Building Better Communication in Tourism: How Cultural Competence and Language Skills Shape Service Performance

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Abstract

In today's globalized tourism sector, frontline employees are increasingly expected to navigate intercultural interactions with competence and agility. This study develops and empirically tests a structural model linking intercultural competence, foreign language proficiency, organizational support, and international experience to communication self-efficacy, influencing strategic communication behaviors and enhancing communicative performance. Drawing on social cognitive theory, the model conceptualizes communication self-efficacy as a psychological bridge between underlying competencies and behavioral outcomes. Data were collected from 256 tourism professionals using a structured questionnaire and analyzed via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that communication strategies significantly predict communicative performance and that communication self-efficacy strongly predicts strategic communication use. Foreign language proficiency, intercultural competence, and organizational support each significantly enhanced self-efficacy, while international experience showed only a marginal effect. The findings advance theoretical understanding by positioning self-efficacy as a behavioral enabler that converts potential into performance. Basically, the study proves the value of training that mixes knowledge and builds confidence, understanding of strategy, and team support. It is clear from the results that delivering real cultural service requires organizations in tourism to develop their employees' skills and give them the confidence to act well in multi-cultural situations.

Keywords: communication self-assurance; the ability to work with people from different cultures; those working in tourism; effective communication in business; providing good service

INTRODUCTION

The travel industry's operational focus has shifted due to people moving more widely around the world, mainly with regard to frontline services. Since more and more tourists visit from abroad and have different backgrounds and languages, tourism professionals must interact with them and speak clearly. When people encounter cultures besides their own, they need communicative Competence and intercultural Competence, which includes understanding, adapting to, and dealing with new cultural environments (Hu et al., 2022; Kotollaku & Lekli, 2024). For this reason, how employees communicate with visitors is now a main factor in their satisfaction, loyalty to the place, and the quality of service, making tourism workers important for creating a positive visitor experience (Raman, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Contemporary scholarship has also emphasized the shift from transactional service exchanges to co-created interactions, wherein the interpretation of both explicit and implicit cultural cues shapes not only the perceived quality of service but also the emotional engagement of tourists with the destination (Jørgensen & Larsen, 2023; Thornton et al., 2024).

Despite growing recognition of knowledge-based competencies in shaping communication outcomes, there is increasing evidence that psychological factors—particularly communication self-efficacy—play an equally critical role. Defined as individuals' beliefs in their capability to manage complex or unfamiliar

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communication tasks, communication self-efficacy is strongly associated with persistence, adaptability, and recovery in service interactions under cultural ambiguity or stress (Gardiana et al., 2023; Ren, 2023; Wang, 2024). However, this construct remains underrepresented in empirical tourism research, especially as a mediating mechanism linking intercultural competence and language Proficiency to actual communicative behavior (Liu et al., 2022; Saini & Ardhy, 2023). Theoretical models often neglect how beliefs about communication capabilities shape strategic decision-making in cross-cultural scenarios, despite evidence suggesting that self-efficacy significantly enhances both behavioral effectiveness and relational engagement (Huang & Wang, 2023; Mushaathoni, 2024).

Further complicating this landscape are two contextual variables hypothesized to support the development of communication self-efficacy: organizational support and international experience. Organizational mechanisms—such as structured training, access to language resources, and cultural orientation—strengthen employees' confidence in navigating intercultural communication, yet their direct contribution to psychological readiness remains insufficiently tested (Miguel, 2024; Setyawan et al., 2022). Similarly, international experience, often viewed as an informal but potent learning context, has been linked to deeper cultural awareness and improved strategic communication skills (Jin, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). However, existing literature offers limited insight into how these factors collectively shape the self-efficacy beliefs necessary for communicative performance in diverse service settings (Drozdova, 2023; He, 2024). This gap is not merely academic—it reflects a practical oversight in training and organizational policy within tourism institutions (Chang, 2023; Kokt & Sentso, 2024).

