

## **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) IN BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING (BET)**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Experience of cultural diversity is not a new phenomenon in today's global marketplace and most Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Parallel to that, Sri Lanka is becoming more multicultural than it used to be. This review aims to promote intellectual communication competence (ICC) in Business English teaching (BET). Conceptual review papers can theoretically enrich the field by reviewing actual knowledge and inconsistencies, identifying critical gaps and key insights, and proposing agendas for future research. Even though factors influence integrating ICC in BET in HEIs other than Sri Lanka, there is no research yet in Sri Lanka on ICC in BET. There are adequate empirical research and conceptual studies based on the country's social, political, economic, and educational requirements, which results in identical BET practices fitting into the particular country. However, the contemporary literature lacks specific research on ICC in BET in Sri Lanka. Thus, this review entails the gap in the literature by attempting to remind teacher educators, policymakers, material developers, and curriculum developers to revisit the existing local and international communication requirements in HEIs for further reformations and to make the undergraduates and postgraduate students aware of the local and international requirements. This interdisciplinary literature review aims to conceptually enrich the field of ICC in BET in Sri Lanka by promoting researchers in BET. Since a preliminary review is needed where there is a dearth of literature in ICC in BET, it is a prerequisite for a researcher to review contemporary literature. Thus, the literature review is considered best for a reason. This review is conducted to identify the local and global concerns in embedding an intercultural perspective in BET, where English is taught to speakers of other languages. Hence, although local and foreign literature (empirical and concept papers) is analysed, Asian-based research is prioritized.

Firstly, findings reveal a paradigmatic development of International Business (IB), ICC, and ELT that has created much room for significant scholarly research. Secondly, literature on International Business (IB) appears to lack conceptualization and consistency in definitions (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012). Thirdly, the review reveals that Chinese researchers have started an empirical and philosophical dialogue by researching different aspects of ICC in BET- which sets a forerunner to Sri Lanka. Finally, the review connotes that ICC in BET is an indispensable timely concern, so learning/teaching and getting updated with relevant teaching pedagogy for BET is obligatory if ICC needs to be inculcated through BET. There are critiques on the absence of capable theory and methodological issues about ICC and ELT (Pudelko et al., 2015), which this review excludes as limitations. This review provides a critique to promote research on ICC in BET in local and international contexts.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The conceptual review focuses on synthesizing existing knowledge by applying inductive reasoning from organized individual reasoning. Accordingly, the scope of the review was narrowed to BET in TESOL contexts to identify similarities that teachers of BET could consider in Sri Lankan HEIs. Thus, this research adheres to a qualitative data analysis method in which the Systematic Review method is followed to select related, most important, updated research findings in merged fields of ICC, English Language Teaching (ELT) in HEIs and IB. Most related data was explored by Text Mining. The search was completed using electronic using Academic Search Premier, Google scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, Sage Publication, Science Direct and ERIC, English language teaching in universities/HEIs, ICC in BET, and Cross-Cultural Communication in Business English search terms were used. Since ICC is a new concept to Sri Lanka, search terms were specified. The literature published within the last ten years was included in the review. With the assistance of ATLAS.ti version 9 was taken for the analysis to identify unified observations in ICC, ELT, and IB disciplines. Data was gathered, performed on-screen text coding (inductive and deductive), annotated text segments, and mapped with the research objectives for content analysis. Zotero was used for reference management.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the wake of World War II, the new demands of ELT highlighted that language teaching/learning alone was insufficient (Jingzi et al., 2016). Likewise, BET is also unique in its ways and has grown with its demands as a result of globalized International Business Communication (IBC) (Gajšt, 2014). IBC is a study that aims to improve communication, management, and interaction of people from different cultures (Pikhart, 2014). Similarly, it involves the cultural orientation of individual managers and organization members. It is a broadly recognized fact that cultural awareness shapes the behaviour of business firms in cross-culturally reflected international markets with globalisation and advancements in science and technology. However, it is essential to mention two schools of argument about "culture as a source of competitive advantage and its opposite" (Søderberg & Holden, 2002, p. 105). We observe that intercultural awareness commonly influences local and international business affairs, but few empirical studies have been conducted. Sri Lanka, a multicultural country with four main different ethnic groups, has more to research in the aspect of ICC.

