



THE NEED OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN A MULTICULTURAL WORK ENVIRONMENT (LITHUANIAN CASE)

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Abstract: Working in a multicultural environment is quite little analyzed in Lithuania but is widely discussed in the world scientific literature and is very relevant in the course of globalization processes. The aspect of multiculturalism has been studied relatively actively and interest in it has increased especially as Lithuania integrates into the European Union and NATO. A lot of research has been already done about intercultural cooperation and its problems, but analyzing and studying the intercultural aspect, its peculiarities and intercultural communication efficiency in a multicultural environment at work, in negotiations, intercultural projects working in multicultural teams in companies or outside is not analyzed enough. At that meanwhile, in the current scientific literature there are no clear descriptions for individual multicultural aspects of communication, as most scientific works present conclusions and proposals based on classification of cultures, by cultural differences, but with little consideration of cultural background or intersection of cultures – the reason for the communication and its productivity, also the necessity of intercultural competence. The aim of this article is – to analyze the scientific literature about working in multicultural environments and to present the recent research of intercultural competence analysis of intercultural communication in Lithuanian companies where people constantly work in multicultural teams. After analyzing the peculiarities of the work of the multicultural teams, make proposals for the improvement of multicultural teamwork, corresponding to today's trends.

Keywords: intercultural competence, multiculturalism, teamwork, multicultural work environment

JEL Classification: J24, M12

1. INTRODUCTION

The population of working people in many countries is becoming increasingly diverse culturally and ethnically. Such diversity determines new requirements for employees, including a good command of foreign languages and an ability to handle different cultures and understand their attitudes, values, and perceptions. People failing to meet these requirements have limited career opportunities (Waheed, 2015).

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The globalization processes and growing numbers of migration are leading to more racial and ethnic minorities in the labour force and is intensifying the labour force pressure on organisations required to accommodate gender, racial and ethnic differences effectively. This also poses challenges to employees as they need to understand diverse cultures and work with people possibly having significantly different values and perceptions or perspectives. In many organisations, career success may depend on the employee's ability to adapt to a multicultural environment (Statnickė, 2019).

A significantly greater focus of the scientific literature on such topics as the multicultural environment, intercultural competence etc., has been noted before. These topics have been addressed by scholars such as Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens & Oddou, 2010; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton (2002), Deardorf (2006) and others. Multiculturalism has been studied relatively actively and interest in it has grown especially with Lithuania's integration into the European Union and NATO. The problematics of the concept of multiculturalism have researched Tamošiūnas, Jakavičiai (2000), Saugėnienė, Liaudanskienė (2003), Mazolevskienė, Montvilaitė (2007), Reingardė, Vasiliauskaitė, Erentaitė (2010) and others. According to Gražulis (2016), the current society's perception of intercultural differences in countries and various ethnic groups has been formed by countless efforts of scientists.

The need for intercultural competence in Lithuanian organizations has become increasingly important due to globalization and rising migration. This trend is reflected in the growing interest among scientists in multiculturalism and interculturalism over the past decade. The increasing flow of people into and out of Lithuania due to migration and the European Union's open borders has heightened the necessity for intercultural competence in the workplace. A difficult situation in Ukraine also has a significant impact on Lithuania's situation.

Research methodology: scientific literature analysis on the topic of working in multicultural environments and the need of intercultural competence; situation analysis in Lithuania – it's migration indicators, recent research of intercultural competence analysis in Lithuanian companies where people constantly work in multicultural teams.

2. SITUATION IN LITHUANIA REGARDING MIGRATION

People have always been inclined to migrate, whether due to climate change, wars or slavery, or for economic, social, political or personal reasons. Migration has always been an important process, but the modern world is unimaginable without international migration and migration plays an increasingly important role in many countries (Herm, 2008). Dion (2010) argues that being an

immigrant is being vulnerable. A person, alone or together with others, leaves their home country and travels abroad in search of a different, better life. The new country can be both hospitable and inhospitable. In both cases, immigrants immediately face difficulties related to the lack of information, uncertainty about how to behave in certain situations and, of course, the language barrier. Regardless of where the home country is, some of the problems that new immigrants face remain the same: culture shock, cultural conflict and generational conflict. However, the hospitality of the country plays one of the most important roles in the lives of immigrants and causes major problems. Due to prevailing attitudes, immigrants face societal hostility, which is influenced by the media and long-standing stereotypes (Obiakor and Afolayan, 2007).

