



Foreign Language Anxiety and Intercultural Communication: Role of Cultural Intelligence and Linguistic Competence

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Abstract

With a more globalized labor force, effective intercultural communication is now a vital aspect of transnational employees. This research seeks to explore how cultural intelligence and foreign language competence impact the effectiveness of intercultural communication. It also explores the mediating function of foreign language anxiety and the moderating function of transnational social capital in such relationships. A quantitative method was applied, with data from 211 transnational employees in different multinational companies. Scales for all constructs were used as they existed, and data were processed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the underlying hypotheses. The results show that both linguistic ability and cultural competence have positive effects on the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Foreign language anxiety mediates these relations, with less anxiety enhancing the quality of communication. Additionally, transnational social capital strengthens these relations as a significant moderator. The six hypotheses were supported empirically. This study contributes to cross-cultural communication literature by integrating psychological, linguistic, and social components into a single model. From an applied perspective, the findings provide prescriptive results for global HRM, suggesting targeted language skills training and cultural adaptability to enhance global team communication.

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Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Linguistic Competence, Foreign Language Anxiety, Transnational Social Capital, Intercultural Communication Effectiveness.

Introduction

In the era of world interconnectedness today, successful intercultural communication competence has developed into a comprehensive survival capacity in transnational and multicultural settings. Due to increased global mobility, cross-border business relations, and global exchanges, people are increasingly navigating various cultural and linguistic worlds which demand extremely high levels of adaptability, sensitivity, and communication

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capacities (Liu et al., 2025). This has created scholarly interest in the quest to learn about the psychological, cognitive, and social factors that enable or disable intercultural communication (c). Concepts like cultural intelligence (CQ), language competence, and foreign language anxiety are among the most extensively studied in this context (Elrayah & Alzahrani, 2024). Besides, as the world becomes increasingly networked, the importance of transnational social capital, which refers to social relations beyond national borders, has also become more salient in explaining individuals' communicative behaviors and adaptation capacity (Dong & Li, 2024). In spite of such developments, the overall function of such personal and social constructs in the effectiveness of transnational communication remains under-theorized within an integrated scheme.

There exists a vast empirical foundation of research that has studied the effect of cultural intelligence on various intercultural outcomes (Puzzo et al., 2024). For instance, Harras and Ennam (2025) identified that CQ has a strong positive effect on interpersonal adaptability as well as cross-cultural communication ability. Likewise, Krajka (2025) showed that people with high CQ have a stronger capacity for understanding cultural cues and preventing communication failure in distant places. Linguistic competence, the second factor, has similarly been consistently linked with effective communication results. Studies have proven that second-language proficiency enhances clarity, confidence, and comprehension during intercultural encounters (Wawrosz & Jurásek, 2023). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) studies, however, illustrate an inverse link with communication success (Chen et al., 2025). FLA has also been associated with increased psychological tension, avoidance behavior, and reduced verbal engagement (Bećirović, 2023). Current studies also recognize social capital's moderation and mediation roles in affecting communication outcomes, particularly within context involving diaspora communities, expatriates, and overseas students (Ergin-Kocaturk et al., 2025). But these investigations all too often focus on one construct in isolation from others, and without consideration for their interactive effects nor for the broader social context in which communication occurs.

There is a broad empirical body of research that has examined the impact of cultural intelligence on other intercultural outcomes (Jin et al., 2024). In the first place, whereas cultural diversity has been increasingly researched across management and education contexts, less work is explored regarding its influence in combination with linguistic proficiency on communication effectiveness within transnational environments (Rajaram, 2023). This compartmentalized concept of communicative behavior does not address the intricate interplay between linguistic and cultural forces, both of which are necessary for functioning effectively in global contexts (Lauring et al., 2023). Second, foreign language anxiety has mainly been studied as an outcome measure or factor inhibiting language learning, but not as a mediator that accounts for the way that psychological stress influences the relationship between individual ability (CQ or linguistic ability) and communication performance (Wang, 2024). This restricts the intensity of insight into the psychological processes that determine communicative action in cross-cultural settings (Chu & Hsu, 2024). Third, whereas transnational social capital is increasingly recognized as a driver of intercultural adaptation, there are few empirical studies examining its moderating effect on individual-level factors like CQ and language ability (Qiu, 2023). Current research primarily speaks to social capital as an independent predictor rather than an environment-constraining moderator (Liang et al., 2025). Fourth, most of the studies do not include integrative models that explain how these cognitive, affective, and social ones mediate each other in determining intercultural communication effectiveness (Yao, 2025). Finally, comparatively little empirical research exists with full models that integrate mediating psychological barriers and moderating social resources among transnational communities like expatriates, international staff, or migrant professionals (Yu & Wright, 2024). These shortcomings point to the need for a more complete and interactional model considering individual capacities, emotional states, and social context factors in a simultaneous prediction of successful intercultural communication.

The principal objective of the present study is to verify and empirically test an integrative model that examines the contribution of cultural intelligence and language competence to intercultural communication effectiveness, moderated by transnational social capital and mediated by foreign language anxiety. The current study seeks to address the following major questions: (1) How much do cultural intelligence and linguistic ability separately affect intercultural communication effectiveness in transnational settings? (2) Does foreign language anxiety act as a mediator of these individual abilities and the outcomes of communication? (3) Does transnational social capital mediate these interactions, in turn amplifying or dampening the impact of cultural intelligence and language ability on effective communication? Through these research questions, the study aims to deconstruct the multi-level processes that drive communication success in diverse settings. The research also hopes to contribute theoretically through bringing together psychological, linguistic, and sociological aspects, and practically through providing direction for international workforce development, international education, and cross-cultural training programs (Santoso et al., 2024).

The conceptual framework of this study borrows chiefly from Social Cognitive Theory (Hsu et al., 2024), Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory (Nurmatova & Noori, 2023), and Social Capital Theory (Castro

& Shelton-Strong, 2024). Social Cognitive Theory lends support for the idea that cognitive abilities of people (e.g., CQ and language competence) and their environmental factors (e.g., social networks) interact to determine behavior here, intercultural communication. It describes how observational learning and self-efficacy affect people's capacity to cope and function in multifaceted social contexts. AUM Theory offers a psychological perspective towards comprehending foreign language anxiety as the mediating mechanism, holding that handling anxiety and uncertainty is fundamental to successful communication in new cultural contexts. Foreign language anxiety is a hindrance that reduces self-presentation and message transmission, hence affecting the route from ability to performance (Xue & Abdullah, 2025). Social Capital Theory also provides a foundation for the understanding of how transnational social capital is a moderating factor. It provides an explanation of how trust, social networks, and mutual norms produce knowledge transfer and quality of communication (Michailova et al., 2024). These theory foundations together provide the foundation for the study hypotheses and the rationale for utilizing individual skills, emotional processes, and social environments in intercultural communication quality prediction across boundaries.