Given these theoretical and empirical deficiencies, there is a critical need to advance an integrative framework that accounts for the interplay between individual competencies, psychological mechanisms, and organizational-environmental influences. A conceptual model that positions communication self-efficacy as a central psychological driver—mediated by intercultural competence, language proficiency, organizational support, and international exposure—could substantially enhance our understanding of communicative behavior in the tourism workforce. More importantly, such a model provides a foundation for evidence-based interventions to build communicative resilience and service effectiveness in multicultural contexts.

Accordingly, this study proposes and tests a structural model that examines the direct effects of intercultural Competence, foreign language proficiency, organizational support, and international Experience on communication self-efficacy among tourism professionals. It further analyzes how self-efficacy influences the application of communication strategies, which subsequently affect communicative performance. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, this research offers an empirically grounded contribution to the literature on intercultural communication and provides actionable insights for workforce development, training design, and policy formulation in the tourism sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Intercultural Competence and Communication Self-Efficacy

Effective communication in multicultural service industries, particularly in tourism, relies greatly on having Intercultural Competence (IC). The set of abilities involves thinking skills, expressing feelings openly, and being flexible in behavior, which helps individuals to participate properly in different cultures (Pichas, 2024). How employees respond to different cultural situations is very important in helping them believe they can communicate well. In places where tourists from other cultures interact often, employees whose intercultural awareness is high feel more confident in dealing with these situations (Lee & Choi, 2024). In turn, IC encourages interaction between cultures and improves mental preparedness, which creates a good basis for CSE, which is the confidence to interact effectively with people of other cultures (Dyankova & Nikolova, 2023).

This kind of training connection is also a sign of the wide importance of joining cultural awareness and practical hands-on lessons in training. According to studies, workers who develop their intercultural competence can notice and make sense of cultural indicators, and they are emotionally prepared to handle a wide range of cultural encounters (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). It is very important for team members to feel confident inside, as they must provide emotional service and solve issues in the moment. Multicultural education that includes reflective practices helps people become more sensitive to different cultures and put their knowledge into effective communication (Cancino & Nuñez, 2023). If frontline workers have good IC and strong CSE, they are more likely to use communication methods that help them understand each other, understand customers well, and form friendly relationships (Atakoziyeva et al., 2024). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that intercultural competence enhances employees' belief in their communication abilities and equips them with a broader repertoire of communication strategies to navigate intercultural service encounters. Hypotheses:

H1: Intercultural Competence positively influences communication self-efficacy.
H2: Intercultural Competence positively influences the use of communication strategies.

Foreign Language Proficiency and Communication Self-Efficacy

Many consider foreign language proficiency (LP) mainly to be a technical skill, but it has major psychological effects in busy service areas, especially in tourism. The ability to use a second or third language allows service workers to feel at ease in cross-cultural situations, reduce fear of speaking to customers, and feel more comfortable and self-assured when leading service encounters—facets required for establishing good communication self-efficacy (Erzhanova et al., 2023). Having clear and fluent conversations with guests from other cultures makes employees feel more able to manage any challenges and strengthens their coping skills (H. Chen & Hu, 2023). So, being able to speak the language well helps employees manage different communication situations with confidence.

Also, when employees' language skills are higher, their mental awareness and ability to deal with different cultures in various ways is much improved. People who are confident in their language skills are likely to adjust the way they communicate by using paraphrasing, explaining, and considering tone, which helps everyone understand each other and improve service quality (Suratullah et al., 2023). In addition, being limited in how many languages one can speak can usually make someone less confident among others, leading to fewer chances to establish meaningful relationships. Hence, to enable both competence with language and flexible thinking in new situations, a training strategy should integrate skill practice, hands-on activities, and mindfulness techniques (Ergüt & Baş, 2023; Tauchid et al., 2024). Extra language skills among tourism professionals result in more effective communication, higher self-esteem, and a better overall service experience. Hypotheses:

H3: Foreign language proficiency positively influences communication self-efficacy.
H4: Foreign language proficiency positively influences the use of communication strategies.

Organizational Support and Communication Self-Efficacy

With tourism being a culturally diverse field, how well employees do often depends on organization-level support for their skills and psychological development. Acts like training opportunities, workshops on language abilities, and cultural orientation show employees that their capabilities are necessary and recognized (Jiao et al., 2022; Setyawan et al., 2022). Since the organization shows trust in its employees, they are encouraged to trust in their abilities to deal with people from different cultures. Organizational support encourages employees and helps build readiness, which in turn impacts their behavior in international settings.