Due to globalization, countries become open parts of the world, where migration processes become common phenomena (Ruškus, 2010). The influence of globalization on Lithuania, as on most countries of the world, has played an important role in accelerating migration flows. In this way, Lithuania from a racially and religiously homogeneous country is gradually becoming a multicultural country, receiving foreigners not only from the former Soviet Union or the current EU, but also from third countries (Jančaitytė et al., 2009), therefore globalization becomes a challenge for Lithuania both in cultural, demographic and legal, as well as social or political aspects (Ruškus, 2010).

Speaking about the features of immigration to Lithuania, it is important to define the concept of an immigrant Lithuania. According to K. Žibas (2009) (cited in the United Nations Recommendations on the Promotion of International Migration Statistics, 1998), immigrants are considered to be persons who have arrived in the Republic of Lithuania for at least 12 months. This means that immigrants who have arrived in Lithuania for at least one year are included in the number of immigrants. The author notes that the one-year period applies only to foreigners with permits.

In Lithuania, at the beginning of 2022, the majority of foreigners were citizens of European countries, however, only 9.4 percent of foreigners were from EU countries and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) member states. Another part of European foreigners living in Lithuania were citizens of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, they make up as much as 68 percent of foreigners living in Lithuania. Another part (6 percent) of foreigners living in Lithuania were people who came from Asian countries. The majority (52.5 percent) come from Israel, China and Kazakhstan, and in 2023 there was an increase of immigrants from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The number of citizens of Asian

countries increased by 5.4 percent over the year. Africans in Lithuania made up only 0.6 percent of all foreigners, but represented as many as 26 African countries. The largest number of Africans in Lithuania were from Nigeria, Egypt and Tunisia (65.8% of Africans in total). The smallest number of foreigners living in Lithuania were from South and Central America (0.3%) and Australia and Oceania (0.1%). However, there is a noticeable increase in the number of people from both regions. Over the year, the number of foreigners from Central and South America increased by 15.4%, and foreigners from Australia and Oceania (mainly New Zealand) by 16%.

Following Lithuania's accession to the European Union (EU) (2004) and the Schengen area (2007), immigration flows to Lithuania have accelerated significantly. According to the Lithuanian Statistics Department, 2012 saw the highest number of people immigrating to Lithuania since 2000 and the second highest number was after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Lithuania's ethnic composition is also being significantly altered by the current war situation in Ukraine. For many years the majority of immigrants were Lithuanians returning from emigration, but in recent years there is a trend that e.g. in 2023, 25% of Lithuanians have returned, around 1% of EU citizens have immigrated, and 74% of non-EU citizens have immigrated, of which 40% are immigrants from Ukraine and Belarus. 87.4 thousand people immigrated to Lithuania in 2022. The number of immigrants, compared to 2021, increased almost 2 times (42.5 thousand). 15.3 thousand of the country's permanent residents emigrated from Lithuania in 2022 – 39.4 percent (9.9 thousand) less than in 2021. In 2023 international migration amounted to 72.1 thousand residents, of whom 7.6 thousand were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and 64.5 thousand were foreigners. For the past four years, net international migration of citizens of the Republic of Lithuania has remained positive (more residents immigrated than emigrated). Over the past years (2013–2022), 353.3 thousand people immigrated to Lithuania, of whom 183.5 thousand (51.9 percent) were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who returned and 169.8 thousand (48.1%) were foreigners. During this period, 343.3 thousand permanent residents of the country emigrated from Lithuania, of which 297.7 thousand (86.7%) were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and 45.6 thousand (13.3%) were foreigners. In 2013–2022, 10 thousand more people immigrated than emigrated. During this period, net international migration of citizens of the Republic of Lithuania was negative (114.2 thousand more emigrated than immigrated), and of foreigners – positive (124.2 thousand more emigrated than immigrated). In 2022, the overall net international migration indicator (the

ratio of the difference in the number of persons who immigrated and emigrated during the year to the average annual population, calculated per 1 thousand inhabitants.) was 25.5.