Literature Review

Knowledge integration and social capital are two highly interrelated constructs that strongly impact organizational innovation and performance, especially in transnational environments (Michailova et al., 2024). Knowledge integration refers to a process of combining knowledge from dispersed, often heterogeneous, pools of knowledge within or across different units or stakeholders to create meaningful and useful insights (Tesfaye et al., 2025). In transnational contexts, it is more complex because of differences in institutions, culture, and language, and thus the necessity for the usage of strong mechanisms of cooperation and trust (Bratianu et al., 2025). Scholarly argument presumes effective integration of cross-border knowledge must be achieved by having a constructed strategy that faces tacit and explicit knowledge and constructs cross-cultural communication (Dülger & Ugurlu, 2025). This is especially true for multinational corporations and international partnerships that not only have to gather but also contextualize and implement knowledge across heterogeneous environments (Fenuku, 2024). The success of this integration depends on relational antecedents, such as shared values, mutual trust, and regular interaction, which diminish uncertainty and ensure shared understanding required for shared problem-solving and innovation (Wu & Shafait, 2024).

Social capital, that includes structural, relational, and cognitive, is important in creating the flow and integration of knowledge in global networks (Wang & Li, 2025). Structural social capital identifies the structure of connections among actors, relational social capital encompasses trust, norms, and obligations, and cognitive social capital entails shared narratives and language (Peltokorpi & Xie, 2025). Social capital allows access to varying sources of knowledge, facilitates coordination among widely distributed groups, and underpins absorptive capacity the potential to identify, assimilate, and apply new knowledge (Zhang et al., 2024). In culturally diverse contexts especially, high degrees of social capital can reduce the demerits associated with distance and difference, serving as a lubricant for knowledge transfer and integration (Kiti et al., 2024). The creation of robust social relationships promotes emergent communication channels and shared sense-making, which are crucial when there is failure in formal processes due to lack of context (Bastian & Widodo, 2024). Therefore, building and maintaining social capital across boundaries is neither a separate initiative nor an intrinsic requirement but a necessary strategic necessity for organizations that seek to capitalize on their full range of transnational knowledge assets (Liu et al., 2025).

Cultural intelligence (CQ), or one's capacity to function efficiently in intercultural settings, has been widely considered a primary source of effective intercultural communication (Elrayah & Alzahrani, 2024). There is a plethora of empirical research that testifies that individuals with high CQ have the cognitive, cultural, and behavioral competencies needed to handle intercultural scenarios with ease and adaptability (Puzzo et al., 2024). Krajka (2025) research verified that cultural intelligence has a positive relationship with effective communication in transnational teams. Likewise, research in education and management suggests that those with higher CQ perform better when it comes to reading non-verbal signals, appreciate cultural diversity, and possess the ability to deal with uncertainty, all of which lead to more effective communicators with cross-cultural boundaries (Chen et al., 2025). In cross-cultural negotiation contexts, CQ has similarly been associated with increased empathy and openness to experience, resulting in increased amounts of mutual understanding and decreased amounts of communication breakdowns (Ergin-Kocaturk et al., 2025). Such findings as a whole affirm that cultural intelligence is a key element in the construction of efficacious intercultural communication, especially in transnational or multicultural settings.

With the fundamental importance of cultural intelligence to feel the complex intercultural dynamics, it is theoretically justifiable and empirically sound to propose that CQ has significant influence on successful

intercultural communication (Rajaram, 2023). Strong CQ allows individuals to appropriately adjust their own communication style and behavior to fit the cultural environment of their communicators (Wang, 2024). This adaptive flexibility includes acquiring through cross-cultural experience, self-reflection on one's own prejudgments, and respectful and successful interaction with other individuals (Qiu, 2023). Empirical evidence has discovered that interest and eagerness to adjust (motivational CQ) and the capacity to act suitably (behavioral CQ) are especially vital in establishing effective communication experience (Yao, 2025). In cross-cultural collaborations, such as joint ventures or student exchange, high-CQ individuals are better adept at interpreting culturally charged messages and building rapport (Santoso et al., 2024). Thus, not only does cultural intelligence generate understanding, but it also lessens miscommunication and interpersonally tense interactions, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of intercultural communication (Nurmatova & Noori, 2023). All of these lines of evidence affirm the hypothesis that CQ is critical to the effectiveness of communication in multicultural or transnational environments.

H1: *Cultural intelligence significantly influences the intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Linguistic competence, or the ability of a person to employ a language correctly and suitably, has been recognized extensively as the key to effective intercultural communication (Xue & Abdullah, 2025). Studies have confirmed that proficiency in a foreign language or second language enhances not only oral communication but also comprehension of cultural connotations underlying language (Tesfaye et al., 2025). Studies conducted on international students and expatriates indicate a high-level correlation between linguistic ability and confidence in intercultural interactions (Dülger & Ugurlu, 2025). Additional studies in the organizational context indicate that linguistic ability lowers communication apprehension, enhances job satisfaction, and supports task performance among culturally diverse teams (Wu & Shafait, 2024). Linguistically competent people also perform better in adapting communication strategies according to the context and audience, which is important in preventing misunderstandings in intercultural communication (Peltokorpi & Xie, 2025). Overall, the above empirical evidence confirms that linguistic competence is an important facilitator for successful communication across cultures.

The imperative of linguistic competence to drive effective communication across cultures has compelled scholars to think of it as both a building block and strategic resource (Kiti et al., 2024). In contrast to cultural intelligence, which facilitates understanding of large-scale cultural patterns and behavior, linguistic competence actually affects the transmission and decoding of messages two essential elements of communication (Tesfaye et al., 2025). Native speakers of a second language are in a better position to engage in advanced conversations, comprehend idiomatic expressions, and stay fluent and accurate, and these are all central to building trust and communicative clarity (Dong & Li, 2024). Furthermore, studies have established that higher linguistic ability minimizes the potential for communicative breakdown, particularly when transmitting delicate or technical information within cross-cultural situations (Harras & Ennam, 2025). This ability also enables relational building by informal interaction and intensive involvement, which are essential in trust-oriented intercultural relationships. Therefore, linguistic ability is not merely a technical need but also enables psychological self-assurance and social interaction skill (Wawrosz & Jurásek, 2023). All these aspects taken together also justify the hypothesis that linguistic ability has far-reaching implications in the areas of effectiveness in intercultural communication, particularly in transnational and multilingual environments.