In addition to real assets, being part of supportive organizations supports psychological safety, so employees should feel comfortable communicating in different situations (Dietl et al., 2023). Being accepted for errors and having open conversations without fear encourages workers to try paraphrasing terms they do not know and making sure guest statements are clear (Huerta et al., 2024). This kind of behavior forms the basis of good communication in the industry. Cho et al. (2023) and Hanshaw & Hanshaw (2023)'s findings stress that giving support at work contributes to having confidence and applying strategies. Where employees in tourism face regular and unexpected encounters with different cultures, organizations prioritizing support and psychological safety will encourage their employees to be better and more confident communicators (Moon & Kang, 2024). Hypotheses:

H5: Organizational support positively influences communication self-efficacy.
H6: Organizational support positively influences the use of communication strategies.

International Experience and Communication Self-Efficacy

International Experience provides a form of deep experiential learning that complements and often surpasses the impact of formal training in preparing individuals for intercultural communication. Employees who have lived, worked, or studied in culturally diverse settings acquire firsthand exposure to the norms, values, and behaviors that shape communication styles across cultures. This immersive experience enables individuals to navigate ambiguity better, respond appropriately to unfamiliar behaviors, and develop empathy—foundational to building communicative confidence (Mardhiyyah et al., 2022). These lived encounters expand one's cultural awareness and enhance intuitive, real-time decision-making in diverse social environments, thus supporting a more stable and proactive communicative posture during service interactions (Salerno et al., 2024).

More critically, the psychological dimension of international experience lies in its ability to boost communication self-efficacy. Individuals exposed to culturally complex environments tend to report greater

confidence in managing intercultural interactions and interpersonal challenges (Wiersma-Mosley & Garrison, 2022). This self-assurance translates into a greater willingness to engage actively in service exchanges and to employ adaptive communication strategies — such as adjusting speech style, clarifying intent, or using culturally appropriate nonverbal cues (Wickline et al., 2024). Empirical evidence further suggests that international exposure encourages interpersonal risk-taking and openness, contributing to richer, more effective service interactions (Balachandran et al., 2022). As customer satisfaction and the quality of service are directly linked to such competencies in tourism, companies that promote international exposure benefit both in growth and in their strategy. For this reason, we can believe that international work experience improves both people's confidence in communicating and the strategies they use. Hypotheses:

H7: International Experience positively influences communication self-efficacy.

H8: International Experience positively influences the use of communication strategies.

Communication Self-Efficacy and Strategic Communication Behavior

Experts recognize that communication self-efficacy (CSE) greatly influences the communication behavior of individuals. In tourism, because employees face diverse cultures every day, CSE helps them react more thoughtfully than automatically. If employees have high self-efficacy, they are more likely to speak with the guest considering their cultural and language preferences, address misunderstandings tactfully, and use body language to promote clearer communication. Showing these behaviors is key in today's workplace because the chance of misunderstanding presents a risk, and customers look for professionalism.

Other research areas support the idea that CSE affects behavior in communication. Similarly, nurses in healthcare can efficiently manage tough patient situations if they have strong communication self-efficacy (X. Chen et al., 2023), and teacher candidates in education with higher CSE manage classroom communication better (AYDIN, 2024). This shows that CSE turns the confidence people feel within themselves into improved ways of communicating with others. In addition, CSE works to make employees proactive and to help them handle situations, solve issues on the spot, and rely on a wider range of techniques to deal with service complications. As a result, organizations wanting to improve intercultural service delivery should offer training that specifically helps employees grow their confidence and intentionally handle challenging communication (Mehralian et al., 2023). Thus, the hypothesis below has been proposed:

H9: Communication self-efficacy positively influences the use of communication strategies.