As the number of immigrants grows, the country's cultural and ethnic make-up is changing. Immigrants from neighboring countries have been joined by newcomers from Asia and Africa and have created new challenges for integration issues. Immigration is a complex issue with economic and social as well as legal and cultural aspects. At the same time, immigration is a divisive issue, as many Europeans consider immigration a threat to national security. The inevitable process of immigration requires that public sector institutions are well prepared to deal with immigrants and to deal with immigration-related problems.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Working in the intercultural environment

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on how organizations need to evolve to address the challenges of a multicultural environment. Research shows that one of the most important components of creating effective multicultural organizations is intercultural work engagement, trust, communication, and empathetic leadership.

According to Stahl et al. (2021), organizations that fail to adapt to cultural diversity face challenges related to talent retention, organizational commitment, and overall employee productivity. The ability to strategically manage multicultural human resources dynamics is now considered a key success factor for global businesses (Reiche et al., 2022). This topic is also becoming more relevant due to technological advances and hybrid work models that have further diversified global teams. Digital collaboration tools allow organizations to work with employees from different cultures, but without a systematic approach to human resource management, companies can face communication barriers, misunderstandings, and conflicts (Brewster et al., 2023)

Cross-cultural challenges, such as differing perspectives on work (Mendenhall et al., 2008), emphasize cultural sensitivity in managing a diverse workforce. The concept of a culturally aware workforce emphasizes employee awareness and appreciation of cultural differences (Peltokorpi et al., 2020). Such awareness is associated with higher levels of employee engagement (Doherty and Dickmann, 2019) and contributes to organizational success (Glaser and Weber, 2019). In addition, a culturally aware workforce contributes to better organizational

outcomes, such as teamwork, innovative problem solving, and adaptive communication practices (Peters & Greer, 2021; Martin and Jackson, 2022).

Intercultural competence is defined as an ability acquired based on specific knowledge and attitudes enabling individuals to work effectively in the context of different cultures (Mažeikienė & Virgailaitė-Mečkauskaitė, 2007) or as an ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006). According to Spitzberg & Chagon (2009), intercultural competence is appropriate and effective management of interaction between people representing different or divergent, affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world.

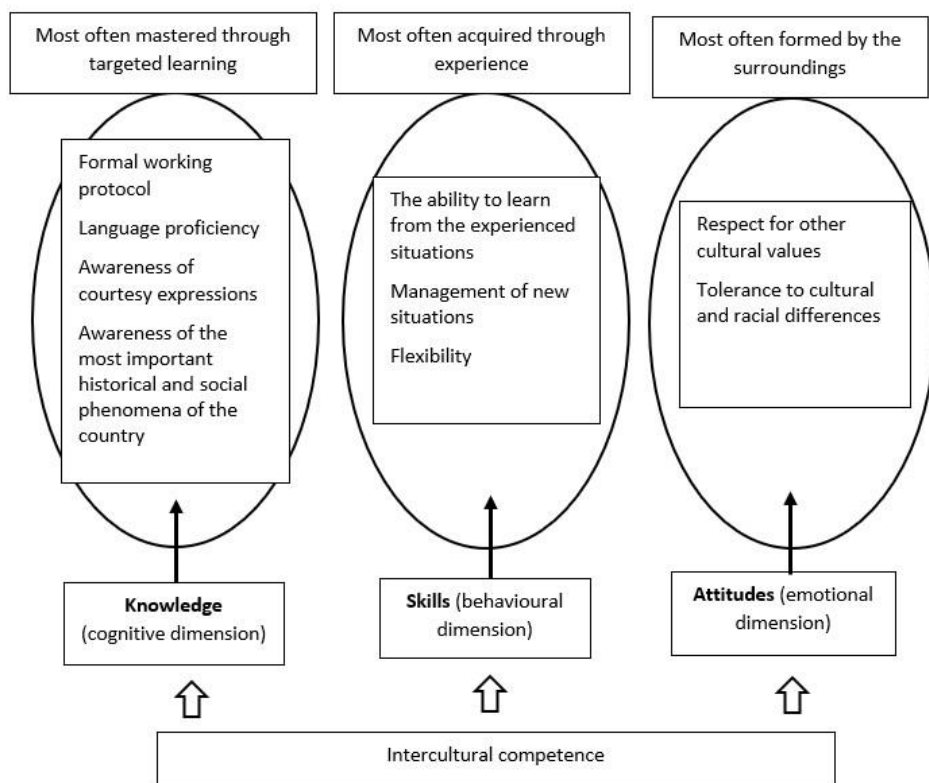


Figure 1. Intercultural competence research model

Source: elaborated by an international group of scientists, 2017, based on Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Chen & Naquin, 2006; Campion et al., 2011; Deardorff & Jones, 2012.

