IJoLLT Vol. 9, No. 1 (March) 2026
eISSN: 2637-0484

Intercultural Competence and Translation Performance: A Correlational Study in Translation Education

XIAOJING CAO
0009-0004-6884-2236
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
2022812452@student.uitm.edu.my

NORHAZLINA HUSIN (corresponding author)
0000-0001-8766-9249
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
norha462@uitm.edu.my

NORHASLINDA HASSAN
0000-0002-6986-0477
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
UiTM Penang Campus, Penang, Malaysia
haslinda.hassan@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Intercultural competence (IC) is usually regarded as an important factor for successful translation, especially when those texts contain culture-specific items. This quantitative correlation study identifies the students' IC levels and the relationship between their IC and translation performance in culture-loaded tasks. This study was carried out in a newly-built application-oriented local university in China. Participants were third-year students who majored in Business English (N = 133), and all of them were native Chinese speakers with English as their second language; 115 valid cases were used in the analysis. Two instruments were used: the Selfassessment Questionnaire on Intercultural Competence of Chinese University Students to measure students' IC and a paragraph translation test with culture-specific items to evaluate their translation performance. Descriptive statistics were used to profile students' IC across key dimensions, and correlational analyses were applied to examine the association between students' IC and their translation outcomes. The results indicated a positive and statistically significant correlation: students with higher IC generally got higher scores on translation tasks requiring sensitivity to cultural references and the application of cultural knowledge for target-language choice. These findings provide empirical support for the pedagogical importance of cultivating IC in the field of translation. They emphasize the need for evaluation methods that prioritize not just linguistic accuracy and fluency but also IC when students engage with culture-specific elements in translation.

Keywords: Intercultural competence; Translation performance; Translation education

Received: 19 December 2026
Accepted: 9 July 2026
Published: 30 August 2026

This work is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

To cite this article: Cao, X., Husin, N., & Hassan, N. (2026). Intercultural Competence and Translation Performance: A Correlational Study in Translation Education. *International Journal of Language, Literacy and Translation 9*(1), 47-62. https://doi.org/10.36777/ijollt2026.9.1.140

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.36777/ijollt2026.9.1.140

INTRODUCTION

In China, the national strategy of *Chinese Culture Going Global* emphasizes the importance of strengthening international communication and spreading Chinese culture globally. This makes the key role of the translator as a cultural mediator highlighted. With the rapid advancement of translation technologies, the time for redesigning translation education and training of translators has come. Recent research on AI-mediated translation teaching also suggests that AI translation tools may support the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence, offering new implications for translation education and translator training (Mao et al., 2026). As a result, the profile of a translator is no longer limited to being linguistically accurate but more so to post-editing and revising, intercultural competence (IC), and a broader international cultural outlook (Dang, 2024). In terms of translation education, this means that in order for future translators to handle cultural differences and create translations of Chinese culture that readers from other countries can understand, the development of IC and global cultural consciousness should be given top priority.IC has been widely recognized as an essential component in language education and translation studies (Byram, 1997; PACTE Group, 2003; Tao, 2023; Abdelsattar Metwally & M. Hamadp, 2023). However, in the context of Chinese translation education, empirical research which directly examines how students' IC relates to their translation performance remains limited. To make this research gap more specific and measurable, this study focuses on third-year Business English majors at an undergraduate university in China. Students' IC is measured using a six-dimensional framework, and the study examines whether it is associated with performance in translation tasks involving culture-specific items.

This research is guided by these two questions:

1. What is the level of IC among third-year Business English majors at a university in China?
2. What is the correlation between IC and translation performance in tasks involving culture-specific items among third-year Business English majors at a university in China?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of accelerating globalization and increasingly frequent cross-cultural contact, translation is no longer viewed as a purely linguistic operation. Translators are expected to function as intercultural mediators. They can bridge cultural gaps and facilitate communication between different communities. From this perspective, intercultural competence (IC) can be seen as the ability to notice culture-specific meanings, interpret them appropriately, and make translation decisions that are acceptable and meaningful for the target audiences.

Building on this understanding of IC in translation, the present study considers IC to be a multidimensional construct in language education. Byram (2021) defines IC as comprising attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Deardorff (2006) highlights the dynamic development of IC through attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal and external outcomes. Fantini (2009) considers the assessment of IC in terms of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. Based on these models, Wu's (2015) *Intercultural Communicative Competence Assessment Scale* (ICCAS) uses six dimensions to measure Chinese university students' IC: Knowledge of One's Own Culture; Knowledge of Foreign Cultures; Attitudes; Intercultural Communication Skills; Intercultural Cognitive Skills; and Awareness. This six-dimensional framework provides the basis for

measuring students' IC level, which is examined in relation to their translation performance in this study.