H2: *Linguistic competence significantly influences the intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a concept that refers to the experience of nervousness, apprehension, and worry one associates with the use of a non-native language, and has been discovered to have a negative effect on intercultural communication (Bećirović, 2023). Empirical findings suggest that individuals with higher FLA are more inclined to avoid social interactions, experience lower confidence levels, and perform poorly in communicative situations (Jin et al., 2024). FLA has been shown to have a negative influence on comprehension, engagement, and interpersonal relation, particularly in high-stakes or new cultural contexts (Lauring et al., 2023). In cross-cultural learning and expatriate research, FLA tends to function as an obstacle that dilutes the communication competence of even culturally smart people (Chu & Hsu, 2024). While cultural intelligence gives one the ability to adapt and comprehend, language anxiety can impede the complete utilization of such abilities, particularly in verbal and social communication (Liang et al., 2025).

Cultural intelligence gives the person cognitive, motivational, and behavioral competencies to adapt to intercultural situations, but the anxiety caused by the use of a second language may inhibit these abilities (Yu & Wright, 2024). A high CQ person can intellectually know cultural norms and be willing to interact but be held back by stress caused by language (Hsu et al., 2024). For instance, someone can know what to do in culturally acceptable manners but not start conversations because they are afraid of committing language errors (Castro & Shelton-Strong, 2024). This mental barrier restricts possibilities for effective intercultural exchanges, thus

diminishing the efficiency of communication (Michailova et al., 2024). Empirical evidence confirms that an FLA decrease can allow for maximum cultural intelligence utilization through more assertive approaches to language use and message sending (Bratianu et al., 2025). Therefore, FLA is a mediating factor that transmits the beneficial influences of CQ into real communication outcomes (Fenuku, 2024). Therefore, foreign language anxiety as a mediating function is both theoretically sound and empirically supported, and the hypothesis that it strongly mediates cultural intelligence and effective intercultural communication is generated.

H3: *Foreign language anxiety significantly mediates the relationship of cultural intelligence and intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Language proficiency, or the ability to understand, produce, and employ language in order to effectively communicate, is key to creating intercultural communication experiences (Wang & Li, 2025). Scholars suggest that linguistically capable people are better equipped to decipher cultural nuances, negotiate social cues, and communicate successfully in intercultural environments (Zhang et al., 2024). However, even language proficiency cannot guarantee effective communication outcomes. An increasing body of evidence calls to mind that speakers of a second or foreign language often experience emotional and psychological barriers, such as anxiety, which hinders their performance even with technical proficiency (Bastian & Widodo, 2024). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is usually associated with fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation, and apprehension of communication in new linguistic situations, which may render otherwise competent individuals ineffective to engage in intercultural communication (Liu et al., 2025). Therefore, whereas linguistic ability enables the promise of effective communication, foreign language anxiety can impact whether or not the promise is realized in intercultural communication.

New studies have begun examining the mediating role of FLA between language ability and communication performance (Dong & Li, 2024). For instance, Harras and Ennam (2025) demonstrated that high language ability was inversely correlated with anxiety, and in turn, anxiety was positively correlated with communication effectiveness. This is an indication of a psychological process through which language capability is translated into effective communication outcomes (Chen et al., 2025). Moreover, low-anxiety subjects are likely to demonstrate greater confidence and communicative willingness and thus amplify the positive impact of linguistic capacity on interaction consequences (Jin et al., 2024). Also, a study by Wang (2024) shows that anxiety management related to language is crucial in maximizing the worth of linguistic competence in intercultural teams. These results support the conceptualization of FLA as a mediator between linguistic competence and effectiveness in intercultural communication (Liang et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study indicates that individuals with higher linguistic proficiency are less likely to experience FLA, and thus stand a better chance of achieving effective intercultural communication. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: *Foreign language anxiety significantly mediates the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Transnational social capital, or the social resources embedded in social networks that go beyond national borders, has been increasingly found to be a mechanism of knowledge transfer, coordination, and trust across intercultural environments (Santoso et al., 2024). It comprises relations like professional contacts, diaspora, and cross-border community-based ties that produce shared norms, mutual trust, and cultural understanding (Castro & Shelton-Strong, 2024). Empirical studies have established that transnational social capital enhances communication by making actors accessible to a multiplicity of cultural perspectives, reducing uncertainty, and also emotional and instrumental aid (Tesfaye et al., 2025). When the conditions of global mobility are in place, actors engaged with transnational networks will be more likely to demonstrate greater adaptability, openness, and the capacity to decode culturally embedded cues (Fenuku, 2024). These networks prefer to act as spontaneous learning spaces that promote cultural fluency and reduce isolation, which is otherwise experienced in alien environments (Peltokorpi & Xie, 2025). Transnational social capital, thus, not only impacts communication but also intermingles with other skills such as cultural intelligence.

While cultural intelligence gives individuals cognitive and behavioral flexibility to live in a cross-cultural context, transnational social capital may amplify or augment such ability through the provision of a situational support system (Bastian & Widodo, 2024). For example, those who have high CQ may be able to decode cultural norms and modify behavior, but as they are situated in transnational networks, they are provided with culturally embedded knowledge, instant feedback, and trusted intermediaries that facilitate verification and refinement of their approach to communication (Tesfaye et al., 2025). Empirical studies by Puzzo et al. (2024) reveal that high social connectedness among members in multicultural teams is likely to convert cultural awareness into effective communication. Further, the existence of relational trust within transnational networks minimizes the risk related to social interaction across cultures, thereby encouraging individuals to employ their cultural intelligence with more confidence and frequency (Wawrosz & Jurásek, 2023). Therefore, the presence of transnational social

capital is not only augmenting CQ but indeed impacts the degree to which it is transformed into effective communication (Ergin-Kocaturk et al., 2025). This lends support to the hypothesis that transnational social capital significantly moderates the relationship between linguistic ability and effectiveness of intercultural communication, particularly in heterogeneous and globally networked environments.

H5: *Transnational social capital significantly moderates the relationship of cultural intelligence and intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Language proficiency is central to successful communication, but it's influenced by social context and the strength of interpersonal networks (Lauring et al., 2023). Transnational social capital offers such context in the form of network-based access to language-rich settings, mentorship, and shared contexts that facilitate improved use of language (Qiu, 2023). Studies have indicated that the people immersed in cross-border networks are more likely to gain more chances to acquire and practice the foreign language in real, non-dreadful contexts (Yu & Wright, 2024). Such networks also provide access to cultural-linguistic subtleties like idiomatics, informal registers, and discourse patterns, which cannot be learned with the help of formal classes alone (Nurmatova & Noori, 2023). Research by Michailova et al. (2024) highlights that social capital supplements human capital (e.g., language ability) by establishing conditions conducive to knowledge utilization and learning. Also, trust and reciprocity in transnational contacts create a safety net where linguistic mistakes are more apt to be accepted, and consequently, communicative nervousness will decline, and more effective communication will ensue (Wang & Li, 2025).