Intercultural competence can be divided into three main categories: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Cognitive competence relates to a person's ability to process information, affective competence refers to emotional responses, and

behavioural competence concerns behaviour (Lloyd & Härtel, 2010). Scientists (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Chen and Naquin, 2006; Campion et al., 2011; Deardorff & Jones, 2012) concur that defining the concept of intercultural competence requires considering such dimensions as knowledge and abilities (skills) and attitudes. Based on these dimensions, Fig. 1 presents a theoretical model for research on intercultural competence. This theoretical construct has been empirically validated.

Lithuanian scientists T. N. Liobikienė, J. T. Šinkūnienė (2010) according to James, Gilliland (2001) emphasize that for a person working in a multicultural environment, it is important to assess:

- their ability to work in this environment,
- knowledge of the customs, behavioral characteristics, religion, etc. of people from other cultures,
- skills to perform an intervention acceptable to people from other cultures,
- sufficient experience.

The authors, following Bula (2000), emphasize the approach to factors that, when working in a multicultural environment, an employee should assess in his/her own and others: – nationality, – social gender role, – age (in some cultures a person's age is calculated from the moment of conception), – socioeconomic class (this is not only the amount of money a person has, but also the status that provides economic security), – religion, which in many cultures is the basis of morality, interpersonal relationships, and gives life meaning, – sexual orientation, – different abilities, values, norms, – language (it is important to find out what the native language is, what language was learned and for what purpose). When assessing these factors, attention should be paid to beliefs, attitudes and knowledge (Liobikienė, Šinkūnienė, 2010).

Th. Baumer (2002) states that culture can be understood as a multi-dimensional construct (system, expression, identity, function). System: values, symbols, rituals, customs, behavior, as well as the learning process of a certain community/group of people.

1. Expression: behavior (greetings, problem solving, etc.), feelings (joy, concern, etc.), things (clothing, buildings, etc.), thinking (attitudes, opinions, etc.).
2. Identity: nation, religion, gender, generation, activity, profession, subculture.
3. Functions: orientation, behavior management, communication, living together, identity, dissociation.

When relating the concept of culture to intercultural competence, according to Th. Baumer (2002), culture can also be defined as a programmed collective consciousness that distinguishes members of one group from members of another group. The way culture is defined also determines the concept of

intercultural competence itself. If, for example, we define culture as the culture of each individual (which includes geographical, ethical, ethnic, moral, religious, political, historical, etc. affiliation; e.g. age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, etc.), then intercultural competence can be understood as a prerequisite for successful everyday communication with other people, and thus this competence would come closer to the concept of social competence (Baumer, 2002). Those who go to work abroad can be divided into two groups: those who have found their desired job on their own and those who are sent by organizations. In one case, this news can be viewed favorably. In another, valuable individuals engaged in international business, sent by their employer for a limited time and faced with a new environment, often experience discomfort, and their further career may take a negative or positive direction, depending on the (dis)agreement to work abroad. Adaptation depends on location, cultural distance, competence, previous work experience, ability to adapt to new working and living conditions, and gender. Three forms of adaptation are distinguished:

1. Psychological. Maintaining mental and physical well-being, i.e. the ability to overcome stress, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of dissatisfaction.
2. Sociocultural. Activity in the new society, overcoming everyday problems and maintaining good contacts with members of the local society.
3. Work. Competently performed work, successful achievement of goals, ability to adapt to the local group, improvement of mutual relations.

3.2. Challenges of international teams

A team is a group of people who are focused on one goal and use all their skills to achieve that goal. A team has common goals and its members, although they retain personal and individual responsibilities, share their activities in order to best perform their work and ensure the fulfillment of the team's goals. In addition to the challenges inherent in every team – successfully overcoming the stages of team formation and development, overcoming internal conflicts and problematic relationships, and correctly distributing responsibilities within the team – members of a multicultural team must also overcome the challenge of intercultural differences. Even under the best of conditions, it is difficult to communicate effectively, and factors from different cultures, according to most authors, increase the likelihood of even greater communication difficulties. The process of encoding messages into symbols and decoding them is based on a person's cultural background, so it is not the same for all people. The greater the difference in the cultural background of the sender and the recipient, the greater

the difference in the meaning given to the information. People from different cultures see, evaluate and interpret things differently, and therefore react to them differently. When different cultures and representatives of different cultures come together, the primary problems of cultural compatibility arise first: – cultural shock; – stereotypical thinking; – the problem of "cultural glasses" (Lalienė, 2008).

