Pipsa Purhonen

Interpersonal Communication Competence and Collaborative Interaction in SME Internationalization

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Pipsa Purhonen

Interpersonal Communication Competence and Collaborative Interaction in SME Internationalization

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2012

Interpersonal Communication Competence and Collaborative Interaction in SME Internationalization

Pipsa Purhonen

Interpersonal Communication Competence and Collaborative Interaction in SME Internationalization

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Cover picture by Sampo Laukkanen

ABSTRACT

This study has four main goals. First, it aims to explore the collaborative interaction of individual stakeholders in SME internationalization, namely the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations such as business consultancies, finance companies or innovation centers. Second, the study examines the nature of the interpersonal communication competence (ICC) collaborative interaction requires. Third, the study has methodological objectives to develop a new measure for assessing ICC and to test the applicability of measuring ICC in international business collaboration. Fourth, the study aims to measure the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC in collaborative interaction that is crucial in SME internationalization.

The study was conducted in the context of the entry of Finnish SMEs into China. A web survey was used to gather the research data consisting of the SME and intermediary representatives' (N=115) responses to both open-ended questions and structured questions and assessment scales. The data were analyzed with mixed methods of data analysis, including content analysis, phenomenographic analysis and statistical analysis.

In the research findings collaborative interaction in SME internationalization is identified as task communication, relational communication and dialogic communication. ICC in collaborative interaction is characterized by the management of dialectical tensions that were found inherent in SME-intermediary relationships, including personal-professional, similarity-difference, and stability-change. The findings address difficulties in measuring ICC in SME internationalization. The results indicate a very high level of the individual stakeholders' ICC, but the assessments are likely to be biased by the differing expectations towards collaborative interaction or the positive experiences of accomplishing the overall goal of SME internationalization.

Keywords: business communication, collaborative interaction, interpersonal communication competence, relational dialectics, SME internationalization, social interaction

Author's address   Pipsa Purhonen
Department of Communication
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Supervisor   Lecturer Tarja Valkonen
Department of Communication
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Reviewers   Professor Pekka Isotalus
School of Communication, Media and Theatre
University of Tampere, Finland

Professor Leena Louhiala-Salminen
Department of Communication
Aalto University School of Economics, Finland

Opponent   Professor Leena Louhiala-Salminen
Department of Communication
Aalto University School of Economics, Finland

FOREWORD

FIGURES

TABLES

CONTENTS

APPENDIX

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

Economic globalization, rapid technological changes, and increasing organizational interdependencies have caused a need for collaboration in all sectors of our society (Koskenlinna et al., 2005; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Collaboration is created, maintained and developed in social interaction, making it a subject of special interest for speech communication scholars and also the focus of this doctoral dissertation. In particular, this study scrutinizes collaborative interaction and the interpersonal communication competence (ICC) that it requires in the context of the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SME refers here to a company having fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover below 50 million euros (see Statistics Finland, 2012).

Internationalizing SMEs may face barriers such as the high costs of internationalization, a lack of adequate information about trade, legislation or regulations, a lack of personnel's expertise and skills, or communication challenges due, for instance, to language problems and cultural differences (Forsman, Hinttu & Kock, 2002; Internationalization of European SMEs, 2010). Thus SME internationalization often involves collaborative arrangements and also the engagement in long-term relationships that may provide access to the needed resources or further networks and alliances (see Forsman, Hinttu & Kock, 2002). Formal relationships with existing business partners, informal relationships with friends and relatives, and mediated relationships with non-profit government-owned advisory bodies and exhibition organizers are all used when entering a new foreign market (Ojala, 2008).

The importance of interpersonal relationships has been widely recognized in the research literature on SME internationalization. So far, the topic has mainly received theoretical and empirical research attention from business and management scholars (see e.g. Agndal & Chetty, 2007; Ellis, 2000; Kontinen, 2011; Ojala, 2008). According to a recent review interpersonal relationships and networks have a pivotal role in all the major theories and models of business internationalization (Ojala, 2008). Interpersonal relationships have been seen as

an important resource (internationalization new venture theory by Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) and as a source for knowledge creation (Uppsala internationalization process model by Johanson & Vahlne 1977, 2006). In addition, relationships have been conceptualized as determinants of market selection (Network model of internationalization by Johanson & Mattson, 1988). These theoretical approaches, however, do not suffice to provide an understanding of what kind of a challenge the essential relationships pose to the social interaction of individual stakeholders in SME internationalization. Neither do they identify how interpersonal relationships are initiated and maintained and what kind of interpersonal communication skills and competencies they involve.

The social interaction of globally acting, mutually dependent individuals, and the creation, facilitation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships and alliances have become a major part of international business (see Charles, 2009). This study explores the *collaborative interaction* of such individuals, the representatives of Finnish SMEs and Finnish and international intermediary organizations involved in SME internationalization. These intermediary organizations include, for instance, technology and innovation centers, business incubators, regional development companies, and research institutions (Koskenlinna et al., 2005).

Collaborative interaction is here approached from the perspective of interpersonal communication, as dyadic social interaction. The speech communication literature addresses and defines collaboration typically as a temporarily formed group or relationship that involves 1) acting and doing, 2) equality and interdependency of participants, 3) a shared task, goal or interest, and 4) fundamentally informal and volitional participation (see Keyton & Stallworth, 2003 or Lewis, 2006 for reviews). In the field of education, the concept of *collaborative learning* has been distinguished from *co-operative learning*, the former referring to the creation of shared meanings and mutual understanding in social interaction, and the latter to the division of labor or tasks (Häkkinen & Arvaja, 2009). In a similar vein, collaborative interaction can be understood as *the creation of shared meanings and understanding in the context of mutual task- and goal-accomplishment.* Collaborative interaction is characterized accordingly as entailing shared responsibility and active contribution of both/all collaborating partners.

The collaborative interaction of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations transcends organizational boundaries and can thus be seen as *inter-organizational collaboration*. Inter-organizational collaborative practices and discourses have been examined in contexts such as community development (Doerfel, 2005; Heath, 2007; Isbell, 2009; Koschmann, 2010; Zoller, 2000), conflicts and disasters (Aggestam & Keenan, 2006; Isbell & Godstein, 2006), collaborative writing (Palmeri, 2004) and business consulting (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary research of inter-organizational collaboration has typically neglected the interpersonal level of collaboration, and focused on organizational perspectives instead (for

organizational and structural aspects of collaboration see e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Communication scholars (Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008; Koschmann, 2010; Thomson & Perry, 2006) have criticized earlier studies for prioritizing the antecedent conditions, organizational properties and outcomes, or other abstract structural characteristics over actual human interaction, communication strategies or the individual influences of collaborating partners. However, inter-organizational collaboration can be observed as the social interaction of human agencies, that is, people interacting (Doerfel, 2005; Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008).

Collaborative interaction between individual stakeholders in SME internationalization may exceed sector-specific boundaries and national borders, and may then be complicated in many ways. Such a collaborative context may evince differences in language use and technological know-how, in the regulatory environment and economic development, and in the cultures to which collaborating partners are attached, including their corporate culture, the industry culture, the general business culture, and the national culture (see Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Saatci, 2008; Varner, 2000). In addition, differing goals among individuals, collaborative groups and their stakeholder organizations are likely to occur and give rise to several dialectical tensions (Heath & Frey, 2004). Studies have demonstrated that collaboration in an inter-organizational context may simultaneously involve cooperation and competition, collaboration and hierarchy, and diversity and consensus (Doerfel, 2005; Zoller, 2000). Moreover, tensions between representing the interests and opinions of collaborating individuals or those of their parent organizations, as well as representing either public or private interests may occur (Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008). For instance, representatives of SMEs may primarily aim to improve their business operations (private good), whereas the representatives of intermediary organizations may be more concerned with supporting regional development (public good).

The existing corpus of collaboration research has formed a basis on which it is reasonable to argue that social interaction in inter-organizational collaboration is complex in nature. Yet the complexity raises several so far unanswered questions concerning the interpersonal aspect of inter-organizational business collaboration: What kind of collaborative interaction do the inter-organizational, international collaborative relationships involve? How can collaborative interaction be managed? To what extent is collaborative interaction managed in the context of SME internationalization, by the central individual stakeholders such as representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations? The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of these insufficiently studied topics and to contribute to the conceptualization, operationalization and measurement of *interpersonal communication competence* (ICC) in collaborative interaction. The phenomenon and concept of ICC are discussed in the following chapter.

1.2 Interpersonal communication competence in business and organizational contexts

The scholarly research on interpersonal communication competence (ICC) is diverse, and the phenomenon has been approached from various theoretical perspectives (Wilson & Sabee, 2003). Numerous studies have relied on the foundation provided by Spitzberg & Cupach (1984), according to which ICC is a construction of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions. From this standpoint, ICC requires knowledge about effective and appropriate interpersonal communication, motivation to engage in social interaction, meta-cognitive communication skills, as well as the interpersonal communication skills needed to act in a way that the interactants perceive to be both effective and appropriate (Valkonen, 2003).

Effectiveness has been understood as the achievement of preferred or desired outcomes in social interaction, whereas *appropriateness* refers to the perceived fitness or legitimacy of a communicator's behavior in a given context and relationship (Spitzberg, 2000). ICC entails *both* effectiveness *and* appropriateness. For instance, Parks (1994, 595) defines ICC as representing "the degree to which individuals satisfy and perceive that they have satisfied their goals within the limits of a given situation and without jeopardizing their ability or opportunity to pursue their other subjectively more important goals".

Despite the behavioral dimension can be characterized as only one central part of ICC, the concepts of *interpersonal communication skills*, *skilled behavior* or *skilled interpersonal communication* have sometimes been used parallel to what is meant by ICC (see e.g. Hargie, 2011). A more typical path in ICC research has been to understand ICC as an overall *impression* formed about the effectiveness and appropriateness of someone's communication behavior (e.g. Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Lakey & Canary, 2002). The impressions of someone's ICC are always *subjective*. The perceptions of effectiveness and appropriateness may refer to the participants in social interaction ("I/she/he was a competent communicator") or the social interaction itself ("Our/their interaction was competent"), and may be produced by the interactants or by an observer (Spitzberg, 2000).

Although ICC has received extensive attention from speech communication scholars, it still faces definitional problems (Wilson & Sabee, 2003). Several concepts, such as *communication competence*, *communicative competence*, or *relational competence*, have been used as synonyms for ICC. In some ways, this conceptual diversity may due to the contextual nature of ICC. Social interaction always takes place within a certain culture, time, relationship, situation or function (Spitzberg 2003, 2006). The perceptions of the context give rise to different expectations of ICC, and the conceptualizations of ICC have also been sensitive to the specific context of social interaction. For instance, by *organizational communication competence* Payne (2005, 64) means the "judgment of successful communication where interactants' goals are met using messages

that are perceived as appropriate and effective within the organizational context." This definition emphasizes how evaluations of ICC within organizations are affected by contextual parameters, such as organizational rules, norms and practices.

Further, the contextual nature of ICC is explicitly taken into account in the definitions of *intercultural communication competence*. The aspects of ICC that are emphasized in intercultural and international communication contexts include intercultural sensitivity, awareness and adroitness, perspective taking, adaptation, and empathy (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Wiseman, 2002; Arasaratnam, 2006). Thus the conceptualizations of intercultural communication competence reflect cultural differences and expectations regarding ICC. For example, Hajek and Giles (2003, 952) define intercultural communication competence as "obtaining desirable communicative outcomes through the appropriate management of individuation/stereotype expectation in communication, given a cognitive awareness of all participants' cultural orientations, cultural history, and motivations".

Researchers have emphasized the importance of ICC in several professional contexts, such as in the work of researchers (Laajalahti, 2008), pharmacists (Hyvärinen et al., 2010) or politicians (Almonkari & Isotalus, 2010). ICC has been understood as a dimension of vocational competence and vital to career success, job satisfaction and wellbeing at work (see Kostiainen, 2003; Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000; Madlock, 2008; Wright et al., 2010).

Studies have also produced several contextually sensitive definitions of ICC specific to organizational and international business communication. Table 1 on the following page presents some recent conceptualizations proposed, for instance, in the fields of speech communication (e.g. Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009), business communication (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) and international business management (Macpherson & Wilson, 2003; Phan, Styles & Matterson, 2005).

TABLE 1   Conceptualizations of ICC in organizational and international business
communication

Concept	Conceptualization	References
BELF (business English as a lingua franca) competence	▪ Clarity and accuracy of content ▪ Knowledge of business-specific vocabulary and genre conventions ▪ Relational orientation	Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, 380
Global communicative competence	▪ Multicultural competence including listening and accommodation skills, and acknowledgement of and flexibility and tolerance towards national, corporate and professional cultures ▪ BELF competence including situation-specific and strategic language use ▪ Business know-how	Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, 259
Interactive competences	▪ Customer focus: Service orientation, proactive in understanding and responding to customer requirements ▪ Communication: Formal and ad hoc interactions, quality information systems and information sharing, collaborative approach, possibly multi-level and multi-functional	Macpherson & Wilson, 2003, 172
Intercultural communication competence	▪ Effective communication skills/abilities ▪ Cultural awareness and understanding ▪ Open-mindedness and non-judgmental attitude ▪ Personal competence and intelligence	Matveev, 2004, 55
Organizational communication competence	▪ The judgment of successful communication where interactants' goals are met using messages that are perceived as appropriate and effective within the organizational context ▪ Involves knowledge of the organization and of communication, ability to carry out skilled behaviors, and one's motivation to perform competently	Payne, 2005, 64
Relational competency	▪ The manager's ability to communicate effectively with the managers of the partner firm	Phan, Styles & Patterson, 2005, 173
Leadership communication competence	▪ Knowledge about and skills in managing different tensions and expectations towards leadership communication ▪ Motivation and willingness to communicate with the subordinates	Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009, 193

Regardless of the field of study, the definitions of ICC in organizational and
international business communication emphasize the importance of context-
specific interpersonal communication skills, knowledge of communication and
motivation to communicate, as well as the main criteria of effectiveness and
appropriateness. In addition to accomplishing a professional task, the
definitions suggest the crucial role of *relational communication* that creates,
maintains and develops interpersonal relationships. Indeed, the organizational
members share a lot of spontaneous relational communication including self-
disclosure, humor and small talk (Sivunen, 2007). Relational communication
functions, such as empathy, demonstrating presence or interest, and discussion
of social or personal issues, are likely to enhance effective communication and

the organizational members' ICC in both addressing the task and in maintaining interpersonal relationships (Pullin, 2010; Thompson, 2009).

The conceptualizations of ICC have often provided a basis for ICC assessment and measurement. ICC can be assessed using both direct methods (such as observation or simulations) and indirect methods (such as interviews or introspective questionnaires) (Spitzberg, 2003; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). The assessment tools and measures can differ in focusing on only one or many of the dimensions of ICC (cognitive, affective, or behavioral). In addition, measurements can assess the atomistic qualities of ICC (e.g. eye contact or gestures), or the holistic inferences of one's communication behavior (e.g. empathy, activity), and ICC can be assessed by the interactant her/himself, by the interlocutor or a third party as an observer (see Valkonen, 2003; Wilson & Sabee, 2003).

In spite of a large number of ICC measures and rating tools (for reviews, see e.g. Kearney & Beatty, 1994; Spitzberg, 2003; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989), the studies on ICC in organizational or international business communication have made only little contribution in the operationalization or measurement of ICC. Profession-focused ICC measures are available especially in health communication (see e.g. Hullman & Daily, 2008, for a review of physician communication competence scales) but recent studies on ICC in organizational and business communication have not produced or validated context-specific assessment tools or ratings scales. With the exception of the assessment scales by Payne (2005), these studies have only proposed skills- and behavior-based specifications of ICC within business and organizations. These characterizations include interpersonal communication skills that support task accomplishment, such as assertiveness, persuasion, information sharing, or team skills, as well as skills in adaptation and adjustment, such as adaptability and perspective taking (Payne, 2005; Phan, Styles & Patterson, 2005; Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009; Wardrobe, 2002). In addition, relational communication skills including empathizing, intimacy, or creating and supporting interpersonal relationships, have been suggested as specific to ICC in business and organizational communication (Payne, 2005; Phan, Styles & Patterson, 2005; Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009). The following Table 2 illustrates some recent specifications of ICC in organizational and international business settings in greater detail.

TABLE 2   Specifications of ICC in organizational and international business communication

Instrument or specification	Operationalization	References
Communication skill scale Communication knowledge scale Communication motivation scale	▪ Skill at adapting communication, at empathizing, and at managing interaction ▪ Knowledge of adaptability, of empathy, and of interaction management ▪ Motivation to adapt, to empathize, and to communicate	Payne, 2005
Relational competence	Relationship initiation competence: ▪ Assertiveness ▪ Dominance ▪ Instrumental competence ▪ Shyness (negative variable) ▪ Social anxiety (negative variable) Relationship maintenance competence: ▪ Intimacy ▪ Trusting ability ▪ Interpersonal sensitivity ▪ Altruism ▪ Perspective taking	Phan, Styles & Patterson, 2005
Leadership communication competence	ICC in the functions of: ▪ Persuading and engaging employees ▪ Gathering, interpreting and sharing information ▪ Creating and supporting interaction and social relationships ▪ Guiding work and providing feedback ▪ Supporting the interaction between employees	Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009
Business communication skills	▪ Written skills ▪ Cultural literacy skills ▪ Technology-mediated skills ▪ Interpersonal skills ▪ Listening skills ▪ Group/team skills	Wardrobe, 2002

Despite various interpersonal communication skills found crucial to ICC within business and organizations, the measurement of ICC still holds to measures developed for and used primarily in educational settings. These assessment tools cannot as such be deemed applicable in organizational or business settings.

A review of the literature reveals some obvious gaps in research. There appears to be a lack of research examining ICC in collaborative or inter-organizational contexts. An exception is Juch and Rathje's (2011) study on cooperation competence in commercial alliances defining communication principles such as transparency, willingness to compromise, recognition of cultural relativity, desire for development, or anticipatory trust as central to the process formation and the establishment of relationships in a cooperative setting. No study contributing to the theoretical conceptualization of ICC in inter-organizational business collaboration was found. However, ICC in the inter-organizational context such as between individual stakeholders in SME internationalization may differ from ICC involved in workplace relationships

within the same organization, such as in leader-member communication, and different kinds of expectations and appreciations regarding ICC are likely to evoke.

In addition, there is a clear need for ICC measurement in the organizational context. Apart from the Communication Competence Questionnaire by Monge, Bachman, Dillard & Eisenberg (1982) and the scales by Payne (2005), it is difficult to find a measure focusing on ICC in organizational communication. The CCQ by Monge et al. (1982) does not include the relational forms of communication, and none of the existing measurements were developed for inter-organizational or collaborative settings. ICC in inter-organizational collaboration is an aspect that warrants analysis and conceptualization, as well as the examination of how and to what extent it can be assessed or measured.

1.3   Theoretical cornerstones of the study

This study examines interpersonal communication competence (ICC) in inter-organizational business collaboration, particularly in the context of SME internationalization. Creating, managing and developing collaboration in an inter-organizational, inter-sectoral and international context poses special challenges for the ICC of individual stakeholders in SME internationalization. Thus the focus of examination is on ICC in collaborative interaction between the individual representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. This context-specific ICC is here approached from two theoretical perspectives namely 1) *the ecological systems perspective* (Jablin & Sias, 2001; Sias, Krone & Jablin, 2002) and 2) *relational dialectics theory* (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

The ecological systems perspective proposes that organizational relationships and ICC in an organizational context are embedded in four levels of an ecosystem (Jablin & Sias, 2001; Sias, Krone & Jablin, 2002). Microsystem, or the level of *interpersonal communication*, concerns the individual organizational members. Mesosystem is composed of the individual microsystems and can thus be seen as team or *group communication*. Macrosystem refers to the level of *organizational communication*, and the exosystem comprehends the *cultural or ideological context* of communication. The different levels of the ecosystem are interconnected. Thus the collaborative interaction of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations is affected not only by interpersonal norms, expectations or appreciations, but also by the interests, resources, procedures and policies of a variety of business networks, parent organizations, sectors or industries, as well as the national cultures of collaborating partners.

For instance, ICC specific to collaborative interaction, such as eliciting the necessary information, often involves collaborating partners' relational networks (see Stohl & Walker, 2002). Further, globalization, increased diversity and other changes in the exosystem impose new requirements on organizations and individuals, an example of which is a need for ICC in developing global

communication networks (Jablin & Sias, 2001). Collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization is shaped by the diversity of the business community: by the personal, interpersonal, relational, organizational, industrial, and national backgrounds of collaborating participants (see also Charles, 2009; Varner, 2000). On the other hand, the collaborative interaction of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations can affect other levels of the ecosystem such as enhancing the achievement of organizational goals or further the developments in the exosystem including, for example, regional welfare and political decision-making.

Relational dialectics theory (RDT) proposed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) originates from a *Bakhtinian* sense of dialogue and considers that meaning making is a social process that emerges from an encounter of different worldviews named *discourses*. Because collaboration of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organization is characterized by diversity, the dialogic perspective can be seen as justifiable to examine collaborative interaction (see also Heath, 2007). In reference to RDT (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010), collaborative interaction in SME internationalization is grounded in discursive struggles that are not psychological needs or functions, but oppositional aspects of collaborative interaction such as public-private or partnership-competition. The representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations may at the same time experience independence from and dependence on their collaborating partners. RDT takes the view that the maintenance of interpersonal relationships is shaped by such *relational dialectics* that are emergent and dynamic, simultaneously present and mutually negotiating in interpersonal communication, but also in dialogue with the social order that exists beyond the immediate boundary of the relationship (see Baxter, 2004a, 2004b; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). Thus RDT also takes into account the larger context of social interaction and suggests, indeed, that it may be difficult to draw the boundary of relational communication at the level of interpersonal communication because relationships are sites of culture (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010).

Whereas RDT has mainly been applied to the scrutiny of communication in close relationships, especially family communication (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010), some steps have been taken towards applying the perspective in organizational or workplace communication contexts. Bridge and Baxter (1992) studied *blended relationships* which exist between friends who are also work associates, and were able to identify five dialectical tensions inherent in workplace friendships: autonomy-connection, equality-inequality, impartiality-favoritism, judgment-acceptance, and openness-closedness. In addition, Gerlander (2003) examined dialectical tensions in doctor-patient communication and found the dialectics of relational closeness-distance, expressiveness-protection, autonomy-interdependence, predictability-surprise, and judgment-acceptance involved in doctor-patient relationships.

Analyzing ICC from the theoretical perspective of RDT draws primary attention to social interaction and interpersonal relationships (Wilson & Sabee

2003, 29). From this vantage point, ICC occurs in the collaborative interaction of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The approach of RDT suggests that competent collaborating partners are sensitive to diversity and multivocality. Thus ICC involves *knowledge* of personal, relational and cultural standards for the effectiveness and appropriateness of social interaction, *motivation* to continue relating, to appreciate and respond to contradictions and to take into account the multiple voices, and *relational communication skills* that promote dialogue such as skills in listening, self-disclosure or integrative negotiation (Baxter & Montgomery 1996; Wilson & Sabee 2003).

By applying the approaches of the ecological systems perspective and RDT, the study suggests that collaborative interaction is embedded in different levels of an ecosystem of SME internationalization, and that collaborative interaction is relational and dialectical in nature. These aspects also affect ICC specific to collaborative interaction in an inter-organizational business context.

1.4 Research objectives

This study aims to contribute to the theoretical conceptualization of ICC in inter-organizational, international business collaboration. ICC is studied in the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations such as business consultancies, finance companies or research and innovation centers.

The study has four main goals. First, it aims to *explore and describe collaborative interaction that is crucial to the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations*. This objective involves the identification of inter-organizational collaboration as interpersonal communication, a topic that has so far received little research attention. The study explores the collaborative interaction of the individual stakeholders in SME internationalization and how they perceive it. The first research objective divides into seven research questions:

1) *How do the SME and intermediary representatives perceive their collaborative relationships?*
2) *What do they see as the primary function of collaborative relationships?*
3) *What characteristics do they consider important in their collaborative relationships?*
4) *How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations perceive the nature of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization?*
5) *What are the aims, functions and outcomes of collaborative interaction?*
6) *How are dialectical tensions manifest in inter-organizational collaborative interaction?*

7) *What kind of problems and barriers may the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations experience and perceive in inter-organizational collaborative interaction?*

Second, the study attempts to *examine what kind of interpersonal communication competence (ICC) collaborative interaction requires.* While collaborative arrangements have become a significant part of today's global business context, little attention has been paid to ICC specific to inter-organizational business collaboration. This study focuses on ICC in collaborative interaction between the representatives of Finnish SMEs and Finnish and international intermediary organizations. The attempt is to learn more about the *knowledge* regarding interpersonal communication, *motivation* to engage in communication and interpersonal communication *skills* that are specific, in particular, to the collaborative interaction in SME internationalization. The second research objective is examined with the help of research question 8:

8) *What kind of interpersonal communication competence is specific to and necessary for networking and collaboration?*

Third, in addition to examining the conceptualization of ICC in collaborative interaction, the study has methodological objectives to d*evelop a new measure for assessing ICC and to test the applicability of measuring ICC in international business collaboration.* This research goal warrants exploration of the extent to which ICC can be operationalized into measurable variables as well as scrutinizing of the validity and reliability of self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC. The study uses the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS), a measure specially developed to assess ICC in SME internationalization. CCCS takes account of the complex nature of collaborative interaction in an international business context as well as all the four ecological systems affecting ICC (microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and exosystem). The study is also guided by research questions 9 and 10:

9) *What are the validity and reliability of Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS)?*
10) *What are the validity and reliability of self-assessments and partner assessments of interpersonal communication competence in international business collaboration?*

Fourth, the study aims to *measure the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC in collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization.* Instead of observer assessments, the interest is in the perceptions of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning the ICC of their own and that of their collaborating partners. The actual stakeholders in SME internationalization were seen as appropriate judges to assess the level of ICC in collaborative interaction because a third party (observer) always lacks relational knowledge about the given interpersonal relationship which is

essential in order to assess whether the observed communication behavior is effective and appropriate (see Parks, 1994). The fourth and final research objective is articulated in research questions 11 and 12:

11) *How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations rate their own interpersonal communication competence?*
12) *How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations rate each other's interpersonal communication competence?*

1.5   Articles included in the study

This doctoral dissertation consists of five research articles and the overview at hand. Four out of five articles were published in peer-reviewed journals (ref.), three of them international and one of them Finnish. One manuscript was co-authored with the supervisor of the doctoral dissertation and it will be submitted for publication in an international journal. The first author carried the main responsibility for writing this co-authored article, while the second author made her contribution both in the ideation and the actual writing process by commenting and editing the text.

   One of the articles is a literature review and the other four are empirical research reports. They all contribute to achieving the objectives of the study. The third research objective in particular can be seen as an overarching theme throughout the articles. Thus all five articles discuss the ICC that collaborative interaction or its problems and barriers require from the stakeholders in SME internationalization. However, to avoid repetition or overlapping examination, each article addressed specific research questions. The articles and their objectives are presented in Table 3 on the following page.

TABLE 3 Research articles included in the study

Article	Research questions
I. Purhonen, P. (2008). SME internationalization as a challenge to interpersonal communication competence: An analysis of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration. Journal of Intercultural Communication 18, http://immi.se/intercultural/nr18/purhonen.htm	*Research question 8:* 8) What kind of interpersonal communication competence is specific to and necessary for networking and collaboration?
II. Purhonen, P. (2010a). Perceptions of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning collaborative relationships in SME internationalization. Intercultural Communication Studies XIX (2), 22–36.	*Research questions 1–3 :* 1) How do the SME and intermediary representatives perceive their collaborative relationships? 2) What do they see as the primary function of collaborative relationships? 3) What characteristics do they consider important in their collaborative relationships?
III. Purhonen, P. (2010b). Collaborative interaction in the internationalization of small- and medium-sized enterprises. David C. Lam Institute for East -West Studies Working Paper Series 106, 1–22.	*Research questions 4–6:* 4) How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations perceive the nature of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization? 5) What are the aims, functions and outcomes of collaborative interaction? 6) How are dialectical tensions manifest in inter-organizational collaborative interaction?
IV. Purhonen, P. & Valkonen, T. (Manuscript). Measuring Interpersonal Communication Competence in SME Internationalization.	*Research questions 9–12:* 9) What are the validity and reliability of the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS)? 10) What are the validity and reliability of self-assessments and partner assessments of interpersonal communication competence in international business collaboration? 11) How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations rate their own interpersonal communication competence? 12) How do the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations rate each other's interpersonal communication competence?
V. Purhonen, P. (2011). Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoita pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. [Pitfalls of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization] Prologi. Puheviestinnän vuosikirja 2011, 25–43.	*Research question 7:* 7) What kind of problems and barriers may the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations experience and perceive in inter-organizational collaborative interaction?

2 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 Mixed methods approach

This study aims to explore and describe interpersonal communication competence (ICC) that is crucial in the collaborative interaction of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. In addition, the study attempts to measure the ICC of these individual stakeholders in SME internationalization, and to test the feasibility of measuring ICC in international business collaboration. The study also includes developing a new ICC rating scale. The study aspires to both generate and test theory about ICC. It asks descriptive research questions that fall within the qualitative research tradition, in addition to the exploratory but measurable questions that are typically attached to the quantitative research approach. Therefore, the study can be defined as *mixed methods research*.

A mixed methods research approach can be interpreted broadly as both the method of collecting, analyzing and mixing quantitative and qualitative research data and as the philosophical assumptions that guide the research framework and strategies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). Mixed methods research was introduced as a response to the "paradigm wars" between opposing worldviews or belief systems associated with quantitative and qualitative research traditions (see e.g. Denscombe, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Quantitative research has traditionally followed a positivist research paradigm that portrays reality as singular and responsive to objective inquiry (Feilzer, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Qualitative research, on the other hand, has been guided by constructivism that denies the existence of an objective reality, asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Whereas quantitative research aims to gain knowledge through a search for regularities and relationships between and among the components of the world (Miller, 2001; Query et al., 2009), qualitative research attempts to

make sense or to interpret phenomena in their natural settings and in terms of the meanings people attach to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Mixed methods research strives to combine the quantitative and qualitative research approaches and therefore fits comfortably with neither of the belief systems described above (Feilzer, 2010). Instead of philosophical worldviews underlying qualitative or quantitative research traditions, a mixed method approach typically emanates from the research questions at hand and aims to determine what data and analyses are needed to achieve the objectives of the study (see Bazeley, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

A mixed methods approach determined both the research setting and the procedures of data collection and analysis of the present study. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches may occur in any or all stages of a study, and the research literature has produced several typologies to classify the different paths or strategies of mixed methods research (for typologies see e.g. Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Mason, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) terms, this study followed a fully integrated mixed design, in which the qualitative and quantitative approaches occur in an interactive, reciprocal and interdependent way at all stages of the study. Neither qualitative nor quantitative research approach was given priority; they were treated equally. Neither was used to solely corroborate or explain the primary findings produced by the other.

The purposes of the fully integrated mixed design in this study were to 1) to obtain a diverse and complete picture of ICC and collaborative interaction in SME internationalization, and 2) to recognize the possible biases or weaknesses of using only one (either quantitative or qualitative) approach to study these complex phenomena. In compliance with integrative logic (Mason, 2006), the objectives of the study were seen as integrated, and the qualitative and quantitative data were used in order to understand connecting parts and layers of the whole. A similar logic guided data analysis: the different methods of analysis were deployed because they were seen as the most appropriate ways to explore the different aspects of the problems being researched (see Mason, 2006). The qualitative and quantitative data analysis occurred in many stages and periods of time. In this way, the procedures of becoming acquainted with the research literature, analyzing the empirical data, and reflecting the earlier research were overlapping. Therefore the analysis involved both inductive and deductive reasoning processes. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) state that this *inductive-deductive research cycle* is an inevitable part of mixed methods research.

Integrating qualitative and quantitative research approaches, prioritizing research questions and goals over philosophical worldviews, and using both inductive and deductive reasoning all link this study to a *pragmatist* research paradigm. Mixed methods research is often seen to be underpinned by pragmatism (e.g. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2007; Scott & Briggs, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). Pragmatism rejects the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative research approaches and a forced choice between either position (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007;

Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Instead, pragmatism accepts pluralism, both singular and multiple realities, and treats knowledge as being constructed *and* based on the reality we experience (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Similar to the integrative logic of mixing methods, pragmatism recognizes the different – both subjective and constructed, and objective and measurable – layers of the phenomenon. In this study, pragmatism endorsed various methods of empirical inquiry and allowed examination of the individual stakeholders' constructions of collaborative interaction and ICC as well as the measurement of their actual communication behavior within a single study. The study involved *abductive* reasoning that moved back and forth between induction and deduction as well as theory and data, which is also a characteristic of a pragmatist research approach (see Morgan, 2007; Maxby, 2003).

Relying on pragmatism, the study took an instrumental view of the theoretical conceptualization of ICC and tested it in practice by measuring the stakeholders' ICC in SME internationalization. Typical of a pragmatic research approach, the study attempted to obtain useful and transferable knowledge (see e.g. Feilzer, 2010, Morgan, 2007). Although pragmatist research often aims to direct action, it was not a primary intention of the present study.

2.2 Research procedure

2.2.1 Stages of the study

The study was conducted in the context of *the entry of Finnish SMEs into China*. China's fast-growing markets have attracted approximately 280 Finnish companies to start international business operations there (the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, 2011). China has an important role as a supplier to European SMEs, but in addition to imports, SME internationalization involves exports and co-operative business activities such as technological collaboration, subcontracting or investments (Internationalization of European SMEs, 2010). Due, for instance, to language barriers and differences in the business environments between Finland and China the role of intermediary organizations may be crucial when a Finnish SME aims to initiate business operations in China. Interpersonal relationships, particularly with authorities, can help in coping with regulations and laws in China, and provide protection against opportunism and other business risks in the context of SME internationalization (Ai, 2006; So & Walker, 2006).

The study consisted of several stages that are typical of an integrative mixed methods design (see Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The stages of the study are illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page, and discussed in more detail below.
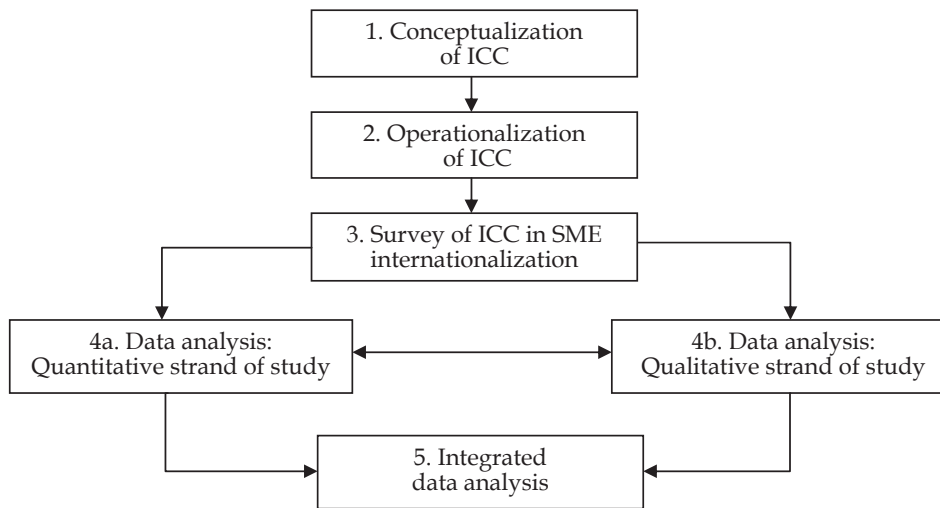
FIGURE 1   Stages of the study

1. Conceptualization of ICC. The first stage of the study in 2007–2008 involved a systematic review of the relevant literature concerning ICC in international business collaboration. To choose the literature, the main parameters of the context were first summed up. As establishing business activities across international borders requires networking and collaborative interaction regionally, nationally and internationally, the examination was confined specifically to networking and collaboration. The often multicultural context of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization was also taken into account. A review of the theory base of interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence and interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction produced a concept analysis of ICC that is specific to and necessary for SME internationalization. This conceptualization was reported in the theoretical article (Purhonen, 2008) forming part of the study.

2. Operationalization of ICC. The second stage of the study identified and described behaviors and characteristics that underlie ICC in international business collaboration. Based on the outcomes of the previous conceptualization stage, the operationalization stage involved the design of the data collection method, a survey of ICC in SME internationalization. The survey included a collection of open-ended, structured and scaled questions.

The operationalization stage also involved testing the survey design prior to the actual process of data collection. The survey questionnaire was piloted in autumn 2008 by conducting eight interviews in Hong Kong and Shanghai, China. Five Chinese and three Finnish representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations participated in the interviews. Following a method adapted from *cognitive interviews* (Godenhjelm, 2002), the interviewees were

encouraged to *think aloud* and point out all the unclear instructions or concepts used in this pilot version of the survey questionnaire while answering it. The feedback received from the interviewees concerned primarily the language used in the survey questions. Thus piloting the method caused only minor changes to the items and questions that were revised for the final version of the survey. The contents of the survey questionnaire are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.2.3 of this overview.

3. Survey of ICC in SME internationalization. The research data were gathered using a web survey developed specially for this study, based on the previous stages of conceptualization and operationalization of ICC. The survey produced a mix of thematic (qualitative) and numerical (quantitative) research data. Thus the mixed methods were conducted concurrently. The data collection stage merged the equally valued qualitative and quantitative strands of the study, as opposed to sequentially conducted mixed methods research in which qualitative or quantitative data build on or extend the other (see Creswell, Plano Clark & Garrett, 2008).

The research data were gathered in 2009 from Finland and China. The participants of the study were recruited through email lists and websites related to the entry of Finnish SMEs into China. Direct emails were used, and an invitation to participate in the study was published in three web pages to make contact with the representatives of both SMEs and intermediary organizations. More information about the participants of the study is provided in Chapter 2.2.2.

4. Data analysis. The concurrently gathered quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in two phases. At the outset, the written data and numerical data were analyzed separately. Data analysis of the quantitative strand of the study was reported in Articles II (Purhonen, 2010a) and IV (Purhonen & Valkonen, manuscript), whereas Articles III (Purhonen, 2010b) and V (Purhonen, 2011) focused on the qualitative strand of the study. However, the nature of the parallel data analysis was interactive, as the arrow between stages 4a and 4b illustrates in Figure 1 (see p. 28). For instance, the rating data of ICC (quantitative strand of the study) was reflected against the data on the individual stakeholders' understanding of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization (qualitative strand of the study). The mixed methods of data analysis are further described in Chapter 2.2.4.

5. Integrated data analysis. Following an integrative mixed methods design, the results of the parallel analysis of qualitative and quantitative data were synthesized. The aim of this final stage of the study was to develop a fuller understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny and to create *meta-inferences* that Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) explain are overall conclusions, explanations and understanding developed through an integration of the findings from the qualitative and quantitative methods of the study. The creation of meta-inferences that neither methodological strand of study could alone yield can be seen as the most crucial stage of a fully integrative mixed

design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Chapter 2.2.4 explains the ways in which this second phase of data analysis was applied in the study.

2.2.2 Participants

The invitations to participate in the study led to a sample of 128 representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. Unfortunately 13 of the responses were unusable because of a large number of missing data. The resulting group was, thus, 115 participants, 49 of which represented Finnish SMEs while 66 were from the intermediary organizations. The sample size varied among the research articles included in the study, because the articles addressed different parts of the overall research data.

The respondents had varying levels of experience of operating in the Chinese markets (from less than one year to more than ten years). The majority of the participants were men (n = 91, 23 women, and 1 unreported). There was a bias towards Finnish participants (n = 101) but the sample was also representative of other nationalities (6 Chinese, 3 Swedish, 2 Norwegian, 1 French, 1 Italian, and 1 Taiwanese). The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 71 years (M = 48.0). Most of the participants held a bachelor's or a master's degree. Their fields of study varied and included accounting, agriculture, architecture, biology, business administration, chemistry, engineering, forestry, law, linguistics, marketing, physics, and science of religion.

The group of representatives of Finnish SMEs included both entrepreneurs and employees. The majority of their companies had less than 50 employees and a maximum annual income of 10 million euros. The SMEs were both manufacturing and service companies, primarily focusing their business operations in China on the economic regions of Beijing and Shanghai.

The representatives of intermediary organizations created a diverse group including advisors, CEOs, consultants, country representatives, lawyers, program directors, and researchers. They represented national, international and multinational intermediary organizations such as business councils, consulting companies, finance companies, governmental, education and research organizations, regional development companies, and technology and innovation centers. In addition to Finland and China, their organizations were based in Germany, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore and Sweden.

To participate in the study, the SME representatives were asked to choose one collaborating partner who worked in an intermediary organization in Finland, China or elsewhere, and who had significantly assisted the SME's internationalization process in China. The majority of the SME representatives reported collaboration with Finnish (n = 27) or Chinese (n = 17) representatives of intermediary organizations. In addition, the collaborating partners were from Hong Kong (n = 3), Australia (n = 1) and UK (n = 1).

The representatives of the intermediary organizations likewise were requested to choose a person from a Finnish SME, and refer to this collaborating partner, one person, in the partner assessments. The collaborating partners from

Finnish SMEs were naturally mainly Finnish (n = 54), with only a few Chinese representatives (n = 9, unreported/unclear responses n = 3). The nationalities of all research participants and their collaborating partners are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4   Nationalities of respondents and their collaborating partners

	Respondents	Collaborating partners
Finnish (n)	101	81
Chinese (n)	6	26
Other (n)	8	8
Total (N)	115	115

Comparison of the nationalities revealed that 61 % (n = 70) of the collaborative relationships under scrutiny were relationships in which both collaborating partners were Finnish stakeholders while 25 % (n = 29) were relationships between a Finnish and a Chinese stakeholder in SME internationalization. The sample also included a collaborative relationship of two Chinese stakeholders (1 %), and an assortment of international collaborations (13 %, n = 15) including Australian-Norwegian, Finnish-French, Finnish-Hong Kong, Finnish-Italian, Finnish-Norwegian, Finnish-Swedish and Finnish-British. Thus the study sample represents a diverse range of collaboration, including both national and international collaborative interaction. Due to the different professional, organizational and sectoral backgrounds of the collaborating partners, the study sample can be deemed culturally diverse.

2.2.3 Survey of interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization

A survey of ICC in SME internationalization was conducted using a web questionnaire (see Appendix 1) that included two versions, one in Finnish and one in English. The questionnaire first asked the representatives of SMEs to choose one collaborating partner who worked in an intermediary organization in Finland, China or elsewhere, and who had significantly assisted the SME's internationalization process in China. Similarly, the intermediaries were advised to choose a person from a Finnish SME and throughout their response to refer to this same collaborating partner, one individual, in their answers. The web questionnaire consisted of four thematic sections:

1) *Background information* (questions 1–16). The questions in this section concerned the participant's personal and organizational background and the background of the collaborating partner. This information was elicited to better understand the research data.
2) *Collaborative relationship* (questions 17–22). The section consisted of structured questions concerning the duration, intensity and characteristics of the relationship between the respondent and the

collaborating partner. The section also included a 25-item Collaborative Relationship Evaluation Scale (CRES, α = 0.83) that was specially developed for the study. CRES was based upon a seven-point semantic differential scale with contrasting adjectives or characteristics, one at each end of the scale. The participants were asked to choose the extent to which one or the other adjective described their collaborative relationship.

3) *ICC in the collaborative relationship* (questions 23–24). The section included two versions of the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS): 1) CCCS self-assessment (CCCSsa, α = 0.96), and 2) CCCS partner assessment (CCCSpa, α = 0.95). Both had a pool of 42 statements formulated to reflect participants' perceptions of ICC in six communication functions: 1) *information sharing*, 2) *management of diversity,* 3) *adaptation and adjustment*, 4) *integrative negotiation*, 5) *creation and management of relationships*, and 6) *management of network resources*. Likert-type scales (*Agree – Somewhat agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Somewhat disagree – Disagree*) were used to assess the extent to which the respondent agreed or disagreed with the statements.

4) *Perceptions of collaborative interaction* (questions 25–26). The two open-ended questions in this section elicited descriptions and perceptions of collaborative relationships in general. The questions included: 1) Please, describe what the maintenance of collaborative relationships means to you in general (You can consider, for instance, what you expect from collaboration or your collaboration partners. Which factors can develop collaboration? What does the maintenance of collaborative relationship require?) 2) In your opinion, what is *failed* or *unsuccessful* collaboration in general? (You can consider, for instance, how unsuccessful collaboration differs from successful collaboration? Which factors may cause collaboration to fail?) In addition, the section included an open space for comments (question 27).

2.2.4 Data analysis

The research data were analyzed in two phases. The first phase included parallel analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data reported in the empirical articles II–V. Table 3 on the following page summarizes the various methods of data collection and analysis used in the study, and is followed by a detailed discussion of the first phase of data analysis.

TABLE 5   Methods of data collection and analysis in the empirical articles II–V

Article	Method of data collection	Data	Method of data analysis
II. Purhonen, P. (2010a). Perceptions of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning collaborative relationships in SME internationalization. Intercultural Communication Studies XIX (2), 22–36.	Structured questions Collaborative Relationship Evaluation Scale, CRES (semantic differential)	Perceptions and evaluations of collaborative relationships	Statistical analysis: mean scores standard deviations item-total correlations frequencies exploratory factor analysis
III. Purhonen, P. (2010b). Collaborative interaction in the internationalization of small- and medium-sized enterprises. David C. Lam Institute for East -West Studies Working Paper Series 106, 1–22.	Open-ended questions	Written descriptions of collaborative interaction	Phenomenographic analysis
IV. Purhonen, P. & Valkonen, T. (Manuscript). Measuring Interpersonal Communication Competence in SME Internationalization.	Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS): Self-assessment (CCCSsa) Partner assessment (CCCSpa)	Self-ratings and partner ratings of ICC	Statistical analysis: mean scores standard deviations item-total correlations frequencies exploratory factor analysis Cronbach's Alpha
V. Purhonen, P. (2011). Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoita pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. [Pitfalls of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization] Prologi. Puheviestinnän vuosikirja 2011, 25–43.	Open-ended questions	Written descriptions of unsuccessful collaboration	Content analysis

Phase 1: Parallel analysis of quantitative and qualitative data

The quantitative research data consisted of the participants' perceptions and evaluations of their current collaborative relationships, and the ratings of their own ICC and that of their collaborating partners. This part of the research data was analyzed statistically and computed using the SPSS for Windows 16.0 statistical program. Descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations), item-total correlations and the percentile frequencies were used to examine collaborative interaction and the self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in SME internationalization.

In addition, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to search for items in CRES (Collaborative Relationship Evaluation Scale) that were linked together in the perceptions of SME and intermediary representatives concerning their collaborative relationships. EFA was also applied to test the underlying factor structures of the Collaborative Communication Competence Scales: CCCS self assessment and CCCS partner assessment. Finally, a Mann-Whitney test was applied to study the differences between the self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC. This non-parametric test was chosen because the rating data were not normally distributed but skewed towards the upper values on the scale of 1–5.

The qualitative research data consisted of the stakeholders' written descriptions of collaborative interaction and unsuccessful collaboration in general. In contrast to the analysis of the numerical corpus of data, the qualitative data was analyzed inductively. The data amounted to approximately 35 pages of text with a font size of 12 and using double spacing. The stakeholders' responses varied from single adjectives and word lists to detailed descriptions of collaborative interaction and its problems and barriers in an international business context.

Two methods of data analysis were applied to examine the qualitative research data: 1) phenomenographic approach (Marton, 1981) and 2) qualitative content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). The written descriptions of the management of collaborative relationships were analyzed following a *phenomenographic approach* (Marton, 1981). This approach yielded an understanding of the phenomenon of collaborative interaction through the ways in which the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations experienced, perceived, or conceptualized it (see Marton, 1994). The analysis focused on the qualitative variety of ways in which the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations perceived collaborative interaction in SME internationalization. Firstly, the meanings and variations of the answers to the two open-ended questions were extracted. Secondly, the quotes were grouped and regrouped according to their similarities and differences into conceptual groups describing collaborative interaction. Resulting from this collation three qualitatively distinct perspectives of collaborative communication (categories of description) were formulated.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the written data on unsuccessful collaboration. The responses to open-ended questions were scrutinized using the method of emergent coding (Neuendorf, 2002).

Accordingly, the first step in the analysis was to become acquainted with the data in its entirety. This qualitative review revealed that the respondents characterized the pitfalls of collaborative interaction on two levels: as problems occurring in interpersonal communication and, on the other hand, as contextual challenges beyond the immediate boundary of their collaborative relationship. The examination of these two loose, tentative schemes continued with coding the written responses further according to their differences and similarities. This helped to develop the final categories of analysis, which can be characterized as emergent coding schemes based on what was found in the data (see Neuendorf, 2002).

Phase 2: Integrated analysis of the data
The starting point of the integrative data analysis was the interconnected nature of the research objectives. For instance, the examination of the individual stakeholders' perceptions of collaborative relationships helps to analyze what kind of ICC is required in collaborative interaction. Also, the assessments of ICC, and the questions concerning the feasibility of measuring ICC in an international business context in general, can both be reflected with the stakeholders' understanding of collaborative interaction and its challenges in SME internationalization. The second phase of the data analysis brought the findings obtained in the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study together in the interpretation to achieve a more complete and diverse understanding of collaborative interaction and of the ICC and its measurement in SME internationalization.