Many scholars believe that IC plays a central role in dealing with cultural differences and ensuring the overall quality of translation (Bahumaid, 2010; Cai, 2023; Mirzoeva & Zhumabekova, 2016). For example, Bahumaid (2010) pointed out that problems such as mistranslation, insufficient translation and omission often stem from insufficient cultural awareness and lack of effective strategies to deal with cultural factors. As a result, he advocated for translation education to explicitly teach cultural awareness and specialised techniques.Similarly, Cai (2023) emphasized the importance of cultivating cross-cultural communication awareness in English translation teaching, especially when dealing with cultural differences between China and the West. More broadly, empirical research shows that cultural cognition may affect how translators identify cultural problems, choose solutions and predict the expectations of target readers (Angelone, 2016; Olalla-Soler, 2018, 2019; Qassem & Al Thowaini, 2023). Because decision-making in tasks containing cultural complexity relies on the assessment of cultural fit rather than merely formal equivalency, this influence is especially important. The ongoing significance of IC in translation education is also supported by more recent studies.. In a systematic literature review, Cao et al. (2025) found that translation education often emphasizes IC for successful translation practice. However, they also found that existing research remains fragmented, and that further work is needed to address gaps in theoretical frameworks, practical applications and research methods.

In the context of China, IC has attracted increasing attention in the field of translation education, and some empirical studies have begun to explore this area (e.g., Sun & Gao, 2020; Wen & Deng, 2005; Yang, 2016; Zheng & Tan, 2007). However, most of the existing documents still focus on the broad teaching reflection and concept discussion of intercultural training. There are still relatively few empirical studies that directly link students' IC with measurable translation results, which means that many teaching suggestions have not been tested or systematically implemented in classroom practice (Wang & Pan, 2019).

The *College English Test* (CET) translation component provides an appropriate context to examine students' translation performance. Previous research on CET-4 and CET-6 translation tests already shows that these tasks contain culture-specific items requiring appropriate translation strategies (Niu et al., 2024). This concern is also reflected in recent research on culture-specific item translation, which shows that translating such items requires identifying and interpreting cultural references to produce culturally appropriate translations (Tkachivska et al., 2025). In higher education language learning, translation is also linked to sociocultural and intercultural mediation (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2022). So, students' performance in these tasks may reflect their IC, particularly their ability to understand and convey culture-specific meanings.

IC is particularly important for Business English students because the ability to communicate across cultures is identified as a core competence in China's national standards for undergraduate Business English programs (Wang et al., 2015). Business English education also places emphasis on integrating language, business and culture in the context of intercultural business communication (Shi & Wan, 2021). This emphasis is consistent with recent research on Chinese cross-border e-commerce students. Song and Sahid (2025) identified intercultural engagement, business English proficiency, global mindset, cultural knowledge, adaptability, and entrepreneurial motivation as key factors in cross-cultural competence development. Therefore, examination of students' IC and its relationship with translation performance can provide useful implications for Business English education and translation teaching.

These research gaps are also related to the long-standing teaching tradition. In many universities in China, translation courses still rely on teacher-led teaching mode, focusing on the cultivation of theory and basic skills. Although this model may be effective in building basic knowledge, it often ignores the combination of IC and task-oriented learning and evaluation. As Liu et al. (2022) point out, in an increasingly interconnected world, the teaching of English translation needs to place a stronger emphasis on developing students' practical abilities and IC. Given this, it is important to examine how students' IC is associated with their performance on translation tasks containing culture-specific elements.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at a newly built, application-oriented local university in mainland China. The 133 participants were third-year undergraduates enrolled in four Business English classes. All of the participants were native speakers of Chinese (L1) who used English as their primary foreign language (L2).

The study adopted a quantitative design, relying on two instruments for data collection: a self-report questionnaire and a translation test. The questionnaire used in this study was the *Self-Assessment Questionnaire on Intercultural Competence of Chinese University Students*, which was originally designed and validated by the Chinese scholar Wu Weiping (2015). It consists of two parts. The first part collects the basic demographic information of the participants, and the second part is the ICCAS. There are 28 items in the scale. In Wu's verification study, the scale showed excellent internal consistency, and the Cronbach α coefficient was 0.913. This value shows that each item can effectively reflect the potential structure of IC. Wu conducted a questionnaire survey among 447 sophomores from five comprehensive universities in China to verify the validity and reliability of the scale, which provided strong evidence for the robustness and reliability of the tool.