Communication Strategies and Communicative Performance

Simplifying language, checking what was understood, and using culturally correct non-verbal gestures can make interactions in multicultural tourism much better overall. Encountering various languages and cultures is easier when employees act like this since it leads to fewer misunderstandings and improved relationships with clients abroad (Lifintsev et al., 2025). Communicative performance here means being able to speak and write according to the rules of language. Team members who act this way usually support meaningful participation, impressive confidence in handling uncertainty, and the creation of memorable service experiences. So, using communication strategies is how employees show their intercultural competence when they interact with guests.

Using different ways to adapt communication, for example, by keeping it simple, checking if the client understands, and mimicking their expressions, can highly increase their contentment, mainly in places with different languages and heavy customer flow (alobaid et al., 2023; Pamučar et al., 2022). Showing empathy in body movements and facial expressions is a big factor in forming the client's view of the counselor and encouraging trust (Abdulla et al., 2022). People with good intercultural skills tend to use these techniques consistently and correctly in different situations, thus turning their knowledge into results (Ahuatzin et al., 2023). Teaching employees effective ways to communicate through training helps them manage various service situations well, makes communication clearer, and boosts the effectiveness of the service. As a result, a hypothesis is put forward as follows:

H10: Communication strategies positively influence communicative performance.
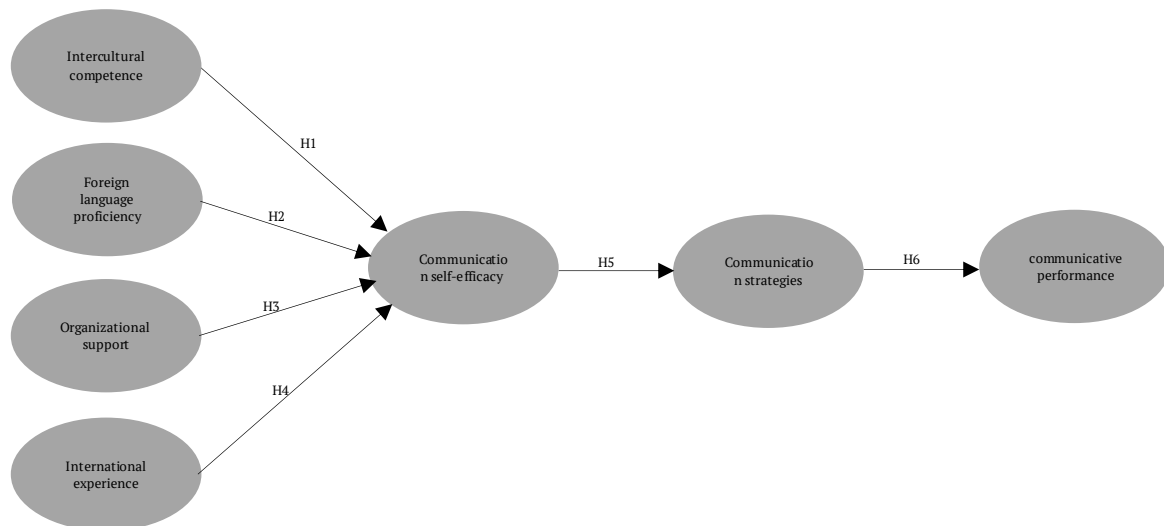
Figure 1. Proposed Model
Source: Research data, 2025

METHODS

A quantitative, cross-sectional design using surveys to collect information was used in this study to analyze how the skills of intercultural competence, foreign language proficiency, organizational support, international experience, communication self-efficacy, communication strategies, and communicative performance are connected. For testable theory and prediction in models that feature multiple latent variables and mediating factors, the method of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was suitable. Also, PLS-SEM is useful for analyzing non-normally distributed data, and when sample sizes are small or moderate, it fits well within this study.

The main group for the study was tourism employees who interact directly with foreign tourists at hotels, as tour guides, travel consultants, and within the hospitality industry. Those with experience in multicultural service were included in the study by applying a purposive sampling technique. Data were gathered by sending a self-administered questionnaire online to tourism experts through different networks, email, and social sites. The survey contained a cover letter explaining what the study was about, promised that responses would remain confidential, and highlighted that everyone taking part was free to back out at any point. Before any real data was collected, a sample of 30 people tested the tool to adjust it. After excluding incomplete and invalid responses, a minimum of 200 valid responses was targeted for analysis, which was in line with minimum sample size recommendations for PLS-SEM with medium complexity models.

