

A Review of Research on Intercultural Communication in Business Contexts



Abstract

The paper focuses on the relationship between culture and communication, describing the long history of intercultural communication as a research field. It aims to present a non-exhaustive literature review by showcasing the most important intercultural lines dealing with investigations and results obtained in business contexts. The paper details selected theoretical challenges intercultural communication research faces, describing the trends in the research history of intercultural communication through the findings of investigations carried out in business contexts. The rationale behind this is the need to be aware of the most significant research lines so that future research directions can be identified to help business professionals avoid miscommunication in intercultural contexts.

Keywords: culture, communication, diversity, intercultural communication, trends in research

JEL code: M14, D83

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication is a multidisciplinary academic field that focuses on understanding how individuals from different countries and cultures behave and communicate.

The business environment has become globalized due to transnational and multinational companies, and consequently, people of widely differing cultural backgrounds have to work and communicate together without misunderstandings. In today's business environment, managing cultural differences during communication and interacting with cultural awareness is essential. Consequently, research on intercultural communication continues to be regarded as important.

Intercultural communication, like communication itself (Chan–Grill, 2022), has been intensively investigated for over half a century. However, the world is changing, and so is how researchers and actors in business settings approach intercultural communication—a topic with numerous challenges. The focus is no longer solely on describing and analyzing the differences between national cultures or emphasizing the fundamental characteristics of the well-known Hofstede and Trompenaars models. Instead, the aim is to foster creative, critical, and innovative thinking to assist business professionals who operate in societies where individuals from different cultural backgrounds regularly interact in their daily activities. Hofstede's latest approach (2011, 1) builds on the idea that “the world around us is changing does not need to affect the usefulness of the dimensional paradigm; on the contrary, the paradigm can help us understand the internal logic and the implications of the changes.”

Success in today's global economy relies on the ability to work across international borders. The business environment has expanded beyond individual nations and regions (Sims, 2007), requiring individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to communicate, collaborate, and conduct business internationally. This phenomenon has drawn the interest of researchers and practitioners, who strive to develop a deeper understanding of issues related to intercultural communication. It is well established that intercultural communication encompasses various fields, including anthropology, cultural studies, psychology, communication, and internal and external corporate communication. It occurs whenever a message is created by a member of one culture and intended for an individual from another. Due to cultural differences in such interactions, the potential for misunderstandings and disagreements is considerable. Communicative behavior is believed to be strongly influenced by cultural value systems (Fitzgerald, 2003), while Samovar and Porter (1991, 108) claim that "in the study of human interaction, it is important to look at cultural values, but in the study of intercultural communication it is crucial."

Challenges, therefore, may occur when business professionals with different cultural backgrounds interact. In this sense, Hofstede's (1991a, 237) advice that "the principle of surviving in a multicultural world is that one does not [need to] think, feel, and act in the same way in order to agree on practical issues and to cooperate" is noteworthy.

This paper will provide a literature review by concentrating on the most important and recent research directions regarding intercultural communication in business contexts. Among the most significant lines of research are those that have formed the foundation of intercultural communication studies since the latter half of the 20th century, such as the dimension-based models of Hofstede (1991a), Hall (1976), and Trompenaars (1993). In addition to dimension-based models, this period includes other significant research that addresses intercultural communication from a business perspective, such as studies on intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. This paper highlights recent research examining the relationship between intercultural communication and areas such as management, leadership, intercultural competence, and cultural intelligence. The historical overview focuses specifically on studies that approach intercultural communication from a business perspective, driven by the need to understand current research trends and guide future studies. This knowledge is crucial for business professionals and practitioners to navigate and prevent miscommunication in multicultural settings. Additionally, the paper outlines the development of intercultural communication research, tracing its roots back to the 1960s and 1970s and recognizing the contributions of influential scholars. It also explores cultural issues that carry significant implications for economists, investors, managers, researchers, and those operating in diverse environments (e.g. Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1991; Hall-Hall, 1990; Gudykunst, 2004).