Integrative strategies including *data transformation* and *data comparison* were implemented to complete the second phase of data analysis (for a review of data-integration strategies see Creswell, Plano Clark & Garrett, 2008). First, the data was transformed into comparable form. In practice, the numerical results from the quantitative strand of study concerning the individual stakeholders' perceptions of collaborative interaction and ICC were qualitized by creating narrative descriptions of them. This helped to combine the results from the qualitative and quantitative data in order to create meta-inferences and enable further analysis. Second, the findings based on the qualitative and quantitative sets of data were integrated visually into tables that explored and described collaborative interaction and ICC central in the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The outcomes of the integrated analysis of the research data are presented in the findings chapters 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of this overview. Chapter 3.4 focuses on the fourth objective of the study that was of measuring the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC in collaborative interaction, and is more quantitative than integrative in nature.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Collaborative interaction in SME internationalization

This chapter discusses and presents a synthesis of the research findings originally reported in the four articles included in this doctoral dissertation (Purhonen 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Purhonen & Valkonen, manuscript). The first aim of the study was to describe and explore collaborative interaction central to the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The examination revealed a diversity of collaborative relationships from newly formed partnerships to long-term relationships sustained for several years. The relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations were typically initiated in a work context such as project, task, or business meetings, or through business networks and formal intermediaries. However, the results suggest that collaborative relationships can also be established informally through a friend or a relative.

Another important observation relates to the supposedly international nature of collaborative relationships in the context of the entry of Finnish SMEs into China. Based on the results of the study, taking Finnish SMEs' business into a new foreign market entails both national and international collaboration. The majority of respondents described collaborative interaction between two Finnish stakeholders, while some addressed international collaborative interaction. Collaborative interaction in the internationalization process of Finnish SMEs in China must be understood as more diverse than communication between *Finns* and *Chinese*. The key collaborating partners in SME internationalization originate from a variety of countries and represent various national cultures.

The quantitative strand of the study addressed the primarily instrumental nature of collaborative interaction in the relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The findings on the individual stakeholders' perceptions and evaluations concerning their current

collaborative relationships can be condensed into three statements. According to the respondents:

- Collaborative interaction has mainly task-related communication functions such as information exchange, planning or coordinating, problem solving, and innovating new solutions, products or knowledge.
- Relational communication functions including relationship-building or networking, and motivating, encouraging and supporting are less important in collaborative relationships.
- The achievement of results and goals, common goals and objectives, and shared commitment to collaboration are the most important aspects in collaborative interaction. By contrast, a great deal less emphasis is placed on expressing emotions, sharing personal issues or information, similar interests, humor, and non-business meetings.

Further, the results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) suggested a four-dimensional conceptualization of collaborative relationships in SME internationalization. The representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations understand collaborative relationships as:

- *Trusted relationships* that involve trust, mutual understanding, acceptance, partnership, honesty, flexibility, and agreement
- *Equal relationships* that are characterized by equality, shared goals, openness, equal power, reciprocity and certainty
- *Regular relationships* that in addition to being regular are also active, stable, permanent and close
- *Predictable relationships* that involve predictability, even responsibility, connection, and interdependence.

The qualitative strand of the study enhanced the understanding of the individual stakeholders' subjective interpretations of collaborative interaction and its challenges in SME internationalization. A phenomenographic analysis of the individual stakeholders' written descriptions concerning the maintenance of collaborative relationships resulted in three qualitatively distinctive perspectives on collaborative interaction. The representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations approach collaborative interaction as:

- *Task communication* that is goal-oriented, that functions as making observations, sharing, managing and applying information, and providing informational support, and that results in economic success and mutual benefits
- *Relational communication* that is other-oriented, that functions as creating, managing and developing the collaborative relationship, and that results in both short-term and long-term relationships

- *Dialogic communication* that is ethics-oriented, that functions as managing the diversity and differences involved in collaborative relationships, and that results in learning and benefiting from the difference.

These three perspectives on collaborative interaction are not mutually exclusive but rather located on a continuum. For instance, whereas some of the individual stakeholders in SME internationalization considered collaborative interaction to be mainly task communication, which requires relational communication, the others referred to it as relational communication, the prerequisite of task accomplishment. The representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations also saw aspects of relational communication, such as other-orientation, to be closely connected to respect for or management of differences that can be seen as characteristics of dialogic communication. Nevertheless, there were individual variations in the value or importance attached to task communication, relational communication or dialogic communication as elements of collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization.

The qualitative strand of study also identified dialectical tensions inherent in collaborative interaction between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. Thus, and particularly from the perspective of dialogic communication, collaborative interaction also functions as the management of dialectical tensions. Five kinds of dialectical tensions were found in the collaborative interaction of the individual stakeholders in SME internationalization:

- *The tension between personal and professional*: collaborative relationships simultaneously involve a social or emotional bond, and an instrumental or organizational purpose
- *The tension between strategic and emergent*: collaborative relationship may be strategic and planned but new collaboration opportunities are also likely to occur from the informal and volitional social networks
- *The tension between active and passive*: collaborative relationships involve active contact and effort but as they are typically connected to larger collaborative networks, delays and passive stages are often inevitable
- *The tension between stability and change*: collaborative interaction requires a goal and a clear direction but faces constant unexpected changes
- *The tensions between similarity and difference*: collaborating partners share, for instance, interests and goals, but have differences due to aspects such as their organizational background, culture or age.

Finally, the content analysis of the individual stakeholders' written descriptions of unsuccessful collaboration revealed pitfalls of collaborative interaction in an inter-organizational business context. The results exposed three kinds of barriers to and problems in collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization:

- *Insufficient or unbalanced task communication and relational communication:* a lack of task communication or relational communication, or one aspect of collaborative interaction dominates at expense of the other
- *Ignorance of communication ethics:* dishonesty, reticence, selfishness, or a lack of respect or trust occurs in collaboration
- *Challenges that arise from the operational and cultural environment of collaboration:* for instance, the organizational tasks and roles of each collaborating member, the cultures and policies of their parent organizations, differences in the national or business cultures of the collaborating partners, or the insufficient recourses and otherwise difficult situation of the SMEs in an international business environment.

Approximately a tenth of the respondents discussed China in their written descriptions of collaborative interaction and its problems and barriers. These responses described characteristics specific to the Chinese business context including, for instance, flexibility with schedules and contracts, frequent contacting, and the importance of personal relationships, *quanxi*, that involve favors and favors in return.

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study produces a diverse picture of collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization. Given the results of the quantitative strand of the study, the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediaries are primarily *instrumental* and function as enhancing the task they are set: to further the process of SME internationalization. This finding can also be seen as a reflection and evaluation of collaborative interaction in reality and *in practice*.

The qualitative strand of the study, on the other hand, complements the understanding of collaborative interaction with relational and ethical aspects of collaboration and reveals the complex, *dialectical,* and *boundary spanning* nature of collaborative interaction. SME internationalization involves collaborative interaction across organizational and national boundaries as well as the boundaries of personal and professional. From this standpoint, what really matters to collaborative interaction are relational and dialogic communication functions that both enable and support the instrumental purpose of collaboration. However, these findings may reflect the *ideal* collaborative interaction and the expectations and appreciations related to collaborative interaction instead of the actual collaboration of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations.

The main aspects of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization, as found using quantitative and qualitative research methods, are integrated in Table 6 on the following page.

TABLE 6   Research findings of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization

Aspect of collaborative interaction (CI)	Findings of the quantitative strand of the study	Findings of the qualitative strand of the study
Nature of CI	Instrumental	Dialectical Boundary spanning
Orientation of CI	Goal-oriented	Goal-oriented Other-oriented Ethics-oriented
Communication functions of CI	Task communication functions (e.g. sharing information, problem solving, innovating new products, solutions and knowledge)	Task communication functions (e.g. making observations, sharing, managing and applying information, providing informational support) Relational communication functions (creating, managing and developing relationships) Dialogic communication functions (e.g. managing differences and dialectics, avoiding the pitfalls of collaborative interaction)
Outcomes of CI	Goal-achievement	Economic success and mutual benefits Short-term and long-term relationships Learning and benefiting from the differences

3.2 Interpersonal communication competence in collaborative interaction

A second goal of the study was to examine what kind of interpersonal communication competence (ICC) collaborative interaction requires in the context of SME internationalization. A review of the literature on interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence, interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction revealed the initial dimensions of ICC that is specific to and necessary in networking and collaboration (see Purhonen, 2008). ICC was found to be crucial in five communication functions: 1) *information sharing*, 2) *management of diversity*, 3) *adaptation and adjustment*, 4) *integrative negotiation*, and 5) *creation and management of relationships*. In a later stage of the review of the appropriate literature a sixth function, 6) *management of network resources*, was added into the analysis.

The measurement of ICC in the context of SME internationalization did not, however, confirm the original six-dimensional structure of ICC in collaborative interaction but indicated instead that the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale self-assessment (CCCSsa) measures different aspects of ICC than the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale partner assessment (CCCSpa). According to the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), CCCSsa encompasses self-impressions of:

- *Connectedness* – supporting the collaborating partner, furthering the case, being active in networks and contacting, introducing and providing information about new collaborators, using the networks' competencies in collaboration
- *Clarity and credibility* – using clear language, being easy to talk to in difficult situations, preparing well for meetings, ensuring the collaborating partner's understanding of the message, using convincing arguments and asking for further justification when needed
- *Personal communication* – sharing personal information, inviting the partner to informal meetings, knowing the partner well
- *Trust and respect* – showing trust in the collaborating partner, showing respect and trustworthiness.

EFA for CCCSpa (partner assessment) resulted in a different factor solution than EFA for CCCSsa (self-assessment). The results suggested that CCCSpa measures ICC in:

- *Connectedness* – introducing to and providing information about new collaborators, activity in networks, using the networks' competencies in collaboration, furthering the case and achieving results that are unattainable without the help of a collaborating partner, supporting the partner
- *Information sharing* – answering questions, providing the needed information, sharing knowledge and opinions openly, notifying about possible problems and difficulties
- *Familiarity* – sharing personal information, inviting the partner to informal meetings, knowing the partner and the partner's organization well
- *Adjustment* – adjusting to changing situations, being flexible, handling the uncertainty related to collaboration
- *Trust and respect* – avoiding offensive language, creating comfortable atmosphere, showing trustworthiness.

According to the EFA results, ICC specific to collaborative interaction in SME internationalization involves knowledge of communication, motivation to communicate, and interpersonal communication skills that are specific to *adjustment, connectedness, clarity and credibility, information sharing, personal communication or familiarity,* and *trust and respect*. The integration of the results

produced with the qualitative strand of study provides insights into the complex nature of collaborative interaction and the challenges that it poses to the ICC of the individual stakeholders in SME internationalization. Reflecting the individual stakeholders' perceptions and understanding of collaborative interaction and its pitfalls in inter-organizational collaboration identifies new aspects of ICC as essential in the context of SME internationalization. The following Table 6 presents the main findings concerning the conceptualization of ICC in collaborative interaction as found applying quantitative research methods, namely self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC. In addition, the table includes inferences that can be made based on the results produced using qualitative research methods: phenomenographic analysis and content analysis. In Table 7 the research findings concerning collaborative interaction and its pitfalls in SME internationalization are approached from the perspective of ICC to identify what kind of ICC is required in collaborative interaction.

TABLE 7   Inferences of ICC in collaborative interaction

Findings of the quantitative strand of the study	Inferences based on the qualitative strand of the study
ICC in collaborative interaction involves *knowledge* of communication, *motivation* to communicate, and *interpersonal communication skills* that are specific to*:* - Connectedness - Clarity and credibility - Personal communication - Trust and respect ICC in collaborative interaction involves *knowledge* of communication, *motivation* to communicate, and interpersonal communication *skills* that are specific to*:* - Connectedness - Information sharing - Familiarity - Adjustment - Trust and respect	ICC in collaborative interaction involves: - *knowledge* about effective and appropriate task communication, relational communication and dialogic communication - *motivation* to be goal-oriented, other-oriented and ethics-oriented, and - *interpersonal communication skills*, for instance, in sharing information, providing instrumental support, creating, managing and developing relationships, and managing differences and dialectics ICC in collaborative interaction involves: - *knowledge*, understanding and recognition of the pitfalls of collaborative interaction, and contextual knowledge of the personal, relational, organizational and cultural standards, norms, commitments and expectations towards collaboration - *motivation* to be sensitive and respectful towards diversity and contradictions - *interpersonal communication skills* to perceive and manage the possible problems in and barriers to collaborative interaction

3.3 Applicability of measuring interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization

The third goal of the study was to develop a new measure for assessing ICC and to test the applicability of measuring ICC in international business collaboration, such as SME internationalization. The results of both the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study indicated four major difficulties with measuring ICC in the context of SME internationalization.

Firstly, both self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC were concentrated at the positive end of the rating scale. Thus, the ratings of ICC were not normally or evenly distributed, which indicates that the respondents may have based their assessments on holistic impressions of themselves or their collaborating partners. The finding gains support from the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this case, the high Cronbach's alpha values should not be seen as a positive sign of the reliability of the measurement but as a symptom of the respondent's tendency to reflect holistic impressions of collaborative interaction instead of analytically assessing separate items of ICC.

Secondly, the qualitative strand of the study revealed the complex nature of collaboration and the individual stakeholders' differing expectations, for instance, of *task communication*, *relational communication* and *dialogic communication* as part of collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization. Also, the assessments of ICC may, in fact, reflect the respondents' appreciations or expectations regarding ICC or collaborative interaction instead of their actual communication behavior. In particular, *the tension between personal and professional* may have affected the ratings of ICC specific to *personal communication and familiarity*. These assessments may reveal the extent to which, for instance, personal or emotional connectedness is deemed important in collaborative interaction, and hence, not rate the actual ICC.

Thirdly, the measurement of ICC in SME internationalization may indicate the stakeholders' satisfaction with goal-achievement or the fulfillment of their expectations regarding collaboration. The respondents were asked to assess ICC in a relationship with the partner with whom they had mostly been in contact and whom they had met at least once. The reason for this request was to eliminate from the examination those relationships which do not involve the ongoing management of the relationship and are more *cooperativ*e than *collaborative* in nature. Consequently, the advice may have led only to assessments of ICC in collaborative relationships that are *successful*. The measurement of ICC in collaborative interaction is thus likely to be biased by the tendency to assess too positively a person whom one knows well and with whom one likes to work compared to how one would assess interaction partners with whom collaboration has not been successful. Hence the measurement may also reflect positive experiences or goal-achievement in collaboration rather than interpersonal communication behavior.

Fourthly, the results of the exploratory factor analysis suggest that the self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in collaborative interaction are not comparable with each other. Whereas self-assessments seem to concern self-impressions of *connectedness*, *clarity and credibility*, *personal communication*, and *trust and respect*, partner assessments reflect ICC in *connectedness*, *information sharing*, *familiarity*, *adjustment*, and *trust and respect*. The fact that self-assessments seem to examine partly different aspects than partner assessments indicates the problematic nature of measuring ICC. The methods of the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale self-assessment (CCCSsa) and the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale partner assessment (CCCSpa) cannot be seen to represent ontologically similar phenomena of ICC in collaborative interaction.

To sum up, the findings achieved in this study reveal difficulties with the applicability of measuring ICC in complicated business collaboration. According to the empirical data of the study, these difficulties include that:

- The respondents may reflect holistic impressions of collaborative interaction and collaborating partners in assessments of ICC
- The complex nature of collaborative interaction in an inter-organizational business context and the differing expectations regarding collaborative interaction and ICC complicate the assessments of ICC
- The respondents are likely to evaluate the goal-achievement or positive experiences of the collaborative relationship rather than the actual level of ICC
- Self-assessments and partner assessments do not measure same aspects of ICC.

3.4 Level of interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization

The fourth goal of the study was to measure the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC in collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization. Due to the difficulties in measuring ICC, the results of the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS) must be treated with caution. According to the results of the self-assessments, the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC in collaborative interaction is very high. In turn, the assessments of the collaborating partner's ICC produced lower values than the self-assessments of the level of ICC. The representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations rated their own ICC significantly higher than that of their collaborating partners ($p = 0.000$).

Both self-assessments and partner assessments produced similar findings of the individual stakeholders' strengths and stumbling blocks in collaborative

interaction. ICC in *showing trust and respect* is a particular strength of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations according to the assessments of their own and those of their collaborating partners. On the other hand, *personal communication and familiarity* seem to be aspects of ICC that the individual stakeholders in SME internationalization do not manage as successfully as showing trust and respect. Table 8 illustrates in which aspects the level of the individual stakeholders' ICC appears to be highest and lowest according to self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in collaborative interaction.

Table 8 Individual stakeholders' strengths and stumbling blocks in ICC

Judge of ICC	Highest level of ICC	Lowest level of ICC
Self	- Avoiding offensive language - Being trustworthy - Showing respect for the collaborating partner - Showing trust in the collaborating partner	- Inviting the collaborating partner to informal meetings and gatherings - Sharing personal information with the collaborating partner
Partner	- Avoiding offensive language - Showing trust in the collaborating partner - Creating a comfortable atmosphere - Being trustworthy	- Inviting the collaborating partner to informal meetings and gatherings - Sharing personal information with the collaborating partner - Ensuring that the collaborating partner understands

4 DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

4.1 Theoretical contributions of the study

4.1.1 Definition of interpersonal communication competence in collaborative interaction

This study demonstrated the complexity of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization. According to the new understanding and characterization of collaborative interaction, the study also contributes to the theoretical conceptualization of ICC specific to SME internationalization that takes into consideration the instrumental, dialectical and boundary-spanning nature of inter-organizational business collaboration.

The study suggests that one of the main aspects of ICC in SME internationalization is to strike a balance between *task communication* and *relational communication*. The total exclusion of all personal and non-work related topics that Sias and Perry (2004) call *depersonalization* may result in the reduced sharing of task communication. The workplace relationships that are characterized by trust and self-disclosure proved to involve more accurate, useful and timely sharing of work-related information than those that are superficial or role-bound (Sias, 2005). The findings obtained in this study suggest that collaborative relationships in SME internationalization can be theorized as *blended relationships* that function simultaneously with both personal and role components (see Bridge & Baxter, 1992).

Another defining characteristic of ICC in collaborative interaction is to manage the diversity both internal and external to the collaborative relationships that are vital to SME internationalization. As the study has shown, collaborating partners have common ground, the collaborative task, but differ in their experiences and backgrounds. ICC is complicated by different kinds of personal, organizational and cultural expectations and appreciations. The collaborating partners must manage the sector- and market-specific regulations and procedures, the delays and passive stages, as well as sudden changes in collaborative interaction, and work across the functional, organizational and national boundaries. Thus, these collaborative relationships can also be seen as

boundary spanning relationships (see e.g. Isbell, 2009; Laajalahti & Purhonen, 2011; Williams, 2002).

A third characteristic that the study proposes as essential to ICC in SME internationalization is the *ethical* aspect of collaborative interaction. According to the research findings, collaborative interaction in this business context should strive for honesty, openness, unselfishness and for reciprocal trust and respect. These ethical principles are characteristics of *dialogic communication* ethics (see e.g. Arnett, Harden Fritz & Bell, 2009; Johannesen, 2002). Dialogic communication ethics involves the inclusion of the interaction partner, creating a supportive atmosphere, active involvement in social interaction, and equality between the communicators despite their differences (Johannesen, 2002; Valkonen, 2003).

These conclusions support the applicability of both an ecological systems perspective to organizational communication (Jablin & Sias, 2001; Sias, Krone & Jablin, 2002) and relational dialectics theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) in examining ICC in SME internationalization. Relational dialectics theory (RDT) has primarily been applied to examine communication in close relationships, such as in Chinese friendship (Chen, 2006), in intercultural couples' relationships (Cools, 2011) or "military marriages" of soldiers and their spouses (Sahlstein, Maguire & Timmerman, 2009). However, this study confirmed the usefulness of RDT in business and organizational communication settings, too. In particular, relational dialectics theory provided an appropriate perspective for examining the ICC that is pivotal in SME internationalization – more appropriate than that of intercultural communication competence. Whereas the definitions of intercultural communication competence typically focus on the cultural backgrounds and differences between the interactants (see Chapter 1.2), relational dialectics theory sees all social interaction as fundamentally multivocal, and cultural differences and similarities as only one aspect of the diversity and complexity inherent in interpersonal communication.

The study suggests a theoretical conceptualization that follows relational dialectics theory and adapts the multivocal nature of social interaction, locates ICC in collaborative interaction and takes into consideration the dialectical tensions here found manifest in collaborative relationships specific to SME internationalization: *personal-professional, strategic-emergent, similarity-difference, active-passive,* and *stability-change.* In reference to the ecological perspective on organizational communication, the conceptualization sees ICC to be embedded in and affected by the whole ecosystem of SME internationalization. Finally, the proposal follows the pervading idea of dialogic communication ethics of respecting difference and learning from it (Arnett, Harden Fritz & Bell, 2009). Thus, ICC in SME internationalization is characterized as *collaborative interaction* in which the collaborating partners:

- focus on task-achievement but avoid depersonalization
- define strategies to achieve the goals of collaborative interaction but are also responsive to emerging possibilities to collaborate

- create shared meanings and belongingness but are sensitive to and respect diversity
- are active in task accomplishment and continue relating also during the passive stages of collaboration
- follow a particular direction but are flexible when needed and adapt to changes and differences in the ecosystem of collaboration.

4.1.2 Measuring interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization

The research findings of this study reveal several challenges and difficulties in assessing ICC. The attempts to develop a new rating scale in ICC crystallized, in particular, two aspects that should be taken into consideration in measuring ICC in an inter-organizational business context such as SME internationalization.

The first aspect of measuring ICC that becomes essential particularly in business and organizational settings is to *identify the most appropriate judge(s) of ICC*. Both self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC appear to be subject to several biases (see also Purhonen, Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer & Valkonen, 2010). Self-assessments may refer to factors such as communication satisfaction, goal-accomplishment or self-efficacy instead of actual interpersonal communication skills (Valkonen, 2003). The high ratings may also be based on *false competence* which can be understood as taking responsibility for positive results that the individual did not actually produce (Parks, 1994). Indeed, despite a desire to report accurately and confidently, the respondents may in fact be inaccurate in their self-assessments (Boster & Sherry, 2010).

Thus self-assessments cannot be treated as a truly reliable method for behavioral assessment (see Miller, 2001) or valid representations of ICC in collaborative interaction. They can be seen as useful in ascertaining beliefs, attitudes and values (see Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000), such as the importance attached to personal communication as an aspect of ICC in collaborative interaction, in the context of SME internationalization. In addition, self-reports can present the interactants' communication goals, confidence or feelings about communication, but they seem to be inaccurate for assessing actual communication behavior.

Whereas partner assessments may provide more accurate information about the actual communication behavior than self-reports, they, too, are likely to be biased by factors such as the shared experiences of the collaborating partners, or the variety of communication goals or expectations regarding collaborative interaction or the given relationship. Triangulating the introspective self-reports and partner assessments together with direct methods could yield a valid and reliable picture of interactants' ICC. Direct methods such as observation alone cannot be seen as more accurate than introspective methods, because a third party always lacks relationship-specific information necessary in assessing ICC in a given interpersonal relationship (see Parks, 1994). Therefore, self-reports and partner assessments must be seen useful in

providing knowledge of the values and attitudes influencing ICC, but the measurement of ICC in complex business and organizational relationships also warrants a third judge, an observer perspective, to sufficiently and adequately identify the individual strengths and weaknesses and encompass the actual ICC in collaborative interaction (see also Purhonen, Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer & Valkonen, 2010). The validity and reliability of ICC measurement would also benefit from careful instructions and training provided to the assessors.

The second aspect that requires careful scrutiny in inter-organizational business collaboration, such as in the context of SME internationalization, is the conceptualization and operationalization of ICC. The results of the exploratory factor analysis as well as the concentration of the ratings at the positive end of the rating scales may both reflect the invalid content of the measurements used in this study (CCCSsa and CCCSpa). Because of a diverse range of collaborative relationships, and the differing expectations and appreciations that collaborative interaction evokes, it may not be possible to develop a measure of ICC applicable to every collaborative relationship. However, in reference to the conclusions presented above, this study suggests that the operationalization of ICC into measurable items should more explicitly take into account the complex and dialectical nature of collaborative interaction.

The operationalization of ICC in SME internationalization should focus on *collaborative interaction*. In practice, the measurable items would reflect the collaborating partners and their social interaction, such as in the statement "Our interaction furthers the goal-achievement". Such phrasing might help respondents to evaluate their actual social interaction instead of reflecting their attitudes or the value they attach to the different aspects of collaborative interaction. The operationalization of ICC as above would also take into account the shared nature of collaborative interaction more appropriately than the measurement scales focusing on the interpersonal communication behavior of oneself or that of one's collaborating partner.

Yet the assessments of ICC are always subjective inferences and valid only in given relationships or contexts. Measurement cannot provide an objective or absolute picture of ICC in complicated inter-organizational business collaboration. Thus the operationalization of ICC in collaborative interaction that is affected by several levels of the inter-organizational ecosystem, and that involves a multiplicity of interpersonal, organizational, or culture-and sector-specific norms, goals, expectations and appreciations, remains challenging.

4.2 Practical implications of the study

This study identified requirements of collaborative interaction and networking that have sometimes been presented as mysterious in the research literature. It has been suggested, for instance, that successful networking or *boundary spanning* requires a certain type of personality or qualifications (see e.g. Ritter, 1999; Ritter & Gemunden, 2003; Williams, 2002). This study helps to perceive

successful inter-organizational or international collaboration as ICC located in collaborative interaction. In practice, collaborative interaction then involves knowledge of communication, motivation to communicate, and the interpersonal communication skills discussed in Chapter 3.2.

These findings can be used in ICC training and development in business and organizational settings. ICC trainers and instructors may find new directions to take account of the relational nature of ICC and locate ICC in social interaction or in the interpersonal relationships. The study also piloted an ICC assessment tool in collaborative interaction specific to SME internationalization. The lessons learnt in this study, and described above in Chapter 4.1, can produce a more valid and reliable Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS) which can be used to identify the stakeholders' strengths in ICC as well as the aspects that still warrant further training and development.

Communication professionals should be able take into account and respond to the requirements of current working life often characterized by transcending functional, organizational, or national boundaries. The findings of this study specified the challenges and the possible pitfalls of collaborative interaction in inter-organizational business collaboration. These findings can be used in planning and revising the contents and objectives of communication consulting to better respond to the needs of organizational members or international business people. The findings concerning the complexity involved in collaborative interaction and inter-organizational communication may also provide new perspectives on various functions of organizational communication and management, including project management or internal and external communication practices.

The research findings increased the understanding of the importance and nature of collaborative interaction and ICC that is beneficial for the whole network of stakeholders not only in SME internationalization, but in all contexts of inter-organizational collaboration. The findings can be applied, for instance, to enhance the business relationships or the collaborative interaction between the representatives of different sectors such as business enterprises and authorities, or to encourage and facilitate SME internationalization in new markets. The findings can encourage the individual stakeholders to appreciate the role and importance of their collaborative interaction in SME internationalization or in other inter-organizational collaboration settings, and to reflect and develop their current collaborative relationships.

4.3 Limitations of the study

Although effort was made to prevent the potential limitations of the study, there remain a number that must be acknowledged. The first and most important set of limitations concerns the contextualization of both the data collection method and the whole research setting. The study aimed to explore

and describe the ICC and collaborative interaction that are crucial in the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The study also attempted to measure the ICC of these individual stakeholders in SME internationalization, and to test the applicability of measuring ICC in international business collaboration. The data collection method, the survey of ICC in SME internationalization, was limited to the entry of Finnish SMEs into China in order to specify the context of the study. However, apart from the section concerning the background information of the respondents and their collaborating partners, the questionnaire did not explicitly take account of the Chinese context.

The survey yielded only a relatively small sample of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations that was strongly biased toward Finnish participants. A local research partner or assistant in China may have increased the number of Chinese respondents. Further, the qualitative and quantitative strands of research data were collected concurrently using an extensive web questionnaire the length and intensity of which possibly limited the number or respondents. Now the method produced a lot of background information about the respondents and their collaborating partners, but a relatively small amount of research data that did not allow statistical comparisons or groupings that would have been possible in the case of a larger amount of research data. It could have been interesting, for instance, to search for differences in the evaluations of collaborative relationships or in the assessments of ICC between international collaborative interaction and that between two Finnish collaborators.

The context of China was only explicit in some of the written answers provided by the Finnish research participants, but the study did not really provide any new information about Chinese business communication. For instance, earlier studies on Chinese business context (e.g. Hong & Engeström, 2004; Nojonen, 2007; Wang & Murphy, 2010; Wong & Tam, 2000; Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2007; Zhang & Zhang, 2006) have widely emphasized the importance of *guanxi*, which can be understood as an informal, particularistic personal connection between two individuals following social norms such as maintaining long-term relationships, mutual commitment, loyalty and obligation (Chen & Chen, 2004). However, the majority of the informants of this study discussed collaborative interaction – and also the significance of personal communication and connection – in their written answers on a more general level. Thus, according to the results of this study the personal nature of collaborative relationships cannot be related only to the Chinese business context.

The data collection method produced research data on ICC and collaborative interaction in SME internationalization that can be seen as more general in nature than specific to the context of SME's entry into *particularly* China. The outcome was consistent with the objectives of the study. However, this being the case, a research setting involving the internationalization of

Finnish SMEs in *all* foreign markets would have provided a more valid and reliable research data.

Another issue rooted in the method of data gathering is the diverse nature of the collaborative interaction under scrutiny in this study. The collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations were various, from SME-consultant to SME-financier relationships. It is possible that the collaborative interaction in different types of collaborative relationships is not truly comparable. Further, using an internet survey as a data gathering method, the researcher was not able to control whether the collaborative interaction under examination was more *collaborative* or *co-operative* in nature.

The methodological limitations of the study also involve the use of non-standardized scales (CRES and CCCS) designed specifically for present purposes. However, no assessment instruments already shown to be valid and reliable in inter-organizational, international business collaboration such as SME internationalization were available. The results of Cronbach's alpha indicated scale quality, but a larger amount of data, and a more careful pilot study or testing would have increased the validity and reliability of the quantitative strand of the study (see Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). In addition, the study aimed to give a voice to the participants and used open-ended, qualitative questions to elicit the participants' conceptualizations and views of collaborative interaction and ICC. However, this solution may have produced thin descriptions of the maintenance of collaborative relationships. The use, for instance, of research interviews would have provided a richer qualitative data.

The second set of limitations concerns the research design, which is a central indicator of quality in a mixed methods study (see Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; 2008). The use of sequential design instead of concurrent and parallel data gathering and analysis would have helped to accomplish the research objectives of developing a new measure and measuring the level of ICC in SME internationalization. A sequential design could have applied individual interviews, focus groups or direct observations before the development and implementation of the ICC measurement (see also Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante & Nelson, 2010, for conducting mixed research in order to develop quantitative instruments). However, the fully integrated mixed methods design was found useful to generate conceptualizations and multiple characterizations of collaborative interaction and ICC.

Typical of a research design that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodology, the study involved a practical challenge of writing and representation. An integrative design must combine the different traditions, norms and criteria of qualitative and quantitative research reporting (Greene, 2008; Sandelowski, 2003). Following an integrative logic requires transformation of the research findings to synthesize the findings from both strands of the study (see also Creswell, Plano Clark, & Garrett, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Sandelowski, Voils & Barroso, 2006). In this study the quantitative findings were converted into qualitative form in the

second phase of data analysis. This practice casts doubt on the equality of the qualitative and quantitative approaches in the final research findings.

Third, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research data were here incorporated in terms of assimilation as opposed to configuration (see Sandelowski, Voils & Barroso, 2006). The different strands of the study expanded and refined each other. Given this complementary and integrative nature of the present study, the findings produced by different methods do not validate each other (see Hammersley, 2008). Rather, the study generated important insights into collaborative interaction and ICC in SME internationalization that would not have been accomplished with the use of a qualitative or quantitative approach alone. The use of only quantitative methods would have provided a more straightforward picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny, which is often the case when a respondent must choose a response from the existing options. On the other hand, the inferences based on the qualitative data are inevitably affected by the researcher's subjectivity. The credibility of the inferences of this study could have been enhanced with the help of the triangulation of analysts (see Patton, 2002). According to the results of this study, the research method may be reflected in the way that the research findings represent the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Finally, due to the parallel stages of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, the inductive nature of the phenomenographic and content analyses may have suffered. Typical of a mixed methods study, the inference process was more abductive and "interactive" (see Miller, 2003). Analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data sets on collaborative interaction and ICC first separately, then mirroring then with the knowledge produced by each phase of analysis, and finally bringing the qualitative and quantitative data together for meta-inferences, enabled the interpretation of the findings from a multidimensional perspective (see also Feilzer, 2010).

4.4 Directions for future research

The present study captured the complex nature of ICC and collaborative interaction specific to SME internationalization, albeit at least some of the findings are likely to also appear in other inter-organizational collaboration and international business settings. Thus the research findings are partly transferable, which – together with workability and utility – should be attempted in a pragmatist study (Morgan, 2007). However, the topics of ICC and collaborative interaction still warrant closer research attention.

One direction of future research should continue the application of RDT theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) to examine dialectical tensions in workplace and inter-organizational relationships. For instance, future studies could investigate what kind of *praxis patterns* collaborating partners or organizational members use to negotiate and manage dialectics and differences in their interpersonal relationships. Praxis patterns can be seen as joint actions

of relationship parties in response to the dialectical tensions (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000). In particular, the tension between personal and professional should receive closer examination in organizational contexts.

Further research on the issue of ICC in business and organizational settings is also necessary. One pathway for further research arises from the ethical aspect of business communication. The present study provided some insights into the role and relevance of communication ethics in inter-organizational business collaboration but further examination is needed to extend our understanding of the requirements that it imposes on the ICC of international business actors. In addition, future studies should investigate ICC specific to technologically mediated communication. The use of communication technology has rapidly increased within organizations and especially in international business. This invites elaboration on what kind of knowledge of communication, motivation to communicate or interpersonal communication skills are needed to create, manage and develop, for instance, technologically mediated collaborative interaction or collaborative relationships.

Further, the present study obtained only initial scale development for measuring ICC in collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization. Therefore, CCCSsa and CCCSpa still require extensive testing and confirmation. Nevertheless, as proposed in Chapter 4.1, the studies aiming to assess ICC within organizational settings need to apply triangulation of assessment methods. Future studies on ICC in organizational and business contexts could also examine correlations between the assessments of ICC and the characteristics of collaborative or workplace relationship in more detail, such as between the ratings of ICC and the duration of the relationship.

Despite the various theoretical and practical implications of this study, ICC in organizational and business settings remains a complex issue that deserves research attention from speech communication scholars. The present study suggested various insights into collaborative interaction and the challenges that it poses to the individual stakeholders' ICC in SME internationalization. These research contributions provide important directions for future studies on ICC.

YHTEENVETO

Tutkimuksen tausta

Tässä puheviestinnän väitöskirjatutkimuksessa tarkastellaan kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta ja sen edellyttämää vuorovaikutusosaamista suomalaisten pienten ja keskisuurten yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. Kansainvälisille markkinoille etabloitumiseen liittyy usein erilaisia, niin virallisia kuin epävirallisiakin yhteistyösuhteita, joiden avulla pk-yritykset voivat lisätä resurssejaan ja laajentaa yhteistyöverkostoja ja -alliansseja (ks. Forsman, Hinttu & Kock, 2002; Ojala, 2008). Vaikka pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen tutkimus on korostanut yhteistyökumppaneiden ja sosiaalisten verkostojen merkitystä kansainvälistymisprosessissa (ks. esim. Agndal & Chetty, 2007; Ellis, 2007; Kontinen, 2011; Ojala, 2008), se ei ole syventynyt pohtimaan yhteistyösuhteiden edellyttämää kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta. Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen monitieteinen tutkimus on tarkastellut yhteistyötä pääosin organisaatioiden tasolla, muttei ole juuri huomioinut interpersonaalisen viestinnän merkitystä (Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008; Koschmann, 2010).

Tämän tutkimuksen keskiössä on pk-yritysten ja kansainvälistymisessä keskeisten välittäjäorganisaatioiden, kuten alueellisten kehittämisyhtiöiden, teknologia- ja innovaatiokeskusten sekä rahoitusorganisaatioiden, edustajien yhteistyö. Yhteistyötä lähestytään kahdenvälisenä sosiaalisena vuorovaikutuksena. Tätä kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta voidaan kuvata jaettujen merkitysten ja yhteisen ymmärryksen rakentamisena, jolle on ominaista yhteistyökumppaneiden riippuvuus toisistaan ja aktiivinen osallistuminen tehtävän suorittamiseen yhteisten tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi (ks. esim. Häkkinen & Arvaja, 2009; Keyton & Stallworth, 2003; Lewis, 2006).

Pk-yritysten ja kansainvälistymisessä keskeisten välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa on kyse organisaatio- ja toimialarajat ylittävästä yhteistyöstä. Kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa voi ilmetä monenlaisia ongelmia ja jännitteitä. Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi yhteistyöosapuolten taustaorganisaatioiden erilaiset tavoitteet, vallan epätasapaino ja kulttuurierot. Onkin syytä olettaa, että kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus luo erityisen haasteen pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutusosaamiselle.

Vuorovaikutusosaamista on tutkimuskirjallisuudessa lähestytty useista teoreettisista näkökulmista. Vuorovaikutusosaaminen jäsennetään useimmiten kognitiiviseen, affektiiviseen ja behavioraaliseen ulottuvuuteen (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Spitzberg, 2006; Valkonen, 2003). Tällöin vuorovaikutusosaaminen edellyttää tietoa vuorovaikutuskäyttäytymisestä, -strategioista ja -normeista sekä motivaatiota ja taitoja toimia vuorovaikutustilanteessa tavalla, jota vuorovaikutukseen osallistujat pitävät tehokkaana ja tarkoituksenmukaisena (Valkonen, 2003). Vuorovaikutusosaamista voidaankin pitää viestijän itsensä, hänen vuorovaikutuskumppaninsa tai vuorovaikutuksen ulkopuo-

lisen havainnoijan subjektiivisena vaikutelmana vuorovaikutuksen tehokkuudesta eli tuloksellisuudesta ja tarkoituksenmukaisuudesta eli sopivuudesta tai hyväksyttävyydestä (Lakey & Canary, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Wilson & Sabee, 2003). Kontekstuaaliset tekijät, kuten viestintäkulttuuri, vuorovaikutuksen aika, paikka tai tilanne, sekä vuorovaikutussuhde tai -funktio, luovat erilaisia odotuksia vuorovaikutusosaamiselle (Spitzberg, 2003, 2006).

Tässä tutkimuksessa kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen edellyttämää vuorovaikutusosaamista pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä tarkastellaan erityisesti dialogisesta vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteiden teorian (Baxter & Montgomery 1996) sekä organisaatioviestinnän ekosysteemin (Jablin & Sias, 2001; Sias, Krone & Jablin, 2002) näkökulmista. Tällöin vuorovaikutusosaaminen hahmottuu suhdetason ilmiönä eli pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien jännitteisenä kollaboratiivisena vuorovaikutuksena, joka on kytköksissä laajempaan ekosysteemiin eli yhteistyökumppaneiden verkostoihin, taustaorganisaatioihin ja yhteistyön toiminta-, kulttuuriseen ja poliittiseen ympäristöön.

Tutkimustehtävä

Tällä väitöskirjatyöllä on neljä päätavoitetta. Ensiksi, tutkimuksessa pyritään kuvaamaan ja jäsentämään kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien yhteistyösuhteissa. Toiseksi, tutkimus pohtii ja määrittelee sitä, millaista vuorovaikutusosaamista kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä edellyttää. Kolmanneksi, tutkimuksessa pyritään kehittämään uusi vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittari ja testaamaan sen soveltuvuutta kansainvälisen liiketoimintayhteistyön kontekstissa. Neljänneksi, tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutusosaamisen taso. Näihin tavoitteisiin pyritään seuraavien tutkimuskysymyksen avulla:

1) Millaisia käsityksiä ja kokemuksia pk-yritysten ja välittäjä-organisaatioiden edustajilla on yhteistyösuhteistaan?
2) Mikä heidän mielestään on yhteistyösuhteiden pääasiallinen tehtävä?
3) Millaisia tekijöitä he pitävät tärkeinä yhteistyösuhteissa?
4) Millaista pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mielestä kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus on luonteeltaan?
5) Millaisia tehtäviä, tavoitteita ja tuloksia kollaboratiivisella vuorovaikutuksella on?
6) Miten vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteet ilmenevät kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa?
7) Millaisia näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia pk-yritysten ja välittäjä-organisaatioiden edustajilla on kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteistä ja ongelmista pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä?

8) Millaista vuorovaikutusosaamista tarvitaan erityisesti verkostoitumisessa ja yhteistyössä?

9) Mikä on tätä tutkimusta varten kehitetyn vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittarin (Collaborative Communication Competence Scale) validiteetti ja reliabiliteetti?

10) Mikä on vuorovaikutusosaamisen arviointien validiteetti ja reliabiliteetti kansainvälisen liiketoimintayhteistyön kontekstissa?

11) Kuinka pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat arvioivat omaa vuorovaikutusosaamistaan?

12) Kuinka pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat arvioivat toistensa vuorovaikutusosaamista?

Tutkimuksen toteuttaminen

Tutkimusmenetelmät. Tutkimus on monimenetelmäinen. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin vuonna 2009 pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajille suunnatulla verkkokyselyllä, joka tuotti sekä määrällistä että laadullista tutkimusmateriaalia.

Määrällinen tutkimusaineisto koostui pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien arvioista valitsemastaan pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä keskeisestä yhteistyösuhteesta. Lisäksi vastaajat arvioivat omaa ja yhteistyökumppaninsa vuorovaikutusosaamista vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittarilla (Collaborative Communication Competence Scale), joka kehitettiin tätä tutkimusta varten vuorovaikutusosaamista, kulttuurienvälistä viestintäosaamista ja kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta käsittelevän tutkimuskirjallisuuden pohjalta. Likert-asteikollinen mittari sisälsi yhteensä 42 väittämää, jotka koskivat seuraaviin viestintäfunktioihin liittyvää vuorovaikutusosaamista: 1) vuorovaikutussuhteiden luominen ja ylläpitäminen, 2) tiedon jakaminen, 3) verkostoresurssien hallinta, 4) integratiivinen neuvottelu, 5) erilaisuuden hallinta ja 6) sopeutuminen ja mukautuminen.

Määrällisen aineiston analyysiin käytettiin tilastollisia analyysimenetelmiä kuten eksploratiivista faktorianalyysiä ja Cronbachin Alpha -testiä. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin vastausten frekvenssejä, keskihajontaa, keskiarvoja ja osiokorrelaatioita.

Laadullinen tutkimusaineisto käsitti pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vastauksia avoimiin kysymyksiin, joissa pyydettiin kuvailemaan yhteistyösuhteen ylläpitämistä sekä epäonnistunutta yhteistyötä. Laadullisen tutkimusaineiston analyysi noudatti fenomenografista analyysiä (Marton, 1981) sekä laadullista sisällönanalyysiä (Neuendorf, 2002).

Lopuksi määrällisten ja laadullisten menetelmien tuottamia tutkimustuloksia tarkasteltiin rinnakkain. Tuloksia vertailemalla ja yhdistämällä pyrittiin määrällisen ja laadullisen tutkimusotteen *integrointiin* ja saavuttamaan koko-

naisvaltainen kuva tutkittavista ilmiöistä eli kollaboratiivisesta vuorovaikutuksesta ja vuorovaikutusosaamisesta pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä.

Osallistujat. Aineistonkeruu rajattiin koskemaan niitä yhteistyösuhteita, jotka ovat keskeisiä erityisesti suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Pyyntö osallistua tutkimukseen julkaistiin kolmella kansainvälistymistä käsittelevällä verkkosivustolla. Lisäksi pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajiin otettiin yhteyttä sähköpostitse erilaisten sähköpostilistojen ja jäsenluetteloiden perusteella.

Tutkimukseen osallistui 49 suomalaisten pk-yritysten ja 66 kansainvälistymisessä keskeisten välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajaa. Yhteensä tutkimushenkilöitä oli siis 115, joista 91 oli miehiä ja 23 naisia (1 raportoimaton). Valtaosa tutkimushenkilöistä oli suomalaisia (n = 101), ulkomaalaisten vastaajien osuus oli vähäisempi (6 kiinalaista, 3 ruotsalaista, 2 norjalaista, 1 italialainen, 1 ranskalainen ja 1 taiwanilainen).

Pk-yritysten edustajia pyydettiin kyselyyn vastatessaan ensin valitsemaan sellainen välittäjäorganisaation edustaja, joka on edistänyt yrityksen kansainvälistymistä Kiinaan ja vastaamaan sitten verkkokyselyyn ajatellen juuri tätä yhteistyökumppania (siis yhtä henkilöä). Välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vastaukset koskivat vastaavasti suomalaisten pk-yritysten edustajia.

Vastaajien ja heidän valitsemiensa yhteistyökumppaneiden kansallisuuksien vertailu osoitti, että 61 % (n = 70) tarkastelluista yhteistyösuhteista oli kahden suomalaisen muodostamia yhteistyösuhteita ja 25 % (n = 29) suomalaisen ja kiinalaisen tahon yhteistyösuhteita. Muut yhteistyösuhteet olivat kansainvälisiä, esimerkiksi australialaisen ja norjalaisen tai suomalaisen ja iso-britannialaisen henkilön yhteistyösuhteita.

Tulokset ja päätelmät

Kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. Tutkimustulosten perusteella pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien tämänhetkiset yhteistyösuhteet ovat pääosin instrumentaalisia. Kollaboratiivisella vuorovaikutuksella on erityisesti yhteistyön tuloksellisuuteen liittyviä tehtäviä, kuten tiedon jakaminen, ongelmanratkaisu ja uusien tuotteiden tai tiedon innovointi. Pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä keskeiset toimijat odottavat ja arvostavat kuitenkin myös suhdetason vuorovaikutusta ja viestintäeettisten periaatteiden noudattamista yhteistyössä. Tutkimustulosten mukaan kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa tärkeitä viestintäeettisiä periaatteita ovat esimerkiksi luotettavuus, avoimuus, rehellisyys, epäitsekkyys sekä erilaisuuden, kuten yhteistyöosapuolten kulttuuristen, organisatoristen ja ammatillisten taustojen, kunnioittaminen ja huomioiminen.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta voidaan tutkimustulosten perusteella hahmottaa yhteistyön tuloksellisuutta tukevana *tehtäväviestintänä*, vuorovaikutussuhdetta edistävänä ja ylläpitävänä *relationaalisena viestintänä* ja *dialogisena viestintänä*, joka tarkoittaa tässä esimerkiksi jännitteisyyden ja moninaisuuden hallintaa ja viestintäeettis-

ten periaatteiden huomioimista vuorovaikutuksessa. Tutkimus kuitenkin osoitti, että pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajilla on erilaisia, vastakkaisiakin odotuksia siitä, missä määrin kutakin näistä kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen piirteistä tulisi painottaa liiketoimintayhteistyössä. Lisäksi kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä havaittiin liittyvän seuraavia vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteitä:

1) *Henkilökohtaisuus-ammatillisuus*: Yhteistyökumppaneita yhdistää usein henkilökohtainen tai emotionaalinen side, mutta kollaboratiivisella vuorovaikutuksella on lähtökohtaisesti instrumentaalinen ja organisaation etuja edistävä tarkoitus
2) *Suunnitelmallisuus-suunnittelemattomuus*: Yhteistyösuhteita luodaan ja ylläpidetään strategisesti ja suunnitellusti, mutta uusia yhteistyömahdollisuuksia voi syntyä myös informaaleissa ja vapaaehtoisesti ylläpidetyissä vuorovaikutusverkostoissa
3) *Aktiivisuus-passiivisuus*: Yhteistyösuhteet edellyttävät aktiivista yhteydenpitoa ja osallistumista, mutta koska yhteistyösuhteet ovat tavallisesti osa laajempaa yhteistyöverkostoa, ovat viivästykset ja passiiviset ajanjaksot väistämättömiä yhteistyössä
4) *Pysyvyys-muutos*: Kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus edellyttää tarkasti määriteltyä suuntaa ja tavoitetta, mutta kansainvälisessä liiketoimintayhteistyössä kohdataan jatkuvasti odottamattomia muutoksia
5) *Samanlaisuus-erilaisuus*: Yhteistyökumppaneilla on yhteisiä tavoitteita ja kiinnostuksenkohteita, mutta yhteistyöosapuolet eroavat organisatoriselta, kulttuuriselta ja henkilökohtaiselta taustaltaan.

Vuorovaikutusosaaminen pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä. Tutkimustulosten perusteella vuorovaikutusosaamiseen kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat tarvitsevat:

- tietoa tehokkaasta ja tarkoituksenmukaisesta tehtäväviestinnästä, relationaalisesta viestinnästä ja dialogisesta viestinnästä
- motivaatiota ja uskallusta ottaa huomioon ja edistää niin yhteistyön tehtävä- kuin suhdetason tavoitteita sekä halua noudattaa yhteistyön viestintäeettisiä periaatteita
- vuorovaikutustaitoja kuten taitoa jakaa tietoa, tarjota instrumentaalista tukea, luoda, ylläpitää ja kehittää yhteistyösuhteita sekä hallita erilaisuutta tai yhteistyösuhteen jännitteitä.

