

The Concurrent Predictive Validity of the Intercultural Business Communication Competence Scale

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This article reports the concurrent predictive validity of a new Intercultural Business Communication Competence Scale (IBCCS) involving three dimensions: cognitive ability about intercultural business communication situation (CB), business English linguistic proficiency (LP), and intercultural business communication motivation (CM). Survey data were collected with 120 Chinese international business practitioners. It was found that the subjects' intercultural business communication competence (IBCC) appeared to predict the three dimensions of job performance (JP): task performance (TP), interpersonal facilitation (IF), and job dedication (JD). In the three facets of IBCC, CM emerged as significant predictor of the three dimensions of JP. The present study provides more validity evidence for the IBCCS and extends the existing research on the relationship between communication competence and JP to intercultural business context.

Keywords: intercultural business communication competence, Chinese international business practitioners, job performance

Introduction

Intercultural business communication (IBC) is the communication among individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds in a business environment (Varner, 2000; Chaney & Martin, 2013). In the increasingly globalized international business world, international business practitioners are highly involved in IBC, which may greatly facilitate (Birlik & Kaur, 2020; Camiciottoli, 2020) or hamper (Wang, Clegg, Gajewska-De Mattos, & Buckley, 2018; Wilczewski, Soderberg, & Gut, 2018) their international business activities. Intercultural business communication competence (IBCC) is vital for the international business practitioners' career success but this construct is still understudied (Xu & Jiao, 2017). Recently Jiao et al. (2020) developed and validated a new Intercultural Business Communication Competence Scale (IBCCS), but concurrent predictive validity evidence for the scale is needed. So the first aim of the current study is to seek concurrent predictive validity evidence for the IBCCS among Chinese international business practitioners.

Research has demonstrated that communication satisfaction is a contributor to job satisfaction and job performance (JP) (Pincus, 2010). In the available studies on the relationship between communication

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competence and JP, the communication counterparts are mainly from the same cultural background (Kuroda & Yamamoto, 2018; Bunner, Prem, & Korunka, 2019; He et al., 2019; Kirca & Bademli, 2019). Very limited research has addressed their relationship with communicators from different cultural backgrounds (Tsaur & Tu, 2019; Wu & Ng, 2020). In IBC, the international business practitioners have to communicate with people who have different native languages and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, their IBCC is vital for them to realize business and rapport objectives. So the second goal of the present study is to link international business practitioners' IBCC to their JP to expand the existing study on the relationship between communication competence and JP to intercultural business context.

Intercultural Business Communication Competence

The existing related researches on international business practitioners' IBCC are mainly conceptual frameworks (Varner & Beamer, 2014; Xu & Jiao, 2017). Related empirical research was implemented by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), Yao and Du-Babcock (2020), and Jiao, Xu, and Zhao (2020). Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011, p. 258) argued that business professionals' global communicative competence (GCC) consisted of three layers: multicultural competence, competence in BELF (English as a business lingua franca), and the communicators' business know-how. Language is a key component in the model. Yao and Du-Babcock (2020, p. 1) found that the construct of IBCC (intercultural business communicative competence) consisted of four obligatory components: three in relation to cultural ability (metacognitive cultural intelligence, CQ), motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ) and one to language ability (strategic competence). In their study, respondents' IBCC was measured with four items used in Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's survey (2011, p. 257). The four components of IBCC are BELF (business English as a lingua franca) competence, business know-how, multicultural competence, and the overall ability in IBC (Yao & Du-Babcock, 2020). But it seems that only four items may not be sufficient to represent the complex construct of IBCC.

Recently Jiao et al. (2020) developed an IBCCS, a 16-item test that assesses international business practitioners' communication competence with business counterparts from different cultural backgrounds. The exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the construct of IBCC included three interrelated dimensions: the cognitive ability for the intercultural business communication situation (CB), business English linguistic proficiency (LP), and intercultural business communicative motivation (CM). In an earlier study, the evidence of the content, construct, convergent, discriminant, criterion, and external validity of the measure has been provided (Jiao et al., 2020). But more validity evidence for the measure is needed such as the concurrent predictive validity among international business practitioners.