All constructs in the model were measured using multi-item Likert-type scales adapted from validated instruments in previous research. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following variables were operationalized: 1) Intercultural Competence: Assessed through cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions reflecting cultural awareness, empathy, and adaptability; 2) Foreign Language Proficiency: Measured based on self-rated ability to speak, understand, read, and write in at least one foreign language relevant to job function; 3) Organizational Support: Captured through items assessing perceived training opportunities, cultural resources, and managerial encouragement; 4) International Experience: Evaluated by self-report on the extent and nature of prior exposure to international work, study, or living experiences; 5) Communication Self-Efficacy: Measured via respondents' confidence in managing communication tasks in complex or intercultural scenarios; 6) Communication Strategies: Reflected in the frequency and perceived effectiveness of using simplification, clarification, non-verbal adaptation, and other strategic behaviors; 7) Communicative Performance: Assessed through perceived ability to deliver effective, clear, and culturally appropriate service communication. Based on pilot testing, each scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70).

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, following a two-stage process. First, the measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity, including indicator reliability, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability), convergent validity (average variance extracted, AVE), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion, HTMT). Second, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized

relationships using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The significance of the hypothesized paths was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The analysis aimed to determine the direct and indirect effects among variables and the mediating role of communication self-efficacy and communication strategies in predicting communicative performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

A total of 256 frontline tourism employees participated in this study. The gender distribution was 60.5% female (n = 155) and 39.5% male (n = 101). The majority of respondents were aged between 26 and 35 years (45.7%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (25.4%), 18–25 years (19.1%), and over 45 years (9.8%). In terms of educational background, more than half held a bachelor's degree (50.4%), while 30.1% had completed a diploma or vocational certificate, 10.9% had a high school diploma, and 8.6% had earned a master's degree or higher. Regarding work experience in the tourism industry, 38.3% of respondents had 2 to 5 years of experience, 30.9% had worked for 6 to 10 years, 17.6% had over 10 years of experience, and 13.3% had less than 2 years. Regarding interaction with international tourists, 47.3% reported engaging with guests frequently, while 26.2% interacted with them daily. The remainder interacted occasionally (21.9%) or rarely (4.7%). Occupationally, respondents were primarily employed as hotel front office staff (36.3%), followed by tour guides (24.2%), travel consultants (18.8%), and other hospitality roles such as restaurant or housekeeping staff (20.7%).

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed to determine the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs used in this study. Evaluation procedures included testing for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. All analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4.0. Indicator reliability was evaluated by examining the outer loadings of each item on its corresponding latent construct. As shown in Table 1, all items demonstrated strong loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.722 to 0.946. This indicates that each observed variable represents its underlying latent construct with sufficient precision.

Table 1. Indicator Loadings and Reflective Measurement Items

Construct	Reflective Measurement Statement	Loading
Communication Self-Efficacy	I feel confident communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.	0.838
	I can handle communication challenges in cross-cultural situations effectively.	0.860
	I believe I can communicate even in unfamiliar cultural contexts.	0.801
	I am confident in managing conversations in multicultural service environments.	0.864
Communication Strategies	I simplify my language when communicating with people from different backgrounds.	0.722
	I check if others understand me during conversations.	0.830
	I paraphrase my messages to improve clarity.	0.807
	I adjust my communication style based on who I am speaking to.	0.867
	I use non-verbal cues to support verbal communication.	0.836
Foreign Language Proficiency	I can understand spoken communication in at least one foreign language.	0.858
	I can express myself clearly in a foreign language.	0.927
	I can read and write fluently in a foreign language relevant to my work.	0.913
Intercultural Competence	I respect cultural differences when interacting with others.	0.830
	I am aware of how culture affects communication.	0.906
	I can adapt my behavior to different cultural contexts.	0.895
	I enjoy learning about new cultures.	0.902
	I understand different cultural norms and values.	0.882
International Experience	I have worked or lived abroad for a significant period.	0.891
	I have frequent interactions with people from other countries.	0.934
	My international experiences help me understand cultural differences.	0.946
Organizational Support	My organization provides communication skills training for international clients.	0.829
	I receive support from supervisors in managing cultural communication challenges.	0.860
	The organization promotes awareness of cultural differences.	0.872
	I am encouraged to attend cultural orientation programs.	0.875
Communicative Performance	I can communicate clearly and effectively with clients from different cultures.	0.884
	I can maintain positive interactions during service encounters.	0.898
	I can deliver service messages appropriately in diverse cultural contexts.	0.884