Tutkimus osoitti, pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajilta vaaditaan vuorovaikutusosaamista kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoiden välttämiseksi. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mielestä yhteistyön esteeksi voi tulla esimerkiksi tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän riittämättömyys tai viestintäeettiset ongelmat, kuten salailu, oman edun tavoittelu tai suoranainen epärehellisyys yhteistyössä. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjä-

organisaatioiden edustajien käsitysten mukaan viestintähaasteita voi nousta myös yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä, kuten markkina-alueiden tai yhteistyöosapuolten taustaorganisaatioiden menettelytapa- ja kulttuurieroista. Pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä keskeisillä toimijoilla tulisikin olla ymmärrystä ja kykyä havaita kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen ongelmia ja esteitä sekä halua ja vuorovaikutustaitoja selviytyä niistä yhteistyösuhteissaan.

Sekä vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteiden teoria (Baxter & Montgomery 1996) että organisaatioviestinnän ekosysteemin näkökulma (Jablin & Sias, 2001; Sias, Krone & Jablin, 2002) osoittautuivat hyödyllisiksi tarkasteltaessa pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen liittyvää vuorovaikutusosaamista. Pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä keskeiseksi vuorovaikutusosaamiseksi voidaankin tutkimustulosten pohjalta määritellä sellainen kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus, jossa yhteistyökumppanit:

- keskittyvät yhteistyön tehtävätavoitteiden edistämiseen, mutta eivät välttele henkilökohtaisuutta vuorovaikutuksessa
- määrittelevät strategioita tavoitteiden saavuttamiseen, mutta ovat herkkiä myös ennakoimattomille yhteistyömahdollisuuksille
- pyrkivät viestimään yhteenkuuluvuutta, mutta arvostavat toistensa erilaisuutta ja pyrkivät hyötymään siitä
- ovat aktiivisia vuorovaikutusosapuolia tehtävän suorittamisessa, mutta jatkavat yhteydenpitoa myös passiivisina ajanjaksoina
- ovat päämäärätietoisia, mutta tarvittaessa joustavia yhteistyön ekosysteemin muutoksissa.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittaaminen. Tulosten perusteella vuorovaikutusosaamisen taso pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä näyttää hyvin korkealta. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat arvioivat oman vuorovaikutusosaamisensa tason korkeammaksi kuin yhteistyökumppaneidensa. Itsearvioinnit saattavatkin heijastaa viestintätyytyväisyyttä tai jopa *väärää kompetenssia* (Parks, 1994), jolloin viestijä pitää omana ansionaan sellaista, mikä ei sitä ole. Sekä itsearviointien että yhteistyökumppanin arviointien perusteella pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vahvuuksia ovat erityisesti luottamuksen ja kunnioituksen osoittaminen kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa. Heikkoutena puolestaan voidaan pitää puutteita henkilökohtaisuuden ja tuttuuden osoittamisessa. On kuitenkin mahdollista, että henkilökohtaiseen tai relationaaliseen viestintään liittyviä vuorovaikutusosaamisen arviointituloksia vinouttavat erilaiset odotukset kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen luonteesta, erityisesti henkilökohtaisuuden ja ammatillisuuden välinen jännite.

Vuorovaikutusosaamisen arviointiin käytettiin Likert-asteikollista mittaria, jonka väittämät kuvasivat kuuteen viestintäfunktioon kytkeytyvää vuorovaikutusosaamista. Eksploratiivinen faktorianalyysi ei kuitenkaan vahvistanut tätä mittarin rakennetta, vaan osoitti vuorovaikutusosaamisen itsearviointimittarin ja yhteistyökumppanin arviointimittarin mittaavan jossain määrin eri asioita.

Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että vuorovaikutusosaamisen arviointituloksia voivat vinouttaa esimerkiksi myönteiset kokemukset tavoitteiden saavuttamisesta tai kokonaisvaikutelmat yhteistyösuhteesta ja -kumppanista. Arvioinnit ovat pikemminkin holistisia kuin analyyttisiä. Lisäksi tulokset saattavat kertoa kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen liittyvistä odotuksista ja arvostuksista ennemmin kuin pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutusosaamisen tasosta.

Tämän tutkimuksen tuloksista on käytännön hyötyä esimerkiksi elinkeinoelämän ja yhteiskunnallisille toimijoille, joiden työ ylittää maantieteellisiä tai organisaatioiden ja toimialojen rajoja. Tulokset auttavat hahmottamaan organisaatioiden välistä yhteistyötä sosiaalisena vuorovaikutuksena sekä niitä haasteita, joita kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus ja sen karikot luovat yhteistyöosapuolten vuorovaikutusosaamiselle. Tuloksia voidaankin soveltaa niin yritysten kuin julkisen tai järjestösektorinkin toimijoille tarjotussa viestinnän koulutuksessa ja konsultoinnissa.

Tutkimustulosten valideettia ja reliabiliteettia olisi lisännyt suurempi tutkimusaineisto. Vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittarin kehittämistä olisi tukenut monimenetelmäisen tutkimusaineiston kerääminen vaiheittain, jolloin vuorovaikutusosaamisen operationalisointi olisi perustunut esimerkiksi haastattelu- tai havainnointiaineiston tuloksille. Verkkokyselyllä samanaikaisesti hankitut laadullinen ja määrällinen tutkimusaineisto pikemminkin täydensivät kuin validoivat toisiaan. Monimenetelmäisyys mahdollistikin monipuolisen teoreettisen jäsennyksen kollaboratiivisesta vuorovaikutuksesta ja vuorovaikutusosaamisesta pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä.

Tämä tutkimus osoitti vuorovaikutusosaamisen mittaamisen haasteelliseksi pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa. Vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen mittaaminen edellyttävät jatkotutkimusta erityisesti organisaatioiden rajat ylittävän työn kontekstissa, johon liittyy jännitteisiä odotuksia sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen luonteesta ja toisaalta vuorovaikutussuhteen ulkopuolelta tulevia viestintähaasteita. Lisäksi Baxterin ja Montgomeryn (1996) vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteiden teorian sovellusmahdollisuuksia tulisi selvittää yhä tarkemmin ja monipuolisemmin erilaisissa työelämäkonteksteissa. Kiinnostava tutkimussuunta olisi esimerkiksi henkilökohtaisuuden ja ammatillisuuden jännitteen ja sen hallinnan syvempi tarkastelu työelämän vuorovaikutussuhteissa.

REFERENCES

Aggestam, M. & Keenan, J. 2006. Failed inter-organizational collaboration: "Contraversion" and conflict building. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association 19–23.6.2006, Dresden, Germany.

Agndal, H. & Chetty, S. 2007. The impact of relationships on changes in internationalization strategies of SMEs. European Journal of Marketing 41 (11/12), 1449–1474.

Ai, J. 2006. Guanxi networks in China: its importance and future trends. China & World Economy 14 (5), 105–118.

Almonkari, M. & Isotalus, P. 2010. Communication skills of political leaders in times of professionalization. Paper presented at ECREA's 3rd European Communication Conference 12. –16.10.2010, Hamburg, Germany.

Arasaratnam, L. 2006. Further testing of a new model of intercultural communication competence. Communication Research Reports 23 (2), 93–99.

Arnett, R. C., Harden Fritz, J. M. & Bell, L. M. 2009. Communication ethic literacy: Dialogue and difference. Los Angeles: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. 2004a. Dialogues of relating. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter & K. N. Cissna (Eds) Dialogic approaches to communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 107–124.

Baxter, L. A. 2004b. Distinguished scholar article: Relationships as dialogues. Personal Relationships 11 (1), 1–22.

Baxter, L. A. & Braithwaite, D. O. 2008. Relational dialectics theory: Crafting meaning from competing discourses. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds) Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives. Los Angeles: Sage, 349–361.

Baxter, L. A. & Braithwaite, D. O. 2010. Relational dialectics theory, applied. In S. W. Smith & S. R. Wilson (Eds) New directions in interpersonal communication research. Los Angeles: Sage, 48–66.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. 1996. Relating: Dialogues & dialectics. New York: The Guilford Press.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. 2000. Rethinking communication in personal relationships from a dialectical perspective. In K. Dindia & S. Duck (Eds) Communication and personal relationships. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 31–53.

Bazeley, P. 2009. Integrating data analyses in mixed methods research. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 3 (3), 203–207.

Boster, F. J. & Sherry, J. L. 2010. Alternative methodological approaches to communication science. In C. R. Berger, M. E. Roloff & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds) The Handbook of Communication Science. Los Angeles: Sage, 55–71.

Bridge, K. & Baxter, L. A. 1992. Blended relationships: Friends as work associates. Western Journal of Communication 56, 200–225.

Charles, M. 2009. The ascent of international business communication: are we on board? In L. Louhiala-Salminen & A. Kankaanranta (Eds) The ascent of international business communication. Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics, 9–24.

Chen, G. & Starosta, W. J. 1996. Intercultural communication competence: a synthesis. In B. R. Burleson (Ed) Communication Yearbook 19. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 353–383.

Chen, L. 2006. Western theory and nonwestern practice: Friendship dialectics for Chinese in Hong Kong. China Media Research 2, 1–30.

Chen, X-P. & Chen, C. C. 2004. On the intricacies of the Chinese guanxi: A process model of guanxi development. Asia Pacific Journal of Management 21, 305–324.

Confederation of Finnish Industries EK. Retrieved 16.10.2011 from: http://www.hpl.fi/www/fi/kauppapolitiikka/kiina/suomi_kiina_kaup pa.php

Cools, C. 2011. Relational dialectics in intercultural couples' relationships. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 171.

Creswell, J. W. 2003. Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L. 2011. Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L. & Garrett, A. L. 2008. Methodological issues in conducting mixed methods research design. In M. M. Bergman (Ed) Advances in mixed methods research: Theories and applications. Los Angeles: Sage, 101–119.

Denscombe, M. 2008. Communities of practice: A research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 2 (3), 270–283.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. 2003. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds) The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1–45.

Dixon, M. A. & Dougherty, D. S. 2010. Managing the multiple meanings of organizational culture in interdisciplinary collaboration and consulting. Journal of Business Communication 47 (1), 3–19.

Doerfel, M. 2005. A network measure of cooperation-competition. Paper presented at the International Communication Association annual meeting 26. –30.5.2005, New York, USA.

Ellis, P. 2000. Social ties and foreign market entry. Journal of International Business Studies 31 (3), 443–469.

Feilzer, M. Y. 2010. Doing mixed methods research pragmatically: Implications for the rediscovery of pragmatism as a research paradigm. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 4 (1), 6–16.

Forsman, M., Hinttu, S. & Kock, S. 2002. Internationalization from a SME perspective. Proceedings of the 18th IMP Conference 9.–11.9.2002, Dijon, France.

64

Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H. & Kreps, G.L. 2000. Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gerlander, M. 2003. Jännitteet lääkärin ja potilaan välisessä viestintäsuhteessa [Tensions in the doctor-patient communication and relationship]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 3.

Godenhjelm, P. 2002. Kognitiiviset haastattelut [Cognitive interviews]. In A. Ahola, P. Godenhjelm & M. Lehtinen (Eds) Kysymisen taito. Surveylaboratorio lomaketutkimusten kehittämisessä [The skill of asking: Survey laboratory in developing questionnaire studies]. Statistics Finland. Helsinki: Hakapaino Oy.

Greene, J. C. 2008. Is mixed methods social inquiry a distinctive methodology? Journal of Mixed Methods Research 2 (1), 7–22.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1989. Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park: Sage.

Hajek. C. & Giles, H. 2003. New directions in intercultural communication competence: the process model. In J.O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds) Handbook of communication and social interaction skills. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 935–957.

Hammersley, M. 2008. Troubles with triangulation. In M. M. Bergman (Ed) Advances in mixed methods research: Theories and applications. Los Angeles: Sage, 22–36.

Hargie, O. 2011. Skilled interpersonal communication: Research, theory and practice. London: Routledge.

Heath, R. G. 2007. Rethinking community collaboration through a dialogic lens: Creativity, democracy, and diversity in community organizing. Management Communication Quarterly 21, 145–171.

Heath, R.G., & Frey, L. 2004. Ideal collaboration: A conceptual framework of community collaboration. In P. Kalbfleisch (Ed) Communication yearbook 28. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 189-231.

Hong, J. & Engeström, Y. 2004. Changing principles of communication between Chinese managers and workers. Management Communication Querterly 17 (4), 552–585.

Hullman, G. A. & Daily, M. 2008. Evaluating physician communication competence scales: A replication and extension. Communication Research Reports 25 (4), 316–322.

Huxham, C. & Vangen, S. 2000. Ambiguity, complexity and dynamics in the membership of collaboration. Human Relations 52, 771–806.

Hyvärinen, M-L., Tanskanen, P., Katajavuori, N., & Isotalus, P. 2010. A method for teaching communication in pharmacy in authentic work situations. Communication Education 59, 124–145.

Häkkinen, P. & Arvaja, M. 1999. Kollaboratiivinen oppiminen teknologiaympäristössä [Collaborative learning in technology environment]. In A. Eteläpelto & P. Tynjälä (Eds) Oppiminen ja asiantuntijuus: Työelämän ja koulutuksen näkökulmia [Learning and

expertise: Perspectives of working life and education]. Porvoo: WSOY, 206–221.

Internationalization of European SMEs. 2010. Brussels: Entrepreneurship Unit, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, European Commission. Retrieved 14.1.2012 from:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/market-access/files/internationalisation_of_european_smes_final_en.pdf

Isbell, M. 2009. Communicating social identities: Exploring boundary spanners in interorganizational contexts. Doctoral dissertation. The University of Texas at Austin, USA.

Isbell, M. & Godstein, R. 2006. Interorganizational collaboration among disaster relief agencies. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association 19–23.6.2006, Dresden, Germany.

Jablin, F. M. & Sias, P. M. 2001. Communication competence. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds) The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 819–864.

Johannesen, R. L. 2002. Ethics in human interaction. Long Grove: Waveland Press.

Johanson, J. & Mattsson, L-G. 1988. Internationalization in industrial systems: A network approach. In N. Hood & J-E. Vahlne (Eds) Strategies in global competition. London: Croom Helm, 287-314.

Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J-E. 1977. The internationalization process of the firm: A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments. Journal of International Business Studies 8 (1), 23–32.

Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J-E. 2006. Commitment and opportunity development in the internationalization process: A note on the Uppsala internationalization process model. Management International Review 42 (2), 165–178.

Johnson, R. B. & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. 2004. Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. Educational Researcher 33 (7), 14–26.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Turner, L. A. 2007. Toward a definition of mixed methods research. Journal of Mixed Methods 1 (2), 112–133.

Juch, S. & Rathje, S. 2011. Cooperation competence: A problem-oriented model for successful interaction in commercial alliances. Intercultural Journal 10 (13), 39–59.

Kankaanranta, A. & Planken, B. 2010. BELF competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. Journal of Business Communication 47 (4), 380–407.

Kearney, P. & Beatty, M. J. 1994. Measures of instructional communication. In R. B. Rubin, P. Palmgren & H. E. Spyher (Eds), Communication research measures: A sourcebook. New York: Guilford, 7–20.

Keyton, J., Ford, D. J. & Smith, F. I. 2008. A mesolevel communicative model of collaboration. Communication Theory 18, 376–406.

Keyton, J., & Stallworth, V. 2003. On the verge of collaboration: Identifying group structure and process. In L. R. Frey (Ed) Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 235–260.

Kontinen, T. 2011. Internationalization pathways of family SMEs. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Business and Economics 100.

Koschmann, M. 2010. Collaborative conversations: Economic sectors as discursive resources in inter-organizational collaboration. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association 14.–17.11.2010, San Francisco, USA.

Koskenlinna, M., Smedlund, A., Ståhle, P., Köppä, L., Niinikoski, M-L., Valovirta, V., Halme, K., Saapunki, J. & Leskinen, J. 2005. Välittäjäorganisaatiot: moniottelijat innovaatioita edistämässä [Intermediary organizations: All-rounders advancing innovations]. Teknologiakatsaus 168. Helsinki: Tekes.

Kostiainen, E. 2003. Viestintä ammattiosaamisen ulottuvuutena [Communication as a dimension of vocational competence]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 1.

Laajalahti, A. 2008. Vuorovaikutusosaaminen tutkijoiden työssä. Aikuiskasvatus 28 (2), 117–123.

Laajalahti, A. & Purhonen, P. 2011. Dialectical tensions and interpersonal communication competence in boundary spanning work. Paper presented at The Interpersonal Communication and Social Interaction (ICSI) Section 2011 Conference of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), 8.–9.9.2011, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Lakey, S. G. & Canary, D. J., 2002. Actor goal achievement and sensitivity to partner as critical factors in understanding interpersonal communication competence and conflict strategies. Communication Monographs 69, 217–235.

Lewis, L. K. 2006. Collaborative interaction: Reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. In C. S. Beck (Ed), Communication Yearbook 30. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 107–247.

Louhiala-Salminen, L. & Kankaanranta, A. 2011. Professional communication in a global business context: The notion of global communicative competence. IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication 54 (3), 244–262.

MacPherson, A. & Wilson, A. 2003. Enhancing SME's capability: Opportunities in supply chain relationships? Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development 10 (2), 167–179.

Madlock, P. E. 2008. The link between leadership style, communicator competence, and employee satisfaction. Journal of Business Communication 45, 61–78.

Marton, F. 1981. Cognosco ergo sum: Reflections on reflections. Nordisk Pedagogik 15, 165–180.

Marton, F. 1994. Phenomenography. In T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds) The International Encyclopedia of Education. Pergamon, 4424–4429.

Mason, J. 2006. Six strategies for mixing methods and linking data in social science research. Working paper. Retrieved 30.9.2011 from: http://www.reallifemethods.ac.uk/publications/workingpapers/2006-07-rlm-mason.pdf

Matveev, A. V. 2004. Describing intercultural communication competence: In-depth interviews with American and Russian managers. Qualitative Research Reports in Communication V, 55–62.

Maxby, S. J. 2003. Pragmatic threads in mixed methods research in the social sciences: The search for multiple modes of inquiry and the end of philosophical formalism. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds), Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 51–89.

Miller, K. 2001. Quantitative research methods. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds), The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 137–160.

Miller, S. 2003. Impact of mixed methods and design on inference quality. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds) Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 423–453.

Monge, P. R., Backman, S. G., Dillard, J. P., & Eisenberg, E. M. 1982. Communicator competence in a workplace: Model testing and scale development. In Burgoon, M. (Ed) Communication Yearbook 5. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 505–528.

Morgan, D. L. 2007. Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 1 (2), 48–76.

Morreale, S. P., Osborn, M. M. & Pearson, J. C. 2000. Why communication is important: A rationale for the centrality of the study of communication. Journal of the Association for Communication Administration 29, 1–25.

Neuendorf, K. A. 2002. The content analysis guidebook. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Nojonen, M. 2007. Guanxi: The Chinese third arm. Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics.

Ojala, A. 2008. Internationalization of software firms: Finnish small and medium-sized software firms in Japan. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Computing 89.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bustamante, R. M. & Nelson, J. A. 2010. Mixed methods research as a tool for developing quantitative instruments. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 4 (1), 56–78.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Teddlie, C. 2003. A framework for analyzing data in mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds) Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 351–383.

Oviatt, B. M. & McDougall, P. P. 1994. Toward a theory in international new ventures. Journal of International Business Studies 25 (1), 45–64.

Palmeri, J. 2004. When discourses collide: A case study of interprofessional collaborative writing in a medically oriented law firm. Journal of Business Communication 41 (1), 37–65.

Parks, M. R. 1994. Communicative competence and interpersonal control. In M. L. Knapp & G. R. Miller (Eds) Handbook of interpersonal communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 589–618.

Patton, M. Q. 2002. Qualitative research & evaluation methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Payne, H. J. 2005. Reconceptualizing social skills in organizations: Exploring the relationship between communication competence, job performance and supervisory roles. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 11 (2), 63–77.

Phan, M. C. T., Styles, C. W. & Patterson, P. G. 2005. Relational competency's role in Southeast Asia business partnerships. Journal of Business Research 58, 173–184.

Pullin, P. 2010. Small talk, rapport, and international communicative competence: Lessons to learn from BELF. Journal of Business Communication 47 (4), 455–476.

Purhonen, P., Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. & Valkonen, T. 2010. Assessing interpersonal communication competence in business and organizational relationships. Poster presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association 14.–17.11.2010, San Francisco, USA.

Query, J. L. Jr., Wright, K. B. Amason, P., Campbell Eichhorn K., Weathers, M. R., Womack Haun, M., Gilchrist, E. S., Bochunek Klein, L. & Pedrami, V. 2009. Using quantitative methods to conduct applied communication research. In Frey, L. R. & Cissna, K. N. (Eds) Routledge handbook of applied communication research. Routledge: New York, 81–105.

Ritter, T. 1999. The networking company: Antecedents for coping with relationships and networks effectively. Industrial Marketing Management 28, 467–479.

Ritter, T. & Gemunden, H. G. 2003. Network competence: Its impact on innovation success and its antecedents. Journal of Business Research 56, 745–755.

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. 2009. Johtajan vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen kehittyminen. Johtamisen viestintähaasteet tietoperustaisessa organisaatiossa [The interpersonal communication competence of leaders and its development. Leadership communication challenges in a knowledge-based organization]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 128.

Saatci, E. 2008. Problem-based learning in an intercultural business communication course: Communication challenges in intercultural relationships in internationalizing small- or medium-sized enterprises. Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 22 (2), 237–260.

Sahlstein, E., Maguire, K. C. & Timmerman, L. 2009. Contradictions and praxis contextualized by wartime deployment: Wives' perspectives revealed through relational dialectics. Communication Monographs, 74 (4), 421–442.

Sandelowski, M. 2003. Table or tableaux? The challenges of writing and reading mixed methods studies. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds) Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 321–350.

Sandelowski, M., Voils, C. I. & Barroso, J. 2006. Defining and designing mixed research synthesis studies. Research in the Schools 13 (1), 29–40.

Scott, P. J. & Briggs, J. S. 2009. A pragmatist argument for mixed methodology in medical informatics. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 3 (3), 223–241.

Selsky, J.W. & Parker, B. 2005. Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. Journal of Management 31, 849–873.

Sias, P. M. 2005. Workplace relationship quality and employee information experiences. Communication Studies 56 (4), 375–395.

Sias, P. M. & Perry, T. 2004. Disengaging from workplace relationships: a research note. Human Communication Research 30 (4), 589–602.

Sias, P., Krone, K. J. & Jablin, F. M. 2002. An ecological systems perspective on workplace relationships. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds) Handbook of interpersonal communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 615–642.

Sivunen, A. 2007. Vuorovaikutus, viestintäteknologia ja identifioituminen hajautetuissa tiimeissä [Social interaction, communication technology and identification in virtual teams]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 79.

So, Y. L. & Walker, A. 2006. Explaining Guanxi: the Chinese business network. London: Routledge.

Spitzberg, B. H. 2000. What is good communication? Journal of the Association for Communication Administration 29, 103–119.

Spitzberg, B. H. 2003. Methods of interpersonal skill assessment. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds) Handbook of communication and social interaction skills. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 93-134.

Spitzberg, B. H. 2006. CSRS: The conversational skills rating scale: An instructional assessment of interpersonal competence. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association 16.–19.11.2006, San Antonio, USA.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. 1984. Interpersonal communication competence. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. 1989. Handbook of interpersonal competence research. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Statistics Finland. 2012. Retrieved 14.1.2012 from: http://www.stat.fi/meta/kas/pk_yritys.html

Stohl, C. & Walker, K. 2002. A bona fide perspective for the future of groups: Understanding collaborating groups. In L. R. Frey (Ed.) New directions in group communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 237–252.

70

Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. 1998. Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Tashakkori, A. & Tedlie, C. 2003. The past and future of mixed methods research: From data triangulation to mixed model designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds) Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 671–701.

Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. 2008. Quality of inferences in mixed methods research: Calling for an integrative framework. In M. M. Bergman (Ed) Advances in mixed methods research: Theories and applications. Los Angeles: Sage, 101–119.

Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. 2009. Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences. Los Angeles: Sage.

Thompson, J. L. 2009. Building collective communication competence in interdisciplinary research teams. Journal of Applied Communication Research 37 (3), 278–297.

Thomson, A. M. & Perry, J. L. 2006. Collaboration processes: Inside the black box. Public Administration Review 66 (1), 20–32.

Valkonen, T. 2003. Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi. Näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin [Assessing speech communication skills. Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 7.

Varner, I. 2000. The theoretical foundation for intercultural business communication: A conceptual model. Journal of Business Communication 37 (1), 39–57.

Wang, J. & Murphy, P. 2010. In the office vs. outside the office: supervisor-subordinate guanxi maintenance among Chinese and Western managers in China. Chinese Journal of Communication 3 (2), 147–166.

Wardrobe, W. J. 2002. Department chairs' perceptions of the importance of business communication skills. Business Communication Quarterly 65 (4), 60–72.

Williams, P. 2002. The competence boundary spanner. Public Administration 80 (1), 103–124.

Wilson, S.R & Sabee, C. M. 2003. Explicating communicative competence as a theoretical term. In S. R. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds) Handbook of communication and social interaction skills. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 3–50.

Wiseman, R. L. 2002. Intercultural communication competence. In W. B. Gudygunst & B. Mody (Eds) Handbook of international and intercultural communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 207–224.

Wong, Y. H. & Tam, J. L. M. 2000. Mapping relationships in China: guanxi dynamic approach. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing 15 (1), 57–70.

Wright, K. B., Banas, J. A., Bessarova, E., & Bernard, D. R. 2010. A communication competence approach to examining health care social support, stress, and job burnout. Health Communication 25, 375–382.

Zhang, Y. & Zhang, Z. 2006. Guanxi and organizational dynamics in China: A link between individual and organizational levels. Journal of Business Ethics 67, 375–392.

Zhu, Y., Nel, P. & Bhat, R. 2006. A cross cultural study of communication strategies for building business relationships. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management 6 (3), 319–341.

Zhu, Y. & Zhang, A. M. 2007. Understanding guanxi (connections) from business leaders' perspectives. Business Communication Quarterly 70, 385–389.

Zoller, H. M. 2000. "A place you haven't visited before": creating the conditions for community dialogue. Southern Communication Journal 65 (2), 191–207.

**Dimensions
mrInterview**

SURVEY OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN SME INTERNATIONALIZATION

Dear representative of an SME

This survey studies interpersonal communication competence related to the collaboration of Finnish SMEs and the intermediary organizations involved in the SME internationalization.

The questionnaire consists of 4 sections:

1. In first section a series of questions are asked about your background and the background of your collaboration partner in an intermediary organization. This information is asked only for statistical purpose. All responses you give will remain **strictly confidential.**
2. In the second section questions are asked about the collaboration relationship of you and your collaboration partner.
3. The third section relates to the interpersonal communication competence specific to collaboration and networking.
4. The fourth section focuses on your perceptions of collaboration in general.

The completion of the questionnaire will take from 20 to 30 minutes.

If you have any questions related to the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me (the researcher):

Ms Pipsa Purhonen, MA
University of Jyväskylä (Finland), Department of Communication, Speech Communication
Email: pipsa.purhonen@jyu.fi
Tel. Hong Kong:+852 6886 9576

Section 1
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions 1-13 are asked about your company (SME) and your personal background. This information will be coded and analyzed statistically. The results will be reported in aggregate form to ensure that **it will not be possible to identify any individual or organization.** All responses you give will remain **strictly confidential.**

Background information of the SME

1. What is the number of employees in your company?

   ☐ 1-9

   ☐ 10-49

   ☐ 50-250

   ☐ More than 250

2. What is the annual turnover of your company?

   ☐ Less or equal to 2 million euro

   ☐ More than 2 m €, less or equal to 10 m €

   ☐ More than 10 m €, less or equal to 50 m €

   ☐ More than 50 m €

3. What is the main industry of your company?

   ☐ Manufacturing industry

   ☐ Service industry

4. In which areas does your company operate in China? *(You may tick more than one box)*

   ☐ Beijing

   ☐ Shanghai

- [ ] Yangtze River delta (e.g. Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui)
- [ ] Hong Kong SAR
- [ ] Pearl River delta (e.g. Guangdong: Guangzhou, Shenzhen)
- [ ] Other (please specify) (You can mention cities or provinces): [_____]

5. For how long has your company operated in China?
- [ ] The company does not yet operate in China
- [ ] Less than a year
- [ ] 1-5 years
- [ ] More than 5, but less or equivalent to10 years
- [ ] More than 10 years
- [ ] I don't know

Dimensions mrInterview

Background information of the respondent

6. Your age (in years)?

[_____]

7. Your gender?
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

8. Your nationality?

☐ Finnish

☐ Chinese

☐ Other (please specify): [   ]

9. Please specify the highest level of education you have completed

☐ Primary education or lower secondary education

☐ Upper secondary education, post secondary non-tertiary education or first stage of tertiary education (e.g. maturity examination, vocational or technical education)

☐ Second stage of tertiary education (e.g. Bachelor's or Master's degree)

☐ Other (please specify): [   ]

10. What is the major or field of study of your education/degree?

[   ]

11. What is your position in the SME?

☐ Entrepreneur/owner

☐ Employee

12. What is the title of your current position in the SME?

13. How many years' experience you have in (business) collaboration in China?

☐ Less than a year

☐ From 1 to 3 years

☐ More than 3, less than 10 years

☐ Over 10 years

☐ I do not have any experience on (business)collaboration in China

Background information of the collaboration partner

The next questions 14-16 are related to your collaboration partner in an intermediary organization. To answer these questions, I would first like to ask you to think about those **intermediary organizations in Finland, China or elsewhere, which have assisted your company in its internationalization process into China.** These intermediary organizations can be, for example, governmental organizations, innovation or technology centers, business incubators, consultants or education and research institutes.

Next, I ask you to choose a person who works in one these intermediary organizations. Please, choose **a person who you most deal with** and who you have met at least once. The person may be Finnish, Chinese or from somewhere else. For this person, who you now choose, the term 'collaboration partner' will be used in the questionnaire. It is important that through the questionnaire your answers refer to this same collaboration partner, one person.

14. Is this collaboration partner?

☐ Finnish

☐ Chinese

☐ Other (please specify): [_____]

15. What is the gender of your collaboration partner?

☐ Male

☐ Female

16.1 Is the intermediary organization s/he works for a?

☐ Finnish intermediary

☐ Chinese intermediary

☐ Other (please specify): [_____]

16.2 Is this intermediary organization?

☐ Government, public administration or other organization receiving public funding

☐ The Employment and Economic Development Centre, T&E Centre

☐ Interest group or regional development company

☐ Technology or innovation center

☐ Business council

☐ Consulting company

☐ Financial or credit institution

☐ Education or research organization

☐ Other (please specify): [_____]

Section 2
COLLABORATION RELATIONSHIP

The questions 17-22 will be asked about the relationship of you and your collaboration partner from an intermediary organization. For each question, please think about the same person who you chose above.

17. For how long have you known your collaboration partner?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ From 1 to 3 years
- ☐ From 4 to 10 years
- ☐ Over 10 years

18. How did you first get in touch with him/her?

19. How often are you in contact with him/her

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never
19.1 Face to face?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.2 By phone?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.3 By using SMS?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.4 By using computer-mediated phone calls, video negotiation or internet meetings?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19.5 By email?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19.6 By using instant messages (e.g. MSN or Skype chat)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. What is your collaboration with him/her at this moment primarily about?

☐ Negotiation

☐ Problem-solving

☐ Consultation or guidance

☐ Information exchange

☐ Planning or coordinating

☐ Relationship-building or networking

☐ Innovating new solutions, products or information

☐ Visioning

☐ Motivating, encouraging or supporting

☐ Other (please specify): _____

21. Below you can find different characteristics that describe collaboration relationships. Please, tick (X) a box which in each case best indicates your perception of the collaboration relationship of you and your collaboration partner. For instance, if you feel that your relationship is more 'stabile' than 'changing', please tick a box closer to the option 'stabile'.

Our collaboration relationship is mainly:

	stabile	-	-	-	-	-	changing
21.1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	regular	-	-	-	-	-	irregular
21.2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	private	-	-	-	-	-	professional
21.3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	close	-	-	-	-	-	distant
21.4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	permanent	-	-	-	-	-	temporary
21.5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	certain	-	-	-	-	-	uncertain
21.6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	active	-	-	-	-	-	passive
21.7	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	formal	-	-	-	-	-	informal
21.8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following characteristics are typical to our collaboration relationship:

	competitiveness	-	-	-	-	-	partnership
21.9	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	openness	-	-	-	-	-	lack of openness
21.10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	equality	-	-	-	-	-	inequality
21.11	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	agreement	-	-	-	-	-	disagreement
21.12	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	honesty	-	-	-	-	-	dishonesty
21.13	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	trust	-	-	-	-	-	distrust
21.14	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	reciprocity	-	-	-	-	-	one-sidedness
21.15	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	predictability	-	-	-	-	-	spontaneity
21.16	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	connection	-	-	-	-	-	separateness
21.17	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

		-	-	-	-	-	
	mutual understanding						lack of mutual understanding
21.18	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	acceptance	-	-	-	-	-	judgment
21.19	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	flexibility	-	-	-	-	-	inflexibility
21.20	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In our collaboration relationship we have mostly:

		-	-	-	-	-	
	shared goals						individual goals
21.21	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	even responsibility	-	-	-	-	-	uneven responsibility
21.22	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	interdependence	-	-	-	-	-	independence
21.23	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	equal power	-	-	-	-	-	unequal power
21.24	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. What do you see as **important in the relationship with your collaboration partner** (the one you chose above)? Please, choose **3 characteristics** from the following options which you consider as the most important ones. Please, rank these characteristics according to the order of importance by indicating the **most important character with number 1, the second with number 2 and the third with number 3.**

	For me, the most important characters in our collaboration relationship are:
22.1 Mutual goals and objectives	
22.2 Regular meetings	
22.3 Favors and favors in return	
22.4 Similar interests	
22.5 Also other meetings than in business	
22.6 Active contact	
22.7 Information sharing	
22.8 Enhancing networks relations	
22.9 Achievement of results and goals	
22.10 Sharing personal issues/information	
22.11 Flexibility and adaptability	
22.12 Aim to mutual or public good	
22.13 Joint decision making	
22.14 Expressing emotions	
22.15 Humor	
22.16 Trust	
22.17 Motivating and encouraging each other	
22.18 Mutual commitment to collaborate	

Section 3
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN THE COLLABORATION RELATIONSHIP

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: PARTNER

23. Next, I would ask you to assess the interpersonal communication competence of your partner in the collaboration relationship. Please, indicate the degree of agreement to each of the following statements 23.1-23.41 based on your general idea of him/her.

Task achievement 1/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.1 My collaboration partner openly shares his/her knowledge and opinions with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.2 S/he answers to my questions thoroughly enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.3 S/he provides me a lot of information that I need.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.4 S/he tells me about the possible problems and difficulties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.5 S/he comes up with a lot of new ideas and suggestions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.6 S/he makes sure that I understand her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.7 S/he is goal oriented.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.8 S/he is innovative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.9 With her/his help I can accomplish results which I could not reach by myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.8 With his/her help I can accomplish results which I could not reach by myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Task achievement 2/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.10 My collaboration partner has a lot of knowledge about what kind of competencies exist in his/her networks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.11 S/he makes use of the competencies of her/his networks in our collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.12 S/he actively explores my opinion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.13 S/he informs me about collaborators who could be of assistance to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.14 S/he has introduced me to new collaborators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.15 S/he supports me in going forward.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.16 S/he aims to further my case with her/his actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.17 S/he is active in our network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Task achievement 3/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.18 My collaboration partner is well prepared for our meetings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.19 The language s/he uses is clear and easy to understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.20 S/he uses convincing arguments in reasoning her/his opinions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.21 S/he asks me for further	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

arguments when needed.

Maintenance of relationship 1/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.22 My collaboration partner acknowledges my goals and perspectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.23 S/he knows my organization well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.24 S/he knows me well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.25 S/he understands my culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.26 It is easy to talk to her/him in difficult situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.27 S/he shows me that s/he respects me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.28 S/he does not use offensive language.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Maintenance of relationship 2/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.29 My collaboration partner shows that s/he trusts me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.30 I can trust in her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.31 S/he creates a comfortable atmosphere to our meetings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.32 S/he shares personal information with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.33 S/he has invited me to informal meetings and gatherings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.34 S/he is interested in me and my case.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.35 S/he is committed to collaborating with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.36 S/he is active in keeping contact with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Maintenance of relationship 3/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
23.37 My collaboration partner aims to understand me even if I disagree with her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.38 S/he is flexible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.39 S/he handles well the uncertainty related to collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.40 S/he adjusts quickly to changing situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.41 In disagreements s/he strives for a conclusion that is satisfying for both of us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23.42 S/he is a good listener.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: SELF-REPORT

24. Next, please consider **how you perceive yourself acting with the collaboration partner** who you assessed above, and indicate the degree of agreement with each of the following statements 24.1-24.43 based on this impression.

Task achievement 1/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.1 I openly share my knowledge and opinions with my collaboration partner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.2 I answer her/his questions thoroughly enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.3 I provide her/him with a lot of information that s/he needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.4 I tell her/him about the possible problems and difficulties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.5 I come up with a lot of new ideas and suggestions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.6 I make sure that s/he understands me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.7 I am goal oriented.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.8 I am innovative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.9 With my help s/he can accomplish results which s/he could not reach by her/himself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Task achievement 2/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.10 I have a lot of knowledge about what kinds of competencies exist in my network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.11 I make use of the competencies of my networks in our collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.12 I actively ask for her/his opinion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.13 I inform her/him about collaborators who could be of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

assistance to her/him.						
24.14 I have introduced her/him to new collaborators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.15 I support my collaboration partner in going forward.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.16 I aim to further her/his case with my own actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.17 I am active in our network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Task achievement 3/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.18 I am well prepared for our meetings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.19 The language I use is clear and easy to understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.20 I use convincing arguments in reasoning my opinions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.21 I ask her/him for further arguments when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Maintenance of relationship 1/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.22 I acknowledge the goals and perspectives of my collaboration partner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.23 I know her/his organization well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.24 I know her/him well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.25 I understand her/his culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.26 It is easy to talk with me in difficult situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.27 I show her/him that I respect her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.28 I do not use offensive language.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Maintenance of relationship 2/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.29 I show my collaboration partner shows that I trust her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.30 S/he can trust me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.31 I create a comfortable atmosphere to our meetings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.32 I share personal information with her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.33 I have invited her/him to informal meetings and gatherings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.34 I am interested in her/him and her/his case.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.35 I am committed to collaborating with her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.36 I am active in keeping contact with her/him.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Maintenance of relationship 3/3

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Do not know/ No opinion
24.37 I aim to understand my collaboration partner even if s/he disagrees with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.38 I am flexible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

24.39 I handle well the uncertainty related to collaboration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.40 I adjust quickly to changing situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.41 In disagreements I strive for a conclusion that is satisfying for both of us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24.42 I am a good listener.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
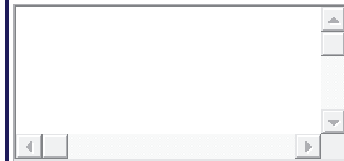
Section 4
THE PERCEPTIONS OF COLLABORATION

Finally, I would like to ask you to carefully consider and answer to the following questions 25 and 26. When answering to the questions, please ponder the concept of collaboration in general.

25. Please describe what does the maintenance of collaboration relationship mean to you in general?
(You can consider, for instance, what do you expect from collaboration or your collaboration partners? Which factors can develop collaboration? What does the maintenance of collaboration relationship require?)

26. In your opinion, what is *failed* or *unsuccessful* collaboration in general? (You can consider, for instance, how does unsuccessful collaboration differ from successful collaboration? Which factors may cause collaboration relationship to fail?)

27. In the end you may add further comments on the survey or the topic, or other possible greetings for the researcher.

ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

**SME INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A CHALLENGE TO
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE:
AN ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
COMPETENCE IN NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION**

by

Pipsa Purhonen 2008

Journal of Intercultural Communication 18

SME internationalization as a challenge to interpersonal communication competence

An analysis of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration

Pipsa Purhonen

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Abstract

This paper investigates how the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) poses a challenge to the interpersonal communication competence of SME owners, managers and employees. Interpersonal communication competence is discussed particularly in the contexts of networking and business collaboration.

Collaborative arrangements even with competitors are needed in today's global business world. Through collaborative interaction it is possible, for instance, to reduce development and production costs or channel resources to creating new innovative products (Stohl & Walker 2002: 237). The expansion of business activities across international borders, in particular, requires networking and collaborative interaction regionally, nationally and internationally. Based on the literature of interpersonal and intercultural communication competence, interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction, this paper provides an analysis of the interpersonal communication competence specific to and needed in the context of SME internationalization.

Keywords: collaboration, intercultural communication competence, interpersonal communication competence, networks, SME internationalization

---

1 Introduction

Until now, the topic of the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has mainly interested business scholars. In the fields of organization, marketing or management studies SME internationalization has been approached through a variety of theories and models. However, one connecting theme for the central theories of SME internationalization is the importance of networks. As Ojala (2008: 17, 19) puts it, network relationships have a significant role in the main theories of business internationalization such as the Uppsala internationalization model (Johanson & Vahlne 1977; Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul 1975), the network model of internationalization (Johanson & Mattsson 1988), and the internationalization new venture (INV) theory (Oviatt & McDougall 1994). In these theories networks are discussed, in particular, as an important resource (Uppsala model, INV theory), as determinants of market selection or as facilitating entry to successful resources in SME internationalization (Network model). However, what seems to have been neglected in the literature of (SME) internationalization is a deeper understanding of networking as interpersonal relationships and social interaction. The literature emphasizes the significance of network relationships, but deeper analysis of their creation, management and

development is still required. No work has either been done to examine what kinds of social or communicative competencies are needed in the contexts of networking.

Scholars applying the network perspective to SME internationalization have typically discussed the internationalization process from the viewpoint of *theories of self-interest*, such as the Theory of Social Capital (Coleman 1988)(i) or the Transaction Cost Economics Theory (Williamson 1975)(ii). SME internationalization is typically realized within regional and local networks of authorities, intermediary organizations, research institutions and manufacturing and service companies which, again, can enable access to important national and international information and knowledge networks (see e.g. Sternberg 2000). The networks related to SME internationalization can thus be characterized as interdependent alliances of public and private sector firms (see Monge et al 1998). According to Monge et al (1998), in such alliances different kinds of public goods are typically created and distributed. Consequently a better approach for the study of interpersonal networks within this context is *theories of mutual-interest and collective action*.

An approach utilizing theories of mutual-interest and collective action allows examination of how participants' collective activity and their contribution to mutual or public goods produces joint value maximization and outcomes that are unattainable by individual action (Monge & Contractor 2003: 22). Given its emphasis on collective action and mutuality, it is from this perspective that the interdependency of multiple interpersonal networks related to SME internationalization is best observed. Questions of collaboration are also brought to the fore.

The application of public goods theories to private sector public goods has typically focused only on the distribution or maintenance of public goods, such as resultant effects on the global economy (Monge et al 1998: 3-4). In SME internationalization, examples of public goods as a result of networking are regional development and welfare or effects on the national economy. However, it is also worth recognizing the production of important, interorganizational communication and information public goods within these alliances. Monge et al (1998: 2) characterize these goods as connectivity (the ability of partners to directly communicate with each other through the information and communication system of the alliance) and communality (the availability of a commonly accessible pool of information to alliance partners). For its members, exchange of these goods is the main benefit of belonging to an alliance (Lewis 2006: 230). By the same token, belonging to an alliance demands active participation in the contribution of the goods, as well as open and reciprocal information sharing. Given this, networking in the context of SME internationalization is bound up with the processes of collaboration.

For these reasons this paper focuses on the essential processes in SME internationalization, namely networking and business collaboration. Networking and collaboration are here discussed from the perspective of the interpersonal communication competence of SME owners, managers and employees. The main task of the paper is to analyze *what kind of interpersonal communication competence is specific to and necessary in networking and collaboration*. To approach this goal, literature of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence is first reviewed. As the phenomena of both collaboration and networking are fundamentally communicative and relational (see Lewis 2006: 242; Heiss & Monge 2007), attention is paid to the definitions and conceptualizations of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence which focus on social interaction and interpersonal relationships.

Based on the theory of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence and with the reference also to the literature of interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction, an analysis of the interpersonal communication competence that is essential and specific

to the context of SME internationalization is provided. Finally, the last section summarizes the analysis and suggests some directions for future research.

2 Interpersonal communication competence in intercultural contexts

Interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence are both multidimensional, multi-theoretical concepts which have been defined in many ways. In the different definitions and conceptualizations similar characteristics are, however, often emphasized. To start the synthesis, *accomplishing goals, outcomes or objectives* in interaction is explicated in many of the definitions (see Table 1 for examples). Parks (1994) associates goal-achievement in social interaction with personal control. He sees that when pursuing their goals, competent communicators exert control in social interaction in ways that are both adaptive and collaborative (Parks 1994: 611). *Adaptation* and *collaboration* are suggested as the key to the examination of intercultural communication competence as well (see Hajek and Giles 2003).

Lakey and Canary's (2002) definition of interpersonal communication competence (see Table 1) emphasizes the collaborative nature of interpersonal communication competence. Lakey and Canary (2002: 220) argue that attention to partners in interaction helps actors achieve their own goals. Possessing knowledge of the partner's goals can help the interactant to plan behaviors that contribute to perceptions of competence and, on the other hand, to recognize the existence of incompatible goals. As Parks (1994) puts it, many of the goals in interaction are social by nature and cannot be achieved without the aid of others.

This *relational* nature of interpersonal communication competence refers also to the relational outcomes of social interaction, such as satisfying interpersonal relationships. In accordance with the definition of relational competence proposed by Spitzberg & Cupach (1984), interpersonal communication competence can be viewed as competence both in social interaction and in the creation and management of interpersonal relationships.

TABLE 1		
Definitions of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence		
Interpersonal communication competence		
Relational competence: 'the extent to which objectives functionally related to communication are fulfilled through cooperative interaction appropriate to the Interpersonal context'	Spitzberg & Cupach (1984: 100)	
Communicative competence: 'the degree to which individuals satisfy and perceive that they have satisfied their goals within the limits of a given social situation and without jeapordizing their ability or opportunity to pursue their other subjectively more important goals'	Parks (1994: 595)	
'The extent to which an interactant achieves	Spitzberg (2003:	

preferred outcomes in a manner that upholds the emergent standards of legitimacy of those judging the interaction'	98)
'An impression formed by an interaction partner of an actor's communication behaviors that are performed to achieve his/her goals while also to respect the partner's goals'	Lakey & Canary (2002: 221)
Intercultural communication competence	
'The appropriate level of motivation, knowledge, and skills of both the sojourner and the host-national in regards to their relationship, leading to an effective relational outcome'	Imahori & Lanigan (1989: 276-277)
'The ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment'	Chen & Starosta (1996: 358- 359)
'The process of obtaining desirable communicative outcomes through the appropriate management of levels of individual/stereotype expectation in communication, given a cognitive awareness of all participants' cultural orientations, cultural history, and motivations'	Hajek & Giles (2003: 952)

Lakey and Canary (2002) explicitly define interpersonal communication competence as an impression or attribution of the interaction partner. An interesting question to consider is where to locate this competence. The actor and coactor in an interaction can judge their own competence ('I was a competent communicator'), and the competence of each other ('the other person was a competent communicator') or the interaction ('our interaction was competent') (Spitzberg 2000: 113). Thus, rather than as certain skills, abilities, techniques or tactics, interpersonal communication competence should be understood as the evaluations attributed to these behaviors (see Spitzberg 2006). Interpersonal communication competence can be described as an inference and is, hence, *subjective* by its nature.

Another fundamental characteristic of the nature of interpersonal communication competence is that it is *contextual*. This means that the same behavior can produce different outcomes in different contexts (see Spitzberg 2006). Context can refer to, for instance, the culture, time, relationship, situation or function of the communication. In accordance with this classification, networking and collaboration can be seen as functions of social interaction. Behavior evaluated as competent in networking and collaboration may not be evaluated similarly in other functions such as instruction or guidance. In the same way, competence at one time or in one culture, relationship or situation does not as such imply competence in another. (See e.g. Spitzberg 2000, 2003 for context as a multifaceted concept.) To conclude, context is not "out there" but constructed in the mind of the interactant and incorporated into both action and judgments of action (Spitzberg 2000: 112). This

means that perceptions of and related to the context of interaction establish different kinds of expectations for interpersonal communication competence.

Owing to this contextual nature of interpersonal communication competence, it can be asked whether interpersonal communication competence and intercultural communication competence actually characterize the same phenomena - competence in social interaction and interpersonal relations -. However, the latter only emphasizes the cultural context of interaction. As Spitzberg (1989: 261) states, 'the fundamental *nature* of the communication process does not change given different cultural contexts; only the contextual parameters change'. The significance of the (intercultural) context to interpersonal communication competence is not underestimated in this paper but is, rather, further discussed in relation to the criteria of the effectiveness and appropriateness and the dimensions of interpersonal communication competence.