As the present paper aims to provide a literature review, it organized the review around the behavioral aspect of working in intercultural business environments. The paper considers the insight of Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005, 404), who noted that "in multicultural situations, the various cultures of the interactants interact with and influence encounters, which, in turn, influence the nature of discourse." This understanding underscores the importance of examining intercultural communication

from a business perspective to prevent miscommunication and enhance collaboration in multicultural environments. The paper also accepts the hypothesis that companies that conduct business in intercultural environments are subject to communication barriers due to different cultural backgrounds (Barić et al., 2013). Consequently, the authors of this paper selected those pieces of research that support the aim of the paper and help them test the hypothesis.

Thus, in the first part of the paper, the most significant research lines from the second half of the last century are introduced. Then, the paper concentrates on the past years after the millennium and investigations on intercultural communication in business settings.

1. RESEARCH HISTORY: THE 2ND PART OF THE LAST CENTURY

The second part of the last century has increased research interest in diversity and its related topics. Diversity may be investigated from different viewpoints and can be defined in several ways. “Most studies focus on various dimensions, such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, education, or work status.” (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013, 159) The authors of this paper accept Kreitz’s definition, according to which diversity is “any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another.” (Kreitz, 2008, 102)

Therefore, this paper aims to introduce the research history of a specific field related to the investigation of diversity: intercultural communication. First, the authors briefly review investigations related to the meaning of the concept of culture (e.g. Kroeber-Kluckhohn, 1952; Geertz, 1973; Adler, 1983). Second, the authors highlight research that broadly investigates intercultural communication, discussing the dimension-based models of Hofstede (1980), Hall (1976), and Trompenaars (1993), which suggest that national factors influence management practices (Ablonczy-Mihályka, 2015). The paper presents additional significant research directions related to intercultural communication that differ from the dimension-based models.

Intercultural communication research is exciting. The first researchers took full advantage of methodologies developed in the second half of the last century that discussed *culture* as the context for communication. Adler (1983) says culture has been defined in hundreds of ways, depending on the dominant theoretical perspective and methodological approach.

Among the many definitions of culture, one conventional understanding is “a community or population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining, that is, large enough to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people” (Jandt, 2018, 56). In other words, thoughts and experiences, behavior patterns, values, and norms, among other things, are considered parts of culture. Culture can be defined in various ways, as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and Hall (1980) noted. The specific definition chosen often depends on the research field, such as sociology, the humanities, management studies, or communication, reflecting the growing number of academics involved in culture-related research. Alexander Thomas (2010, 19), the founder of the

cultural standards approach, states: “All human beings live within a specific culture and contribute to its development. Culture creates a structured environment within which a population can function. [...] Culture is always manifested in a system of orientation typical to a country, society, organization, or group. [...] The culture-specific orientation system creates possibilities and motivation for action but also determines the conditions and limits of the action.”

For this paper, the authors adopt the following perspectives on culture:

- as a set of shared values within a social group that distinguishes it from others (Schwartz, 2014);
- encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of a particular society (Cunningham, 2019);
- described as “the collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 1980, 286);
- serving as a basis for interaction and shared understanding among group members (Kroeber–Kluckhohn, 1952; Wallerstein, 1990);
- reflecting the beliefs, norms, traditional values, practices, and attitudes on preceding issues (Eun et al., 2015);
- determining social norms and expectations that ultimately shape the behavior of individuals and organizations (Hofstede, 1980; 2001).

It is often said that communication and culture are inseparable, and the authors of this paper agree with Smith (1966) that culture is a code we learn and share, and learning and sharing require communication. Culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood by understanding the culture it supports (Jandt, 2018). Hofstede (1994) categorized the elements of culture into four groups: symbols, such as verbal and non-verbal communication elements; rituals, which include socially essential collective activities; values, defining what is considered good or bad; and heroes, who are real or fictional figures that act as role models.

The authors first focus on investigations related to dimension-based studies to outline the key research lines from the past. They then shift to other significant research relevant to intercultural communication in business settings.