Linguistic competence, although necessary, may not be as effective in communication unless the people are placed in socially supportive contexts that promote its actual use and practice (Kiti et al., 2024). Transnational social capital, by virtue of its ability to form culturally embedded and linguistically diverse relational environments, increases the practical utility of linguistic competence (Elrayah & Alzahrani, 2024). For instance, a second-language-proficient person can be incompetent in intercultural contexts if they do not have access to peer support, cultural feedback, or trusted social media through which to exercise (Harras & Ennam, 2025). Yet, when such subjects participate in transnational networks, they tend to receive contextual exposure, peer correction, and immersive conversations that sharpen communicative fluency (Chen et al., 2025). These social structures not only promote taking risks with language use but also present interpretive guidance that closes the gap between linguistic competence and communicative effectiveness (Jin et al., 2024). Consequently, transnational social capital enhances the connection between language ability and communicative results, thus validating the hypothesis that it strongly moderates the association between linguistic competence and intercultural communication effectiveness.

H6: *Transnational social capital significantly moderates the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural communication effectiveness.*

Theory to Explain the Research Model and Relationships

Conceptual hypotheses and relationships in this study are based on Social Cognitive Theory Wang (2024) and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory (Liang et al., 2025). Social Cognitive Theory provides a solid framework for analyzing how individual factors (e.g., linguistic competence and cultural knowledge) and environmental pressures (e.g., transnational communication environments) interact to shape behavior and outcomes. It centers on self-efficacy as part of CQ and language ability in explaining communication behavior. The AUM Theory, on the other hand, faces a head-on approach to intercultural communication by proposing that effective communication depends on individuals' ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty in culturally unfamiliar contexts (Santoso et al., 2024). Foreign language anxiety is therefore accommodated within this framework as a psychological state that distorts interpretation, undermines confidence, and increases miscommunication. In addition, the social capital theory is taken from Social Capital Theory (Castro & Shelton-Strong, 2024) that explains how networks of relationships increase the accessibility of resources here, for successful communication. Transnational social capital's moderating effect traces along the same perspective as it structures the quality of relationships between individual competences (CQ and language mastery) and communication success (Tefaye et al., 2025). Together, these models (Figure 1) provide a coherent explanation of how personal abilities, affective states, and social environments interact with each other to influence intercultural communication effectiveness.

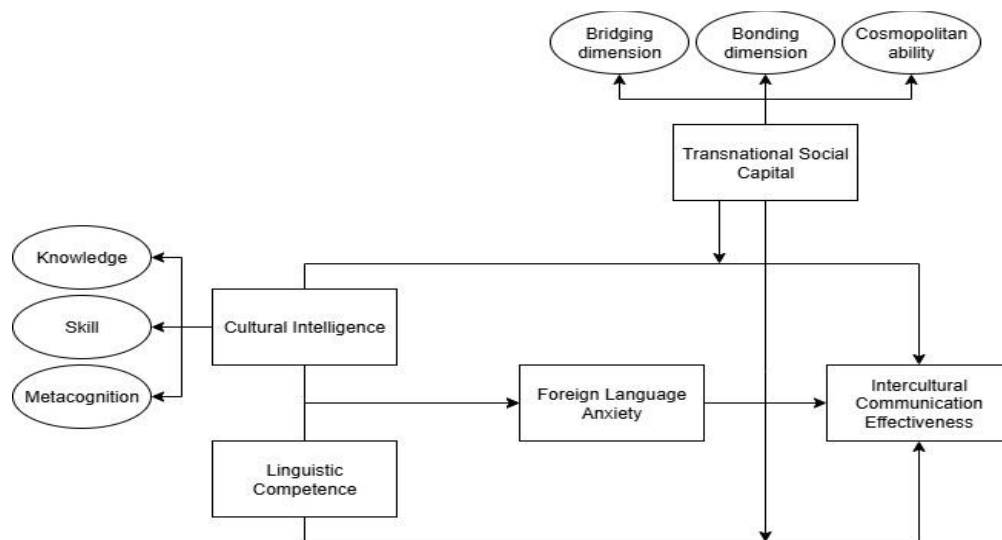


Figure 1: Theoretical Model

Methodology

The present study used a quantitative study design in testing the dynamics between foreign language anxiety, cultural intelligence, linguistic competence, transnational social capital, and intercultural communication effectiveness across different transnational work settings. The study was underpinned by a purposive sample of 211 transnational workers who are employed in different organizations working in global settings. Sampling of the sample was done in a way that the respondents possessed adequate cross-border experience, collaborated with culturally and linguistically diverse work teams, and engaged in communication processes that necessitated the use of intercultural competencies. The information was gathered using a standardized survey instrument that included well-validated scales from existing research studies to ascertain reliability as well as construct validity.

Cultural intelligence was quantified by a 10-item Thomas et al. (2015), scale, measuring people's ability to perform effectively in multicultural settings. Linguistic competence was measured with an 8-item scale drawing on Piquer Píriz and Castellano Risco (2021), capturing the self-assessed capacity of participants to speak suitably and correctly in a foreign or second language. Foreign language anxiety was evaluated with 8 items based on Prada et al. (2020), which targeted reactions on anxiety in using languages in working situations. Effectiveness of intercultural communication was evaluated with 4 items developed by Nadeem and Zabrodskaja (2023), which targeted to what extent individuals labeled their intercultural exchanges as effective and significant. Transnational social capital, or employees' available resources and networks across borders, was measured with an 18-item scale by (Levy et al., 2021).

The data analysis was carried out using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is most appropriate for exploratory research, models with complex relationships, and small sample sizes. PLS-SEM enabled rigorous testing of direct, mediating, and moderating relationships postulated in the conceptual framework. Measurement model was initially tested for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, after which the structural model was evaluated to test the hypotheses. Bootstrapping methods were utilized to test the significance of path coefficients and mediation/moderation effects. The application of PLS-SEM made it possible for the study to fully grasp the impact of cultural and linguistic abilities on intercultural communication, mediated by language anxiety and moderated by social capital, and hence contribute to both practice and theory in cross-cultural organizational research.