2.1 Effectiveness and appropriateness as criteria of interpersonal communication competence

Effectiveness and appropriateness are typically identified as the dual criteria for the evaluation of interpersonal communication competence. Effectiveness refers to the achievement of preferable or desirable outcomes in communication. Depending on the context, effectiveness can subsume understanding, clarity and efficiency. (e.g. Spitzberg 1994). When considering what is perceived as competence in social interaction, it must be noted that the features and emphasis of the criteria are derived from the context of interaction. In high-context cultures like China accuracy may not help in accomplishing interpersonal goals such as harmony in interaction.

Appropriateness, again, can be understood as the perception of suitable behavior, politeness, correctness or legitimacy in interaction. Suitable behavior refers to avoiding the violation of valued rules, expectancies and norms. Nevertheless, sometimes to be appropriate in interpersonal communication, renegotiating the rules or norms is required. Appropriateness should therefore rather be conceived as 'the perceived fitness or legitimacy of a communicator's behavior in a given context' (Spitzberg 2000: 105). In other words, appropriateness is highly sensitive to cultural, relational or situational parameters in social interaction. Moreover, effectiveness and appropriateness must be seen as complementary systems to each other; communication that is both effective and appropriate is most probably perceived as competent. (For criteria of interpersonal communication competence see e.g. Cupach & Canary 1997, Spitzberg 1994, 2000, 2006)

An interesting point is that, according to the meta-analysis of intercultural communication competence research by Bradford, Allen & Beissen (2000), intercultural communication competence and intercultural communication effectiveness have often been operationalized as the same phenomena. Effectiveness seems to be emphasized especially in professional intercultural communication (see e.g. 'a profile of the interculturally effective person IEP' (Canadian Foreign Service Institute 2000 or 'Overseas effectiveness' (Kealey 1990) for examples). The relational and collaborative nature of intercultural communication competence should also be acknowledged more explicitly within professional contexts. As previously noted, effectiveness and appropriateness are complementary to each other, and efforts in sensitivity or legitimacy are likely to have a positive influence on achieving goals and outcomes in interaction. Over the years, the study of intercultural communication competence has been criticized for following an outcome-focused approach and concentrating on competence as effective cross-cultural adaptation (see Imahori & Lanigan 1989).

2.2 Dimensions of interpersonal communication competence

Most communication scholars define interpersonal communication competence as the construction of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge and metacognitive skills. Competence in social interaction requires, for instance, knowledge of the communication partner, of conversing and the topic (Spitzberg & Hecht 1984: Knowledge (KNO) Measure); knowledge of communication processes, strategies and context; and metacognitive skills to plan, perceive, evaluate, control and analyze communication. (For dimensions of interpersonal communication competence, see e.g. Valkonen 2003; Spitzberg 2003, 2006.)

The affective dimension of interpersonal communication competence can be understood as motivation to communicate competently (Spitzberg & Hecht 1984: Motivation (MOT) Measure) and may be expressed in a person's willingness to approach or avoid particular situations or achieve specific objectives in interaction (Wilson & Sabee 2003: 11). Finally, the behavioral dimension of interpersonal communication competence refers to interpersonal communication skills. In the Conversational Skills Rating Scale (CSRS), a widely used measure of interpersonal communication skills, these skills are classified in terms of attentiveness, composure, expressiveness and coordination. Attentiveness refers to the quality of being interested in and attentive to a conversational partner. Composure can be understood as assertiveness and confidence, or avoidance of anxiety cues in interaction. Expressiveness relates to topical verbosity or nonverbal animation and finally, coordination refers to interaction management, including coordinated entrance and exit from conversations, nondisruptive flow of conversational turns or topic innovation. (Spitzberg 1998, 2006)

In the literature of intercultural communication, the behavioral dimension of intercultural communication competence is operationalized similarly to interpersonal communication skills (for example, see Chen & Starosta 1996, 2005). The structure of The Conversational Skills Rating Scale CSRS has also been tested in intercultural contexts (Milhouse 1993) and validated as consistent regardless of the participants' cultures. This finding supports the equivalence of perspective of interpersonal communication competence in intercultural contexts as well as Spitzberg's (1989) statement that the actual interaction process is the same even if the context of communication changes.

Milhouse's (1993) research on the applicability of interpersonal communication competence to intercultural communication contexts also resulted in finding equivalent operationalization of the Knowledge (KNO) Measure and Motivation (MTO) Measure across cultures. However, in the literature of intercultural communication and definitions of intercultural communication competence (Table 1), the cognitive and affective dimensions of intercultural communication competence are explicated somewhat differently from the cognitive and affective dimensions of interpersonal communication competence.

In Chen and Starosta's (1996: 358-359) definition of intercultural communication competence, recognition of the interactant's multiple identities in a specific environment is emphasized. Understanding and awareness of how cultures vary and how they affect people's thinking and behavior is typically characterized as intercultural awareness (e.g. Chen & Starosta 1996: 365). Korzilius et al (2007) define intercultural awareness as follows:

> 'Intercultural awareness is the ability to empathize and to decentre. More specifically, in a communication situation, it is the ability to take on the perspective(s) of (a) conversational partner(s) from another culture or with another

nationality, and of their cultural background(s), and thus, to be able to understand
and take into consideration interlocutors' different perspective(s) simultaneously.'

Secondly, knowledge of cultural parameters such as knowledge of cultural orientation and history
are also brought to the fore in intercultural communication competence (see Hajek and Giles 2003
in Table 1).

The affective dimension of intercultural communication competence has also been characterized as
readiness to accommodate oneself to intercultural challenges (Kim 1991: 269) or as intercultural
sensitivity (Chen and Starosta 1996: 362). Intercultural sensitivity refers to the acknowledgement of
and respect for cultural differences (Chen & Starosta 1996) or as Bennett (1993: 24) puts it, as 'the
construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes
development'. (For intercultural sensitivity see e.g. Bennett 1988, 1993.)

Conceptualizations of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of intercultural communication
competence reflect cultural differences and expectations. Wilson and Sabee (2003) explain
communication competence through communication theories and suggest that from the perspective
of expectancy theories competent communicators are responsive to expectations (8-9). However, in
examinations of intercultural communication competence, expectations related to social interaction
are typically limited only to cultural expectations. Similarly, Korzilius et al (2007) admit that their
definition of cultural awareness (see above) does not take into account the individual, episodic and
relational components which should also be represented if a person is to be considered
interculturally aware.

The perspective of intercultural communication competence alone is too narrow for the examination
of competence in social interaction and interpersonal relationships, even if the context is
intercultural. The perspective of intercultural communication competence mainly acknowledges
only one dimension of the multifaceted concept of context: culture. It is better then to see
intercultural communication competence as a sub-concept and part of the broader interpersonal
communication competence. Making communication choices and enacting communication
appropriate to the setting entails perceiving the contextual parameters and identifying the variables
that influence the situation (see Duran and Spitzberg 1995: 260). Admittedly, this can be
challenging, especially in intercultural contexts, in which appropriateness requires both recognizing
different kinds of cultural values and flexibility both in behavior and with one's cultural identity.
Nonetheless, adaptability, sensitivity and respect are not needed only in cultural terms, but within
the broader context of any social interaction, where situation, function, time and relationship are
also factors.

Finally, it is important to note that these behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions are
interrelated and are all part of interpersonal communication competence. The cognitive and
affective dimensions are needed to produce and display the behavioral dimension, interpersonal
communication skills. Skills are the actual manifested behaviors which attempt to achieve goals and
understanding in interaction (Spitzberg 2003: 95) or as Kim (1991: 270) puts it, the behavioral
dimension can be understood as carrying out what a person is capable of in the cognitive and
affective dimensions.

In this section the concepts of interpersonal communication competence and intercultural
communication competence have been discussed. It has been concluded that intercultural
communication competence is part of interpersonal communication competence; the concepts are
not separate. In the next section, interpersonal communication competence will be examined

particularly in the contexts of networking and collaboration and from the perspective of SME owners, managers and employees. An analysis of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration will be provided based on the literature reviewed in this section and the theory-base of interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction.

3 Interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration

When aiming to examine the interpersonal communication competence specific to and needed in the internationalization of SMEs, it is first useful to summon up the main parameters of the context. The internationalization of business activities across international borders requires networking and collaborative interaction regionally, nationally and internationally. Hence, it is appropriate to confine the examination particularly to the contexts - or functions - of networking and collaboration. The contexts of social interaction are also often multicultural. This must also be taken into account in the analysis of interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization.

From the perspective of theories of mutual interest and collective action as well as of research in collaborative interaction (see Lewis 2006; Stohl & Walker 2002), it can be argued that networking and collaboration as functions are closely connected. To be competent in both of these communication contexts requires similar kinds of skills, knowledge and motivation. Here this competence is analyzed through the theory-base of interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence and interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction. Instead of providing a molecular list of certain communication skills, knowledge and attitudes needed in networking and collaboration, interpersonal communication competence is examined through five areas of competence which are seen here subjective to the context: information sharing; the management of diversity; adaptation and adjustment; integrative negotiation; and the creation and management of relationships. These areas of competence can also be understood as the specific challenges to the interpersonal communication competence of SME owners, managers and employees which the process of SME internationalization poses.

These areas of competence are illustrated in Figure 1. The figure shows that they are interconnected and overlapping, and together they illustrate the kind of interpersonal communication competence that is essential and specific to networking and collaboration. The three arrows in the figure signify the three dimensions of interpersonal communication competence and show that skills, knowledge and motivation are all included in the appointed areas. The areas of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration are discussed further below.
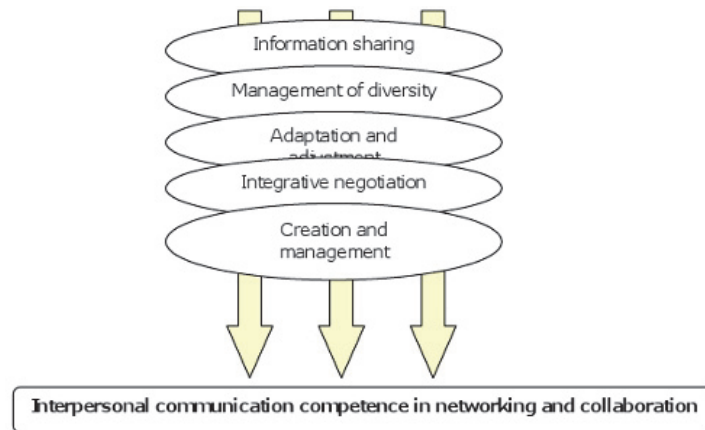
FIGURE 1   Areas of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration

3.1 Information sharing

For participants, the exchange of expertise, information and knowledge can be seen as the main benefit of belonging to business networks and collaborative groups (see Lewis 2006: 230). Based on the literature of collaborative interaction and the theories of mutual interest and collective action, it can be said that mutuality, reciprocity and openness are the criteria for competent information sharing in the contexts of collaboration and networking. For SME owners, managers and employees, these criteria create challenges in terms of activeness and participation as well as creativeness and innovativeness in conversations and meetings. To contribute to the mutual or public good, it is necessary to contribute one's own objectives, ideas or proposals to the commonly accessible pool of information for one's alliance partners (see Monge 1998).

It is also important to acknowledge that the groups collaborating often have unstable and ambiguous borders. They are always closely connected to broader networks and are interdependent with the contexts in which they are embedded (Stohl & Walker 2002). It is therefore useful for collaborating groups if their members have the ability 'to determine who in their social networks can link them to the needed knowledge and skills' (Stohl & Walker 2002: 249). For SME owners, managers and employees it is thus important to recognize what kind of information and other resources exist within their interpersonal networks, and how these resources could help their collaborating group or partners. Stohl and Walker (2002: 242) also claim that the collaborating group's ability to access and use the needed knowledge is even more dependent on members' networks than on the group's openness or its supportive climate.

3.2 The management of diversity

According to Lewis's (2006) review of collaborative interaction in communication scholarship and research agendas, in the definitions of collaboration the features of 'coordinated, joint action', 'mutual and shared goals' or 'mutual exchange' are typically emphasized. However, as Lewis (2006) also remarks, individual goals are also (often) involved in collaboration and the members in collaborating groups are therefore rarely unanimous in their goals and activity. Stohl and Walker (2002: 242-243) argue that members' individual and organizational goals that are in any way distinct from the overall objective can become sources of tension and distrust in collaboration. Members in collaborating groups are committed to multiple targets including the targets of their partner organization (Stohl & Walker 2003: 245), and this can create problems in achieving trust, commitment or reciprocity within the collaborating group. This complexity puts particular strain on the collaborating and networking partners' interpersonal communication competence. SME representatives must firstly have knowledge and understanding of and secondly pay attention to the multiple organizational affiliations of their collaborative partners and to how these affiliations may affect their goals, tasks or roles in the interaction and on a wider scale in their larger networks.

The diversity among the individuals in any collaborating groups and networks must be not only acknowledged, but also respected. Respect for others' values, even if they are different from one's own, and equity in collaboration are important. Questions about equity, equality or ethics in business collaboration are always complex. Since in collaboration related to SME internationalization there are always organizational goals, conflicts may arise not only between the various interactants' values and goals on the personal level, but also between these personal values and the organizations' values. Ethics is also understood differently in different cultures, which is why knowledge and acceptance of different cultures are very important in SME internationalization.

3.3 Adaptation and adjustment

The complexity and multiplicity of collaboration and networking pose a great challenge in terms of adaptation and adjustment in social interaction. In the literature of interpersonal communication competence, adaptation (together with collaboration and goal-accomplishment) has been characterized as, for instance, revising one's interpretations of events and people in accordance with changing goals and situational demands; or predicting and explaining others' behavior to empathize or role-take to the degree required to satisfy one's personal goals (Parks 1995: 606). Adaptation entails possessing a diverse behavioral repertoire and adjusting effectively to changes in the surrounding context (Spitzberg (1989: 20).

The collaborating groups and networks are often temporary and changes in them may be rapid and demanding, especially in unfamiliar international contexts. Therefore, management of uncertainty and adjustment to sudden and unexpected changes have become essential facets of interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization.

In the literature of intercultural communication competence, adaptation is often regarded as psychological adaptation – coping with frustration, stress or alienation (see Chen & Starosta 1996: 354, Kim 1991). However, adaptation in intercultural communication contexts can also refer to recognition of interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment (see Chen & Starosta's 1996 in Table 1). Especially in intercultural collaboration and networking contexts, flexibility and adaptation may be needed not only in behavior but also in the interactant's (cultural) identity.

3.4 Integrative negotiation

Negotiation is not here understood merely as business negotiation (compare Numprasertchai & Swierczek 2006) but also as negotiation of the collaborating group's boundaries, borders, contexts, roles and tasks (see Stohl & Walker 2002: 242). In the context of collaboration, integrative or cooperative negotiation tactics are emphasized rather than distributive or competitive ones.

Morley (2006) reports the finding of Williams' (1993) study on effective negotiators, stating that effective cooperative negotiators were seen as fair-minded, willing to share information, actively exploring the opponent's views and avoiding using threats. Lakey and Canary's (2002) study on interpersonal communication competence in conflicts confirmed the proposition that showing support for a partner's conflicting goals and choosing integrative rather than distributive tactics to manage the conflict had a positive effect on goal-accomplishment and effectiveness in communication. These findings are highly consistent with research on collaborative interaction (Lewis 2006). When networking or collaborating, SME representatives must be able not only to accept but to actively seek compromises, which lead to mutual or public benefits and goods.

3.5 The creation and management of relationships

In Lewis's (2006) review of collaborative interaction, the following communication skills or behaviors are mentioned as examples of collaborative communication skills: showing concern for others; reasoning with others; expressions of trust; using elaboration, directness and mutual concessions; providing face support; maintaining a warm and friendly tone; assertiveness; and the use of effective communication structures (230-231). These skills or behaviors could just as well be characterized as relational communication skills. In the literature of relational communication, similar skills or competencies are emphasized. Reciprocal self-disclosure, sharing informal and personal information, highlighting shared interests, showing confidence in each other and making decisions together, for instance, are emphasized in relationship formation and management (see Hargie and Tourish 1997: 360-373).

The relational nature of both networking and collaboration is set out in the research literature (see e.g. Hardy et al 2003: 323, Heiss and Monge 2007). This is why interpersonal communication competence in these contexts should be examined particularly from the perspective of relational communication.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) take a dialogic view of interpersonal communication competence. From the perspective of their relational-dialectics theory, interpersonal communication competence is determined by multiple, valid meaning systems as well as dialectical tensions and contradictions in social interaction and interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal communication competence is realized in interaction that is sensitive to the demands and possibilities of contradiction (Wilson & Sabee 2003: 8). Attention is thus drawn from interpersonally competent individuals to competent relationships or interaction (Wilson & Sabee 2003: 29).

According to Baxter & Montgomery (1996: 1999-203, see also Wilson & Sabee 2003: 32) competent interaction is realized through respect to multivocality (recognizes and is sensitive to multiple, simultaneously salient meaning systems in interaction), fluid dialogue (engages the ongoing exchange and joint action) and creativity (creates ways to coordinate action without sharing the same meaning systems (Pearce 1989)). It must, however, be acknowledged that Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) relational-dialectics theory concerns especially close relationships. This is why it is applicable to the context of SME internationalization only selectively and with

acknowledgement of the professional nature of the interpersonal relationships in question. In any case, it can be concluded that in networking and collaboration, SME representatives need to manage relational communication that creates understanding among the interactants as well as mutuality and trust.

4 Concluding remarks

Given the significance of networking and business collaboration in the internationalization of business operations, interpersonal communication competence is an important resource and asset in the process of SME internationalization. Based on the literature of interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence, collaborative interaction and interpersonal networks, five areas of interpersonal communication competence become focal in SME internationalization: information sharing, the management of diversity, adaptation and adjustment, integrative negotiation, and the creation and management of relationships. These areas of competence were seen here as specific to the contexts of networking and business collaboration.

These areas of competence were considered in the light of the two criteria of interpersonal communication competence: effectiveness and appropriateness. In the contexts of collaboration and networking pursuing one's own (business) goals in any interaction should be done in such a way that it is acceptable to the other parties and does not jeopardize the continuation of the relationship. Task accomplishment or goal achievement in collaborative interaction is often dependent on relational communication and the robustness of the interpersonal relationship. Teng's (2007) study on collaborative intercultural study programs, for instance, showed that students felt they needed to know the members of their collaborating group 'well enough to collaborate'.

However, there are also difficulties in depending on the relational perspective to interpersonal communication competence in the context of SME internationalization. The research literature on relational communication, in particular Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) relational dialectics theory, often discusses interpersonal communication competence in *close* relationships. Furthermore, Baxter and Montgomery (1996: 205) explicitly consider the applicability of relational dialectics theory in different cultures (see also Wilson & Sabee 2003: 38). It also needs to be pointed out, as Lewis (2006: 239) does, that the collaboration literature also depends on assumptions of 'western' communication styles and characteristics.

For these reasons, empirical research is needed to study how interpersonal communication competence is perceived by SME owners, managers and employees and their main national and international collaborative partners in SME internationalization. Citing Lewis (2006: 238) further: 'Research needs to further analyze how participants in collaboration manage this type of interaction, how they recognize it as appropriate, and how they evaluate their experiences with it". Attitudes, expectations and evaluations of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration should be further examined in a wide range of cultural contexts.

Numprasertchai and Swierczek's (2006) research interestingly indicated that at the same time there seem to be both culture-specific and culture-general standards for business negotiations. In today's global business world, it would be interesting to study whether, for example, traditional Asian values affect perceptions of networking and collaboration competence in international business relations or whether these perceptions could be considered universal in these contexts.

NOTES

[i] Arenius (2002), for instance, has studied the creation of firm-level social capital and its' exploitation in the process of internationalization.

[ii] See e.g. Ruzzier et al (2006) for the Transaction cost approach to SME internationalization.

REFERENCES

Arenius, P. (2002). *Creation of firm-level social capital, its exploitation, and the process of early internationalization*. PhD thesis. Institute of Strategy and International Business. Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, Helsinki University of Technology, Espoo.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating. Dialogues & dialectics.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Bennett, M. J. (1988). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10 (2), 175-195.

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In: R. M. Paige, ed. *Education for the intercultural experience*. 2nd ed. Yarmouth (Me.): Intercultural Press, 1993, 21-71.

Bradford, L., Allen, M. & Beisser, K. R. (2000). Meta-analysis of intercultural communication competence research. *World Communication*, 29 (1), 28-51.

Canadian Foreign Service Institute, Centre for Intercultural Learning (2000). *A profile of the interculturally effective person*. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada.

Cegala, D. J. (1981). Interaction involvement: A cognitive dimension of communicative competence. *Communication Education*, 30, 109-121.

Chen, G. & Starosta, W. J. (1996). Intercultural communication competence: a synthesis. In B. R. Burleson, ed. *Communication Yearbook 19.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1996, 353-383.

Chen, G. & Starosta, W. (2005). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.

Cupach, W. R. & Canary. D. J. (1997) *Competence in interpersonal conflict*. New York : McGraw-Hill.

Duran, R. L. & Spitzberg, B. H. (1995). Toward the development and validation of a measure of cognitive communication competence. *Communication Quarterly*, 43 (3), 259-275.

Hajek. C. & Giles, H. (2003). New directions in intercultural communication competence: the process model. In J.O. Greene & B. R. Burleson, eds. *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003, 935-957.

Hardy, C., Phillips, N. & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40 (2), 321-347.

Hargie, C. T. C. & Tourish, D. (1997). Relational communication. In O. D. W. Hargie, ed. *The handbook of communication skills*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1997, 358-382.

Heiss, B. M. & Monge, P. (2007). *Organizational network implications of relating as communicating: Recommendations for prudent uses of the multitheoretical, multilevel framework*. Paper presented at 57th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA, May 24-28, 2007.

Imahori, T. T. & Lanigan, M. L. (1989). Relational model of intercultural communication competence. *Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relation*, 13, 269-286.

Johanson, J. & Mattsson, L-G. (1988). Internationalization in industrial systems - A network approach. In N. Hood & J-E. Vahlne, eds. *Strategies in global competition*. London: Croom Helm, 1988, 287-314.

Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J-E. (1977). The internationalization process of the firm: a model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments. *Journal of International Business Studies* 8 (1), 23-32.

Johanson, J. & Wiedersheim-Paul, F. (1975). The internationalization of the firm: four Swedish cases. *Journal of Management Studies* 12 (3), 305-322.

Kealey, D. J. (1990). *Cross-cultural effectiveness. A study of Canadian technical advisors overseas*. Quebec: Canadian International Development Agency.

Kim, Y. Y. (1991). Intercultural communication competence. A systems-theoretic view. In S. Ting-Toomey & F. Korzenny, F, eds. *Cross-cultural interpersonal communication*. Newbury Park: Sage Publication, Inc., 1991, 259-275.

Korzilius, H., van Hooft, A. & Planken, B. (2007). A longitudinal study on intercultural awareness and foreign language acquisition in the Netherlands. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 15. Retrieved May 16, 2008, from http://www.immi.se/ intercultural

Lakey, S. G. & Canary, D. J. (2002). Actor goal achievement and sensitivity to partner as critical factors in understanding interpersonal communication competence and conflict strategies. In C. S. Beck, ed. *Communication Monographs*, 69 (3), 217-235.

Lewis, L. K. (2006). Collaborative interaction: reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. In C. S. Beck, ed. *Communication Yearbook 30*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2006, 107-247.

Lindell, M. & Karagozoglu, N. (1997). Global strategies of US and Scandinavian R&D-intensive small- and medium-sized companies. *European Management Journal*, 15 (1), 92-100.

McCroskey, J. C. & Richmond, V. P. (1995). Correlates of compulsive communication: Quantitative and qualitative characteristics. *Communication Quarterly,* 43, 39-52.

Milhouse, V. H. (1993). The applicability of interpersonal communication competence to the intercultural communication context. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester, eds. *Intercultural communication competence*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication, Inc, 1993, 184-203.

Moe, K. O. & Zeiss, A. M. (1982). Measuring self-efficacy expectations for social skills: A methodological inquiry. *Cognitive Therapy and Research,* 6, 191-205.

Monge, P. R. & Contractor, N. S. (2001). Emergence of communication networks. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam, eds. *The handbook of organizational communica*tion. Advances in theory, research and methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2001, 440-502.

Monge, P. R. & Contractor, N. S. (2003). *Theories of communication networks*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Monge. P. R., Fulk, J., Kalman, M. E., Flanagin, A. J., Parnassa, C. & Rumsey, S. (1998). Production of collective action in alliance-based interorganizational communication and information systems. *Organization Science*, 9, 411-433.

Morley, I. E. (2006). Negotiation and bargaining. In O. Hargie, ed. The handbook of communication skills (3rd ed.). London: Routledge, 2006, 403-425.

Norton, R. W. & Pettigrew, L. S. (1979). Attentiveness as a style of communication: A structural analysis. *Communication Monographs* 46, 13-26.

Numprasertchai, H. P. & Swierczek, F. M. (2006). Dimensions of success in international business negotiations: A comparative study on Thai and international business negotiators. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 11. Retrieved May 16, 2008, from http://www.immi.se/ intercultural

Ojala, A. (2008). *Internationalization of software firms. Finnish small and medium-sized software firms in Japan*. PhD thesis. Jyväskylä studies in computing. University of Jyväskylä.

Oviatt, B. M. & McDougall, P. P. (1994). Toward a theory in international new ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 25 (1), 45-64.

Parks, M. R. (1994). Communicative competence and interpersonal control. In M. L. Knapp & G. R. Miller, eds. *Handbook of interpersonal communication*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994, 589-618.

Pearce, W. B. (1989). *Communication and the human condition*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ruzzier, M., Hisrich, R. D. & Antoncic, B. (2006). SME internationalization research: past, present and future. *Journal of small business and enterprise development*, 13 (4), 476-497.

Spitzberg, B. H. (1988). Communication competence: Measures of perceived effectiveness. In C. H. Tardy (ed.) *A handbook for the study of human communication: Methods and instruments for observing, measuring and assessing communication processes.* Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1988, 67-105.

Spitzberg, B. H. (1989). Issues in development of a theory of interpersonal competence in the intercultural context. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 241-268.

Spitzberg, B. H., (1994). The dark side of (in)competence. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg, eds. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994, 25-49.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2000). What is good communication? *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*, 29, 103-119.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2003). Methods of interpersonal skill assessment. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson, eds. *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2003, 93-134.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2006). *CSRS The conversational skills rating scale. An instructional assessment of interpersonal competence*. NCA Diagnostic Series. Paper presented at 92nd National Communication Association Annual Convention, San Antonio, Texas, November 16-19, 2006.

Spitzberg, B.H. & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Hecht, M. L. (1984). A component model of relational competence. *Human Communication Research*, 10 (4), 575-599.

Sternberg, R. (2000). Innovation networks and regional development - evidence from the European Regional Innovation Survey (ERIS): Theoretical concepts: Methodological approach, empirical basis and introduction to the theme issue. *European Planning Studies*, 8 (4), 389-407.

Stohl, C. & Walker, K. (2002). A Bona Fide perspective for the future of groups. Understanding collaborating groups. In L. R. Frey, ed. *New directions in group communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc, 2002, 237-252.

Teng, L. Y-W. (2007). Collaborating and communicating online: A cross-bordered intercultural project between Taiwan and the U.S. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 13. Retrieved May 16, 2008, from http://www.immi.se/ intercultural

Valkonen, T. (2003). *Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi. Näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin* [Finnish] [Assessing speech communication skills. Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students]. phD thesis. Jyväskylä studies in humanities 7. University of Jyväskylä.

Williams, G. R. (1993). Style and effectiveness in negotiation. In L. Hall, ed. Negotiation: strategies for mutual gain: the basic seminar of the Harward program on negotiation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Williamson, O. E. (1975). *Markets and hierarchies: Analysis and antitrust implications, a study of the economics of internal organization*. New York: Free Press.

Wilson, S. R. and Sabee, C. M. (2003). Explicating communicative competence as a theoretical term. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson, B. R, eds. *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2003, 3-50.

About the Author

MA Pipsa Purhonen is a doctoral student in speech communication at the Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She has a post as a full-time researcher in the Doctoral School of Communication Studies. Her research focuses on the internationalization of Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to China as a challenge to interpersonal communication competence.

From September 2008 to August 2009 Pipsa Purhonen will work as a visiting scholar at the Centre of Asian Studies, The University of Hong Kong.

Author's Address
Ms Pipsa Purhonen
University of Jyväskylä
Department of Communication
P.O. Box 35 (ToB)
40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

II

PERCEPTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF SMEs AND INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS
CONCERNING COLLABORATIVE
RELATIONSHIPS IN SME INTERNATIONALIZATION

by

Pipsa Purhonen 2010a

Perceptions of Representatives of SMEs and Intermediary Organizations Concerning Collaborative Relationships in SME Internationalization

Pipsa Purhonen, University of Jyväskylä

The present study examines collaborative relationships between representatives of Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the relevant Finnish and international intermediary organizations in the context of the internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China. Collaborative relationships are approached, in particular, from the perspective of interpersonal communication and relational dialectics. An online questionnaire survey, in 2009, of representatives from both Finnish SMEs and intermediary organizations ($N = 113$) provided data for quantitative analysis using descriptive methods and exploratory factor analysis. The results showed that perceptions of collaborative relationships should be conceptualized as four-dimensional: (1) trusted relationship, (2) equal relationship, (3) regular relationship, and (4) predictable relationship. Participants in collaborative relationships give priority to the achievement of results and goals, to shared goals and objectives, and to joint commitments to working together. However, the results of the study also indicate that bipolar concepts such as independence-interdependence and private-professional shape collaborative interaction in SME internationalization.

Internationalization has become a necessity rather than a choice for many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Finland. There are approximately 200 Finnish companies operating in China, the majority of which are SMEs (see Mikkola & Pirttimäki, 2007). Interpersonal relationships are important for SMEs seeking to expand their businesses into China. Previous research shows that in Chinese markets *guanxi*, which can be understood as an "interpersonal relationship" (So & Walker, 2006) or "the process of social interaction" (Fan, 2002), helps businesses to obtain important information and to influence Chinese decision makers (Björkman & Kock, 1995). *Guanxi* can reduce business risks, provide access to markets and customers, and help with business legal problems (Ai, 2006). *Guanxi* is especially important in the case of SMEs and in the initial stages of entering the Chinese market (Yeung & Tung, 1996).

Instead of contacting the Chinese partner directly, SME internationalization is often realized within regional and local networks of authorities, research institutions, consultancy and service companies, and other intermediary organizations. These networks enable access to important national and international networks (see Sternberg, 2000). Intermediary organizations related to SME internationalization are diverse, such as financing companies, innovation and technology centers, and business agents. Further, both formal and informal relationships are emphasized in the process of SME internationalization (see Holmlund & Kock, 1998; Ojala, 2008). Consequently, the range of possible collaborative partners in SME internationalization is broad and the members in these collaborative networks typically represent the many kinds of actors in international business. This does, however, mean that the actors also have a diversity of personal and organizational objectives in SME internationalization; for example, SME representatives may primarily be aiming to develop

business operations, whereas intermediaries may be more concerned with supporting regional development. Collaborative relationships can, therefore, be seen as multicultural relationships due to their organizational and personal backgrounds—as well as the national or ethnic backgrounds of the participants.

Several political and power inequalities can exist between the participants involved in collaboration, individuals and institutional. Therefore, as Keyton and Stallworth suggest, "Group member assimilation and relationship building are more crucial and require more attention than in other types of task groups" (2003, p. 258). Expectations, appreciations, and assumptions, which can also be seen as possible sources of tension, are probably related to collaborative relationships between SME and intermediary representatives. There are, therefore, good reasons to study how the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations perceive these interpersonal relationships.

Theoretical Background: Conceptualizing Collaboration and Collaborative Relationships

Even though the concept of collaboration has been applied widely across disciplines and defined in multiple ways, some points of convergence do exist. First, the definitions tend to focus on action, as collaboration is primarily an activity. Second, collaboration refers to the relation between self and other(s). Third, collaboration is characterized by equality between participants. Fourth, the definitions emphasize collaboration as a developing and changing process with a beginning, middle, and an end. Fifth, collaboration is seen as emergent, informal, and volitional (collaborative interaction in communication scholarship reviewed by Lewis, 2006). Finally, shared goals, member interdependence, equal input by participants and shared decision making are essential to collaboration (Stallworth, 1998, cited in Keyton & Stallworth, 2003).

Collaboration is often approached as a group phenomenon and typically the definitions view the process as temporary. Also, a collaboration network can have participants from many organizations as Stohl and Walker (2002) explain:

> *Collaboration* is the process of creating and sustaining a negotiated temporary system which spans organizational boundaries involving autonomous stakeholders with varying capabilities including resources, knowledge and expertise and which is directed toward individual goals and mutually accountable and innovative ends. (p. 240)

Stohl and Walker (2002) apply a *bona fide* group perspective to examine collaboration based on the idea that groups emerge from communication not only within the group but also across its borders. The perspective suggests that groups primarily have stable but permeable boundaries, that they are interdependent with the contexts in which they are embedded, and that they have unstable and ambiguous borders that differentiate the group from its contexts (Stohl & Walker, 2002; see also Frey, 1994, 2003). As Keyton and Stallworth (2003) see it, four key aspects locate collaboration within the *bona fide* group perspective: "(a) members from various organizations addressing a shared problem, (b) the potential imbalance of power, (c) divided membership loyalty, and (d) rotating organizational representation" (p. 239). The *bona fide* group perspective also recognizes the possible dialectical tensions among

the participants, their stakeholder organizations and their goals in collaboration (Heath & Frey, 2004).

This paper studies collaboration as interpersonal communication in a dyadic relationship instead of the group context. Furthermore, due to the complicated nature of collaboration processes, as described above, the paper uses the perspective of relational dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) to examine interpersonal communication in collaborative relationships. From this vantage point, relationships are shaped by dynamic interplays of contradictory forces, for instance integration-separation, certainty-uncertainty, and openness-closedness (Baxter, 2004a, 2004b; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These bipolar forces do not exclude one another but are both present and mutually negating in relationships, even though one force may dominate at any particular time or situation (Montgomery, 1993). The creation and management of collaborative relationships can be seen as a complex knot of ongoing contradictory interplays in interpersonal communication, which are emergent and dynamic but also in dialogue with the social order that exists outside the immediate boundary of the dyadic (Baxter, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). By choosing the perspective of relational dialectics, I suggest that collaborative relationships are built not only on mutuality but also on individuality, not only on interdependence but also on independence, and that the management of these dialectical tensions is essential in collaborative interaction related to SME internationalization.

In addition to these bipolar forces, other factors such as differences in national and organizational cultures, levels of economic development, the regulatory environment, technological know-how, business goals, and specific communication goals and processes are possible sources of complexity in intercultural business relationships (Saatci, 2008). In order to facilitate the ideal collaboration, the participants should engage in dialogic processes, informal networks, and sharing of organizational agendas (see Heath & Frey, 2004). As collaboration typically lacks solid borders, "it is impossible to imagine that all relevant business is conducted around the collaboration meeting table" (Heath & Frey 2004, p. 204). Collaborative relationships in SME internationalization can, therefore, be seen as more complicated than many other business or task relationships.

In summary, I see that collaborative relationships are created, managed, and developed in collaborative interaction that is shaped by dialectical tensions. I argue that collaboration in SME internationalization is interpersonal, multicultural communication in which either both or all participants engage in managing dialectical tensions and work towards mutually acceptable goals.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of collaborative relationships, the present study examines the perception of collaborative relationships in the context of SME internationalization and seeks to answer the following questions: How do the SME and intermediary representatives perceive their collaborative relationships? What do the SME and intermediary representatives see as the primary function of collaborative relationships? What characteristics do the SME and intermediary representatives consider important in their collaborative relationships?

Method

Participants

The participants consisted of 113 respondents (90 men, 22 women, and 1 unreported) of various nationalities (100 Finnish, 5 Chinese, 3 Swedish, 2 Norwegian and 1 each of French, Italian, and Taiwanese) and representing both Finnish SMEs (49) and Finnish and international intermediary organizations (64). The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 71 years (*M* = 48.0). The nationality of their collaboration partners were Finnish (71 %), Chinese (23%), and an assortment of other countries including Australia, England, Hong Kong, Norway, Sweden, and the USA (6%). Comparison of the nationalities of the respondents and their collaboration partners showed that 38% of the collaborative relationships were intercultural and 62% intra-cultural. The durations of the collaborative relationships were: less than a year (13%); 1-3 years (42%); 4-10 years (27%), and more than 10 years (18%). The ways in which the respondents had initially contacted their collaboration partner varied: through project, task, or previous work experience (41%); direct contact, a visit, or a meeting (23%); a colleague, network, or intermediary (18%); informal non-business networks, such as through studies, friends, or relatives (12%); other occasions (4%); and unspecified (2%).

Materials and Procedure

In February and March, 2009, I invited the representatives of Finnish SMEs and Finnish and international intermediary organizations to participate in a bilingual (Finnish and English) web survey. I sent direct email invitations and also placed the invitation on web pages related to the internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China.

I asked the SME representatives, prior to completing the survey, to choose one collaboration partner, who worked in an intermediary organization in Finland, China, or elsewhere and had significantly assisted their SME's internationalization into China. Likewise, I asked the intermediaries' representatives to choose an individual from a Finnish SME and to refer throughout the questionnaire to this particular collaboration partner, the individual in their answers.

I used a 25-item Collaborative Relationship Evaluation Scale (CRES) to evaluate the collaborative relationships. I based CRES upon a 7-point semantic differential scale that had two bipolar adjectives or characteristics, one at each end of the scale. The representatives were asked to choose the extent to which one or the other adjective described their collaborative relationship. For instance, the respondents were asked if they felt that their collaborative relationship was more "stable" than "changing." Cronbach's alpha for the 25-item scale was α = 0.83. However, given the multidimensional (bipolar) nature of the semantic differential scale, the estimation of the instrument's overall internal consistency may be difficult.

In addition, the questionnaire included a structured question about the function of the collaborative relationship. Finally, I asked both SME and intermediary representatives to consider which three characteristics from a list of options they saw as most important in the

relationship with their collaboration partner. The respondents ranked their choices 1, 2, and 3, with 1 as the most important.

Analysis

I used SPSS for Windows 16.0 statistical program to compute and analyze the data and to examine the descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations), item-total correlations, and frequencies. I used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to search for items that were linked together in the SME and intermediary representatives' perceptions of their collaborative relationships. I applied EFA with the principal axis method and varimax (orthogonal) rotation to all 25 items of CRES.

Results

Evaluations of the SME-Intermediary Relationships

The SME and intermediary representatives perceived their collaborative relationships as trusted ($M = 1.65$), honest ($M = 1.66$), accepting ($M = 1.80$) and flexible ($M = 1.80$). Mean scores of these items lie clearly at one end of the bipolar scale, and the standard deviations are small ($SD = 0.72$–0.83). Further, the respondents perceived their partnership was more typical of their collaborative relationships than competitiveness ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.26$). The relationships were also seen as more professional than private ($M = 5.39$). However, the standard deviation value is among the highest in this bipolar statement (private – professional, $SD = 1.59$). Interesting results are also found in those bipolar statements whose mean scores are not situated at either end of the scale, but in the middle. Accordingly, neither predictability nor spontaneity ($M = 3.15$), neither inter-dependence nor independence ($M = 3.59$), neither formality nor informality ($M = 4.57$) dominate in the relationships. Similarly, neither even responsibility nor uneven responsibility ($M = 4.57$), conventionality nor uniqueness ($M = 4.57$) are more typical of collaborative relationships. All of these items also scored relatively high values in standard deviations ($SD = 1.26$–1.66). Table 1 presents the item-total correlations with the descriptive statistics.

The exploratory factor analysis using varimax (orthogonal) rotation revealed that 22 items of CRES loaded onto four factors, which accounted for 59.4% of the variance. Three items (bipolar statements): private-professional, formal-informal, and conventional-unique, had to be excluded from the factor analysis due to their low item reliabilities (< 0.30) and low communality values (< 0.25).

The four factors were labeled (1) trusted relationship, (2) equal relationship, (3) regular relationship, and (4) predictable relationship. Table 2 presents the factor loadings for the items. For those variables which did not exceed or approach the limit of 0.4 (see Gorsuch, 1997), I determined a suitable factor based on the highest loadings and internal consistency of the factors and their items. In the case of cross-loadings, I included only the most significant (highest) loadings in the factor model. I calculated the Cronbach's alpha for the bipolar statements which made up the particular factors. Cronbach's alpha indicated acceptable reliability for the four dimensions, ranging from $\alpha = 0.68$ to $\alpha = 0.87$.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Item/Total Correlations on Collaborative Relationships

	Bipolar statement	Mean	SD	Item/total corr.
1*	trust - distrust	1.65	0.72	0.55
	honesty - dishonesty	1.66	0.75	0.43
	acceptance - judgment	1.80	0.68	0.44
	flexibility - inflexibility	1.80	0.83	0.48
	openness - lack of openness	2.03	1.03	0.39
	mutual understanding - lack of mutual understanding	2.10	0.81	0.50
	equality - inequality	2.19	1.08	0.52
	shared goals - individual goals	2.19	1.17	0.57
	connection - separateness	2.34	1.01	0.69
	agreement - disagreement	2.35	0.81	0.52
	certain - uncertain	2.36	1.09	0.74
	permanent - temporary	2.37	1.12	0.52
	reciprocity - one-sidedness	2.58	1.28	0.58
	active - passive	2.61	1.31	0.62
	stabile - changing	2.62	1.42	0.51
	close – distant	2.80	1.21	0.41
	regular - irregular	2.81	1.71	0.49
	equal power - unequal power	2.88	1.27	0.37
2**	predictability - spontaneity	3.15	1.36	0.46
	even responsibility - uneven responsibility	3.21	1.26	0.56
	interdependence - independence	3.59	1.56	0.44
	conventional - unique	3.79	1.57	-0.21
	formal - informal	4.57	1.66	-0.02
3***	private - professional	5.39	1.59	0.04
	competitiveness - partnership	5.72	1.26	-0.44

N = 113

Note

 * The first characteristic is more typical of the relationship than the second (Mean = 1.0-2.9).

** Neither of the characteristics dominates in the relationship (Mean = 3.0-5.0).

***The second characteristic is more typical of the relationship than the first (Mean = 5.1-7.0).

Table 2

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis With Varimax Rotation of Relationship Characteristics

Bipolar statements	Factors			
	Factor 1: *Trusted* *relationship*	*Factor 2:* *Equal* *relationship*	*Factor 3:* *Regular* *relationship*	*Factor 4:* *Predictable* *relationship*
trust - distrust	**0.780**	0.124	0.173	0.147
mutual understanding - lack of mutual understanding	**0.725**	0.032	0.057	0.405
acceptance - judgment	**0.687**	0.253	-0.014	0.194
partnership - competitiveness	**0.666**	0.190	0.177	-0.001
honesty - dishonesty	**0.659**	0.240	0.142	-0.028
flexibility - inflexibility	**0.623**	0.350	0.034	0.143
agreement - disagreement	**0.393**	0.091	0.202	0.368
equality - inequality	0.289	**0.745**	0.068	0.077
shared goals - individual goals	0.145	**0.555**	0.292	0.191
openness - lack of openness	0.326	**0.491**	0.112	0.012
equal power - unequal power	0.171	**0.467**	0.020	0.220
reciprocity - one-sidedness	0.128	**0.465**	0.204	0.465
certain - uncertain	0.313	**0.446**	0.405	0.386
regular - irregular	0.030	0.009	**0.953**	0.173
active - passive	0.075	0.425	**0.634**	0.219
stabile - changing	0.203	-0.027	**0.455**	0.370
permanent - temporary	0.291	0.346	**0.446**	0.121
close - distant	0.270	0.336	**0.436**	0.019
predictability - spontaneity	0.140	0.001	0.091	**0.676**
even responsibility - uneven responsibility	0.106	0.317	0.083	**0.575**
connection - separateness	0.440	0.229	0.316	**0.472**
interdependence - independence	-0.050	0.279	0.254	**0.428**

N = 113

Note. Factor loadings > 0.390 and included in the factors and are in boldface.

Thus, the respondents' perceptions of their collaborative relationships are best conceptualized as four-dimensional: (1) trusted relationship, (2) equal relationship, (3) regular relationship, and (4) predictable relationship. The first and the strongest factor (eigenvalue = 7.82), *trusted relationship* (α = 0.87), explained 35.5% of the variance and demonstrated good internal reliability[1]. The factor includes seven items which state that trust, mutual understanding, acceptance, partnership, honesty, flexibility, and agreement are typical to this type of collaborative relationship. The second factor (eigenvalue = 2.23), *equal relationship* (α = 0.80), which accounted for 10.2% of the variance, consists of six items that deal with equality, shared goals, openness, equal power, reciprocity, and certainty in the collaborative relationship. The third factor (eigenvalue = 1.58), *regular relationship* (α = 0.79), explained 7.2% of the variance. The items in this factor indicate that the relationship is regular, active, stable, permanent, and close. The fourth factor (eigenvalue = 1.44), *predictable relationship* (α = 0.68), accounted for 6.5% of the variance and consists of predictability, even responsibility, connection, and interdependence in this type of collaborative relationship.

The Primary Functions and Most Valued Characteristics of Collaborative Relationships

The results presented in Table 3 show the SME and intermediary representatives' perceptions of the function of their collaborative relationships. The data indicated that collaborative relationships serve many purposes for the participants. Almost a third of the respondents perceived the prime functions of collaboration with their current partners were equally information exchange, and planning or coordination. A third of the respondents felt that problem-solving, relationship-building or networking, as well as innovating new solutions, products, and information were the primary functions. A few of the respondents had more pragmatic perspectives, such as trading (3.5%) or funding (2.7%). The aggregate of 5.3% for other functions includes items such as product registration, administration, recruiting, assignment, or functions related to international business.

Table 4 presents the frequencies of the characteristics which respondents perceived as being among the three most important characteristics of their collaborative relationships. The frequencies showed that the respondents emphasized the importance of achievement of results and goals, mutual goals and objectives, mutual commitment to collaborating, trust, information sharing, and aiming for mutual or the public good in the collaborative relationships. By contrast, the respondents place a great deal less emphasis on expressing emotions, sharing personal issues/information, similar interests, humor, and non-business meetings.

Table 3

Functions of the Collaborative Relationships

Function	f	%
Information sharing	18	15.9
Planning or coordinating	18	15.9
Problem solving	13	11.5
Relationship-building or networking	13	11.5
Innovating new solutions, products or information	12	10.6
Consultation or guidance	11	9.7
Negotiation	9	8.0
Trading	4	3.5
Funding	3	2.7
Motivating, encouraging or supporting	3	2.7
Visioning	3	2.7
Other	6	5.3
Total (*N* = 113)	113	100

Table 4

Frequencies of Importance of Collaborative Relationships Characteristics

Very important *Characteristics*	f	**Important** *Characteristics*	f	**Less important** *Characteristics*
Achievement of results and goals	72	Enhancing network relations	27	Regular meetings
		Active contact	22	Mutual favors
Mutual goals and objectives	64	Flexibility and adaptability	18	Non-business meetings
Mutual commitment to collaborating	44	Mutual motivating and encouragement	15	Humor Similar interests
Trust	39	Joint decision making	14	Sharing personal issues and information
Information sharing	33			
Aim of mutual or public good	30			Expressing emotions

Discussion

The present study was designed to examine the perception of the collaborative relationships and their primary functions and characteristics in the context of SME internationalization, particularly from the point of view of representatives of Finnish SMEs and intermediary organizations. The results of this study suggested several key findings. First, the CRES results provide information not only about the current collaborative relationships between representatives of Finnish SMEs and intermediary organizations but also about the value that the actors in SME internationalization attribute to these interpersonal relationships. Since the respondents were asked to evaluate the collaborative relationship with a partner who had had a significant role in the process of SME internationalization, it is likely that the results present a profile of good or successful collaboration. In a good collaborative relationship trust, mutual understanding, acceptance, flexibility, and honesty are the dominant characteristics. These relationships can be seen as true partnerships on which the SME and intermediary representatives can rely in the multiple networks of stakeholders, agents, authorities, and competitors.

The interesting aspect, however, is that even more than trust, the representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations seem to prioritize the achievement of results and goals, mutual goals and objectives, and mutual commitment to working together in their collaborative relationships. This aspect might be a reflection of the complexity of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization. Members are most often committed to multiple targets, including the targets of their parent organizations, and they do not necessarily all experience the same benefits. As Stohl and Walker (2002) suggest, "*When* trust develops in a collaborating group is as important as *whether* trust develops, given the group's composition and short-term nature" (p. 244). Mutual goals and objectives, and mutual commitment to collaborating, may enhance the development of trust or make working together less difficult within collaborative interaction in the context of SME internationalization. Finally, that the achievement of results and goals was seen as the most important characteristic reflects that these interpersonal relationships are essentially instrumental in nature.

