Leena Louhiala-Salminen
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(Editors)

The Ascent of International Business Communication

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This book celebrates the work of
Professor Emerita
Mirjaliisa Charles

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ENGLISH AS A BUSINESS LINGUA FRANCA: A FRAMEWORK OF INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO FUTURE RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The work of Mirjaliisa Charles and her associates has made a significant contribution to the understanding of international and intercultural business communication, but more importantly, these scholars have provided a basis and foundation for the future development of research and theory development in this field. This paper is written as a tribute to Mirjaliisa Charles, but I also want to recognize those who have worked with Charles in a cooperative team effort, especially members such as Leena Louhiala-Salminen and Anne Kankaanranta. It is my considered judgment that their research and theory development have the potential to make a similar impact on the field of international and intercultural communication as the Hawthorne Studies had on the field of organizational behavior (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1967). In this article I summarize the contributions made by Charles and her associates, explain the relationship of their work with that of other researchers, and show how the work has provided a foundation on which to build future research studies and theory development.

Key words: BELF, language-based communication zones, intercultural communication, business communication, meetings, turn-taking patterns, English language proficiency

Studies by Charles (1996, 2001) have recognized the importance of language choice, and that language designated to be used as a lingua franca (company official language) is based on responses to situational factors and organizational needs. Drawing on both discourse analysis and business studies of negotiation, Charles's (1996) study used a linguistic text-based approach to examine organization and rhetoric of sales negotiation genres of the British salespeople. In this study, Charles adopted Brown and Levinson's (1978) face framework and introduced the concept of "professional face" through a series of strategies or tactical moves, highlighting the strategic nature of the communication event. The findings of this study demonstrated the differences of linguistic choices between the participants in negotiation situations depending on whether a relationship has or has not been established among participants. Charles's (1996) study "partly filled the gap between a contextual, business approach and a linguistic text-based approach" (p. 20).

In more recent work, Charles and her associates have engaged in large scale longitudinal studies. These studies (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006) describe and examine the communication patterns that took place in the merger of a Finnish paper manufacturer (i.e., Paper Giant) and a Swedish bank (i.e., PankkiBanken). In these two longitudinal research studies, Charles and associates investigated intercultural meetings by examining language use, communication practices, turn-taking behaviors, and cultural views in two international corporations, both of which had been formed as a result of a merger between a Swedish and a Finnish company. In the workplace, employees needed to be able to communicate effectively in a variety of different genres. In the meetings, employees of the two merged companies (i.e., Paper Giant and PankkiBanken) who were formerly independent companies had to represent both cultures in the merged company, the new entity, and two different languages, "one of which was a foreign language" (Nickerson, 2005, p. 373). Charles took painstaking effort in analyzing the collected qualitative data by comparing the use of business English as a lingua franca (BELF) of the Swedes to the use of the Finns. The language choice had implications for both communication effectiveness and the interpersonal relationships of Finns and Swedes. The choice of English put both the Finns and Swedes in neutrallanguage proficiency positions as the use of BELF is nobody's native or first language, and therefore, the "language superiority" positions are greatly reduced (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007, p.363).

Significance of the Charles et al. (2005, 2006) Study

The research by Charles and her associates is significant for five major reasons. I next outline and discuss these five reasons. The first has to do with the research process. The project demonstrated the importance of the development of an effective research team in order to carry out such a large scale project. The management of this research effort can serve a model for future researchers. Important elements contributing to the successful management of the research project were the mutual respect that the researchers gave to each other, continually updating the objectives of the research, and recruiting new team members who could contribute to the project.

The mutual respect was demonstrated to me when principal team members gave progress reports at regional and international conferences. As a personal note, I have learned much about the division of project responsibilities and the need for mutual support by attending sessions at the European Network for Communication Development in Business and Education (ENCoDe) and the Association for Business Communication. I will use this model in my future research efforts.

The second reason for the project's significance, also pertaining to the research process, is that it can provide guidelines for other researchers on how to secure and maintain the cooperation of companies. Charles and her associates were able to convince the companies that the data collection would be unobtrusive, that proprietary information would be held in confidence, and that individuals would not be identified by name. More importantly, the companies would be offered something of value so that having the researchers would be considered an asset rather than a liability. In effect, the merging companies were being offered free consulting in exchange for the access to data in the companies. An especially important component was the regular contact that was maintained with the companies.

