language produced by an interlocutor – whether native speaker or not – meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor.
Discourse competence		The ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts, which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for stated purposes.
Intercultural competence	Attitudes	Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
	Knowledge	Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
	Skills in interpreting and relating	Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.
	Skills in discovering and interacting	Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate

		knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
	Critical cultural awareness/political education	An ability to evaluate critically based on explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Byram (1997) also challenged the long-standing tendency to adopt native speakers as the model for second/foreign language learners. He pointed out that using native speakers as the model in S/FLA not only sets an impossible goal for learners, but also potentially makes them feel psychologically stressed. Particularly, many intercultural communication settings do not involve native speakers, and even when they do, “both interlocutors have different social identities and therefore a different kind of interaction than they would have with someone from their own country speaking the same language” (Byram, 1997, p. 32). Accordingly, using the native speaker as a model appears often to misrepresent reality. In place of the native speaker model, Byram (1997) suggested the following:

The [...] desirable outcome is a learner with the ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviors and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors, expressed in the same language – or even a combination of languages – which may be the interlocutors’ native language, or not. (p. 12)

Following this conception, Byram’s framework somewhat resolved the limitations of previous frameworks developed by S/FLA specialists and applied by linguists in terms of further improving S/FLA and language pedagogy to facilitate students’ interactions in intercultural contexts. However, it has long been recognized that a gap remains between what is taught in the classrooms and what occurs in real-life situations (Evans, 2012; Gilmore, 2007). For example, Byram described linguistic competence in his framework as “the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language” (see Table 2.1). Although he did not directly mention that “the rules of a standard version of the language” are based on native speaker standard, in the S/FLA

paradigm as Jenkins (2006) interprets it, non-native speakers have as their final goal the ability to speak the language as proficiently as native speakers. Alternatively, in the ELF paradigm all English forms produced by NNEs are considered acceptable in their own right. For instance, the forms customarily labeled as ‘errors’ and evaluated against native speaker norms in S/FLA may be considered as ‘variants’ in ELF (Jenkins, 2006). In this sense, Byram’s model may not fully apply to settings outside of the S/FLA classroom such as those in which BELF is used as a shared language of intercultural business communication. Hence, to understand the role that communicative competence plays in intercultural business communication, studies concerned with this specific field should also be considered.

2.2.3 The contribution of International Business and Management studies

An article by Ng, Van Dyne and Ang (2009) indicated that business professionals working in intercultural settings 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” (p. 511). Moreover, a study by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) focusing on language use skills explored the communicative competences required for intercultural business communication. They developed the model of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) (see Figure 2.4) by investigating business professionals’ perceptions of the GCC components 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 positioned in the innermost layer, multicultural competence is positioned in the first surrounding layer, which refers to the knowledge and accommodation skills (such as respect and tolerance towards each other’s differences) required to manage interactive situations with business practitioners of different national, organizational, and professional cultures. Competence in BELF is positioned in the second surrounding layer and requires competence in English language use,

knowledge of business genres and communication strategies (e.g., asking for clarifications, making questions, repeating and paraphrasing), and a focus on preciseness, conciseness, directness and politeness to achieve successful communication. Business know-how is positioned in the third outermost layer and is fundamental for GCC because it is shared knowledge among business professionals and thus affects all other layers. Such competence refers to business-specific knowledge and combines two essential elements: the specific business practice domain and the overall business goals, customs and strategies shared by the business community.

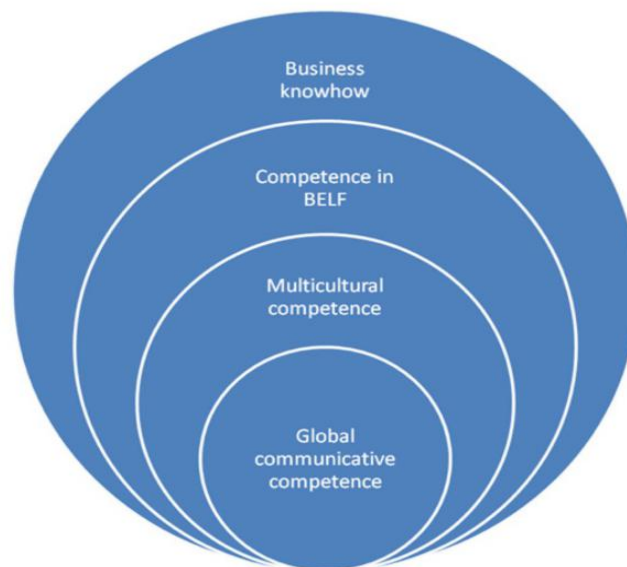


Figure 2.4 Model of GCC (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 258)

The GCC model aligns with the knowledge, skills and abilities business people must receive training 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. This is to better understand which knowledge and abilities contribute to intercultural business communication, because cultural sensitivity and language proficiency are recognized as essential abilities for a successful international business career (EIU, 2010). The EIU (2012) study also suggested that insensitivity towards different cultural traditions or misunderstandings arising from language deficiencies

can be the greatest threats to cross-border business deals for organizations.

Earley and Ang's (2003) study partly addresses the limitations of the GCC model. To understand why some people manage to thrive in globalized organizations while others do not (Erez & Earley, 1993; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007), the authors developed a conceptual construct of cultural intelligence (CQ). They defined CQ as an individual's ability 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) also theorized that CQ is a multidimensional construct that includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions.

Metacognitive CQ

Metacognitive CQ refers to “an individual's level of conscious cultural awareness when involved in intercultural interactions” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 5). It comprises higher-order cognitive strategies that contribute to information processing at a deeper level. This enables individuals to develop new frameworks and rules for social communication in unfamiliar cultural environments (Flavell, 1979). In other words, people who have higher-level metacognitive CQ can consciously reflect on their cultural assumptions (e.g., a Western business professional may assume Chinese people prefer indirect expressions) and fine-tune their cultural knowledge both during and after interactions with those from other cultures. Relevant skills include planning, observing, regulating, and revising mental models of cultural norms for countries or groups of people (Ang et al., 2007).

Cognitive CQ

Whereas metacognitive CQ refers to “higher-level cognitive processes, cognitive CQ focuses on the knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures that have been acquired from educational and personal experiences” (Ang & Van Dyne, p. 5). Thus, cognitive CQ reflects an individual's level of cultural knowledge or

knowledge of the cultural setting. Given the wide diversity of cultures in the modern world, cognitive CQ stipulates both the knowledge of cultural universals and the knowledge of cultural distinctions. The cognitive dimension of CQ is considered a critical component because cultural knowledge influences people's thoughts and behaviors. With strength in understanding a society's culture and its cultural components such as social values and conventions, individuals can better appreciate the systems that shape and prompt certain patterns of social interaction within a culture. As a result, those with high cognitive CQ can thrive in interactions with others from culturally different environments.

Motivational CQ

Motivational CQ refers to “the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 6). According to Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) expectancy-value theory of motivation, two elements reflect the direction and extent of the energy transferred toward a specific task: the expectation of successfully fulfilling the task and the associated value of fulfilling the task. Those with high motivational CQ tend to channel their energy and effort toward intercultural situations out of inherent interest (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986) and based on their confidence in functioning effectively during intercultural encounters (Bandura, 2002). The motivational factor of CQ is critical because it triggers the attention and energy required to function in unfamiliar intercultural situations. For example, a Chinese professional who has good English language proficiency and enjoys interacting with those from different cultures would more likely initiate a conversation with colleagues from other countries.

Behavioral CQ

Behavioral CQ refers to “the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 6-7). It reflects the extent to which an individual can display appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors in intercultural communications, which are the most

prominent features of social interactions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). As Hall (1959) suggested, cultural knowledge and motivation must be complemented by appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors, based on specific cultural values in a specific context. That is, even though people involved in face-to-face interactions do not have access to other's innate feelings and thoughts, they can count on what they observe and hear in the other's vocal, facial, and behavioral expressions. Accordingly, in intercultural encounters, the behavioral dimension of CQ may be the most crucial factor communicators can use to evaluate others' CQ. Individuals with an advantage in behavioral CQ are considered more flexible in that they can adjust their actions to the particulars of each cultural interaction.

Earley and Ang's (2003) theories suggest that the four components of CQ are distinct aspects of the overall competences that function effectively in intercultural settings. Accordingly, metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ are viewed as different capability dimensions that combine to constitute the overall CQ construct.

Ott and Michailova (2018) reviewed 73 conceptual and empirical articles on CQ from 2002 to 2015 published in a range of management, international business, education and psychology journals. The studies examined the relationships between CQ and various dependent variables in expatriates' adjustment and adaptation (e.g., Chen, Wu, & Bian, 2014; Lee, Veasna, & Sukoco, 2014; Lin, Chen, & Song, 2012), performance and effectiveness (e.g., Chen, Lin, & Sawangpattanakul, 2011; Lee, Veasna, & Wu, 2013), and cross-cultural leadership in multicultural settings (e.g., Deng & Gibson, 2009; Rockstuhl, Seiler, Ang, Van Dyne, & Annen, 2011). Ott and Michailova found that most correlations between CQ and the identified dependent variables were positive, and that motivational CQ is recognized as a potentially significant CQ factor in facilitating adjustment and overcoming adaptation problems.

From what is indicated above, it suffices to say that the CQ conceptual construct illustrates the components of intercultural competence required for intercultural business communication. This is because it is conceptualized as the individual's

ability to function and manage effectively in intercultural settings. Nonetheless, even though language is an important element in intercultural communication it is explicitly mentioned only in the behavioral intelligence component, leaving how BELF competence is constructed unknown. In fact, in addition to behavioral intelligence, language plays a fundamental role in acquiring and understanding information (metacognitive intelligence), in transmitting knowledge (cognitive intelligence), and in supporting communication in unfamiliar situations (motivational intelligence) (Salvi, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to review the studies related to BELF use to better understand how competence is constructed in BELF. The following section reviews the studies related to BELF use for intercultural business communication and outlines the conceptual framework used in this study.

2.2.4 BELF studies

The BELF phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers from all over the world, especially in Europe and East Asia. Their interest is primarily to explore the nature of ELF and its implications for communication in various domains of interest including business settings (Jenkins et al., 2011). The past two decades has seen a surge of interest among scholars in a wide range of issues regarding language selection and use in progressively globalized business and professional worlds (Evans, 2013). Among these studies, the series conducted by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008, 2010) are particularly prominent as their findings provide comprehensive insights into BELF use and practice in intercultural business communication, 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 on the professional effectiveness of NNEs. Special attention was given to the language issues NNEs experienced when communicating in international meetings held annually by the international organization, Groupe Consultatif Actuariel European (GCAE). The Groupe gave permission for data to be collected via questionnaire during an external formal meeting where GCAE members convened to

discuss key topics and to review business outcomes for the previous year. The range of specific difficulties encountered during international gatherings were summarized by the NNES participants. They included comprehension problems due to fast or quiet speech, production problems due to vocabulary limitations, and a lack of competence in managing interactions appropriately such as how to properly interrupt other speakers or how to present a point of view during high-speed discussions.

Although it is generally expected that people will speak a common language (notably English) in such multicultural and multilingual contexts, it is also generally the case that the participants will not necessarily speak the common language in the same way, especially given the fundamental variance in socio-cultural conventions and/or variances in language proficiency. Furthermore, the survey revealed that the participants were aware of strategies to employ to overcome their communication challenges and frustrations. Follow-up analysis of the meeting-based discourse in the 2008 Rogerson-Revell study identified similar issues to those reported in the previous survey, particularly regarding unequal levels of participation by NNES participants. The author concluded that the unequal participation in the meetings was most likely due to a combination of linguistic challenges and procedural limitations, or because of external factors such as a lack of professional know-how.

Building on her previous studies, Rogerson-Revell (2010) employed a multi-method approach to explore the issue of communicative accommodation more specifically, this time by observing and analyzing three international meetings. She investigated what, if any, communicative strategies NESs and NNESs business professionals used to accommodate the challenges they encountered around language use in multilingual meetings to promote communicative effectiveness. From the data, Rogerson-Revell (2010) identified two types of accommodations: normalization strategies and convergence strategies. Notably, the use of normalization strategies by lingua franca speakers were 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 used a combination of conversational strategies to make “extraordinary, deviant, and sometimes ‘abnormal’ linguistic behavior” (p.

237) seem unproblematic and understandable (Firth, 1996).

Rogerson-Revell's (2010) study also noted that participants used two different normalization strategies in meetings: "let it pass" (p. 442) and "make linguistic differences explicit" (p. 444). In terms of the "let it pass" strategy, participants tolerated or simply ignored the linguistic anomalies which occurred during the meetings if the content of the message was understandable in context. In other words, the content of a message outweighs its form. Rogerson-Revell suggested that this strategy demonstrates how speakers can be accepting of mutual differences, and that this is beneficial for facilitating interaction and, more importantly, in managing one's rapport with other professionals. In terms of the, "make linguistic differences explicit" strategy, participants explicitly requested clarification or interpretation if they perceived the language use to be 'abnormal'. NNEs might ask NESs for clarification in situations in which the NNEs' second language (L2) competence is not proficient enough to understand the complex content of NESs' message. NNEs might also code-switch to their first language (L1) when they experience difficulties identifying the equivalent words in English.

Two convergence strategies identified by Rogerson-Revell (2010) to occur in meetings are "procedural formality" (p. 446) and "careful speech style" (p. 449). Procedural formality strategies were most often observed when participants were trying their best to comply with the procedural rules of formal meetings regarding, for instance, turn-taking procedures and following the agenda. Rogerson-Revell suggests that such strategies can help accommodate non-native participants who may not be linguistically competent enough to self-claim the floor or to interrupt, which were identified as challenges by the NNEs participants. The "careful speech style" convergence strategy was employed mainly by native speakers to adapt their speech delivery (e.g., by speaking more slowly or pronouncing words very carefully), and to avoid using culturally specific idioms, collocations or metaphors. Although native speaker language use is not the focus of this present study, the insights gained from this study could help to raise awareness of convergence strategy use among NES involved in multi-party group encounters with NNEs.

Based on the findings of the three studies by Rogerson-Revell (2007, 2008, 2010), it is important for BELF speakers to master a combination of communicative competences such as socio-cultural competence, linguistic competence, actional competence and strategic competence. This is in addition to professional know-how in order to realize communicative efficiency in intercultural business communication. The findings of the studies also partly explain what BELF knowledge and skills are indispensable in multilingual interactions. However, the more fundamental question as to the exact nature of BELF has yet been answered. Without knowledge of its nature people cannot fully understand why those competences related to BELF use are considered essential for intercultural communication.

Over the last two decades, many scholars have tried to examine the nature of BELF. In particular, studies conducted by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen with their research team have made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the concept and development of BELF. Originally, the BELF abbreviation referred to Business English as Lingua Franca, but it now refers to “English as Business Lingua Franca”. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen initiated this minor change to highlight the context in which English is used rather than the type of English itself (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Two studies were conducted by the authors with a specific focus on language use and practices during the implementation of two business projects in multicultural and multilingual organizations.

In their first study (2000-2002), Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen examined the internal communications involving business professionals working in merged Finnish-Swedish companies. This study is integral to the conceptualization of BELF. Employing a multi-method approach including questionnaire survey and relevant interviews, the authors reported three key findings related to BELF use. First, ELF was the medium used by the Finnish and Swedish business professionals during their interactions at work rather than either party’s mother tongue. Moreover, the choice between the mother tongue and ELF was primarily based on pragmatic considerations

such as who the target audience was and their anticipated language preference. Second, English was perceived as an acceptable alternative because using ELF was regarded as neutral (i.e., neither party could claim ‘ownership’ of the language). Furthermore, speaking English would not result in diminished perceptions of the business practitioners’ professional expertise which may occur if they used their limited language for professional communication with native speakers of that language. Third, the data revealed that when business professionals used BELF in their communication, a variety of linguistic and cultural characteristics were reflected in their speech delivery, depending on their native language and its conventions (for more on this project see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005).

The second study by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen (2006-2009) explored the role of communication in the business know-how of global operations. It comprised several sub-studies which investigated communication expertise among business professionals working in companies at different market levels. For instance, one sub-study examined BELF in relation to communication and communication expertise in organizations operating at the international level. It also sought to identify the characteristics that contribute to professionals’ perceptions of successful communication. The researchers collected data via an extensive online survey of around 1000 business professionals in five multicultural companies based in Finland (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). Follow-up in-depth interviews were also conducted with international business professionals from Finland and the Netherlands.

The findings reported by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) demonstrate that BELF can be conceptualized as a “simplified, hybridized, and highly dynamic communication code” (p. 380). Moreover, proficiency in using BELF “calls for clarity and accuracy of content (rather than linguistic correctness), and knowledge of business-specific vocabulary and genre conventions (rather than only ‘general’ English)” (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 380). In other words, BELF was not characterized as a ‘standard’ language by native speakers such as UK or US English, but as a global language in the sense that BELF competence is, as a whole, a dynamic

construction depending heavily on the setting of use and its users. For example, it does not have absolutely-fixed norms determining proper usage of discursive forms to restrict BELF users, so long as their inadequate language proficiency exerts no adverse effects on getting the work done and establishing a rapport.

However, no matter how moderate it seems on the surface, such linguistic competence implies several components. BELF users are supposed to master a combination of skills: “accommodation skills, listening skills, an ability to understand different ‘Englishes’, and overall, a tolerance towards different communication styles” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013, p.27). This view is confirmed by another unique feature of BELF competence; namely, genre knowledge of one’s specific field of expertise, which was considered more important than grammatical correctness. Context-specific genre knowledge consisted of a common understanding of many contextual factors such as “appropriate choice of audience, media and timing as well as the focus and style of the (spoken/written) message” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013, p. 27). As pointed out by Du-Babcock and Babcock (2007), BELF proficiency is related to workplace discourse, or, in other words, genre patterns. For example, they suggested that the vocabulary of a relational genre (e.g., social talk) originates from general language and as such it is different from the vocabulary used in other genres such as professional language (e.g., languages spoken by lawyers).

Another interesting finding in the second study by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen is perceptions of successful and effective intercultural business communication align with language elements traditionally emphasized in business communication textbooks; that is, preciseness, conciseness, directness and politeness. This consistency between real-life situations and textbook advice highlights a common business culture shared by the international business community. In other words, despite having varied cultural backgrounds, BELF users interact in the same way (i.e., precisely, concisely, directly and politely) in their business community to achieve communicative efficiency. This finding aligns with the findings reported by Wang (2010), and Kankaanranta and Lu (2013), who detected directness, rather than indirectness, in Chinese professionals’ communication when presenting evidence of

convergences in rhetorical patterns of directness and indirectness used by Chinese professionals and their western counterparts.

According to the findings of the studies outlined above, BELF appears to be a shared language emergent from a shared business culture in intercultural business communication. Nevertheless, BELF is also characterized by its multiculturalism and multilingualism due to its users' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-salminen, 2013; Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, & Karhunen, 2015). Drawing upon this conclusion, Kankaanranta (2009) explicitly interprets BELF as a culture carrier in that its speakers share the context and culture of business (the 'B'), as well as the language and its discourse practices (the 'E'), but also as a dynamic in which BELF speakers are separate to each other due to their characteristically different personal and cultural backgrounds. Considering these characteristics of BELF, Baker (2011) suggests that users should bear in mind an "intercultural awareness" to communicate effectively in diverse global contexts.

Based on a review of the BELF literature, being a proficient BELF speaker requires being equipped with a combination of communicative competences in addition to business know-how. The competences are mostly aligned with the interpretation of communicative competence in S/FLA studies, except that in business communication, linguistic/grammatical competence is considered less important. If the language proficiency levels of business professionals exert no adverse effects on work outcomes and rapport building, there is no requirement to produce a high level of language accuracy.

2.2.5 The intercultural business communicative competence construct in the present study

The review of studies on BELF use and practice in intercultural business communication demonstrates that the Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011)

GCC model can best represent the components of communicative competence in intercultural business communication for two reasons. First, their model elaborates on language elements often downplayed in other models proposed by communication scholars such as Chen (2014) and Earley and Ang (2003). Second, the GCC model empirically associates the theory-based and pedagogy-oriented frameworks proposed by foreign language scholars in contexts beyond classrooms. Most importantly, their conceptualization of the GCC model complies with the findings in BELF studies regarding the nature, knowledge and skills of BELF use in intercultural business communication. In this sense, this present study draws on the elements of the GCC model for its independent variables.

Regarding intercultural competence, the present study replaces the pre-modifier 'multicultural' originally used in the GCC model with 'intercultural' because it reflects more precisely this study's focus on intercultural business communication. The components of this trait will be based on the definition of cultural intelligence provided by Earley and Ang (2003). One reason for this is that the affective, cognitive and behavioral factors are not explicitly elucidated in the conceptualization of multicultural competence in the GCC model. Rather, they are implied in the interpretation 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 for using the CQ construct is that the missing components of the GCC model have been well conceptualized and developed by Earley and Ang in their study. Finally, the CQ construct is both more concise and complete, containing all the traits associated with individuals' affection, cognition and behavior, compared to other models of intercultural competence such as that developed by Chen and Starosta. Also, the CQ construct is more appropriate for the present study because it originates from business and management studies. Several empirical studies have indicated that CQ is closely related to intercultural communication success (Ott & Michailova, 2018). Therefore, from the culture perspective, the four components (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral intelligence) in the cultural intelligence construct developed by Earley and Ang (2003) are adopted in this study.

Regarding the trait of BELF competence, three components construct communicative language ability: discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence. As indicated in the studies by Rogerson-Revel (2007, 2008, 2010), and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-salminen (2011), business professionals must combine these competences to realize communicative efficiency and rapport maintenance in intercultural business communication (i.e. linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence, actional competence and intercultural competence). To be more concise, the term ‘pragmatic competence’ is used in this study as an umbrella term which integrates sociocultural competence, linguistic competence and actional competence.

In effect, the notion of pragmatic competence was included by Canale and Swain (1980) as an important component of their communicative competence framework, Although, as Rueda (2006) has pointed out, they identified it as sociolinguistic competence in their study. In Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) framework, pragmatic competence is also a crucial component which integrates the capacity to use language to express a diversity of functions and to understand the illocutionary force in a wide range of sociocultural contexts. More explicitly, Bialystok (1993) suggests that pragmatic competence entails an array of abilities related to the use and understanding of language in contexts, namely: 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) 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.

Therefore, to examine the perceived communicative competences related to BELF use for successful intercultural business communication at work (RQ3), four components of intercultural competence and three components of communicative language ability are applied to generate four sets of hypotheses as follows:

H7: Cultural intelligence (CQ) is likely to be positively related to (a) metacognitive CQ, (b) cognitive CQ, (c) motivational CQ, and (d) behavioral CQ.

H8: Communicative language ability (CLA) is likely to be positively related to (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, and (c) strategic competence.

H9: Intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) is likely to be positively correlated with (a) communicative language ability and (b) cultural intelligence.

H10: An individual's intercultural business communicative competence is likely to be predicted by (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, (c) strategic competence, (d) metacognitive CQ, (e) cognitive CQ, (f) motivational CQ, and (g) behavioral CQ.

2.3 Summary

This chapter reviews previous studies of BELF use at work and the constructs of intercultural communicative competence. There is no doubt that BELF has emerged as a worldwide code to conduct business in global contexts. It also has distinct characteristics and features which require a combination of user competences to achieve communicative effectiveness. Drawing on the literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework to investigate BELF use and practice at work in China-based companies, as presented in Figure 2.5. Hypotheses are developed not only to investigate the linguistic landscape in different types of the China-based companies, but also to demonstrate the anticipated interrelations between the IBCC construct traits. The next chapter explains the methods that have been adopted for this study.

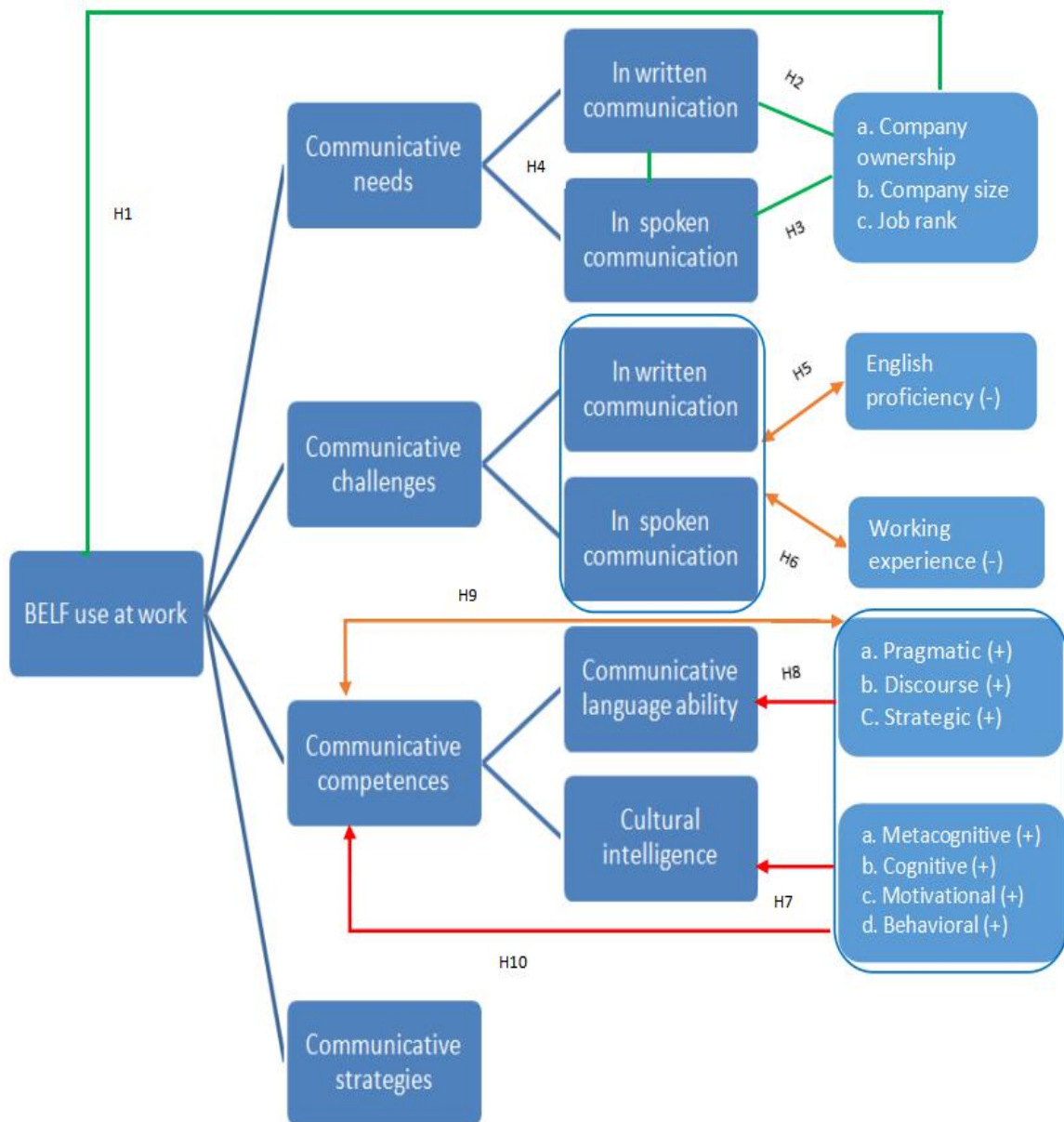


Figure 2.5 The conceptual framework of the present study

Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology adopted for this study. The chapter begins by introducing the participants in the study, and then proceeds to describe how the mixed-methods study design was applied for data collection; namely, administering a quantitative questionnaire and conducting semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. Triangulation was performed in the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data to provide a multifaceted and complementary analysis of the issues examined in the study. The discussion of the methodological approaches adopted for this study also includes details of the pilot studies conducted on the processes and instruments used for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, respectively, the data transcription and analysis procedures, and the processes applied to test the validity and reliability of the study instruments. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research design.

3.1 Participants

The process for selecting participants for inclusion in this study was determined by the nature of the research topic under investigation. Ideally, a comprehensive study of Chinese business professionals' perceptions of BELF use and IBCC in China should investigate China-based organizations operating in all industries. However, such a huge project is beyond the scope of a single doctoral thesis. Instead, the present study first undertook convenience sampling to recruit participants from this researcher's group of acquaintances. The participants have been known to this researcher for many years, so they were relatively easily accessible and were willing to voluntarily participate in the study. Owing to the practical constraints around the availability of resources for this research, the recruitment process then relied on the snowball sampling method (Dornyei, 2007) whereby existing participants helped to recruit additional participants from among their acquaintances. The final sample size was 227 Chinese business professionals working in diverse China-based organizational

settings; namely, state-owned companies, privately-owned companies, and multinational companies whose headquarters are not in China.

The eligibility criterion applied in the participant selection process included Chinese business professionals who need to use English in their workplaces. Initially, 248 Chinese business professionals volunteered to participate in the study. However 21 volunteers reported that they did not use English at all (0%) in their workplaces and were subsequently deemed to be ineligible for participation. A sample comprising 227 Chinese business professionals is large enough to conduct a robust statistical analysis given a sample equal to or greater than 100 ($N \geq 100$) is considered adequate for a simple model to conduct factor analysis with three to four indicators per factor (Marsh & Hau, 1999). Of the 227 participants recruited to complete the quantitative survey, 11 were invited to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews. Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 present the demographic profile of the participants.

Admittedly, both Chinese and non-Chinese business professionals can comment on BELF use. However, the focus in the present study was limited to Chinese business professionals for two reasons. First, Chinese professionals can better inform whether there has been an increase in English use in the Chinese business context. This is important given the results of previous studies (e.g., Pang et al., 2002; Zhang & Guo, 2015) have suggested that English was not often used in the workplace. Non-Chinese speakers of English may therefore not be able to provide as detailed data as Chinese speakers of English on the proportions of English and Chinese language use in the workplace. Second, Chinese professionals can better inform how cultural differences (particularly differences between the Chinese culture and other cultures) can influence their BELF communication. Therefore, collecting data from Chinese business professionals directly about their practices and experiences provided a better opportunity to gain a deeper level of understanding of BELF use by business professionals in various China-based companies.

Recruitment of the participants in the present study was further limited to Chinese professionals who use English as lingua franca in their workplace to better inform how they perceive BELF use at work (i.e., the RQs in this study). Business professionals who have not used English to accomplish workplace tasks such as writing an English report may not accurately perceive the dynamics of English use in intercultural interactions.

Importantly, the sampling approach applied in this study addresses the limitation in previous studies that respondents were students who had little experience in intercultural communication and were often asked to self-report their behavioral choices in hypothetical situations (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

3.1.1 Demographic profile of questionnaire respondents

This section presents the demographic information of the questionnaire respondents (n=227) in terms of: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) education, (4) working experience, (5) job rank, (6) workplace, and (7) profession of the company. The demographic profile acquired also provides a general picture of the respondents' social, educational, and language background.

3.1.1.1 Gender

The gender distribution results for the respondents are presented in Table 3.1. It shows that females (n=134, 59%) moderately outnumbered males (n=93, 41%) in the sample population. The distribution in both state-owned and privately-owned companies was generally equal; whereas, in multinational companies, females markedly outnumbered their male counterparts at a ratio of two to one in the sample. One possible reason for this might be that working in multinational companies requires more exposure to foreign language use. In turn, “women speak English better than men, both globally and in almost all countries, regardless of region, wealth, or

overall English proficiency” (Education First, 2017, p. 16). As expected, such a phenomenon matches the current reality of gender distribution.

Table 3.1 Gender of the respondents

Ownership	Female	Male
State-owned	38	33
Privately-owned	30	27
Multinational	66	33
Total	134	93

3.1.1.2 Age, rank, and working experience

The age distribution of respondents is presented in Table 3.2. Among the 227 respondents, most were in the age range from 20 to 35 years old, with the largest portion of respondents (n=98, 43.17%) aged 26 to 30 years old. This is followed by 20- to 25-year-olds (n=59, 30%), and 31- to 35-year-olds (n=54, 23.79%). Those who are over 35 years old account for only a small portion of the sample (n=16, 7.05%).

Table 3.2 Age of the respondents

Ownership	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
State-owned	18	30	13	9	1
Privately-owned	22	23	10	2	0
Multinational	19	45	31	3	1
Total	59	98	54	14	2

The age distribution of the sample aligns with the distribution of working experience and rank of the sample population, as shown in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. Since most of the respondents were under 35 years of age (93%), they had less than nine years of working experience (see Table 3.3) and did not have a high-ranking position in the companies in which they worked (see Table 3.4). About half of the respondents

(50.22%; n=114) were mid-level staff members; 42.29% (n=96) were junior staff and only 7.49% (n=17) were senior members of staff.

Table 3.3 Working experiences of the respondents

Ownership	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18
State-owned	23	21	12	3	4	1
Privately-owned	28	15	5	0	2	0
Multinational	32	29	23	5	1	0
Total	83	65	40	8	7	1

Table 3.4 Rank of the respondents at work

Ownership	Junior	Middle	Senior	
State-owned		27	35	9
Privately-owned		27	26	4
Multinational		41	53	5
Total		96	114	17

The age, rank and working experience distributions of the sample indicate that the results generated from the present study may mostly represent the views and opinions perceived by Chinese business professionals at a young age. Although a more comprehensive view on BELF use at work could be obtained if more senior business professionals participated in the study, the present sample supports a reliable exploration of Chinese professionals' practices in intercultural communication for two reasons. First, employees working in multinational companies are of "a very young average age" in China (Guo & Gallo, 2017, p.13), so the average age of the participants aligns with the general trend of age distribution in China-based companies. Second, according to Education First (2017), younger people in most countries (excluding European countries) speak English better than adults aged over 40, indicating that the participants in the study can provide a representative perception of the nature of IBCC in Mainland China.

3.1.1.3 Education background

The results of respondents' educational background and language ability are shown in Tables 3.5 and 3.6, respectively. Table 3.5 illustrates that most respondents had achieved a Bachelor (n=119, 52.65%) or Master's degrees (n=72, 31.86%); with the remainder having achieved various kinds of sub-degrees (n=22, 9.73%) or a Doctoral degree (n=13, 5.75%). Table 3.6 shows that most respondents (n=183, 80.62%) have English certificates at a middle level or higher (CET6⁴, TEM4, or TEM8). It reveals that companies in China tend to employ staff with a certain level of English language proficiency so that the employees can fulfill the communication tasks requiring the use of English in the workplace.

Table 3.5 Education backgrounds of the respondents

Ownership	High	Higher	Bachelor	Master	Doctor
State-owned	0	3	42	19	6
Privately-owned	4	10	32	11	0
Multinational	0	5	45	42	7
Total	4	18	119	72	13

Table 3.6 English proficiency of the respondents

English Proficiency	Number of Respondents
CET 4	39
CET 6; TEM 4	113
TEM 8	50

3.1.1.4 Workplace and Profession of the Company

The selected respondents' workplaces and professions of the companies are presented in Tables 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9. According to the IP address connected to each

⁴ College English Test Band Four/Six (CET 4/6) is a national English certificate granted by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education of China. It indicates the English proficiency of university non-English majors. Test for English Majors Band Four/Eight (TEM 4/8) is also a type of national English as a foreign language test.

questionnaire submitted, most respondents were located in Shanghai (53.30%), followed by Guangdong province (15.42%), Shandong province (7.49%), Jiangsu province (6.17%) and other cities and regions (see Table 3.7). Although the respondents came from different cities in China, they can be considered as having similar characteristics when communicating with foreigners for two reasons. First, a large majority of the participants (around 93%) are from the cities in southern China, and therefore, no distinct cultural differences exist among the respondents, although a small percentage of respondents came from the northern China. Second, the focus of the study is the intercultural business communication, i.e., the communication between Chinese professionals and their foreign counterparts, rather than the communication between Chinese themselves, so the cultural influences arising from regional differences are not the focus of the study.

Table 3.7 Sources of data

Region	Percentage
Shanghai	53.30%
Guangdong Province	15.42%
Shandong Province	7.49%
Jiangsu Province	6.17%
Beijing	4.85%
Zhejiang Province	4.41%
Fujian Province	2.64%
Hubei Province	2.20%
Overseas	2.20%
Sichuan Province	1.32%
Total	100.00%

The respondents also provided information about the nature of their companies in terms of ownership, profession, and size. Table 3.8 demonstrates that 71 (31.28%) of respondents worked in state-owned companies, 57 (25.11%) in privately-owned companies, and 99 (43.61%) in multinational companies headquartered in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Japan, and Korea. In terms of

size, 50 (22.02%) of the organizations were in category of “small” (fewer than 99 employees), 118 (51.98%) were in category of “medium” (100-999 employees) and 59 (26%) were in category of “large” enterprises (over 999 employees). In addition, the companies represented a wide range of services such as Communications (11.22%), Trading and logistics (17.86%), Banking and financial services (8.16%), and other professional services (2.55%) (see Table 3.9).

Table 3.8 Size of the companies

Ownership	1-99	100-999	> 999	Total
State-owned	9	43	19	71
Privately-owned	27	23	7	57
Multinational	14	52	33	99
Total	50	118	59	227

Table 3.9 A list of respondents’ professions and company nature

Professions	Percentage
Trading and logistics	17.86%
Technology	16.33%
Communications	11.22%
Industrial manufacturing	8.67%
Professional services	8.16%
Banking and financial services	8.16%
Retail and consumer	5.61%
Entertainment and media	5.61%
Hospitality and leisure	4.08%
Health care and pharmaceuticals	3.06%
Engineering and construction	2.55%
Automotive	2.55%
Aerospace and defense	2.04%
Asset management	1.53%
Others	2.55%
Total	100.00%

3.1.2 Demographic profile of interviewees

This section reports the demographic information of the 11 follow-up interviewees. As summarized in Table 3.10, most interviewees (9 out of 11) had 7 to 9 years of working experiences and all held a Bachelor’s degree or above. The interviewees worked in different departments of their respective companies (e.g., marketing and human resources) and had different levels of English language proficiency, demonstrating the heterogeneity of the sample (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the demographic profile acquired from the Chinese professionals ensures rich information was elicited for the qualitative analysis. Moreover, as shown in the table, pseudo names are used for making sure of the confidentiality of the interviewees’ information. Those names were given by keeping the first letter of the interviewee’s last name. For example, the interviewee’s family name is “Zheng” and his given pseudonym is “Zack”. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, when the interviewees are referred to, their pseudonyms appear after a letter indicating the ownership of the companies they are working for. For example, Zack works for a state-owned company, so he is referred to as S_Zack.

Table 3.10 Demographic profiles of interview respondents

Participant by pseudonyms	Gender	Age	English proficiency	Education	Working experience	Job position	Company ownership
Zack	M	31	CET 4	Bachelor	9 years	Electrical Engineer	State-owned
Dahlia	F	32	CET 6	Bachelor	9 years	HR executive	MNL (Swiss)
Carol	F	27	CET 6	Master	4 years	IT technician	MNL (UK)
Flora	F	31	CET 6	Bachelor	8 years	Accountant	MNL (USA)
Zoe	F	31	CET 6	Bachelor	8 years	Purchasing	MNL (USA)
Linda	F	29	TEM 8	Bachelor	7 years	Customer service	MNL (UK)
Sara	F	32	TEM 8	Bachelor	9 years	Project manager	Privately-owned
Shawn	M	33	CET 6	Master	9 years	HR supervisor	MNL (German)
Hanna	F	31	CET 6	Bachelor	9 years	Logistics	MNL

						executive	(Netherlands)
Xavier	M	31	CET 6	Master	8 years	Marketing executive	MNL (USA)
Yvonne	F	22	CET 6	Bachelor	1 year	Logistics executive	Privately-owned

3.2 Questionnaire surveys

Baseline data for the study were collected using an online questionnaire survey (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was based on a cross-sectional design characterized by the collection of large amount of data within a short time frame, which is relatively common in linguistics research (Rasinger, 2013). The online survey comprised three sections: communicative needs analysis, IBCC measurement, and demographic information. The communicative needs analysis was conducted to investigate multiple aspects of Chinese business professionals' BELF use in their workplaces. The IBCC measurement was used to examine their communicative competences when dealing with intercultural business communication. Additionally, selected demographic information was collected from each respondent. Given that the participants' first language is 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 the target language.

3.2.1 Instruments

3.2.1.1 Communicative needs analysis

Intercultural business communication, as a sub-category of intercultural communication, is a target situation where the communicative competence required should correspond to a subsection of all the components of the intercultural communicative competence. It also varies from one target situation to another. For example, being a business professional working with colleagues from other cultures in his/her home country, rather than abroad, most likely requires less factual knowledge about daily life in the other culture than would be expected of an expatriate. Therefore, given the aim of this study is to investigate BELF use in Mainland China, it is

necessary to make a list of the specific needs, or so-called “target-situation necessities” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 204) related to BELF use at work by Chinese business professionals. This list not only helped to create a picture of the linguistic landscape of BELF use at work, it also facilitated the following investigation of IBCC on how to meet the linguistic needs and challenges. Furthermore, Brown (2016) points out that a needs analysis is defined as “the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining and validating a defensible curriculum” (p. 4). Whether it is teaching English for business communication at the tertiary level or offering workplace language training, identifying the communicative needs of learners is most often the initial step to understanding what needs to be provided.

Over the previous two decades, several scholars (e.g., Charles & Marschan-piekkari, 2002; Chew, 2005; Cowling, 2007; Evans, 2010; Evans & Green, 2003; Gass, 2012; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Lockwood, 2012; Spence & Liu, 2013; Zhang & Guo, 2015) have engaged in needs analysis research to explore its implications for designing courses for academic institutions, or for developing employee language training programs for business organizations. These studies have provided valuable resources for conducting similar needs analyses in Mainland China. To explore the communicative needs related to BELF use in China-based companies, questions in the first part of the survey focused on: (1) the proportion (0% - 100%) of Chinese professionals’ communication in a language type (English vis-a-vis Chinese), (2) the proportion (0% - 100%) of their communication with native English speakers (NESs) versus non-native English speakers (NNESs), (3) the most commonly used modes of written/spoken communication in the workplace, and (4) the challenges in writing and speaking BELF. The items included in this section of the survey were adapted from similar studies (see Chan, 2014) exploring language needs analyses in the workplace (see Part I in Appendix 1). Understandably, it is unlikely that all respondents could accurately determine the percentage amounts of their uses of each language, but due to the exploratory nature of this study, the aim is to observe the general trends with descriptions of the relationships and estimated values.

