



A Review on Intercultural Communication Competence for Business Research

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine intercultural communication literature to serve a path to scholars of business and intercultural communication. There are several studies on intercultural communication competence, as well as cross-cultural problem solving, yet it is not adequately acknowledged in business studies. For the purpose, the literature was investigated to ascertain different approaches on the topic. The paper includes a review on the literature. It is supported that, utilizing quantitative methods of intercultural competence with business constructs would improve both fields. Also it is stressed that such intercultural studies have a promising future for business in a multi-cultural era, international businesses and conceptual clarification of intercultural studies.

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1. Introduction

Culture is mentioned in different contexts with different meanings in daily life. Basically it is used in the literature as a way of doing things, which also predicts and offers differences between various human groups. Close to anthropological view, culture can be defined with a set of ideas, beliefs, customs, rituals, clothing, music etc. This definition leads to a more static understanding of culture. For instance, according to Brislin (1981) it is due to a common historical background. For Hofstede (1993), it is mental software differentiating human groups. Even though the term is widely used in similar meanings, the definition has always been in dispute (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952).

Hall (1961: 36-37) pioneered a new approach on culture studies with a dynamic concept, treating "culture in its entirety as a form of communication". Hall's communication approach had led to understanding culture in its contexts, underlying the communication processes it lives in. Yet still, daily use of the term has validity in terms of meaning. Conclusions made from cultural differences of human groups are most of the time not totally wrong, since people with similar identities seem to share a same cultural entity. But also this is due to shared environmental, historical or biological reasons. In this paper, culture will be used without totally rejecting cultural entities, but realizing that every time it is reproduced by itself under various circumstances.

Throughout 20th century, with technological development of communication opportunities mobility of labour has been globally emerged. Not only need of information and competences of economical purposes, but also interaction of people from different backgrounds brought discussion of culture into prominence (Sarı, 2004: 2). Thusly scholars pursued the meanings of experiences in different cultural sets. From managerial perspective it was given into credit to overcome possible problems, and for scientists to understand human life. As Edward T. Hall (1961: 39) stated understanding culture is not easy since it "hides much more

than it reveals". Most of time culture can only be understood in contrast, many people realize their "own culture" when in contact with the other. Therefore, any sort of contact, widely communication between individuals, produce not only culture as a whole matter, but also intercultural phenomenon. From this perspective, the aim of this study is to examine the literature around intercultural encounters to serve a path to scholars of business and intercultural communication.

1.1 Intercultural Communication

Among several descriptions of culture, scholars tend to focus on three main attributions. When it is construed as software or a guide showing how things should be done (Kluckhohn & Kelly, 1945; Kluckhohn, 1951; Hofstede, 1993), culture is a phenomenon which someone can be educated about, and thus individual can cope with the problems of difference in times of cross-cultural meetings by updating the software. From another perspective, culture is a matter of group affiliation and identity (Brislin, 1981). Most of the time culture is perceived nation-wise, thereby cross-cultural problems are subjects of knowledge and getting ready to new situations "with the others" in this means. These two close concepts are both more direct and education rooted. A third perspective refers to a dynamic understanding of culture, that culture is constructed recurrently in different contexts by different individuals who have differences in group affiliations and identities. This perspective interprets culture as a non-static phenomenon (Hall, 1961; Martin & Nakayama, 2000) evoking intercultural communication competence, a general view on coping with the cultural differences an individual is subject to.

It is better to clarify that intercultural (IC) means cultural diversification, when encounter of specific cultural sets is named cross-cultural (CC) and individual's coping skills with foreign cultures and environment had been referred as intercultural communication competence (ICC) in the literature and in this paper. This competence, ICC, is explained in terms of semiotic perception, whereas an

individual can only interpret message codes around by his own cultural background (Beamer, 1992). How a message is perceived and coded grounds in cultural norms (Hall, 1961: 93-98) and therefore it is directly related to the structure of culture (Kartarı, 2006: 57).

Every interaction between individuals is cross-cultural interaction, such as social class differences in a college as a culture shock (Jack, 2014). Even though the topic is highly related to meeting of two separate cultures, for instance individuals going to another country to work and live (Ruben, 1989), ICC is a much broader concept. Since every individual is at least slightly different than other members of his own cultural group and since working in a culturally mixed environment had already began to be meetings of several cultures, both learning these cultures and being prepared to cultural differences gain more importance. Early scholars of culture were mostly aware of the situation, yet most of the time teaching cultural codes were assumed eligible for practical reasons. In today's global world, not only cultural variations in nations are more recognized but also mix-cultural environments in international business are more prevailing than before. Therefore conceptualization of problem solving due to cultural differences, and also measuring one's capability of solving such problems, are discussed from another perspective (Leung et al., 2014; Martin & Nakayama, 2015). According to Fraser and Shalley (2009), this discussion is also a cultural problem in an interdisciplinary view on itself. Use of two different terms "intercultural" and "cross-cultural" seems to be a confusing topic, at least in non-English literature. It must be referred cross-cultural when the context arises from the relationship of different but particular cultural structures, whereas intercultural is more discrete and conceptual term of a universal situation.