Third, the project demonstrated the importance of using multiple data collection and data analysis methods, and in taking measurements over time. Charles and her associates present a model of how to manage data. The significance of their findings relies on their real world data gathered over time. They were able to use multiple data collection techniques to capture the complex data, including a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, observations to examine an overview of the communication practices, the collection of written documents and audio-and video-recoding of meetings. Consequently, they combined the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Furthermore, they were able to collect data at different data points. Maintaining their connection with the subject firms enabled them to have this ongoing data collection, and ultimately resulted in a longitudinal research project.

After gaining an overview, they analyzed the discourse that employees produced when they were actually working together on a day-to-day basis. The multiple data collection methods allowed them to analyze the data from multiple points of views. They also contrasted the perceptions that Swedish and Finish employees had of each other's cultures. It is my judgment that this research is the equivalent to the *Hawthorne* Studies (see, Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1967) as it forms the basis for defining a new field and for guiding research in this field.

The fourth reason this research is significant is that important theoretical advances were made as a result of it. In sum, the research demonstrated the effect of language choice on intercultural and international communication. Charles and her associates showed how English as a lingua franca impacted the communication processes among merger employees from two nationalities (Finns and Swedes), and in doing so, they demonstrated that communicating in a lingua franca is different from communicating in either one of the national languages (Swedish or Finnish). Language choice impacted the power relationships among the Finnish and Swedish communicators.

Fifth, Charles and her associates have set the stage for studying international and intercultural business communication patterns in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural communication environment. They have established the importance of building on their research and theory and have contributed theoretical constructs to help guide future research and theory development.

In viewing Charles's contribution in the area of intercultural business communication and business English as a lingua franca, in this paper, I attempt to find the way of integrating Charles's research framework with two areas of my research. In doing so, I will first review two of my areas of research that are aligned with Charles's research, and second, I will examine how my research can be located within Charles's established framework. I will conclude this paper by putting forward the recommendation of integrating my research work with Charles's so as to make the intercultural business communication research framework more complete.

Summary of Du-Babcock's Research Aligned with Charles

Two streams of Du-Babcock's research align with Charles's research framework, studies of turn-taking behavior and the development of a model of language-based communication zones. The body of research in relation to turn-taking behavior (Du-Babcock, 2006, 2003, 2005, 1999) is made up of empirical studies that examined turn-taking behaviors and strategies of Cantonese bilinguals (Cantonese and English) participating in intra-cultural and intercultural decision-making meetings. Du-Babcock's studies (1999, 2006) offered linguistic and cultural explanations for the turn-taking and topic management strategies that Cantonese bilinguals follow in their first- and second-language decision-making meetings. In examining different turn-taking behaviors and strategies, Du-Babcock investigated the premise that the choice of language communicators use can influence both message content and communication behaviors.

Findings of the first research data set revealed that (a) the average number of turns in Cantonese meetings was more than those in English meetings, and that (b) individuals with higher second-language proficiency took more turns than did individuals with lower second-language proficiency, even though the actual length of speaking time was similar. The results of the original findings therefore only provide partial explanations as to how bilingual individuals from collectivistic cultures interact differently when using their first and second languages to make decisions in intra-cultural small-group meetings. In other words, the aspect of the language proficiency-based explanation argued that it was first- and second-language proficiency differentials that triggered the various communication behaviors of the Cantonese bilinguals.

The follow-up study (Du-Babcock, 2003, 2005) was an intercultural study that expanded the geographical location to include individuals from the United States in intercultural information sharing and decision making meetings. This follow-up study further examined whether Hong Kong bilinguals exhibited similar or different turn-taking behaviors when they participated in a homogeneous group, as compared with a decision making meeting in a heterogeneous group.

The findings of the intercultural research on turn-taking behaviors (Du-Babcock, 2003, 2005) show that (a) participants from collectivistic cultures not only spoke less than those from individualistic cultures, they also took fewer turns than those from individualistic cultures; (b) participants from collectivistic cultures took more turns and spoke for longer in intracultural than in intercultural decision making meetings; and (c) no significant difference occurred in the number of turns or in the amount of speaking time among individuals from individualistic cultures when they participated in either intracultural or intercultural and decision making meetings.