3.2.1.2 Intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) measurement

Three instruments were employed to measure the Chinese professionals' IBCC. The set of instruments were adopted from 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 & Kankaanranta, 2011). Details of the instruments are presented as follows.

Communicative Language Ability Scale (CLA)

In the present study, the scale of CLA developed by Bachman and Palmer (1989) was adopted. The reasons for using the CLA instrument are: (1) it is a statistically validated self-rating measurement to assess 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 instrument can best align with other instruments in the study using the Likert scale, and (4) the model of language proficiency on which the measurement is based is similar to the communicative competence construct of my study in terms of language ability. Details of the CLA instrument are introduced below.

The CLA scale is a trait structure of an experimental self-rating assessment of communicative language ability. The model of language abilities Bachman and Palmer attempted to measure consists of three main traits: grammatical competence, pragmatic competence, and socio-linguistic competence (see Figure 3.1), which were an extension of Canale and Swain's (1980) work. Bachman and Palmer used different question types to ask the respondents about the three language proficiency traits. For each type, different questions were asked to assess each of the sub-traits under each competence. The first question type, '*Ability to use trait*', measures respondents' ability to use a language. For instance, the question, '*How much grammar do you know?*', measures grammatical competence. The second question type, '*Difficulty in*

using traits’ evaluates respondents’ difficulty in using the language. 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?*’ measures pragmatic competence. The third question type is ‘*Recognition of input*’; that is, to rate the extent to which respondents could recognize the language abilities of others in their utterances. For instance, the question, ‘*Can you tell how polite English-speaking people are by the kind of English they use?*’, measures socio-linguistic competence.

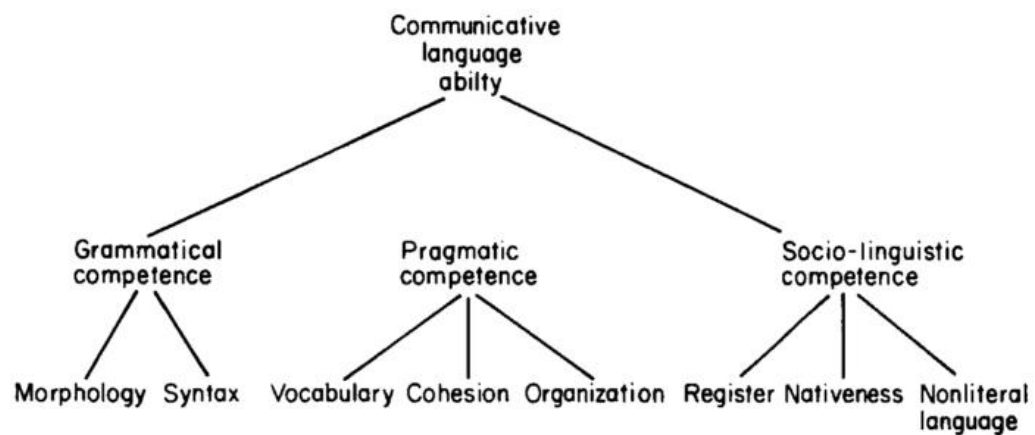


Figure 3.1: Model of communicative language ability (Bachman & Palmer, 1989, p. 17)

Bachman and Palmer’s (1989) study of 116 NNESs found that all self-reported measures had strong loadings on a general factor. This finding suggests that self-ratings can be considered valid and reliable as measures of communicative language ability. Of the three question types designed, Bachman and Palmer reported that language learners were more capable of identifying what they found challenging when using a language than what they found easy. In other words, the *Difficulty in using trait* question type was the most effective measurement as it asked about the respondents’ perceived strains on various aspects of language use; whereas, the least effective question type was *Ability to use trait*. Thus, *Difficulty in using trait* was used in this study to probe the respondents’ perceived communicative language ability.

In the present study, three components of communicative language ability were

examined: discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5). The statements exploring pragmatic competence and discourse competence were adapted from Bachman and Palmer's (1989) instrument (see Part II in Appendix 1, Q.17, 18 and 21-24). As introduced in Chapter 2, discourse competence was originally subcategorized to sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Swain's (1980) model. Bachman and Palmer developed their instrument based on Canale and Swain (1980). Therefore, the statements under Bachman and Palmer's (1989) sociolinguistic competence were adopted to measure participants' discourse competence for this study.

Statements examining strategic competence were adopted from the LSS developed by Cohen, Oxford, and Chi (2002). The LSS is an instrument used to assess the language learning and language development of students who seek an education abroad (Paige & Stallman, 2007). It is a self-rated instrument in which language learners report the frequency with which they use a variety of language learning strategies. The statements comprise the strategies used across the four main language learning and use skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as vocabulary and translation skills.

The LSS was later developed and revised for the 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 possess sound validity and reliability with reliability coefficient alpha generally greater than 0.75. As a result, three statements from the LSS were adapted for use in this study to investigate the language strategies used by participants in terms of three language skills (listening, speaking and writing), with one statement corresponding to one skill (see Part II in Appendix 1, Q. 19,20 and 25).

Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQ)

The CQ scale (Ang et al., 2007) measures a set of multiple aspects of intercultural competence. Development of the CQ instrument went through two major stages: item pool generation and scale validation. During the first stage, the scale started with 53 items for the initial item pool, based on the operational definitions for the four CQ components. The authors consulted a panel of three faculty members and three experienced international executives to independently assess 53 items in random order for their intelligibility, readability, and definitional reliability. The result was to retain 40 best-quality items, 10 for each dimension. During the second stage, Ang and associates conducted five studies to further measure and validate the scale. In the first study, 576 business school undergraduates in Singapore completed the initial version of the CQ questionnaire. Following the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Ang et al. 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 meta-cognitive CQ items, six cognitive CQ items, five motivational CQ items, and five behavioral CQ items. In the second study, Ang et al. continued to measure the CQ scale across samples, with another sample of 447 undergraduate students in Singapore finishing the 20-item questionnaire. The Structural Equation modeling (SEM) analysis revealed internal consistency of the data to the hypothesized four-dimension model, demonstrating robust relationships between the items and their scales.

In their third study, Ang et al. validated the 20-item CQ questionnaire across time to analyze temporal stability of the CQ scale. They also asked a subset of subjects (n=204) from the Singapore cross-validation sample in Study 2 to complete the questionnaire again four months later. They specified four identical latent variables in two measurement occasion matrixes, with unique variances of the same items correlated across time. In the fourth study, Ang et al. indicated the equivalence in the number of CQ factors construct by assessing the similarity of the questionnaire used across countries and by comparing Study 4 (U.S. n=337) with Study 2 (Singapore). In

the fifth study, Ang et al. used multiple assessors of CQ to examine generalizability across methods (self-ratings and observer/peer-ratings) by applying Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix (MTMM) techniques to measure convergent, discriminant and criterion validity. Their analysis provided evidence that the self-rating CQ questionnaire was parallel to the results for the peer-rating CQ questionnaire. In summary, Ang et al. (2007) critically examined the psychometric traits of the CQ and the measurement invariance of the four dimensions across time, across two countries, and across methods. They positioned the CQ as a single instrument for assessing four aspects of intercultural competence; that is, metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ.

Following Ang et al.'s (2007) study, this study included 12 items from the CQ scale in the questionnaire (see Part II in Appendix 1, Q.1-12). This was done to keep the length of the survey as short as possible and to prevent respondents from becoming too tired and giving up halfway through the questionnaire. The 12 items applied were those with the highest factor loadings based on Ang et al.'s (2007) study. There are three items under each CQ dimension which ensures the minimum number of items for each trait required to complete a factor analysis.

Intercultural Business Communicative Competence (IBCC)

To measure Chinese professionals' IBCC in the present study, four items from the Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) survey were adopted. The items relate to the respondents' perceptions of the possible features of successful intercultural business communication, which were appropriate for use as outcome variables in the present study. Thus, one statement with the highest percentage of perceived importance to the measurement of IBCC was adapted from each trait in the Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta GCC model (see Part II in Appendix 1, Q.13-16). There are four traits in their GCC model, so four statements were adopted. Q 13 was used to measure respondents' business know-how; Q 14 was used to measure respondents' multicultural competence; Q 15 was used to measure respondents' overall ability in intercultural business communication; and Q 16 was

used to measure respondents' BELF competence

3.2.2 Constructing the questionnaires

3.2.2.1 Likert scales

A crucial concern when implementing a questionnaire instrument is the number of response options that each scale comprises. The earliest Likert scales comprised five response options (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree), but succeeding research has successfully used scales with two-, three-, four-, six-, and seven-response options (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Therefore, it appears there is no absolute criterion for how many response options to include on rating scales in general and on Likert scales, particularly.

In the present study, a six-point response option was used for two reasons. First, five or six scale points are most commonly used because too many response options on a Likert scale can result in some respondents being unable to distinguish clearly between the different levels of agreement/disagreement, resulting in unreliable responses (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In addition, there is conjecture as to whether an even or odd number of responses should be applied. Some scholars prefer even variations on rating scales, believing that research respondents might use the middle option such as "neither agree nor disagree" or "not sure" to avoid spending their cognitive effort to make a real choice (Krosnick, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2005). Moreover, an association has also been made between the tendency to choose the middle category and the cultural characteristics of respondents. For example, Chen, Lee, and Stevenson (1995) reported that Asian students were inclined to select the middle category more often than their North American counterparts because they may be influenced by Confucian philosophy that promotes the virtues of moderation. Therefore, even scale points rather than odd scale points were applied in this study.

3.2.2.2 Items grouping and sequencing

Item sequence in a questionnaire is an important consideration because adjacent items may impact the respondents' interpretation of an item and the response subsequently provided (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that, in addition to some general suggestions and principles, no research has yet put forward any specific theoretical rules for item sequencing (Robson, 2011). According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), one main ordering principle is content-based organization. This does not mean that statements belonging to a multi-item part should be placed next to each other. Rather, statements from different multi-item parts need to be mixed up to a maximum extent to stop respondents from simply repeating preceding answers. Thus, for each instrument used in this study, the constituent items where the measured components were related to each other were randomly mixed to create a sense of variety.

In terms of opening questions or starter questions, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) have suggested that they be simple and certainly not threatening or sensitive. Hence, a language needs analysis was designed as the starter for the whole survey in this study because it is a comparatively mild or neutral element, does not require a high level of cognitive thinking and avoids compelling the respondents to make fundamental decisions at such an early stage. Demographic information was left to the end of the questionnaire because it related to respondents' personal information such as age and contact information. Moreover, age and education background details are regarded as personal and private in many cultures and posing these questions at the beginning of the questionnaire may lead to some resistance in the respondents to finish the questionnaires (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

3.2.2.3 Questionnaire translation

It is generally acknowledged that the main challenge in questionnaire translation is to reconcile two moderately contradictory criteria: (a) the need to produce a translation as similar as possible to the original text (or, most ideally, to two identical versions),

and (b) the need to produce a natural-sounding translation in the target language, closest to the language the respondents would use (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). To meet these criteria, the back-translation method was applied in this study after the initial translation. This involved an independent translator who translated the translation of the questionnaire in the target language (Chinese) back into the original language (English) to then compare the two English-version texts. It turned out that the two versions corresponded with each other, indicating that both instruments were investigating the same factors, which manifested the accuracy of the translation. A copy of the translated questionnaire in Chinese is attached in Appendix 2.

3.2.2.4 Pilot studies with the questionnaires

To ensure the feasibility of the research design, two stages of piloting testing were employed in this study. At the initial piloting stage, three people were invited to help to ensure the development of a reader-friendly draft of the questionnaire. One participant was not an expert in the field of business communication, and was included to help identify and eliminate unnecessary jargon. The other two participants were no stranger to questionnaire research and had a profound knowledge of the target population. The three participants were asked to provide feedback about the structure, style and language use of the questionnaire items along with the answers that they provided. The researcher was present while they were answering the questions to observe their reactions (e.g., uncertainties or hesitations) and to respond to any questions or comments related to unclear instructions. Based on the three reviewers' comments and suggestions, examples and explanations were added to the questionnaire to clarify the meanings of certain items, such as "instant messaging (e.g., Wechat, MSN, QQ, etc.)", "social interactions at office (e.g., chatting, staff party)", and "formal meetings (i.e., with agenda, minutes)". Furthermore, the suggestions and comments from the reviewers were applied to refine and enhance the comprehensibility of a near-final version of the questionnaire.

At the second stage, a pilot study was conducted whereby the questionnaires were distributed to 30 Chinese business professionals working in different types of

China-based companies. On average, it took the participants around 8.5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. According to an analysis of the 30 completed pilot questionnaires, no statements associated with either extreme high or low means were observed. In addition, all responses to statements showed acceptable variance with Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951), with a score of .96 for the communicative needs analysis content, .90 for the cultural intelligence content, .92 for the communicative language ability content, and .81 for the IBCC content. Normally, the criterion of internal consistency for well-developed scales is recommended to reach 0.80, or over 0.70. If the Cronbach alpha does not approach 0.60, the researcher should keep alert and vigilant to that (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Thus, Cronbach's alpha tests of the questionnaire indicated a "very good" degree of reliability. No further changes were made to the questionnaire after the piloting stage. Considering this piloting phase did not result in any changes in the instrument, the responses obtained can be used for the purpose of the "real" investigation (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

3.2.2.5 Administration of the questionnaires

Before answering the main questions, all questionnaire respondents were required to indicate their consent by clicking on the "Next" button on the first page where information was presented regarding the main purpose of the questionnaire, the time duration, possible risks, and the significance of participating in the study. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided. The finalized questionnaire survey was administered between May and June 2017. A hyperlink and a QR code to the questionnaire were first sent to the researcher's Chinese business acquaintances representing a range of professions in Mainland China. Then, following a snowball distribution approach, the first round of respondents helped circulate the hyperlink and QR code among their colleagues and other acquaintances. There was no time limit to complete the questionnaire. On average, it took respondents about 10 minutes to provide answers to all the items in the questionnaire. Explanations of how to answer the items were clearly stated at the beginning of each instrument, and all respondents were reminded to answer the compulsory questions they happened to miss before they went on to the next page.

Thus, the missing value rate of each item was very low (less than 0.5%).

3.2.3 Data analysis

This section describes the consecutive steps taken to process the questionnaire data. In general, the data analyses included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analyses, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. All statistical analysis results were analyzed and generated using SPSS Statistics 24.0 for Windows.

3.2.3.1 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistics included the number of respondents and means values for all items. The preliminary analysis of the survey data included calculating the proportion of respondents in terms of various demographic categories and mean values for items examining language use in both written and spoken communication in workplaces. The mean values were then tabulated using the classification, ownership of the companies (state-owned, privately-owned, and multinational), size of the companies (small, middle, and large), and respondents' job rank in their companies (junior, middle, and senior).

3.2.3.2 Analysis of comparing means

One-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) and *t*-tests were conducted to test the significance of the differences between companies of different ownership regarding the mean responses for language use. This was conducted by testing the null hypothesis that there is the same population mean between three different categorized companies concerning language use at work. When the p-value is smaller than the significant level (0.05 in this case), the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the conclusion can be drawn.

3.2.3.3 Correlation analysis

In the current study, the correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine any positive or negative associations between the variables under study based on the hypotheses. A correlation analysis is utilized to determine if there is an association between two variables and/or whether there is an observed covariance between the two variables of interest (Kachigan, 1991). In other words, correlation analysis was used in this study to determine if there were positive or negative associations between variables. According to Kachigan (1991), “the correlation coefficient, finds application in the widest range of data analysis problems” (p. 125). The correlation coefficient range or ‘ r ’ can be from -1 to +1. A correlation coefficient of +1 suggests a perfect positive correlation, an r of -1 suggests a perfect negative correlation, and an r of 0 suggests that there is no relationship between the two variables of interest.

3.2.3.4 Regression analysis

Regression analysis was used to investigate if the independent variables can predict the dependent variables. The essence of regression analysis is that “we fit a model to our data and use it to predict values of the dependent variable (DV) from one or more independent variables (IVs)” (Field, 2009, p. 198). The regression analysis measures the degree of the relationship between the predictor variable (or IV) and the criterion variable (or DV). This study hypothesized that pragmatic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (predictor variables) predict IBCC (criterion variable). Similarly, it hypothesized that four components of cultural intelligence predict IBCC. Thus, regression analysis was used to specify any causal relations between the variables under study based on the hypotheses. A p -value of 0.05 or less was set as the criterion to decide whether or not the degree of prediction is significant.

3.2.3.5 Examining the reliability and validity

Reliability and *validity* are two properties of measurement indicating whether researchers can have confidence in the job that the measure is doing. *Validity* is

“whether an instrument actually measures what it sets out to measure.” The *reliability* of an instrument refers to “whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations” (Field, 2009, p. 11). To test these two key properties of the study instruments, an item analysis was conducted involving four aspects following both the final piloting phase and the administration of the final questionnaire. They were:

(1) A careful examination of response irregularities in the completed questionnaires, for example, missing responses. If it is found that several respondents left out some items, it perhaps means that something is not right.

(2) An examination of the variation of the responses elicited by each item. This is because statistical analysis requires a certain range for the responses.

(3) A check of the internal consistency of the multi-item scales. In terms of a psychometric instrument, it means that the items constituting the multi-item scales within the questionnaire should work together in a homogeneous manner. This has been referred to as Likert’s criterion of “Internal Consistency” (Anderson, 1985). Although internal consistency handles only one aspect of overall reliability, Nunnally (1978) indicates that its estimated reliability is usually remarkably close to the reliability estimated from other sources (e.g., from correlations between alternative instruments).

Following this principle, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency reliability of the instruments used in the present study. Specifically, this was accomplished by calculating correlation coefficients for each potential item with the total scale score and then maintaining the items with the highest correlations.

(4) Running factor analysis as an alternative method to eliminate items and to make scales more homogeneous. Factor analysis simply means reducing a mass of information (variables) taken from the data to a simple message (fewer variables) (Field, 2009). Scale validity is then achieved by retaining only those items that

have the highest loadings on the factor that they are written to examine. In the present study, factor analysis was conducted on two instruments: CLA and CQ scale. Although the CQ scale involved in the current study had already been tested for validity, it was decided to cross-validate the scale for all variables employing the present study's sample.

Before running the factor analysis, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test (Kaiser, 1970) was performed to measure the suitability of the collected data for factor analysis. KMOs test sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and for the whole model, which measures the proportion of common variance accounting for the total variance among variables. A lower proportion indicates higher suitability for the data to undergo factor analysis. The KMO statistic varies between 0 and 1. A rule of thumb for interpreting the values is that a KMO statistic greater than 0.5 is identified as barely acceptable by Kaiser (1974). Another concern with regard to conducting factor analysis is how many factors to retain. Statistical programs provide several procedures to help with the selection. Perhaps the most widely used criterion is the eigenvalue greater than one, sometimes referred to as *the Kaiser criterion* (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011). However, Jolliffe (1972, 2002) reports that Kaiser's criterion is too strict and suggests retaining all factors with eigenvalues over 0.70. According to Field (2009), the decision on how many factors to retain depends on the purpose of the analysis. If it aims to overcome multicollinearity problems in regression analysis, then it might be better to retain "too many factors than too few" (p. 642). Thus, Jolliffe's (2002) criterion of greater than 0.7 is adopted. In addition to the number of factors, the criteria of acceptable factor loading are also important for doing factor analysis. According to Pituch and Stevens (2016), for a sample size of 200, a loading should be greater than 0.40 to be accepted. In this case, a sample of 227 participants meant this study applied the rule that variables with factor loadings over 0.40 were accepted.

In brief, Cronbach's alpha technique was used for reliability analysis in estimating the internal consistency. Factor analysis was used to further test the validity of the items reflecting the construct of CQ and that of CLA by the sample of Chinese business professionals.

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Along with the online questionnaire, interviews were conducted for data collection. Interviewing is acknowledged as a sound research method to elicit rich information in terms of interviewees' verbal and non-verbal expressions (Brinkmann, 2013). This also allows researchers to view the topic from the perspectives of the respondents and thus make the issue under investigation explicit, meaningful and knowable (Patton, 2015). The semi-structured interview format was applied in this study to ask open or probing questions to gain knowledge about relevant issues as they arise, or to clarify the interviewees' views or perceptions (Gillham, 2005). The aims of the in-depth interviews were three-fold: to triangulate the statistical results generated from the questionnaire survey; to explore the reasons leading to Chinese professionals' needs related to BELF use at work and the competences required for successful intercultural business communication; and to help reveal and explain the nuances around the research topic that the findings from the quantitative data do not provide. The interview questions concerned a range of aspects: (a) the respondents' demographic information, (b) their perceptions of the communicative needs related to BELF use at work, (c) their views of the intercultural communicative competences in the business context, (d) the problems and challenges they encountered in intercultural business communication, and (e) the strategies that they applied to deal with the challenges.

3.3.1 Pilot interviews and the interview guide

To check whether the interview questions were well designed, a pilot interview was conducted in late June 2017 with a business professional from Mainland China who was working in a Hong Kong-based multinational company. The pilot interview revealed that the questions used could elicit rich responses from the interviewee to answer the research questions. The piloted interview lasted 38 minutes, suggesting that the duration of the actual interviews with participants would not be too long so as to tire them, but still long enough to solicit useful comments for analysis. Another point worth noting is that two interview questions (i.e., Questions 6 and 23, see Appendix 7) were generated from the preliminary findings of the questionnaires.

According to the quantitative findings, instant messaging has emerged as one of the frequently used methods of written communication in English, other than traditional methods such as emails and reports. Question 6 sought to investigate how Chinese professionals use instant messaging for communication with foreign counterparts at work. Moreover, preliminary findings showed that cultural knowledge may not be as important as expected for successful intercultural communication. Question 23 was then designed to examine if it is necessary to have knowledge of other's cultures for intercultural business communication at work.

3.3.2 Administration of interviews

One item in the third section of the questionnaire asks respondents to leave their contact email addresses if they are willing to participate in follow-up interviews. Nineteen respondents left their contact information. Given the purpose of the study, those who have rich experiences in intercultural business communication were the most appropriate respondents to participate in the in-depth interviews. Based on their responses to the item asking the proportion of English vis-a-vis Chinese use at work, 14 out of 19 respondents were selected because they reported that more than 40% of their communication at work was in English. An invitation letter – both an English version and a Chinese version – was sent to each of the selected respondents (see Appendices 3 and 4). The letter described the purpose, possible time duration, possible risks, and the significance of participating in the interview. Together with the invitation letter was an Informed Consent Form in bilingual form (see Appendices 5 and 6) for respondents to voluntarily sign to participate in the study. Eleven volunteers responded to the emails with a signed consent form and three either rejected the invitation or provided no reply. The demographic information of the interviewees is provided in section 3.1.2.

Wechat was used as the communication medium of the interviews. In fact, remote interviews such as telephone and remote video interviews (e.g., Skype) have been used in social scientific research for many years (e.g., Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012; Shuy, 2002; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Weller,

2017). There has been a rapid growth in the use of online approach to conducting interviews (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018). Thus, remote interviews were used for the study, considering the researcher's physical distance from the interviewees and the busy schedules of the interviewees.

An email was sent to prospective interviewees to schedule a time for the interviews. The interviews were later conducted via Wechat in a quiet context mutually agreed upon by the interviewees and the interviewer. WeChat is a multi-purpose messaging and social media application developed by Tencent, whose function supporting face-to-face online communication met the needs of the present study. Before asking interviewees the questions, the purpose of the research was again briefly explained, and the interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of the data they provided. To assist the respondents to feel comfortable and to minimize the problems caused by language barriers if English was adopted, the interviews were conducted in Putonghua. Moreover, the interviewees were asked to provide their consent to having the interviews audio-recorded. Remote interviews enabled the interviewees and the interviewer to communicate in a rather quiet and private place with little surrounding noise to influence or affect the quality of the recordings. During each interview, researcher notes were sometimes taken of the information conveyed. For example, the interviewees' facial expressions were of interest because they can reveal how they feel when answering the interview questions. This information could provide a more informed understanding their responses and facilitate the subsequent data analysis. The English version of the interview questions for the interviewees is presented in Appendix 7 and the Chinese version is present in Appendix 8.

The duration of the interviews varied in line with the interviewees' willingness to talk. No interview lasted for more than 60 minutes, however. At the end of each interview, the interviewees were asked if they would consent to having the researcher contact them if necessary, to resolve any issues of clarity related to their responses.

3.3.3 Data transcription and coding

The data collected from the interviewees were in Mandarin Chinese and transcribed

verbatim in Chinese for detailed analysis. A description of paralinguistic features was not included in the transcripts because it was not necessary to do so given the focus of the data analysis was not on examining how the participants use the language during the interviews, but on finding broad patterns of common themes across their responses (King & Horrocks, 2010).

After transcription, the interview data (58,870 Chinese characters) were imported into NVivo 11 Pro, a software program developed to analyze and code qualitative textual data. Qualitative content analysis (King & Horrocks, 2010) was the method used to systematically report the meaning of the interview data. Preliminary analysis involved reading and annotating the data together with coding and making comments on the interviewees' accounts. Successively, the interview data were further analyzed to identify any missing information regarding the issues concerned and any patterns characterizing recurrent perceptions, ideas, and experiences relevant to the research questions. A distinct color was attached to each coding level so that different colors represented different codes, which generated a visual contrast in the collated data and enhanced coding efficiency. Appendix 9 presents a systematic way for coding with different levels of sub-codes. After coding was completed, a PhD candidate who is also a native Chinese speaker was requested to cross-check the coding of themes. To address any disagreements over the coding applied, both coders first went back to the recording to check the correctness of transcription and then discussed the coding. The data were then translated into English and the selected English translation was used for reporting findings in Chapter 4.

Although the percent agreement of the two coders was not calculated to report inter-rater reliability, the coding of direct quotations used in the study was agreed upon by both coders.

3.3.4 Consideration for validity and reliability

Qualitative validity requires the researcher to employ certain procedures for checking

the accuracy of the findings (Gibbs, 2007). As suggested by Creswell (2014), member checking is a common strategy used to enhance the validity of qualitative research. It involves having respondents confirm or disconfirm the descriptions and themes identified from the data (Creswell, 2014). As an “outsider-researcher” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.61) who lacked an insider’s understanding of business practice, the researcher endeavored to incorporate professional voices into the analysis to enhance the validity of the results. Hence, the interviewees were contacted to check areas of uncertainty and the accuracy of the provisional conclusions drawn from the data. Moreover, several interviewees were willing to provide written materials to reflect the communication behaviors in their companies. In turn, the written materials were used as supplementary evidence to support the qualitative findings. For example, M_Dahlia provided the copies of some company policies (e.g., Mobile Phone Policy) and the news to show that the documents were usually presented in two languages (English and Chinese) at her company.

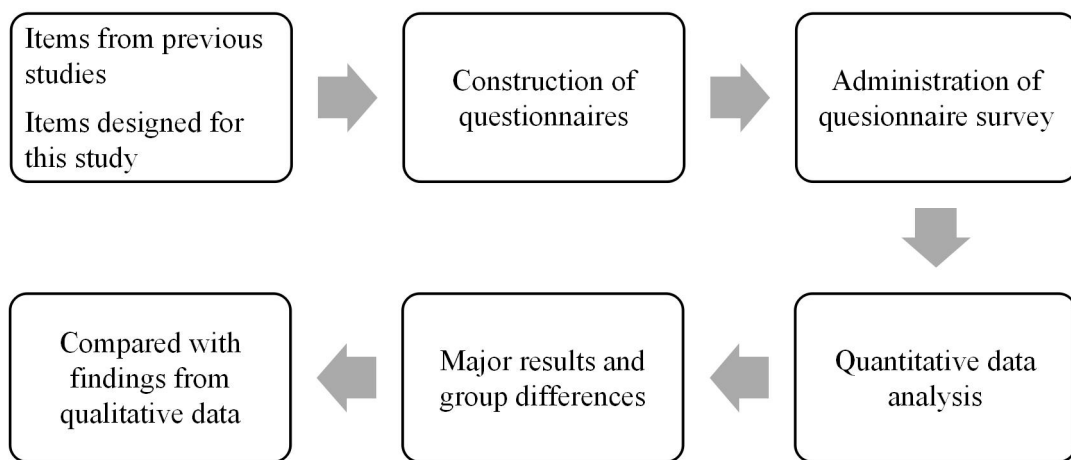
Qualitative reliability requires the researcher to employ a consistent approach across different researchers and different projects (Gibbs, 2007). Suggestions for improving reliability by Gibbs (2007) are: checking transcripts to avoid obvious mistakes, making sure that there is no shift in the definition of the codes used for coding, and cross-checking codes to achieve intercoder agreement. Several measures were taken to enhance the reliability of the present study. On every occasion, the same instructions were provided to the interviewees, the same questions were asked, and the same recording equipment and interview procedures were applied during each interview. Two people were involved in cross-checking the coding of the same interview data and agreement was achieved on the coding of direct quotations of the interviewees’ responses.

3.4 Summary

This chapter reported on the participant recruitment process applied in this study, provided justification for the methods used for data collection, analysis, and outlined the research validity and reliability assurances. As discussed in the foregoing sections of this chapter, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in this research to realize triangulation. Since each method has its own inherent limitations, the two

methods were designed to supplement each other. To display the research design more clearly, the procedures taken for the research are demonstrated in Figure 3.2. Great caution has been taken in each procedure to ensure the data are a true representation of Chinese professionals' perceptions of communicative needs and competences related to BELF use in intercultural business communication. The following chapter describes the results and findings obtained using the two research methods in the study.

Questionnaire survey



Semi-structured interviews

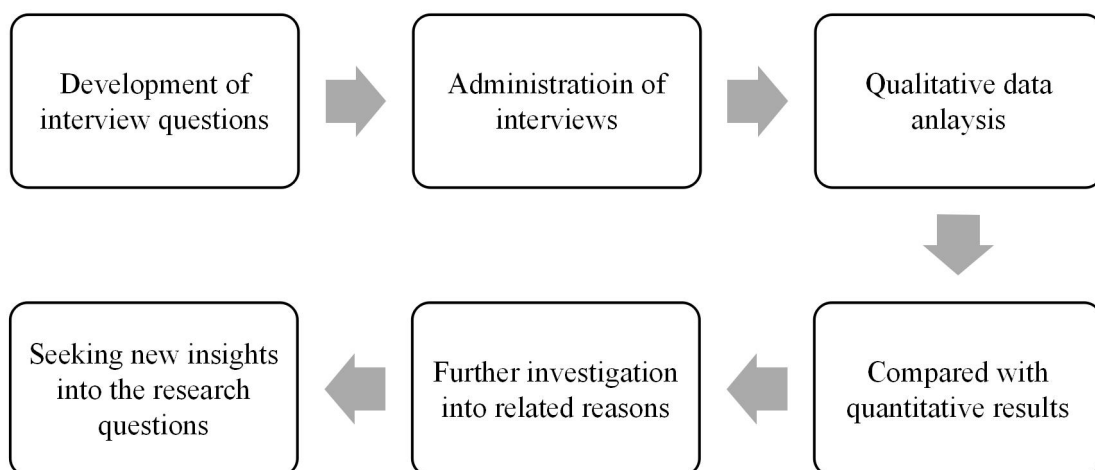


Figure 3.2 Procedures for the present research

Chapter 4 Findings and Interpretation

This chapter comprises three sections which collectively aim to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses put forward in Chapter 2. Specifically, Section 1 focuses on the results of the quantitative analyses in relation to the communicative needs, challenges, and competences related to BELF use at work and the disparities in the perceptions among different groups of participants. Section 2 centers on the analyses of the qualitative data to further explore the research questions, presenting not only a comparison to, but also an explanation of, the quantitative results. Along with the reports of the findings in Section 1 and Section 2, initial discussions are also provided to further interpret the data. The chapter will conclude by summarizing the analysis and findings.

The four research questions (RQs) and the corresponding ten sets of hypotheses are recapped below, in which RQs 1, 2 and 3 are answered by both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and RQ4 by qualitative analysis only.

RQ1: What are the communicative needs related to BELF use in intercultural business communication faced by Chinese business professionals?

To answer RQ1, four sets of corresponding hypotheses are put forward and they are:

H1: The frequency of English use at work is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) job ranks in a company.

H2: The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) job ranks in a company.

H3: The frequency of English use in spoken communication is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals working in different (a) types of company, (b) sizes of company, and (c) job ranks in a company.

H4: The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different from that in spoken communication at work in companies of different ownership: (a)

state-owned companies, (b) privately-owned companies, and (c) multinational companies.

RQ2: What are the communicative challenges related to BELF use in intercultural business communication faced by Chinese business professionals?

To answer RQ2, two sets of corresponding hypotheses are put forward and they are:

H5: Chinese business professionals who have higher English proficiency are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

H6: Chinese business professionals who have more related working experience are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

RQ3: What are the communicative competences related to BELF use perceived by Chinese business professionals as necessary to achieve successful intercultural business communication?

To answer RQ3, four sets of corresponding hypotheses are put forward and they are:

H7: Cultural intelligence (CQ) is likely to be positively related to (a) metacognitive CQ, (b) cognitive CQ, (c) motivational CQ, and (d) behavioral CQ

H8: Communicative language ability (CLA) is likely to be positively related to (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, and (c) strategic competence

H9: Intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) is likely to be positively correlated with (a) communicative language ability and (b) cultural intelligence

H10: An individual's intercultural business communicative competence is likely to be predicted by (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, (c) strategic competence, (d) metacognitive CQ, (e) cognitive CQ, (f) motivational CQ, and (g) behavioral CQ

RQ4: How do Chinese business professionals deal with the challenges related to BELF use encountered in intercultural business communication?

4.1 Quantitative findings

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire surveys were first subjected to descriptive analysis by calculating the mean value of each variable. Then, the scale items of Communicative Language Ability (CLA) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) underwent Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha test. This was to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items and to achieve a better understanding of the structure of each construct for further analysis. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and *t*-test were also conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in the perceptions held by the different groups of participants. Specifically, comparisons were made between Chinese business professionals from companies of different ownership, from companies of different size, and from different job ranks. In addition, Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine whether there are relationships among the possibility that Chinese business professionals find it challenging to use English at work, their English language proficiency, and their working experiences. Correlation analysis was also carried out to determine the relationship between Chinese professionals' level of language and culture competence, and their overall IBCC. Lastly, regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which the independent variables (language and culture competences) can predict the dependent variable (IBCC). All statistical analyses were fulfilled using SPSS version 24.

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics of the questionnaires

The descriptive analysis includes calculating the mean values of the questionnaire items used in the study. The results are reported in the following two sub-sections; 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2. Section 4.1.1.1 reports the descriptive statistics of the instrument examining the linguistic landscape of BELF use by Chinese business professionals. Section 4.1.1.2 displays the descriptive analysis of the instruments investigating the communicative competence related to BELF use in intercultural business communication.

4.1.1.1 Descriptive statistics for communicative needs related to BELF use

Responses to all items related to communicative needs of BELF use at work (see Part I of the questionnaire in Appendix 1) are displayed in Table 4.1. The reliability of the instrument used for this part was determined by Cronbach's alpha test (.97), indicating a "very good" degree of reliability. Items 1-4 depict a general picture of language use by Chinese business professionals at work by percentage mean of a slider from 0% to 100%. Table 4.1 shows that the Chinese business professionals use Mandarin Chinese (60.33%) more often than English (39.67%) at work. When they need to use English, they communicate with NNES (61.95%) more frequently than with NES (38.05%). In other words, the language dominating the intercultural business interactions in China's business context can be characterized as BELF.

Items 5-31 demonstrate the frequency with which English was used in written and spoken communication at work. There are 14 different written communicative tasks (e.g., letters, emails, reports) and 13 different spoken communicative tasks (e.g., presentations, telephoning, meetings). The frequency of each communication task was scored on a six-point Likert scale. Regarding the Likert scale variances, 1 indicates the communication in English by the individual is less than 5% (<5%); 2 indicates the communication in English is 5-10%; 3 indicates the mode of communication in English is 11-30%; 4 indicates the communication in English is 31-50%; 5 indicates the communication in English is 51-80%; and 6 indicates the communication in English is more than 80% (> 80%).

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for communicative needs (N = 227)

	Items	Mean
	Communication in general at work	1 - 100%
1	Percentage of Chinese use at work	60.33
2	Percentage of English use at work	39.67
3	Percentage of communicating with NES at work	38.05
4	Percentage of communicating with NNES at work	61.95
	Written communication in English at work	1 - 6 points
5	External email	3.63

6	Internal email	3.56
7	Instant Messaging	3.53
8	Websites	3.51
9	Reports	3.33
10	Promotional materials	3.25
11	Letters	3.14
12	Proposals	3.13
13	Minutes	3.12
14	Notices	3.12
15	Newspaper	2.90
16	Legal documents	2.81
17	Memos	2.75
18	Faxes	2.06
	Spoken communication in English at work	1 - 6 points
19	Informal meetings/discussions	3.39
20	Formal meetings	3.33
21	Telephoning	3.23
22	Presentations	3.10
23	Video conferences	3.10
24	Job interviews	2.99
25	Seminars	2.96
26	Workshops	2.92
27	Social interactions	2.89
28	Negotiations	2.85
29	Announcements	2.74
30	Voice messages	2.49
31	Media Briefings	2.28

To better visualize the frequency variance trend, the mean values presented in Table 4.1 are also displayed in a bar chart (see Figure 4.1 for written communication and Figure 4.2 for spoken communication). As is shown in Figure 4.1, the frequency variance was divided into four tiers based on their mean values; that is, the first (upper) tier includes all mean values over 3.5, the second tier includes a range of mean values from 3.0 to 3.49, the third tier includes a range of mean values from 2.5 to 2.99, and the fourth (lower) tier includes a range of mean values from 2.0 to 2.49.

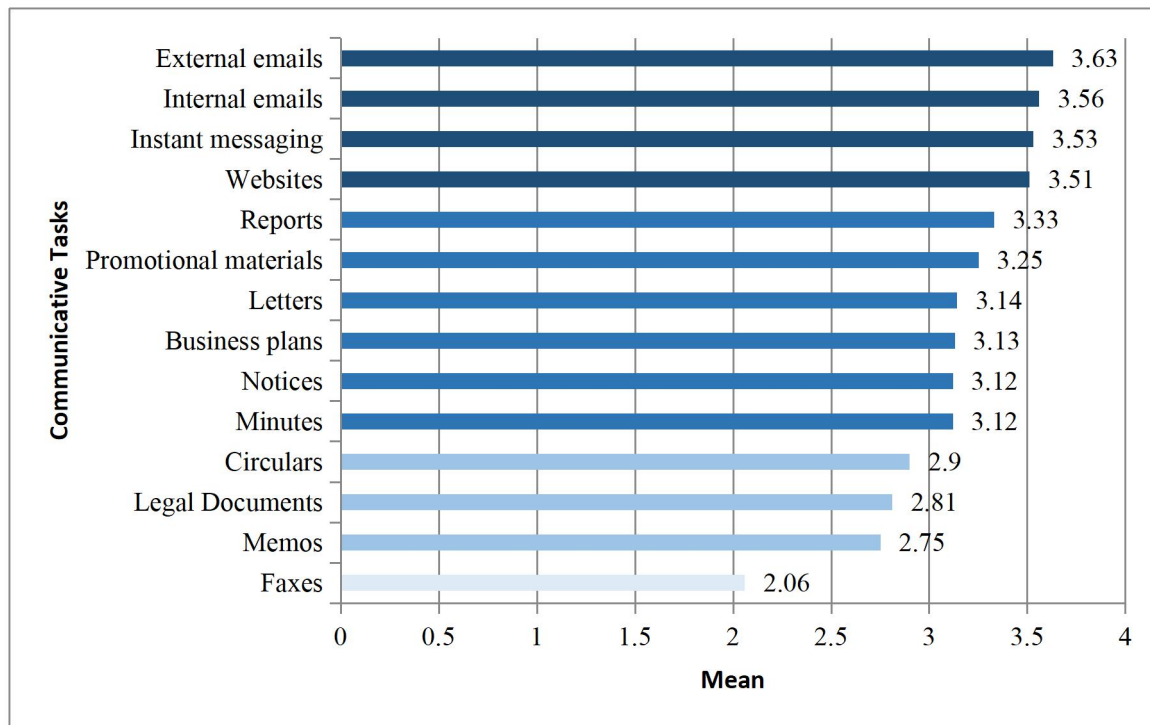


Figure 4.1 Frequency of English use in written communication at work

Four tasks in the first tier (with mean values above 3.5) were found to be the most commonly used written tasks in English in the workplaces. E-mails were used most frequently with a composite mean of 3.6 (3.63 for externals and 3.56 for internals), followed by instant messaging (mean 3.53) and websites (mean 3.51). Reports, promotional materials, letters, business plans, minutes, and notices appear in the second tier (with mean values between 3.0 – 3.49), with reports showing the highest mean value at 3.33. Circulars, legal documents, and memos are in the third tier (with mean values between 2.5 to 2.99), and faxes (mean 2.06) are in the fourth tier (with mean score below 2.5). Thus, it is found that fax writing is the least frequently performed written task by Chinese professionals at work.

Regarding the spoken communications shown in Figure 4.2, no task had a mean value located in the first tier (more than 3.5). Meetings, either formal or informal (with a composite mean of 3.36), were found to be the most common tasks conducted in English, followed by telephoning (mean 3.23), video conferences (mean 3.10) and presentations (mean 3.10). Interviews, seminars, workshops, social talks, negotiations,

and announcements appear in the third tier, with interviews showing the highest mean value at 2.99. Voice messages and press briefings were the least frequently performed spoken tasks by professionals at work, with press briefings showing the lowest mean value at 2.28.