A representative of each culture evaluates other people through the prism of their own culture, values, behavior, customs and traditions. In this way, the cultural experience they have in their own way colors the understanding of the behavior of representatives of other cultures and marks their acceptance in their own way. For example, nervous, active Spaniards who gesticulate a lot with their hands seem strange to reserved Swedes or Finns, while to Italians or Portuguese such behavior seems normal. This is how stereotypes of national behavior are formed over time, which may not always be confirmed. Thus, cultural shock, stereotypes or prejudice against other cultures are problems that a multicultural team may encounter at the stage of formation. Once a multicultural team has been formed, another challenge lies ahead – to overcome the problem of cultural compatibility. The scientific literature analyzes the types of "intercultural balance" and their diversity. Most authors, when talking about different cultural groups, rely on and limit themselves to the analysis of a few strong or large cultures.

Possible variants of cultural convergence in a multicultural team depend on the following aspects: the willingness and ability of representatives of the "coming" culture to impose their methods and instruments; the willingness and ability of representatives of the "receiving" culture to absorb what they consider to be acceptable and useful.

Intercultural competence is the ability of an individual (or organization) to work effectively in a diverse environment. The term intercultural competence is synonymous with the English terms transnational competence, cross-cultural competence, cultural competence, and less commonly the term intercultural literacy. The following content elements of intercultural competence are most often identified: – cultural awareness; – cultural knowledge; – cultural sensitivity or cultural attitudes; – cultural skills. Several main areas are distinguished that are important when discussing intercultural communication: – display of respect; – interaction posture; – orientation of knowledge; empathy; – roles (role behavior); – interaction management; – tolerance for ambiguity (Wiseman, 1993).

Looking at the characteristics of intercultural competence distinguished by the authors (Wiseman, Jandt, Radzevičienė, etc.), it can be noticed that each of them can be attributed to a specific block of general managerial competence, therefore, by generalizing the models of H. McCredie, V. Shackleton, Lindsay, Stuart

and Boyatzis, it is possible to distinguish groups of competences that are important in terms of intercultural cooperation. This is exactly what N. Petkevičiūtė and R. Budaitė did in their scientific work on intercultural competence. In it, based on the statements of R. E. Boyatzis, V. Dulewitz,

E. Schein, J. Hey, P. Lindray, R. Stiuart and other scientists about the characteristics that determine competence and the success of intercultural communication, a generalized model of intercultural competence is presented. The following parts of the competency model are distinguished with their most important characteristics of intercultural competence:

- Intellectual abilities and their management: – knowledge of a foreign language(s); – knowledge of the cultural and managerial characteristics of one's own country; – general knowledge of the cultural and managerial characteristics of other countries; – willingness to learn and improve.
- Interpersonal abilities: – communication skills; – tolerance for another person.
- Flexibility and adaptability: – the ability to apply one's knowledge related to intercultural cooperation to a specific situation – cultural flexibility; – adaptation to the environment.
- Attention to others: – solving problems related to intercultural cooperation in the organization; – development of employees for intercultural work.

After reviewing the scientific literature on the topic of intercultural competence, it is obvious that the intercultural competence of the leader of a multicultural team or its members is a guarantee of successful communication, which in turn influences the success and efficiency of the multicultural team.



Figure 2. Necessity and relevance of particular intercultural competence elements

Source: I. Pliopaitė, A. Radzevičienė (2010).

Figure 2 presents the attitudes of Baltic Europe, Nordic Europe, Western Europe and overall Europe necessity and relevance of particular intercultural competence elements according to I. Pliopaitė, A. Radzevičienė (2010). Knowledge of the role of culture, of peculiarities of different cultures and their management patterns are characterized as the foundation of intercultural competence.

4. RESEARCH OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE NEED IN LITHUANIAN ORGANIZATIONS

The results of a comprehensive *study of intercultural competence of managers* conducted in Lithuania by N. Petkevičiūtė and R. Budaitė – an assessment of the characteristics of intercultural competence of managers in a decimal system – presented in Table 1, show that the intercultural competence of Lithuanian managers is not sufficient to ensure effective intercultural competence. The study involved managers of organizations that cooperate with representatives of other countries and cultures in one way or another. These include:

- Lithuanian companies managed by foreigners permanently residing in Lithuania;
- companies whose main activity is related to permanent cooperation with representatives of other countries;
- branches of foreign companies in Lithuania managed by foreigners.