In sum, Du-Babcock's research in turn-taking behaviors (1999, 2003, 2005, 2006) suggested that culture and second-language proficiency are likely to be factors that affect the communication behaviors of Chinese bilinguals. While Du-Babcock's original turn-taking behavior research suggested that second-language proficiency is positively related to communication effectiveness and participation rates in second-language communication environments, her intercultural research study on turn-taking behavior revealed that

Chinese bilinguals exhibited different communication behaviors when participating in decision making meetings in a homogeneous group as compared to a heterogeneous group.

In comparing the studies on turn-taking behavior of second-language non-native English speakers between Du-Babcock (2003, 2005) and Charles et al (2006), the difference lies in the research approach. While the research by Charles and her associates examined only a very small sample size using qualitative data analysis approach, Du-Babcock's turn-taking behavior used a quantitative approach to data analysis with a sample size of 350 participants. The findings of Du-Babcock's studies could supplement Charles's (Charles et al., 2006) small sample size and serve as a basis for generalization.

The language-based communication zones model (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007, 1996; Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001) is another line of research that is aligned with Charles's research work. In studying language competence, I developed the language-based communication zones model, which provides a framework for describing differing patterns of international business communication (2007a; 2007b; 2001; 1996). Over a ten-year period, the language-based communication zones model has progressively defined the language competence variables more completely and described the language patterns associated with the different language zones. In their initial study, Du-Babcock and Babcock (1996) developed models showing how expatriates in Taiwan operated within three language-based communication zones (Zone One, Zone Two, and Zone Three) according to their relative abilities to speak a second language. A more fully developed model of language-based communication zones of international business communicators (IBCs) was later offered to complement the previously developed models and explain other aspects of international business communication (Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001). The language competence in the theoretical framework published in 2001 was defined in terms of the ability to use general language.

In two recent publications (Du-Babcock, 2007a; Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007b), the 2001 theoretical model has been further expanded by relating competence to the ability to communicate directly in specific tasks and situations and by adding genre competence, the relationship of genre competence to general language competence, and intercultural communication competence to the model. The objectives of the first publication (2007a) were to add genre competence (Bhatia, 1999; 2004) and distinguish general language competence from professional genre-based language competence. In the second article (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007b), the language-based communication zones model was reconsolidated into three language-based communication zones; Zone Two and Zone Three were renamed MegaZone Two and MegaZone Three to encompass all the sub-patterns (see Figure 1) and commercial and relational genres.

Placing Charles and Associates in a Research Framework and Stream

In this section I will discuss how Du-Babcock's two streams of research can be situated in relation to the research of Charles and associates. I assume that Charles and her associates are studying the communication patterns of speakers who are proficient second-language (English) communicators, since they did not test for English proficiency. Using the language-based communication zones framework (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007, 1996; Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001), these speakers would be communicating at a parallel language competency position in a sub zone of MegaZone Three: that is, the interlocutors possess equivalent full fluency in the shared language. As a consequence, they would communicate at a fully fluency level and would not have to make language adjustments in order to communicate effectively with each other in either language. In addition, although there are cultural differences between Finns and Swedes, both nationalities share a larger Scandinavian culture and would be similar in many cultural traits (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars, 1993) and therefore they are more likely to communicate effectively.

Other communication patterns can emerge when the communicators have different levels of language competency or cultural differences. To illustrate, the linguistic and cultural situation in Finnish-Swedish communication is both similar and different when contrasted to that occurring with my research on Chinese and Japanese business communication (see below for description of this current joint research project with Professor Tanaka). The Japanese and Chinese speakers have intermediate (the majority) to advanced (the minority) English language proficiency, and therefore, would be interacting from parallel language competency positions (where both Chinese and Japanese have equivalent but intermediate language competence), or from non-parallel language competency positions (where they would have either superior or subordinate language proficiency in relation to their communication counterparts). Consequently, in contrast to the MegaZone Three communication of Finns and Swedes, the Japanese and Chinese would be primarily interacting in MegaZone Two with some MegaZone Three communication.

The similarities in communication patterns take place as both Japanese and Chinese are communicating as second-language speakers and both have cultures based upon Confucian philosophy and ethics. The differences take place when Chinese or Japanese possess different language competence or communicate with Westerners. In these intercultural communication encounters, the Chinese or Japanese are likely to take an inferior or subordinate language proficiency position and are interacting with dissimilar cultures.