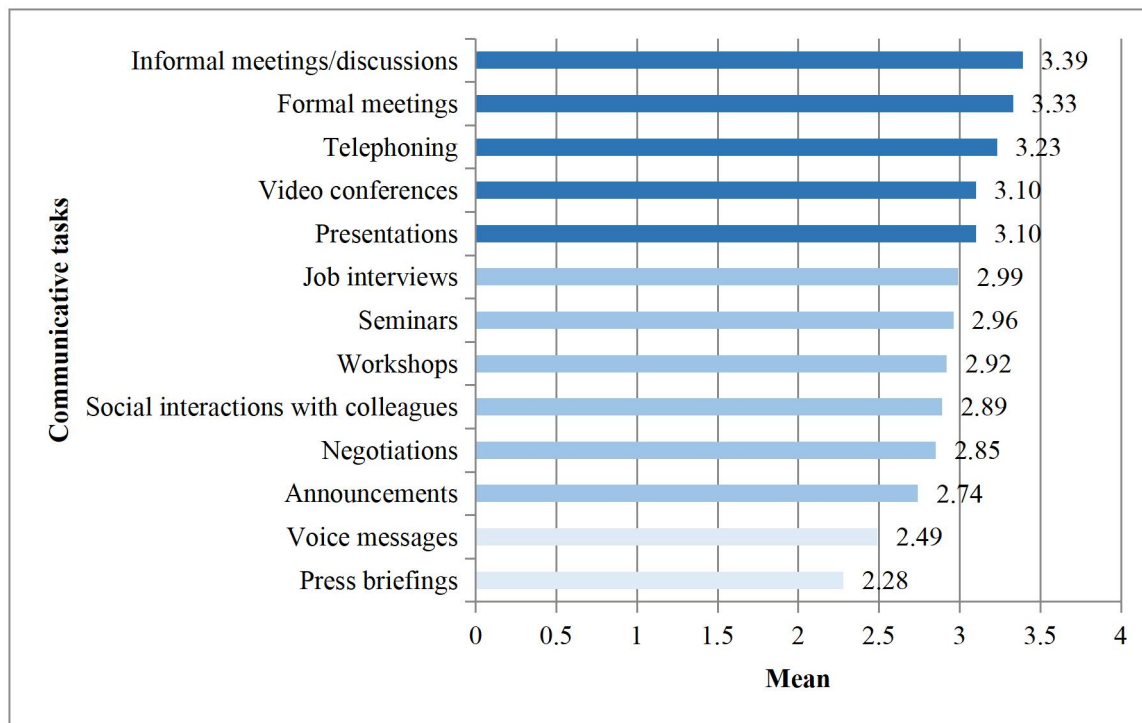


Figure 4.2 Frequency of English use in spoken communication at work

In sum, the frequency of English use increased across a range of communicative activities over the years, with varying time spent on each, although not considerably. Fax messages as a form of communication was identified as one of the major modes of English use by Pang et al. (2002), but in this study it was rarely used. A similar phenomenon was found in other contexts such as Mexico (Grosse, 2004) and Korea (Huh, 2006) where the use of fax messages in English has diminished considerably in the business context; whereas, the use of email has increased rapidly. Conversely, instant messaging (e.g., WeChat) and video conferencing have emerged as two of the most frequently-used modes of written and spoken communication in English by Chinese professionals, respectively.

4.1.1.2 Descriptive statistics for communicative competences related to BELF use

Responses to all items related to communicative competence of BELF use at work (see Part II in the questionnaire in Appendix 1) are displayed in Table 4.2. The first two instruments, the scale of CQ scale and the IBCC scale were scored on a six-point Likert scale: (from 1 indicating Strongly disagree to 6 indicating ‘Strongly agree’). The third instrument, the CLA scale, included a variance range where 1 indicates ‘Very hard’, and 6 indicates ‘Not hard at all’. Cronbach’s alpha (.92) indicated a “very good” degree of reliability in the instruments used in Part II.

As for the CQ scale (see Table 4.2), items 1-3 measured Chinese professionals’ metacognitive CQ, items 4-6 their cognitive CQ, items 7-9 their motivational CQ, and items 10-12 their behavioral CQ. The composite means (i.e., the mean of the mean values) of four components of the CQ scale show that the mean of cognitive CQ is relatively lower at 4.02, compared with the other three components with a mean value around 4.5. This result implies that Chinese professionals did not perceive that they have a cognitive CQ as good as the other three CQs. As for the CLA, items 17-19 measured Chinese professionals’ pragmatic competence, items 20-22 their discourse competence, and items 23-25 their strategic competence. Composite mean values indicate that the professionals have a higher level of strategic competence (mean=4.12) than the other two competences, with pragmatic competence showing the lowest mean value at 3.64. Comparatively, the mean scores of the CQ scale are higher than those of CLA, which suggests that Chinese professionals have more confidence in their cultural competence than in their language ability. This finding accords with the result generated from the IBCC scale. The mean value of item 16 (4.54) which measured the professionals’ language abilities is lower than the other three values: Item 13 (4.84) measured the professionals’ business know-how ability, item 14 (4.7) their multicultural competence, and item 15 (4.8) their overall ability in intercultural business communication. Therefore, compared with culture ability, language ability emerged as a bigger concern for Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics for communicative competences (N = 227)

	Items	Mean	Composite mean
Culture Intelligence (CQ) Scale		1 - 6 points	
1	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	4.69	4.68
2	I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	4.66	
3	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.	4.69	
4	I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	3.94	4.02
5	I know the marriage systems of other cultures.	3.91	
6	I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures.	4.21	
7	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	4.64	4.51
8	I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	4.37	
9	I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	4.52	
10	I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	4.56	4.48
11	I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	4.35	
12	I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	4.53	
Intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC)			
13	Business is a communication-based activity.	4.84	4.72
14	When I communicate interculturally, I try to see the matter from the other person's perspective as well.	4.70	
15	I pay a lot of attention to delivering the message clearly.	4.80	
16	I know the English vocabulary of my own business area.	4.54	
Communicative language ability (CLA)			
17	How hard is it for you to make no grammar mistakes in English?	3.38	3.64
18	How hard is it for you to use different kinds of English with different kinds of people (e.g., a colleague, a boss, a customer)?	3.62	
19	How hard is it for you to tell how polite English-speaking people are by the kind of English they use?	3.91	
20	How hard is it for you to put several English sentences together in a row?	3.94	3.84
21	How hard is it for you to organize a speech in English with several ideas in it?	3.68	
22	How hard is it for you to tell how well it is organized when you hear something in English?	3.91	
23	How hard is it for you to ask speakers to repeat what they said if it	4.22	4.12

	wasn't clear to you?		
24	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?	4.06	
25	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?	4.09	

In brief, this section reports on a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data by providing an indication of the communicative needs and competence related to BELF use in the workplace. The following sections present the findings to answer the research questions by testing ten sets of hypotheses.

4.1.2 RQ1: What are the communicative needs related to BELF use in intercultural business communication faced by Chinese business professionals?

The nature of RQ1 investigates the linguistic landscape of Chinese professionals' BELF use in the workplace. To answer RQ1, three aspects of BELF use at work were examined: (1) the proportion of Chinese business professionals' communication in language (English vis-a-vis Chinese), (2) the frequency with which they used English in written communication, and (3) the frequency with which they used English in spoken communication. To investigate these three aspects of BELF use at work, four sets of hypotheses (H1, H2, H3 and H4) were proposed to examine the differences in relation to company ownership, company size, and employee job rank.

H1: The frequency of English use at work is likely to be different between Chinese business professionals.

H1a: In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use at work is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies.

H1b: In terms of company size, the frequency of English use at work is higher in companies of larger size.

H1c: In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use at work is higher for professionals of higher job rank.

H2: The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals.

H2a: In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies.

H2b: In terms of company size, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher in companies of larger size.

H2c: In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher for professionals of higher job rank.

H3: The frequency of English use in spoken communication is likely to be different among Chinese business professionals.

H3a: In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies.

H3b: In terms of company size, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher in companies of larger size.

H3c: In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher for professionals of higher job rank.

H4: The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different from that in spoken communication at work in companies of different ownership.

H4a: The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in state-owned companies.

H4b: The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in privately owned companies.

H4c: The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in multinational companies.

4.1.2.1 Frequency of English use at work among Chinese business professionals

Hypothesis 1 examines the frequency of English use at work among Chinese business professionals from the perspectives of company ownership (H1a), company size (H1b), and job rank (H1c). To answer Hypothesis 1, one item in the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate on a slider (0%-100%) the proportion of English vis-a-vis Chinese used in the workplace. The responses were subsequently categorized according to different variables; namely, company ownership, company size, and job rank (see Figure 4.3). MANOVA was conducted to examine if the mean difference in English use was significant among the categories (H1a, H1b, and H1c).

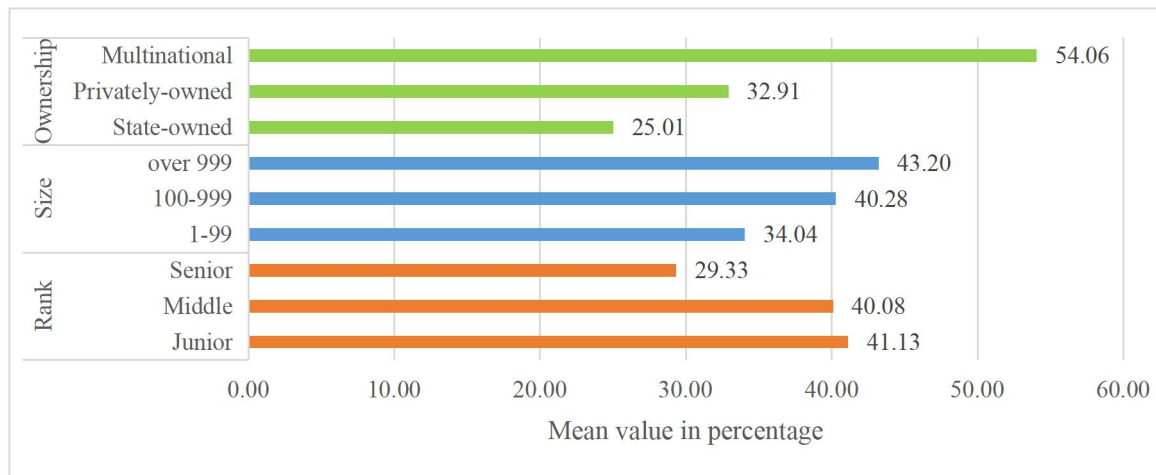


Figure 4.3 The frequency of English use at work among Chinese business professionals

Altogether, three comparisons were conducted, with a statistically significant difference found in one of the three only. Specifically, professionals from companies of different ownership were markedly different on frequency of English use at work ($p < .001$). No significant difference was found between companies of different size and between different job ranks. Thus, H1a was supported; whereas, H1b and H1c were rejected.

To substantiate H1a, Figure 4.4 compares the percentage means of English and Chinese use for communication in companies of different ownership. The result shows that English was used far less frequently in non-multinational companies, where around 30% of communication was conducted in English (25.01% in state owned companies and 32.91% in privately owned companies). In contrast, English was used for workplace communication 54.06% of the time in multinational companies.

To validate the MANOVA results and to further investigate the differences in English use, one-way ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA test result reveals that there was a significant difference in the percentage of English vis-a-vis Chinese use between three

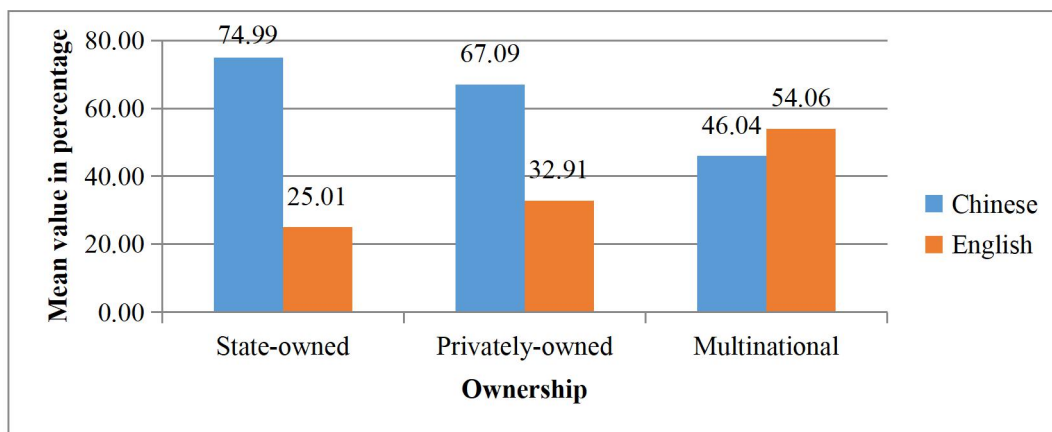


Figure 4.4 Frequency of English use as compared to Chinese use

types of companies, $F(2, 224) = 43.81, p < .001$. Further analysis of Post Hoc Tests (see Table 4.3) shows that the difference between state-owned and privately-owned companies was not significant; whereas, it was significant between the non-multinational (including both state-owned and privately-owned companies) and multinational companies. Thus, ANOVA analysis confirms one key tendency that Chinese business professionals working in multinational firms need to use English markedly more regularly than their counterparts working in non-multinational concerns.

Table 4.3 Significance level of ownership-based comparison in the frequency of English use

Post Hoc Tests: Multiple Comparisons			
English use			
Ownership	Ownership	Std. Error	Sig.
State-owned	Privately-owned	3.72	0.10
	Multinational	3.25	0.00
Privately-owned	State-owned	3.72	0.10
	Multinational	3.48	0.00
Multinational	State-owned	3.25	0.00
	Privately-owned	3.48	0.00
<i>Note: The mean difference is significant at the .05 level (p < .05).</i>			

Although the MANOVA analysis shows that there was little difference in the frequency of English use in companies of different size or for professionals with different job ranks, an interesting tendency was observed when putting the relevant data into a simple 3-D bar chart (see Figure 4.5). In multinational companies, it turns out that the higher the job rank of the business professional, the more frequently he or she was required to use English at work, although the variance between frequency means was small (less than 5%). In contrast, the percentage mean shows a negative linear association between the two variables in non-multinational companies, with junior staff using English at work most frequently and senior staff using English the least. This is an interesting contrast identified between two types of companies. While it might not be hard to imagine that staff at senior positions are required to use English more often to communicate with expatriate managers in multinational companies, the reason why junior staff use English more often in non-multinational companies needs to be further explored. This is further examined and explained when reporting the qualitative findings (see Section 4.2).

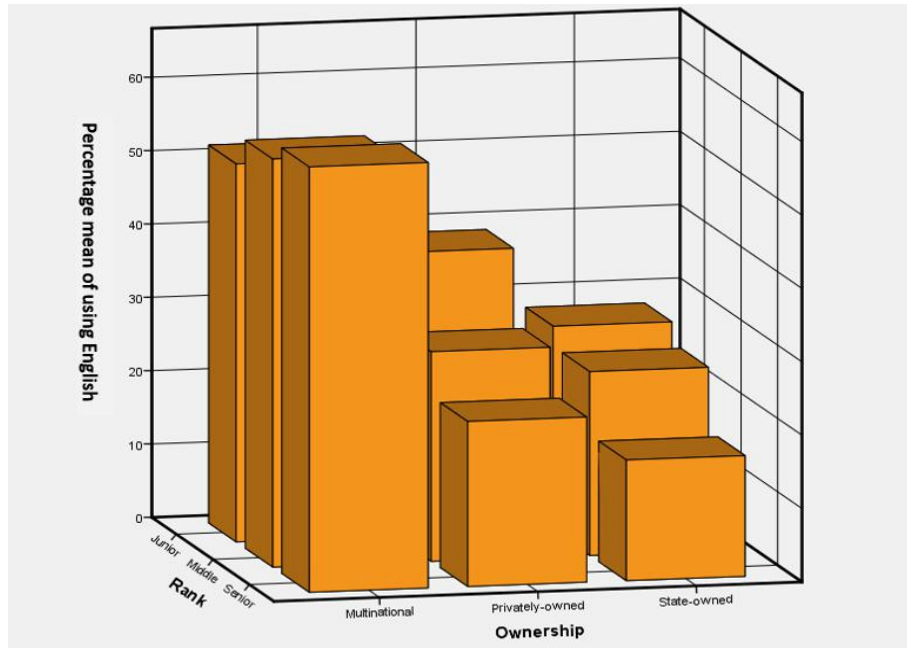


Figure 4.5 3-D bar chart on the relationship between frequency of English use, company ownership, and job rank

Concerning the proportion of language use, Chinese professionals generally used two languages at work: Chinese and English, but the extent to which each language was employed in daily work activities varied considerably in terms of company ownership. Participants employed by non-multinational firms reported that they used Chinese more often than English as their working language. Both English and Chinese were patently the principle channels of communication in multinational companies; however, English was used slightly more often than Chinese.

4.1.2.2. Frequency of English use for written communication among Chinese business professionals

Hypothesis 2 examines the frequency of English use for written communication between Chinese business professionals from the perspectives of company ownership (H2a), company size (H2b), and job rank (H2c). To examine Hypothesis 2, participants were asked to rate on a 6-point Likert scale the frequency of English use to perform each written task (see Appendix 1). Figure 4.6 presents the frequency of English use in written communication among Chinese business professionals from the

same three categories as demonstrated in Section 4.1.2.1. In each category, a difference was observed in the frequency of written English use between the three groups of professionals. Thus, MANOVA was conducted to test the set of Hypothesis 2 to examine whether the mean values of English use in written communication were significantly different among the various groups. Three group comparisons were investigated, and a statistically significant difference was found in one group comparison only. That is, the frequency of English use in written communication ($p < .001$) was significantly different among Chinese professionals from companies of different ownership. However, no significant difference was found between participants either from companies of different sizes or in positions of different ranks. Thus, H2a was confirmed, and H2b and H2c were rejected.

In terms of company size, Figure 4.6 informs that the difference between the mean values was rather small (less than 0.2), which may explain why MANOVA reported no significant differences in the group comparison. In terms of job rank, one possible reason for there being no significant difference is that the sample size distribution is uneven. Of the 227 questionnaire respondents, only 17 reported working in high-ranking positions in their companies. Moreover, Figure 4.5 presents a contrasting frequency trend in English use by business professionals of different job ranks in multinational and non-multinational companies. This may also explain why no significant difference was found in the mean values. In terms of company ownership, to validate the MANOVA results and to further investigate the differences in English use in written communication, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. The results show a significant difference in the frequency of English use in written communication ($F(2, 224) = 50.46, p < .001$) between the three types of companies. Further analysis of Post Hoc Tests (see Table 4.4) shows that the differences between state-owned, privately-owned companies, and multinational companies are all significant at the .05 level ($p < .05$). As might be expected, Chinese business professionals working in multinational companies were required to use written English significantly more frequently than those working in non-multinational companies. The frequency mean value for multinational companies was 3.86 (see Figure 4.6) and this value is more than one point higher than those of non-multinational companies (2.35 for state-owned companies and 2.85 for

privately-owned companies). Moreover, it is also found that written English was used markedly more often in privately-owned companies than in state-owned companies, although the difference in their mean values is not big (0.5). To explain, according to Xiao and Liu (2015), state-owned companies were the main participants in the early internationalization process of China. However, due to the constraints from both Chinese government and foreign countries, the internationalization process of China's state-owned companies began to slow down. On the contrary, "China's privately-owned enterprises are less related to the government, and they make full use of their advantages to become the main force of internationalization in the circumstances of rising global protectionism" (Xiao & Liu, 2015, p. xi). Xiao and Liu's finding may help explain why English was found to be used more often in privately-owned companies than in state-owned companies. They suggest that privately-owned companies, rather than state-owned companies, become the main participants in today's internationalization process of China.

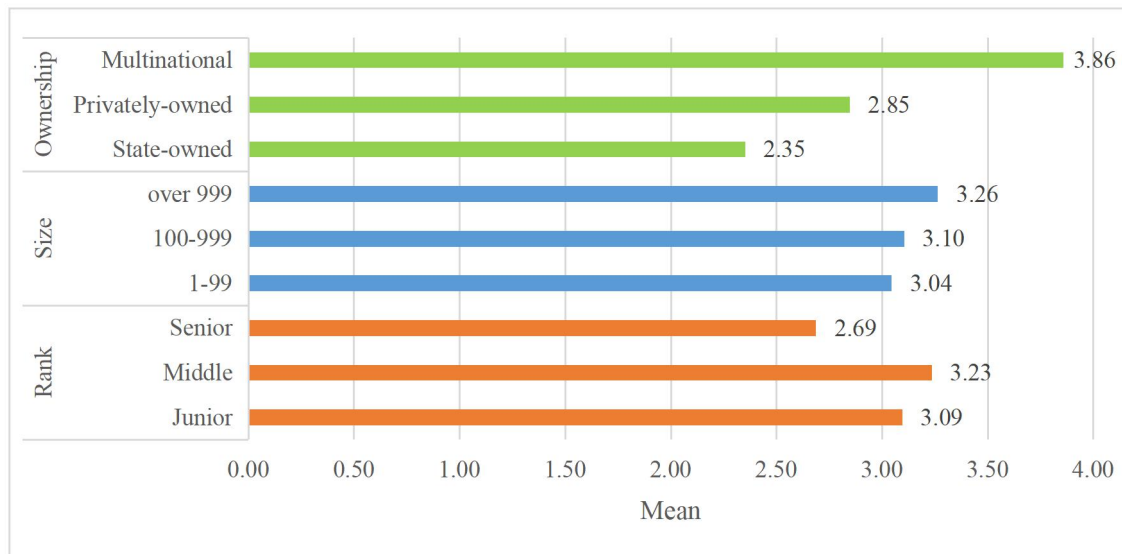


Figure 4.6 Frequency of English use in written communication among Chinese business professionals

Table 4.4 Significance level of ownership-based comparison in the frequency of English use for written and spoken communication

Post Hoc Tests: Multiple Comparisons

The frequency of English use			Std. Error	Sig.
Written communication in English	State-owned	Privately-owned	0.18	0.02
		Multinational	0.16	0.00
	Privately-owned	State-owned	0.18	0.02
		Multinational	0.17	0.00
	Multinational	State-owned	0.16	0.00
		Privately-owned	0.17	0.00
Spoken communication in English	State-owned	Privately-owned	0.19	0.01
		Multinational	0.17	0.00
	Privately-owned	State-owned	0.19	0.01
		Multinational	0.18	0.01
	Multinational	State-owned	0.17	0.00
		Privately-owned	0.18	0.01
<i>Note:</i> The mean difference is significant at the .05 level ($p < .05$).				

In order to further explore the difference in the frequency of written English use among professionals working in different types of companies, Table 4.5 summarizes the ownership-based comparison relating to how frequently Chinese professionals were required to use BELF in various written tasks at work. It appears that the most commonly used written tasks were generally alike in each company type such as emails, instant messaging, and websites. However, the results reveal an obvious difference between multinational and non-multinational companies. In non-multinational companies, external emails in English were written more often than internal emails; whereas, in multinational companies, internal emails were more often written in English than external emails. One possible reason for this difference is that there are many expatriates working in multinational companies and so English is frequently required for internal communication. Other reasons to explain this phenomenon are explored in the analysis of the qualitative data in Section 4.2.

Table 4.5 Mean values of English uses in each written task, by company ownership

Written communication	State-owned	Privately-owned	Multinational
External emails	3.04	3.19	4.30
Internal emails	2.28	3.14	4.71
Instant messaging	3.10	3.58	3.82
Websites	2.87	3.07	4.22

Reports	2.42	2.81	4.27
Promotional materials	2.62	2.77	3.98
Letters	2.51	2.72	3.84
Business plans	2.18	2.95	3.92
Minutes	2.04	2.86	4.05
Notices	2.11	2.96	3.94
Circulars	2.21	2.39	3.69
Legal documents	2.1	2.49	3.52
Memos	1.79	2.56	3.56
Faxes	1.63	2.35	2.19
Overall (Composite mean)	2.35	2.85	3.86

4.1.2.3 Frequency of English use in spoken communication among Chinese business professionals

Hypothesis 3 examines the frequency of English use in spoken communication among Chinese business professionals from the perspective of company ownership (H3a), company size (H3b), and job rank (H3c). To examine Hypothesis 3, participants were asked to rate on a 6-point Likert scale the frequency of English use to perform each spoken task. Using the same analytical method as for written communication, Figure 4.7 displays the frequency of spoken English use among Chinese business professionals from different group categories. Variance in the frequency was discovered in each group category. MANOVA was then conducted to test the set of Hypothesis 3 by examining whether the mean values of English use for spoken communication were significantly different among the three groups of participants in each category. As with the findings for written communication, a significant difference ($p < .001$) was found in participants from companies of different ownership only. Thus, H3a was accepted; whereas, H3b and H3c were rejected. The reason for why there is no significant difference in terms of company size and job rank is the same as that given for the written communication results. In terms of company size, Figure 4.7 informs that the distance between the mean values is rather small (less than 0.1). In terms of job rank, a small participant sample working in high-ranking positions, and the opposite frequency trend in English use by professionals in different job ranks in companies of different ownership, may lead to a finding of no

significant difference in the group comparison. In terms of company ownership, a one-way ANOVA analysis was also conducted to further investigate the differences of English use in spoken communication. The results show that there was a significant difference in the frequency of spoken English use ($F(2, 224) = 22.54, p < .001$) among the three types of companies (also see Table 4.4). Figure 4.7 shows that the frequency mean value for multinational companies was 3.42; indicating that at least 30% of the spoken communication was conducted in English. This value is higher than the value for non-multinational companies (2.33 for state-owned companies and 2.87 for privately-owned companies), which aligns with the trend observed in written communication.

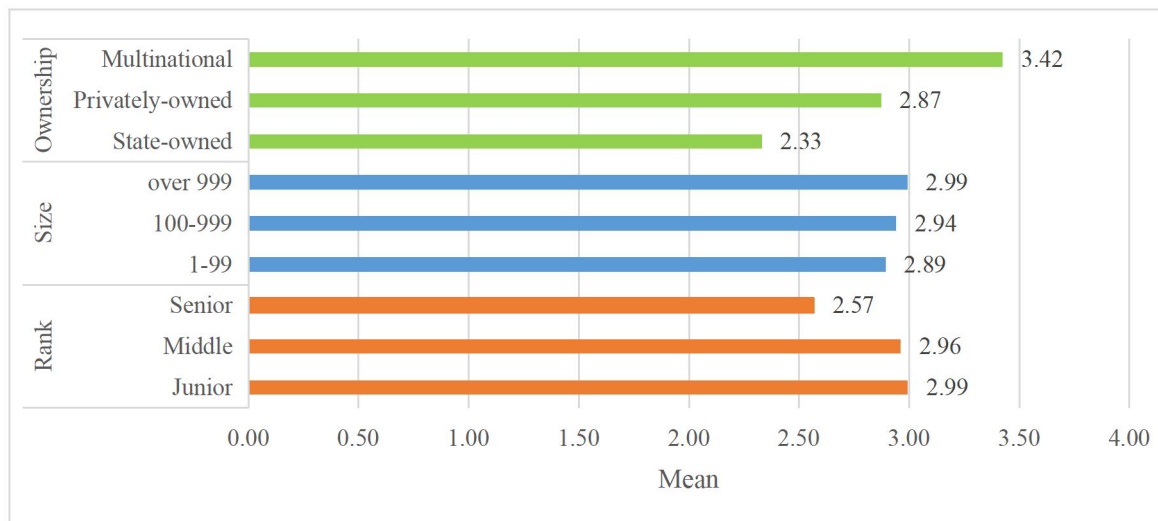


Figure 4.7 Frequency of English use in spoken communication among Chinese business professionals

To further explore the nature of spoken English use across the three different company types, Table 4.6 summarizes the ownership-based information relating to how frequently Chinese business professionals were required to use BELF in various spoken communication tasks at work. The most commonly used spoken tasks in each company type were generally the same, namely, formal or informal meetings and telephoning. What is new here is that one task, voice messages, was found to be used rather more frequently in privately-owned companies, with a remarkably higher mean value than that in the other two types of company. This may imply that professionals

in privately-owned companies prefer to use social media for communication. The high frequency use of videoconferencing in privately-owned and multinational companies can again demonstrate the popularity of using technology for business communication among people at different workplace locations. Moreover, it was found that in both privately-owned and state-owned companies, professionals were required to use English for negotiations more regularly than for most of the other tasks on the list. This observation may suggest that English is more likely to be used for external communication in these two types of company.

Table 4.6 Frequency of English use in each spoken task, by company ownership

Spoken communication	State-owned	Privately-owned	Multinational
Informal meetings/discussions	2.52	3.21	4.12
Formal meetings	2.68	3.04	3.98
Telephoning	2.68	3.19	3.66
Presentations	2.30	2.81	3.85
Video conferences	2.15	2.96	3.85
Job interviews	2.42	2.77	3.53
Seminars	2.21	2.88	3.56
Workshops	2.14	2.65	3.63
Social interactions with colleagues	2.39	2.67	3.36
Negotiations	2.52	2.95	3.02
Announcements	2.17	2.88	3.06
Voice messages	2.18	3.00	2.42
Press briefings	1.94	2.35	2.48
Overall	2.33	2.87	3.42

4.1.2.4 Comparisons of English use in written and spoken communication at work

Hypothesis 4 examines whether the frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in the three types of companies: state-owned companies (H4a), privately-owned companies (H4b), and multinational companies (H4c). Figure 4.8 compares the written and spoken communication in English results among companies of different ownership. A

tendency was observed that Chinese business professionals working in multinational companies were required to use English for written and spoken tasks most frequently, followed by those working in privately-owned companies, and those working in state-owned companies using English the least. In addition, taking a closer look at the mean values within each type of company in Figure 4.8, the gap (.02 point) was found to be marginal between the mean scores of written and spoken English use in non-multinational companies. However, the gap was larger (.44 point) in multinational companies. In this case, *t*-test was used to test whether the frequency of English use in written communication was significantly different from spoken communication at work in the three types of company. The *t*-test results indicate that the requirements of BELF use for written communication ($M = 3.86$, $SE = 0.09$) significantly outweighed spoken communication in multinational companies ($M = 3.42$, $SE = 0.10$), $t(98) = 6.61$, $p < .001$. This indicates that English use for written communication in multinational companies occupies a significantly greater proportion of professionals' working time than spoken communication. Thus, H4a and H4b were rejected; whereas, H4c was supported.

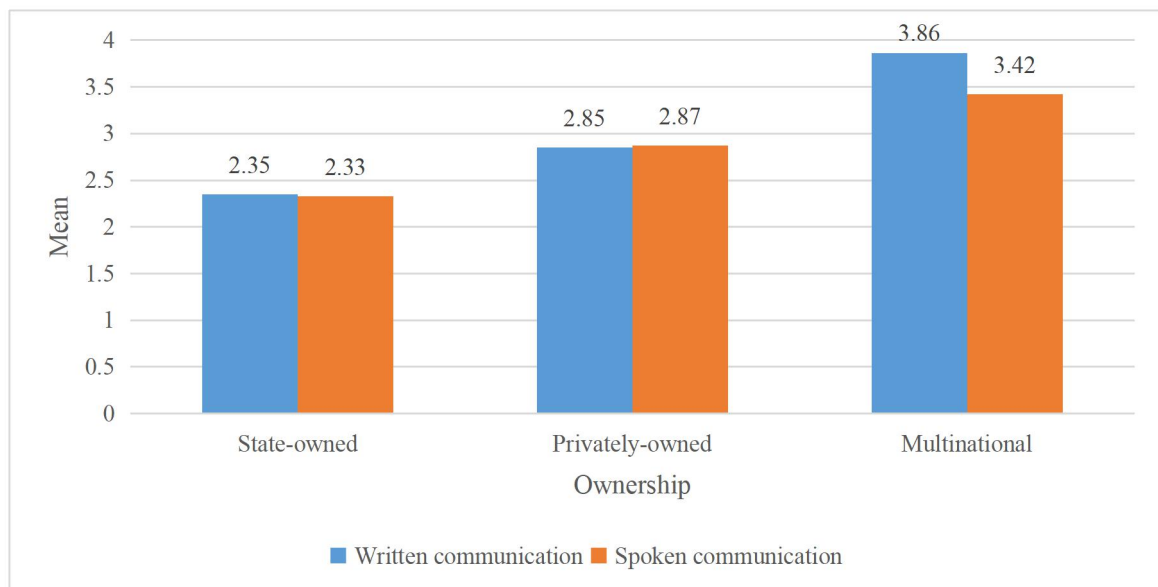


Figure 4.8 English use in written and spoken communication in companies of different ownership

4.1.2.5 Summary

Concerning the communicative requirements for English use by Chinese business professionals at work, several salient features were identified: (1) there was a significant difference ($p < .001$) in the percentage of English vis-a-vis Chinese use between the non-multinational companies (state-owned companies and privately-owned companies) and multinational companies; (2) English was mostly used with NNES rather than with NES; (3) the frequency with which Chinese professionals were required to communicate in English (in both written and spoken forms) has increased across a range of communicative activities since China's accession to the WTO in 2001, 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), is rarely used nowadays. Conversely, new communicative activities such as instant messages, video conferences, and voice messages have emerged as the more-frequently-used forms of written or spoken communication in English by Chinese professionals; (4) the time spent on different communicative activities varied, though not considerably. On average, the respondents estimated that, in a regular working day, English was mostly used in emails and during meetings and discussions; (5) English is used more widely for external communication in non-multinational companies; whereas, English is used more often for internal communication in multinational companies. These are the key characteristics identified in terms of the communicative needs related to BELF use at work. The next section analyzes what communicative challenges Chinese business professionals face when using BELF at work.

4.1.3 RQ2: What are the communicative challenges related to BELF use in intercultural business communication confronting Chinese business professionals?

RQ2 examines the communicative challenges related to BELF use encountered by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication. To answer RQ2, questionnaire respondents were asked to report the tasks that they found difficult to fulfill in English after identifying the most common tasks requiring written and spoken English communication in the workplace. The number of each task was then aggregated to determine the tasks the Chinese business professionals regarded as

difficult. Moreover, correlation analysis was used to examine two sets of hypotheses (H5 and H6) on the relationship between task difficulty, English proficiency, and working experience.

H5: Chinese business professionals who have higher English proficiency are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

H6: Chinese business professionals who have more related working experience are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.

4.1.3.1 Challenging tasks conducted in English at work

Hypotheses 5 and 6 examine the likely relationship between the written communication tasks at work Chinese business professionals find challenging and their English proficiency (H5) and working experiences (H6).

In terms of written tasks, 177 participants reported that they were required to write letters in English, with 41 participants perceiving this task as difficult to fulfill. This was followed by legal documents (n = 38 out of 162) and business plans (n = 20 out of 193). In terms of spoken tasks, the findings show that a formal meeting was the task most participants (n = 44 out of 203) considered difficult to fulfill, followed by negotiations (n = 25 out of 207) and seminars (n = 13 out of 169). For the remaining written and spoken tasks listed in the questionnaire, fewer than 10 participants regarded them difficult to fulfill.

It was somewhat surprising to find that few business professionals indicated problems in fulfilling different tasks in English at work. Two reasons may explain this result. First, the participants have relatively good English proficiency and may therefore not experience many challenges in English use to fulfill their workplace tasks. As presented in Chapter 3, 80.62% of respondents have English achievement

certificates at the middle level or higher (CET6, TEM4, or TEM8). Feng and Tang (2012) provided a general picture of the language proficiency of each English language certificate (CET4, CET6, TEM4, and TEM8) by calibrating the certificates with CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) via vocabulary range, as is shown in Figure 4.9. According to the Council of Europe (2001), CEFR is widely used internationally and describes language ability on a six-point scale: A1 (the lowest), A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 (the highest). Those ranked at level C2 or C1 are identified as proficient users, B2 or B1 as independent users, and A2 or A1 as basic users. Figure 4.9 indicates that, based on vocabulary range, CET 4 corresponds to a level between A2 and B1 in CEFR, CET 6 to level B1, TEM 4 to a level between B1 and B2, and TEM 8 to a level above B2. In terms of English proficiency, CET 4 is therefore the lowest; whereas TEM 8 is the highest.

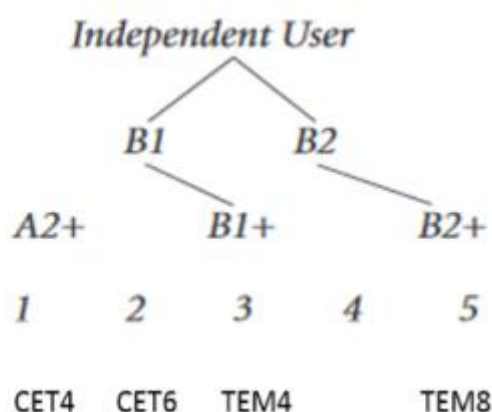


Figure 4.9 Comparing English language certificates in China and CEFR, adapted from Feng and Tang (2012)

Based on the English language proficiency reported, a correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between English proficiency and the number of perceived challenging tasks (H5). Statistical analysis shows there is no significant correlation between the two variables ($r = -.06$, $p > .05$). That is, participants who have high English language proficiency may still find it challenging to use English to fulfill tasks. Thus, H5 was not accepted.

The second reason to explain why few participants had difficulty in fulfilling the tasks may be related to the participants' working experience. As shown in Chapter 3, 63.43% of the participants had more than three years of working experiences compared to those who had just graduated from university. Compared to the 'green hands', the years of experience may have enabled professionals to not only become familiar with the skills required for written and spoken communication in English at work, but also to apply appropriate communicative strategies to cope with the challenges (see Section 4.2.4). As a result, the professionals may not feel as challenged as expected to deal with the tasks. This speculation is further explained by the result for H6 examining the relationship between the difficulties around English use and the professionals' working experience.

To test H6, a correlation analysis was conducted between task frequency and task difficulty in terms of the three most challenging written and spoken tasks identified by the participants. The results generally indicate that participants who do difficult tasks more frequently at work are less likely to feel challenged when doing so. The correlation was not strong, however, in that the correlation coefficient r for all six tasks was between $-.16$ (business plans) and $-.28$ (legal documents) with a significance level of $.05$ ($p < .05$). Thus, H6 was confirmed.

Despite the small number of participants who found it challenging to use English at work, two features of the difficult tasks stand out. One, the tasks perceived as difficult (e.g. writing letters) were those that are typically used for external communication, often requiring higher levels of language proficiency and communication skills. For example, the style of business letter can vary depending on the relationship between the interactants involved. Furthermore, the contents of a business letter can vary widely, such as requesting information, apologizing, or conveying goodwill. Comparatively, the style used for a business plan does not change and there is a fixed structure applied to the content required as essential for writing a business plan. Similarly, spoken tasks such as in formal meetings usually suggest a high degree of formality and importance around the messages transferred. Moreover, formal meetings usually involve attendees communicating with each

other to plan what to do and how to do it. The interactants need to make productive and relevant contributions, respond appropriately to others' points of view, and skilfully use a variety of speech acts such as asking for clarification, disagreeing, and interrupting. All these interactive aspects entail high-level language and communication skills from business professionals. Two, the challenging tasks often require more field-specific knowledge to compose the discourse, such as legal documents and seminars. These tasks often involve professional genres which are "specialized languages spoken by professionals within a discipline" (Du-Babcock & Babcock 2007, p. 345). Without the field-specific knowledge, professionals may find it hard to complete the tasks.

4.1.3.2 Summary

Research question 2 examines the communicative challenges related to English use by Chinese business professionals at work. The results indicate that irrespective of whether it is written or spoken communication, two factors characterize the most challenging tasks to be fulfilled in English: a high degree of formality such as external communication, or a high level of field-specific knowledge such as legal documents. Moreover, although good English language proficiency can result in Chinese business professionals having confidence in their ability to evaluate their English use, the result of Hypothesis 5 informs that they still experience difficulties in fulfilling certain tasks (e.g., letters and meetings) even if they have a high level of English proficiency. On the other hand, professionals who accumulated years of work practice appeared to find it beneficial to their communication efficiency. As Hypothesis 6 suggests, the more experience the professionals had in doing the work, the less likely they are to experience difficulties when doing it, although the correlation was not significant. The reason behind the results is explained and discussed later during the analysis of the qualitative data.

Having discussed the issue of communicative challenges, the next section discusses the communicative competences of Chinese business professionals regard as being

essential to meet the various communicative needs and to overcome the various communicative challenges related to BELF use at work.

4.1.4 RQ3: What are the communicative competences related to BELF use perceived by Chinese business professionals as necessary for achieving successful intercultural business communication?

The essence of RQ3 is to explore the competences considered as essential by Chinese business professionals for successful intercultural business communication. Four sets of hypotheses (7-10) were tested to answer the RQ3. EFA was conducted to statistically identify the factors that contribute to cultural ability (H7) and language ability (H8). Correlation coefficients were carried out to determine if a significant correlation (H9) exists between the factors across the three instruments (CLA, CQ, and IBCC). Regression analysis was also run to explore the extent to which the identified factors can predict an individual's level of IBCC (H10). Reliability analysis shows that the items used to measure the participants' communicative competences are reliable with the Cronbach's alpha = .92, indicating a high degree of reliability, given a value of .7 to .8 is an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value (Field, 2009).

H7: Cultural intelligence (CQ) is likely to be positively related to (a) metacognitive CQ, (b) cognitive CQ, (c) motivational CQ, and (d) behavioral CQ.

H8: Communicative language ability (CLA) is likely to be positively related to (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, and (c) strategic competence.

H9: Intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) is likely to be positively correlated with (a) communicative language ability and (b) cultural intelligence.

H10: An individual's intercultural business communicative competence is likely to be predicted by (a) pragmatic competence, (b) discourse competence, (c) strategic competence, (d) metacognitive CQ, (e) cognitive CQ, (f) motivational CQ, and (g) behavioral CQ.

