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**CULTIVATING LINGUACULTURAL COMPETENCE IN BUSINESS ENGLISH
COMMUNICATION: A MIXED METHODS INTERVENTION STUDY**

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Cultivating Linguacultural Competence in Business English Communication:
A Mixed Methods Intervention Study

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2025

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Lucas John Peltonen

ABSTRACT

Internationally operating business professionals communicate using English as a business lingua franca (BELF). BELF communication is inherently transcultural: BELF interlocutors communicate to execute business functions or build business relationships to enhance business functions, with interlocutors from a variety of linguistic and cultural (linguacultural) backgrounds. However, as I observed in my own business English (BE) classrooms in southern China, and as has been identified in the research literature, culturally based miscommunications remain pervasive. Consequently, this investigation endeavors to bridge the gap between current theories about contemporary transcultural communication in BELF and tangible curricular implementation.

Despite the plethora of pedagogically oriented cultural models in applied linguistics, none have specifically focused on the development of the linguacultural competencies (LCCs) of BELF learners and users. It was necessary to develop a novel conceptual framework that specifically addressed professionals' LCCs pedagogically. Therefore, the Linguacultural Competence (LCC) framework was developed. Aligned with the broader Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) framework's proposals to adjust pedagogy to address the global and transcultural nature of contemporary communication, the LCC framework combines the theoretical lenses of BELF, linguaculture, and genre to identify specific LCCs that can be operationalized and addressed pedagogically.

As the LCC framework is a novel construct, this study had four research objectives: The first objective was to identify what specific LCCs professionals require. The second objective was to use the identified LCCs to structure an analysis of an existing BE curriculum (e.g., *Market Leader*, a popular, globally distributed textbook) to determine what competency-building opportunities are present in the textbook versus those that are not and how the relative presence or absence of LCCs

might affect learners. For the third objective, the findings of the materials analysis were used to design a teaching intervention that included adaptations intended to develop two specific LCCs deemed important by professionals but were lacking in the textbook: 1) the ability to express one's home culture and 2) understanding of how religion impacts business communication. Utilizing a mixed methods intervention design, I collected qualitative and quantitative data from a control group receiving instruction on the existing curriculum and an experimental group that was exposed to an adapted version of the curriculum targeting the two LCCs. The final research objective was to examine the qualitative data (during-course self-reflections, email contents, post-course reflective questions, post-course interviews) to determine the reasons behind and explanations for the quantitative findings.

The work centering on the first research objective resulted in the identification of 20 individual LCCs that were deemed important by job-experienced professionals. Interestingly, according to a Principal Components analysis (PCA), the LCCs clustered into knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes, aligning with extant intercultural constructs.

The analysis conducted to achieve the second research objective revealed the LCC building opportunities that were present in the *Market Leader* textbook, and those that were absent. An in-depth analysis of Unit 3 offered insight into how the presence or absence of such competencies might affect learners. Informed by the findings related to this research objective, several necessary but neglected LCCs were discussed, and two competencies were selected as the basis of materials adaptations, development, and assessment in the intervention.

Regarding the third research objective, the quantitative results of the intervention showed that both groups improved to a statistically significant but similar degree, as measured by two assessment instruments: a self-report questionnaire and an email performance task. Qualitative

findings illustrated the utility of the LCC framework by showing that the LCCs are readily developable and assessable. Further, the fact that both groups improved over the course of a limited intervention suggests that raised awareness is enough to prompt improved linguacultural expression. The relative performance of the groups with respect to both LCCs (religion and home culture) and components (knowledge, skills/strategies, attitudes) are discussed.

For the fourth research objective, qualitative data indicated that the similar improvement of the control and experimental groups was likely due to factors relating to the population of participants, namely their experience, motivation, and autonomy. Other factors that impacted the results were related to the intervention itself, such as the choice of materials and the removal of one assessment instrument.

The findings of this study can inform pedagogical practices that contribute to developing the linguacultural competence of professionals who, in turn, can create a more engaged, empathetic, and efficient international business environment in the future. Such communicative improvements will ideally support business activity and success not only in Greater China but also globally.

PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE THESIS

The content of this thesis is present in several research works in various stages of development, outlined below.

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and teaching English (pp. 103-124). Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-82139-4_6)

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The case of a business English textbook in China. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*,

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

The following list includes acronyms and abbreviations that are most prevalent in this thesis.

BE	Business English
BELF	English as a business lingua franca
CEFR	Common European Framework Reference
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELL	English language learning
ELT	English language teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GELT	Global Englishes for Language Teaching
LCC	Linguacultural Competence (general)
LCCs	Linguacultural Competencies (individual)
L1	First/native language
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question test
MFRM	Many-facet Rasch measurement
NS/NSs	Native Speaker(s) (of English)
NNS/NNSs	Non-Native Speaker(s) (of English)
PARSNIP	Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, -isms, and Pork (Taboo topics in ELT)
WE	World Englishes

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter provides the contextual background for the present study. Starting with the motivation for the study, the chapter continues with a description of the state of English globally, the state of business English (BE) globally, the concept of BELF, and the state of business English learning and teaching in China. Subsequently, the research gaps and research questions that drive the study are outlined. After that, the chapter explains the significance of the study and concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Motivation of the Study

This entire study was motivated by an event that occurred in my business English classroom. During the early fall of 2020, when I was just beginning my master's degree study, I was training a group of vice presidents (VPs) of various departments of the Guangzhou subsidiary of a large multinational bank. While these VPs were confident in their ability to discuss work-related topics in English, they felt lost when it came to building rapport, hosting foreign guests, or simply chatting with overseas colleagues. The bank's stakeholders tasked me with developing a custom-made curriculum to address their needs. What became evident during the training was that there were incidents of miscommunication seemingly attributable to cultural differences, a phenomenon I had observed and heard about throughout my teaching, but which was succinctly summarized in the following anecdote.

One trainee recounted that when a senior manager was visiting from the UK, her team took the visitor to a renowned Cantonese restaurant. After diligently checking the manager's dining preferences, the hosts ordered several dishes, including a chicken dish. However, when the chicken dish arrived – in traditional Cantonese style with the head still attached – the UK visitor screamed. The local team members were understandably embarrassed, as was the UK manager. For me, this

story was an epiphany, a powerful example of the intersection of language, culture, and professional dynamics. I suspected that culturally based expectations were at the heart of this event. Semantically, chicken is chicken. However, the exact conceptualization of chicken in the context of eating can range from “chicken should be nicely cooked white meat, perhaps on a bone” to “chicken should be presented in its entirety to show its freshness and authenticity.” The situation was a perfect example of a tenet of linguaculture: Language offers the communicative form, but culture provides the meaning.

I became concerned: If miscommunications about simple words such as chicken can occur, then misunderstandings in situations such as high-stakes business negotiations, mergers and acquisitions, or sales discussions could be catastrophic.

What I have now termed the *Chicken Incident* prompted me to investigate how culture impacts language learning and usage in business contexts. The focus of this investigation is to understand how incidents such as the *Chicken Incident* happen, how to analyze them, and how to prevent similar situations from happening in the future. The investigation has led me on a journey across disciplines, through my master’s degree study, and toward the current investigation. The first step in solving miscommunications such as the *Chicken Incident* is to understand the contexts in which they occur, which we will examine below.

1.2 English in the World

There are languages that currently function as regional lingua francas, such as Mandarin in Greater China and parts of Southeast Asia, Arabic across parts of the Middle East, Spanish in Central and South America, and Russian in ex-Soviet states (Godenzzi, 2006; Jaradat & Al-Khawaldeh, 2015; D. C. S. Li, 2006; Pavlenko, 2006). However, English is the language that currently functions as the global lingua franca (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Hu, 2018; Patel et al., 2023; Rose & Galloway,

2019). Globalization has caused vastly increased volumes of international communication, especially in the realms of international business, trade, commerce, medicine, and science (Arancon, 2013; Barroso, 2020; Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; Hu, 2018, 2019). Additionally, the growing ease of international travel has impacted the growth of English (Hu, 2018; Tuite et al., 2020): The number of English speakers worldwide is staggering, and researchers expect this number only to increase (Jenkins, 2015, 2018). The following are several factors contributing to the prominence and anticipated growth of English usage worldwide.

It is estimated that 2.3 billion people in the world speak English as a first (L1) or second (L2) language (Crystal, 2018; Patel et al., 2023), with another 1.85 billion currently learning English (Mishan, 2022). A significant portion of this number is Chinese speakers of English, estimated at more than 430 million people, who are communicating more frequently and in more contexts than ever before. They outnumber all native English Speakers (NS) globally (Hu & McKay, 2014; Jenkins, 2015, 2018; Patel et al., 2023). Another large group is India's estimated 129 million English speakers. Millions more are in South Asian countries such as Pakistan (23 million representing 12% of the population) and Bangladesh (8 million, representing 5% of the population) as well as African countries such as Nigeria (115 million, representing 60% of the population) and Ghana (19 million, representing 66% of the population) (Crystal, 2018; Patel et al., 2023). As long as English remains the global lingua franca, individuals, organizations, and nations will aspire to develop English proficiency as a way to raise their socioeconomic status (Patel et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2017).

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as *Skype*, *Zoom*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Google Meet*, and messaging apps such as *WhatsApp*, *WeChat*, and *Facebook Messenger* have also facilitated greater volumes of international communication. In fact, in the

post-COVID era, such technologies have become commonplace for workplace as well as personal communication, lowering the barriers to entry to international communication (Barroso, 2020). Relatedly, English is the most widely used language on the Internet, accounting for 60% of website content, followed by Russian, Spanish, and German with 5.4%, 4.1%, and 3.5% respectively. Chinese falls in ninth place at 1.7% (Patel et al., 2023). English accounts for more website content than all other languages combined. Sitting in their homes or offices, people are communicating in English on a greater scale than ever.

On an organizational level, English is the official language – or one of the official languages – of global entities such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as prominent regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN + 3 (adding China, Japan, and Korea), the European Union (EU), and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (European Union, 2023; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Patel et al., 2023; United Nations, 2023; World Bank, 2023; World Trade Organization, 2023). Though some of these organizations have multiple official languages, English is the common language across each of these organizations. It is a genuinely global phenomenon.

At the corporate level, “it’s clear that both employers and employees believe English skills are key to thriving in the global workspace” (Pearson, 2024, p. 13). It is estimated that 85% of international organizations use English as one of their working languages (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016). Further, 85% of employees surveyed worldwide agree that English will continue to be the language of choice for international business, and 90% of employees are “pleading” for language training (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016, p. 13), unveiling a critical gap in workplace abilities. From employers’ perspectives, in every industry, “there is a gap between the English language skills required and the skills that are actually

available” (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016, p. 22). Across all company sizes (small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs] to large multinationals), there is at least a 40% skills gap, though it is as high as 67% in countries where English is not an official language, such as Japan and China (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016). English is not only crucial to attaining and performing in high-level global jobs, such as in multinationals, but also for lower-skilled jobs, such as in the service industry or tourism (Patel et al., 2023). For those who do have English proficiency, the benefits can be enormous, garnering salaries as much as 30-50% higher than those who do not have proficiency, depending on the country/territory (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016). In short, English proficiency in professional contexts is a fundamental requirement, bearing enormous implications. Having established the prominence and expected growth of English usage as a lingua franca globally, I now turn to how this growth is impacting language usage.

Globally, English, whether used domestically or as a lingua franca, will likely change due to the increasing volume and contexts of international communication (Cameron & Galloway, 2019; Jenkins, 2018). The fundamental reason for such change is as follows: Business professionals are 70% - 100% likely to interact with other non-native English speakers (NNSs) than with NS (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Rose & Galloway, 2019), a fact illustrated by my personal experience: When I taught BE to the mergers and acquisitions team of a large, state-owned organization (a department which was tasked with partnering with overseas governments to develop electricity infrastructure), I was the only English NS speaker they encountered during any given week. The rest of their English language communication was with stakeholders in Southeast Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe. Accordingly, “standard” English, as used by NSs from places such as the USA and UK, comprises a small minority of what is spoken globally daily. In

fact, the concept of the “Native Speaker” itself is questionable: There is an enormous variety of dialects and proficiencies even amongst those whose first language is English (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2015). Furthermore, research has revealed that NSs are often complicit in lingua franca miscommunication due to their inflexibility and lack of practice in accommodating non-native speakers’ communicative abilities and needs (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2010). The previously accepted paradigm of NS “owning” English that was considered “standard” and “proper” is not how English actually functions in the world today, particularly in the context of business: English is used by people of an enormous variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, all communicating according to their own styles, which influence the English being spoken at any given moment. It is the concepts of lingua franca communication and English varieties to which we will now turn.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is defined as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Seidlhofer (2018) explains further: “As a truly post-modern phenomenon, it is used by speakers from all walks of life in all continents, with hundreds of different languages and varying degrees of ‘proficiency’, and in a way that demonstrates very clearly that communicative effectiveness is frequently a function of variability, of the destabilization of established linguistic norms” (p. 85). In other words, ELF is not a stable “type” of English. It is better described as the constantly developing corpus of international communication. In the context of business communication, this phenomenon is labeled English as a business lingua franca (BELF). Originally, BELF was an acronym for business English as a lingua franca (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). However, more recently, researchers have argued that the term should be *English as a business lingua franca* to highlight the domain of use and

ensure that it is not conceptualized as a language variety (Komori-Glatz, 2017), which earlier articles did (e.g., Nickerson, 2010). Despite the re-ordered wording, the acronym BELF has remained. It could be argued that this wording is prescriptive, arising from the European context. In China, BE is a discipline and course of study in its own right (Du, 2021), so the former nomenclature might be more appropriate in the Chinese context. Nevertheless, in this study, I will follow convention by referring to it as English as a business lingua franca while using the acronym BELF.

As lingua franca communication is usually international (across political or linguistic borders), it is inherently transcultural (Baker, 2015, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2021). In order to define transcultural communication, I must first define culture. Culture has been defined in many ways depending on the disciplinary background of those creating the definitions. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reviewed over one hundred definitions of culture, and in the years since their study, there are likely hundreds, if not thousands, more. Focusing on the definitions from the literature underpinning this study's linguacultural competence (LCC) framework, there are salient contributions from Agar (linguaculture), Bhatia (genre), and Baker (ELF), each of which will be discussed. Agar (2002) defines culture in terms of interaction, learning, and awareness. In other words, he views it as a process. Bhatia (1993) defines culture as "that elusive combination of customs, skills, art, and ideas that distinguish each country" (p. 87). Interestingly, he conceptualizes culture according to nation-states, highlighting its visible products and less visible ideas. ELF theorists define culture as groupings of people and complex shared systems: "cultural systems emerge from the interactions of groups of individuals but are not reducible to those individuals" (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019, p. 472). Based on the combination of theoretical lenses inherent to this study's LCC Framework, culture will be defined as a set of values, beliefs, behaviors, worldviews, and

products from the group(s) in which one functions, revealed in interactions with others. This definition includes the processes, communication, and tangible products contained in the above definitions. Importantly, this definition expresses the fluid and emergent nature of culture and can accommodate different levels of culture (e.g., regional, corporate, work team, and individual) and orientations of culture (i.e., home, target, and universal), discussed in Section 2.5.

Transcultural communication refers to communication across the entirety of the global cultural landscape. This study uses the term transcultural communication as a conceptualization distinct from other terms such as cross-cultural (Beckisheva et al., 2015; Richter et al., 2023), intercultural (Agar, 2002; Hofstede, 1983; Lewis, 2021), or multicultural (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Intercultural and cross-cultural usually refer to communication between defined (national) cultures, while multicultural pertains to contexts in which multiple cultural backgrounds are present. On the other hand, the term transcultural has been proposed by ELF theorists, who highlight the transient, borderless, and fluid nature of ELF and BELF communication. The abstract from Baker's article, "From Intercultural to Transcultural" explains:

Links between linguistic resources, other modes, and cultures are created *in situ* suggesting that relationships between 'named' languages and cultures cannot be taken for granted. We frequently see emergent cultural practices and references which are neither part of any one culture, or, crucially, necessarily in-between cultures. Thus, the traditional metaphor of 'inter' for intercultural communication is better approached as transcultural communication where borders are transcended, transgressed and in the process transformed. (Baker, 2022a, p. 280)

The poignance of the above epistemology is that linguacultural backgrounds are so diverse, with interactions that are so frequent – but also fleeting – that multiple languages and modalities

function simultaneously (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Cogo & House, 2018). Therefore, communication cannot be adequately described as being “between” cultures or even in a third space separate from them (Baker, 2022a). Rather than adhering to the traditional English language teaching (ELT) conceptualization of English culture(s) as those of native speakers, usually British or American, the cultures of English are understood as being global and are no longer reserved for NS. This changing paradigm of English communication significantly impacts English usage globally and, therefore, pedagogy. In such a vast and complex linguacultural landscape, the *transcultural* paradigm much more aptly encompasses the characteristics of such communication. Having outlined this study’s conceptualization of transculturalism, it is time to examine BE and BELF.

1.3 Business English

One difficulty in defining BE is the question of what, exactly, qualifies as business. Accordingly, the term *workplace English* has been advanced. This term is more flexible and inclusive, as the context of use can be broader (e.g., English used by professionals in a school or government office, which may not be considered a “business”) (Du, 2021; Jeong, 2021). Even so, this study will use the term *business English* because it is more widespread in the academic literature and is used by practitioners (teachers, trainers, and facilitators) worldwide (Peltonen & Haga, 2025).

Definitions of BE fall into three main categories. First, it is defined in terms of its theoretical positioning and area of study, often under the auspices of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1996). Second, it is defined in terms of context, namely the communication that happens during the course of business, such as a sales presentation, a negotiation, or emails pertaining to a merger (Frendo, 2005; Pearson, 2022). The third category of definitions concerns functions, including genres for specific tasks (Nickerson,

2010; Peltonen & Hu, under review), the combination of knowledge and skills required to complete professional tasks (Frendo, 2005), and the transactional and interpersonal functions of business communication (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). This study's definition of BE encompasses each of the above: *BE is the language used in professional contexts to exchange work-related knowledge, perform work tasks, and develop relationships to achieve professional objectives*. This definition encompasses the existing definitions' focus on context as well as transactional and interpersonal functions, positioning it at the nexus of business communication, "everyday English," and ESP (Frendo, 2005).

BE instructors function in a complex and fragmented landscape. They work with both pre-experienced learners (usually in universities) and job-experienced professionals (often in training centers or in-company), as will be discussed in Section 1.6 (Frendo, 2005; Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Their classes might be online, face-to-face, hybrid, group, or one-to-one, and can be synchronous or asynchronous. BE instructors have to adapt to learner groups of similar or different language levels who hail from numerous geographical and cultural contexts and industries (Frendo, 2005; Sing, 2017). When working with job-experienced learners, BE instructors have to acknowledge that the learners know more about their jobs and topics than they do, so instructors may position themselves as consultants or facilitators. On the other hand, with pre-experienced learners, they might consider themselves subject authorities and a "provider of input" (Bereckzky, 2009, p. 84). One consequence of the fragmented nature of BE teaching is that BE instructors often function in isolation from others and "therefore have limited availability of a community to connect to, whether in the workplace or at events such as conferences" (Macalister, 2018, p. 248). Consequences of such isolation range from a lack of a community with whom to share best practices, find validation, or examine research (Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Further, BE instructors

report a wide variety of trajectories toward BE teaching: They have often worked in business roles previously or have migrated from mainstream ELT toward BE teaching (Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Within this complex landscape, BE instructors are also expected to keep abreast of new research and theoretical developments, such as BELF, but BE teacher training is highly decentralized, with dozens of certificates, without a central authority or standard, leading Hutchinson and Waters (1986) to term the field of BE teaching “the Wild West of ELT” (p. 158). Further, even when exposed to research, BE instructors may not implement it in the classroom due to impracticality or conceptual inaccessibility (Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Understanding the BE pedagogical contexts highlights the importance of the current inquiry in endeavoring to establish flexible and useful principles that BE instructors can directly translate to the classroom and, ideally, improve BE pedagogy.

Business English learners hail from a variety of industries and represent an enormous range of English proficiencies, requirements, and geographical, language, and cultural backgrounds. They work in heavy industry in Japan (Cowling, 2007), public relations in Croatia (Jugo et al., 2017), civil engineering in Iran (Nateghian, 2024), the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh (Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2023), or international trade in China (Du, 2021). Alternatively, they might be executives in Hong Kong (Chan, 2023). They might work for large, established multinational companies or startup SMEs (Du, 2021). As will be shown, though the vast majority of participants in this study were in the Greater China region, they represented dozens of industries, job functions, organizational sizes, and varying levels of English proficiency. Regarding learning motivations, findings from research informed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) have shown that when learners choose to study BE, spending their own money for training, they tend to display high levels of intrinsic motivation and learning autonomy. In contrast, those

who are required to join training by their employers (Ellis & Johnson, 1994) tend to display extrinsic motivation and lower levels of learning autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). This investigation will examine how motivation and autonomy manifest in this study's participants, and how those characteristics may impact the study's results.

1.4 English as a business lingua franca (BELF)

BELF is defined as a shared language used in the business domain by speakers with different L1s (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020). A distinction must be made between BE and BELF. Whereas BE describes the language used in the workplace, BELF highlights that this English usage is not a static, codified body of knowledge; instead, BELF is actively evolving and is negotiated in real-time between interactants in different contexts (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Although BELF facilitates business communication, it cannot be understood as neutral or cultureless: "Rather, it can be seen to be a conduit of its speaker's communication culture" (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005, pp. 417-418). BELF communication could be Hong Kong Chinese interacting with business partners in Japan (Du-Babcock, 2013), employees of the Indian subsidiary of a multinational bank communicating with their counterparts in Malaysia (Peltonen, 2022a), or an infinite number of other permutations. Examples of how people from different linguacultural backgrounds communicate, including mismatches and gaps in cultural understanding, abound. In the Asian context, Du-Babcock (2013) illustrated how Hong Kong Chinese and Japanese interactants differed in the number of communicative turns taken, speaking time, and lexical choices. In the European context, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) studied Finnish and Swedish communication styles in an organization that had undergone a merger. Perceptions of communication styles were quite different: What Finnish survey respondents labeled as "to the point, no unnecessary chatting," the Swedes considered "direct, sounds harsher than is intended." On the other hand,

what Swedish respondents considered “dialogue,” Finns perceived as “endless discussion” (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005, p. 408). These examples illustrate that different linguacultures communicate differently, even within the seemingly structured conventions of BE communication. BELF, as a theoretical construct, is the result of extensive research into how professionals communicate when they function at the international level. However, how to connect its theoretical concepts to tangible classroom practice beyond brief “pedagogical implications” at the end of research articles remains an open question.

1.5 English in China

As mentioned, China likely has the largest English language learning (ELL) population in the world (He & Li, 2023). In the Chinese context, the fundamental purpose of learning English is to pursue professional and economic development, which Gardner and Lambert (1972) labeled instrumental motivation. English’s position as a mandatory subject in the Chinese educational system, at the policy level, appears to be based on its usefulness to the country’s ability to participate in global trade, diplomacy, research, etc. (He, 2020; Patel et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2017).

However, along with China’s continuing economic development and increasing global influence comes also the tremendous demand for English-proficient professionals, especially in the fields like international law, international trade, and tourism, and the shortage of such talents has become an obstacle for the country’s further economic development. (He & Li, 2023, p. 151)

Reasons for a lack of English-proficient professionals include the following: Researchers have observed that traditional grammar-translation pedagogy is prevalent in Chinese schools. First adopted in the nineteenth century, this approach focuses more on grammatical accuracy than

communication (Hu, 2002, 2004, 2005; Le Gal & Pei, 2015; Lei & Qin, 2022; Zhan, 2008). Further, traditional views of teachers are that they are arbiters of knowledge (Hall Haley & Ferro, 2011; Hu, 2002; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Zhan, 2008), and, according to Confucian learning principles, education should emphasize “silent reading, memorization and practice” (Zhan, 2008, p. 53). These beliefs result in learners who might be silent and seemingly passive and expect teachers to present them with knowledge rather than facilitate their engagement in communication. Furthermore, due to the conditions in typical Chinese classrooms (many students, limited time, learning points that must be met) (Hu, 2002; Lei & Qin, 2022), the default method of instruction has been teacher-centered lectures in which students listen to the information, absorb it, practice it in homework, and then take exams (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014). The result of each of the above factors has been generations of learners who can pass exams on English grammar and vocabulary but cannot communicate. That said, the challenges of implementing Western-created communicative approaches in the Chinese context have been well-examined (Hu, 2002; Lei & Qin, 2022). This research has identified disconnects between Chinese learners’ teacher-centered learning experiences and expectations and Western-created communicative approaches propounded by private training centers and BE providers (both of whom hired NS from Western countries). I personally witnessed and experienced “silent” classrooms in which the students expected teacher input, which mismatched the instructors’ expectations of student communication. That said, researchers have found that Chinese learners have been able to adjust to meaning-based approaches that are more communicative in nature (Walker et al., 1996), and possible entry points to such approaches could be to leverage Chinese collectivist orientations (Hu, 2002). In my own experience, adjusting students’ expectations and orienting their learning toward communication

was a lengthy, incremental, and step-by-step process. These realities had to be considered in the development and enactment of this study's BE curricula.

On a societal level, as China's power and participation in the global order and economy have risen, companies, individuals, and government policies have focused on expanding business partnerships overseas. Major ventures such as the Belt and Road Initiative (Li, 2018; Pan & Block, 2011) have generated infrastructure projects all over the world, including high-speed railroads, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunications networks, and electricity plants across Central and South Asia, Africa, and Europe (Huang, 2016). Such endeavors require vast resources of professionals with English proficiency. Additional reasons for developing English communicative competence relate to events such as the Olympic Games and the World Expo, which require hosts who can communicate with overseas visitors. Further, English proficiency is necessary for import and export trade, tourism, and seeking foreign direct investment (FDI), which was USD 168 billion in 2022, USD 153 billion in 2023, and USD 102 billion from Jan – Nov 2024 (Textor, 2024). Despite recent decreases, China remains the second-largest economy with over 10% of the world's FDI. In a survey conducted by He (2020), 95.5% of respondents, active business professionals in mainland China, believed English would become more important in the future. They cited the fact that English is the global lingua franca, English proficiency influences upward mobility, and more Chinese enterprises are expanding globally. These endeavors are considered crucial to China's socioeconomic development and as mentioned, require many English-speaking professionals.

To achieve the above goals and compete in a saturated marketplace, employees' English abilities must be at least on par with those of competitors. Yet there continues to be a gap between English levels in China and the levels of other developed and developing economies (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014). From 2019 to 2024, according to the EF English Proficiency

Indexes (EFEPI), mainland China's ranking dropped from 40th to 91st (English First, 2019, 2024), worsening from "Moderate" proficiency to "Low" proficiency. Not only is mainland China's English proficiency still not competitive, but the trend is also moving in the wrong direction. By a different metric, in the 2024 "Global English Proficiency Report," the Asia Pacific and China region scored the lowest of all regions in its "Versant by Pearson" language assessment 4-skills score (48/90), and second lowest in speaking scores (40/90) and writing scores (54/90) (Pearson, 2024, p. 6). In other words, overall, the region's English proficiency was the lowest in the world. At the same time, employers in China "are seen to be the drivers of which language is learned ...if the workplace requires English, then English will continue to be the language to learn" (Patel et al., 2023, p. 93). The need for proficient English speakers in professional contexts remains enormous (Patel et al., 2023), prompting both private and public companies as well as individuals to undertake business English training programs (He, 2020; Wang et al., 2017).

Despite the need for and paucity of capable BELF communicators in Chinese workplaces, there is a movement to reduce the importance of English in Chinese school curricula. "The mood is such that legislators and school administrators have tried to limit the amount of time devoted to the study of English, and to reduce the weight given to it on China's all-important university-entrance exams" (The Economist, 2024). The argument is that enormous curricular time and effort are devoted to English, yet few students actually utilize their skills, so traditional Chinese subjects should be emphasized. A further possible explanation for the deemphasis of English is that "China's relations with the world's biggest English-speaking countries soured" (The Economist, 2024). In other words, the country's youth should not be learning the language of China's rivals. However, as Patel et al. (2023) explain, English is likely to remain the dominant foreign language taught in China in large part because of its potential professional benefits both now and in the

future. The authors assert that “[p]arents, academics and training providers understand the importance and benefits of English and will find solutions to work around the deprioritisation of English in schools” (p. 93). Further, there are “no foreseeable changes to the *Zhongkao* [secondary school entrance examination] or the *Gaokao* [university entrance examination]” (p. 95). In other words, despite proposed curricular changes for younger learners, English proficiency is likely to remain a high priority for the workplace and will require professionals in China to develop their language and requisite LCC skills.

In addition to organizational and governmental policy-driven needs for professionals with a high proficiency in English, there are well-documented benefits of English ability for professionals at an individual level. According to a study by Wang et al. (2017), higher English proficiency correlates with higher salary. In some cases, English proficiency garners as much as 5.7% higher earnings. However, the salary differences vary widely across regions, occupations, and demographics, with “returns to proficiency in English being higher for those living on the coastal seaboard, middle-aged workers, those with better education, and those in technical and service occupations” (Wang et al., 2017, p. 102). Another motive for improving business English proficiency relates to power in the workplace: Higher proficiency appears to correlate with a greater volume of communication and perceptions of having authority in interactions (Du-Babcock, 2013). The implications are that improved language competency can boost job performance and perceptions of authority, thus leading to promotions, increased salary, and more responsibility for the professional (Du, 2021; Wang et al., 2017). Having established the importance of English proficiency in the Chinese context at the level of the individual, organization, and state, it is now time to consider the status of BE pedagogy in China and how that may impact the success of raising the English proficiency of the population.

1.6 Business English Learning and Teaching in China

In China, the majority of BE training happens in three contexts; in universities to prepare students for entering the workforce (pre-experienced), in private training centers (pre-experienced and job-experienced), or in-house training for active professionals (job-experienced). As this investigation focuses on active, internationally-facing business professionals, the private training center and in-house contexts are most applicable (He, 2020).

Before discussing the BE teaching and learning contexts in more detail, it is necessary to understand why this study focuses on job-experienced, internationally-facing business professionals. First, a crucial aspect of understanding how to improve BE teaching is understanding what competencies business professionals need. Only active professionals will be able to provide such insights (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025). At the same time, this population will benefit directly from any pedagogical improvements because they are in the workplace, communicating regularly and in real-time (Frendo, 2005). Second, discovering and addressing job-experienced professionals' communicative needs will also inform what should be taught to pre-experienced learners who do not yet have practical perspectives (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025). Job-experienced professionals' input will help align curricula and pedagogy with real-world professional communication, thus better preparing pre-experienced learners for workplace success. Third, research aimed at job-experienced business professionals, including pedagogical practice, is underrepresented in the current literature, likely because academics have easier access to pre-experienced learners in the university contexts in which they often function (Rose et al., 2021). This study aims to build knowledge where there is a dearth of research.

Private training centers contributed significantly to BE training for job-experienced professionals prior to 2019 (He, 2020). Providers such as Meten, WEBi, English First, Berlitz, and

Wall Street English offered BE classes to adults in training centers or on-site at companies. In 2016, Wall Street English was described as:

among the leading players that provide internationally recognized training to Fortune 500 companies with around 1,000 clients globally. In China, the company has provided training to over 300 companies such as Bank of China, Lenovo, Roche, Bayer, HUAWEI, and Air China. As more global companies with headquarters in China emerge, the demand for specialized courses will increase further. (Technavio, 2016).

It was during this time of explosive growth that I worked in Wall Street English, training job-experienced professionals in dozens of organizations. However, since the onset of COVID-19 and the implementation of new government policies, the private training center market is now a fraction of what it was. Wall Street English, where I worked, along with its major competitors, METEN and WEBi, have all closed (Chan et al., 2021, July 25; Li et al., 2022).

Even in light of the greatly reduced presence of private training centers in mainland China, the characteristics of BE teaching and learning in such centers are salient, as they illustrate the policies and orientations toward such pedagogy in mainland China. First, most of the foreign teachers in the centers were English NSs, as it is a matter of government policy that foreign teachers be from one of seven native English-speaking countries to get a visa for teaching English (Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, 2020; Pan, 2019). Second, most of the materials were created in Western countries, or were created in China but by Westerners, so native speaking standards were pervasive (He, 2020; Leung & Lewkowicz, 2018; Si, 2020). Third, the preferred pedagogical approach was Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach devised in the West that “emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task-based activities, and communication for real-world, meaningful purposes” (H. D. Brown, 2014, p. 369). It should

be noted that the adoption of and response to CLT in China has been mixed, partly due to the great variety in the quality of how it has been implemented and partly due to cultural factors, such as the philosophical understanding of education which, in the Chinese context, highlights the importance and authority of the teacher rather than peer interaction, such as espoused by CLT (Hu, 2002, 2003). Further, even with a purported focus on CLT, in my experience, private language center pedagogy often prioritized form and accuracy, as that is what was expected by the student population (Li, 2018). In other words, BE teaching in training centers strived to balance communicative practice with linguistic accuracy.

Some organizations have in-house BE training programs, either hiring full-time teachers to be on staff or outsourcing teaching to third-party providers (such as the private training centers discussed above), bringing teachers into their companies on an as-needed basis (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005, 2019; Peltonen & Haga, 2025). For organizations, the advantage of in-house training is that they can control the topics, schedule, attendance, and evaluation of the training because it is generally custom-designed for the organization and the specific participants of that training (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Zhang, 2012). In such programs, the organization's stakeholders, often management, task the human resources' training specialists with procuring and overseeing an in-house training program (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005). Best practices require the BE instructors to conduct a needs analysis and develop a curriculum addressing the learners' needs, wants, and lacks (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Zhang, 2012). From personal experience, having served as the supervisor of corporate training for the provider Wall Street English in large organizations, the needs analyses were a complicated affair: What students perceived was necessary did not always match what management and human resources (HR) required, which, in turn, often did not match what trainers deemed necessary after the needs

analysis. Negotiation and compromise were required to form the training curriculum (Richards, 2001). Interestingly, there is very little empirical evidence about curricula, pedagogical styles, or the materials used during in-house corporate training, likely due to the difficulty of receiving approval from organizations with comprehensive privacy policies. Even if privacy policies permitted research, practical obstacles remain: It is difficult to convince BE trainers and their students to agree to observations, interviews, and work product collection.

The third area of BE training in China is universities (He, 2020). Though university BE pedagogy is outside of the scope of this investigation, it is vital to know the context of university BE in order to understand why it falls outside of the scope of this investigation. Business English was established as a bachelor's degree program by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2007 and was soon offered in over 300 universities (Du, 2021; Si, 2019b). In 2018, the MOE issued the National Standard for the Teaching in Majors of Foreign Languages and Literature, of which BE was a central component. Further, the "[BE] National Standard took the form of a triptych – courses on language skills, courses on business knowledge, and culture-related courses" (Du, 2021, p. 152). The fact that cultural competence was central to the proposed curriculum indicates its importance to BE communication and, therefore, pedagogy, in Chinese tertiary education. Interestingly, some of the BE programs used an adapted version of the current study's focus text, *Market Leader* (Si, 2020). The university BE context differs from the private training center and in-house contexts in that university students are pre-experienced users, so they do not yet know what specific aspects of BE they will need for their jobs (Frendo, 2005). Put another way, they will not be able to relate the BE lessons to their personal lives. For them, the language and concepts of BE might be perceived as theoretical rather than practical (Du, 2021; Frendo, 2005). These

differences in context have consequential implications for pedagogy, ranging from creating curricula and materials to classroom approaches.

1.7 The Research Problem of the Study

When considering BE learning and teaching in the Chinese context, the concern arises that BE pedagogy in China does not match how international business communication actually functions. In other words, extant research has uncovered a gap between how professionals communicate in the real world and BE pedagogy (Du, 2021). Bhatia and Bremner (2012) outline the risks of such a situation: “In recent years we have seen a widening gap between classroom activities and the professional practices in which the corporate world has engaged” (p. 436). Further, the rate at which business communication is changing far outpaces developments in pedagogy and research on the subject. The authors go on to warn that “if academics do not make serious efforts to understand and collaborate with professionals who are engaged in business communication, the situation may become even worse” (p. 426). Essentially, since the nature of English communication in the world is changing, the way English is taught should also change to prepare learners for this new reality (Galloway, 2018; Hu, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Therefore, the research problem of this study can be stated as follows: How can I develop a pedagogy that improves the linguacultural competence of English as a business lingua franca speakers and learners?

Reflecting the enormous changes in global English usage, researchers have argued for a “paradigm shift” or “epistemic break” in English language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Rose & Galloway, 2019). However, such proposals must be appraised carefully because they could be misconstrued as arguments for the complete reconceptualization of English pedagogy worldwide. As such, this study aligns with the Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) proposals for

pedagogical innovation that better reflect the reality of contemporary global business English communication. Like GELT's creators, I argue that pedagogical innovation must stay within existing paradigms if it is to gain a foothold and have a chance at further development and implementation. Therefore, a textbook such as *Market Leader* can be the foundation from which to build rather than being an obsolete vestige that should be discarded. The idea is to leverage existing materials while adjusting them to meet learners' specific needs and stakeholders' goals. Traditional ELT has developed many practical pedagogical approaches with tremendous classroom utility. These practices and approaches should serve as a starting point for pedagogical innovation. Accordingly, this study proposes adjusting, supplementing, and adding to existing curricula and pedagogy to develop BELF linguacultural competence, leveraging the foundations of current practice and materials rather than abandoning them.

Espousing "innovation inside the box" (Couros, 2015, p. 44), this study addresses miscommunications such as the *Chicken Incident* by developing a novel conceptual framework, called the Linguacultural Competency (LCC) framework, amalgamated from extant theoretical lenses. The LCC framework addresses a theoretical and pedagogical gap specific to international professional communication by defining the contexts and characteristics of such communication (BELF), how different linguistic and cultural perspectives might align or misalign (linguaculture), and how each of these may manifest in tangible communicative structures (genre), all for the purposes of identifying pedagogical solutions. See Figure 1.1 for the LCC framework.

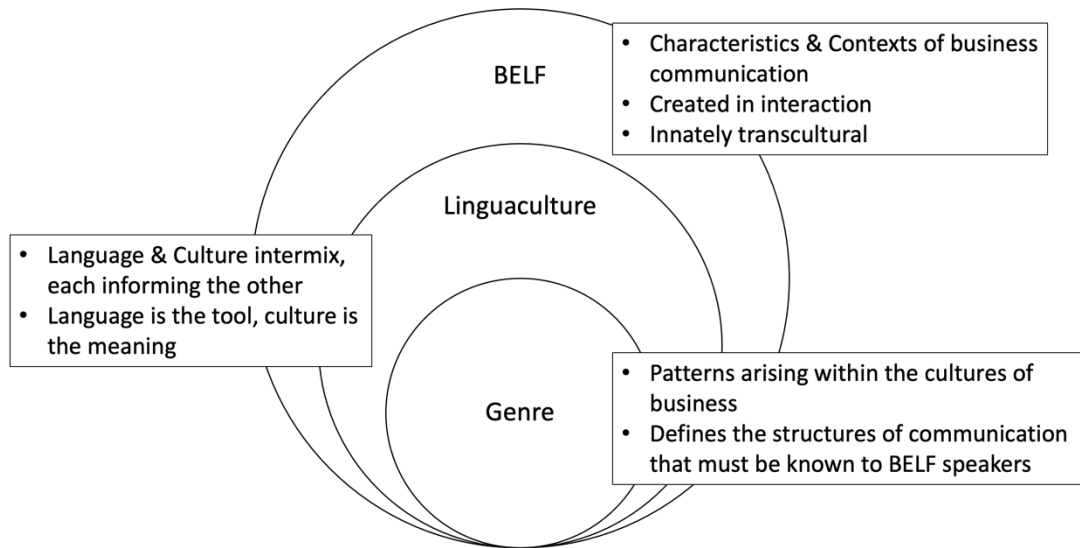


Figure 1.1 The LCC Framework

The LCC framework focuses specifically on the linguacultural aspect of English communication in a global business context. The LCC framework’s components, development, theoretical foundations, and position within extant frameworks will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

1.8 The Research Questions

As illustrated above, in the changing landscape of global English usage, BELF users and learners need to develop competencies distinct from traditional ones based on “standard” forms of English and attaining “native-like proficiency” (Patel et al., 2023). Contemporary business communication focuses on meaning, building relationships, and *getting the job done* in different contexts, in real time, with a variety of interlocutors (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Acknowledging that the nature of English usage in international professional contexts is changing, the question of how to adjust BE pedagogy arises. Specifically, a source of complicated and tricky miscommunications can be attributed to the differences in interlocutors’ linguacultures. As illustrated in the *Chicken Incident*, there can be different cultural understandings of the exact same word, leading to miscommunication, which can have deleterious effects on business relationships,

rapport, and task completion, perhaps leading to suboptimal business performance. The question underlying this study, then, is how pedagogy can improve professionals' linguacultural competence to anticipate, understand, manage, and avoid such incidents. Within that general question are this study's specific research questions:

RQ1: How well might the Linguacultural Competence (LCC) conceptual framework fare as a guide for identifying what linguacultural competencies (LCCs) are likely to be involved in BELF communication? Do job-experienced business professionals find these competencies important in their business communication?

RQ2: How effective is the LCC framework in analyzing, designing, and enacting a BE curriculum?

- a. What is the distribution of linguacultural competence-building opportunities in this study's foundational textbook, and how may that distribution impact BE learners' linguacultural competence development?
- b. How would such findings impact the design and enactment of a BE curriculum (e.g., which LCCs should be developed and assessed)?

RQ3: How effective is a pedagogical intervention informed by the LCC framework in enhancing BE learners' linguacultural competence and meeting their transcultural communicative needs?

RQ4: What factors may contribute to the efficiency or inefficiency (i.e., relative effectiveness) of the intervention?

1.9 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant in understanding how to cultivate LCCs in job-experienced professionals operating globally and, therefore, transculturally. More than a decade

ago, Bhatia & Bremner (2012) decried the paucity of studies connecting empirical research, professionals' workplace needs, and pedagogy, warning that "[a]cademic research has also been seen as lacking relevance and useful application in the world of work" and "if academics do not make serious efforts to understand and collaborate with professionals who are engaged in business communication, the situation may become even worse" (p. 436). This study endeavors to address that very issue. Further, though there has been a plethora of investigations into cultural competence (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021; Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1980), few have specifically considered job-experienced business professionals. By studying this under-researched population in an attempt to fill the research-workplace-pedagogical gap, this study uniquely contributes to academic literature, understanding workplace needs, and BE pedagogy.

Regarding theoretical significance, the first contribution of this study is the LCC framework itself, specifically developed to address linguacultural competence for BELF learners and users. Combining the theoretical lenses of BELF, linguaculture, and genre in a cohesive, complementary, and functional framework, it is distinct from other frameworks in that it 1) incorporates contemporary conceptualizations of culture as being manifested in fluid, negotiated, and liminal communication rather than being a static entity (Baker, 2024); 2) It regards language and culture as integrated rather than separate paradigms (Agar, 2002; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Risager, 2006). 3) It leverages genres as linguacultural bridges essential to BELF communication (Agar, 2002). The simultaneous interaction of the three theoretical lenses provided a broad and deep understanding of the linguacultural requirements of BELF communication and pedagogical implications. The second theoretical contribution of this study is that the LCC framework is aligned with the broader GELT framework, addressing its proposals to change pedagogy to reflect the way English functions globally, and to acknowledge multiple cultures rather than focus on

Anglo-American cultures in ELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The LCC framework contributes to the GELT body of knowledge in terms of professional communication, linguacultural competence, and requisite pedagogy.

Additionally, this study contributes to each of the LCC framework's theoretical lenses. The study will demonstrate that BELF can accommodate a pragmatic epistemological orientation: When broken down into its components, BELF can be structured enough to be addressed and assessed pedagogically. Next, this study is the first to incorporate linguaculture into a theoretical framework, considering language and culture to be integrated rather than separate paradigms, enabling understanding of how they interact during business communication. This study is also innovative in conceptualizing linguacultures in terms of levels and orientations for structured but flexible understanding of the multiple scales of professional linguacultures. Finally, this study is the first to address genre through the lens of BELF. Genres are fundamental to BELF communication, serving as frames of understanding between interlocutors from different linguacultures or contexts (Peltonen & Hu, 2025; under review).

Regarding methodology, Rose et al. (2021) argued that “[f]uture studies need to match this pedagogical contribution with research rigour, using robust data collection procedures to create a body of undisputable findings of proposals in action” (p. 178). First, mixed methods were embedded in every phase of this study, offering quantitative results and qualitative insights into the reasons behind those results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Second, the questionnaire and email assessments combined self-reports with performance. Successful implementation of the assessments provided evidence not only of participant improvement but also the utility of the LCC construct underpinning assessments of contemporary global English usage called for by researchers (Hu, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). These contributions can be leveraged in other

BE curricula to develop the LCCs of users across contexts, accounting for the variability inherent in classroom practice. Third, this study's longitudinal research design is unique. To my knowledge, it is the first experimental teaching intervention designed for adult, job-experienced professionals. The fourth methodological contribution is to materials analysis and evaluation. The creation and validation of the LCC descriptors, along with the identification of genres required by professionals, enabled the type of principled, criterion-referenced evaluation called for by researchers (Tomlinson, 2013). Such research-supported materials analysis enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data for a deep understanding of the materials and how they (mis)matched professionals' workplace needs. Fifth, the operationalization of the LCCs enabled materials adaptations and assessments that were measurable, well-rationalized, and research-informed. Sixth, basing the entire curriculum on a global coursebook is a unique approach (Norton & Buchanan, 2022) that offers insight into the gaps between professionally developed materials and workplace needs.

Pedagogically, by illustrating how the LCC framework can be used in the development and execution of BE curricula, this study is essential to bridging the gap between how international business English functions and how it is being taught in the classroom. Additionally, the course's tasks were found very useful by the participants because they aligned with their workplace needs, underlining the importance of domain and/or needs analyses in determining curricular design for relevant learning and teaching. Another pedagogical contribution of this study is its approach to adaptations, which was rigorous, methodical, and principled. This study's novel adaptation tree can be used by teachers as a guide for both *ad hoc* as well as pre-planned adaptations.

From a societal perspective, this study addresses Rose et al. (2021), who pointed out that "more research is needed in China" (p. 183) because its English learning population is reported to be the

largest in the world (He & Li, 2023). Further, China's growing economic and geopolitical influence regionally and globally includes ventures such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which require vast resources of English-speaking professionals, yet the gap between Chinese employers' English language requirements and employees' proficiency levels seems to be growing (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; He, 2020; He & Li, 2023; Patel et al., 2023). The findings of this study can inform pedagogical practices that will develop the transcultural communicative abilities of Chinese professionals. Additionally, this study's pedagogical approach, supporting self-expression, self-motivation, and autonomy, is intended to be empowering and could therefore impact educational understandings at a societal level. Finally, focusing on the population of job-experienced learners showed how the immediate relevance and high stakes of daily global and transcultural communication can impact learning and competencies. If the contribution of this study is to improve professional communication, then business activity can be supported, hopefully leading to success and prosperity not only in Greater China but also globally.

1.10 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters. After this introduction to the contextual background of this study, Chapter Two begins with an overview of materials analysis, including the difference between analysis and evaluation, and adaptation. After that, the chapter presents the current state of assessment, including contemporary and cultural assessments. Then, the chapter proceeds to examine the three theoretical lenses that comprise this study's novel LCC framework. First, BELF is discussed according to its contexts, characteristics, and pedagogical implications. Second, linguaculture is examined from its historical roots to contemporary understandings and pedagogical affordances. Third, genre analysis is considered according to linguistic expression,

culture, pedagogy, and its place in business communication. Each section of the chapter considers gaps in the literature and opportunities for further research related to this study.

The third chapter introduces the theoretical framework of this study. An important aspect of this chapter is parsing the difference between a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework, as this study incorporates both. The foundational theoretical framework is GELT, which is described. The LCC conceptual framework is described in terms of its position vis-à-vis GELT as well as its structure: The LCC conceptual framework is founded on the interactions of the three theoretical lenses: BELF, linguaculture, and genre.

Chapter Four provides a detailed description of the methodology used in this study. It opens with a brief discussion of the ontology and epistemology of the mixed methods approach underpinning this study. Thereafter, it introduces the overall research design and hypotheses of the study. Next, the stages of the exploratory sequential phase are described. These stages include developing the LCC framework, conducting the domain analysis, analyzing a BE textbook (*Market Leader*), developing two parallel curricula via adaptations, and creating and validating the assessment instruments, which include a questionnaire, email performance task, and multiple-choice test (MCQ). The pilot intervention is then described, highlighting its findings and how they influenced adjustments to the curriculum and research design of the main intervention study. Then, the intervention phase is described, which includes the course design, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, the explanatory sequential phase is discussed, in which the email content, self-reflections, post-intervention questions, and post-intervention semi-structured interviews are examined to help deepen understanding of the quantitative results of the intervention.

The fifth chapter presents the findings related to the first two research questions, addressed in the exploratory sequential phase of this study. It reveals the results of the domain analysis, which uncovered 20 linguacultural competencies divided into three clusters: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. The findings of the materials analysis are that there is an unbalanced mix of LCCs present in the *Market Leader* textbook. Four neglected but necessary competencies are identified and discussed.

The sixth chapter examines the teaching intervention results, as captured by the questionnaire's overall scores, subscale scores, and component scores. It also presents the results of the email performance assessment scores. The MCQ is discussed inasmuch as the results were ultimately deemed invalid and were therefore removed from this study's final analysis. Qualitative findings offer insights into how the above results manifested. Discussion follows the findings of each research question.

Chapter seven concludes the study by summarizing the findings, examining the implications of the study, and highlighting the theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, and societal implications of the findings. Finally, this study's limitations are discussed, which indicate possible future research directions and calls to action.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a literature review on topics pertinent to the present study with a view to identifying research gaps and opportunities. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section focuses on materials analysis and evaluation, providing an overview of the extant literature from a theoretical perspective as well as describing major trends and approaches in extant empirical studies. The second section discusses materials adaptation, considering different approaches to, types of, and reasons for adaptation from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. The third section examines the challenges of assessment vis-à-vis the changing role of English globally. It also positions this study within both the traditions of language assessment and cultural assessment. The fourth section considers the fundamental theoretical lens of the LCC framework: BELF. After describing the theory, contexts, and characteristics of BELF communication, the focus turns to BELF-informed pedagogy, including classroom approaches and textbook analysis. The fifth section considers the concept of linguaculture, tracing its historical origins through contemporary understandings. Linguaculture shapes how those from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact in ELF and BELF communication. Linguaculture-informed pedagogy is also discussed. The sixth and final section examines genre as a means of linguistic and cultural expression as well as a contributor to pedagogy and business communication.

2.1 Materials Analysis and Evaluation

Materials are “anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of the language” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 2). McGrath (2002) specifies categories of materials: 1) “those that have been specifically designed for language learning and teaching,” such as textbooks, workbooks, and software; 2) authentic materials, such as restaurant menus or newspaper articles “that have been specially

selected and exploited for teaching purposes by the classroom teacher;” 3) teacher-created materials, and 4) learner-generated materials (p. 7). A recent development, AI-generated materials, should be added to the above list. However, the distinction between human involvement and AI’s contribution remains blurry, hence, an area requiring much more research and concise delimitation.

This study focuses on one type of material: the textbook. Peltonen and Hu (2024) propose that textbooks are the logical starting point for considering curricular change for several reasons: First, from a teaching perspective, published textbooks are often the foundation of ELT instruction; “indeed they have remained...‘the visible heart’ of many ELT programmes” (Mishan, 2022, p. 491). According to a survey by Tomlinson (2010), 92% of teachers “regularly” use a textbook. Second, from learners’ perspectives, textbooks are “revered in many classrooms as the ultimate authority” (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017, p. 41). Considering this study’s context, there is an enduring tradition of textbooks being central to Chinese classrooms, where “learning is equated with reading books” and textbooks are seen as “the source of knowledge” (Hu, 2002, p. 98). Third, textbooks are often a central aspect of BE learning and teaching, with advantages ranging from “a solid framework to work with” to “a window on the business world” (Frendo, 2005, p. 43). Finally, the “nature of language teaching is that it encapsulates the language’s culture, making any language textbook a de facto cultural artefact” (Mishan, 2022, p. 493). Textbooks, by their very nature, include cultural content, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Risager, 2022; Xu & Feng, 2022). Due to the fundamental position textbooks occupy in BE pedagogy, they are the logical starting point from which to address linguacultural competence.

There is an extensive tradition of analyzing and evaluating materials. Tomlinson (2013b) highlights the difference between materials *analysis* and materials *evaluation*. An analysis “focuses on the materials and it aims to provide an objective analysis of them” (p.22). In other

words, the analysis concerns what the materials contain, what they aim to achieve, and what they require learners to do. On the other hand, an evaluation involves “making judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them” often using scoring rubrics, ratings criteria, or critical lenses (Tomlinson, 2013b, p. 21). The evaluation focuses on the uses and users of the materials. Evaluation can involve determining issues such as the “value of the materials in terms of long-term learning (of both language and of communication skills” and “the flexibility of the materials (e.g., the extent to which it is easy for a teacher to adapt the materials to suit a particular context” (Tomlinson, 2013b, p. 21). Further, examinations can be qualitative or quantitative, and “[m]any publications on materials evaluation mix analysis and evaluation” (Tomlinson, 2013b, p. 23). As will be illustrated in Chapter 4, this study’s materials examination will be analytical and evaluative. However, rather than making judgments about the quality or efficacy of the materials in general, as many evaluations do, this investigation specifically focuses on determining the presence of linguacultural developing opportunities and then describes how (if present) they are manifested or (if absent) they could be manifested in the materials.

Researchers argue for principled, criterion-referenced evaluations: “Making an evaluation criterion-referenced can reduce (but not remove) subjectivity and can certainly help to make an evaluation more principled, rigorous, systematic, and reliable” (Tomlinson, 2013a, p. 311). Researchers (e.g., Tomlinson, 2013a, 2013b; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013, 2017) have observed a distinct lack of transparent, principle-based investigations of materials in the overall research landscape. Accordingly, this study will follow best practices presented in previous works by including a rich description of the analysis and evaluation and basing it on the LCC framework (Hu & McKay, 2014; Macalister & Nation, 2020; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

For background and context, an overview of relevant investigations into textbooks, materials, and curricula follows: Investigations have included how to select appropriate textbooks (Chambers, 1997; Cunningsworth, 1995; Littlejohn, 2011, 2022; Macalister & Nation, 2020; Tomlinson, 2013b), how to develop materials analysis criteria (Roberts, 1996; Tomlinson, 2013a, 2013b; Williams, 1983), how to address cultural content (Adaskou, 1990; Alptekin, 1993; Apple, 1992; Chao, 2011; Mason, 2011; Risager, 2021, 2022; Risager & Chapelle, 2013; Troncoso, 2011), and best practices to follow for evaluations (Littlejohn, 2011; Tomlinson, 2012; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013, 2017). Further, investigations can employ checklists, descriptors, or criteria to structure analysis. Such tools can be employed in investigations ranging from macro-level and general (Chambers, 1997; Dalimunte & Pramoolsook, 2020; Macalister & Nation, 2020), to meso-level according to a particular framework such as GELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Syrbe & Rose, 2018) or micro-level, specific to BE, BELF, and BE textbooks (Chan, 2009; Peltonen & Hu, 2024, under review; Pullin, 2010). It is important to note that the above studies have informed materials investigations by delineating general principles.

Beyond general approaches and principles, there has also been much literature proposing best practices for performing textbook analysis. Proposals have included executing both surface and in-depth analyses using checklists and criteria that are grounded in pedagogical theories (Littlejohn, 2011, 2022; McDonough & Trofimovich, 2009; Roberts, 1996; Tomlinson, 2013a; Williams, 1983). Critical of the above types of analysis, which often include frequency counts, researchers have proposed semiotic approaches connecting image, text, and task (Weninger & Kiss, 2013), discourse analysis (Cheng & Warren, 2005), and critical discourse analysis approaches that examine textbook messages more critically and in depth (Cheng & Warren, 2006; Xiong & Hu, 2022; Xiong & Qian, 2012).