Studies Extending the Research of Charles and Others

In this section, I present two in-progress studies to illustrate how additional methodologies can further uncover the communication patterns in Finnish-Swedish communication and to compare Finnish-Swedish communication with Japanese-Chinese communication. These examples of on-going research show how the data collected by Charles and her associates can be further analyzed to develop theoretical advances and to contrast communication among and between cultural groups. It is hoped that these examples can spur the efforts of other researchers.

To further analyze Finnish-Swedish communication, I am currently cooperating with Charles in a study funded by the City University of Hong Kong Strategic Research Grant (SRG project No. 700 2403) entitled "An Examination of English as a Business Lingua Franca: A Comparative Analysis of Communication Behavior and Strategies". The study's data set comes from audio and video recordings of communication in the meetings of Finns and Swedes.

This collaborative research will first extend Du-Babcock's studies based on student samples to include data from real-world business dialogues between Chinese business professionals. The study also intends to examine the similarities and differences of the communication behaviors of Chinese and Swedish / Finnish business professionals. Specifically, the study will examine the use of English as a business lingua franca (BELF) between business professionals. Consequently, the focus of this collaborative research is to confirm prior research findings as well as extend the research to a comparison of Chinese and Swedish/ Finnish business professionals in that the study examines the communication behaviors (i.e., turn-taking behaviors, speaking time, and number of words) of business professionals from the two high- and low-context societies. As such, the study will analyze the turn-taking and topic management strategies taking place in the intercultural meetings using the methodology that I have used in my studies (Du-Babcock, 1999, 2006). Key findings in the earlier studies are that (Finding 1) Chinese engage in spiral topic management strategies in first-language communication and most often engage in linear topic management (see Figures 1 and 2) but sometimes in spiral patterns in second-language communication (see Figure 3); (Finding 2) Chinese bilinguals exhibited different turn-taking behaviors when participating in decision-making meetings using their first language (Cantonese) and compared with decision-making meetings using their second language (English); and (Finding 3) Chinese bilinguals exhibited different turn-taking behaviors when participating in intra-cultural decision-making meetings as compared to when participating in intercultural decision-making meetings.

The comparative study will use the data set from Charles and her associates to examine the communication patterns of Westerners according to the Du-Babcock analytical approach. From a theoretical perspective, Western cultures have been associated with linear discussion patterns and Asian cultures with spiral discussion patterns (Kaplan, 1966, 1987). The findings from this study will clarify the turn-taking patterns and lead to advances in turn-taking theory to substantiate explanations based on cultural and linguistic competence. More specifically, the study should be able to answer the following two research questions put forward in Du-Babcock and Charles's collaborative research project.

RQ1: Do business professionals from mainland China compared with business professionals from Sweden and Finland exhibit equivalent or different turn-taking behaviors in English business meetings?

RQ2: Does English language proficiency affect the communication behaviors (e.g., turn-taking and number of words) of mainland Chinese and Swedish and Finnish business professionals in their English-language communication?

The second on-going research project extends Du-Babcock's turn-taking behavior and topic management studies and will examine the turn-taking behaviors and topic management strategies of bilingual Chinese and Japanese managers using the methodology that Du-Babcock developed and used in her prior studies. This study aims at confirming prior research findings as well as extending the research to a comparison of Chinese and Japanese business professionals from two high-context cultural societies. In other words, the study attempts to examine how individuals speaking high-context languages (Japanese and Chinese) manage topics differently than when they speak in their native language (i.e., Chinese or Japanese) as compared to when they speak in a low-context language (English). In this collaborative study, Du-Babcock and Tanaka are first examining the communication behaviors between Chinese and Japanese business professionals and then comparing the results of these communication behaviors to those of Finns and Swedes. The research questions guiding the second research study are included in Appendix 1.

The second on-going research study which is funded by a Hong Kong SAR General Research Fund (GRF, Project Number 9041451 / CityU 141509) is such that we are first studying the communication between similar cultures (i.e., Chinese and Japanese) and then the communication patterns between dissimilar cultures (i.e., Asian/ Chinese and Japanese; and Western / Swedish and Finnish). In other words, we will take the results from the study of Japanese – Chinese business communication and compare these communication patterns with Swedish and Finnish communication patterns as discerned in the Du-Babcock and Charles study described above.

Taken together, the two on-going research projects use intercultural group comparisons among the four different language and cultural environments. Consequently, these findings can contribute to a better understanding of intra-and intercultural communication behaviors of Chinese, Japanese, Swedish, and Finns business professionals and managers.