Defining the conceptual ground is practical especially when related to competence. ICC is explained by Ruben (1989) in terms of interaction, information flow and adaptation. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009: 6) states that it has been "variously equated with understanding (e.g., accuracy, clarity, co-orientation, overlap of meanings), relationship development (e.g., attraction, intimacy), satisfaction (e.g., communication satisfaction, relational satisfaction, relational quality), effectiveness (e.g., goal achievement, efficiency, institutional success, negotiation success), appropriateness (e.g., legitimacy, acceptance, assimilation), and adaptation". In this sense, as a value carried and possibly implied in one's curriculum vitae, ICC is a universal asset (Spitzberg, 2000). It is not an action or performance, but a social impression (Koester & Lustig, 2015), meaning that it is perceived with the results of efficiency, adequacy and satisfaction. Hence it is as a relational and dialectic phenomenon (Martin, 2015) to be perceived as a potential advantage. Cross-cultural abilities like having learned the language or customs of the host culture on the other hand, are due to knowledge gathered about the foreign culture (Koester & Lustig, 2015), suggesting a more direct but less profound asset, not intercultural competence.

2. Studies Related to Intercultural Communication

Academic interest on IC is rooted to practical reasons. After The Second World War, officers from the United States of America were sent to overseas duties to many countries. To help them cope with cultural differences, Foreign Service Institute (FSI) was founded in 1946 to train American officers

(Sarı, 2004: 2). From the beginning, the aim of the institute was described as increasing capacities of the trainees in different cultural environments (Martin & Nakayama, 2000: 27). Ruth Benedict was the first to use the term "intercultural", yet Edward T. Hall related the term to communication and formed the concept of IC, evoking a broad area of study (Hall, 1961).

Martin and Nakayama (2000: 31) classified three main approaches in IC studies. Functionalist approach emphasises determinant role of culture on communication from a psychological view. Interpretive approach, based on subjective anthropologic and sociolinguistic explanations, emphasises the context in IC studies. And critical approach takes into account that culture and communication is not unbound to power, thus recognizes influence of economy-politic in IC. As fourth, dialectical approach is proposed to IC studies by Martin and Nakayama (2015), which stresses processual nature of communication as well as relational aspects. It is possible to spot traces of these approaches concurrently in IC studies, yet constructs proposed by scholars are mostly direct and open. From this point of view, important IC approaches will be examined in this chapter to signify their differences in method and aims in a historical context.

2.1. Primary Message Systems

Edward T. Hall (1961: 45) proposes Primary Message Systems to reveal the whole picture in culture studies when dealing with a specific phenomenon. Message systems are universally recognized means of maintaining life of humans and ten of them are described as "primary" as interaction, association, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality, learning and acquisition, play, defence and exploitation. Cultural context as an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs and behaviours is formed by exercising verbal or non-verbal symbols. From this perspective, features of a cultural set are understandable when related to message systems since they are elements of culture by communicating through them. For instance, a specific and inevitable difference in housing between a sunny, warm, seaside area and a cold, snowy, mountainous area and what people from these areas build for sheltering is naturally different and labelled as a cultural difference. From Hall's perspective, relating culture to geography and needs of survival is then naturally accurate.

Social order is built in time due to biological, environmental and economic reasons. To maintain a living, an individual both follows and supports the social order. Since difference in conditions of location and people would create difference in social order, learning of how things would be done is inevitably diverse. As stated in many following studies, cultural differences in social life, namely "power distance" as importance given to social roles (Kartarı, 2006: 75), is perceptible by how such feature was formed in its message systems.

As summarized above, the Primary Message Systems is a broad theory about conceptualizing cultural context. Main importance of the theory is that it aims to account for total explanations in cultural issues, as well as IC topics.

2.2. Culture Shock

Culture shock is defined by Oberg (1960) as an individual's facing difficulty in interpreting what is around, how to behave and feeling anxious in general when regular symbols in the brain is shifted by others in daily life. The term is popular in studies on expatriates since an obvious

situation of culture shock occurs when a person moves to a totally different place to live. Not surprisingly, Foreign Service Institute was found just after the Second World War, in a time when American officers were sent to countries for the Marshall Plan. Even though the world is much different than 70 years ago, the topic still draws attention.