Table 1. Average ratings of personal characteristics of the managers

Characteristics	Ratings (decimal system)
<i>Proficiency in foreign languages</i>	8,0
<i>Knowledge of the cultural and managerial characteristics of one's own country</i>	2,5
<i>Desire to learn and improve</i>	9,0
<i>Communicative ability</i>	9,3
<i>Tolerance towards others</i>	8,7
<i>Adaptation to the environment</i>	9,1
<i>Cultural sensitivity</i>	8,2
<i>Solution of intercultural problems</i>	2,4
<i>Improving the intercultural competence of employees</i>	5,0

Source: elaborated by the authors.

These results showed that Lithuanian managers lack knowledge about their own and other countries' cultural and managerial characteristics, problems related to intercultural cooperation are solved inefficiently or not solved at all, and

employees in companies are not developed for intercultural work. Insufficient knowledge of intercultural cooperation among managers and lack of development for intercultural work pose problems related to:

- different temperaments of communicators;
- different negotiation styles;
- different perceptions of relationships between managers and subordinates;
- different time planning and management;
- different work culture, rules of conduct;
- different styles of the decision-making process.

This study alone has shown that different languages, different cultures and different practices remain invisible barriers in global business. As we can see from the results of the study, this greatly complicates intercultural communication, therefore it is very important to solve the emerging problems in one way or another and to improve the intercultural competence of managers at all levels, as well as each person. In order to ensure effective intercultural cooperation and high quality of work performed or services provided, so that organizational leaders deepen their knowledge of the cultural and managerial characteristics of their own and other countries, to learn to solve emerging problems of intercultural cooperation, to become familiar with the basic rules of intercultural cooperation in the world, the improvement of intercultural competence becomes important. Most authors who analyze the concept of intercultural competence believe that intercultural competence allows:

- to more critically assess the uniqueness of one's own culture and thus get rid of stereotypical thinking and ethnocentric closure;
- understand the influence of culture on the individual and team's behavior and attitude;
- learn to decode the values cherished by other nations, understand their place and importance in it and thus expand their cultural horizons and become a full-fledged member of an international or multicultural team;
- develop the skills necessary for effective multicultural communication – the ability to adapt, accept, empathize, and feel for another team member;
- understand the influence of culture on business, its organization, orientations, and management.

Another research was made to examine *intercultural competence in Lithuanian organizations*. The survey questionnaire on intercultural competence was composed of seven question blocks. This paper presents only a part of the survey results. To find out employee views representing different sector organisations, an

online questionnaire survey was conducted in Lithuania with non-probability convenience sampling. Employees' intercultural competence (knowledge/cognitive dimension, skills/behavioural dimension, and attitudes/emotional dimension) was evaluated using 5-point Likert items (Adamoniene et al., 2022).

The respondents partook in the survey voluntarily; they were informed about the object and the aim of the research, its practical value, research methods and procedures, data anonymity and the use for scientific and publication purposes. Informed consent was received in the form of agreeing to proceed with the survey following the introduction of the research.

In total, 1193 respondents participated in this research in Lithuania. The majority of participants (72.8 %) were women. 20.5 % were younger than 25, 32.5 % — 25–35, 25.8 % — 35–50 years old and 20.8 % were over 50. 84.5 % of respondents had a university education. 27.6 % represented private sector organisations, 68.2 % — public sector organisations, and 1.8 % — non-governmental organisations.

Less than one-third of the respondents answered that intercultural competence development was their responsibility (Table 2). A binary variable was constructed, where 1 indicated that the intercultural competence development was not undertaken by the organisation (27.1 %) and 0 indicated all other answers except for the missing values excluded from the analysis.

Table 2. Frequency for methods of intercultural competence development in organisations

Methods of intercultural competence development	Group size	Percentage
Training, seminars, simulations	143	12
Business trips and internships abroad	167	14
Sharing good practice, learning from each other	297	24.9
No development, employee's responsibility	323	27.1
I don't care about that	51	4.3
Don't know	172	14.4
Missing	40	3.4
Total	1193	100

Source: elaborated by the authors.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which each aspect posed issues when communicating with foreigners on a scale from 1 ("does not pose any issues") to 5 ("poses issues very frequently"). It appeared that the greatest challenge was the language barrier: 34 % of respondents perceived it as a frequent (4) or very frequent (5) issue (Table 3).