The Future Research Direction and Practice

The framework of the business English as lingua franca (BELF) in international business communication context that has resulted from the research by Charles and her colleagues has significantly contributed to the development of a framework for guiding future research. They have established that communication in English as a lingua franca is different from communication in a native language. The choice of language carries with it cultural implications. The future development of research in international and incultural communication will involve extending the research development to other parts of the world and between different cultures. The special attention will be given to the Asian business environment due to its prominent position in the world of business.

The emphasis can also be on integrating the research findings to make generalizations about communication among different cultural groups and among individuals possessing differing levels of language and intercultural competencies. I modestly suggest that the language-based communication zones model provide part of this framework: the influence of language proficiency on intercultural business communication. Another part of the framework relates to cultural differences. In this regard, I have preliminarily developed the concept of intercultural corridors (See Figure 2) as a framework to classify communication among those with cultural differences and having different levels of intercultural competency (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2006). In addition, the research should be extended to the study of other languages that operate as linguae francae.

The research that Charles and her colleagues have established suggests three possible ways to move forward for future research of English as a business *lingua franca* and in international business communication. These are: (1) the development of a shared framework for research that integrates and adapts an existing framework; (2) the need for collaboration between native English speakers and nonnative speakers in business; and (3) the immediate need for bridging the gap between workplace communication and business communication research.

The Development of a Shared Framework

The international and intercultural business communication studies have captured the dynamics influencing interactions among full bilinguals from different cultures. While these various studies and models have made valuable contributions, they have overlooked the communication events between partial bilinguals and unilinguals in IBC. In the past, research was operated on the assumption that all participants within an IBC setting functioned as fully proficient users of all languages being spoken, with no accounting for communication difficulties arising from varying levels of language proficiency or intercultural communication competence. Since 2000, studies recognizing competence differentials have been emerging. European studies have focused on language choice (see, Charles, 2001) and second-language (English) communication in multinational corporations. In their study, Charles and her associates examined language-influenced communication in Nordic and Scadinavian companies such as Finnish-Swedish companies where they have focused on language choice and its effect on communication effectiveness. Comparisons are made based on when Swedish, Finnish, or English is chosen as the company's *lingua franca* (language of convenience, used by people for whom it is not their native language). Consequently, the integration of the language-based communication zone model with Charles's research is the first step to develop a shared framework.

The language-based communication zones model (Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001; Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2007) shows how interactants with varying language competence developed different communication strategies and tactics in three language-based communication zones. The BELF model emphasizes the idea of English as business lingua franca in that English became the official corporate language of both merged companies. Du-Babcock and Babcock's language-based communication zones model is in the same line as Charles's BELF framework in that both studies accept that English is a key language in international business communication. The difference lies in language environment and linguistic competence between the two research subjects. While the research subjects of Charles can be classified as a sub-zone of MegaZone Three where business professionals are fully bilingual in speaking English, the business professionals of Du-Babcock and Babcock's are situated in the environment where English is seen as outer circle (Kachru, 1985) where the linguistic competence of business professionals is varying widely.

Integrating these two theoretical frameworks provides a competence-based framework that recognizes the need for linguistic and intercultural competence and that diagnoses the development of the requisite competence for communicating in different situations and tasks in international business communication. In addition, through the integration of the language-based communication zones and the BELF, a mechanism can be introduced to identify communicators' competence match at the beginning or throughout interactions of communicators, and to apply the framework to different languages that communicators may choose to use. This integrated approach allows a more systematic detection of whether intercultural miscommunication emanates from linguistic competence or deep meanings of exchanged messages in which there are cultural differences.

In sum, by merging the concepts of language-based communication zones and BELF, a more realistic and accurate portrayal of intercultural language competence is hopefully to be achieved.