1.1. DIMENSION-BASED PIECES OF RESEARCH

Geert Hofstede, widely regarded as a leading figure in cultural research, conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on the influence of culture in the workplace. He analyzed data collected from IBM across more than 70 countries, initially focusing on 40 countries and later expanding to 50 countries and additional regions. Hofstede (1991a) initially investigated four main areas:

- social inequality and its relationship with authority;
- the relationship between the individual and the group;
- the concept of masculinity and femininity, encompassing the social and emotional implications of being born male or female;

- approaches to dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity, which relate to controlling aggression and expressing emotions (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Hofstede's model (1991b; 2001; 2011) identifies cultural aspects that can be measured relative to other cultures, including:

- power distance (ranging from low to high);
- collectivism versus individualism;
- femininity versus masculinity;
- uncertainty avoidance (ranging from low to high);
- short-term versus long-term orientation;
- indulgence versus restraint.

The literature acknowledges the value of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in understanding diverse organizational behavior and the influence of different cultural patterns on communication and negotiation styles in intercultural contexts (e.g. Gerstner-Day, 1994; Liu et al., 2019). Although Hofstede's model is often criticized, with over 40,000 citations, Hofstede's research on work-related values and norms is among the 25 most cited books in social sciences. It is important to mention that assessing the impact of Hofstede's research in management is challenging, but Kirkman et al. (2006; 2017) did it very effectively.

Hall (1976), an American cultural anthropologist, identified three universal challenges: space, time, and communication. Hall and Hall (1990, 3) stated that "...the world of communication can be divided into three parts: words, material things, and behavior. Words are the medium of business, politics, and diplomacy. Material things are usually indicators of status and power. Behavior provides feedback on how others feel and includes techniques for avoiding confrontation."

According to Hall's dimensions, there are high-context and low-context cultures and polychronic and monochronic cultures (Hall, 1976). In low-context cultures, communication is generally clear and direct. In low-context cultures, communicators are expected to be direct and explicit, starting from the assumption that the listener has little prior knowledge. Background knowledge is given minimal emphasis, and contextual cues and non-verbal communication play a minor role. Conversely, in high-context cultures, speakers often assume that listeners share significant common knowledge, creating an implicit understanding of the situation. Communication relies heavily on the context, the individuals involved, and the surrounding circumstances. Much of the message is conveyed indirectly or taken for granted, requiring listeners to "read between the lines." Additionally, a strong emphasis is placed on politeness and maintaining social harmony. In monochronic cultures, time is objective, linear (past through present to future), tangible, and divisible. Planning and deadlines are important, and appointments should be kept. In contrast, polychronic cultures view time as more flexible and subjective, where deadlines, punctuality, and strict schedules hold less importance, as everything is understood to take a certain amount of time that cannot easily be reduced.

Hall's concept of low-context versus high-context cultures (1976) was further developed by Haworth and Savage (1989) through the channel-ratio model of inter-

cultural communication. They observed that standard communication models did not adequately emphasize the varying ways messages are structured or the use of channels crucial for effective intercultural communication. The model was also configured to adjust to the dynamics of a personal interaction. Moreover, the needs of business professionals regarding easiness, relevance, and inclusiveness were balanced in the construction of the model, as well.

Trompenaars (1993), a Dutch interculturalist and management consultant, developed seven cultural dimensions to explain how people perceive others, time, and nature. These dimensions include:

- universalism versus particularism (organizations prioritize consistency, systems, standards, and rules versus flexibility, pragmatism, and exceptions);
- individualism versus collectivism (decision-making processes are short versus prolonged);
- neutral versus affective (emotions are openly expressed versus controlled);
- specific versus diffuse (small private space versus an overlap of private and business matters);
- achievement versus ascription (decisions are challenged based on technical and functional merit versus only by those with higher authority);
- sequential time orientation versus synchronic time orientation (time is seen as tangible and linear versus intangible and fluid);
- inner-directed versus outer-directed societies (focus on self versus focus on external entities such as customers, partners, and colleagues).