Researchers have also examined the cultural content of ELT textbooks. These investigations have identified general strategies for evaluating cultural content (Adaskou, 1990; Mason, 2011; Troncoso, 2011), considered the local versus global orientation of textbooks (Risager, 2021; Risager & Chapelle, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019), and examined unequal power structures such as Anglo-American-centric ideologies, neoliberalism, new capitalism, and emphasis on target cultures at the expense of home cultures (Alptekin, 1993; Apple, 1992; Chao, 2011; Gray, 2010; Xiong & Qian, 2012; Yuen, 2011). Previous research also includes analyzing a textbook for evidence of multilingualism that reflects English as an International Language (EIL) usage (Hu & McKay, 2014). Additionally, there have been investigations into the expression of religion in locally designed ELT textbooks in Iran (Sharifian, 2010) and Bangladesh (Hamid, 2024). While the former identified explicitly religious content, such as passages about Muhammad, the latter found that adaptations to include Muslim content for *madrassa* education were mostly cosmetic. Viewing the overall landscape, the consensus is that textbooks tend to prioritize English-speaking cultures and lack pluralistic, varied, and contemporary conceptualizations of cultures, especially learners' home cultures, a crucial gap that this study will address.

Considering all of the above, four consequential gaps and, therefore, opportunities for this study have emerged: First, regarding methodology, there is room for more principled, criterion-based analyses and evaluations of ELT textbooks, a gap this study fills with its mixed methods content analysis that includes both a checklist (e.g., the list of LCCs) and in-depth qualitative analysis (examining the potential impact of the presence or absence of the LCCs on learners). This study endeavors to leverage the strengths of both analysis and evaluation for deeper and more varied insights. Second, while there have been a variety of investigations into the cultural content of textbooks, there have not been any that examine specific linguacultural competencies. To bridge

the gap, this study's evaluation is based on the operationalization of newly identified competencies underpinned by the novel LCC framework. From that perspective, determining the utility of the LCC framework and descriptors of the linguacultural competencies in analyzing and evaluating materials is one of this study's fundamental aims. Third, there have been relatively few examinations of BE textbooks that take into account the perspectives of job-experienced learners (as opposed to pre-experienced learners), another gap this study addresses, with its focus on *Market Leader*. Finally, the LCC framework incorporates constructs of BELF, linguaculture, and genre. The research gaps and opportunities for each theoretical lens in materials analysis will be discussed below, in their specific sections of the literature review.

2.2 Materials Adaptation

After analyzing and evaluating the textbook, the materials must be adapted based on the findings and the learners' requirements derived from a domain analysis or a needs analysis. As a detailed description of the process is presented in Chapter 4, the following section will offer a general perspective on the relevant literature. Tomlinson (2012) defines materials adaptation as changing materials to improve them or make them more effective for a particular group of learners. Many teachers adapt materials every time they use a textbook because their learners have unique needs that a global coursebook is unlikely to meet without adjustments (Frendo, 2005; Masuhara, 2022; McDonough et al., 2013; Saraceni, 2013). Adaptive decisions may be made in advance or in real time in the classroom, depending on the situation, student population, student performance, test scores, feedback, and stakeholder goals (Richards, 1984).

At the broadest level, this study's materials adaptations reflect the need for a "specific proficiency" as opposed to a 'general competence' view of second language development" (Nunan, 1986, p. 42). As BE can be positioned as a subcategory of ESP, one of its key characteristics is its

specific requirements (Tomlinson, 2013b; Zhang, 2012). The goal of such a curriculum is to enable learners to develop the language skills required for specific purposes (Nunan, 1986). Consequently, building BELF linguacultural competence requires specific materials adaptations particular to its specific goals. Understanding this topline approach underpinning this study's materials adaptations allows progression to the next, more specific, level: Adaptation strategies.

Researchers have proposed several strategies for materials adaptations, including personalizing, individualizing, localizing, modernizing, and glocalizing (Madsen & Bowen, 1978; McGrath, 2013; Rai & Deng, 2016; Tomlinson, 2012; Wright, 2025). Personalizing and individualizing are appropriate because the materials will have to reflect the students' particular contexts and requirements based on domain or needs analyses along with teachers' observations (Masuhara et al., 2008; McDonough et al., 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013). Localizing materials is relevant because understanding one's home culture and context is a crucial first step in building understanding and communication transculturally (Masuhara et al., 2008; McDonough et al., 2013; McGrath, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Si, 2019a; Tomlinson, 2016). Modernizing the materials is also key. For example, as *Market Leader Intermediate's* most recent editions were released in 2010, some of the content is outdated and, therefore, less relevant to the learners. Finally, glocalizing the content involves adapting the materials to leverage the learners' local knowledge as a bridge toward understanding and incorporating broader concepts in international business, culture, or communication (McDonough et al., 2013; Rai & Deng, 2016). Other adaptation strategies include simplification, complexification, and differentiation (McGrath, 2013). With approaches and strategies for adaptation in place, discussion can proceed toward specific and tangible classroom implementation.

McDonough et al. (2013) propose several practical techniques for tangible classroom implementation, and further research has expanded upon these ideas: Practitioners can consider adding or omitting content (Macalister & Nation, 2020; Masuhara, 2022; McDonough et al., 2013), changing the format (Macalister & Nation, 2020; McDonough et al., 2013), using authentic materials (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Frendo, 2005; Macalister & Nation, 2020), and including learner-generated materials (Clarke, 1989; Macalister & Nation, 2020; Saraceni, 2013). Further, practitioners can leverage online resources (Motteram, 2011) or draw from language corpora (Macalister & Nation, 2020; McCarthy & McCarten, 2022; Reppen, 2011). Regarding activities, common adaptations include incorporating role plays, simulations, case studies, and problem-based tasks (Ellis, 2011; Frendo, 2005; Tomlinson, 2013b) as well as implementing communicative strategy charts (also called *frameworks* or *concept maps*) (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Peltonen, 2021, 2022b; Uba et al., 2020). The choice of classroom implementation is heavily context-dependent, regardless of whether the adaptations were made in advance or in the moment.

Traditionally, the literature on textbook adaptations has been primarily theoretical and analytical. Examining books on the topic, Garton and Graves (2014) explain: “The chapters in these volumes generally take a more theoretical perspective in looking at what underlies the development of ELT materials, although they tend again to be based on relating theories of language teaching and learning to materials development rather than research into the materials themselves or their use” (p. 2). Such literature has focused on general reasons for adapting materials (Macalister & Nation, 2020), emotional reasons behind adaptations (Tomlinson, 2018), and arguments for more rigorous, criterion-based adaptations. The advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of including learners in the adaptation processes have also been explored (Choi & Nunan, 2022; Saraceni, 2013).

More recently, empirical studies of materials adaptations have been conducted in response to the aforementioned concerns about the paucity of empirical literature (Garton & Graves, 2014; Tomlinson, 2010). Most of these empirical studies have had small sample sizes, focusing on only a few teachers or adaptations (Lee & Bathmaker, 2007; Li & Harfitt, 2017; Li & Li, 2021; Loh & Renandya, 2015; Tasseron, 2017). That said, reviews of the landscape reveal certain themes: For example, Brown (2011) was able to categorize teachers' adaptation practices in three ways – *offloading* (sticking closely to the textbook content), *adapting* (making changes to the content), and *improvising* (eschewing the textbook in favor of other materials). Instead of focusing on processes, Shaver (2010) categorized teachers according to how closely they followed existing curricula, labeling them *Curriculum Makers* (develop their own curricula), *Curriculum Developers* (use the existing curricula with their own adaptations), and *Curriculum Transmitters* (use the existing curricula almost exclusively, with little change). Shaver (2010) also explored teachers' attitudes, reasons, and strategies behind their adaptations or lack thereof. Other studies have focused on the factors influencing how teachers use textbooks in the classroom, categorizing their practices as “reading, evaluating, appropriating, adapting, transforming and improvising” (Li & Harfitt, 2017, p. 407). Further teacher-focused investigations have examined teachers' perceptions of materials adaptation, including their levels of confidence, perceived need for adaptations, and tensions between challenging the textbook developers' authority and institutional demands. These tensions can manifest in numerous ways, ranging from teachers needing to prepare students for a particular test that is not adequately addressed in the textbook to being concerned that their ideas for adaptation are not valid enough to support making changes to professionally created materials (Bosompem, 2014; Grammatosi & Harwood, 2014; Lee & Bathmaker, 2007; Mekabu & Harwood, 2014). Further, there have been quantitative measurements of how teachers have executed

adaptations in the classroom. One such study was conducted according to the Materials Use Ark (MUA) Framework devised by Li and Li (2021). This framework enabled the researchers to code how teachers utilized materials in terms of *transforming*, *adapting*, and *improvising* to make measurable comparisons between teachers in different contexts. The contribution of the MUA is that it offers empirical, quantitative information about adaptation practices that is observable rather than based on self-report. Another quantitative study used Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to classify teachers based on their adaptation choices, simultaneously trying to correlate these practices with the teachers' demographic profiles. Few correlations were found (Zhang et al., 2022). As there is a distinct lack of information about BE teachers' materials usage and adaptation, future studies combining the MUA and LPA would be a productive line of inquiry in developing empirical studies of the adaptation practices of BE instructors. Researchers could combine self-reports with classroom observations to triangulate data for a more well-rounded understanding (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013).

Another line of inquiry has focused on why teachers adapt textbooks (Bosompem, 2014; Bouckaert, 2019; Grammatosi & Harwood, 2014), how they approach the process of adaptation (Bouckaert, 2019; McGrath, 2013; Ottley, 2016), and the benefits of adaptation (Bouckaert, 2019). Specific to cultural content, Gray (2000) focused on how and why teachers censored cultural material that they thought would be inappropriate, stereotypical, or offensive, while Ottley (2016) outlined adaptations he introduced to make a textbook culturally relevant to Kurdish learners in Iraq. Similarly, Tasserou (2017) discussed textbook adaptations that university lecturers enacted to ensure that the subject matter was relevant to and culturally appropriate for university students in Oman. Zacharias (2005) explored a similar theme for tertiary teachers' adaptation practices in Indonesia. Lopez-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat (2014) found that teachers in Argentina often

made adaptations due to language issues (the level being too difficult) or to ground the topics in more locally relevant subjects.

Several themes have emerged from the above literature review: 1) adaptation practices vary widely across contexts and practitioners; 2) the universal coursebook does not fit all contexts, thus requiring the above practices, and 3) patterns of links between teacher backgrounds, teaching contexts, subjects, and adaptation practices have yet to be found. In other words, adaptation practices appear to be individualized rather than determined by predictable demographic or contextual factors. Identification of the above themes leads us to gaps and opportunities regarding adaptation practices.

The first research gap is theoretical: Regarding the GELT framework, Rose and Galloway (2019) presented theoretically supported and actionable suggestions for materials adaptations after analyzing several textbook series. They also highlighted the paucity of, and need for, empirical testing of adaptations in longitudinal experimental studies to determine their efficacy (Rose et al., 2021). However, except for Cogo (2022), I have been unable to find any study on adaptations, whether at the individual or institutional level, that responds to the GELT framework's proposals to develop learners' global and transcultural competencies. As the GELT framework is relatively broad, there is a rich opportunity for future research on adaptations.

Further research gaps are contextual: Though I uncovered an empirical study of adaptations to BE course materials in a Chinese university (Xie, 2017), there appear to be no empirical investigations of materials adaptations for BE textbooks in the job-experienced context. In other words, there is a marked research gap regarding how BE teachers use materials in terms of their perceptions of, attitudes about, and processes of adaptation. Similarly, there are no studies of

materials adaptations to develop the linguacultural competencies of active, job-experienced BELF users, particularly in the Chinese context.

The above gaps indicate several salient research opportunities specific to BE materials and adaptation. First, there needs to be investigations of materials usage and adaptation practices in both the private training center context and the in-company training context. Second, the practices, processes, attitudes, and rationale for materials adaptations enacted by BE teachers need to be investigated. Third, there needs to be longitudinal studies on the implementation and effects of materials adaptations. The latter gaps are being addressed by the current study.

2.3 Assessments

It is vital to position this study's assessment plan within the broader landscape. Two aspects of this study's assessments are notable. First, they are essential to determining the efficacy of the teaching intervention. Second, as these assessments pertain to linguaculture, they must necessarily be a hybrid of language testing and cultural testing, also referred to as intercultural or cross-cultural assessment (Camerer & Mader, 2012; Richter et al., 2023), and therefore require being designed from scratch. As such, discussion of existing constructs and assessments, both in the realm of language and culture, is necessary to understand the development and implementation of this study's assessments and how they relate to the current assessment landscape.

For context, there has been extensive discussion about how to assess learners in the context of global English usage and lingua franca communication. Such discussion is predicated on an assertion made by Tomlinson (2010): "All over the world, learners of English are being tested on a variety of English they do not and never will speak" (p. 599). Researchers question why students are tested according to standard British or American English when, in fact, their interlocutors will probably not be American or British (Harding & McNamara, 2018; Jenkins & Leung, 2019).

Related criticisms of current testing practices range from washback negatively affecting learners' educational experiences (Shohamy, 2018; Tomlinson, 2010) to tests that assess knowledge of English rather than students' ability to use it (Hu, 2018; Tomlinson, 2010). ELF theorists argue that although testing constructs are based on fixed language, test takers use language more fluidly, hence a mismatch between usage and testing (Shohamy, 2018). How to assess learners whose goal is to communicate on an international level, in lingua franca communication, remains an open question. That said, numerous proposals have been offered to address the issue of assessing the changing usage of English in the world. Such proposals have included an examination paradigm that measures different levels of communicative outcome achievements rather than linguistic difficulty. This approach is espoused by the GELT framework's creators as well as proponents of critical language testing paradigms (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Shohamy, 2018). Others suggest testing a core ability to use international English along with local varieties or specific linguistic knowledge and competencies (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012; Canagarajah, 2006; Elder & Davies, 2006; Hu, 2018). Another proposal is to assess according to three general constructs: "(1) ability-focused, (2) task-focused, and (3) interaction-focused" (Bachman, 2007, p. 70) as an alternative to the knowledge-heavy testing that is prevalent. J. D. Brown (2014) examined global English usage and contexts and separated them into three testing approaches: 1) the Repertoire of World Englishes approach, which tests learners for competence in a "repertoire of English varieties" (p. 9); 2) the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) approach, which would entail modifying traditional tests to accommodate ELF users "without changing the construct" (p. 9); and 3) the English as an International Language approach, which would test localized content "specific to the target context" (p. 10). Further highlighting the importance of context in global communication, Jenkins (2015) argued that tests must focus on the ability to use English as a tool of intercultural

communication rather than one's ability to mimic native speakers. Accordingly, researchers support using performance-based assessments (Canagarajah, 2006; Tomlinson, 2010).

In addition to the above criticisms of current assessment paradigms and practices and the proposals for how assessments "should" function, the exact positioning of this study's assessment needs to be considered. On the one hand, BELF could be placed under the auspices of ESP because it is the language used in a particular field and context (Hu, 2018). Douglas (2013) details the concept of ESP testing:

[It] should always be part of the construct of specific purpose tests that learners' specific purpose language needs include not only linguistic knowledge but also background knowledge relevant to the communicative context in which learners need to operate. Thus, the theoretical underpinnings of specific purpose assessment must be expanded to include not only strictly linguistic features but also features of the context of interest to test takers and score users. (p. 371)

In the case of this study, the context is transcultural communication for internationally functioning business professionals. The background knowledge in question relates to linguacultural competencies and the expression thereof, as opposed to the specific BE language used (such as the language required for finance, mergers and acquisitions, or sales) (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012). Although specific-purpose language is precise, the issues of culturally based miscommunications persist even for highly proficient ESP users (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Accordingly, the assessment required for this study falls partly outside of the parameters of ESP, and the field of intercultural/cross-cultural competency assessment becomes relevant. In principle, cultural competency testing should

go beyond ‘objective’ knowledge of literature, history, and so on to include ‘subjective’ cultural knowledge such as communication styles and underlying cultural values so that learners better understand some of what is beneath the tip of the cultural iceberg, of what influences others’ behaviors and communication patterns. (Deardorff, 2009, p. 67)

As the volume of cultural competency assessment instruments is too large to examine here, the following discussion will cover the findings of studies that reviewed multiple instruments to get an overview of the landscape. Camerer (2014) evaluated the functions, uses, validity, and reliability of three instruments: The Intercultural Development Inventory, the Test of Intercultural Sensitivity, and the International Profiler. Camerer’s findings indicate that “any test based on a construct of personality, while ignoring the candidate’s practical communicative performance, would be insufficient because of its manifest lack of construct validity” (p. 233). He recommended that assessments be based on the Common European Framework Reference’s (CEFR) performance standards, especially those in the updated CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) (Council of Europe, 2018), which contains dozens of scales ranging from oral and written interaction to plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Fantini (2009) provided an overview of 44 instruments, each with unique foci, including behaviors, personal values, adaptability, attitudes, workplace cultural preferences, global awareness, sensitivity, readiness, biases, etc. Fantini suggested that existing “external” tests could be combined with assessment activities devised by teachers for specific “internal” contexts, which would result in a well-rounded and contextually relevant assessment plan. Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) reviewed 10 cross-cultural assessments and included details about the instruments’ validity evidence, focusing on content validity, construct validity, and various forms of ecological validity. Overall, their findings were that three of the

assessments, the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), had the most robust validity measures and showed “the most promising evidence for assessing 3C [cross-cultural competence]” (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 867). Even so, the authors found that most of the instruments they examined either lacked validity measures, lacked crucial data, or reported inconsistent results. Additionally, the validation of these instruments was mostly quantitative. The authors argued that qualitative and mixed methods validation are lacking and represent an important future direction for instrument validation, a shortcoming that this study will address. More recently, Richter et al. (2023) reviewed 68 instruments created over the last 50 years. This rigorous review examined each instrument for its purpose, theoretical construct, subdomains, means of measurement, validity, and reliability. Several findings of the Richter et al. (2023) study have implications for this study’s instruments: 1) In the creation of the instrument, the measurement was not always based on a clearly outlined theoretical construct, or the connection between the construct and the measurement was undefined; 2) while constructs were labeled differently across the instruments, they often measured something similar, which led to confusion and difficulty in comparing constructs, measurements, and results; 3) “the assessment of instrument reliability, validity, and generalizability needs improvement” (p. 30), and 4) there was a need for future research to use test-retest reliability or inter-rater reliability to “demonstrate that the instrument can measure changes in CCC [cross-cultural competence] after interventions” (p. 30). The current study addresses each of the above issues. Finally, Camerer and Mader (2010) and Fantini (2009) pointed out that the intercultural instruments examined neglected the linguistic and communicative aspects of intercultural competence, another gap in the assessment landscape that this study’s assessments will address via their linguacultural construct.

Having reviewed the literature on materials development, adaptations, and assessment, I now turn to the theoretical lenses comprising the LCC Framework and the extant literature within these areas of study.

2.4 English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF)

BELF functions within the umbrella theoretical lens of ELF, as a subcategory. As a reminder, ELF is defined as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). ELF is one of the foundations of the GELT framework, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Whereas ELF consists of the entirety of the global English communicative corpus, BELF is specific to professional contexts. BELF’s specificity derives from its unique characteristics. These characteristics are its 1) domain of use (international business), the role of its users (professionals), and the overall goals of the interactions: “getting the job done” (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 256) and building rapport. Based on the above, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) created the Global Communicative Competence (GCC) framework for business communication. The GCC structures the competencies into categories: *business “knowhow,” competence in BELF*, and *multicultural competence*, all leading to *global communicative competence*. Notably, *multicultural competence* is a key component of the model. With a basic understanding of BELF competencies, the next step is to consider BELF-informed pedagogy.

Implementing BELF-informed pedagogy is a challenging prospect, as “the characteristics for BELF reflect its very nature: variation, hybridity, dynamism, context-dependency and individual idiosyncrasies. How can such a chameleonic ‘language’ be taught?” (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 30). These characteristics of BELF communication raise several unique

pedagogical challenges (Peltonen & Haga, 2025): The first is how to address real-time usage that, by definition, does not adhere to codified standards such as the NS standards to which English language learners have traditionally been expected to aspire (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2018). These “standards” refer to rules for English language accuracy that have been problematized for being unattainable and prescriptive (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Research has demonstrated that BELF users do not follow these standards yet still communicate successfully (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018). The second challenge is how to address linguacultural competence, as, in the business context, there are many cultural groups at the regional, organizational, and team/department levels (Peltonen & Hu, 2024; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2024). The third challenge is how to assess BELF, as it is, by nature, function and execution rather than standardization (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). The fourth challenge, an amalgamation of the above, is how to address these challenges in the classroom (Soruç & Griffiths, 2023). To that point, Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) state that “learners should be trained to see themselves as communicators, with real jobs to perform and needs to fulfill; it is these jobs and needs that should be emphasized, not the language they use to carry them out” (p. 419). The authors encourage facilitating BELF speakers’ awareness of their own and interlocutors’ discourse habits, conventions, and linguacultural backgrounds to help them be flexible. At a slightly lower level of abstraction, research has focused on BELF pedagogical principles (He, 2017, 2020; Pullin, 2010; Zhang, 2012). Beckisheva et al. (2015) endeavored to close the gap between theory and practice in an investigation into how to incorporate case studies when teaching BELF. The authors mined previous research for best practices and then set forth principles to follow when teaching a case study, using practical examples. Pullin (2010) approached BELF pedagogy using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), focusing on meetings and interviews. Further, Kankaanranta et al.

(2015) outlined research from three disciplines: applied linguistics, international management, and corporate communication to draw conclusions about how to teach BELF, recommending exposure to active professional discourse, explicit learning of relevant corporate language norms, thus combining language development with business knowhow and corporate jargon. Further BELF-informed pedagogical investigations have included addressing power imbalances (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2024), developing BELF users' adaptive and flexible pragmatic competence, especially in meetings (Kaur & Birlik, 2021), designing more practical and relevant university curricula (Du, 2021; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2025), and improving language training and mentoring at the workplace, including learning from experience (Du-Babcock, 2016; Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Lockwood & Song, 2020; Takino, 2019). Additional pedagogical proposals were to leverage Communities of Practice (CoPs) to help socialize professionals into appropriate BELF communication (Nielsen, 2020), highlighting the need to develop cultural knowledge as an essential managerial and rapport-building resource (Komori-Glatz, 2017; Räisänen, 2019), ensuring that learners' multilingual repertoires are leveraged in the classroom (Hodges & Seawright, 2023), and recommending that learners examine communication strategies and how they differ across cultures and genders (Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022). It should be noted that most of these articles focused on language usage in the workplace, with only brief mentions of pedagogical implications. The ones that were explicitly pedagogical mostly considered pre-experienced learners (university students) rather than job-experienced learners (working professionals), a gap this study addresses.

BELF research has highlighted the importance of building rapport and establishing relationships in business through casual small talk, a type of communication that is imbued with cultural implications and falls outside of the structured nature of transactional business

communication (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Frenedo, 2005; Peltonen & Hu, 2024; Pullin, 2010, 2015). Rapport is defined as “people’s subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relationships” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 102). In other words, rapport is how well people are building relationships and getting along, and rapport management is how well the “(dis)harmony is (mis)managed” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 102). Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2018) found that the importance of interpersonal relationships was the third most frequently mentioned characteristic of BELF, according to professionals surveyed. Socializing, building rapport, and small talk “surrounds and intermixes with task-related communication and...develops positive attitudes that can result in more efficient and effective work-related communication” (Du-Babcock, 2013, p. 118). However, engaging in small talk remains a significant challenge for business professionals whose L1 is not English because, while task-oriented business communication revolves around defined rules of interaction, pragmatic characteristics, and mutual understanding (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), small talk is dynamic, flexible, multifunctional, and can cover a wide range of topics. Interviews in a study conducted by Du (2021) elucidated the challenge for Chinese professionals:

More importantly, most interviewees found it challenging to conduct small talk. Speaking business-related topics was much more comfortable than speaking in a non-business context. They felt at ease when talking about product, parameters, processes, prices and markets in workshop tours and negotiations, but awkward when discussing news, politics, entertainment, sports, lifestyles or culture with their foreign partners at a dining table or while traveling. (p. 61)

Not only have Chinese BELF users consistently self-reported having difficulty with interpersonal communication (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020), but they have also been observed by researchers to struggle with rapport management and relationship-building with interlocutors of different backgrounds (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2004; Wei et al., 2001). Small talk is context-specific, so forms of small talk will vary between different groups and may be dependent on those in power (Pullin, 2010). While the above investigations focus on the execution of small talk and rapport building in BELF, they do not address the issue from a pedagogical perspective. To what extent BE textbooks such as *Market Leader* convey the importance of small talk and whether they include small talk rapport-building strategies and tactics remains an open question that this study addresses.

Due to the difference between how (B)ELF functions in the real world and how English is being taught in classrooms, theorists have argued for a “paradigm shift” in teaching to better prepare learners for ELF and BELF interactions (Seidlhofer, 2011). Nevertheless, paradigm changes take time and can face resistance (Hu, 2018; Hu & McKay, 2014). In China, the country with the most ELLs in the world (Patel et al., 2023), policy dictates that foreign English teachers must be NSs from one of seven English-speaking countries (Ministry of Justice of the People’s Republic of China, 2020; Pan, 2019). A drastic policy change, with related mindset adjustment de-prioritizing the importance of NSs, would have to be enacted, upending a long-established educational practice. A further practical challenge would be how to assess English from an ELF or BELF perspective: If the way English is taught changes, the way it is assessed must also change. Another challenge is mindset. Especially in the Chinese context, there exists the pervasive belief that “standard,” native English, such as British or American, is the ultimate goal, and anything less than native-like proficiency is failure (Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2018; Wang, 2013, 2015). Even

though the concept of the native speaker has been problematized (for example, the accents and proficiencies of NSs vary widely), such mindsets persist. Notably, the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), one of the most widely-used language proficiency criteria in the world, has been criticized for adhering to NS standards (Pullin, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011). In other words, one of the most consequential measuring instruments for learners worldwide, including China, promotes the exact mindset that researchers have been calling to change (He, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Wang, 2013, 2015; Wang & Jenkins, 2016). In light of the mindsets and structures in place, this investigation's goal is to develop a progressive linguacultural pedagogy that incorporates BELF principles but operates within existing parameters rather than recommend a pedagogical overhaul. In principle, it is similar to the "Standard English Plus" proposed by D. D. S. Li (2006) and espoused by He (2020), who recommends teaching standard English but adjusting it for specific local and global communicative needs and practices.

Regarding materials, Rose and Galloway (2019) examined several textbooks for a global orientation according to the GELT Framework. *Market Leader* was ranked by far the highest for global orientation in their review, which is one reason why it was selected as the foundational material for this study. Previously, Flinders conducted broad, qualitative surveys of several BE textbooks, offering general impressions (Flinders, 2001, 2005). He described *Market Leader* as the "heavyweight champion" in his 2001 review (p. 192) but was more reserved in 2005. In neither of Flinders' articles were specific evaluative or analytical principles or criteria described, so the conclusions lack benchmarks. More recently, Xu and Feng (2022) examined university BE textbooks used in China for the values they expressed. They concluded that "textbooks aim at cultivating globally minded talents with a good sense of social responsibility and business practitioners equipped with intercultural communicative competence, so as to meet the need of

social and economic development in contemporary China” (p. 37). This investigation was informative due to its context (China) and approach to materials analysis, though it differs from the current investigation in its aim (values versus competencies) and learners (pre-experienced versus job-experienced).

Other studies focusing specifically on *Market Leader* warrant discussion. The first is Pashmforoosh and Babaii (2015), investigating the cultural orientations of *Market Leader* and *Business Result* (Hughes & Naunton, 2008). The researchers examined the materials from two perspectives, labeled as the *Aspect* analysis of cultural elements, based on Kachru’s three circles of World Englishes (Kachru, 1985) and a *Level* analysis based on whether the content was “knowledge-oriented” or “communication-oriented” (Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015, p. 222). While the analysis in their article was lucid and principle-based, the constructs used could be considered problematic. First, there are strong arguments against both Kachru’s three circles paradigm, which does not account for transnationalism and globalization, and his categorization of nation-states, which does not sit well with multiple cultures existing within a country, cultures spilling across nation-state boundaries, or the influences of organizational cultures (Du, 2021). Next, organizing the content into two distinct categories, “knowledge-oriented” and “communication-oriented”, seems simplistic, especially when the researchers were investigating a textbook as multi-layered as *Market Leader* and considering a topic as complex as culture. Such an overly simplified analysis could render reductionist and generalized results, discounting crucial aspects of the materials such as “problem-solving oriented,” “strategically oriented,” or “critical thinking oriented.”

In another investigation, Si (2020) examined *Market Leader* from a BELF perspective. The context of her inquiry was *Market Leader*’s use in Chinese university BE courses. Si’s study

focused on language ownership (i.e., which speakers are represented: NSs, NNSs, Chinese, etc.), language exposure (i.e., NSs in business settings, NNSs communicating with each other, business communicators coping with communication breakdowns, etc.), and language activity (i.e., accuracy-oriented or communication-oriented). The study revealed a relatively balanced representation of NSs and NNSs, a finding supporting the aforementioned results of Rose and Galloway (2019). Interestingly, Si examined a version of *Market Leader* (created and published in the UK) that was adapted for the Chinese market. However, the study revealed very little evidence of content relating to Chinese culture. The study concluded that *Market Leader* was more focused on accuracy than communication and had an NS orientation, all of which are contrary to BELF principles. That said, these findings also illustrate a seeming contradiction: There was an empirically proven presence of NNSs in Si's analysis, yet she concluded that the orientation of the material was native-speakerist and contained zero ELF-informed language activities. While Si's study was well-defined and transparent, the above discrepancy should be addressed: How can there be a balanced representation of NSs and NNSs but no evidence of (B)ELF communication? Also, it should be noted that Si's study focused on *Market Leader* vis-à-vis pre-experienced learners rather than job-experienced learners. In a more recent investigation (Peltonen, 2021), I extracted BELF competencies from extant literature to examine *Market Leader* to determine where and how it could be adjusted, supplemented, and expanded to have a more BELF-oriented focus. This study was influenced by Pullin (2010), who outlined BELF competencies that could be used as criteria to examine textbooks or build curricula. While my findings were practical, tangible, and focused on job-experienced learners, the approach was broad, and the pedagogical proposals remain untested. Finally, the findings of the current study's analysis of *Market Leader* were reported by Peltonen and Hu (2024). Though these findings will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, for now,

it is important to note that *Market Leader* was found to contain an unbalanced mixture of linguacultural competencies: Some were prevalent, while others were absent.

In sum, while BELF literature has discussed and outlined the characteristics and competencies required for BELF users, much less attention has been paid to how those characteristics and competencies could be translated into materials development. In fact, researchers cannot agree on a paradigm of BELF pedagogy: As BELF is a context-specific and fluid usage of English, how to structure and teach this usage seems contradictory. On the one hand, in order to teach something, there must be standards or structures, but on the other hand, the way BELF functions is a “moving target.” Some researchers seem to question whether BELF is teachable at all (Karhunen et al., 2023). As it stands, BELF-informed pedagogy remains primarily theoretical, undefined, and untested, a gap in the research landscape that this study addresses through its curricular adaptations and teaching intervention.

Having reviewed the BELF literature, including opportunities and gaps in the literature as they relate to this study, the focus now turns to linguaculture.

2.5 Linguaculture

Linguaculture refers to the intersection of language and culture (Agar, 2002; Risager, 2006). In other words, language and culture are not separate paradigms requiring different lenses; rather, they are integrated and must be understood to be simultaneous, symbiotic, and iterative.

The tradition of considering how language might affect national cultural ideas, and vice-versa, stretches back over 100 years (Friedrich, 1989; Risager, 2012). Agar (2002) developed the contemporary concept of linguaculture. In his view, linguaculture applied to all social groups rather than only to “national” cultures, which laid the groundwork for more sophisticated epistemologies of linguaculture developed later. Agar (2002) also introduced several other

concepts that are pertinent to this investigation. First, he postulated that words, sentences, and discourse are empty without meanings, which are provided by culture. In other words, language provides the form and tools, while culture provides the meaning (e.g., the different meanings of “chicken” in different cultures, as illustrated in the *Chicken Incident*). Next, Agar labeled misunderstandings stemming from linguacultural differences as *rich points* and viewed these points as opportunities to improve understanding of both one’s own and others’ linguacultures. He wrote: “[c]ulture starts when you realize that you’ve got a problem with language, and the problem has to do with who you are” (Agar, 2002, p. 20). Also germane to this investigation is Agar’s concept of *frames*, which are the templates with which one understands linguaculture. Frames can aid understanding in a top-down manner, such as using a preexisting frame to understand an interaction or rich point, or they can aid understanding in a bottom-up manner, in which case one collects information to build a new frame as a bridge toward understanding (Agar, 2002). Agar used the example of colors, from experiments by Berlin and Kay (1969). While different linguacultures have different labels for colors, all of those studied had a similar conception of the term “red.” As such, red could be the frame used to connect different linguacultural conceptions of color across the spectrum (Agar, 2002).

Subsequently, Risager (2006) introduced the transnational perspective of linguaculture. The tenets of Risager’s conceptual expansion are: 1) “language is never culturally neutral” (p. 106), and 2) the perspective must change from “the traditional national paradigm to a transnational view of both language and culture (and linguaculture)” (p. 106). In her view, the rise of globalization and transnationality facilitates communication within and across national boundaries, forcing a revision of the conceptualization of language and culture being based on nation-states. Risager referred to these conceptualizations as *local complexity* and *global cultural and linguistic flows*.

Next, she directly addressed the place of linguaculture (“linguaculture” in her earlier writings) within lingua franca communication:

... language is never culturally neutral in the sense ‘linguaculturally neutral’. When a language is used in a lingua franca situation i.e. typically in a situation where it is used as a foreign language by all participants because they do not have any other common language, it is used with contributions from all these participants’ own semantics and pragmatics, but it also leads to a potentially lesser degree of precision. The conversation partners will probably adjust to each other and end up with some ad hoc compromises characterized by, among other things, power relations and levels of competence. (Risager, 2007, p. 123)

Risager’s vision of lingua franca communication as a heterogeneous mix of linguacultures, rife with rich points that must be negotiated, is prescient: Her work influenced ELF and BELF theorists. In fact, the concept of linguaculture is fundamental to ELF and BELF research, which has adopted the term when discussing the linguistic and cultural implications of globalization and transnationality that Risager and others defined earlier (Byram, 1989, 1997; Risager, 2005, 2006). For example, in the *Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca* (Jenkins et al., 2018), “linguaculture” and “linguacultural” were mentioned 38 times by 19 different authors. The concept was used mainly in the context of linguacultural background (17 mentions), which suggests perspective, outlook, or worldview; linguacultural resources (4 mentions), which evinces means of communication and expression; and linguacultural diversity, boundaries, or ambiguity (1 mention each), which illustrates the hybrid and fluid nature of linguaculture.

Given the above understandings of linguaculture, linguacultural competence is the ability to communicate successfully with people from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds

(Risager, 2006). For this study's purposes, "competence" refers to the overall level of proficiency, while "competency" refers to a specific ability that is part of the overall competence. Linguacultural competence is an essential component of BELF communication, as determined through multiple studies of BELF communicators in multiple contexts (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Pullin, 2015), including Greater China (Chan, 2023; Du, 2021; Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Researchers have specified essential components of linguacultural competence in the BELF context. First, linguacultural competence requires having baseline knowledge of BELF in terms of lexis, grammar, pragmatics, and genres. Second, it includes possessing sociolinguistic, discourse, and transcultural skills to negotiate meaning in case of communication breakdowns or situations that are out of ordinary experience. Strategic competence consists of the ability to use metacommunicative strategies, verbal and nonverbal strategies, face-saving strategies, monitoring and repair, and *in situ* practical approaches to avoid the breakdown of communication (Baker, 2022a, 2022b; Byram, 2021; Camerer, 2014; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Canale & Swain, 1980; Candelier et al., 2012; Peltonen & Hu, 2025; Sercu, 2004). As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, skills and strategies were conceptualized jointly rather than separately by participants. Fourth, attitude is important: Openness, flexibility, curiosity, empathy, non-judgment, positive disposition, and tolerance are among the attitudes that underpin linguacultural competence (Barrett, 2020; Byram, 2021; Camerer, 2014; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Candelier et al., 2012; Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Fantini, 2009; Sercu, 2004). Camerer (2014) highlights the importance of specific communicative and cultural contexts underpinning all of the above: All communication is context-specific; thus, the exact way the components manifest will vary accordingly. These components of linguacultural competence are salient because they delineate the different ways that linguacultural competence

can be taught, assessed, and operationalized in research. In other words, they can help structure teaching practices and guide the assessment of competencies, as each of the components can be targeted in rubrics, questionnaires, or other assessment instruments, as this study does.

The concepts of *levels* and *orientations* of linguaculture are useful to this study for several reasons. First, on a theoretical level, when discussing linguacultures in BELF, one has to account for more than just “national” or “regional” linguacultures. Many other facets of culture and subculture impact communication and must be understood more specifically. In fact, researchers argue that in business, organizational culture is more consequential and immediately relevant than regional cultures (Keyton, 2010). Second, a major pedagogical challenge is how to present the “cultural” aspect of “linguacultural” without being overly simplistic, reductionist, or stereotypical. At the same time, since the intersection of language and culture is complex, addressing the infinite permutations of how cultures interact could overwhelm teachers, trainers, and students alike (Peltonen, 2022a, 2023b). Hence, the concepts of levels and orientations of culture are crucial to both structuring the understanding of linguacultural competence on a theoretical level and addressing linguacultural competence for BELF communicators pedagogically. Regarding levels, linguacultures function at macro-, meso-, micro-, and individual levels (also referred to as scales in ELF literature) (Baker, 2022a, 2024; Bloor & Dawson, 1994; Hu, 2019; The Douglas Fir Group et al., 2016). Importantly, at the macro-level, this study uses the term regional culture rather than national culture because nation-states can be incredibly diverse both in terms of language and cultural background (The Douglas Fir Group et al., 2016): Linguacultures may or may not span across national boundaries. At the meso-level is corporate or organizational culture (Keyton, 2010; Walker, 2021). At the micro-level are the sub-cultures functioning within an organization’s culture such as one’s professional group (e.g., accounting department) (Bloor & Dawson, 1994), work

function (e.g., administrative staff across departments) (Sackmann, 1992), or hierarchical position (e.g., management) (Keyton, 2010). Finally, there are individual conceptions of culture. Just as organizational culture is composed of multiple, fluid, and overlapping subcultures, each subculture is comprised of individuals in interaction (Keyton, 2010), hence the need to consider individuality.

Another way to structure understanding of linguaculture is the three orientations of culture: home, target, and universal. When considering BELF communication, which is inherently transcultural, a crucial first step is to understand one's home culture, including one's own perspectives, biases, and worldview (Hu & McKay, 2014). Cultural self-reflection helps provide a frame of reference for understanding other linguacultures (Byram, 1986; Gajšt, 2014; Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025). The target culture is the cultural background from which anticipated interlocutors hail (Gajšt, 2014). The more one knows about target cultures, the more precise and effective one's interactions with members of those linguacultures will be. Functioning synergistically with the home culture and target culture is the universal understanding of culture orientation, which "encourages the learners to understand what culture is [and] deal with people who may have different ways of doing things" (Frendo, 2005, pp. 112-113). For example, researchers have conceptualized cultural dimensions to delineate the tendencies of different cultural groups, especially in the workplace (Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1980; McSweeney, 2015; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2021). While a full review of cultural dimensions is beyond the scope of this investigation, it is important to understand that cultural dimensions "provide us with a means for characterizing and differentiating the way that people in different societies think and behave" (Stahl & Tung, 2015, p. 392). Cultural dimensions have been proposed by Hofstede (1980), Lewis (1996), Hall (1989), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2021). The benefits of each of these dimensions is that they help build frames for understanding different

communicative styles, they are based on research, and they have been examined widely in the extant literature. On the other hand, the concept of cultural dimensions as well as the methodology used to derive them has been criticized. McSweeney (2015) argues that the creators of cultural dimensions made the following errors: 1) They conflated national cultures with individual behaviors; 2) the nature of their data collection, often relying on surveys, could, at best, indicate correlations but certainly not causality; 3) their proposals are subject to the ecological fallacy (Selvin, 1958), inaccurately inferring that the characteristics of the aggregate level also describe those at the individual level. In fact, each part will not have the characteristics of the whole. As BELF communication involves individuals interacting with other individuals, the ecological fallacy raises a crucial question: If dimensions do not hold across individuals, it could be argued that they are useless. A final issue with trying to use cultural dimensions is that they may homogenize a usually heterogeneous entity (Hu, 2019), which could devolve into reductionism or stereotyping (McSweeney, 2015). Acknowledging that cultural dimensions can be problematic, it is important to highlight their usefulness and rationalize their inclusion in the pedagogical adjustments contained in this study. First, cultural dimensions, when used as guidelines rather than immutable laws, help structure ideas, tendencies, and communicative styles that BELF communicators will encounter. Second, the appropriacy of these dimensions are context-bound: They may not hold true in all situations or with all individuals in a given group, but understanding them can help guide thought processes. For example, if one dimension does not appear pertinent to a given situation, perhaps another one does, thus providing structure and guidance. Third, cultural dimensions should not be thought of as static and fixed entities. Rather, they flow and develop in real-time, manifested in communication. Such an epistemology aligns with ELF and BELF conceptualizations of cultural practices and references, which are “constructed in situ and

emergent” (Baker, 2022b, p. 289). According to this epistemology, conceptualizations of cultural dimensions are relevant, but they must be considered contextually, on a case-by-case basis.

Both Agar and Risager, as well as subsequent linguaculture theorists such as Shaules (2016) and Blyth (2019), have explored pedagogical approaches to developing linguacultural competence. Though Agar (2002, 2008) did not explicitly provide pedagogical approaches, his concepts of *frames*, *rich points*, and what he called the *mistake, awareness, and repair cycle* when encountering linguacultural miscommunications translate to pedagogy by providing structures and procedures for successful transcultural communication. Risager (2006) described her own linguacultural pedagogy when describing lessons in which French, German, Danish, Dutch, and Farsi linguacultures were mixed in a classroom discussion of the media coverage of the *Tour de France* cycling event. She aimed to build understanding with “linguistic, discursive and cultural flow” (p. 182). Subsequently, Shaules (2016) created the Developmental Model of Linguacultural Learning (DMLL) to structure a pedagogical approach to language learning that integrates linguacultural development. He explained that “[p]edagogy could focus on helping reframe students’ understanding of learning itself, so that they are able to see language and cultural learning in terms of growth and development, rather than as simple mastery of knowledge and skills” (Shaules, 2016, p. 14). While Shaules based his DMLL and Linguaculture Classroom Approach (LCA) on Dynamic Skills Theory (DST) (Fischer, 1980), they remain highly theoretical, and Shaules himself recommended several ways in which they should be researched and tested, as they are not yet developed enough for pedagogical implementation. Finally, Blyth (2019) implemented a curriculum that combined aspects of Agar’s and Risager’s work with multiliteracies studies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; New London Group, 1999). Notably, none of the above investigations incorporated BE or BELF.

The above history of linguaculture and its position in the current theoretical and practical landscape have pointed to several gaps and opportunities in the literature vis-à-vis this study. To my knowledge, linguaculture has not been included in a transdisciplinary framework with ELF or BELF, even though it is the fundamental conceptualization of the cultural aspects of global communication in ELF and BELF literature (Jenkins et al., 2018). As such, a fruitful opportunity to examine how linguaculture informs and is informed by BELF communication has been missed thus far. This study contributes to addressing the above gap by not only defining linguaculture but also delineating its relationship to BELF, as shown in the hierarchical structure of the LCC Framework. With a clearer understanding of linguaculture's position vis-à-vis BELF, the linguacultural aspects of BELF and BELF's impact on linguaculture can be explored further in this study and future studies.

Linguaculture lacks application and testing on two pedagogical levels. First, despite the described pedagogical implementations of linguaculture (Blyth, 2019; Risager, 2005, 2007, 2015; Shaules, 2016), thus far no research has been uncovered in which researchers employ linguaculture as a theoretical lens in curricular analysis. Therefore, determining how linguaculture might fare in curricular examinations (whether independently or as part of a conceptual framework) reveals a consequential theoretical gap. It also reveals a practical gap in determining how linguaculture can contribute to learners' and users' communicative proficiency or competence. The current study addresses the above via its principled analysis of BE materials. Second, while richly described qualitative studies are present in the extant literature, pedagogy informed by linguaculture has not yet been tested empirically for efficacy in experimental studies. Linguacultural competence must be operationalized, taught, and assessed to better understand its pedagogical value, affordances, and limitations. As such, this study will contribute to the extant literature by offering one of the

first empirical investigations into linguaculture's pedagogical utility. Though the current study is specific to the context of BE communication, the hope is that the findings and principles derived from this study can inform future studies across contexts.

Having reviewed the literature related to BELF and linguaculture, the focus turns to the third component of the LCC Framework: genre.

2.6 Genre and Genre Analysis

A genre is a set pattern of communication codified within a culture for smooth and efficient functioning (Bhatia, 2012). As a socially recognized way of using language, a genre serves a typified communicative purpose. As Swales (1990) explains,

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. (p.58)

In this case, the communicative purpose is to conduct business on a global and transcultural level. As mentioned, the importance of genres was well recognized by scholars of BELF, who pointed out that business knowledge includes genres of written and spoken communication (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Du (2021) concurs that “in the BELF setting, English is highly contextual and business competence and genre rules are more important than language proficiency” (p. 26). Understanding the centrality of genre to BELF communication, we turn to an in-depth discussion of genre.

Viewing genre from a broad perspective, Hyon (1996) and Hyland (2003) have classified the study and practice of genre analysis into three schools. First, there is the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) model of genre analysis described above (Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Flowerdew, 2011; Swales, 1990). Second, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) emphasizes how patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features are linked to the context of use (Christie & Martin, 1997; Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1973; Martin & Rose, 2008). Third, the New Rhetoric approach has traditionally focused on first-language composition, considering genre as the functional relationship between a type of text and rhetorical context (Bazerman, 1988; Miller, 1984; Schryer, 1993; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). While all three schools attempt to describe and explain genre's purpose, form, and action, they differ in "the emphasis they give to text or context, the research methods they employ, the types of pedagogies they encourage" (Hyland, 2003, p. 22).

This investigation combines the ESP perspective on genre with the SFL one, leveraging each school's insights according to their usefulness and applicability to the phenomenon in question. The ESP perspective on genre is essential and primary in this study, as ESP has a strong precedent for investigating, analyzing, and structuring pedagogical approaches to professional communication (Bhatia, 1993). Meanwhile, literature from the SFL school of genre also contributes to this study in that 1) existing lists of genres were combined to create the initial set of genres used for content analysis; 2) SFL theorists have elucidated the relationship between genre and culture, both theoretically and practically, so their contribution to the position of genre related to culture and within the LCC Framework is essential; 3) SFL genre theorists have examined small talk in business contexts, which is an essential aspect of BELF communication. In sum, the ESP perspective enables tangible analysis of the requisite genres, while the SFL perspective provides baseline practical, descriptive, and theoretical information.

As explained above, a genre is a pattern of communication with its own structure and rules that allow people within a particular culture and context to communicate more efficiently. Crucial to genre analysis is understanding the concepts of stages and phases. Though “stages” and “phases” are SFL labels, the ESP school has similar concepts, namely “moves” and “steps”. For this study, I will use the SFL labels: 1) each genre has a set of stages, which are the step-by-step organization of the genre’s text; 2) each stage consists of a set of phases, and 3) every genre, stage, and phase possesses a unique means of expression (Eggins & Slade, 2006; Gardner, 2016). Eggins (2004) illustrates the linguistic implications of genre:

[T]exts of different genres will reveal different lexico-grammatical choices – different words and structures. For example, the types of words and structures used in a transactional genre will not be the same as those used in an exchanging opinion genre.... realization patterns will differ across genres. (p. 66)

Given the above, genre analysis has three notable potentials related to business communication in general as well as this investigation and the LCC framework in particular. First, genre analysis can identify the presence and prevalence of each genre in the curriculum (Dalimunte & Pramoolsook, 2020; Peltonen & Hu, under review). Understanding the prevalence of each genre in the textbook will later enable comparison between the text’s genres and the genres that business professionals are required to use, thus providing tangible insights into how to adjust the curricula (Peltonen & Hu, under review). Second, genre analysis makes explicit how each text is structured. Third, the above two insights impact pedagogy: Knowledge of requisite genres and how they are constructed – according to context, stages, phases, and the lexico-grammatical resources required – provides a blueprint for how to present them to students (Bhatia, 1991; Derewianka, 2003; Eggins, 2004). In other words, the analytical potential of genre feeds directly into pedagogy.

There is yet another aspect of genre that is useful to this investigation. Genres are patterns developed within cultures to standardize and organize communication (Derewianka, 2003). Martin (2009) further explains this point when asserting that “genre is a recurrent configuration of meanings and a culture is a system of genres” (p. 19). Therefore, there can be no discussion of genre without culture and no discussion of linguaculture without understanding genre. Genre analysis can reveal precisely how various texts progress, as situated within their cultures. Eggins (2004) provides questions the analyst can ask; “why is this genre useful for the culture? What does this genre tell us about the culture that uses it?” (p. 83). For example, if the textbook includes a dialogue in which one of the interlocutors says, “How are you?” upon meeting another person, it is likely to follow an American set of rules. The interlocutors specifically chose not to say, “Have you eaten?” as in a Chinese linguaculture, which might indicate that there are language and cultural power structures in place. As Eggins (2004) explains, “[t]hese meanings reflect dominant cultural values, but values which are more useful to certain sectors of the culture than to others” (p. 83). If such imbalances exist, a more pluralistic cultural orientation needs to be introduced, per BELF and GELT proposals. Genres can delineate how these imbalances exist and, subsequently, how to adjust communication to find balance. Further, particular pragmatic practices are prevalent within different macro-, meso-, and micro-cultures (Bhatia, 1991; Schleppegrell, 2008). It follows that BELF communicators must know these conventions within their own cultures as well as target cultures. Missing a stage in communication, or adding one unnecessarily, can cause confusion or communication breakdowns. For example, Pavlidou (2000) discussed instances of “cultural dissonance,” in which her expected moves did not match her interlocuter’s (p. 122), causing culturally-based miscommunications. This principle applies to written texts as well as spoken

discourse. Given genre's importance as culturally embedded patterns of communication crucial to business function, it is important to now focus on genre's implications for pedagogy.

As mentioned earlier, there is a strong tradition of using genre to analyze professional communication, especially in the ESP school (Bhatia, 1993; Bhatia & Bremner, 2012; Handford, 2010; Koester & Handford, 2012; Swales, 1990). Bhatia's 1993 work, *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*, is a seminal publication, as it describes how to approach the analysis of genres, providing examples (e.g., sales promotion letters, job applications). Also salient to the current investigation is his seven-step approach to analyzing unfamiliar genres, a thorough method of understanding and classifying texts. Importantly, this method could be implemented in this study both methodologically and pedagogically. From a methodological standpoint, the seven-step analysis can be used in a textbook analysis to identify and classify previously unidentified genres. Pedagogically, the seven-step analysis can be implemented as 1) a means for learners to identify genres accurately and methodically, and 2) to a gain metacognitive understanding of genres, which, in turn, would enable them to express themselves within these genres more effectively. However, it must be noted that some business functions will use some genres more than others, and each function, even within the same genre, will adjust it for its own purpose. For example, a letter of complaint written by an HR professional to a VP will likely manifest differently than one written by a lawyer to a government official. The key to addressing genres pedagogically, then, is to make learners understand that there are communicative structures, but they are flexible enough to be used differently, depending on the context.

Despite the prevalence of literature using genre as a theoretical lens, there are opportunities for implementing genre in this investigation that have not been previously pursued. There is a paucity

of research connecting genre analysis and resultant findings to ELF and BELF interactions. Bartlett (2018) explains:

[W]e need to understand, across a whole range of discourse-informed disciplines, the social and linguistic processes of change through which stable forms become hybridized and hybrids become stabilized as new sociolinguistic configurations take hold and the marginalized move to the centre. (p. 37)

Along these lines, BELF interactions occur in real time, require flexibility, and are likely to contain “non-standard” language that could spontaneously create unique subgenres and functions. A related concept is hybrid genres, the combination of two or more genres (Eggins, 2004), such as the amalgamation of a *data report* and a *sales promotion letter* to create a *data-driven sales pitch*. Similarly, though Bhatia (1993) focused on similarities in the structures and moves of various professional genres, he also parsed out particular cultural differences, such as “Using pressure tactics” (p. 117), which is prevalent in certain cultural contexts but unacceptable in others. Accordingly, a BELF communicative text could be a cultural hybrid – mixing the pragmatic norms of more than one culture during a transcultural communicative exchange. These non-standard and hybrid communicative styles and genres in BELF communication represent a field of investigation that has been under-researched. Using established means of identifying and labeling both existing and emergent genres (Bhatia, 1993), this study is one of the first to address the concept of genre from a BELF perspective, necessarily conceptualizing genres as flexible principles of communication and communicative meeting points between linguacultures (frames) rather than prescriptive rules to follow (Peltonen & Hu, under review).

Additionally, casual talk for building rapport and business relationships is a central characteristic and required competency of BELF communication, and as discussed, it is

particularly challenging for Chinese BELF users. In addition to the understanding of casual talk elucidated in BELF research, genre analysts, particularly in the SFL school, have researched such communication. According to them, casual talk is divided into “chat,” which is the unstructured, turn-by-turn aspect of conversations, and “chunks,” which are more structured passages (Eggins & Slade, 2006). In addition to determining that storytelling genres are common in casual talk in professional settings, Eggins and Slade identified four types of storytelling: narrative, anecdote, exemplum, and recount. They also structured the stages of each genre and examined them granularly, at the lexico-grammatical level. The implications of this research are crucial to the current study: Casual talk has not only been identified as a fundamental aspect of BELF, requiring a particular linguacultural competency, but there is also a genre-based means of analysis of such communication, which accounts for culture and context. Recognizing and teaching these casual talk genres can therefore proceed in a structured manner rather than remain a vast and opaque area of unstructured discourse.