Second, the results supported the viability of the perspective of relational dialectics (Baxter, 2008; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) in the study of collaborative relationships. The respondents did not perceive either even responsibility or uneven responsibility and either interdependence or independence as more typical of their collaborative relationships, which indicates that a potential imbalance of responsibility and divided loyalty may be distinguishing characteristics of these relationships. This imbalance should not be seen as a negative feature of the relationship but rather a reflection that while the representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations are actors in their collaborative relationship they are also members of other business units such as their parent organizations. They are, therefore, influenced by the social order that exists outside the immediate boundary of the collaborative relationship. These findings offer empirical evidence to support the argument that dependence and interdependence, as much as the interplay of mutuality and individuality, shape collaborative relationships and that the management of these dialectical tensions is essential to collaborative interaction.

Third, the factors found through EFA provided insights into which attributes are linked together in the perceptions of the collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The representatives perceived collaborative relationships as a four-dimensional construct: (1) trusted relationship, (2) equal relationship, (3) regular relationship, and (4) predictable relationship. There were, however, three bipolar statements or dialectics which did not fit into these dimensions, private-professional, formal-informal, and conventional-unique. These need to be examined as separate items. This may indicate that perceptions of collaborative relationships as private or professional, as formal or informal, or as conventional or unique reflect a different level or perspective on relationships than the characteristics included in the factor model.

Interestingly, these dialectics in interpersonal communication seem to shape respondents' evaluations of their relationships on a larger scale. For instance, representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations evaluated their collaborative relationships as professional but close or as both conventional and unique. One reason for this apparent contradiction may be the different backgrounds of the collaborative relationships. For some of the respondents the creation and management of a collaborative relationship may be an activity they are required to do rather than a relationship they have voluntarily chosen to engage in, whereas they may have established other collaborative relationships on a more volitional basis. These relationships are distinguishable from the definitions, in which characteristics such as emergent, informal, and volitional are associated with collaboration (see Lewis, 2006). Furthermore, Hardy, Phillips, and Lawrence (2003) see collaboration as "a cooperative, inter-organizational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process, and which relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control" (p. 323). Taking a different approach and applying relational dialectics theory, this paper contributes to the conceptualization of collaboration by suggesting that collaborative relationships are neither formal nor informal, neither professional nor private, but a combination of both—a dynamic interplay of these dialectical tensions in interpersonal communication. Furthermore, collaborative relationships in SME internationalization are interdependent with the context in which they are embedded, and they are inevitably influenced by market and hierarchical mechanisms.

Fourth, this study suggests that collaborative relationships in SME internationalization serve several purposes for the participants. Perceptions of the primary function of collaborative relationships were fairly evenly distributed between information sharing, planning and coordination, problem solving, relationship-building or networking, innovating new products or information, and consultation or guidance. This finding gives evidence of the complicated nature of these interpersonal relationships. Collaborative interaction has multiple objectives, including both personal and instrumental goals, which in interpersonal communication can also support each other. Developing relational ties between collaboration participants can improve the purpose for which collaboration has been undertaken (see Keyton & Stallworth, 2003).

Background information on the collaborative relationships also demonstrated that even though many of the respondents had initially contacted their collaboration partners through formal relations (such as through a project, task, or previous work), they had also used informal relationships (e.g., friends or relatives) on a considerable number of occasions. This finding is consistent with the idea that collaborations typically lack solid infrastructures

(Heath & Frey, 2004). Therefore collaboration may not be successful if SMEs and intermediaries attempt to make a definite distinction between private and professional relationships: doing so might block beneficial information or other networks.

Finally, the results indicated collaborative relationships in SME internationalization are regular and more permanent than temporary. This finding further emphasizes the importance of managing and developing interpersonal relationships in SME internationalization.

Practical Implications

This study provides valuable insights into the complexity of collaborative relationships. These relationships form a tapestry of contrasting perceptions and expectations, which from a practical perspective poses a great challenge to the interpersonal communication competence of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. First, to fulfill the instrumental goals related to collaborative interaction the representatives need to know about effective and appropriate communication, they need interpersonal communication skills, and they also need to be motivated to participate in sharing, managing and creating information, and negotiating the goals and objectives of the collaboration (for interpersonal communication competence, see e.g., Spitzberg, 2006; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Second, to achieve the long-term benefits of collaborative relationships and mutual commitments in collaborating, representatives need to know how to create and manage relationships and they need relational communication skills and motivation to develop the interpersonal relationship with their collaborative partners. Third, they need knowledge of the interaction partner and of communication processes, strategies, and context; they also need metacognitive skills of planning, controlling, and evaluating communication (for metacognitive skills as part of interpersonal communication competence, see Valkonen, 2003). Representatives need interpersonal communication skills and the motivation to manage the diversity and dialectics related to collaborative interaction. Understanding how the collaborative partners' background may influence the collaborative relationship and being able to adapt and adjust to the tensions, such as formal-informal or private-professional in interpersonal communication, will enhance the achievement of both the instrumental and personal goals of collaborative relationships in SME internationalization.

The findings of this study can provide a basis for training and developing interpersonal communication and interpersonal communication competence in the context of SME internationalization. The findings specify the communication challenges that the representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations face in their collaborative relationships and will help instructors to plan the contents and objectives of communication training to better respond to trainees' needs. Also I hope this research encourages representatives of the SMEs and intermediary organizations to consider their collaborative relationships, to reflect on their own behavior with their collaborative partners, and evaluate how they could further develop those relationships which have not been as successful as those examined in this study.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the useful information acquired from this study, there are also limitations and directions for future research to consider. First, a higher return rate of questionnaires would have enhanced the validity of the results. Interpretation of these results must therefore be made with a degree of caution. Second, this study may have primarily captured the perceptions of successful collaborative relationships. In order to gain a deeper understanding of collaborative relationships those relationships perceived as unsuccessful should also be studied. Third, using qualitative research methods could provide additional and more in-depth information on collaborative relationships, and also help individuals' understanding of the results of this study. Finally, this study was limited to an exploration of collaborative relationships in the context of SME internationalization. I suggest that future empirical studies examine collaborative relationships and test the Collaborative Relationship Evaluation Scale (CRES) in a variety of organizational and professional contexts. This study gave some indication that the conceptual definition of collaboration and collaborative relationships may not remain unchanged from one context to another; consequently, more research is needed to clarify this issue.

Acknowledgement

Note

1. To ensure appropriate interpretation, I re-coded the bipolar scale "competitiveness-partnership" in a converse order ("partnership-competitiveness") for the reliability analysis. I repeated EFA with varimax rotation with the re-coded data, resulting in the same factor model.

References

Ai, J. (2006). Guanxi networks in China: Its importance and future trends. *China & World Economy*, *14*(5), 105-118.

Baxter, L. A. (2004a). Dialogues of relating. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter, & K. N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogic approaches to communication* (pp. 107-124). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. (2004b). Distinguished scholar article: Relationships as dialogues. *Personal Relationships*, *11*(1), 1-22.

Baxter, L. A. (2008). Relational dialectics. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of communication*. Retrieved December 3, 2008, from http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com (Blackwell Reference Online)

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues & dialectics*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Björkman, I., & Kock, S. (1995). Social relationships and business networks: The case of Western companies in China. *International Business Review*, *4*(4), 519-535.

Fan, Y. (2002). Questioning guanxi: Definition, classification and implications. *International Business Review*, *11*, 543-561.

Frey, L. R. (1994). Introduction. The call of the field: Studying communication in natural groups. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of natural groups* (pp. ix-xiv). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Frey, L. R. (2003). Introduction. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups* (pp. 1-20). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gorsuch, R. L. (1997). Exploratory factor analysis: Its role in item analysis. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 68*(3), 532-560.

Hardy, C., Phillips, N., & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effect of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(2), 321-347.

Heath, R. G., & Frey, L. (2004). Ideal collaboration: A conceptual framework of community collaboration. In P. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 28, pp. 189-132). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Holmlund, M., & Kock, S. (1998). Relationships and the internationalisation of Finnish small and medium-sized companies. *International Small Business Journal*, *16*(4), 46-63.

Keyton, J., & Stallworth, V. (2003). On the verge of collaboration: Identifying group structure and process. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups* (pp. 235-260). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lewis, L. K. (2006). Collaborative interaction: Reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. In C. S. Beck (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 30, pp. 107-247). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Mikkola, M., & Pirttimäki, A. (2007). Tuotekehitys Kiinassa. Uhka, mahdollisuus vai yhdentekevää? [R&D in China: A threat, an opportunity or a source of indifference?]. *Research Notes 2391*, Espoo: VTT Tiedotteita.

Montgomery, B. M. (1993). Relationship maintenance versus relationship change: A dialectical dilemma. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *10*, 205-223.

Ojala, A. (2008). *Internationalization of software firms: Finnish small and medium-sized software firms in Japan*. Doctoral dissertation, Studies in Computing, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland.

Saatci, E. (2008). Problem-based learning in an intercultural business communication course: Communication challenges in intercultural relationships in internationalizing small- or medium-sized enterprises. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *22*(2), 237-260.

So, Y. L., & Walker, A. (2006). *Explaining guanxi: The Chinese business network*. New York: Routledge.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2006, November). *CSRS: The conversational skills rating scale: An instructional assessment of interpersonal competence*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, San Antonio, TX.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Stallworth, V. (1998). *Building a model of interorganizational nonprofit collaboration*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Memphis, TN.

Sternberg, R. (2000). Innovation networks and regional development—evidence from the European Regional Innovation Survey (ERIS): Theoretical concepts: Methodological approach, empirical basis and introduction to the theme issue. *European Planning Studies, 8*(4), 389-407.

Stohl, C., & Walker, K. (2002). A bona fide perspective for the future of groups: Understanding collaborating groups. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp. 237-252). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Valkonen, T. (2003). *Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi: Näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin* [Assessing speech communication skills: Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students]. Doctoral dissertation, Studies in Humanities No. 7, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland.

Walker, K. L., Craig, J. L., & Stohl, C. (1998, November). *The dynamics of collaboration: Developing a communication model of the collaboration process*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, New York.

Yeung, I. Y. M., & Tung, R. I. (1996). Achieving business success in Confucian societies: The importance of guanxi (connections). *Organizational Dynamics, 24*(3), 54-65.

III

COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION
IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF
SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

by

Pipsa Purhonen 2010

David C. Lam Institute for East -West Studies Working Paper Series 106, 1–22

**Collaborative Interaction in the Internationalization of
Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

Pipsa Purhonen, MA
University of Jyväskylä

Pipsa Purhonen, M.A., is a researcher in the The Doctoral School of Communication Studies CORE (Finland) and a doctoral student in Speech Communication in the Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She is currently conducting a doctoral study concerning collaborative interaction and interpersonal communication competence in the context of the internationalization of Finnish small-and medium-sized enterprises into China. Her study is supervised by Dr Tarja Valkonen, Associate Professor of Speech Communication (Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä). Pipsa Purhonen participated in LEWI Scholar-in-Residence program from 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010.

The authors welcome comments from readers.

Contact details:
E-mail: pipsa.purhonen@jyu.fi

Collaborative Interaction in the Internationalization of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Pipsa Purhonen
University of Jyväskylä

Abstract

Internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involves inter-organizational collaboration between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations such as business consultancies, finance companies or research and innovation centers. This study provides the individual practitioners' view of collaborative interaction in the context of internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China, based on qualitative written data (N = 93). The findings produced using a phenomenographic approach suggest that collaborative interaction in SME internationalization can be characterized as goal-oriented task communication, other-oriented relational communication, and ethics-oriented dialogic communication, having both personal and organizational functions and outcomes. In addition, the study reveals dialectical tensions such as *personal-professional*, *emergent-strategic*, and *stability-change*, inherent in inter-organizational business collaboration. The study concludes with a discussion of both theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

Keywords: collaborative interaction, inter-organizational collaboration, interpersonal communication, relational dialectics, SME internationalization

Introduction

Current working life is characterized by transcending functional, hierarchical, organizational and national boundaries (see Thomas, 2007). Rapid technological changes, scarce resources and the increasing organizational interdependencies have raised the need for collaboration (Thomson & Perry, 2006), which the fluctuation of the global economy has emphasized. The internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is an example of a process that requires collaboration across borders, both locally and globally. SME internationalization brings together representatives of various organizations, economic sectors and nationalities as it typically involves collaborative interaction of the SMEs and the intermediary organizations such as authorities, business consultancies, finance companies or research institutions. This paper investigates collaborative interaction (CI) particularly in the context of internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China.

One of the biggest challenges facing a collaborative context is the sheer diversity that exists among the stakeholders and partner organizations as they aim towards some form of collective action (Koschmann, 2010). CI in an international business context can be complicated by the differences in professional languages and technological know-how, organizational and national cultures, or the regulatory environment and economic development (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Saatci, 2008). The actors from different sectors are likely to be motivated by a variety of goals or approaches, and specific communication goals and processes (Selsky & Parker, 2005, Saatci, 2008). The internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China involves various individuals who act not only in Finland or China but globally, and who are increasingly interdependent of each other. The idea of the current era as the globalization of individuals (Friedman, 2006) fits well to the context of SME internationalization.

Thus far, inter-organizational collaboration has predominantly been studied from the organizational perspectives (for reviews see e.g. Heath & Frey, 2004; or Selsky & Parker, 2005). Communication scholars (e.g. Thomson & Perry, 2006; Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008; Koschmann, 2010) have criticized the past interdisciplinary research of prioritizing the antecedent conditions, organizational properties and outcomes, or other abstract structural characteristics over the actual human interaction, communication strategies or the individual influences of collaborative partners. However, collaborative exchange does happen among human agencies, collaboration is people interacting (Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008; Doerfel, 2005). Social interaction creates and sustains collaboration among individuals (Keyton, Ford & Smith, 2008), which is why the present study examines collaboration from the perspective of interpersonal communication. The argument approaches inter-organizational collaboration as CI of the individual representatives of SMEs and the Finnish and international intermediary organizations involved in internationalizing Finnish SMEs into China.

Collaborative Interaction in Inter-organizational Relationships

The concept of collaboration typically refers to the relation between self and other and this relationship is ideally characterized by equality between participants (Keyton & Stallworth 2003; Lewis, 2006). Collaborative interaction requires a shared task or goal but the participation in successful collaborative relationships is

characterized as fundamentally informal and volitional (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003; Lewis, 2006). Organizational representatives whose participation is forced or required may perceive collaborative efforts less worthwhile (Keyton & Stallworth, 2003).

However, CI in inter-organizational contexts, such as SME internationalization, may be complicated by the collaborative partners' differences in terms of budget, staff, status, power and the motivation to participate and promote their specific objectives (see Keyton et al, 2008). The collaborative partners in SME internationalization represent different sectors, and are most often committed to multiple targets including the targets including those of their parent organizations, and they do not necessarily experience the same benefits from collaboration. This may create competition and even a potential imbalance of power (see Keyton & Stallworth, 2003), which questions the equality between collaborative partners, and indeed, Doerfel (2005) provides evidence of the simultaneous existence of cooperation and competition in collaborative relationships in an inter-organizational context.

The varying goals among the individuals, the collaborative groups and their stakeholder organizations and the varying benefits from collaboration can manifest several dialectical tensions (Heath & Frey, 2004). The communicative model of collaboration devised by Keyton, Ford and Smith (2008) reveals previously under-theorized tensions in inter-organizational collaboration such as a tension between public and private that can refer to different kinds of beliefs and assumptions and how they affect information sharing. In particular, the representatives of different economic sectors tend to have competing ideologies and values, and collaborative relationships across the sector boundaries can, hence, be even more complicated than those within the same organization or industry (Koschmann, 2010). Representatives of SMEs may primarily be aiming to improve their business operations (private good), whereas the representatives of intermediary organizations may be more concerned with supporting regional development (public good) (see also Keyton et al, 2008). The individuals often need to balance their organizations' interests to collaborate with the larger goals of the collaborative group (Heath & Frey, 2004), but also the goals or values of themselves and their stakeholder organizations may be divergent. In addition, it is possible that CI reveals personal opportunities that do not benefit the organizations. As Keyton et al (2008) suggest, this tension between individuals and organizations is likely to cause uncertainty of whether individuals or organizations are

collaborating, and the collaborative members' messages may, thus, be interpreted as representing the views of their own or those of their stakeholder organizations.

Presumably, the individual-organization tension also relates to the multiple forms and functions of collaborative relationships. They, like workplace relationships in general, function, for example, as information-sharing, decision-making, and the provision of instrumental and emotional support (see Sias et al, 2002). Workplace relationships have both relational and organizational features (Myers, 2010), which is why such relationships may be complicated (see Waldron, 2003), and evoke different expectations as to how close or distant or formal or informal they should be (see Purhonen, 2010; Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009). The development and maintenance of workplace relationships involves evaluation of the partner's potential value in accomplishing the desired organizational goals as well as the evaluation of their social contribution (Myers, 2010).

As diversity always resides in collaboration, it is justifiable to examine CI from a dialogic perspective (Heath, 2007). A specificity of dialogue is that it generates new ideas, thoughts and outcomes, and accounts for the role of diversity in achieving creativity (Heath, 2007). Understanding CI at the level of interpersonal communication could, therefore, be grounded in relational dialectics theory (RDT) formulated by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), the premise of which is that meaning-making emerges from, and interpersonal relationships are shaped by, the struggle of different often competing discourses like integration-separation and expression-nonexpression (see also Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010). These discourses can be understood as worldviews or systems of meaning that can be simultaneously present and mutually negotiating in interpersonal relationships (see Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010). For instance, collaborative parties may at the same time value dependence of and independence from their partners. Whereas RDT has mainly been applied to examine communication in close relationships, especially family communication (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010), some moves have been made towards applying the perspective in organizational communication contexts. Bridge and Baxter (1992) studied blended relationships which exist between friends who are also work associates, and were able to identify five dialectics inherent in workplace friendships: autonomy-connection, equality-inequality, impartiality-favoritism, judgment-acceptance, and openness-closedness.

Collaborative interaction in SME internationalization from the RDT approach can be understood as grounded in discursive struggles, such as the dialectical tensions of public-private or partnership-competition which are emergent and dynamic but also in dialogue with the social order that exists outside the immediate boundary of the relationship (see Baxter, 2004a, 2004b; Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008). In SME internationalization, this social order is shaped by the diversity of the business community: by the personal, organizational, industrial and national backgrounds of the collaborating participants (see also Varner, 2000; Charles, 2009). As Baxter and Braithwaite claim "it is problematic to draw the boundary of relational communication at the dyadic border, because relationships are sites of culture" (2010: 52). Therefore, an examination grounded in RDT takes the perspectives of both (inter)cultural and interpersonal communication to CI.

Communication research has approached collaboration as actual communication processes (see e.g. Thomson & Perry, 2006) and discourses (see e.g. Hardy et al, 2005) in contexts such as virtual learning teams (Rajan & Kisselburgh, 2010), inter-professional collaborative writing (Palmeri, 2004), and inter-organizational arrangements across economic sectors (Koschmann, 2010). The study of Thomson and Perry (2006) identified the communication processes of governance and administration, reconciling individual and collective interests, forging mutually beneficial relationships, and building social capital norms of trust and reciprocity, as specific to CI. Furthermore, boundary spanners were found to use their social identity and create sub-groups within inter-organizational collaboration to find ways to justify their membership and help orient and organize the diversity in collaboration (Isbell, 2010). This corpus of collaboration research has illustrated the communicative processes and practices, which form the basis of the argument concerning the complex nature of CI. The studies have, however, provided little insight into the perspective of individual practitioners to collaborative relationships or interpersonal communication specific to collaboration. An aspect that is also lacking is the examination of CI in an international business context. The present study provides the practitioners' view and examines the experience and understanding of the collaborating representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning CI. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1: What is the nature of collaborative interaction in SME internationalization?

2: What are the aims, functions and outcomes of collaborative interaction?

5

3: How are dialectical tensions manifest in inter-organizational collaborative interaction?

Method

Participants

A total of 93 respondents of Finnish SMEs (n=35) and Finnish and international intermediaries (n=58) participated in the study during spring 2009. There was a bias towards Finnish participants (n=83), but the sample was also representative of other nationalities (5 Chinese, 3 Swedish, 1 Norwegian and 1 Taiwanese). The majority of the respondents were men (n=73), with 19 women and 1 unreported and the ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 71 years ($M = 48.0$).

Procedures

I gathered the research data with a web questionnaire constructed in Finnish and English. The data includes the written descriptions of the maintenance of collaborative relationships by the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. I used two open-ended questions to elicit descriptions and perceptions of collaborative relationships in general. These included: 1. Please, describe what the maintenance of collaborative relationships means to you in general? (You can consider, for instance, what you expect from collaboration or your collaboration partners? Which factors can develop collaboration? What does the maintenance of collaboration relationship require?) 2. In your opinion, what is *failed* or *unsuccessful* collaboration in general? (You can consider, for instance, how does unsuccessful collaboration differ from successful? Which factors can cause collaboration to fail?)

The answers varied from single adjectives and word lists to detailed descriptions of collaborative relationships. Altogether the data accounted for approximately 35 pages of text with a font size of 12 and using double spacing.

Analysis

For analyzing the data, I followed the phenomenographic approach (Marton, 1981), which enabled me to understand the phenomenon of CI, through the ways in which people experience, perceive, understand or conceptualize it (see Marton, 1994). The results of phenomenographic analysis form categories of description, which

6

Åkerlind (2005) explains are qualitatively different meanings or ways of experiencing the phenomenon. The outcomes of phenomenographic analysis may also include structural relationships linking the different ways of experiencing (Åkerlind, 2005).

In the analysis, I focused on the qualitative variety in the ways in which the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations experience CI in SME internationalization. Firstly, I searched for the meanings and variations of the answers to the two open-ended questions. Secondly, I grouped and regrouped the quotes according to their similarities and differences. This stage of analysis created conceptual groups that describe CI (see Figure 1). For instance, "keeping up with personal relations" (RN4)[i] was grouped into Description 2B: Function (CI functions as creating, managing and developing relationships). Consequent to this collation I was able to formulate three qualitatively distinct perspectives of collaborative communication (categories of description), which are presented with demonstrative examples from the written data.

Results

The main result was the formulation, based on the understanding of CI by the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations (henceforth the respondents or practitioners), of the three qualitative distinct perspectives of CI: 1. *Collaborative interaction as task communication*, 2. *Collaborative interaction as relational communication*, and 3. *Collaborative interaction as dialogic communication*. These three perspectives were not mutually exclusive but should be viewed as being located on a continuum. Some of the respondents considered CI mainly as task communication, which requires relational communication. By contrast, other respondents referred to CI as relational communication, being the prerequisite of task accomplishment. In the respondents' understanding of CI, relational communication was also closely connected to respect for, and management of differences which are characteristics of dialogic communication. In the practitioners' understanding these three perspectives to CI were, hence, interconnected. There were, however, individual variations in the value or importance given to the three perspectives as elements of CI in an inter-organizational context. The practitioners' views of CI were also critical emphasizing, for instance, that an offering of cooperative or coordinative services should not be confused with 'partnership', or 'collaboration'.

Perspective 1: Collaborative interaction as task communication. This perspective views CI as goal-oriented with the key communicative functions of making observations and sharing, managing and applying information, or providing informational and instrumental support. CI as task communication leads to economic success and mutual benefits.

The respondents saw goals, ideally common to all participants, as the prerequisites of CI, as RN45 stated "A shared goal to which both of the participants are committed to". Parallel to common goals, CI should, as RN40 explained, be based on an actual (as opposed to hypothetical) need to have a collaboration partner: "The basis of collaborative relationship is that both [participants] need each other. This is especially important and challenging in collaboration between Chinese and Finnish: there must be some reason so that a Chinese part wants to collaborate". Common goals and the need to collaborate provide clarity and certainty to CI.

CI from this perspective has several communicative functions. The respondents contend essential aspects of inter-organizational CI are making observations and having knowledge of the collaborative partner, and the partner's organization and of the wider business environment. One respondent RN66 specified CI as "Keeping your antennas up and communicating your observations immediately. 'Helicoptering' the collaborative partner's business, that is, the ability to perceive the whole area of operation and its' structures". Other respondents perceived CI as sharing, managing and applying new information: "Readiness to share information openly" (RN25), "Mutual problem solving and pondering the issues. Mutual planning of the future" (RN15), and "Innovatively seeking for new approaches to the market" (RN21). The management of information was particularly emphasized at the beginning of a collaboration project, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

> When the schedule, budget, goals and procedures have been agreed [together], the implementation of the project is usually easy. In that case, the customer will give information about [their] own organization and the history of activities related to the project, and will support the project with [their] entire organization. (#68)

> What is aimed for is actually clear to both participants in the beginning. Both sides audit each other in the first meeting. In addition, the business participants usually know the initial state pretty well. Whether you can trust the other's competence and solutions or not. (#32)

Another communicative function related task communication was the provision of help and informational and instrumental support. As RN78 pointed out "Our aim

isn't specifically to maintain the collaborative relationships but to help companies in their export endeavors". However, RN31 elaborated that help should be provided in a discreet way that enables the collaborative partner to maintain "status and face". The practitioners also saw that the help and support for collaborative partners can exceed the boundaries of the current project or relationship. They specified CI as "Providing business contacts" (RN55) and "Tips and encouragement even if there wasn't an assignment in progress" (RN58). One respondent described the definition of CI as:

> For me, the maintenance of collaborative relationship means taking care of the self-evident, agreed matters, but also knowing the goals of the partner, committing to them and supporting them in the market area of one's entire network. That obligates one to spur the partner with different kinds of business ideas and innovations related to the partner's business or to the mutual possibilities, and to update one's own repertory and network for that day, when the partner needs the services of that network commercially. Supporting the partner in the non-commercial stage assures the flexible transfer to the commercial stage when that is justifiable businesswise. (RN44)

The above excerpt is also an example of conceptualizing CI as contextual (i.e. placed within a larger context). In many cases, the respondents saw that CI involves the partner's entire business and social network and not simply the collaborating partners.

Finally, the respondents emphasized that CI as task communication should result in (economic) success and mutual benefits. As one respondent pointed out, "Essential to collaborative relationship are mutual benefits which can be realized in many ways and the benefits won't surely be the same for both participants" (RN80). Mutually advantageous collaboration sometimes requires further problem-solving as the following quotation suggests:

> In order to getting a mutually beneficial partnership you must have two parties that gain on the business relation. This does not mean that you cannot have tough negotiations but in the end result there must be something for both parties. (RN5)

Perspective 2. Collaborative interaction as relational communication. The second perspective present in the practitioners' understanding of CI was the perspective of relational communication. From this standpoint, CI is other-oriented communication that functions as creating, managing and developing interpersonal relationships. Seen as relational communication, CI results to both short-term and long-term partnerships. The conceptions of the respondents concerning relational

communication varied, however, in terms of how professional or personal they saw the relationship with their collaborative partners.

The other-oriented nature of CI can be seen in respondents' emphasis on having interest in and taking the collaborative partner into account. As RN25 pointed out, CI is "Adequately unselfish, everything isn't equally important to both participants" while RN76 described that it was important to show that the partner had "a privileged position". From the relational perspective, CI functions as creating, maintaining and developing interpersonal relationship and a positive (working) environment. The following quotation demonstrates both the other-oriented nature and the relational functions of CI:

> Taking the other into account and remembering them….Being interested in and caring for the other person and for the shared matters. Even emotional therapy. (RN15)

The respondents' views were, however, various and even contrasting in terms of the personal and professional characteristics of CI. Some of the respondents tend to limit CI strictly to factual contents and leave personal issues outside the collaborative relationship. As RN36 argued:

> In business life, collaborative relationships and their functioning and success are an asset, this is why I am ready to put a lot of effort in them. Mainly related to the matter and work, personal issues are easily left with less [attention] and even if the relations to my collaborative partners are good in general, I want to keep my private life separate from them. (RN36)

On the other hand, collaborative relationships were also specifically referred to as personal relationships, even friendship: "Good personal chemistry is a prerequisite, informal friendship is best" (RN89) and kinship: "Collaboration in our case is every now and then like a father-son relationship" (RN19). From these standpoints, the complex nature of CI requires personal attachment and the multiple roles of the collaborative partners, as the following excerpts illustrate:

> I appreciate it if there are shared goals in collaborative relationship, participants have respect for each other, for differences and different kinds of competence, and that collaborating is nice, not forced. Knowing the partner deeper than on the professional level relates to this essentially. (RN61)

> During the whole 12 years of time when I've had my own company my role has been to act as a "family doctor" to my customers: I know the family, its background and problems – and the connection is getting stronger all the time. They don't need to explain the history to me at the beginning of the project – we are part of the customer's organization. (RN60).

The importance of knowing the collaborative partner's personal background was further stressed in the Chinese business context. The respondents thereby linked the interpersonal relationship to the larger cultural context of China and Chinese ideologies. Some of these particular voices criticized the Finnish tendency to concentrate on task-oriented communication, as the following quotation demonstrates:

> It is important to assist the customer from one airport to another or as far as possible personally. The Chinese have that skill. They can also ask how you are, in phone, for instance, even if some [work] matter should be handled urgently. We go straight to the business when we know the partner. (RN74)

However, the conceptions of CI as personal or professional communication were not always dichotomous. In some cases, the personal and professional characteristics were separated by a fine line and some not at all. It was seen, for instance, that a professional business relationship can eventually develop into a personal relationship, or business opportunities can be created from the social networks, as the following examples suggest:

> Immediate social interaction not only in business frame but also in other contexts. Management of the social network should be unselfish and base on voluntariness, from which business opportunities can be created. (RN14)

> A good collaborative relationship is created by knowing each other for a long time and getting evidence of the partner's competence. You want to develop a good collaborative relationship further than a business relationship, that is knowing each other on a personal level, and even friendship level. (RN30)

Finally, according to the respondents' understanding, CI results in both short-term and long-term partnerships. Indeed, some expectations were linked to understanding collaborative relationships as personal or professional, as RN53 states:

> For me collaborative relationship is purely a professional matter. Whether or not it continues, depends on the results of the joint project. It's not always even reasonable to maintain the collaborative relationship. (RN53)

Another respondent echoed the same idea and reflected on the difficulty of developing long-term relationships:

> To maintain the relation is difficult. As long as the project is over, then the relation seems to be over, this is more true in [the] professional consulting business. (RN93)

In contrast, some respondents perceived collaboration as continuous. Typical of this view was the acknowledgement of the different active and passive stages in a collaborative relationship, and emphasizing persistence and activity in maintaining the relationship during passive periods, as the following examples demonstrate:

[Collaboration is a] Continuous (irregularly regular) process, which also has room for discussion at those times, when active operations are not in progress. (RN69)

Because I work in an organization that supports internationalization, there are different kinds of stages in collaboration with the collaborative partners (entrepreneurs) => active vs. passive stages, in my opinion it is important to "read" the partner and in that way, contact [them] at appropriate intervals." (RN57)

It was also noted that the creation and development of your position or face in the social network particularly in China may require years of effort.

Perspective 3. Collaborative interaction as dialogic communication. The third qualitatively different way of understanding CI was from the perspective of dialogic communication. In this case, CI can be identified as ethics-oriented communication that functions as managing differences and dialectics. CI as dialogic communication results to learning and benefiting from differences.

The respondents conceptualized CI through several ethical values and norms that can be seen specific to dialogic communication. Those were, for instance, mutual trust and respect, and equality and reciprocity among the collaborative partners. Trust, in particular, was seen as one of the most important building blocks in the maintenance of collaborative relationships. Trust was mainly defined as trusting each other, but also as being able to trust the collaborative partner's competence and actions, or trusting that the relationship continues even if problems occurred. Mutual trust was also emphasized in complex international business communication:

In these relationships, mutual trust is the most important thing that enhances collaboration. And actually without it, collaboration does not exist i.e. it is a basic requirement, and at the same time, a critical asset. The maintenance of collaboration would require understanding of how trust is created. In this, cultural differences are a challenge. (RN40)

The first requirement for Finnish-Chinese collaboration is mutual trust, which is created through shared activities and shared experiences and success. You must remember that trust can only be lost once! (RN64)

In the respondents' views of collaborative CI, trust was attached to openness, honesty and transparency. They expected open discussions also of difficult issues, which were necessary, as RN84 suggests that by "revealing the problems and bottlenecks, so that we can truly help them [their collaborative partners]".

In addition to trust, mutual respect and reciprocity were seen as an essential part of CI. Respect was expected among the collaborative partners, but also towards

12

differences: "Partners respect each other, [their] differences and different kinds of competence" (RN61), a sentiment echoed by RN27, "In collaboration the partners can keep their special nature and characters, still respecting each other". Reciprocity was emphasized, for instance, in contacting each other, in information sharing, and in providing help and advice, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

> Maintenance of relationships requires reciprocal activities, at least the other participant needs to respond, even if they couldn't handle the issue right away. (RN74).

> Collaboration is reciprocal, and helps both participants to develop operations. In our case, collaboration is occasionally like a father-son relationship, a father gives wise advice to his son, and the son, in turn, tells his father about the new issues he has encountered. (RN19)

From the perspective of dialogic communication, one of the important communication functions of CI was the management of differences, which in the respondents' views was specified as understanding the context as well as taking into account the different backgrounds of the collaborative partners. As one respondent pointed out, "It is expected that the collaboration partner conducts [their] work non inflicted by politics and personal interests" (RN10), which another echoed:

> Collaboration requires openness, and trust, and understanding of the shared goals. In the same way, you need to have understanding of the background of the collaborative partner and of [their] own objectives and try to accommodate them into your own objectives and needs. (RN81)

The importance of accommodation and flexibility as part of CI was noticed by the practitioners. The fact that CI is frequently unpredictable was reflected by RN25's advice that "[i]n collaboration you need to be ready to encounter difficulties. Everything doesn't, for sure, go as planned". Culture was quoted as a reason underlying the need for flexibility in CI, "You need to have flexibility, because Chinese are impulsive, and decide at the last minute" (RN74).

From the standpoint of dialogic communication, the outcomes of CI were seen as learning from difficulties and shared experiences, or benefiting from the cultural, occupational and personal differences. As RN67 concluded, CI is: "Equal, honest and utilizing and bearing the difference, and turning it into a benefit."

Dialectical tensions in collaborative interaction. As argued earlier, the respondents conceptualized CI as both personal and professional communication. In their views, collaborative relationships are developed and maintained in the simultaneous existence of personal (social and emotional bond or affection) and

professional (instrumental goals and expectations) characteristics. In addition, they saw that the creation of new collaborative relationships can be strategic and planned, but new collaboration possibilities are also likely to occur from the informal and volitional social networks. Dialectical tensions such as *personal-professional*, and *emergent-strategic*, can hence be found within the practitioners' understanding of CI in SME internationalization and furthermore, the dialectics of *active-passive* and *stability-change* can be seen as inherent in CI. The dialectic of *active-passive* can be examined as a tension between the collaborative partners and the external collaboration environment. Many of the respondents expected activeness in collaborative relationship, however, as collaborative relationships typically involve larger networks to accomplish their instrumental goals, delays and passive stages are often inevitable. The large and diverse business community also relates to the dialectic of *stability-change*. CI involves a goal and a clear direction, but requires flexibility to manage unexpected changes or cultural differences, as the practitioners saw it. The existence of cultural differences in collaborative relationships was also examined due to the dialectic of *similarity-difference*. The respondents mentioned that even though they shared several characteristics with their collaborative partners, including for instance, shared interests or goals, they still had their differences due to other aspects such as their culture or age. Therefore, and particularly from the perspective of dialogic communication, CI also functions as the management of dialectical tensions including *personal-professional*, *emergent-strategic*, *active-passive*, *stability-change*, and *similarity-difference*.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature, aims, functions and outcomes of CI as experienced and understood by the practitioners, the collaborating representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations involved in the internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China. In addition, the study aimed to shed light on the dialectical tensions inherent in CI. The results of the investigation give first-hand knowledge of how individual participants view inter-organizational collaboration. The findings revealed that CI in an inter-organizational setting can be identified as goal-oriented task communication, other-oriented relational communication, and ethics-oriented dialogic collaboration. The study also uncovered relational dialectics and dynamics of *personal-professional*, *emergent-strategic*,

active-passive, *stability-change*, and *similarity-difference* as specific to inter-organizational business collaboration. The current findings support the central idea that collaboration is essentially interpersonal communication, and CI is the key site of managing challenges and differences, see also the communicative model of collaboration by Keyton, Ford and Smith (2008). These conclusions have both theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretically, the findings of the study provided support for the applicability of RDT in organizational contexts. The perspective of RDT was found useful to capture the dialectical tensions in the interpersonal level of collaboration. Grounded in the standpoint of RDT, the study argues that CI between the participants of SMEs and intermediary organizations creates and produces meanings through discourses such as personal-professional, emergent-strategic, active-passive, stability-change, and similarity-difference. CI has instrumental means for achieving goals and objectives, but it also creates, manages and develops personal relationships, even friendship. The existing dialectics of personal-professional and emergent-strategic suggest that collaborative relationships in the context of SME internationalization are to a notable extent *blended relationships* that function simultaneously with both personal and role components (see Bridge & Baxter, 1992).

The dialectic between the personal roles and organizational work-roles can also be seen as one of the defining characteristics of the duration of collaborative relationships. Even though it is possible to maintain collaborative relationships by concentrating only on task accomplishment and communication about work-related issues, there is not always the will to maintain the relationship once the instrumental goals of the particular collaboration project have been attained. Based on the results of the present study, the relational or dialogic approaches to CI were not shared by all, but some of the task-oriented practitioners clearly neglected the relational aspect of collaboration. The study reveals that also *depersonalization* (Sias & Perry, 2004), the exclusion of all the personal and other non-work related topics, is present in CI. Depersonalization is an intentional strategy found to be typical of disengagement from workplace relationships (Sias & Perry, 2004). In CI contexts, disengagement from a personal relationship or personal networks related to the given collaboration project may, however, have a negative effect on information-sharing. A study by Sias (2005) examining the connection between the amount and quality of work-related information and the quality of the relationships with peer co-workers, can provide

insights into this argument. Sias's (2005) study corroborated that in the relationships characterized by trust and self-disclosure, the work-related information provided to one another was more accurate, useful and timely than in those relationships that were more superficial and role-bounded. In the same way, ignoring relational communication, or the informal and personal nature of CI in the context of SME internationalization, may result in the isolation of some participants concerning quality information.

The findings of the present study demonstrate how CI is affiliated with the broader contexts and cultures in which it is embedded, which can be seen as manifest in the dialectics of similarity-difference and stability-change. The relational dialectic of similarity-difference essentially defines intercultural communication (Chen, 2002). Collaborative partners share a common ground, a collaborative task, but they bring a diversity of cultures, national, organizational, industrial, or general business, into their relationship. Thus, CI involves discourses both internal and external to the relationship (see also Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; Chen, 2002). The dialectic of stability-change can refer to the typical request of business relationships for following a particular direction but having the flexibility and courage to move in a different way when needed, which Arnett et al. (2009) see as an element of business communication ethics. The ethical perspective can help understand relational dialectics in CI. Ethical communication recognizes the ethical commitments of each collaborative partner, and the contemporary situations and how they all shape, guide and restrain interpersonal communication (see Arnett et al., 2009). Managing differences and dialectics in CI can, thus, be approached as ethical communication.

In addition to the dialogic perspective, the findings of the study place the theoretical examination of CI within the approaches of both strategy literature and learning literature (see the literature review by Hardy et al., 2003). In the strategy literature collaboration is primarily treated as compensation of lacking internal competencies or series of discrete transactions. From this point of view, the selection of collaborative partners is rational and requires formal agreements with clearly identified goals. The opposite view sees collaboration as knowledge creation or organizational learning and acknowledges collaborative relationships as ongoing, synergetic relationships, which can also be initiated informally (see Hardy et al., 2003). However, the central results of the present study address the notion that the creation of new collaborative relationships can be strategic and planned, but new

16

collaboration possibilities can also occur from the informal and volitional social networks. CI has several, both personal and instrumental, or individual and organizational, functions. Therefore, the creation, management and development of collaborative relationships are strategic and emergent, or formal and informal alike. By ignoring the emergent or informal dimension, the collaborative aims can result in isolation from important business opportunities.

The study also provided insights into CI in practice. By focusing on perceptions and experiences of the participants in inter-organizational collaboration it is possible to identify the challenges that such collaborative arrangements pose to individual practitioners – an aspect that has been partly mystified in previous research literature. Williams (2002) portrays the individual actors in inter-organizational collaboration as boundary spanners who have skills, abilities and personal characteristics which contribute to effective inter-organizational behavior. Williams (2002) identifies these contributions of the competent boundary spanners as managing networks, building effective personal relationships with a range of other actors, managing and negotiating non-hierarchical decision making, connecting problems to solutions and mobilizing resources and efforts into successful outcomes. However, as the ontological nature of CI between the individual participants can be characterized as interpersonal communication, the competence in CI should be examined from the perspective of interpersonal communication competence.

Interpersonal communication competence requires knowledge about effective and appropriate interpersonal communication, motivation to engage in communication, meta-cognitive communication skills, and interpersonal communication skills needed to act in a way that the interactants perceive both as effective and appropriate (Valkonen, 2003; see also Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Based on the practitioners' understanding and conceptualization of CI as task communication, relational communication and dialogic communication, competent CI involves i) knowledge about effective and appropriate task communication, relational communication and dialogic communication, ii) motivation to be goal-oriented, other-oriented and ethics-oriented, and iii) interpersonal communication skills in, for instance, sharing information, providing support, creating, managing and developing relationships, and managing differences and dialectics. Interpersonal communication competence in collaborative contexts is an aspect that still warrants deeper analysis and

conceptualization (see Purhonen, 2008) and the examination of to what extent it can assessed and managed (see Purhonen, Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer & Valkonen, 2010).

Despite the useful theoretical and practical implications, the study left some unanswered questions and directions for future research. Being a qualitative study, the findings need to be kept in the context (see Patton, 2002). There was a bias toward Finnish participants in the study, but the sample was also representative of Asian and other European nationalities. The respondents as representatives of Finnish SMEs and Finnish and international intermediary organizations can also be seen as representatives of a larger international business community, and some of the findings of this study may also appear in other inter-organizational settings, and international business contexts. Nonetheless, the context of SME internationalization into China probably explains some perceptions of the respondents concerning CI. The phenomenographic approach, as applied in this study, can be seen as descriptive rather than explanatory by nature, which aims to reveal and understand the variation among the different ways of understanding the phenomenon of CI (see Häkkinen, 1996). Therefore, mixed methods of analysis could enhance the credibility of the current findings, as would the triangulation of analysts (see Patton, 2002).

Even though the study captured several tensions and complexities involved in CI, one of the aspects for future research should be a deeper analysis of the specific challenges and barriers to CI in an international business context. The practitioners' strong expectation of trust in CI may refer to the possible risks and threats that this study left partly unnamed. Such threats could be, for instance, opportunism, neglecting the interests of others, or identity damage (see Williams, 2007). The present study contributes to our theoretical and practical understanding of CI at the level of individual collaborative relationships, and is particularly noteworthy for the field of business communication due to its context of SME internationalization. However, further examination of the opposite of CI and the practitioners' views of failed or unsuccessful collaboration is still needed to better understand the complex nature of inter-organizational collaborative arrangements from the collaborating individuals' point of view.

[i] All translations are the responsibility of the author; respondents are referred to anonymously by their randomly selected numbers (RN) to protect their identities.

Acknowledgements

References
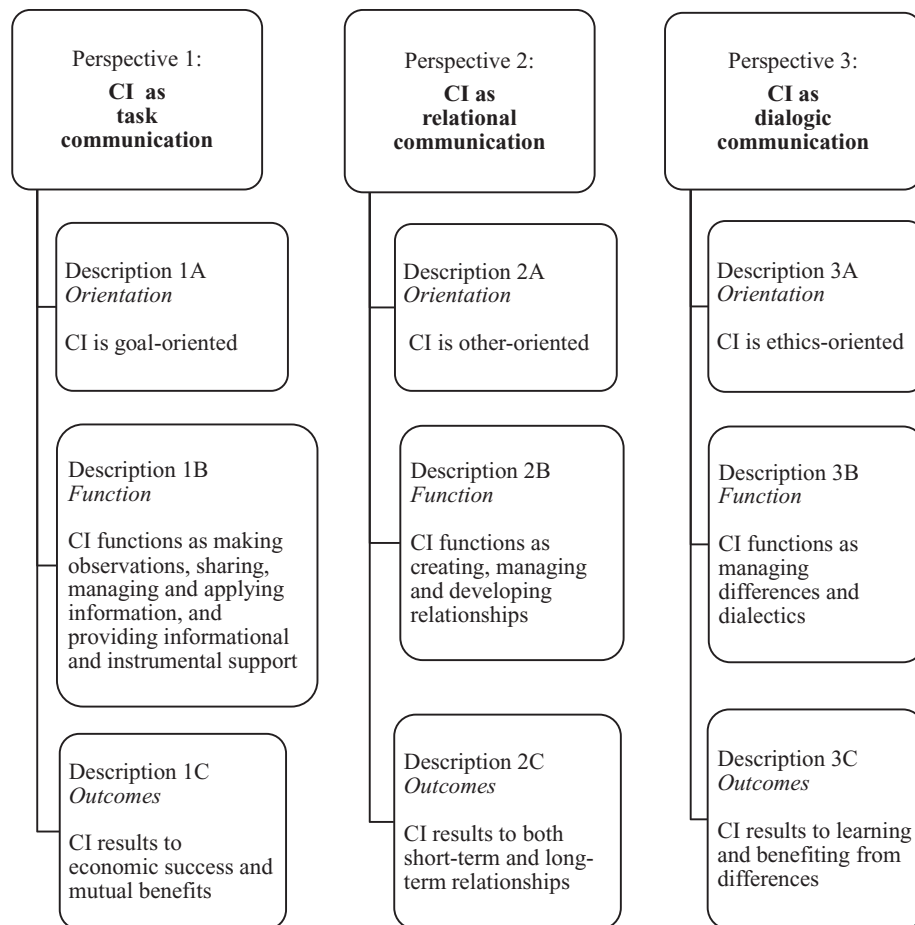
Arnett, R. C., Harden Fritz, J. M. & Bell, L. M. (2009). *Communication ethic literacy: Dialogue and difference.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development, 24* (4), 321-334.

Baxter, L. A. & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). Relational dialectics theory. Crafting meaning from competing discourses. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 349-361). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. & Braithwaite, D. O. (2010). Relational dialectics theory, applied. In S. W. Smith & S. R. Wilson (Eds.), *New directions in interpersonal communication research* (pp. 48-66). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues & dialectics.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Baxter, L. A. (2004a). Dialogues of relating. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter & K. N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogic approaches to communication* (pp. 107-124). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. (2004b). Distinguished scholar article: Relationships as dialogues. *Personal Relationships*, *11* (1), 1-22.

Bridge, K. & Baxter, L. A. (1992). Blended relationships: Friends as work associates. *Western Journal of Communication*, 56, 200-225.

Charles, M. (2009). The ascent of international business communication: Are we on board? In L. Louhiala-Salminen & A. Kankaanranta (Eds.), *The ascent of international business communication* (pp. 9-24). Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics.

Chen, L. (2002). Communication in intercultural relationships. In W. B. Gudygunst & B. Mody (Eds.), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication* (pp. 241-257). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Doerfel, M. (2005, May). *A network measure of cooperation-competition*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association annual meeting. New York, NY.

Friedman, T. L. (2006). The world is flat. A brief history of the twenty-first century. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Hardy, C., Lawrence, T. B. & Grant, D. (2005). Discourse and collaboration: The role of conversations and collective identity. *Academy of Management Review, 30* (1), 58-77.

Hardy, C., Phillips, N. & Lawrence, T. B. (2003). Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies, 40* (2), 321-347.

Heath, R. G. (2007). Rethinking community collaboration through a dialogic lens: Creativity, democracy, and diversity in community organizing. *Management Communication Quarterly, 21*, 145-171.

Heath, R.G., & Frey, L. (2004). Ideal collaboration: A conceptual framework of community collaboration. In P. Kalbfleisch (Ed.), *Communication yearbook*, *28* (pp. 189-132). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Huxham, C. & Vangen, S. (2000). Ambiguity, complexity and dynamics in the membership of collaboration. *Human Relations, 52*, 771-806.

Häkkinen, K. (1996). Fenomenografisen tutkimuksen juuria etsimässä: Teoreettinen katsaus fenomenografisen tutkimuksen lähtökohtiin. [Searching for the roots of phenomenographic research: A theoretical review of the standpoints of phenomenographic research]. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistopaino.

Isbell, M. (2010, November). *Communicating social identities: Exploring boundary spanners in interorganizational contexts.* Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San Francisco, CA.

Keyton, J., & Stallworth, V. (2003). On the verge of collaboration: Identifying group structure and process. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups* (pp. 235-260). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Keyton, J., Ford, D. J. & Smith, F. I. (2008). A mesolevel communicative model of collaboration. *Communication Theory, 18*, 376-406.

Koschmann, M. (2010, November). *Collaborative conversations: Economic sectors as discursive resources in inter-organizational collaboration*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San Francisco, CA.

Lewis, L. K. (2006). Collaborative interaction: Reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. In C. S. Beck (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook, 30* (pp. 107-247). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Marton, F. (1981). Cognosco ergo sum. Reflections on reflections. *Nordisk Pedagogik* 15, 165-180.

Marton, F. (1994). Phenomenography. In T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 4424-4429). Pergamon.