Table 3. Description of items expressing the extent of intercultural issues

Issues	Mean	Standard deviation	Frequent difficulties	N
• language	3.15	1.32	34.0 %	1080
• different decision-making	2.63	1.19	17.4 %	1062
• different temperament	2.58	1.29	20.3 %	1062
• different perceptions of managerial and subordinate relationships	2.56	1.22	16.9 %	1064
• different styles of informal communication	2.55	1.18	17.1 %	1061
• lack of interest in foreigners among employees	2.48	1.28	17.6 %	1058
• ignorance of foreign culture	2.37	1.19	13.7 %	1061
• unacceptable topics of conversation (taboos)	2.19	1.19	11.3 %	1060
• different religion	1.99	1.19	9.6 %	1059

Source: elaborated by the authors.

However, all other potential difficulties were not perceived as especially important as only approx. from 10 % to 20 % of respondents rated them as a frequent or very frequent issue. Averages also indicate that evaluations were at about the middle point of 5 anchors scale or lower. Therefore, the univariate analysis suggests that a significant proportion of respondents have difficulties operating in a multicultural work environment; however, the extent of the issues was less than expected.

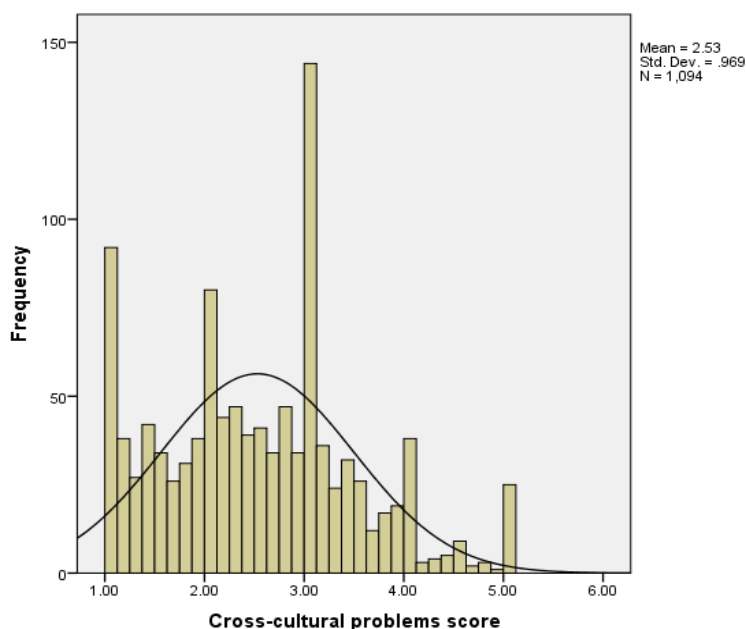


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of intercultural issue scores

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the single factor explaining 59 % of the total variance and all except one (0.512) factor loadings being above the threshold of 0.6, the scale of frequency of intercultural issues was constructed by calculating the unweighted average of the above-described items (Table 3). The frequency distribution of the resulting scale was not Gaussian, with the average of 2.53, median 2.56 and the standard deviation of 0.969 (Fig. 3).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The labour force of the 21st century is becoming extremely diverse, representing different ages, genders, cultures, religions, abilities, beliefs etc. Many jobs nowadays require working in a diverse environment, so it is essential to constantly develop intercultural competences. Scientists tend to concur that intercultural competence has cognitive, behavioural, and emotional dimensions. The research instrument was prepared based on these dimensions, and the research was carried out in different Lithuanian organisations. The results helped to verify the great need for development of intercultural competence.

Overall, while there is a growing recognition of the importance of intercultural competence in Lithuanian organizations, there are challenges in developing and implementing effective training programs to meet this need.

The results of this research proved that organisations should pay as much attention as possible to the development of intercultural competence since most respondents noted that it could positively contribute to the personal career of employees and an organisation's success. Organisations in the public, private and non-governmental sectors would particularly benefit from a greater understanding of intercultural competence and methods for identifying, developing and promoting it. The development of intercultural competence should be included in organisational strategies to ensure continuous and consistent development. Finally, it should not be left solely to the own responsibility of employees.

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