Regarding materials analysis, recent genre-based investigations of ELT textbooks have been conducted in a variety of contexts. In Brazil, Machado (2016) examined two EFL textbooks to conclude that the textbook employing the genre approach was more effective in developing writing proficiency. In the Korean context, Lee and Na (2019) analyzed 335 writing tasks in 10 ELT textbooks, finding a lack of genre diversity and genre-awareness activities. Watanabe (2017) examined EFL textbooks in Japan, revealing that they had an unbalanced mix of genres, lacking enough variety to improve learners’ writing competence. Investigating Finnish EFL textbooks, Lahdesmaki (2009) highlighted how genres were recontextualized when used in the textbooks, and the possible effects of such recontextualization on textbook users were discussed. Unlike general ELT textbooks, BE textbooks have hardly been examined from a genre perspective. Dalimunte

and Pramoolsook (2020) compared the genres present in both a Standard Economics and Islamic Economics textbook. They found that the different treatment of genres in the two textbooks was likely due to the ideological differences between the two sub-disciplines of economics, highlighting the importance of context to genre instantiation. Finally, two articles based on the current study leveraged genre to analyze BE materials. Peltonen and Hu (2024) found that *Market Leader Intermediate* included almost no interpersonal genres, despite the importance of relationship-building communication in professional settings. Subsequently, Peltonen and Hu (under review) examined five popular BE textbooks and found that the genre categories represented in the books were similar to those found in other textbooks, but they did not match the genre categories that active, job-experienced professionals deemed important. In other words, both studies uncovered prominent mismatches between genre presence and genre usage. Finally, until the most recent studies based on this investigation (e.g., Peltonen & Hu, 2024), there had not been any analyses of texts with genre integrated into a multidisciplinary framework, such as the LCC framework, to examine a BE text. For each of the above reasons, this study is innovative in leveraging genre's potential to analyze curricula and inform pedagogy in the context of BELF. More specifically, this study uniquely incorporates genre in terms of what it analyzes (BE curricula), how it analyzes (incorporated into a transdisciplinary framework focusing on linguaculture), and why it analyzes (the end goal being curricular adjustment and direct pedagogical implementation). These affordances will likely have powerful implications for future investigations into materials analysis, BE pedagogy, and genre theory.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored topics according to two main categories: aspects of pedagogy pertinent to this study (materials analysis, adaptation, assessment) and the theoretical lenses adopted in this

study's LCC framework (BELF, linguaculture, and genre). The pedagogical aspects were discussed to place this study within the theoretical and empirical contexts of the extant literature. The discussion of BELF, linguaculture, and genre offered the theoretical underpinnings, extant empirical investigations, and pedagogical affordances of each theoretical lens. The chapter also identified the research gaps in each section and how this study addresses them. The following chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the theoretical framework of this study. It begins with a brief overview of the importance of theoretical frameworks and theory-driven research. Then, it distinguishes between theoretical frameworks and conceptual frameworks, as this study incorporates both. Next, it examines the Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) framework and explains how GELT's proposals for pedagogical change align with and underpin this entire study. After that, the chapter introduces this study's novel LCC conceptual framework, aligning it with GELT. Subsequent discussion includes the rationale for incorporating the LCC framework's three theoretical lenses (i.e., BELF, linguaculture, and genre) and their relationships. In sum, this chapter illustrates the framework's integrated and synergistic ability to develop pedagogy that improves the LCCs of job-experienced professionals.

3.1 The Importance and Function of Theory-Driven Research

Grant and Osanloo (2014) propound the importance of theory-driven research: “[T]heory-driven thinking and acting should be emphasized in relation to the selection of a topic, development of research questions, focus of the literature review, the design approach, and analysis plan for the dissertation study” (p. 14). The research questions of the current study are complex, spanning sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, cultural linguistics, and professional communication as well as curricular and pedagogical approaches. To address such complex phenomena, this study requires a transdisciplinary approach. Therefore, the theoretical framework underpinning this study, at an ontological level, must accommodate multiple realities and disciplines offering different perspectives on the same phenomenon simultaneously.

For an overview, the theoretical framework is the backbone of any research project, both

informing and being informed by the researcher's philosophical beliefs, influencing each facet of the study (Torraco, 1997). Grant and Osanloo (2014) explain the importance of theoretical frameworks as follows:

One of the many values of having a clearly identified theoretical framework for a dissertation study is the ability to use this material to support and build the methodological plan. The use of a theoretical framework is not limited to problem formulation and the literature review – it should guide your study throughout the dissertation. (p. 21)

There can be no sound research without theoretical support to guide the series of decisions that inform every aspect of the structure and process.

3.2 Theoretical Versus Conceptual Frameworks

Understanding the importance of theory-driven research and the philosophical foundations of research, I must define what a theoretical framework is and distinguish between theoretical and conceptual frameworks, as this study incorporates both.

We distinguish the two terms by clarifying that a theoretical framework is derived from an existing theory (or theories) in the literature that has already been tested and validated by others and is considered a generally acceptable theory in the scholarly literature.... On the other hand, a conceptual framework, in our view, is the researchers' understanding of how the research problem will best be explored, the specific direction the research will have to take, and the relationship between the different variables in the study). (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, pp. 16-17)

In other words, a *theoretical framework* consists of pre-existing tested and validated theories that underpin the understanding of the research questions and how they are to be investigated.

Functionally, the theoretical framework “supports the research question and directs the analytic approach” (Varpio et al., 2020, p. 991). Additionally, theoretical frameworks are usually developed before data collection, thus informing the data collection (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 16). As will be discussed, this study’s theoretical framework, GELT, existed before this investigation began, therefore informing it from its inception. Additionally, GELT encompasses multiple theoretical lenses that enable the linguistic analysis of contemporary global English usage for pedagogical change and development.

A conceptual framework is the researcher’s understanding of how the research phenomenon will be investigated according to a specifically developed system of concepts, structures, and beliefs that focus and guide research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Put another way, “whereas a whole theory may serve as one’s theoretical framework, a conceptual framework is normally of limited scope – carefully put together in the form of a conceptual model, and immediately applicable to a particular study” (Imenda, 2014, p. 189). Often, conceptual frameworks are formulated during the investigation, as is the case with the current study. The relationship between a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework manifests differently, depending on the type of investigation underway (Imenda, 2014). As will be illustrated, in this investigation, the linguacultural competence (LCC) conceptual framework aligns with the broader GELT theoretical framework, focusing on a specific aspect of it in order to advance knowledge about a particular facet – that is, pedagogically addressing the development of the LCCs of job-experienced business professionals.

3.3 The Global Englishes for Language Teaching (GELT) Framework

As established in the literature review, ELF is one of the foundational components of GELT. BELF is a sub-category of ELF and therefore aligns with the GELT framework. However, there are more

nuanced and consequential reasons why this study aligns with GELT. In order to understand them, it is first essential to understand GELT.

As an overview, GELT, devised and proposed by Galloway and Rose (e.g., Galloway, 2013; Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019), is a pedagogically oriented theoretical framework that emphasizes the dynamic and pluralistic nature of English as it is used worldwide. GELT challenges traditional ELT norms that prioritize native-speaker models and Anglo-American cultural orientations, instead advocating for an approach that recognizes the diverse linguistic practices of English speakers globally. Further, GELT encourages educators to adopt pedagogical approaches that reflect the changing and expanding role of English in contemporary communication, across various cultural and communicative contexts. The GELT approach broadens the scope of language teaching to include a variety of Englishes (e.g., those arising from different linguacultural backgrounds) and aims to empower learners by validating their linguistic identities and diverse backgrounds, preparing them for effective, flexible, and empathetic communication globally.

GELT defines and structures the linguistic and sociolinguistic landscape of contemporary English usage in several ways. First, as the role and usage of English in the world are changing, existing conceptualizations must be reconsidered and adjusted, which, in turn, requires pedagogical innovation. Second, along with explicit descriptions of and a call to action based on the changing position of English and its users globally, GELT espouses a reorientation of cultural understanding: GELT recognizes the plurality of cultures involved in contemporary communication and supports the ELF epistemology that cultures are fluid and embedded contextually within interactions rather than being static and definable entities (Baker, 2022b). Third, GELT integrates several theoretical lenses to generate an analysis of and structured

information about the changing position of English globally, offering a triangulated view of the phenomenon. In sum, GELT provides great utility in determining the contexts, characteristics, and pedagogical implications of contemporary global English communication, including BELF communication.

As mentioned earlier, proponents of GELT argue for a “paradigm shift” in the way English is taught to match the current sociolinguistic landscape of the 21st century (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. xi). Specific changes that the GELT framework espouses include changing the views of the ownership of English, distancing NNSs from NS norms, reframing culture within the English language, adjusting models of language, and reconsidering the target interlocutor. The proposed changes are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 GELT's proposals for change

Item	Concept	Traditional ELT	GELT
1	Target Interlocutors	Native English Speakers	All English users
2	Ownership	Inner Circle	Global
3	Target culture	Static Native English Cultures	Fluid cultures
4	Norms	Standard English	Diverse, flexible, and multiple forms
5	Teachers	Non-native English-speaking teachers (same L1) and native English-speaking teachers	Qualified, competent teachers (same and different L1s)
6	Role Model	Native English speakers	Expert users
7	Source of Materials	Native English and Native English speakers	Salient English-speaking communities and contexts
8	Other languages and cultures	Seen as a hindrance and source of interference	Seen as a resource as with other languages in their linguistic repertoire
9	Needs	Inner Circle defined	Globally defined
10	Assessment criterion	Accuracy according to prescriptive standards	Communicative competence
11	Goals of learning	Native-like proficiency	Multicompetent user
12	Ideology	Underpinned by an exclusive and ethnocentric view of English	Underpinned by an inclusive Global Englishes perspective
13	Orientation	Monolingual	Multilingual/translingual

Adapted from Rose & Galloway (2019, p. 20)

This study addresses two of the above proposals: Item # 3, reorienting the target culture from “Static Native English Cultures” to “Fluid cultures,” and Item #8, adjusting “other languages and

cultures” from being seen as a “hindrance and source of interference” to being seen as “a resource” (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. xi). In alignment with GELT’s proposals, this study investigates English usage functioning on a global scale. Therefore, its pedagogical approach necessarily encompasses multiple linguacultures, treating them as resources with particular affordances.

GELT’s creators do not explicitly define it as a theory per se. Instead, they describe its goals, perspectives, components, and proposals for change (Rose & Galloway, 2019). For perspective, the primary function of a theory is “to be generative of new ideas and new discoveries” (Higgins, 2004, p. 138). Theories encompass proposals that, if true, will garner anticipated results when tested. For the purposes of this study, GELT must be expressed as a theory that can be adopted, tested, and supported (or not supported) by research. This study’s working expression of GELT as a theory is as follows: GELT postulates that the role of English globally is changing, so new pedagogies must be developed to address these changes. The converse is that current pedagogy does not adequately address English learners’ and users’ needs in a changing global English communicative landscape. Expressing GELT as a theory is useful for several reasons. First, it prompts a hypothesis: When compared to traditional ELT, GELT-informed pedagogy will better prepare learners to function in contemporary global communication. The precise way this hypothesis is tested can vary. For example, novel curricular materials, classroom approaches, and assessments examining communicative competence as opposed to grammatical accuracy can be created and their efficacy evaluated. Or, specific to this study, investigating the effects of operationalizing linguacultural competencies in an adapted curriculum can be tested against an existing one. In other words, GELT, stated as a theory, provides a foundation from which the rest of this investigation can proceed, as a theory-based research inquiry. It enables further research into the roles, characteristics, and effects of English, as well as supports investigations into

pedagogical innovations that can be tested. Second, to my knowledge, this is the first explicit definition of GELT as a theory. In other words, this study contributes to the GELT framework by postulating a definition of GELT that can be tested and developed iteratively, expanding its knowledge base across contexts. See Figure 3.1 for a visual representation of GELT.



Figure 3.1 The Global Englishes for language teaching (GELT) framework

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, GELT is a paradigm that includes the concepts of WE, ELF, and EIL along with related concepts associated with the global use of English, such as multilingualism and translanguaging (Galloway and Rose, 2015; Galloway, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Each of the above fields of study shows how the English language functions today, highlighting the pluralistic nature of English, its global ownership, and that it functions quite differently from the NS forms taught in ELT classrooms (Galloway, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Galloway offers the rationale and relative contributions of the components of GELT:

World Englishes research has been instrumental in raising awareness of the diversity of English use around the world and the various implications the existence of ‘Englishes’ has for ELT...However, globalisation and increased ELF usage in fluid and dynamic contexts has made it increasingly difficult to neatly label ‘varieties’ of English...Both ELF and work on translanguaging showcase how users of ELF utilise their integrated proficiency, as they negotiate communication in plurilingual encounters. EIL scholars, who mostly focus on the pedagogical implications of the global spread of English, have also made an important contribution to the field.

(Galloway, 2017, p. 5)

The components of the GELT framework, though with different stances, are united in the aim of incorporating the diversity of English to instigate a paradigm shift in ELT. The ultimate goal of GELT is to combine these disparate but complementary bodies of research to inform optimized ELT moving forward (Rose & Galloway, 2019).

GELT can be considered a *disruptive theory* that “refutes or expands” existing knowledge (Varpio et al., 2020, p. 990). It can be categorized as such because it articulates proposals to redistribute the “ownership” of English and change ELT to treat cultures as being relativistic and multiple rather than focusing on Anglo-American cultures. Further, GELT is a *middle range theory* in that it addresses a specific aspect of human interaction (e.g., global English usage and related pedagogy) as opposed to *grand theories* “that are highly abstract and that tend to be concerned with broad natural or social patterns (e.g., Marxist theories of society)” or *microtheories* that “focus on individual-level phenomena (e.g., symbolic interactionism)” (Varpio et al., 2020, p. 990).

GELT encompasses several bodies of knowledge (e.g., WE, ELF, EIL, translanguaging, and multilingualism). Its transdisciplinarity is advantageous because, “[i]n our contemporary times, most social phenomena are complex and linked to multiple bodies of knowledge that belong to different disciplines” (Jabareen, 2009, p. 50). Put another way, parsing out specific theories of language or pedagogy runs the risk of being myopic or reductionist in perspective: “Epistemologically, transdisciplinarity aspires to transcend the boundaries of disciplines and generate knowledge that is more than the sum of a discipline-specific collection of findings” (The Douglas Fir Group et al., 2016, p. 25). This study aligns with GELT, mainly within the ELF subdomain, though incorporating principles from WE, in order to leverage GELT’s perspectives, findings, and proposals regarding pedagogy while also focusing specifically on the linguacultural aspects of international lingua franca communication for professionals. While EIL offers valuable contributions to the field, examining this area of study falls outside of the parameters of this study. See the LCC framework’s position within GELT in Figure 3.2.

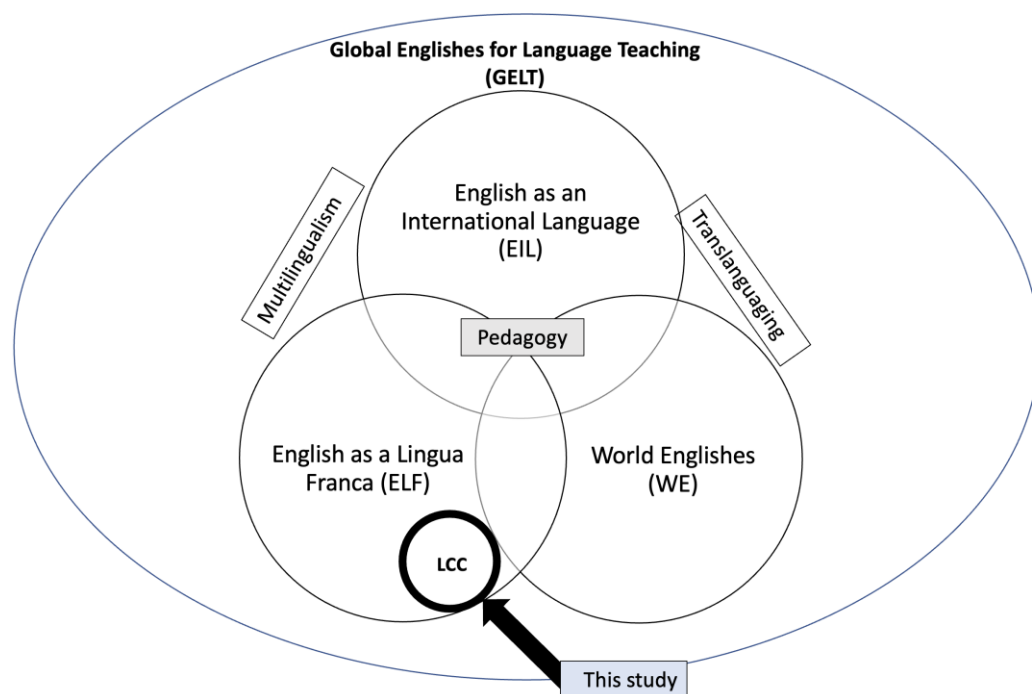


Figure 3.2 This study's theoretical contribution to GELT

With an understanding of the GELT framework and its relevance to this study, further rationales for its selection as this study's foundational theoretical framework must be examined. Such rationales include: 1) philosophical alignment, 2) theory-practice reconciliation, 3) incorporation of contemporary cultural theoretical lenses, and 4) contemporary professional communicative theoretical lenses.

At the philosophical level, GELT is aligned with both my personal perspectives and those of this study. This investigation espouses a *pragmatic* philosophical perspective. The pragmatic paradigm stresses the importance of problem-solving and adopting whatever approach will address the target issue. "Pragmatism seeks an application of multiple methods, types of data and data analyses that can fully provide answers to research questions or problems. This paradigm can be said to underpin mixed methods research" (Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015, p. 17). Pragmatists consider objectivity and subjectivity to be equally important aspects of research that need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the context, focus, and aims of the inquiry. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, mixed methods research, such as this study, fits well with the pragmatist philosophical paradigm. It should be noted that Rose and Galloway (2019) do not mandate specific philosophical paradigms. The fact that GELT is paradigmatically agnostic is evidenced by previous GELT-informed research – and recommended future research – that is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods in nature (each of which implies different paradigmatic orientations). From that perspective, GELT aligns with pragmatism in its versatility, enabling it to be used as the framework for diverse research issues (e.g., curricula, pedagogy, teacher training, classroom practice), incorporate different disciplines, and employ different methodological approaches. Put simply, the openness and flexibility of GELT support this study's philosophical orientation and the LCC framework itself.

In support of the goals of the current study, GELT's central aim is to bridge the theory-practice divide. Rose and Galloway (2019) state that GELT's "research-informed practices have predominantly occurred within the very space between theory and practice" (p. xvii). The authors also explain that as teachers may have difficulty grasping the theoretical findings of GELT investigations, it is incumbent on applied linguists focused on education to translate these ideas into practical application – the same aim of the current study and the purpose of the LCC conceptual framework. GELT aligns with the present study in another fundamental way: It provides theoretical foundations for utilizing curricula to bridge the theory-practice gap. The authors explain: "By anchoring our discussions within familiar concepts such as the curriculum, we hope to avoid alienating teachers with our critical perspectives, which have previously been observed as being an issue in connecting theory with pedagogical practice" (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 29). In other words, the curriculum serves as a connector between theorizing and classroom practice: Every facet of the curriculum is impacted by GELT's theoretical perspective, which, in turn, informs possible pedagogical adjustments. The current study espouses a similar implementation of curriculum, including proposed adjustments with a specific focus on professionals' linguacultural competence.

To bridge the theory-practice divide, Rose and Galloway (2019) call for more research, citing six main areas, three of which are particularly pertinent to this investigation. "The first call for research involves a need for classroom-based research into the implementation of GELT innovations into language curricula" (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 110), which is exactly what this study does. The second is "Considering the vital role that ELT materials play, we simply need more research into materials evaluation and analysis on how key GELT constructs (the target interlocutors, role models, norms, cultures, ELF strategies) are construed in textbooks" (Rose &

Galloway, 2019, p. 113). Again, this is one of the main objectives of the current study. The third relevant call for research is “Emphasizing respect for diverse culture and identity in ELT,” which “concerns the need to respect cultural differences and reconsider what an English-using culture is” (Rose et al., 2021, pp. 159-160). The authors argue that because the majority of global English usage is between NNSs, the centrality of Anglo-American cultural perspectives in textbooks and overall pedagogy needs to change. As discussed in Chapter 2, the challenge is how to structure understanding of the massive volume of cultural knowledge without overly simplifying it or being reductionist. At the same time, theorists cannot simply present an infinite number of permutations of transcultural encounters and communication because that would overwhelm teachers and learners. Accordingly, this investigation aims to contribute to theoretical knowledge about the GELT framework by developing, structuring, and clarifying the conceptualization of linguacultural competence for pedagogical implementation. It does so by operationalizing 20 LCCs as descriptors that are used in materials analysis, to inform adaptations, and underpin the assessments.

Addressing the call for reorienting the cultural focus of ELT, the GELT literature cites the work of Baker, whose concept of transculturality has informed GELT and the current study by advancing the epistemology of culture being fluid, liminal, and created through interactions rather than being a static, boundary-oriented, and discrete phenomenon (Baker, 2022a, 2022b, 2024; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). According to GELT’s authors, learners must

...be aware that new cultures emerge and develop in each instance of language use, especially in lingua franca contexts, where speakers are bringing different expectations and experiences to the speech community. Intercultural awareness recognizes the need to move away from essentialist conceptualisations and highlights this fluid, dynamic

and complex relationship between language and culture in ELF encounters. (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 22)

Notably, Rose and Galloway (2019) use the term “intercultural,” a label Baker later examines and problematizes in the context of ELF communication because it implies understandings of culture as being static and having boundaries as opposed to being fluid and delimited. Newer GELT literature espouses the concept of *transculturality* to align with Baker’s conceptualization. The goal of this study, for example, is to expand the theoretical knowledge base of how the concept of transculturality 1) can be structured and positioned within GELT, 2) how transculturality relates to professional communication and BELF, and 3) how the theoretical understanding of transculturality can be translated into pedagogy. The challenge for this study is to balance the structures required for pedagogy while also incorporating the flexibility required for contemporary transcultural interactions. If successful, it could serve as a template for other GELT-informed investigations across linguacultural contexts, addressing similar issues.

Finally, professional communication has been embedded in the GELT framework since its inception. GELT was developed partly based on the creators’ experiences teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to English majors (Galloway, 2013) as well as in a bilingual business program (Galloway & Rose, 2013). Even so, the BELF literature generally does not explicitly position BELF vis-à-vis GELT. Conversely, the GELT literature rarely mentions BELF. As such, one contribution of the current study is to explicitly connect BELF-informed pedagogical research to the GELT framework, thus contributing to the expansion of both theoretical and pedagogical knowledge. Relatedly, there is a paucity of BELF-informed pedagogical research. The majority of previous BELF studies examined communicative practices within professional contexts, addressing pedagogy only briefly in the implications section of the research articles’ conclusions

(Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Positioning BELF-informed pedagogical research in relation to GELT enables its more extensive body of literature to inform BELF theory, pedagogy, and research, and place results in relation to a broader and established landscape, ideally illuminating more about both. Finally, BELF continues to be misunderstood on a conceptual level by both researchers and practitioners. As one experienced teacher-researcher lamented in Peltonen and Haga (2025), even after attending sessions aimed to develop BELF understanding for BE teachers, “the concept is still blurry to me” (p. 13). Her statement represents the conceptual inaccessibility of, and need to “translate”, BELF theory, findings, and pedagogical implications to a wider audience. Relatedly, researchers continue to misunderstand BELF as simply “settling” for sub-standard English that is “just enough to ‘get the job done’” (Chan, 2021, p. 11). Such a deficit view of BELF is completely contrary to the paradigm shift and message of inclusivity and empowerment proposed by GELT. Perhaps by more explicitly integrating the LCC framework into GELT and expanding BELF’s presence in GELT, such misunderstandings can be alleviated. The enhanced conceptual clarity could, ideally, lead to more pedagogical innovations thus enabling more effective transcultural communication globally.

As illustrated below, the LCC framework aligns with the broader GELT framework with a specific aim: to develop the LCCs of BELF communicators. Successfully conceptualized, structured, and employed, the LCC framework should both broaden and deepen GELT’s theoretical base. At the same time, leveraging GELT’s theoretical foundations, perspectives, and affordances should offer insights into BELF, LCCs, and this study’s findings, leveraging a greater body of knowledge. In that sense, the relationship between GELT and the LCC framework is reciprocal and complementary.

3.4 The Linguacultural Competence (LCC) Framework

With an understanding of the GELT framework and the LCC conceptual framework's alignment with GELT, we turn to the LCC framework itself. The following sections describe its structure, components, and rationale.

The *Chicken Incident* illustrated that existing frameworks did not address the specific problem that this study considers: *How do we develop the linguacultural competence of BELF learners and users?* Therefore, I needed to develop a framework as a foundation from which to explore the contexts, characteristics, conceptualizations, and pedagogical implications of the changing role of English in contemporary global professional communication. There are precedents for integrating multiple disciplines into theoretical and conceptual frameworks to analyze professional communication and inform pedagogical approaches: These include the *Global Communicative Competence* (GCC) Framework (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) and the *Dynamics of Business Communication* (DBC) Framework (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2011). Examination of these frameworks informed the creation of the LCC conceptual framework in the following ways. First, these transdisciplinary frameworks were designed thematically. The theoretical lenses or disciplines incorporated were determined by the aim and context, structured by selecting whatever best addressed the phenomenon in question. Second, transdisciplinary approaches investigating complex phenomena support mixed-methods research approaches because both prioritize the integration of diverse perspectives to address complex issues. Such alignment facilitates a holistic research approach in which the strengths of different methods and disciplines are leveraged to generate more robust, nuanced, and implementable findings (Jabareen, 2009; The Douglas Fir Group et al., 2016).

Understanding the benefits and affordances of transdisciplinary frameworks, the following section will describe the specific roles of each theoretical lens within the LCC framework along

with the rationale for inclusion. The discussion will include how each theoretical lens integrates with the other lenses. It should be noted that, even though discussed separately, the relationships of these theoretical lenses are reciprocal, overlapping, and simultaneous. See Figure 3.3 for a visual representation of the LCC Framework.

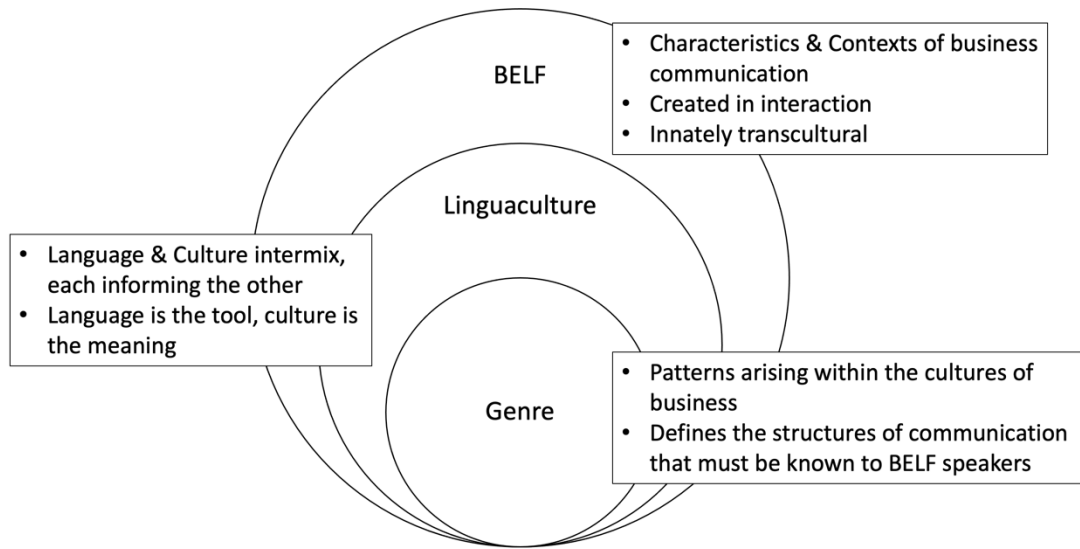


Figure 3.3 The Linguacultural competence framework

The LCC framework's constituents, which function synergistically and simultaneously, have been specifically organized from broad to specific to address the issue of how to develop professionals' linguacultural competence. BELF is fundamental to the framework because it delineates the contexts and characteristics of global business communication. Linguaculture complements BELF at a more specific level by showing how language and culture intersect, addressing BELF communicators' need for cultural understanding and the ability to communicate transculturally (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Most specifically, the construct of genre interacts with linguaculture in that it structures and illustrates patterns of communication within and across cultures, though without being prescriptive (Bhatia, 1993). The

adoption of these three theoretical lenses is intended to yield a rich understanding of which LCCs are needed in the workplace and how they can be addressed pedagogically.

3.4.1 The Components of the LCC Framework

BELF is the foundational theoretical lens of the LCC framework, providing the meta-structure within which this entire study operates. BELF research has identified and described the overall context of the communication being examined: Business professionals communicate with each other in English across organizations, countries, and regions (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018; Karhunen et al., 2023). BELF research has elucidated how this communication functions in terms of its characteristics and required competencies. As a review, the term “characteristics” refers to the fluid, liminal nature of this communication, in which meaning and clarity are paramount, and business knowledge and cooperation toward a shared goal are essential (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Related competencies are business knowledge, the ability to communicate using BELF linguistically, and transcultural competencies. Additionally, BELF has defined who is doing the communicating – internationally functioning, job-experienced professionals fulfilling a variety of roles and interacting with interlocutors of various L1s (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018; Karhunen et al., 2023). These communicators might be from vastly different backgrounds: They could be independent agents or members of departments of multinational companies, and they might possess a wide array of education levels, regional backgrounds, hierarchical positions, and viewpoints (Du, 2021; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2025). Finally, BELF has delineated the purposes of communication, which this study labels as its two metafunctions: *interpersonal communication* to build relationships for business and *transactional communication* to get the job done, which requires absolute clarity of meaning (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Peltonen & Hu, 2024; Pullin, 2010). In sum, BELF outlines the

nature of global and transcultural communication in business contexts, which enables an understanding of the functions and contributions of the framework's other theoretical components.

Linguaculture provides insight into how people of different backgrounds interact within the context of BELF communication. Cultures are not static entities that collide but fluid and flexible phenomena that are manifested in communication (Baker, 2024). According to this epistemology, the notion of linguaculture is the most appropriate way of addressing the issue of transcultural communication because it integrates language and culture into a single paradigm, thus highlighting the centrality of language to cultural manifestation. Further, as discussed in Chapter 2, BELF has multiple cultural levels (e.g., regional, corporate, work team, and individual) and orientations (i.e., home, target, and universal). The combination of each interlocutor's cultural levels and orientations impacts communication, and linguaculture's integrated nature accommodates these complexities. Conversely, separating language from culture would require defining and describing the cultures (such as a regional culture or a corporate culture) or the languages (such as English varieties or professional jargon) independently and then endeavoring to merge them. This approach would be cumbersome, confusing, and conceptually inappropriate because it would deemphasize the role language plays in the manifestation of culture. Further, by functioning at the nexus of language and culture, linguaculture enables the gathering of insight into how interlocutors' understandings of various concepts align or do not align (Agar, 2002; Risager, 2006). In other words, linguaculture offers a way to determine if different cultural groups' understanding of something (e.g., "chicken," "contract," "agreement") is the same or different. This understanding is crucial in any transcultural encounter and even more so in high-stakes business communication in which decisions with profound ramifications are made. Miscommunications in such situations are called *rich points*, which linguacultural theorists argue must be identified and explored to

develop improved linguacultural understanding (Agar, 2002). Linguacultural theorists offer means to address such gaps in understanding by building bridges between linguacultures, which they call *frames*. Frames can be developed in two ways: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down frames are preparatory, derived from research, reading, and gathering information before encounters. Bottom-up frames are created through experience, by reflecting on the interactions and drawing conclusions from the patterns and themes the individual has observed in transcultural encounters (Agar, 2002). Linguaculture enables conceptualization of how language simultaneously informs and is informed by culture, how linguacultures may mismatch, and how they can be connected, offering affordances fundamental to understanding and developing BELF learners' and users' LCCs.

Next, linguaculture accounts for the global and transcultural flows of communication in the contemporary world. For example, linguaculture can illuminate integration, such as two professionals from different backgrounds discussing the food sitting in front of them, or separation, such as a professional who is overseas trying to explain something about their home culture but without the cultural artifact under discussion being present. In other words, because a cultural perspective will manifest in a particular way within a specific context, BELF interlocutors must be agile enough to discern, react, and interact according to particular circumstances. The concept of linguaculture not only provides an analytical lens for such issues, but it also points to competencies (awareness, identifying and addressing rich points, frame-building) and, therefore, potential pedagogical implications.

Finally, regarding GELT's proposals for pedagogical change, the notion of linguaculture supports "respect for diverse culture and identity" (Rose et al., 2021, p. 159). By providing a means of determining how different cultural groups understand (or misunderstand) a topic and defining

transcultural flows and local complexities, the notion of linguaculture facilitates a global perspective encompassing multiple cultures rather than focusing exclusively on Anglo-American linguacultures. Linguaculture's epistemology is fundamentally pluralistic, facilitating cultural relativity and understanding as opposed to a comparative and evaluative stance.

Similarly, the last component of the LCC framework, genre, has a complementary relationship with BELF that is manifested in several ways. First, how genres are employed and understood is context-dependent (Bartlett, 2018). BELF provides the context of communication in which professional genres are developed and used by describing who is communicating with whom, for what purpose, and with what goals. Within the broader BELF communicative context, there are numerous sub-contexts, requiring specific manifestations and uses of genres. For example, two emails may employ the same genre of "responding to complaints." However, the exact complaints can be distinct, and the interlocutors may come from different industries, which affects how the genre is utilized. The way the genre manifests depends on factors such as the writer, the intended audience, and culture (e.g., linguacultural background, regional culture, corporate culture). BELF offers a way of understanding the multitude of conditions in which the genre is used in professional, global, transcultural communication.

Further, one of the fundamental requirements of BELF communication is business knowhow (Kankaanranta et al., 2015). Professionals must assimilate the way their profession, function, organization, or team communicates, and part of that knowledge is the communicative genres used. It must be noted that, on the surface, there is a contradiction between genres as conventionalized structures and the fluid and ephemeral nature of BELF communication (Kankaanranta et al., 2015). This contradiction, however, is more apparent than real. BELF communicators must negotiate meaning with others and rely on frames between people of different cultures, organizations,

departments, or work functions (Agar, 2002). Genres are frames because they serve as flexible but structured entities that facilitate communication between professionals of different backgrounds. Put another way, BELF communication requires genres for structure, and genres require BELF to delineate the contexts and characteristics that, in turn, define their usage. As such, genres are an integral aspect of the communicative acculturation of professionals using BELF and must be developed pedagogically to prepare learners for transcultural workplace communication.

The relationship between linguaculture and genre is synergistic and a matter of scale. Whereas linguaculture integrates language and culture on a broad level, genres structure communication in the culture within which they function at a more specific level. As mentioned above, genre analysis is always performed within the sociological, cultural, and cognitive parameters of the context of that communication (Bhatia, 1991; Martin, 1992). By organizing communication within the context of business and business cultures, genre illustrates how professional culture informs communication, and vice-versa. Bhatia (1993, p.49) elaborates on this point:

[Genre] is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s).

Genres vary by culture and are simultaneously products of the beliefs and expectations of their culture (whether organizational, regional, etc.) and influence the culture by following cultural expectations, rejecting them, or pushing their boundaries. Put another way, genres are linguistic

means of expressing meaning within and according to the linguacultures in which they function. A fitting metaphor for this relationship could be that of sports: Linguaculture is the game, and genre is how the game is played, namely rules, strategies, tactics, and plays. (According to this metaphor, BELF would be the sport). In other words, “cultures seem to involve a large but potentially definable set of genres, that are recognizable to members of a culture, rather than an unpredictable jungle of social situations” (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 17). Cultures divide communication into genres to streamline and structure communication, making the conveyance of function and meaning more efficient. If genres structure the communication of a given linguaculture, then its theoretical contribution to pedagogy becomes apparent: Individuals, groups, and organizations enact certain ways of communicating based on certain situations within certain linguacultures, in essence, communicating through known structures that are genres.

Additionally, even though genres are typically understood to organize text according to existing codes, rules, or expectations, both the SFL and ESP schools propose the concept of hybrid genres that are created *in situ* and that have not been identified previously. The ESP term for such hybridization is *interdiscursivity*, defined as “innovative attempts to create various forms of hybrid and relatively novel constructs by appropriating or exploiting established conventions or resources associated with other genres and practices” (Bhatia, 1991). This concept is useful for examining BELF communication in which language forms that do not align with what might be considered “standard” NS English are used and hybrid communication create unique genres, which interlocutors and genre analysts must address flexibly. Offering a precedent for accommodating emergent, negotiated, and non-standard hybrid genres is another illustration of how the theoretical lens of genre aligns with the fluid nature of BELF and linguaculture.

Finally, the rich and structured construct of genre is not only a lens for developing an understanding of business communication but also pedagogy because “the main concern of such applied genre analysis is to characterize typical or conventional features of any genre-specific text in an attempt to identify pedagogically utilizable form-function correlations” (Bhatia, 1991, p. 155). The pedagogical task is to identify, define, and impart these known structures to users and learners, accounting for the linguacultural contexts in which they must be utilized. However, it is important to note that these “known structures” should not be prescriptive rules but principles upon which to build structured but uniquely meaningful communication (Peltonen & Hu, under review).

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the importance of theoretical frameworks and theory-driven research. It also parsed out theoretical versus conceptual frameworks, as this study utilizes a conceptual framework (LCC) as an adjunct to a larger theoretical framework (GELT). The chapter went on to describe GELT and explain why and how the LCC framework aligns with GELT epistemologically, philosophically, conceptually, methodologically, and pedagogically. The chapter continued with an introduction of the novel LCC framework according to its structure, components, rationales, and functions. It also included an examination of the relationship and synergy between the LCC framework’s three components (i.e., BELF, linguaculture, and genre) as a theoretical foundation for an integrated and triangulated understanding of BELF LCC and pedagogical implications. The following chapter discusses the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the present study's methodology followed by a more detailed description of each step in the process. As described in Chapter One, the study seeks to identify how useful the LCC framework is in determining BELF LCCs, how effective it is in analyzing and evaluating materials to determine LLC-building opportunities, and how those findings might impact the design and enactment of a teaching intervention. Further, the study seeks to determine the efficacy of the teaching intervention based on the LCC framework and factors mediating the performance of the control and experimental groups. To achieve these objectives, quantitative and qualitative data were collected during each stage of the study. Data included domain analysis surveys, qualitative and quantitative data from the materials analysis, pre- and post-intervention assessment scores (questionnaire, multiple choice test, and performance assessments), self-reflections, post-intervention questions, and post-intervention interviews.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the ontology and epistemology underlying this study's methodology, followed by a description of and the rationale for the specific mixed-methods intervention design of this study. After that, each phase of the study is described, including the participants and their recruitment, the development and validation of novel assessment instruments, data collection and analysis, and data merging. Notably, a pilot intervention study is described, including pertinent findings that prompted adjustments for the main study.

4.1 Ontology and Epistemology of this Study's Mixed Methods Approach

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study subscribes to a pragmatist ontology because the complexity of linguacultural competence inherently requires multiple viewpoints to fully understand the phenomenon. As illustrated by the *Chicken Incident*, two linguacultural groups can

have different understandings of the same word (chicken) in the same situation. This study acknowledges different understandings of linguacultural phenomena (constructivist) yet aims to reconcile such different understandings by structuring them through the operationalization of LCC descriptors (positivist) for adaptations, pedagogical treatment, and assessment. By integrating two seemingly disconnected paradigms (pragmatist), this study aims to bridge gaps between linguacultural groups' varying understandings of similar phenomena. On an epistemological level, pragmatists consider objectivity and subjectivity to be aspects of research that need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the context, focus, and aims of the inquiry. The chief warrant for the adoption of a mixed methods approach in this study is that the phenomenon in question, BELF, is by nature fluid, negotiated, and liminal. However, I have endeavored to “dissect” BELF by separating out one of its main facets – linguacultural competence – and addressing it according to specific structures (e.g., levels and orientations of culture, genres) and competencies (e.g., the LCC descriptors) so that they can be addressed pedagogically and assessed objectively. Subjective data related to the participants' perspectives, learnings, and development is crucial to understanding how and why they performed the way they did. From the pragmatist viewpoint, there will likely be both connections and disconnects between the quantitative and qualitative results. Reconciling such alignments and discrepancies requires a mixed methods approach, which will ideally provide a holistic and rich understanding of the phenomenon in question.

4.2 Research Design

A research design is an overarching plan for carrying out a study logically, comprehensively, and cohesively to ensure that the data collection and analysis are appropriate to the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As discussed, if both positivist and constructivist principles can be leveraged to develop both objective and subjective understanding of a phenomenon, then a

mixed methods research design is appropriate. Accordingly, the methodology of this study is a mixed methods experimental design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) in which a control group will be exposed to the existing curriculum (materials and activities), while an experimental group will be exposed to a teaching intervention adapted from the existing curriculum. As Creswell and Creswell (2020) explain,

mixed methods research involves the collection of both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed-ended) data in response to the research questions. The two forms of data are integrated in the design analysis to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon. (p. 297)

Mixed methods research draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research: quantitative to determine outcomes and qualitative to determine reasons for the outcomes (Berman, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Specific to this study, the mixed methods intervention design “involves the researcher collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the information within an experiment or intervention trial” (Creswell & Creswell, 2020, p. 248). Analysis before, during, and after the teaching intervention will determine differences, improvements, and gaps between the control and experimental groups to ascertain the efficacy of the teaching intervention (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Diab, 2011). The progression of the mixed methods intervention design includes an exploratory sequential phase and an explanatory sequential phase anchored in the experimental intervention adopting a convergent design. See Figure 4.1 for a visual representation of the design. In the *exploratory sequential design* comprising an initial qualitative phase and an intervention phase, the LCC framework was conceptualized, LCCs were identified and finalized, and *Market Leader* was analyzed to determine LCC building opportunities and identify two LCCs to be developed in the intervention. Next, in

the *convergent design* constituted by the quantitative and qualitative strands of the intervention phase, the participants were exposed to the control and experimental instructional conditions. They were assessed pre- and post-intervention. Qualitative data in the form of presentations, exercise responses, and self-reflections were collected. In the *explanatory sequential design* made up of the intervention phase and a following qualitative phase, post-course reflective questions were given to ascertain participants' understanding of the two target LCCs after taking the course. Further, post-course interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the intervention results, moderating factors, and the participants' firsthand experiences with the intervention.

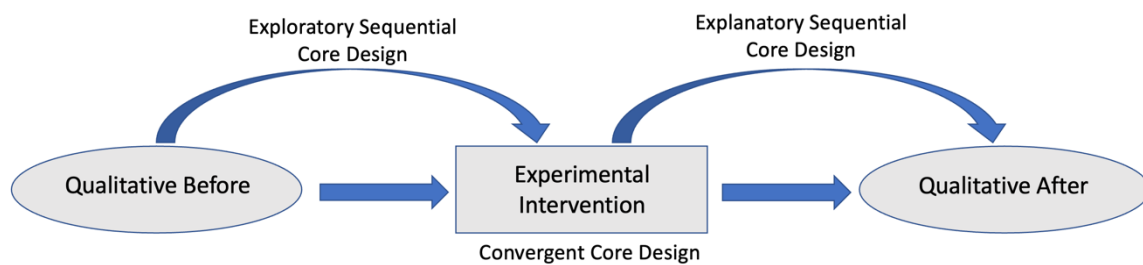


Figure 4.1 The mixed methods intervention design

This study's research questions follow. RQ1 and RQ2 are addressed in the exploratory sequential phase of the study.

RQ1: How well does the Linguacultural Competency (LCC) conceptual framework fare as a guide for identifying what linguacultural competencies (LCCs) are likely to be involved in BELF communication? Do job-experienced business professionals find these competencies important in their business communication?

RQ2: How effective is the LCC framework in analyzing, designing, and enacting a BE curriculum?

- a. What is the distribution of linguacultural competence-building opportunities in this study's foundational textbook, and how may that distribution impact BE learners' linguacultural competence development?
- b. How would such findings impact the design and enaction of a BE curriculum? (e.g., which LCCs should be developed and assessed?)

RQ3 and RQ4 are examined in the explanatory sequential phase of the study.

RQ3: How effective is a pedagogical intervention informed by the LCC framework in enhancing BE learners' linguacultural competence and meeting their transcultural communicative needs?

RQ4: What factors may contribute to the efficiency or inefficiency (i.e., relative effectiveness) of the intervention?

4.3 The Exploratory Sequential Phase

This investigation employed the *intervention-development* variant of mixed methods designs, in which “the researcher collects qualitative data to help develop an intervention (or an experiment) that would work with the participants and be meaningful to them” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 90). The specific stages of the exploratory sequential phase follow, comprising an initial qualitative phase (which has several stages, each building upon the previous one) and an intervention phase.

4.3.1 Stage 1: Development of the LCC Framework

This investigation began with an extensive literature review to determine practical, pedagogical, and theoretical perspectives addressing linguacultural competence for job-experienced professionals. The review revealed the three theoretical lenses fundamental to developing LCCs for professionals: BELF, linguaculture, and genre. The LCC framework's hierarchical structure –

from broad to specific – took shape because BELF defines the overall contexts and characteristics of professional communication (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005), linguaculture provides insights into the interactions between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Risager, 2006), and genre is a structured but flexible linchpin of professional communication (Bhatia, 1993). The theoretical lenses interact simultaneously and complementarily. I also surveyed extant intercultural models (e.g., Baker, 2024; Byram, 2021) and examined validated instruments such as the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Language and Culture (FREPA) (Candelier et al., 2012) and the Common European Framework Reference Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) (Council of Europe, 2018) for input. Next, I identified 15 candidate LCCs from the relevant literature, and these were operationalized as “can-do” descriptors (e.g., “Professionals can...”). Additionally, potentially relevant genres of BE communication were also identified based on previous SFL and ESP-informed genre studies. These were categorized as transactional genres for conducting business and interpersonal genres for building relationships for business purposes and were operationalized as descriptors.

4.3.2 Stage 2: Domain Analysis

Notably, I have labeled this stage a *domain analysis* rather than a *needs analysis*. For the purposes of this study, this distinction is crucial: The domain analysis is an examination of a broad context of language usage, whereas a needs analysis focuses on a specific group of learners for a specific course of study. A domain analysis includes job and linguistic analyses, often utilizing interviews, and surveys with industry insiders with the goal of developing validity arguments (Knoch & Macqueen, 2020), while a needs analysis “examines what the learners know already and what they need to know” including lacks, necessities, and wants (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 24). In this

study, the domain analysis occurred before recruiting participants, thus precluding it from being considered a needs analysis.

The domain analysis was conducted to identify relevant LCCs. In other words, the research-based principles and resulting LCC descriptors tell only one part of the story: It was crucial to gather data from the perspectives of the users themselves, in this case, job-experienced professionals (Brinkmann, 2018). Gathering data from the users has several advantages. First, it offers *data triangulation* (Denzin, 1970). That is, the multiple strands of data can be used to verify each other, providing “convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results” (Caracelli & Greene, 1993, p. 196). Second, it provides *methodological triangulation* (Denzin, 1970), enabling the literature-derived linguacultural competencies in the descriptors to be checked against the lived experiences of professionals collected via interviews. Professionals’ insights can identify required linguacultural competencies that a literature review fails to uncover or show the irrelevance of a literature-derived competency (Flick, 2018). Using triangulation, the integration, comparison, and contrast of the data, discussed transparently, can enhance the validity of the research findings (Mathison, 1988). After the 19 specific LCCs were identified, a questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data from a wider sample. Each LCC underpinned a questionnaire item. Scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important) the questionnaire was designed to ascertain each LCC’s perceived importance according to job-experienced professionals.

4.3.2.1 Domain Analysis Participants

For the domain analysis interviews, I used *volunteer/convenience sampling*, leveraging my professional network to recruit participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 active, job-experienced professionals in mainland China. The sample

included 12 business professionals and two business English teachers. The professionals worked in 12 different industries and were located in eight cities across mainland China. The teachers were included to get a pedagogical perspective of learners' needs, requirements, and proficiencies. See Appendix B for more detailed demographic information about the interviewees.

As part of the domain analysis, 90 participants who had to use English at work completed the questionnaire described above. These respondents were professionals working in 26 industries across 13 cities, with 75 different job titles. Sixty-two of them were from mainland China, 18 were from Hong Kong, Macau, or other places, and 10 did not indicate their location. They reported a range of experience levels, company structures, and company sizes. See Appendix B for more detailed demographic information about the questionnaire respondents.

4.3.2.2 Domain Analysis Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they are flexible and versatile and have “been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant” (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955). The interviews followed an interview guide, developed according to the five-phase process outlined in Kallio et al. (2016) and including elements adapted from existing questionnaires (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; He, 2020; He & Zhang, 2010). The interview guide is presented in Appendix C. All interviews were conducted in January 2023. Due to COVID restrictions, each interview was conducted virtually via *Zoom* or *Tencent Meeting*. Eight interviews were one-on-one, while two were in groups due to scheduling constraints. The reason why only 14 interviews were conducted was because it was found they provided enough data to achieve *theoretical saturation* (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), a concept usually associated with grounded theory but useful for the purposes of this analysis. Theoretical saturation is “when responses given in later stages of the interviewing process yield confirmation of earlier findings, but nothing significant or

new” (Bryant, 2014, p. 131). They were conducted in English and lasted, on average, 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed via *Describe* software, and then manually corrected. Transcription and initial coding happened immediately after the interviews so that when new themes emerged, they could be explored more extensively in subsequent interviews.

The goal of the interviews was to gauge support for the LCCs derived from the literature and identify any new competencies that might emerge. As such, the questions focused on the interviewees’ perceptions of their home culture and identity, general cultural knowledge, the influence of corporate cultures and subcultures, communicative functions and genres necessary for successful professional communication. The interview data was examined inductively with the aid of *MAXQDA* in a *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017), using coding to identify patterns that could be organized thematically. Some patterns reflected support for existing LCCs derived from the literature. However, other patterns revealed new LCCs. These were developed into a descriptor and integrated into the existing list of descriptors. From the interview analysis, I identified four new competencies (#2, #15, #16, and #17, discussed in Chapter 5). Additionally, I conducted member checking by showing the competency descriptors that emerged from the interviews to the relevant interviewees, who expressed agreement with them. These four competencies were added to the list of LCCs.

4.3.2.3 Domain Analysis Questionnaire

Next, it was essential to gather the perspectives of a larger and more varied sample. As mentioned, I developed a questionnaire based on the 19 LCC descriptors. Specifically, a 5-point Likert scale question was written for each competency to elicit its perceived importance (1 = not at all important, 5 = extremely important). As most respondents would be Chinese, it was essential to translate the questions into Chinese to ensure clarity. An initial translation was done through

Google Translate, and then two groups of external reviewers checked the translation for accuracy, making adjustments (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010; Wagner, 2015). The questions were piloted on a small group of participants ($n = 7$) and modified to improve clarity. Once adjustments to both the questions and the translations were made, the final questionnaire was sent out via the *SurveyMonkey*® platform using snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), in which participants and connections were encouraged to send the questionnaire to more potential participants. *SurveyMonkey*® was selected after testing several platforms because it functioned seamlessly both outside and inside the Chinese mainland. Links to the platform were disseminated via *WeChat*, email, *WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, and *LinkedIn*. For the questionnaire items, see Appendix D. Responses to the questionnaire were collected between February 13th and March 14th, 2023.

4.3.2.4 Finalizing the Descriptors

With the questionnaire results analyzed, the finalized list of descriptors was determined by three criteria. First, the competency in question appeared in at least three articles in the research literature that the LCC framework was based on, representing a triangulated basis of support. Second, the competency was indicated in a validated instrument such as the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Culture (FREPA) (Candelier et al., 2012) or the Common European Framework Reference Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) (Council of Europe, 2018). Specifically, “indicated in” means that the FREPA or CEFR-CV included principles supporting the descriptors in the LCC framework. Third, the competency had to be corroborated by the interview and questionnaire results. The new competencies uncovered in the interviews were adopted if they were present in more than one interview, were corroborated by the questionnaire results, and received member-checking validation. An additional LCC (#3) was added to the list afterward, as it was present in the literature, interviews, and instruments but had not yet been

included in the questionnaire. Ultimately, 20 LCC descriptors were adopted. With the descriptors finalized, it was time to analyze the source material: *Market Leader Intermediate 3rd Edition Extra* (Cotton et al., 2010).

4.3.3 Stage 3: Analyzing a BE Textbook for LCC-building Opportunities

The main goal of this stage was to determine if opportunities for developing the 20 LCCs were present in *Market Leader* and how those opportunities might enable learners to develop their linguacultural competence.

4.3.3.1 Materials Selection

Market Leader was selected for analysis in this study because 1) it is a popular global textbook, defined as “English coursebooks developed by international publishers, such as Cambridge University Press, Pearson, and MacMillan, for use in a range of contexts, such as state schools, private language schools, and universities around the world” (Norton & Buchanan, 2022, p. 50; Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015); 2) this textbook is used extensively in China because it was “endorsed as ‘National Planning Materials’ by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which guarantees [its] wide use in China” (Si, 2020, p. 158); 3) it is, in large part, designed for job-experienced, internationally operating business professionals, a population of BE learners that has been researched far less often than pre-experienced university BE students (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025; Rose et al., 2021); 4) it scored by far the highest for transcultural, translingual, and global content in an analysis of several global textbooks (Rose & Galloway, 2019), making it a strong candidate for linguacultural inquiry, adaptation, and supplementation; and 5) per my experience as a BE curriculum developer and supervisor at Wall Street English in mainland China, it was the primary textbook used across the organization’s 70+ centers to teach BE to adult professional students. My extensive experience with the textbook gives me intimate knowledge of how it can be applied to

the classroom. The intermediate level (i.e., for learners at CEFR levels B1 to B2) was chosen because learners at this level typically have high enough English proficiency to understand, develop, and express aspects of linguaculture but have not yet had sufficient opportunity to do so (Camerer & Mader, 2012).

4.3.3.2 Textbook Analysis and Evaluation

A mixed methods criterion-based content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 2004; Tomlinson, 2013b; Xiong & Hu, 2022) was adopted. This study's objective analysis was a quantitative, full-text examination based on the finalized list of LCC "can do" descriptors. Its subjective evaluation consisted in an in-depth, qualitative scrutiny of a single unit (Unit 3) according to the LCCs. This phase of the investigation aimed to determine to what extent the linguacultural competencies were present and how that presence might support the development of learners' linguacultural competence. Conversely, the absence of these competencies pinpoints areas where *Market Leader* could have done more to enhance learners' linguacultural competence.

Market Leader consists of 12 regular units and four "Working Across Cultures" units. The "Working Across Cultures" units were excluded from the analysis because they were structured differently from the regular units, allowing no meaningful comparisons with the units. The revision sections were also excluded to avoid redundant activities. Included activities were coded against each of the 20 LCC descriptors. If it addressed a particular LCC, it was coded as "opportunity present" for developing the competency. Each activity was also coded to determine the distribution of transactional and interpersonal genres (Competencies 19 and 20). To ensure coding reliability, I engaged in an intracoder exercise, coding the entire textbook twice at a 3-month interval. Cohen's kappa coefficient was .903, indicating near-perfect agreement. An intercoder agreement exercise was also conducted. A doctoral student with relevant expertise served as a second coder. After

several rounds of training, the second coder independently coded a unit of *Market Leader*, and the kappa coefficient was .936, indicating an excellent level of agreement between the two coders.

Based on the results of the quantitative full-text analysis described above, Unit 3 of *Market Leader*, entitled “Change,” was chosen for a more in-depth evaluation because it had a relatively high percentage of linguacultural building opportunities overall but was not specifically focused on culture. Hence, it could provide a good illustration of how opportunities manifest in a more general context. For this evaluation, all previously coded linguacultural competency-building opportunities in the unit were revisited. However, this time, the focus of the scrutiny was on how, in the context of a specific activity, the presence of an opportunity to develop an LCC might enhance professionals’ competence in BE communication. Competencies that were not present were also considered according to how their absence might hinder, or at least detract from, professionals’ linguacultural competence development.

4.3.3.3 Determining Target LCCs for Adaptation

As this investigation proceeded toward the teaching intervention, it was determined that working to develop all 20 linguacultural competencies was too expansive a goal, given the constraints of time (the limited amounts of participants’ free time), researcher capacity (my ability to develop adaptations and assessments targeting the competencies), and students’ cognitive load (new concepts would take time to absorb and should be limited to allow for mastery). Accordingly, it was decided that two competencies that were important but lacking in the existing textbook should be targeted for development. The following is a brief overview of the two competencies selected for this study’s teaching intervention (i.e., underpinning the adaptations and assessed in the teaching intervention).

The first is Competency 15: *Professionals recognize and can express the enormous cultural diversity within their home culture*. There were no instances of this competency being developed in Unit 3 (or any unit of *Market Leader*), a finding that will be reported more in-depth in Chapter 5. Home cultural understanding is crucial because it is the foundation of understanding other linguacultures (Hu & McKay, 2014). Further, as mentioned, research has shown that Chinese learners struggle to express their home culture in English (Cong, 2000; Du, 2021; Peltonen & Ning, 2025). Therefore, the absence of this competency represents a crucial deficiency in the textbook overall and Unit 3 in particular.