Myers, K. K. (2010). Workplace relationships and member negotiation. In S. W. Smith & S. R. Wilson (Eds.), *New directions in interpersonal communication research* (pp. 135–156). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Palmeri, J. (2004). When discourses collide: A case study of interprofessional collaborative writing in a medically oriented law firm. *Journal of Business Communication, 41* (1), 37-65.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Purhonen, P. (2008). SME internationalization as a challenge to interpersonal communication competence. An analysis of interpersonal communication competence in networking and collaboration. *Journal of Intercultural Communication,* 18. Retrieved January 26th, 2011, from http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr18/purhonen.htm

Purhonen, P. (2010). Perceptions of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning collaborative relationships in SME

internationalization. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Studies, XIX* (2), 22-36.

Purhonen, P., Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. & Valkonen, T. (2010, November). *Assessing interpersonal communication competence in business and organizational relationships*. Poster session presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San Francisco, CA.

Rajan, P. & Kisselburgh, L. (2010, November). *Team collaboration in virtual worlds: A discursive approach*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San Francisco, CA.

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. (2009). *Johtajan vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen kehittyminen. Johtamisen viestintähaasteet tietoperustaisessa organisaatiossa* [The interpersonal communication competence of leaders and its development. Leadership communication challenges in a knowledge-based organization] (Doctoral thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland), Retrieved January 26th, 2011, from http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-3759-1

Saatci, E. (2008). Problem-based learning in an intercultural business communication course: Communication challenges in intercultural relationships in internationalizing small- or medium-sized enterprises. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *22* (2), 237-260.

Selsky, J.W. & Parker, B. (2005). Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. *Journal of Management, 31*, 849-873.

Sias, P. M. & Perry, T. (2004). Disengaging form workplace relationships. A research note. *Human Communication Research, 30* (4), 589-602.

Sias, P. M. (2005). Workplace relationship quality and employee information experiences. *Communication Studies, 56* (4), 375-395.

Sias, P. M., Krone, K. J. & Jablin, F. M. 2002. An ecological perspective on workplace relationships. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 615-642). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Thomas, G. F. (2007). How can we make our research more relevant? Bridging the gap between workplace changes and business communication research. *Journal of Business Communication, 44* (3), 283-296.

Thomson, A. M. & Perry, J. L. (2006). Collaboration processes: Inside the black box. Public *Administration Review, 66* (1), 20-32.

Waldron. V. R. (2003) Relationship maintenance in organizational settings. In D. J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication. Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 163-184). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Valkonen, T. (2003). *Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi. Näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin* [Assessing speech communication skills. Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students] (Doctoral thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland). Retrieved January 26th, 2011, from http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:951-39-1546-8

Varner, I. (2000). The theoretical foundation for intercultural business communication: A conceptual model. *Journal of Business Communication*, *37* (1), 39-57.

Williams, M. (2007) Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management: A threat regulation model of trust and collaboration across boundaries. *Academy of Management Review, 32* (2), 595-621.

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration, 80* (1), 103-124.

Figure 1 Perspectives of Collaborative Interaction (CI) Produced Using a Phenomenographic Approach

Perspective 1: **CI as task communication**	Perspective 2: **CI as relational communication**	Perspective 3: **CI as dialogic communication**
Description 1A *Orientation* CI is goal-oriented	Description 2A *Orientation* CI is other-oriented	Description 3A *Orientation* CI is ethics-oriented
Description 1B *Function* CI functions as making observations, sharing, managing and applying information, and providing informational and instrumental support	Description 2B *Function* CI functions as creating, managing and developing relationships	Description 3B *Function* CI functions as managing differences and dialectics
Description 1C *Outcomes* CI results to economic success and mutual benefits	Description 2C *Outcomes* CI results to both short-term and long-term relationships	Description 3C *Outcomes* CI results to learning and benefiting from differences

IV

MEASURING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN SME INTERNATIONALIZATION

by

Pipsa Purhonen & Tarja Valkonen

Manuscript

MEASURING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE
IN SME INTERNATIONALIZATION

Abstract

Collaborative interaction has become a significant part of today's business communication. Still, little attention has been given to interpersonal communication competence specific to international business collaboration. This study examines interpersonal communication competence in the context of internationalization of small and medium sized enterprises. The article reports and analyses how the representatives of small and medium sized enterprises and the intermediary organizations involved in the internationalization process assess their own and each others' interpersonal communication competence. The discussion examines the validity and reliability of the assessment of interpersonal communication competence in collaborative business relationships.

Keywords: Assessment, Collaborative Interaction, Interpersonal Communication Competence, Measurement, Networking, SME Internationalization

Introduction

The importance of interpersonal communication competence (ICC) in business and organizational settings is undeniable. The studies of ICC have corroborated the relationships between, for instance, communication competence and high job performance (Payne, 2005), or the supervisors' communication competence and both employee work and communication satisfaction (Madlock, 2008) and ICC can be seen as vital to career success and business enterprises (see Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000). The current business context is increasingly international and multicultural, and characterized by the diversity of the

1

globalized business community (Charles, 2007). International business actors must be able to adjust the content, style and format of their communication, as well as the level of formality according to the needs of the wide range of citizens, clients and colleagues (see Dannels, 2001). This paper examines ICC in the context of internationalization of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

When aiming to internationalize their business operations, SMEs often face challenges such as limited personnel and financial resources, or insufficient expertise and skills (Forsman, Hinttu & Kock, 2002). For this reason SME internationalization typically involves collaborative relationships between the representatives of SMEs and the intermediary organizations such as authorities, business consultancies, finance companies and research institutions. These collaborative arrangements can provide the necessary alliances and networks and provide access to resources (see Stohl & Walker, 2002). Collaborative relationships in the context of SME internationalization bring together participants from a variety of personal, organizational and national backgrounds. The internationalization of SMEs involves inter-organizational, inter-sectoral and international collaborative interaction.

Collaborative arrangements have become a significant part of today's global business context, but little attention has been given to ICC specific to international business collaboration. In SME internationalization, ICC is an aspect that warrants analysis and conceptualization, as well as examining to what extent it can be assessed or measured. This study focuses on ICC in collaborative relationships between the international representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations involved in the SME internationalization. The primary purposes of the study are to examine the conceptualization and operationalization of ICC in international business collaboration, and to explore how the individual participants, that are the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations, assess their own and each others' ICC.

Theoretical background

Interpersonal communication competence in SME internationalization

Research on interpersonal communication competence tends to rely on the foundation provided by Spitzberg & Cupach (1984). Accordingly, ICC can be understood as an inference or impression formed by interaction partners or observers about someone's communication behavior (Lakey & Canary, 2002; Spitzberg, 2000). The interaction partners or an observer can judge competence of the interactants ("I/she/he was a competent communicator") or the interaction itself ("Our/their interaction was competent") (Spitzberg, 2000). Rather than being a certain set of skills, abilities or tactics, ICC can be understood as evaluations attributed to them and formed on the basis on how effective and appropriate communication behavior is perceived (Spitzberg, 2006).

Research typically views ICC as a construction of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions. Crucially, ICC requires knowledge about effective and appropriate interpersonal communication, motivation to engage in social interaction, meta-cognitive communication skills, as well as interpersonal communication skills needed to act in a way that the interactants perceive both as effective and appropriate (Valkonen, 2003) Social interaction always takes place within a certain culture, time, relationship, situation or function. This context is incorporated in both action and judgments of action, and the perception of the context of any interaction establishes different kinds of expectations of ICC (Spitzberg 2000, 2003). Thus, ICC is inherently contextual.

In an organizational context the requirements for ICC can be approached from a profession-specific perspective. For instance, the work of the leaders in a knowledge-based organization involves ICC in task communication and relational communication including the functions of persuading and engaging employees; gathering, interpreting and sharing

information; creating and supporting interaction and social relationships; guiding work and providing feedback; and supporting the interaction between employees (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, 2009). Relational orientation is also emphasized as a central part of ICC in an international business context (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Relational communication functions such as empathy, demonstrating presence or interest, and discussion of also social or personal issues are likely to enhance effective communication and the organizational members' ICC in both addressing the task and in maintaining the interpersonal relationships (Pullin, 2010; Thompson, 2009).

The contextual nature of ICC can also be approached from the ecological perspective as Jablin and Sias (2001) propose in their ecological model that views organizational communication competence embedded in four, inter-connected systems: 1) the *microsystem* that concerns individuals such as the organizational members, 2) the *mesosystem* composed of the individual microsystems such as work teams or projects 3) the *macrosystem* of the whole organization, and 4) the *exosystem* that represents a larger cultural or ideological context. From this standpoint, ICC of the individual representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizational can be located on the micro-level that is affected by other levels of the ecosystem of SME internationalization. Actors in an international business context such as SME internationalization are tied to several macro and exosystems including their corporate culture, the industry culture, the general business culture, and their national culture (see Varner, 2000).

Collaborative relationships that transcend the sector boundaries are probably more complicated than those within the same organization or industry (Koschmann, 2010). In international business collaboration ICC may, therefore, differ from ICC involved in workplace relationships within the same organization, such as in leader-member communication, and different kinds of expectations and appreciations are likely to evoke

4

towards ICC. Collaborative business relationships are complicated by the simultaneous existence of both similarity (e.g. shared interests) and difference (e.g. divided commitment and differing organizational goals or input) or the divergent expectations of how formal or informal or how personal or professional these relationships should be (see Purhonen, 2010; Stohl & Walker, 2002). The value given to particular ICC may, indeed, vary among the employees of different types of organizations (private, public and state enterprise) even within one national culture (see Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin, 1999).

Collaborative interaction functions as sharing, managing and applying information that are some of the main benefits of belonging to business networks and collaborative groups (see Lewis, 2006; Purhonen, 2010). In order to contribute to the mutual or public good in collaboration, it is necessary to bring one's own objectives, ideas or proposals accessible for collaborative partners (see Monge et al, 1998). Central to ICC in SME internationalization is, thus, providing information to the collaborative partner(s), sharing the possible problems and difficulties and coming up with new ideas and suggestions. The access and ability to use the needed knowledge is often dependent on collaborative partners' networks because collaborative relationships are always connected and interdependent with the broader contexts in which they are embedded (Stohl & Walker, 2002, see also the ecological model of organizational communication competence by Jablin & Sias, 2001). In SME internationalization, ICC may then involve knowledge of what kind of resources exist in one's networks and the motivation and willingness to use these resources in collaboration. In addition, collaborative interaction involves the negotiation of the tasks, results, boundaries, and contexts of collaboration (see Stohl & Walker, 2002). This negotiation requires interpersonal communication skills such as using convincing arguments or asking the partner for further arguments.

In addition to communicative functions that support the instrumental goals of collaboration, collaborative interaction requires relational communication functions that create, manage and develop interpersonal relationships. Due to possible political and power inequalities between the individual and institutional participants in collaboration, relationship building is crucial for all collaboration (see Keyton & Stallworth, 2003). This places emphasis on certain interpersonal communication skills such as showing trust to the collaborative partner, creating a comfortable atmosphere and sharing personal information.

Finally, collaborative interaction in SME internationalization may involve dialogic communication that acknowledges ethical values and norms specific to collaborative interaction such as mutual trust and respect, and equality and reciprocity among the collaborative partners, and that functions as managing differences and dialectics (Purhonen, 2010). This dialogic aspect of international business collaboration can be seen as convergent with business and professional communication ethics that recognize the contemporary situation as well as the ethical commitments of self and of others, and how they all shape, guide and restrain our actions (see Arnett, Harden Fritz & Bell, 2009). From this viewpoint, ICC in SME internationalization requires understanding and knowledge of the collaborative partner's cultural and organizational background, and taking the goals and perspectives of the partner into account in one's own communication behavior. To handle the uncertainty related to collaboration, the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations need to be flexible and have metacognitive skills such as planning and controlling their communication to meet the ethical principles and to acknowledge the differences and dialectics inherent in collaboration interaction.

To conclude, ICC central to SME internationalization can be seen as *knowledge* about effective and appropriate task communication, relational communication and dialogic communication, *motivation* to be goal-oriented, other-oriented and ethics-oriented and

interpersonal communication skills in, for instance, sharing information, providing instrumental support, creating, managing and developing relationships, and managing differences and dialectics (see also Purhonen, 2010).

Measuring interpersonal communication competence

Interpersonal communication competence can be assessed by using both direct (such as observation or simulations) and indirect (such as interviews or introspective questionnaires) methods (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989; Spitzberg, 2003). There are a large number of different assessment tools and measures that differ, for instance, in whether the assessment focuses on only one or many of the dimensions of ICC (cognitive, affective, or behavioral). Further, measurements can assess atomistic qualities of ICC (e.g. eye contact or gestures), or holistic inferences of one's communication behavior (e.g. empathy, activity), and ICC can be assessed by the interactant, by one's interaction partner or a third party as an observer (see Valkonen, 2003; Wilson & Sabee, 2003).

Although each assessor has a different perception of ICC, the participants might be seen as the most appropriate assessors. This is because a third party (observer) lacks access to the kind of relational knowledge about the particular interpersonal relationship, which is essential in order to assess whether the communication behavior observed is effective and appropriate (Parks, 1994). Self-assessments, on the other hand, have a significant advantage over the partner assessments if it's considered that the information possessed about one's own ICC is obtained from both internal social comparison and the reflections of others (see Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). However, self-assessments may appear to reflect the interactant's emotions, motivation and overall communication satisfaction, or the perceptions of ease of interaction or activity, rather than the actual behaviors (see e.g. Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989; Valkonen, 2003).

7

Identification of which domains of competence it is appropriate to assess in a particular context can be seen as one of the most important challenges in assessing ICC (see Spitzberg, 2003). Even though a large number of existing measures of ICC (for reviews, see e.g. Kearney & Beatty, 1994; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989; Spitzberg, 2003), one that would focus on ICC in an international business setting and consider the complex nature of collaborative business relationships does not yet exist.

Conversational Skills Rating Scale (Spitzberg, 2006), a widely used measure, focuses on the behavioral aspect of ICC, which has been rather typical of the assessment of interpersonal communication competence. Conversational Skills Rating Scale (CSRS) classifies interpersonal communication skills in terms of attentiveness (e.g. being interested in and attentive to a conversational partner), composure (e.g. an assertive or confident manner), expressiveness (e.g. topical verbosity, nonverbal animation), and coordination (e.g. topical innovation, coordinated entrances and exits from conversation). However, CSRS, such as most of the existing measures, are not developed for the organizational contexts, and may not, as such, be applicable in the context of SME internationalization.

Only a few studies have examined measurement of ICC in an organizational setting. An example is a study by Payne (2005) that applied the Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) model of ICC in an organizational context. In the study, all the dimensions of ICC (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) were taken into account in operationalization. The employees judged their own motivation to communicate, empathize and adapt, and their knowledge of empathy, interaction management and adaptability, while their supervisors judged the employee's skills at adapting communication, empathizing and managing interaction. Nevertheless, the study lacks the interactants' self-assessments of how appropriate and effective they perceived their own communication behavior to be.

This study explores the assessments of ICC in SME internationalization and uses a measure that takes into account the context of collaborative interaction and all of the four ecological systems affecting ICC (microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and exosystem). The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of ICC in collaborative interaction between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations?

2. What are the validity and reliability of Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS), and of the self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in international business collaboration?

Method

Participants

The study involved 115 individual stakeholders in the internationalisation of Finnish SMEs into China, including participants of both sexes (91 males, 23 females, and 1 unreported) and various nationalities (101 Finnish, 6 Chinese, 3 Swedish, 2 Norwegian, 1 French, 1 Italian, and 1 Taiwanese). They represented both Finnish SMEs (49) and Finnish and international intermediary organizations (66). These intermediary organizations were, for instance, business councils, consulting companies, finance companies, governmental organizations, education or research organizations, regional development companies, and technology or innovation centers from China, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore and Sweden. The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 71 years ($M = 48.0$).

Procedure

Members of Finnish SMEs operating or aiming to establish business operations in China and of the intermediary organizations involved in the internationalization process of SMEs were

9

invited to participate in the study during spring 2009. The invitations to participate in the survey were both sent by direct emails and published in three web pages related to the internationalization of Finnish SMEs into China. In the study the respondents completed a web questionnaire and assessed their own ICC and that of their collaborative partner. The SME representatives were asked to choose one collaboration partner who was working in an intermediary organization in Finland, China or elsewhere, and who had significantly assisted the SME's internationalization process into China. Similarly, the intermediaries were advised to choose a person from a Finnish SME, and refer to this collaboration partner, one person, in the partner assessments.

Measure: CCCS

Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCS) included a pool of 42 statements (see Table 1) developed specially for this study from the theory-base of interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence, and interpersonal networks and collaborative interaction (for review, see Purhonen, 2008). The statements were phrased to reflect respondent's perceptions of ICC in six communication functions: 1) *the creation and management of relationships, 2) information sharing, 3) management of network resources, 4) integrative negotiation, 5) management of diversity,* and *6) adaptation and adjustment*. Likert-type scales (*Agree – Somewhat agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Somewhat disagree – Disagree*) were used to assess how strongly the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations agreed or disagreed with the statements. There were two CCCS versions: 1. CCCS self-assessment (CCCSsa), and 2. CCCS partner assessment (CCCSpa), both in two languages, Finnish and English.

The two versions were piloted in October and November 2008 by using a method adapted from "cognitive interviews" (Godenhjelm, 2002). Altogether eight interviews were conducted

10

in Hong Kong and Shanghai, China, involving five Chinese and three Finnish representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations. The interviewees were encouraged to point out all the unclear instructions or concepts used in this pilot version of the questionnaire while answering it. In addition, after completing the questionnaire the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of the language and conceptualization used in the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, the items were revised into the final versions of CCCSsa and CCCSpa, as presented in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha was .96 for the 42-item CCCSsa and .95 for the 42-item CCCSpa.

Analysis

The data were analyzed statistically and computed using the SPSS for Windows 16.0 statistical program. The descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations), item/total correlations and the percentile frequencies of the ratings were examined. Additionally, a Mann-Whitney test was used to study the differences between the self-assessments and partner assessments. This non-parametric test was chosen because the data were not normally distributed but distorted towards the upper values on the scale of 1–5. To test the underlying factor structures of the CCCSsa and CCCSpa, items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the principal axis method and varimax (orthogonal) rotation.

Results

The level of interpersonal communication competence

SME and intermediary representatives' self-assessments using the Collaborative Communication Competence Scale (CCCSsa) yielded high values of the level of ICC in collaborative relationships ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .44$). The level of ICC was rated highest in

avoiding offensive language ("I do not use offensive language" *M* = 4.79, *SD* = .45), *being trustworthy* ("S/he can trust me" *M* = 4.77, *SD* = .42) and *showing respect* ("I show him/her that I respect him/her" *M* = 4.62, *SD* = .54) and *trust* ("I show to my collaboration partner that I trust him/her" *M* = 4.59, *SD* = .53) (see Table 1). In turn, interpersonal communication skills in *informal communication and relationship maintenance* had the lowest mean scores ("I have invited him/her to informal meetings and gatherings" *M* = 3.45, *SD* = 1.46; "I share personal information with him/her" *M* = 3.47, *SD* = 1.24).

Assessments of the collaborative partner's ICC using the CCCSpa produced lower values than the self-assessments of the level of interpersonal communication competence (*M* = 4.04, *SD* = .58). Ratings of *avoiding offensive language* were the highest (*M* = 4.74, *SD* = .64). *Showing trust* (M = *4.45,* SD = *.69), creating a comfortable atmosphere* (*M* = 4.41, *SD* = .78), and *being trustworthy* (*M* = 4.37, *SD* = .81) were also skills that yielded a high mean score (see Table 1). Ratings of the collaborative partner's interpersonal communication skills were lowest in *informal communication and relationship maintenance* ("S/he has invited me to informal meetings and gatherings" *M* = 3.38, *SD* = 1.43; "S/he shares personal information with me" *M* = 3.44, *SD* = 1.34) and *assurance* ("S/he makes sure that I understand him/her *M* = 3.63, *SD* = 0.99).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Assessment of Interpersonal Communication Competence

CCCSsa: statements (N=113)	Mean	SD	Item/ total corr.	CCCSpa:statements (N=115)	Mean	SD	Item/ total corr.
1 I openly share my knowledge and opinions with my collaboration partner	4.41	0.66	0.51	My collaboration partner openly shares her/his knowledge with me	4.31	0.74	0.56
2 I answer her/his questions thoroughly enough	4.45	0.61	0.56	S/he answers to my questions thoroughly enough	4.15	0.81	0.56
3 I provide her/his with a lot of information that s/he needs	4.36	0.81	0.64	S/he provides me a lot of information that I need	4.05	0.79	0.69
4 I tell her/him about the possible problems and difficulties	4.42	0.85	0.64	S/he tells me about the possible problems and difficulties	3.93	0.97	0.56
5 I come up with a lot of new ideas and suggestions	4.16	0.85	0.61	S/he comes up with a lot of new ideas and suggestions	3.88	1.00	0.66
6 I make sure that s/he understands me	4.38	0.66	0.66	S/he makes sure that I understand him/her	3.63	0.99	0.73
7 I am goal oriented	4.53	0.63	0.54	S/he is goal oriented	4.18	0.78	0.51
8 I am innovative	4.37	0.71	0.66	S/he is innovative	4.07	0.90	0.55
9 With my help my collaboration partner can accomplish results s/he could not reach by her/himself	4.19	0.83	0.53	With her/his help I can accomplish results that I could not reach by myself	4.01	0.88	0.56
10 I have a lot of knowledge about what kind of competencies exist in my networks	4.45	0.68	0.61	S/he has a lot of knowledge about what kind of competencies exist in her/his networks	4.19	0.83	0.57
11 I make use of the competencies of my networks in our collaboration	4.39	0.74	0.62	S/he makes use of the competencies of her/his networks in our collaboration	4.08	0.83	0.58
12 I actively ask for her/his opinion	4.23	0.78	0.44	S/he actively asks for my opinion	3.93	0.87	0.53
13 I inform her/him about collaborators who could be of assistance to her/him	4.27	0.85	0.62	S/he informs me about collaborators who would be of assistance to me	3.70	1.13	0.67
14 I have introduced her/him to new collaborators	4.10	1.07	0.60	S/he has introduced me to new collaborators	3.72	1.28	0.58
15 I support my collaboration partner in going forward	4.26	0.84	0.66	S/he supports me in going forward	3.74	0.98	0.73
16 I aim to further her/him case with my own actions	4.49	0.76	0.67	S/he aims to further my case with her/his own actions	3.90	0.95	0.74
17 I am active in our network	4.25	0.80	0.67	S/he is active in our network	3.96	0.88	0.66
18 I am well prepared for our meetings	4.20	0.71	0.59	S/he is well prepared for our meetings	3.90	0.96	0.50
19 The language I use is clear and easy to understand	4.33	0.65	0.60	The language s/he uses is clear and easy to understand	4.14	0.84	0.54

13

Table 1 continues

CCCSsa: statements (N=113)	Mean	SD	Item/total corr.	CCCSpa: statements (N=115)	Mean	SD	Item/total corr.
20 I use convincing arguments in reasoning my opinions	4.39	0.62	0.61	S/he uses convincing arguments in reasoning her/his opinions	4.00	0.90	0.69
21 I ask her/him for further arguments when needed	4.39	0.67	0.53	S/he asks me for further arguments when needed	4.10	0.78	0.52
22 I acknowledge the goals and perspectives of my collaboration partner	4.46	0.57	0.49	S/he acknowledges my goals and perspectives	4.09	0.76	0.70
23 I know her/his organization well	4.11	0.80	0.50	S/he knows my organization well	4.06	0.90	0.48
24 I know her/him well	3.98	0.94	0.60	S/he knows me well	4.10	0.93	0.58
25 I understand her/his culture	4.30	0.86	0.47	S/he understands my culture	4.18	0.82	0.45
26 It is easy to talk with me in difficult situations	4.35	0.66	0.50	It is easy to talk with her/him in difficult situations	4.23	0.81	0.69
27 I show her/him that I respect him/her	4.62	0.54	0.58	S/he shows me that s/he respects me	4.35	0.70	0.66
28 I do not use offensive language	4.79	4.45	0.31	S/he does not use offensive language	4.74	0.64	0.35
29 I show my collaboration partner that I trust her/him	4.59	0.53	0.54	S/he shows that s/he trusts me	4.45	0.69	0.79
30 S/he can trust me	4.77	0.42	0.48	I can trust her/him	4.37	0.81	0.73
31 I create a comfortable atmosphere to our meetings	4.43	0.62	0.69	S/he creates a comfortable atmosphere to our meetings	4.41	0.78	0.77
32 I share personal information with her/him	3.47	1.24	0.52	S/he shares personal information with me	3.44	1.34	0.58
33 I have invited her/him to informal meetings and gatherings	3.45	1.46	0.60	S/he has invited me to informal meetings and gatherings	3.38	1.43	0.54
34 I am interested in her/him and her/his case	4.30	0.75	0.64	S/he is interested in me and my case	3.90	1.00	0.70
35 I am committed to collaborating with her/him	4.53	0.66	0.58	S/he is committed to collaborating with me	4.14	0.85	0.71
36 I am active in keeping contact with her/him	4.09	0.89	0.63	S/he is active in keeping contact with me	3.90	0.89	0.69
37 I aim to understand him/her even if s/he disagrees with me	4.45	0.60	0.49	S/he aims to understand me even if I disagree with her/him	4.04	0.70	0.63
38 I am flexible	4.36	0.63	0.47	S/he is flexible	4.13	0.90	0.70
39 I handle well the uncertainty related to collaboration	4.23	0.86	0.53	S/he handles well the uncertainty related to collaboration	4.04	0.84	0.61
40 I adjust quickly to changing situations	4.45	0.64	0.66	S/he adjusts quickly to changing situations	4.10	0.94	0.70
41 In disagreements I strive for a conclusion that is satisfying for both of us	4.36	0.71	0.53	In disagreements s/he strives for a conclusion that is satisfying for both of us	4.02	0.88	0.65
42 I am a good listener	4.25	0.74	0.51	S/he is a good listener	4.00	0.99	0.75

14

The consistency of self-assessments and partner assessments

A Mann-Whitney test revealed differences between the self-assessments and partner assessments of interpersonal communication competence in collaborative relationships. SME and intermediary representatives assessed their own interpersonal communication competence significantly higher than that of their collaborative partners ($p = 0.000$).

All the 42 items of both CCCSsa and CCCSpa demonstrated high item reliabilities. To search for items that were linked together in the SME and intermediary representatives' inferences of interpersonal communication competence, EFA with the principal axis method and varimax (orthogonal) rotation was applied to all 42 items of CCCSsa and to all 42 items of CCCSpa. Items which failed to produce at least .50 loading on the primary factor were removed from the analysis. This allowed the identification of the problematic items, and the reduction of the assessment scales into 19 items for CCCSsa and 21 items for CCCSpa (see Table 2 and Table 3). None of the items included in the analysis had secondary loadings above .40. Exploratory factors analysis for CCCSsa and EFA for CCCSpa resulted in different factor solutions.

Table 2 Factor Loadings for CCCSsa Obtained Using Exploratory Factor Analysis with
Varimax Rotation (N = 101)

	Factors			
	Factor 1: Connectedness	Factor 2: Clarity and Credibility	Factor 3: Personal Communication	Factor 4: Trust and Respect
Statements				
I support my collaboration partner to go forward	.708			
I aim to further her/his case with my own actions	.702			
I am active in our network	.702			
I have introduced her/him to new collaborators	.656			
I inform her/him about the collaborators who could be of assistance to her/him	.655			
I make use of the competencies of my networks in our collaboration	.644			
I am active in keeping contact with her/him	.615			
The language I use is clear and easy to understand		.769		
It is easy to talk with me in difficult situations		.665		
I am well prepared to our meetings		.624		
I make sure that s/he understands me		.624		
I use convincing arguments in reasoning my opinions		.615		
I ask her/him for further arguments when needed		.502		
I share personal information with her/him			.810	
I have invited him/her to informal meetings and gatherings			.730	
I know her/him well			.590	
I show my collaboration partner that I trust her/him				.765
I show that I respect and appreciate her/him				.629
S/he can trust me				.558

Table 3 Factor Loadings for CCCSpa Obtained Using Exploratory Factor Analysis with
Varimax Rotation (N = 101)

	Factors				
	Factor 1: Connectedness	Factor 2: Information Sharing	Factor 3: Familiarity	Factor 4: Adjustment	Factor 5: Trust and Respect
Statements					
S/he has introduced me to new collaborators	.746				
S/he is active in our network	.712				
S/he makes use of the competencies of her/his networks in our collaboration	.694				
S/he aims to further my case with her/his own actions	.666				
S/he informs me about the collaborators who could be of assistance to me	.661				
My collaboration partner supports me in going forward	.609				
With her/his help I can accomplish results that I could not reach by myself	.603				
S/he answers my questions thoroughly enough		.824			
S/he provides me a lot of information that I need		.732			
My collaboration partner openly shares her/his knowledge and opinions with me		.673			
S/he tells me about the possible problems and difficulties		.657			
S/he shares personal information with me			.762		
S/he has invited me to informal meetings and gatherings			.717		
S/he knows me well			.685		
S/he knows my organization well			.555		
S/he adjusts quickly to changing situations				.759	
S/he is flexible				.671	
S/he handles well the uncertainty related to collaboration				.616	
S/he does not use offensive language					.637
S/he creates a comfortable atmosphere to our meetings					.635
I can trust her/him					.625

Exploratory factor analysis for CCCSsa yielded a factor solution accounting for 65.6% of
the variance, with four factors that had eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The first, and the
strongest, factor accounting for 38.7% of the variance and demonstrated good internal
reliability (α = .88) and contained seven items, four of them related to networking, two
addressed help and support to the collaborative partner and one referred to active relationship
maintenance. The factor was accordingly labeled *Connectedness*. The second factor, labeled

Clarity and Credibility, contained six items addressing inferences of clarity and ease of communication, assurance and argumentation. The factor explained 11.8% of the variance (α = .86). The third factor indicated sharing personal information with the collaborative partner, invited the partner to informal meetings, and knew the partner well. This *Personal Communication* factor explained 8.5% of the variance among the items (α = .81). Similarly to the third factor, the fourth factor contained only three items, accounted for 6.7% of the variance, and was labeled *Trust and Respect* (α = .78). High ratings in this factor indicated that the respondent was trustworthy and showed trust and respect in the collaborative relationship.

The procedure of EFA for CCCSpa revealed a factor solution explaining 72.3% of the variance in the item set, and including 5 factors with eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The first factor, labeled *Connectedness*, included seven items which indicated interpersonal communication competence in the management of networks and helping and supporting the collaborative partner. The Connectedness factor accounted for 42.8% of the variance and demonstrated good internal reliability (α = .89). The second factor contained four items that addressed answering questions, sharing information, knowledge and opinions, and also revealing problems and difficulties. The factor was labeled *Information Sharing* and accounted for 9.8% of the variance (α = .86). The third factor, labeled *Familiarity* explained 8.0% of the variance among the items (α = .82). Ratings in this factor reported self-disclosure, knowing the collaborative partner and his/her organization, and inviting the partner to informal gatherings. The fourth factor accounted for 6.4% of the variance and contained three items (α = .88). Ratings in this *Adjustment* factor indicated that the person adjusts to changing situations, is flexible and handles well the uncertainty related to collaboration. Finally, the fifth factor, labeled *Trust and Respect* accounted for 5.3% of the variance (α =

.81). The three items in this factor referred to avoiding offensive language, creating a comfortable atmosphere, and being trustworthy.

As the structures of CCCSsa and CCCSpa were modified due to the results achieved with EFA, the final results of self-assessments and partners assessments cannot be compared as such. The examination of the percentile frequencies of ratings (see Table 4 and Table 5), however, reveals that both self-assessments and partner assessments are clearly concentrated at the positive end, that is, in the options "somewhat agree" and "agree". There is most variation among the self-assessments of ICC in *Personal Communication*. Hence the assessments of ICC were not normally or evenly distributed, but accumulated around the positive attributions.

Table 4 Percentile Frequencies of the Self-Assessments of Interpersonal Communication Competence (CCCSsa)

Measure	Negative %	Neutral %	Positive %	M	SD
Connectedness	1.8	8.8	89.4	4.36	0.65
Clarity and Credibility	0.0	5.3	94.7	4.31	0.50
Personal Communication	17.9	25.0	57.1	3.64	1.04
Trust and Respect	0.0	0.0	100.0	4.66	0.42

Negative = *disagree or somewhat disagree* (Mean < 2.50), Neutral = *neither agree nor disagree (Mean = 2.50 - 3.49),*
Positive = *somewhat agree or agree* with the statement (Mean > 3.49)
N=101

Table 5 Percentile Frequencies of the Partner Assessments of Interpersonal Communication Competence (CCCSpa)

Measure	Negative %	Neutral %	Positive %	M	SD
Connectedness	3.5	32.2	64.3	3.87	0.78
Information Sharing	1.7	10.5	87.8	4.10	0.69
Familiarity	6.1	30.4	63.5	3.74	0.94
Adjustment	3.5	17.4	79.1	4.09	0.80
Trust and Respect	1.7	5.3	93.0	4.51	0.63

Negative = *disagree or somewhat disagree* (Mean < 2.50), Neutral = *neither agree nor disagree (Mean = 2.50 - 3.49),*
Positive = *somewhat agree or agree* with the statement (Mean > 3.49)
N=101

Discussion

Assessments of ICC in SME internationalization

This study examined ICC and its' measurement in international business collaboration. Self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in collaborative interaction between the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations resulted to high ratings. In the context of showing trust and respect, ICC is a particular strength of the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations based on the assessments of their own and those of their collaborative partners. This is an encouraging finding as trust can be seen as an important building block in both addressing the task and maintaining social relationships in the organizational settings (see Thompson, 2009). Trust and respect have also been emphasized as ethical principles of collaborative interaction (see Lewis, 2006).

On the other hand, personal communication and familiarity seem to be aspects of ICC that the representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations do not manage as successfully as showing trust and respect. In the context of collaborative interaction, ICC should also be

managed in the functions of relationship creation and maintenance because as Myers (2010) suggests successful organizational relationships can facilitate the development of collaboration and networks, and thereby lead to new opportunities which may not otherwise occur. Creating strong interpersonal relationships has been emphasized in particular in Chinese business communication (see e.g. Ding, 2006; Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006). ICC in Chinese context can be seen as prioritizing relationship maintenance over directness or accuracy, and rather sacrificing effectiveness than embarrassing anyone involved in social interaction (Yeh, 2010).

Measuring ICC related to relationship maintenance can, however, be a complicated process. The ratings of personal communication and familiarity may be influenced by the SME and intermediary representatives' differing expectations towards collaborative business relationships or the value given to them. Representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations are found to perceive their collaborative relationships as both personal and professional, and both emergent and strategic and this may have affected the assessments of ICC in personal communication and familiarity (see Purhonen, 2010). The assessments may, hence, refer to the participants' appreciations or expectations given to, for instance, personal or emotional connectedness as part of international business collaboration instead of actual communication behavior.

The representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations assessed their own ICC significantly higher than that of their collaborative partners. For the study the SME and intermediary representatives were asked to assess ICC in a relationship with a partner, whom the SME and intermediary representatives had mostly been in contact with and whom they had met at least once. The reason for this request was to exclude from examination those relationships which do not involve the ongoing management of the relationship. However, this advice may have led only to assessments of ICC in collaborative business relationships

21

which could be perceived as successful. The self-assessments may then relate more to the SME and intermediary representatives' satisfaction with the accomplishment of their goals or the fulfillment of their expectations rather than be assessments of their actual interpersonal communication behavior. Further, because the SME and intermediary representatives' self-assessments of their own ICC were significantly higher than the judgments made by their collaborative partners, it is also possible that the self-assessments are to some extent based on "false competence" which can be understood as taking responsibility for positive results that the individual did not actually produce (Parks, 1994).

The assessments of ICC in collaborative relationships may also be biased by the tendency to assess too positively a person whom one knows well and with whom one likes to work with compared with how one would assess interaction partners who are not so close or with whom collaboration has not been successful. Hence, the assessments may reflect positive experiences of the interpersonal relationship rather than assessments of actual interpersonal communication behavior. Further, the percentile frequencies of both self-assessments and partner assessments were concentrated at the positive end and the data were not normally distributed. This indicates a possibility that the respondents' tendency to depend on holistic impressions when assessing ICC has lead to biased assessments.

The respondents' ability to accurately report their own communication activities should also be taken into consideration. In particular in the case of self-assessments, despite an apparent desire to report accurately and confidently, the respondents may in fact be inaccurate (Boster & Sherry, 2010). Therefore, self-assessments cannot be seen as perfectly reliable method for behavioral assessment or valid representation of the construct being examined (Miller, 2001). By using self-reports to examine ICC in SME internationalization it may only be possible to gain understanding concerning the SME and intermediary representatives' communication goals, confidence or feelings about their own communication behavior. In

addition, the self-assessments may refer to factors such as communication satisfaction, goal-accomplishment or self-efficacy instead of actual interpersonal communication skills (Valkonen, 2003). Self-assessments appear to be inaccurate to assessing actual communication behavior, but they can be seen as highly suitable for ascertaining beliefs, attitudes and values such as the importance given to trust and respect or personal connectedness in international business collaboration.

Conceptualization and operationalization of ICC

In this study ICC was operationalized according to six communicative functions of collaborative interaction: 1) *the creation and management of relationships, 2) information sharing, 3) management of network resources, 4) integrative negotiation, 5) management of diversity,* and *6) adaptation and adjustment*. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) did not confirm this original six-dimensional structure of ICC in collaborative interaction but indicated that CCCSsa (Collaborative Communication Competence Scale self-assessment) is viable for measuring different aspects of ICC, as compared to CCCSpa (Collaborative Communication Competence Scale partner assessment). Whereas CCCSsa seemed to encompass self-impressions of *connectedness*, *clarity and credibility*, *personal communication*, and *trust and respect*, CCCSpa measured ICC in *connectedness*, *information sharing*, *familiarity*, *adjustment*, and *trust and respect*.

The internal consistency of both CCCSsa and CCCSpa was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Both measures yielded a coefficient of greater than .70. However, the results of EFA and even the high Cronbach alphas may refer to difficulties in the conceptualization and operationalization of ICC in SME internationalization. Measurement of ICC can be seen as sensitive to different kinds of rating errors (e.g. Valkonen, 2003) and the high Cronbach alpha

values may reflect a tendency to base assessments on holistic impressions of oneself or one's interaction partner rather than analytically assessing separate items of ICC.

Another challenge emerges from the findings based on EFA. As the self-assessments seemed to examine aspects divergent with partner assessments, do these two methods of assessment actually measure the same phenomenon, ICC in international business collaboration? Based on the results achieved with EFA the self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC in SME internationalization are not comparable.

Limitations and future directions

Interpersonal communication competence (ICC) was assessed here using non-standardized measurement scales designed specifically for the present study. The study was only an initial stage in the development of the scales. The results of both EFA and Cronbach alpha indicated scale quality, but a larger corpus of research data, and a pilot study or testing program would have increased the measurement validity and reliability (see Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). Therefore, the findings of this study should be viewed with some caution, as both Collaborative Communication Competence Scale self-assessment and Collaborative Communication Competence Scale partner assessment require extensive testing and further confirmation.

The findings achieved in this study cast doubt on the suitability and validity of measuring ICC in a complicated international business setting. According to the empirical data of this study, measurement of ICC seem to be influenced by several individual- and relationship-specific factors such as the variety of communication goals or shared experiences of the participants in the given collaborative relationship (see also Purhonen, Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer & Valkonen, 2010). Both self-assessments and partner assessments of ICC appear to be exposed to several biases. Self-assessments may reflect the inferences of goal

24

accomplishment, satisfaction or self-efficacy, and even false competence instead of actual interpersonal communication skills. Whereas partner assessments may provide information about the actual communication behavior, they might also be biased, for instance, by the value given to ICC or the closeness and familiarity of the collaborative partner. Also the different kinds of expectations towards the given context or the relationship (such as how formal or informal or how private or professional collaborative relationships should be) may complicate the assessment of ICC in international business collaboration.

Future studies should use triangulation of both direct and indirect methods to produce a deeper understanding of ICC in a complex business context. Direct methods such as observation could provide a more reliable picture of the collaborative partners' actual communication behavior (e.g. interpersonal communication skills), but may not alone be sufficient or adequate to encompass ICC in international business collaboration. A third party always lacks relationship-specific information, which is necessary in assessing ICC in a given interpersonal relationship (see Parks, 1994). Indirect methods should not be treated as useless, as they appear to be viable in providing knowledge of the values and attitudes influencing ICC. Hence, examination of ICC in collaborative business relationships could follow a mixed methods approach and apply individual interviews, focus groups or direct observations before the development and implementation of the ICC measurement (see also Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante & Nelson, 2010, for conducting mixed research for developing quantitative instruments). Such practice would help the researcher to better understand the contextual parameters such as communication practices, organizational roles or the professional tasks inherent in the assessment context and develop a contextually sensitive measure for ICC.

This study revealed challenges in the measurement of ICC in a collaborative business context and indicated that measurements do not provide sufficient understanding or explain the participants' communicative strengths or the stumbling blocks in collaborative interaction.

Measurement cannot provide an objective or absolute picture of ICC in complicated, international business collaboration, but assessments are always subjective inferences and only valid in particular relationships or contexts (see also Purhonen, Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer & Valkonen, 2010). Operationalization of ICC in collaborative business relationships that occur at several levels of an organizational ecosystem and which also involve a diverse range of collaborative participants, expectations, goals and appreciations, is challenging. International business relationships are phenomena that have received scant attention from scholars in interpersonal communication and collaborative interaction. Consequently continued research into this complex issue is necessary.

References

Arnett, R. C., Harden Fritz, J. M. & Bell, L. M. (2009). *Communication ethic literacy: Dialogue and difference.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Boster, F. J. & Sherry, J. L. (2010). Alternative methodological approaches to communication science. In C. R. Berger, M. E. Roloff & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds.), *The Handbook of Communication Science* (2nd ed.) (pp. 55–71). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Charles, M. (2007). Language matters in global communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, *44*(3), 260–282.

Dannels, D. O. (2001). Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice of Communication across Curriculum. *Communication Education, 50*(2), 144–158.

Ding, D. D. (2006). An Indirect Style in Business Communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 20*, 87–100.

Forsman, M., Hinttu, S. & Kock, S. (2002, September). *Internationalization from and SME perspective.* Paper presented at the 18th Annual IMP Conference, Lyon, France.

Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H. & Kreps, G.L. (2000). *Investigating communication. An introduction to research methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Godenhjelm, P. (2002). Kognitiviiset haastattelut [Finnish] [Cognitive interviews]. In A. Ahola, P. Godenhjelm & M. Lehtinen, *Kysymisen taito. Surveylaboratorio lomaketutkimusten kehittämisessä*. [The skill of asking. Survey laboratory in developing questionnaire studies]. Statistics Finland. Helsinki: Hakapaino Oy.

Jablin, F. M. & Sias, P. M. (2001). Communication competence. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication. Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 819–864). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kankaanranta, A. & Planken, B. (2010). Belf competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. Journal of Business Communication 47 (4), 380–407.

Kearney, P. & Beatty, M. J. (1994). Measures of instructional communication. In R. B. Rubin, P. Palmgren & H. E. Spyher (Eds.), *Communication reasearch measures. A sourcebook* (pp. 7–20). New York, NY: Guilford.

Keyton, J., & Stallworth, V. (2003). On the verge of collaboration: Identifying group structure and process. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups* (pp. 235–260). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Koschmann, M. (2010, November). Collaborative conversations: Economic sectors as discursive resources in inter-organizational collaboration. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, San Francisco, CA.

Lakey, S. G. & Canary, D. J., (2002). Actor goal achievement and sensitivity to partner as critical factors in understanding interpersonal communication competence and conflict strategies. *Communication Monographs, 69,* 217–235.

Lewis, L. K. (2006). Collaborative interaction: Reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. In C. S. Beck (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook, 30* (pp. 107–247). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Madlock, P. E. (2008). The Link Between Leadership Style, Communicator Competence, and Employee Satisfaction. *Journal of Business Communication, 45*, 61–78.

Miller, K. (2001). Quantitative research methods. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication. Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 137–160). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Monge. P. R., Fulk, J., Kalman, M. E., Flanagin, A. J., Parnassa, C. & Rumsey, S. (1998). Production of collective action in alliance-based interorganizational communication and information systems. *Organization Science*, 9, 411–433.

Morreale, S. P., Osborn, M. M. & Pearson, J. C. (2000). Why communication is important: A rationale for the centrality of the study of communication. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration, 29*, 1–25.

Myers, K. K. (2010). Workplace relationships and member negotiation. In S. W. Smith & S. R. Wilson (Eds.), *New directions in interpersonal communication research* (pp. 135–156). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bustamante, R. M. & Nelson, J. A. (2010). Mixed methods research as a tool for developing quantitative instruments. Journal of Mixed Methods Research 4 (1), 56–78.

Parks, M. R. (1994). Communicative competence and interpersonal control. In M. L. Knapp

    & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed.) (pp. 589–618).

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Payne, H. J. (2005). Reconceptualizing social skills in organizations: Exploring the

    relationship between communication competence, job performance and supervisory roles.

    Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 11(2), 63–77.

Pullin, P. (2010). Small talk, rapport, and international communicative competence: Lessons

    to learn from BELF. Journal of Business Communication 47 (4), 455–476.

Purhonen, P. (2008). SME internationalization as a challenge to interpersonal communication

    competence: An analysis of interpersonal communication competence in networking and

    collaboration. Journal of Intercultural Communication 18,

    http://immi.se/intercultural/nr18/purhonen.htm

Purhonen, P. (2010). Perceptions of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations

    concerning collaborative relationships in SME internationalization. *Intercultural*

    Communication Studies XIX (2), 22–36.

Purhonen, P., Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. & Valkonen, T. (2010, November). *Assessing*

    interpersonal communication competence in business and organizational relationships.

    Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San

    Francisco, CA.

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. (2009). Johtajan vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen kehittyminen.

    Johtamisen viestintähaasteet tietoperustaisessa organisaatiossa [The interpersonal

    communication competence of leaders and its development. Leadership communication

challenges in a knowledge-based organization]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 128.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2000). What is good communication? *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration, 29*, 103–119.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2003). Methods of interpersonal skill assessment. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills* (pp. 93–134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Spitzberg, B. H. (2006, November). *CSRS: The conversational skills rating scale: An instructional assessment of interpersonal competence*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association. San Antonio, TX.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. (1989). *Handbook of interpersonal competence research*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Stohl, C. & Walker, K. (2002). A Bona Fide perspective for the future of groups. Understanding collaborating groups. In L. R. Frey, (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp. 237–252). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam, N. & Jablin, F. M. (1999). An Exploratory of Communication Competence in Thai Organizations. *Journal of Business Communication, 36*, 382–418.

Thompson, J. L. (2009). Building collective communication competence in interdisciplinary research teams. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 37*(3), 278–297.

Varner, I. (2000). The theoretical foundation for intercultural business communication: A conceptual model. *Journal of Business Communication*, *37* (1), 39-57.

Valkonen, T. (2003). *Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi. Näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin* [Assessing speech communication skills. Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students]. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 7.

Wilson, S.R & Sabee, C. M. (2003). Explicating communicative competence as a theoretical term. In S. R. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills* (pp. 3–50). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Yeh, J-h. B., 2010. Relations matter: Redefining communication competence from a Chinese perspective. Chinese Journal of Communication 3 (1), 64–75.

Zhu, Y., Nel, P. & Bhat, R. (2006). A Cross Cultural Study of Communication Strategies for Building Business Relationships. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 6*, 319–341.

V

KOLLABORATIIVISEN VUOROVAIKUTUKSEN KARIKOITA PK-YRITYSTEN KANSAINVÄLISTYMISESSÄ [PITFALLS OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION IN SME INTERNATIONALIZATION]

by

Pipsa Purhonen 2011

Prologi. Puheviestinnän vuosikirja 2011, 25–43

Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoita pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä

Pipsa Purhonen

Tiivistelmä

Kansainvälistyminen, yksittäisten toimijoiden riittämättömät resurssit ja organisaatioiden keskinäinen riippuvuus ovat lisänneet yhteistyön tarvetta yhteiskuntamme kaikilla sektoreilla. Artikkelissani[1] tarkastelen suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymistä, joka edellyttää kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta. Pohdin kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen haasteita ja ongelmia sekä niiden hallintaa erityisesti pk-yritysten ja kansainvälistymisessä keskeisten välittäjäorganisaatioiden, kuten kauppayhdistysten ja teknologia- sekä innovaatiokeskusten, edustajien yhteistyösuhteissa. Tavoitteenani on selvittää, millaisia näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajilla on kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoista suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan.

Tutkimusaineistoni (N = 91) on laadullista, ja se on kerätty verkkokyselyllä Suomesta ja Kiinasta vuonna 2009. Sisällönanalyysi pk-yritysten (n = 34) ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien (n = 57) vastauksista avoimiin kysymyksiin osoittaa, että kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikot pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä liittyvät 1) relationaalisen viestinnän ja tehtäväviestinnän riittämättömyyteen tai epätasapainoon, 2) viestintäeettisiin ongelmiin ja 3) yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nouseviin vuorovaikutushaasteisiin. Avaan ja analysoin näitä tutkimuksen keskeisiä tuloksia erityisesti dialogisen viestintäetiikan ja vuorovaikutusosaamisen näkökulmista. Tutkimustulokset lisäävät niin teoreettista kuin käytännönkin ymmärrystä yhteistyöstä interpersonaalisena viestintänä.