In order to verify the reliability of the scale in the current sample, we use the data collected in this study to further analyze ICCAS. The Cronbach α coefficient of the overall scale is 0.902, which indicates that its internal consistency level is high. Table 1 lists the reliability coefficients of the overall scale and its dimensions. The α coefficient of each sub-scale is between 0.759 and 0.875. All values are higher than the generally accepted minimum standard of 0.70, and most of them are higher than 0.80, which is usually considered as evidence of good reliability (George & Mallery, 2021).

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients of the Scale

Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Overall scale	28	0.902
Knowledge of One's Own Culture	3	0.808
Knowledge of Foreign Cultures	7	0.875
Attitudes	3	0.797
Intercultural Communication Skills	9	0.813
Intercultural Cognitive Skills	3	0.759
Awareness	3	0.819

This questionnaire was used to evaluate students' IC. The questionnaire was hosted on an online survey platform widely used in China (http://www.wjx.cn/), participants can access the questionnaire by scanning the QR code or WeChat link. Before filling out the questionnaire, students received a clear written explanation of the research objectives and the purpose of the questionnaire answers. The completed questionnaire was submitted through the online platform, and the platform automatically anonymized the answers to protect the identity of participants and ensure privacy.

A paragraph translation test was used to evaluate the students' translation performance. In this study, the translation material was taken from an exam paper for the CET-6 in China. Translation accounts for 15% of the total score on the CET-6. Students are asked to translate a short passage of approximately 180–200 Chinese characters into English within 30 minutes. As the CET-6 is a large-scale standardized exam used in Chinese universities for many years, the texts are carefully selected to be appropriate in terms of both language and cultural content. For this reason, a CET-6 passage was chosen as the source text for the present study.

More specifically, the passage was taken from the June 2022 CET-6 exam. It describes the Lugou Bridge and contains 191 Chinese characters. The Chinese source text is shown below as the task for the student translation.

> 卢沟桥位于天安门广场西南 15 公里处，横跨永定河，是北京现存最古老的多拱石桥。卢沟桥最初建成于 1192 年，1698 年重建，由 281 根柱子支撑。每根柱子上都有一头石狮。这些石狮的头、背、腹部或爪子上都藏有更多的狮子。这些石狮生动逼真、千姿百态，是卢沟桥石刻艺术的精品。桥上的石狮不计其数，因而北京地区流传着"卢沟桥上的狮子——数不清"的说法。卢沟桥不仅以其美学特征闻名于世，还被公认为石桥建筑史上的一座丰碑。
> (Source: June 2022 College English Test Band 6 translation section, National Education Examinations Authority.)

The translation test was in the form of paper and pen. Students were asked to complete the task in 30 minutes, and they were told that they were not allowed to use any outside help like dictionaries, electronics and internet services. The test papers were then collected, and all personal information was sealed to keep anonymous. Then the translation test papers were graded by two raters.

The scoring was based on the official CET-6 translation rubric (National Education Examinations Authority, 2016). This rubric mainly focuses on three points: the accurate transmission of the original meaning, the appropriateness of grammar and vocabulary, and whether the structure of the English text is clear and smooth. In practice, the raters usually pay attention to whether the key ideas of the original text are correctly expressed, whether there are serious language errors, and whether the whole article is easy to read. In order to ensure the consistency and fairness of the evaluation, the main scoring categories and grades are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

CET-6 Scoring Criteria

Level	Description
13-15 Points	The translation is very close to the original meaning. English expression is natural and fluent, easy to read, clear in structure, and proper in grammar and vocabulary. Although there may be some subtle mistakes, it will not affect the understanding.
10-12 Points	The main idea of the original text has been accurately conveyed. The translation is generally fluent and the structure is reasonable. Although there are some language errors, they are not serious and do not affect understanding. Grammar and vocabulary usage are generally acceptable.
7-9 Points	The basic information of the original text can be conveyed, but there are obvious errors or omissions. The fluency and structure of writing are uneven, and there are many language errors, some of which may affect understanding.
4-6 Points	The original meaning is only partially conveyed correctly. The translation is poorly written, loosely structured and contains many grammatical and lexical errors. These errors seriously affect the understanding of the text.
1-3 Points	Except for a few sporadic words, the translation fails to accurately reflect the original meaning. The full text is confusing in structure, lacking fluency and full of language errors, which makes it hard to understand.