4.1.4.1 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the CQ construct

Hypothesis 7 examines whether CQ is positively related to four factors: metacognitive CQ (H7a), cognitive CQ (H7b), motivational CQ (H7c), and behavioral CQ (H7d). To test H7, EFA was conducted on the 12-item CQ instrument with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .88$ ('great' according to Field, 2009), and all KMO values for individual items were $> .85$, which is well above the acceptable limit of $.5$ (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(66) = 1340.76, p < .001$, indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA. EFA analysis was then run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Four components had eigenvalues over Jolliffe's (1972) criterion of more than 0.7 and in combination explained 76.27% of the variance. Although the most widely-used criterion may be the eigenvalue greater than one, given the original CQ construct comprised four intelligences and that the aim of doing EFA is to overcome multicollinearity problems in the following regression analysis, four is the number of components retained in the following analysis. Table 4.7 shows the factor loadings after rotation. According to Pituch & Stevens (2016), a loading should be greater than 0.4 to be accepted for a sample size of 200. Thus, factor loadings over $.40$ were shown in the Table. For those items with factor loadings under two different components, the higher loading was applied, because a higher loading means a larger contribution to the component. Therefore, items that cluster on the same components suggest component 1 represents metacognitive intelligence, component 2 cognitive intelligence, component 3 motivational intelligence and component 4 behavioral intelligence. Cronbach's alpha for each component is above $.80$, indicating good validity.

Table 4.7 Factor loadings for EFA with varimax rotation of CQ

Items	Component			
	MetaC	Cog.	Mot.	Beh.
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	.82			

culture that is unfamiliar to me.				
I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.	.76			
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 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 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.				
Key: MetaC: Metacognitive; Cog: Cognitive; Mot: Motivational; Beh: Behavioural				

4.1.4.2 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the construct of CLA

Hypothesis 8 examines whether CLA is positively related to three factors: pragmatic competence (H8a), discourse competence (H8b), and strategic competence (H8c). To test H8, EFA was also conducted on the 9-item instrument with orthogonal rotation (varimax). KMO= .91 ('superb' according to Field, 2009) verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, and all KMO values for individual items were > .85, which is largely above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity Chi-Square (36) = 1316.66, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA. The analysis shows that two components had eigenvalues over 0.7, which in combination explained 74.67% of the variance. Therefore, two was the number of components retained in the following analysis. Table 4.8 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same components suggest

that component 1 represents pragmatic competence and component 2 strategic competence. Cronbach's alpha for each component is above .80, indicating good validity.

Table 4.8 Factor loadings for EFA with varimax rotation of CLA scale

Items	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
<i>Note.</i> Factor loadings over .40 appear in the table.		

The EFA result also showed that pragmatic competence was not independent of discourse competence. As Bialystok (1993) explains, “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). This may explain why pragmatic and discourse competences were not identified as two independent components from the statistical analysis. Thus, based on the EFA results, two components (pragmatic competence and strategic competence) were identified as compulsory factors in terms of CLA and thus were applied in the follow-up correlation and regression analyses.

4.1.4.3 Correlation analysis on the relationship between IBCC and the factors identified

Hypothesis 9 examines if IBCC is positively correlated with CLA (H9a) and cultural intelligence (H9b). To test H9, correlation analysis was used to identify the extent to which each factor is correlated to IBCC. It turns out that four CQ factors (metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ) and two CLA factors (pragmatic competence and strategic competence) generated by factor analysis all have a significantly positive correlation with IBCC, according to the statistics of correlation coefficient r shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Correlations between IBCC and six factors

Correlations				
			IBCC	
Kendall's tau_b	Metacognitive	Correlation Coefficient	.512**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	Cognitive	Correlation Coefficient	.417**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	Motivational	Correlation Coefficient	.568**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	Behavioural	Correlation Coefficient	.558**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	Pragmatic	Correlation Coefficient	.210**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	Strategic	Correlation Coefficient	.326**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed) ($p < .01$).			

According to Rumpf's (2011) criteria, correlation coefficient r representing metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ is between .50 to .60, indicating a moderate positive correlation between each CQ trait and IBCC level. The other three variables (cognitive CQ, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence) have a weak positive linear relationship with IBCC, considering the coefficient r is lower than .50. In this study, the significant positive correlation identified among the six factors and the IBCC level indicates that Chinese business professionals with

higher communicative language and cultural ability are likely to have higher levels of IBCC and that cultural ability is more strongly correlated with IBCC than language ability.

4.1.4.4 Regression analysis on the predictors of IBCC

Hypothesis 10 examines whether an individual's IBCC can be predicted by his or her CLA (H10a - H10c) and cultural intelligence (H10d - H10g). According to the results of the EFA conducted on the CLA construct, discourse competence (H10b) was not found to be an independent factor in the construct, so it was not included in the regression analysis. To test H10, a multiple regression analysis (MRA) was conducted. Using the enter method, it was found that six factors jointly explained a significant amount of the variance (65%) in the IBCC value, $F(6, 200) = 61.2, p < .001, R^2 = .65$ (see Table 4.10, Model 1). However, coefficients of the predictors of IBCC (see Table 4.11, Model 1) showed cognitive intelligence and pragmatic competence did not significantly predict IBCC; whereas, the other four components did at the level of $p < .05$ (see Table 4.11, Models 1 and 2). In this case, MRA was then run on the four components. The results show that their combination (metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, behavioral CQ, and strategic competence) can explain 64.2% of the variance in the IBCC value, $F(4, 202) = 90.38, p < .001$ (see Table 4.10, Model 2). Thus, although the variance explained by Model 1 was higher than Model 2 with a higher F value, Model 2 was accepted as a better model with predictors of IBCC.

Table 4.10 Predictors of IBCC

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

Table 4.11 Coefficients of the predictors of IBCC

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
1	(Constant)	.79	.22		3.53	.00
	Metacognitive	.24	.05	.26	4.71	.00
	Cognitive	.06	.04	.07	1.35	.18
	Motivational	.31	.05	.35	5.92	.00
	Behavioural	.18	.05	.22	3.58	.00
	Pragmatic	-.06	.05	-.09	-1.39	.17
	Strategic	.13	.05	.17	2.52	.01
2	(Constant)	.78	.22		3.54	.00
	Metacognitive	.26	.05	.28	5.28	.00
	Motivational	.32	.05	.36	6.18	.00
	Behavioural	.21	.05	.25	4.36	.00
	Strategic	.08	.04	.10	2.10	.04

The MRA was calculated to predict IBCC based on metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, behavioral CQ and strategic competence. A significant regression equation was found ($F(4, 202) = 90.38, p < .001$), with an R-squared (R^2) of .64. Participants' predicted IBCC is equal to $.78 + .26$ (metacognitive CQ) $+ .32$ (motivational CQ) $+ .21$ (behavioral CQ) $+ .08$ (strategic competence), where all variables are measured as 1-6 points. However, according to Keith (2014), β value is applied when comparing the relative effects of different predictors in the same sample. Keith (2014) suggested that in terms of research on learning and achievement, " β s above .05 are considered small but meaningful, those above .10 are considered moderate, and those above .25 are considered large" (p.62). The β value for each predictor shown in Model 2, Table 4.11 is no less than .10, indicating that the effects of the four predictors are meaningful. What is also worth noting is that motivational CQ was found to have the greatest effect on one's IBCC level ($\beta = .36$).

The regression equation indicates that in general, cultural ability contributes more than language ability to the overall level of IBCC, despite the possible limitations of

the questionnaire design and respondents' relatively lower confidence in reporting their language ability. It also implies that a professional's performance during intercultural business communication is more related to their competence related to BELF use than being equipped with enough linguistic and cultural knowledge. In other words, one business professional who may not be highly linguistically proficient may still be an effective BELF user in intercultural business communication if they have a high level of ability in other aspects. These aspects include intercultural sensitivity, motivation to communicate, and the use of appropriate strategies to either make up for communicative breakdowns or to facilitate mutual understanding during an interaction.

4.1.4.5 Summary

In brief, RQ3 examines the communicative competences of English use by Chinese business professionals at work. The correlation analysis indicated that all six factors identified by EFA were positively correlated with IBCC, four from the CQ construct (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ) and two from the CLA construct (pragmatic competence and strategic competence). Regression analysis confirmed the profound importance of language and cultural abilities for successful intercultural business communication. More importantly, it was found that an individual's cultural ability weighs more than his or her language ability when dealing with communication in intercultural business contexts, which is contrary to the belief that speaking a foreign language is most important for intercultural communication.

4.1.5 Summary of quantitative findings

In Section 4.1, the quantitative findings were presented to answer RQs 1, 2, and 3 and to test hypotheses 1 to 10. Table 4.12 displays a summary of the hypotheses and results. Generally, English was used as an important language code for workplace communication in Mainland China, especially in multinational companies. Furthermore, Chinese business professionals encountered great challenges in fulfilling certain communicative tasks such as drafting a contract and having a formal meeting,

which require wide-ranging professional knowledge in a specific field and/or a high level of formal language use. To be a competent BELF user who can meet the communicative needs and cope with the communicative challenges, multifaceted competence is required in terms of language ability and culture ability. Although quantitative analysis answered the research questions by either accepting or rejecting the hypotheses (1-10), the reasons for these outcomes are not provided. For this reason, the analysis of qualitative data is included to explore the nuances of the research findings derived from quantitative data. The next section reports the qualitative data analysis results to further answer the research questions and to explain the issues that cannot be resolved in the quantitative findings.

Table 4.12 Summary of hypotheses and results

Hypothesis	Supported ?
H1	The frequency of English use at work is likely to be different between Chinese business professionals
H1a	In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use at work is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies. Yes
H1b	In terms of company size, the frequency of English use at work is higher in companies of larger size. No
H1c	In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use at work is higher for professionals of higher job rank. No
H2	The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different between Chinese business professionals
H2a	In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies. Yes
H2b	In terms of company size, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher in companies of larger size. No
H2c	In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use in written communication is higher for professionals of higher job rank. No
H3	The frequency of English use in spoken communication is likely to be different between Chinese business professionals.

H3a	In terms of company ownership, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher in multinational companies than in non-multinational companies.	Yes
H3b	In terms of company size, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher in companies of larger size.	No
H3c	In terms of job rank, the frequency of English use in spoken communication is higher for professionals of higher job rank.	No
H4	The frequency of English use in written communication is likely to be different from that in spoken communication at work.	
H4a	The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in state-owned companies.	No
H4b	The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in privately-owned companies.	No
H4c	The frequency of English use in written communication is higher than in spoken communication in multinational companies.	Yes
H5	Chinese business professionals who have higher English proficiency are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.	No
H6	Chinese business professionals who have more related working experience are likely to find it less challenging to use English at work.	Yes
H7	Cultural intelligence is likely to be positively related to	
H7a	Metacognitive CQ	Yes
H7b	Cognitive CQ	Yes
H7c	Motivational CQ	Yes
H7d	Behavioral CQ	Yes
H8	CLA is likely to be positively related to	
H8a	Pragmatic competence	Yes
H8b	Discourse competence	No
H8c	Strategic competence	Yes
H9	Intercultural business communicative competence is likely to be positively correlated with	
H9a	CLA	Yes
H9b	Cultural intelligence	Yes
H10	An individual's intercultural business communicative competence is likely to be predicted by	

H10a	Pragmatic competence	No
H10b	Discourse competence	No
H10c	Strategic competence	Yes
H10d	Metacognitive CQ	Yes
H10e	Cognitive CQ	No
H10f	Motivational CQ	Yes
H10g	Behavioral CQ	Yes

4.2 Qualitative findings

To ensure the interview participants properly represented BELF users at work, a range of factors were taken into consideration during the recruitment process (see Chapter 3 for more details). The criteria include adequate frequency of English language use at work (judged by their questionnaire responses), working experiences, gender, and the type of company ownership (state-owned, privately-owned, or multinational). The interviewees were firstly given pseudonyms. They were then further coded according to their workplace company ownership type, given the MANOVA analyses reported in Section 4.1 indicated a significant difference among participants from companies of different ownership types. “S” was used to represent state-owned companies, “P” for privately privately-owned companies, and “M” for multinational companies. Thus, each interviewee was assigned a code to demonstrate their attributes and their workplace context to facilitate more systematic analyses and interpretations. For example, “M_Carol” refers to an interviewee from a multinational company called Carol in the study.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, NVivo 11 Pro was used to analyze and code the interview data. There are several advantages to using NVivo to analyze and code qualitative data. To name just a few, it can assist the researcher to manage the data in a systematic way using different levels of sub-codes as shown in Appendix 9. Moreover,

a distinct color can be attached to each coding level which facilitates a visual contrast of the collated data and enhances coding efficiency.

This section reports the findings from the analysis of the interview data collected from 11 Chinese business professionals regarding their perceptions and beliefs about the communicative needs, challenges, and competences associated with successful intercultural business communication in the workplace. The findings are presented from the perspectives of language and culture to provide a crystal-clear picture of the role each perspective plays in intercultural communication at work. Notwithstanding, it should be noted that although the current study artificially separates the language-relevant data from the culture-relevant data in the analysis and reporting, this does not mean that language can be considered as independent of its cultural meanings and that its role as a culture carrier can be denied. This is given that the business community regards language and culture as discrete and separate competences, referring to the EIU studies (2010, 2012) that separate the research into the perceptions of respondents into the perspectives of language and culture.

4.2.1 Qualitative data analysis of RQ1: Communicative needs

This section reports the qualitative findings that further examine the nature of BELF use at work in three types of companies in Mainland China. The examination covers three aspects: (1) the interplay between English and Chinese in the workplace communication, (2) the most commonly used communicative activities in English, and (3) the role of culture in intercultural communication at work.

4.2.1.1 The interplay between English and Chinese in workplace communications

One key tendency revealed in the quantitative data analysis (see Section 4.1.2.1 Figure 4.3) was that Chinese business professionals working in multinational companies need to use English significantly more often than those in non-multinational companies (state-owned and privately-owned companies). This

tendency was further investigated by the relevant questions asked during interviews (see Questions 3, 8 and 9 in Appendix 7). An examination of the interview data confirmed that Chinese was always used as the default language in day-to-day communication in non-multinational companies, and that English was only used when there were non-Chinese speakers involved. Documents circulating in the company were mostly written in Chinese, with a few written in bilingual languages (English and Chinese). Two interview respondents, one working in a privately-owned logistics company (P_Yvonne) and the other working in a state-owned company (S_Zack) in Shanghai remarked:

English is only used when I need to communicate with our overseas business partners; for example, from the US, Mexico, India, and Hong Kong. Most of the time, we emailed to each other and sometimes used phone calls if something urgent needs to be dealt with. (P_Yvonne)

I generally don't need to use English for internal communication, but since our company has a global business network, I need to communicate with my overseas counterparts, either clients or vendors such as those in Korea, Spain, and France. (S_Zack)

Conversely, a different finding emerged in relation to multinational companies. In these companies, expatriates are often integral to company operations (Guo & Gallo, 2017), while non-multinational companies employ a greater number of Chinese-speaking staff who may be less involved in intercultural business communication than their multinational counterparts (Evans, 2013). Thus, professionals employed by non-multinational companies reported that they used Chinese significantly more often than English and that English is used more frequently for external communication than for internal communication. Another reason for the comparatively low frequency English use for internal communications in non-multinational companies is that many staff members may not be competent in using English. As P_Sara mentioned, "In our company, half of the staff are not good at English, especially those of older generations."

It has been previously stated in this thesis that English has conventionally played a limited role in Chinese society. Mandarin Chinese is the official national language and thus serves as a lingua franca in Mainland China. It was not until the globalization of the Chinese economy and the rapid development of foreign trade from the 1900s onwards that English use became more widespread to successfully communicate with people speaking different mother tongues (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). This situation is in fact similar to other Expanding Circle territories such as those in northern Europe where BELF use is a relatively recent phenomenon (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005). In addition, English learned as a foreign language has undergone a 'roller coaster ride' in the Chinese education system. In the early 1950s, Russian was promoted ardently, with many English teachers required to teach Russian until the early 1960s (Adamson, 2002). Between 1966 and 1976, when the Cultural Revolution reached its height, learning English was outlawed in many parts of the country. During the 1980s, English language instruction in China underwent a revival. It was not until September 2001 however that English was officially introduced as a compulsory subject in Grade 3 in all elementary schools (Nunan, 2003). Hence, older generations may have had little or no opportunity to learn English systematically at school. Due to these political and educational factors, the level of English language proficiency among Chinese people as a whole is not high. According to Wei and Su (2012), statistics from a national survey on English proficiency in China showed that 29% of respondents, from a total of 165,000 households from 1,063 cities and regions, possessed reasonable English reading proficiency, with the results relating to spoken English proficiency even lower.

Thus, it is no surprise that older employees in Chinese companies are not proficient English users and that younger employees are often assigned tasks involving English use at work. As P_Sara added: "In our company, translation work was always completed by some young girls who are English-major graduates." This point may also explain why in junior staff in non-multinational companies are required to use English more often than senior staff (see Figure 4.5). Moreover, because English is used only when non-Chinese speakers are involved, the quantitative data analysis found that the extent to which English was used in written and spoken

communication was similar across non-multinational companies (see Figure 4.8 in Section 4.1.2.4).

Conversely, interviewees working in multinational companies reported a different story. In some multinational companies, professionals were required to use English all the time at work. Participants M_Carol and M_Flora reported that English was their dominant language for workplace communication, no matter who they were communicating with – be it Chinese or non-Chinese speakers. Considering the scope (multinational) of their companies' business and the standard practices of their own professions (information technician and accountancy), it is understandable that English plays a more prominent role in their work. Other interviewees also working in multinational companies stated that professionals tended to use English as the medium of communication in all information exchanges (usually by email), especially when in contact with other departments. As two participants remarked:

In addition to English use to communicate with foreign colleagues in the head office overseas and foreign superiors working in the Shanghai branch, I also need to use English to communicate with Chinese colleagues who are not in our department; for example, to seek cross-department cooperation.
(M_Dahlia)

We chose to use English for work-related communication when colleagues from a different department are involved, while we usually use Chinese to communicate with colleagues from the same department. Although it is not a company policy, we are inclined to write in English for cross-departmental communication. (M_Linda)

M_Xavier provided a clue as to the practical reason for communicating in English at work; namely, that most of the time emails need to be routed to non-Chinese speakers:

It would be better if we could use English because some documents, reports and emails are supposed to be checked by or forwarded to foreign managers or clients. (M_Xavier)

The interviewees' comments here indicate that in multinational companies, English is used not only with foreign expatriates, but also with Chinese colleagues. While the reason for using English when communicating with non-Chinese-literate addressees may appear obvious, the reason for its use in intracultural communication between Chinese colleagues is less apparent. As reported by the interviewees, English was used even when the context was Chinese-to-Chinese interaction and there was in fact no corporate policy stipulating this practice. The professionals generally preferred to write in English, even if it risked causing confusion or misunderstandings due to the communicator's limited language proficiency. The reason for such practices emerged from the interview responses. The Chinese business professionals were inclined to use English rather than Chinese in intracultural communications to develop their professionalism, as well as to register the importance and formality of the communication within the context of English as the global language of business. This way of conducting business seems to be unanimously accepted as a convention or part of the culture of multinational companies, although it is often not written into the company's policy. As one interviewee commented:

It is because using English to write emails seems more professional and formal than using Chinese, especially when the receiver's boss who is not Chinese is forwarded to. Besides, writing in English implies the importance of the emails. It would be the best if you can use the other party's mother tongue (Chinese) for communication because anyone would feel comfortable when interacting in their native language. However, for workplace communication, you must use English to show professionalism and formality, so even if you hate to use it, you still need to. For personal communication, you don't have to use English if you don't like it. (M_Dahlia)

Interestingly, the interplay of spoken Chinese and written English use in multinational companies was also observed during the interviews. Some

interviewees mentioned that they would use Chinese as their first choice when engaging in informal communications such as reminding a colleague or when further discussing the content of English language emails. As one interviewee reported, this usually includes a telephone discussion in Chinese coming after the transmission of English texts:

We use Chinese for dealing with informal or trivial things like reminding a colleague to help follow up a case. We wouldn't specially write an English email to that colleague just for a reminder. He may regard me as crazy.... Instead of directly calling, when something really complicated happened, I would first write him an email in English, which allows the other party enough time to digest the message. Later, I would call him for further discussion in Chinese. I found it's the most efficient way of communicating in such situations. (M_Linda)

Other situations where Mandarin Chinese played a more important role in communication included when professionals found that their Chinese colleagues were not proficient enough to speak in English. M_Xavier commented, "English would only be used for email communication or at the meetings where non-Chinese speakers were involved. As many sales managers in other areas are not competent in communicating in English, we are therefore inclined to use Chinese." This finding helps to answer the question as to why English is used more frequently in written tasks than in spoken tasks in multinational companies, as found from quantitative data analysis (see Figure 4.8).

More surprisingly, one interviewee (M_Shawn) reported details of an extreme situation where professionals had little or no need to use English when working in multinational companies, stating that "even if you write in English to them (staff who have low English language proficiency), they don't understand it." The solution to this issue usually involved the company distributing bilingual documents and communicating in Chinese for both written and spoken communication. It is therefore no coincidence that all multinational-based interviewees mentioned that English

language skills would serve as a barrier to Chinese employees' career development. M_Zoe observed, "In several foreign companies where I have worked, I found that those salespeople who were proficient English users were much more popular with overseas superiors than those who weren't." The participant continued, "The present situation is that if you are looking for a job, you can know nothing but you must be good at using English. Take purchasing as an example, if a purchaser can speak English fluently, he/she can approach more international clients. Then his/her salary may be ten to twenty thousand (RMB, Chinese yuan) per month higher than the one who cannot speak English well." Although this comment is related to specific fields (sales and purchasing), it indicates that English language skills play a remarkably important role when working in a multinational company. Indeed, the importance is to the extent that it would impact on an individual's career success in addition to facilitating more effective workplace communication.

The findings reported so far indicate the increasing use of English in internal communication in China-based multinational companies, although this is not as a deliberate company policy but rather as an ad hoc practice (e.g., business culture/convention). They also reveal that a rise in the use of English at work accompanies a rise in the role of English played in professional development. Furthermore, while Chinese continues to play a dominant role in the communication systems of non-multinational companies, English and Chinese, both as the principal working languages, play important complementary roles in multinational companies, with the two codes enjoying virtually equal status as communication media. The extent to which Chinese business professionals need to use BELF at work takes many factors into consideration. The primary factor would be the identity of the person involved in the communicative activity. If a person speaks a different mother tongue when participating in communication, then English would be used without question. This conforms to the customary business practice that English is always used as a lingua franca among people from different cultural backgrounds. If the communication involves only Chinese speaker, other contextual factors are taken into consideration in terms of language choice. One key factor is the level of significance and formality assigned to the communication. If the communication implies a high degree of importance and formality, English is often used as the communicative

language code. For example, professionals would first send an email in English to communicate about an issue and later conduct further discussions in Chinese via telephone. This practice suggests the important and functional status of English in business culture across Mainland China.

4.2.1.2 Most commonly used communicative activities in English

To identify the most commonly used communicative activities in English, relevant questions (see Questions 4-7 in Appendix 7) were asked to all interviewees. In terms of written communication, interviewees from multinational companies remarked that most reading materials including notices, newsletters and documents were written in English or in bilingual form, and that they used the English-version computer operating systems and office software at work. The interviewees indicated that emails, text messages, letters, reports, minutes of meetings, and contracts were often written in English for both internal and external communication, among which emails was the most frequently performed task at work. The results generally align with the quantitative findings (see Figure 4.1 in Section 4.1.1.1). Examples of typical responses by interviewees regarding their experiences of English use in written communication are presented below:

...once I received 80 emails overnight. Reports are required by the head office in the US quite frequently. Basically, you need to write different reports in English every day, every week and every month. (M_Zoe)

[...] formal information, notification, and meeting minutes, etc. are all circulated via email in our company. (M_Shawn)

Considering the high frequency with which the participants were required to write emails in English at work, the interviewees working in multinational companies unanimously perceived this as the most important communicative activity in the workplace. As M_Carol remarked:

Writing emails in English is the most important task, especially when writing to colleagues and vendors all over the world to explain something; to explain what technical problems happened, where they happened, why they happened and how they can be resolved. (M_Carol)

Alternatively, two interviewees from non-multinational companies (S_Zack and P_Sara) reported that they do not need to use English for written communication as often as for spoken communication. They had either face-to-face communications or videoconferences with foreign counterparts, with further details reported in the next section. The other interviewee (P_Yvonne) said that she was required to write English emails every day to communicate with overseas clients, and so English emails was the most important task for her to perform well at work.

In addition to emails, the interview data shows that instant messaging was also popularly used in all three types of companies. In fact, according to a report published on 25 April 2017 by the *South China Morning Post*, WeChat has become the top workplace communication app for 90 percent of Chinese professionals, due to its increasing number of features that enable various work-related tasks. As one interviewee working in a privately-owned company commented:

Time-effectiveness of communication is really important, so we use WeChat to communicate with the colleagues at home and abroad, including those in the US, Korea and Israel. ... Our company even customized WeChat so there are some functions different from the original version of the tool. We can check colleagues' contact list, so much information is distributed via WeChat nowadays in our company. (P_Sara)

However, rather than use existing apps like WeChat, multinational companies preferred to use self-developed systems for similar purposes:

We use our self-developed internal chatting tool which enables colleagues at home and abroad to communicate online at the same time. You can find their contact information easily by searching their names on the tool, just like the way you use WeChat or QQ in China. You can send instant messages, voice messages, and call people, whatever you want. (M_Zoe)

Generally, the main reason for turning to instant messaging is to deal with emergencies or to enhance work efficiency. However, another minor reason could be that the language used on the chat tool can be less formal than in email communications, as suggested by one interviewee who often needs to communicate with her US colleagues:

If it is 9 or 10:00 pm when US colleagues just start working and both of us are online, it must be more convenient to communicate via a chat tool because instant replies can be ensured, especially when something emergent happens. ... on chatting tool, language is more informal, more casual, and requires less attention to grammatical accuracy. (M_Zoe)

In terms of spoken communication, meetings (including video conferences and negotiations), telephone conversations, social talk, and interviews were the work-related tasks reported by interviewees. Several participants (M_Xavier, M_Shawn, and M_Carol) from the multinational companies also stated that they were required to provide presentations in English and to attend workshops conducted in English. Some of the typical responses related to interviewees' experiences of spoken English communication are presented below:

[...] with American colleagues for example, I was in Shanghai and they might not be in the office at the time, so we all used WeChat to have a video conference. It's the same with Korean and Israeli colleagues. (P_Sara)

[...] do presentations on the analysis of vendors, reporting to the GM (general manager), who is an American. (M_Xavier)

Sometimes I called them (Indians or Malaysians) to report my computer problem, so they could help tackle the issue immediately, much faster than just reporting to the system. (M_Linda)

Corresponding to the findings on written communication, this study found that social media tools were also becoming increasingly popular for spoken communications. As one interviewee from a privately-owned company commented:

Many colleagues don't call by telephone any more. If they know someone is in the office at the time, they directly call that person via WeChat. (P_Sara)

Moreover, it was observed that although the questionnaire results showed social interaction was not regarded as a frequently used mode at work (a mean of 2.89, see Table 4.1 in Section 4.1), most interviewees, especially those working in multinational companies, suggested that social talk played a crucial role in their workplace communication. S_Zack suggested that “through chatting (non-work-related), we can better understand each other or enhance trust in each other. Our relationship can change from colleagues to friends, from business partners to friends, which can make work much easier”. His opinion concurred with other interviewees' insights that having knowledge of a counterpart's culture, and talking about topics that they are interested in, can facilitate off-work communication and maintain a mutual rapport, especially when chatting with superiors. Two examples are presented below:

In our day-to-day work, in fact, whether you can write an English email well does not affect your work to the degree that the task cannot be finished. However, if your (spoken) communication is good, you can socialize well with your boss during and after work and you can have a better performance in the meeting, which probably would make a difference to your future development in the company. (M_Flora)

Since we have foreign colleagues in the office, they would ask you what restaurants are famous in Shanghai and what places they can go to for

entertainment, not just work-related communication. ...Social chatting can help me to know more about the person and the country that the person is from. ...It's quite useful. (M_Dahlia)

Social talk takes on a distinguished role in workplace communication because good socialization with foreign colleagues and superiors can facilitate rapport building and maintenance. It is a particularly important sociolinguistic skill used by professionals to succeed in multicultural workplaces (Holmes, 2005). However, despite its importance, social talk was often not conducted at work. One reason for this could be related to cultural issues which is further explored in the next section in the discussion of the role of culture in intercultural communication at work.

4.2.1.3 The role of culture in intercultural communication at work

To investigate the role culture plays in intercultural business communication, two relevant questions (see Questions 10 -12 in Appendix 7) were asked to all interviewees. Six interviewees commented that cultural differences do not have an obvious impact on their daily workplace communication. Two examples were selected and are presented below:

Since our communication is only related to work, discussing technical issues, culture has little impact on my work. (S_Zack)

There is no influence brought by cultural aspects to our communication, I think, because our discussion was only related to work, financial aspects such as the fluctuation of revenue, cost, or accounting entry, nothing else.

(M_Flora)

The comments from S_Zack and M_Flora suggest that cultural differences have little influence on workplace communication in terms of professional genres: S_Zack works as an electrical engineer in a state-owned company, and M_Flora works as an accountant in a multinational company. Professional genres are defined by Du-Babcock and Babcock (2007) as specialized languages used by professionals (e.g., lawyers, engineers, and accountants) within their professional communities. Professional genres are “often products of a set of established procedures that form an

important part of the disciplinary culture within a profession” (Bhatia, 2014, p. 149). Professionals from each discourse community, within or across organizations, industries, and countries, have common or similar education and experience. As such, they acquire a shared professional knowledge base, although possibly to varying degrees (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007). In this case, cultural differences may not extensively affect the language used in those specified disciplines.

In addition to the genre, the question types used by Chinese business professionals during communication appears to leave little room for problems caused due to cultural differences. The professionals’ interactions with foreign superiors usually includes many close-ended questions, the answers to which are checked many times by the employees until they are sure about what to do. As remarked by M_Hanna:

[...] because the situation in which you need to communicate with them (foreign superiors) at work is most often to ask them to authorize permission, just simple Yes or No questions are asked. Before I take any action, I would make sure that I understand his idea or intention clearly and correctly. It’s impossible for you to do anything when you don’t think you know what he wants. So, I don’t think cultural differences would lead to communication difficulty. (M_Hanna)

Although the interviewees mentioned above that they believed cultural issues play a limited role in work-related intercultural communication, they also agreed that cultural aspects can influence intercultural communication in general, because people from different cultures have different ways of thinking in business. M_Xavier narrated the story of his travel experience in Europe with 12 foreigners to illustrate this view:

Cultural differences have an impact on intercultural communication in general as we have different thinking patterns. For example, once I travelled in Europe with 12 foreigners who were from all over the world such as Europe, Asia and Africa. At the end of our journey, except for the Europeans, the rest of us

didn't catch the flight back home, since, you know, Europeans and non-Europeans went through different passport checking processes and the process for non-Europeans usually took much more time. So, we (non-Europeans) were required to buy new flight tickets to go back. Surprisingly, when we got back, the Europeans wanted to share the cost of new tickets with us because they thought that's something they should do as a team, while the Asians, including me, never had such an idea and we considered that they (Europeans) didn't need to do so. (M_Xavier)

Five other interviewees also commented that cultural diversity played an important role in their workplace communication. M_Dahlia remarked that her Swiss colleagues were very detail-oriented when doing business, so she was required to explain each request clearly before getting their support to complete the task. Similarly, M_Shawn provided an example that happened to his colleagues, suggesting that due to differences in the way his Chinese and German co-workers do business, they sometimes encountered a divergence of views:

I find foreign co-workers are usually more detail-oriented and they cannot tolerate ambiguity. When you need to push them to do something for you, you must give specific rather than general reasons to explain why it is urgent and explicate what expected results you want. They need to know the reasons behind your pushing, so they would be eager to meet your needs. (M_Dahlia)

Something that maybe didn't happen to me but to many of my Chinese co-workers. They just feel that many German colleagues are too detail-oriented and careful, to which Chinese colleagues are not accustomed. Therefore, they (Chinese and Germans) sometimes have unhappy communications when discussing either technology-related or technical details with each other or with vendors. (M_Shawn)

M_Dahlia and M_Shawn both reported a situation where Chinese staff felt it was hard to adapt to their foreign colleagues' working styles. P_Sara, who was working in a privately-owned Chinese company, was concerned that his or her foreign counterparts may feel strange about the unique culture in this company, saying that:

There is a brainwashing culture in our company, which is never found in the

multinational companies where I worked before. For example, in our company, one story about a receptionist who practiced receiving guests after work was officially announced to all the staff working at both home and abroad to praise her deed. I think this was too much. She is worth the compliments, but I think overseas colleagues may find it hard to understand why it is necessary to make such an official announcement to tell this story, not to say that some English translation was quite sloppy. (P_Sara)

From their experiences, cultural issues are regarded as being important for business communication at work, which contrasts with the previous six interviewees' views. Generally, cultural difference has an impact on Chinese business professionals' intercultural communication, although the extent of the impact varies in different situations. To further explore the impact of culture issues, the different types of activities and tasks at work that can be affected by cultural differences are discussed.

A large volume of interview data shows that the influence of the different cultural backgrounds of professionals was manifested in both written and spoken communication at work. In terms of written communication, several interviewees mentioned that they observed much difference between the writing style of Chinese and their foreign counterparts, notably in showing politeness. M_Hanna indicated that her co-workers from The Netherlands are prone to expressing undesirable situations in a polite and indirect manner using mitigated language. This can help to reduce unpleasant feelings or to reduce pressure on readers. On the other hand, her Chinese colleagues tended to go in the opposite direction:

I feel that my foreign co-workers write emails in a more implicit and polite way than the Chinese do. When writing something, Chinese colleagues just translate the Chinese meaning into English words. For example, if Chinese professionals want to express that they are not pleased with something, then they would just put down, "I'm not happy about it"; whereas, foreigners would say, "I find this is not quite appropriate", in a milder way to express it. (M_Hanna)

However, M_Xavier held a different view; namely, that emails written by his Chinese colleagues are usually more courteous and respectful because they are inclined to use

set expressions or phrases at the beginning of the email message to show politeness and friendliness before informing the receiver of the purpose of the message. “I feel Chinese like to use many polite formulas at the beginning of an email rather than state the purpose of writing this email. For example, at the beginning of a message, Chinese colleagues intend to write [frontload] many sentences to show their appreciation for your kind assistance to warm up a little. They then would continue to describe the real purpose of sending the message. In contrast, foreigners (his American counterparts) are more direct and communicate the business issue right from the start with no redundant polite formula”, said M_Xavier.

From the comments of M_Hanna and M_Xavier, it was observed that Chinese business professionals and their western counterparts use different linguistic strategies to show politeness. Western professionals choose to apply mitigated language to cushion negative messages to be more considerate and to avoid provoking undesirable feelings in the reader. In contrast, Chinese professionals are not good at using deferential or indirect language to convey negative information, which may read as impolite to the reader. Such contrasting behaviors between western and Chinese business professionals appear to be opposite to key points in Hofstede’s (2001) and Hall’s (1959) culture theories. The theories claim that the Chinese belong to a high context culture and are used to indirect communication; whereas, westerners belong to low context cultures and are accustomed to more direct communication. In fact, western business professionals’ use of mitigated language is not an attempt to be indirect, but to be polite and to maintain a sound relationship with their business partners. This intention is indeed of an identical nature with Chinese business professionals’ uses of a politeness formula when starting an email message to show friendliness and appreciation towards their business partners. Despite the same intention however, western and Chinese business professionals use different practices to realize the same outcome. Different communication practices suggest Chinese and westerners have dissimilar perceptions of how to maintain a strong rapport with their business partners. Furthermore, this implies a gap in the communication skills of Chinese professionals regarding how to politely and courteously express negative messages in English.

In addition to politeness, M_Xavier's response also shows that his western co-workers typically apply a direct strategy in written communication by specifying the aim of the communication at the outset. This finding is congruent with another interviewee's observation (M_Dahlia), which inferred that different writing styles between western and Chinese business professionals might result from different ways of thinking. Chinese professionals tend to expand at great length on personal ideas and feelings more often than their western professionals:

I found Chinese and westerners (her Swiss co-workers) have different thinking patterns when writing emails. Chinese prefer a rich opening, first using rhetoric and idioms to express personal feelings, while westerners prefer to directly state the aim of the task, then the process of the task, and the expected results of it.... Honestly, I enjoy reading their (her Swiss co-workers) emails and appreciate their style of going straight to the point. I think they may consider it is more efficient to do business in this way. It's not necessary to express your own opinions or feelings on issues, although Chinese may think it's important to do so. Others wouldn't care so much about your feelings, as long as you can get the work done. (M_Dahlia)

Although there are slight differences among the observations of M_Hanna, M_Xavier and M_Dahlia, their views are generally the same. That is, cultural differences between professionals from various cultural backgrounds (especially between Chinese and western cultures) have an impact on their writing styles for business communication. The impact on writing can manifest in many ways such as how the professionals perceive politeness and how they open a written message. Surprisingly, however, M_Shawn offered a contrasting view by contending that the influence of business culture meant professionals from different cultural backgrounds have a similar writing pattern in business communication:

The style of writing in English at work is influenced not only by the writers' own national cultures but also by the business culture, I think. So, the emails generally look alike even if they are written by people from different countries. In terms of grammatical accuracy, there may be some diversity considering

different language proficiency. But in terms of writing style, like how to organize a paragraph, they (his Chinese and foreign colleagues) just follow a similar pattern. I guess this is because professionals have been practicing writing business messages for many years, so they must have been accustomed to the business writing style as influenced by the business culture. When writing an email for example, usually you just greet first, then state the key points, explain the scenarios if necessary, and at last ask one question to the other. Put simply, the format used by them (Chinese and western professionals) is just similar. (M_Shawn)

It can be deduced from M_Shawn's comments that the business professionals' writing style may be influenced by culture in two dimensions. Business culture influences a business message in the macro dimension when deciding on the general pattern, content, or the format of the message and when constructing a pragmatic, business-oriented identity for Chinese professionals (Feng & Du-Babcock, 2016). In addition, the business professionals' national culture influences a business message in a micro dimension resulting in different writing strategies, ways of expressions, or attitudes about including personal feelings in the message.

As for spoken communication, 10 of 11 interviewees reported that cultural differences could be recognized in face-to-face communications between Chinese business professionals and their overseas counterparts. The spoken activity that is most influenced by cultural difference is social talk in the workplace, as M_Shawn observed:

We Chinese are inclined to directly talk about work with German colleagues, while they (German workmates) tend to have a little small-talk at first. How can I put this? Chinese may have small-talk with each other, but I feel that they just don't do this with German colleagues. (M_Shawn)

As mentioned in Section, 4.2.1.2, Chinese business professionals acknowledged the importance of having social talk in the workplace, even though in reality they did not

frequently socialize with their foreign counterparts. As reported by M_Hanna, “Many colleagues always try to avoid face-to-face encounters with foreign superiors because they often feel embarrassed by not knowing what to say and how to say it”.

As for “not knowing how to say it”, this implies that Chinese professionals may not have good mastery of the language skills required to fulfill this kind of activity at work. According to Du-Babcock and Babcock (2007), the vocabulary of a relational genre in which social talk is included originates from general language, so it is different from the vocabulary used in other genres such as the professional or commercial genres. Therefore, despite having good knowledge of profession-specific vocabulary, Chinese professionals may still have little idea of how to socialize appropriately in English.

As for “not knowing what to say”, this suggests that the low frequency of social talk at work is related to cultural differences. Chinese professionals often have no idea regarding what to talk about to establish and maintain sound relationships with foreign colleagues. As M_Shawn reported:

It is easy for us (Chinese) to have a topic to chat about for socialization because, nowadays, we can know what happened in others' lives from WeChat (in which there is a platform called “moments” designed for users to share what is happening in life among friends). Our German colleagues, however, cannot do this (either because they don't use WeChat, or they don't understand Chinese language). Hence, they (Chinese and Germans) have nothing but work to talk about. Also, what they follow with interest is different. For example, Chinese may be concerned about the skyrocketing cost of buying an apartment, while Germans are considering where to go for summer vacation. Totally different. (M_Shawn)

According to M_Shawn, the reason that Chinese business professionals are reluctant to engage in social talk is that they do not have much in common between with their foreign co-workers except their work. They use different social networking tools to keep social connections, and, as a result, are basically ignorant of each other's life beyond work. This provides Chinese professionals with little at hand to start a social

conversation with expatriates working in their company. Moreover, M_Shawn later added a comment that in Chinese culture, it is often regarded as impolite and disrespectful for subordinates to ask superiors questions regarding their personal life. This may be another concern that prevents Chinese business professionals from socializing with their foreign superiors.

More than this, it was found that Chinese professionals not only find it challenging to start social talk with their western counterparts, but they also have difficulty maintaining social talk at work. M_Dahlia shared a scenario where she felt embarrassed when chatting with her foreign co-workers because she could not quite understand the funny point or the punch line of a joke made by her western counterparts:

Just like we (Chinese) have no problem understanding each other's jokes, those westerners can understand each other well too. But we can hardly get the *haha* point when a westerner tries to amuse us by making a joke, it usually makes all of us (Chinese and westerners) feel embarrassed. I think it is the cultural difference that leads to the gap. (M_Dahlia)

The findings show that Chinese business professionals in general were, more or less, uncomfortable when socializing with expatriates, either when in a position to initiate social talk or to keep the conversation going. As reported above, apart from limited language competency, another main reason for this is that they are not familiar with their interlocutors' culture, so they are often confused about how to start and maintain intercultural social talk. As a result, they particularly tried to avoid conversing in the workplace with foreign co-workers and foreign superiors.