Asiasanat: dialoginen viestintäetiikka**,** kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus, organisaatio, pk-yritys, vuorovaikutusosaaminen, yhteistyösuhde

Johdanto

Talouden globalisaatio on lisännyt paitsi yritysten kansainvälistymistä, myös elinkeinoelämän toimijoiden tarvetta yhteistyöhön ja verkostoitumiseen (ks. Koskenlinna ym. 2005, 14–15). Globalisaatiossa on yhä enemmän kyse kansainvälisten, toisistaan riippuvaisten yksilöiden vuorovaikutuksesta kuten tiimityöstä tai vuorovaikutussuhteiden ja -allianssien luomisesta, ylläpitämisestä ja kehittämisestä (ks. myös Charles 2009). Tässä artikkelissa tarkastelen pienten ja keskisuurten yritysten kansainvälistymistä, joka toteutuu usein pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden, kuten alueellisten kehittämisyhtiöiden, teknologia- ja innovaatiokeskusten tai julkishallinnon organisaatioiden, edustajien yhteistyössä. Lähestyn pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta eli yhteistyötä interpersonaalisen viestinnän näkökulmasta, kahdenvälisenä sosiaalisena vuorovaikutuksena.

Tarkastelen kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta erityisesti suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Kiinassa toimivia suomalaisyrityksiä on jo yli 200, mutta vähäiset resurssit ja kumppaniverkostot haastavat edelleen pk-yritysten kansainvälistymistä (Mikkola & Pirttimäki 2007, 7, 24–25). Pk-yritykset tarvitsevat niin virallisia kuin epävirallisiakin yhteistyösuhteita, joiden avulla ne voivat saavuttaa puuttuvia resursseja ja uusia liiketoimintaverkostoja ja -allianseja (ks. Forsman, Hinttu & Kock 2002; Ojala 2008). Henkilökohtaisten vuorovaikutussuhteiden merkitys korostuu eritoten kiinalaisen liiketoiminnan kontekstissa ja pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen alkuvaiheessa, sillä henkilökohtaiset suhteet voivat vähentää liiketoimintaan sisältyviä riskejä kuten opportunismia (ks. Ai 2006, So & Walker 2006, 16–17). Suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistyminen Kiinaan edellyttääkin sekä kansallisia että kansainvälisiä, organisaatioiden ja toimialojen rajat ylittäviä yhteistyösuhteita.

Artikkelin tarkoituksena on hahmottaa kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta kansainvälistymisessä keskeisissä yhteistyösuhteissa sellaisena, kuin pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat sen näkevät ja kokevat. Vaikka pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen tutkimus on korostanut yhteistyökumppaneiden ja sosiaalisten verkostojen merkitystä kansainvälistymisprosessissa (ks. esim. Agndal & Chetty 2007; Ellis 2007; Kontinen 2011; Ojala 2008), se ei ole syventynyt pohtimaan yhteistyösuhteiden edellyttämää kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta. Toisaalta kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen monitieteinen tutkimus on keskittynyt tarkastelemaan yhteistyötä pääosin organisaatioiden tasolla, kuten organisatorisina rakenteina ja prosesseina, muttei ole juuri huomioinut interpersonaalisen viestinnän merkitystä (ks. Keyton, Ford & Smith 2008; Koschmann 2010). Organisaatioiden välinen yhteistyö on kuitenkin havaittavissa juuri yksilöiden, ei organisaatioiden vuorovaikutuksena (Keyton, Ford & Smith 2008, 385). Yhteistyötä luodaan, ylläpidetään ja kehitetään sosiaalisessa vuorovaikutuksessa.

Kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta (collaborative interaction) on tarkasteltu usealla tieteenalalla. Siitä huolimatta käsitteelle ei ole vakiintunutta merkitystä tai määritelmää (esim. Stohl & Walker 2002, 240; Lewis 2006). Kasvatustieteissä kollaboratiivisuudesta on keskusteltu oppimisen yhteydessä, jolloin kollaboraatio on nähty jaettujen merkitysten ja yhteisen ymmärryksen rakentamisena vuorovaikutuksessa toisten ihmisten kanssa (Häkkinen & Arvaja 1999, 209). Kollaboratiivisen oppimisen (collaborative learning) suomenkielisenä vastineena on käytetty myös yhteistoiminnallisen oppimisen käsitettä, mutta Häkkinen ja Arvaja (1999, 209) näkevät sen usein virheellisesti yhdistettävän pelkästään työnjaollisiin opetusmenetelmiin (co-operative learning). Samasta syystä käytän esimerkiksi yhteistoiminnallisen vuorovaikutuksen tai yhteistyöviestinnän sijaan käsitettä kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus. Tällä käsitevalinnalla korostan paitsi merkitysten jakamista ja niistä neuvottelua, myös yhteistyökumppaneiden yhteistä vastuuta ja panosta tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi.

Kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus organisaatioiden välisessä yhteistyössä

Interpersonaalista viestintää on ollut tapana hahmottaa dynaamisena, muuttuvana ja epävirallisena kahdenvälisenä vuorovaikutuksena, joka voi toteutua kasvokkain tai teknologiavälitteisesti (Knapp ym. 2002, 8–9). Viestinnän tutkimuskirjallisuudessa kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta on määritelty samaan tapaan luonteeltaan vapaaehtoiseksi ja aktiiviseksi toiminnaksi, joka ajan myötä muuttuu ja kehittyy (ks. Lewis 2006, 213–220). Keskeistä määritelmissä on myös vuorovaikutussuhde. Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen on katsottu vaarantuvan, mikäli yhteistyökumppanit eivät jaa samoja tavoitteita, ole riippuvaisia toisistaan, osallistu yhtäläisellä panoksella yhteistyöhön tai tee päätöksiä yhdessä (Keyton & Stallworth 2003, 240).

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa on kyse yhteistyöstä työn kontekstissa, yli organisaatioiden rajojen. Organisaatioiden välisen kollaboraation kriteerinä ja erona työnjakoon perustuvaan yhteistyöhön on pidetty sitä, että yhteistyö koskee tasapuolisesti kaikkia asianosaisia ja tuottaa yhteistyökumppaneiden eroja hyödyntämällä ratkaisuja, jotka ovat paitsi synergisiä myös innovatiivisia (Hardy, Lawrence ja Grant 2005, 58). Kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta organisaatioiden välisessä kontekstissa luonnehtivat kuitenkin usein monenlaiset jännitteet, jotka juontuvat yksilöiden, yhteistyöryhmien ja taustaorganisaatioiden eriävistä tavoitteista (Heath & Frey 2004, 196). Lisäksi yhteistyön hyödyt konkretisoituvat harvoin tasavertaisesti kaikille yhteistyökumppaneille tai heidän edustamilleen organisaatioille.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa voi ilmetä erityisesti organisaatioiden väliselle yhteistyölle ominaisia jännitteitä kuten yksilön ja organisaation tai julkisen ja yksityisen välinen

jännite (Keyton, Ford & Smith 2008). Yksilön ja organisaation välinen jännite voi aiheuttaa epävarmuutta siitä, onko yhteistyö yksilöiden vai organisaatioiden välistä, ja ovatko yhteistyökumppanin käsitykset ja mielipiteet hänen omiaan vai edustavatko ne hänen taustaorganisaatiotaan. Mikäli yhteistyökumppanit tulevat elinkeinoelämän eri sektoreilta, on todennäköistä, että heidän tavoitteensa ja toimintatapansa ovat erilaisia (Selsky & Parker 2005, 851). Yhteistyökumppaneiden eriävät arvot tai ideologiat haastavat todennäköisimmin juuri sektorien rajat ylittävää yhteistyötä (Koschmann 2010). Julkisen ja yksityisen välinen jännite liittyykin esimerkiksi julkisen ja yksityisen sektorin välisiin eroihin ja siihen, kuinka ne vaikuttavat uskomuksiin, olettamuksiin tai informaation jakamiseen (Keyton, Ford & Smith 2008).

Lisäksi on havaittu, että vapaaehtoisuuden ja strategisuuden sekä henkilökohtaisuuden ja ammatillisuuden väliset jännitteet määrittävät kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen kontekstissa (Purhonen 2010a; 2010b). Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat luovat, ylläpitävät ja kehittävät kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta sekä strategisesti että vapaaehtoisesti. Vaikka yhteistyösuhteita luodaan pääasiassa työn kontekstissa, kuten sovituissa tapaamisissa tai messuilla, on osa pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajista tutustunut pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen kannalta merkitykselliseen yhteistyötahoon esimerkiksi ystävän tai sukulaisen kautta. Liiketoimintaan kytkeytyvää yhteistyötä voi siis syntyä informaaleissa ja vapaaehtoisesti ylläpidetyissä vuorovaikutusverkostoissa. Toisaalta liiketoimintasuhteista voi kehittyä henkilökohtaisia vuorovaikutussuhteita, jopa ystävyyttä. Yhteistyösuhteista voidaankin puhua *sulautettuina vuorovaikutussuhteina* (blended relationships, Bridge & Baxter 1992), jotka toteuttavat sekä henkilökohtaisia että työrooliin liittyviä tehtäviä. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen voi kuitenkin liittyä myös *etäännyttämistä* (depersonalization, Sias & Perry 2004), sillä osa yhteistyökumppaneista intentionaalisesti välttää henkilökohtaisia puheenaiheita eikä ole motivoitunut ylläpitämään vuorovaikutussuhdetta sen jälkeen, kun yhteistyössä on saavutettu sille asetetut tehtävätavoitteet (Purhonen 2010b, 15).

Kollaboratiivisella vuorovaikutuksella on pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen kontekstissa yhteistyön tuloksellisuuteen liittyviä tehtäviä, kuten tiedon jakaminen, hallinta ja soveltaminen tai instrumentaalisen tuen tarjoaminen, sekä relationaaliseen viestintään eli vuorovaikutussuhteen luomiseen, ylläpitämiseen ja kehittämiseen kytkeytyviä tehtäviä (Purhonen 2010b). Organisaatioiden välisen yhteistyön kontekstissa kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen voidaan katsoa edellyttävän myös jännitteisyyden ja moninaisuuden hallintaa.

Vaikka kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta tarkasteltaisiinkin interpersonaalisen viestinnän näkökulmasta, on kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen luonteen ymmärtämiseksi huomioitava myös yhteistyön laajempaa kontekstia ja toimintaympäristöä. Vuorovaikutussuhteen osapuolet ovat erilaisten ryhmien, verkos-

tojen ja yhteisöjen jäseniä, mikä vaikuttaa esimerkiksi kahdenvälisen vuorovai-
kutuksen normeihin ja rakenteisiin (Knapp ym. 2002, 8).

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivista vuoro-
vaikutusta, kuten työpaikan viestintää ja vuorovaikutussuhteita yleensä, voidaan
tarkastella ekologisena systeeminä. Sias, Krone ja Jablin (2002) hahmottavat
työpaikan vuorovaikutussuhteiden kehittyvän neljällä, toisiinsa vaikuttavalla
ekosysteemin tasolla: 1. *mikrosysteemin* tasolla, joka käsittää yksilöiden kes-
kinäiset vuorovaikutussuhteet, 2. *mesosysteemin* tasolla, joka kuvaa vuorovai-
kutussuhteiden riippuvuutta toisistaan, 3. *makrosysteemin* tasolla, joka vastaa
työskentelyorganisaatiota tai sen osia, sekä 4. *eksosysteemin* tasolla, jolle voi-
daan sijoittaa laajempia merkityssysteemejä kuten kulttuuriset tai poliittiset ide-
ologiat. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivinen
vuorovaikutus on tällöin mikrosysteemi, johon vaikuttavat esimerkiksi yhteis-
työkumppaneiden tiimit, ryhmät ja verkostot (mesosysteemi), taustaorganisaa-
tioiden ja -yritysten erilaiset toimintatavat tai odotukset (makrosysteemi) sekä
heidän edustamiensa toimialojen, sektoreiden tai kansallisten kulttuurien eri-
tyispiirteet (eksosysteemi).

Kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus on siis riippuvaista ekosysteemin eri
tasoista. Esimerkiksi yhteistyön kannalta merkityksellisen tiedon hankkiminen
tai sen soveltaminen voi riippua yhteistyökumppaneiden verkostoista (Stohl &
Walker 2002, 245). Toisaalta mikrotaso, eli pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaati-
oiden edustajien yhteistyö, vaikuttaa toisiin ekosysteemin tasoihin. Kollabora-
tiivinen vuorovaikutus interpersonaalisen viestinnän tasolla voi edistää esimer-
kiksi organisaatioiden tavoitteiden saavuttamista tai laajempaa kehitystä, kuten
alueellista hyvinvointia.

Yhteistyön haastavasta ja jännitteisestä luonteesta johtuen pyrin tässä artik-
kelissa ymmärtämään erityisesti kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen "pimeää
puolta". Erityisen tärkeää on mielestäni tarkastella organisaatioiden välisen
yhteistyön esteitä ja ongelmia interpersonaalisen viestinnän näkökulmasta ja
pyrkiä ymmärtämään sitä, millaisen haasteen ne luovat yhteistyökumppaneille
ja heidän vuorovaikutusosaamiselleen.

Tutkimuksen toteuttaminen

Tutkimustehtävä ja -kysymykset

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on pohtia kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen haas-
teita ja ongelmia sekä niiden hallintaa pk-yritysten ja kansainvälistymisessä kes-
keisten välittäjäorganisaatioiden, kuten kauppayhdistysten ja teknologia- sekä
innovaatiokeskusten, edustajien yhteistyösuhteissa. Tutkimuksen kontekstina
on suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistyminen Kiinaan. Pyrin ymmärtä-
mään kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoita sellaisina, kuin yhteistyö-

hön osallistuvat yksilöt eli pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat ne ymmärtävät ja kokevat. Tutkimustani ohjaakin tutkimuskysymys:

1. Millaisia näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorgani-saatioiden edustajilla on kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteistä ja ongelmista suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan?

Tutkimusaineisto ja analyysi

Tutkimusaineistoni (N = 91) on laadullista ja se on kerätty verkkokyselyllä Suomesta ja Kiinasta vuonna 2009. Pyyntö osallistua tutkimukseen julkaistiin kolmella verkkosivustolla, jotka käsittelivät suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansain-välistymistä Kiinaan. Lisäksi otin pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edus-tajiin yhteyttä sähköpostitse erilaisten sähköpostilistojen ja jäsenluetteloiden perusteella.

Aineisto sisältää pk-yritysten (n = 34) ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien (n = 57) vastauksia avoimiin kysymyksiin, joissa pyydettiin kuvailemaan epä-onnistunutta yhteistyösuhdetta (Millainen on mielestäsi epäonnistunut yhteis-työsuhde? Voit pohtia esimerkiksi sitä, mikä erottaa epäonnistuneen yhteistyön onnistuneesta yhteistyöstä? Millaiset seikat voivat johtaa yhteistyösuhteen epä-onnistumiseen?). Enemmistö vastaajista oli suomalaisia (n = 81), mutta osallis-tujia oli myös Kiinasta (n = 5), Ruotsista (n = 3), Norjasta (n = 1) ja Taiwanista (n = 1). Tutkimukseen osallistuneista pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajista 71 oli miehiä ja 19 naisia (1 raportoimaton). Osallistujien ikä vaihteli 26 ikävuodesta 71 vuoteen (ka = 48).

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kirjoittamat kuvaukset epäonnistuneesta yhteistyöstä vaihtelivat tiiviistä muutaman adjektiivin listoista yksityiskohtaisiin usean virkkeen määritelmiin ja tarinoihin. Yhteensä kirjoitet-tua aineistoa oli noin 35 liuskaa. Aineistolähtöiselle sisällönanalyysille (Neuen-dorf 2002) ominaisesti pyrin aluksi hahmottamaan kokonaiskuvan aineistosta, mikä olikin melko ongelmatonta. Vastaajat kuvasivat kollaboratiivisen vuoro-vaikutuksen karikoita toisaalta yhteistyökumppaneiden vuorovaikutuksen, toi-saalta yhteistyösuhteen ulkopuolisten, kontekstuaalisten tekijöiden tasolla. Jat-koin analyysia näiden aihekokonaisuuksien pohjalta tarkastelemalla aineistoa yksityiskohtaisemmin. Koodasin pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edus-tajien vastauksia niiden merkityssisällön perusteella ja etsien sisällöllisiä yhden-mukaisuuksia ja eroja. Tämä auttoi minua jäsentämään ja erottelemaan aineistoa edelleen ja muodostamaan lopulliset analyysiluokat.

Tulokset

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioi-den edustajien näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen

esteistä ja ongelmista suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Aineistolähtöisen sisällönanalyysin perusteella kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikkoja ovat 1) tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän riittämättömyys tai epätasapaino, 2) viestintäeettiset ongelmat ja 3) yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nousevat vuorovaikutushaasteet. Kuvaan näitä tutkimustuloksia seuraavaksi tarkemmin ja käyttämällä aineistoesimerkkejä. Autenttisuuden varmistamiseksi en ole kääntänyt aineistonäytteitä, vaan ne ovat suomeksi ja englanniksi. Numerot aineistoesimerkkien perässä viittaavat vastaajan tunnisteeseen.

Tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän riittämättömyys tai epätasapaino

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kuvaukset kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoista kertovat viestinnän riittämättömyydestä. Äärimmillään "kommunikaation" katsottiin puuttuvan täysin. Yleensä vastauksissa kuvattiin joko riittämätöntä panostusta yhteistyön tuloksellisuutta edistävään vuorovaikutukseen, josta käytän tässä käsitettä *tehtäväviestintä*, tai suhdetason vuorovaikutuksen eli *relationaalisen viestinnän* laiminlyöntiä. Tehtäväviestinnän tai relationaalisen viestinnän riittämättömyyden lisäksi niiden epätasapaino nähtiin kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikkona. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat kirjoittivat epäonnistuneista yhteistyösuhteista, joissa tehtäväviestintään keskitytään relationaalisen viestinnän kustannuksella tai vastaavasti yhteistyösuhteen ylläpitämisestä ja kehittymisestä huolehditaan siinä määrin, ettei yhteistyön tulostavoitteita saavuteta.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat pitivät ongelmallisena sellaista kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta, jossa yhteistyön tehtävistä ja tavoitteista ei keskustella riittävästi, vaan ne jäävät epäselviksi ja konkretisoimattomiksi ja yhteistyökumppaneilla on niistä eriäviä käsityksiä. Kirjoitettujen kuvausten perusteella tehtäväviestintä on puutteelllista, mikäli yhteistyökumppanit eivät jaa yhteistyön tavoitteita edistävää tietoa tai yhteistyöhön liittyvistä seikoista tiedottaminen on hidasta tai "epäkorrektia". Riittämätön tehtäväviestintä on pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mukaan tuloksetonta, tehotonta ja paikallaan pysyvää. Tähän voivat vastaajien mielestä johtaa esimerkiksi sitoutumisen puute, heikko tai "hutiloitu" työpanos, kyvyttömyys tai haluttomuus päätöksentekoon sekä kärsimättömyys, jolloin "odotetaan liian nopeita tuloksia". Oheiset aineistoesimerkit kuvaavat yhteistyötä, jossa ei riittävästi jaeta tietoa tai neuvotella yhteistyön tavoitteista, työskentelytavoista tai resursseista.

> "Jos ei riittävästi keskustella tavoitteista ja niiden saavuttamiseksi vaadittavista keinoista ja panostuksista ennen sopimuksen tekoa ja yhteistyön aloittamista, tulee varmasti ongelmia, syytöksiä ja virheitä, joista vastuuta vieritetään aina toisille. Yhteisymmärrys ja tilanteesta

> tehty yhteinen analyysi johtopäätöksineen on välttämätöntä ennen prosessin käynnistämistä." (67)

> "Epäonnistunut suhde johtaa oleellisen tiedon tai yhteyksien panttaamiseen ja siihen, että se pieni työntöapu, jolla kuorma saadaan liikkeelle ei ole aina saatavissa. Epäonnistunut suhde johtaa siihen, että suoritteita yritysten välillä ei ole riittävän hyvin määritelty ennen aloitusta, mutta niitä perataan täikammalla jälkikäteen." (44)

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mukaan kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa tulisi huomioida yhteistyökumppania ja vuorovaikutussuhdetta. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mielestä yhteistyösuhde epäonnistuu, mikäli "se perustuu yksinomaan laskutukseen", eikä suhteessa "panosteta riittävästi suhteen ja luottamuksen rakentamiseen". Kirjoitettujen kuvausten perusteella yksipuolisuus tai epäaktiivisuus eivät riitä yhteistyösuhteen ylläpitämiseen, vaan suhteen tulee olla vastavuoroinen. Muutoin voi syntyä "sanelupolitiikkaa" tai "haluttomuus aitoon vuorovaikutukseen torpedoi suhteen".

Vastaajien mielestä kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen ongelmaksi tai esteeksi voi tulla tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän epätasapaino. Aineiston perusteella kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa saatetaan pyrkiä yhteistyön tuloksellisuuteen siinä määrin, että vuorovaikutussuhde kärsii. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien käsitysten mukaan yhteistyösuhdetta ei kuitenkaan voida ylläpitää pelkästään henkilökohtaisella tai epävirallisella tasolla. Vastaajien määritelmien perusteella ei olekaan yksiselitteistä, missä määrin yhteistyösuhteessa tulisi korostaa tuloksellisuutta tai yhteistyön liiketaloudellisia hyötyjä ja missä määrin vuorovaikutussuhteen ylläpitämistä ja kehittämistä. Aineistossa tulee esille hyvin vastakkaisiakin näkemyksiä ja odotuksia tehtäväviestinnästä ja relationaalisesta viestinnästä osana kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta, kuten seuraavat esimerkit osoittavat.

> "Kilpailu on niin kovaa, että mihinkään ylimääräiseen kimppakivaan tai seurusteluun ei enää ole valitettavasti kenelläkään aikaa. joka asialle lyödään ainakin laskennallinen hintalappu. Lisäksi uudet kontaktit haetaan suoraan Googlettamalla, tai esim. messuilta. Epäonnistunut (verkosto) on se joka ei tuo kassavirtaa, siis ordereita. [... ...] Eli lyhyesti, painopiste yhteistyösuhteissa on yhä enempi, korostuneempi kovan osaamisen know how puolella, kuin "pehmeissä" sosiaalisissa suhteissa." (32)

> "Epäonnistunut yhteistyösuhde on yksipuolinen, "voitonhakuinen" ja suhde, jossa toinen osapuoli ei aidosti ole kiinnostunut toisen osapuo-

len asioista eikä kunnioita henkilönä. Nyky aikana raadollinen voitonhakuinen työskentelyilmapiiri saattaa ajaa tähän." (19)

"I would say that social and emotional connectedness is the most important single issue for commercially successful business. If you are not socially accepted by a group, it does not matter how well you do your work, you will be disqualified anyway. This is why I seek social connectedness in my clients." (89)

Viestintäeettiset ongelmat

Pk-yrittäjien ja välittäjorganisaatioiden edustajien kuvaukset kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen varjopuolista sisälsivät luonnehdintoja erilaisista viestintäeettisistä ongelmista. Tällaiset luonnehdinnat koskivat esimerkiksi epäluottamusta, salailua tai avoimuuden puutetta sekä suoranaista epärehellisyyttä. Vastausten perusteella yhteistyötä voivat varjostaa itsekkyys ja oman edun tavoittelu. Aineisto sisälsi myös kuvauksia epäonnistuneesta kollaboratiivisesta vuorovaikutuksessa, jossa yhteistyökumppanit eivät kunnioita toisiaan tai toistensa työpanosta tai eivät näe toisiaan tasavertaisina.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mukaan epäluottamus on yksi keskeisimmistä viestintäeettisistä ongelmista kansainvälisen liiketoimintayhteistyön kontekstissa, jossa yhteistyökumppanit voivat olla myös toistensa kilpailijoita. On mahdollista, että "luottamussuhdetta ei synny tai luottamus petetään". Kilpailuasetelman lisäksi epäluottamus voi vastaajien mukaan juontua "ristiriidasta tavoitteissa" tai "lupausten rikkomisesta". Yhteistyökumppaneilla voi olla "piiloagendoja" ja esimerkiksi yhteistyötä "muiden asiaan vaikuttavien tahojen kanssa" saatetaan salailla. Alla olevat aineistoesimerkit havainnollistavat erityisesti avoimuuden puutetta kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikkona.

"Epäluottamus (asioita ei kerrota suoraan, vaan ne selviävät muuta kautta). Kumppani ei vastaavasti kerro mitään vapaaehtoisesti jos luottamusta ei löydy. " (76)

"Ei kerro ajoissa totuutta, joka voi aiheuttaa taloudellisia tai muita menetyksiä. Normaalisti vaietaan jos ei ole uutta kerrottavaa tai jos asiat ovat huonosti. Jos ei kerrota, että asiat eivät järjesty ja toiselle aiheutuu kustannuksia, se horjuttaa yhteistyösuhdetta." (74)

Epäluottamuksen ja avoimuuden puutteen lisäksi pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat mainitsivat epärehellisyyden kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteenä. Yhteistyökumppanit voivat antaa virheellistä tietoa erityisesti omasta osaamisestaan ja resursseistaan. Niin epärehellisyys kuin avoimuuden puutekin voivat pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mielestä joh-

tua siitä, että yhteisten tavoitteiden sijaan toinen tai molemmat yhteistyökumppaneista pyrkivätkin edistämään vain omaa etuaan. Osa vastaajista näkeekin mahdottomana sellaisen yhteistyösuhteen, jossa toinen osapuoli pyrkii "maksimoimaan omat hyötynsä" tai jossa "ollaan valmiita yhteistyöhön vain kun se hyödyttää itseään". Yksipuolisen hyödyn tavoittelu voi johtaa ikäviin lopputulemiin, joita vastaajat listaavat alla olevissa esimerkeissä.

> "Toisen hyväksikäyttö millä vain tavalla. Ottaminen antamatta. Yhteisen hyvän tai tiedon väärinkäyttö." (15)

> "Jos toinen osapuoli vaan pumppaa tietoa ja tinkii hintoja, muttei aiokkaan olla yhteistyössä." (83)

Yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nousevat vuorovaikutushaasteet

Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoksi voi pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien käsitysten mukaan koitua myös erilaiset yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nousevat viestintähaasteet. Nämä haasteet liittyvät esimerkiksi yhteistyökumppaneiden työrooleihin ja -tehtäviin tai taustaorganisaatioiden kulttuureihin ja toimintatapoihin. Kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta haastavat pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien mielestä myös kulttuuriset erot sekä pk-yritysten puutteelliset resurssit ja yritysten muutoinkin haastava asema kansainvälisen liiketoiminnan kontekstissa.

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kirjoittamien kuvausten perusteella kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta monimutkaistavat erilaiset yhteistyökumppaneiden ja heidän taustaorganisaatioidensa väliset vuorovaikutusongelmat. On esimerkiksi mahdollista, ettei yhteistyökumppaneita ole "asianmukaisesti informoitu oman yrityksen johdon taholta" tai johto päinvastoin puuttuu tarpeettomasti yhteistyöhön ja häiritsee sen rutiineja. Taustaorganisaatio voi "alkaa kilpailemaan projektin suorittamisessa". Lisäksi yhteistyökumppaneiden henkilökohtaiset asenteet ja tehtäväroolin odotukset voivat olla ristiriidassa. Esimerkki tällaisesta tilanteesta on erään välittäjäorganisaation edustajan kuvaus yhteistyökumppanista, joka on haluton yhteistyöhön, vaikka se kuuluisi hänen työtehtäviinsä.

Yhteistyökumppaneiden taustaorganisaatioiden viestintäkulttuurit ja toimintatavat eroavat vastaajien mielestä joskus perustavanlaatuisellakin tavalla. Osa pk-yritysten edustajista piti virkamiesten ja julkishallinnon edustajien vuorovaikutusta tuloksettomana. Toisaalta yhteistyökumppanit eroavat työhistorialtaan tai vaikkapa teknologiselta osaamiseltaan. Tämä voi aiheuttaa viestintäongelmia ja -haasteita kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa, kuten seuraavat esimerkit konkretisoivat.

> ”Hyvin suuri kuilu on se kokemuksen, tiedon ja erityisesti kansain-
> välisen vuorovaikutuksen ymmärtämisen kuilu asiantuntijan ja asi-
> akkaan välillä. Millä välittää yli 30 v:n kokemus henkilölle, joka on
> tämän taipaleen ensiaskeleilla.” (66)

> ”Asiakas voi vaatia teknisiä mahdottomuuksia joiden juuret eivät ole
> tarpeeseen sidottuja vaan tulevat jostain ”varmuuden vuoksi” ja juon-
> tavat tekniseen tietämättömyyteen.” (65)

Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien käsitysten suomalaisen ja
kiinalaisen liiketoimintakulttuurin eroavaisuudet tuovat viestintähaasteita suo-
malaisten yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Vastaajien mielestä suoma-
laisilla ja kiinalaisilla yhteistyökumppaneilla on eriäviä käsityksiä esimerkiksi
päätösten ja sopimusten sitovuudesta. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden
edustajat kuvasivat kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen kiinalaisten yhteistyö-
kumppaneiden kanssa vaativan tiheää yhteydenpitoa sekä sitoutumista *quanxi*:n,
palveluksia ja vastapalveluksia edellyttävien henkilökohtaisten vuorovaikutus-
suhteiden ja -verkostojen, pitkäjänteiseen rakentamiseen ja ylläpitämiseen. Vas-
taajien mielestä nämä kiinalaisen liiketoimintakulttuurin erityispiirteet luovat
vaatimuksia suomalaisten yhteistyökumppaneiden vuorovaikutuskäyttäytymi-
selle, mitä seuraavat lainaukset kuvastavat.

> ”Suhteiden ylläpito edellyttää molemminpuolista toimintaa, ainakin
> toisen osapuolen tulee vastata, vaikkei voisi asiaa silloin hoitaa. Suo-
> malaiset eivät vastaile nopeasti kyselyihin. Kiinalaiset odottavat vas-
> tausta ”viimeistään huomenna” ja viesti tulee eri tavoin, jos vasta-
> usta ei tule s.postilla ..(seuraavaksi faksilla ja soittavat, oletko saanut
> viestin).” (74)

> ”Oikeaa kiinalaista Guanxi:ta ei voi ostaa ja sen oppiminen vie vuo-
> sia. Suomalaisten yhteistyökumppanien kanssakäyminen on oluen
> juontia ei oikeaa businesta.” (23)

Vastaajien käsitysten mukaan haasteita yhteistyöhön voivat lisäksi aiheuttaa pk-
yritysten vaikea asema kilpaillussa ja dynaamisessa liiketoimintakontekstissa
sekä resurssien, kuten rahoituksen, markkinoinnin tai osaamisen, puute. Nämä
tekijät voivat rajoittaa kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen mahdollisuuksia ja
tuloksellisuutta. Välittäjäorganisaation edustajan kommentti kiteyttää pk-yritys-
ten tilanteen:

> ”Yleisesti ottaen alani pk-yritykset ovat pieniä. Innovatiivisuutta on,
> mutta kauppaa vähän. Ilman rahaa ei ole mahdollista onnistua.” (71)

Pohdintaa

Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikot
ja dialoginen viestintäetiikka

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli pohtia kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteitä ja ongelmia suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Tutkimustulosten perusteella pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta voivat varjostaa tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän riittämättömyys tai epätasapaino, viestintäeettiset ongelmat sekä yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nousevat vuorovaikutushaasteet. Nämä tulokset tukevat ekologisen systeemin näkökulman (Sias, Krone & Jablin 2002) soveltamista kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen tarkasteluun. Tehtäväviestinnän ja relationaalisen viestinnän määrään ja laatuun sekä viestinnän eettisiin periaatteisiin liittyy erilaisia henkilö-, organisaatio-, toimiala- ja kulttuurikohtaisia odotuksia, arvostuksia ja tottumuksia. Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoihin vaikuttavat siis mikrosysteemin (kuten yhteistyöhön osallistuvat yksilöt), mesosysteemin (kuten yhteistyöverkostot), makrosysteemin (kuten organisaatio) ja eksosysteemin (kuten kansallinen tai liiketoimintakulttuuri) tasot.

Tulokset kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen varjopuolista kuvastavat pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien tapoja jäsentää tätä monin tavoin hajanaista ja epäselvääkin yhteistyökontekstia. Yhteistyökumppaneita kuvataan ja tulkitaan paitsi yksilöinä, myös erilaisten stereotyyppien, kuten "virkamiehet", "suomalaiset" tai "kiinalaiset", valossa. Yleistykset voivat olla haitallisia kollaboratiiviselle vuorovaikutukselle, mutta prototyypeistä eli tyypillisimmistä mielikuvista on havaittu olevan hyötyä yhteistyön alkuvaiheessa. Prototyypit auttavat etsimään eroja ja samankaltaisuuksia kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen liittyvistä uskomuksista ja olettamuksista, joiden pohjalta yhteistyökumppaneiden on mahdollista rakentaa yhteistä identiteettiä (Isbell 2010, 20). Juuri jaetun tai kollektiivisen identiteetin saavuttamista on pidetty organisaatioiden välisen yhteistyön tehokkuuden ja innovatiivisuuden mahdollistajana (Hardy, Lawrence & Grant 2005). Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset, kuten löydökset stereotyyppisistä näkemyksistä tai oman edun tavoittelusta yhteistyössä, saattavat viitata siihen, ettei pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kuvaamissa epäonnistuneissa yhteistyösuhteissa ole saavutettu yhteenkuuluvuutta tai me-henkeä. Tällöin yhteistyöhön osallistujat ovat pikemminkin itsenäisiä toimijoita ja organisaatioidensa edustajia kuin yhtenäinen kollektiivi (ks. Hardy, Lawrence & Grant 2005, 61–62). Epäonnistuneissa yhteistyösuhteissa on siis voinut olla kyse pelkästään työnjakoon perustuvasta yhteistyöstä (cooperation), ei kollaboraatiosta (collaboration).

Yhteistyökontekstin diversiteetti ja toisaalta pyrkimus yhteisyyteen tai yhteisymmärrykseen luovat jännitteen kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen (ks. myös Zoller 2000). Kollaboratiivisella vuorovaikutuksella on moni-muotoinen ja jännitteinen luonne. Se voidaan esimerkiksi nähdä sekä henki-lökohtaisena että instrumentaalisena ja samaan aikaan yksilöiden välisenä ja organisaatioita edustavana vuorovaikutuksena. Pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorgani-saatioiden edustajien kokemat kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikot kyt-keytyvät suurilta osin juuri yhteistyösuhteiden ja yhteistyökontekstin moni-muotoisuuteen. Esimerkiksi opportunismi tai yhteistyökumppanin intressien laiminlyönti ovat tyypillisesti koettuja uhkia juuri organisaatioiden välisen yhteistyön kontekstissa (Williams 2007, 597).

Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoita on kiinnostavaa pohtia dia-logisen viestintäetiikan näkökulmasta, joka korostaa ihmisten erilaisuutta ja vuorovaikutuskontekstien moninaisuutta (esim. Arnett, Harden Fritz & Bell 2009; Johannesen 2002). Tämän tutkimuksen valossa kollaboratiivisen vuoro-vaikutuksen tulee pyrkiä luotettavuuteen, rehellisyyteen, avoimuuteen, epäit-sekkyyteen sekä yhteistyökumppanin kunnioittamiseen. Nämä eettiset periaat-teet ovat dialogisuudelle tunnusomaisia. Dialogisuuteen kuuluu muun muassa toisten huomioonottaminen, supportiivisen ilmapiirin luominen ja aktiivinen läsnäolo vuorovaikutuksessa. Dialoginen viestintäetiikka edellyttää myös sitä, että erilaisuudestaan huolimatta vuorovaikutuskumppanit nähdään keskenään tasavertaisina. (Johannesen 2002, 59–60; ks. myös Valkonen 2003, 139.) Kol-laboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen uhkien ja riskien hallitseminen tai välttämi-nen vaatii asettautumista toisen asemaan eli toisen näkökulmien, tunteiden ja motiivien ymmärtämistä. Erityisen tärkeää on ymmärtää sitä, millaiset seikat saattavat näyttäytyä yhteistyökumppanille uhkina (Williams 2007, 601). Dia-loginen viestintäetiikka kunnioittaa erilaisuutta ja pyrkii oppimaan juuri vuo-rovaikutuskumppaneiden eroavaisuuksista ja vuorovaikutuskontekstin moni-muotoisuudesta (Arnett, Harden Fritz & Bell 2009). Dialogisuuteen liittyykin näin luovuus. Dialogisuus luo ideoita, ajatuksia ja tuloksia (Heath 2007, 149) eli tukee kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen instrumentaalisia tavoitteita.

Tutkimustulosten perusteella kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus vaatii riit-tävää tehtävä- ja relationaalista viestintää, panostamatta kumpaankaan toisen kustannuksella. Kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa keskeistä ovat dialo-giselle viestintäetiikalle ominaiset periaatteet, kuten luotettavuus, rehellisyys, avoimuus, epäitsekkyys ja toisen kunnioittaminen. Kollaboratiivista vuorova-kutusta ei voi irrottaa toimintaympäristöstään, vaan esimerkiksi yhteistyökump-paneiden taustaorganisaatiot tai liiketoimintakulttuurit säätelevät yhteistyötä. Se, muodostuuko näistä kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen ominaispiirteistä pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä yhteistyön ongelmia tai esteitä, on pitkälti kiinni pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajista itsestään. Dialogi-

suuden keskiössä on vuorovaikutukseen osallistujien asennoituminen toisiinsa (Johannesen 2002, 56).

Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikot ja vuorovaikutusosaaminen

Organisaatioiden väliseen yhteistyöhön osallistuvia yksilöitä on kutsuttu tutkimuskirjallisuudessa (esim. Isbell 2010; Williams 2002) "rajojenylittäjiksi" (boundary spanners), sillä he työskentelevät yli organisaatioiden sekä tehtävä- tai toimialakohtaisten rajojen. Heidän on katsottu tarvitsevan työssään erilaisia taitoja, kykyjä sekä ominaisuuksia rakentaakseen ja ylläpitääkseen vuorovaikutussuhteita, hallitakseen yhteistyön monimuotoisuutta tai ymmärtääkseen erilaisia motiiveja, rooleja ja vastuita (Williams 2002, 103). Tätä organisaatioiden tai toimialojen välisessä yhteistyössä tarvittavaa osaamista ei kuitenkaan ole jäsennetty interpersonaalisesta näkökulmasta. Tutkimustuloksia kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteistä ja ongelmista onkin tarpeellista tarkastella pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutusosaamisen haasteena.

Vuorovaikutusosaamisella voidaan hahmottaa olevan kognitiivinen, affektiivinen ja behavioraalinen ulottuvuus (Spitzberg & Cupach 1984; Spitzberg 2000). Vuorovaikutusosaamiseen liittyy esimerkiksi tietoa viestintäkäyttäytymisestä, metakognitiivisia taitoja ennakoida, suunnitella, säädellä ja arvioida viestintäkäyttäytymistä sekä motivaatiota ja taitoja toimia vuorovaikutuskontekstissa tavalla, jota viestintään osallistuvat pitävät tehokkaana ja tarkoituksenmukaisena (Valkonen 2003, 26). Onkin kiinnostavaa pohtia, miten kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta voidaan hallita ja missä määrin sen karikoita voidaan väistää. Millaista tietoa vuorovaikutuskäyttäytymisestä, -strategioista tai -normeista tai millaista motivaatiota olla vuorovaikutuksessa yhteistyön haasteet ja ongelmat edellyttävät? Millaisia vuorovaikutustaitoja pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajat tarvitsevat ylittääkseen kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteitä?

Kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta voidaan hahmottaa tehtäväviestintänä, relationaalisena viestintänä ja *dialogisena viestintänä*, joka tarkoittaa esimerkiksi jännitteisyyden ja moninaisuuden hallintaa ja eettisten periaatteiden huomioimista vuorovaikutuksessa (ks. Purhonen 2010b). Vuorovaikutusosaamiseen kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa tarvitaan tällöin 1) tietoa tehokkaasta ja tarkoituksenmukaisesta tehtäväviestinnästä, relationaalisesta viestinnästä ja dialogisesta viestinnästä, 2) motivaatiota ja uskallusta ottaa huomioon ja edistää niin yhteistyön tehtävä- kuin suhdetason tavoitteita ja halua noudattaa yhteistyön viestintäeettisiä periaatteita, sekä 3) vuorovaikutustaitoja kuten taito jakaa tietoa, taito tarjota instrumentaalista tukea, taito luoda, ylläpitää ja kehittää yhteistyösuhteita sekä taito hallita erilaisuutta tai yhteistyösuhteen jännitteitä (ks myös Purhonen 2010a; 2010b).

Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella keskeistä vuorovaikutusosaamisessa on se, että yhteistyökumppanit ymmärtävät kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen merkityksen ja heillä on tietoa hahmottaa kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen haastavaa ja jännitteistä luonnetta organisaatioiden välisen yhteistyön kontekstissa. Tämä edellyttää esimerkiksi tietoa kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen karikoista kuten jännitteisistä tehtäväviestintään ja relationaaliseen viestintään liittyvistä odotuksista, mahdollisista viestintäeettisistä ongelmista yhteistyössä sekä yhteistyön toimintaympäristöstä nousevista viestintähaasteista. Yhteistyökumppaneilla tulee myös olla motivaatiota, halua ja taitoa havaita yhteistyön ongelmia ja esteitä sekä pyrkiä selviytymään niistä.

Vuorovaikutusosaamista pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä voidaan tarkastella dialogisesta vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteiden teorian (Baxter & Montgomery 1996), näkökulmasta. Tällöin vuorovaikutusosaaminen hahmottuu suhdetason ilmiönä eli yhteistyöhön osallistuvien pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien vuorovaikutuksena. Vuorovaikutusosaamisena voidaankin pitää sensitiivisyyttä ja kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen kytkeytyvän jännitteisyyden, monimuotoisuuden ja ristiriitaisuuden huomioimista interpersonaalisessa viestinnässä. Vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteiden teorian näkökulmasta vuorovaikutusosaamiseen tarvitaan tietoa erilaisista vuorovaikutusosaamiseen liittyvistä henkilökohtaisista, relationaalisista ja kulttuurisista normeista ja odotuksista eli esimerkiksi ymmärrystä siitä, millaista viestintää kussakin kontekstissa pidetään tehokkaana ja tarkoituksenmukaisena (ks. Wilson & Sabee 2003, 8). Vuorovaikutusosaaminen pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä edellyttää erilaisuuden ja moniäänisyyden arvostamista sekä halua jatkaa yhteistyösuhteen ylläpitämistä ja kehittämistä. Kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa keskeisiksi vuorovaikutustaidoiksi nousevat tällöin dialogia edistävät taidot kuten kuuntelemisen tai integratiivisen neuvottelun taidot (ks. myös Baxter & Montgomery 1996, 185–206; Wilson & Sabee 2003, 8–9, 29–35).

Vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteitä ja niiden hallintaa osana vuorovaikutusosaamista on korostettu myös muissa työelämäkonteksteissa, kuten johtajan ja johdettavan välisessä vuorovaikutussuhteessa (esim. Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009). Pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä vuorovaikutusosaamista haastavat paitsi vuorovaikutussuhteen jännitteet tai yhteistyösuhteen osapuolten mahdollisesti ristiriitaiset odotukset ja näkemykset kollaboratiivisesta vuorovaikutuksesta, myös yhteistyön laajemmasta toiminta- ja kulttuurisesta ympäristöstä nousevat vuorovaikutushaasteet. Yhteistyökumppaneiden organisatoriset kytkökset voivat aiheuttaa epäselvyyttä siitä, mitä tahoja yhteiskumppanit lopulta edustavat ja mihin he ovat sitoutuneita. Toisaalta esimerkiksi talouden heilahtelut tai poliittinen päätöksenteko saattavat aiheuttaa nopeitakin muutoksia toimintaympäristössä, joilla on vaikutuksia myös pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen. Muun muassa henkilöstömuu-

tokset taustaorganisaatioissa voivat muuttaa yhteistyölle asetettuja tavoitteita ja pahimmillaan heikentää saavutettua luottamusta (Huxham & Vangen 2000).

Tämän tutkimuksen valossa kollaboratiivinen vuorovaikutus asettaa vaatimuksia yksilöiden vuorovaikutusosaamiselle, mutta vuorovaikutusosaamisen tarkastelu pelkästään yksilötasolla ei riitä. Kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa keskeistä vuorovaikutusosaamista onkin syytä lähestyä ekologisen systeemin näkökulmasta (Jablin & Sias 2001). Ekologisesta näkökulmasta eksosysteemin muutokset kuten kansainvälistyminen ja teknologinen kehitys tai makrosysteemin piirteet kuten organisaation rakenne ja johtamisfilosofia luovat vaatimuksia yksilöiden vuorovaikutusosaamiselle (mikrosysteemi). Kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen esteiden ylittäminen pk-yritysten ja välittäjäorganisaatioiden edustajien yhteistyösuhteissa edellyttää meso-, makro- ja eksosysteemien reflektointia, kuten keskustelua yhteistyökumppaneiden verkostoista, taustaorganisaatioista tai yhteistyön toiminta-, kulttuurisesta ja poliittisesta ympäristöstä sekä niiden vaikutuksista kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen. Ekosysteemin huomioon ottaminen voi edistää esimerkiksi luottamuksen tai yhteisyyden rakentumista mikrosysteemin eli interpersonaalisen viestinnän tasolla ja auttaa hallitsemaan kollaboratiivista vuorovaikutusta ja ratkaisemaan sen ongelmia.

Vuorovaikutusosaamista kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa voitaisiin hahmottaa jaettuna, kollektiivisena vuorovaikutusosaamisena (collective communication competence, Thompson 2009), joka korostaa viestijöiden, vuorovaikutustavoitteiden ja viestintäkontekstien keskinäistä suhdetta. Kollektiiviseen vuorovaikutusosaamiseen tarvitaan yksilöiden kykyä havainnoida ja reflektoida muutoksia ympäristössä, kuten Thompson (2009) havaitsi etnografisessa tutkimuksessaan vuorovaikutusosaamisesta monitieteisessä tutkimusryhmässä. Hänen mukaansa keskustelu terminologia- ja näkökulmaeroista tai yhteistyöryhmän tehtävästä sekä relationaalinen viestintä, kuten huumori tai spontaani henkilökohtaisten asioiden jakaminen, edistävät kollektiivisen vuorovaikutusosaamisen kehittymistä, kun taas väittely ja vallan tavoittelu heikentävät sitä. Pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisen kontekstissa keskustelua ja reflektointia edellyttävät myös tehtävä- ja relationaalisen viestinnän jännitteinen suhde.

Yksilöiden vuorovaikutusosaamisella voi olla laajoja ja kauaskantoisia vaikutuksia paitsi kollaboratiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen interpersonaalisen viestinnän tasolla, myös organisaatioihin, toimialoihin ja laajempaan kansainväliseen liiketoimintaympäristöön. Pysyvien, henkilökohtaistenkin yhteistyösuhteiden luominen ja ylläpitäminen näyttävät tämän tutkimuksen tulosten valossa erityisen merkityksellisiltä suomalaisten pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä Kiinaan. Onkin ongelmallista, mikäli yhteistyökumppanit eivät saa taustayhteisöjensä tukea, eivät sitoudu yhteistyösuhteeseen tai heillä ei ole vuorovaikutusosaamista kollaboratiivisessa vuorovaikutuksessa eli niitä tietoja, taitoja ja motivaatiota, joita tarvitaan tehokkaaseen ja tarkoituksenmukaiseen vuorovaikutukseen kan-

sainvälisessä liiketoimintayhteistyössä. Pk-yrityksen kansainvälistyminen tai vaikkapa alueellinen kehittämishanke voi epäonnistua yhden yhteistyösuhteen karikoihin. Yhteistyösuhteiden ja kollaboratiivisen vuorovaikutuksen tulisikin saada merkittävästi enemmän huomiota pk-yritysten kansainvälistymisessä.

Kirjallisuus

Agndal, H. & Chetty, S. 2007. The impact of relationships on changes in internationalization strategies of SMEs. European Journal of Marketing 41 (11/12), 1449–1474.

Ai, J. 2006. Guanxi networks in China: its importance and future trends. China & World Economy 14 (5), 105–118.

Arnett, R. C., Harden Fritz, J. M. & Bell, L. M. 2009. Communication ethic literacy: dialogue and difference. Los Angeles: Sage.

Baxter, L. A. & Montgomery, B. M. 1996. Relating: dialogues & dialectics. New York: The Guilford Press.

Bridge, K. & Baxter, L. A. 1992. Blended relationships: friends as work associates. Western Journal of Communication 56, 200–225.

Charles, M. 2009. The ascent of international business communication: are we on board? Teoksessa L. Louhiala-Salminen & A. Kankaanranta (toim.) The ascent of international business communication. Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics, 9–24.

Ellis, P. 2008. Social ties and foreign market entry. Journal of International Business Studies 31 (3), 443–469.

Forsman, M., Hinttu, S. & Kock, S. 2002. Internationalization from a SME perspective. *Esitelmä. 18th IMP Conference 9.–11.9.2002, Dijon.*

Hardy, C., Lawrence, T. B. & Grant, T. 2005. Discourse and collaboration: the role of conversations and collective identity. Academy of Management Review 30 (1), 58–77.