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, involving around 17,300 middle managers from 950 organizations across 62 countries (House et al., 2004), is a significant multinational effort. The project's primary focus areas include culture, organizational practices, values, and leadership. As a result of their research, House et al. (2004) identified nine cultural dimensions: assertiveness, future orientation, gender egalitarianism, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, performance orientation, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. They evaluated these nine dimensions from two perspectives: culture as it *currently exists* ("As is") and culture as it *ideally should be* ("Should be").

These dimension-based studies shared a common trait: they examined intercultural communication indirectly. Nonetheless, they have significantly enriched the field of intercultural communication research through their valuable insights.

1.2. OTHER IMPORTANT PIECES OF RESEARCH RELATED TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to dimension-based research, the culture standards method is valuable for describing the characteristics of bicultural cooperation. Originating from the work of Thomas (1991), this method provides a productive approach to gaining insights into how one culture is perceived through the lens of another (Tompos, 2015). The quali-

tative methodology employed in this approach involves narrative or semi-structured interviews with individuals who have worked or are currently working in another culture. These interviews aim to gather the interviewees' business experiences related to cooperation with people from different cultural backgrounds and to document critical incidents that occurred during their intercultural interactions. This element provides valuable contributions to the research history of intercultural communication and offers practical insights for business professionals aiming to conduct successful communication in bicultural business settings.

In addition to dimension-based models and the culture standards method, much research has focused on individual aspects of intercultural communication, such as the competencies, abilities, and skills that facilitate recognizing and preventing misunderstandings during business interactions. Consequently, conceptualizations of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence developed parallel to the evolution of dimension-based models. These terms may seem difficult to demarcate; nevertheless, researchers have tried to grasp the main essence of both terms. The authors of this paper believe that Hammer et al. (2003) made the most significant progress in this area by distinguishing between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. They (Hammer et al., 2003, 422) defined intercultural sensitivity as "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences," whereas intercultural competence was described as "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways." However, Chen and Starosta (1996) stated that intercultural sensitivity is a dimension of intercultural competence, not a separate concept. It is worth mentioning that numerous terms and definitions have been proposed by scholars over the years, for example, intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993), intercultural awareness (Chen–Starosta, 1998), cross-cultural competence (Ruben, 1989). Of these, intercultural competence and one of its elements, the so-called intercultural communicative or communication competence, was the focus of many researchers (e.g. Gardner, 1962; Benson, 1978; Hawes–Kealey, 1981; Dinges–Lieberman, 1989; Hotta, 1991; Beamer, 1992; Kealey–Protheroe, 1996). These theorists investigated whether intercultural communication competence contributes to the success of intercultural communication in business settings, and if yes, to what extent and how.

Gardner (1962) was among the first scholars to deal with intercultural competence. In his research, he sought to determine how individuals from one culture can effectively communicate and find common ground with individuals from another culture. This inquiry led to the development of what is now widely recognized as intercultural competence. He also defined some traits, including self-confidence, sensitivity, sociability, and respect, which lead to intercultural competence.

Beamer (1992) investigated intercultural competence and its elements and found that "intercultural communication competence is the ability to encode and decode meanings in matches that correspond to the meanings held in the other communicator's repository." (Beamer, 1992, 285) She also reviewed the literature on intercultural training and found that little attention was paid to gaining intercultural competence for business purposes. As a consequence, she created a model for learning intercultural

tural communication competence. The model comprises five progressive levels: (1) acknowledging diversity, (2) organizing information using stereotypes, (3) questioning and challenging those stereotypes, (4) analyzing communication episodes, and (5) creating messages tailored to the other culture. The purpose of the model is to enable business professionals to decode messages from partners with different cultural backgrounds and to encode their own messages in a way that ensures the intended meaning is preserved after their partners decode it.

Bennett (1993), a prominent scholar in the field of intercultural sensitivity, developed a model to illustrate the progression of intercultural sensitivity as a component of intercultural competence. The model is divided into two phases encompassing six levels:

- Ethnocentric phase: (1) denial, (2) defense, and (3) minimization;
- Ethnorelative phase: (4) acceptance, (5) adaptation, and (6) integration.