The second is Competency 16: *Professionals understand religion in terms of holiday schedule, food, and beliefs and interact accordingly*. As with Competency 15, there were no mentions of religion in *Market Leader*, yet the topic arose repeatedly in the interviews with the domain analysis participants, especially the Chinese professionals working in the Middle East. Though it can be a sensitive topic, a nuanced understanding of religion, the parameters of what aspects can be discussed, and how it affects business communication is crucial (Brown & Nanguy, 2021; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Peltonen & Hu, 2024).

Having identified the two competencies to be developed and assessed for the teaching intervention, the next step was to adapt the materials.

4.3.4 Stage 4: Adaptations and Developing Two Parallel Curricula

Theoretical and practical support for the adaptations was based on an extensive literature review, which informed the creation of a “decision-making tree,” shown in Figure 4.2. The tree is arranged into three tiers, moving from general to specific: 1) Topline approach, 2) adaptation strategies, and 3) classroom-level adaptations. In terms of the topline approach, the adaptation of *Market Leader* Unit 3 was intended to address specific proficiency (Nunan, 1986) because the focus was on

developing the two target LCCs for BELF communication (as opposed to aspects of general English). At the strategic level, the goal was to include adaptations from all four options: personalizing, localizing, modernizing, and glocalizing (Madsen & Bowen, 1978; McGrath, 2013; Rai & Deng, 2016; Tomlinson, 2012; Wright, 2025) to facilitate LCC development. Specific classroom-level adaptations were implemented on a case-by-case basis. Every adaptation followed this process, which is described in detail, with rationale, in Appendix E. In executing the adaptations, I also endeavored to adhere to the best practices outlined in Evans (1962): 1) The majority of the source materials were retained; 2) The adapted version retained the same structure as the source material; 3) The length (as determined by word count) was similar.

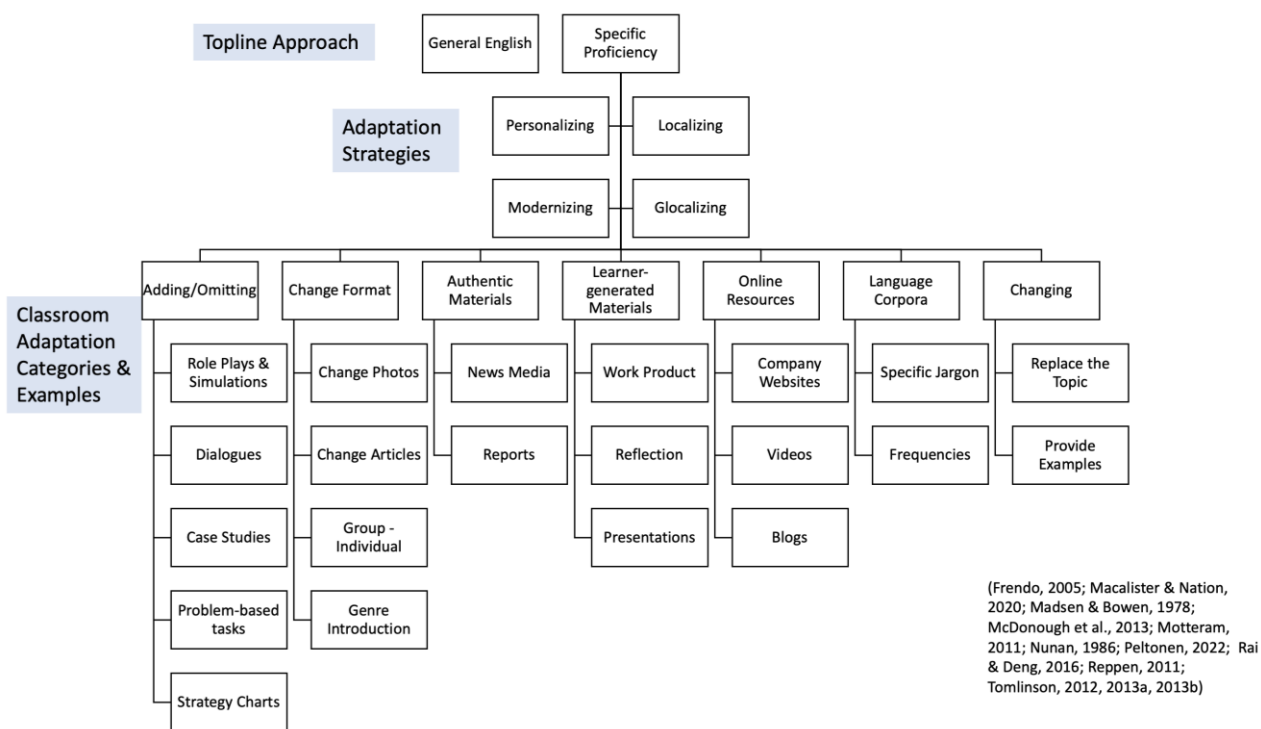


Figure 4.2 The adaptation decision-making tree

Unit 3 of *Market Leader* is divided into six sections: 1) *Starting Up*; 2) *Vocabulary: Describing Change*; 3) *Reading: Mercedes, shining star*; 4) *Language Review: Past Simple and Present*

Perfect; 5) *Skills: Managing Meetings*; and 6) *Case Study: Acquiring Asia Entertainment*. Additionally, I attached the textbook's *Working Across Cultures* section about international meetings to the control group's materials to ensure that they also had cultural content, enabling a valid comparison to the adapted version. Adaptations were made to four of the seven sections of the unit. Sections focusing on form (*Vocabulary, Language Review*) were not changed. One version of the *Case Study* was not changed either, as it was the basis of an email assessment for both groups. However, a parallel version was created to counter-balance the case study assignments completed pre- or post-intervention to avoid the practice effect. Minor changes were made to the *Starting Up* section to prompt responses about being exposed to different cultures. The text of the *Reading* section was changed, replacing the article about Mercedes with one about a fictional Chinese multinational that revolutionized its cultural training to improve the communication and, therefore, the performance of the staff. The *Managing Meetings* section was changed from a dialogue about a company's smoking policy to one about changing the holiday policy to meet the needs of people of different faiths. The *Working Across Cultures* section was adapted from the topic of how different cultures conceptualize meetings to the importance of being able to express one's home culture when functioning in business internationally.

Adaptations were of different sizes, ranging from a single sentence to entire passages. For an objective metric, the *Market Leader* source material was 5,602 words, while the adapted materials were 5,541 words, retaining 52% of the original words (or an adaptation of 48% of the material). However, this metric likely over-represents the extent of adaptation, as the word count of some passages that replaced the source material's passages comprised a large proportion of words changed (e.g., the articles and dialogues contained many words as compared to other exercises).

See Figure 4.3 for a visual comparison of the control and experimental group’s content. Adapted sections are in yellow.

Control Group	Experimental Group
Module 1: Pre-course	
Pre-course assessments: Questionnaire and Case Study Email Assignment	
Module 2: Main course	
Starting Up + Self-Reflection (SR) 1	
Vocabulary: Describing Change	
Reading: Mercedes makes changes	*Reading: ZhongTech Makes Changes
Language Review: Past Simple and Present Perfect	
Skills: Managing Meetings: Smoking policy	*Skills: Managing Meetings: Holiday policy
Culture: International Meetings + SR 2	*Culture: Expressing the home culture + SR 2
Module 3: Post-Course	
Post-course Assessments: Case Study Email Assignment and Questionnaire	
*Adapted sections	

Figure 4.3 Adaptation overview

With the adaptations in place, the materials were ready for a pilot intervention study. However, assessment instruments had to be developed and validated first. We now turn to that process.

4.3.5 Stage 5: Developing an Assessment Plan

As developing LCCs is a complex endeavor, utilizing a sophisticated battery of assessments is the most appropriate strategy for determining competence. According to Rogers and Revesz (2020), “[w]hile single outcome measures are more practical to administer, the use of multiple outcome measures, if carefully selected, are likely to provide a fuller picture of second language development” (p. 136). Therefore, three novel instruments were developed to assess the participants’ performance: a self-report questionnaire, a multiple-choice test (MCQ), and an email performance assessment scored according to a newly designed LCC-based rubric. The questionnaire provides self-ratings, which “typically require the respondents to rate their own

abilities, interest levels, motivations, and so forth” (Brown, 2001, p. 34). In this case, the students rated their perceived understanding of, ability in, and attitudes toward different LCCs. However, self-rating instruments have sometimes been criticized for eliciting inaccurate self-assessments or bias (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, the questionnaire was complemented by the email performance assessment, which provided an opportunity for students to apply their LCCs in authentic business communication (Kuo, 2007). Performance assessments “assess learning targets that require students to apply their knowledge and skills as they perform something (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014, p. 202). Email was selected as the means of communication, as it remains the most-used communicative method in business communication (Chan, 2023; Du, 2021; Evans, 2010, 2011, 2012). Performance tasks are best scored through rubrics (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014), so the development and validation of the LCC rubric will be discussed. A third assessment instrument, the MCQ test, was also developed, piloted, and used in the main study to directly assess improvements in participants’ LCC knowledge. Though the development and validation of the MCQ test are reported here, it was ultimately deemed invalid, and the data collected with it was removed from the main study. Possible explanations as to why the MCQ test was valid in the pilot study but not in the main study will be discussed in Chapter 6. The effects of its invalidity will also be discussed. The assessments were completed both pre- and post-intervention to determine the effects of the teaching intervention. See Figure 4.4 for a summary of the assessment plan. Further description of the individual instruments is in Section 4.5.3.

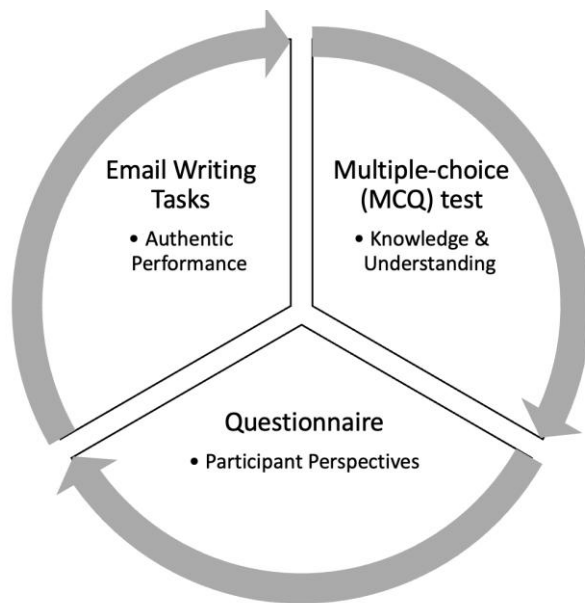


Figure 4.4 This study's assessment plan

4.3.6 Stage 6: Pilot Intervention

Once the materials adapted and the instruments were in place, a pilot intervention was conducted. Nine participants were recruited via volunteer/convenience and snowball sampling (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Noy, 2008). The participants, all female, were assigned to control ($n = 5$) and experimental ($n = 4$) groups by the order in which they contacted me. Originally, 10 were recruited, but one did not complete the course, alerting me to the issue of attrition, which would have to be considered when I recruited participants for the main study. Participants included working professionals, undergraduate and postgraduate students from mainland China and the Hong Kong SAR (see Appendix F for detailed demographic information). This eclectic mixture offered a range of perspectives, experience, and competence levels. All participants signed informed consent.

The teaching intervention was one-on-one, online, self-paced, and asynchronous to accommodate busy adults with demanding schedules. As was described in Section 4.4.4, the control group was exposed to *Market Leader's* Unit 3, while the experimental group was exposed to an adapted version of the same unit. The course was divided into three modules: Module 1

comprised the pre-intervention assessments. Unlike the main study, there were four assessments: the questionnaire, the email task, the MCQ test, and a presentation assignment. Module 2 was the main course (textbook exercises and self-reflections). Module 3 consisted of the post-intervention assessments, which were an exact repetition of the pre-intervention assessments. Students completed the modules in the specified order and were only given a new module after they had completed the previous module. They were also provided short videos and *PowerPoint* presentations that added context and explanations of each section’s topics.

For data analysis, the scores from the assessments were compared pre- and post-intervention. As the sample size precluded inferential statistical analysis, the mean score of each assessment was calculated and compared. Table 4.1 is an overview of the pilot study results, presented as support for changes to be made for the main study. See Appendix G for each student’s raw scores.

Table 4.1 Assessment scores

Questionnaire	Pre-intervention Score	Post-intervention Score	Difference
Control	3.82	4.04	0.22
Experimental	3.89	4.10	0.21
Email task	Pre-intervention Score	Post-intervention Score	Difference
Control	2.43	2.95	0.52
Experimental	2.85	3.22	0.37
Presentation	Pre-intervention Score	Post-intervention Score	Difference
Control	2.99	3.61	0.62
Experimental	2.93	3.38	0.45
MCQ Test	Pre-intervention Score	Post-intervention Score	Difference
Control	9.00	8.20	-0.80
Experimental	7.75	8.75	1.00

The questionnaire results showed similar improvement for both groups, and every student improved except for one. Both groups exhibited improvement in the email assessment, though the control group outperformed the experimental group. Every student’s email score improved except for one (pseudonym Alisa), who declined to complete the second email, as she believed that, even after taking the course, she would not change any aspect of her answer to the case study

assignment. The students who did not improve had an outsized effect on the group's overall scores due to the small sample size. Further, the email score differences must be considered carefully because the experimental group's pre-intervention score was almost half a point higher than the control group's score, suggesting a possible ceiling effect (Ho & Yu, 2015) in which their ability to improve from already high scores would be limited. Regarding the presentation, both groups' scores improved, but this improvement had to be considered with skepticism for two reasons. The first reason was that participants expressed hesitation about creating two presentations that were similar (just changing the city). In fact, two participants refused to complete the second presentation. The second issue was that perhaps the similarity of the pre- and post-intervention presentations caused a practice effect (Rogers & Revesz, 2020), in which case the observed score improvement was due more to practice than to LCC development. Finally, the scores of the MCQ test were inconsistent. Individual students' scores varied widely: Some improved, whereas others went down. Additionally, while the experimental group's MCQ scores improved, the control group's scores went down, an indication that the MCQ did not function as intended.

As mentioned, the results of the pilot study are discussed in this section to provide context for the lessons learned and implications for the main study. These implications are as follows. First, the results of the pilot study highlight the importance of adequate sample size (at least 30 participants per group) to enable inferential statistical analysis and account for potential outliers such as those whose email scores did not improve, which had an outsized effect on the pilot group's overall scores. Second, the email task and questionnaire cannot be identical pre-and post-intervention. The questionnaire items' order should be rearranged, and the email task must be revised so that there are two similar (but not identical) versions. This adjustment would control for the practice effect by requiring a new email and would preclude situations such as Alisa opting not

to revise her first email. Third, the instructional materials for the control and experimental groups should be more divergent to achieve more differentiated results. The materials used in the pilot study retained a degree of similarity because my concern was that if the two curricula were too different there could not be a fair comparison. However, the similarity in the results of the two treatment conditions shows the need for treatments that better parse out the target LCCs. Accordingly, in ensuing adaptations, I made changes to the first self-reflection question and endeavored to highlight linguacultural strategies in the experimental materials. Fourth, it is possible that the two groups' scores were similar because "the pretest may sensitize participants to the focus of the experiment, and this, in turn, may influence the results" (Rogers & Revesz, 2020, p. 136). In other words, the content of the pre-tests might have primed the students in both groups to focus on linguacultural issues. Therefore, to follow best practices, pretesting should take place at least one week before students enter the main body of the course to minimize such sensitization or priming. Fifth, the inconsistent scores from the MCQ test prompted me to redevelop and revalidate it, as will be described in Section 4.5.3. Finally, I decided to eliminate the presentation assignment completely because participants seemed hesitant to create two presentations that were labor intensive and repetitive, besides the aforementioned concerns about the practice effect. Instead, I added two post-intervention reflective questions to understand how participants would address issues related to home culture and religion after completing the course. With these lessons learned and adjustments made after the pilot study, I proceeded to the main study.

4.4 The Intervention Phase: Convergent Core Design

The purpose of this phase was to implement specific classroom interventions and monitor their reception, execution, and efficacy. The intervention phase adopted a convergent core design in

which “qualitative and quantitative methods are used to measure overlapping, but distinct, facets of the phenomenon under investigation.” Results from one method type are intended to “enhance, illustrate, or clarify results from the other” (Caracelli & Greene, 1993, p. 196). In the convergent design constituted by the quantitative and qualitative strands of the intervention phase, the students were exposed to control and experimental instructional conditions and assessed pre- and post-intervention. Qualitative data in the form of during-course self-reflections and post-intervention reflective questions were collected.

4.4.1 Participants and Recruiting

The intervention phase started on April 9, 2024, when I began recruiting students. This phase culminated on September 28, 2024, when the 68th student completed the course. On August 4th, 2024, I stopped recruiting students, as I had calculated that I would meet my goal of at least 30 students in each group finishing the course. To recruit the 60+ participants, I conducted 166 interviews between April 12 and August 4, 2024 (not all interviewees joined the course). Further, some participants who joined the course did not complete it. See Table 4.2 for the recruitment, completion, and attrition statistics.

Table 4.2 Recruitment, joining, completing, and attrition

Action	Interviewed	Signed Forms	Finished Module 1	Finished Module 2	Finished the course (Module 3)
Total	166	135	80	71	68

Participants were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups, as this is the best way to arrive at equivalent groups at the beginning of a study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Rogers and Revesz (2020) concur, stating that “[r]andomized experimental designs are considered the gold standard for research investigating causal relationships” (p. 140). Conversely, a lack of random assignment may allow confounding variables to affect the study’s internal validity. The

random assignment was executed using www.randomizer.org (Urbaniak & Plous, 2023). Four groups were randomly formed: two for the experimental condition and two for the control condition. There were two groups for each condition so that some of the assessment tasks could be counterbalanced for the pre- and post-intervention measures to avoid possible practice effects. If a participant completed the *Market Leader* case study pre-intervention, they completed the adapted case study post-intervention, and vice-versa.

Participants were considered to have entered the course when they finished Module 1. A total of 48% of those I interviewed joined the course, and 85% of those who entered the course completed it, representing a 15% attrition rate. For perspective, this attrition rate was far lower than rates reported in systematic reviews of trials, which ranged from 20% to 30% (Flick, 1988). Further, 96% of the participants who finished Module 2 completed the course, illustrating that, once committed to the course, most completed it. For participants who entered the course but did not finish ($n = 12$), reasons included being too busy with work ($n = 3$) and finding the course too difficult or outside of their expectations ($n = 2$). Other students simply discontinued with no explanation ($n = 7$). Of the 12 who did not complete the course, 7 were from the control group and 5 were from the experimental group, which suggests random attrition rather than a systematic pattern of withdrawals from one of the treatment conditions. Examination of the demographics of those who withdrew did not uncover any discernable patterns of difference (see Appendix H). Further, independent samples t -tests comparing the pre-intervention questionnaire scores of those who completed the course ($M = 4.97, SD = 0.44$) and those who did not ($M = 4.98, SD = 0.50$) were nonsignificant, $t(78) = -.08, p = .497$. Similarly, independent samples t -tests comparing the raw pre-intervention email scores of those who completed the course ($M = 2.33, SD = 0.47$) and those who did not ($M = 2.37, SD = 0.48$) were nonsignificant $t(78) = -.299, p = .383$. Therefore, it

was concluded that 1) there did not appear to be any latent variables influencing attrition, and 2) those who withdrew from the course likely did so due to difficulty, workload, or motivation. None of these findings were deemed threats to the study's overall validity (Flick, 1988).

Finally, as mentioned above, a total of 68 participants completed the business English course. There were 36 in the control group and 32 in the experimental group. Subjects were drawn from the pool of available and interested professionals via volunteer/convenience sampling (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) as well as snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). I sent *WeChat* messages to ex-students, ex-colleagues, and friends. I also posted on my *WeChat* "friends circle" and in chat groups with ex-colleagues. Finally, the PolyU Department of English and Communication sent an email to alumni inviting participants. The 68 participants reported 55 different job descriptions and functioned in 22 industries. All of them were Chinese L1 speakers except for one Russian L1 speaker. The random assignment described above created fairly equivalent groups in terms of gender, geographic background, workplace interlocutors, job or study status, and job experience. See Table 4.3 for detailed demographic information.

The course was open to multiple industries, experience levels, and backgrounds because LCC is required by business professionals across all industries. In other words, developing LCC is not an industry-specific endeavor. Furthermore, including a broad range of participants would enable me to demonstrate that the LCC framework, descriptors, and intervention are effective across contexts and are therefore broadly implementable. On a practical level, participant recruitment was difficult, as they had to commit to several hours of study. Therefore, I needed to be able to gather a wide range of participants to reach my target of at least 60 participants.

Table 4.3 Main study participant demographics

Characteristic	Control Group		Experimental Group		Full Sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender						
Female	27	75	28	88	55	81
Male	9	25	4	12	13	19
Born in:						
Mainland China	34	94	30	94	64	94
Hong Kong SAR	1	3	2	6	3	5
Other (Russia)	1	3	0	0	1	1
Most Interactions with:						
Native Speakers	11	31	11	34	22	32
Non-Native Speakers	25	69	21	66	46	68
Working Experience						
0 (Have not started)	2	6	1	3	3	4
1-5 years	7	19	9	28	16	24
6-10	13	36	10	31	23	34
11-15	8	22	7	22	15	22
16-20	4	11	4	13	8	12
21+	2	6	1	3	3	4
Study/Employment Status						
Student Only	3	8	2	6	5	7
Working Full-Time	26	72	24	75	50	74
Working Part-Time	5	14	4	13	9	13
Other	2	6	2	6	4	6

As mentioned, before allowing participants into the course, I conducted 166 brief, informal, 15-minute interviews with every prospective participant. The interviews served four purposes: First, they allowed me to meet the students and learn about their backgrounds. Second, I could ascertain their reasons for joining the course and gauge their interest. Third, I could describe the course and the estimated time commitment (at least 10 hours), and set expectations for its online, asynchronous, and autonomous structure. Fourth, I used the CEFR's *Qualitative features of spoken language* descriptors to ascertain potential participants' language levels, a competency I developed as a result of my 8 years of EFL teaching in mainland China, during which one of my main responsibilities as a foreign teacher was to establish students' language levels before and during study. The interviews were conducted on *WeChat* video for convenience, though 5 potential

participants preferred different platforms: *Zoom* (2), *WhatsApp* (2), and *Tencent Meeting* (1). Based on these pre-intervention interviews, participants' speaking levels ranged from CEFR A2 to C1. As mentioned, the target level was at least a CEFR B1. Students at the A2 level were invited to enter the course if they showed strong interest and motivation. Before beginning the course, students had to sign two forms, which can be seen in Appendix A: One was a consent form ensuring data privacy and acknowledging their rights as participants according to PolyU's IRB requirements. The second form was an expectations form that outlined my expectations in terms of effort, practices, and timing. Once students signed and returned the consent and expectations forms, I randomly assigned them to groups.

4.4.2 Course Design and Description

As with the pilot study, the course in the main study was online, one-on-one, self-paced, and asynchronous. The online format enabled me to draw participants from different backgrounds who were physically all over the world with a wide range of backgrounds (Lucas & Vicente, 2023). While the one-on-one arrangement was disadvantageous in that it precluded peer-to-peer interactions, it had the advantage of eliminating variables that might arise from different group and student interactions because a "potential threat to the validity of this design is that participants in the control and experimental groups may communicate about the study outside the experiment, which might also contaminate the findings" (Rogers & Revesz, 2020, p. 136). The course was self-paced and asynchronous to accommodate the wide variety of schedules and availability of these participants, most of whom worked full-time in addition to holding personal and family responsibilities. Though participants might work on the course at different times and in different places, the instruction in the treatment conditions remained consistent.

Each section of the course was treated as a mini-lesson (see Appendix I for the syllabus). Short videos accompanied the materials in each section, adding context and further explanation. Links to the course materials and videos are provided in Appendix J. The video mini-lessons followed the approaches and best practices outlined in the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2018). The rationale for following CELTA's practices is that they are highly structured, research-based, and widespread, as the CELTA is one of the most popular ELT certificates in the world (Dewey & Patsko, 2018; Scrivener, 2011). Therefore, the CELTA approach to teaching may be familiar to the population of learners in this study. Relatedly, the focus of this study is materials adaptation rather than classroom approach: The idea is that with novel concepts presented in the materials, the classroom approach should be held constant and follow established practices so as to parse out the effects of the materials adaptations and eliminate variables that might arise from unconventional or innovative teaching approaches. The *Starting Up*, *Vocabulary*, and *Language Review* sections followed the Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) approach in which learners are first exposed to the language they need to know, then they practice it in a controlled exercise and are finally asked to use the language freely (Harmer, 2001; Scrivener, 2011). The *Reading*, *Managing Meetings*, and *Culture* sections employed the Receptive Skills approach in which the context is established before exposure to the text (to activate the schema) followed by reading/listening for gist, and then a post-text discussion of participants' personal responses to the text (Harmer, 2001; Scrivener, 2011). The *Case Study* section employed the Productive Skills approach in which the teacher sets the context, the learners read about the problem while focusing on specific issues in the task to prepare and then respond (Harmer, 2001; Scrivener, 2011).

In further attempts to control variables, the presentation of the materials, supporting *PowerPoints*, and pre-recorded videos were kept as similar as possible, with only relevant sections adjusted, eliminating confounding variables that might arise from different presentations to different students (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). Relatedly, students could only move on to a subsequent module after finishing the previous module, so that concepts later in the course did not influence students' performance in earlier sections of the course. Also, the materials were placed in almost identical documents so that any identifiers were removed to eliminate potential bias such as participants assuming the control group's textbook materials were superior to the adapted version or vice versa (Thom & Lorena, 2015). Finally, as discussed, adaptations were made to 48% of the words to ensure that the two curricula were different but still comparable in scope.

4.4.3 Instruments

The instruments were developed and validated according to an adapted version of the argument-based validation (ABV) framework for English for professional purposes (Knoch & Macqueen, 2020), which includes the domain description, explanation, and evaluation inferences. (See Table 4.4). The domain description inference was addressed during the domain analysis via the identification of the LCC descriptors derived from the research literature and double-checked with business professionals through interviews and a survey. The explanation and evaluation inferences will be discussed below.

Table 4.4 The adapted ABV framework

Inference	Claim
Domain Description Inference	The selection, design, and delivery of the tests and test tasks address the relevant target language use domain.
Explanation Inference	Expected scores are attributed to the defined construct.
Evaluation Inference	Observations are evaluated using instruments that result in observed scores with intended characteristics.

4.4.3.1 The Questionnaire

Addressing the *explanation inference*, a questionnaire-based assessment was developed to focus on the two selected LCCs, with items adapted from existing instruments such as the FREPA (Candelier et al., 2012), the CQS (Ang et al., 2007), and the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe, 2018). Importantly, as was described in Chapter 2, linguacultural competence includes the components of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021; Candelier et al., 2012; Council of Europe, 2001; Hu & McKay, 2014; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). All three components were operationalized in the questionnaire-based assessment to ensure that participants were being measured for their competencies in a granular way.

A pool of 49 items was created addressing the home culture ($n = 25$) and religion ($n = 24$) LCCs. The questionnaire items were assessed on a Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The scale had six points to avoid a middle option that might appear neutral (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010). Experienced research professionals with relevant backgrounds provided input during its iterative development, further supporting content validity. An important piece of feedback was to differentiate the components of each competency more precisely into knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. The 49 questionnaire items were piloted on a pool of 271 participants, mostly undergraduate university students who were preparing to enter workplaces in which they would use English. The sample was deemed appropriate for the questionnaire pilot as their self-reported data would be used to ascertain the ratings of the items and underlying constructs rather than comparing this sample’s scores to the scores of other samples. That said, it would also be crucial to re-validate the questionnaire after the main study participants completed it (Zhang & Aryadoust, 2022). The results of the re-validation will be provided in Chapter 5. See Appendix K for demographic information about the respondents.

For the *evaluation inference*, a principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 24 items pertaining to religion with oblique rotation (direct oblimin), which assumes a relationship between the items. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy of the analysis (KMO = .886), which is “meritorious” according to Kaiser and Rice (1974). All Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for individual items were greater than 0.846, well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. I targeted items that had eigenvalues over the criterion of .512. The .512 benchmark was adopted because it is for sample sizes of over 100 but fewer than 300 (Field, 2018; Stevens, 2002). After removing items that were below the .512 threshold, I re-ran the analysis, finding four components, though one was empty. I re-ran the analysis after eliminating more items that were below the threshold and those items that did not target the same construct as others in the component (e.g., knowledge items in the attitudes component). Finally, three components were extracted, explaining 66.052% of the variance. Component one was religion skills/strategies. Component two was religion knowledge. Component three was religion attitudes. Ultimately, thirteen items were removed, eleven were retained, and at least three targeted each of the three components (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010). Cronbach’s alpha for the 11 retained religion items was .87, indicating highly reliable items.

The same process was followed for the home culture items. The KMO was .902, “marvelous” according to Kaiser and Rice (1974), and the MSA values for individual items were greater than 0.822, which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The three components explained 60.991% of the variance. After removing items below the .512 threshold and those that did not address the same construct as those clustered in their component, three components were extracted, clustering the same way as the religion items: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes.

Ultimately, nine items were removed, and 15 were retained. The items in the home culture scale were also highly reliable. Cronbach's alpha for the 15 home culture items was .89.

It should be noted that it was unexpected that skills and strategies would cluster together. My original intention in writing the items was to have four components, with skills and strategies being separate. They were not differentiated in the responses perhaps because strategies were thought of as approaches, while skills were seen as actions or abilities based on those approaches. Importantly, this finding about skills and strategies margining into one component matched the FREPA's structure of competencies, offering evidence of the concurrent validity of the construct. Overall, the evidence supported the validity of the home culture and religion scales and differentiated between knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes.

The final version of the questionnaire-based assessment consisted of 26 Likert scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree), with 15 items forming the home culture subscale and 11 items constituting the religion subscale. The items assessed knowledge ($n = 9$), skills/strategies ($n = 11$), and attitudes ($n = 6$) regarding the two LCCs (home culture and religion). See Appendix L for the questionnaire items.

4.4.3.2 The Analytic Rubric

Addressing the *explanation inference*, a performance assessment – an email task in this case – was designed to mimic real-world tasks. To score the emails, a new analytic rubric was developed as an amalgamation of existing rubrics (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Stevens & Levi, 2005), guidance and criteria (Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2019; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). An analytic rubric was selected because “it provides ... much more detail about [assessee's] strengths and weaknesses” (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014, p. 222). Another rationale for developing an analytic rubric was that it would provide numeric scores that could be compared pre- and post-intervention.

The analytic rubric was divided into the components of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes so that it mirrored the component structure that arose from the questionnaire-based assessment's PCA, matched the FREPA's construct, and aligned with well-established intercultural understandings (Byram, 2021), in further support of the explanation inference. Each component scale could be scored from 1 to 5, with a maximum score of 15.

For the *evaluation inference*, concurrent validity was established during a pilot study. Emails ($n = 20$) scored with the LCC rubric were also scored with a validated instrument, the CEFR's *Facilitating Pluricultural Space* scale (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 216-217). Pearson's correlation between the LCC scores and the CEFR scores was strong (Schober et al., 2018) and statistically significant: $r(18) = .829, p < .001$. This statistic indicates that the two rubrics evaluate similar but not identical aspects of the expression of cultural competence, which is the ideal result. Further, interrater reliability was established between me and an additional rater, a newly graduated ELT master's degree student. Pearson's r revealed a moderately strong correlation (Schober et al., 2018) that was statistically significant, $r(43) = .712, p < .001$. These results provide evidence of the rubric's validity, though suggesting that the rubric might need more specification to garner more reliable results. Changes addressing this issue were made before the main study.

Further validation of the rubric was conducted after the main study data was collected. I coded each email and presentation according to the updated LCC rubric (see Appendix M for the rubric). As an intra-rater exercise, I rated each assignment a second time, three weeks after the first round of ratings, and conducted a Pearson's correlation to analyze the results. The correlation was statistically significant, $r(134) = .707, p < .001$, indicating a moderately strong correlation. To gather more evidence of the rubric's validity, I engaged two additional raters. The second rater, a recently graduated PhD student, scored 27 emails, resulting in a moderately strong correlation that

was statistically significant, $r(25) = .737, p < .001$. The third rater, a third-year PhD student, rated 39 emails, and the ratings were strongly correlated with mine, $r(37) = .815, p < .001$. The main study's higher correlations than those obtained in the pilot study reflects the improvement of the rubric and, likely, the raters' growing proficiency with its use. These reliability indices ranging from .70 to .89 are considered "strong" (Schober et al., 2018, p. 1765).

4.4.3.3 The Multiple-Choice Question (MCQ) Test

Addressing the explanation inference, there were several reasons why a multiple-choice instrument should be included in the assessment battery. First, since it has been established that knowledge is one of the fundamental components of linguacultural competence in BELF (Camerer, 2014; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011), knowledge of the targeted LCCs must be assessed. While knowledge was also addressed in the questionnaire-based assessment, it was a self-report instrument and therefore an indirect assessment of the participants' (perceived) knowledge (Brown, 2001). An MCQ test would directly assess knowledge (Mader, 2011; Nitko & Brookhart, 2014). Critics argue that MCQ items can only indirectly assess educational outcomes because they do not require takers to "articulate explanations and give examples, to produce and express unique or original ideas" (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014, p. 123). However, proponents of MCQ assessments argue that well-written MCQ items are effective in directly assessing abilities to "apply information and knowledge in structured situations" (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014, p. 123). Espousing the latter perspective, the goal of this study's MCQ test was to assess students' pre-existing and newly learned knowledge. The pre- and post-intervention administration of the test would provide a structured comparison that could be statistically evaluated and integrated into the overall assessment plan (Belgrad, 2013; Nitko & Brookhart, 2014; Open Portfolio Project Team, 2016).

For the evaluation inference, I used *WINSTEPS* Version 5.7.1 (Linacre, 2005) to conduct Rasch

analysis on two iterations of the MCQ test that were piloted. According to the Rasch model, a student with a higher ability (linguacultural competence) has a greater probability of answering an item correctly. Conversely, a student with a lower ability has a lower probability of answering the same item correctly (Chow et al., 2020). Put another way, Rasch analysis determines how people measured by the same latent variables (e.g., home culture and religion knowledge) have a different probability of answering an item correctly. Analysis of the MCQ results focused on the key parameters of Rasch measurement: item and person reliability, data-to-model fit, unidimensionality, and local independence (Aryadoust et al., 2021; Bond & Fox, 2015).

The first version of the MCQ test was completed by 192 participants who were undergraduate and postgraduate students majoring in an array of disciplines that would require English in the workplace. The Rasch analysis found the test invalid, with unacceptably low person fit statistics according to the parameters outlined in Aryadoust et al. (2021). Therefore, I completely rewrote the MCQ test items to reflect different levels of difficulty, so that the test assessing the home culture and religion LCCs would better discern participants' competence levels. The second version of the MCQ test was piloted on 229 participants. These participants were undergraduates mostly studying business English, with a minority studying the teaching of Chinese to speakers of other languages. This was a completely different population than the first sample. The second iteration of the MCQ test had nine religion items and 10 home culture items. After removing misfitting persons ($n = 18$), all of the items were within the Rasch parameters (except for one item, which was removed). The second MCQ test's data better fitted the Rasch model. Though the person reliability was slightly below ideal parameters, after conferring with a subject expert in Rasch analysis, it was decided that the assessment was sensitive enough to differentiate ability

levels. Since it was deemed valid, this was the version used in the main study. For the data arising from the two Rasch analyses, see Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Rasch analysis results for the two versions of the MCQ test

Measure	Target Parameter	MCQ Test 1 (<i>n</i> = 192)		MCQ Test 2 (<i>n</i> = 229)	
		HC	Rel	HC	Rel
Item reliability	> .7	.92	.96	.99	.97
Person reliability	> .7	.20	.27	.34	.42
Item fit	0.5 - 1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5
Dimensionality	< 3	1.52	1.54	1.51	1.77
Local Independence	< .3	< .3	< .3	< .3	< .3

The validated and finalized version of the MCQ test had 18 items: Nine on the religion subscale, and nine on the home culture subscale. Each item had four possible answers (A-D). See Appendix N for the MCQ test items along with the correct answers.

4.4.4 Data Collection

Collected data included pre- and post-intervention assessment scores, self-reflections, emails, post-intervention reflective questions, and post-intervention interviews. Table 4.6 summarizes the collected data.

Table 4.6 Summary of the collected data

Data	#	Time of measurement	Rationale
Questionnaire results	x 2	Pre- and post-intervention	Quantitative self-report information
MCQ test scores	x 2	Pre- and post-intervention	Direct assessment of knowledge and understanding
Email assignments	x 2	Pre- and post-intervention	Performance task mimicking a real-life work task. Scored via rubric
Self-reflection	x 1	Mid-course Module 2	Gathering participant perspectives, impressions, and ideas
Post-course reflective questions	x 2	Post-intervention	Ascertaining students' LCC expression and perceptions qualitatively
Interviews	x 1	Post-intervention	Gathering participant perspectives, experiences, and motivations

The following sections detail how data was collected before, during, and after the teaching intervention.

4.4.4.1 Pre-intervention Data Collection

This study employed the pretest-posttest control group design (Rogers & Revesz, 2020) in which the “purpose of the pretest is to ensure the comparability of the two groups prior to the treatment, whereas the posttest allows researchers to determine the immediate effects of the treatment of the outcome variable(s)” (Rogers & Revesz, 2020, p. 135). The pre-test instruments included the questionnaire-based assessment and the MCQ test administered through *SurveyMonkey*, as well as the email assignment sent to participants in a *OneDrive* link via email, *WeChat*, or *WhatsApp*. The order of the questionnaire and MCQ items was different for the pre- and post-intervention versions to avoid familiarity or practice effects. All items were presented in English and Chinese to ensure clarity for the participants.

As briefly described in Section 4.3.4, the email task entailed two parallel forms of the case study administered before and after the intervention in a counterbalanced manner to avoid possible practice effects (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). The email assignments were based on the case study of *Market Leader's* Unit 3. The original case study considered an Australian media company merging with a media distributor based in Hong Kong. The adapted case study involved a French wine company merging with a distributor in Shanghai. In both cases, the merger resulted in cultural, managerial, and morale problems. Participants wrote 300-500-word emails responding to employees' complaints, which had been assembled by an HR professional and sent to company leaders. See the instructions for both versions of the assignment in Figure 4.5.

Assignment 1:

Please respond to the email from Jasmine Chou. Address the difficulties raised by brainstorming ideas and possible solutions. This email should be specific and have examples. The email should be at least 300-500 words.

Assignment 1:

Please respond to the email from Cindy Chow. Address the difficulties raised by brainstorming ideas and possible solutions. This email should be specific and have examples. The email should be at least 300-500 words.

Figure 4.5 Email assignment instructions

The email assignments were scored according to the LCC rubric to quantify evidence of the two target LCCs in the emails. Scores from the pre-test assessments were used as a baseline for comparison to the post-intervention assessments. Once students had completed the questionnaire-based assessment, the MCQ test, and the email task, I sent them a *OneDrive* link to the main course, Module 2.

4.4.4.2 During-Intervention Data Collection

Qualitative data collected during the course comprised the participants' self-reflections. The self-reflections were designed to provide deeper insight into the participants' perspectives, opinions, viewpoints, and attitudes. Further, they were intended to develop students' metacognition – to examine their own understandings of and ideas about linguacultural competence (Belgrad, 2013). The self-reflection task asked students about cultural issues at work raised in the *Expert Talk* section of the unit. Though the actual self-reflection question was the same for the control and experimental groups, the content of the *Expert Talk* was different. The control group's *Expert Talk* discussed international meetings, whereas the experimental group's *Expert Talk* illustrated the importance of being able to express one's home culture in business. Figure 4.6 presents the instructions for the self-reflection task. Another intention of this self-reflection task was to

ascertain if the two groups developed differentiated understanding of the home culture LCC or how religion might affect business communication.

Self-reflection: How important do you think the issues **covered in the Expert Talk** are in your business culture? *As a reminder, a self-reflection is an informal piece of writing that shares your thoughts and ideas about the situation. Try to be as specific as possible with examples, anecdotes, and personal stories. This self-reflection should be at least 300-400 words.*

Figure 4.6 The self-reflection assignment

4.4.4.3 Post-intervention Data Collection

The post-intervention assessments were given to determine the effects of the treatment on the control and experimental groups. Following best practices, these assessments were given immediately after the treatment phase of the experiment (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). As a reminder, the post-intervention assessments included the email task (using the version each student did not complete pre-intervention), the questionnaire-based assessment (with items arranged in a different order), the MCQ test (with items arranged in a different order). Further, two post-intervention reflective questions were included in Module 3, to be completed after all other assignments were completed. These questions were devised to address both target competencies: home cultural expression and religion. Answers to these questions would provide insight into participants' LCC development and would be analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis. See Figure 4.7 for the post-intervention questions.

Instructions

Please answer the following two questions. You can **CHOOSE** to answer them **IN WRITING** (100-300 words per answer) to practice your writing **OR IN A RECORDED VIDEO** (1-3 minutes per answer) to practice your speaking.

1. In Module 1, you presented a town or city that you know well. *Based on what you now know and have learned, how would you do it differently from the one you did in Module 1? What would you add, take out, or change?*
2. Imagine you are my boss. I have just told you that I need 10 days' leave to celebrate my religious holidays. This leave is not part of your company's public holiday arrangement. This leave would put a higher workload on you and the other employees. *How will you solve this situation? What would you do?* Please explain specifically, with details and examples.

Please answer the above questions in writing or in a video according to the instructions. Please be specific and provide examples.

Figure 4.7 Post-intervention question assignment

After all the assessment data was collected, I conducted post-intervention interviews. The interviewees ($n = 18$) were selected purposively to “identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 535). The inclusion criteria were 1) they had indicated in the post-intervention survey their willingness to be interviewed, 2) there was a mix of men ($n = 4$) and women ($n = 14$), 3) there was a mix of geographies represented (7 mainland Chinese cities and the Hong Kong SAR), and 4) both instructional conditions were represented (8 participants were from the control group, while 10 participants were from the experimental group).

The post-intervention interviews aimed to determine participants' reasons for joining and completing the course, evidence of developing the two target LCCs, and their perspectives on the course. They were conducted on the *Tencent Meeting* platform between November 5th and 20th, 2024. They lasted between 21 and 54 minutes and were recorded and transcribed using

TurboScribe for later analysis. One participant (#25) responded to the interview questions in writing due to scheduling constraints. The interviews followed an interview guide (Appendix O).

4.4.5 Quantitative Analysis of the Effects of the Intervention

The following sections describe the quantitative analysis of the assessment scores.

4.4.5.1 Analysis of the Questionnaire Scores

Re-establishing the questionnaire's validity was crucial because the population of the main study was quite different from the population of the pilot study (i.e., job-experienced professionals versus pre-experienced learners), and the sample was smaller ($n = 68$ versus $n = 229$). Therefore, using the *WINSTEPS* computer package (Version 5.7.1) (Linacre, 2005), I performed a Rasch analysis because it is sensitive to small sample sizes. The results offered strong evidence of validity, with results fitting all of the model parameters. Next, a series of 2-way mixed ANOVAs were run on the results using *SPSS* Version 29.0.1.0. The between-groups independent variable was instructional conditions (i.e., experimental and control treatments), and the within-subjects independent variable was time of measurement (i.e., pre- and post-intervention). For the questionnaire-based assessment, the analysis was conducted on the overall scores, the home culture scale scores, the religion scale scores, and the component scores for knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. The rationale for the different analyses was to establish both an overall perspective on the intervention and a more specific view of the different competency scales and competency components. For the email, the analysis was run on the overall fair scores. It should be noted that before the 2-way ANOVA could be conducted, the data had to satisfy six assumptions. These assumptions are 1) there are independent observations, 2) the data must be normally distributed, 3) there is homogeneity of variance, 4) the population covariances are

constant, 5) sphericity is assumed, and 6) the data is scale in SPSS (Evans, 2013). All data satisfied these assumptions, as shown in Appendix P.

4.4.5.2 Determining Fair Scores for the Email Tasks and Analyzing the Scores

Before conducting the 2-way ANOVA on the email assignment scores, I had to determine their fair scores. Perhaps the greatest challenge of using rubrics for scoring is “the potential for multiple interpretations of each criterion” by both scorers and those being scored (Rust et al., 2003, p. 149). In other words, no matter how well-trained or experienced they are, raters tend to rate differently (Eckes, 2019), hence the utility of fair scores. A fair score is a score corrected for rater severity and leniency and the influence of other factors such as biases toward a group (e.g., control and experimental) or products (e.g., pre-intervention emails and post-intervention emails). I conducted a Many-facet Rasch measurement (MFRM) analysis using the *FACETS* Version 4.1.8 software package to determine accurate fair scores for the pre- and post-intervention email tasks, respectively. The MFRM scores were combined from my intra-rater scores and inter-rater scores. I examined the results according to the parameters outlined in the literature. Overall data-to-model fit was determined by examining the responses that were unexpected given the assumptions of the model. Per parameters delineated in Eckes (2005), satisfactory overall data to model fit is when 5% or fewer standardized residuals are equal to or greater than 2, and about 1% or fewer of absolute standardized residuals are equal to or greater than 3. In this analysis, 5.1% of standardized residuals were equal to or greater than 2, and none were greater than 3, indicating acceptable data-to-model fit. The person reliability was .81 for the pre-intervention scores and .83 for the post-intervention scores, indicating that the participants’ scores were consistent with their ability level. Rater reliability was .95 for the pre-intervention scores and .98 for the post-intervention scores, showing that each of the raters was highly internally consistent. Item reliability was .98 pre-intervention

and .96 post-intervention, providing evidence that the rubric categories performed as expected and would likely perform the same at different times and with different populations. Person separation was 2.08 and 2.17 for pre- and post-intervention scores respectively, indicating that the population was fairly homogenous in terms of performance and could be categorized into two or three levels of ability. Rater separation was 3.60 pre-intervention and 3.63 post-intervention, indicating almost four levels of severity or leniency. However, this degree of separation was well within the bounds of acceptability, as previous studies revealed as many as 9 levels of rater separation (Eckes, 2019). Item separation was 5.72 pre-intervention and 4.67 post-intervention, which was an ideal result because it showed that the rubric measured six different levels of difficulty. In other words, the items discerned between different levels of performance in a granular way. Regarding fit statistics, the raters and items were well within the acceptable parameters of .5 to 1.5 (Aryadoust et al., 2021). Regarding person fit, nine persons fell outside of the acceptable parameters, but upon closer inspection, these were the lowest nine email scores and therefore should not be discarded. As a double-check, I compared the rubric's raw scores with the fair scores using Pearson's r . Results showed that the two sets of scores were very highly correlated and statistically significant $r(134) = .987, p < .001$, which was an ideal result, indicating that the raters' scores were fairly close to each other's and did not require much adjustment via the MFRM. In sum, the MFRM analysis revealed several findings: 1) The results offered support for the validity of the instrument in that it measured what it was supposed to measure and separated different levels of difficulty and student performance; 2) The rubric was reliable; 3) The raters were reliable in that they were internally consistent; 4) The fair scores derived from this analysis were valid and could be used in the planned statistical analyses, namely 2-way ANOVAs.

4.4.5.3 Analysis of the MCQ Scores

As with the questionnaire, it was important to re-establish the MCQ test's validity before analyzing the test scores. Therefore, I performed four Rasch analyses using the *WINSTEPS* computer package Version 5.7.1 (Linacre, 2005). The analyses were run on 1) pre-intervention home culture subscale scores, 2) pre-intervention religion subscale scores, 3) post-intervention home culture subscale scores, and 4) post-intervention religion subscale scores. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the results of this analysis precluded any further analysis, as the instrument was deemed invalid.

After all of the assessment data was analyzed, I sent each participant a comprehensive completion report. The completion reports served three purposes: 1) They explicitly informed participants about their improvement, highlighting areas to pay attention to in the future; 2) They served as a method of member-checking to ensure that the participants understood and agreed with their results; 3) They could serve as conversation starters for the post-intervention interviews.

4.5 Post-intervention: Explanatory Sequential Phase

An explanatory sequential phase is thus described by Creswell and Creswell (2020): “[T]he researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research” (p. 52). It is explanatory because the quantitative data results obtained in the quantitative strand (the intervention phase in this study) are explained with the qualitative data (the qualitative phase after the intervention in this study), and it is sequential in that the quantitative strand is necessarily followed by the qualitative strand. The details of this phase are described in the following sections.

4.5.1 Post-intervention Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted on the data collected from the post-intervention questions and post-intervention interviews following the 6-phase procedure developed by Braun and Clarke

(2006). The coding was executed with the aid of *MAXQDA* software. The main aim of the coding was to determine 1) participants' motivations to join and complete the course, 2) evidence of expanded or expanding understanding of the two target LCCs, 3) evidence of changes in LCC knowledge, skills/strategies, or attitudes, 4) participant perspectives on and perceptions of the course, and 5) possible effects of above-mentioned factors on the effectiveness of the intervention. Using this qualitative data to complement, expand, and explain the quantitative results would ideally provide a well-rounded picture of the intervention's effect. Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) was also used to examine the post-intervention interviews for evidence of students' motivation: I coded the interviews according to 1) explicit expressions of intrinsic motivation and 2) learning autonomy. The aim of the content analysis was to determine how their motivations and levels of autonomy may or may not have affected the results of this study.

4.5.2 Mixed Methods Data Integration

In the data integration phase, the qualitative data were connected to the quantitative findings to help explain the quantitative results. The rationale for and process of the integration of quantitative and qualitative data are described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 244):

The intent of this design [the mixed methods experimental design] is to augment the [teaching intervention] by embedding qualitative data so that the experiment can incorporate the personal experiences of the participants. This means analyzing the [teaching intervention] results, analyzing the qualitative results, and then further determining how the qualitative data augments the [intervention].

With both the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed, the perspectives of the participants had to be integrated into each of the above topics for well-rounded understanding. More specifically, I analyzed the qualitative data for evidence that explained, supported, or

contradicted the quantitative findings, and assembled the qualitative data for further analysis and comparison with previous studies.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

As several stages of this study involved human subjects (the interviews, questionnaires, pilot study, and main study), approval was obtained from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is the "authority for granting ethical clearance for research/teaching projects or investigations involving human subjects" (Institutional Review Board, 2022). The ethics approval reference number is HSEARS20221231002. The ethics approval documents, provided on January 6th, 2023, are in Appendix A. The IRB confirmed that the research would pose no harm to the participants and that the information sheet and consent form to be signed by participants were appropriate to the study. For each stage of the study (e.g., domain analysis, instrument piloting, pilot intervention, main study), participants were given an information sheet that detailed the study's purpose, the importance of their participation, and the time commitment of their participation. Further, the information sheet explained how their personal data would be protected, with digital data stored on a password-protected computer that only I could access, and any hard copies would be kept in a locked drawer that only I could access. Participants were also explicitly informed that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or repercussions. Finally, pseudonyms and numeric identifiers were used to protect participants' confidentiality and non-traceability. All participants gave informed consent, showing that they understood the scope of the research, their protections, and how the data would be used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Sample information sheets and informed consent documents are in Appendix A. Specific descriptions of how participants were recruited for each stage of the study are in the following sections.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the overall research design of the current study. Specifically, this study followed a mixed methods experimental design, structured to form an exploratory sequential phase and an explanatory sequential phase. With the overall research design defined, each stage of the study was described according to the participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis. In all stages, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Ethical considerations were also addressed. The chapter concluded with a description of how the quantitative and qualitative streams of data were merged to answer the research questions in a way that was robust, comprehensive, and valid.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS FROM THE PRE-INTERVENTION PHASE AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the pre-intervention phase of the study, focusing on the domain analysis and materials analysis. Therefore, it is divided into two sections, each reporting and discussion findings in response to one set of research questions. The reason for presenting the discussion immediately after the results concerning each research question is to make the thesis more reader-friendly and less cognitively demanding, and to explore how the findings related to each research question inform subsequent findings.

5.1 Guide for Identifying BELF LCCs

This section provides the results of the domain analysis interviews and questionnaire responses in establishing a finalized list of LCCs, which will be operationalized as “can do” descriptors to be used in subsequent stages of this study. Further, this section reports the results of the Principal Components Analysis (PCA), which grouped the LCC items according to whether they addressed knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. Finally, it describes how all of the descriptors were deemed important by job-experienced professionals and were therefore retained. Discussion of the findings follows.

5.1.1 Four Emergent LCCs

The interview analysis revealed several key points. First, there was explicit support for the 15 LCCs that were initially gleaned from the literature underpinning the LCC framework. These LCCs were discussed as examples or evident in interviewees’ anecdotes. Second, one LCC – *Professionals understand the implications of multiple linguacultures speaking to each other in English for business* – was discarded after the interviews revealed no explicit support for or rejection of it. Rather, this LCC seemed to be taken for granted and was therefore not a competency

that had to be developed. Third, four additional LCCs unidentified in the literature were added due to their repeated mention in the interviews. Discovering these new LCCs highlights the essentiality of researching this population and determining competencies that are relevant and ecologically valid. The descriptors for the new LCCs follow:

- *Professionals understand that corporate culture reflects the business function and industry standards in which it operates.* This LCC was evident in statements such as “It was really competitive industry with a lot of ‘rat race.’ So, that’s why my boss was actually doing these things really directly, and then they would, he would pursue efficiency and profit.” Jane, an eCommerce professional in Guangzhou, was describing the no-frills culture of her old company in terms of business function and industry. She contrasted that culture with her new company, in the IT industry (also in Guangzhou), which had a calmer environment and more “benefits” such as healthcare and vacation. Another example of the importance of this LCC (and the consequences of lacking it) was from Tina. Tina shared that one of her primary management duties was to facilitate understanding and agreement between two polarized linguacultural groups:

...they have different opinions about how to handle a thing in the same way. So, the way for me to handle it is to talk to both sides and just try to let each other know, like, why would they think doing in this way is better and try to help them to balance and also try to help them to agree to a certain extent that both sides can do it....

In her industry, local Chinese and foreigners were essential, but they had different roles, which exacerbated tensions between the two groups. This set of circumstances greatly affected communication, requiring the LCC for understanding how business function and industry affect communication. According to Tina, if the polarized groups had had an enhanced understanding of this LCC and understood their different but equal roles, the difficulties would have been eased. In

both of the above cases, the industry and function of the business drove certain behaviors and outlooks, which required understanding to communicate optimally in that environment.

- *Professionals are aware of and can express the enormous cultural diversity within their home cultures.* This LCC emerged from statements such as: “I think it depends on the subjects, the objects. Like, if I [talk to] the foreigners, my culture, maybe it’s China’s culture. If the objects [interlocutors] are people from Meizhou, [then] my culture is Guangzhou *Guangfu*.” Alice, who worked in eCommerce, was talking about cultural heterogeneity even within the boundaries of Guangdong Province. Her statements were echoed by Winnie, whose fashion designs sold differently in different parts of China according to local preferences. Several other interviewees highlighted the regional variations of food in China, further illustrating that home cultures, especially in cases such as China, are complex and diverse rather than a homogeneous whole.

- *Professionals can understand religion in terms of holiday schedule, food, and beliefs and interact accordingly.* This LCC came to light from statements such as “So, you can’t say ‘Merry Christmas’ to a Muslim.” This quote came from Kim, a medical industry professional in southern China, who recalled wishing her Muslim colleague “Merry Christmas.” She was embarrassed when her interlocutor had to patiently explain to her that he did not celebrate Christmas because he was Muslim. This competency became so important to her work that her company’s onboarding process began including questions about the faith and holiday schedules of new hires so that their beliefs, needs, and schedules could be accommodated. The need to understand aspects of religion and how it affected business communication was echoed by Steven, a Chinese man stationed in the Middle East who had to adjust to a Sunday through Thursday work week because of the Muslim calendar in which Fridays are a day of worship. These interviewees felt that they lacked understanding of religion and how it could affect business communication and had to learn difficult

lessons to improve their understanding.