Heath, R. G. 2007. Rethinking community collaboration through a dialogic lens: creativity, democracy, and diversity in community organizing. Management Communication Quarterly 21, 145–171.

Heath, R.G. & Frey, L. 2004. Ideal collaboration: a conceptual framework of community collaboration. Teoksessa P. Kalbfleisch (toim.) Communication yearbook 28. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 189–132.

Huxham, C. & Vangen, S. 2000. Ambiguity, complexity and dynamics in the membership of collaboration. Human Relations 52, 771–806.

Häkkinen, P. & Arvaja, M. 1999. Kollaboratiivinen oppiminen teknologiaympäristössä. Teoksessa A. Eteläpelto & P. Tynjälä (toim.) Oppiminen ja asiantuntijuus. Porvoo: WSOY, 206–221.

Isbell, M. 2010. Communicating social identities: exploring boundary spanners in interorganizational contexts. Esitelmä. Annual convention of the National Communication Association 14.–17.11.2010, San Francisco.

Jablin, F. M. & Sias, P. M. 2001. Communication competence. Teoksessa F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (toim.) The new handbook of organizational communication: advances in theory, research, and methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 819–864.

Johannesen, R. L. 2002. Ethics in human interaction. Long Grove: Waveland Press.

Keyton, J., Ford, D. J. & Smith, F. I. 2008. A mesolevel communicative model of collaboration. Communication Theory 18, 376–406.

Keyton, J. & Stallworth, V. 2003. On the verge of collaboration: identifying group structure and process. Teoksessa L. R. Frey (toim.) Group communication in context: studies of bona fide groups. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 235–260.

Knapp, M. L., Daly, J. A., Fudge Albada, K. & Miller, G. R. 2002. Background and current trends in the study of interpersonal communication. Teoksessa M. L. Knapp & J. L. Daly (toim.) Handbook of interpersonal communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 3–20.

Kontinen, T. 2011. Internationalization pathways of family SMEs. Jyväskylän yliopisto. Jyväskylä Studies in Business and Economics 100.

Koschmann, M. 2010. Collaborative conversations: economic sectors as discursive resources in inter-organizational collaboration. Esitelmä. Annual convention of the National Communication Association 14.–17.11.2010, San Francisco.

Koskenlinna, M., Smedlund, A., Ståhle, P., Köppä, L., Niinikoski, M-L., Valovirta, V., Halme, K., Saapunki, J. & Leskinen, J. 2005. Välittäjäorganisaatiot: moniottelijat innovaatioita edistämässä. Helsinki: Tekes, Teknologiakatsaus 168.

Lewis, L. K. 2006. Collaborative interaction: reviews of communication scholarship and a research agenda. Teoksessa C. S. Beck (toim.) Communication Yearbook 30. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 197–247.

Mikkola, M. & Pirttimäki, A. 2007. Tuotekehitys Kiinassa: uhka, mahdollisuus vai yhdentekevää? Espoo: VTT Tiedotteita - Research Notes 2391.

Neuendorf, K. A. 2002. The content analysis guidebook. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ojala, A. 2008. Internationalization of software firms: Finnish small and medium-sized software firms in Japan. Jyväskylän yliopisto. Jyväskylä Studies in Computing 89.

Purhonen, P. 2010a. Perceptions of representatives of SMEs and intermediary organizations concerning collaborative relationships in SME internationalization. Intercultural Communication Studies XIX (2), 22–36.

Purhonen, P. 2010b. Collaborative interaction in the internationalization of small- and medium-sized enterprises. David C. Lam. Institute for East-West Studies (LEWI) Working Paper Series 106, 1–22.

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer, M. 2009. Johtajan vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen kehittyminen: johtamisen viestintähaasteet tietoperustaisessa organisaatiossa. Jyväskylän yliopisto. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 128.

Selsky, J. W. & Parker, B. 2005. Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: challenges to theory and practice. Journal of Management 31, 849–873.

Sias, P., Krone, K. J. & Jablin, F. M. 2002. An ecological systems perspective on workplace relationships. Teoksessa M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (toim.) Handbook of interpersonal communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 615–642.

Sias, P. & Perry, T. 2004. Disengaging from workplace relationships: a research note. Human Communication Research 30 (4), 589–602.

So, Y. L. & Walker, A. 2006. Explaining Guanxi: the Chinese business network. London: Routledge.

Spitzberg, B. H. 2000. What is good communication? Journal of the Association for Communication Administration 29, 103–119.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. 1984. Interpersonal communication competence. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Stohl, C. & Walker, K. 2002. A bona fide perspective for the future of groups: understanding collaborating groups. Teoksessa L. R. Frey (toim.) New directions in group communication. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 237–252.

Thompson, J. L. 2009. Building collective communication competence in interdisciplinary research teams. Journal of Applied Communication Research 37 (3), 278–297.

Valkonen, T. 2003. Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi: näkökulmia lukiolaisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin. Jyväskylä yliopisto. Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 7.

Williams, M. 2007. Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management: a threat regulation model of trust and collaboration across boundaries. Academy of Management Review 32 (2), 595–621.

Williams, P. 2002. The competent boundary spanner. Public Administration 80 (1), 103–124.

Wilson, S. R & Sabee, C. M. 2003. Explicating communicative competence as a theoretical term. Teoksessa S. R. Greene & B. R. Burleson (toim.) Handbook of communication and social interaction skills. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 3–50.

Zoller, H. M. 2000. "A place you haven't visited before": creating the conditions for community dialogue. Southern Communication Journal 65 (2), 191–207.

J Y V Ä S K Y L Ä   S T U D I E S   I N   H U M A N I T I E S

1 KOSTIAINEN, EMMA, Viestintä ammattiosaamisen ulottuvuutena. - Communication as a dimension of vocational competence. 305 p. Summary 4 p. 2003.

2 SEPPÄLÄ, ANTTI, Todellisuutta kuvaamassa – todellisuutta tuottamassa. Työ ja koti television ja vähän radionkin uutisissa. - Describing reality – producing reality. Discourses of work and home in television and on a small scale in radio news. 211 p. Summary 3 p. 2003.

3 GERLANDER, MAIJA, Jännitteet lääkärin ja potilaan välisessä viestintäsuhteessa. - Tensions in the doctor-patient communication and relationship. 228 p. Summary 6 p. 2003.

4 LEHIKOINEN, TAISTO, Religious media theory - Understanding mediated faith and christian applications of modern media. - Uskonnollinen mediateoria: Modernin median kristilliset sovellukset. 341 p. Summary 5 p. 2003.

5 JARVA, VESA, Venäläisperäisyys ja ekspressiivisyys suomen murteiden sanastossa. - Russian influence and expressivity in the lexicon of Finnish dialects. 215 p. 6 p. 2003.

6 USKALI, TURO, "Älä kirjoita itseäsi ulos" Suomalaisen Moskovan-kirjeenvaihtajuuden alkutaival 1957–1975. - "Do not write yourself out" The beginning of the Finnish Moscow-correspondency in 1957–1975. 484 p. Summary 4 p. 2003.

7 VALKONEN, TARJA, Puheviestintätaitojen arviointi. Näkökulmia lukioikäisten esiintymis- ja ryhmätaitoihin. - Assessing speech communication skills. Perspectives on presentation and group communication skills among upper secondary school students. 310 p. Summary 7 p. 2003.

8 TAMPERE, KAJA, Public relations in a transition society 1989-2002. Using a stakeholder approach in organisational communications and relation analyses. 137 p. 2003.

9 EEROLA, TUOMAS, The dynamics of musical expectancy. Cross-cultural and statistical approaches to melodic expectations. - Musiikillisten odotusten tarkastelu kulttuurienvälisten ja tilastollisten mallien avulla. 84 p. (277 p.) Yhteenveto 2 p. 2003.

10 PAANANEN, PIRKKO, Monta polkua musiikkiin. Tonaalisen musiikin perusrakenteiden kehittyminen musiikin tuottamis- ja improvisaatiotehtävissä ikävuosina 6–11. - Many paths to music. The development of basic structures of tonal music in music production and improvisation at the age of 6–11 years. 235 p. Summary 4 p. 2003.

11 LAAKSAMO, JOUKO, Musiikillisten karakterien metamorfoosi. Transformaatio- ja metamorfoosiprosessit Usko Meriläisen tuotannossa vuosina 1963–86. - "Metamorphosis of musical characters". Transformation and metamorphosis processes in the works of Usko Meriläinen during 1963–86. 307 p. Summary 3 p. 2004.

12 RAUTIO, RIITTA, *Fortspinnungstypus* Revisited. Schemata and prototypical features in J. S. Bach's Minor-Key Cantata Aria Introductions. - Uusi katsaus kehitysmuotoon. Skeemat ja prototyyppiset piirteet J. S. Bachin kantaattien molliaarioiden alkusoitoissa. 238 p. Yhteenveto 3 p. 2004.

13 MÄNTYLÄ, KATJA, Idioms and language users: the effect of the characteristics of idioms on their recognition and interpretation by native and non-native speakers of English. - Idiomien ominaisuuksien vaikutus englannin idiomien ymmärtämiseen ja tulkintaan syntyperäisten ja suomea äidinkielenään puhuvien näkökulmasta. 239 p. Yhteenveto 3 p. 2004.

14 MIKKONEN, YRJÖ, On conceptualization of music. Applying systemic approach to musicological concepts, with practical examples of music theory and analysis. - Musiikin käsitteellistämisestä. Systeemisen tarkastelutavan soveltaminen musikologisiin käsitteisiin sekä käytännön esimerkkejä musiikin teoriasta ja analyysistä. 294 p. Yhteenveto 10 p. 2004.

15 HOLM, JAN-MARKUS, Virtual violin in the digital domain. Physical modeling and model-based sound synthesis of violin and its interactive application in virtual environment. - Virtuaalinen viulu digitaalisella alueella. Viulun fysikaalinen mallintaminen ja mallipohjainen äänisynteesi sekä sen vuorovaikutteinen soveltaminen virtuaalitodellisuus ympäristössä. 74 p. (123 p.) Yhteenveto 1 p. 2004.

16 KEMP, CHRIS, Towards the holistic interpretation of musical genre classification. - Kohti musiikin genreluokituksen kokonaisvaltaista tulkintaa. 302 p. Yhteenveto 1 p. 2004.

17 LEINONEN, KARI, Finlandssvenskt sje-, tje- och s-ljud i kontrastiv belysning. 274 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2004.

18 MÄKINEN, EEVA, Pianisti cembalistina. Cembalotekniikka cembalonsoittoa aloittavan pianistin ongelmana. - The Pianist as cembalist. Adapting to harpsichord technique as a problem for pianists beginning on the harpsichord. 189 p. Summary 4 p. 2004.

19 KINNUNEN, MAURI, Herätysliike kahden kulttuurin rajalla. Lestadiolaisuus Karjalassa 1870-1939. - The Conviction on the boundary of two cultures. Laestadianism in Karelia in 1870-1939. 591 p. Summary 9 p. 2004.

20 Лилия Сиберг, "БЕЛЫЕ ЛИЛИИ". ГЕНЕЗИС ФИНСКОГО МИФА В БОЛГАРИИ. РОЛЬ РУССКОГО ФЕННОИЛЬСТВА. ФИНСКО-БОЛГАРСКИЕ КОНТАКТЫ И ПОСРЕДНИКИ С КОНЦА XIX ДО КОНЦА XX ВЕКА. 284 с. - "Belye lilii". Genezis finskogo mifa v Bolgarii. Rol' russkogo fennoil'stva. Finsko-bolgarskie kontakty i posredniki s konca XIX do konca XX veka. 284 p. Yhteenveto 2 p. 2004.

JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN HUMANITIES

21 Fuchs, Bertold, Phonetische Aspekte einer Didaktik der Finnischen Gebärdensprache als Fremdsprache. - Suomalainen viittomakieli vieraana kielenä. Didaktinen fonetiikka. 476 p. Yhteenveto 14 p. 2004.

22 Jääskeläinen, Petri, Instrumentatiivisuus ja nykysuomen verbinjohto. Semanttinen tutkimus. - Instrumentality and verb derivation in Finnish. A semantic study. 504 p. Summary 5 p. 2004.

23 Mertanen, Tomi, Kahdentoista markan kapina? Vuoden 1956 yleislakko Suomessa. - A Rebellion for Twelve Marks? – The General Strike of 1956 in Finland. 399 p. Summary 10 p. 2004.

24 Malherbe, Jean-Yves, L'œuvre de fiction en prose de Marcel Thiry : une lecture d'inaboutissements. 353 p. Yhteenveto 1 p. 2004.

25 Kuhna, Matti, Kahden maailman välissä. Marko Tapion *Arktinen hysteria* Väinö Linnan haastajana. - Between two worlds. Marko Tapio's Arktinen hysteria as a challenger to Väinö Linna. 307p. Summary 2 p. 2004.

26 Valtonen, Heli, Minäkuvat, arvot ja mentaliteetit. Tutkimus 1900-luvun alussa syntyneiden toimihenkilönaisten omaelämäkerroista. - Self-images, values and mentalities. An autobiographical study of white collar women in twentieth century Finland. 272 p. Summary 6 p. 2004.

27 Pusztai, Bertalan, Religious tourists. Constructing authentic experiences in late modern hungarian catholicism. - Uskontoturistit. Autenttisen elämyksen rakentaminen myöhäismodernissa unkarilaisessa katolisuudessa. 256 p. Yhteenveto 9 p. Summary in Hungarian 9 p. 2004.

28 Pääjoki, Tarja, Taide kulttuurisena kohtaamispaikkana taidekavatuksessa. - The arts as a place of cultural encounters in arts education. 125 p. Summary 3 p. 2004.

29 Juppi, Pirita, "Keitä me olemme? Mitä me haluamme?" Eläinoikeusliike määrittelykamppailun, marginalisoinnin ja moraalisen paniikin kohteena suomalaisessa sanomalehdistössä. - "Who are we? What do we want?" The animal rights movement as an object of discursive struggle, marginalization and moral panic in Finnish newspapers. 315 p. Summary 6 p. 2004.

30 Holmberg, Jukka, Etusivun politiikkaa. Yhteiskunnallisten toimijoiden representointi suomalaisissa sanomalehtiuutisissa 1987–2003. - Front page politics. Representation of societal actors in Finnish newspapers' news articles in 1987-2003. 291 p. Summary 2 p. 2004.

31 Lagerblom, Kimmo, Kaukana Kainuussa, valtaväylän varrella. Etnologinen tutkimus Kontiomäen rautatieläisyhteisön elinkaaresta 1950 – 1972. - Far, far away, nearby a main passage. An ethnological study of the life spans of Kontiomäki railtown 1950 – 1972. 407 p. Summary 2 p. 2004.

32 Hakamäki, Leena, Scaffolded assistance provided by an EFL teacher during whole-class interaction. - Vieraan kielen opettajan antama oikea-aikainen tuki luokkahuoneessa. 331 p. Yhteenveto 7 p. 2005.

33 Viergutz, Gudrun, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Musikunterrichts an den Gelehrtenschulen der östlichen Ostseeregion im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. - Latinankoulujen musiikinopetuksen historiasta itäisen Itämeren rannikkokaupungeissa 1500- ja 1600-luvuilla. 211 p. Yhteenveto 9 p. 2005.

34 Nikula, Kaisu, Zur Umsetzung deutscher Lyrik in finnische Musik am Beispiel Rainer Maria Rilke und Einojuhani Rautavaara. - Saksalainen runous suomalaisessa musiikissa, esimerkkinä Rainer Maria Rilke ja Einojuhani Rautavaara. 304 p. Yhteenveto 6 p. 2005.

35 Syvänen, Kari, Vastatunteiden dynamiikka musiikkiterapiassa. - Counter emotions dynamics in music therapy. 186 p. Summary 4 p. 2005.

36 Eloranta, Jari & Ojala, Jari (eds), East-West trade and the cold war. 235 p. 2005.

37 Hiltunen, Kaisa, Images of time, thought and emotions: Narration and the spectator's experience in Krzysztof Kieslowski 's late fiction films. - Ajan, ajattelun ja tunteiden kuvia. Kerronta ja katsojan kokemus Krzysztof Kieslowskin myöhäisfiktiossa. 203 p. Yhteenveto 5 p. 2005.

38 Ahonen, Kalevi, From sugar triangle to cotton triangle. Trade and shipping between America and Baltic Russia, 1783-1860. 572 p. Yhteenveto 9 p. 2005.

39 Utriainen, Jaana, A gestalt music analysis. Philosophical theory, method, and analysis of Iegor Reznikoff's compositions. - Hahmoperustainen musiikkianalyysi. Hahmofilosofinen teoria, metodi ja musiikkianalyysi Iégor Reznikoffin sävellyksistä. 222 p. Yhteenveto 3 p. 2005.

40 Murtorinne, Annamari, *Tuskan hauskaa!* Tavoitteena tiedostava kirjoittaminen. Kirjoittamisprosessi peruskoulun yhdeksännellä luokalla. - Painfully fun! Towards reflective writing process. 338 p. 2005.

41 Tunturi, Anna-Riitta, Der Pikareske Roman als Katalysator in Geschichtlichen Abläufen. Erzählerische Kommunikationsmodelle in *Das Leben des Lazarillo von Tormes*, bei Thomas Mann und in EinigenFinnischen Romanen. 183 p. 2005.

42 Luoma-aho, Vilma, Faith-holders as Social Capital of Finnish Public Organisations. - Luottojoukot – Suomalaisten julkisten organisaatioiden sosiaalista pääomaa. 368 p. Yhteenveto 8 p. 2005.

43 PENTTINEN, ESA MARTTI, Kielioppi virheiden varjossa. Kielitiedon merkitys lukion saksan kieliopin opetuksessa. - Grammar in the shadow of mistakes. The role of linguistic knowledge in general upper secondary school German grammar instruction. 153 p. Summary 2 p. Zusammenfassung 3 p. 2005.

44 KAIVAPALU, ANNEKATRIN, Lähdekieli kielen- oppimisen apuna. - Contribution of L1 to foreign language acquisition. 348 p. Summary 7 p. 2005.

45 SALAVUO, MIIKKA, Verkkoavusteinen opiskelu yliopiston musiikkikasvatuksen opiskelu- kulttuurissa - Network-assisted learning in the learning culture of university music education. 317 p. Summary 5 p. 2005.

46 MAIJALA, JUHA, Maaseutuyhteisön kriisi- 1930-luvun pula ja pakkohuutokaupat paikallisena ilmiönä Kalajokilaaksossa. - Agricultural society in crisis – the depression of the 1930s and compulsory sales as a local phenomenon in the basin of the Kalajoki- river. 242 p. Summary 4 p. 2005.

47 JOUHKI, JUKKA, Imagining the Other. Orientalism and occidentalism in Tamil- European relations in South India. -Tulkintoja Toiseudesta. Orientalismi ja oksidentalismi tamileiden ja eurooppalaisten välisissä suhteissa Etelä-Intiassa. 233 p. Yhteenveto 2 p. 2006.

48 LEHTO, KEIJO, Aatteista arkeen. Suomalaisten seitsenpäiväisten sanomalehtien linjapaperei- den synty ja muutos 1971–2005. - From ideologies to everyday life. Editorial principles of Finnish newspapers, 1971–2005. 499 p. Summary 3 p. 2006.

49 VALTONEN, HANNU, Tavallisesta kuriositee- tiksi. Kahden Keski-Suomen Ilmailumuseon Messerschmitt Bf 109 -lentokoneen museoar- vo. - From Commonplace to curiosity – The Museum value of two Messerschmitt Bf 109 -aircraft at the Central Finland Aviation Museum. 104 p. 2006.

50 KALLINEN, KARI, Towards a comprehensive theory of musical emotions. A multi-dimen- sional research approach and some empirical findings. - Kohti kokonaisvaltaista teoriaa musiikillisista emootioista. Moniulotteinen tutkimuslähestymistapa ja empiirisiä havain- toja. 71 p. (200 p.) Yhteenveto 2 p. 2006.

51 ISKANIUS, SANNA, Venäjänkielisten maahan- muuttajaopiskelijoiden kieli-identiteetti. - Language and identity of Russian-speaking students in Finland. 264 p. Summary 5 p. Реферат 6 с. 2006.

52 HEINÄNEN, SEIJA, Käsityö – taide – teollisuus. Näkemyksiä käsityöstä taideteollisuuteen 1900-luvun alun ammatti- ja aikakausleh- dissä. - Craft – Art – Industry: From craft to industrial art in the views of magazines and trade publications of the early 20th Century. 403 p. Summary 7 p. 2006.

53 KAIVAPALU, ANNEKATRIN & PRUULI, KÜLVI (eds), Lähivertailuja 17. - Close comparisons. 254 p. 2006.

54 ALATALO, PIRJO, Directive functions in intra- corporate cross-border email interaction. - Direktiiviset funktiot monikansallisen yrityksen englanninkielisessä sisäisessä sähköpostiviestinnässä. 471 p. Yhteenveto 3 p. 2006.

55 KISANTAL, TAMÁS, „…egy tömegmészárlásról mi értelmes dolgot lehetne elmondani?" Az ábrázolásmód mint történelemkoncepció a holokauszt-irodalomban. - "...there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre". The representational method as a conception of history in the holocaust-literature. 203 p. Summary 4 p. 2006.

56 MATIKAINEN, SATU, Great Britain, British Jews, and the international protection of Romanian Jews, 1900-1914: A study of Jewish diplomacy and minority rights. - Britannia, Britannian juutalaiset ja Romanian juutalaisten kansain- välinen suojelu, 1900–1914: Tutkimus juuta- laisesta diplomatiasta ja vähemmistöoikeuk- sista. 237 p. Yhteenveto 7 p. 2006.

57 HÄNNINEN, KIRSI, Visiosta toimintaan. Museoi- den ympäristökasvatus sosiokulttuurisena jatkumona, säätelymekanismina ja innovatiivisena viestintänä. - From vision to action. Environmental education in museums as a socio-cultural continuum, regulating mechanism, and as innovative communication 278 p. Summary 6 p. 2006.

58 JOENSUU, SANNA, Kaksi kuvaa työntekijästä. Sisäisen viestinnän opit ja postmoderni näkö- kulma. - Two images of an employee; internal communication doctrines from a postmodern perspective. 225 p. Summary 9 p. 2006.

59 KOSKIMÄKI, JOUNI, Happiness is… a good transcription - Reconsidering the Beatles sheet music publications. - Onni on… hyvä transkriptio – Beatles-nuottijulkaisut uudelleen arvioituna. 55 p. (320 p. + CD). Yhteenveto 2 p. 2006.

60 HIETAHARJU, MIKKO, Valokuvan voi repiä. Valokuvan rakenne-elementit, käyttöym- päristöt sekä valokuvatulkinnan syntyminen. - Tearing a photograph. Compositional elements, contexts and the birth of the interpretation. 255 p. Summary 5 p. 2006.

61 JÄMSÄNEN, AULI, Matrikkelitaiteilijaksi valikoituminen. Suomen Kuvaamataiteilijat -hakuteoksen (1943) kriteerit. - Prerequisites for being listed in a biographical encyclopedia criteria for the Finnish Artists Encyclopedia of 1943. 285 p. Summary 4 p. 2006.

62 HOKKANEN, MARKKU, Quests for Health in Colonial Society. Scottish missionaries and medical culture in the Northern Malawi region, 1875-1930. 519 p. Yhteenveto 9 p. 2006.

63 RUUSKANEN, ESA, Viholliskuviin ja viranomaisiin vetoamalla vaiennetut työväentalot. Kuinka Pohjois-Savon Lapuan liike sai nimismiehet ja maaherran sulkemaan 59 kommunistista työväentaloa Pohjois-Savossa vuosina 1930–1932. - The workers' halls closed by scare-mongering and the use of special powers by the authorities. 248 p. Summary 5 p. 2006.

64 VARDJA, MERIKE, Tegelaskategooriad ja tegelase kujutamise vahendid Väinö Linna romaanis "Tundmatu sõdur". - Character categories and the means of character representation in Väinö Linna's Novel *The Unknown Soldier*. 208 p. Summary 3 p. 2006.

65 TAKÁTS, JÓZSEF, Módszertani berek. Írások az irodalomtörténet-írásról. - The Grove of Methodology. Writings on Literary Historiography. 164 p. Summary 3 p. 2006.

66 MIKKOLA, LEENA, Tuen merkitykset potilaan ja hoitajan vuorovaikutuksessa. - Meanings of social support in patient-nurse interaction. 260 p. Summary 3 p. 2006.

67 SAARIKALLIO, SUVI, Music as mood regulation in adolescence. - Musiikki nuorten tunteiden säätelynä. 46 p. (119 p.) Yhteenveto 2 p. 2007.

68 HUJANEN, ERKKI, Lukijakunnan rajamailla. Sanomalehden muuttuvat merkitykset arjessa. - On the fringes of readership. The changing meanings of newspaper in everyday life. 296 p. Summary 4 p. 2007.

69 TUOKKO, EEVA, Mille tasolle perusopetuksen englannin opiskelussa päästään? Perusope-tuksen päättövaiheen kansallisen arvioin-nin 1999 eurooppalaisen viitekehyksen taitotasoihin linkitetyt tulokset. - What level do pupils reach in English at the end of the comprehensive school? National assessment results linked to the common European framework. 338 p. Summary 7 p. Samman-fattning 1 p. Tiivistelmä 1 p. 2007.

70 TUIKKA, TIMO, "Kekkosen konstit". Urho Kekkosen historia- ja politiikkakäsitykset teoriasta käytäntöön 1933–1981. - "Kekkonen´s way". Urho Kekkonen's conceptions of history and politics from theory to practice, 1933–1981 413 p. Summary 3 p. 2007.

71 Humanistista kirjoa. 145 s. 2007.

72 NIEMINEN, LEA, A complex case: a morphosyntactic approach to complexity in early child language. 296 p. Tiivistelmä 7 p. 2007.

73 TORVELAINEN, PÄIVI, Kaksivuotiaiden lasten fonologisen kehityksen variaatio. Puheen ymmärrettävyyden sekä sananmuotojen tavoittelun ja tuottamisen tarkastelu. - Variation in phonological development of two-year-old Finnish children. A study of speech intelligibility and attempting and production of words. 220 p. Summary 10 p. 2007.

74 SIITONEN, MARKO, Social interaction in online multiplayer communities. - Vuorovaikutus verkkopeliyhteisöissä. 235 p. Yhteenveto 5 p. 2007.

75 STJERNVALL-JÄRVI, BIRGITTA, Kartanoarkkitehtuuri osana Tandefelt-suvun elämäntapaa. - Manor house architecture as part of the Tandefelt family´s lifestyle. 231 p. 2007.

76 SULKUNEN, SARI, Text authenticity in international reading literacy assessment. Focusing on PISA 2000. - Tekstien autenttisuus kansainvälisissä lukutaidon arviointitutkimuksissa: PISA 2000. 227 p. Tiivistelmä 6 p. 2007.

77 KŐSZEGHY, PÉTER, Magyar Alkibiadés. Balassi Bálint élete. - The Hungarian Alcibiades. The life of Bálint Balass. 270 p. Summary 6 p. 2007.

78 MIKKONEN, SIMO, State composers and the red courtiers - Music, ideology, and politics in the Soviet 1930s - Valtion säveltäjiä ja punaisia hoviherroja. Musiikki, ideologia ja politiikka 1930-luvun Neuvostoliitossa. 336 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2007.

79 SIVUNEN, ANU, Vuorovaikutus, viestintä-teknologia ja identifioituminen hajautetuissa tiimeissä. - Social interaction, communication technology and identification in virtual teams. 251 p. Summary 6 p. 2007.

80 LAPPI, TIINA-RIITTA, Neuvottelu tilan tulkinnoista. Etnologinen tutkimus sosiaalisen ja materiaalisen ympäristön vuorovaikutuksesta jyväskyläläisissä kaupunkipuhunnoissa. - Negotiating urban spatiality. An ethnological study on the interplay of social and material environment in urban narrations on Jyväskylä. 231 p. Summary 4 p. 2007.

81 HUHTAMÄKI, ULLA, "Heittäydy vapauteen". Avantgarde ja Kauko Lehtisen taiteen murros 1961–1965. - "Fling yourself into freedom!" The Avant-Garde and the artistic transition of Kauko Lehtinen over the period 1961–1965. 287 p. Summary 4 p. 2007.

82 KELA, MARIA, *Jumalan kasvot* suomeksi. Metaforisaatio ja erään uskonnollisen ilmauksen synty. - God's face in Finnish. Metaphorisation and the emergence of a religious expression. 275 p. Summary 5 p. 2007.

83 SAARINEN, TAINA, Quality on the move. Discursive construction of higher education policy from the perspective of quality. - Laatu liikkeessä. Korkeakoulupolitiikan diskursiivinen rakentuminen laadun näkökulmasta. 90 p. (176 p.) Yhteenveto 4 p. 2007.

84 MÄKILÄ, KIMMO, Tuhoa, tehoa ja tuhlausta. Helsingin Sanomien ja New York Timesin ydinaseuutisoinnin tarkastelua diskurssi-analyyttisesta näkökulmasta 1945–1998.

and early twentieth-century narrative literature. 208 p. Summary 3 p. 2008.

106 PÄÄRNILÄ, OSSI, Hengen hehkusta tietostrategioihin. Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistisen tiedekunnan viisi vuosikymmentä. 110 p. 2008.

107 KANGASNIEMI, JUKKA, Yksinäisyyden kokemisen avainkomponentit Yleisradion tekstitelevision Nuorten palstan kirjoituksissa. - The key components of the experience of loneliness on the Finnish Broadcasting Company's (YLE) teletext forum for adolescents. 388 p. 2008.

108 GAJDÓ, TAMÁS, Színháztörténeti metszetek a 19. század végétől a 20. század közepéig. - Segments of theatre history from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. 246 p. Summary 2 p. 2008.

109 CATANI, JOHANNA, Yritystapahtuma kontekstina ja kulttuurisena kokemuksena. - Corporate event as context and cultural experience. 140 p. Summary 3 p. 2008.

110 MAHLAMÄKI-KAISTINEN, RIIKKA, Mätänevän velhon taidejulistus. Intertekstuaalisen ja -figuraalisen aineiston asema Apollinairen L'Enchanteur pourrissant teoksen tematiikassa ja symboliikassa. - Pamphlet of the rotten sorcerer. The themes and symbols that intertextuality and interfigurality raise in Apollinaire's prose work L'Enchanteur pourrissant. 235 p. Résumé 4 p. 2008.

111 PIETILÄ, JYRKI, Kirjoitus, juttu, tekstielementti. Suomalainen sanomalehtijournalismi juttu-tyyppien kehityksen valossa printtimedian vuosina 1771-2000. - Written Item, Story, Text Element. Finnish print journalism in the light of the development of journalistic genres during the period 1771-2000. 779 p. Summary 2 p. 2008.

112 SAUKKO, PÄIVI, Musiikkiterapian tavoitteet lapsen kuntoutusprosessissa. - The goals of music therapy in the child's rehabilitation process. 215 p. Summary 2 p. 2008.

113 LASSILA-MERISALO, MARIA, Faktan ja fiktion rajamailla. Kaunokirjallisen journalismin poetiikka suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä. - On the borderline of fact and fiction. The poetics of literary journalism in Finnish magazines. 238 p. Summary 3 p. 2009.

114 KNUUTINEN, ULLA, Kulttuurihistoriallisten materiaalien menneisyys ja tulevaisuus. Konservoinnin materiaalitutkimuksen heritologiset funktiot. - The heritological functions of materials research of conservation. 157 p. (208 p.) 2009.

115 NIIRANEN, SUSANNA, «Miroir de mérite». Valeurs sociales, rôles et image de la femme dans les textes médiévaux des trobairitz. - "Arvokkuuden peili". Sosiaaliset arvot, roolit ja naiskuva keskiaikaisissa trobairitz-teksteissä. 267 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2009.

116 ARO, MARI, Speakers and doers. Polyphony and agency in children's beliefs about language learning. - Puhujat ja tekijät. Polyfonia ja agentiivisuus lasten kielenoppimiskäsityksissä. 184 p. Yhteenveto 5 p. 2009.

117 JANTUNEN, TOMMI, Tavu ja lause. Tutkimuksia kahden sekventiaalisen perusyksikön olemuksesta suomalaisessa viittomakielessä. - Syllable and sentence. Studies on the nature of two sequential basic units in Finnish Sign Language. 64 p. 2009.

118 SÄRKKÄ, TIMO, Hobson's Imperialism. A Study in Late-Victorian political thought. - J. A. Hobsonin imperialismi. 211 p. Yhteenveto 11 p. 2009.

119 LAIHONEN, PETTERI, Language ideologies in the Romanian Banat. Analysis of interviews and academic writings among the Hungarians and Germans. 51 p. (180 p) Yhteenveto 3 p. 2009.

120 MÁTYÁS, EMESE, Sprachlernspiele im DaF-Unterricht. Einblick in die Spielpraxis des finnischen und ungarischen Deutsch-als-Fremdsprache-Unterrichts in der gymnasialen Oberstufe sowie in die subjektiven Theorien der Lehrenden über den Einsatz von Sprachlernspielen. 399 p. 2009.

121 PARACZKY, ÁGNES, Näkeekö taitava muusikko sen minkä kuulee? Melodiadiktaatin ongelmat suomalaisessa ja unkarilaisessa taidemusiikin ammattikoulutuksessa. - Do accomplished musicians see what they hear? 164 p. Magyar nyelvü összefoglaló 15 p. Summary 4 p. 2009.

122 ELOMAA, EEVA, Oppikirja eläköön! Teoreettisia ja käytännön näkökohtia kielten oppimateriaalien uudistamiseen. - Cheers to the textbook! Theoretical and practical considerations on enchancing foreign language textbook design. 307 p. Zusammanfassung 1 p. 2009.

123 HELLE, ANNA, Jäljet sanoissa. Jälkistrukturalistisen kirjallisuuskäsityksen tulo 1980-luvun Suomeen. - Traces in the words. The advent of the poststructuralist conception of literature to Finland in the 1980s. 272 p. Summary 2 p. 2009.

124 PIMIÄ, TENHO ILARI, Tähtäin idässä. Suomalainen sukukansojen tutkimus toisessa maailmansodassa. - Setting sights on East Karelia: Finnish ethnology during the Second World War. 275 p. Summary 2 p. 2009.

125 VUORIO, KAIJA, Sanoma, lähettäjä, kulttuuri. Lehdistöhistorian tutkimustraditiot Suomessa ja median rakennemuutos. - Message, sender, culture. Traditions of research into the history of the press in Finland and structural change in the media. 107 p. 2009.

126 BENE, ADRIÁN Egyén és közösség. Jean-Paul Sartre Critique de la raison dialectique című műve a magyar recepció tükrében. - Individual and community. Jean-Paul Sartre's

Critique of dialectical reason in the mirror of the Hungarian reception. 230 p. Summary 5 p. 2009.

127 DRAKE, MERJA, Terveysviestinnän kipupisteitä. Terveystiedon tuottajat ja hankkijat Internetissä. - At the interstices of health communication. Producers and seekers of health information on the Internet. 206 p. Summary 9 p. 2009.

128 ROUHIAINEN-NEUNHÄUSERER, MAIJASTIINA, Johtajan vuorovaikutusosaaminen ja sen kehittyminen. Johtamisen viestintähaasteet tietoperustaisessa organisaatiossa. - The interpersonal communication competence of leaders and its development. Leadership communication challenges in a knowledge-based organization. 215 p. Summary 9 p. 2009.

129 VAARALA, HEIDI, Oudosta omaksi. Miten suomenoppijat keskustelevat nykynovellista? - From strange to familiar: how do learners of Finnish discuss the modern short story? 317 p. Summary 10 p. 2009.

130 MARJANEN, KAARINA, The Belly-Button Chord. Connections of pre-and postnatal music education with early mother-child interaction. - Napasointu. Pre- ja postnataalin musiikkikasvatuksen ja varhaisen äiti-vauva -vuorovaikutuksen yhteydet. 189 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2009.

131 BŐHM, GÁBOR, Önéletírás, emlékezet, elbeszélés. Az emlékező próza hermeneutikai aspektusai az önéletírás-kutatás újabb eredményei tükrében. - Autobiography, remembrance, narrative. The hermeneutical aspects of the literature of remembrance in the mirror of recent research on autobiography. 171 p. Summary 5 p. 2009.

132 LEPPÄNEN, SIRPA, PITKÄNEN-HUHTA, ANNE, NIKULA, TARJA, KYTÖLÄ, SAMU, TÖRMÄKANGAS, TIMO, NISSINEN, KARI, KÄÄNTÄ, LEILA, VIRKKULA, TIINA, LAITINEN, MIKKO, PAHTA, PÄIVI, KOSKELA, HEIDI, LÄHDESMÄKI, SALLA & JOUSMÄKI, HENNA, Kansallinen kyselytutkimus englannin kielestä Suomessa: Käyttö, merkitys ja asenteet. - National survey on the English language in Finland: Uses, meanings and attitudes. 365 p. 2009.

133 HEIKKINEN, OLLI, Äänitemoodi. Äänite musiikillisessa kommunikaatiossa. - Recording Mode. Recordings in Musical Communication. 149 p. 2010.

134 LÄHDESMÄKI, TUULI (ED.), Gender, Nation, Narration. Critical Readings of Cultural Phenomena. 105 p. 2010.

135 MIKKONEN, INKA, "Olen sitä mieltä, että". Lukiolaisten yleisönosastotekstien rakenne ja argumentointi. - "In my opinion…" Structure and argumentation of letters to the editor written by upper secondary school students. 242 p. Summary 7 p. 2010.

136 NIEMINEN, TOMMI, Lajien synty. Tekstilaji kielitieteen semioottisessa metateoriassa. - Origin of genres: Genre in the semiotic metatheory of linguistics. 303 p. Summary 6 p. 2010.

137 KÄÄNTÄ, LEILA, Teacher turn allocation and repair practices in classroom interaction. A multisemiotic perspective. - Opettajan vuoronanto- ja korjauskäytänteet luokkahuonevuorovaikutuksessa: multisemioottinen näkökulma. 295 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2010. HUOM: vain verkkoversiona.

138 SAARIMÄKI, PASI, Naimisen normit, käytännöt ja konfliktit. Esiaviollinen ja aviollinen seksuaalisuus 1800-luvun lopun keskisuomalaisella maaseudulla. - The norms, practices and conflicts of sex and marriage. Premarital and marital sexual activity in rural Central Finland in the late nineteenth century. 275 p. Summary 12 p. 2010.

139 KUUVA, SARI, Symbol, Munch and creativity: Metabolism of visual symbols. - Symboli, Munch ja luovuus – Visuaalisten symboleiden metabolismi. 296 p. Yhteenveto 4 p. 2010.

140 SKANIAKOS, TERHI, Discoursing Finnish rock. Articulations of identities in the Saimaa-Ilmiö rock documentary. - Suomi-rockin diskursseja. Identiteettien artikulaatioita Saimaa-ilmiö rockdokumenttielokuvassa. 229 p. 2010.

141 KAUPPINEN, MERJA, Lukemisen linjaukset – lukutaito ja sen opetus perusopetuksen äidinkielen ja kirjallisuuden opetussuunnitelmissa. - Literacy delineated – reading literacy and its instruction in the curricula for the mother tongue in basic education. 338 p. Summary 8 p. 2010.

142 PEKKOLA, MIKA, Prophet of radicalism. Erich Fromm and the figurative constitution of the crisis of modernity. - Radikalismin profeetta. Erich Fromm ja modernisaation kriisin figuratiivinen rakentuminen. 271 p. Yhteenveto 2 p. 2010.

143 KOKKONEN, LOTTA, Pakolaisten vuorovaikutussuhteet. Keski-Suomeen muuttaneiden pakolaisten kokemuksia vuorovaikutussuhteistaan ja kiinnittymisestään uuteen sosiaaliseen ympäristöön. - Interpersonal relationships of refugees in Central Finland: perceptions of relationship development and attachment to a new social environment. 260 p. Summary 8 p. 2010.

144 KANANEN, HELI KAARINA, Kontrolloitu sopeutuminen. Ortodoksinen siirtoväki sotien jälkeisessä Ylä-Savossa (1946-1959). - Controlled integration: Displaced orthodox Finns in postwar upper Savo (1946–1959). 318 p. Summary 4 p. 2010.

145 Nissi, Riikka, Totuuden jäljillä. Tekstin tulkinta nuorten aikuisten raamattupiirikeskusteluissa. – In search of the truth. Text interpretation in young adults' Bible study conversations. 351 p. Summary 5 p. 2010.

146 Lilja, Niina, Ongelmista oppimiseen. Toisen aloittamat korjausjaksot kakkoskielisessä keskustelussa. – Other-initiated repair sequences in Finnish second language interactions. 336 p. Summary 8 p. 2010.

147 Váradi, Ildikó, A parasztpolgárosodás „finn útja". Kodolányi János finnországi tevékenysége és finn útirajzai. – The "Finnish Way" of Peasant-Bourgeoization. János Kodolányi's Activity in Finland and His Travelogues on Finland. 182 p. Summary 3 p. 2010.

148 Hankala, Mari, Sanomalehdellä aktiiviseksi kansalaiseksi? Näkökulmia nuorten sanomalehtien lukijuuteen ja koulun sanomalehtiopetukseen. – Active citizenship through newspapers? Perspectives on young people´s newspaper readership and on the use of newspapers in education. 222 p. Summary 5 p. 2011.

149 Salminen, Elina, Monta kuvaa menneisyydestä. Etnologinen tutkimus museokokoelmien yksityisyydestä ja julkisuudesta. – Images of the Past. An ethnological study of the privacy and publicity of museum collections. 226 p. Summary 5 p. 2011. HUOM: vain verkkoversiona.

150 Järvi, Ulla, Media terveyden lähteillä. Miten sairaus ja terveys rakentuvat 2000-luvun mediassa. – Media forces and health sources. Study of sickness and health in the media. 209 p. Summary 3 p. 2011.

151 Ullakonoja, Riikka, Da. Eto vopros! Prosodic development of Finnish students´ read-aloud Russian during study in Russia. – Suomalaisten opiskelijoiden lukupuhunnan prosodinen kehittyminen vaihto-opiskelujakson aikana Venäjällä. 159 p. (208 p.) Summary 5 p. 2011.

152 Marita Vos, Ragnhild Lund, Zvi Reich and Halliki Harro-Loit (Eds), Developing a Crisis Communication Scorecard. Outcomes of an International Research Project 2008-2011 (Ref.). 340 p. 2011.

153 Punkanen, Marko, Improvisational music therapy and perception of emotions in music by people with depression. 60 p. (94 p.) Yhteenveto 1 p. 2011.

154 Di Rosario, Giovanna, Electronic poetry. Understanding poetry in the digital environment. – Elektroninen runous. Miten runous ymmärretään digitaalisessa ympäristössä? 327 p. Tiivistelmä 1 p. 2011.

155 Tuuri, Kai, Hearing Gestures: Vocalisations as embodied projections of intentionality in designing non-speech sounds for communicative functions. – Puheakteissa kehollisesti välittyvä intentionaalisuus apuna ei-kielellisesti viestivien käyttöliittymä-äänien suunnittelussa. 50 p. (200 p.) Yhteenveto 2 p. 2011.

156 Martikainen, Jari, Käsitettävä taidehistoria. Kuvalähtöinen malli taidehistorian opetukseen kuvallisen ilmaisun ammatillisessa perustutkinnossa. – Grasping art history. A picture-based model for teaching art history in the vocational basic degree programme in visual arts. 359 p. Summary 10 p. 2011.

157 Hakanen, Marko, Vallan verkostoissa. Per Brahe ja hänen klienttinsä 1600-luvun Ruotsin valtakunnassa. – Networks of Power: Per Brahe and His Clients in the Sixteenth-Century Swedish Empire. 216 p. Summary 6 p. 2011.

158 Lindström, Tuija Elina, Pedagogisia merkityksiä koulun musiikintunneilla perusopetuksen yläluokkien oppilaiden näkökulmasta. – Pedagogical Meanings in Music Education from the Viewpoint of Students of Junior High Grades 7-9. 215 p. 2011.

159 Ancar, Joanna, Assessing foreign language listening comprehension by means of the multiple-choice format: processes and products. – Vieraan kielen kuullun ymmärtämistaidon mittaaminen monivalintatehtävien avulla: prosesseja ja tuloksia. 308 p. Tiivistelmä 2 p. 2011.

160 Ekström, Nora, Kirjoittamisen opettajan kertomus. Kirjoittamisen opettamisesta kognitiiviselta pohjalta. – The story of writing teacher. Teaching writing from cognitive base. 272 p. Tiivistelmä 4 p. 2011.

161 Huovinen, Mika, Did the east belong to the SS? The realism of the SS demographic reorganisation policy in the light of the germanisation operation of SS- und Polizeiführer Odilo Globocnik. – Kuuluiko Itä SS-järjestölle? SS-järjestön uudelleenjärjestelypolitiikan realistisuus SS- ja poliisijohtaja Odilo Globocnikin germaanistamisoperaation valossa. 268 p. Tiivistelmä 1 p. 2011.

162 Pakkanen, Irene, Käydään juttukauppaa. Freelancerin ja ostajan kohtaamisia journalismin kauppapaikalla. – Let's do story business. Encounters of freelancers and buyers at the marketplace of journalism. 207 p. 2011.

163 Koskela, Heidi, Constructing knowledge: Epistemic practices in three television interview genres. – Tietoa rakentamassa: episteemiset käytänteet kolmessa eri televisiohaastattelugenressä. 68 p. (155 p.) Yhteenveto 3 p. 2011.

164 Pöyhönen, Markku O., Muusikon tietämisen tavat. Moniälykkyys, hiljainen tieto ja musiikin esittämisen taito korkeakoulun instrumenttituntien näkökulmasta. – The ways of knowing of a musician: Multiple intelligences, tacit knowledge and the art of performing seen through instrumental lessons of bachelor and post-graduate students. 256 p. Summary 4 p. 2011.

165 RAUTAVUOMA, VEERA, Liberation exhibitions as a commemorative membrane of socialist Hungary. 251 p. Yhteenveto 3 p. 2011.

166 LEHTONEN, KIMMO E., Rhetoric of the visual – metaphor in a still image. – Visuaalisen retoriikka – metafora still-kuvan tarkastelussa. 174 p. Yhteenveto 1 p. 2011.

167 SARKAMO, VILLE, Karoliinien soturiarvot. Kunnian hallitsema maailmankuva Ruotsin valtakunnassa 1700-luvun alussa. – Carolean warrior values: an honour-dominated worldview in early-eighteenth-century Sweden. 216 p. Summary 11 p. 2011.

168 RYNKÄNEN, TATJANA, Русскоязычные молодые иммигранты в Финляндии – интеграция в контексте обучения и овладения языком. – Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents in Finnish society – integration from the perspective of language and education. 258 p. Tiivistelmä 9 p. Summary 9 p. 2011.

169 TIAINEN, VEIKKO, Vähentäjää vähentämässä. Tehdaspuu Oy puunhankkijana Suomessa. – Tehdaspuu Oy in Finnish Wood Procurement. 236 p. Summary 5 p. 2011.

170 STOLP, MARLEENA, Taidetta, vastustusta, leikkiä ja työtä? Lasten toimijuus 6–vuotiaiden teatteriprojektissa. – Art, resistance, play and work? Children's agency in a six-year-olds' theatre project. 79 p. (142 p.) 2011.

171 COOLS, CARINE, Relational dialectics in intercultural couples' relationships. – Kulttuurienvälisten parisuhteiden relationaalinen dialektiikka. 282 p. 2011.

172 SAARIO, JOHANNA, Yhteiskuntaopin kieliympäristö ja käsitteet – toisella kielellä opiskelevan haasteet ja tuen tarpeet. – The language environment and concepts in social studies – challenges and need of support for a second language learner. 290 p. Summary 7 p. 2012.

173 ALLURI, VINOO, Acoustic, neural, and perceptual correlates of polyphonic timbre. – Polyfonisen sointivärin hahmottamisen akustiset ja hermostolliset vastineet. 76 p. (141 p.) Yhteenveto 1 p. 2012.

174 VUOSKOSKI, JONNA KATARIINA, Emotions represented and induced by music: The role of individual differences. – Yksilöllisten erojen merkitys musiikillisten emootioiden havaitsemisessa ja kokemisessa. 58 p. (132 p.) Tiivistelmä 1 p. 2012.

175 LEINONEN, JUKKA, The beginning of the cold war as a phenomenon of realpolitik – U.S. secretary of state James F. Byrnes in the field of power politics 1945–1947. – Kylmän sodan synty reaalipoliittisena ilmiönä – James F. Byrnes suurvaltapolitiikan pelikentällä Jaltasta Stuttgartiin 1945–1947. 393 p. Yhteenveto 8 p. 2012.

176 THOMPSON, MARC, The application of motion capture to embodied music cognition research. - Liikkeenkaappausteknologian soveltaminen kehollisen musiikkikognition tutkimuksessa. 86 p. (165 p.) Yhteenveto 1 p. 2012.

177 FERRER, RAFAEL, The socially distributed cognition of musical timbre: a convergence of semantic, perceptual, and acoustic aspects. - Musiikillisen sointivärin jakautunut kognitio. 42 p. (156 p.) Yhteenveto 1 p. 2012.

178 PURHONEN, PIPSA, Interpersonal communication competence and collaborative interaction in SME internationalization. 72 p. (196 p.) Yhteenveto 7 p. 2012.