Job Performance

Williams and Anderson (1991, p. 609) viewed employee performance as three separate types: behaviors which are recognized by formal reward systems and are part of the requirements as described in job description (in-role behavior, IRB), organizational citizenship behaviors that immediately benefit specific individuals and indirectly through this means contribute to the organization (OCBI), and behaviors that benefit the organization in general (OCBO). In the teamwork, individuals' task performance describes the extent to which a team member contributes directly to the goals of the team (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996, p. 530) refined the construct of contextual performance by dividing it into interpersonal facilitation (IF) and job dedication (JD). Interpersonal facilitation includes cooperative, considerate, and helpful

acts that assist co-workers' performance and job dedication involves self-disciplined, motivated acts such as working hard, taking initiative and following rules to support organizational objectives.

The existing research demonstrates that individuals' communication competence contributes to job performance in medical caring (Kirca & Bademli, 2019), safety performance (He et al., 2019), safety engineers' work role performance (Bunner et al., 2019), tour leaders' job performance (Tsaur & Tu, 2019), staff's productivity (Kuroda & Yamamoto, 2018), and multicultural team members' task performance and voice behaviors (Wu & Ng, 2020). Specifically, Wu and Ng (2020) held that in multicultural teams, people with higher cultural intelligence (CQ) and language competence had higher task performance and voice behaviors. In the highly uncertain and complex IBC scenarios, international business practitioners' JP would have to rely more upon their IBCC. It seems that a more competent communicator would have better JP. So the author proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: The respondents' IBCC will be positively correlated to their JP.

Method

Participants and Procedures

From April, 2019 to January, 2020, the author administered a survey with Chinese international business professionals through the online survey platform WJX.cn. 139 respondents and their supervisors completed a questionnaire made up of a demographic information sheet and two scales: IBCCS and JP scale. The IBCCS was completed by the respondents and the JP scale was finished by their immediate supervisors who knew the respondents well.

Instruments

Intercultural Business Communication Competence Scale. Jiao et al. (2020, p. 1) developed and validated an Intercultural Business Communication Competence Scale (IBCCS) to measure Chinese international business students and practitioners' self-perceived IBCC. The 16-item scale has shown sound validity and reliability (Jiao et al., 2020). The three dimensions encapsulated in the scale are the cognitive ability for the intercultural business communication situation (CB), business English linguistic proficiency (LP), and intercultural business communicative motivation (CM). The sample items are stated as "I know the communication rules in specific business situation", "My business English listening comprehension is:", and "I enjoy communicating with the business people from different cultural backgrounds". The respondents are expected to rate their competence level on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree; 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = neutral, 4 = good, 5 = very good for business English linguistic proficiency).

Task Performance and Contextual Performance Scale. The respondents' task performance (TP) was measured with the scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991, p. 606). The typical items state like "Adequately completes assigned duties" and "Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description" (Williams & Anderson, 1991). For the contextual performance, I used the scale designed by Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996, p. 527). The construct of contextual performance is made up of two dimensions: interpersonal facilitation (IF) and job dedication (JD). The items are phrased as "Praise co-workers when they are successful", "Treat others fairly", "Put in extra hours to get work done on time", and "Pay close attention to important details" (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). The two scales, involving altogether 20 items, were combined together to measure subjects' JP. The combined Chinese version has shown ideal reliability and validity (Zhao,

2012). In the current study, the 20-item combined scale was finished by the respondents' immediate supervisors, who rated their subordinates' JP on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

120 valid responses were obtained from the 139 responses. The respondents' demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Respondents Profile (n = 120)