- *Professionals adopt the “When in Rome...” perspective for overseas travel or assignments.*

This LCC was identified by statements such as: “So I need to keep on learning and following about that, and based on that, maybe I can be a friend of them because they were very glad that you will know and respect their rules and their culture.” Steven, a home appliance product manager based in Guangdong Province, China, was reflecting on the professional and relational benefits of following the local culture now that he was stationed in the Middle East. He went on to explain that both his personal life – his ability to function in the target culture – and his business performance improved after he learned more about the local culture and how to express respect for it.

The identification of the above LCCs illustrate the importance of gathering data from BELF users themselves. Crucially, such data, emerging from workplace experiences, could only come from job-experienced professionals. The above competencies were integrated into the list of LCCs underpinning the questionnaire designed to gather the perspectives of a larger sample.

5.1.2 LCCs Deemed Important

Table 5.1 presents the descriptive statistics for job-experienced professionals’ responses to the questionnaire-based survey on the perceived importance of 19 LCCs in the workplace. All the mean scores were well above 3, the lowest being 3.38 (Competency 15) and the highest being 4.10 (Competency 17). Further, *t*-tests revealed no significant differences between the responses of 62 mainland Chinese participants ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.62$) and 18 participants from outside of mainland China ($M = 3.45, SD = 0.62$), $t(78) = 2.295, p > .01$, indicating that the respondents, regardless of their location, perceived the LCCs to be important to international business communication in the workplace. (Ten participants did not identify their locations).

Table 5.1 Ratings and Groupings of the LCCs

Group	No.	Competency	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	LCC8	Professionals know that there are different orientations of culture (home, target, and universal) and communicate accordingly.	3.67	0.88
1	LCC14	Professionals recognize and can express the enormous cultural diversity within their home culture.	3.55	0.97
1	LCC15	Professionals understand religion in terms of holiday schedule, food, and beliefs and interact accordingly.	3.38	1.07
1	LCC11	Professionals know that frames (bridges of understanding) can be built from the top-down or bottom-up to improve transcultural understanding and overcome 'rich points' (misunderstandings).	3.49	1.05
1	LCC7	Professionals know that there are distinct levels of culture in business (i.e., regional, corporate, team, and individual conceptions of culture) and communicate accordingly.	3.49	1.08
1	LCC3	Professionals grasp the pluralistic nature of linguaculture and refrain from being biased toward any linguaculture, including cultures of native English speakers.	3.55	1.02
1	LCC6	Professionals understand that different cultural concepts of power and management practices exist in the workplace and may affect communication.	3.49	0.97
1	LCC2	Professionals understand that corporate culture reflects the business function and industry standards in which it operates.	3.65	0.94
1	LCC10	Professionals are aware of visible culture (external) and deep culture (internal values, norms, and hidden assumptions) and can discuss or express both.	3.67	0.87
2	LCC17	Professionals are able to employ different genres, including their moves and stages, as typified patterns arising from the culture in which they function.	4.10	0.87
2	LCC12	Professionals can harness linguacultural expression to indicate their position and establish their identity.	3.93	0.88
2	LCC18	Professionals can function within transactional genres for direct business interactions.	4.07	0.83
2	LCC16	Professionals are able to adopt the "When in Rome..." perspective for overseas travel or assignments.	4.07	0.87
2	LCC19	Professionals can function within interpersonal genres for building rapport and making "small talk" for business purposes.	4.00	0.86
3	LCC 13	Professionals accept and respect that specific behaviors are likely attributable to linguaculture.	3.93	0.79
3	LCC1	Professionals appreciate cultural differences as illustrated by cultural dimensions and their benefit to linguacultural competence.	3.78	0.89
3	LCC4	Professionals are sensitive to stereotypes and acknowledge the dangers of stereotyping in transcultural communication.	3.83	0.90
3	LCC9	Professionals empathize with members of different linguacultures when communicating with them.	4.01	0.84
3	LCC5	Professionals accept and respect World Englishes, which represent different linguacultures.	3.72	1.03

A principal component analysis (PCA) was performed on the responses using oblique rotation (direct oblimin) to determine if they organized into clusters. The KMO was .891, just short of “marvelous” according to Kaiser and Rice (1974), and the MSA values for individual items were greater than .801, well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The PCA yielded a 3-component structure of the 19 LCCs (see Appendix Q for the items and their PCA results). As all 19 LCCs loaded on all three components, I determined that a particular LCC belonged to a component if its factor loading was over the criterion of .512. The .512 benchmark was adopted because it is for sample sizes of over 100 but fewer than 300 (Field, 2018; Stevens, 2002). The three components explained 61.950% of the variance. A close examination of the LCCs falling in each component revealed that the three groups respectively captured three dimensions of LCCs: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes.

Group 1: Knowledge of general cultural issues, home cultural expression, corporate culture, and religion and how they affect professional communication.

Group 2: Skills and strategies for adapting language for functions such as transactional or interpersonal communication, establishing identity, or adjusting to the local culture.

Group 3: Attitudes of empathy for and acceptance of other groups, communication styles, and language varieties; avoidance of stereotypes.

The items in the questionnaire were also highly reliable. Cronbach’s alpha for the 19 competency items was .94. Table 5.1 indicates the group numbers (1 = knowledge, 2 = skills/strategies, 3 = attitudes). The LCCs in Group 2 (skills/strategies) had, on average, the highest mean scores, ranging from 3.93 to 4.10 (average = 4.05). Those in Group 3 (attitudes) received the second-highest mean scores, ranging from 3.72 to 4.01 (average = 3.85). The LCCs in Group 1 (knowledge) had the lowest mean scores, ranging from 3.38 to 3.67 (average = 3.55). The score

patterns indicated that the respondents viewed skills/strategies-related LCCs and attitudes-based LCCs as more important than knowledge-based ones for successful business communication.

5.1.3 Framework Utility and Pedagogical Implications

RQ1 asks: *How well might the LCC conceptual framework fare as a guide for identifying what LCCs are likely to be involved in BELF communication? Do job-experienced business professionals find these competencies important in their business communication?* In light of the findings presented above, it can be concluded that the LCC framework had great utility in determining the LCCs that professionals require in the workplace. The strongest evidence for this conclusion is that all 19 LCCs were deemed important by the survey participants. Further, the LCCs offered nuance and structure by clustering on dimensions of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes, aligning with extant literature and thus offering evidence of concurrent validity (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Candelier et al., 2012). These LCCs address the need for business professionals to develop linguacultural competence, as has been identified by BELF scholars (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025). The LCCs formulated in this stage of the study pave the way for bridging the research-practice gap (Rose et al., 2021) by specifying competencies that are immediately applicable to materials development (e.g., adaptations or design), classroom practice, and assessment for different contexts and populations. Table 5.2 outlines how the LCCs can be addressed pedagogically – ideas that will be pursued in greater detail in subsequent phases of this study.

Table 5.2 Addressing the LCCs Pedagogically

Group	Pedagogy	Activity
Knowledge	Materials development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook analysis for adaptations • Select/Create readings
	Classroom practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student research reports/presentations • Examining critical incidents - discussion
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short answer quizzes • Multiple-choice tests • Critical Incident analysis
Attitudes	Materials development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study design • Student materials: emails, anecdotes
	Classroom practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies (of the impact of attitudes) • Self-reflections
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-report questionnaires • Personal essays
Skills / Strategies	Materials development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy charts to structure actions • Case study design
	Classroom practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task-based language teaching • Role plays and simulations
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance assessments • Rubric-based assessments

Discussion of each group of LCCs, which will heretofore be labeled *components*, and how they could be addressed pedagogically, follow. Delineating the components will further illustrate the LCC framework's utility in identifying LCCs and considering their pedagogical utility. Examples of how the components manifest are based on statements by interviewees in the domain analysis: Kim, Tina, and Steven. The discussion will also show how these subconstructs of LCC align with the extant literature, offering convincing evidence of their utility and concurrent validity.

5.1.3.1 The Knowledge Component

Knowledge of BELF includes understanding the lexis, grammar, and pragmatics required to perform one's job duties ((Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Added to that is knowledge of the business in which one functions (Kankaanranta et al., 2015), and cultural understanding (Baker, 2022b; Barrett, 2020; Byram, 2021; Camerer, 2014; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Candelier

et al., 2012). In other words, cultural understanding is essential to successful BELF communication. In this study, such understanding manifests in the knowledge component of LCCs.

The challenge of developing knowledge-based LCCs is to provide structure while also inculcating a productive use of that knowledge with sensitivity to the context. For example, Competency #15 (understanding how religion impacts professional communication) raises several important issues. When Kim shared that “you can’t say ‘Merry Christmas’ to a Muslim,” she realized that she lacked knowledge of religion, and set out to understand different faiths’ holiday schedules, beliefs, and customs. On the other hand, Kim hails from a relatively secular society and was likely exposed to mostly Western-created English learning materials, as has been common practice in mainland China (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2018). In Western publishing, religion is considered taboo and is generally avoided in ELT materials (Brown & Nanguy, 2021; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). As a result, she was unprepared for how religion would impact her workplace communication. Her experience underlines the importance of gaining an understanding of religion to fulfill business tasks and communications transculturally. The topic must be addressed in an organized and structured way in the safety of the classroom. At the same time, because the topic is so sensitive, pedagogical treatment must be unbiased, avoid oversimplification, and exemplify a nuanced understanding of different groups’ orientations toward religion and how that might impact professional communication.

In terms of materials development and adaptations, knowledge-based LCCs such as the one concerning religion can be addressed by specifically designing or finding existing readings about religious issues such as belief systems, religion-driven work schedules, and how those might affect professional communication (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). For classroom practice, one approach would be to use a *critical incident* – an example of a puzzling cultural miscommunication (Camerer &

Mader, 2012) or, in linguacultural terms, a *rich point* (Agar, 2002) to lead a discussion about the nature of the miscommunication and what knowledge could have prevented it from happening. Assessments could include multiple-choice tests or short answer questions targeting declarative knowledge. As we shall see, one such assessment was devised for this study. Despite the desirability of assessing declarative knowledge, there should also be a focus on how such knowledge can be utilized in practical skills, critical thinking, and real-world application, such as case studies concerning rich points (Camerer & Mader, 2012). As we shall see, this study attempted to address knowledge accordingly.

5.1.3.2 The Attitudes Component

Previous research has uncovered the importance of the affective component of linguacultural competence, citing openness, flexibility, curiosity, empathy, non-judgment, positive disposition, and tolerance as underpinning linguacultural competence (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Candelier et al., 2012). Another key attitude is relativizing oneself, which means understanding how linguacultures are different, not better or worse, thus not taking an ethnocentric viewpoint (Byram, 1997). Relatedly, one must be amenable and motivated to communicate transculturally. The challenge with addressing attitude-grounded LCCs pedagogically is that attitudes are less tangible than knowledge. They are highly personal and internal. Furthermore, there exists “very little research literature on teaching the affective component of intercultural competence” (Liao & Li, 2023, p. 1304). The affective component arose in the interview with Tina, who spent much of her time reconciling oppositional linguacultural groups. The lack of attitudinal openness or empathetic stance in the two groups caused enormous friction in her organization, which well illustrates the necessity for linguacultural groups to understand each other’s different ways of doing things by developing empathy and acceptance.

For materials development, a case study approach could be adopted to demonstrate “the significance of being tolerant to different worldviews, and open-mindedness to challenge one’s cultural assumptions” (Liao & Li, 2023, p. 1310). Such case studies could illustrate problems due to poor attitudes, such as in Tina’s organization, or the impact of positive attitudes on business communication (Pullin, 2015). For classroom practice, self-reflection activities could be employed to give students the chance to think more about their own biases, beliefs, and attitudes in specific situations and how these might affect communication in the workplace (Liao & Li, 2023). For assessment, self-report questionnaires and self-reflections could be used to gauge attitude changes, or lack thereof, during the course of study (Camerer & Mader, 2012). Again, it was these types of assessments that were implemented in this study.

5.1.3.3 The Skills/Strategies Component

Another essential component of linguacultural competence, *skills/strategies*, includes plans for and approaches to communicating with those of different linguacultural backgrounds (Camerer, 2014; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). As BELF communication is fluid and ephemeral, skills/strategies necessarily involve being able to adjust according to different communicative contexts and interlocutors, establish and maintain relationships, and cooperate toward mutual goals (Barrett, 2020; Council of Europe, 2018). Adjustments could take many forms, including negotiating meaning in case of communication breakdowns (Hu, 2018), changing the subject if a taboo topic arises (Camerer & Mader, 2012), or devising trainings or policies to address LCCs at the organizational level. The challenge of developing skills/strategies-related LCCs is that they must be practiced. For example, as mentioned above, Steven illustrated the “*When in Rome...*” LCC by discovering that adapting to the local culture in a respectful way benefitted his business function and communication. However, such a strategy must be constantly and consciously

practiced until it becomes ingrained for maximal effectiveness. Learners must have the opportunity to workshop different scenarios, experiment with different approaches, and reflect on what worked and what did not work during the classroom practice sessions.

Materials development could include strategy charts to provide structure but also flexibility in guiding communication. For example, a strategy chart could delineate ways of gathering information about the host culture with specific avenues of approach depending on the conversation partner's responses (Peltonen, 2022b). These strategies could be practiced in role plays and simulations in the classroom (Frendo, 2005) to develop fluency and flexibility in applying them. Mastery of these skills/strategies, as reflected in simulation activities, could then be assessed in a well-designed rubric (Camerer & Mader, 2012).

In sum, the LCC framework builds on existing models in its characterization of culture being manifested in fluid, negotiated, and liminal communication rather than being a static entity (Baker, 2022a, 2024) and its conceptualization of linguacultural competence as consisting of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes (Byram, 2021). Defining these three components of linguacultural competence is significant for the following reasons: They structure the different ways that linguacultural competence can be understood, which, in turn, can help structure materials development and classroom approaches targeting LCCs. They can also underpin the assessment of the competencies, as each component can be delineated in rubrics, questionnaires, or other assessment instruments. Though aligned with the extant literature, the specific linguacultural LCCs that underlie BELF communication are more contextually bound, as they target professional communicative necessities for the workplace. Importantly, their practicality is enhanced by the fact that their relevance and usefulness were corroborated by job-experienced professionals. Finally, the operationalization of target LCCs in “can-do” descriptors facilitates pedagogical

implementation. In other words, the descriptors can inform practical materials development and assessment, an affordance that will be considered in the following sections.

5.2 Utility in Analyzing a BE Curriculum

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings pertaining to the second research question. In it, I examine the distribution of LCC competence-building opportunities in this study's foundational textbook, *Market Leader*, and how that distribution may impact BE learners' LCC development. After that, there is a discussion of the findings, including how they might impact the design, adaptation, and enactment of a BE curriculum.

5.2.1 Presence of LCC Building Opportunities in *Market Leader*

Figure 5.1 presents the number of opportunities present for building the LLCs across the 12 regular units of the textbook. While it is unsurprising that the unit focusing on culture (Unit 7) has the most LCC-building opportunities, the fact that Unit 3 on *change* has the second most opportunities warrants an explanation. Within the theme of change, much of this unit concerns taking overseas job positions (changing locations) and corporate mergers (changing work life). In these situations, diverse linguacultures are likely to come into contact, contributing to the relatively high incidence and variety of LCC-building opportunities in this unit.

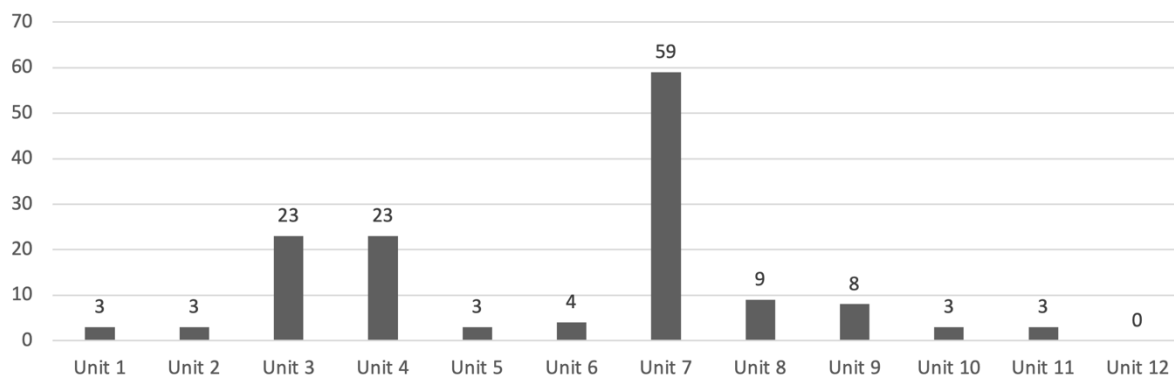


Figure 5.1 Competency-building opportunities included by unit

Figure 5.2 presents the distribution of included opportunities by LCC. Opportunities for building a variety of LCCs are included, ranging from issues of corporate culture (e.g., Competencies 2, 7, and 13) and visible and deep culture (e.g., Competencies 1, 9, and 11) to ideas about specific behaviors related to cultural background (e.g., Competencies 4, 12, 14, 17, and 18). Notably, there are few opportunities for developing several LCCs. There is considerable variation in the opportunities present for the individual LCCs: While some (e.g., Competencies 1, 5, 7, 11, and 14) are opportunity-rich, others (e.g., Competencies 2, 12, 13, 17, and 18) have sparse opportunities. Further, Competencies 3, 5, 6, 10, 15, and 16 are completely absent. These LCCs pertain to the relativistic nature of linguacultures, dangers of stereotyping, home cultural diversity, and religion. The lack of attention to these competencies pinpoints areas where *Market Leader* could have done more to enhance learners' LCC. Because these LCCs are absent, they are the strongest candidates for adaptation, a point that will be taken up in the discussion.

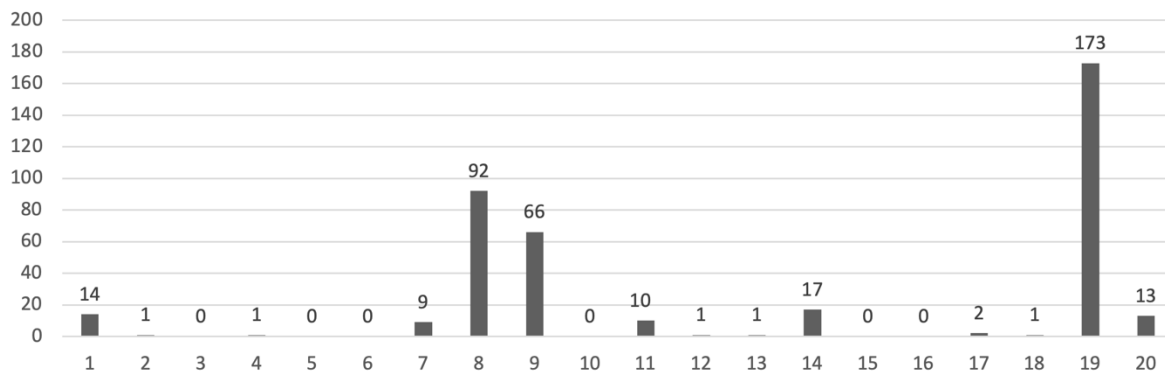


Figure 5.2 Opportunities included by LCC

Finally, the genre analysis revealed that 93% of the genres of business communication present in *Market Leader* are transactional, whereas only 7% are interpersonal. These findings merit attention because interpersonal communication is one of the two meta-functions of professional communicative genres identified in the research literature (Caleffi, 2020; Komori-Glatz, 2017; Pullin, 2010). In other words, interpersonal communication such as building rapport and

developing relationships is a fundamental and crucial aspect of workplace communication. The lack of interpersonal genres in *Market Leader* represents a major deficiency in the textbook because it does not match workplace needs. Further, the paucity of interpersonal genres in *Market Leader* led me to reflect on, in the close-up evaluation of Unit 3, how that might affect learners' LCC, and how such genres could be included via adaptations.

5.2.2 The LCC Framework and Its Utility to Materials Analysis

RQ2 asks: *How effective is the LCC framework in analyzing, designing, and enacting a BE curriculum? What is the distribution of linguacultural competence-building opportunities in this study's foundational textbook, and how may that distribution impact BE learners' linguacultural competence development? How would such findings impact the design and enactment of a BE curriculum? (e.g., Which LCCs should be developed and assessed?)*

The first element of RQ2 asks how successfully the LCC framework and its descriptors informed materials analysis, which in this case was an analysis of *Market Leader*. Regarding the second element of RQ2, the analysis identified candidate LCCs to be addressed in the study, thus informing adaptations. In the following discussion of the close-up, qualitative evaluation, the LCC framework offers insights into the importance of context as well as necessary but neglected LCCs that should be addressed within and beyond this study. The position of these findings within the extant literature is also discussed in support of the conclusion that the LCC framework was an effective guide for materials analysis because it enabled principled, structured, and informative analysis and evaluation.

5.2.2.1 The Importance of Context

Findings from the close-up analysis of *Market Leader* Unit 3 illustrate the importance of context. Researchers argue that the foundation of competence is being able to “respond appropriately, and

effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 32). In other words, the context in which interlocutors function has a fundamental influence on their actions. In the case of Unit 3, the context is predicated on the theme of *change*. Unit 3 had the second most LCC-building opportunities, second only to the unit focused on culture because of its context: In business, change encompasses challenges such as how to approach overseas postings, or how to handle changes in organizational structure, management, or job roles. These topics inherently involve different linguacultures interacting, which is when LCCs are required and manifested. Further, the case study of Unit 3 focused on a merger. Research has highlighted the importance and difficulty of communication between linguacultures involved in mergers (De Leon, 2020; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). A major challenge arising from company mergers is different company cultures clashing, which can create difficulties and tension that may even lead to the failure of the merger (Lewis, 2021). By addressing such topics, Unit 3, unsurprisingly, includes more LCC-building opportunities than other units. Put another way, the relatively higher incidence of LCC-building opportunities is attributable to the context of the unit. It follows that, when considering pedagogy and curricular adaptation, the context and theme of each topic, unit, or exercise will impact the relative importance of LCC-building needs and opportunities. This understanding highlights the flexibility and utility of the LCC framework and its individual competencies, each of which can be emphasized or deemphasized depending on the context. Additionally, as we shall see in Sections 5.2.2.2 and 6.8.1, the context of the learners themselves has a profound impact on LCC development.

The following sections discuss four LCCs that were conspicuously absent from Unit 3. As competencies that are essential to LCC development, they are considered vis-à-vis their position

in the research landscape and in the Chinese context. Of central importance is how their presence or absence may affect learners' overall linguacultural competence. Two of the four competencies discussed were ultimately chosen for development in the intervention phase of this study.

5.2.2.2 Necessary but Neglected LCCs

The first necessary but neglected LCC regards the importance of understanding religion. LCC #15 states: *Professionals understand religion in terms of holiday schedule, food, and beliefs and interact accordingly.* As mentioned, this competency was not identified in the LCC literature but emerged in the domain analysis interviews. Interestingly, in the domain analysis questionnaire responses, this competency scored an average of 3.38/5, making it the lowest-scoring of all the target competencies. However, instead of interpreting that result at face value and treating the competency as the least important, it can also be argued that the score was relatively low because it was the least considered competency. In other words, the score could suggest the participants' lack of awareness of, knowledge about, or comfort with, religion. Support for this interpretation was that religion was a recurring communicative issue in the interviews. As discussed, when working in Saudi Arabia, Steven had to adjust to a Sunday through Thursday work schedule based on the Islamic prayer calendar. He needed to learn to avoid sending out communication on Fridays. Similarly, Kim shared her anecdote about wishing a Muslim colleague "Merry Christmas." That experience made Kim realize the importance of religion in her international work and communication. Subsequently, she changed her company's onboarding practices so that new employees' faith and calendar were made known, paving the way for smoother communication for both interpersonal and transactional purposes. Both Steven's and Kim's conceptions of communication regarding holidays and schedules had to change based on issues related to religion. In linguacultural terminology, these mismatches of understanding are rich points and are

opportunities for learning and development (Agar, 2002), which both Kim and Steven took advantage of. As such, even though religion is largely absent from the literature underpinning the LCC framework or *Market Leader*, the religion-related linguacultural competency is crucial to effective transcultural communication, both transactional and interpersonal.

Further, the described misunderstandings and resultant need to develop linguacultural competence related to religion are particularly relevant to the Chinese context. One explanation for the near total absence of religion in *Market Leader* is that the topic of religion is highly sensitive in the West and constitutes one of the global textbook taboos (i.e., PARNSIPS – politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, and pork) (Brown & Nanguy, 2021). However, these taboos have been established in Western publishing, according to Western experiences and outlooks. In that sense, these “guidelines for inappropriacy are based on customers’ perceived sensitivities” (Gray, 2002, p. 144). Assuming learners possess baseline religious knowledge or religious sensitivities might be accurate in Western contexts but would not necessarily apply to the Chinese context. One consequence of such a situation is that textbooks may have been “stripped of” important cultural content, in this case, religion (Gray, 2002, p. 143). In contrast, religion is explicitly present in ELT textbooks in other contexts. For example, Sharifian (2010) reported how religious topics were treated in textbooks in Iran, while Hamid (2024) examined religion in English teaching in Bangladesh. In other words, the presence or absence of the religion LCC is contextually and culturally dependent. Mainland China is a largely secular society without the same history or dynamics of religious tensions as other regions, which could have two results: First, religion is likely a less sensitive topic in the Chinese context and could be addressed more directly in pedagogy. Second, the extent of Chinese BELF users’ ability to grasp how religion may impact business and communication might be more limited than that of those from more religious societies

simply because their exposure has been more limited (Camerer & Mader, 2012; Council of Europe, 2001; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). As such, it is even more crucial that the religion competency is addressed in a sensitive, nonjudgmental, and sophisticated way, via adaptations and the development of BE materials for Chinese BELF speakers functioning internationally. The pedagogical implications are twofold: First, BELF learners and users need to gather knowledge about religion's impact on different linguacultures, focusing on the target cultures with which they know they will interact. Second, they will need skills/strategies practice in interacting with interlocutors of different faiths. These interactions should be structured, workshopped, and reflected on in the safety of the classroom to ensure that they have an adequate understanding of religion's impact on business to avoid the difficulties that interviewees Kim and Steven, as well as the fictional characters in Unit 3's case study, faced. Such implications were uncovered by the use of an LCC descriptor, not only illustrating its utility to materials analysis but also revealing important findings for the continuation of this study and similar studies in different contexts.

The second necessary but neglected LCC is home cultural understanding. LCC#14 states: *Professionals recognize and can express the enormous cultural diversity within their home cultures.* Lack of this LCC in the textbook denies Chinese learners the opportunity to develop such a competency in English, perpetuating the phenomenon that Chinese theorists a quarter of a century ago labeled *cultural aphasia* – Chinese learners' inability to express their home culture in English (Cong, 2000). This phenomenon, studied consistently since the emergence of this term, also manifested in more recent work by Peltonen and Ning (2025), who found that Chinese communicators struggled to express even widespread home cultural concepts such as *dim sum*. Despite more than two decades of investigation, the ability to express one's home culture remains a challenge and has not been addressed in BE textbooks in the Chinese context, a finding that

aligns with Si (2020). Home cultural expression is crucial for several reasons. First, in order to express one's home culture in English, one must understand the concepts and ideas that are to be expressed (Hu & McKay, 2014; Peltonen & Ning, 2025). Communicators must know what they are communicating. Along these lines, understanding one's home culture includes examining one's own perspectives, biases, and worldview, as "the process of learning about another culture entails a reflection on one's own culture as well as the foreign culture" (Hu & McKay, 2014, p. 68). In other words, cultural self-reflection helps provide a frame of reference for understanding other linguacultures (Byram, 2021). Second, home cultural expression requires various strategies. In the case of Chinese cultural self-expression, these strategies might include translation, transliteration/using pinyin, and combining translation or transliteration with further explanation (He & Li, 2009; Peltonen & Ning, 2025). Communicators must know which strategies are at their disposal and which ones to use, depending on the context. Third, home cultures are usually not homogeneous. In the case of China, expressing one's home culture can be an extremely complex task. In a domain analysis interview, Wilma, a fashion designer and retailer, illustrated such complexity when she discovered a difference between northern and southern Chinese customers' views of yellow.

You must, don't know why my hometown doesn't like yellow color.... If some lovers, they, they say goodbye to each other and the old people will say, "oh, they, they are yellow" ...but in the south of China, most girls like yellow color especially.... They think the yellow color is, maybe is a royal color.

In this situation, Wilma had designed a line of yellow clothes, which were selling well in the south but were not selling at all in the north. When she asked one of her salespeople in the north why this might be the case, the saleswoman reminded her that, in that part of northern China, the Chinese word for yellow used as a verb (*huangle*) means "fail" or "break up," so women did not

want to wear that color. Wilma's anecdote illustrated two things: home cultures are diverse, with seemingly simple concepts such as yellow understood differently, and Wilma, who is originally from the north but built her business in the south, neglected such regional cultural differences to the detriment of her business. Her experience is a lucid illustration of how regional linguacultures interact or clash, with direct effects on professional practice. Interestingly, though much of her business was domestic, Wilma also had to explain this aspect of Chinese culture in English to overseas partners, such as those who made the raw materials. The fact that she could convey this anecdote to me indicated a degree of LCC pertaining to home culture. It also illustrates how she identified this rich point and used it as an opportunity for learning. In sum, the understanding of and ability to communicate one's home culture – in all of its complexity and nuance – is a crucial aspect of BE that needs to be incorporated into materials and classroom practice.

The third necessary but neglected LCC regards cultural dimensions. Taking a step back, any study on linguacultural competence would be remiss without discussing cultural dimensions, which have provided a theoretical structure to cultural studies, especially in the professional context, for decades. Cultural dimensions are enormously useful in linguacultural development, as will be described, and are therefore part of the LCC's competency profile. LCC#1 states: *Professionals understand cultural dimensions and how they can be beneficial to linguacultural competence.* Though there were instances of this LCC in *Market Leader*, there was none in Unit 3. Cultural dimensions address a key challenge in developing linguacultural competence, namely, structuring understanding of culture. That said, cultural dimensions must be considered with caution: Criticisms of cultural dimensions promoting static, homogenized, or stereotypical views of cultural groups are also valid (McSweeney, 2015). These criticisms have prompted a revision of how dimensions should be understood: Contemporary conceptualizations of culture, especially

as they relate to international lingua franca communication, are that “cultural reference, identities and practices [are] fluid and contestable, operating at multiple scales, as well as being emergent and constructed in situ” (Baker, 2022a, p. 289). A salient example of the malleability of cultural dimensions was provided by Alice, in her domain analysis interview, when she explained that her cultural orientation depended on the context of her communication (e.g., whether she was talking to someone from a different part of Guangdong Province or someone from outside China). In other words, rather than existing within the constraints of permanent and static cultural roles, individuals such as Alice adjust their perspectives, positions, and identities in different situations through their interactions, which are fluid, changing, and ephemeral. It follows that cultural dimensions are manifested contextually and in communication (Peltonen, 2023a).

The evolution of understanding of cultural dimensions can be illustrated by Unit 3’s case study about a merger. Hofstede (1980), arguably the most renowned cultural dimension theorist, proposed that certain cultures are more individualistic, focusing on the self and personal fulfillment, while others are more collectivist, prioritizing group harmony. An illustration of this *collectivist* versus *individualist* cultural dimension, as it relates to Unit 3’s case study about the merger, would be as follows: According to Hofstede Insights (2023), Australians (the buyers in the case study) get an individualism score of 90 out of 100, while Hong Kongese (those in the acquired company) score 25 out of 100, reflecting collectivist tendencies. However, real-world behaviors may deviate from these generalizations. For example, after the merger, an Australian manager may prefer extensive group discussion to build consensus, while a Hong Kong IT professional may prefer to work alone and communicate explicitly and directly, demonstrating variability within cultural frameworks. In this scenario, the interlocutors contradict their supposed cultural characteristics. However, this reversal does not negate the utility of cultural dimensions in

developing linguacultural competence. Rather, it calls for a revised understanding of how cultural dimensions must be understood: They are still relevant but must be applied contextually – interpreted case by case and observed through actual interactions between individuals.

This competency is crucial to Chinese BELF learners and users as it relates to current ELT contexts, deeply ingrained beliefs about English language learning, and pedagogy on the mainland. It is well established that, in the Chinese system of ELT, the cultural focus has been on Anglo-American target cultures, with Chinese learners aspiring to be able to function within those cultures (Rose & Galloway, 2017; Wang, 2013). Further, as a matter of policy, to be qualified as a foreign English teacher in mainland China, one must be from one of seven native English-speaking countries (Ministry of Justice of the People’s Republic of China, 2020). The impact of this policy has created a gap between policy and professional practice, illustrated by my personal experience: When I taught members of the mergers and acquisitions team of a Chinese state-owned enterprise – a department that was tasked with partnering with overseas governments to develop electricity infrastructure – I was the only native English speaker they interacted with during a given week. The rest of their English language communication was with stakeholders in Southeast Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe. This experience mirrors research findings that the vast majority of BELF communication is between non-native speakers (NNSs), findings that were supported by this study’s domain analysis questionnaire data (61% of respondents’ self-reported communication was primarily with NNSs). Accordingly, these users’ linguacultural understanding must be broadened beyond static, Anglo-American-centric cultural content currently present in BE textbooks (Baker, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Cultural dimensions, as described above, anchor a broadened understanding by structuring the vast array of cultural tendencies but with a sophisticated and nuanced perspective that is not reductionist or essentialist, going beyond merely

acclimating BELF users to different accents or providing knowledge about festivals. BE textbook adaptations and future design could leverage the power of cultural dimensions to develop linguacultural competence, thus nurturing highly competent BELF users in China.

The fourth necessary but neglected LCC pertains to interpersonal genres. LCC#19 states: *Professionals can function within interpersonal genres for building rapport and making “small talk” for business purposes.* It is essential to understand that genres are the linchpins of professional communication that can be leveraged for materials analysis and evaluation, thus informing materials development and the enactment of classroom practices. I have also argued that genres are *frames* bridging different linguacultural groups by serving as known structures that can be implemented and easily understood (Agar, 2002). The importance of interpersonal communicative genres is well documented in the literature (Planken, 2005; Pullin, 2010; Yang, 2012) and was confirmed by the participants in the domain analysis interviews and survey: 33% of the respondents indicated that interpersonal communication was at least half of their overall communication in the workplace, and the item asking about the importance of interpersonal communication scored an average of 4/5, which was one of the highest scores in the data. As illustrated, Tina explained in her domain analysis interview that interpersonal communication was the key to *getting the job done*:

You know, like, when you work together, you usually need each other’s help, right?

So, if you have a good relationship with someone else, even though it’s a tough job or maybe someone else is not willing to do, but based on the rapport, based on the relationship you have with that person, probably the person is more willing to help you finish that task.

The importance of interpersonal genres notwithstanding, *Market Leader* only once explicitly labels such a genre and structures its stages for learners. The significantly skewed distribution of 93% transactional versus 7% interpersonal genres in *Market Leader* and the complete absence of any interpersonal genres in Unit 3 highlight a significant deficiency. This gap is particularly conspicuous in the case study of Unit 3, which focuses on difficulties in communication and mismatches of understanding between the company's new Australian owners and the local Hong Kong staff. This section of the unit fails to raise awareness of the usefulness of interpersonal genres in building rapport, establishing personal relationships, and engaging in team building – all activities that might improve the discordant situation after the merger.

The lack of opportunities to develop interpersonal genre proficiency is even more severe when considering that Chinese BELF users have consistently and specifically self-reported difficulty with interpersonal communication (Du, 2021; Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020) and have been observed to struggle with rapport management or relationship-building with interlocutors of different backgrounds (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2004; Wei et al., 2001), causing sometimes major miscommunications. As such, adaptations to current BE textbooks and the design of future textbooks used in the Chinese context must address the importance of interpersonal communication. Interpersonal genres can offer the structure to understand and address such communication pedagogically.

5.3 Chapter Summary

Regarding RQ1, the LCC framework displayed high utility in identifying specific and operationalizable LCCs, which were cross-checked with job-experienced professionals. Referring to RQ2, the principled, criterion-based analysis and evaluation of the textbook illustrated the high efficacy and utility of the LCC framework and its 20 descriptors to materials analysis and

evaluation. The findings of the materials analysis and evaluation highlighted the importance of context to such analyses and prompted discussion of four necessary but neglected LCCs. The findings also informed what adaptations should be made when designing the experimental group's materials. Put another way, with empirical evidence of which LCCs were absent from the textbook and how that might affect learners, the decision about which ones should be targeted in the intervention was based on principles and data and illustrated how practical and useful the framework was in informing materials development and adaptation decisions.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS FROM THE EXPLANATORY SEQUENTIAL PHASE AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports the findings from the explanatory sequential phase of the study, beginning with the intervention and ending with the post-intervention qualitative phase. I will report the results of 2-way ANOVAs on the questionnaire-based assessment and offer evidence arising from the thematic analysis of the qualitative data (e.g., self-reflections, post-intervention reflective questions, assessment email contents, and post-course interviews) which offers insight into those results. Finally, I will discuss how the findings relate to the extant literature.

6.1 The Effectiveness of the Intervention: Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire-based assessments revealed that students in both treatment conditions improved from pre- to post-intervention, and there were between-group differences on most measures. Table 6.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the assessment results. The measures include scores for the overall questionnaire, the subscales (home culture and religion), the components (knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes), and the email tasks. As we shall see, the MCQ test was deemed invalid and was removed from the study.

Table 6.1 Descriptive statistics for the assessments

Measure	Control Group				Experimental Group			
	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Questionnaire	4.86	0.40	4.98	0.40	5.12	.41	5.24	0.36
Home culture	4.93	0.39	4.94	0.43	5.14	.47	5.22	0.39
Religion	4.78	0.53	5.03	0.45	5.09	.43	5.27	0.39
Knowledge	5.25	0.42	5.39	0.38	5.43	.39	5.58	0.33
Skills/Strategies	4.45	0.64	4.54	0.61	4.76	.61	4.87	0.52
Attitudes	5.04	0.51	5.19	0.51	5.33	.45	5.39	0.47
Email task	3.80	0.97	4.43	1.28	3.95	.90	4.49	0.90

Notably, there was very little difference in improvement between the two groups when examining the grand mean. On the questionnaire, both groups improved by 0.12 from pre- to post-intervention. On the email assessment, the control group (+0.63) slightly outperformed the experimental group (+0.54). Again, these differences are negligible. As will be shown by inferential statistics, the two groups' performance was almost identical.

The two-way ANOVA run on the overall questionnaire scores found a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement (i.e., pre- and post-intervention), $F(1, 65) = 8.828, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .120$. The effect size, as measured by the eta squared value, approached the criterial .14 for a large effect, explaining 12% of the variance in the dependent variable. The participants as a whole improved significantly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 4.98, SD = 0.43$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 5.10, SD = 0.40$). There was also a main effect of instructional conditions (i.e., the control group vs. the experimental group), $F(1, 65) = 8.34, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .114$. The effect size fell between medium and large. The experimental group ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.35$) outperformed the control group ($M = 4.92, SD = 0.38$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .000, p = .998, \eta_p^2 = .000$, indicating the differences between the pre- and post-intervention assessments were consistent for the two instructional conditions.

Regarding the email tasks, the two-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement (i.e., pre- and post-intervention), $F(1, 65) = 16.799, p = <.001, \eta_p^2 = .205$. The effect size was very large, far exceeding the criterial .14 for a large effect. The participants as a whole improved significantly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.93$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.11$). There was no effect of instructional conditions (i.e., the control group vs. the experimental group), $F(1, 65) = .238, p = .627, \eta_p^2 = .004$. The

experimental group ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.73$) outperformed the control group ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.95$). Similarly, the interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .063$, $p = .759$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, indicating the differences between the pre- and post-intervention assessments were consistent for the two instructional conditions.

Notably, the effect size of the improvement on the email tasks (i.e., .205) was markedly greater than that of the aggregated questionnaire scores (i.e., .120). Further, neither group's questionnaire-based skills/strategies scores improved, contradicting their statistically significant improvement on the email tasks, which directly assessed their use of skills and strategies. These findings show that performance assessments were more sensitive to the skills/strategies component of LCC improvement, underscoring the importance of using multiple measures of LCC development in a study like this one.

6.2 Contributing Factors: Qualitative Findings

6.2.1 Intrinsic Motivation

The interviews shed light on the significant improvement of both groups. Participants showed high levels of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated individuals engage in activities “for their own sake – for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from their performance” (Deci et al., 2017, p. 328). A determinant of intrinsic motivation is whether the participants expected any external reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In this study, the participants were given no external mandate, nor were they offered any reward, as the intention was to ensure that intrinsically motivated individuals were recruited. Along those lines, the reasons participants gave for joining the course included: “I was curious” (E#43), “I saw the topic I’m very interested in” (E#64), and “[I want to] improve myself”

(E#65).¹ Notably, these reasons relate to self-fulfillment and personal agency rather than any external influence, mandate, or pressure.

Another factor in their intrinsic motivation was their expectations of the future: There was a strong sentiment that English would continue to be essential to these participants' professional lives. Participant E#64's statement was representative:

I think I will use [English] more because in this day, I think English is very important in my work. This day, I recruit some engineers and some project management people. At this time, they all need English as oral English in work. So, I think in the future I will use more English in my work and in my life.

This participant was being relocated to her company's car factory in Mexico, facing the imminent prospect of daily transcultural BELF communication. As a result, she was highly motivated to improve her proficiency. Relatedly, Participant C#34 said, "no matter what the plan is, what the plan B is, the English skills ... they need to [ac]company with me forever." Similar sentiments were offered by participants C#22, C#25, C#26, E#52, E#58, and E#59. In addition to the above contributors to intrinsic motivation, all participants were explicitly informed that they were free to leave the course at any time, which 12 did. Therefore, participants who completed the course were likely highly intrinsically motivated.

6.2.2 Learning Autonomy

The participants, regardless of their instructional condition, also displayed high levels of learning autonomy. Autonomy is having "the skills to manage various elements of one's environment.

¹ The participants are labeled as follows: Participants #1-36 were in the control group and will be labeled C#1-36 (e.g., C#26). Participants 37-68 were in the experimental group and will be labeled E#37-68 (e.g., E#37).

Otherwise, one is likely to be controlled by them” (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 30). Participant C#22 commented on the independent, self-paced, and autonomous nature of the course:

[F]or me, it’s totally fine because I’m an active learner. I’m not a passive learner. So, and I think your review, your comments are so detailed, elaborated. So, I think it’s a very good feedback, and I can get it from you. So, I think it’s totally fine to me. And I think it’s a great way to learn.

As long as he received feedback, C#22 was comfortable with the autonomous nature of the course. Additionally, Participant C#25 was eloquent on the matter:

The shift to a more autonomous learning style was a significant change from the traditional Chinese educational approach. Initially, it felt a bit overwhelming, as I was accustomed to a more structured and guided learning environment. However, I quickly adapted and found the independence to be empowering.

The participants’ autonomy, on the surface, defies expectations of Chinese learners, who might expect teacher-centered pedagogy in which the instructor is positioned as an authority (Hu, 2002), controlling their actions with mandates, precluding learner autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Yu et al., 2018). However, as Participant C#25 illustrated, the transition to an autonomous learning style was smooth, a finding supported by the participants’ statistically significant score improvements. Additionally, the participants’ learning autonomy was in part a vestige of their experience with COVID-19. As Participant C#31 explained:

I think I’m very used to this type of learning because of the pandemic, actually. I think we are getting used to learning things on the internet. And because of work, actually, I have to complete many courses on the internet. Like [company name], they will have many online training to do. So, I think it’s also a very convenient way to learn things.

In mainland China, where lockdowns were strict and, in places, prolonged, participants were forced to learn online and autonomously. Participant E#60 made a similar comment about the normalization of autonomous online learning due to the pandemic. Also, participants such as C#31 reported undergoing continuing professional development for work, which was often independently completed online, contributing to their comfort with autonomous learning. In sum, given their previous experience with such learning, the online mode of instruction in this study was familiar and facilitative of their learning autonomy.

Despite their intrinsic motivation and autonomy, some participants did struggle with thoughts of quitting the course. Participant E#52 explained: “I mean, it’s inner frustration, because on one side, I want to do one thing well. The other side, I want to rest, or do nothing. And the two, they are fighting.” E#52 attributed thoughts of quitting to her own struggles. In contrast, C#31 admitted that she considered quitting the course because of its content:

I thought the course would seem a little bit dull. Not that funny. And it seems a little bit complicated. And it seems the work, the homework, the questionnaire, the coursework a bit more than I expect. Maybe a lot more.

Perhaps not surprisingly, C#31’s post-intervention email score went down, which might be an effect of her struggles with motivation during the course. However, most interviewees did not consider quitting (e.g., C#6, C#26, C#36, E#41, E#43, E#60).

6.3 Effects of the Intervention on the Home Culture LCC

The two-way ANOVA run on the questionnaire-based home culture subscale scores revealed no statistically significant main effect for time of measurement, $F(1, 65) = 0.93, p = .338, \eta_p^2 = .014$. The effect size was small. The participants as a whole improved slightly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 5.03, SD = 0.44$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 5.07, SD = 0.43$). There was

a main effect of instructional conditions (i.e., the control group vs. the experimental group), $F(1, 65) = 7.21, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .100$. The effect size was medium. The experimental group ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.37$) outperformed the control group ($M = 4.93, SD = 0.37$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .37, p = .546, \eta_p^2 = .006$, indicating the differences between the pre- and post-intervention assessments were consistent for the two instructional conditions.

Both groups' home culture subscale scores improved from pre- to post-intervention, but not to a statistically significant degree, given the unexpectedly high baseline levels (4.93/6 and 5.14/6) of competence in the LCC self-reported by the participants. Perhaps job-experienced professionals perceived that they had already developed this LCC to some extent, thus limiting their improvement in the questionnaire-based assessment, a point that will be taken up in the discussion. Even so, there was qualitative evidence of their progress in this LCC, which they found useful and relevant. In the post-intervention interview, Participant E#46 said:

I think the best part for me, my idea is we need to make presentations to show our hometown's history and like pretend we have a customer to come to China. We need to show them our history and know about our hometown. I think this is very great.

As an independent international trader, this participant often had to host overseas customers. She appreciated the presentation assignment in Module 2, which allowed her to practice home cultural expression and served her workplace needs well. Participant C#34 concurred, highlighting how understanding "my cultures" helped her to understand "another people's cultures," a key rationale for the home culture LCC. Her sentiments were shared by other participants (e.g., E#41, E#52, E#64, and E#65), offering further evidence that the instructional activity was impactful and successful in raising awareness of and triggering into action the home culture LCC. As will be

shown in subsequent sections, there is qualitative evidence of the home culture LCC developing on each of the dimensions: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. Explanations reconciling the disjunction between the questionnaire scores and the qualitative evidence will be considered in the discussion section.

6.4 Effects of the Intervention on the Religion LCC

The two-way ANOVA run on the questionnaire's religion subscale scores found a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement, $F(1, 65) = 19.118, p = <.001, \eta_p^2 = .227$. The effect size was very large, far exceeding the criterial .14 for a large effect. The participants as a whole improved significantly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 4.93, SD = 0.51$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 5.14, SD = 0.44$). There was also a main effect of instructional conditions, $F(1, 65) = 7.37, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .102$. The effect size was medium. The experimental group ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.37$) outperformed the control group ($M = 4.91, SD = 0.44$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .67, p = .417, \eta_p^2 = .010$, indicating that the differences between the two instructional conditions remained consistent across the two points of measurement.

The statistically significant improvement in the religion subscale was supported by findings from the qualitative data. This improvement was illustrated by E#41, who described her experience learning about religion during the course:

And then you got this kind of religion things which plays a key role in cultural [...] how can you avoid, you know, religious issues if you did not understand, or you did not know it. You have to know about it, and then you have you can just avoid some, you know, battles or conflicts.

E#41's awareness of religious knowledge during the course was pronounced, as she went on to describe how she created a calendar incorporating the holidays of several different faiths to stay updated on her customers' work schedules. As will be shown in subsequent sections, there is qualitative evidence of the religion LCC development in terms of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes.

6.5 Effects of the Intervention on the Knowledge Component of LCCs

The two-way ANOVA run on the questionnaire's knowledge component scores found a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement, $F(1, 65) = 11.31, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .148$. The effect size was large, exceeding the threshold of .14 for a large effect. The participants as a whole improved significantly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 5.33, SD = 0.41$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 5.48, SD = 0.37$). There was also a main effect of instructional condition, $F(1, 65) = 4.99, p = .029, \eta_p^2 = .071$. The effect size was medium. The experimental group ($M = 5.51, SD = 0.30$) outperformed the control group ($M = 5.32, SD = 0.37$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .05, p = .832, \eta_p^2 = .001$, indicating the differences between the pre- and post-intervention assessments were consistent for the two instructional conditions or vice versa.

Additionally, the MCQ test was designed to be the primary measure of LCC development in the knowledge component for both the religion and home culture LCCs. Before analyzing the quantitative data in a 2-way ANOVA, Rasch analysis was run for validation because the population of the main study was different from those involved in the pilot study (i.e., job-experienced learners versus pre-experienced learners), and the sample in the main study was smaller (68 participants versus 229). The results, presented in Table 6.2, failed to match the Rasch model. Of particular concern was the extremely low person reliability, highlighted in red, which indicates that the

participants displayed similar abilities (Aryadoust et al., 2021). In other words, the test was not successful in separating out different levels of ability. Inspection of the Wright Map and the individual responses revealed that almost all participants answered the easy questions correctly while answering the difficult questions incorrectly, revealing that the results were organized in a binary manner rather than parsing out different ability levels. In practice, such results meant that participants' scores did not change in an informative way from pre- to post-intervention. After conferring with an experienced expert on Rasch analysis, I determined that the MCQ tests, when completed by this sample and under these conditions, were invalid because they did not distinguish ability levels or improvement. The results of the MCQ tests were removed from this study's analysis. Possible reasons for, and effects of, the invalidity of the MCQ tests will be discussed later.

Table 6.2 Rasch analysis results for the MCQ tests in the main study

Measure	Target Parameters	Pre-intervention <i>n</i> = 68		Post-intervention <i>n</i> = 68	
		Home culture	Religion	Home culture	Religion
Item reliability	> .7	.92	.88	.96	.82
Person reliability	> .7	.09	.02	.23	.00
Item fit	0.5 - 1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5	.5-1.5
Dimensionality	< 3	1.95	1.68	1.68	1.62
Local independence	< .3	< .3	< .3	< .3	< .3

As a consequence, the only quantitative data for the knowledge component came from the questionnaire, which evidenced statistically significant improvement for both groups. This improvement was consistent with what the post-intervention interviews revealed. For example, Participant C#33 said: “I really learn a lot about different culture. Generally, I knew some culture is different [...] but I know a lot. Actually, I’m improved in this part.” E#58 concurred, saying, “I

learned about some cultural differences between different countries and how I can handle the conflicts between the different culture.” Several other participants offered similar thoughts (e.g., C#6, C#22, C#33, C#34, E#58, E#59, and E#64). Additional participants were more specific, citing gaining knowledge about working habits and schedules in Egypt (E#60), Indian culture (C#33), gestures and costumes (E#60), and gift-giving (E#59). Examples of how increased awareness of Chinese home culture and religion manifested will be presented below.

6.5.1 Illustrations of Home Culture Knowledge Improvement

Convincing evidence of home cultural knowledge development arose from the qualitative data. There were two main themes, arising mostly from the case study email responses: *food and festivals as symbols of the home culture* and *increasingly sophisticated understandings of the home culture*. As a reminder, in the case study, a post-merger complaint of the local staff was that the Western-style canteen food was unfamiliar, and they felt Western holidays were being prioritized over local ones. Participants responded to these complaints, offering solutions. Responses such as C#27's are representative: “Respecting each other’s food culture, the restaurant should provide a variety of food choices, including not only dairy products but also more Chinese dishes with fresh vegetables and fish.” Notably, foods are not viewed as simply things to be eaten. They are expressed as symbols of respect. Therefore, disregarding the home culture’s foods or holidays is disrespectful. In linguacultural terms, these expressions of culture go beyond visible culture (tangible products) to deep culture, defined as “the unconscious frameworks of meaning, values, norms and hidden assumptions that we use to interpret our experiences” (Shaules, 2007, p. 2). Connecting food to respect was a common theme, expressed by C#7, C#15, C#16, C#23, and E#63. Similarly, connecting festivals to respect was conveyed by C#3, C#10, C#12, C#17, C#34, C#35,

E#45, E#53, E#68. Food as a symbol of culture and proxy for respect was a pronounced theme, illustrating evidence of the learners' enhanced home cultural awareness and ability to express it.

Additional evidence of the participants' improved ability to express their home culture knowledge was illustrated by their increasingly nuanced and sophisticated descriptions of their home cultures. In the self-reflection, C#14 talked about the differences between the northern and southern regions of the country:

There are many differences in business negotiations and conferences in the north and south of China. For example, southern Chinese places greater emphasis on efficiency and convenience. The business model in northern China places greater emphasis on relationships. With the development of modern society, my personal feeling is that the differences between countries still exist but are increasingly narrowing. What is more reflected is the individual differences of each country, rather than the differences between countries.

Highlighting that the differences inside the country are comparable to the differences between countries reveals two things: It illustrates the diversity of the home culture and offers a global perspective by positioning the Chinese home culture within the broader international context, a perspective espoused by the LCC framework. Participant E#62 also considered the differences between northern and southern Chinese, making a more specific comparison:

Different home cultures, to some degree, indeed make me not only recognize different things but positively engage with various cultures in business activities. For instance, when I chat with northerners in China, the communication way had better be straight and frank, aligning with their local personality, like Americans.

Participant E#62 likens northern Chinese to Americans – again comparing internal diversity to between-country differences. Such comparisons are an illustration of what Hu and McKay (2014) asserted: That home cultural understanding serves as a foundation for understanding other cultures. In both cases, the participants showed insight into the regional level of home cultural diversity and then drew comparisons to overseas countries, evidence of their understanding of how diverse their home culture is at the regional level. Additionally, both of the above examples considered business function, which inherently involves the organizational level of culture. Including multiple levels of culture in their responses is another demonstration of an increasingly sophisticated expression of how linguacultures function in business. Exemplifications of home cultural diversity at the regional and organizational levels were also provided by participants C#2, E#41, E#44, E#47, E#54, E#58, E#60, E#61, E#62, E#63, and E#64. As can be seen, more members of the experimental group expressed the complexity and diversity of their home culture than members of the control group, likely due to the specific treatment of home culture in the adapted version of the materials. This finding represents one piece of qualitative evidence that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the knowledge dimension of the home culture LCC.

Another way participants demonstrated improved home cultural knowledge awareness was reflected in their expressions of cultural dimensions, exemplified by C#14's email in response to the post-merger complaints about cultural clashes:

Chinese people tend to be more tactful in communication, and some may not directly express their thoughts. However, I think French people may be more direct in communication, expressing their ideas and suggestions directly. These two different communication methods may cause some misunderstandings.

On the one hand, C#14 described the communication styles relatively: She did not evaluate one as

being better than the other, but just saw them as different, a key LCC and GELT perspective. She also alluded to cultural dimensions, specifically the *High Context* versus *Low Context dimension* proposed by Hall (1989), which categorizes cultures according to direct or indirect communication styles. Such a reference illustrated her growing knowledge of cultural dimensions and how culture might influence communication in professional settings. On the other hand, the above description might be considered essentialist in that it considers cultures as being static and divided along national lines. A more nuanced understanding of cultural dimensions related to the home culture was illustrated in C#6's email. He explained why the merged company should not force employees to compete for jobs:

...it seems quite embarrassing and immoral to compete with your friends in Chinese culture for a reward. Let me give you an example. Gianmarco Tamberim, an Italian high jump athlete, shared an Olympic go[ld] medal with Mutaz Barshim, [a] Qatari athlete, in Tokyo Olympic. It seems competition is never a barrier to their friendship.