The model's primary hypothesis is that as an individual's experience of cultural differences becomes more sophisticated, their competence in intercultural interactions improves. Each stage reflects a distinct worldview, with corresponding attitudes and behaviors typically associated with that perspective. Generally, the ethnocentric stages involve avoiding cultural differences, whether by denying their existence, defending against them, or downplaying their significance. In contrast, the ethnorelative stages involve embracing cultural differences, either by recognizing their importance, adapting one's perspective to incorporate them, or fully integrating them into one's sense of identity (Bennett–Bennett, 2001).

Chen and Starosta (1998) went even further by developing an instrument of five factors with 24 items for measuring intercultural awareness, a dimension of intercultural communication competence. The model of intercultural communication competence they developed includes three conceptual dimensions: (1) intercultural awareness, (2) intercultural sensitivity, and (3) intercultural adroitness, each containing a set of components (Chen–Starosta, 1996). This model was regarded as a milestone at the time, as it combined elements of both cross-cultural/intercultural attitude frameworks and behavioral skills models (Fritz et al., 2002).

The research discussed above shares the common understanding that successful intercultural communication relies on a combination of competencies, abilities, and skills, along with the recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity and culturally appropriate behavior.

2. RESEARCH HISTORY: 2000–2022

Fairley (2000) points out a shift from *old* intercultural communication perspectives characterized by individualistic, persuasive, or rational conceptualizations to *new* perspectives characterized by interaction, creation, and emergence. As a result, over the past two decades, research and analysis of intercultural communication in business contexts have primarily focused on management and leadership topics. These topics encompass

the relationship between managerial skills and intercultural communication, the link between intercultural communication and leadership, and intercultural competence and cultural intelligence. To address these areas, the authors have employed qualitative and quantitative approaches, emphasizing that current trends in both research and practice encourage the examination of intercultural communication from multiple perspectives.

2.1. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT

The study of culture and management has developed since the 1990s (Dickson et al., 2003). Researchers have focused on leadership across nations (e.g. House et al., 2004), and investigations have established that culture affects the application of management theories and practices. Values, norms, and communication styles within an organization are an important part of intercultural understanding and they have strong implications for many areas of management. Similarities and significant differences may have been found within multicultural organizations.

Heidrich (2002), a well-known Hungarian scholar, notes that less attention has been paid to the contrary argument that cultural differences may be a source of value in a workplace. In a workplace where people of diverse cultural backgrounds work together, flexible thinking is bounded by what individuals have learned: habits and knowledge acquired in the family, at school, and via culture (Gołowska et al., 2016). Maddux-Galinsky (2009) add that flexible, creative thinking often occurs when we learn how things are done (differently) in other cultures.

Gesteland (2002; 2005), an American businessman and specialist in global management, has investigated cultural differences and their effect on business encounters. He bases his model on observations of more than 30 years of international business experience (in more than 45 cultures) and the dimension-based research models of Hofstede and Trompenaars. Therefore, he developed a model on how to understand other cultures and minimize conflicts and miscommunication between the business parties. His model includes four cultural dimensions:

- deal-focused versus relationship-focused;
- formal versus informal;
- rigid-time (monochronic) versus fluid-time (polychronic);
- expressive versus reserved cultures.

In deal-focused cultures, the focus is on tasks; therefore, communication is clear, and disagreements are solved in writing. Relationship-focused cultures emphasize the person with whom they are doing business or negotiating; thus, communication is usually indirect. Formal cultures respect formality in communication, whereas informal cultures pay less attention. From the point of view of communication, rigid-time cultures prefer non-interrupted and rigid negotiations with exact time schedules and punctuality. In contrast, fluid-time cultures see people and relationships as the focus of communication instead of timelines and programming. Expressive cultures communicate animatedly, utilizing both verbal and non-verbal cues extensively. In contrast,

reserved cultures communicate more modestly, using minimal non-verbal signals. Gesteland (2005) argues that a comprehensive knowledge of the behaviors of each culture enables success in international business and management and, thus in intercultural communication as well.