Source: Research data, 2025

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2, all values exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.862 to 0.930, and CR values ranged from 0.906 to 0.947, indicating excellent internal consistency across all constructs. Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs surpassing the 0.50 threshold. The AVE values ranged from 0.663 (Communication Strategies) to 0.854 (Foreign Language Proficiency), demonstrating that the constructs explain a sufficient portion of the variance in their indicators.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Communication Self-Efficacy	0.862	0.865	0.906	0.707
Communication Strategies	0.872	0.883	0.907	0.663
Foreign Language Proficiency	0.914	0.915	0.946	0.854
Intercultural Competence	0.882	0.891	0.927	0.809
International Experience	0.930	0.932	0.947	0.781
Organizational Support	0.867	0.867	0.918	0.790
Communicative Performance	0.881	0.882	0.918	0.738

Source: Research data, 2025

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. The highest HTMT value was 0.838 between Communication Self-Efficacy and Intercultural Competence, which is acceptable given their conceptual closeness.

Table 3. HTMT Ratios for Discriminant Validity

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Communication SE	—	0.549	0.812	0.838	0.632	0.674	0.608
(2) Communication Strategies		—	0.365	0.523	0.532	0.730	0.788
(3) FL Proficiency			—	0.756	0.498	0.428	0.400
(4) Intercultural Competence				—	0.582	0.630	0.625
(5) International Experience					—	0.635	0.488
(6) Organizational Support						—	0.716
(7) Communicative Performance							—

Source: Research data, 2025

The evaluation of the measurement model confirms that the constructs exhibit strong reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. These results validate the use of the reflective measurement model and support its readiness for structural model analysis in the next phase.

Structural Model

Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among constructs. The evaluation includes path coefficient analysis, explained variance (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and significance testing using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The path coefficients and statistical significance of each hypothesized relationship are presented in Table 4. All but one path demonstrated statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. Specifically, communication self-efficacy significantly influenced communication strategies ($\beta = 0.477$, $t = 8.687$, $p < 0.001$), which in turn had a strong and significant impact on communicative performance ($\beta = 0.699$, $t = 18.037$, $p < 0.001$). Among the predictors of communication self-efficacy, foreign language proficiency ($\beta = 0.392$, $t = 8.408$), intercultural competence ($\beta = 0.294$, $t = 5.484$), and organizational support ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 3.949$) all had significant positive effects. International Experience ($\beta = 0.114$) was marginally significant ($p = 0.056$), indicating a weak yet observable influence.

Table 4. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

| Path	β	t-value	p-value	Significance
Intercultural competence → Communication SE	0.294	5.484	0.000	***
Foreign Language Proficiency → Communication SE	0.392	8.408	0.000	***
Organizational Support → Communication SE	0.206	3.949	0.000	***
International experience → Communication SE	0.114	1.916	0.056	† (marginal)
Communication Self-Efficacy → Communication Strategies	0.477	8.687	0.000	***
Communication Strategies → Communicative Performance	0.699	18.037	0.000	***

