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The Relevance of Cultural Effects on Cognitive Processes in the Context of Managerial Communication

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Firma dello studente

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Abstract

With the development of business world, relocation of workforce and companies going global, the workplace environment significantly changes, becoming multicultural and more diverse. As the result affecting managerial communication within the firm. This study examines the differences between cognitive processes among individuals that affect their way of thinking and communication preferences, based on their cultural background.

The research was conducted using qualitative approach, in particular in-depths, semi-structured interviews as the data-collection tool, based on the use of vignettes. The goal of the study being the assessment of relevance of cultural differences, accommodation of preferences and the awareness regarding them in the workplace, bringing to light respondent's individual experiences.

Interviews were conducted involving the respondents from different fields, different cultures and backgrounds. They were asked about their perception of belonging to a particular culture, how it is different from the one that dominates their workplace, if the differences between the worldview are significantly noticeable and if it affects in any way effectiveness of their communication.

The study provided a meaningful insight on the issue from the employees' perspective, elaborating on the reasoning behind the outcome of the research and providing useful recommendations for the companies.

Keywords: Communication, Cognitive Processes, Cultural Effects, Multiculturalism,

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Introduction

The way world is developing right now is rapid and interconnected. People's worldviews are being shaped by economic, social, and demographic dynamics, which are also facilitating an increasing number of cross-cultural interactions. People must therefore accept, value, and profit from newly growing cultural diversity.

It could be argued that every individual belongs to a particular culture but again due to the high-paced globalization the notion of people's cultural affiliation is becoming fluid. Societies intersect and every individual is left with unique mindset. But even in this circumstance societies share same values and unite under the same philosophy: the way of living.

A few organizations are left that work solely in their cultural context and it is firms' obligation to make immersion to new cultures possible for their employees. How people see their culture changes as they move form situation to another. This variation of the viewpoint mainly depends on the social context the individual is in, as well as their own motivations and interests.

There is a need for employees to become more adaptable and open-minded, considerate and accepting of differences that emerge in the workplace.

The question is what the reasons of the said so differences are. They originate from the differences between individual's higher mental processes, which are memory, perception, language and problem-solving. Those on the other hand are affected by external elements, like social and cultural factors that are critical to acknowledge.

Cultural identity and background influence individuals' cognitive processes from early stage of development and shape the way they perceive and understand the world, furthermore affecting individual attitudes and behaviors.

This thesis focuses on the context of communication in the workplace. Examining the differences between preferred ways of communication, the patterns in behaviors and understanding of employees; exploring the reasons why particular patterns and preferences are created in the first place, how it's influenced by the cognition and all the way up to the cultural impact on mental processes. The aim of the study is to assess the presence and relevance of culture consequent

differences, the awareness of the topic among the employees; and summarize respondent experiences.

RQ: The relevance of cultural effects on cognition in the context of managerial communication

Using the qualitative approach based on the in-depths semi-structured interviews, aim was to collect information directly from the employees working in multicultural environment, in their own country or in another country they are based in, just being the sole international or working in an international team.

The research is relevant because of the growing rate of internalization and relocation of workforce. More and more firms are encountering the miscommunication problems or misunderstandings and discomfort consequent to poor communication.

Additionally to that, the topic of cultural drivers of differences in cognitive styles is also evolving. More and more factors are taken into consideration like urbanization, education, socialization; and leading researchers to adapting their approaches towards more experimental methodologies. The study of social and ecological factor influences is far from complete but as the result we could get more precise understanding of background processes to individual behavior and get more information regarding the ways of how to better handle them.

This thesis is organized in the following way, chapter 1 describes the theories of cultural differences, the models of culture clustering based of their characteristics, explores more in details those characteristics and leads to an explanation of how above-mentioned cultures differ in cognitive processes in chapter 2. This chapter is dedicated to explanation of cognition, different mental processes and their influence on behaviors and perception, as well as some experiments supporting the topic. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, data collection techniques and underlying principles for development of the research. Following with findings and analysis in chapter 4, and concluding with managerial implications and limitations in chapter 5 and 6 respectively.

Chapter 1 Definition of Culture and its Impact

The business environment recently is becoming more and more diverse. Working on global projects, across different countries making intercultural management noticeable direction in studies. Even though Mckinsey found that diversity is reflected in profitability, if not handled in the right way it could lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Thus it's vital acknowledging the differences between the cultures, understanding and respecting them, as culture shapes managerial practices and behaviors of workers.

Culture is pattern for living, it is considered to be the broad term and could be defined in many ways, but within the field of international business and for international management it is defined as knowledge that individuals acquire to interpret experiences and form and influence social behavior. It's the way the values are formed and attitudes created. Scholars agree that culture is group phenomena not specific to single individuals, acquired by learning, cumulative of individuals' experiences and passed through generations. The base of culture is the human capacity of adapting, changing, and being able to symbolize world around and use one thing to represent another.

Every individual lives within specific culture, creating a structured environment with rigid rules, making it a universal phenomenon. It unites individuals' ideas and values. And by itself is manifested in a system orientation that could be typical to particular group. "This system of orientation provides all members with a sense of belonging and inclusion within a society or group and creates an environment in which individuals can develop a unique sense of self and function effectively" (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010). Samovar and Porter suggest the term of "assumptive world of the individual" (Samovar & Porter, 1991). The idea of "mindsets" is another typical term used in this area of study, and it describes how a situation could be evaluated proceeding to decision-making, based on the perception of the worldview and reasoning (Fisher, 1997) as cited in (Dzenowagis, 2008).