Conversely, they try their best in their game to show respect to each other.

Participant C#6 made a cultural argument against internal competition. His explanation could be framed within the *Masculine* versus *Feminine* dimension (later re-branded as the *Motivation towards Achievement and Success* dimension), which delineates the degree to which competition versus support is propagated in a culture (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede Insights, 2023). Participant C#6 argued for a supportive environment rather than a competitive one because it aligned with the cultural background of the employees. Participants C#6, C#28, C#31, C#34, E#50, and E#54 also alluded to cultural dimensions. Such expressions of culture could be simultaneously described as insightful, exhibiting considerable cultural knowledge, but simplistic, discounting the importance of communication and interaction (Baker, 2022b) to the manifestation of cultural dimensions.

Even so, the majority of examples illustrate the improved awareness of home cultural knowledge along with the ability to express it, manifested as increasingly sophisticated descriptions of the diversity and heterogeneity of cultures and how cultural artifacts such as food and festivals symbolize deeper meanings (e.g., respect). These examples also showed evidence of a more nuanced understanding of culture functioning at multiple levels, namely, regional and organizational.

Next, I examine how religion LCC knowledge was treated by participants.

6.5.2 Illustrations of Religion Knowledge Improvement

Both groups' statistically significant improvement on the religion subscale was corroborated by the post-intervention interviews. Participants' expressions of religion LCC knowledge divided into several themes: *appropriate practices*, *work schedules*, *food and festivals*, and *sacred locations*.

The first theme that illustrated the development of religion LCC knowledge was expressions of *appropriate practices*. Participant E#59 offered the following example:

I was asked to choose some gifts for our customer. They are from there. Actually, they are living in the Middle East now, Riyadh, but they are Indian. So, when I was searching for gifts for them, I was like thinking about those like cultural difference.

Yeah, yeah. Thinking about cultural difference, like those festivals.

She applied her learning from the course to the process of choosing gifts for her business contacts, thus making culturally informed decisions. In this case, cultural knowledge pertains to interpersonal communication, as the act of gift-giving aims to develop relationships for business purposes (Pullin, 2010). Such anecdotes provided evidence of participants' greater awareness and ability to practice what they learned regarding the religion LCC in the workplace. These anecdotes

also highlight the importance of context and the unique position that job-experienced learners hold: LCC improvement can have tangible and immediate workplace implications.

Similarly, C#27 demonstrated growing knowledge by offering an example of how religion impacted *work schedules*. She wrote:

In the later stage of the negotiation, our Chinese colleagues scheduled the meeting on Friday. However, in Pakistan, they did not work that day, so the meeting arrangement ignored cultural differences and confirmed the time with the other side in advance, which eventually had some impact on our business progress.

The above passage illustrates a rich point – a mismatch between linguacultural groups (Agar, 2002). It is notable for elucidating how the logistics of a Muslim weekly work calendar can affect work function. Further, it pertains to transactional communication for executing work tasks. Considering the former example about gift-giving alongside the latter example about schedules, it can be concluded that religion LCC knowledge affects both transactional and interpersonal communication. The fact that participants showed improved knowledge according to both functions is evidence of their increasingly sophisticated awareness of religion and its various effects on professional communication.

Relatedly, religion affected stakeholders' knowledge about *food and festivals*, which, in turn, affected business and communication. E#49's response was illustrative:

I remembered last month, April, was the end of the Malaysian Fasting Day. Because of the need to organize the online meeting, it happened to be arranged at noon. In Malaysian Islam, Muslims do not exclude others from eating in front of them during Ramadan, but as a basic etiquette, friends who do not fast should try not to eat in front of them. If the lunch meeting is in the office, people can eat their own lunch, otherwise

just schedule the meeting. It should be understood if a lunch meeting must be arranged
[...], Muslims [can] choose not to attend.

This excerpt is a clear illustration of how religion can underpin festivals and, therefore, food choices, which can have a direct impact on business function and communication. Also, notable in this excerpt is the level of empathy expressed by E#49, explaining that it was good etiquette to not eat in front of fasting Muslims and that religious observers could choose whether or not to attend lunch meetings during Ramadan. These arrangements offered agency to those observing and gave their colleagues the opportunity to show understanding and support. Similar expressions of understanding how religion affected business were offered by several other participants: E#46 recalled taking Indian clients to a vegetarian restaurant to respect their religiously dictated eating habits. Likewise, C#14, C#15, and C#16 mentioned religion impacting food and eating habits such as halal requirements and not eating pork. Addressing potential rich points through cultural understanding provided evidence of improved awareness of religion and how it might affect business function and communication.

There was also evidence of religious understanding when participants expressed their home culture. As a reminder, post-intervention question #1 asked participants to reflect on how they would introduce their home culture to overseas business guests. Some participants introduced *sacred locations*. For example, E#64 introduced Foshan and recommended visiting the Ancestral Temple. She wrote that “the reason for visiting the ‘Ancestral Temple’ is that we can learn about the religious beliefs of Chinese people there,” adding that visitors like to “pray” at the temple. She was illustrating the importance of the temple and the behavior of prayer as a symbol of their beliefs. Participant C#2 also introduced Foshan, though he focused on the *Guanyin* statue at Xiqiao Mountain, writing, “There is a 观音 (a God) bronze statue in 西樵 (Xiqiao) Mountain. The people

believe it will take care of them and make a better life for them.” Notably, C#2 expressed terms – usually nouns – in both Chinese and English, illustrating the multilingual repertoire at his disposal. He was one of only a handful of participants to include Chinese in his responses, a finding aligning with previous studies about home-cultural self-expression in which few participants used their L1 in their expressions of home culture (Peltonen & Ning, 2025). In the above excerpt, C#2 went beyond describing surface-level and observable aspects of religion, instead expressing the deeper aspects of religion, such as worldviews and beliefs. Similarly, E#58 showed deep cultural knowledge when introducing her hometown of Hengyang City in Hunan Province. Hengyang is home to Mount Heng, one of the five sacred mountains in China.

Rich religious culture distinguishes Mount Heng from the other four sacred mountains of China. There are lots of mountains on the hillside where the monks preach Buddhism and Taoism. If you are confused about your relationship, career, or academic promise, you can ask for signs here. We believe sincerity leads to spirituality.

E#58 was eloquent, outlining Mount Heng’s position amongst China’s sacred mountains and describing the mountain and the monk’s behaviors. More importantly, she expressed deep cultural knowledge by offering reasons to pray and beliefs about spirituality. It was a multilayered and nuanced description of religion, evidence of a greater awareness of religion in the home cultural context and how to explain it to others.

The above examples offer evidence of the development of linguacultural knowledge about religion and how it can affect business and communication, manifested as *appropriate practices*, *work schedules*, *food and festivals*, and *sacred locations*. While some examples offer surface-level descriptions of visible culture, others delve more deeply into beliefs and outlooks, representing deep cultural knowledge. Additionally, the examples discussed above illustrate how religion can

impact both transactional and interpersonal communicative functions. The fact that the participants showed how it could impact these two different functions is yet more evidence of improved, sophisticated, and nuanced awareness of religion. Overall, the participants showed great facility in conveying religious aspects of their home cultures at both the visible and deep levels, powerful evidence of improved knowledge.

6.6 Effects of the Intervention on the Skills/Strategies Component of LCCs

The two-way ANOVA run on the skills/strategies subscale scores did not find a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement, $F(1, 65) = 2.41, p = .125, \eta_p^2 = .036$. The effect size was small. The participants as a whole improved somewhat from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 4.59, SD = 0.64$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 4.69, SD = 0.59$). There was a main effect of instructional conditions, $F(1, 65) = 5.79, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .082$. The effect size was medium. The experimental group ($M = 4.81, SD = 0.51$) outperformed the control group ($M = 4.49, SD = 0.57$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .06, p = .808, \eta_p^2 = .001$, indicating the differences between the two instructional conditions were consistent at the two points of measurement.

As discussed, in contrast to the skills/strategies component of the questionnaire, both groups showed statistically significant improvement in the email assessment, which directly assessed skills/strategies. The effect sizes were large ($\eta_p^2 = .205$). Supporting the quantitative results of the email tasks and diverging from the questionnaire results, the qualitative data offered explicit evidence of skills/strategies improvement.

In the post-intervention interviews, participants such as C#25 were clear about their skill improvement:

The best part of the course, in my opinion, was the practical exercise where I was given a specific business scenario and tasked with writing a business reply. This activity was not only challenging but also immensely helpful in applying the theoretical knowledge we had learned. The feedback provided was particularly insightful, and it greatly improved my ability to craft effective business correspondence.

Participants C#31, C#34, and E#59 also highlighted the efficacy of the email tasks in prompting them to use skills and strategies to solve the cultural problems caused by the merger. The content of their post-intervention emails was informative and showcased their increasingly sophisticated consideration of skills/strategies, as presented below.

6.6.1 Skills/Strategies Regarding Home Culture

Participants believed that the fundamental problem arising from the case studies was that their home culture was being ignored, misunderstood, or minimized. Their main goal was to find ways to express their home culture to correct the power imbalances evident in the newly merged company. There were two main strategies for enabling such expression: *training to develop communication skills* and *adopting policies*.

The most common strategy for developing communicative skills in conveying the home culture was employee *training*. The goal of the training was twofold: learning about target cultures and how to communicate with them (e.g., French or Australian, depending on the version of the case study), and learning about the home cultures (e.g., mainland Chinese in Shanghai or Hong Kong locals) and how to express them. Participant C#15's solution was representative: "Given that team members come from different cultural backgrounds, we can consider customized language courses that not only teach language skills but also incorporate the introduction and comparison of the respective cultures." Notably, this suggestion explicitly connects language and culture. Though

the learning materials never explicitly used the term linguaculture, this participant appears to have adopted the concept and used it in her solution. The sentiment behind this strategy was that improved transcultural communication skills would enable home cultural expression – from both sides – resulting in more empathy and better understanding, which, in turn, would facilitate smoother business function and less friction. Proposals for training were offered by almost every participant. Their strategic solutions included general cultural training (C#7, C#13, C#15, C#16, E#39, E#40, E#41, E#42, E#64), training in Australian films (because it was a media company) (C#1, C#33, C#63), French working culture (C#5), Chinese working culture (C#5, E#57), English courses (C#8, C#11, C#13, C#21, C#32, E#52, E#56, E#61), Chinese courses (C#11, C#32, E#57), customs, etiquette, values, and taboos (C#15, C#32, E#39), cultural integration, adaptation, sensitivity (C#25, C#29, E#54), and peer training (E#51).

The participants also proposed *policies* aimed at correcting power imbalances between overseas and local linguacultural groups. These policies were designed to empower the locals to express their home culture, which would enable others to understand their needs, wants, and perspectives. Participant C#35 suggested that “the merger aims to utilize HK branch’s cultural resources and market channels. Adding more Chinese executives is crucial for successful expansion into the Asian market.” Though C#35 discusses the issue according to the regional level (e.g., HK Chinese versus overseas), the suggestion also displays an understanding of how management structures affect communication at the corporate culture level (e.g., market channels). The policy of changing the management mix to rebalance the linguacultural background of the organization’s power structure was intended to facilitate the expression of the locals’ home cultural perspectives. Similar policies to adjust management structures were proposed by C#6, E#28, E#39, E#40, E#54, E#56, E#61, and E#66. The fact that the strategies addressed both the regional and

organizational levels of culture illustrates the participants' increasingly sophisticated skill/strategy approaches to solve the problems at hand.

Another policy-based strategy directly related to communication was illustrated when E#60 proposed developing "a more open and inclusive communication system, to enhance employees' engagement, making them feel that they are part of the company." This strategic approach meant implementing policies that facilitated employees' contributions and engagement, thus leading to improved communication. Unlike the management-level policies described above, this policy was designed to empower employees. The strategy of proposing policies and arrangements to facilitate intra-organizational communication was prevalent. Proposals included teambuilding activities (e.g., C#3, C#4, C#15, C#17, C#18, C#30, C#36, E#38, E#39, E#41, E#47, E#48, E#53, E#61, E#63, E#64), cultural integration activities or exchanges (e.g., C#25, E#37, E#56, E#64, E#51, E#62, E#68), creating a cultural committee or department (C#24, C#16, E#42, E#51, E#64), interviews, meetings, or town halls (e.g., C#7, C#19, C#26, C#32, E#37, E#44, E#54, E#60, E#62, E#67), and peer mentor programs or buddy systems (e.g., C#34, E#39). Interestingly, several of the proposed strategies supported interpersonal communication for relationship building (teambuilding, buddy systems), others targeted transactional communication (interviews, meetings, town halls, and peer mentor programs), and still others considered both (cultural integration activities and exchanges, cultural committee/department). In other words, enabling both transactional and interpersonal communication was part of the strategies to solve the organization's rich points. These multilayered solutions are further evidence of an increasingly developed skills/strategies component, particularly addressing home cultural mismatches in the newly merged organization. In sum, the strategies of developing linguistic and cultural communicative skills, along with policy adjustments aimed at improving home cultural expression,

were proposed to rebalance power relations in the organization, which would ideally lead to smoother and more productive workplace communication and function.

In contrast to the above strategic proposals focusing on equity and development, some proposed solutions were negatively disposed. For example, C#3 responded to the local staff's worries that they were losing their cultural identity after merging with an Australian company by writing: "Employees who still spread such opinions may not be suitable for the new company's work to a certain extent...we will investigate losses caused to our company by this statement." Rather than showing empathy for employees, C#3 recommended a punitive strategy, invalidating the honestly expressed concerns of the employees that their culture was vanishing from the newly merged organization. E#54 also proposed a punitive strategy when responding to complaints about the canteen's food, recommending punishing the canteen manager. In both cases, the strategic approach is negative, focusing on punishment rather than using these rich points as opportunities to develop LCCs. Such examples of negative strategic approaches should be considered when interpreting the non-significant results of the questionnaire's skills/strategies component.

6.6.2 Skills/Strategies Regarding Religion

Skills and strategies related to religion were evidenced by responses to post-intervention question #2, which required participants to respond to an employee's request for leave on religious grounds. Two main strategies manifested: *gathering information* and *examining policies*.

Many of the participants, before responding to the employee, endeavored to *gather information* about the religious holiday to ascertain the gravity of the request. This information would inform how they proceeded. Participant C#24's response was illustrative:

I would have a conversation with [the employee asking for leave] to fully understand the details of [the] religious holidays, the specific dates, and the significance of these days to fully ensure I am aware of your needs.

Notably, C#24 understood that she did not just need to learn the facts (e.g., the dates of the holiday) but also the rationale and beliefs behind the request (e.g., significance). Her response showed her understanding that there might be deep levels of culture and affective factors (attitudes, emotions) of which she was unaware. Perhaps this was why she would gather information directly from the employee rather than relying on the Internet for the information: She wanted to gain a personalized perspective that included the sentiment behind the request. This approach illustrated her burgeoning grasp of religion's impact on business and workplace communication: She understood that religion functions at deep cultural levels and requires tact and nuance to address. In acknowledging that they did not know enough about the religion or its holidays to make informed decisions, participants such as C#24 underlined the need for the religion LCC. Further evidence of the general lack of the religion LCC was evidenced by the high number of responses in which gathering more information was the first step (e.g., C#9, C#10, C#13, C#26, C#28, C#29, C#35, E#39, E#42, E#50, E#51, E#52, E#53, and E#58). Though the participants lacked religion knowledge, they exhibited skills/strategies improvement in their understanding of their deficiency and proposing strategies to address it.

The second strategic approach to the request for leave was to examine workplace *policies*. First, participants determined if there were existing policies to handle such situations. Participant C#25's response was representative: "First I will confirm whether there are relevant leave management rules or precedents. Follow the rules or precedents if there are." Participants responded based on their own workplaces, experiences, and perspectives. The fact that they did

not know whether there were policies for religious leave (in which case it would be necessary to change or create them) indicates a crucial gap in workplace knowledge. The participants not only needed to gather more information about the religion and holiday itself, but they also needed to gather information about the policies surrounding such leave. Evidence that this knowledge gap was pervasive was illustrated by the number of similar responses (e.g., C#25, C#8, C#6, E#49, E#51, E#57, E#61, and E#64). Religion knowledge was lacking in these learners, which had secondary consequences such as ignorance of relevant policies. By understanding the details and importance of the holiday and the policies and implications of the leave, the participants illustrated practical and thoughtful strategies to respond to the request. Such findings indicate enhanced linguacultural competence in the skills/strategies component of the religion LCC, supporting the quantitative findings from the email tasks but diverging from the quantitative findings from the questionnaire-based assessment.

6.7 Effects of the Intervention on the Attitudes Component of LCCs

The two-way ANOVA run on the questionnaire-based attitude scores found a statistically significant main effect for time of measurement, $F(1, 65) = .34, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .072$. The effect size was medium. The participants as a whole improved significantly from the pre-intervention assessment ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.50$) to the post-intervention one ($M = 5.28, SD = 0.50$). There was also a main effect of instructional conditions, $F(1, 65) = 2.97, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .072$. The effect size was medium. The experimental group ($M = 5.36, SD = 0.41$) outperformed the control group ($M = 5.11, SD = 0.49$). The interaction between time of measurement and instructional conditions was not significant, $F(1, 65) = .87, p = .353, \eta_p^2 = .013$, indicating the differences between the pre- and post-intervention assessments were consistent for the two instructional conditions.

Qualitative evidence supports the questionnaire-based finding that the participants improved in the attitudes component. For example, in the post-intervention interview, Participant E#46 said:

When we are dealing with different countries' customer and we need to [realize] sometimes that there is a different culture, you need to feel [like] them and understand them. And then when you talk about something [...], I think that will be easiest to talk together.

This participant highlighted the importance of empathy and mutual understanding as underpinning rapport-building and successful business communication. Further evidence of attitudinal development came from the case study emails. Participant E#60 employed a proverb to illustrate her attitude:

When it comes to understanding diverse cultures, it reminds me of a Chinese saying: ‘海纳百川，和而不同’. It means that you should be open-minded and respect different perspectives and cultures. Although we are different, we can get on well with each other.

By using a Chinese proverb, she leveraged her home cultural knowledge to define her attitude towards cultures, illustrating how the different components (knowledge and attitudes) could work synergistically and simultaneously. Overall positive attitudes were also expressed by C#11, C#14, C#15, C#17, C#26, C#29, C#32, E#22, E#39, E#40, and E#54. These expressions exemplified participants' attitudes that facilitated LCC development. The following sections examine how the attitudes component manifested in the home culture and religion LCCs, respectively.

6.7.1 Attitudes Surrounding Home Culture

The attitudes embedded in the participants' home cultural expression tended to be *empathetic*, and they paid a great deal of attention to the need for *respect*. Additionally, they showed a keen

awareness of how language indexes attitudes. One fascinating finding arose from participants trying to explain the behaviors of members of their home culture. In response to post-intervention question #1, C#16 endeavored to unpack why elders may stare at foreigners:

Also, older citizens may not see foreigners as often when they were young. So they may look or stare at you for too long, which may make foreign visitors feel uncomfortable, but they are just curious and don't have any, harbor malicious intentions.

In addition to exemplifying empathy in trying to explain the home cultural perspective of a seemingly bizarre behavior, it is notable that C#16 specified "older" citizens (as opposed to a more general statement such as "Chinese people"). She was differentiating a sub-cultural group, delineated by age, illustrating her understanding that cultures function at multiple scales, with different sub-cultural groups comprising the larger culture (Baker, 2022b). This nuanced explanation not only illustrated empathy but also an understanding of the home culture's diversity. Similarly, E#44 showed a high level of awareness and empathy when introducing her home culture to overseas guests. At first, she thought that taking them to a history museum would offer insight into her home culture. However, upon reflection, she decided to eliminate the trip:

I'd skip the Humen Fort and the Opium War Museum to avoid any discomfort for our French colleagues, considering France's history with China.

Participant E#44 showed empathy for foreigners' perspectives by understanding that this museum may paint them as oppressors, villains, or adversaries. She demonstrated how understandings of culture and history can be relative: A museum that is a source of pride for members of the home culture might be awkward or offensive for members of target cultures. The above examples from

C#16 and E#44 are evidence of how the course impacted their home cultural attitudes, prompting them to reconsider the topics with renewed care and empathy.

Another way the participants exhibited positive attitudes was through the *language* they used. That is to say, they identified that the linguistic form of the communication was impactful. Perhaps the most poignant example of this came from C#33 when she responded to the case study email outlining the cultural problems post-merger:

I noticed that you frequently use “we” and “they” in your mail[.] We are all now part of the same company. We should not have “them” anymore, right? You should learn from each other’s cultures and customs so that you can all understand and integrate better.

Participant C#33 astutely identified the inherent divisiveness of the language used and argued for a reorientation of how cultural integration should be discussed at a linguistic level. Her response suggested a grasp of the concept of linguaculture: She was addressing cultural attitudes (meaning) through the means of their linguistic expression (form). Her approach was notable in its specificity, identifying the words used, and its empathy, by explaining how those words might be construed and changed. Meanwhile, most other participants’ linguistic expressions of positive attitudes were more straightforward, using terms such as “fairness, harmony, stability, and joint construction and development” (E#32), “fairness and justice” (E#61), and “mutual understanding” (E#66). In sum, these expressions of positive attitudes showed increased sensitivity to how language conveys meaning.

Next, almost all of the respondents mentioned *respect* when talking about cultural competence, making it the most frequently expressed attitude in this study. For example, E#40 wrote, “Respecting and understanding the work habits and values of different cultures is key.” Participant

C#29 was similarly explicit: “the company values and respects cultural diversity through behavior, policy making and decision-making processes.” While both excerpts mention respect, the former orients more toward how individuals behave, while the latter functions at the organizational level. The concept of respect as expressed by these participants illustrates several important points: First, it implies a multicultural perspective of positive attitudes, as the participants mentioned respect for cultures (plural) rather than demanding respect for a particular culture. Second, as expressed above, the positive attitude of respect was expected to lead to positive communication, behavior, and work function, echoing researchers’ arguments that attitudes drive behaviors and competencies (Byram, 2021). Finally, the fact that respect was mentioned so frequently indicated that it was a key attitude required in the workplace by this study’s job-experienced professionals: Not only was respect prominent in the emails, mentioned by C#3, C#34, E#37, E#40, E343, E#53, E#54, E#43, E#60, and E#65, but it was also propounded by almost every participant in their self-reflections and post-intervention questions.

Despite the pervasive expression of positive attitudes, there were instances of negative attitudes. For example, when addressing the cultural conflict between the French and Chinese linguacultural groups after the merger, C#31 wrote, “I’m afraid the French people would not be able to achieve what you’ve done....” She went on to criticize their efforts, saying “the French team should make more effort to bridge our missions and the local Chinese market.” In these two excerpts, C#31 insinuates that the Chinese staff work harder than the French staff and argues that the French would never be able to handle the same workload or attain similar levels of productivity as the Chinese. She then blames the French team for not adjusting to the local culture. Such a perspective could be viewed as ethnocentric, assessing one’s home cultural group as being superior to another (Byram, 2021). On the other hand, perhaps C#31’s intentions were not to criticize but

to indicate that the French group could improve according to the “When in Rome...” competency and endeavor to adapt to the local culture. Regardless, the means of conveying such a message is vital, and these comments had negative connotations. As participant C#31 had years of work experience in a multicultural environment, her responses illustrate that positive attitudes are not automatically inculcated through workplace experience. In fact, her work experience may have generated negative attitudes. Even so, the qualitative data overwhelmingly contained expressions of positive attitudes, offering convincing evidence of LCC development in the attitudes component of home culture.

6.7.2 Attitudes Surrounding Religion

Participants’ attitudes towards religion were also empathetic and respectful. As a reminder, post-intervention question #2 asked how participants would respond if an employee asked for leave on religious grounds. Participant C#31 offered an empathetic response: “First, I would show my understanding and respect to my fellow’s religion and ask about his holiday detail to show care.” She mentioned respect explicitly, and her empathy was exemplified by showing “understanding” and “care”, sentiments expressed in numerous responses. Participant E#44 showed a similar level of empathy: “As an international company, we must fully consider the cultural and traditional differences among our employees. All in all, our goal is to foster a more humane, united, and efficient team.” This participant’s response is notable because, unlike Participant C#31’s, it is from the organization’s point of view, illustrating her grasp of the multiple cultural levels operating. Her response is also poignant because of the adjectives she used to describe the characteristics to which the team aspires: “Humane” and “united” indicate positive affective characteristics, while “efficient” pertains to workplace performance, a reminder that the positive attitudes ultimately drive competencies needed for business function. In addition to expressing empathy and

employing positive vocabulary, most participants made great efforts to approve the employees' leave as a matter of respect. In fact, all but two found a way to grant the request. In other words, their actions signified positive attitudes. The above instances align with the statistically significant improvement of both groups in the attitudes component of the questionnaire-based assessments from pre- to post-intervention.

Even so, there were instances of less positive attitudes. For example, E#45 expressed awareness of religion but decided it should be avoided:

I think that if foreigners visit my city or town, I should avoid going to some religious sites as much as possible. In some foreign countries, religion is mysterious and taboo.

I also should prevent communicating religious problems with them.

He retained the belief that religion is taboo, despite the experimental curriculum's efforts to express otherwise. Perhaps E#45's response highlights the recalcitrance of attitudes toward the topic of religion, even if pertinent to business communication. Examples of negative attitudes notwithstanding, the responses overwhelmingly conveyed positive attitudes regarding religion as it pertains to business function and communication. The findings are qualitative evidence in support of the questionnaire-based results, which showed that participants in both groups improved in the attitudes component.

6.8 Discussion

The findings presented above provide robust evidence of the LCC framework's contribution to learning improvement. The following sections examine how the results can be understood within the landscape of extant literature.

6.8.1 Readily Developable LCCs

RQ3 asks: *How effective is a pedagogical intervention informed by the LCC framework in enhancing BE learners' linguacultural competence and meeting their transcultural communicative needs?* The quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that both groups made statistically significant improvement with large effect sizes for both the questionnaire-based assessments ($\eta_p^2 = .114$) and the email tasks ($\eta_p^2 = .205$). Relatedly, both groups showed statistically significant improvement on the religion subscale, the knowledge subscale, and the attitudes subscale, with large effect sizes of $\eta_p^2 = .227$ and $\eta_p^2 = .148$, and a medium effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .072$ respectively. While the questionnaire-based home culture subscale and the skills/strategies subscale showed raw score improvement for both groups, it was not statistically significant. However, the email assignments directly assessed the learners' skill/strategy performance, providing convincing evidence of their development in that area. Qualitative data provided further evidence of LCC improvement for both groups. Based on the findings summarized, it could be concluded that both the experimental and control conditions were effective in improving LCC knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes through raised awareness. Contrary to expectations, the control condition was equally efficient as the experimental condition. In general, the qualitative data aligned with the quantitative data, with two exceptions: the home culture subscale and, to some degree, the skills/strategies component, whose qualitative data aligned with the quantitative data obtained with the email tasks but contrasted with the questionnaire-based data.

These findings are particularly encouraging given that the scope of the intervention was limited to accommodate participants' heavy schedules and time constraints. As mentioned in the methodology section, a pilot study was conducted before this study (e.g., Peltonen, 2025). One

lesson learned from the pilot was that the originally planned curriculum was too expansive for busy professionals volunteering to complete the course; consequently, it was condensed in the main study. This condensation was necessary but potentially risky, as the methodology literature suggests that “a pretest-posttest design can provide only a limited picture of the L2 learning process” (Rogers & Revesz, 2020, p. 136). In other words, learning improvements often require extended periods of time to manifest. This intervention was based on just a single unit from a textbook, structured such that learners completed required tasks independently over the course of several hours, yet they showed significant improvements, suggesting that the LCCs can be developed with great efficiency in curricula. The most plausible explanation for the improvements experienced by both groups during this relatively limited intervention is that these job-experienced professionals seemed to already possess a certain degree of LCC, but the intervention prompted raised awareness and improved expression. Put another way, both groups improved because the LCCs are relevant and important, had already been inculcated in the learners to some degree, but improved awareness and the ability to express the LCCs were prompted by the intervention, generating statistically significant improvements in both groups. Further, that the two different treatment conditions supported the development of the LCCs indicates that they can be cultivated in multiple versions of curricula and therefore have a wide range of pedagogical utility. The individual competencies of the LCC framework are operationalizable, pedagogically addressable through adaptations, and assessable (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Additionally, the improvement of the experimental group, exposed to novel adaptations, further illustrates the efficacy of the LCC construct underpinning those materials. This conclusion aligns Hadley and Hadley’s (2022) argument that a novel adapted curriculum performing similarly to an established, globally

distributed, and professionally designed one in an experimental intervention is evidence of its pedagogical value.

The following sections discuss the two subscales (home culture and religion) and the three components (knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes) respectively, examining the nuances of the quantitative findings. I also consider how the qualitative data supported or contrasted with the quantitative findings, and how all of them fit within the extant literature.

6.8.2 Home Culture Defied Expectations

On the surface, it was surprising that the home culture subscale scores did not improve for either group. In fact, an assumption of this study was that the participants' home cultural expression would be a major deficiency, one that has been examined by researchers since Cong (2000) characterized it as Chinese *culture aphasia*. Further, Chinese users of English themselves have reported home cultural self-expression to be a challenge (Peltonen & Ning, 2025). To be clear, the concept of cultural aphasia indicates that individuals possess deep knowledge of their home culture, but they do not know how to express it in English. However, the participants' pre-intervention scores showed the opposite: 4.93/6 for the control group and 5.11/6 for the experimental group, indicating that the participants felt that they had a quite high ability to express their home culture in business situations. There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, this study focused on job-experienced learners working transculturally, unlike the majority of extant studies on the topic, which have focused almost exclusively on pre-experienced learners (Guan et al., 2018; Huo, 2015; Luo, 2011; Peltonen & Ning, 2025; Song & Bai, 2018; Wang, 2013). It is possible that these job-experienced learners had the opportunity (or necessity) to develop the ability to express their home culture for their workplace communication. After all, participants such as E#46 explained that introducing overseas customers to Guangzhou was a

regular task for her. From that perspective, the questionnaire scores are understandable because they reflected a competency that the job-experienced participants knew was important and had already developed. This finding is yet another example of the importance of conducting research with job-experienced professionals whose perspectives and competencies are different from pre-experienced learners' (Frendo, 2005). At the same time, the participants did show evidence of improving their home cultural self-expression, as exhibited by the qualitative data. The specifics of their improvement will be discussed in the following sections when considering the three components of LCCs.

6.8.3 Developing the Religion LCC

The findings of this study indicate that participants' religion LCC improved, as evidenced by their statistically significant improvement along with qualitative support for that improvement. These results must be considered in light of the conventional perspective in ELT on religion as a taboo topic that must be avoided and is therefore absent from Western-created curricula, especially global coursebooks (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, religion is one of the PARSNIPS (Brown & Nanguy, 2021) forbidden topics that must be eliminated from ELT materials, lest they cause disagreements, controversy, or, as one prominent business English materials developer told me in private, lawsuits. Because the majority of materials used for Chinese BE teaching are created in Western countries, namely the United Kingdom and the United States (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2018), Chinese learners are not exposed to religious content, even in versions of *Market Leader* specifically adapted for the Chinese market (Si, 2020). Due to the above, this study's examination of the topic of religion in a BE curriculum for Chinese learners represented a foray into an unexplored territory. Viewed that way, this study was successful in that it broached the subject of religion at all. In fact, out of the 68 participants in the study, only one

(E#45) explicitly labeled religion as “taboo” when responding to the post-intervention question. All 67 other participants addressed religion openly and explicitly. Therefore, a major finding of this study supports the sentiment that basing materials decisions on customers’ “perceived sensitivities” can strip important cultural content from textbooks (Gray, 2002, pp. 143-144). Treating religion as taboo is a disservice to learners, especially in the Chinese context, who may lack religious understanding but need it in the internationally functioning workplace (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). Religion, in fact, can be addressed in a nuanced, sensitive, and non-controversial way in BE.

For perspective on how this study’s treatment of religion functioned, we must look beyond West-created (e.g., Anglo-American) materials. As addressing religion in ELT curricula has precedents in certain Muslim contexts, it is useful to view the results of this study in relation to them. For example, Hamid (2024) examined how the coursebooks intended for Bangladesh’s secular schools and those adapted for *madrasas* (religious schools) presented languages and images. In the Iranian context, Sharifian (2010) highlighted the explicit presence of Islamic content in ELT coursebooks, with entire passages devoted to the prophet Muhammad. Both were examples of societies “producing local textbooks [...] as an alternative, which has enabled them to choose content that is compatible with their religious and cultural values” (Hamid, 2024, p. 744). The current study’s treatment of religion differed from the above studies in its global perspective of religion. Rather than focusing on specific religions or sets of beliefs, the idea was to allow the learners to explore the religious content arising from their own experiences, which resulted in descriptions of Buddhist and Taoist systems in their home culture (C#2, E#58, E#64) as well as anecdotes about interactions with Muslim or Hindu stakeholders (E#41, E#45, E#46). Unlike the “cosmetic” adaptations to address religion described by Hamid (2024, p. 749), I argue that this

study's adaptations were comprehensive, nuanced, and flexible, garnering statistically significant quantitative improvements. Further support for this claim came from the qualitative data, revealing understanding of visible culture (e.g., tangible products such as foods, festivals, and habits) reinforced by understanding of deep culture (e.g., beliefs and worldviews such as "sincerity leads to spirituality") (Shaules, 2007). In other words, participants' consideration of religion went beyond the visible to explore the sacred, symbolic, and intangible. Perhaps this study's learner-centered approach, bringing to the fore job-experienced professionals' understandings, is a useful template for addressing such topics.

Additionally, developing the religion LCC has implications for both transactional and interpersonal communication, as illustrated in participants' anecdotes. Participant E#59 described how she used what she learned during the course to choose gifts for her customers. As mentioned, gift-giving serves an interpersonal function, designed to build rapport and strengthen relationships for the purposes of promoting business function (Camerer & Mader, 2012; Pullin, 2010). In contrast, C#27 described adjusting meeting schedules based on the Islamic workweek. Such scheduling would serve a transactional function, aimed at executing work tasks. Finally, E#49 created a multi-faith holiday schedule so that she knew when her customers would or would not be working, and when she could wish them happy holidays. Her scheduling served both interpersonal and transactional functions. The fact that the participants expressed how religion affected both communicative metafunctions is evidence of their increasingly sophisticated LCC awareness. It also represents a nuance of religion's effect on professional communication that has not been explored in the extant literature.

Finally, the fact that I had to adapt curricula to address religious competencies highlights competency gaps caused by the actions of both the Anglo-American materials creators and the

Chinese stakeholders who make decisions about materials usage. Critics of global coursebooks point out the powerful influence of the ideologies of the “neoliberal imperative of the profit-driven Western textbook industry and dominant ideologies of their language and their speakers” (Hamid, 2024, p. 744). Developed according to these ideologies, textbooks and the cultures that are represented in them do not always address the needs of the societies using these books (Hamid, 2024). The BE textbook examined, *Market Leader*, did not address the religion competency, which was a crucial need for learners in the Chinese context, identified during this study’s domain analysis. However, it is not just the ideologies underpinning the global textbooks that can be detrimental. The failure is also within the Chinese system, not addressing the needs of the members of the society using these books (Hamid, 2024). In the Chinese context, the aspiration for native-speaker competence and focus on Anglo-American culture has underpinned English language learning for decades (Hu, 2004; Wang, 2013), resulting in the adoption and use of global coursebooks. One result of using such materials is that cohorts of learners have entered the workforce unprepared, lacking crucial competencies (Du, 2021; Peltonen & Hu, 2024, under review). Perhaps improved home cultural knowledge, at a societal level, is necessary to enact meaningful curricular adjustments that match learners’ needs. In other words, there must be a broad change in policies and pedagogy at a societal level that addresses learners’ needs, lacks, and wants. Without changes at the societal or policy level, the onus is on instructors to leverage resources such as the LCC framework to facilitate adaptations addressing these deficiencies.

Having discussed the findings concerning home culture and religion, the discussion now turns to the three components of LCCs: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. These will be discussed in relation to the questionnaire-based quantitative data. In other words, home culture

knowledge, religion knowledge, home culture skills/strategies, religion skills/strategies, home culture attitudes, and religion attitudes will be discussed, respectively.

6.8.4 Insights into Improvement of the Knowledge Component

Both groups improved significantly in the knowledge component of the questionnaire-based assessments. How this growing knowledge manifested was evident in the qualitative data. The participants showed evidence of increasingly sophisticated LCC awareness. I argue that the degree to which one can express deep culture represents the degree to which one's LCC has developed.

The most frequent expression of cultural knowledge was food, described mostly in terms of domestic regional differences, such as the food varieties from different Chinese regions (e.g., Northern versus Southern foods), or along national lines, such as the food from different countries (e.g., French, Australian, or Chinese). Other categorizations of food were based on religion, with participants mentioning halal food for Muslims and vegetarian food for Hindus. Differentiating food along national lines might be considered essentialist or simplistic (Baker, 2022b; Risager, 2006). However, differentiating foods within the home culture or along religious lines is more sophisticated and therefore indicates improved LCC because participants showed an understanding of linguacultural *transnational flows* and *local complexity* (Risager, 2006): Different foods are consumed within and across national boundaries, by cultural groups functioning at different scales (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021). Another key finding was that participants linked food with respect. This conceptualization of food contradicts the extant literature, which conventionally categorizes food as an aspect of visible culture (Byram, 2021; Shaules, 2007). This was generally discussed in several ways. For home culture, participants argued that they should have access to their own foods as a matter of respect. For a target culture, for example, in the case study involving a wine company, French history of, passion for, and understanding of wine was discussed as something

that should be admired, studied, and respected. In both cases, food was not just an object. Rather, it was *symbolic*, providing “food for reflection on the nature of language, discourse, communication and mediation” (Byram, 2021, p. 7). The way food was discussed represented deep cultural understanding rather than visible culture because they equaled cultural pride and attitudes of respect. As Shaules (2007) points out, “objects often mean different things to different people. A hamburger may be a status food to one person and a symbol of economic imperialism to another” (p. 14). For this study’s participants, the symbolism of food also relates to power relations: If food is a symbol of cultural respect, then the unequal distribution of foods in the case study (e.g., more Australian foods and fewer Chinese foods in the canteen) was an illustration of unequal power relations. Such inequalities have been observed in BELF contexts and typically manifest as Western interlocutors having more power than Asian ones (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2024), which was exactly how they turned out in the case study. Accordingly, the participants proposed strategic solutions to ensure equal distribution of foods in the canteen, a symbolic way of demanding equality and respect. Their arguments for equal treatment of festivals within the company functioned similarly. Their improved LCC awareness was exemplified by their increasingly sophisticated expression of seemingly simple concepts like food and festivals as representing deeper cultural issues such as respect and equity.

Participants’ knowledge was also illustrated by their increasingly complex expressions of their home cultural beliefs. As reported earlier, C#6 explained why the merged company should not force employees to compete for jobs by making a cultural argument: “...it seems quite embarrassing and immoral to compete with your friends in Chinese culture for a reward.” Participant C#6 was making a cultural argument against internal competition. Several aspects of this argument are noteworthy. First, rather than presenting it in abstract terms, he offered a

metaphor to illustrate his point, leveraging a cultural reference to convey his meaning more clearly. That is, the anecdote uses language to form a metaphor, leveraging linguistic expression to illustrate a cultural belief. Such a reference exemplifies the concept of linguaculture: Language provides the tool, but culture provides the meaning (Agar, 2002; Risager, 2006). The second striking aspect of the above quote is that it alludes to a cultural dimension (e.g., *Motivation toward Achievement and Success*) (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede Insights, 2023). Participant C#6 leveraged his understanding of this cultural dimension to argue for a more culturally appropriate work environment. As mentioned, other participants alluded to cultural dimensions when describing business communication. Participant C#14 described Chinese communication as “tactful” and French communication as “direct.” Such distinctions relate to the *High Context* versus *Low Context* cultural dimension, delineating the relative directness or indirectness of communication in different cultures (Hall, 1989). A third example of cultural dimensions came from C#28’s written statement that “French tends to make decision quick with less consensus while us Chinese enjoy group discussion to reach agreement.” This quote clearly invoked the *Individualist-Collectivist* dimension proposed by Hofstede (1980). A surprising aspect of the above findings is that neither the control nor the experimental group’s materials explicitly mentioned cultural dimensions. One explanation for the unexpected expression of cultural dimensions is perhaps these principles were latent in the materials and were acquired inductively. Another possible explanation is that the participants had been exposed to the concepts of cultural dimensions previously and used that knowledge in their responses. This explanation aligns with the aforementioned assertion that these learners already possessed LCCs, but increased awareness due to structured and explicit attention to the LCCs facilitated improved expression. Indeed, these responses exemplify deep

cultural knowledge because they address phenomena that are intangible, representing the principles by which cultural groups behave (Shaules, 2007).

Additionally, these excerpts underscore the utility of cultural dimensions: They are effective means of structuring cultural understanding, which I have also argued in Chapter 5 and Peltonen and Hu (2024). That said, even though insightful, these participants' conceptualizations of cultural dimensions could improve: They did not express cultural dimensions according to the contemporary conceptualizations propounded in the extant literature – as being manifested in communication (Peltonen, 2023a; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). Instead, they expressed cultural groups' dimensions as static (e.g., permanent characteristics of certain groups), defined by national identities, which has been problematized for being essentialist and overly simplistic (Baker, 2024; Byram, 2021).

Turning to knowledge related to religion, for these Chinese learners, exposure to religion was enough to prompt increased awareness and, therefore, improved expression. It could be argued that their knowledge of religion began from a lower baseline than their knowledge of their home culture. That is to say, the participants likely possessed deep knowledge of their home culture even if they did not know how to express it in English (Cong, 2000; Peltonen & Ning, 2025). In contrast, they lacked religious knowledge, as illustrated by statements such as those made by E#41, who admitted that she had never even considered how religion might affect business function before this course. Her stated lack of religion LCC aligned with findings from the domain analysis, illustrated by the “wishing ‘Merry Christmas’ to a Muslim” anecdote, as well as the materials analysis, which uncovered a complete absence of religion in *Market Leader*. However, during the intervention, the participants realized how much they did not know, which prompted them to gather more information as shown in their responses to the request for leave on religious grounds

in the post-course reflective question. As discussed, increased awareness of religion in the Chinese context is very different than how religion is treated in Islamic countries, (Hamid, 2024; Sharifian, 2010), where religion is a much stronger aspect of the home culture, and religious knowledge presented in ELT materials is more specific, intentional, and in-depth. In contrast, for this study's participants, it appeared that even a modicum of awareness of religion substantively increased LCC, evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative findings.

Further evidence of religion knowledge development arose from participants' discussions of their home culture. Knowledge of religion as deep culture was evident when C#2 introduced the *Guanyin* (a goddess in Buddhism) statue on Xiqiao Mountain. He explained how people believe the goddess "will take care of them and make a better life for them." An enormous statue at the top of the tallest hill in Foshan, the *Guanyin* is believed to protect the entire city. Participant C#2, in describing the *Guanyin*, expressed a deeply held belief among locals. Another example of an improved ability to express knowledge of religion as deep culture was provided by E#58, who explained that both Taoism and Buddhism are observed on Mount Heng. She went on to provide reasons for which people might pray on the mountain: relationships, career, or academic concerns, and they could ask for "signs" there. In this case, "signs" likely represent omens or indicators of which direction to take in life. It must be noted that how the culture is categorized (e.g., visible versus deep) is relativistic and depends on the perspective. As mentioned, Shaules (2007) defines visible culture as that which is tangible and observable, while deep culture reflects assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews. From the home cultural perspective (e.g., of Chinese linguacultures) it could be argued that these expressions reflect religion as "visible" culture in that they are common knowledge gained from folklore spread by classic works such as *Journey to the West* and normal practices in temples. However, for those of different linguacultural backgrounds, such descriptions

of religion might be revelatory and therefore express knowledge of deep culture. Regardless of how they are categorized, these examples illustrate an ability to express faith-based beliefs facilitated by the intervention. It is notable that E#58 ended her description with the poignant statement, “sincerity leads to spirituality.” By offering this example of a deep cultural belief, she illustrated how religion and spirituality are understood in her context. Such nuanced and analytical presentations of religion are clear illustrations of increased awareness of religion, its place vis-à-vis home cultural knowledge, and the expression thereof. Interestingly, I have been to both Xiqiao Mountain and Mount Heng. One thing that struck me was the scale of both mountains: They require considerable effort to summit, which, in the case of Foshan’s Xiqiao Mountain, results in being close to the *Guanyin* and, in the case of Mount Heng, means reaching a temple after several hours of hiking. In both places worshippers prayed and joined ceremonies, but only after being physically tested. I argue that the effort required to perform these ceremonies in these locations illustrates their importance within the belief systems of the locals. That is to say, they are so important that they are worth the enormous energy required to execute them. In that sense, the participants likely chose these locations as symbols of the strength of the locals’ faith, representing the expression of deep culture.

Arguably the most significant finding regarding religious knowledge is that religion can be addressed at all, contrary to established ELT practices. As has been discussed, religion is a PARSNIP that has been considered taboo in ELT and ELT materials, particularly from a Western perspective (Brown & Nanguy, 2021; Camerer & Mader, 2012; Cogo, 2022; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). Put another way, religion has been assumed to be a rich point that could cause miscommunications, misunderstandings, and disagreements between those of different linguacultural backgrounds. However, participants such as E#46, C#2, and E#58 showed how

knowledge of religion can be addressed in a sensitive, nuanced, and empathetic way, and serve as a *frame* between different linguacultural groups rather than a *rich point*. In that respect, the findings of this study contradict conventional wisdom underpinning Western materials development and, therefore, Chinese English language learning. Ultimately, beyond addressing the participants' limited knowledge of the religion LCC, this study illustrates that participants' religious understandings and knowledge can be elicited, cultivated, and communicated when addressed in a sensitive, empathetic, and nuanced way. Treated thus, religion can facilitate communication, and serve as a vital link between job-experienced professionals from different linguacultural groups using BELF.

Having discussed how the home culture and religion knowledge improvement manifested, we turn to the skills/strategies component.

6.8.5 Skills and Strategies for Gathering Information and Implementing Policies

The results of the skills/strategies component seem to indicate an incongruity: Neither group's skills/strategies improved according to the questionnaire, but their skills/strategies were demonstrated to have improved on the email tasks, which directly assessed these abilities. In other words, there was a discrepancy between their perceptions (no improvement of skills and strategies) and their actual performance (improved skills and strategies in their LCC writing expression). Participant C#26's statement is illustrative of this disconnect. In her post-intervention interview, she said, "I don't think after the course, I have learned a lot of the foreign culture." Her statement is salient because she improved in the questionnaire-based assessment and the email task but did not recognize her improvement. The most likely explanation is that participants such as C#26 did not necessarily acquire new skills/strategies, so their perceptions as elicited by the questionnaire-based assessments did not change. Rather, the intervention made them more aware of the

importance of these skills and strategies, and the post-intervention email task provided an opportunity to apply them. This explanation aligns with the extant literature regarding motivation in which the concept of *transfer* is relevant. Transfer is “using the trained knowledge and skills in a new context” (Bauer et al., 2016, p. 35). It could be argued that transfer is more important to job-experienced learners than any other learning group, because their training and development are immediately applicable, with high stakes, an assertion that cannot be made for almost any other group (with the possible exception of test-takers, though, in that case, transfer is for a specific purpose, not real-world applicability). According to the concept of transfer, the participants of this study gained improved skill/strategy awareness prompted by the explicit and structured requirements of the intervention, so they were able to transfer their skills and strategies to a new context to address a novel set of LCC-related issues.

Importantly, the discrepancy between the questionnaire-based skills/strategies scores and the email task scores evokes the extant assessment literature. The mismatch between the different assessment scores illustrates the importance of enacting comprehensive and triangulated assessment plans that offer multiple data points as evidence of performance (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). Case in point, the email assignment was more sensitive to skill/strategy improvement than the questionnaire because it directly assessed learners’ performance and provided convincing evidence of both groups developing in that component. Viewed that way, this study’s assessment plan was effective in complementing findings and gathering evidence of improvement from multiple sources, some of which were more sensitive to certain aspects of improvement than others.

It is notable that the strategic approaches propounded by participants in the email assignments were similar for both the religion and home culture LCCs. They could be divided into two general

categories: 1) *development (learning, training, and skill-building)*, and 2) *implementing policies*. The strategy of *development* was prominent across participants' responses. For skill/strategy development related to the home culture, one particularly notable suggestion for training came from E#64, who wrote, "We will organize cross-cultural training for management and staff to understand and respect for different working styles and cultural norms." Though she was talking about skill-building (training), she was anticipating an increase in knowledge (understanding) and positive attitudes (respect). She was demonstrating a grasp of how all three LCC components (knowledge, skills/strategies, attitudes), though separated for the purposes of research and pedagogy, function simultaneously and synergistically (Byram, 2021; Peltonen & Hu, 2024). Her suggestion was even more impressive when considering that participants were not explicitly introduced to the three components of LCC. Her increased awareness of them seems to have developed inductively. Crucially, the strategy of *development* via skill-building was tangible, actionable, and practical, presented as an integrated solution to the communicative and linguacultural rich points at hand. Such a multidimensional approach, proposed by multiple participants, offers convincing evidence of enhanced skills/strategies awareness.

Similarly, when responding to the employee's request for leave based on religious grounds, the first step for almost all of the participants was to gather information, either from the employee himself or from other sources. They were aware of the importance of the information-gathering strategy in enabling an informed decision about the request. Their expressed lack of knowledge about religion aligns with findings from this study highlighting a deficiency in the religion LCC (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025; Peltonen et al., under review). Further, their strategy of gathering information aligns with proposals made in Peltonen (2022b): When faced with subject matter with which job-experienced professionals are unfamiliar, the first step can be to ask questions and

gather information. Put another way, evidence of improved LCC in the skills/strategies component is that these participants had a greater awareness of how to address this sensitive but consequential issue. Conversely, if complacent, they might have overestimated their knowledge, abilities, and competencies (Dunning, 2011) and made uninformed decisions. These participants seemed to know about such issues but became more aware of LCC's importance, relevance, and usefulness as a result of the intervention. In other words, they grasped its potential for transfer (Bauer et al., 2016). This finding illustrates that increased awareness is enough to guide appropriate strategies in developing the religion LCC, therefore improving communicative function in the workplace.

The second category of strategies regarded *policies*. When addressing the issue of leave based on religious grounds, participants proposed the strategy of referring to and/or creating policies. While some participants did not even know if there were policies for religious leave, others assumed that policies existed, but they were not familiar with them. Still others believed that new policies would have to be devised. In each case, investigating, developing, or implementing policies was a fundamental step in the participants' considerations of how to communicate about religion in the workplace. Similarly, regarding home cultural expression, participants proposed restructuring the newly-merged organization to include more locals on the management team to represent and communicate the interests of the employees from the home culture. In other words, their strategy was to implement policy changes to management hiring processes to facilitate the communication of home cultural perspectives.

It is crucial to note that achieving equity underpinned the skill/strategy approaches for both religion and home culture. For example, when discussing policies to improve home cultural expression in the newly-merged organization, the participants used language such as "mutual understanding," "open communication," "cooperation," "integration," "respect," "cultural

sensitivity,” “diverse perspectives,” “decrease stereotypes,” “balanced working model,” and “inclusive.” The principle underlying these proposed structural changes was equity, which requires cultural relativity: Both the home and target linguacultural groups should be recognized for their different but equal contributions to the business (Risager, 2006). Equity was also a principle underlying the policies concerning religious leave: Participants’ rationale for considering policies was to make sure that all employees would have equal leave, and that no religion was marginalized.

While the above examples represent proactive approaches to ensuring equity, the participants also demonstrated skill/strategy improvement in the ways they addressed the preexisting power imbalances in the case study. In other words, in the above examples, they preempted issues of inequity. However, as we shall see below, they also had to react to inequities that had already formed. Issues of power were a central concern of the participants when analyzing the case study. Their perspectives can be considered in relation to the literature underpinning the LCC framework: There are precedents for identifying and addressing power imbalances within BELF literature. Roshid and Chowdhury (2024) assert that power imbalances in BELF:

...should be viewed as an exercise of power embedded in various forms caused by organizational hierarchy positions (e.g., senior and junior status), business positions (e.g., buyers and suppliers), language ability positions (e.g., native and nonnative English speakers), and sociocultural and national identity positions (Asian and non-Asian). (p. 434)

The post-merger complaints about Chinese being excluded from management positions exemplify exactly this kind of culturally based power imbalance. In the case study, employees’ main concern post-merger was that their voices were not being heard, and some even complained about losing their identity. In response, participants offered multiple proposals to solve the problems, ensuring

equitable management practices, improving communication, and achieving a symbolic balance (e.g., balance of food and festivals). It is notable that they proactively proposed solutions to problems caused by power imbalances instead of adopting a *colonial mentality*, which Roshid and Chowdhury (2024) describe as accepting inferiority. As mentioned, these dynamics often manifest as local Asian people losing power to non-locals of European descent. At an epistemological level, the way the participants addressed the power imbalances aligns with GELT: They were arguing for a pluricultural perspective promoting cultural relativity in which European cultural groups do not assume power. Further, they showed agency and empowerment, another tenet of GELT: Interlocutors communicate as themselves, from their own perspectives, understanding that they are different but equal (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This orientation appears to have underpinned their common proposals of strategies ensuring equity and countering power imbalances. Conversely, the traditional ELT approach to these issues, ignoring the need for LCCs, would likely have supported an embedded imbalanced power structure. Therefore, even if participants' perceptions of their skill/strategy improvement were inconclusive in the questionnaire-based results, their refusal to accept a "colonial mentality" and their consistent proposals of strategic solutions are conclusive evidence of improvement. These results further illustrate that the LCCs are readily developable and are effective in underpinning pedagogy that can lead to LCC componential improvements.

6.8.6 Attitudes: The Precondition of LCC Development

Attitudes "are the precondition for successful intercultural interaction" (Byram, 2021, p. 45). From that perspective, the fact that both treatment groups improved significantly in their LCC attitudes measured by the questionnaire-based instrument is consequential: This improvement underpinned the overall improvement. Conversely, if the participants' attitudes had been negative, they likely

would not have improved in the other components of LCCs. How the improvement on attitudes component manifested in the qualitative data is the topic to which we now turn.

One specific manifestation of attitudinal development was evident in participants' pervasive expressions of empathy in their treatments of both the home culture (such as trying to explain certain behaviors to foreigners) and religion (such as the unanimous expressions of empathy for the employee's religious background). According to the extant literature, expressions of empathy underpin an important process in the development of LCC: the ability to *decentre*. Decentring is a "willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (Byram, 2021, p. 45). In other words, empathy is inherent to decentring. Not only was this process evident in the participants' expressions of empathy, but it was also evident in approaching cultures as relative rather than evaluating them as superior or inferior, such as when E#43 explained that she "can't judge which [cultural work] style is better or worse." In order to be able to express relativity, one must decentre enough to make objective observations and see multiple perspectives. It should be noted that an egalitarian and empathetic view of cultures is expressed in LCC#9, which states *Professionals empathize with members of different linguacultures when communicating with them*. In sum, the participants' empathy represents an essential condition identified in the literature as necessary to developing the attitudinal component of LCC.