After the grading is completed, the students' translation scores are entered into the dataset and associated with each student's identification number. The final sample only includes students who have completed the questionnaire and translation test at the same time, and whose student identification numbers match correctly. In the end, a total of 115 students met these standards. Students who have not completed either of the two tasks or have missing/invalid student identification numbers are excluded from the analysis.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings according to the two research questions. It first reports students' IC level and then presents the correlation between IC and translation performance.

STUDENTS' IC LEVELS

This part addresses the first research question by reporting students' IC level based on data collected from the *Self-Assessment Questionnaire on Intercultural Competence of Chinese University Students*.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 3 summarizes the basic background information of 115 effective cases included in the analysis. The sample is mainly female, 103 interviewees (89.57%) are female and 12

interviewees (10.43%) are male. This proportion is consistent with the gender composition of Business English classes in the research site. Given that all participants are third-year Business English undergraduates, the sample closely corresponds to the targeted population of junior students within this program.

Table 3

Distribution of Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

Item	Answer Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	103	89.565	89.565
	Male	12	10.435	100.000
Total Sample		115	100.000	100.000
Grade Level	Junior (3rd year)	115	100.000	100.000
Total Sample		115	100.000	100.000
Respondents' Major	Business English	115	100.000	100.000
Total Sample	115	100.000	100.000	

In addition to basic demographic information, Table 4 also describes students' intercultural exposure and interaction, including overseas experiences, contacts with foreigners in China and participation in intercultural activities. Generally speaking, the data shows that the direct intercultural contact of the respondents is limited.

Table 4

Personal Intercultural Exposure and Interaction

Item	Answer Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Overseas experience	No	113	98.261	98.261
	Yes	2	1.739	100
Total Sample	115	100	100	
Frequency of contact with foreigners in China	Rarely	52	45.217	45.217
	Average	37	32.174	77.391
	Hardly at all	17	14.783	92.174
	Many	8	6.957	99.13
	Plenty	1	0.87	100
Total Sample	115	100	100	
Participation in intercultural activities	No	112	97.391	97.391
	Yes	3	2.609	100
Total Sample	115	100	100	

In the category of "overseas experience", 113 students (98.26%) stated they had never been abroad, and only two students (1.74%) said they had traveled abroad. In other words, almost all the students lack first-hand experience of living or studying in other countries.

Judging from the frequency of contact with foreigners in China reported by respondents, the situation is similar. "Rarely" was the most common answer, with 52 students (45.217%) choosing it, followed by "Average", with 37 students (32.174%) choosing it. Another 17 students (14.783%) chose "Hardly at all", which shows that a considerable number of students have little interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds. In contrast, only eight students (6.957%) chose "Many" and only one student (0.87%) chose "Plenty". With the increase of frequency

categories, the number of students decreases, which shows that frequent contact with foreigners is not common in this student group.

There is also extremely little involvement in official cross-cultural events like summer camps, foreign conferences, and exchange programs. In fact, a total of 112 students (97.391%) stated they had never participated in such activities, while only three students (2.609%) reported they had experience in such activities. The significant difference between the two groups of students further shows that the students in this survey lack organized intercultural learning and participation opportunities.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN IC LEVELS AND TRANSLATION PERFORMANCE

This part addresses the second research question, which concerns the correlation between students' IC and their translation performance in tasks involving culture-specific items.

TRANSLATION TEST SCORES

In order to test the relationship between students' IC levels and their translation performance, a descriptive overview of translation test scores must be provided.

Each translation was independently evaluated by two trained raters according to the CET-6 translation scoring rubric, using the overall scoring method. The students' final score (out of 15) was obtained by averaging the scores of two raters.

Table 7 reports the descriptive statistics of translation tests. The scores range from 3.0 to 13.0, with a mean score of 7.47 and a standard deviation of 1.81(N = 115). Overall, this shows that the overall performance of the sample is at a medium level. At the same time, the relatively wide distribution of scores also shows that there are significant differences among students; some students can produce more accurate and coherent translations, while others encounter greater difficulties in dealing with the language and cultural requirements of the translation task.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Translation Test Scores

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
115	3.0	13.0	7.470	1.8056

The normality of the translation test scores was tested by Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) and Shapiro–Wilk (S–W) tests (refer to Table 8). The results suggest that the distribution shows a deviation from normality. Specifically, the S–W test produced a p-value of.008, which is lower than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Similarly, the effect of K–S test is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Collectively, these results indicate that the translation scores do not adhere to a normal distribution.