Results

Table 1 shows the validity and reliability measures for the constructs of the research model. For each latent variable, such as Linguistic Competence, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), Intercultural Communication Effectiveness (ICE), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), and Transnational Social Capital (TSC), a number of indicators were measured based on conventional measurement model standards. Second, Cronbach's Alpha measures for

every construct were above the 0.70 mark (from 0.742 to 0.920), thereby establishing strong internal consistency. The same was true for Composite Reliability (CR) measures, which also fell above the minimum recommended of 0.70 for every construct, the highest being 0.933 for cultural intelligence, also establishing the constructs' reliability.

Table 1: Variables reliability and validity

		Original Sample	Sample Mean	P Values	Cronbac h's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Linguistic competence	LC1	0.660	0.656	0.000	0.868	0.897	0.522
	LC2	0.778	0.774	0.000			
	LC3	0.775	0.776	0.000			
	LC4	0.720	0.716	0.000			
	LC5	0.727	0.723	0.000			
	LC6	0.718	0.713	0.000			
	LC7	0.641	0.635	0.000			
	LC8	0.748	0.744	0.000			
Foreign language anxiety	FLA1	0.771	0.768	0.000	0.871	0.899	0.528
	FLA2	0.747	0.741	0.000			
	FLA3	0.760	0.754	0.000			
	FLA4	0.748	0.739	0.000			
	FLA5	0.717	0.718	0.000			
	FLA6	0.753	0.753	0.000			
	FLA7	0.715	0.711	0.000			
	FLA8	0.585	0.580	0.000			
Intercultural communication effectiveness	ICE1	0.634	0.632	0.000	0.750	0.843	0.576
	ICE2	0.773	0.772	0.000			
	ICE3	0.818	0.817	0.000			
	ICE4	0.797	0.795	0.000			
Cultural intelligence Knowledge	K1	0.877	0.875	0.000	0.920	0.933	0.584
	K2	0.905	0.906	0.000	0.742	0.885	0.794
Metacognition	M1	0.851	0.850	0.000	0.815	0.890	0.730
	M2	0.880	0.878	0.000			
	M3	0.832	0.831	0.000			
Skill	S1	0.724	0.725	0.000	0.859	0.899	0.642
	S2	0.757	0.756	0.000			
	S3	0.802	0.802	0.000			
	S4	0.831	0.829	0.000			
	S5	0.882	0.880	0.000			
Transnational social capital Bonding	BOD1	0.766	0.765	0.000	0.912	0.924	0.535
	BOD2	0.739	0.738	0.000			
	BOD3	0.770	0.768	0.000			
	BOD4	0.709	0.702	0.000			
	BOD5	0.657	0.652	0.000			
	BOD6	0.719	0.715	0.000			
Bridging	BRD1	0.762	0.761	0.000	0.862	0.901	0.645
	BRD2	0.806	0.804	0.000			
	BRD3	0.816	0.814	0.000			
	BRD4	0.784	0.779	0.000			
	BRD5	0.845	0.843	0.000			
Cosmopolitan ability	CA2	0.790	0.789	0.000	0.807	0.867	0.568
	CA3	0.811	0.810	0.000			
	CA4	0.781	0.777	0.000			
	CA5	0.621	0.617	0.000			
	CA6	0.749	0.748	0.000			

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was over 0.50, as it should be if each latent variable has more than 50% of the variance of its indicators, which is a marker of convergent validity. For instance, linguistic competence (AVE = 0.522) and ICE (AVE = 0.576) both passed this test (Figure 2). All loadings for the indicators were significant statistically ($p < 0.001$), with the majority exceeding 0.70 except for a few like LC1 (0.660) and FLA8 (0.585), which were marginal but acceptable. Subdimensions of multifaceted constructs such as

knowledge, metacognition, and skill for cultural intelligence and bonding, bridging, and cosmopolitan ability for TSC also demonstrated high reliability and convergent validity. These findings overall confirm that the measurement model is reliable, valid, and strong enough for further structural analysis.