Another expression of positive attitudes was represented by the participants' preoccupation with respect. Though respect is mentioned in the LCC literature and propounded by GELT, it is not developed. Rather, it is mostly mentioned in passing statements such as "respecting diversity" (Baker, 2022b, p. 59) or "respect and acceptance for the behaviour and values of others" (Camerer & Mader, 2012, p. 189). Perhaps respect is taken for granted or is embedded in other attitudes in

the extant cultural models and LCC literature. Even so, respect is crucial, can manifest in many ways, and should therefore be explored more extensively. Additionally, participants' conceptualization of respect was unique: Respect was symbolized by tangible products, such as food and festivals, which can have both home culture and religious implications. A common sentiment manifested in the case study was that the degree to which a culture's food was present in the canteen and cultural festivals were celebrated by the company reflected the extent of respect for cultures concerned. From a linguacultural perspective, food and festivals could be sources of rich points (e.g., an imbalance or absence of a cultural group's foods), but they could also be frames (e.g., a balance and presence of a cultural group's foods) (Agar, 2002). In other words, linking the relative presence or absence of cultural products to degrees of respect represents either a cause of or a solution to cultural clashes or mismatches. The first step toward solving the issues that arose in the case studies would be to ensure that visible cultural products such as food and festivals are balanced between linguacultural groups. Such balance would symbolize an egalitarian view of cultures and, perhaps more importantly, respect for home culture and/or religion. Connecting attitudes such as respect with tangible symbols and offering solutions using the symbols shows the participants' burgeoning grasp of how attitudes impact LCC. In fact, the centrality of respect as an LCC attitude is a key revelation of this study. Future studies and development of theoretical models addressing attitudes should include deeper explorations of how respect is understood, can be addressed, and leveraged for LLC attitudinal improvement.

Another key understanding arising from this study is the importance of positive attitudes to interpersonal communication for building rapport and developing relationships for business purposes (Baker, 2022b; Byram, 2021). Transactional communication "is dependent to some extent on the establishment of relations" (Pullin, 2010, p. 458), which requires interpersonal

communication. In their seminal examination of interpersonal genres and casual talk, Eggins and Slade (2006) illustrated that attempts to connect with others necessarily required positive attitudes such as interest (finding mutually relevant topics), curiosity (asking questions and gathering information), and support (providing positive feedback or compliments). In the BELF literature, another relationship-building strategy is to code-switch between the lingua franca and one's interlocutors' language, to show affinity (Du-Babcock, 2013). Such actions require positive attitudes such as empathy (acting in a way to make the interlocutor more comfortable), relativity (exemplifying the value of the interlocutors' home language), and respect for World Englishes (different language varieties and multilingual repertoires) (Baker, 2022a; Byram, 2021; Kirkpatrick, 2021). In this study, a poignant example of the above was several participants' desire to have a face-to-face talk with the employee asking for leave based on religious grounds: This conversation could develop a connection by showing empathy and support. Here is where the current study offers a salient insight: As expressions of positive attitudes to develop relationships are manifested linguistically, being able to leverage interpersonal genres to develop relationships is a crucial LCC (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). That is, genres are tangible and implementable linguistic structures that can support the conveyance of positive attitudes in relationship-building. The connection between positive attitudes and the use of interpersonal genres has generally not been explored in the extant literature, with a few exceptions (e.g., Eggins & Slade, 2006; Peltonen & Hu, under review). Conceptualizing interpersonal genres as conduits for conveying positive attitudes is a novel finding and represents one of the LCC framework's contributions to the extant literature.

Overall, support for the development of positive attitudes was evident in the qualitative data. While the findings mostly aligned with the extant literature in establishing the centrality of

attitudes to LCC development, how the attitudes manifested was unique: Participants' ability to decentre and express empathy, their preoccupation with respect as symbolized in visible cultural products, and the importance of positive attitudes to cultivating interpersonal communication were novel revelations offering nuance and color to the quantitative findings.

6.9 Factors Contributing to the Relative (In)effectiveness of the Intervention

RQ4 asks: *What factors contributed to the (in)efficiency (i.e., relative effectiveness) of the intervention?* As reported earlier, the experimental group outperformed the control group on all the questionnaire measures: overall questionnaire scores, home culture subscale scores, religion subscale scores, knowledge component scores, skills/strategies component scores, and attitudes component scores. However, there were no significant interaction effects between instructional conditions and time of measurement, showing that participants in both instructional conditions improved equally over time. These results indicated that the experimental treatment was not more efficient than the control treatment in developing the two target LCCs or enhancing participants' perceived improvement, as elicited by the questionnaire-based measures. In the case of the email assessments, there was neither a significant main effect for instructional conditions nor a significant interaction between instructional conditions and time of measurement, indicating that the two treatment groups did not differ in their improvement over time. Taken together, these results revealed no difference in efficiency between the two instructional treatments. Several possible explanations can be proposed for the lack of differences between the treatment conditions. These explanations fall into two categories: 1) the characteristics of the learners, and 2) the execution of the intervention itself. These explanations will be discussed in subsequent sections.

6.9.1 The Contexts of Job-Experienced Learners

The first, and arguably most, consequential characteristic of these learners is that they are job-experienced. The importance of work experience to the results of this study cannot be overestimated. Job-experienced learners have a specific set of characteristics, real-world stakes, and perspectives, which offer key insights into the results of this study. To understand the impact of workplace experience, we must understand the role of context. Context is paramount (Camerer, 2014; Jenkins & Leung, 2019). The term *competence* can only be determined in relation to the particular context in which it is applicable (Byram, 2021; Camerer & Mader, 2012). Put another way, competencies “cannot be detached from their contexts of practice and use” (Resnick & Resnick, 1991, p. 43). The context underpins, permeates, and influences every aspect of competence, behavior, and performance (Camerer & Mader, 2012). Figure 6.1 is a visual representation of the role of context vis-à-vis LCCs.

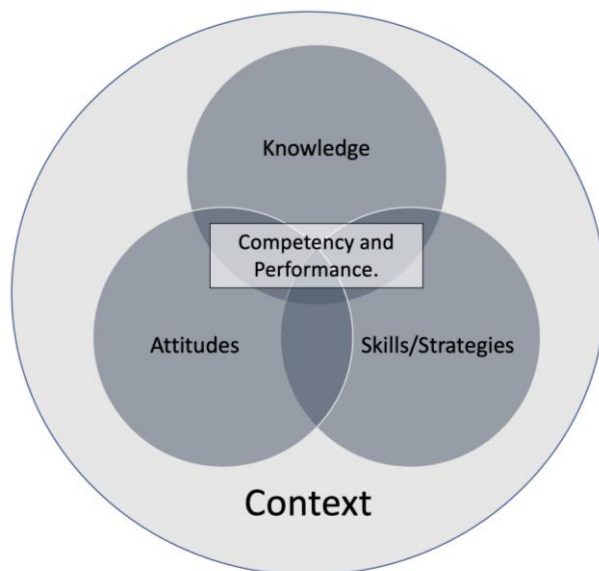


Figure 6.1 The role of context, adapted from Camerer (2014)

Beginning with the pilot study, real-world contexts impacted the results. Alisa, a participant in the pilot study, refused to complete the second email:

...it won't make me to make any changes for my answers, because I believe Decker, the company will continue to manage the Asia Entertainment with influences of the Australian way from the CEO interview in the module 2. From the interview, I cannot see the CEO denied there were any cultural problems.

Her response was based on her context: She worked for a French company functioning in Hong Kong. Her experience was that her company's (French) leadership was not responsive to change or input from the local staff; therefore, even after taking the course, she concluded that the second case study assignment was pointless. Her action impacted how the main study had to be designed – parallel versions of the email were introduced, in part, to avoid the above scenario. Notably, several months after participating in the pilot study, Alisa left her position in her company, deciding that the cultural distance was too great, and telling me in a *WhatsApp* message that “this research helped me realized that I'm sort of mismatch with my company's culture.” This outcome illustrates the (unintended) real-world impact of the course, and how the course contents and participants' experience influenced each other. Their experience underpinned their performance on the course, while the course informed their experience.

Another example of a reciprocal relationship between the participants' experiences and the course came from Participant C#26, who explained that she joined the main study because of a previous work experience:

Because my last job is related, strongly related to oral English. Yeah, to deal with the foreigner customer. And I think why, the reason I leave that job...I cannot catch their word correctly. So, I leave there.

The real-world effects of insufficient communicative competence and LCCs were that she left her position, which entailed a job search, onboarding, and adjusting to a new company that did not

require oral English skills, thus completely changing the complexion of her professional life. Notably, C#26 was not satisfied with her situation, feeling that her “poor” communicative skills hindered her career progression, a sentiment that prompted her to join this study’s course. Her situation illustrates the high stakes of the linguacultural competencies, namely the downside of lacking them and the potential upside of gaining them.

A final example of the importance of context arose during Participant E#64’s post-intervention interview. She explained that she was preparing to transfer to Mexico, facing imminent exposure to daily BELF transcultural communication. Her need for LCC was tangible and immediate. Not only would she be working with those from different linguacultural groups (local Mexican employees), but she would also have to function within that society, a prospect that requires a broader set of LCCs than those for working with overseas partners in one’s home country. For example, she would require the “When in Rome...” LCC (#16) to function optimally in her new linguacultural environment. With an immediate need to improve her English and requisite LCCs for the workplace, her motivation to join the course was strong. Her situation is another illustration of how real-world workplace needs informed learners’ performances in this course. It should be noted that the main study participants discussed, C#26 and E#64, hailing respectively from the control and experimental groups, improved in both the questionnaire-based assessment and the email task. In fact, their improvements were higher than the average improvement across all participants. All of this is to illustrate that, in the contexts of these job-experienced learners, the stakes were high: Communication and LCC were essential to their careers, and lack thereof brought profound consequences (Du, 2021; Frendo, 2005; Peltonen, 2025; Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025), hence their high levels of engagement and performance in this course. The way these participants’ experiences informed and were informed by the course, combined with the highly

relevant subject matter, were powerful drivers of their learning gains. I argue that it is possible that the influence of their contexts was strong enough to attenuate the influence of the different treatment conditions. In other words, context could be more influential than the treatment conditions, thus contributing to the finding that both groups improved to a similar degree.

Understanding the context of job-experienced learners, we turn to another influencing factor: Learner characteristics, discussed below.

6.9.2 Participant Characteristics: Intrinsic Motivation

Research has shown that intrinsic motivation correlates with greater enjoyment and, therefore, engagement with training content, resulting in higher levels of performance from adult trainees (Bauer et al., 2016). As reported earlier, the participants in this course were intrinsically motivated. In the post-intervention interviews, when asked about their successful performance, they expressed high levels of enjoyment and engagement. Participant E#65 said, “it’s a very good experience,” a statement similar to those made by C#6, C#22, C#25, C#33, and E#46. Referencing engagement, Participant C#34 said, “when I joined your course, I’m very engaged, I think. I was very engaged. So, I think maybe [my improvement was] because I [in]volved myself into this course.” These findings align with the extant literature on the motivation of adult, job-experienced corporate trainees: “if trainees enjoy the content of a course, they should be more engaged in the course and learn the material” (Bauer et al., 2016, p. 36). Further, almost all participants anticipated the continued importance of English in their professional lives. A key motivational consideration is the participants’ “beliefs about whether successful course completion will lead to valued outcomes” (p. 36). In this case, the “valued outcomes” were improved communicative proficiency in their daily work; thus, expending effort to achieve this goal was warranted, resulting in successful LCC improvement. Finally, participants from both groups displayed high levels of

intrinsic motivation and were persistent enough to complete the course. Unsurprisingly, they showed similar statistically significant improvements (Peltonen et al., under review).

6.9.3 Participant Characteristics: Autonomous Learners

Another explanation for this study's findings relates to learning autonomy, which must be considered contextually. Researchers have suggested that learners from collectivist cultural backgrounds, such as China, might have lower autonomy (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). According to such assertions, Chinese learners should be assumed to be dependent, passive, or even display "learned helplessness" (Yu et al., 2018, p. 190). To complicate matters, scholars have argued that Western pedagogies (such as those used in this study, derived from the CELTA certification by Cambridge) are sometimes unsuccessful in the Chinese context because "traditional Chinese education has more structure" (Yu et al., 2018, p. 194). Participant C#25 alluded to his Chinese education when talking about transitioning from Chinese-style learning to the autonomous nature of this course. However, many studies of Chinese learners have found that they display equal levels of autonomy as learners from more individualistic cultures (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and that "an autonomous motivation to study positively predicted adaptive learning attitudes, academic success, and personal well-being" (Yu et al., 2018, p. 184). Notably, autonomy is often associated with positive attitudes, which we have shown are a precondition to LCC development. Crucially, this study's participants were active, job-experienced professionals who regularly had to use English in their work and therefore did not have the option of being quiet, passive, or helpless (Yu et al., 2018); therefore, their high levels of autonomy could be expected. High levels of autonomy, in turn, is related to high levels of performance (Yu et al., 2018), a finding borne out in this study. I argue that participants' learning autonomy was not just based on comfort with the online, asynchronous nature of the course. Rather, their autonomy was driven by their high stakes: For

these job-experienced learners, the implications of communicative proficiency were tangible and immediate. From that perspective, the means of the course's delivery was less consequential. Rather, the subject matter, which was germane to their work and lives, was their priority. Put another way, regardless of how the course was delivered, the subject matter drove their motivation and learning autonomy. Their motivation and resultant autonomous efforts to improve likely superseded possible hesitations about independent online learning or culturally influenced educational expectations for teacher-centered approaches (Hu, 2004; Yu et al., 2018). They were simply "getting a job done" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 25). As autonomy was evident amongst all of the participants, it is understandable that both groups improved to a similar degree.

6.9.4 Choice of Materials

Another possible factor contributing to the results was the choice of materials used in this study. There were multiple reasons for selecting *Market Leader*, as discussed in Section 4.4.3.1. One rationale was that Rose and Galloway (2019) scored it by far the highest of the textbooks examined for transcultural, translingual, and global content. Therefore, implementing LCC adaptations to a textbook with strong GELT foundations should be advantageous. However, both groups improved almost equally, which, in retrospect, might be unsurprising because the original textbook already had a strong GELT orientation. Even if not explicitly present in the control group's Unit 3 materials, it is conceivable that *Market Leader* indirectly raised awareness of the target LCCs. Perhaps a textbook that scored less highly on its GELT orientation would have resulted in greater differentiation between the materials and, therefore, the results of the two groups.

6.9.5 *The Invalid MCQ Tests*

The MCQ tests were found invalid with the main study's participants. This result requires further examination. There was a crucial difference between the conditions in which the MCQ tests were piloted and administered in the main study. Participants in the pilot study of the MCQ test were given limited time in class to complete the test, and they completed it according to their extant knowledge. The average amount of time the pilot participants spent on the MCQ was 9 min 6 s. In contrast, the main study participants admitted in their post-intervention interviews that they used the internet to search for answers to the MCQ questions (e.g., E#52, E#56, E#59, and E#60). Their statements were supported by the fact that the average amount of time spent on the MCQ tests in the main course was 17 min 43 s for the pre-intervention and 14 min 26 s for the post-intervention—almost twice as long as the pilot study participants spent – which is further evidence that the students took time to look up information during the test. In my instructions to participants, one item on the expectations sheet that each participant read and signed stated “Work must be your own. Do not simply use material from the internet. Why? I don't want to assess the internet. I want to assess your work.” This item was translated into Chinese for clarity of meaning to the participants. Even so, students such as E#52 admitted that they searched “on the internet to find some culture answer.” Looking up answers on the internet defeated the purpose of the MCQ test, which was to assess learners' extant knowledge and then see how it changed during the intervention. Another likely possibility is that if learners looked up information from the same internet sources, such as what would be at the top of a *Baidu* search, they might provide the same answers (whether right or wrong), which would hinder the differentiation of their performances. This explanation would also explain the lack of gradation of abilities uncovered by the Rasch

analysis. Ultimately, the results of the MCQ were outside of the Rasch model's acceptable parameters and were deemed invalid, hence removed from this study.

The invalid MCQ test affected this study's overall findings. The original assessment plan included three complementary assessments. Losing the MCQ data weakened the triangulation of assessment data (Caracelli & Greene, 1993). Further, the initial assessment plan was that the MCQ test assessed knowledge, the questionnaire assessed self-report of all subscales and components, and the email assignment assessed skills/strategies performance. While knowledge was addressed in the questionnaire and, to some degree, the email tasks, the added quantitative data from a valid MCQ test would have offered a useful data set to examine the results of the intervention in that specific component. Lacking this assessment means that an opportunity to identify possible differences between the control and experimental groups was lost.

6.10 Chapter Summary

As covered in this chapter, the conclusion can be drawn that the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the LCC framework and its descriptors have a high level of utility to curricular design and enactment. As there was not a statistically significant difference in improvement between the two instructional conditions, the differentiated presence of LCCs in the instructional conditions did not appear to be impactful. This finding, illustrated in the quantitative results, was further supported by the qualitative evidence that pointed to other factors (e.g., context, assessments) influencing the results. The relevance of the material to job-experienced learners was a key factor behind their performance. Finally, learner characteristics such as job experience, intrinsic motivation, and learning autonomy contributed to the effectiveness of the intervention. With these points in mind, we turn to the conclusion.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the major findings of the study. The chapter goes on to highlight this study's theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, and societal contributions. Finally, the study's limitations are delineated, followed by suggestions for future research and calls to action.

7.1 Major Findings of the Study

As it is a novel construct, the LCC framework had to be examined to determine whether it would be useful to English language pedagogy for internationally operating, job-experienced business professionals. Even if theoretically sound, the framework had to be implementable pedagogically.

The first major finding of this study is that the LCC framework showed great utility in identifying 20 specific and operationalizable LCCs for BELF learners and users (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Not only were all 20 LCCs deemed important to workplace communication by job-experienced professionals, but they also clustered into knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes, components of cultural competency previously identified in extant literature and cultural models (Baker, 2024; Byram, 2021; Candelier et al., 2012). In other words, the LCCs, though novel, possessed characteristics identified as crucial to transcultural communication, exhibiting concurrent validity. Beyond merely uncovering the 20 LCCs, this study offers evidence that their contextually bound, specific, and operationalizable nature elevates this communicative model from a theoretical construct to one that can be implemented pedagogically in domain analyses, needs analyses, materials analyses, adaptations, and assessments.

The second research objective was to examine how useful the LCCs would be for analyzing materials to identify where they possessed and lacked LCC-building opportunities. To obtain a more granular understanding, a single unit was analyzed in depth to ascertain what effects the

presence or absence of these opportunities would have on learners. The textbook analysis was also intended to identify specific LCCs that would be targeted in the adaptation and enactment of the curricula in the teaching intervention. The textbook, *Market Leader*, had a prevalence of some LCCs (e.g., adjusting to accents and speech styles, corporate structure's impact on communication) and an absence of others (e.g., home cultural expression, religion). In general, the unbalanced presentation of the LCCs might insufficiently prepare learners to function in the workplace (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). These findings offer evidence that the LCC framework and its specific competencies were effective in materials analysis aimed at identifying how LCCs were treated in existing curricula and providing insights into how to adapt materials to target such competencies.

Another major finding of this study in relation to the second research objective was the mismatch between job-experienced professionals' communicative needs and textbook contents. As discussed, the domain analysis' interviews and surveys revealed that business professionals deemed all 19 LCCs important, and they highlighted the centrality of both transactional and interpersonal genres. However, the textbook, *Market Leader*, had a prevalence of some LCCs (e.g., adjusting to accents and speech styles, corporate structure's impact on communication) and an absence of others (e.g., home cultural expression, religion, interpersonal genres). The unbalanced presence of the LCCs might insufficiently prepare learners to function in the workplace (Peltonen & Hu, 2024). While determining the reasons for the textbook writers' content decisions is beyond the scope of this study, the mismatch between professionals' communicative needs and textbook contents suggest that there might be standard practices or assumptions about what should be included in BE textbooks, but these assumptions do not necessarily align with workplace communicative needs (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012; Nickerson & Planken, 2016). There is an urgent need for principled, research-informed materials development. As it stands, the misalignment of

textbook contents with workplace needs has a negative effect: a failure to merge professional, pedagogical, and research understandings in the development of learning materials, thus leading to a missed opportunity to prepare learners for the workplace, as identified by Bhatia and Bremner (2012) over a decade ago.

The third major aim of the study was to determine the relative efficiency of developing LCCs in an adapted curriculum compared to an existing curriculum. The major finding concerning this research objective was that the LCCs are readily developable, as both the control and experimental treatment improved significantly due to the teaching intervention. In other words, they may not require heavy pedagogical work. Indeed, as this population of learners was job-experienced, improvements seem to be attributable to the intervention prompting raised awareness of extant but latent LCCs through structured and explicit pedagogical treatment. A related finding was that the LCCs showed utility as constructs underpinning assessments: This study's two assessments, aiming to determine the relative levels of LCC, proved to be effective, reliable, and valid in parsing out competencies and their development. Though both groups' LCCs improved, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. Qualitative findings offered in-depth evidence of learners' LCC improvement, uncovering seemingly similar manifestations of LCC development. Though the findings indicated that the overall utility of the LCCs was high, there were nuances to the findings that had to be explored further, in the final research objective.

The final research objective was to explore possible explanations for the findings of the teaching intervention. First, some learner characteristics appeared to have an impact. Specifically, as the learners were job-experienced, the applicability of the course contents had high stakes and immediate implications, likely prompting greater engagement and effort. Next, these were intrinsically motivated and autonomous learners, who, according to motivational theories, were

likely to exert higher levels of effort and, therefore, perform well (Bauer et al., 2016). Their belief in the continuing importance of English to their professional lives was another major influence on their motivation to develop their skills through the intervention. Perhaps most importantly, it appears that these job-experienced learners already possessed a certain level of LCC, so the intervention's explicit and structured address of LCC elicited their extant LCC, facilitating improved expression. As both groups of participants exhibited such characteristics, their similar levels of improvement are understandable. Another contributing factor to these results was the relatively limited scope of the intervention, which might have contributed to this study's failure to parse out LCC development between the groups. Relatedly, the invalid MCQ test in the main study meant that an entire set of assessment data was not available for determining LCC development and differentiating performances between the groups.

7.2 Contributions of this Study

The contributions of this study are fourfold: theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, and societal. These contributions will be discussed vis-à-vis the findings of Rose et al. (2021), who performed a systematic review of Global Englishes-informed pedagogy from 2010 to 2020.

7.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

The first theoretical contribution of this study is the LCC framework itself. A novel construct, it was specifically devised to address pedagogy to develop the linguacultural competence of professionals functioning in transcultural business contexts. There were previous multidisciplinary frameworks to address business communication and pedagogy such as the Global Communicative Competence (GCC) framework (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) and the Dynamics of Business Communication (DBC) framework (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2011). However, the LCC is the first to incorporate: 1) the BELF epistemology of fluid, liminal, and flexible business

communication in the transcultural workplace, 2) the conception of linguaculture as an integrated paradigm with which to understand the language and culture nexus, and 3) genre as flexible but structured communicative bridges between linguacultures. Additionally, the LCC framework is unique in that it examines individuals' communicative practices and how they might impact other individuals or organizations (bottom-up) as opposed to organizational mandates (top-down). This focus fits with contemporary epistemologies of organizational cultures arising from individuals in interaction (Keyton, 2010). The operationalization of specific LCC descriptors enables the LCC framework's theoretical insights to translate into implementable pedagogical functions such as materials analysis, adaptation, classroom approaches, and assessment in a way that extant frameworks cannot. Finally, each LCC is also subdivided into three components (knowledge, skills/strategies, attitudes), which incorporates and extends extant intercultural theories (Baker, 2024; Byram, 2021; Candelier et al., 2012) while also providing tangible pedagogical affordances.

The second theoretical contribution of this study is that the LCC framework aligns with the broader GELT framework. The LCC framework and this study contribute to GELT's theoretical body of knowledge at three levels: macro, meso, and micro. At the macro level, the LCC conceptual framework expands GELT's theoretical body of knowledge by addressing two of its key proposals: Cultures are fluid rather than static, and multivarious rather than Anglo-American (Rose & Galloway, 2019). The LCC framework addresses these proposals by accounting for multiple cultures that partake in lingua franca communication at a global level. The competencies warranted by the framework can be addressed contextually. For example, home cultures and their target cultures change depending on which linguacultural group is being considered. (e.g., for Chinese learners, the home culture is Chinese). By introducing the concept of LCCs, which undergird a robust, multidisciplinary, and triangulated framework, this study has contributed to the

theoretical development of GELT's aim to be truly global in scope, culturally egalitarian, and pluralistic.

At the meso level, this study has expanded GELT's theoretical body of knowledge in terms of professional communication, as it is the first investigation to explicitly connect BELF-informed pedagogy to the GELT framework. As described in Chapters 2 and 3, GELT has a broad purview, considering the entire field of ELT and thus leaving room for a greater understanding of how professionals communicate using BELF and resulting pedagogical implications. Further, as GELT was created by two teacher-researchers whose work included preparing learners for workplace communication (Galloway & Rose, 2013), English for business purposes is inherent to GELT. In fact, the primary motivation of most English language learners worldwide, especially those in China, is to develop skills that can be leveraged in the workplace (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; He & Li, 2023; Patel et al., 2023). From that perspective, BELF has been extremely under-researched (an issue to be discussed further below) and perhaps should not be considered a niche theoretical lens. Rather, it should be at the forefront of pedagogically-focused research, as it defines the communication to which most learners aspire (Patel et al., 2023).

At the micro level, this study has contributed to GELT in the specificity and structure of the LCC framework. The framework, its individual competencies, the concept of levels and orientations, and the components of knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes will be useful additions to GELT's burgeoning body of knowledge in that they are readily implementable in pedagogy. In that respect, they serve as bridges between theory and practice, addressing a central goal of GELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019).

This study also contributed to each of the LCC framework's theoretical lenses individually. Its contributions to BELF are twofold. The first contribution is at the epistemological level. BELF

subscribes to a constructivist epistemology which holds that multiple realities may exist simultaneously, depending on the perceiver and the context in which the communication takes place (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Phakiti & Paltridge, 2015). In the case of this study, multiple realities arose from the wide variety of linguacultural backgrounds functioning in real-time and negotiated interactions across professional and cultural contexts. The chicken incident this thesis started with illustrates the constructivism of BELF – different understandings of the same phenomenon at the very same time. However, as this study has shown, the operationalization of the LCCs and their contribution to materials analysis, adaptation, and the assessment instruments indicate that BELF can accommodate a pragmatic epistemological orientation. In other words, BELF, when broken down into its components, can be structured and measured (to a certain degree). Conversely, I would argue that if viewed from a purely constructivist stance, BELF could not be addressed pedagogically, as it would be too multifaceted and transient. It requires a pragmatic orientation to even attempt to define, structure, teach, and measure BELF. My hope is that this study illustrates the affordances of such an epistemology.

This study's second theoretical contribution to BELF is the specificity of the LCC framework: Its focus on the transcultural communicative needs of professionals. While previous BELF literature has examined the contexts and characteristics of English usage in global professional communication (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Karhunen et al., 2023; Räisänen, 2018), the treatment of cultural competence has focused mostly on theory and proposals (Pullin, 2015), with only brief discussions appearing at the end of research articles (Hodges & Seawright, 2023), observational data (Komori-Glatz, 2017), or materials (Si, 2020). This study has endeavored to deepen understanding of these BELF findings by creating

structured and operationalizable descriptors and testing them in an intervention. Peltonen and Hu (2025, p.1) highlight the utility of the LCCs and how they build on extant cultural theories:

However, the specific linguacultural competencies (LCCs) that constitute BELF linguacultural competence are more contextually bound, as they target professional communicative necessities in the workplace. They are also practical in that the relevance, usefulness, and credibility can be enhanced by job-experienced professionals and their operational definitions facilitate pedagogical implementation.

The descriptors offer a promising avenue toward understanding BELF's transcultural communicative contexts more specifically, for the ultimate purpose of addressing them pedagogically. Evidence of this utility is in the way BELF was combined with linguaculture and genre to operationalize descriptors and inform every stage of this inquiry, enabling the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data. Additional evidence of the theoretical utility of this approach to BELF research can be found in the empirical findings: A teaching intervention informed by BELF contexts, characteristics, and principles (the BELF construct), was successful because the learners of both instructional conditions improved to a statistically significant degree.

Next, there are two theoretical contributions related to linguaculture. First, this study is fundamentally distinct from other frameworks and perspectives in its use of the theoretical lens of linguaculture, which considers language and culture to be integrated rather than separate paradigms. Researchers have pointed out that intercultural development has often focused on either culture or language, each at the expense of the other (Camerer & Mader, 2012). The integration of the concepts is supported by contemporary conceptualizations of culture as being manifested in communication (Baker, 2022b, 2024), enabling a streamlined understanding of how culture and language interact. This study illustrates that language provides the form, but culture provides the

meaning (Agar, 2002). A perfect example of this phenomenon is the chicken incident shared in Chapter 1. While the word “chicken” was the same, the two cultural groups’ understanding of it was different. Meanings, communicated through language and influenced by culture, can align or mismatch, which can have enormous consequences for high-stakes business communication in which clarity of meaning is paramount. Identifying and attending to such mismatches (rich points) and alignments (frames) offers insights into how to solve such miscommunications in the future (Agar, 2002).

The second contribution to the theoretical lens of linguaculture is this study’s delineation of the levels and orientations of professional communication. The concept of linguaculture must expand beyond national or regional cultures to include organizational cultures, work team cultures, job function cultures, and individual conceptions of culture (Peltonen, 2022a, 2023b). In terms of orientations, professional linguacultural understanding must include home cultures, target cultures, and universal understandings of culture (Peltonen, 2022a, 2023b). In effect, this study endeavored to design these structures to comprehend such communication and address it pedagogically without being overly prescriptive or essentialist. The theoretical contribution of linguacultural levels and orientations is that they offer a balance of structure and flexibility to account for the nuance and complexity of how linguacultures function and interact.

Finally, this study’s theoretical contribution to genre is that it is the first study to address genre through the lens of BELF. As discussed, BELF communicative competence requires a focus on meaning (prioritized over form) and business knowledge, which includes knowledge of professional genres (Kankaanranta et al., 2015). That is, genres are fundamental to BELF communication. Further, the liminal, real-time, negotiated nature of BELF makes genres as linguacultural frames between interlocutors from different contexts even more essential to

professionals. Genres are mutually understandable communicative structures rather than prescriptive forms; consequently, they can be used flexibly to enable efficient business communication, transactionally or interpersonally, to serve many functions, and are therefore accurately described as the linchpins of BELF communication (Peltonen & Hu, 2024).

7.2.2 Methodological Contributions

This study offers several methodological contributions: its longitudinal experimental design, the use of mixed methods at every stage of the study, its approach to materials analysis and adaptation, the design and validation of novel assessment instruments, and the choice of materials.

First, for perspective, this study addressed methodological gaps that Rose et al. (2021) identified in their systematic review of Global Englishes research: Many of the reviewed studies lacked a robust research design, thus weakening the reliability of the studies' findings. As the authors explained, “[f]uture studies need to match this pedagogical contribution with research rigour, using robust data collection procedures to create a body of undisputable findings of proposals in action” (p. 178). In response, this project has adopted the type of pre- and post-intervention and rigorous mixed methods research called for in the review. Further, Rose et al. (2021) called for research that “include[s] thick descriptions of innovations, as well as a clearly articulated research procedure” (p. 184), elements required for a transparent, robust, and replicable research design (Porte & McManus, 2019). Ideally, this study's methodological rigor, along with the thick description of its processes and results, has begun to fill such identified gaps.

Second, mixed methodology was embedded into every stage of this investigation. As discussed, the advantage of a mixed methods approach is that it provides and draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data offers insights into the reasons behind the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In their systematic review, Rose et al. (2021)

found that GELT studies have been “predominantly qualitative in their approach, with only one quantitative and one mixed method design present in our sample of classroom studies” (p. 177). They went on to argue that “[m]ixed-methods approaches to data collection are also essential to highlight specific elements of the intervention that worked best” (p. 183). BELF research has similarly neglected mixed methods research. BELF studies have been qualitative, ethnographic, or observational (Ehrenreich, 2010; Karhunen et al., 2023; Nielsen, 2020; Pullin, 2010), relied on discourse or corpus analysis (Du-Babcock, 2013; Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022; Räisänen, 2018) or were based on survey data (Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Hodges & Seawright, 2023; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). To my knowledge, with the exception of Du (2021), no extant BELF studies have adopted mixed methods designs. As such, this study is unique in its incorporation of mixed methods across every stage of the study, addressing a paucity of literature in BELF and the overall GELT landscape.

Third, this study filled a methodological gap with its teaching intervention design, addressing the need for “longitudinal research design[s] that could measure the effects of ongoing interventions in real classrooms” (Rose et al., 2021, p. 183). While there have been teaching interventions within the GELT framework (e.g., Caprario, 2024), this study is the first designed for adult, job-experienced professionals who communicate in English transculturally. Further, the intervention’s self-reflections, post-intervention questions, and interviews offered deeper insight into the learners’ experiences and perspectives and the results of the intervention. Collecting such data addresses a methodological gap in data collection in GELT literature: “In all of these studies [on curricular innovation] there are no measures to directly capture students’ beliefs before and after the tasks, and thus there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate change” (Rose et al., 2021, p. 173). In other words, this study’s longitudinal design including multiple assessments, combined

with the qualitative data, offered a holistic, comprehensive, and robust picture of this intervention. The result is that this study provided convincing evidence of change and causality.

This study's fourth methodological contribution is to materials analysis and evaluation. Materials researchers argue for principled, criterion-referenced evaluation because "making an evaluation criterion-referenced can reduce (but not remove) subjectivity and can certainly help to make an evaluation more principled, rigorous, systematic, and reliable" (Tomlinson, 2013a, p. 311). Accordingly, this study followed best practices by including thick description of the analysis and evaluation conducted according to the novel LCC conceptual framework. The creation and validation of the framework have also been described transparently (Macalister & Nation, 2020; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Further, this study has broken new ground by developing an inventory of LCCs firmly grounded in the literature and multiple sources of empirical data. With the aid of this inventory, a competency profile can be identified for each textbook (or other source material), and informed adaptations and adjustments of the learning materials can be made to match learners' transcultural communicative needs and LCC deficiencies. Notably, there have been few studies of BE materials and even fewer focusing on job-experienced professionals (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025, under review). As illustrated in this study, job-experienced professionals have a direct and tangible relationship with learning materials, as they are communicating in English with people from different backgrounds on a daily basis. Their authentic communicative needs provide a litmus test of the relevance and adequacy of the learning materials, and they have the experience to evaluate which competencies are important to them, as illustrated in the domain analysis and qualitative data arising from the intervention. Their input can inform the effective development of materials not only for job-experienced professionals but also pre-experienced learners, who do not yet have experience-informed frames of reference.

The adoption of genre as a conceptual lens also offers a unique contribution to materials analysis and development. As structured but flexible entities, genres can be used for both thematic and content analysis with the ultimate goal of identifying pedagogical implications. Regarding content analysis, this study used genre as a lens to identify the distribution and frequency of transactional and interpersonal genres within the textbook, both crucial functions of BELF communication. Other genre-informed content analyses would also be informative, such as specific genres within the materials, which can be identified, defined, and compared to active, job-experienced learners' needs, as done in Peltonen and Hu (under review). The findings of genre-based analyses could inform the adaptations made to benefit learners in the classroom. Understanding how genres can be identified and addressed pedagogically can also benefit pre-experienced learners: Presenting genre knowledge and usage to those who have not yet joined the workforce – along with the rationale as to why those genres are being taught – can prepare pre-experienced learners for BELF communication in the workplace. As illustrated, genres are the linchpins of BELF communication and show great utility in materials analysis.

The fifth methodological contribution of this study relates to my positionality as both the materials adapter and the course instructor. The primary implication of such positionality was that I had to work diligently to eliminate my own bias: Anyone reviewing my research would know it was in my own interests to ensure the experimental group outperformed the control group to demonstrate the efficacy of my framework and intervention. Therefore, I had to be especially careful to show a balanced, principled, and well-rationalized set of adaptations. The theoretical foundation of the LCC framework and the decision-making tree (See Figure 4.2 and Appendix E) enabled me to execute transparent adaptations that could withstand scrutiny. Beyond my own positionality, the transparency and procedural structure of the decision-making tree can be used in

multiple contexts and can accommodate additions as more research and types of adaptation are discovered. As it stands, the adaptation tree is likely this study's biggest contribution to the discipline of materials development.

The sixth methodological contribution of this study pertains to assessment. This study's assessments are unique within the GELT framework and, particularly, BELF. For a perspective on the state of assessments in GELT literature, Rose et al. (2021) reported the following:

Many of the studies purport that their innovations change students' attitudes and knowledge, but very few have concrete instrumentation to measure this.... The prominence of self-reported and retrospective data collection instruments such as interviews and written reflections (often as the only source of data) is also problematic in that they do not provide strong evidence of causality. (p. 177)

In response, this study's questionnaire-based assessments, email tasks, and assessment rubrics were created from scratch to address the above issue, complementing self-report with performance data for stronger evidence of causality (Rogers & Revesz, 2020; Rose et al., 2021). The LCC framework and its descriptors demonstrated great utility in the development of these assessment instruments, especially when considering the components of LCCs: knowledge, skills/strategies, and attitudes. The integration of these three components facilitated greater specificity in assessing the LCCs because the assessments not only encompassed the two target LCCs but also specified the components of each scale. Though the MCQ test was ultimately found invalid, I have demonstrated that the problem lay in the conditions in which the MCQ test was piloted versus the conditions in which it was completed during the main course, rather than the construct (the knowledge component) underpinning it. The questionnaire-based assessment and the rubric for grading email assignments underwent thorough and rigorous development and validation

processes, supported by multiple validity arguments and high reliability. In sum, the LCC and its descriptors successfully underpinned the creation of novel, valid, and effective assessment instruments.

A final methodological contribution pertains to materials. The curriculum was based on a global textbook, which is innovative because “research into the classroom use and impact of global coursebooks is limited” (Norton & Buchanan, 2022, p. 52). In other words, it is novel to use a global coursebook as the control group’s materials and an adapted version of the coursebook as the experimental group’s materials. Second, “while there is quite an extensive literature on research and materials development, there is regrettably little empirical evidence of the effects that these materials have on the end-users” (Hadley & Hadley, 2022, p. 156). The authors continue to explain that most materials development evaluations are observational. Accordingly, Hadley and Hadley (2022) recommend materials development experiments to address “the relative scarcity of experimental studies into the effects of second language teaching materials, especially those which seek to better inform and enhance materials development” (p. 155). From that perspective, by enacting an experimental intervention based on two versions of a curriculum, this study joins a limited group of studies that examine the effects of materials development based on a global coursebook.

7.2.3 Pedagogical Contributions

As illustrated, BELF has mostly been examined for how it is used in workplace contexts. In fact, there is some debate about whether BELF is “teachable” at all or if it must be derived from on-the-job experience (Karhunen et al., 2023; Peltonen & Haga, 2025). One aim of this study was to illustrate that BELF is, in fact, teachable but with the caveat that the pedagogy must address

specific aspects of BELF (e.g., LCCs, strategic competence, flexibility). From that foundation, this study's pedagogical contributions will be discussed.

First, the course's tasks (i.e., the presentation and email assignment) were found very useful by the participants because they aligned closely with their workplace needs, underlining the importance of domain and/or needs analyses in determining curricular design for relevant learning and teaching. As a reminder, the term *domain analysis* is more appropriate than *needs analysis* because this study examined a context of language use rather than a specific group of learners' needs. The LCCs derived from the literature informed the domain analysis interviews, and emergent LCCs from the interviews were used to create the questionnaire-based survey, which double-checked the LCCs with active, job-experienced professionals (Peltonen & Hu, 2025). Though this study's domain analysis was broad in scope, the LCCs could similarly underpin a needs analysis with a specific group of learners. Importantly, the structure of the descriptors, interview guide, and the resultant survey instrument should enable teachers who are not trained in research to perform such analyses for the purposes of creating curricula that are relevant and useful to their pedagogical contexts. Addressing LCCs with tasks that are relevant to learners, while simultaneously being ecologically valid, is a crucial factor in successful curricular development. Ultimately, the evidence from this study supports the conclusion that the LCC framework and can-do descriptors had strong utility in performing the domain analysis and, in the future, would be useful for needs analyses, both of which could ensure that the developed and enacted curricula are relevant to the learners.

Second, across the GELT research landscape, this is one of very few studies that include adaptations targeting BELF communication (Peltonen, 2021; Pullin, 2015). These adaptations are a first step toward addressing the LCC aspect of BELF pedagogically. The adaptations exemplified

a rigorous and principled adaptation process (Tomlinson, 2013a) that was based on two target LCC descriptors. Third, the design and implementation of the adaptation decision-making tree was an innovation for pedagogical endeavors. As illustrated in Appendix E, each adaptation followed the tree for theoretical and practical support, and the rationale was provided, illustrating the sort of principled approach called for by researchers (Tomlinson, 2013a). For classroom teachers, there are two scenarios in which the decision-making tree can be leveraged. For *ad hoc* adaptations, it can serve as a quick reference for brainstorming. For planned adaptations, it can be used as a principled reference to inform systematic adaptations along with a rationale that can be shown to stakeholders (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017). As instructors regularly adapt their materials (Masuhara, 2022), the utility of the LCC framework and adaptation decision-making tree are evident.

7.2.4 Societal Contributions

This study has made three main societal contributions: One pertains to the Chinese professional context, the second concerns the Chinese BE educational context, and the third regards business communication more broadly.

The first societal contribution lies in this study's aim to reduce the English language skills gaps reported by Chinese employers (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; Patel et al., 2023). There is a tremendous need for learners to develop proficiency beyond the university and, therefore, the need for pedagogy that matches the reality of international business. Further, even with the calls to deemphasize English in the curriculum (Patel et al., 2023; The Economist, 2024) and the supposed waning interest in learning English in China (The Economist, 2024), the participants in this study pursued language development vigorously. While it could be argued that these 68 learners were a small cross-section of Chinese society, 63% of employers in China report

English to be “significant for their organisation” (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016, p. 13). Compounding this issue, China reports some of the highest English language skills gaps in the world (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; Patel et al., 2023). As established in Chapters 1 and 2, Chinese learners of English are simply unprepared for BELF communication upon leaving their university programs (Du, 2021). Put another way, workplace requirements are key drivers of English learning and motivation in Chinese society, but how that learning actually functions is not meeting workplace needs. Looking toward the future, every single interviewee stressed the importance of English to their professional lives, findings that align with the extant literature (He, 2020). In their efforts to continue learning, but without access to the training centers once pervasive across Chinese cities, some of this study’s participants cited using learning apps, while others joined English corners in local gathering places, such as the “[Name] English Corner” in Foshan, from which several participants joined this study. In response, the findings of this study can support Chinese professionals to develop more insightful, holistic, and nuanced cultural understandings, which would enable them to engage in more empathetic, compassionate, and effective communication. Such skill sets could facilitate a new generation of Chinese professionals to have an effective and confident communication style and become model professional communicators who can contribute to the region’s economic growth and position Chinese businesses as leaders in their fields. Improved communication can also facilitate FDI and build overseas partnerships, which would benefit Chinese society in terms of cooperation, development, and prosperity.

The second societal contribution has to do with BE education in the Chinese context. A key finding from this study concerned the characteristics of this population of participants, who exhibited a high level of intrinsic motivation and learning autonomy. This finding could impact

education in the Chinese context in terms of empowerment and policy. The LCCs support empathy, plurality, and home cultural expression. BELF learners are encouraged to communicate as themselves, from their own perspectives rather than trying to attain the cultural knowledge and skills of Anglo-Americans. The first step in developing linguacultural competence is understanding one's own culture and perspectives, which I argue will strengthen students' cultural understanding even while learning a new language. The goal is not to erase students' cultures or force them to adapt to others' cultures; rather, the goal is for professionals to communicate optimally, as themselves, with those of different backgrounds. Ideas such as *China English*, a unique variety of English that is viewed as imperfect or deficient (He, 2020; Peltonen & Ning, 2025) but enables Chinese to express themselves and their culture uniquely, are applicable in such scenarios. Imbuing Chinese English language education with messages and pedagogies supporting self-expression, self-motivation, and autonomy could be empowering, perhaps altering the educational orientation to English learning at a societal level: Instead of believing English is a foreign construct, it could be thought of as something that the learners can take ownership of, a foundational aim of GELT (Rose & Galloway, 2019) and this study. Perhaps such mindset changes could contribute to altering the way BE is addressed pedagogically, thus improving the language proficiency of Chinese English language learners, enabling them to participate in the global marketplace more effectively and with greater self-assurance.

The third societal contribution pertains to the target population of job-experienced professionals. As discussed, most investigations have examined BE pedagogy from the perspective of pre-experienced learners, often in the university context, perhaps because of the convenience of gaining access to large numbers of BE students in the universities in which researchers work and teach (Peltonen & Hu, 2024, 2025; Rose et al., 2021). However, as this study illustrated, job-

experienced learners' perspectives are crucial because they can provide researchers, materials developers, and instructors with first-hand information about what is needed in real-world professional communication. Ideally, the findings will inform pedagogical practices that can contribute to developing the transcultural communicative abilities of a cohort of professionals who will create a more engaged and understanding international business environment in the future. Amidst shifting geopolitical landscapes, discussions about globalization versus protectionism, and the changes in economic conditions, industries, and sectors in the post-COVID era - combined with the use of English to communicate all of the above, the competencies required for successful transcultural communication are more important than ever. Communication needs to remain open, empathetic, and clear. Such improvements will support business communication and connections for individuals and organizations globally. Therefore, ideally, the impact of this research can contribute to prosperity, stability, and improved quality of life in societies globally.

7.3 Limitations and Future Directions

There were several limitations to this study, which point to possible future research directions. The first limitation is that the study focused on a single unit of a single BE textbook and thus provided a limited snapshot of how LCCs are treated in the broader textbook landscape. Future investigations could include 1) multiple units of *Market Leader*, 2) multiple levels of the textbook (Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced), 3) different BE textbook series such as *Business Advantage*, *Business Partner*, *Business Result*, *The Business 2.0*, or 4) textbooks with a specific focus, such as *English for Accounting*, *English for the Financial Sector*, or *English for Engineering*, depending on the student population's needs.

Second, this study's sample was limited to those from mainland China, with a few participants from the Hong Kong S.A.R. This sample could be considered a limitation for two reasons. For one

thing, the participants hail from similar regional and linguacultural backgrounds, thus precluding comparison between dissimilar regional or linguacultural groups. For another, the participants functioned in a wide range of industries, organization types, and jobs, which had the advantage of offering a broad view of LCC development across workplace contexts but limited deeper insights into specific industries, job types, or organizations. After all, transactional BE communication can be extremely specific. Future investigations could focus on 1) a single industry or organization to gain insights into a more homogeneous population, 2) multiple geographies to determine what differences might exist among different linguacultural groups, and 3) organizations of specific sizes, particularly under-researched ones such as SMEs in Du (2021) or Roshid and Kankaanranta (2023). Further, while this study focused specifically on job-experienced professionals, similar studies could be conducted with business school students, business English students, or other pre-experienced students being taught at the university level.

The third limitation relates to the online, asynchronous, one-on-one course design. As such, learners were unable to engage in communicative practice with their peers that can help to socially construct LCC development. In fact, several participants expressed the desire to be able to interact with their peers for the above reasons (e.g., C#31, E#41). In future studies, there are tremendous opportunities to adjust instructional variables such as 1) How different approaches such as TBLT might work for developing LCCs; 2) how different teachers might impact student performance; and 3) how different course structures, student group sizes, and face-to-face instruction might impact student performance (Porte & McManus, 2019; Rogers & Revesz, 2020).

Finally, as mentioned, the MCQ test yielded invalid results and had to be dropped from the main study. Losing this assessment is a limitation because this data set could have more sensitive to differences in the performances of the two groups. Further, as the MCQ test was intended to

directly assess knowledge, the knowledge component of the participants' LCC development was potentially under-analyzed in this investigation. Future studies should leverage triangulated assessments (e.g., self-report questionnaires, performance assessments, MCQ) to provide deeper insight into LCC building pedagogy.

Beyond limitations, there are several other future research directions that should be pursued. One crucial avenue of investigation would be to include materials created using AI and compare them to existing curricula to increase understanding of the affordances and drawbacks of AI in BE materials development and usage. Additionally, enacting a longer intervention with multiple assessment points could be useful in giving students more exposure to the LCCs and offer more opportunity for differentiation in performance (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). Finally, though the findings of this study provided strong evidence of the utility of the LCCs to curricular implementation, its scope was limited to examining two LCCs out of 20, leaving 18 unexamined. Investigating the other LCCs would allow comparison between the different LCCs as well as provide insight into how different populations prioritize certain LCCs. In other words, the same process used in this study could be followed for different target LCCs, depending on the context of the learners. It could include 1) the same LCCs but in different contexts for replication of this study, 2) more LCCs for a broader intervention, or 3) a different set of LCCs. Crucial to such endeavors would be to develop and validate triangulated tests to differentiate student performance.

Lessons learned from this study also point to several broader research directions. I will present these research directions in the form of calls to action regarding the research-practice divide, the continued exploration of BELF, and the importance of classroom research.

Perhaps the research-practice divide is not insurmountable. As has been discussed, researchers have decried a growing research-practice divide in BE teaching and learning (McKinley, 2019;

Rose, 2019). More specifically, there is a dearth of resources aimed at translating BELF research findings into practical and tangible classroom practices that BE practitioners can implement (Peltonen & Haga, 2025). Some argue that academic research does not positively impact practitioners because the research, conducted by academics, is totally removed from the realities of the classroom (Medgyes, 2017). Others counter that research has “been able to broaden and deepen understanding of teaching and learning in ways that can be applied to both the classroom and to language teaching materials” (Paran, 2017, p. 499). Even so, many researchers propound the importance of research-informed practice and have endeavored to bridge the theory-practice divide, particularly with researcher-practitioner partnerships (Becker, 2024; Sato & Loewen, 2022; Winch et al., 2015). In this study, I was in the unique position of simultaneously being the practitioner and the researcher. While being a teacher-researcher is not a new concept (Rose & McKinley, 2022), this positionality raised a series of challenges over the course of this study: The design of the course had to be tightly controlled so that my teaching approaches for both groups were equivalent. For example, I was mindful of recording videos and providing *PowerPoint* materials that were as similar as possible except for the adapted sections. On the other hand, the advantage of being a teacher-researcher is that one’s research can inform one’s practice, hopefully leading to research-informed pedagogy. Another advantage is that this entire study arose out of my classroom experience, an example of a research problem arising from practice rather than theory, something called for by academics in the field, as this practice can help lead to research addressing contextually relevant issues (Becker, 2024; McKinley, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2019). I hope this study has illustrated that both roles can be filled while retaining the integrity of each. If that is the case, the “divide” might not be as great as has been reported. As Rose and McKinley (2022) point out, many applied linguistics researchers come from a practitioner background, and,

even if they do not, they fulfill both roles in their academic lives anyway. Rather than focusing on a growing divergence between pedagogical research and practice, more pressing issues are a very real accessibility problem. Practitioners are often unable to access research that exists behind expensive paywalls (Peltonen & Haga, 2025; Rose & McKinley, 2022). Even when practitioners can access articles, they might be written in such a way that makes them conceptually inaccessible (Rose, 2019). As a BE teacher said in Peltonen and Haga (2025), “the concept is still blurry to me” (p. 14) when referring to BELF. Therefore, I call for more practitioner-researcher and dual practitioner-researcher projects in a continued effort to bridge the theory-practice divide.

Regarding the second broad direction, BELF seems to have been abandoned, which represents a crucial research and pedagogical gap in the field. Though the concept of Global Englishes has struck a chord in the realm of contemporary English language research and pedagogy, spawning its own conference (ELINET) and numerous research articles, very little of the literature pertains specifically to BELF, even though the creation of GELT was, in part, based on teachers’ experiences preparing Japanese learners for the workplace (Galloway & Rose, 2013). While there was a flurry of activity after the concept of BELF was initially proposed and defined almost two decades ago in Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), research on the topic has become sparse, with only a handful of BELF-informed studies since 2015 (e.g., Du, 2021; Du-Babcock & Yao, 2020; Hodges & Seawright, 2023; Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022; Karhunen et al., 2023; Komori-Glatz, 2017; Nielsen, 2020; Räsänen, 2018; Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2023; Si, 2019b, 2020). Of those studies, even fewer focused on pedagogy. At the same time, English usage is growing at an unprecedented rate globally and is expected to continue to do so (Patel et al., 2023). Further, English for professional communication is crucial to global business functions (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; Pearson, 2024). While the current study focused on the greater

China region, enormous gaps in understanding of the contexts, characteristics, and requisite pedagogical approaches exist globally, in contexts ranging from South Asia to Africa (Cambridge English & Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016; Patel et al., 2023). From that perspective, it is remarkable that there are so few studies addressing the particular pedagogical challenges that BELF entails. Furthermore, there is a stunning lack of information about BE instructors' materials usage and adaptation practices, particularly in the instruction of job-experienced adult learners. While it may be difficult to observe BE teachers' practices due to privacy concerns of the organizations in which they function (Frendo, 2005), there could still be research, even if in a limited fashion. The dearth of such research is concerning, as the aforementioned communicative challenges, if addressed, could prepare people in multiple contexts all over the world for workplace communication. Conversely, the lack of investigation risks leaving people to their own devices in developing professional communicative proficiency in English. Relatedly, devising pedagogical approaches and curricula informing BE instructional practices would benefit BE teachers and their learners, and hopefully move the industry away from being the "Wild West of ELT" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1986, p. 158). Additionally, how generative AI impacts BELF communication, communicators, BE instructors, and BE pedagogy is a key area that must be investigated. In the end, professionals with better communicative abilities would benefit themselves and their organizations by ensuring effective and efficient communication, which, in turn, should lead to business success and prosperity. Accordingly, this study shows that there should be a much stronger call for BELF-informed pedagogical investigations on a global scale.

Finally, classroom interventions and experiments are messy but necessary. McKinley (2019) talks about the "messiness" of pedagogical research, specifically in the realm of TESOL. He goes on to explain that it is an obstacle to pedagogical research:

There is an inherent problem where academic rigour of published research does not allow for admissions or confessions of mistakes made or dilemmas experienced in the research process; messiness should not be seen to detract from methodological rigour, but to reflect the realities under investigation (p. 881).

The “messiness” he refers to is studying “real people living real lives” (Rigg, 1991, p. 536) and “the complex issues that teachers deal with in their daily practices” (McKinley, 2019, p. 876). My experience in this research project aligned with the above. Though I made every effort to ensure research rigor and transparency and follow best practices, I still faced multiple dilemmas. These dilemmas include but are not limited to: participant attrition (at times I wondered if I would ever be able to recruit enough participants); an invalid MCQ assessment instrument (from the pilot studies, I was convinced it was valid and ready for use); individual differences such as language level and learning background (I had no idea how language level might affect performance); length of time spent on the course (despite my requirement that students finish the course within three weeks, only 10 out of the 68 finished within that time frame), and attitudes (interested and engaged versus bored and uninterested). What I found reinforces the assertion that pedagogically based studies incorporating classroom interventions are highly complex, fluid, and unpredictable. From that perspective, it is understandable why researchers may eschew classroom-based research in favor of more controlled and controllable types of research. On the other hand, classroom-based research is crucial, and teaching interventions are the best way to ascertain causality (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). The hope is that, rather than trying to sanitize the process and findings of classroom-based research, teacher-researchers can transparently explain the “messiness” inherent to this work. Looking at it more broadly, this study was an experiment, which, by definition, does not ensure any particular outcome. The risk taken at the inception of this project was that the results

would not support my hypotheses. In this case, the results partially supported my hypothesis because the study showed the utility and relevance of the LCC framework as a construct, and that, after exposure to both curricula, both groups improved in their target LCCs. However, that still leaves the fact that there was no difference between the groups. My experience suggests that one reason for a growing research-practice divide might be the fear of messiness. However, these types of studies are crucial, and the aptly-named section title in McKinley (2019) offers researchers a necessary and clear call to action by “EMBRACING THE MESSINESS OF REAL-WORLD TESOL RESEARCH” (p. 880, emphasis in original).