Table 8

Results of the Normality Test for Translation Test Scores

Test	Statistic	df	Sig.
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.145	115	0.000
Shapiro-Wilk	0.969	115	0.008

Due to the violation of the normality assumption, subsequent analyses involving the translation test scores use non-parametric procedures. Specifically, Spearman's rank-order correlation is used to examine the relationship between students' IC and their translation performance. Relying on a rank-based non-parametric index ensures that the analysis remains reliable even when the underlying score distribution does not conform to normality.

Spearman Correlation Analysis

To investigate how IC is related to students' translation performance, this section reports the correlation between ICCAS scores and translation test scores. Because the translation scores did not meet the assumption of normality, all correlations were calculated using Spearman's rank-order coefficient.

As shown in Table 9, the correlation between the ICCAS total scores and the translation test scores is positive, strong and statistically significant ($\rho = 0.734$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that students with higher levels of IC can often achieve better results in translation tasks. Regarding effect size, a coefficient higher than 0.70 usually indicates a significant correlation, indicating that there is considerable common variation between IC and translation performance.

Table 9

Spearman's Correlation between ICCAS Total Scores and Translation Test Scores

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
ICCAS Total Scores – Translation Test Scores	0.734**	0.000	115

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to fully understand the relationship between the sub-dimensions of ICCAS and translation test scores, we have conducted additional analysis. The results are summarized in Table 10. All six sub-dimensions are positively correlated with translation performance, but the correlation intensity is different. The strongest associations are observed for *Knowledge of Foreign Cultures* ($\rho = 0.778$), *Intercultural Communication Skills* ($\rho = 0.728$) and *Attitude* ($\rho = 0.712$). This finding indicates that some of the components of IC, especially foreign cultural knowledge, openness to other cultures, and intercultural communication ability, are closely linked with students' success in translation tasks.

Table 10

Spearman's Correlation between IC Subdimensions and Translation Test Scores (N = 115)

IC Subdimension	Correlation with Translation Test Score (ρ)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Knowledge of One's Own Culture	0.458**	0.000
Knowledge of Foreign Cultures	0.778**	0.000
Attitude	0.712**	0.000
Intercultural Communication Skills	0.728**	0.000
Intercultural Cognitive Skills	0.613**	0.000
Awareness	0.556**	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Overall, the results show that students' IC is strongly and positively correlated with their translation performance. All six IC sub-dimensions are positively correlated with translation test

scores, with *Knowledge of Foreign Cultures*, *Intercultural Communication Skills*, and *Attitude* showing the strongest associations.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the major findings reported above. It first discusses students' overall IC level and dimensional performance, and then interprets the relationship between IC and translation performance.

STUDENTS' IC LEVELS

The findings show that students' IC is generally at a medium level. This finding is consistent with the previous research results using the ICCAS in the context of China. For example, Li and Wang (2016) reported that the mean score of English majors in Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics was 3.20 (ranging from 2.07 to 4.18), which was very close to the mean score of this study. The findings from various studies consistently indicate that university students in China tend to assess their intercultural competence (IC) at a moderate level. This may be attributed to their awareness of both their strengths and limitations in this area, which makes them less inclined to provide extreme self-assessments.Another possible factor is the influence of cultural values such as *Zhong Yong* (the doctrine of the mean), which emphasizes moderation and modesty, and which may discourage participants from selecting very high or very low scores on a self-reporting scale.

This medium overall level is further reflected in the uneven development of different IC dimensions. Previous empirical studies have also reported similar findings, that is, Chinese university students usually show strong emotional readiness in intercultural situations, but they are relatively weak in cognitive or behavioral performance (Li & Wang, 2016; Peng & Wu, 2017; Quan, 2022). For example, Peng and Wu (2017) pointed out that many students have cultivated a certain awareness of cultural diversity through media contact and English language education. However, this awareness does not necessarily mean profound understanding, nor can it guarantee that students can properly interpret or deal with complex intercultural situations.