Theories on stages of culture shock and adaptation have been proposed by many scholars following Oberg's definitions, mostly but disputably with a U-curve hypothesis (Furnham, 2010: 91). The U-curve theory generally implies that individual starts his time abroad with great joy and entertainment, yet coping with many differences bring many difficulties to face and finally, and hopefully, finds ways to adapt to new environment. Marx (1999: 8-9) summarizes "phases of adaptation" with honeymoon, culture shock, recovery and adjustment. According to her, honeymoon phase is passed with openness, curiosity and joy of experiencing new things. Culture shock is itself a phase, where problems which make the topic important for both scholars and managers. In this phase, disorientation and even more "negative symptoms such as stress (being unable to sleep or eat), irritability, a negative view of the job, the country and colleagues" is observed.

Cross-cultural studies are frequently related to adaptation (Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Zimmerman et al. 2003); culture shock, permanent adaptation issues, job related differences, isolation (Morley & Cerdin, 2010; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013; Ying et al., 2017); efficiency in another culture (Bird et al., 2010); social and cultural relations in expatriate efficiency (Kraimer et al., 2001; Harrison & Shaffer, 2005); culture shock and negative implications of a foreign work environment (Muzychenko, 2008). In line with psychological, behavioural and organizational theories, business literature lays emphasis on organizational culture and stress at work as a subject of productivity. Therefore, management of psychological problems, such as culture shock, leads to inspection of personal traits, leadership styles and organizational culture eligible for coping with such problems (Eren, 2008: 303-317). As a distinct topic in related to business and expatriate efficiency, culture shock explanations point to important role of openness and flexibility on well being of an individual in a social context, as well as easing methods in specific contexts.

2.3. In search for intercultural traits

While in 1980's many other scholars attempted to improve the conceptual background of the phenomenon (Spitzberg & Chandon, 2009), because of practical needs such as culture shock, scholars were mostly prone to focus on cross-cultural communication. Starting point of interest in topic evoked scholars interest on traits related to getting ready for cross-cultural situations. Until 1990's, the research was still on expatriates' adaptation problems and failures related to culture (Harrison & Shaffer, 2005). This tendency has been a strong base of examining traits of individuals with better coping experiences. For Ruben (1989), ICC concept is for explaining failures, predicting success, improving personnel selection and preparing training programmes related. Janssens (1995) focused on solutions to cultural conflicts and terms of adaptation and acculturation. Culture related differences were emphasised by scholars in relation to namely wage policies (Martin and Nakayama, 2015) and dealing with out of mainstream sexual identities (Willis, 2011). That is to say, the ICC topic is related to various cultural difference issues from cross-cultural to social stress in work environments.

Providing a broader approach on this track, Hofstede (1980) laid emphasis on effects of cultural and personal traits on behaviour and perception with cultural dimensions theory. Based on it, in 1991, Robert J. House initiated a project on IC competent leadership named "global leadership and organizational behaviour effectiveness" (GLOBE) including performance orientation, future orientation, entrepreneurship, power distance, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and gender egalitarianism (House et al., 2002). Main idea behind GLOBE project is to form an international predictor for business' using given cultural traits based on ethnic identities.

From a processual perspective, developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) was formed by Bennett (1986; 2013) to scrutinize IC differences and proper behaviour when confronting a foreign culture. The model lists six steps of ethnocentrism, from a unique point of view on IC literature. The steps are named as denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration (Bennett, 2004). Steps of DMIS are related to daily problems of ethnocentrism related to anxiety and elevating self-group and problems of facing uncertainty (Kartarı, 2006: 210-213). Therefore in DMIS approach, scholars seek for IC success and steps concerning own/other group sense.

Table 1. Dimensions of GLOBE and steps in DMIS.

Dimensions of global leadership and organizational behaviour effectiveness (GLOBE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance orientation • future orientation • entrepreneurship • power distance • humane orientation • in-group collectivism • uncertainty avoidance • gender egalitarianism
Steps in developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • denial • defence • minimization • acceptance • adaptation • integration

Along with GLOBE and DMIS, "Cultural Orientations Indicator" and "seven value dimensions" models are also acknowledged in various research (Dumetz et al., 2014). In both GLOBE and DMIS, and in other similar constructs, scholars offer an understanding that can be useful in finding answers for cross-cultural and static situations. The models drew attention in business literature and international organizations, yet not claiming to understand what lies behind the instant situation or providing any sort of proactive solutions but taking a picture of the moment only.