Source: Research data, 2025

Intercultural Competence

Foreign language proficiency

Organizational support

International experience

β =.294/p=.000

β =.392/p=.000

β =.206/p=.000

β =.114/p=.056

R²=.681/Q²=.471

R²=.228/Q²=.147

R²=.489/Q²=.357

Communication Self-Efficacy

Communication Strategies

Communicative Performance

β =.477/p=.000

β =.699/p=.000
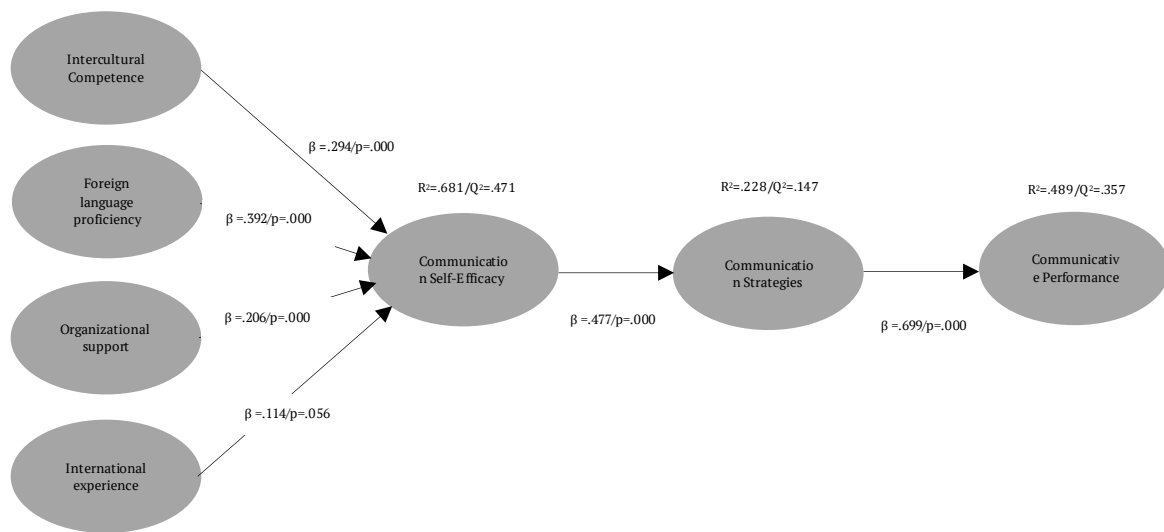
Figure 2. Evaluated Framework Model
Source: Research data, 2025

The R² values reflect the amount of variance in the endogenous variables explained by the exogenous constructs in the model. As shown in Table 5, the model explains 68.5% of the variance in communication self-efficacy, which is considered substantial. The model also explains 22.8% of the variance in communication strategies and 48.9% in communicative performance—both considered moderate, indicating meaningful explanatory power.

Table 5. R² and Adjusted R² Values

Endogenous Variable	R²	Adjusted R²	Interpretation
Communication Self-Efficacy	0.685	0.681	Substantial
Communication Strategies	0.228	0.225	Moderate
Communicative Performance	0.489	0.487	Moderate

Source: Research data, 2025

The Q² values were examined using the blindfolding procedure to evaluate the model's predictive relevance. As indicated in Table 6, Q² values for communication self-efficacy (0.471), communication strategies (0.147), and communicative performance (0.357) were all above zero, confirming the model's predictive relevance for these constructs.

Table 6. Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Construct	Q²	Interpretation
Communication Self-Efficacy	0.471	High predictive relevance
Communication Strategies	0.147	Moderate relevance
Communicative Performance	0.357	Moderate-to-high relevance

Source: Research data, 2025

The structural model demonstrates strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships. Communication self-efficacy functions as a crucial mediator, significantly influenced by core competencies (language proficiency, intercultural competence, and organizational support) and, in turn, affects communication strategy use. Communication strategies emerged as the strongest predictor of communicative performance, highlighting their central operational role in multicultural service delivery. Although the effect of international experience on self-efficacy was only marginally significant, it suggests that informal, experiential learning may complement formal competence development.

Discussion

This study empirically validates a comprehensive structural model that articulates the pathways through which intercultural Competence, foreign language proficiency, organizational support, and international Experience contribute to communication self-efficacy and how this psychological readiness mediates the influence of these competencies on communication strategy use and, ultimately, communicative performance in multicultural tourism contexts. The results confirm that communication strategies—such as simplifying language, clarifying meaning, and adapting non-verbal cues—serve as critical behavioral mechanisms in

delivering effective service communication. With a strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.699$, $p < 0.001$), communication strategies were found to be the most significant direct predictor of communicative performance, reinforcing that what employees do with their communicative tools often matters more than what they know.