In *Communicating Across Cultures at Work*, Guirdham (2005) provides a comprehensive guide to effective cross-cultural communication in the workplace. She emphasizes strategies for interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and notes the increasing frequency of cross-cultural interactions. The book delves into cultural diversity and communication behavior at work, highlighting cultural and subcultural similarities and differences. It also examines organizational diversity policies that can serve as valuable resources for researchers and practitioners.

Similarly, Hoffman et al. (2014) examined the relationship between managerial skills and effectiveness in a cross-cultural setting, finding that managerial skills impact both effectiveness and attitudes. Their findings suggest that interactive skills have a strong positive effect, initiating skills have a positive impact, and pressuring skills negatively affect attitudes. They conclude that fewer unique skills and more fundamental management skills are needed for successful management across cultures.

2.2. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

Since the turn of the millennium and with the globalization of business, several scholars (e.g. Bolten, 2005; Shipper et al., 2007; Csath, 2008; Seiler, 2015) have explored the relationship between intercultural communication and leadership. Their main focus has been understanding why a leader or individual may succeed in one environment but not another. Bolten (2005) explored this question and concluded that success in an intercultural environment requires developing competencies in five key areas: (1) professional competence (e.g. business knowledge), (2) strategic competence (e.g. knowledge management), (3) individual competence (e.g. motivation), (4) social competence (e.g. communication skills), and (5) intercultural leadership competence. This means that if a leader wants to be interculturally competent, they must be able to describe and explain their own culture, the foreign culture, and the intercultural interaction.

According to Csath (2008), a Hungarian researcher, successful leadership in an intercultural environment requires a thoughtful leadership approach and managing cultural differences. This is facilitated by the so-called “five competence model” at the corporate level. This model comprises five key factors: (1) intercultural communication; (2) a strategic approach; (3) continuous, synergistic learning; (4) culturally sensitive leadership methods; and (5) geocentric thinking. These factors enable both leaders and companies to manage cultural differences effectively. All five competencies are essential for a leader’s success and effectiveness. Additionally, Csath notes that successfully managing cultural diversity can provide a significant competitive advantage for the company.

Seiler (2015) also investigated the criteria for successful leadership in intercultural settings and identified five key factors influencing intercultural leadership behavior: (1) individual competence, (2) the situation, (3) the context, (4) the organization, and (5)

the team or group. He concluded that “an intercultural environment adds an additional level of complexity that requires additional competencies and a different approach to certain aspects of leadership than a mono-cultural environment.” (Seiler, 2015, 5)

The literature on leadership has established that appropriate leader behaviors often vary across cultures (e.g. Shipper et al., 2007), and certain leadership styles have been identified that seem to be universally accepted. In contrast, others were found to be universally unacceptable (Hoffman–Shipper, 2011). The authors of this paper agree with Javidan and Carl (2005) that leadership may be culturally bound because culturally differentiated values mean differentiated views regarding effective leaders and behaviors.

Research indicates that effective leadership is critical for a company’s success and significantly influences organizational communication. For example, Kang and Singh (2004) found a connection between leadership style and job satisfaction. Additionally, Zander et al. (2011, 206) highlight that leadership style is closely tied to language and culture, emphasizing that “there is a general consensus in the literature that language and culture matter. Yet, we still know little about how firms cope with cultural and language issues...”

The GLOBE project (House et al., 2004) has extended Hofstede’s dimensions, focusing on how they can be applied to leadership and organizational behavior. Researchers still utilize Hofstede’s cultural values framework to highlight how management issues and leadership can be approached from an intercultural perspective (Kirkman et al., 2006).