Many studies show that language courses often focus on language forms rather than cultural content, which leads to students' limited or even superficial understanding of foreign cultures (Li & Wang, 2016; Peng & Wu, 2017; Quan, 2022). Furthermore, Quan (2022) pointed out that students studying in independent colleges or colleges with fewer resources may have fewer opportunities for international exchange, which further limits their development of foreign cultural knowledge. To sum up, due to the lack of direct opportunities for intercultural experience and the lack of emphasis on culture in the curriculum, many Chinese college students still find it difficult to acquire comprehensive cultural knowledge.

Li and Wang (2016) also found that even when students know more about their own culture, they may still lack the reflective and strategic capacities required for effective cultural mediation. Drawing on Byram (2021), it can be concluded that IC requires more than mere familiarity with cultural facts; rather, it necessitates "systematic opportunities for critical reflection and comparative analysis".

In his work (1997, 2021), Byram stresses that skills such as interpreting, relating, discovery and interaction develop in close connection with attitudes and knowledge. Without sufficient cultural knowledge, learners may struggle to understand new cultural information or interpret intercultural events in a balanced way. Conversely, if cognitive and communicative skills are

underdeveloped, students may struggle to turn their knowledge and attitudes into effective action. Angelone (2016) points out that gaps in cultural knowledge can restrict translators' ability to resolve problems involving culture-specific expressions. Likewise, Albir and Olalla-Soler (2016) argue that cultural competence in translation should be assessed based on the kinds of tasks which provide a comprehensive application of the components, including cognitive, attitude and strategic sub-competences rather than knowledge recall alone.

Survey-based research done recently (e.g., Quan, 2022) also echoes these concerns: students from poor resources or lower-level educational environment may have special difficulties when trying to apply abstract intercultural concepts to real situations. In translation education, this imbalance may hinder students' ability as cultural mediators, thus affecting their ability to explain, communicate and coordinate different cultures.

Generally speaking, the statistics and theoretical analysis in this section show that the development of students' IC is unbalanced: they show strong attitude preparation, and their communication and cognitive abilities are at a medium level, but their cultural knowledge is relatively limited, especially in foreign cultures. As Byram (2021) emphasised, the full development of intercultural competence (IC) requires sustained motivation and meaningful opportunities for reflection and intercultural comparison. These findings underscore the need to incorporate IC more systematically into translation curricula through purposeful pedagogical interventions. Such efforts would enable students to progressively strengthen their intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes, ultimately equipping them to serve as more effective cultural mediators in diverse translation contexts.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN IC LEVELS AND TRANSLATION PERFORMANCE

The findings show a strong positive correlation between students' IC levels and their performance in translation tasks, suggesting that students with higher IC levels, particularly in the knowledge and action dimensions, tend to perform better. The relatively weaker correlation of *Knowledge of One's Own Culture* implies that awareness of one's own culture at the declarative level is insufficient for the effective mediation of culture, and that knowledge must be combined with awareness of different cultures and the skills to interpret and negotiate meaning across languages. In other words, effective translation seems to depend more on students' ability to apply IC to specific communication and problem-solving situations than on cultural references.

The model observed in this study is basically consistent with the understanding of IC in translation training research. For example, Olalla-Soler (2015) believes that cultural competence should not be simplified as static factual knowledge, but should be understood as an applied competence, involving pragmatic mediation and interpretation judgment in translation. Although his research is still exploratory, his emphasis on dynamic and skill-based cultural participation is consistent with the strong correlation between the sub-dimensions of IC (such as *Intercultural Communication Skills*, *Knowledge of Foreign Cultures*, and *Attitude*) observed in this study.

Similarly, Albir and Olalla-Soler (2016) believe that the assessment of cultural competence in translation education should adopt the task of requiring students to identify, interpret and convey cultural meanings, rather than relying solely on knowledge recall tests. This view is consistent with the current research results, that is, higher scores of IC, especially in strategic and explanatory dimensions, are related to better translation performance.

The relatively modest correlation between *Knowledge of One's Own Culture* and the translation test score can also be understood in this light. Declarative knowledge of one's home

culture alone is not sufficient for mediation to work unless it is integrated into a broader intercultural framework. This view aligns with Castagnoli's (2016) observation that successful translation depends on managing contrastive pragmalinguistic patterns and aligning with discourse norms and contextual expectations, rather than relying solely on self-oriented cultural knowledge.