Communication self-efficacy also emerged as a pivotal construct in the model ($\beta = 0.477$, $p < 0.001$), functioning as a bridge between latent competencies and observed behavior. This finding echoes (Bandura et al., 1999) self-efficacy theory, which posits that confidence in one's ability to perform under uncertainty is a stronger determinant of behavior than ability alone. In line with this, the study demonstrates that tourism employees with higher self-efficacy are more likely to employ adaptive strategies to manage diverse interactions proactively. Supporting this dynamic, foreign language proficiency ($\beta = 0.392$) and intercultural competence ($\beta = 0.294$) significantly predicted self-efficacy, confirming the importance of linguistic and socio-cognitive resources in building communicative readiness. Moreover, organizational support ($\beta = 0.206$) positively influenced self-efficacy, underscoring the role of enabling environments in empowering employees to act with confidence.

The study's findings resonate with prior research emphasizing the role of adaptability, rather than linguistic precision alone, in driving communicative success (Lifintsev et al., 2025; Saptiany & Putriningsih, 2023). What sets this model apart is that it combines both organizational and psychological factors, which gives a deeper explanation of communication behavior in practice. Unlike studies focusing on competence, this research illustrates the behavioral activation role of self-efficacy and demonstrates how it mediates between what employees know and what they do. This contributes theoretically by framing self-efficacy as a behavioral gateway—a psychological lens through which competence is interpreted and transformed into communicative action.

Interestingly, international experience had a marginal effect on communication self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.114$, $p = 0.056$), deviating from previous studies highlighting its developmental significance (Amloy et al., 2024). This discrepancy may reflect the varied nature of international exposure—differences in duration, depth, or cultural intensity may limit its uniform impact. The result reinforces that experience alone is insufficient unless accompanied by structured reflection, guided learning, or feedback, suggesting that informal learning must be intentionally designed to contribute meaningfully to self-efficacy development.

From a practical standpoint, the study offers valuable insights for workforce development in the tourism and service sectors. It emphasizes that technical language and intercultural communication training should complement interventions that build psychological confidence and strategy use. Scenario-based learning, coaching, and the cultivation of psychological safety within organizations can play critical roles in equipping employees with skills and believing they can apply them effectively. HR development strategies should, therefore, focus not just on what employees learn but on shaping how they perceive their ability to perform under cultural complexity.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported, cross-sectional data introduces the possibility of common method bias and limits causal inference. Additionally, the generalizability of findings is constrained by the geographic and sectoral composition of the sample. The construct of international experience was also broadly defined, lacking granularity regarding the nature and intensity of cross-cultural exposure. These factors may have attenuated its observed effect and highlight the need for more nuanced operationalizations in future research. Future studies should further explore the qualitative dimensions of international experience, including variables such as cultural distance, emotional salience, and the role of structured debriefing or reflection in enhancing learning outcomes. Longitudinal designs would be valuable in tracking the development of communication self-efficacy over time and its responsiveness to training. The use of supervisor and customer reviews in communication skills adds another fair and objective dimension to looking at results. Moreover, studying traits such as being open to new ideas, flexible, or having intercultural sensitivity as moderators could show how a person's characteristics affect the link between their skills and their behaviors.

CONCLUSION

The research develops a detailed framework for exploring how factors related to individuals and the organization touch on communication effectiveness in multicultural tourism. The research demonstrates that psychological readiness mainly connects intercultural competence, speaking another language, organizational backing, and exposure to different countries to communication self-efficacy. The study found that employees who are both skilled and confident in their abilities are more apt to use different ways of communicating, which results in improved communicative performance.

Microeconomics supplies explanations for theories and practical understanding. The idea is that service communication involves psychological principles to highlight self-efficacy as the link between knowing and doing. Putting it into practice, it points out that only training employees on information is not enough and that training needs to focus on giving them confidence and strategic skills. Tourism companies must set up strategies that support their teams in becoming confident and capable communicators.

Although the research is very reliable, the study points out several ways future research could be improved. They mean reviewing international experience in greater detail, using long-running designs, and comparing them with other measures of school performance. In today's global service environments, being very culturally and communicatively competent is required. This makes training based on psychology particularly useful to maintain quality service everywhere.

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