2.3. INTERCULTURAL (COMMUNICATION) COMPETENCE

Although research on intercultural competence, a specialized field of intercultural communication, dates back to the latter half of the 20th century, interest in the topic has surged over the past two decades, likely because it is now considered a key skill for the present (Atteneder–Herdin, 2020). Research on intercultural communication competence, influenced by earlier studies, has focused on developing this competence for business and leadership purposes (e.g. Bennett, 2001; Johnson et al., 2006). Various models have been established (e.g. Chen–Starosta, 2000; Matveev, 2002; Matveev–Nelson, 2004), while recent studies have examined factors affecting intercultural competence (e.g. Bagwe–Haskollar, 2020) or its impact on business outcomes, such as team performance (e.g. Balakrishnan et al., 2021).

Chen and Starosta (2000) further developed their previous model. Also, they developed an instrument to explore the concept of intercultural sensitivity, besides intercultural awareness, to measure the dimension of intercultural communication competence. Fritz et al. (2002) later tested the validity of this scale in a different cultural setting and confirmed its reliability, although they noted room for improvement.

Matveev’s (2002) Cross-Cultural Communicational Competence Model (3C Model), further detailed by Matveev and Nelson (2004), integrates findings from several earlier studies on intercultural communication competence (e.g. Benson, 1978; Hawes–Kealey, 1981; Dinges–Lieberman, 1989; Kealey–Protheroe, 1996). The model comprises four key elements: (1) interpersonal skills, (2) group effectiveness, (3) cultural uncertainty, and (4) cultural empathy. Interpersonal skills are particularly important, encompassing the

ability to recognize and adapt to communicative and interactional differences between cultures. High interpersonal skills can help minimize misunderstandings during intercultural communication by effectively bridging cultural differences. Cultural uncertainty was also significant when communicating with people with different cultural backgrounds since ambiguity and uncertainty caused by the interaction of diverse cultures must be tolerated. Moreover, generalizations and stereotyping must be avoided. Cultural empathy involves seeing and understanding the world through the perspective of another culture and demonstrating interest in its values, beliefs, and communication styles. The model, therefore, emphasizes the skills and abilities necessary for successful interaction and communication between individuals from different cultures.

Johnson et al. (2006) reviewed international business literature. They found that it primarily focuses on knowledge, skills, and related attributes rather than providing a comprehensive conceptualization and definition of intercultural competence (referred to as cross-cultural competence in their work). As a result, they proposed a definition of intercultural competence that applies to international business and elaborated a model to understand how intercultural competence is developed in individuals. Their model of intercultural competence in international business contains personal attributes, personal skills, cultural knowledge, institutional ethnocentrism, and cultural distance, with the last two harming intercultural competence (Johnson et al., 2006).

Alongside the development of intercultural competence, the assessment of intercultural competence models has gained significant attention (e.g. Fritz et al., 2002; Fantini-Tirmizi, 2006), leading to the exploration of various methods and measurement scales. Notably, Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) conducted influential research in this area, creating their model for assessment and developing a comprehensive framework for understanding intercultural competence. Furthermore, Fantini and Tirmizi provided substantial data and evidence to support previous assertions about intercultural competence, such as its inclusion of a complex set of abilities.

Finally, it is worth noting that recent years have seen a growing number of studies on intercultural communication and competence among students pursuing higher education abroad, driven by the internationalization of higher education worldwide (e.g. Deardorff, 2006; Stier, 2006; Atteneder-Herdin, 2020). Although these studies are not directly related to business, international students contribute to local economies by paying for their studies and living expenses. Additionally, if they remain and work in the host country after graduation, their intercultural competence and awareness become valuable from a business perspective.

2.4. CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Research into cultural intelligence has gained significant popularity as cross-border travel for personal and professional purposes has become routine. Consequently, the behavioral and communication patterns encountered in foreign business settings are subject to broader interpretations, increasing the likelihood of miscommunication (Earley-Mosakowski, 2004). As a result, research has explored

cultural intelligence, including its foundations (Thomas–Inkson, 2003), its role in facilitating successful communication in intercultural settings (Bertagni et al., 2010), and methods for measuring and applying it in practice (Ang–Dyne, 2008; Earley–Mosakowski, 2004).

According to the research conducted by Earley and Mosakowski (2004, 1), cultural intelligence is seen as “an outsider’s seemingly natural ability to interpret someone’s unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person’s compatriots would.” Consequently, more studies have dealt with cultural intelligence and its impact on intercultural communication in business settings.