Sri Lanka needs reformation, advancements, and adequate updates without further ado. Scholars with similar multicultural contexts suggest that understanding cultural diversity and eliminating cultural barriers are essential skills for business firms to develop a competitive advantage in IB (Jenifer, 2015). Literature provides evidence that business firms that could not overcome cross-cultural barriers have encountered adverse effects in IB (Zhang, 2020). Given the importance of finding more about the future direction of ICC, the first Anthology of ICC presents the non-European approach to studying culture and communication. Asante et al. (2013) show four future directions for IC research. The 3rd examines power and privilege and their impact on communication equality and mutuality in intercultural contexts. They emphasize that it is necessary to seek to know the way individuals think and the nature of communities' philosophies of life. Hence, Sri Lankan HEIs cannot overlook its updates and further improvements in ICC in BET.

Prescriptively, Gajšt (2014) presents the standards and levels suitable for BET by examining the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale descriptors. According to the definition of Beamer (1992), a learner of ICC inevitably must inherit a willingness to acknowledge the frequently unexpected, stereotypical characteristics or differences in a new culture. At the same time, the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CI) includes behavioural and motivational facets and a metacognitive aspect. CI is mainly related to the learning aspect than the pragmatic aspect. Therefore, the role of a teacher of BET needs to be more noticeable and functional according to the updated local and global requirements.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Undoubtedly, under economic globalisation, ICC in BET needs to be updated in HEIs. Although business communicators floundered without a reasonable basis for a pedagogical posture, recent literature shows that several teaching methods are practical in BET. Experimental, student-centered, integrated teaching methods and TBL activities are also successful in business communication classes (Hsu, 2016). Besides Zhang and Liu (2013) argue the effectiveness of extracurricular English activities through teaching business skills practices. One of the two pieces of research found in Sri Lanka on ICC in BET is seeing the effectiveness of BET in blended mode, Dharmawardene and Wijewardene (2021), which emphasizes the content of business communication includes intercultural communication as one of the components of the list. The other is an empirical study based on cross-cultural dimensions of Business Communication in Sri Lanka, which reveals how workplace collectivism has a substantial and significant effect on business activities and participation than other underlined variables (Rathnayaka, 2014). This proves the dearth of ICC in BET related-literature based in Sri Lanka.

On the contrary, several aspects of ICC in BET are researched in ICC in BET in China. According to research experience based on BET in China, teaching activities, teaching methodology, teachers need constant improvements and updates related to cultural apprehension, teacher's consciousness towards students' emotional needs, enriching teaching methods, curriculum, and the contents should be reconstructed, classroom discourse and BET materials should reflect the intercultural elements to provide ICC in IB.

In addition, Fu (2008) presents the intercultural issues in current BET in China. Besides, Li and Dong (2021) suggest that a multitude of versatile talents are in urgent need in order to have a "good grasp of linguistic and business knowledge but also competent in ICC" (p. 752). The multiple constraints that affect the teachers' to integrate ICC into BET in China are; inadequate time allocation, absence of ICC objectives in the BET syllabi and assessments, lack of facilities, students' low English language proficiency, lack of suitable activities in teaching materials, foreignness in the studying environment, teachers' inadequate cultural knowledge and ICC teaching pedagogy (Li & Dong, 2021). Jingzi et al. (2016) insist on the active role of BET and prove it by contributing to the discipline.

As the literature suggests, research inquiry fosters coherent and systematic culture infiltration that initiates reaching the expectations of the IB. We believe this research inquiry can lead to new ELT, ICC, and IB research. Since there is a dearth of literature based on Sri Lankan experience of BET on pedagogy (methods and practice of teaching) related to ICC in BET, specific teaching materials and experience of teacher training in BET are identified as areas

to be investigated. Accordingly, the review concludes by mentioning how more research innovations on ICC in BET can be produced and lead to further knowledge and skill development based on TESOL contexts.

**Keywords:** Business English teaching, higher education institutes, international business, international business communication, intercultural communicative competence

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