These results show that successful translation performance not only depends on students' knowledge of culture, but also on the way they interpret, negotiate and reconstruct meaning when communicating between languages and cultural systems. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the analysis reported here is correlational. These results show the relationship between IC and translation scores, but they do not establish causality.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the level of students' intercultural competence (IC) and its relationship with their performance of translation tasks with specific cultural content. According to ICCAS data, the research results show that students' IC is medium, but the development of sub-dimensions is uneven: students rated themselves relatively high on *Attitude* and *Awareness*, but much lower on *Knowledge of Foreign Cultures*. This imbalance shows that students have obvious deficiencies in substantive cultural knowledge, especially in foreign cultures. At the same time, the analysis of the relationship between variables shows that there is a significant positive correlation between IC and translation performance ($\rho = 0.734$, $p < 0.01$). Among the six sub-dimensions, *Knowledge of Foreign Cultures*, *Intercultural Communication Skills* and *Attitude* demonstrated the closest links with translation test scores, which means that these elements are crucial to the successful completion of culture-loaded translation tasks.

These findings have some implications for translation teaching. They show that the cultivation of IC should be integrated in translation courses, rather than regarded as an optional or additional content besides language and translation skills. In practice, students with higher IC levels can often cope better with texts containing specific cultural elements, which means that classroom teaching needs to go beyond formal accuracy and error correction. We should pay more attention to cultivating students' cultural awareness and interpretation sensitivity. This goal could be achieved by focusing on specific cultural references, using real case materials and guiding students to reflect on cultural differences. These activities can not only make students improve their IC and translation skills, but also convert them gradually from the simple language converter to a cultural mediator.

This study is only conducted in an institution and a specific teaching environment, so the evidence provided is only applicable to this specific situation and may not be applicable to other higher education environments. In addition, the analysis completely adopts quantitative methods, which limits the depth of interpretation and blurs the relationship between IC and translation performance at the process level. In order to overcome these limitations, future research could repeat the research in multiple institutions and teaching modes, and adopt mixed method design, combining inferential statistics with qualitative methods such as interviews, thinking-aloud protocols, classroom observation and error/text analysis. This will help to triangulate the research results and clarify the correlation mechanism between IC and translation performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No grants were received from any public, private or not-for-profit funding agencies to support this study.

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

The researchers used the research ethics guidelines provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (REC UiTM). All procedures involving human subjects in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution's research committee. Consent and agreement to participate in the study were also obtained from all study participants. This study has also received research ethics approval with reference number REC/07/2024 (PG/MR/318).

REFERENCES

Abdelsattar Metwally, A., & M. Hamadp, M. (2023). The impact of collocational competence on translation quality: Literature review. *Arab World English Journal for Translation and Literary Studies*, *7*(1), 175–186. https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol7no1.13

Albir, A. H., & Olalla-Soler, C. (2016). Procedures for assessing the acquisition of cultural competence in translator training. *Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *10*(3), 318–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1236561

Angelone, E. (2016). A process-oriented approach for documenting and gauging intercultural competence in translation. *Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, *10*(3), 304–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1236560

Bahumaid, S. (2010). Investigating cultural competence in English-Arabic translator training programs. *Meta*, *55*(3), 569–588. https://doi.org/10.7202/045078ar

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited*. Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800410251

Cai, J. (2023). Cultural differences in college English translation teaching and strategies for cultivating intercultural communicative competence. *Revista de Psiquiatria Clinica*, *50*(2), 228–235. https://doi.org/10.15761/0101-60830000000577

Cao, X., Husin, N., & Hassan, N. (2025). Intercultural competence in translation education: A systematic literature review. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 10*(2), Article e003215. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v10i2.3215

Castagnoli, S. (2016). Investigating trainee translators' contrastive pragmalinguistic competence: A corpus-based analysis of interclausal linkage in learner translations. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer, 10*(3), 343–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1236562

Dang, Z. (2024). On cultivation of translators' cross-cultural competence and global cultural perspective in the context of new technologies and the new era. *Foreign Languages in China*, *02*, 12-15.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*(3), 241–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002

Fantini, A. E. (2009). Assessing intercultural competence: Issues and tools. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 456–476). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987.n27

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2021). *IBM SPSS statistics 27 step by step: A simple guide and reference*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003205333

Li, H., & Wang, Y. (2016).Survey and analysis of intercultural communication competence among college students. *Journal of Huanggang Normal University*, *36*(2), 101–105.

Liu, H., Zhao, S., & Zhao, Y. (2022). *Theoretical and Practical Application Research of Intercultural English Translation*. YanBian University Press.