4.2.1.4 Summary

This section reported the qualitative data findings to answer RQ1. They were generally aligned with the quantitative data findings examining the communicative needs related to BELF use at work. More importantly, the interview data is more informative of the interplay between English and Chinese in workplace communication, especially between written English and spoken Chinese. The findings

suggest that the extent to which Chinese business professionals are required to use BELF at work takes many factors into consideration. The primary factor would be the identity of the person involved in the communicative activity. BELF would be used without question if a person participating in the communication speaks a different mother tongue. If only Chinese workers are involved in the communication, the language choice then depends on other contextual factors such as the significance and formality of the interaction, the interlocutors' English language proficiency, the business culture, and the form of communication (written or spoken). Moreover, the qualitative data analysis also informs how cultural issues regarding national, organizational, or business culture can influence business communication, highlighting the multicultural character of today's Chinese business communications. The findings suggest that Chinese business professionals have long faced various challenges and concerns pertaining to intercultural communication at work, due to both cultural and linguistic barriers, and in relation to the significant differences between the Chinese and Western cultures (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 2001). The next section reports in more detail the findings related to the cultural and linguistic challenges encountered by Chinese business professionals at work.

4.2.2 Qualitative data analysis of RQ2: Communicative challenges

To supplement the quantitative data findings of RQ2, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on the challenges they face and the concerns they have in relation to intercultural communication. Following the same format as in the previous section, the findings are presented in two dimensions: language-related challenges and culture-related challenges.

4.2.2.1 Language-related challenges

The interview question regarding the tasks Chinese business professionals find challenging to perform in English at work (Question 13, see Appendix 7) was asked of all interviewees. A range of written and spoken communication tasks were identified and discussed, including legal documents, external messages, oral reports, and social talks. They generally align with the quantitative data results in this regard (see Section 4.1.3).

Regarding the challenges in relation to written communication, the interview data reveals that Chinese business professionals from multinational companies are confronted with more language-related issues than business professionals working in non-multinational companies. Those working in multinational companies were most concerned about the audience and language skills, especially the ability to use language appropriately to communicate effectively in a business context. Some interviewees commented that business English is different from general English. The competence of the field-specific vocabulary is of vital importance when producing business documents, especially those used for formal communication such as legal documents and reports. Moreover, a lack of enough knowledge of specific vocabulary also affected the professionals' understanding of the documents written to them. Several typical examples were cited as below:

The biggest challenge is the misunderstanding of each other during the communication. For example, in the HR department, "performance" means how successfully a staff member can fulfill a task or an operation, while "performance" learned in my high school textbook meant an act of presenting a play or a concert. I didn't know there should be other different meanings of the word. They are completely different. ...Many unsuccessful communications are resulted from misunderstanding. (M_Dahlia)

...If the words are within my expertise, then I don't feel any trouble. If not, I don't know how to express them appropriately. For example, my boss asked me to write an email for him in English. He verbally told me what the email was about in Chinese, which was not related to my expertise. Then, it is hard to translate those technical words. So, I can only translate the meaning of them, but those who have the expertise may feel my writing is not formal or professional. (M_Linda)

I often find difficulty in making contracts. ...even if I can refer to some samples drafted by other multinational companies, there are still some clauses in the contract that I don't know how to translate. (M_Hanna)

M_Dahlia and M_Hanna are CET 6 holders and M_Linda is a TEM 8 holder. Although they had different levels of English language proficiency, they all reported that they felt challenged to fulfill tasks related to a specific field of knowledge. Another comment made by M_Linda further manifested this point:

[...] my colleague, her language proficiency is pretty good, and she was working as an English trainer in an institution before. But she doesn't feel at ease using English in the workplace because she's not familiar with the words often appearing in the business context. For example, TL (the acronym of team leader), forward, and bcc, she doesn't know.... Thus, sometimes she cannot follow what we are talking about. (M_Linda)

This observation helps to explain why there is not a negative linear correlation identified in the quantitative data analysis between English language proficiency and the possibility of experiencing difficulties in business communication (see Section 4.1.3). Moreover, the interviewees' examples also indicated two reasons for why business English was regarded as difficult for Chinese professionals to use successfully in intercultural business contexts. One reason is that the English used in business contexts is generally different to the English used in other contexts such as academic writing. Terms, phrases, and acronyms such as "ETA" (Estimated Time of Arrival), "IPO" (Initial Public Offering), and "logistics" that frequently appear in workplace communication may seldom appear in the language-learning classroom. The other reason is that the English used in specific business disciplines can differ. For example, one professional who is familiar with the language used in the accounting discipline may feel unaccustomed to the language used in another professional genre like marketing. Thus, a worker who has high proficiency general English may still find it difficult to be an effective BELF user.

In addition, M_Dahlia's comments also imply a gap between what she learned at school and how she practiced that knowledge at work. M_Zoe's response concurred with this point:

When writing a report, you often need to use Microsoft Office software. Since our computer system and all software are English versions, it's hard for me to find the equations or functions I want. I don't understand what the words mean in the toolbar when using English-version software. We are accustomed to using Chinese-version ones at school. But we didn't know their corresponding English words and we weren't taught them at school. It just becomes much harder if you are not familiar with the English names of those functions. It takes you much time to figure out the Chinese meanings of them and you may also find the wrong ones. (M_Zoe)

Along with the challenges of using and understanding specific vocabulary in a business context, communicating with NES at work was another key issue to be noted. Chinese professionals were concerned that they could not fully perceive their NES colleagues' conversational or colloquial expressions, which usually led to confusion and misunderstanding. Two typical examples were cited below:

The way that Americans express something is different from the way that Chinese do. Chinese use of English seems more formal. American colleagues' style of using English is rather conversational and colloquial. Sometimes they write emails to their local coworkers and cc to us. We don't understand their conversational expressions and we often cannot understand well or misunderstand their email messages. (M_Zoe)

[...] some fixed collocation or set phrases, for example, "take", it seems that the verb can be collocated with many different prepositions to express various meanings. Native speakers (his American coworkers) seem to use it quite often. But sometimes we (Chinese) don't understand the meanings. You know the meaning of the verb, and you know the preposition, but you just don't know what the phrase means when two words are combined to appear in that sentence. (M_Xavier)

Given that some interviewees mentioned the challenges they had in communicating with NES, I asked an impromptu question about whether they felt communicating with NNEs was as challenging as with NES. The interviewees widely indicated that it

was less challenging to communicate with NNES in written communication, and below is a typical response:

Indians, Pakistanis, Japanese, either colleagues or clients, their English proficiency is like ours. They just asked simple questions and used simple grammar and vocabulary, so it's easy to communicate with them by email.
(M_Zoe)

The language-related challenges reported above are associated with lexical-grammatical issues such as unacquainted field-specific words and phrases, native speakers' colloquial expressions, and unfamiliar names shown in English-version computer operating systems. In addition to lexical-grammatical issues, the interview data analysis shows that Chinese professionals were also confused about how to organize a professional business discourse appropriately. The main concerns reported were related to issues of register, such as how to write messages in the correct format, tone, or style (see M_Dahlia, M_Flora, and M_Linda's responses).

[...] I often feel confused about how to start an email or letter. I don't know which way is appropriate. I tend to write a lot by using rhetoric and idioms to have a nice beginning or have some small talk first. But I found that my foreign coworkers often started by directly telling the aim of the communication, maybe asking for help or seeking cooperation. If it is our first-time communication, they would introduce themselves first. So, sometimes I feel I didn't clarify what I wanted enough, using too many unnecessary utterances at the beginning. I remember when I was a green hand, once I needed to write an external email to a public email box and I didn't know who I should write to. I directly wrote "Dear" as a way of greeting. Later after that, I knew it is more appropriate to call the receiver by "To whom it may concern" in that situation, so I felt so embarrassed about this experience.
(M_Dahlia)

I don't know how to precisely convey my ideas sometimes. When sending messages to different people, superiors or clients, I need to spend much time

considering how to write them, such as what format is more suitable, if my tone sounds right, or whether my email is written professionally. (M_Flora)

... Chinese tend to write long emails including much unnecessary or unrelated information to the topic in question. And after reading many long paragraphs, you still don't have a clear idea of what they want. I think they can just simply list the key points rather than trying to write too long sentences like what those western professionals usually do. (M_Linda)

Language-related challenges encountered by Chinese business professionals were also identified in relation to spoken communication. As with written communication, professionals found it difficult to understand colloquial words or idioms when having either casual conversations or work-related discussions with their NES colleagues or clients. They also experienced difficulty in organizing appropriate spoken discourse when facing different audiences in different contexts such as preparing work reports for superiors or engaging in social talk with colleagues. Moreover, the fast speed of speech delivery was also considered as an obstacle that may impede smooth interaction. Examples of social talk have been presented in previous sections (see Sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.3). Below are other typical examples depicting the challenges usually confronted by Chinese business professionals:

[...] those native English speakers, if they use a native English expression, I most often don't understand what that expression meant. (P_Sara)

[...] because native speakers speak too fast, all the words and syllables sound to be connected together. And those idioms, I don't understand the meanings. (M_Carol)

[...] many Chinese colleagues are too wordy when reporting their work. ... One idea can be clarified by one to two utterances, but they always feel that they don't elaborate on it enough, so they make some supplementary explanation. Thus, they used three or more sentences to interpret the idea, which I think is not necessary and even counterproductive. (M_Shawn)

Contrasting with written communication, most interviewees found it more challenging to verbally communicate with NNEs than with NES, mainly because of the various types of pronunciations and accents of NNEs. As three interviewees commented:

[...], the pronunciation, I cannot understand, you know, the accents of Indians, Japanese, Sri Lankans, Koreans. I feel so tired and I struggle every time when we [M_Dahlia herself and her NNE counterparts] have a meeting. I don't understand what they are talking about, which often makes me doubt whether my failure in catching the information is because of their accents or a lack of vocabulary. (M_Dahlia)

[...] if they are colleagues from south-eastern Asia, the challenge is mainly from their accents or pronunciations. For instance, the syllable where they put a stress in a word is different from how I pronounce that word. So, I often cannot identify what they were saying, even though I may actually know the word. (M_Flora)

It's more challenging to communicate with non-native speakers than with native speakers, since their [NNE] language proficiency is also limited. In this case, it's more likely to happen that neither of the speakers [S_Zack himself and NNE] can understand what the other is saying. (S_Zack)

In terms of the difficulties relating to spoken communication in the business context, the interviewees noted that Chinese professionals face challenges in communicating with both NES and NNEs. The challenges regarding communications with NNEs are related to pronunciation variance, along with minor lexical-grammatical issues; whereas, the challenges regarding communications with NES are mainly related to their colloquial expressions and the fast speed of speech delivery. Apart from this, Chinese business professionals also noted that it is very demanding for them to speak English when constructing appropriate and effective spoken discourse in situations where they need to make progress reports or to chat with colleagues of different rank in the company.

In brief, this study found that Chinese business professionals face a variety of challenges in both written and spoken communication regarding lexical-grammatical issues and register in English language use. Even if they are equipped with adequate language skills in general English, they still find themselves unable to use English in the business context appropriately. Furthermore, despite years of exposure to workplace communications, Chinese business professionals remain concerned about how to fulfill certain communicative tasks in the workplace given the range of different issues and situations they face during their daily work. As one interviewee commented:

Although you use English every day at work, you don't use it each time in the same way. You come accross different situations at work every day, with something new, so sometimes you still don't know how to handle them with appropriate language. (M_Carol)

This finding further facilitates an understanding of the quantitative result that working experience does not play a significant role in facilitating challenge-free workplace communication in English. In other words, although working experience can help business professionals to become more familiar with routine messages in business communication, the professionals still found it difficult at times to manage the communication well due to the complex and ever-changing nature of the tasks.

4.2.2.2 Culture-related challenges

Related questions were asked to all interviewees (see Question 15, Appendix 7) to explore the culture-related challenges Chinese business professionals encounter in their day-to-day workplace communications. Six interviewees who had previously commented that cultural differences do not have an obvious impact on their work (see Section 4.2.1.3) contended that they seldom met culture-related challenges at work.

Moreover, if they encountered challenges, they could potentially not realize that it was related to cultural differences.

The responses of the remaining five interviewees revealed three challenges: differences in working styles across organizations; a lack of cultural knowledge of different countries; and varied language expressions influenced by cultural diversity.

As for the challenge related to different working styles, four participants (M_Dahlia, P_Sara, M_Zoe, and M_Hanna) were concerned that different working cultures across different companies could be a road block for successful intercultural communication and efficient task fulfillment. M_Hanna shared her experiences of doing business with professionals working in both Chinese-owned and foreign-owned companies. She found there was a demonstrable difference in the attitudes towards contracts and business relationships held by employees in the two types of companies. The attitude of some Chinese companies made her feel concerned about establishing and maintaining a cooperative relationship with them:

Sometimes I find it challenging or even helpless to do business with Chinese companies. In the foreign business professional's mind, they think once they sign a contract with a company, both parties would strictly fulfill the obligations stated in it. However, some privately-owned companies in China don't think in the same way. They would break the contract easily with various excuses. For example, they would tell you they do not need the products due to the declining product demands from the market, so they won't continue to fulfill the payment. It usually takes a long time for our company to demand the payment or compensation. Even if we eventually managed to get compensation, our products may have expired. Hence, in most cases we just had to forget it. So, either way, demanding compensation or not, it is a loss for us. In terms of contract execution, I think some Chinese companies cannot do it well. In contrast, Dutch people are quite trustworthy, with principles of doing business. They believe they need to take responsibility for their mistakes even if they have to pay a big price for compensation; whereas, Chinese are not like this. They tend to try the best to escape obligation. Also, I think Dutch people are more far-sighted, considering the long-term cooperative

relationship, while Chinese seem to be more focused on short-term interests. Hence, I feel my hands are tied when dealing with situations [Chinese company breaking the contract] like this. (M_Hanna)

M_Dahlia, M_Zoe, and P_Sara all mentioned that different work times or work patterns between themselves and their foreign counterparts sometimes made them feel harder to complete the work. P_Sara (working in a privately-owned company) made the point that American employees working at the US branch always refused to work overtime. It is often the case however that Chinese employees working at the head office in Shanghai are required to work after office hours. Usually, the Chinese employees are more tolerant to the overtime situation. She stated, “This reflects the different attitudes to interacting with superiors between Chinese and foreign co-workers”. She further added, “Chinese staff are more obedient to their superiors, so they normally won’t reject a request from those higher in rank even though they are reluctant to do so. In contrast, westerners seem to have a different mindset. They don’t regard it inappropriate to decline superiors’ requests as long as they feel they have acceptable reasons.” Hence, P_Sara feels it a constant challenge knowing how to strike a balance in the two work patterns. “So, when extra working hours are unavoidable, I would try to ask Chinese colleagues to do so. If it must involve American colleagues, I need to humble myself to explain clearly, nicely and politely to them why they must do so, and timely thank for their support afterwards”, she added.

P_Sara’s comment on the different attitudes of her American and Chinese colleagues towards requests to work overtime indicates the difference in power distance among members in a workplace (Hofstede, 2001). Following Hofstede’s (2001) framework, the dimension of national culture is stratified into power distance. One key indicator of power distance in the workplace is “whether or not subordinates are afraid to express disagreement with their superiors” (p. 140). China’s power distance score is double that of the US (80 vs. 40, respectively) in this dimension. With such a big difference in the scores, it is understandable that American and Chinese workers have different attitudes towards a superior’s request to work overtime.

Moreover, P_Sara mentioned that the different working days in different countries often lead to a state of helplessness. As she said: “For example, in Israel, their working days are different from ours in China. They don’t work on Friday and Saturday, so our working time is different. They also have different public holidays from us. Sometimes, when I want to complete something immediately and find that it was their public holiday, I could not do anything but wait until their working day starts.” A similar situation also happened to M_Dahlia, as she reported:

I have to be careful about the different working patterns between us [head office in Switzerland and the branch in Shanghai]. They [Swiss] usually start work at 10 am, have coffee during 2-3 pm, and get off work at 4 pm. Quite different from ours [Chinese working hours]. At first, I didn’t know this, so I always looked to deal with them about something at an inappropriate moment. Without receiving their feedback, I just pushed them a lot while waiting, which left a negative impression on them. I felt like I was running around like a headless chicken. (M_Dahlia)

M_Zoe remarked that she often found it hard to seek help from her American colleagues in head office because it appeared that they would not get involved in anything that is not related to their job duties:

They [her American co-workers] wouldn’t help if they thought what you want is not related to their job duties. For example, if you want to look for a salesperson to help with something, but you unexpectedly send a message to a purchaser because you are not familiar with the colleagues in the head office. Then, that purchaser would tell you what you want has nothing to do with him and ask you to look for another person instead. If, unluckily, you find the wrong person again, you will be asked to find someone else again, but they won’t tell you which specific person you should turn to or be nice enough to give you that person’s contact information even if they know it. You are just like a ball to be kicked here and there. It often takes you a lot of time to find the right person for help. It makes me feel they are selfish and only care about their own work. It must be a quite different situation if the same thing happens to Chinese colleagues. They would help you out even if they are not responsible for what you are asking. Once I asked for a help from a

salesperson regarding a financial issue. He just helped me out immediately rather than asking me to look for a financial person. (M_Zoe)

M_Zoe's comment on the different attitudes of her American and Chinese colleagues towards others' request suggests the difference between a culture of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Under this framework, the dimension of national culture was stratified into individualism and collectivism, which is associated with whether the individual's interests are superior to the interests of social groups. "Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself. Collectivism, on the other hand, pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p 92). According to Hofstede (Insights, www.hofstede-insights.com), there is huge gulf between the scores of two countries in the Individualism dimension (China's 20 vs. US's 91). With such a huge difference in these scores it is no surprise that American and Chinese workers have different attitudes towards a request that does not fall within their job duties.

Another significant challenge concerning the business professionals regarded the diversity of cultures they experienced in terms of different countries, different organizations, and different individuals. P_Sara reported that she was aware that she needed to adjust her behavior to facilitate communication with different foreign clients, but that she had no idea of how to make the adjustment due to a lack of cultural knowledge. Hence, she worried that:

I have cultural sensitivity when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, but the challenge I face is that I know I need to adjust [my behaviors] but I don't know how to, because there are too many different situations; Americans, Koreans, Israeli, Russians, just too many. Do I need to know each culture in detail? If so, I don't think I have that much time to do this.

Another participant, KP, who was a junior employee working at a Shanghai logistics company, echoed this view. She was required to communicate with clients from several different countries including Korea, Mexico and Peru. She said:

Once I took a client from Peru for a business trip to Yiwu⁵ to purchase products. We departed early at 6:00 am from Shanghai. Around 11:30 am, the client asked me if I was hungry. I said “no” although I was hungry, because I thought he just wanted to be polite and nice, so he asked that. I didn’t want to delay his journey, considering the schedule was quite tight that day. One hour later, he suggested having lunch, so we did. Later, I told the story to one of the senior employees in the company. She said that when the client asked me if I was hungry the first time, he must have felt hungry himself, so he asked me to see if we could have lunch first. It just made me feel that I did something wrong. I don’t know how to cater to the needs of those people, especially when they are from different cultures. Not only are there national culture differences, there are also individual differences.

This viewpoint indicates that a lack of cultural knowledge can be an obstacle faced by Chinese business professionals when engaging in intercultural communication. Furthermore, an issue emerged as to the cultural knowledge that professionals need to manage cultural obstacles, and the way that they can learn about this knowledge efficiently, given they are all busy business people. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 5.

As for the major challenge related to the different language expressions influenced by cultural diversity, both M_Carol and M_Xavier commented that it is the context and culture that one is accustomed to that influences the way they use the language to express their thoughts. M_Xavier’s response is cited below as an example:

Although there are Chinese people who can speak English fluently, I can feel that their speaking of English is influenced by the way they speak Chinese according to the phrases or sentence patterns they use to express the meaning in Chinese. We have been living in Chinese context and communicating in Chinese language

⁵ Yiwu is a city in central Zhejiang province, famous for its small commodity trade and vibrant market.

for so long, so it's hard for us to speak English the same way as a native-English speaker does. Also, the way we speak English reflects how we were taught to speak it in our educational context.... Similarly, those who are from other non-native English speaking countries must have their own ways of speaking English under the influence of their own educational and national cultures. Therefore, it may happen that speakers from different countries use English to express the same meaning while in different ways. As a result, even if I know every word in their utterances, I may still have no idea what they are trying to get across.. (M_Xavier)

The analysis of the main challenges experienced by Chinese business professionals revealed that they are mainly concerned with issues around cultural differences related to three aspects: different ways of doing business or operating in a work culture, a lack of culture-related knowledge and skills, and trouble in achieving mutual understanding between people speaking different mother tongues.

Related questions were asked to all interviewees (see Questions 14 and 16, Appendix 7) to examine the impact that the lack of language or culture skills have on intercultural business communication. Surprisingly, although the interviewees believed language and culture barriers can impact (to a greater or less extent) on their daily work communication and ways of doing business, they also felt that the impact was not likely to lead to communication failure. One reason for this identified from the interview data was that both parties (Chinese business professionals and their foreign counterparts) in intercultural communication were aware that they were dissimilar in many regards (e.g., language use and working styles), so they would have an open mind about the dissimilarities, as explained by M_Xavier:

Since you know it was cultural differences that caused misunderstanding, embarrassment, or the need for much interpretation in communication, which your counterpart also knows, you find them interesting with no bad feelings. So, there wouldn't be any negative results whatsoever. (M_Xavier)

Moreover, due to years of experience when working and living in a different country, expatriates become gradually accustomed to the local culture and can begin to

decipher a pattern of how to interact with Chinese in English. Hence, neither cultural differences nor language proficiency are an insurmountable obstacle to smooth business interactions, which aligned with the opinion provided by M_Dahlia.

There must be some influence given by culture, but, nowadays, it seldom occurs that cultural differences give rise to communication failure. This is because those foreigners have generally been localized and accustomed well to China's actual conditions. . . . I think their ability to understand Chinese people's use of English has gradually improved over the years. Both of us [Chinese and foreigners] are making efforts to facilitate one another's communication styles and language proficiency. (M_Dahlia)

4.2.2.3 Summary

This section reports on the qualitative data findings to answer RQ2, and largely explains and supplements the quantitative data findings examining the communicative challenges related to BELF use at work. In brief, the interview data reveals that Chinese business professionals face a variety of linguistic challenges in both written and spoken communication when English is used as a lingua franca such as a lack of field-specific vocabulary; English use with appropriate formats, styles, and tones in business context; and colloquial expressions, fast speech and accents. Moreover, the data discloses that Chinese business professionals encounter challenges arising from cultural differences related to three aspects: differences in working styles, a lack of cultural knowledge, and trouble understanding English when spoken by people with different mother tongues. So far, the present study has highlighted the communicative needs and challenges that Chinese business professionals need to address at work. The next section reports on the communicative competences required of Chinese business professionals to meet their communicative needs and to cope with communicative challenges in intercultural communications at work.

4.2.3 Qualitative Analysis of RQ3: Communicative competences

This section reports on the communicative competences perceived as essential for Chinese business professionals to successfully engage in intercultural business

communication (see Questions 19-25 in Appendix 7). The competences identified are presented from the perspectives of language and culture with a general discussion of IBCC at the end of the section.

4.2.3.1 Language-related competences

The ability to communicate in English in the workplace was addressed from a variety of perspectives during the interviews, with two significant outcomes. First, when asked what they perceive as proficient language ability for intercultural business communication, it was interesting to note that almost all interviewees tended to define their ability in terms of spoken language competence. Only four of them took written English competence into consideration. The reason for this may be that speaking is commonly considered as more challenging than writing to Chinese (Zhang, 2009). Spoken communication requires a quick response and instant feedback. Thus, it allows less time for language processing and entails a higher level of proficiency in English output than does written communication. As M_Zoe commented:

I think if you work in an American-based organization, you'd better have no barriers to spoken communication, while for written communication, I think a CET4 level of English ability is the minimum. Spoken communication requires a quick response, while writing emails allows you more time to process and polish your language, search for information that you don't know, or even ask for help from others if necessary. You can spend 5 minutes writing an email or even 10 or more, which doesn't matter much. But speaking necessitates instant feedback. If you fail to be fast in your response, you fail your communication. (M_Zoe)

The second significant outcome from the interviews was that even though written communication in English is more frequently required than spoken communication in their daily work (see Figure 4.8 in Section 4.1.2.4), speaking performance in the workplace is regarded as more important than writing performance by Chinese professionals, to the degree that it may influence the individual getting promotion in the organization. Part of the reason for this finding is that proficient speaking skills

can enable better socialization with foreign colleagues and superiors to facilitate rapport building and maintenance, as discussed in the previous section (see Section 4.2.1.1). Nevertheless, although Chinese professionals are conscious of the significance regarding off-work communication, they are still not motivated enough to do so, because:

[...] for many foreigners in China, their rotation or assignment has a time limit; in most cases, two years. It means that after two years, they either renew their contracts or go back.... Thus, they wouldn't be very keen to [build interpersonal rapport], although there are individual differences. Then, vice versa, Chinese colleagues know the foreigners are not long-term committed leaders in the company, so I think few efforts are made to build personal relationships. (M_Shawn)

Along with these two significant outcomes, a variety of perspectives regarding CLA were also identified from interviewees' comments. Clarity and fluency were two characteristics mentioned by most interviewees. Other factors such as politeness, directness, and being strategic were also regarded as important for achieving effective communication. More importantly, compared with knowledge of the language, competence in appropriately using learned language knowledge in different situations is prioritized, notwithstanding that this knowledge may be limited.

Clarity of expression was the characteristic most frequently mentioned by the interviewees, emerging as the most important factor characterizing English language proficiency for effective intercultural business communication. Generally speaking, the concept of clarity refers to explicitness, conciseness and preciseness in communication, which could be specified as part of the discourse competence of intercultural business professional (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). In fact, the remarks by the interviewees suggested that clarity has various interpretations. One interviewee commented that it is important not only to convey a message in a concise and precise way, but also to convey the message in a way that is understandable and acceptable to the audience. This sentiment is expressed in the following two quotes:

You should be able to use your knowledge of vocabulary and grammar well to express your ideas precisely and to let the audience understand what you are saying. It is of utmost importance to make sure that listeners can understand what meanings you are conveying. You don't have to speak native-like English, but you must let others understand what you want and what your aim is. (M_Zoe)

Proficient English speakers are those who can express themselves clearly by using words and phrases familiar to the audience. In other words, it means that individuals can convey their ideas, thoughts or feelings in words and sentences that are understandable to their interlocutors. If so, that can be considered as "seamless communication" in a real sense, I think. (M_Dahlia)

M_Dahlia further explicated the idea of "seamless communication" by saying that "it is important to express clearly in English the logic of the whole thing. That's how speakers can guarantee getting their messages across to listeners in intercultural business communication."

The two interviewees' comments on clarity above indicate that "explicitness, conciseness and preciseness" are not the only requirements to ensure successful communication. An additional dimension, understandability or the familiarity of an expression to the listeners, should also be taken into consideration. Therefore, clarity in this sense requires not only individual linguistic competence and discourse competence in using English to compose a clear message to different audiences, but also sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence to construe an understandable message that caters to the needs of various audiences. This is linked to having knowledge of the message recipients in the interaction and the perceived importance of the role of the other party.

In addition to clarity, half the interviewees considered fluency of speech as essential for efficient communication at work, although not necessarily to the level of

native-like fluency. They also believed that clarity and fluency should come into effect in tandem for effective intercultural communication. One interview respondent emphasized the importance of language fluency as follows:

I think good communicative language ability means confidently communicating in a target language [BELF] with no obstacles, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking, especially when you are conversing with bosses face to face. What I call “with no obstacle” here means that I would not find any single challenge in expressing clearly the meanings that I want to convey. Also, it means that I do not need to spend much time processing my language. It’s just like communicating in English as fluently as in Chinese. ...However, it doesn’t mean that my English pronunciation and spoken language need to reach native-like proficiency. (M_Linda)

Here, the clauses used by M_Linda such as “do not need to spend much time processing my language” and “communicating in English as fluently as in Chinese” characterize fluency as a necessary factor for business professionals to successfully accomplish their communicative tasks. In this case, fluency is closely associated with linguistic competence and discourse competence. It turns out that the root cause of why business professionals attach so much importance to fluency when speaking English is not to show off their English proficiency, but to demonstrate what efficient employees they can be to their foreign superiors. M_Zoe explains why fluency is regarded as critical at work:

For example, a boss from the head office overseas comes to Shanghai to attend a meeting and he asks you a question. If you can answer him fluently and communicate with him clearly, then he will think that you are efficient in task fulfillment and competent in providing a quick response. So, he would feel it easy and comfortable to communicate with you. On the other hand, if you are often at a loss for what you say with many *ums* and *uhs* appearing in your speech, and you can never articulate the ins and outs of the matter, it may seem to the boss that you are affecting his work efficiency. He would think that you are wasting his time because you spend half an hour to explain something that someone else may need only five to ten minutes to finish. It must influence his evaluation on your performance. (M_Zoe)

This example again emphasizes the importance of clarity and fluency in communications in intercultural workplaces. Meanwhile, it also raises the issue of the relationship between language proficiency, work efficiency, time efficiency, and performance evaluation at work. Here is another example reported by an interviewee:

For example, the big secretary in our company [secretary to General Manager] can take down the meeting minutes and send them out right after the meeting. Little assistants like us have to write up the rough notes made during the meeting and polish the language before sending the meeting minutes out. The main issue leading to such a big difference here I think is the gap in English proficiency, particularly our fluency in using English. (M_Dahlia)

The phrases “big secretary” and “little assistant” used by this interviewee not only indicate the rank distance between them in the company, but also imply the efficiency distance between them at work due to their fluency distance in language use. Hence, it was found that both fluency and clarity of English use are directly associated with the ability to fulfill a task at work, to the extent that it would even impact the employer’s evaluation on employees’ work performance. Again, this may explain why English proficiency influences one’s career development in a multinational company.

In addition to clarity and fluency, a few comments were made about the importance of having good language knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) as an obligatory competence for effective intercultural business communication. In other words, it is not necessary for a business professional to have perfect grammar and a large vocabulary base to fulfill various communicative tasks. Two typical examples are cited below:

It is not necessary to pay much attention to grammatical correctness in intercultural business communication. Just like a foreigner speaking Chinese, even if he cannot speak well and makes many grammatical mistakes, you [native Chinese speakers] can still understand what he is talking about and what he wants. Good grammar is more like icing on the cake than a key factor that decides whether communication would be successful or not. (M_Xavier)

It may not be necessary for you to use complex sentence structure or fancy words like foreigners [NES] do. You may just use some simple words to replace those hard ones when responding to people. Those simple words may sound silly, but it'll be all right if listeners can understand. Proficient language speakers may have 9,000 or 10,000 words of vocabulary, while you may only have 2,000 to 3,000. However, if you can make full use of those 3,000 words, you would still manage to communicate with no obstacle, I think. (M_Zoe)

However, although the interviewees generally agreed that grammatical knowledge is not an indispensable factor related to fulfilling communicative tasks, several of them did propose that knowing correct pronunciation and vocabulary was useful because the two factors were perceived as being closely associated with an understanding of the speakers' meanings and the strategies applied to compensate for communicative breakdowns. Participants S_Zack and M_Hanna commented:

Pronunciation is also important because sometimes when you find it hard to speak a complete utterance, you may as well utter a key word so people can still get your meaning. For example, you want to ask someone whether he/she has lunch yet, but you cannot speak a complete sentence to ask that question. If it's around noon (lunch time), you just need to say "lunch" with a rising intonation to the person, I think he or she can still comprehend your question with no problem. However, if your pronunciation is weird, then the listener can hardly perceive your intended meaning I'm afraid. (M_Hanna)

[...] in most times, you don't need to catch each word to understand an utterance. If the key word is well understood in the present context, the whole utterance can be understood. (S_Zack)

The interviewees' remarks above may not necessarily indicate that vocabulary or pronunciation weighs more heavily than grammar for professionals to succeed in workplace communication. They do suggest however that tolerably good grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are satisfactory enough for them. Therefore, what Chinese professionals are most concerned about is not the range of linguistic

knowledge or grammatical competence that one has, but the ability to skillfully use the knowledge that one can achieve, although the knowledge may be limited to a greater or less extent. It is of vital importance for professionals to apply their (limited) knowledge to either produce or understand meanings (especially beyond the sentence-level meanings) to achieve effective communication. This competence, the skillful use of a foreign language, falls within the areas of pragmatic competence in this study's theoretical framework, corresponding to the effectiveness and appropriateness of language use suggested by previous studies including Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980). Moreover, this phenomenon also partly explains why no interview respondent reported that they experienced difficulties in writing or speaking grammatically-correct utterances or were required to make a considerable effort to ensure their communication was free of grammatical anomalies. The following comments from S_Zack and M_Shawn elaborate on this:

What we mainly focus on in a conversation is the meaning and real intention of the other party, so grammar is considered the least important. If your knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is adequate for properly expressing yourself, that's fine. (S_Zack)

Communication in English is less focused on grammatical accuracy, but more on appropriate use of knowledge. For example, how your knowledge of language is applied to meet the needs of different situations involved in emails and presentations such as what the topics are, who the audience is, and what the issues are under discussion. (M_Shawn)

Along with using linguistic knowledge appropriately and effectively, other factors such as directness, politeness, and being strategic were briefly referred to by a couple of interviewees. Politeness was considered as an essential business etiquette that establishes an image of professionalism. As P_Sara commented: "it is also important to ensure that the message looks polite, like including a "best regards" or something like that in the message sent. That's basic business etiquette." As for directness, it was interpreted as a strategy to be used depending on the situation in question. "Usually, I would go straight to the point, but it also depends on the audience and the issues

under discussion. If you are engaged in negotiation and trying to reach a compromise with the other party, then you'd better make a detour to the goal", stated S_Zack. As for being strategic, successful intercultural communication requires Chinese business professionals to be masterful at using appropriate strategies to either compensate for or enhance their language performance. This competence is closely related to RQ4 of the present study, so a detailed report is presented in Section 4.2.4.

In short, in relation to IBCC from the perspective of language competence, multiple factors are identified as being indispensable for successful intercultural communication (i.e., clarity, fluency, politeness, directness, being strategic, and appropriate use of language knowledge). Good language ability is mainly assessed according to whether the professional's communicative performance results in efficient task fulfillment at work. As interpreted above, all these factors are closely related to pragmatic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence in the study's theoretical framework, which generally parallels the quantitative data results in this dimension. The next section provides a detailed discussion of communicative competences from the perspective of culture.

4.2.3.2 Culture-related competences

When asked to identify the cultural competences they regard as essential for intercultural business communication the interviewees appeared unable to provide informative comments, unlike their comments on language abilities. One reason for this could be that they generally considered the influence brought by cultural differences on communicative efficiency was much less significant than that brought by language proficiency. As discussed in Sections 4.2.1.3 and 4.2.2.2, several interviewees regarded cultural differences to have little impact on their daily work communication. They seldom encountered any challenges caused by cultural issues so they put little thought into what cultural abilities professionals should have for successful intercultural communication. Another reason for this might be that the interviewees did not receive any specific training to enhance their culture-related abilities, so they were not aware of the specific terms to describe or name cultural abilities. Conversely, they could comment on language abilities using familiar terms

such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Notwithstanding this limitation, the interviewees still provided rich information regarding the topic, from which three essential abilities stand out: motivation, cultural awareness, and adaptability with an optional ability-cultural knowledge.

Motivation

Motivation, or motivational CQ in the study's theoretical framework, is the ability to direct and channel one's attention and energy toward intercultural communication with initiative and confidence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Bandura, 2002). Three interviewees (S_Zack, M_Dahlia, and P_Yvonne) mentioned that it is important for Chinese professionals to enthusiastically engage in intercultural communication both at work and outside of work. To realize such engagement, S_Zack suggested, "you need to stop being afraid of making mistakes and overcome your shyness." M_Dahlia believed that being actively involved in intercultural communication can further motivate her to learn more extensively, as indicated in her comment below:

As a non-native speaker of English, using English is like jumping out of my comfort zone. If you keep communicating with those who have the same mother tongue as yours, you won't bother to know the history and culture of a different country and will find yourself hardly making any progress. Getting involved in intercultural communication is a challenge, which pushes you to actively learn something new. It provides me with the motivation to expand my vocabulary and adapt to different accents, especially when communicating with another non-native speaker. (M_Dahlia)

Cultural awareness

Cultural awareness is related to the metacognitive CQ, which is defined as one's consciousness of cultural awareness during intercultural communication (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Six interviewees mentioned a range of characteristics in this dimension. M_Xavier suggested that professionals should not be judgmental and stereotype cultures when communicating with those from other cultures. He said:

Just because the issue occurred during intercultural communication doesn't mean it occurred because of cultural differences. Sometimes, it could be related to individual differences. For example, some people are just very stubborn, and they never listen to other people's suggestions. There is an American, a Honduran, and an Italian in our group. A hiccup in our communication cannot simply be interpreted as their cultures having problems. Sometimes I think it has little to do with cultural differences and more to do with individual differences. Actually, I also found some Chinese quite stubborn and hard to communicate with. (M_Xavier)

With an awareness of cultural differences in mind, M_Shawn held a view that it is necessary for business professionals to adjust their cultural assumptions during interactions:

Since I have two years' experience of learning overseas and I have some foreign friends. I know their ways of living are different from locals' (Shanghainese). So, I talk with them in a way different from talking with Chinese. However, I am still careful with our interaction. When I talk with a foreigner, I have to be cautious with what I say and how I respond. No matter how familiar you think you are with their cultural backgrounds, chances are that you may still need to adjust the way you talk to them. I'm already used to communicating in this way. It's like an automatic reaction. (M_Shawn)

Moreover, M_Dahlia strengthened her ability to reflect processes on her own performance during and after interactions. She reported:

It's very important for professionals to reflect on the process of communication. During the interaction, if I notice a communicative breakdown like a confusing look on the person's face, a quick thought would occur to me like asking myself, what I do to make the other person feel confused and how I should make up for it? So, I would try to make up the breakdown. After the interaction, I would reflect more deeply by asking myself questions such as: Why did the person feel confused about my idea? It is because of my language deficiency or my ignorance of his/her culture? Which part was unsuccessful? Was there anything that I missed? So, I can make improvement. (M_Dahlia)

According to the interviewees, cultural awareness is characterized as a competence based on being conscious of the existence of differences among various cultures, being capable of reflecting on one's own performance in communicating with people from various cultures, and to be cognitively prepared to adjust one's behavior to meet the contextual needs of communication.

Adaptability

Adaptability is connected with the behavioral CQ, which is defined as an individual's capability to behave appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally, in situations when interacting with people from different cultures (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). All interviewees believed it was important for professionals to display appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors during intercultural situations. They illustrated this by exhibiting a good range of examples, some of which are presented as follows:

If sometimes misunderstanding occurs during the interaction due to cultural differences, I would express my ideas with a different interpretation until mutual understanding is reached. (M_Zoe)

If I speak with Indians, I worry that they may not understand my accent, so I slow my speaking speed or repeat what I said until they manage to get the meanings. (M_Linda)

I changed my way of communicating when I was on my business trip to non-English speaking countries such as Spain, Korea, and France, where people on the streets are not competent in speaking English. Especially in France, they would tell you that they don't speak in English. In such cases, I have to make full use of my body language to express what I want to them. Or else, you cannot communicate. (S_Zack)

The examples presented above indicate that Chinese professionals are supposed to adapt themselves to various intercultural situations by adjusting their verbal and nonverbal actions to either facilitate communication efficiency or compensate for communication breakdowns.

As for optional competence, having a good knowledge of various cultures is related with cognitive CQ. This refers to the level of one's knowledge of both cultural universals and cultural differences (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). All interview respondents were asked an independent question (see Question 23, Appendix 7) in consideration of the quantitative data result that cognitive CQ does not significantly contribute to Chinese professionals' overall IBCC. The answers to the question varied. Most interviewees regarded it as unimportant for them to have knowledge of other people's cultures for intercultural communication. Four interviewees, however, provided insights into the benefits of having knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultures.

M_Carol believed that it was necessary for professionals to be acquainted with different cultures although she thought that it was often difficult to find time to acquire this knowledge. People from different cultural backgrounds may express the same thing in different ways. So, with knowledge of their own culture, professionals can better understand their foreign counterparts, which, in turn, can enhance their work efficiency.

Indians, Americans, and British, the ways they use English to express things are different, such as using different words, phrases and sentence structures. Without knowing their culture, sometimes you can hardly understand their meanings expressed, even if you can comprehend the language. However, I don't have time to broaden my cultural knowledge of different countries. It's just impossible to know each of them. (M_Carol)

Her view accorded with M_Dahlia's idea of what she called "intercultural English". She regarded it as higher-level English proficiency because it requires more than knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, she added that professionals need to have a grasp of what is going on in the world so that they can be open-minded when intercultural communication comes into play.

Cultural knowledge is a higher-hierarchy need I suppose. Indeed, I want to learn some "intercultural English", but it's difficult and takes much time. Nowadays, it is important for us to know what is happening all over the world and what attitudes people have towards those incidents. You can have access to them from various media such as WeChat, Microblog, and websites. Thus,

you can avoid seeing people from other countries through colored lenses.
(M_Dahlia)

Furthermore, P_Sara added that it is not only imperative for professionals to be well informed of their foreign interlocutors' national culture, it is also vital for them to be aware of their recipients' company culture during the interaction:

I think wherever you go and whatever the reasons (e.g., business trip, sight-seeing) for going there, you need to know the local culture. It shows respect to others' culture and prevents damaging it. Moreover, for work-related communication, it is very important to have an idea of the company culture of your counterparts or else your communication may not go as smoothly as you expected. (P_Sara)

One remark by S_Zack perhaps usefully explains the reason for different views on the necessity of cultural knowledge. He suggested that it is "because it is associated with needs. If your job duties require good knowledge of the counterpart's culture, it would motivate you to learn. If not, few people would like to spend time on this I suppose." Because the participants in the study were working in their home country, they were quite familiar with their local culture. Hence, there seems to be little need for local business professionals to adapt themselves to their home culture, unlike expatriates who need to familiarize themselves with the target culture when adjusting to a different work and life environment. Moreover, cultural needs are usually considered as "a higher-hierarchy need" (M_Dahlia) for "developing a personal relationship with overseas staff in the workplace" (M_Shawn). In other words, it is "not compulsory, but auxiliary" (M_Carol). Nonetheless, some interviewees mentioned that Chinese expatriates or sojourners should have a global mindset. "Many salespeople need to take business trips or be sent for training to the US, so they need to possess cultural knowledge in order to survive communicating with American colleagues and living in the host country", observed M_Zoe.