7.4 Final Thoughts

I was reminded of the central purpose of this study during my post-intervention interview with E#46. To humanize her, I will call her by the pseudonym Nelly. Nelly came from Foshan, a second-tier city in southern China. After graduating from a university and getting her first job, she paid substantial sums of money to join English classes at METEN to learn how to actually communicate in English rather than simply memorize grammar or vocabulary. It was in a classroom at METEN that I first met her, more than ten years ago. In our post-intervention interview, Nelly described the challenges she faced after studying at METEN and how she came to work independently as an international trade broker:

You know, I would like to share some touching history. And because I failed several years ago and I lost myself...and I asked myself, what can I do just because I know English? Oh, that [was] a very tough time for me. [begins to cry]. And just because I know English, and I found a way for myself, and I found a career for myself. And I stand up again. So, I do feel happy that I know English, and I love it very much.

After losing her job, she took inventory of her skills, wishes, and goals, and realized that her ability to communicate in English was her most important skill, so she rebuilt her career based on that foundation. Now, she is thriving as an independent broker in international trade. Her story reminded me that our research does not just contribute to business organizations or intangible notions like the “research landscape” or “pedagogy.” Rather, as Porte and McManus (2019) remind us, “social science deals with people” (p. 4). Ultimately, we are trying to improve the lives of people like Nelly. That endeavor is our true contribution to making the world a better place.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Documents, Information Sheets



To Hu Guangwei (Department of English and Communication)
From Ahrens Kathleen Virginia, Chair, Departmental Research Committee
Email kathleen.ahrens@ Date 06-Jan-2023

Application for Ethical Review for Teaching/Research Involving Human Subjects

I write to inform you that approval has been given to your application for human subjects ethics review of the following project for a period from 01-Sep-2022 to 31-Aug-2025:

Project Title: Using a Conceptual Framework to Analyze a Business English Curriculum: A Mixed Method Intervention Design Study
Department: Department of English and Communication
Principal Investigator: Hu Guangwei
Project Start Date: 01-Sep-2022
Project type: Human subjects (non-clinical)
Reference Number: HSEARS20221231002

You will be held responsible for the ethical approval granted for the project and the ethical conduct of the personnel involved in the project. In case the Co-PI, if any, has also obtained ethical approval for the project, the Co-PI will also assume the responsibility in respect of the ethical approval (in relation to the areas of expertise of respective Co-PI in accordance with the stipulations given by the approving authority).

You are responsible for informing the PolyU Institutional Review Board in advance of any changes in the proposal or procedures which may affect the validity of this ethical approval.

Ahrens Kathleen Virginia

Chair

Departmental Research Committee (on behalf of PolyU Institutional Review Board)

Information Sheet

Using a Conceptual Framework to Analyze a Business English Curriculum: A Mixed Methods Intervention Design Study

You are invited to participate in the above project conducted by Lucas Peltonen, who is a post-graduate student of the Department of English and Communication in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The project is supervised by Professor Guangwei Hu. The project has been approved by the PolyU Institutional Review Board (PolyU IRB) (Reference Number: HSEARS20221231002). 诚邀您参与由香港理工大学英语及传意系研究生 Lucas Peltonen 主持，由 Professor Guangwei Hu 监督的上述项目。该项目已获得香港理工大学机构审查委员会 (PolyU IRB) 批准 (参考编号：HSEARS20221231002)。

The aims/objectives of this project are to help improve materials and teaching to better prepare learners for professional communication internationally. 该项目的目的/目标是帮助改进材料和教学，让学习者更好地为国际专业交流做好准备。

This business English course is estimated to take you about 5-10 hours total, depending on your work pace. The course includes a learning text, short videos to support the text, and several assignments. Before and after the course, volunteers are invited to complete surveys and assignments. The surveys will likely take ten to twenty minutes total, while the assignments may take over an hour. 本商务英语课程预计共需要大约 5-10 小时，具体时间取决于您的进度。该课程包含学习文本、短视频（以支持文本）和一些作业。在课程之前和之后，您将被邀请完成问卷调查（需要约 10-20 分钟）和作业（需要约一小时）。

There is not any expected risk of participating in the teaching intervention, completing the assignments, or completing the surveys. The information you provide as part of the project is the research data. Any research data from which you can be identified is known as personal data. Personal data does not include data where the identity has been removed (anonymous data). We will minimize our use of personal data in the study as much as possible. Only the lead researcher will have access to personal data and research data for the purposes of the study. Responsible members of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University may be given access for monitoring and/or audit of the research. 参与教学干预、完成作业或完成问卷调查不存在任何预期风险。您作为项目的一部分提供的信息是研究数据。任何可以识别您身份的研究数据都称为个人数据，个人数据不包括已删除身份的数据（匿名数据）。我们将尽可能减少在研究中使用个人数据。只有首席研究员才能出于研究目的而访问个人数据和研究数据。香港理工大学的负责成员有权对该研究进行监控和/或审查。

All of the collected data will be coded by Lucas Peltonen, and any identity-related information therein will be removed. Therefore, the participants will be identifiable only to Lucas Peltonen through codes. Hard copies of the data will be kept in a locked cabinet that only Lucas Peltonen has access to, and soft copies of the data will be kept in a password protected laptop that only

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH 同意参与研究

**Using a Conceptual Framework to Analyze a Business English Curriculum: A Mixed
Methods Intervention Design Study: Teaching Intervention**

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research project conducted by Lucas Peltonen under the supervision of Professor Guangwei Hu at the Department of English and Communication, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

本人_____ 特此同意参与由 Lucas Peltonen 在香港理工大学英语及传播学系 Professor Guangwei Hu 的监督下进行的上述研究项目。

I understand that all information related to me will remain confidential. All the data will be kept in a password-protected laptop that only the research team can access and will use solely for the purposes of research. 我了解与我有关的所有信息都将保密。所有数据将保存在受密码保护的笔记本电脑中，只有研究团队可以访问并仅用于研究目的。

I also understand that the data I contribute will be anonymized and analyzed along with other participants' data and that it cannot be identified in any publications based on this research, which may include journal articles, books, conference presentations, and so on. 我还明白，我贡献的数据将与其他参与者的数据一起被进行匿名处理和分析，并且我的数据无法在基于本研究的任何出版物中（可能包括期刊文章、书籍、会议演示文稿等）被识别。

I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the research in the Participant Information Sheet. I understand my participation in this study is voluntary. 我确认我已阅读并通过参与者信息表知悉有关该研究的相关信息。我明白我是自愿参与这项研究。

I acknowledge that I have the opportunity to ask questions and can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. 我声明我有机会提出问题，并且随时可以退出研究而不会产生任何后果。

Name of participant: 参加者姓名: _____

Signature of participant: 参与者签名: _____

The name that you type or write here will be counted as your signature
您在此处输入或书写的姓名将被视为您的签名

Name of researcher: Lucas John Peltonen

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: April 13, 2024

Dear Participant,

Welcome to the course and thank you so much for joining! Because this course is for research purposes, there are certain requirements that students need to follow: 欢迎来到本课程，感谢您的加入！由于本课程是基于研究目的，学术需要遵循以下要求：

- Complete the course within 3 weeks. 在三周内完成课程。
- Please do not share these materials with anyone. They are for research purposes only. 请不要与任何人分享这些材料。它们仅用于研究目的。
- Written assignments should be submitted in MS Word. Why? This makes it easier for me to provide comments and feedback. 书面作业应以 MS Word 形式提交。为什么？这使我更容易提供意见和反馈。
- Presentation assignments will be recorded on video and sent to me. Why? Video enables visual support, so the viewer can understand the content better. 演示作业应被录制成视频并发送给我。为什么？视频提供视觉支持，因此观看者可以更好地理解内容。
- Work must be your own. Do not simply use material from the internet. Why? I don't want to assess the internet. I want to assess your work. 工作必须是你自己的。不要简单地使用网络上的资料。为什么？因为我想评估你的工作，而不是网络资料。
- Module 1 assignments will be returned to you at the end of the course. Module 2 assignments will be returned to you as soon as possible. Module 3 assignments will be returned to you in the post-course report. 第一模块的作业将在课程结束时反馈给您，第二模块的作业将尽快反馈给您，第三模块的作业将在课后报告中反馈给您。
- You must complete at least 80% of the textbook exercises. Why? These exercises will support your performance in the assignments and assessment. 您必须完成至少 80% 的课程练习。为什么？这些练习将会支持你在作业和评估中的表现。
- The course includes an entrance interview, Module 1 tasks, Module 2 tasks, a 1-on-1 class session, Module 3 tasks, and an exit interview. 课程包含课前采访、模块一任务、模块二任务、一对一课程、模块三任务和结课采访。
- No Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as chatGPT. Why? Because then I am assessing chatGPT, not your work. 不使用 ChatGPT 等人工智能(AI)。为什么？因为这会让我评估 ChatGPT，而不是你的工作。

Your signature below acknowledges that you understand each of the above expectations. 在下面签名表示您理解上述的每项期望。

Name of participant: 参加者姓名: _____

Signature of participant: 参与者签名: _____

The name that you type or write here will be counted as your signature
您在此处输入或书写的姓名将被视为您的签名

Name of researcher: Lucas John Peltonen

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: April 13, 2024

Appendix B: Domain Analysis Survey Demographics

Domain Analysis Interviewees

Name	Industry	Job Title	Level	Experience	Country of Origin	Work City	Company Structure	Company Size
Winnie	Fashion & Retail	Fashion Designer	Senior (Owner)	12 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Owned	Large
Helen	Accounting	Owner	Senior (Owner)	20 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Owned	Small
Tina	Private Education	Dir. of Business Dev.	Senior	9 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Owned	Small
Todd	Debt Collection	Debt Collection Coord.	Junior	3 years	China	Qingdao	China-Owned	Large
Steven	Home Appliances	Product Manager	Middle	7 years	China	Dubai / Hefei	China-Owned	Large
Jane	eCommerce	Senior Account Manager	Senior	10 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Owned	Large
Kevin	IT Security	Senior Security Researcher	Senior	20 years	Malaysia	Beijing	China-Owned	Large
Kenneth	Logistics	Supervisor: Overseas Dept.	Junior	3 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Owned	Small
Kim	Medical Equipment	Local Support Team Specialist	Junior	4 years	China	Shenzhen	China-Owned	Large
Cassie	Financial Services	Manager	Middle	8 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Foreign Joint Venture	Large
William	Shipping	Overseas Operations	Junior	2 years	China	Shanghai	China-Owned	Small
Alice	eCommerce	Customer Service Rep.	Junior	3 years	China	Guangzhou	China-Foreign Joint Venture	Large
Erin	Education	Business English Teacher	Senior	10 years	USA	Foshan / Guangzhou	China-Foreign Joint Venture	Large
Iris	Education	Business English Teacher	Middle	3 years	China	Hangzhou	China-Foreign Joint Venture	Large

Domain Analysis Questionnaire Respondents

Characteristic	Domain Analysis Questionnaire	
	<i>n</i>	%
Participants:		
Female	48	53
Male	34	37
Did Not Answer	8	10
Born In:		
Mainland China	62	69
Hong Kong SAR	18	20
Did Not Answer	10	11
Years of Learning English		
0-5	12	13
6-10	13	14
11-14	17	20
15-19	9	10
20+	31	34
Did Not Answer	8	9
Years of Working Experience		
0-5	20	22
6-10	14	16
11-14	17	19
15-19	11	12
20+	20	22
Did Not Answer	8	9
Rank in Current Job		
Junior	23	26
Middle	36	39
Senior	23	26
Did Not Answer	8	9
Type of Organization		
Government (e.g., Civil Service)	1	1
Public Service (e.g., school, hospital)	16	18
Private Company	64	71
Did Not Answer	9	10
Type of Ownership of the Company		
China Owned	42	46
Foreign Owned	32	36
China – Foreign Joint Venture	5	6
Did Not Answer	11	12
Size of the Company		
Small (1-50)	24	27
Medium (51-100)	6	7
Large (101+)	50	55
Did Not Answer	10	11

Appendix C: Domain Analysis Interview Guide

Topic	Initial Questions	Possible Follow up Questions
Basic questions and background	What country are you from?	
	What city do you work in?	
	How many years have you been learning English?	
	How many years' experience do you have working?	
	What is your rank in your current job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior • Middle • Senior
	What industry are you in?	
	What is your job title?	
	What type of organization do you work in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private • Public or State-Owned
	Is the company:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China-owned? • Foreign owned? • A China-Foreign joint-venture?
	What is the size of the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small (fewer than 50) • Medium (51-100) • Large (more than 101)
General competencies	Tell me about your English learning and how you use English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you give examples?
	If you could improve any aspects of your English, what would they be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you answer that way?
Business English	As far as English what do you have to be good at to do your job well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your English have to be perfect? • Why do you have to be good at that?
Language proficiency	How would you describe your English proficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you describe it that way?
	How would you describe the proficiency of your colleagues and peers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you describe it that way?
Multilingualism & translanguaging	Do you or your colleagues use multiple languages at work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, what languages? • How do you use the languages? • If not, why not?
Cultural mismatches	Can you remember and describe for me any examples of a time at work when you might have had a miscommunication or misunderstanding that you think was due to cultural differences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you think it was due to culture? • How do you explain culture causing the problem? • How did you feel? • How could you have prevented it? • How did you "fix it"?
Basic definitions	Are language and culture different things, or should they be considered together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you answer that way?
	How would you define the word "culture"?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you define it that way? • How would you describe "visible" culture?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe “hidden” culture or “deep” culture?
Home culture and identity.	How would you describe your cultural identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your cultural identity have any impact on your work life? If so, how? If not, why do you think it does not? • Do you think your cultural identity impacts how you communicate? If so, can you give an example? If not, why do you say that?
	How would you describe your home culture, that is, the culture in which you were born and grew up?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you give examples?
Organizational cultures	What is “company culture?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe your organization’s culture? • Can you describe the culture of one of the organizations you work with that is outside of yours? <p>Can you describe the culture of your department?</p>
Anglo-American cultures	How important is it to understand British or American culture for your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why?
World cultures	If asked to describe different cultures around the world, what would you say?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, if asked to describe American culture, how would you describe it and why?
Building relationships	How important is it to build relationships at work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner companies? • Suppliers? • Customers? • Colleagues?
Building relationships Travel visitors and guests	Do you ever engage in small talk at work? How do you do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you every try to engage in small talk with people at work that you do not know? How? • Is small talk important? Why? Why not? • What do you talk about?
	Have you ever had to host business guests from overseas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel about it? • How did it go? • What do you wish you had known about it before? • Did you learn anything from it? • Were there any cultural issues during the visit? Problems? Learning? Differences?
Travel visitors and guests Company, department, function, and CoP communication	Have you ever had to travel overseas for business?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel about it? • How did it go? • What do you wish you had known about it before? • Did you learn anything from it? • Were there any cultural issues during the visit? Problems? Learning? Differences?
	Can you describe your company’s communicative style?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your company have an explicit language policy? Is it followed? Why? Why not? • Can you describe your department’s communicative style? Is it the same or different from the company’s? <p>Does your work function or the people you interact with have a communicative style? How would you describe it?</p>

Communicative competence and genre knowledge	When you communicate face-to-face or on video or the phone, what types of things are you talking about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, reports, presentations, negotiations, brainstorming, etc. • Can you provide examples? • Do you feel that you are good at communicating this way? Why? Why not?
Communicative competence and genre knowledge Target culture(s) in the workplace.	When communicating in writing, what types of things are you usually writing about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, reports, requests, summaries, decisions, etc.? • Can you provide examples? • Do you feel that you are good at communicating this way? Why? Why not?
	Do you have to read at work? What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of examples?
	How would you describe the cultures of the people you work with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ever compare their cultures to yours? If so, how? • How do you feel about the other cultures you interact with? • Do you communicate differently with people of different cultures? If so, how? If not, why not? • When communicating with someone from a different culture, is it important to understand their perspective? Why? Why not? • Can you describe any strategies or methods you use to try to build understanding from misunderstandings in communication?

Appendix D: Domain Analysis Questionnaire Items

#	Questions Regarding Business English Competencies
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extremely important ○ Very important ○ Somewhat important ○ Not so important ○ Not at all important
5	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand broader, global theories about cultures and the different tendencies cultural groups may have (e.g., dimensions such as collectivism vs. individualism or high-context versus low-context communication).
6	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to identify and avoid cultural stereotypes when communicating with people from other regions, companies, and work teams?
7	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to identify and understand that sometimes people's behavior in business is different than your own because of their language and cultural background?
8	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to adjust to and accept the accents and speech styles from different regions of the world?
9	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know how company structure and management practices may affect communication (e.g., hierarchical management structures versus flat management structures and their effect on communication)?
10	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master certain types of communication for your specific job function (e.g., sales presentations for sales professionals or financial reports for accounting professionals)?
11	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand and empathize with the perspective of people from different cultural and language backgrounds?
12	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that there are different aspects of culture? For example, "visible" culture includes objects such as architecture, food, and clothes, while "deep" culture includes beliefs, values, and worldviews.
13	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master the language, terminology, and rules of communication for your professional communication?
14	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master relationship-building communication for building rapport, making small talk, and getting closer personally?
15	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to do research about people from different cultural and language backgrounds before communicating with them?
16	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that the way you communicate establishes your identity (e.g., how you speak to people of different levels of authority, how formally or informally you present yourself, or how flexible you are)?
17	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know your home culture and be able to express aspects of it to others? For example, you know how to explain Chinese festivals and local foods to foreigners - in English.
18	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know aspects of the cultures of those you communicate with?
19	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand the religion of the people you work with so that you interact accordingly?
20	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that corporate culture (e.g., private tech company cultures versus state-owned infrastructure company cultures) often reflects the business function and industry standards of that company, which may impact communicative practices?
21	When on a business trip or stationed overseas, how important is it to follow local beliefs, customs, and ways of communicating (as opposed to following your own)?
22	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that a single country may host several languages and different cultural groups?

23	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know the cultures of native English-speaking countries, such as the USA or the UK?
#	Questions Regarding Types of Communication at Work
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Always ○ Usually ○ Sometimes ○ Rarely ○ Never
27	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you read, write, listen to, or present case studies about a business activity, company, country, report, or issue?
28	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you evaluate something (e.g., a business or organization, financial report, policy, product or service, specific project, potential opportunity)?
29	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you engage in discussions (e.g., brainstorm new ideas, discuss business plans, ask questions to gather information, summarize something)?
30	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you have to negotiate ?
31	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you give or receive specifications for something (e.g., needs and requirements, product designs, system designs, important information)?
32	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you confirm something (e.g., a contract or purchase order, verbal agreement, receipt of something, completion of something)?
33	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you write a summary of something, such as of a discussion, presentation, or meeting?
34	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you give or receive expert advice, expert perspectives, or lessons learned from experience ?
35	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you read, write, or analyze news reports or press releases (e.g., breaking business news, company profiles, profiles of individuals)?
36	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you read or write company or business notices, announcements, or memos ?
37	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you explain something (e.g., methodology, systems, or processes)?
38	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you communicate about meetings (e.g., set or follow agendas, read or write action notes, summaries, key takeaways, or next steps)?
39	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you propose something (e.g., a business idea, a plan, a new venture, a presentation)?
40	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you introduce a product or service ?
41	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you persuade someone to do something?
42	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you do research (e.g., read or write research articles, analyze data, or present research)?
43	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you report something (e.g., status, annual performance, changes)?
44	For your English language communication at work, how frequently do you read, examine, or analyze specialized material related to your work function (e.g., textbooks, manuals, pamphlets, tests)?

Appendix E: Rationale for Adaptations

#	Adaptation	Words	Strategy Support	Classroom Level
1	Starting Up Exercise A	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: The questions are asked of the learner’s own thoughts and ideas, so they are personalized. Classroom Level: Two items were added/omitted to reflect language competence and micro-organizational cultural issues, encouraging reflection. Linguacultural Competency: Adjusting to a new home culture at the team (micro-culture) level.</p>				
2	Starting Up Exercise C	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing • Localizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: The questions are reflecting the learner’s own thoughts and ideas and introducing their own city/town, so they are personalized and localized. Classroom Level: Two items were added/omitted to reflect home culture (regional) and home culture (corporate) with the management restructure, and they encourage reflection. Linguacultural Competency: Introducing the home culture at the regional level and adjusting to a new home culture at the team (micro-culture) level.</p>				
3	Reading Exercise A	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalizing • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: These are glocalized questions because the questions reflect local Chinese issues that broaden to general principles (cultural training in corporations) and an updated issue in corporate training (modernizing). Classroom Level: These questions were changed to target the article. Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the article, which is developing the religion-related competency.</p>				
4	Reading Article	375	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalizing • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ News Media
<p>Strategy: This article is glocalized to reflect local Chinese issues that broaden to general principles (cultural training in organizations). It is modernized, as this article intends to reflect contemporary trends and update the article in the original source material, which is several years old and therefore potentially less relevant. Classroom Level: The change format adaptation was used, as the article completely replaces the original article, though “News Media” should be considered with the caveat that the new article was generated by chatGPT. Linguacultural Competency: This article was created to discuss religious practices and how they impact professional communication.</p>				
5	Reading Exercise B	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalizing • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: These are glocalized questions because the questions reflect local Chinese issues that broaden to general principles (cultural training in corporations) and an updated issue in corporate training (modernizing). Classroom Level: These questions were changed to target the article. Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the article, which is developing the religion-related competency.</p>				
6	Reading Exercise C	76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalizing • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: These are glocalized questions because the questions reflect local Chinese issues that broaden to general principles (cultural training in corporations) and an updated issue in corporate training (modernizing). Classroom Level: These questions were changed to target the article. Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the article, which is developing the religion-related competency.</p>				
7	Reading Exercise D	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalizing • Personalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: These are glocalized questions because they reflect a specific Chinese corporation’s training broadened to a global principle. They are personalized because they ask for the learner’s personal response. Classroom Level: They were changed to pertain to issues presented in the article and encourage reflection.</p>				

Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the article, which is developing the religion-related competency, though their personal response might also impact home cultural expression.				
8	Language Review Instructions	69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examples
<p>Strategy: These sentences were modernized to reflect current issues in the provided article rather than the older article.</p> <p>Classroom Level: They were changed to provide examples taken from the article.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the article, which is developing the religion-related competency.</p>				
9	Skills Exercise B	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace topic
<p>Strategy: These questions were modernized to reflect current issues in the provided dialogue rather than the older one.</p> <p>Classroom Level: They were changed to reflect content in the new dialogue.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: These questions pertain to the main topic of the dialogue, which is developing the religion-related competency.</p>				
10	Skills Dialogue	545	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding/Omitting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dialogues
<p>Strategy: This dialogue was modernized to reflect current issues in corporate meetings and management: issues of diversity and multiculturalism in multinational companies.</p> <p>Classroom Level: This was a dialogue to replace the pre-existing dialogue on a less timely topic (smoking).</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: The main topic and intention of the dialogue is to develop the religion-related competency.</p>				
11	Skills Exercise D	385	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing • Localizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding/Omitting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Problem-Based Tasks • Learner-generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work Product
<p>Strategy: This activity was developed for learners to focus on how they would conduct a meeting and how they would host overseas guests, thus personalizing and localizing the task requirements.</p> <p>Classroom Level: As the questions pertain to how the learners would use the language and implement the strategies in a few different scenarios, the classroom level adaptation is problem-based tasks, but it is also work product, as the learner is expected to generate their own dialogue.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: The tasks and the strategies support the development of both the competencies of expressing the home culture and understanding religion.</p>				
12	Home Culture Exercise A	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing • Localizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: The strategy is personalizing and localizing, as it is asking for the perspective of the learners regarding their own background.</p> <p>Classroom Level: These adaptations are to create learner-generated responses and reflection by asking questions that are unique to each individual learner.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: These questions all regard the competency of being able to express your home culture.</p>				
13	Home Culture Exercise B	125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: The strategy is modernizing, as it is a new set of questions based on the updated topic.</p> <p>Classroom Level: The questions are rewritten, based on the new topic.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: There is general cultural knowledge here, but the main linguacultural competency of this section is home cultural expression.</p>				
14	Home Culture Exercise C	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: The strategy is personalizing, as it is asking for the perspective of the learners regarding their own perspective.</p> <p>Classroom Level: These adaptations are to create learner-generated responses and reflection based by asking that is unique to the individual learner.</p>				

Linguacultural Competency: These questions all regard the competency of being able to express your home culture.				
15	Home Culture Exercise D	178	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalizing • Personalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change Articles • Learner-Generated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection
<p>Strategy: The strategy is glocalizing, as it is reflecting different perspectives of the home culture (in this case, China) in ways that might broaden understanding. The questions are personalized in that they ask the learner’s experiences regarding the quotes.</p> <p>Classroom Level: The adaptations change the format by changing the article, though in this case it is not a full article; rather, it is individual quotes. The questions, based on the quotes, are reflective to generate discussion of the learners’ perspectives.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: These quotes and questions all pertain to the competency of being able to express your home culture (and be able to understand others’ expressions of their cultures).</p>				
16	Home Culture Exercise E	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: The strategy is glocalizing, as it is taking a local example and using it to develop a broadened, principled understanding.</p> <p>Classroom Level: The questions have been changed to reflect the new topic.</p> <p>Linguacultural competency: The questions all pertain to the expert talk, which focuses on the importance of being able to express the home culture.</p>				
17	Home Culture Exercise F	74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replace Topic
<p>Strategy: The strategy is glocalizing, as it is taking a local example and using it to develop a broadened, principled understanding.</p> <p>Classroom Level: The questions have been changed to reflect the new topic.</p> <p>Linguacultural competency: The questions all pertain to the expert talk, which focuses on the importance of being able to express the home culture.</p>				
18	Home Culture Exercise G	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examples
<p>Strategy: The strategy is modernizing, as the terms are contemporary and are present in the expert talk.</p> <p>Classroom Level: The expressions have been changed to reflect examples of expressions that pertain to the updated topic.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: The phrases are all used in the expert talk which focuses on the importance of being able to express the home culture.</p>				
19	Home Culture Expert Talk	454	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ News Media
<p>Strategy: The strategy is glocalizing, as the speaker uses his own workplace to illustrate general principles (the importance of expressing the home culture, among others).</p> <p>Classroom Level: The article has been changed completely to illustrate this competency rather than the more general cultural content in the existing source materials. The title of “News Media” should be considered with the caveat that this speech was generated by chatGPT.</p> <p>Linguacultural Competency: The focus of the next text is to illustrate the importance of being able to express the home culture in business situations.</p>				

Appendix F: Pilot Study Demographics

Participant	Group	Born	English Study	Currently	Specialty	Location
Jill	Control	Hong Kong	16-20 years	Undergraduate student	Applied Linguistics	Hong Kong
Yvonne	Control	Mainland China	11-15	Undergraduate student	Applied Linguistics	Hong Kong
Julien	Control	Mainland China	11-15	Undergraduate student	Applied Linguistics	Hong Kong
Alisa	Control	Hong Kong	21+	Postgraduate student + FT	Wine Industry	Hong Kong
Lucy	Control	Mainland China	11-15	Postgraduate student	Teaching Chinese FL	Hong Kong
Clem	Experimental	Mainland China	6-10	Working Full Time	Early childhood Ed	Toronto
Daniela	Experimental	Mainland China	11-15	Postgraduate student	Language Sciences	Shenzhen
Rory	Experimental	Mainland China	11-15	Postgraduate student	Teaching Chinese FL	Hong Kong
Katrina	Experimental	Hong Kong	21+	Postgraduate student + PT	Music	Hong Kong

Appendix G: Pilot Study Raw Scores

Group	Participant	Test	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Difference
Control	Lucy	Questionnaire	4.15	4.46	0.31
		Email	3.00	3.25	0.25
		Presentation	2.20	3.20	1.00
		MCQ	6.00	7.00	1.00
	Yvonne	Questionnaire	3.92	4.15	0.23
		Email	2.00	2.75	0.75
		Presentation	2.00	3.10	1.10
		MCQ	11.00	9.00	-2.00
	Jill	Questionnaire	3.15	3.35	0.20
		Email	2.50	3.25	0.75
		Presentation	3.50	4.50	1.00
		MCQ	11.00	10.00	-1.00
	Alisa	Questionnaire	3.88	4.00	0.12
		Email	2.25	2.25	0.00
		Presentation	3.75	3.75	0.00
		MCQ	7.00	6.00	-1.0
	Julien	Questionnaire	4.00	4.23	0.23
		Email	2.38	3.25	0.88
		Presentation	3.50	3.50	0.00
		MCQ	10.00	9.00	-1.00
Experimental	Katrina	Questionnaire	3.69	4.65	0.96
		Email	3.25	3.63	0.38
		Presentation	3.25	3.50	0.25
		MCQ	5.00	8.00	3.00
	Clem	Questionnaire	4.27	3.35	-0.92
		Email	2.00	2.25	0.25
		Presentation	2.20	3.50	1.30
		MCQ	8.00	8.00	0.00
	Rory	Questionnaire	3.46	3.92	0.46
		Email	2.63	3.25	0.64
		Presentation	3.00	3.50	0.50
		MCQ	10.00	9.00	-1.00
	Daniela	Questionnaire	4.12	4.46	0.34
		Email	3.50	3.75	0.25
		Presentation	3.25	3.00	-0.25
		MCQ	8.00	10.00	2.00

Appendix H: Demographics of Withdrawals

Demographics of Withdrawals

Characteristic	Control Group		Experimental Group		Full Sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender						
Female	4	57	5	100	9	75
Male	3	43	0	0	3	25
Born In:						
Mainland China	7	100	4	80	11	92
Hong Kong SAR	0	0	1	20	1	8
Other (Russia)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Most Interactions are with:						
Native Speakers	5	71	2	40	7	58
Non-Native Speakers	2	29	3	60	5	42
Working Experience						
0 (Have not started)	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-5 years	1	14	1	20	2	17
6-10	5	72	1	20	6	50
11-15	1	14	1	20	2	17
16-20	0	0	1	20	1	8
21+	0	0	1	20	1	8
Study / Employment Status						
Student Only	0	0	1	20	1	8
Working Full Time	7	100	4	80	11	92
Working Part Time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix I: Syllabus

Control Group Syllabus

Theme: Change

Aims: To improve specific business English competencies.

Objectives: Students will improve their ability to talk about change and solve problems that arise when change happens in business contexts.

Mode of Delivery: Online

Materials: Coursebook and supporting videos.

Topic	Function	Activities	Assignment
Pre-intervention: Assessments and Tasks			
Tasks of Business English Competencies	Determine learner levels and perspectives.	-Complete Tasks	-Provided tasks
Section 1: Starting Up			
Change in life and work.	-Describe how you think about change.	-Reflective questions and hypothetical situations about how learners think about change.	Self-reflection 1.
Section 2: Vocabulary: Describing Change			
Change in life and work.	-Develop vocabulary you can use to describe change. -Develop the use of verbs and prefixes	-Match verbs to appropriate prefixes. -Use verbs to complete sentences (gap fills). -Describe workplace changes using new verbs.	
Section 3: Reading: Mercedes, shining star			
Management making changes at a car company.	-Learn about how a company changed to become more successful. -See how verbs to describe change are used in authentic material.	-Read an article about Mercedes' changes. -Answer comprehension questions. -Make word partnerships. -Offer a personal response to the topic.	
Section 4: Language Review: Past Simple and Present Perfect			
Changes in Vietnam's economy.	-Distinguishing when to use verb tenses. -Reviewing verb forms.	-Match verb tenses to time expressions. -Use appropriate verb forms to complete sentences (gap fills). -Talk about changes in your town, company, or country.	
Section 5: Skills: Managing Meetings			
Discussing a smoking policy.	-Learn strategies for managing meetings.	-Define a 'successful' meeting versus an 'unsuccessful' one. -Read a dialogue and answer comprehension questions.	

	-Use functional language to implement strategies for managing meetings.	-Identify useful expressions in the dialogue. -Consider how to use the useful expressions in meetings of a fashion chain.	
Section 6: International Meetings			
Participating in international meetings.		-Complete a knowledge quiz about meetings. -Offer personal responses to discussions about the cultural aspects of meetings. -Listen to an expert talk about cultural issues in meetings and answer comprehension questions and a personal response.	Self-Reflection 2
Section 7: Case Study: Acquiring Asia Entertainment			
Solving problems with a merger.	-Use all of the language, skills, and knowledge learned to solve problems with a merger.	-Read the background, interview, and email about post-merger problems. -Write an email to solve the problems.	
Post-intervention: Assessments and Tasks			
Tasks of Business English Competencies	Determine learner levels and perspectives.	-Complete Tasks	-Provided tasks

Experimental Group Syllabus

Theme: Change

Aims: To improve specific business English competencies.

Objectives: Students will improve their ability to talk about change and solve problems that arise when change happens in business contexts.

Mode of Delivery: Online

Materials: Coursebook and supporting videos.

Topic	Function	Activities	Assignment
Pre-intervention: Assessments and Tasks			
Tasks of Business English Competencies	Determine learner levels and perspectives.	-Complete Tasks	-Provided tasks
Section 1: Starting Up			
Change in life and work.	-Describe how you think about change.	-Reflective questions and hypothetical situations about how learners think about change.	Self-reflection 1.
Section 2: Vocabulary: Describing Change			

Change in life and work.	-Develop vocabulary you can use to describe change. -Develop the use of verbs and prefixes	-Match verbs to appropriate prefixes. -Use verbs to complete sentences (gap fills). -Describe workplace changes using new verbs.	
Section 3: Reading: ZhongTech's Training			
A company implements cultural training.	-Learn about how a company has updated its cultural training practices. -See how verbs to describe change are used in authentic material.	-Read an article about ZhongTech's changes. -Answer comprehension questions. -Find specific words and phrases by their meaning. -Offer a personal response to the topic.	
Section 4: Language Review: Past Simple and Present Perfect			
Changes in Vietnam's economy.	-Distinguishing when to use verb tenses. -Reviewing verb forms.	-Match verb tenses to time expressions. -Use appropriate verb forms to complete sentences (gap fills). -Talk about changes in your town, company, or country.	
Section 5: Skills: Managing Meetings			
Discussing a new holiday policy.	-Learn strategies for managing meetings. -Use functional language to implement strategies for managing meetings.	-Define a 'successful' meeting versus an 'unsuccessful' one. -Read a dialogue and answer comprehension questions. -Identify useful expressions in the dialogue. -Write a dialogue about a meeting using useful language and specific cultural strategies.	
Section 6: Expressing the home culture			
The importance of expressing the home culture in business.		-Complete a knowledge quiz about meetings. -Offer personal responses to discussions about the cultural aspects of meetings. -Listen to an expert talk about the importance of being able to express your own culture. -Answer comprehension questions and offer a personal response.	Self-Reflection 2
Section 7: Case Study: Acquiring Asia Entertainment			
Solving problems with a merger.	-Use all of the language, skills, and knowledge learned to solve problems with a merger.	-Read the background, interview, and email about post-merger problems. -Write an email to solve the problems.	
Post-intervention: Assessments and Tasks			
Tasks of Business English Competencies	Determine learner levels and perspectives.	-Complete Tasks	-Provided tasks

Appendix J: Links to Materials

Peltonen, L. (2025). BELF Linguacultural Competence Teaching Intervention Materials.

figshare. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.29210477>

Appendix K: Pilot Questionnaire and MCQ Response Demographics

Characteristic	MCQ 1.0 Pilot		MCQ 2.0 Pilot		Questionnaire Pilot	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Participants:						
Totals	192	100	229	100	271	100
Born In:						
Mainland China	77	40	222	97	122	45
Taiwan	44	23	0	0	89	33
Hong Kong SAR	29	15	5	2	42	15
Other	11	6	2	1	2	1
Did Not Answer	31	16	0	0	16	6
Majors / Industries						
Totals	70+	-	2	-	50+	-
Study / Employment Status						
Undergraduate	120	63	227	99	208	77
Postgraduate	34	17	0	0	17	6
Working	17	9	2	1	0	0
Did Not Answer	21	11	0	0	46	17
Current Location of Work or Study						
Foshan	43	22	0	0	90	33
Guangzhou	0	0	51	22	3	1
Chongqing	0	0	170	74	0	0
Hong Kong SAR	82	43	0	0	21	8
Shanghai	1	1	1	1	0	0
Hualien, Taiwan	44	23	0	0	80	30
Did Not Answer	23	11	7	3	77	28

Appendix L: Questionnaire Items

Ratings	1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Somewhat Disagree 4 Somewhat Agree 5 Agree 6 Strongly Agree		
#	Questionnaire Items	Subscale	Component
1	I can compare the communication style of my own language and culture with that of other languages and cultures to better understand both.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies
2	I am curious about how my own language and culture may impact my thoughts, beliefs, and communication.	Home Culture	Attitudes
3	I know how to minimize the chances of different religious beliefs causing miscommunication.	Religion	Skills / Strategies
4	I know how to change the topic if sensitive religious issues arise in conversation.	Religion	Skills / Strategies
5	I can identify sensitive religious issues in conversations and avoid them.	Religion	Skills / Strategies
6	I enjoy learning from people of different backgrounds, whether they are from inside my country or outside.	Home Culture	Attitudes
7	I respect religious differences, even if they impact work.	Religion	Attitudes
8	I understand that different religious beliefs may affect communication.	Religion	Knowledge
9	I can combine my home language's words with explanations in English to express my home culture to those of different backgrounds.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies
10	I know how to systematically gather information about the differences between my home culture and other cultures to understand how to communicate better.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies
11	I can explain features of my home culture to foreigners in a way they will understand clearly.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies
12	I understand that there may be multiple religions in the same company, city, country, or region.	Religion	Knowledge
13	I know how to plan for interacting with people of different religions to avoid miscommunications or disagreements.	Religion	Skills / Strategies
14	I understand that in some cultures, religion profoundly impacts beliefs and, therefore, communication.	Religion	Knowledge
15	I understand that religion may affect one's norms, values, social practices, behaviors, work style, and communication.	Religion	Knowledge
16	I accept cultural practices, work schedules, and communication styles that are influenced by religion.	Religion	Attitudes
17	I know how to translate, explain, or use words from my native language to express ideas about my home culture.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies
18	I understand there are multiple language and cultural backgrounds in my home country.	Home Culture	Knowledge
19	I understand my home culture's diversity in terms of regional varieties of dialects, food, architecture, clothing, behavior, and worldviews.	Home Culture	Knowledge
20	I can translate words and concepts into English when expressing my home culture to those of different backgrounds.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies

21	I understand my home culture's economic systems, cultural values, and arts an architecture.	Home Culture	Knowledge
22	I understand my home culture's regional, social, and professional subcultures.	Home Culture	Knowledge
23	I am confident that I can work with people of any religious background.	Religion	Attitudes
24	I am sensitive to the complexity of my own language and cultural background and how it may impact communication.	Home Culture	Attitudes
25	I understand that there are aspects of my home language and culture that people will find interesting and unusual.	Home Culture	Knowledge
26	I know how to ask questions to gain understanding of my conversation partner's knowledge of my home language and culture.	Home Culture	Skills / Strategies

Appendix M: Rubric

Component	Descriptor	5	4	3	2	1
Knowledge	Linguacultural competencies in the content show:	Insightful understanding Mentions culture or a cultural thing 3+ times. In-depth explanation & development through details and examples.	Accurate understanding. Mentions culture or a cultural thing 3+ times. Some explanation and development through details and examples.	Some understanding. Mentions culture or a cultural thing 3+ times. No explanations or development.	A lack of understanding. Mentions culture or a cultural thing 1-2 times. No explanations or development.	Absent or Incorrect. No mention of culture or portrayed negatively.
Component	Descriptor	5	4	3	2	1
Skills / Strategies	Text uses: -Professional language -Appropriate register -Genre conventions to convey the topic -Clarification: Explaining new concepts -Scaffolding: Level of complexity	Highly effectively, appropriately, and accurately No instances of inappropriate formality, professional language, genre, tone., complexity.	Mostly effectively, appropriately, and accurately Almost no instances of inappropriate formality, professional language, genre, tone, complexity.	Somewhat effectively, appropriately, and accurately 1-2 instances of inappropriate formality, professional language, genre, tone, complexity.	Mostly ineffectively, inappropriately, and inaccurately 3+ instances of inappropriate formality, professional language, genre, tone, complexity.	Totally ineffectively, inappropriately, inaccurately. Formality is totally inappropriate, does not use professional language, genre, tone, complexity.
Component	Descriptor	5	4	3	2	1
Attitudes	Empathetic, Curious, Flexible, Relativistic, Non-Judgmental, Accepting, Supportive	Strong evidence 3+ instances well-developed, e.g., examples, openness to discuss, explanations.	Evidence 3+ instances some development, e.g., simple examples or explanation	Some evidence 3+ instances of positive attitudes, but no development.	Little evidence 1-2 instances of positive attitudes or supportive language.	No evidence 0 instances of positive attitudes or supportive language.
Component	Descriptor	5	4	3	2	1
Overall	Understanding of appropriate transcultural communication.	Strong	Somewhat Strong	Moderate	Weak	Little or none

Appendix N: MCQ Test Items

#	Item
Q1	<p>Holidays affect international business in each of the following ways EXCEPT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. They do not affect business at all.B. They may cause delays in communication or delivery.C. They may lead to increased sales.D. They may lead to decreased sales.
Q2	<p>In a business situation, religion might have implications on each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Clothing and attire.B. Holidays and schedules.C. Food and drink.D. All of the above.
Q3	<p>What is the significance of “face” (面子) in Chinese business negotiations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. It refers to the “physical appearance” of the negotiators.B. It refers to the “facial expression” of the negotiators.C. It refers to the “initial offer” made by the negotiators.D. It refers to the “saving face” of the negotiators.
Q4	<p>Your overseas colleague visits your offices in Shanghai for the first time. You walk past the tank with goldfish in the lobby. Your colleague says, “Why do you have these fish?” You say, “It’s according to <i>feng shui</i> (风水).” She says, “What’s <i>feng shui</i>?” How do you describe it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. It is harnessing the power of wind and water for business.B. It is a set of rules to gain good fortune and harmony.C. It is believed by all Chinese people to be factual.D. It is impossible to translate or explain in English.
Q5	<p>What is the main religion (e.g., the most people practicing) in India?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. ChristianityB. HinduismC. Islam (Muslim religion)D. Buddhism
Q6	<p>Which of the following best illustrates <i>guanxi</i> (关系) in a business acquisition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. You prepare the financial exchange, as the stakeholders have agreed on a price for the acquisition.B. You create and sign the legal documents, as the stakeholders have agreed to the terms of the acquisition.C. You exchange gifts with all of the stakeholders before the acquisition to show good faith.D. You ask your personal connection, who works for the other company, what terms they would accept for the acquisition.
Q7	<p>You invite your Canadian guest to drink tea (喝茶). When he gets to the restaurant, you order <i>dim sum</i> (点心). Your guest says, “Why did you order food? I already ate breakfast.” You say, “But this is 喝茶, of course I will order food. Why did you eat?” What might have happened here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Your guest is rude for eating breakfast before.B. You are rude for ordering food.C. You did not explain 喝茶 well enough to your guest.D. You explained 喝茶, but only southern Chinese can understand it.

-
- Q8** Jiangang is a salesman for software products. Everyone on the sales team thinks the employee with the highest sales record is rude, arrogant, and does not follow the rules or procedures. When Jiangang mentioned this to the sales manager, the manager replied: “Yes, all of that is true, but at the same time, his customers love him, and his sales are consistently higher than anyone else’s.” What might this illustrate?
- A. The manager’s belief in *feng shui*.
 - B. The manager’s belief in *guanxi*.
 - C. The manager’s belief in *mianzi*.
 - D. The manager’s belief in *yin-yang*.
-
- Q9** You are doing business with a company in India. The CEO is a devout Hindu, which means he actively believes in and practices Hinduism. When might the CEO be unavailable due to religious holidays?
- A. Christmas.
 - B. Ramadan.
 - C. Diwali.
 - D. Qing Ming Festival.
-
- Q10** You are traveling to Saudi Arabia for the first time. What might you need to remember when you greet your Saudi colleagues?
- A. Men and women always shake hands.
 - B. Men and women generally do not shake hands.
 - C. Everyone bows.
 - D. Everyone hugs.
-
- Q11** You are planning a business meeting with a client from Iran. The client is a Muslim. What greeting might you want to use when meeting your client?
- A. Namaste.
 - B. Shalom.
 - C. Salaam.
 - D. Hello.
-
- Q12** Sam was visiting Hong Kong from the USA. He and his local colleagues went to a restaurant, where his colleagues translated the menu to him and ordered on his behalf. He wanted the noodles to be less spicy. When his colleague translated that, the server turned to her manager and had a conversation. Sam asked, “What are they saying?” His colleague answered, “I have no idea. They seem to be speaking some local language. It isn’t Cantonese or Mandarin.” What might this illustrate?
- A. The colleagues’ poor Cantonese.
 - B. The difficulty of ordering food in Hong Kong.
 - C. The language and cultural diversity of the region.
 - D. The staff’s poor English competency.
-
- Q13** You were excited to begin a new business partnership with colleagues in China. For your first business trip, you wanted to bring them a gift, so you bought them a large bouquet of white flowers. Your hosts seemed uncomfortable when receiving the gift. This might be because:
- A. Flowers are bad luck in China.
 - B. In some belief systems, white symbolizes death.
 - C. It is impolite to give gifts in Chinese business culture.
 - D. White flowers would be okay in Guangdong but not the North.
-
- Q14** Bai works in a multinational company. Once, she was chatting on the phone with a colleague from the Egyptian office. Since it was mid-December, she said, “And if I don’t talk to you again, have a Merry Christmas.” Her colleague said, “I don’t celebrate Christmas,” and hung up the phone. What might have happened?
-

-
- A. The colleague does not celebrate Christmas because Egyptians do not celebrate Christmas.
- B. The colleague believes that, in Egyptian tradition, it is bad luck to say “Merry Christmas” over the phone.
- C. The colleague may not be a Christian and therefore might not celebrate Christmas.
- D. The colleague might have been offended that Bai mentioned holidays when talking about work.
-
- Q15** “It depends on who I am talking to. If I am talking to a foreigner, then my culture is Chinese culture. If I am talking to someone from a different province, then my culture is Guangdong *guangfu* (广府文化).” What does this quote illustrate?
- A. The diversity of foreign cultures.
- B. The diversity of the home culture.
- C. The diversity of corporate cultures.
- D. The diversity of popular cultures.
-
- Q16** Ling had a meeting about her annual report with her supervisor. The supervisor made a lot of comments and criticized her work even though she worked extremely hard on the report. Even so, she gracefully accepted the criticism and said, “Thank you for the feedback. I promise I will improve in the future.” What might her response illustrate?
- A. The importance of *feng shui*.
- B. The importance of *guanxi*.
- C. The importance of *mianzi*.
- D. The importance of *yin-yang*.
-
- Q17** Famke visited the Mumbai, India office from her home office in Berlin, Germany. The first day she was there, her colleagues invited her to dinner. At dinner, Famke was surprised to discover that several of her Indian colleagues did not eat beef, while a few others did not eat pork or drink alcohol. Some of them were strictly vegetarian, too. What might this indicate?
- A. Famke needed to stop eating beef and pork and avoid drinking beer during her time in India.
- B. Famke should have left India and gone back to Berlin so that she could eat whatever she wanted.
- C. Famke was experiencing how religion impacted eating customs and habits in a different culture.
- D. Famke should have expected her colleagues to eat whatever she wanted because she was the guest.
-
- Q18** Haoyu is from Guangdong, China, but he now carries out sales duties all over the Middle East. When he first arrived, he did not understand why his local colleagues in Saudi Arabia never responded to emails on Fridays. In fact, if he sent an email on Friday, they usually responded on Sunday. What might explain the above situation?
- A. Haoyu was sending emails right before the weekend, when people did not want to work.
- B. Haoyu experienced a Muslim country’s different schedule, a Sunday to Thursday work week.
- C. Haoyu’s local colleagues were lazy, so they did not respond.
- D. Haoyu’s local colleagues were especially diligent, taking time to respond on the day of rest, Sunday.
-

Appendix O: Post-intervention Interview Guide

Question	Examples
Why do you study English?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your English language learning goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you see yourself working overseas? • Do you see yourself as the kind of person who is good at using English? • Do you see yourself regularly interacting with foreigners or people who speak other languages? • What aspects of English do you need to improve?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you learn anything from the course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, what? • If not, why not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you had to describe the course to a friend who is thinking of taking it, what would you say? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why would you describe it that way?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you decide to join the course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What made you contact me in the very beginning? • After seeing Module 1, many students quit. What made you keep going? Why did you continue?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you ever want to quit the course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, when and why? • If not, why not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your thoughts on the course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the best part of the course? • What was the worst part?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The course required learners to be autonomous – you had to work on your own. This arrangement is the opposite of many Chinese language learning environments in which the teacher takes a stronger role. How did that feel for you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think of yourself as being independent in learning? • Did you like being independent in learning this course? Why? Why not? • Did you think the method of working on your own was good for your learning? Bad? Why or why not?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the course improve your English language skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why or why not? • Can you use any of these skills at work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the course improve your cultural competence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why or why not? • Can you use any of these skills at work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assignments did you think were most useful to your learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the email assignments useful? • Was the presentation assignment helpful? • Were the self-reflections useful? • Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which exercises did you think were most useful to your learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the textbook exercises helpful? • Why?
Do you have any questions for me?	
Do you have any further comments for me about the course?	

Appendix P: Data Assumptions

Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Control Group				Experimental Group			
	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall Questionnaire	4.86	0.40	4.98	0.40	5.12	0.41	5.24	0.36
Home Culture Subscale	4.93	0.39	4.94	0.43	5.14	0.47	5.22	0.39
Religion Subscale	4.78	0.53	5.03	0.45	5.09	0.43	5.27	0.39
Knowledge Component	5.25	0.42	5.39	0.38	5.43	0.39	5.58	0.33
Skills/Strategies Component	4.45	0.64	4.54	0.61	4.76	0.61	4.87	0.52
Attitudes Component	5.04	0.51	5.19	0.51	5.33	0.45	5.39	0.47
Email Scores	3.80	0.97	4.43	1.28	3.95	0.90	4.49	0.90

Questionnaire Overall

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.141	36	.066	.963	36	.261
	Experimental	.134	31	.169	.962	31	.330
Post-intervention	Control	.140	36	.072	.975	36	.576
	Experimental	.122	31	.200*	.951	31	.170
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.141	36	.066	.963	36	.261
	Experimental	.134	31	.169	.962	31	.330
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.140	36	.072	.975	36	.576
	Experimental	.122	31	.200	.951	31	.170

*This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .163, p = .688)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .198, p = .658)

Questionnaire Home Culture Scale

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.141	36	.069	.947	36	.081
	Experimental	.101	31	.200*	.969	31	.505
Post-intervention	Control	.158	36	.023	.955	36	.148
	Experimental	.102	31	.200*	.973	31	.605
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.141	36	.069	.947	36	.081
	Experimental	.101	31	.200*	.969	31	.505
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.158	36	.023	.955	36	.148
	Experimental	.102	31	.200*	.973	31	.605

*This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .561, p = .456)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .089, p = .766)

Questionnaire Religion Scale

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.134	36	.102	.957	36	.172
	Experimental	.093	31	.200*	.974	31	.643
Post-intervention	Control	.101	36	.200*	.962	36	.240
	Experimental	.175	31	.017	.948	31	.134
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.134	36	.102	.957	36	.172
	Experimental	.093	31	.200*	.974	31	.643
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.101	36	.200*	.962	36	.240
	Experimental	.175	31	.017	.948	31	.134

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .327, p = .570)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .154, p = .696)

Questionnaire Knowledge Component

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.114	36	.200*	.966	36	.337
	Experimental	.147	31	.088	.955	31	.213
Post-intervention	Control	.124	36	.179	.917	36	.010
	Experimental	.179	31	.012	.908	31	.012
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.114	36	.200*	.966	36	.337
	Experimental	.147	31	.088	.955	31	.213
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.124	36	.179	.917	36	.010
	Experimental	.179	31	.012	.908	31	.012

*This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .055, p = .815)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .356, p = .553)

Questionnaire Skills/Strategies Component

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.168	36	.012	.937	36	.040
	Experimental	.099	31	.200*	.981	31	.845
Post-intervention	Control	.089	36	.200*	.975	36	.564
	Experimental	.093	31	.200*	.957	31	.249
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.168	36	.012	.937	36	.040
	Experimental	.099	31	.200*	.981	31	.845
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.089	36	.200*	.975	36	.564
	Experimental	.092	31	.200*	.957	31	.249

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .493, p = .485)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .908, p = .344)

Questionnaire Attitudes Component

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.162	36	.018	.911	36	.007
	Experimental	.127	31	.200*	.954	31	.205
Post-intervention	Control	.113	36	.200*	.968	36	.381
	Experimental	.140	31	.129	.940	31	.080
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.162	36	.108	.911	36	.007
	Experimental	.127	31	.200*	.954	31	.205
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.113	36	.200*	.968	36	.381
	Experimental	.140	31	.129	.940	31	.080

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .014, p = .907)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .339, p = .563)

Email Performance

Normality

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-intervention	Control	.123	36	.184	.947	36	.087
	Experimental	.092	31	.200*	.982	31	.857
Post-intervention	Control	.122	36	.192	.969	36	.409
	Experimental	.105	31	.200*	.945	31	.110
Residual Pre-intervention	Control	.123	36	.184	.947	36	.087
	Experimental	.092	31	.200*	.982	31	.857
Residual Post-intervention	Control	.122	36	.192	.969	36	.409
	Experimental	.105	31	.200*	.945	31	.110

Levene's Test

Pre-intervention: (F(1, 65) = 1.711, p = .195)

Post-intervention: (F(1, 65) = .2.607, p = .111)

Appendix Q: LCC PCA

		Factor Loading			
		1	2	3	Communality
Q14	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know aspects of the cultures of those you communicate with?	.847	.365	.495	.719
Q13	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know your home culture and be able to express aspects of it to others? For example, you know how to explain Chinese festivals and local foods to foreigners - in English.	.841	.325	.423	.714
Q15	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand the religion of the people you work with so that you interact accordingly?	.835	.354	.549	.710
Q11	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to do research about people from different cultural and language backgrounds before communicating with them?	.809	.323	.544	.672
Q18	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that a single country may host several languages and different cultural groups?	.779	.504	.414	.635
Q19	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know the cultures of native English-speaking countries, such as the USA or the UK?	.763	.460	.442	.598
Q5	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to know how company structure and management practices may affect communication (e.g., hierarchical management structures versus flat management structures and their effect on communication)?	.710	.671	.609	.701
Q16	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that corporate culture (e.g., private tech company cultures versus state-owned infrastructure company cultures) often reflects the business function and industry standards of that	.681	.532	.422	.525

	company, which may impact communicative practices?				
Q8	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that there are different aspects of culture? For example, "visible" culture includes objects such as architecture, food, and clothes, while "deep" culture includes beliefs, values, and worldviews.	.609	.358	.600	.473
Q9	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master the language, terminology, and rules of communication for your professional communication?	.389	.815	.232	.669
Q12	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand that the way you communicate establishes your identity (e.g., how you speak to people of different levels of authority, how formally or informally you present yourself, or how flexible you are)?	.472	.753	.407	.598
Q6	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master certain types of communication for your specific job function (e.g., sales presentations for sales professionals or financial reports for accounting professionals)?	.399	.709	.411	.536
Q17	When on a business trip or stationed overseas, how important is it to follow local beliefs, customs, and ways of communicating (as opposed to following your own)?	.569	.624	.456	.522
Q10	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to master relationship-building communication for building rapport, making small talk, and getting closer personally?	.544	.558	.279	.412
Q3	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to identify and understand that sometimes people's behavior in business is different than your own because of their language and cultural background?	.474	.439	.826	.713
Q1	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand broader, global theories about cultures and the different tendencies cultural groups may	.606	.178	.822	.740

	have (e.g., dimensions such as collectivism vs. individualism or high-context versus low-context communication).				
Q2	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to identify and avoid cultural stereotypes when communicating with people from other regions, companies, and work teams?	.510	.138	.815	.702
Q7	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to understand and empathize with the perspective of people from different cultural and language backgrounds?	.441	.463	.813	.707
Q4	For your English language communication at work, how important is it to adjust to and accept the accents and speech styles from different regions of the world?	.447	.490	.569	.426

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