The Need for Collaborations across the Disciplines and across the Globe

Forman (2006) suggested that:

> *. . . the research issues we address are driven by our own curiosity, heightened by our gaps in knowledge. Those gaps are created to some extent by the functional silos (e.g., English, management, speech communication, information technology) in which we work. That combination of personal curiosity and gaps in knowledge created by our own particular educational backgrounds and the functional areas in which we work makes our research autobiographical: a narrative of what each of us believes we need to know.* (Suchan & Charles, 2006, p. 395)

Forman's remarks imply the "Elephant and blind man" phenomenon and the immediate need for collaborations across the disciplines and across the globe. Due to advances in technology, there are increasing research efforts at collaboration between institutions and between disciplines. However, these research collaborations are still largely limited by region. Research by Charles et al. (2006) and Poncini (2002, 2003, 2004) in Europe, and the research by Du-Babcock and Varner (2008) in Hong Kong and the US have addressed some of the research issues within the boundaries of the geography they are investigating. While I agree with Poncini's call for "the need for research in multicultural and multilingual settings," I propose that the future research agenda should involve a "global focus" in that we cannot examine the research issues only from geographically specific region, but we also need to compare the findings across the globe. In doing so, we can prevent "elephant and blind man syndrome".

Let me provide an example to illustrate the possibility and opportunities of an internationally collaborative research project funded by the Hong Kong Government's general Research Fund and chaired by my colleague, Professor Vijay Bhatia. In his research team, Professor Bhatia has successfully involved scholars from 25 countries in working on the same research issues related to legal discourse. This current research project draws on discourse-based data (e.g., narrative, documentary, and interactional) to examine the extent to which the "integrity of arbitration principles is maintained in international commercial arbitration practice." As stated by Bhatia, "Building on the wide degree of interest created by the focus of the overall project theme, the international research collaboration it enabled, and the excellent research opportunities for interdisciplinary and international teamwork it provided, the research team has undertaken a further research project focusing on the actuality of arbitration practice across linguistic, socio-cultural, political, and legal boundaries" (http://144.214.44.26/arbitration/arbitration). This longitudinal large-scale discourse analysis study is an example of the research collaboration across disciplines and across the globe.

This example illustrates that international research collaborations can facilitate the development of the discipline and improve our effectiveness as researchers. We should work not only within our discipline with researchers from other cultures and countries (providing firsthand experience in intercultural and multidisciplinary communication) but also outside our discipline with scholars and business professionals (legal specialists in this case) in other disciplines and fields (providing exposure to the knowledge bases and professional genres in different professional fields). These collaborations will allow us to undertake research projects that we could not do individually but also place us in a collaborative and supportive environment to guide our development as researchers and teachers.

Bridging the Gap between Workplace communication and Business Communication Research

Suchan and Charles (2006) have raised concerns about the gap between the development of the theoretical framework, operationalized research, and its implications for the corporate world. To bridge the gap, Thomas (2007) in her 2006 Outstanding Researcher Award address also re-emphasized that, "if scholars do not venture into the field and connect with those who 'do' business communication . . ." (Thomas, 2007, p. 283), eventually the same argument that the business communication literature is becoming less and less relevant to practicing managers can be true when applied to business communication. As Thomas argues, the world of business has become globalized, and organizations have expanded their operations overseas; and thereby business or organizational communication has become increasingly intercultural. Thomas, however, questions whether the business communication literature has kept up with the business communication theory development. An example of her work demonstrates the importance of bridging the academic - practitioner gap in order to develop better theoretical frameworks about workplace communication.

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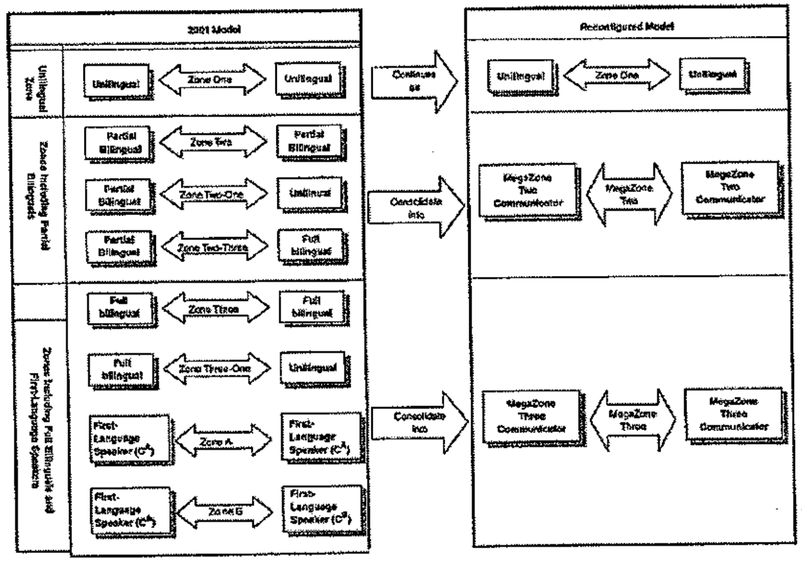