Professionals diverged in their views on the necessity of learning about cultural differences (mainly related to national culture differences). They converged however in their opinion that it is imperative to learn cultural universals, especially in relation

to business culture, such as being polite and direct in business communication, accommodating business counterparts, and pursuing high task efficiency. Although cultural convergence is not presented in this section, it can be easily identified from the last section in the discussion of language-related competences. Moreover, other components of cultural ability are also associated with language ability. For example, a person with high metacognitive CQ can always be reminded to use appropriate linguistic resources when conveying meanings to people from different cultural backgrounds. A fluent and skillful language user in intercultural communication must have high motivational CQ to continuously equip themselves with enough knowledge and to involve themselves in various intercultural contexts. Furthermore, a person competent in applying various strategies is bound to have high behavioral CQ. Thus, it suffices to say that language ability and culture ability are essential for effective intercultural communication, and they are both interconnected with one facilitating the other. In addition to language and culture abilities, other abilities business professionals need to be good at are also explored in the study. These findings are presented in the next section.

4.2.3.3 Intercultural business communicative competence

To further explore IBCC, interviewees were also asked to identify the competences they perceived as obligatory for conducting successful intercultural business communication, and to outline the advice they would give to those who are preparing a job application (see Questions 24 and 25 in Appendix 7). They identified a wide range of competences in addition to language and cultural abilities. Typical examples are presented below, followed by a list generalizing the key points identified from the interviewees' comments on this topic:

I think good IBCC means an individual should have business-specific knowledge and skills, business etiquette, communication skills, and foreign language proficiency, especially knowledge of western cultures. (M_Hanna)

It seems to me that good IBCC is related to open-mindedness, patience, adaptability, putting oneself in others' shoes, free of cultural biases, logical

thinking and expression. You need to find a way to adjust yourself to others' speaking speed, expressions, or ways of doing business rather than insisting on your own ways. All those attributes are interconnected. You must be patient when you are trying to adapt to a new situation. Also, one should sound confident and powerful in business communication. (M_Carol)

Your communication capability in your mother tongue is very important. English output is connected to Chinese proficiency to some extent. If someone lacks competences in expressing precisely in their first language, they can hardly deliver a presentation articulately in English. Proficiency in mother tongue lays a foundation for intercultural communication in a foreign language. (M_Linda)

Generally, I think good intercultural business communicative competence is to speak appropriate language at appropriate moments in appropriate ways. Thus, one needs to have sincere attitudes, quick response ability, and knowledge of language and culture. What's more important, one must have the ability to internalize the knowledge and apply it into practice. (M_Dahlia)

Good intercultural business communicative competence requires good language ability, basic knowledge of culture in general, high EQ, good adaptability, and business-specific knowledge and skills. (M_Shawn)

The following is a list of the key points identified from the interviewees' comments on IBCC:

- business-specific knowledge
- business etiquette
- foreign language proficiency
- western cultures
- open-mindedness
- patience
- adaptability
- putting oneself in others' shoes
- free of cultural biases
- logical thinking
- confidence
- proficiency in mother tongue

- speak appropriate language at appropriate moments in appropriate ways
- sincere attitudes
- quick response ability
- good learning ability
- EQ

As for suggestions to future university graduates regarding working in intercultural workplaces, aside from the recommendations on learning foreign languages and becoming a proficient user of the foreign language – where in most cases the foreign language is English, the interviewees suggested practicing intercultural communication as much as possible to have first-hand experience. They also believed that it is important for professionals to have a knowledge of both general culture (cultural universals) and specific culture (cultural differences). Lastly, they pointed to mastery of using general language (general English in particular) and the development of specific-field language (business English in particular). Typical examples are cited below:

If it is about communication in general, I think you'd better learn how to speak a foreign language more natively. For example, Chinese may say "clean the floor", while native speakers may say "clean it up". So, I think it's not just about the ability to use English in business communication but the ability in general that needs improving. Or else, one wouldn't be confident and thus reluctant to be engaged in intercultural communication. One can start by talking about casual topics because, in the business context, it's all about communicating with people. If it's about communication in business context, one must have a full knowledge of the business English used in various contexts such as writing emails, organizing meetings, and staff recruitment. All that is involved in company operation should be learned. (M_Hanna)

Young professionals should learn how to write emails, how to express ideas clearly and logically, and how to use frequently-used office software. They must practice communication as much as possible because they will have little chance to use English in the Chinese context. (M_Carol)

It's important for young professionals to know how to communicate in English

in both formal and informal ways. They must be equipped with business-related vocabulary, which is quite different from general English, such as cc, forward, especially those words and phrases in English-version computer systems and office software. They use the Chinese versions at university, so if they are not familiar with the corresponding English translation, they will feel quite confused and frustrated at the beginning of their career. I find nowadays there are more and more opportunities provided to university students to practice in multinational companies, so it would be great to learn one more skill. (M_Linda)

They must take the initiative to practice their intercultural communication as much as possible so that they can get a head-start in their job careers. In addition, it would be great if they could get to know different cultures, especially western cultures. This can help a lot for interpersonal communication at work. (M_Dahlia)

4.2.3.4 Summary

This section reports the qualitative data findings used to answer RQ3, confirming, explaining, and supplementing the quantitative data findings examining the communicative competences related to BELF use at work. The findings concerning the IBCC construct suggest that from the perspective of language ability, being polite, direct, and strategic is indispensable for successful intercultural communication. This is closely related to pragmatic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence in this study's theoretical framework. From the perspective of culture ability, three key factors (i.e., motivation to communicate, cultural awareness, and adaptability) are recognized as being essential for successful intercultural communication. That is, motivation to communicate corresponds to motivational CQ, cultural awareness to metacognitive CQ, and adaptability to behavioral CQ. Moreover, the interview data shows that although professionals agree on the importance of learning cultural universals such as being polite and being direct in business communication, they diverged in their views on the necessity to learn culture-specific differences (mainly related to national culture differences). This divergence of views on the need to acquire cultural knowledge can help to explain why cognitive CQ was not recognized as a significant predictor of IBCC in the statistical analysis. In addition,

this section presents a list of key features to emerge from the interviewees' comments on IBCC (see Section 4.2.3.3). The next section further explores the communicative strategies applied by Chinese business professionals to resolve communicative breakdowns and to facilitate the achievement of communicative goals.

4.2.4 Qualitative Analysis of RQ4: Communicative strategies

In this study, RQ4 examines how Chinese business professionals cope with the challenges related to BELF use encountered in intercultural business communication. To answer this research question, two other questions (see Questions 17 and 18, Appendix 7) were asked to all interviewees. The rationale for this was to probe the communicative strategies that Chinese professionals apply to meet communicative challenges at work. According to the interviewees, it is hard to distinguish between the communicative strategies used to deal with language-related challenges and those used to deal with culture-related challenges. They suggested that this was because they do not have the time to contemplate whether the strategy used is related to either language or culture. Rather, Chinese business professionals needed to apply appropriate strategies instantly to manage the communication problems occurring at that moment. Given that there is no clear-cut evidence in the interviewees' comments on language-related or culture-related strategies, this section does not follow the same pattern as previous sections by separating the findings in the perspectives of language and culture. Instead, it reports the findings from the perspective of the communicative strategies used by Chinese business professionals.

Although Chinese business professionals did have concerns about communicating at work, all interviewees reported that at no stage have they encountered a situation where the communication failed beyond repair, or that tasks could not be fulfilled due to catastrophic communication failure. Interviewees reported that they used a wide range of communicative strategies to facilitate ongoing communication and avoided communicative breakdowns. The strategies used were classified into two categories which I call "on-the-stage strategy" and "off-the-stage strategy". The on-the-stage strategies are those used when professionals are in the middle of the communication

to enhance communicative efficiency. The strategies include code-switching, asking for confirmation, and seeking help that are usually used during the interaction. The off-the-stage strategies are the actions taken by professionals before or after the communication to improve the effectiveness of upcoming interactions. The strategies include being fully prepared before an expected interaction, carefully reflecting on self-performance after an interaction, and attentively rehearsing an interaction in mind beforehand.

4.2.4.1 Use of on-the-stage strategy

Several on-the-stage strategy uses were identified in the interviewees' comments. When dealing with written communication challenges, Chinese professionals would often look up an unknown field-specific term online, seek help from colleagues, or use an alternative expression if the meaning was not lost. Selected typical examples are shown below:

[...] check the word online to see how it is used in a specific context, if I'm not sure how to use it. (M_Flora)

If it is emails, since time is enough I can either ask for help from a colleague or search materials online by myself before I reply. (M_Zoe)

Generally, I would try a different way to describe it if I don't know the particular expression. It's like you can write in professional language and you can also write in layman's language. Either way can work for communication. (M_Xavier)

The on-the-stage strategies frequently-used when dealing with spoken-communication challenges (and different to those used for written communication) are code-switching, message reduction, approximation, feigning understanding, appealing for help (including looking up a word in the dictionary), asking for repetition, expressing non-understanding, and non-linguistic strategies. The terms used below are based on the inventory of strategic language devices by Dörnyei and Scott (1997). Examples of each strategy are presented as follows:

Expressing non-understanding and appealing for help:

[...] sometimes you cannot do anything but honestly tell them (foreign interlocutors) that you don't understand their English and request to have someone else to talk to you or ask my colleague who is used to their accent to take over the conversation for me. (M_Zoe)

Non-linguistic strategies, approximation and looking up a word in the dictionary:

I would use gestures or find a synonym to express. If neither works, I would resort to the dictionary app in my phone. (S_Zack)

Message reduction:

In spoken communication, sometimes I want to further clarify my idea, but if I feel that I cannot express my thoughts well, I simply wouldn't say it. (M_Flora)

Asking for repetition:

Sometimes I am just too tired to communicate with them (foreigners with strong accents) because it takes many turns to communicate so that they can understand what I want, and I can understand what they want. Luckily, the purposes of the communication can always be realized in the end because we say "pardon" many times during the conversation. (M_Linda)

Code-switching

I sent him the email in English. ... but would call him for a further discussion in Chinese if he was not good at communicating in English. (M_Flora)

Message replacement

For example, you want to express; "The sealing line of the exterior packing constitutes a problem, which leads to the leak of the milk powder from inside." You will make mistakes saying such a long sentence and you cannot

compose such a long sentence in a really short time. Thus, I prefer instead to say; “The package is not good. The powder sometimes will leak.” (M_Hanna)

Feigning understanding:

Whether it is accents or speaking-speed issues, I usually neglect those I don't understand in the group discussion. I don't think it's necessary to be torn on this, since most of the time it doesn't seem to influence the results a lot. (M_Xavier)

All of the strategies introduced above can be commonly observed in general conversational situations. However, it was interesting that one strategy identified during the interviews appeared to be specifically used in the business context; that is, changing the communication form, usually from spoken to written, as reported by M_Carol and M_Zoe.

[...] such as with Indians, if I cannot understand his meaning due to his strong accents, I ask them to type the messages to me. We change from spoken communication to written communication. Later, with increasing familiarity with each other, I try to patiently speak with him if time allows. I would call him. I find that I changed my communicative strategies after becoming more familiar with his communicative style. (M_Carol)

If the issue is very complicated and cannot be settled at the time of the discussion, I would suggest that we can write emails to further discuss the details. Generally, what cannot be done with a phone call can always be continued by emails. It's no use to keep wasting time in discussion if neither of the speakers can understand what the other said. Sometimes, written communication is more efficient. (M_Zoe)

It is interesting to note that the strategies used by professionals were not stable or fixed, but dynamic and flexible. The strategies used would be adjusted based on the contextual needs of the interaction such as time adequacy, problem complexity, and method efficiency.

In addition to the on-the-stage strategies used by Chinese business professionals, two interviewees also reported those that were used by their foreign interlocutors. As indicated by Tarone (1980), communication is the mutual attempt of two interlocutors to negotiate and agree on a meaning. Two typical examples are cited below:

Taking Americans for example, they seem to use language in different ways when communicating with Chinese colleagues or with American colleagues, such as different words or tone of voice. With Chinese colleagues, their language is more understandable and easier; whereas, with American colleagues (cc to Chinese colleagues), their language is more conversational and colloquial, with many acronyms that we [Chinese] don't understand.
(M_Zoe)

Some non-native [English] speakers may not be good at grammar, but after all it's just spoken communication. If he realized that he made a grammatical error, he would revise it immediately. If my misunderstanding arose from a linguistic problem in his English, he would give an instant explanation for me to more easily understand what he wanted. (P_Sara)

The two examples above show that to facilitate the intercultural communication, both NES and NNES make an effort to either accommodate their interlocutors' language proficiency or transcend their own linguistic limitations, which displays the interactional nature of human communication (Tarone, 1980).

This section introduces the findings related to on-the-stage strategies applied by Chinese business professionals. The next section reports the off-the-stage strategies identified from the interview data to investigate how Chinese business professionals act before and after the communication to realize or enhance communication effectiveness.

4.2.4.2 Use of off-the-stage strategy

As for off-the-stage strategies, the interview data shows that to ascertain the accuracy and quality of communication, Chinese business professionals try to ask for assistance from a colleague with higher language proficiency or they examine the syntax and semantics many times by themselves before sending the message out. The choice of strategy typically depends on who the interactants are (e.g., colleagues or superiors). Moreover, full preparation for a forthcoming interaction in advance was also reported to be a communicative strategy to facilitate the face-to-face communication. As S_Zack and M_Linda reported:

When I was a 'green hand', I prepared my speech at least one day before the meeting with the clients. With the help of translating software, I transferred Chinese meanings to English sentences and recited them for the interaction next day. (S_Zack)

If I send an email to a colleague of the same job rank as mine, I would directly send it out. If the email is sent to a big boss, I would be more careful about the lexical-grammatical issues and discourse organization by checking several times by myself. Or, I would ask my supervisor to have a check for me first and then forward the email out for me. (M_Linda)

In addition to the preparing prior to the communication, several interviewees reported that they would reflect on their performance and learn from notes or recordings taken during the conversation. This self-reflection process allowed the business professionals to figure out solutions to the problems to emerge during the communication and thereby improve their communication. Two typical examples are cited below:

[After the meeting] I would try to reflect on the whole process of communication: 'Which part was unsuccessful?', 'Was there anything that I missed? And, Why would he [foreign interlocutor] express it in this way? This was done so that I could improve for the next communication. Also, I didn't want to be hindered by some points that shouldn't be obsessed with in the middle of the interaction. Therefore, I recorded the meetings with a recording pen or my cell phone so I could listen to it many times after the meeting. I

think after listening to it many times I may understand what they were saying and get used to their way of speaking. This practice would also facilitate our future communication. More than that, I also participated in a business English training course to improve my business writing. (M_Dahlia)

Usually right after an interaction with a foreign client, I would take down some notes related to the issues occurring in the communication. I do this to remind myself, for fear that the same issue would occur next time. In this way, I can avoid making the same mistake again. (P_Yvonne)

As mentioned at the start of this section, the interviewees commented that they could hardly differentiate the strategies they used to deal with language barriers from those they used to handle cultural barriers. Nonetheless, most interviewees emphasized that it is important for them to keep reminding themselves to be culturally sensitive and to familiarize themselves with certain cultural customs when engaging in intercultural business communication. “Each country has its own history and culture. That’s an objective fact which we cannot change. But you can find a way to accommodate the differences. I think human beings can adjust themselves to new surroundings in certain ways, like having more exposure to intercultural communication to improve mutual understanding. Same as improving language skills, you need to read, observe, listen, and communicate as much as you can so you can be well-informed and knowledgeable to avoid certain troubles at work”, suggested M_Dahlia. In addition to cultural sensitivity and adaptability, professionals also stressed the importance of knowing about the interlocutors’ culture before the intercultural interaction. For example, P_Sara said:

I know there are some taboos in Israel, so I would be very discreet and try my best to avoid discussing the topics that may offend them due to my ignorance. Or sometimes I would have a prior talk with the Chinese located in the Israel-based branch, to get to know some specific cultural clues such as some dos and don’ts. (P_Sara)

4.2.4.3 Summary

In brief, to facilitate a smooth communicative interaction, Chinese business

professionals need to apply a wide variety of communicative strategies. This is to ensure they can effectively deal with diverse problems arising from linguistic deficiencies or cultural differences during the intercultural communication. They also need to be strategic in preparing the expected communication and learning from it afterwards. Figure 4.10 presents an overall view of the communicative strategies identified from the interview data.

4.3 Summary of the chapter

This chapter answers four research questions by reporting the findings obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study via questionnaire surveys and the semi-structured interviews, respectively. The quantitative data analysis using SPSS revealed statistically significant differences among the participants from the three types of companies in terms of how they perceived their communicative needs. The diversity of participant views concerning their communicative needs, challenges, competences, and strategies were also observed in the qualitative data analysis using NVivo. The findings from two analytical approaches are generally aligned to answer the research questions. Both the quantitative and qualitative data evidence indicates that English is widely used in multinational companies in Mainland China, especially for written communication. It is essential for Chinese business professionals to master language and culture abilities, apply communicative strategies to meet various communicative needs and cope with assorted communicative challenges during intercultural business communication. The next chapter provides a summary and detailed discussion of the findings reported in this chapter. It also compares the findings to those reported in previous studies in terms of similarities and differences.

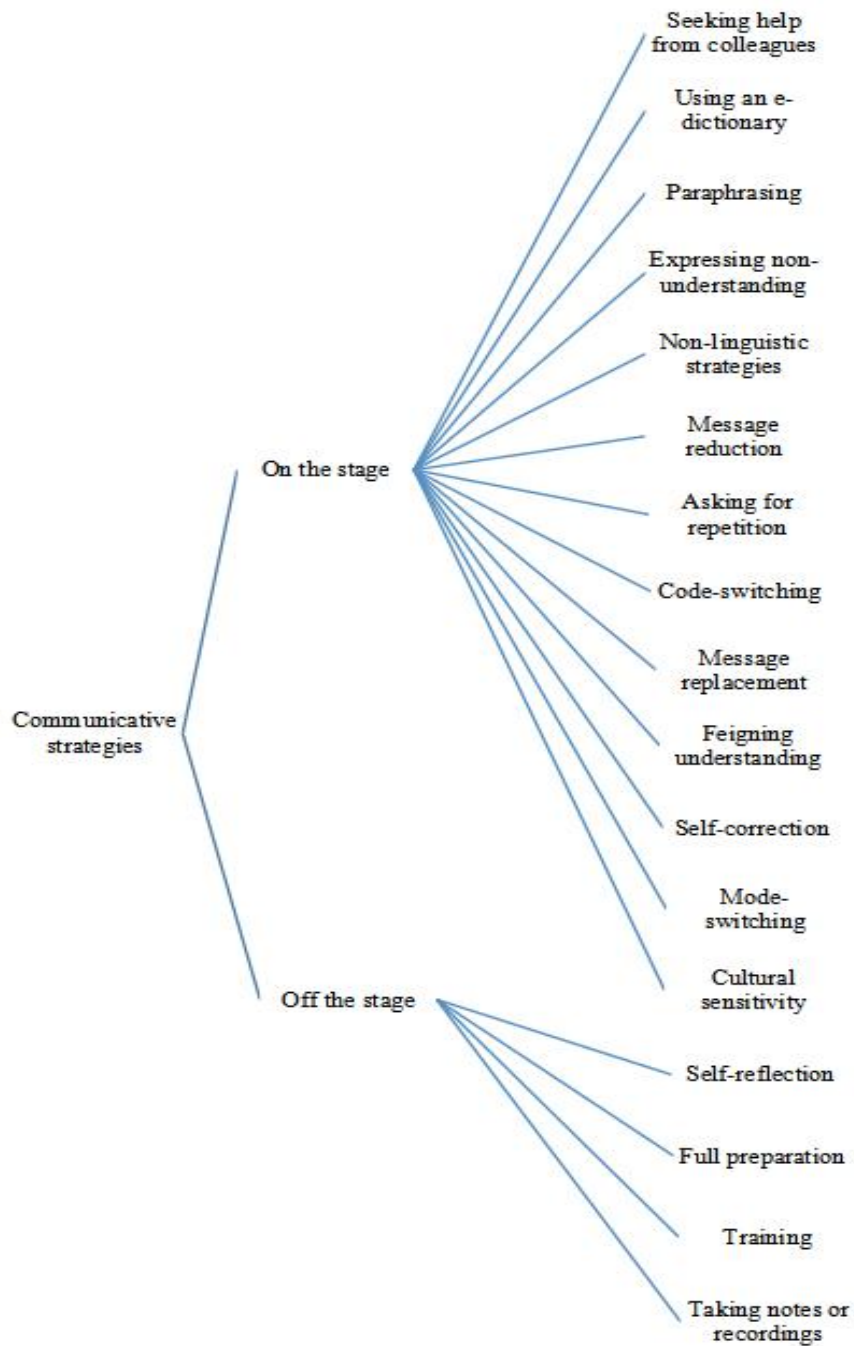


Figure 4.10 The strategies identified from the interview data

Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter comprises five sections which summaries and discuss the findings of the present study. The first four sections review the findings related to each research question, followed by a discussion comparing the findings of the present study with those of previous research. The last section is a summary of the entire chapter.

The present study aims to answer four research questions (see Chapter 1). Specifically, it explores BELF use at work in Mainland China in terms of communicative needs, communicative challenges, communicative competences, and the communicative strategies applied when matching communicative needs and coping with communicative challenges in intercultural business communication. Adopting triangulation as a data analysis method, the present study consists of both quantitative and qualitative research method to offer a multifaceted while complementary outlook on issues examined in the study. A total of 227 Chinese business professionals took part in the questionnaire survey from May to June 2017. Eleven of the questionnaire respondents participated in follow-up interviews in July 2017. Based on the findings of this study, the research tools used satisfied the purpose for which they were designed. That is, quantitative and qualitative tools can cross-validate each other to provide reliable answers to the research questions.

5.1. RQ 1- The communicative needs of using BELF at work

RQ1: What are the communicative needs related to BELF use faced by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication?

RQ 1 investigates the linguistic landscape of Chinese professionals' BELF use in the workplace. In this section, the findings in relation to three aspects of BELF use at work are discussed: (1) English vis-a-vis Chinese used at work in general, (2) the most commonly used communicative modes in English, and (3) the role of culture in using BELF at work.

5.1.1. English vis-a-vis Chinese used at work in general

The questionnaire data revealed that English, mostly used with non-native English speakers (NNES) (61.95%), played an important role in workplace communication in Mainland China. The importance of English is especially obvious in multinational companies where English and Chinese are used as the two dominant working languages for daily work communication (54% and 46%, respectively). The MANOVA analysis further shows that the frequency of English use in multinational companies (54%) is significantly greater than its use in non-multinational companies (28.53%) ($F(2, 224) = 43.81, p < .001$).

This finding echoes a recent study examining BELF use in two state-owned companies in China by Zhang and Guo (2015). The authors reported that English was not as commonly used as they had originally anticipated. As Mandarin Chinese (or Putonghua) is the national language in Mainland China, it is commonly used as an unmarked medium of communication to facilitate the interaction between Chinese professionals from different geographical locations in the country. This linguistic tendency was also confirmed by examining the interview data indicating that Chinese was used as the default language in day-to-day communication in non-multinational companies; whereas, English was only used when non-Chinese speakers were involved. Documents circulating in the company were mostly written in Chinese, with a few written in bilingual languages (English and Chinese). As expected, non-multinational companies (Chinese-owned companies) usually employed a greater number of local staff (Chinese people) and may therefore be less likely to engage in intercultural communication than their multinational counterparts where expatriates are an integral part of the company (See also Evans, 2013). Thus, it is no surprise that professionals working in non-multinational companies reported that they had used Chinese significantly more than English as their language of work.

In contrast, interviewees working in multinational companies reported that they needed to use English frequently at work when communicating with non-Chinese speakers, or even Chinese workers. This finding lends empirical support to the studies

conducted in Hong Kong (e.g., Evans, 2013) and Europe (e.g., Ehrenreich, 2010; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006) where English has become the unmarked language code for office-based communication in multinational companies. The reason for the need to use English is that expatriates are an integral part of multinational companies in China (Guo & Gallo, 2017), so professionals need to use English to communicate with expatriates who do not speak Chinese. Nevertheless, the reason for English use in intracultural communication interactions between Chinese colleagues does not seem to be apparent.

Interviewees working in multinational companies also reported that English was used even during Chinese-to-Chinese interactions. Even more surprisingly, they reported that there was no corporate policy stipulating this practice. Although they agreed that it could be more effective to use Chinese for communication purposes among Chinese workers only, the participants generally preferred to write in English. This was despite the risk that it may cause confusion or misunderstanding due to the communicators' limited English language proficiency levels. The reason for this practice is that Chinese professionals are inclined to use English rather than Chinese in intracultural communication to strengthen their professionalism, as well as due to the importance and formality of the communication. With the belief that English is the language of international business and that it is viewed as necessary for China's economic development (Pan & Block, 2011), it is understandable that Chinese business professionals tend to assign a high status to English as a working language. The ability of Chinese professionals to use English proficiently is often regarded as an indication of their linguistic knowledge or competence and is seen as an essential display of professionalism (Han, 2010).

In this case, speaking in English when Chinese employees are communicating with other Chinese employees is not a deliberate policy in multinational companies where the interviewees in this study worked. Rather, it is an ad hoc practice as a way of conforming to business culture/conventions. On the other hand, Chinese language also played an important role in spoken communication, especially when professionals found that their Chinese colleagues were not proficient enough at speaking English.

As derived from the interview data, there is an interplay between using spoken Chinese and written English in multinational companies. It is often the case that a verbal discussion in Chinese follows an email written in English, especially when the communication is between staff working in different departments of the company. Writing an email in English is to inform the theme of communication and to show the importance and formality of the communication because the email message is perhaps forwarded to the Department Head who may be an expatriate. After sending the English-language email message, professionals use Chinese to further discuss and clarify the content of English email via telephone in most cases.

Given the interplay between using English and Chinese at work, the extent to which Chinese business professionals need to use BELF at work takes many factors into consideration. The primary factor is based on the person involved in the communicative activity. If she/he speaks in a different mother tongue, then BELF is used without question. If only Chinese workers are involved in the communication, then other contextual factors are taken into consideration such as the significance level, communication formality, English proficiency, business culture, and the form of communication (written or spoken). Therefore, Chinese business professionals' attitudes towards choosing language codes to use are largely pragmatic, which corroborates with studies by Angouri (2013), Poncini (2007), and Louhiala-Salminen (2002). All three studies applied context-sensitive analyses of business professionals' discourse activities, revealing that they essentially employed a pragmatic approach to the use of BELF together with other languages.

As stated above, the frequency of English use in multinational companies is significantly higher than that in non-multinational companies. Another interesting difference identified between the two types of companies was that in multinational companies, professionals with a higher job rank needed to use English more frequently at work than lower ranked employees; whereas, junior staff used English more frequently in non-multinational companies (see the 3D bar chart in Section 4.1.2.1). These opposing trends can partly explain why the MANOVA analysis identified no significant difference in the frequency of English use by professionals

with different job ranks. Professionals of higher job rank in multinational companies need to use English more often at work because the company CEO and many senior executive team members are typically expatriates (Guo & Gallo, 2017). Thus, senior professionals in the company who need to regularly interact with foreign executives use English more frequently than junior employees in multinational companies.

On the other hand, junior employees in non-multinational companies need to use English more often at work than their senior counterparts. This finding aligns with the observation by Ehrenreich (2010) that in countries such as China, Russia, and Japan, English cannot be expected to be spoken by upper level management. Most upper level managers in these companies are from the older generations. In fact, as presented in Chapter 4 (see 4.2.1.1), this phenomenon has interrelated political and educational reasons. In Mainland China, English has conventionally played a limited role in society as it is not used as an official language (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). In the education system, the teaching of English started to increase gradually in the 1980s (Adamson, 2002). It was not until September 2001 that English was officially introduced as a compulsory subject in Grade 3 in all elementary schools across Mainland China (Nunan, 2003). Therefore, older generations may have little or no opportunity to learn English systematically at school. Moreover, a national survey on English proficiency in China reported that only around 29% of respondents in the 165,000 households surveyed possessed reasonable English reading proficiency, with the results relating to spoken English proficiency even lower (Wei & Su, 2012). Thus, when English needs to be used in international business contexts, it is often the case that the few professionals with high English proficiency in the company are assigned to the tasks (Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2002). Comments during interview confirmed this finding, as older staff members in a company are usually not proficient English users, so younger workers are often assigned to tasks involving English usage.

Overall, the finding in this study indicated that English, as one of the working languages, played a crucial role in workplace communication in Mainland China, especially in multinational companies. This is an inevitable consequence of the tightening and thickening web of economic globalization since the economic

transformation commenced by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 (Guo & Gallo, 2017). Moreover, the extent to which English is used for business communication is not only determined by a company's ownership, but also by an array of individual factors such as an employee's language proficiency, the nature of the profession, and job rank.

5.1.2. The most commonly used communicative modes in English

The questionnaire data shows that emails, instant messages, and websites are reported to be produced most frequently in English at work; whereas, fax messages, identified by Pang et al. (2002) as one of the major modes of English use, are rarely used. Similar phenomena were found in other contexts such as Mexico (Grosse, 2004) and Korea (Huh, 2006), where the use of English in fax messages had diminished in the business context, while the use of English in emails had increased rapidly. In addition to emails, instant messaging (e.g., WeChat) as a product of the digital revolution emerged as one of the most frequently-used modes of written communication in English by Chinese professionals. According to the interview data, one of the most prominent advantages of using instant messaging at work is time-effectiveness. Chinese professionals working in both multinational and non-multinational companies reported that they communicate in this way on a regular basis. They either used established communicative applications such as WeChat or developed a new one to suit the specific needs of the company's operations and management. For example, the company was concerned that using social networks like WeChat may put the privacy and security of confidential company information at risk. However, despite the potential dangers of social networking, the popularity of instant messaging as a communicative mode at work accords with the needs of contemporary mobile business communication.

In spoken communication, meetings, video conferences, and presentations are most often conducted in English, and the finding is consistent with those reported in studies focusing on different contexts such as Hong Kong (Chan, 2014), Taiwan (Spence & Liu, 2013), and Japan (Cowling, 2007). In addition to traditional communicative modes such as emails and telephone calls, instant messaging and video conferencing

have become new popular modes of business communication due to the growth in computer-mediated communication (Bond-Barnard, Fletcher, & Steyn, 2016).

Moreover, an unexpected finding to emerge from the interviews is that social talk, although not frequently used at work, is a critical form of intercultural business communication. This is because it plays a crucial role in facilitating rapport building and maintenance with foreign colleagues and clients. In multinational companies particularly, being adept at using social talk with foreign superiors is believed, to a large extent, to help professionals climb the corporate 'career ladder'. This finding concurs with previous studies (e.g., Holmes, 2005; Pullin, 2010), suggesting that social talk is a particularly important sociolinguistic skill used by professionals to enhance success in multicultural workplaces. Despite its importance however, Chinese business professionals do not often engage in social talk at work as observed from the questionnaire data. The reason for this is closely related to the language and cultural barriers encountered by Chinese business professionals, the details of which are elaborated and discussed in the following sections (see Section 5.1.3 and 5.2.1).

In addition, companies with different ownership structures were compared for their uses of English in written and spoken communication. The results show that in non-multinational companies, the frequency of English used in written communication is almost the same as that in spoken communication, and that English is used more often for external communication (e.g., external emails) than for internal communication (e.g., internal emails). This finding supports the recent research by Zhang and Guo (2015), who found that in state-owned companies (non-multinational companies), the two most common tasks related to English use in written communication included external emails and business letters. However, in multinational companies, English is used significantly more often in written communication than in spoken communication ($t(98) = 6.61, p < .001$), and is used more frequently for internal communication than for external communication. This finding echoes the previous section (see Section 5.1.1) as the use of English for internal communication has gradually become a convention or culture in multinational companies, particularly for internal written communication.

In brief, the findings related to communicative activities in English at work reveal three important aspects of intercultural business communication in the workplaces of Mainland China. First, although established communicative activities such as emails, letters, and meetings are still frequently used in workplace communications, other activities such as instant messaging and video conferencing have emerged as newer, more frequently-used forms of written or spoken communication in English by Chinese professionals at work. Second, making social talk, as reported, is a very important dimension in workplace communication. Building and maintaining healthy business and interpersonal relationships is critical, not only for a company's business success but also for an individual's career success. Third, a major difference observed between non-multinational and multinational companies is that Chinese professionals working in multinational companies need to use English for written communication more often than for spoken communication. This finding is closely associated with the fact that these professionals always need to write in English for internal communication. Conversely, professionals working in non-multinational companies use English in written and spoken communication with almost equal frequency, and often use English for external communications (e.g., writing letters and external emails).

5.1.3. The role of culture in using BELF at work

Rather than focusing solely on language needs, the present study also focuses on the culture-related needs of English use in the modern workplace. It is found that culture plays different roles for Chinese professionals when dealing with different types of communication or genre patterns (i.e., professional genre, commercial genre, and relational genre) (see Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007). According to Du-Babcock and Babcock (2007), professional genres refer to “specialized languages spoken by professionals within a discipline (e.g., law, medicine, and engineering)” (p. 345) and may include technical reports composed by engineers and financial analyses written by accountants. Commercial genre refers to the information exchange (e.g., a

statement of a new company policy) and commercial transactions (e.g., a conversation between a salesperson and a customer) in specific companies and industries. Lastly, relational genre refers to “the verbal and nonverbal communication that creates the social fabric of a group by promoting relationships between and among group members/language communicators” (p. 345) (e.g., chatting with colleagues). The interviewees who produce professional genres at work reported that cultural differences have little influence on their professional genres. Members of the same professional group around the world have similar education achievements and experience, although possibly in varying degrees, so they acquire a shared professional language for communication (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007). Hence, cultural differences may not extensively affect the language used to produce professional genres in those specific disciplines.

However, those who reported that they were often involved in the communication of commercial or relational genres believe that cultural issues play a paramount role in intercultural communication at work. One example of a cultural issue relating to commercial genres was derived from an interviewee working in a privately-owned company in Mainland China that has a rather different corporate culture from its branch office in the US. A type of edifying culture was exemplified in the Chinese company as it tried to instruct or improve employees, morally. The company deliberately released an official announcement to all staff working both at home and abroad to compliment a receptionist who practiced receiving guests with a security guard after work. The company aimed to encourage all staff to learn from her dedicated spirit. This type of edifying culture is unfamiliar to foreign staff working in the branch office overseas. Furthermore, according to the interviewee, the inadequate translation of the announcement from Chinese to English led to much confusion and misunderstanding among foreign colleagues. Information exchange across organizations is related and intrinsic to the style and language used in organizations (Nickerson, 2000). As such, communication in a commercial genre manifests the culture of the organization in which the messages are distributed. As a result, Chinese and foreign employees would have different attitudes towards, and interpretations of, bilingual documents being circulated such as announcements, news release, or policy statements.

As for relational genres, one type of discourse that stands out is social talk at work. It was reported that cultural differences can apparently be recognized in face-to-face interactions between Chinese employees and their overseas counterparts. As previously mentioned, Chinese professionals do not often make social talk with their foreign counterparts or clients at work. In addition to language barriers, cultural differences also play an important role in restraining professionals from socializing with expatriates at work. It was found that Chinese professionals generally feel uncomfortable when making social talk with expatriates, either because they are unable to initiate the conversation, or they feel it hard to keep the conversation going. As reflected by the interviewees, they hold different views towards issues and different lifestyles from their foreign co-workers or friends. Therefore, they are often unsure about how to start and maintain intercultural social talk in the company. Indeed, acquiring the skills to participate in a relational genre is not easy. The learning process varies depending on an array of related factors, including corporate culture and the differences in professions and countries (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007). In other words, to interact successfully, professionals need to take into consideration both the universal culture (e.g., the need to be polite) and the specific culture (e.g., the bowing of Japanese) with which they are engaged.

As discussed above, intercultural communication associated with a commercial genre or relational genre was most often subject to cultural diversity, be it a national culture or organizational culture. In addition, it was also found that people from different cultures have different communicative styles when conducting business. Western business professionals are regarded by Chinese professionals as being more detail-orientated and less tolerant of ambiguity than are their Chinese counterparts. As Ding (2003) suggested, China's high-context culture leads Chinese people to depend more on context to interpret meanings. Subsequently, they may not expect perfect, clearly written communication by others and themselves.

In addition to their tolerance of (linguistic) ambiguity, it was also noted that Chinese professionals employ different strategies to show politeness than their Western counterparts. As the interviewees reported, Chinese professionals are used to starting a message with a range of politeness formulae to indicate friendliness and to express gratitude; whereas, their Western counterparts (e.g., those from the US, Switzerland, and the UK) often get straight to the point. On the other hand, the interview data also reveals that Western professionals are used to applying mitigated language to inform others about unpleasant matters to show politeness; whereas, Chinese professionals often apply a more direct strategy which may read as impolite to the reader. This difference suggests that Chinese professionals and their Western counterparts may have different perceptions of politeness, which concurs with the view by Yin (2009) that politeness can indicate different meanings in different cultures.

The use of mitigated language by Western professionals to be polite aims to maintain a sound relationship with their business partners. This intention is indeed of an identical nature to Chinese professionals' use of politeness formulae when starting an email message to indicate friendliness and an appreciation of their business partners. It is likely that different perceptions of politeness between Chinese and Western people can lead to different styles of writing. Indeed, both Chinese professionals and their Western counterparts need to be aware of these differences and try to respect and understand each other's cultures. This may be achieved by becoming more familiar with the interlocutors' writing styles and being more patient and open-minded when reading others' messages.

The findings suggest that the influence of culture exists in the workplace (Han, 2010). However, studies in the field (e.g., Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Wang, 2010) have detected signs of convergence in communication styles between Chinese and Western professionals under the influence of certain contextual factors (e.g., English used for business communication). This was observed in the present study where interviewees commented that with many years of practice, Chinese business professionals have become well informed about what should be included in a business message like an email. Professionals from different national or organizational cultures generally apply

the same structure when writing an email: “greet first, then state the key points, explain the scenarios if necessary, and at last ask one question to the other”, commented one interviewee. The interview data also show that Chinese business professionals appreciated their Western counterparts’ writing style, which is more direct, concise, and polite. They would try to imitate and learn from the writing styles of Westerners, which may be another reason for the signs of convergence in communication styles between Chinese and Western professionals. In this case, it is evident from the findings that professionals’ using ELF for business communication are influenced by both cultural universals and cultural specifics.

In brief, because BELF can never be taken as neutral or cultureless (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005), its use for business communication can never be immune to cultural influences. The present study found that cultural differences, national or organizational, appear in a range of communicative practices, especially when the practices involve commercial and relational genres. Cultural differences are also manifested in the communication styles of professionals such as politeness, directness, and tolerance of ambiguity. Furthermore, one point that should not be ignored is that even though cultural diversity leads to differences in professional communications, its influence is restricted to the communication conventions and rules that govern business communication per se. Hence, business culture influences a business message at a macro level; that is, in deciding the general pattern, content, or the format of the message and in constructing a pragmatic, business-oriented identity for Chinese professionals (Feng & Du-Babcock, 2016). At the same time, the national culture of the professional and the organizational culture in the workplace influences a business message at the micro level, resulting in different writing strategies, word choices, and ways of expression.

5.2. RQ 2- the communicative challenges of using BELF at work

RQ2: What are the communicative challenges of related to BELF identified by Chinese business professionals in intercultural business communication?

The purpose of RQ 2 is to examine what challenges are encountered by Chinese business professionals when using BELF to fulfill various communicative practices at work, as identified by answering RQ 1. In this section, the findings related to two aspects of communicative challenges at work are discussed: (1) language-related challenges, and (2) culture-related challenges.

5.2.1. Language-related challenges

The various linguistic challenges identified from both the quantitative and qualitative data can be categorized into two aspects: those related to communicating with native and non-native speakers of English (NES and NNES), and those related to choosing the appropriate language and style to match various communication needs (e.g., communicating with superiors, clients, or colleagues).

In terms of the challenges related to communicating with NES and NNES, Chinese professionals were concerned that they could not fully understand their NES colleagues' conversational expressions in written communication, usually resulting in confusion and misunderstanding. As a result, they considered it easier to communicate with non-native English speakers in written communication. Conversely, the Chinese professionals found it more challenging to engage in spoken communication with NNES than with NES. The challenges around communicating with NNES are centered on the pronunciation variance along with minor lexical-grammatical issues; whereas, the challenges around communicating with NES are mainly related to their use of colloquial expressions and the speed at which they speak. As suggested by Charles and Marschan-piekkari (2002), English, as a lingua franca, can play a facilitating role in alleviating communication problems caused by language diversity, but can also present challenges which impede communication for those who are not able to appropriately and effectively use it. This view aligns with the recurrent theme emerging from the interviews that it was difficult for Chinese professionals to understand different kinds of English. The interviewees indicated that this was particularly evident when English is spoken with an accent, at a fast speed, and when unfamiliar words are used. Many other studies (e.g., Ehrenreich, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2008) have reported similar findings on communication in

multinational companies. These findings suggest that both native and non-native speakers should be aware of this feature of ELF and accommodate their interlocutors. As Firth (2009) indicated, ELF interactants need to monitor each other's language proficiency to determine the appropriate linguistic forms such as grammar, pace of delivery, and lexical range to ensure mutual understanding.