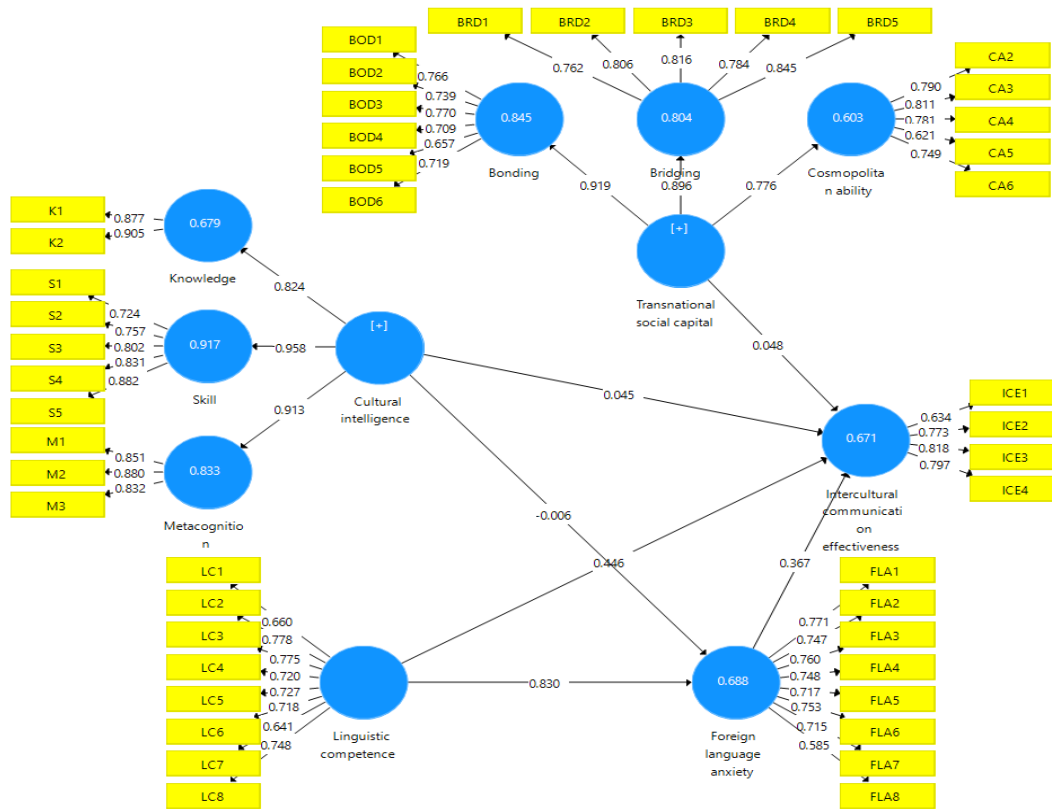


Figure 2: Estimated Model

Table 2 presents the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio, which is a strict test for discriminant validity between constructs. HTMT values of less than 0.85 (or, more conservatively, 0.90) reveal that constructs are empirically differentiated. With the exception of learning capability, most of the HTMT values seen in this table are less than 0.90, revealing acceptable discriminant validity. A few do get close to the upper limit namely between bonding and foreign language anxiety (0.887) and between foreign language anxiety and transnational social capital (0.888). Although these are quite high, they are less than 0.90, which means that these, albeit conceptually proximate, constructs are empirically distinguishable. The comparatively lower HTMT between cultural intelligence and other constructs e.g., 0.092 with FLA and 0.127 with ICE reveals strong empirical distinction. Likewise, the low HTMT values between CQ dimensions (knowledge, metacognition, skill) and extraneous variables confirm that they tap into distinct constructs. Generally, this table confirms the conclusion that the model's constructs have good discriminant validity, i.e., each constitutes a distinct conceptual dimension with minimal overlap.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Bonding											
Bridging	0.886										
Cosmopolitan ability	0.722	0.614									
Cultural intelligence	0.094	0.084	0.114								
Foreign language anxiety	0.887	0.832	0.677	0.092							
Intercultural communication effectiveness	0.792	0.805	0.577	0.127	0.757						
Knowledge	0.122	0.091	0.093	0.797	0.078	0.117					
Linguistic competence	0.839	0.787	0.634	0.100	0.746	0.756	0.070				
Metacognition	0.072	0.077	0.132	0.482	0.104	0.099	0.839	0.070			
Skill	0.091	0.081	0.105	0.778	0.085	0.140	0.886	0.125	0.856		
Transnational social capital	0.530	0.788	0.831	0.107	0.888	0.806	0.113	0.837	0.101	0.101	

Table 3 presents the F-square statistics, which estimate each predictor's effect size on endogenous constructs. F-square values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The findings present significant effects of cultural intelligence on knowledge (2.117), metacognition (4.996), and skill (11.076), revealing that CQ significantly explains variance in its dimensions. Likewise, linguistic competence has a very large effect ($F^2 = 2.203$) on foreign language anxiety, thereby highlighting its critical function in lowering anxiety levels. As far as end results are concerned, cultural intelligence and linguistic competence both show medium-to-large effect sizes on intercultural communication effectiveness ($F^2 = 0.162$ and 0.175 , respectively). Foreign language anxiety also shows a moderate effect ($F^2 = 0.099$) on ICE. In addition, transnational social capital has a strong influence on bonding ($F^2 = 5.433$), bridging (4.094), cosmopolitan capacity (1.518), and ICE (0.235) demonstrating its extensive influence throughout the model. Overall, this table indicates that the majority of predictors have considerable to very large impacts on their respective constructs, reinforcing the explanatory capability and applied significance of the structural model.

Table 3: F-Square Fit statistics

	Bonding	Bridging	Cosmopolitan	Foreign	Intercultural	Knowledge	Meta	Skill
			ability	language	communication		cognition	
				anxiety	effectiveness			
Cultural intelligence				0.104	0.162	2.117	4.996	11.076
Foreign language anxiety					0.099			
Linguistic competence				2.203	0.175			
Transnational social capital	5.433	4.094	1.518		0.235			

Table 4 presents the R-square measures and model fit indices, which are both essential in determining the quality of the structural model in accounting for variance in the outcome measures. The R-square measure of foreign language anxiety is 0.688, which means that almost 69% of FLA variance is accounted for by linguistic competence and cultural intelligence. In the same manner, intercultural communication effectiveness R-square is 0.671, meaning that the variation in ICE by all predictors and mediators explains around 67% of the variance. These are high values of R-square for social science studies (Hair et al., 2019), with the model's good explanatory capability being affirmed. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of both the saturated (0.069) and estimated model (0.075) is less than the 0.08 threshold, reflecting good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The d_ULS (20.604 for saturated model and 23.594 for estimated model) is also acceptable, further reflecting the integrity of the model's structure. In total, this table supports the conclusion that the model being proposed presents a very good fit to the data observed, with strong predictive validity for constructs of most importance.

Table 4: R-square statistics Model Goodness of Fit Statistics

R Square		
	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Foreign language anxiety	0.688	0.685
Intercultural communication effectiveness	0.671	0.665
Fit Summary		
	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.069	0.075
d_ULS	20.604	23.594

Table 5 shows the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for all six hypotheses that were tested in the model (Figure 3). The six hypotheses were confirmed at the $p < 0.001$ level, as they exhibit strong statistical significance. H1 established that cultural intelligence strongly and significantly influences intercultural communication effectiveness ($\beta = 0.522$, $t = 2.292$), confirming CQ's role in cross-cultural environments. H2 also has an equally strong impact of linguistic competence ($\beta = 0.444$, $t = 4.571$) that reflects its significant role in communication.

H3 and H4 indicate that foreign language anxiety mediates partially the impacts of CQ and linguistic competence on ICE ($\beta = 0.209$ and $\beta = 0.303$, respectively), which indicates significant emotional pathways that affect communication outcomes. H5 and H6 emphasize the moderating effect of transnational social capital, which reinforces the influence of CQ ($\beta = 0.360$, $t = 4.634$) and linguistic ability ($\beta = 0.751$, $t = 6.023$) on ICE considerably. Of these, the combined effect of TSC and linguistic ability shows the strongest influence. This table conclusively endorses the entire structural model and offers empirical support for the theoretical relationships posited.