2.4. Contemporary measurement tools for intercultural competence

In recent years, there have been a number of tools proposed by scholars to measure ICC and cross-cultural advantageous traits. Even though Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) noted that construct building efforts in IC studies are weak in various aspects, they also added that some constructs are relatively adequate in reliability and "promising". Among these contemporary tools, intercultural adjustment tool (ICAPS) was formed by Matsumoto et al. (2001), cultural intelligence (CQ) by Earley and Ang (2003) and multipersonal personality (MPQ) by van der Zee and van Oudenhoven (2000) are worth mentioning when considering ICC from different angles.

ICAPS was formed after a series of tests and constructed as a scale by Matsumoto et al. (2001). The model aims to help

recruiting personnel for international assignments. It stresses psychological adjustment in terms of IC in four dimensions as emotional regulation, openness, flexibility and critical thinking. The way dimensions were formed gives the influence that being ready to unusual circumstances, as in flexibility in organizations, is already a trait for a professional to be able to cope with IC phenomenon.

Another model dealing with success in cross-cultural interactions is MPQ, specifically emphasising situations of expatriates and their adaptation and achieving potentials (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000). Testing the model reveals five dimensions named cultural empathy, emotional stability, openmindedness, flexibility and social initiative (van der Zee et al., 2013: 119). When ICAPS is more directed to success, it can be said that MPQ is rather related to problem solving in IC situations. As proposed by Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) constructing a more adequate model to assess ICC is a contemporary topic. As shown in table 2, openness/openmindedness, cultural empathy, emotional stability, flexibility and critical thinking have the potential to form a bond between IC and cross-cultural issues by assessing ICC from different perspectives, such as business practises or social justice (Lieberman & Gamst, 2015: 18).

Table 2. ICAPS and MPQ.

Intercultural adjustment tool (ICAPS)	Multipersonal personality (MPQ)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emotional regulation • openness • flexibility • critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural empathy • emotional stability • open-mindedness • flexibility • social initiative

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as capacity of managerial and functional effectiveness in cross-cultural situations (Earley & Ang, 2003). The scale consists of cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions to assess which aspects lead to success in cross-cultural interactions (Ang et al., 2006). Matsumoto and Hwang (2003: 20) state that CQ is effective in predicting "cognitive decision-making processes and leadership behaviours". Two dimensions model of cultural intelligence (CQS) including internalized cultural knowledge intelligence (ICK) and effective cultural flexibility (ECF), as a refined scale is being used in increasing number of studies (Bücker et al., 2015).

Table 3. Dimensions of cultural intelligence.

Cultural intelligence (CQ)	Cultural Intelligence (2 dimensions) CQS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive • meta-cognitive • motivational • behavioural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internalized cultural knowledge intelligence • effective cultural flexibility intelligence

3. Conclusion

From a behavioural point of view, cultural diversity had been an issue throughout history enabling recognition of culture itself. Human groups labelled their differences as culture mostly nation-wise. IC studies provided insight into phenomenon from nascence of cultural features to operation of culture in life. Thus it can be said that IC theories provided a more personal view on interaction of human groups. Yet as summarized in this paper, the scholars are still trying to validate alternative approaches on the phenomenon.

In ICC and related literature, the diversity in aims and perspectives makes it essential to use different constructs to give meanings to IC relations. Personal, relational and organization based perspectives have their own terming for

similar features. Likewise, target of the study, namely sample of a research, determines the fashion to examine the phenomenon. Nonetheless, as attempted to present in this paper, there are also implicit commonalities in the literature on ICC. Scholars such as Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) and Bücker et al. (2014) made important efforts to examine contemporary measurement constructs quantitatively. These efforts indicate that the literature, started by a practical urge, provided theoretical grounds and leaned to concretize the phenomenon, now comes close to a promising dispute on ICC measurement. The dispute is not limited to quantitative building of scales, but also it necessitates a theoretical clarification. Use of ICC constructs in business research has not only opportunity to improve business literature but also potential to support this clarification.

Utilizing ICC in human resources and organizational psychology offers a broad field of study for scholars concerning the fact that the world is passing through a multi-cultural era and international ventures are more prevalent each year. As in previous research, relating different constructs with ICC encourages scholars to test the scales in different cultural and conditional sets. ICC has the potential to create value for business in terms of corporate policy, organizational culture and strength. As a conclusion to this paper, testing the constructs named in this paper is proposed to scholars of business, human resources and also marketing since prominent findings also for ICC literature is expected in future studies.

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