Mao, L., Kong, B., & Chu, S. (2026). Intercultural communicative competence in translation teaching mediated by artificial intelligence: Cultural schema theory, mediated discourse analysis and intercultural pragmatics. *Acta Psychologica, 265*, Article 106616. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2026.106616

Mirzoeva, L. Y., & Zhumabekova, A. K. (2016). Inter-cultural professional competence as a key aspect of translators training. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *2016*(November Sp), 1231–1236.

National Education Examinations Authority. (2016). Syllabus for the College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (2016 revised edition). National Education Examinations Authority. Retrieved December 22, 2025, from https://cet.neea.edu.cn

National Education Examinations Authority. (2022). *College English Test Band 6 (CET-6) examination paper, June 2022*.

Niu, C., Ng, C. F., Abdul Halim, H., & Nik Mustapha, F. M. (2024). Translation strategies of Chinese-English culture-specific items: The case of translation test from CET4 and CET6. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies, 8*(1), 58–72. https://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol8no1.4

Olalla-Soler, C. (2015). An experimental study into the acquisition of cultural competence in translator training: Research design and methodological issues. *Translation & Interpreting*, *7*(1), 86–110.

Olalla-Soler, C. (2018). Using translation strategies to solve cultural translation problems: Differences between students and professional translators. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, *27*(3), 367–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2018.1549574

Olalla-Soler, C. (2019). Applying internalised source culture knowledge to solve cultural translation problems: A quasi-experimental study on the translator's acquisition of cultural competence. *Across Languages and Cultures*, *20*(2), 253–273. https://doi.org/10.1556/084.2019.20.2.6

PACTE GROUP (2003). Building a translation competence model. In F. Alves (Ed.), *Triangulating translation: Perspectives in process oriented research* (pp. 43-66). John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.45.06pac

Peng, R., & Wu, W. (2017). An analysis of college students' intercultural competence development in the context of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. *Journal of Hubei University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, *35*(3), 183–188.

Pintado Gutiérrez, L. (2022). Current practices in translation and L2 learning in higher education: Lessons learned. *L2 Journal, 14*(2), 32–50. https://doi.org/10.5070/L214251728

Qassem, M., & Al Thowaini, B. M. (2023). Bi-directionality in translating culture: Understanding translator trainees' actual and perceived behaviors. *PLoS ONE*, *18*(11 November). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293541

Quan, X. (2022). A survey on the intercultural communicative competence of students in independent colleges. *Journal of Higher Education*, (22), 71–74.

Shi, X., & Wan, W. (2021). A comparative analysis of intercultural elements in Chinese and foreign Business English textbooks. *Foreign Language Education in China, 4*(2), 50–56.

Song, Z., & Sahid, S. (2025). Exploring factors shaping intercultural competence among China's college students to seize global business opportunities: A systematic literature review. Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 11, Article 101190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101190

Sun, H., & Gao, Y. (2020). An investigation of Chinese undergraduates' ability to translate Chinese cultural items into English and predictors of such ability. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics, 43*(1), 105–125. https://doi.org/10.1515/CJAL-2020-0007

Tao, Y. (2023). Constructing strategies for international communication and translation of Chinese culture—Comments on From "translating the world" to "translating China": An anthology of international communication and translation practice by Huang Youyi. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Languages*, (2), 95–119.

Tkachivska, M., Donii, T., Povoroznyuk, R., Kurakh, N., Buhrii, A., & Bilous, A. (2025). Exploring the sociolinguistic and semiotic aspects involved in translating culture-specific items in foreign language acquisition. *Revista Românească pentru Educaţie Multidimensională, 17*(1), 622–642. https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/17.1/968

Wang, L., Ye, X., Yan, M., Peng, Q., & Xu, D. (2015). An interpretation of the national standards for undergraduate Business English programs. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, *47*(2), 297–302.

Wang, X., & Pan, Y. (2019). The current status and implications of research on cross-cultural foreign language teaching in China. *Foreign Language World*, *4*, 76–84.

Wen, J., & Deng, P. (2005). Empirical study on cultural intervention in the translation process. *Foreign Language Research*, *1*, 81–88.

Wu, W (2015). *Intercultural competence and its comprehensive evaluation: Theory and practice*. China Social Sciences Press.

Yang, Z. (2016). *Translation Competence: An Empirical Study of Chinese Students' Competence in Chinese-English Translation*. Soochow University Press.

Zheng, B., & Tan, H. (2007). Empirical study on translation units in the English-to-Chinese translation process. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, *39*(2), 145–154.