Earley (2002) is one of the most noted scholars in the cultural intelligence research field because he was the first to recognize that although cultural knowledge and awareness are necessary for behaving appropriately in intercultural settings, they are insufficient. He found that knowledge and awareness are worth nothing without the individual’s motivation to use that knowledge in an intercultural environment.

Earley and Ang (2003) researched inter-individual differences in the ability to adapt effectively to new cultural settings. According to their conceptualization, cultural intelligence is comprised of four components: (1) meta-cognitive cultural intelligence (the mental process that an individual uses to acquire and understand cultural knowledge), (2) cognitive cultural intelligence (general knowledge about cultures), (3) motivational cultural intelligence (the direction of energy towards learning about and functioning in intercultural settings), and (4) behavior cultural intelligence (the capability of appropriate verbal and non-verbal behavior in intercultural interaction) (Earley–Ang, 2003). They concluded that cultural intelligence makes individuals capable of functioning effectively in intercultural contexts.

Peterson (2004), the founder of an international consulting firm serving global leaders and an experienced cross-cultural trainer, examined how business people from different cultures can work together, overcome intercultural differences, and improve intercultural communication in the workplace. He concluded that cultural intelligence and its cultivation is the key. He used a set of twenty business-oriented dimensions – most of which are based on the dimensions of previously introduced scholars like Hofstede and Hall – to measure the cultural intelligence of an individual.

Zhan and Hample (2022) investigated the effect of cultural diversity on team performance and communication within a project team, especially related to information sharing. They developed and tested a model to address the previously inconsistent findings regarding the impact of cultural diversity on team performance. Their study also examined cultural intelligence and found that, in intercultural teams, higher levels of cultural intelligence strengthened the positive link between cultural diversity and unique information sharing, ultimately leading to improved team performance.

Fellows et al. (2016) researched cultural intelligence as a platform to connect students, universities, and business organizations. Their study aimed to help universities train students to meet future employers’ communication and cultural needs, ensuring that the development of students’ cultural competence aligns with the expectations of both universities and business organizations.

Building on the above, Earley and his colleagues expanded the traditional concept of intercultural competence by introducing cultural intelligence, which encompasses behavioral, motivational, and metacognitive components. However, as Johnson et al. (2006) note, cultural intelligence emphasizes learning rather than action.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Intercultural communication research is not new, as people from different cultures have long interacted in various contexts. However, new research paradigms are necessary to move beyond simply investigating similarities and differences. This study did not aim to provide a comprehensive review of the history of intercultural communication research. Instead, it introduced studies examining intercultural communication in business settings.

For decades, Hofstede's work has dominated the literature, largely because he was the first to develop a national culture framework with multiple cultural dimensions and provide country-specific scores or indexes for these dimensions, allowing for cross-country comparisons. However, other dimension-based models have also been developed that can be useful for investigating cultural differences or for individuals seeking a broader and deeper understanding of the cultures they interact with in various settings.

In addition to these dimension-based models, scholars have conducted numerous studies exploring the competencies, abilities, and skills necessary for successful and effective intercultural communication. Furthermore, some scholars examined how these competencies and abilities could be developed and enhanced so that intercultural business encounters, intercultural management, and leadership could be as effective as possible.

Since the turn of the millennium, the main research focus has shifted from investigating cultural similarities and differences to exploring the relationship between intercultural communication and management, leadership, competencies, and cultural intelligence. One possible reason for this shift is that, by the 21st century, although cultural similarities and differences were well-documented, there was limited knowledge on how to mitigate the misunderstandings and miscommunication they could cause. Managers, leaders, and business professionals worldwide must enhance their skills to become effective intercultural communicators. Consequently, over the past two decades, research has emphasized studying intercultural communication competence and cultural intelligence due to their significant impact on the success of intercultural communication in business contexts.

This research may impact future studies by broadening the knowledge base and helping academics and business practitioners develop and implement programs that improve international and intercultural communication.

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