Characteristics	Distribution	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	45	37.5
	Female	75	62.5
Age (years)	<25	21	17.5
	26-35	74	61.7
	36-45	22	18.3
	46-55	3	2.5
	>55	0	0
Frequency of IBC activities	Null	35	29.1
	1-3 times	37	30.8
	4-6 times	16	13.3
	7-9 times	1	0.8
	>10 times	31	25.8
Tenure	3 years or below	21	17.5
	3-5 years	15	12.5
	6-8 years	10	8.3
	9-11 years	24	20
	11 years or above	50	41.7
Number of visits abroad	Null	55	45.8
	1-3 times	34	28.3
	4-6 times	14	11.7
	7-9 times	6	5
	>10 times	11	9.2
Number of foreign friends	Null	41	34.2
	1-3	31	25.8
	4-6	14	11.7
	7-9	8	6.7
	>10	26	21.7
English proficiency	^a CET4	35	29.2
	CET6	30	25
	TEM4	11	9.2
	TEM6	4	3.3
	TOFEL	5	4.2
	EILTS	7	5.8
	Other	28	23.3
Industry	Translation	7	5.8
	Pharmacy	3	2.5
	Manufacture	15	12.5
	Education	17	14.2
	Exhibition	6	5

Table 1 to be continued

Logistics	20	16.7
Finance	7	5.8
Consulting	4	3.3
Tourism	1	0.8
^b Other	40	33.3

Notes. ^a CET refers to College English Test for non-English majors and TEM to Test for English Majors in China. ^b Respondents from other industries.

Results

To avoid common method variance, the items in the scale were not arranged strictly according to their dimensions but mixed up. The survey was anonymous and one reverse-coded item was included in the IBCCS. The Harman test was administered to diagnose common method bias and results indicated that the first factor explained 38.585% of the variance, less than 40%, the maximum acceptable value.

To test the discriminative validity of the two scales, Mplus 6.12 was applied to implement confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the results are shown in Table 2. In Table 2, Chi-square value of the four-factor model is the least and the values of χ^2/df , RMSEA, CFI, and TLI are 2.1707, 0.099, 0.892, and 0.878 respectively, so the four-factor model fits the data better. The CFA results document the discriminative validity of the two scales.

Table 2

The CFA Results

Variables	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Four-factor model	486.254	224	2.1707	0.099	0.892	0.878
Two-factor model	796.371	229	3.4776	0.144	0.756	0.731
One-factor model	2,710.792	594	4.5636	0.172	0.462	0.429

Notes. The four-factor model includes IBCC, TP, IF, JD; the two-factor model includes IBCC, TP+IF+JD; the one-factor model involves IBCC+TP+IF+JD.

Table 3

Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Study Variables ($n = 120$)

	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. IBCC	54.27	12.56	0.931	1						
2. TP	20.18	4.07	0.933	0.405**	1					
3. IF	28.43	4.56	0.923	0.309**	0.785**	1				
4. JD	33.13	4.83	0.925	0.223*	0.636**	0.792**	1			
5. LP	15.33	5.93	0.963	0.844**	0.182*	0.131	0.08	1		
6. CM	18.30	3.83	0.779	0.772**	0.547**	0.417**	0.285**	0.400**	1	
7. CB	20.64	5.08	0.899	0.905**	0.377**	0.297**	0.242**	0.616**	0.688**	1

Notes. IBCC = Intercultural business communication competence; TP = Task performance; LP = Business English linguistic proficiency; CB = Cognitive ability about the IBC situation; CM = IBC motivation; IF = Interpersonal facilitation; JD = Job dedication. * $p < 0.05$, two-tailed, ** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

The correlations between the total and dimension scores of the respondents' IBCC and their JP are demonstrated in Table 3. The professionals' IBCC is positively associated with their TP ($r = 0.405$, $p < 0.01$), IF ($r = 0.309$, $p < 0.01$), and JD ($r = 0.223$, $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis is supported. CM is positively correlated

with TP ($r = 0.547, p < 0.01$), IF ($r = 0.417, p < 0.01$), and JD ($r = 0.285, p < 0.01$). In addition, the respondents' CB correlates significantly with TP ($r = 0.377, p < 0.01$), IF ($r = 0.297, p < 0.01$), and JD ($r = 0.242, p < 0.01$). Their LP is also positively associated with TP ($r = 0.182, p < 0.01$).