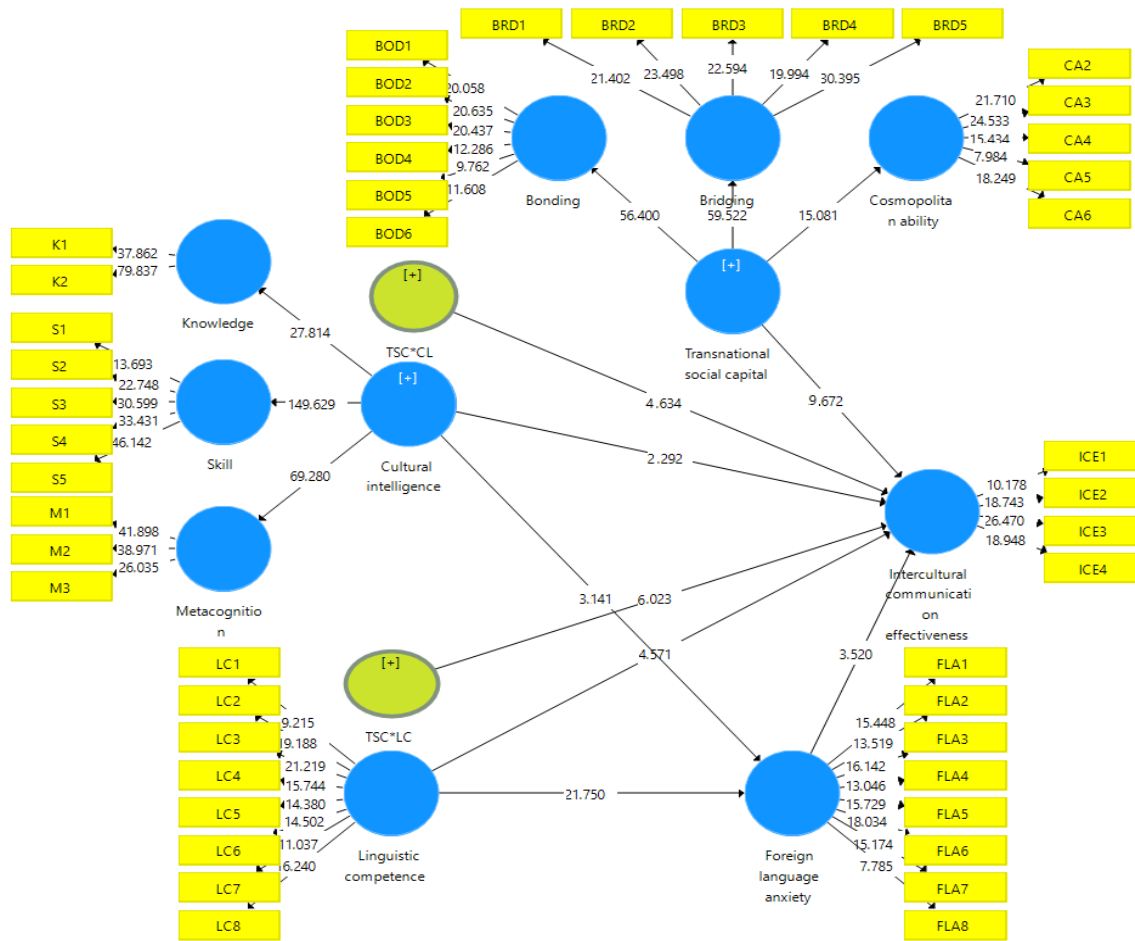


Figure 3: Structural Model for Path Analysis

Table 5: Path Analysis

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
H1. Cultural intelligence significantly influences the intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.522	0.040	2.292	0.000
H2. Linguistic competence significantly influences the intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.444	0.097	4.571	0.000
H3. Foreign language anxiety significantly mediates the relationship of cultural intelligence and intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.209	0.052	2.137	0.000
H4. Foreign language anxiety significantly mediates the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.303	0.091	3.324	0.001
H5. Transnational social capital significantly moderates the relationship of cultural intelligence and intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.360	0.057	4.634	0.000
H6. Transnational social capital significantly moderates the relationship of linguistic competence and intercultural communication effectiveness.	0.751	0.033	6.023	0.000

Discussion

In the globalized era, effective communication across cultures is no longer an ancillary competence but a core ability of individuals working in transnational settings. The study aimed to examine the intricate interplay among cultural intelligence, language proficiency, foreign language anxiety, and transnational social capital in influencing the effectiveness of intercultural communication. By considering both psychological characteristics of

the individual and the situational impact of cross-border social networks, this research presents a sophisticated insight into how individuals interact, adjust, and communicate within multicultural environments. The study's six hypotheses were statistically verified, confirming the put forth integrated model and highlighting the dynamic interaction among cognitive, affective, and social factors. The results not only support previously documented relationships but also identify new avenues and moderation effects that add to the overall debate on intercultural communication and global human behavior.

The support for the first hypothesis validated the fact that cultural intelligence (CQ) fundamentally improves the efficacy of intercultural communication, consistent with a large body of earlier research. High-CQ individuals are more effective at deciphering various cultural signals, learning new social norms, and remaining calm in uncertain interactions. Such skills make communication of higher quality, allowing people to respond effectively to intricate interpersonal situations with confidence and tact. This result supports earlier research by [Fenuku \(2024\)](#), who underlined the importance of metacognitive and behavioral CQ in fostering cross-cultural understanding. Significantly, this research contributes to the knowledge base by showing the predictive power of CQ not only in organizational or academic contexts but also in wider transnational communication contexts where the costs of miscommunication are frequently high.

The second hypothesis confirmed the strong positive correlation between language ability and effectiveness in intercultural communication, solidifying the idea that language proficiency is at the root of effective cross-cultural interaction. Those who were second or foreign language proficient were shown to be more clear, confident, and active when engaging in intercultural communication. This accords with studies by [Peltokorpi and Xie \(2025\)](#), which observed that linguistic ability refines not only the cognitive aspects of communication, but also its relational aspects. More crucially, this study accentuates that linguistic ability not only facilitates transmission of message in a direct way, but is also a social bridge builder that brings about rapport as well as decreased communicative friction. In contrast to other studies that have looked at language proficiency alone, this study combines it with CQ and psychological variables, thus providing a better understanding of how it functions in effective communication.

The third hypothesis demonstrated that foreign language anxiety (FLA) considerably mediates the link between cultural intelligence and efficiency of intercultural communication, revealing a significant affective process that may hinder or facilitate performance of communication. Even high-CQ people may not be able to communicate their messages effectively if they feel anxious when communicating in a foreign language. This mediating role underscores the importance of psychological preparedness and emotional regulation in intercultural situations. Consistent with the results of [Bastian and Widodo \(2024\)](#) this implies that FLA may function as a psychological bottleneck which even breaks the flow of cultural understanding in live communicative interactions. While cultural intelligence, therefore, provides knowledge and motivation to interact across cultures, FLA may thereby reduce its instrumental value, especially when linguistic expression is necessary. This puts into perspective the importance of focused interventions, including anxiety-reduction training and psychological support mechanisms, particularly for globally mobile persons who work in high-stress multicultural settings.

The confirmation of the fourth hypothesis further validates that foreign language anxiety plays a crucial role in mediating the link between linguistic proficiency and intercultural communication competence. This suggests that possessing good language proficiency by itself cannot assure communicative competence if the individual feels extremely apprehensive, self-doubting, or fearful in the use of the language. This result corresponds with earlier studies highlighting the impairment of anxiety on second-language performance ([Tesfaye et al., 2025](#)). While competence in language is the technical basis for good communication, anxiousness can stop spontaneous use of language, lower verbal fluency, and cause avoidance behavior all of which negatively impact communication outcomes. This mediation process points to the psychologic intricacies that determine whether proficiency in language leads to successful communication. It further implies that teachers, employers, and world leaders need to look beyond language education and pay attention to the emotional well-being of the participants in cross-cultural interactions and make sure that their communication contexts are nurturing and confidence-enhancing.