Figure 1. Language-Based Communication Zones and the Reconfigured MegaZone Models

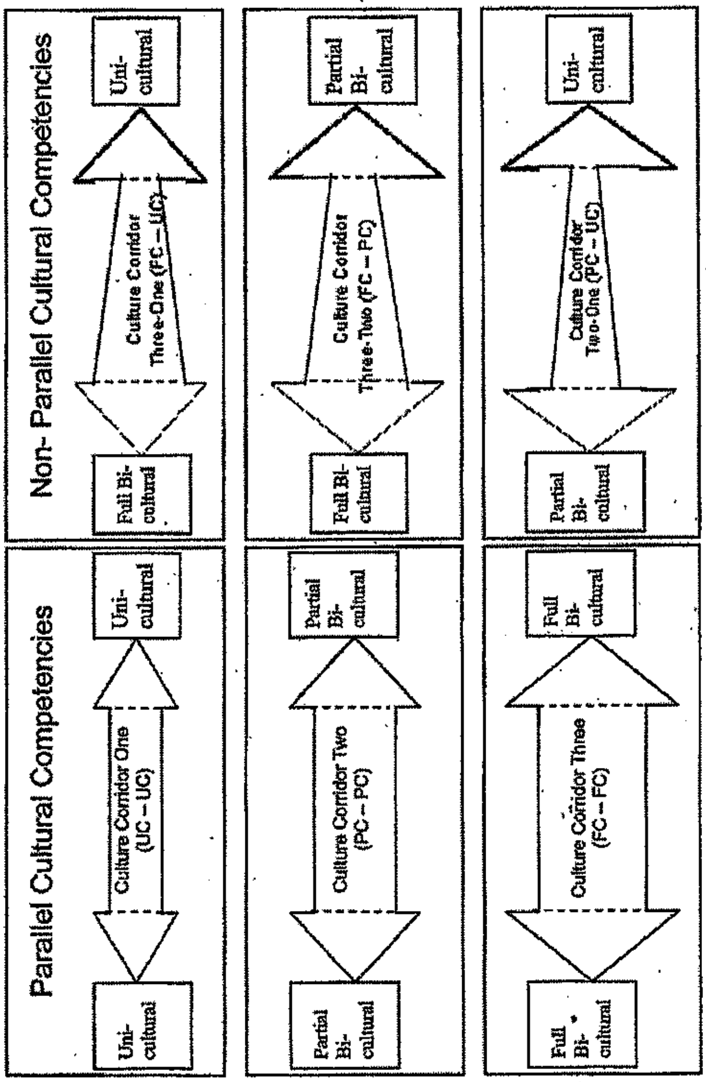

Figure 2: Culture Corridors in Language-based Communication Zones.

Source: Du-Babcock, B., & Babcock, R. (2006). Developing linguistic and cultural competency in international business communication. In *International/intercultural business communication*, edited by Palmer, Juan Carlos; New York: Peter Lang. 55-82.

Appendix 1: Six Research Questions

Turn-taking Behavior and Topic Management Strategies of Chinese and Japanese Business Professionals and Managers: A Comparative Analysis of Intra- and Inter-cultural Group Communication (GRF Project Number: 9041451)

RQ1: Do Chinese and Japanese business professionals exhibit equivalent or different turn-taking behaviors in similar L1 and L2 communication tasks and situations?

RQ2: Does L2 proficiency affects the communication behavior (e.g., turn-taking) of Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers in their L2 communication?

RQ3: Do Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers exhibit different turn-taking behaviors and lengths of speaking time when they participate in first language (homogeneous group) meetings?

RQ4: Do Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers exhibit different turn-taking behaviors and lengths of speaking time when they participate in L2 (heterogeneous) group meetings?

RQ5: Do Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers exhibit different turn-taking behaviors and lengths of speaking time when they participate in homogeneous (intra-cultural) as compared to heterogeneous (inter-cultural) group meetings?

RQ6: Do Chinese and Japanese business professionals and managers use different topic management strategies in low-context (e.g., English) and high-context (i.e., Japanese and Chinese) languages?