Regression Analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was implemented on the subjects' IBCC (as independent variable) and their JP reported by their supervisors (as dependent variable). The respondents' demographic variables such as their gender, age, English proficiency, number of visits abroad, number of foreign friends, frequency of IBC activities, and industry were entered as control variables.

As shown by Model 2 in Table 4, the professionals' IBCC total score significantly predicts their TP ($R^2 = 0.222, b = 0.462$). In Model 5, the IBCC global score predicts the respondents' IF ($R^2 = 0.218, b = 0.424$). The JD is also significantly predicted by IBCC total score in Model 8 ($R^2 = 0.137, b = 0.275$), so the hypothesis is further confirmed. As shown by Model 3, Model 6, and Model 9, CM emerges as a significant predictor of the respondents' TP ($R^2 = 0.365, b = 0.608$), IF ($R^2 = 0.282, b = 0.433$), and JD ($R^2 = 0.185, b = 0.266$).

Table 4

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

	TP			IF			JD		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Intercept	21.516	12.532	10.857	30.304	21.063	19.792	33.258	26.905	25.718
Control variable									
Gender	-0.169	-0.116	-0.120	-0.130	-0.081	-0.080	-0.047	-0.015	0.011
Age	0.086	0.146	0.155	0.181	0.236**	0.241**	0.200*	0.235*	0.227*
Frequency of IBC activities	0.080	0.099	0.089	0.061	0.079	0.071	0.079	0.090	0.077
Numbers of visits abroad	-0.138	-0.151	-0.087	-0.305*	-0.317**	-0.274*	-0.225	-0.233*	-0.196
Numbers of foreign friends	0.206	-0.048	0.112	0.162	-0.071	0.037	0.107	-0.044	0.050
English proficiency	0.002	0.078	-0.038	-0.047	0.023	-0.054	-0.087	-0.041	-0.192
industry	-0.135	-0.061	-0.122	-0.164	-0.096	-0.133	-0.146	-0.102	-0.153
Independent variable									
IBCC		0.462**			0.424**			0.275*	
LP			-0.114			-0.036			-0.155
CM			0.608**			0.433**			0.266*
CC			-0.074			0.016			0.123
R^2	0.095	0.222	0.365	0.112	0.218	0.282	0.092	0.137	0.185
F	1.689	3.958**	6.259**	2.012	3.872**	4.276**	1.63	2.21*	2.469*
ΔR^2	0.095	0.126	0.269	0.112	0.106	0.170	0.092	0.045	0.092
ΔF	1.689	18.04**	15.403	2.012	15.115**	8.602	1.630	5.783*	4.11

Notes. IBCC = Intercultural business communication competence; JP = Job performance; LP = Business English linguistic proficiency; CB = Cognitive ability about the IBC situation; CM = IBC motivation; TP = Task performance; IF = Interpersonal facilitation; JD = Job dedication. * $p < 0.05$, two-tailed, ** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

Discussion

Contributions and Implications

The IBCC model is stable among Chinese practitioners, so the study provides more support for the IBCC model and contributes to IBC and intercultural communication (IC) theory. The practitioners' IBCC predicts

their TP, JD, and IF, so concurrent predictive validity for the IBCCS is provided. The current study extends the validity test for the new scale.

The present study contributes to the extant research on the relationship between individuals' communication competence and their JP. Although the existing study has shown the positive association between communication competence and medical caring performance, safety performance, safety engineers' work role performance, tour leaders' job performance, hotel employees' job performance, and staff's productivity, very limited research has related the construct of IBCC to JP. I found that Chinese international business practitioners' IBCC significantly predicts their JP rated by supervisors. The results echo the study by Wu and Ng (2020, p. 1) who argued that multicultural team members with higher cultural intelligence (CQ) and language competence had higher task performance and voice behaviors. The existing research promotes Wu and Ng's study (2020) further by introducing a new measure IBCCS and respondents' contextual performance. The current study adds new knowledge on the relationship between communication competence and JP and extends the relationship to IBC scenarios.