The endorsement of the fifth hypothesis validated the fact that transnational social capital largely moderates the cultural intelligence and effectiveness of intercultural communication. This moderation effect indicates that highly CQ individuals are more apt to convey messages effectively across cultures when they are in embedded supportive transnational networks. These networks offer social validation, real-time feedback, and cultural guidance that facilitate the practical use of cultural intelligence. This result confirms Social Capital Theory, which states that trust-based social networks facilitate personal resources mobilization ([Fenuku, 2024](#)). It also builds on earlier research by [Castro and Shelton-Strong \(2024\)](#), which discovered that transnational connections ensure a feeling of belonging and enhance cultural competence. The findings suggest that CQ does not work equally in all situations; instead, its effect is enhanced in social-capital-rich environments. In practice, this implies that institutions and organizations ought to create relational networks that encourage cultural exchange and support

to enhance the efficiency of culturally intelligent professionals.

Lastly, the sixth hypothesis revealed that linguistic ability is also moderated by transnational social capital in its relation with the effectiveness of intercultural communication, supporting the belief that language skills thrive in socially supportive contexts. This correspondence suggests that language-proficient people gain much more when they belong to culturally diverse and trust-based social networks. Such networks provide actual-life arenas for the usage of language, ease the fear of judgments, and expose one to colloquial and context-specific words of use which formal learning tends to lack. As endorsed by [Peltokorpi \(2023\)](#), language competence becomes increasingly functional and confidence-enhancing if practiced in meaningful relational contexts. The transnational social capital moderating effect further suggests that communicative effectiveness is not solely a product of individual proficiency but influenced by social facilitation processes. Thus, the development of inclusive, multilingual, and socially dense contexts is crucial to tap the full potential of linguistic ability in transnational communication.

Together, the validation of all six hypotheses supports the study's holistic framework and underscores the necessity to engage intercultural communication as a multi-faceted construct influenced by cognitive skill, emotional control, and social environment. Cultural intelligence and language proficiency were identified as key predictors, however, whose effects were subsequently demonstrated to be dependent on both the experience of foreign language anxiety and the availability of transnational social capital. Such holistic understanding allows for a greater insight into the complexity of cross-cultural contact in real-world settings beyond simple linear models to more dynamic, interactional accounts. The conclusions promote more comprehensive global training and policy development training that is integrated with psychological support and social facilitation along with skill-building. Since people and firms more and more work across boundaries, this work provides timely and practical advice to assist them in establishing more inclusive, communicatively successful, and culturally sensitive settings.

Implications of the study

This study provides important theoretical contributions by further illuminating cultural intelligence and language proficiency's role in effective intercultural communication in transnational settings. Utilizing the Communication Accommodation Theory and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory, this study builds on these frameworks by empirically testing the mediating role of foreign language anxiety and the moderating influence of transnational social capital. By establishing that both linguistic ability and cultural intelligence significantly contribute to ICE, the study not only reaffirms their core positions in intercultural communication theory but also locates them as key pillars in workforce adaptation and collaboration across nations. In addition, the mediating role of foreign language anxiety indicates that internal psychological and emotional states should be integrated into models of communication, underscoring the necessity for a multifaceted theoretical approach to understanding ICE. The transnational social capital moderating factor also enriches the discussion by bringing in social network theory as a way of adding that relational and structural social capital can influence the results of intercultural interactions. Through combining these theoretical spaces, the research presents a more cohesive conceptual framework for future work and sets the stage for intercultural competence hybrid models in globalized contexts.

The results offer concise and practical advice for practitioners working in multinational companies, international schools, and international NGOs. Enhancing cultural intelligence and linguistic capability through specialized training programs has the potential to considerably enhance employees' and students' ability to communicate effectively in trans-cultural contexts. Organizations should invest in holistic cross-cultural communication and language skills workshops for developing these fundamental capabilities. Moreover, the established mediating effect of foreign language anxiety underscores the significance of psychological guidance and the necessity to develop low-anxiety settings through esteem-building activities, guidance, and non-discriminatory policies. Educators and managers need to be made aware of emotional hindrances that may stifle successful communication, particularly among those employed or studying in foreign cultural settings. Additionally, the development of transnational social capital through the promotion of intercultural networking, professional exchange programs, and international project collaborations can be a strategic value that compounds the advantages of both cultural intelligence and language skills. These concrete strategies not only enhance performance but also facilitate inclusion, innovation, and resilience in diverse global environments.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

In spite of the precious contributions of this study, a few limitations must be noted. Firstly, the research

employed a cross-sectional study, and this hinders the capacity to make causal inferences from the links between the variables. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental study designs to capture the temporal dynamics of intercultural communication development more accurately. Secondly, though the sample comprised of various industries and cultural backgrounds, it might not cover all industries or cultural contexts and so hampered generalizability of the findings. Future research would investigate these relationships in a variety of sectors, including healthcare, education, and diplomacy, to establish the model's generalizability. Also, foreign language anxiety was conceptualized as a one-dimension; future research could unpack its different facets (e.g., communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation) to derive more sophisticated insights. Researchers can also test further moderating variables like organizational support or technological communication tools, which could impact the way cultural and linguistic abilities are measured in communication effectiveness in virtual teams and hybrid workplaces.

Conclusion

With a globalizing world dominated by mobility and cross-cultural collaboration, this research offers an overarching framework for understanding the role of cultural intelligence and linguistic competence in improving intercultural communication effectiveness. In validating that both abilities are strong predictors of ICE and that foreign language anxiety acts as a mediator in their effect, the study reaffirms the role of psychological and social factors in intercultural communication. Additionally, the moderating effect of transnational social capital reinforces the model even further, showing that those situated within global networks are more able to convert their skills into successful communication outcomes. These findings are also important for theory and practice, particularly as institutions and organizations attempt to develop globally competent individuals who can function well within complex multicultural environments. Generally, the research introduces a holistic model that integrates individual competencies, emotional experiences, and social networks to account for intercultural communication success in transnational environments. Not only does it fill gaps in current literature, but also provides strategic guidance for enhancing communication efficacy in culturally diverse contexts. By identifying the interchange of knowledge, affect, and social structure, this research is promoting more integrative models of global engagement and skill acquisition. Future research based on these discoveries can help to improve intercultural competence models and define inclusive and psychologically safe environments for effective communication in the global age.

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