In terms of the challenges from appropriately using BELF to fulfill communicative tasks, the quantitative data analysis shows that Chinese professionals often regard two kinds of communicative tasks as being particularly difficult. One set of tasks is usually used for external communication (e.g., external emails and negotiations) entailing a high level of importance and requiring a high degree of formality in conveying the messages. The other set of tasks includes those that involve specific-field knowledge (e.g., specific-field vocabulary and phrases) such as legal documents that require a wider spectrum of knowledge of specific vocabulary than the professional's level of expertise. In contrast, the tasks regarded as easy include those that either require a lower level of formality (e.g., instant messaging) or that function more often as internal communication (e.g., internal emails).

The qualitative data analysis confirmed the quantitative findings and further explained the reasons why BELF was regarded by Chinese professionals as difficult to use in intercultural business contexts. The reasons are twofold: English used in a business context is generally different from English used in other contexts, such as an academic context; and English used in one genre of business discourse can be different to another genre. Regarding English use in different contexts, terms, phrases, and acronyms such as ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival), IPO (Initial Public Offering), and 'logistics' that frequently appear in workplace communications may not appear in academic English products, but are nonetheless taught in English for Business Purposes or business communication courses. Furthermore, the meanings of words learned in the classroom often cannot be directly applied in the context of business communication, and usages of the words can also change. One example provided by a participant working in a HR department is that 'performance' refers to how successfully a staff member can fulfill a task in their working context; whereas, the word 'performance' that she learned at school referred to an act of presenting a play or a concert.

This finding implies a gap between what Chinese professionals learned at school and how they practice that knowledge at work. This implication accords with the finding reported by Han (2010) in whose study the interviewees almost unanimously remarked that their undergraduate education was of little help to their latter workplace communication requirements, resulting in a gap between ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Unfortunately, this phenomenon was not only found in Mainland China, but also in other linguistic and cultural contexts such as Taiwan (Lu, 2018), Malaysia (Sarudin et al., 2013), and Greece (Chostelidou, 2010). Thus, even professionals who achieve high scores in English assessments may still find it difficult to use BELF effectively, so they do not build enough confidence in their performance to fulfill their communicative tasks at work. In turn, this helps to explain the findings from the quantitative data analysis suggesting no negative linear correlation between English language proficiency and the likelihood of experiencing difficulties in business communication (see Section 4.1.3). BELF is different from general English and proficient users of general English may still find it difficult to succeed in workplace communications which require a high level of BELF proficiency (see also, Du-Babcock, 2007).

As for the English used in different types of business discourse, Chinese business professionals find it challenging to use English to fulfill communicative tasks involving diverse business discourse characteristics including different discipline-specific vocabulary (e.g., various professional genre), different discourse format (e.g., emails or reports), different audiences (e.g., superiors or clients), different purposes (e.g., persuasive or descriptive), and different communication styles (e.g., direct or indirect). Such diversity in business communication makes Chinese business professionals concern that the communicative tasks will require them to use language skills beyond their expertise. Moreover, they also worry that their language proficiency is not sufficient to convey messages appropriately, because composing a message means not only adequately expressing meanings but also having rhetorical and stylistic appeal (Han, 2010).

According to the interviewees, they often feel perplexed about how to use the right

style and tone in writing and how to concisely and precisely get their meaning across. As one interviewee worried, “When sending messages to different people, no matter to superiors or clients, I need to spend much time figuring out how to write these messages, what format is most suitable, whether my tone sounds right, or whether my email is written professionally”. His comment shows that without the knowledge and skills to handle their worries, Chinese professionals often write long emails that include unnecessary or unrelated information. Moreover, it is surprising to find that professionals with many years of working experience may still find it difficult to be effective BELF users. Although they use English every day at work, they do not use it in the same way each time. Indeed, they are confronted with different situations, with something new each time, and this leads them to worry about the appropriate language to use to handle the tasks. This worry helps to explain the findings from the statistical analysis that no strong negative correlation exists between working experience and the likelihood of having trouble in business communication (see Section 4.1.3). Due to the diverse business discourse characteristics apparent in the workplace, Chinese professionals are confused about how to use the correct BELF format, tone, and style.

However, it should be noted that the concerns of Chinese professionals are associated with work-related communicative tasks (e.g., reports or meetings), and that they were not worried about their inability to engage in successful social talk. This is not because they consider it unimportant to have sound socialization skills at work, but because they do not regard social talk with expatriates to be as essential as other work-related tasks. Chinese business professionals believe they can always find a way to avoid social contact by minimizing their encounters with expatriates in the workplace. Therefore, even if they are aware of their inability to engage in social talk, they do not appear to take the problem as seriously as they should. As previously discussed, social talk in the relational genre requires different linguistic skills to those required in the professional and commercial genres. It depends on the professional’s proficiency in general English more than on their proficiency in a specific discipline.

Chinese professionals may be familiar with, and competent in applying, discipline-specific English to discuss work after years of education and working. Nonetheless,

they may not be equipped with the required linguistic skills to socialize at work. One reason for this language deficiency lies in English teaching at school. Test-oriented rather than interaction-oriented teaching has long been regarded as a severe problem in foreign language pedagogy in undergraduate education, particularly for the last 20 years that undergraduates in most Chinese universities are required to obtain the CET (College English Test, see Section 4.1.3.1 for details) certificate to graduate (Gu & Liu, 2005). The focus of both teachers and students is on how to successfully pass the English language test rather than how to effectively communicate in English. Thus, graduates and college students generally consider the shortfall in their opportunities to practice using English to be the biggest obstacle to improving their business English proficiency (Wu, 2012).

In addition, the limited opportunities to practice using English in interactions at school results in Chinese professionals lacking the confidence and motivation to engage in social talk at work. In turn, this is detrimental to the employees' ability to establish and maintain healthy and beneficial business or interpersonal relationships at work (Holmes, 2005; Pullin, 2010). It is therefore no coincidence that all multinational-based interviewees mentioned that English language skills could emerge as a barrier to career development in their companies. As reported, those who are not competent English language users tend to avoid social communication or tend to keep quiet during meetings with foreign superiors. This provides foreign superiors with limited opportunities to get to know their skills and capacity. In contrast, competent English language users who regularly interact with superiors are more likely to obtain a job promotion because they can present their communication skills and task fulfillment abilities to their superiors.

The findings of the present study indicate that Chinese business professionals encounter a variety of linguistic challenges when conducting business and fulfilling tasks at work. These challenges not only affect the effectiveness of workplace communications (e.g., lower efficiency in task fulfillment), but also impact an employee's career success in a multinational company (e.g., less possibility of promotion). Moreover, English has emerged as the language of business in China and will remain so (Li & Moreira, 2009). According to Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2008),

job applicants with poor knowledge of the language may not even be considered for recruitment, which in turn limits their opportunities for career development.

5.2.2. Culture-related challenges

In addition to the linguistic challenges, cultural challenges were also identified from the interview data. Two challenges were found to stand out: differences in working styles across organizations, and varied language expressions influenced by cultural diversity.

As for the challenge related to the different working styles, three significant cultural differences were identified, with each associated with one cultural dimension under Hofstede's (2001) framework. First, the different attitudes towards contracts and business relationships were identified between Chinese and Western companies. Chinese companies attach less importance to fulfilling contractual obligations and may therefore break the contract if they believe it to be beneficial to the company. This difference accords with the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension in Hofstede's framework (Hofstede, 2011). With a low score of 30 in this dimension, China has a very pragmatic culture in which rules may be broken for pragmatic reasons. In other words, in a culture of low Uncertainty Avoidance, there is flexibility towards adherence to laws and rules to suit the situation. Thus, Chinese companies may take a pragmatic approach such as breaking a signed contract if they believe that it is in the best interests of the company. This explains why Chinese professionals working in multinational companies feel concerned about establishing and maintaining cooperative business relationships with Chinese-owned companies.

Second, different working times or work patterns between Chinese professionals and their foreign counterparts sometimes made their work harder. Chinese employees were typically more tolerant of difficult situations and more obedient to their superiors, and thus would not likely reject a superior's request to work overtime. In contrast, US professionals were reported to often refuse to work overtime. This difference is consistent with the Power Distance dimension in the framework

(Hofstede, 1980). China attains a score 80 in this dimension, so it is not surprising that Chinese professionals are used to accepting authority at work. Given this cultural trait, it is mostly difficult for Chinese professionals to strike a balance between the somewhat contradictory working patterns of foreign co-workers and workers from their own culture. According to one interviewee, “when extra working hours was unavoidable, I would try to ask Chinese colleagues to do so. If it must involve American colleagues, I need to humble myself to explain clearly, nicely and politely to them why they must do so, and timely thank for their support afterwards”.

Third, the different ways of responding to colleagues’ requests for help was another concern mentioned by the Chinese professionals during interviews. They often face great difficulty in seeking help from their American colleagues in head office because they are reluctant to get involved in anything that is not related to their own job duties. This outcome points to the difference between cultural Individualism and cultural Collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). With a score of 20 in the cultural dimension of Individualism, China represents a highly collectivist culture where relationships with colleagues are essential for in-group cooperation, so interdependence and group harmony are valued. In contrast, with a score of 91 in the cultural dimension of Individualism, Americans value independence and individuality. Individualism and collectivism are regarded as fundamental distinctions between Chinese and American cultures (Chu & Choi 2011).

This distinction between the two countries can explain why Chinese professionals feel uncomfortable when their foreign counterparts refuse or are reluctant to help, and why they can often get help from Chinese colleagues who may not be responsible for the task. To minimize the impact of this culture-related challenge on workplace communication, it is important for both Chinese and Western professionals to be aware of and respect the difference, as well as to be sensitive to the difference by adjusting their language use. Awareness of, and sensitivity towards, the cultural differences need to be exercised in internal and external communications at work and in communications beyond the workplace.

As for the challenge related to the influence of cultural diversity on the uses of various language expressions, the interviewees commented that although Chinese and foreigners communicate using a lingua franca (English), they have different ways of expressing their opinions when using English. For example, Chinese people regard the ‘dragon’ as a symbol of power, nobility, and accomplishment, and subsequently use it as a compliment; whereas, Westerners may regard the word to be a symbol of evil. By the same token, Chinese people may not feel comfortable being called “a lucky dog” because of the negative connotation sometimes associated with the word ‘dog’ in Chinese culture (Tao, 2010). Therefore, the context and culture to which an individual is accustomed may influence how they use language to express their thoughts. As one interviewee commented; “It’s just like I say something in the form A, while others say it in the form B, although both of us are saying the same thing.” In this sense, culture may affect how Chinese professionals communicate with their foreign counterparts in a way that Chinese professionals may misunderstand or misinterpret the latter’s message in the decoding process.

Admittedly, (B)ELF is a carrier of culture (Kankaanranta, 2009), so cultural diversity contributes to the different ways business professionals use English when carrying out different communicative tasks, especially tasks involving commercial and relational genres. Thus, communicators from different cultural backgrounds may use unique language expressions to achieve the same outcome, and this often confuses Chinese professionals when communicating with foreign counterparts. The confusion is however a two-way process. On the one hand, Chinese professionals may feel at a loss when trying to understand the meaning of the foreign interlocutor’s utterances. On the other hand, Chinese professionals may feel baffled about how to express their meaning in a more understandable manner to their foreign interlocutors when in a conversation. Either type of confusion can emerge as an obstacle to smooth intercultural business communication. To address this confusion, one interviewee reported that she needed to pay attention to the interlocutor’s facial expression. “During the interaction, if I notice a communication breakdown like a confusing look on the person’s face, I would quickly ask myself what I had done to make the other

person feel confused and how I should make up for it. So, I would try to make up the breakdown.”

The findings in the present study thus suggest that challenges around business communication emerge from cultural differences at work and influence Chinese professionals’ workplace communication. To meet these challenges, it is important for professionals to free themselves from the conventions of their culture (Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008) and learn how to adapt to the communication demands emergent from cultural differences.

In brief, Chinese professionals have long faced various challenges and concerns pertaining to intercultural communication at work due to both linguistic and cultural barriers. As pointed out by Guo and Gallo (2017), regardless of China’s enormous pool of university graduates (7.4 million in 2016), less than 20% of Chinese job candidates would be suited to working in a multinational setting because they do not have proficient foreign language (English) skills and are not familiar with Western communication styles. This point is consistent with the findings of the present study in that ineffective workplace communication does have a negative impact on an individual’s career development.

5.3. RQ 3- the communicative competences of using BELF at work

RQ3: What are the communicative competences related to BELF use perceived as necessary by Chinese business professionals to achieve successful intercultural business communication?

In this study, RQ 3 examines what Chinese business professionals perceive to be the obligatory communicative competences when using BELF, not only to fulfill various communicative practices, but also to meet various communicative challenges at work. In this section, the findings related to communicative competences are discussed and

a business know-how toolkit; namely, the intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC) toolkit is proposed.

Intercultural communicative competence constructs have been developed by scholars from different disciplines (i.e., second language acquisition, BELF studies, and business and management). In turn, the use of Earley and Ang's (2003) CQ construct in this study was justified on the grounds that it included the main categories for examining the respondents' intercultural competence data. In addition, Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) communicative competence framework was used to measure the respondents' communicative language ability data. The correlation analysis indicated that all six factors identified by factor analysis were positively correlated with IBCC: four from the CQ construct (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ); and two from the CLA construct (pragmatic competence and strategic competence). Regression analysis showed that four factors significantly predicted IBCC: three from CQ construct (i.e., metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ) and one from CLA construct (i.e., strategic competence).

The findings reveal that, in general, culture ability contributes more than language ability to the overall level of IBCC. The result also implies that a professional's performance in intercultural business communication is more related to their competencies when using BELF than the extent to which they are equipped with adequate linguistic knowledge. In other words, a business professional who has not acquired high scores in foreign language assessments may still be an effective BELF user in intercultural business communication if she/he has a high level of ability in other aspects such as intercultural sensitivity, motivation to communicate, and using appropriate communicative strategies (e.g., asking for clarification; see details in Section 4.2.4 of Chapter 4) to match various communication needs. As Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2008) note, cultural awareness actually comes before language knowledge for smooth intercultural communication, and one can learn about the culture without knowing the language.

Moreover, it is worth noting that among the four factors, motivational CQ is found to have the greatest effect on one's IBCC level ($\beta = .36$). This finding supports the recent research by Ott and Michailova (2018), who reviewed 73 conceptual and empirical articles published on CQ from 2002 to 2015 in a range of journals such as management and international business journals, education, and psychology. Their review found that motivational CQ is recognized as potentially the most vital CQ in facilitating communication effectiveness. Those with high motivational CQ intentionally and willingly direct their attention and energy towards intercultural situations (Deci & Ryan, 1985) so that they can remain confident in their intercultural effectiveness (Bandura, 2002). In addition, Cattell (1971) has asserted that motivational CQ is crucial in facilitating the growth of metacognitive CQ and cognitive CQ (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2012). Thus, enhancing an individual's interest in experiencing other cultures and engaging in communicating with people from different cultures can improve their communication skills in intercultural business contexts.

The findings from the quantitative data analysis were confirmed, explained, and supplemented by the qualitative data analysis results. Concerning the IBCC construct from the perspective of language competence, multiple factors are identified as indispensable for successful intercultural communication (i.e., clarity, fluency, politeness, directness, being strategic, and the appropriateness of using language knowledge). Good language ability mainly lies in whether the professional's communicative performance can result in efficient task fulfillment at work. All these factors are closely related to pragmatic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence in the study's theoretical framework, which generally parallels the quantitative results in this dimension. From the perspective of culture competence, three key factors (i.e., motivation to communicate, cultural awareness, and adaptability) are recognized as essential for successful intercultural communication, which also falls within the theoretical framework of the study. That is, motivation to communicate corresponds to motivational CQ, cultural awareness to metacognitive CQ, and adaptability to behavioral CQ.

However, the interview data also shows that Chinese business professionals have disparate points of view on the necessity to acquire knowledge of specific cultures, which corresponds to cognitive CQ in the theoretical framework. Although Chinese business professionals agree that it is imperative to learn cultural universals, especially the universals in business culture such as being polite and being direct in business communication, they diverge in their views on the necessity of learning culture-specific differences (mainly related to national culture differences). It is surprising that learning culture-specific knowledge is not commonly regarded as essential, as might have been imagined given the trend for intercultural communication. The reasons behind this are twofold. On the one hand, the role of culture in China's intercultural workplace is determined by an array of individual factors, including an employee's duties, motivations, and the extent of exposure to the intercultural communication (e.g., staying in home country or abroad). Thus, having a good knowledge of a specific culture may be not compulsory to all Chinese business professionals. On the other hand, those who contended that it is necessary to be well informed about cultural knowledge remain concerned that they do not have enough time to equip themselves with such knowledge, especially considering the wide diversity of cultures. The divergent views held by participants on the need to acquire cultural knowledge may help to explain why cognitive CQ is not recognized as a significant predictor of IBCC in the statistical analysis.

Grounded in the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses, a construct for intercultural communicative competence in a business context is proposed (i.e., IBCC). Figure 5.1 displays an IBCC toolkit, which is an obligatory element of business know-how for professionals to succeed in globalized business. In the toolkit, six competence factors comprise IBCC. According to the quantitative data findings, four factors significantly predicted IBCC. Three factors from the CQ construct (metacognitive, motivational and behavioral CQ) and one factor from the CLA construct (strategic competence). The qualitative data analysis confirmed the quantitative data findings and indicated two additional factors (cognitive CQ and pragmatic competence) were also important for successful intercultural business communication. In addition, a correlation analysis demonstrated that the two competences were positively associated with an individual's success in IBCC. Thus,

the two competences were kept in the toolkit, displayed with a line of dashes to distinguish them from the other four. Each trait in the cycle is briefly discussed below.

First, from a cultural perspective, a business professional needs to have adequate metacognitive CQ for the intercultural communication to succeed. This 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 CQ also refers to the acknowledgement of "different ways of doing things" (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta's, 2011, p. 255), which necessitates flexibility and tolerance during intercultural business communication. This finding aligns with the view held by Baker (2011), who proposes that 'intercultural awareness' is needed for ELF users to communicate in diverse global contexts.

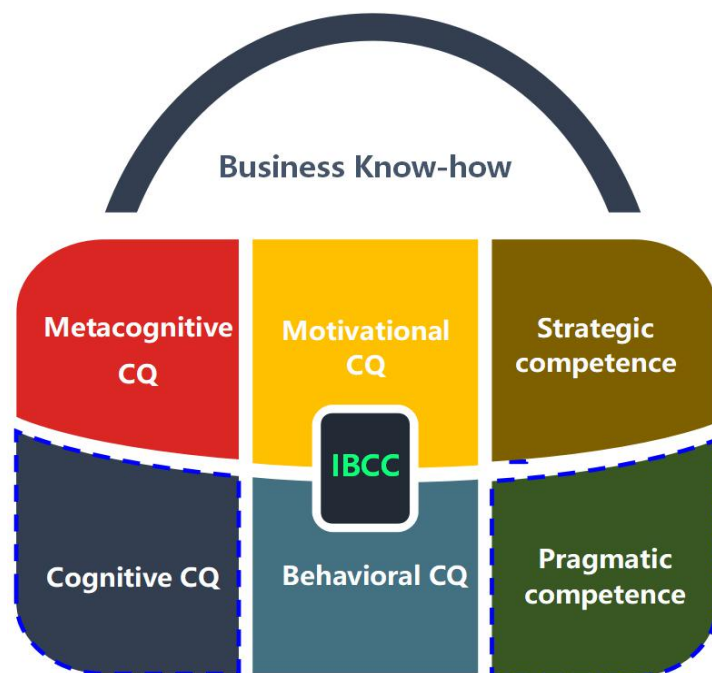


Figure 5.1. Business know-how toolkit: intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC).

Motivational CQ is another integral capability with which a business professional must be equipped. This is closely related to the level of motivation required in

intercultural communication, especially for those who have relatively low language proficiency. A willingness to direct effort and energy into intercultural communication can lead to more exposure to such activities, either to accomplish work tasks or to build a rapport with colleagues, which will, in turn, facilitate an improvement in IBCC. The result also shows that motivational CQ has the greatest effect on one's level of IBCC. In addition to metacognitive and motivational CQ, behavioral CQ also plays a vital functional role in intercultural business communication. This refers to appropriately adjusting one's verbal or non-verbal behavior to meet the needs of specific interaction contexts. It is imperative for business professionals to have a high level of behavioral CQ so that they can handle either expected or unexpected situations.

Moreover, it should be noted that even though cognitive CQ did not significantly predict IBCC it does not mean that it is not important. Correlation analysis did indicate a positive relationship between cognitive CQ and IBCC. The reason for its statistical insignificance may be that the participants of the study were working in their home country and were quite familiar with the local culture. Of course, it is not necessary for local business professionals to adapt to their home culture, unlike expatriates who may need to familiarize themselves with the target culture when adjusting to work and life in another country. However, as discussed above, it is agreed that acquiring culture-universal knowledge (e.g., the conventions of doing business) is of vital importance to successfully achieve business outcomes, and that understanding culture-specific knowledge (e.g., business counterparts' organizational and national culture) can surely facilitate rapport building and maintaining relationships. In turn, this will further promote intercultural business communication. Cultural differences were not found to be an insurmountable barrier, but professionals should be sensitive to cultural factors (especially work cultures) that may cause disruptions in communication. Moreover, they should be aware of the cultural knowledge that may facilitate interpersonal relationships, especially with overseas superiors who often have the power to decide an employee's career promotion within the company. As Stadler (2017) suggested, an integrated approach that combines the development of both culture-specific and culture-generic knowledge is important for practitioners to succeed in intercultural communication.

Second, from the language perspective, it is important for business professionals to master strategic competence when engaging in intercultural communication, especially those with low proficiency in speaking a foreign language. Moreover, pragmatic competence can also contribute to IBCC success, although not in a statistically significant way. This is because strategic competence per se implies mastery of pragmatic competence, otherwise one cannot employ the strategies effectively to either smooth the way for interactions or to prevent communication breakdowns by properly connecting linguistic forms with meanings. Therefore, there may not be a clear distinction between strategic competence and pragmatic competence because they often function in tandem. Moreover, as suggested by Birner (2013), pragmatic competence is usually implicit and known at some level, and it is not generally available for explicit assessment. This comment may explain why pragmatic competence did not emerge as a significantly independent variable to predict IBCC.

Indeed, strategic and pragmatic competences entail the ability to find appropriate and effective ways to clarify and convey messages and repair communicative breakdowns. In fact, interviewees asserted that in some situations it was still common for speakers with limited linguistic resources to communicate with each other, despite many linguistic errors. This is because they often use highly specialized technical terms and share standardized concepts, allowing even very basic English to serve the intent of the business interaction. Even if the communication channels break down, they can always find a way to compensate for their lack of language proficiency such as asking the interlocutor to repeat the utterance, using gestures, or searching for specific words by using the dictionary app on their smartphones. A more detailed discussion of communicative strategies is provided in the next section.

As discussed above, culture and language are two integral and inseparable parts of IBCC. In fact, their close interconnection is evident in how one facilitates the other. For example, individuals who have high metacognitive CQ can remind themselves to

use appropriate linguistic resources to convey their meanings when conversing with people from different cultural backgrounds. Individuals who are fluent and skillful language users in intercultural communication situations must have high motivational CQ to continuously equip themselves with the required knowledge and to involve themselves in various intercultural contexts. In addition, individuals who can competently apply various strategies are bound to have high behavioral CQ. Therefore, those who aim to achieve success in intercultural communication need to be capable in both culture and language competences as shown in Figure 5.1.

5.4. RQ 4- the communicative strategies of using BELF at work

RQ4: How do Chinese business professionals deal with the challenges they encounter when using BELF in intercultural business communication?

RQ 4 examines what communicative strategies are applied by Chinese business professionals when using BELF to compensate for breakdowns in communication, or to improve communication effectiveness. In this section, the findings related to two categories of strategies are discussed: (1) on-the-stage strategies, and (2) off-the-stage strategies.

The findings reveal that although Chinese business professionals regard language and culture barriers to have an impact (to a greater or less extent) on their daily work communication and ways of doing business, they believe that the impact seldom leads to a serious communication failure. One reason for this is that both parties (Chinese and their foreign counterparts) in intercultural communication are aware that they have dissimilarities, and therefore they tend to have an open mind to the dissimilarities. Moreover, expatriates become gradually accustomed to the local culture and can develop an approach to interacting with Chinese in English after years of experience of working and living overseas. In this connection, neither cultural difference nor language proficiency is an insurmountable obstacle to this type of interaction. More importantly, the interview data also reveals that Chinese professionals try to accommodate various situational needs during intercultural

communications. Specifically, they do this by using a wide range of communicative strategies to facilitate intercultural communication and to manage any communicative breakdowns that occur during the communication.

According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), communicative strategies are strategies that second/foreign language learners apply to overcome communication problems and to ensure their intended meaning is conveyed. For instance, the strategies include paraphrasing, using word substitutions, and switching to their first language (Ellis, 2008). In examining the strategies, the communicative strategies used by the interviewees were classified into two categories: on-the-stage strategy and off-the-stage strategy. The strategies used during the communication to enhance communicative efficiency such as code-switching reflect the on-the-stage strategy. Alternatively, the actions taken before or after the communication to improve the effectiveness of upcoming interaction such as fully preparing the English sentences to be used reflect the off-the-stage strategy.

As for on-the-stage strategy, several strategies were identified from the interviewees' responses. When dealing with written communication challenges, Chinese professionals commonly look up unknown words online, seek help from colleagues, or use an alternative expression if it conveys the same meaning. In dealing with spoken-communication challenges, they frequently used strategies such as code-switching, message reduction, and non-linguistic strategies (e.g., observing the interlocutor's non-verbal communication). A full list of on-the stage strategies to emerge from the interview data is provided in Section 4.2.4. Moreover, the findings also suggest that the communicative strategies applied by Chinese business professionals not only accord with the strategies used by language learners (see Dörnyei & Scott, 1997) but also with the strategies used by language users at work (see Firth, 1996; Rogerson-Revell, 2010). One typical example is the strategy, "*Let it pass*" (Firth, 1996, p. 243), whereby lingua franca speakers focus on message content instead of accurate linguistic form in communication. As one interviewee reported; "What we mainly focus on in a conversation is the meaning and real intention of the other party, so grammar is considered the least important." In this sense, if the

meaning conveyed is understood by the listener, BELF users would ignore the language anomalies.

Some communicative strategies identified in the present study can however be commonly observed in general conversational situations such as message reduction or replacement (see Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Four recognized strategies are rarely identified in previous studies, if at all: using an e-dictionary, mode-switching, seeking help from colleagues, and observing facial expression (as in non-linguistic strategies). Due to the rapid developments in digital technologies and the ease with which they can be accessed, people can download an e-dictionary app to their smartphones and use it when needed. This convenience enables business professionals to use this tool during the communication (mostly informal communication) to look up unfamiliar words (i.e., as an on-the-stage strategy), because an e-dictionary is more efficient and accessible than traditional paper dictionaries. Seeking help from colleagues can fasten the speed of language problem solving to enhance work efficiency. Observing facial expressions or non-verbal communication gestures in general can increase business professionals' awareness of the cues related to communicative breakdowns (e.g., the interlocutor looks confused) so that they can instantly adapt their language expression and communication skills to prevent such breakdowns from occurring. Another interesting strategy, mode-switching, is specifically used in business contexts. The strategy involves changing the form of communication, usually from spoken to written. For example, when professionals find it difficult to understand the English used by a person with a strong accent, they ask the speaker to put their utterances into written words so that they can better understand the speaker's ideas and avoid wasting time in meaningless communication. Chinese professionals generally take a pragmatic and flexible approach to accommodating communication by skillfully using a variety of on-the-stage strategies.

As for the off-the-stage strategy, Chinese professionals either seek help from a colleague with higher language proficiency or check the grammatical accuracy carefully by themselves before sending out a formal written communication. They often also fully-prepare in advance to facilitate an upcoming face-to-face

communication, including the identification of key language points and familiarizing themselves with aspects of the interlocutor's culture such as taboo words or gestures. Following the communication, Chinese professionals reflect on their performance and learn from their notes or conversation recordings to identify solutions to the problems that occur in the interaction. Reflection can help build a link between an individual's self-cultural identity and specific communication practices (Jameson, 2007). The extent to which the cultural elements influence communication varies from person to person. Therefore, each learner is encouraged to look within and to recognize the impact of culture on his or her own communication and language use.

Off-the-stage strategies are regarded as just as crucial as on-the-stage strategies by Chinese business professionals to achieve successful intercultural communication. Nonetheless, off-the-stage strategies are seldom reported in previous research studies. Thus, it is necessary for business professionals to pay attention to three stages of an interaction: before, during, and after the interaction.

In brief, to facilitate a smooth communicative intercultural interaction, Chinese professionals need to apply a wide variety of communicative strategies effectively to deal with the diverse types of problems that may occur during the communication process. The appropriate and skillful use of both on-the-stage and off-the-stage strategies as an integrated approach will assist them in achieving effective and efficient intercultural business communication.

5.5. Summary

This chapter summarized the findings generated from the data analysis to answer the four research questions in the present study. The findings were also discussed and compared to those reported in previous studies on related themes (e.g., language needs in a company). The findings generated from both questionnaires and interviews were briefly reviewed and further discussed in relation to each other. The comparisons made between the present study and previous research studies were

presented from four perspectives (needs, challenges, competences, and strategies) of BELF use in the workplace in Mainland China. Both the similarities and dissimilarities in the findings were identified from the comparison, which, to some extent, revealed the significance of this study. More about the implications and contributions of the present study is provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Implications

This chapter concludes the thesis by firstly providing a summary of the key findings to emerge from the data results to answer the four proposed research questions (RQs). The chapter then presents the contributions of the study and its theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. Lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions for further study are put forward.

6.1 Summary of the key findings

The present study discovered four major findings in relation to the four RQs about the communicative needs, challenges, competences, and strategies related to BELF use in the context of intercultural business communication in Mainland China.

To answer RQ1 regarding the communicative needs of BELF use at work, four sets of hypotheses (H1-H4) were tested. The statistical results consistently provided evidence that English, as one of the working languages, plays a crucial role in workplace communication in Mainland China, especially in multinational companies. Chinese business professionals working in multinational companies are required to use English for written communications (both internal and external) more often than for spoken communication. This is because the professionals are accustomed to speaking Chinese (the first language) for informal communication where no expatriates are present. Conversely, Chinese business professionals working in non-multinational companies use English in written and spoken communication with almost equal frequency. Moreover, they often use English for external communication (e.g., writing letters and external emails). In addition, the qualitative data provides evidence that the extent to which English is used for business communication is not only determined by the company ownership structure, but also by an array of individual factors such as the professional's language proficiency, duties, and job rank. More importantly, the present study also reveals the culture-related requirements related to English use in the modern workplace. The interview data demonstrates that BELF use for business communication is consistently influenced by cultural differences such as

rhetorical strategies (directness vs. indirectness), especially when communication is related to specific genres such as commercial genres (e.g., a statement of a new company policy) and relational genres (e.g., social talk).

Regarding RQ2 and the examination of the communicative challenges experienced by the Chinese business professionals, findings from the quantitative data present two features of communicative tasks that a Chinese business professional find challenging to accomplish in English. The first feature relates to tasks typically used for external communication (e.g., letters) and which often require a higher degree of formality in writing. The second feature relates to tasks that require more field-specific knowledge (e.g., legal documents). Moreover, two sets of hypotheses (H5 and H6) were tested. The results suggest that Chinese business professionals with higher English language proficiency do not necessarily experience fewer difficulties in fulfilling communicative tasks (H5); whereas, professionals with more experience in completing the tasks have higher level confidence to do so (H6). That is, the Chinese business professionals' familiarity with the task plays a more important role than their level of English proficiency in accomplishing the communicative work tasks effectively. The follow-up qualitative data findings further substantiate the quantitative data findings. The interview data reveal that the reasons the professionals regard some intercultural communication tasks as challenging are related to both linguistic and cultural elements. Linguistically, four factors emerged: lack of field-specific vocabulary; colloquial expressions used by native English speakers (NES); the strong accents of non-native English speakers (NNES); and an inability to use English in appropriate formats, styles and tones. Culturally, three factors emerged: differences in working styles, lack of culture knowledge, and variations in language expressions due to cultural diversity.

Another important finding of this study relates to the communicative competence required by Chinese business professionals to meet the communicative needs and challenges (RQ3). Four sets of hypotheses (H7-H10) were tested, with the results revealing that both the language and cultural abilities of the speaker are integral to the structure of the professionals' intercultural business communicative competence (IBCC), and that cultural ability is a determining factor. That is, cultural variables

predict IBCC better than language variables. This result indicates that a Chinese business professional who does not acquire a high score in foreign language assessments may still be an effective BELF user in intercultural business communication if she or he possesses high-level abilities in other aspects such as intercultural sensitivity, motivation to communicate, and the use of appropriate strategies to meet various communication needs. The qualitative data findings confirmed, explained, and, more importantly, supplemented the quantitative data results. One surprising finding generated from the interview data is that learning culture-specific knowledge is not commonly regarded as essential by Chinese business professionals. Indeed, its importance depends on an array of individual factors including the employee's duties (e.g., taking frequent business trips), motivation (e.g., being willing to learn about a different culture), and the extent of exposure to intercultural communication (e.g., working in a home country or abroad). This finding is significant in that it demonstrates the requirement to learning specific culture knowledge differs between business professionals working in a foreign country as expatriates and those working in their motherland, as both need to engage in intercultural communication.

Based on both the quantitative and qualitative data findings, an IBCC toolkit was proposed which postulates six competence factors. Four factors were identified quantitatively as significant predictors of IBCC: metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, behavioral CQ, and strategic competence. Two factors were identified qualitatively as important for successful intercultural business communication: cognitive CQ and pragmatic competence. The toolkit indicates an understanding of the communicative competencies considered as essential to address the communicative needs and challenges encountered by Chinese business professionals at work.

In terms of RQ4 related to communicative strategies, the present study identified 13 on-the-stage strategies and 4 off-the-stage strategies frequently used by Chinese business professionals to cope with the communicative challenges they encounter or to facilitate communicative success. Application of these communication strategies is considered important to avoid communicative failure and thereby facilitate more

effective and efficient interactions. Most on-the-stage strategies identified by the Chinese business professionals are commonly observed in conversational situations (e.g., Firth, 1996; Gass, 2012; Rogerson-Revell, 2010); whereas, some relatively less reported and recognized on-the-stage strategies are applied in business contexts specifically such as using an E-dictionary during communication, or changing the form of communication, usually from spoken to written form. Indeed, the rapid development of technology enables business professionals to use the E-dictionary on their cell phones to resolve vocabulary problems, which, in turn, enhances the communication effectiveness. In addition, when Chinese business professionals find it difficult to understand the English being spoken by a person with a strong accent, they often ask the speaker to write down what they have said. This is to better understand the speaker's ideas and to avoid wasting time in meaningless communication. Moreover, off-the stage strategies such as fully preparing before a planned interaction and carefully reflecting on self-performance are crucial to improving communication. Potentially, these findings have a significant pedagogical impact on the teaching and learning of English for Special Purposes (ESP) in general and Business English (BE) at tertiary education level in Mainland China.

6.2 Contributions of the present study

The most important contribution of this research is the identification of the communicative competences required for successful intercultural business communication. This study provides an inter-disciplinary perspective on intercultural communicative competence by integrating studies in Applied Linguistics, Communication, and Business and Management. Thus, the IBCC model proposed contributes to existing intercultural communication theory by applying a multidisciplinary approach to further the understanding of the communicative competences required for Chinese business professionals working in intercultural contexts.

Moreover, although intercultural communicative competence has been widely researched by scholars in western contexts, the present study is the first empirical investigation to focus specifically on business professionals' IBCC in Mainland China.

Moreover, this study investigated the communicative competence of business professionals participating in intercultural business communications in their motherland. This fundamentally differs from most intercultural communication research which mainly examines respondents' learning or working in a foreign country (such as international students, expatriates) and the issue of acculturation (Kealey, 2015). Six competences are identified in this study as essential for successful intercultural business communication, alongside 17 coping strategies to either repair communicative breakdowns or facilitate communicative efficiency. These strategies are applied by Chinese business professionals and are considered as being effective overall. With the competences and strategies highlighted by this study as important references, both business practitioners and education stakeholders can understand the essential elements for effective intercultural business communication.

The second major contribution to the field is the scope of the present study. It examines the interactive relationship between culture and language in intercultural business communication rather than focus on one aspect only; either language or culture. Furthermore, this study examines the roles that culture and language play in three types of companies; namely, state-owned, privately-owned, and multinational, focusing on the similarities and differences among them in terms of BELF use at work. As such, the present study provides valuable insights to language learners, users, and education practitioners in Mainland China particularly into the language and culture communicative needs related to BELF use in the three types of companies. This helps to narrow the gap between classroom learning and real-world use of BELF. Indeed, BE, as a nationally recognized academic program, is still relatively new in Mainland China and this research focus covers virgin territory to date, with plenty of areas still need of exploration (Zhang & Wang, 2011). This is discussed in more depth in the section on pedagogical implications.

The third major contribution of this study to the field is its identification of the communicative challenges and strategies related intercultural communication. Identifying the communicative challenges encountered by Chinese business professionals is an important step to improving students' and professionals' IBCC

because it enhances the awareness and knowledge of language learners, users, teachers, and trainers about the potential difficulties around intercultural business communication. Enhanced awareness and knowledge not only facilitate the psychological preparedness of language learners and users for work encounters, it also equips them with strategies and skills to cope with the challenges. Moreover, the findings also provide practical and effective strategies that enable professionals to resolve the challenges they encounter in intercultural interactions. Therefore, the present study both identifies the issues often experienced by business professionals and offers potential solutions to address such challenges.

6.3 Implications of the present study

The present study is one of only a few to investigate intercultural business communication in Mainland China. This is mainly because previous studies have assigned the research focus to locations outside of the Chinese context (Peng, Wu, & Fan, 2015). The present study focuses on the perspectives of Chinese business professionals working in multicultural settings in their home country. The findings of this study are therefore likely to provide insightful implications for intercultural communication theory (the toolkit of IBCC), methodology (a mixed-method approach), and practice (BE practice and BE course design). The findings reported may also illuminate the findings reported for other settings, especially in regions where local business professionals need to use English for workplace communication, and where decisions need to be made about improving the BE curriculum.

6.3.1 Theoretical implications

As the first study to focus specifically on the intercultural business communications of local Chinese business professionals (non-expatriates) in Mainland China from two aspects: namely, language and culture, the present study has significant theoretical implications for communication theory, business practice, and BE teaching in China. The study identifies the communicative needs related to BELF use in three different types of company structures (state-owned, privately-owned, and multinational), generating evidence of the existence of communicative challenges among Chinese

BELF users. The study also proposes a model of IBCC as one of the obligatory elements of business know-how, and explores the communicative strategies applied by professionals to succeed in intercultural business communication. Although there has been wide research on language learners' needs, challenges, and strategies in academic contexts (e.g., Cai, 2012; Dai & Liu, 2016; Gao, 2007; Li, 2014; Wu, 2012; Xie, 2016), little is known about the perceptions of language users in the workplace regarding these aspects. In other words, the two critical factors that can affect intercultural business communication success – language and cultural competency in the real world – have not yet been given enough attention by scholars. As a result, this omission may have limited student learning around these issues and insights at university and diminished young professionals' ability to adjust to the workplace after leaving school. Both outcomes could in turn impede the future career success of Chinese business professionals. Considering the large discrepancy between the number of graduates and the demand for a qualified workforce (Guo & Gallo, 2017), it is hoped that the findings of the present study can shed light on how to improve business practices and BE education. The practical implications of the study are discussed in Section 6.3.3.

6.3.2 Methodological implications

The most important methodological implication of the study is the advantage of the mixed-method approach. This is because many studies of intercultural communicative competence adopt only quantitative research methods (e.g., Ang et al., 2007; Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fantini, 2009; Gamst, 2004; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013), with a few adopting only qualitative research methods (e.g., Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005). The measurement instruments used in the present study provide both quantitative and qualitative data to realize triangulation. Firstly, based on the research aims and a review of the literature, a multi-faceted questionnaire was developed and used to investigate Chinese business professionals' perspectives of their communicative needs, challenges, and competences related to using BELF at work. Furthermore, the questionnaire data were triangulated with data obtained from in-depth interviews which further unraveled the nuances associated with the BELF use at work. Simply put, the data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews were complementary

and wholly addressed the research questions. A study design that combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research approaches thus yields significant findings.

In addition to the mixed-method approach, the sample in this study comprised Chinese business professionals who were required to use English in their workplaces. As a result, the participants were closely associated with the issues addressed in this study. As reported in Chapter 3, the participants worked in either state-owned companies, privately-owned companies or multinational companies based in China. Moreover, when the researcher selected the interviewees, the demographic details such as working experience, frequency of BELF use at work, and company ownership were taken into consideration. Multiple samples of interviewees enabled the researcher to yield rich information from different perspectives to avoid biased conclusions caused by using a single data sample. Moreover, this sampling method compensates for a major limitation in previous studies as participants who have little experience in intercultural communication (e.g., students) are often asked to self-report behavioral choices in hypothetical situations (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005). Therefore, exploring Chinese business practitioners' practices and experiences supported a more comprehensive understanding of the actual issues related to intercultural business communication.

6.3.3 Practical implications

The study has three important practical implications for business English practitioners and learners as well as business practitioners and trainers. First, this study offers detailed outcomes regarding the communicative needs related to BELF use at work. English use has emerged as a modern business convention/culture in multinational companies, although the extent of its use differs due to various contextual factors including the professional's duties and English language proficiency. The interplay between English and Chinese in workplace communication, as informed in this study, not only emphasizes the importance of developing good proficiency in both languages to enable business professionals to fulfill tasks at work, it highlights the need to be

skilled at choosing an appropriate language code to meet the needs of various communicative situations. Moreover, in contrast to a traditional needs analysis that focuses on language primarily, the present study underlines the need to view culture as one indispensable element influencing the BELF use in contemporary workplaces. This study shows that business professionals not only need to be tolerant of differences in cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies, but also to adjust themselves to those differences. Furthermore, for business professionals who intend to achieve more than just getting their work done, they need to promote and maintain a rapport with others at work, in addition to being appreciative of cultural differences. Therefore, it is necessary for these professionals to understand what cultural differences are, and what specific adjustments should be made to reach a balance between the target culture and the home culture. In this case, business professionals should be trained not only to improve their intercultural awareness (Baker, 2011), but also to enrich their cultural knowledge (e.g., the cultural differences between Western and Asian cultures) to adjust their communicative behaviors.