The CB and CM dimensions of IBCC are positively related to the three factors of JP, respectively. In the IBCC model, the CB dimension involves cognitive ability about communication rules and communicators' roles, genre knowledge and awareness, communication strategies and knowledge on international business culture. The items on CM are about IBC anxiety, attention to differences in paralinguistic behaviors, IBC attitude, and communication efficacy (Jiao et al., 2020). The LP dimension positively correlates with TP, but it is not associated with IF or JD in the present study. This research finding is interesting because on one hand, it echoes the survey results by some scholars who concluded that linguistic accuracy or knowledge of English grammar is not so important for the practitioners' daily IBC. Generally speaking, professionals seem to be more interested in communicating successfully than achieving linguistic accuracy (Palmer-Silveira, 2013). In Bargiela-Chiappini et al.'s study (2003, p. 82), Catherine argued that 20 years of experience as an international negotiator is more effective for closing a deal than an extensive knowledge of English grammar. Real world knowledge including organizational expectations, personal and professional experience, and (national) cultural values is more important than language (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2003). But on the other hand, the current research finding does not conform to some research conclusions which stress the importance of language in IBC. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011, p. 244) argued that language is a key component in business professionals' global communicative competence (GCC) model involving three layers: multicultural competence, competence in BELF (English as a business lingua franca), and the communicators' business know-how.

In the three dimensions of IBCC, CM significantly predicts respondents' TP, IF, and JD. This finding highlights the importance of CM for JP: Positive CM is supportive to JP. It echoes the research by Wu and Ng (2020) who tested the role of avoidance of culturally diverse peers. Being an "emotion-focused coping mechanism", avoidance implies negative communication motivation, for example, the sample item on avoidance states, "I don't speak with [name of team member] unless it is necessary". They found that avoidance was negatively related to peer-rated task performance and voice behaviors and further held that avoidance explained why people with higher CQ and higher language competence had higher task performance and voice behaviors.

The research findings shed light to IBC pedagogy and managerial practice. In the present study, the respondents' IBCC predicts their JP. To improve individuals' JP, the importance of IBCC should be

highlighted. The three factors involved in the IBCC model: the CB, LP, and CM dimension, should be focused upon and recommended in pedagogic or training practice. The three dimensions correlate significantly with one another. Specifically, CM emerged as a significant predictor of the respondents' JP. It highlights the importance of CM for promoting individuals' JP and CM cultivation deserves to be an important aspect of IBC teaching and training.

Limitation and Directions for Future Research

The IBCCS is limited by the disadvantage of self-perceived measures. Although the scale has demonstrated validity and reliability evidence, the self-perceived measure may not be indicants of competent communicative performance (J. C. McCroskey & L. L. McCroskey, 1988). Direct measurement methods are needed to complement the self-perceived measure to appraise IBCC more objectively.

Although the IBCC model is stable among Chinese subjects, the current research is limited by the generalization ability of the research findings. Whether the two constructs' relationship (IBCC and JP) among non-Chinese subjects will still hold deserves reconsideration. Future research should investigate the applicability of the IBCCS among non-Chinese subjects and the nexuses between the two constructs.

Attention should also be paid to how to cultivate individuals' IBCC from the three perspectives and explore effective and appropriate approaches to improve the cognitive ability about the IBC situation, business English linguistic proficiency and cultivate adequate IBC motivation.

Conclusion

The present study provides concurrent predictive validity for a newly developed scale IBCCS. The study lends more support to the IBCC model and contributes to the existing research on IBC and IC theory. The Chinese international business practitioners' IBCC significantly predicts their JP and CM emerges as a significant predictor of JP. The nomological network between communication competence and JP is extended to the IBC context. Research implications for IBC pedagogy and organizations' IBC training are addressed and research limitations are also pointed out.

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