Second, the findings in this study related to communicative challenges point to the problems in urgent need of solutions to improve BE teaching and training. The challenges encountered at work arise from both language barriers and cultural barriers. Indeed, English used in business communication is complex and multi-faceted and becomes even more complex and multi-faceted when people from different cultural backgrounds use it (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002; Ehrenreich, 2010; Kassim & Ali, 2010). One special communicative activity, social talk, has long been an issue that challenges Chinese business professionals. Deficiency in general English, lack of motivation, and cultural differences all contribute to professionals experiencing barriers to initiating social conversations with foreign staff members. Moreover, the findings reveal a mismatch between the knowledge Chinese professionals have learned at school and the knowledge they need for their work practices. As observed by Han (2010), undergraduate education was of little help to Chinese professionals' later workplace communication, resulting in a gap between 'knowing' and 'doing' (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Thus, BE course/curriculum designers need to design the courses/curricula so that they are more responsive to real-world needs and allow teachers and trainers to adjust their instruction or training methods in the

classroom. As a result, future Chinese business professionals can develop adequate skills and knowledge in both language and culture to succeed in intercultural communication and to establish and maintain relationships in the workplace. Given the importance of BE courses, the next implication discusses the pedagogical implication for BE course design and materials development in detail.

Third, there are implications related to all six elements of the IBCC model for intercultural business communication. Rather than investing resources in flawless language proficiency, attention should be paid to knowledge and abilities development to enhance students' and professionals' IBCC efficacy. In this respect, four knowledge and skills domains need special emphasis. For those involved in intercultural business communication, whether in their motherland or another country, the focus should be on raising their sensitivity and openness to cultural differences (i.e., metacognitive CQ) such as different expressions, accents, or intonations. This competence is related to “culture-generic competence” that focuses on developing a true understanding of cultural differences so as to make comprehensive decisions in intercultural communication situations (Stadler, 2017, p. 451). Given Chinese college students' lack of awareness of foreign interlocutors' cultures, attitudes, or stereotypes (Wu, Fan & Peng, 2013), metacognitive CQ is especially crucial for development when business and education practitioners design teaching or training programs. For example, teaching and learning activities can require Chinese learners to collaborate with learners from different cultures. During collaboration, learners can not only enhance their cultural awareness but also practice their intercultural communication skills.

In addition to enhancing the awareness of cultural differences, it is necessary for business professionals, especially expatriates, to understand what cultural differences are (i.e., cognitive CQ). The findings in this study demonstrate the various types of cultural knowledge professionals require dealing effectively with diverse communication situations. Such knowledge includes awareness of the national culture and business culture (i.e., organizational cultures and professional cultures). This competence is related to “culture-specific competence” and focuses on acquiring

culture-specific insights to quickly boost business efficiency in specific cultural contexts (e.g., knowledge of how to do business in China) (Stadler, 2017, p. 449). Integrating different types of cultural knowledge into ESP or BE teaching is of vital significance because cultural knowledge and competence in other languages are essential to enhance trust and to build a rapport with colleagues or business partners (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

Another important point to highlight is that language learners and users must be motivated to engage in intercultural communication (i.e. motivational CQ) to improve their communicative skills through practice. Indeed, the finding shows that motivational CQ has the greatest effect on an individual's IBCC level. Furthermore, intercultural communicators need to be trained to use appropriate strategies to facilitate communication and to prevent breakdowns in communication caused by linguistic deficiencies or cultural differences (i.e., behavioral intelligence and strategic competence). Hopefully, the communicative strategies presented in this study provide BE teachers, trainers, and students with a baseline for dealing with possible communicative challenges. Lastly, emphasis should be simultaneously attached to having pragmatic competence. This is associated with knowledge of speech acts (Searle, 1969), routine formulae used in social situations (Coulmas, 1979), and implicature (Grice 1975), along with the ability to use such knowledge when engaging in intercultural (business) communication. Taking a business meeting as an example, business professionals need to choose the right communication behavior to respond appropriately to others' points of view, and skillfully use a variety of speech acts such as disagreeing and interrupting.

Furthermore, the proposed IBCC model has important implications for classroom instruction and BE assessment. Drawing attention to the importance of intercultural competence in today's business communication, this thesis recommends that the (inter)cultural content be given equal weight in second language teaching. Adopting an intercultural approach to second language education aims not only to achieve 'native speaker competence', but also 'intercultural (business) communicative competence' (Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003). It is important to accept a mode in which

equal classroom time can be distributed between language knowledge and skills and culture knowledge and skills, rather than just a ‘language-centered’ mode. Moreover, the intercultural component should be an integral part of the assessment practices to examine learners’ intercultural communication capabilities. In other words, embedded in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be the six IBCC model elements. The elements should be integrated into the assessment of the language itself and be used to guide the selection of assessment rubrics and acceptable proficiency levels at different stages of second language learning.

6.4 Limitations of the present study

Notwithstanding the relatively significant findings reported in this thesis, the results of this study should be interpreted with some caution due to several limitations. The debate continues around the advantages and disadvantages of performance-based data versus self-reported data (e.g., Heppner, Wampold, Owen, Wang, & Thompson, 2016; McHugh & Behar, 2012; Northrup, 1996) for gathering information about learners’ language use proficiency. As such, the present study has typical limitations (e.g., participants either exaggerate or under-report their situations) related to the use of self-rating questionnaire data, as with all studies relying on self-reported data. Nevertheless, the general criticisms of self-reported methods have been exaggerated (Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Spector, 2006) and using self-reports is in fact no guarantee of having significant results, even with very large samples (see Boswell, Boudreau, & Dunford, 2004). Moreover, empirical evidence has suggested that people can provide information by reflecting on their own communication behavior (Riggio & Riggio, 2001). In addition, the self-reported instruments used in the present study (see Section 3.2.1 for more details) have been proved empirically to be valid and thus are a powerful method for examining learners’ abilities. In other words, the risk of participants’ either over- or under-rating their level of competencies for the current study is low.

Another limitation of this study is the common method biases; namely, that the measures of the predictor and criterion variables are obtained from the same sources (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To limit this potential bias in the

present study, some procedural remedies were implemented as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, the respondents' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed throughout the research process. Moreover, the items measuring respondents' communicative language ability, cultural intelligence and IBCC were displayed on separate pages of the questionnaire. Items used in the instruments were also different in statement type, as manifested by using different descriptions of the Likert scale in the questionnaire. Some items were expressed by their 'difficulty in using' the question type, and others were expressed by a 'can-do' type of statement (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1.2). In addition, the online form of the questionnaire aimed to prevent respondents from going back to previous pages to edit answers once a new page was entered. These procedures can all contribute to minimizing the effects of common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

A third limitation is the rigid structure of the items in the questionnaire, which were set at the beginning of the research and could not be changed. However, using a quantitative method seemed more effective to realize the aims of the present study and explore a more comprehensive and representative picture of BELF use in current business communication in Mainland China. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews applied in the study can to a large degree also break through the constraints of questionnaires.

Finally, there is a limitation to the study related to the sample; that is, the participants were all Chinese business professionals working in China (their motherland), which may imply a biased research context. The findings of study are contextualized in intercultural business communication in Mainland China so they may not be generalizable to another geographic context, although the IBCC model proposed does illustrate the competences needed for successful intercultural communication in today's globalized business world. In addition, a great majority of the participants are relatively young staff, with less than 10 years' work experience. Hence, the study may have presented more comprehensive and representative findings if there were more experienced professionals recruited in the sample.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

Suggestions for the further research are closely connected to the limitations of this study. First, the sample could be expanded to include other geographical areas or to specific professional groups (e.g., engineers). For example, in other contexts beyond China, local business professionals' IBCC can be explored to determine whether similar findings are generated and compared to those in the present study. More specific research investigations into other contexts and settings (e.g., the high-tech industry) can help draw a more realistic picture of the contextual factors that influence professionals' behavior in intercultural encounters.

Second, self-report data has its limitations in that it is unable to provide in-depth details concerning professionals' actual performances at work. Such missing details may include how they employ communicative strategies to negotiate meanings or compensate for their language deficiencies, and the other contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural business communication. Thus, qualitative methods such as discourse analysis and observational methods are useful instruments for use in further studies to achieve a better understanding of what happens during workplace intercultural interactions. In addition, discourse analysis can inform whether a gap exists between professionals' self-evaluation and actual performance.

Third, the quantitative findings related to RQ2 did not indicate a negative correlation between respondents' English proficiency and the difficulties they experienced when using English at work. Although the qualitative data findings explain the possible reasons, further research is recommended to explore whether more competent English learners are more successful intercultural communicators in business settings. For example, professionals with different language proficiencies might be asked to evaluate the perceived degree of difficulty to accomplish different tasks at work using a Likert-scale approach. After evaluation, follow-up interviews can be conducted to determine what and why the business professionals regard the tasks as easy or difficult. Statistical findings may inform whether business professionals with higher

English language proficiency report lower degrees of difficulty in completing the tasks. Moreover, interview findings can present the reasons why professionals report a high or low degree of difficulty. For example, is it related to their English competence, working experience, or other reasons?

Fourth, in order to minimize common method biases, measures of the predictor and criterion variables can be obtained from different sources. For example, in addition to the self-report questionnaire, peer-review or observation can be used for data collection. To evaluate business professionals' communicative competences, superiors or colleagues can provide comments on their communicative competences and researchers can apply shadowing observation (see Lu, 2018) to their communication performances at work. Another important suggestion is related to the questionnaire design. The finding suggests that business culture may sometimes outweigh national culture in business communication. Thus, it is important to focus on measuring the knowledge of business culture in a questionnaire when the instrument aims to measure professionals' suitability to take on tasks in multicultural business settings. In addition, to answer RQ3, two instruments were selected and combined to measure professionals' communicative language ability in the study. Although Cronbach's alpha (.92) shows a high level of reliability for the items used, it is recommended that future research develop a scale to include all competences related to communicative language ability to extend the findings in the present study. That is, with a complete scale of communicative language ability, researchers can better view the role of language played in intercultural communication effectiveness.

Fifth, this research study demonstrates that under the effect of rapidly advancing communication technologies, business practitioners tend to communicate by instant messaging and video conferencing at work. Mobile communication is considered as beneficial for businesses to perform in a faster and more efficient way. Thus, it is worthwhile to investigate the characteristics of business discourses generated from different mobile devices and the procedures involved in such practices to further understand the pros and cons arising from using mobile technology in intercultural business communication.

Sixth, the competences identified from the quantitative data analysis account for about 65 percent of variation in Chinese business professionals' IBCC. Thus, almost 35 percent of variance is unexplained. Most probably, this is the result of respondents' different individual characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy and social identity) and other possible factors beyond the scope of this study. Thus, further studies are needed to examine the role of individual characteristics in intercultural business communication and their relationship with IBCC.

More importantly, it is high time to explore how to integrate cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity improvements, and communicative strategies into ESP (particularly BE) teaching, which are equally important to be a successful BELF user at work. According to Wang, Chen, and Zhang (2011), the national curriculum for the undergraduate program in BE in China allocates 50-60% of total teaching hours (1800 hours) to courses in language knowledge and skills; whereas, only 5-10% is allocated to the teaching of intercultural communication skills. Considering the equal importance of both language and cultural abilities for the intercultural business practitioner, more effort needs to be made to improve the design of intercultural communication skills courses. Furthermore, education practitioners need to investigate how to design appropriate tools to assess students' intercultural business communication skills. Given the differences between BE and GE (General English) based on their discourse attributes and vocabulary meanings, BE assessments should be different from the present tools used to evaluate students' GE abilities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: English Version of the Survey

Questionnaire for Chinese Business Professionals

This survey is designed to understand your needs for business English use in your workplaces and your thoughts and beliefs as English users in intercultural business communication. The questionnaire consists of three sections, which will take you 10-15 minutes to fill out. This research is for Yao Yao's doctoral dissertation research. Yao Yao is currently a research student (PhD program) at Department of English of City University of Hong Kong. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Research Committee at City University of Hong Kong.

The research results will provide important information for multinational companies concerning communication training for their employees in order to increase intercultural business communicative effectiveness, thus increasing organizational effectiveness. Consequently, this research may benefit you who play a role in intercultural business communication in China. Moreover, the research results will inform those universities, who provide programs related to English for business communication, of important information in this regard.

Once you have read this introduction and your questions about the study are answered, please indicate your consent by clicking the "Next" button. This will allow your participation in this study. This is not a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. The results of this survey will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only for research purpose, so please give your responses sincerely. Thank you very much for your participation!

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Yao Yao at:
zzzzzz@my.cityu.edu.hk

Part I

This part aims to understand your needs for business English use in your workplaces.

I. Language needs in the workplace

1. The proportion of communication in language (English vis-a-vis Chinese)

What percentage of your communication is conducted in

- a. Chinese?
- b. English?

2. The proportion of communication with native speakers versus non-native speakers of English

What percentage of your communication in English takes place with

- a. Native speakers of English? (i.e. Americans, Canadians, Australians, British, and New Zealanders)
- b. Non-native speakers of English?

3. Please circle the number representing the frequency of your using different modes of written / spoken communication in the workplace. Carefully read the notes below before you rate the frequency by circling the number corresponding to the frequencies.

Notes: Please note that 1 indicates the respective communication task in English by the individual is less than 5% (<5%); 2 indicates the frequency is between 5-10%; 3 indicates 11-30%; 4 indicates 31-50%; 5 indicates 51-80%; and 6 indicates the respective communication task in English is more than 80% (> 80%).

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6
E.g.: If your frequency of writing memo in English is approximately 60% in your workplace communication, then you will circle 5 as shown below:					
1	2	3	4	5	6

3.1a Written communication in English

	Text type	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Usually	Always
1	letters	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	memos	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	faxes	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	internal emails	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	external emails	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	reports	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	minutes	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	legal documents	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	notices	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	promotional	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	circulars/newspap	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	websites	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	business plans	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	instant messaging	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	others, please specify:	1	2	3	4	5	6

3.1b. Of all of the written task(s) listed on 3.1a, which task(s) do you think is difficult? Please write the corresponding number(s) representing the task(s) in the blank space provided. You can put down as many tasks applicable to your own situation as possible. For example, "If you find writing letters, legal documents, and promotional materials in English are difficult to fulfill at work then please write the corresponding numbers in the space provided.

I find the task(s) of written communication in English is difficult to fulfill in the workplace. [1, 8, 10]

3.2a Spoken communication in English

Note: Please note that 1 indicates the communication in English by the individual is less than 5% (<5%); 2 indicates the communication in English is 5-10%; 3 indicates the mode of communication in English is 11-30%; 4 indicates the communication in English is 31-50%; 5 indicates the communication in English is 51-80%; and 6 indicates the communication in English is more than 80% (> 80%).

	Speaking/Listening situations	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Usually	Always
1	formal meetings (i.e., with agenda, minutes)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	informal meetings/discussions	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	staff training /development and workshops	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	presentations	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	video conferences	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	seminars	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	interviews	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	business negotiations	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	telephoning	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	social interactions at office (e.g., chatting, staff party)	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	press briefings	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	announcements	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	voice messages	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	others, please specify:	1	2	3	4	5	6

3.2b Of all of the spoken task(s) listed on 3.2a, which task(s) do you think is difficult? Please write the corresponding number(s) representing the task(s) in the blank space

provided. You can put down as many tasks applicable to your own situation as possible. For example, “If you find that taking part in formal meetings, video conferences, and press briefings in English are difficult, then please write the corresponding numbers in the provided space.

I find the task(s) of spoken communication in English is difficult to fulfill in the workplace. [1, 5, 11]

Part II

This part aims to understand your thoughts and beliefs as English users in intercultural business communication.

In this part, please tell how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 6. Carefully read the example below before you rate the level of agreement by circling the number corresponding to the levels.

For example:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6
E.g.: If you strongly agree with the statement that I like swimming very much, then you will circle 6 as shown below					
1	2	3	4	5	6

1	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I know the marriage systems of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6

6	I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Business is a communication-based activity.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	When I communicate interculturally, I try to see the matter from the other person's perspective as well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I pay a lot of attention to delivering the message clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I know the English vocabulary of my own business area.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Below are the new questions in this part exploring how hard it is for you to use English for intercultural communication. Please answer them by circling a number from 1 to 6. Carefully read the example below before you rate the level of difficulty by circling the number corresponding to the levels.

For example:

Very hard	Hard	Slightly	Not very	Not Hard	Not hard at all
1	2	3	4	5	6
E.g.: If you find it very hard to lose weight, then you will circle 1 as shown below					
①	2	3	4	5	6

17	How hard is it for you to organize a speech in English with several ideas in it?	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	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)?	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	How hard is it for you to ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't clear to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	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?	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	How hard is it for you to make no grammar mistakes in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	How hard is it for you to tell how polite English-speaking people are by the kind of English they use?	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	How hard is it for you to tell how well it is organized when you hear something in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	How hard is it for you to put several English sentences together in a row?	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	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?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part III

Please provide the following information by putting a “✓” in the bracket or writing your response in the space.

1. Gender: Female () Male ()

2. Age:

1) 20-25 () 2) 26-30 () 3) 31-35 () 4) 36-40 () 5) 41-45 () 6) 46-50 () 7) 51-60 () 8) >60 ()

3. Email address (only for clarification of the answers):

4. Please indicate the sector you are working in: _____

- 1) Aerospace & defense ()
- 2) Asset management ()
- 3) Automotive ()
- 4) Banking & financial services ()
- 5) Chemicals ()
- 6) Communications ()
- 7) Energy, utilities & mining ()
- 8) Engineering & construction ()
- 9) Entertainment & media ()
- 10) Retail & consumer ()
- 11) Forest, paper & packaging ()
- 12) Government/public services ()
- 13) Healthcare and pharmaceuticals ()
- 14) Hospitality & leisure ()
- 15) Industrial manufacturing ()
- 16) Insurance ()
- 17) Metals ()
- 18) Professional services (e.g. accountants, management consultants and lawyers) ()
- 19) Trading & logistics ()
- 20) Technology ()
- 21) Others, please specify: _____

5. Ownership of your company:

- 1) State-owned ()
- 2) Multinational, please specify (e.g. UK-owned, Japanese-owned, American-owned etc.) _____
- 3) Privately-owned ()

6. Number of employees in your company

- 1) 1-99 () 2) 100-999 () 3) > 999 ()

7. Years of working experience:

- 1) 1-3 () 2) 4-6 () 3) 7-9 () 4) 10-12 () 5) 13-15 () 6) 16-18 () 7) > 18 ()

8. Rank in the current job:

- 1) Senior () 2) Middle () 3) Junior ()

9. Highest academic level achieved:

- 1) Middle school ()
- 2) High school ()
- 3) Higher Diploma ()
- 4) Bachelor's Degree ()
- 5) Master's Degree ()
- 6) Doctor's Degree ()
- 7) Others, please specify: _____

10. Your highest level of English proficiency:

- 1) CET 4
- 2) CET 6
- 3) TEM 4
- 4) TEM 8
- 5) Others: _____

Appendix 2: Chinese Version of the Survey

中国商务人士问卷调查

本调查旨在了解您在工作场所中对使用商务英语的需要以及您在跨文化商务沟通中作为英语使用者的想法。本问卷包含三部分，需要 10 至 15 分钟来完成。此项目的研究者姚瑶是香港城市大学英文系的博士研究生，此研究是姚瑶博士毕业论文的研究课题。该项目通过了香港城市大学研究项目审查委员会的评审，以确保问卷调查参与者的权利能得到充分的保护，同时该研究不会对参与者造成伤害。

此项研究的结果能提供相关信息给跨国公司的管理团队以及那些设有商务英语或（和）跨文化沟通相关课程的学校和机构，以帮助他们提供更有效的员工培训和课程体系来提高英语语言学习者以及使用者的跨文化商务沟通能力，从而提高他们现在或者未来的工作效率并使企业能更有效地运作。最终，您在跨文化商务沟通中作为英语使用者，将间接受益。

当您阅读完以上内容并获得了您关于此研究项目有关问题的答案后，请通过点击“下一页”按钮来表示您的参与意愿并进入问卷调查。本调查不是考试，所以答案没有对错之分。您也不需要署名。本调查的结果仅用于学术研究，并将严格保密，所以请您据实作答。非常感谢您的支持与参与！

如果您有关于此研究本身的问题，请联系姚瑶,电子邮件地址
zzzzzz@my.cityu.edu.hk

第一部分

这部分旨在了解您在工作场所中对使用商务英语的需要。请不要遗漏任何题目。

1. 在工作中，您日常沟通需要使用英文和中文的比例分别是多少？
 - a. 使用中文的百分比是_____
 - b. 使用英文的百分比是_____

2. 在工作中，您日常沟通需要用英语和英语国家人士（英国人，加拿大人，美国人，澳大利亚人，新西兰人）以及非英语国家人士进行沟通的比例分别是多少？
 - a. 和英语国家人士沟通的百分比是_____
 - b. 和非英语国家人士沟通的百分比是_____

3. 请问在工作中您是否经常需要用英语来完成以下各种书面或者口头沟通的任务。请参照以下范例并圈出代表不同沟通任务使用频率的数字。

注：数字 1 表示您在工作中需要用英语完成该项任务的频率小于 5% (< 5%)；数字 2 表示频率在 5-10%之间；数字 3 表示频率 10-30%；数字 4 表示 30-50%；数字 5 表示 50-80%；数字 6 表示您在工作中需要用英语完成该项任务的频率大于 80% (> 80%)。

从不使用	偶尔使用	有时使用	经常使用	频繁使用	一直使用
1	2	3	4	5	6
例如：您觉得您需要在工作中用英语来写备忘录的频率是 60%，那您就需要在以下数字中圈出数字 5。					
1	2	3	4	5	6

3.1a 英语书面沟通

	文本形式	从不使用	偶尔使用	有时使用	经常使用	频繁使用	一直使用
1	信件	1	2	3	4	5	6

2	备忘录	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	传真	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	公司内部邮件	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	公司外部邮件	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	报告	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	会议记录	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	法律文件	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	通知	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	宣传资料	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	公告/报纸	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	网页	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	商业计划书	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	网络聊天工具						
15	其他, 请说明: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6

3.1b 在 3.1a 中列出的所有书面沟通任务中, 哪些任务您觉得您有困难去完成, 请把代表任务的相应的序号写在空白处。您可以根据自己的实际情况, 写出所有您觉得在工作中遇到困难的任务。例如: 您如果觉得在工作中用英语写信, 写法律文件, 和写宣传资料对您来说有困难, 请在空白处写出他们相对应的序号。

我觉得这些书面沟通任务对我来说用英语完成有困难: [1, 8, 10]

3.2a 英语口语沟通

注: 数字 1 表示您在工作中需要用英语完成该项任务的频率小于 5% (< 5%); 数字 2 表示频率在 5-10% 之间; 数字 3 表示频率 10-30%; 数字 4 表示 30-50%; 数字 5 表示 50-80%; 数字 6 表示您在工作中需要用英语完成该项任务的频率大于 80% (> 80%)。

	口语 / 听力情	从不使用	偶尔使用	有时使用	经常使用	频繁使用	一直使用
--	----------	------	------	------	------	------	------

	况						
1	正式会议（即有会议议程，会议记录的会议）	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	非正式会议/讨论/面谈	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	员工培训/工作坊	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	演讲/汇报	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	视频会议	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	研讨会	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	面试	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	商务谈判	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	电话	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	办公室的社交互动（例如：聊天，员工派对）	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	新闻发布会	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	通知/公告	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	语音信息	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	其他，请说明： _____	1	2	3	4	5	6

3.2b 在 3.2a 中列出的所有口头沟通任务中，哪些任务您觉得您有困难去完成，请把代表任务的相应的序号写在空白处。您可以根据自己的实际情况，写出所有您觉得在工作中遇到困难的任务。例如：您如果觉得在工作中，您在正式会议，视频会议，和新闻发布上用英语沟通对您来说有困难，请在空白处写出他们相对应的序号。

我觉得这些口头沟通任务对我来说用英语完成有困难： [1, 5, 11]

第二部分

本部分旨在了解您在跨文化商务沟通中作为英语使用者的想法。

在这部分，请告知您对以下的说法同意或者不同意的程度，并从 1 到 6 中选出一个符合您实际情况的数字。请参照以下范例并圈出代表您对该说法同意或者不同意的程度的数字。

范例：

非常不同意	不同意	有点不同意	有点同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6
如果您 非常同意 这个说法：例如，我很喜欢游泳。请在以下数字中圈出数字 6					
1	2	3	4	5	⑥

1	当我与来自不同文化背景的人交往时，我能意识到要使用不同的文化知识。	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	我了解其他文化中的婚姻体系。	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	我相信我可以处理来自适应新文化的压力。	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	当跨文化交往需要时，我会调整我的非言语行为（例如：肢体语言行为）。	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	我享受和来自不同文化背景的人交往的乐趣。	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	当我与一个来自陌生文化背景的人沟通时，我会调整我的文化知识。	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	当跨文化交往需要时，我会调整我的言语行为（例如：口音，语调等等）。	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	在我不熟悉的文化中，我相信我可以和当地人交往。	1	2	3	4	5	6

9	我意识到在不同文化交往中所使用的文化知识。	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	我了解在其他文化中的非言语行为表达（例如：肢体语言表达）的规则。	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	为适应不同的文化交往，我会使用不同的面部表情。	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	我了解其他文化的法律和经济制度。	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	商务活动是一种基于沟通的活动。	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	当进行跨文化交流的时候，我会试图从对方的角度来看事情。	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	我非常注重清晰地传递信息。	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	我了解自己业务领域的英文词汇。	1	2	3	4	5	6

以下这些是新的问题。请告知对您来说在跨文化沟通中使用英语的困难程度，并从1到6中选出一个符合您实际情况的数字。请参照以下范例并圈出代表您认为的困难程度的数字。

范例：

非常困难	困难	有点困难	不太困难	不困难	完全不困难
1	2	3	4	5	6
例如：如果您认为减肥对您来说 非常困难 ，请在以下数字中圈出数字1					
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1	对您来说，用英语来组织演讲内容，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
7							
1	对您来说，跟不同身份的人（例如：同事，老板，客户）使用不同的英语表达方式进行交流，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
8							

19	当您不明白对方的意思的时候，对您来说，用英语表达让对方重复他们说的话，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	当您不能想到一个单词或表达时，对您来说，借用肢体语言来传达您的意思，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	对您来说，在沟通中不出现英语语法错误，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	对您来说，通过别人说的英语来判断对方表达是否礼貌，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	当您听到别人用英文表达的时候，对您来说，判断他们的内容组织是好还是坏，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	对您来说，把多个英文句子连贯地组织在一起，困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	当您不能想到一个单词或表达时，对您来说，寻找一种不同的方式来表达这个想法（比如：使用同义词），困难吗？	1	2	3	4	5	6

第三部分

请提供以下信息，并根据不同的问题在括号中打“√”或者在横线上填写相应的信息。

1. 性别: 女 () 男 ()

2. 年龄:

1) 20-25 () 2) 26-30 () 3) 31-35 () 4) 36-40 () 5) 41-45 () 6) 46-50 () 7) 51-60 ()
8) >60 ()

3. 常用邮箱地址（万一您的答案有不清晰的地方，以便联系到您）:

4.贵公司所从事的行业: _____

- 1) 航空和国防 ()
- 2) 物业管理 ()
- 3) 汽车 ()
- 4) 银行和金融服务 ()
- 5) 化工()
- 6) 通信 ()
- 7) 能源和矿业()
- 8) 工程和建筑业 ()
- 9) 娱乐和媒体 ()
- 10) 零售和快速消费品()
- 11) 纸品加工和包装 ()
- 12) 政府/公共服务 ()
- 13) 医疗卫生和医药 ()
- 14) 生活服务 (如: 酒店, 餐饮) ()
- 15) 制造业 ()
- 16) 保险 ()
- 17) 金属 ()
- 18) 专业服务 (如: 会计, 咨询, 律师 服务)()
- 19) 进出口贸易和物流 ()
- 20) 科技 ()
- 21) 其他, 请具体说明: _____

5.贵公司的所有制性质:

- 1) 国企 ()
- 2) 外企(), 请说明 (例如: 美资, 英资, 日资等)_____
- 3) 民企 ()

6. 贵公司的员工人数

- 1) 1-99 () 2) 100-999 () 3) > 999 ()

7. 您的工作经验年限:

- 1) 1-3 () 2) 4-6 () 3) 7-9 () 4) 10-12 () 5) 13-15 () 6) 16-18 () 7) > 18 ()

8. 您的现任职务:

1) 高层人员 () 2) 中层人员 () 3) 初级人员 ()

9. 您的最高文化程度:

1) 初中 ()

2) 高中 ()

3) 大专 ()

4) 本科 ()

5) 硕士 ()

6) 博士 ()

7) 其他, 请具体说明: _____

10. 您的最高英语语言能力证明:

1) 大学英语 CET 4 ()

2) 大学英语 CET 6 ()

3) 专业英语 TEM 4 ()

4) 专业英语 TEM 8 ()

5) 其他, 请具体说明: _____

Appendix 3: English Version of the Interview Invitation Letter

INVITATION LETTER

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You are cordially invited to participate in a follow-up interview after your submitting the questionnaire, which aims to further examine the needs for business English use in your workplaces and your thoughts and beliefs as English users in intercultural business communication. During the interview, you will be asked the questions regarding your experiences of using English at workplaces and your perceptions and beliefs of intercultural business communicative competence. The interview is going to last around 40 minutes or more, depending on the respondents' answers. This research is for Yao Yao's doctoral dissertation research. Yao Yao is currently a research student (PhD program) at Department of English of City University of Hong Kong. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Research Committee at City University of Hong Kong.

The research results will provide important information for multinational companies concerning communication training for their employees in order to increase intercultural business communicative effectiveness, thus increasing organizational effectiveness. Consequently, this research may benefit you who play a role in intercultural business communication in China. Moreover, the research results will inform those universities, who provide programs related to English for business communication, of important information in this regard.

The results of this survey will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only for research purpose. I hope that you will be willing to contribute to the research by providing important information about your intercultural business communication experiences. If you decide to participate in this interview, please sign your name on the attached INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWEES to indicate your consent of participation and send it to the following email address:

xxxxxxx@my.cityu.edu.hk.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Yao Yao at:

xxxxxxx@my.cityu.edu.hk.

Thank you for your time and interest in this study!

Yours sincerely,

Yao Yao

Appendix 4: Chinese Version of the Interview Invitation Letter

邀请信

尊敬的先生和女士：

谨诚邀您参加继问卷调查之后的访谈调查，目的是进一步了解您在工作场所中对使用商务英语的需要以及您在跨文化商务沟通中作为英语使用者的想法。在访谈中，您会被问及有关您在工作中使用英语的体会以及您对跨文化商务沟通能力的看法。根据您的回答情况，访谈会持续大约 40 分钟或以上。此项目的研究者姚瑶是香港城市大学英文系的博士研究生，此研究是姚瑶博士毕业论文的研究课题。该项目通过了香港城市大学研究项目审查委员会的评审，以确保问卷调查参与者的权利能得到充分的保护，同时该研究不会对参与者造成伤害。

此项研究的结果能提供相关信息给跨国公司的管理团队以及那些设有商务英语或（和）跨文化沟通相关课程的学校和机构，以帮助他们提供更有效的员工培训和课程体系来提高英语语言学习者及使用者的跨文化商务沟通能力，从而提高他们现在或者未来的工作效率并使企业能更有效地运作。最终，您在跨文化商务沟通中作为英语使用者，将间接受益。

本调查的结果仅用于学术研究，并将严格保密。希望您能愿意参与并提供关于您在跨文化商务沟通中的体验和想法等相关信息来支持此项研究。如果您决定参与访谈，请在邮件的附件中的访谈参与同意书上签字，并回复给：xxxxxxx@my.cityu.edu.hk。

如果您有关于此研究本身的问题，请联系姚瑶，她的电子邮件地址：

xxxxxxx@my.cityu.edu.hk。

非常感谢您的时间和对此项研究的兴趣！

此致 敬礼

姚瑶

Appendix 5: English Version of Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWEES

I have been given an explanation of this research project and I understand it.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I certify that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I can refuse to answer any question without giving a reason.

I agree to participate in audio-recorded interviews and understand that the recordings will be destroyed 2 years after the project has been completed.

I agree to be represented using a pseudonym in any publications resulting from this project.

I understand that the data I provide will be used for the project only and will not be released to others without my written permission.

Name of participant :

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 6: Chinese Version of Informed Consent Form

访谈同意书

采访者向我解释了此项研究，我知道此项研究的目的。

我有机会向采访者提出问题，并且提出的问题都得到了满意的答复。

我自愿参与此项研究，并可以随时退出此项研究，且无需解释。

我知道我可以拒绝回答任何问题，且无需解释。

我接受采访全程录音，并且知道录音将在此项研究完成两年后销毁。

我接受在此项研究任何相关出版物中使用化名。

我知道我提供的资料与数据将仅用于此项研究中，且在没有任何我的书面许可下，我提供的资料与数据不会外泄于其他人或机构。

受访者姓名：

受访者签名：

日期：

Appendix 7: English Version of Interview Questions

I. Warm-up activities

1. Briefly explain who I am and why I am conducting the interview, assure the interviewees about the issue of confidentiality, and ask for their permission to record the interview.
2. The interviewees introduce themselves simply.

II. Questions concerning communicative needs of using BELF at work

Language-related questions

3. What kind of tasks do you have to perform in English at work?
4. What are the most frequent tasks you perform at work in English? Why?
5. What are the most important tasks that you should perform in English? Why?
6. Do you use instant messaging for communication with foreign counterparts at work? Why?
7. Do you take part in non-work-related conversations/social talk in English with your foreign counterparts? Why?
8. With whom do you communicate in English at work? Why?
9. How important is it for you to use English in your job? Why?

Culture-related questions

10. How do you perceive cultural differences in intercultural business communication? Why?
11. How will the culture difference influence communication at work? Why?
12. Based on your personal professional experience, what types of activities and tasks can be impacted or affected by cultural issues? Please explain and provide examples from your own personal experience.

III. Questions related to the problems and challenges professionals meet at work

Language-related questions

13. What tasks are difficult for you to perform at work in English? What problems did you encounter?
14. What impact would you say a lack of language skills have on intercultural business communication? Why?

Culture-related questions

15. What tasks are difficult for you to fulfill if you have a lack of culture skills? What problems did you encounter?
16. What impact would you say a lack of culture skills have on intercultural business communication? Why?

IV. Questions concerning the strategies applied to cope with the challenges

17. What are the coping strategies you use for dealing with language barriers occurring in intercultural business communication?
18. What are the coping strategies for compensating a lack of culture skills in intercultural business communication?

V. Questions related to intercultural business communicative competences

19. What are your beliefs about the language abilities (skills) related to intercultural business communication? Why?
20. What are your beliefs about the culture abilities (skills) related to intercultural business communication? Why?
21. How would you define 'good language skills' in the context of intercultural business communication? Why?
22. How would you define 'good culture skills' in the context of intercultural business communication? Why?
23. How important is it for you to learn knowledge of other people's cultures for intercultural business communication? Why?
24. What competences do you think are obligatory for conducting successful intercultural business communication and why?
25. If you could give advice to those who are preparing for a job, what would you recommend them to prepare in terms of intercultural business communicative competence?

VI. Closing question

26. Is it okay to email you if I have additional questions? If yes, would you please leave me an email address?

Appendix 8: Chinese Version of Interview Questions

I. 热身活动

1. 访谈者作简短自我介绍及解释此次访谈的目的, 并保证访谈的机密性及寻求对访谈做录音的许可。
2. 被访谈者简短自我介绍。

II. 关于英语作为国际商务通用语言在工作中使用情况的问题

语言相关问题

3. 在工作中, 什么任务是需要您用英语来完成的?
4. 在工作中, 你觉得什么任务需要用英语最频繁? 为什么?
5. 在工作中, 需要用英语完成的任务中, 你觉得最重要的任务是什么? 为什么?
6. 在工作中, 您是否运用聊天工具和外国同僚进行沟通? 为什么?
7. 在工作中, 您会用英语和外国同僚聊工作以外的话题吗? 为什么?
8. 在工作中, 与什么样的人沟通, 您需要用英语? 为什么?
9. 英语在您的工作中重要吗? 为什么?

文化相关问题

10. 您是如何看待跨文化商务沟通中的文化差异问题的?
11. 根据您的工作经历, 文化差异是否会影响跨文化商务沟通, 是如何影响的?
12. 根据您的工作经历, 什么样的活动或者任务会受到文化差异的影响? 请举例说明

III. 关于在工作中遇到的困难与挑战的问题

语言相关问题

13. 在工作中,你觉得哪些任务用英语来沟通完成是困难的?您遇到了什么问题?
14. 英语能力的不足会不会对跨文化商务沟通产生影响?会产生什么影响?

文化相关问题

15. 在工作中,什么任务会因为文化能力的不足而变得困难?您遇到了什么问题?
16. 文化能力的不足会不会对跨文化商务沟通产生影响?会产生什么影响?

IV. 关于解决沟通障碍的策略的问题

17. 如果在跨文化商务沟通中遇到语言方面的障碍,您通常会用什么方法或者策略来解决问题?
18. 如果在跨文化商务沟通中遇到文化方面的障碍,您通常会用什么方法或者策略来解决问题?

V. 关于跨文化商务沟通能力的问题

19. 您觉得要胜任跨文化商务沟通,需要具备怎么样的语言能力?
20. 您觉得要胜任跨文化商务沟通,需要具备怎么样的文化能力?
21. 您觉得对于跨文化商务沟通,怎么样的能力能称得上是"好的语言能力"?
22. 您觉得对于跨文化商务沟通,怎么样的能力能称得上是"好的文化能力"?
23. 您觉得要胜任跨文化商务沟通,需要了解对方国家的文化吗?为什么?
24. 您觉得哪些能力构成了跨文化商务沟通能力?为什么?
25. 如果要给新的求职者一些建议的话,在跨文化商务沟通能力方面,您会建议他们需要做什么准备?

VI. 结束问题

26. 如果我还有另外的问题可以给您写邮件吗?要是可以,请留一个邮件地址给我好吗?

Appendix 9 Coded Themes

1	2	3	4	5	6	Name	Sources	References
						IBCC	8	15
						1 Adaptation to western cultures	1	1
						2 Others	1	1
						3 Suggestions	7	8
						4 Demographics	11	11
						5 Language-related	1	1
						6 Employment	7	12
						7 Training	9	10
						8 Relation of promotion with English proficiency	8	8
						9 Importance of English	9	12
						10 Audience	4	8
						11 Abilities	6	6
						12 Strategic	3	6
						13 Self-learning	3	7
						14 Alternative expression	6	6
						15 Asking for help from coworkers	2	3
						16 Asking help from immediate boss	3	3
						17 Dictionary, online searching	3	3
						18 Body language	2	3
						19 Mode switching	2	2
						20 Speech act	2	2
						21 Learning BE in institutions	2	2
						22 Key word	2	2
						23 Let it pass	2	2
						24 Code-switching	1	1
						25 Repeated checking	1	1
						26 Pre-preparation	1	1
						27 drop it	1	1
						28 Context inference	1	1
						29 Recording	1	1
						30 Clarity	5	6
						31 Linguistic	3	5
						32 Fluency	5	5
						33 Pragmatic	4	4
						34 Nativeness	3	4
						35 Demeanor	2	2
						36 Discourse	1	1
						37 Directness	1	1
						38 Failure in communication	5	5
						39 Identity	3	5
						40 BE vs. GE	3	4
						41 Needs	1	1
						42 Interplay between Chinese and English	8	13
						43 Language proficiency	4	5
						44 Language policy	3	3
						45 Business convention	2	2
						46 Profession	1	1
						47 Translation	8	12
						48 Challenges	5	7
						49 NES vs. NNES	8	10
						50 Field specific vocabulary	6	9
						51 Register, style, format	5	7
						52 Little practice	3	3
						53 Too Native	3	3
						54		
						55		

56	Language proficiency	3	3
57	Pronunciations	2	2
58	Linguistic accuracy	1	2
59	Written vs. Spoken	1	1
60	Lack of contextual information	1	1
61	Spoken communication	2	2
62	Meetings (formal, informal, discussions)	7	11
63	Video conferences	2	2
64	Small talks	6	8
65	Rapport maintaining	4	4
66	More knowledge about the colleagues	2	4
67	English practice	1	1
68	Language	1	1
69	Telephones	3	3
70	Presentations	1	1
71	Wechat	1	1
72	Written communication	0	0
73	Emails	8	11
74	the most important	1	1
75	Instant Messaging	4	5
76	Convenience	3	3
77	Efficiency	3	3
78	Language	2	2
79	Legal documents	3	4
80	Report	2	2
81	Operating system	1	2
82	Minutes	1	1
83	Notices	1	1
84	PPT	1	1
85	Culture-related	1	1
86	Needs-cultural differences	9	14
87	Work cultures	4	10
88	time difference	3	4
89	Power distance	1	1
90	Detail-oriented	1	1
91	Writing styles	4	6
92	politeness	2	2
	Clarity conciseness	2	2
	Directness	1	1
93	Discrimination	3	5
94	Thinking pattern	3	4
95	Spoken communication	1	3
96	Challenges	3	3
97	Tolerance of ambiguity	1	1
98	Abilities	2	2
99	Behavioral	7	10
100	off the stage	1	2
101	Cognitive-knowledge	6	9
102	Motivational	2	7
103	Metacognitive-sensitivity	6	6
104			
105			