Culture serves as a point of reference for behaviors and for us it's important to learn those specific behaviors to manage the challenges associated with the societies they are relevant to. The process of enculturation that lasts way after the childhood finally could be considered successful when individual's behavior aligns with their worldview completing the process of socialization and incorporating cultural values. (Thomas, 2010)

Continuing the idea of Thomas's system of orientation it is said that culture incentivizes the action, but it also limits and conditions so said action. And since it's all embracing in the sense that it consists of specific symbols that exist around individuals such as language, body language, mimicry, clothing, greeting rituals and so on it influences perception, judgment and makes individuals "act according to specific, narrowly defined behavioral pattern".

The basic orientation is relevant on all three psychological levels that are cognitive, emotional and behavioral.

On the other hand exists the notion of "corresponding tendency" elaborated by Ross and Nisbett, which basically proposes that individual behavior is attributed only to the characteristics of the particular individual, with no consideration of situational factors. While it could be argued regarding the situational factors involvement in the process, the outcome of this theory is quite perceptible. In this setting the agent is not able to recognize the orientation systems of other people involved in communications, thus resulting in flawed judgements and facilitating oblivious behavior. (Ross & Nisbett, 1991) Cited in (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010)

One of other definitions of culture could be the way the groups within tend to respond to solving problems. In other terms for managers it means that they will need to clearly understand the variety of existing patterns of thoughts, they will have to learn properly accommodating them and exploiting for the process of problem solving. Notable is that the more similarity is seen between cultures the more influence it has on intercultural communication. And link between the two is very important to understand because people learn to communicate exactly through culture. (Dzenowagis, 2008)

Since culture embodies so many patterns of perception and behavior, cross-cultural communication approaches should be guarded against assumptions of similarity that are usually made inappropriately, difference should be highlighted and paid attention to. (Bennett, 1998)

Individuals should be able to tolerate certain degree of ambiguity in behaviors and actions that are unclear or contradictory to them. There should be a certain amount of "intrinsic esteem and respect for different life styles, management and interaction mediums." It should all be done to fuel the curiosity and create a "healthy sense of openness to the intercultural encounter". (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010)

1.1 Cultural Dimensions

Since it became apparent that understanding the cultural context is important to understand and predict individual behavior, as well as understand the moving mechanism behind it, many scholars suggested the studies of cultural subparts, united by the same characteristics into dimensions. Some of the most relevant and widely spread models were suggested by Geert Hofstede, GLOBE project that was developed later, Edward T. Hall, Fons Trompenaars and others.

Hall (1959) emphasized differences between Low and High context cultures. With High context cultures being more relational, collectivistic, highlighting importance of the context in communication and valuing group interests. Contrary Low context cultures would be the ones described as more explicitly direct, less relying on the relationships. The differentiation between two is quite important for communication. Considering linguistics Low context are usually attributed with denotation, a literal meaning of the words spoken "mass information is vested in the explicit code", while High context culture is related to connotation, meaning that not only words matter but every other indirect detail, like body language, facial expressions, tonality of the voice, gaze and so on. Hall describes it as communication "in which most of the information is already in the person, while little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message." (Hall, 1990)

Originally four dimensions were examined by Hofstede (1980), adding two more after conducting the research, further summarizing overall 6 cultural subparts: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, time orientation and indulgence vs restraint.

Individualism Vs collectivism – degree to which, people feel the belonging to the group or the society itself, exploring how loose or tight the relationships between the members are

Power distance – assessing the level of blind obedience to the authority and unequal distribution of power

Uncertainty avoidance – attitude towards the ambiguous situations

Masculinity vs femininity – dominance of values such as money and success vs quality of life and carrying for others

Time orientation – focusing on long-term results vs quick results

Indulgence vs restraint – examines an attitude an expression of happiness

Analyzing all of the dimensions give great insight on individual's values and behaviors. But in the context of effect on cognitive processes dimensions of individualism vs collectivism, power distance could be considered as the most important, as it heavily impacts the thinking styles that people develop. Measuring how society perceives itself as integrated group, individualists tend to care about interests of their own and their immediate family, as opposed to collectivists that tend to prioritize group belonging and collective interests. Other scholars elaborated more on the topic to make further distinctions, for example Triandis (1995) proposed 4 attributes within the notion of collectivism and individualism:

1. Definition of self as personal or collective, independent or interdependent

2. Priority of personal goals vs group goals

3. Communal relationships vs emphasis on exchange

4. Social norms vs importance of personal attitudes

As discussed in the future all of the factors influence the thinking processes among individuals.

In the later years Hofstede (2007) made distinction also between the national cultures and organizational cultures. Perceiving that system based on values could not be suitable for draw contrast between companies in the same country. New approach for organizational cultural differences along six dimensions looked like this:

- Process-oriented versus results-oriented

- Job-oriented versus employee-oriented

- Professional versus parochial

- Open systems versus closed systems

- Tightly controlled versus loosely controlled

- Pragmatic versus normative. (Dzenowagis, 2008)

While managers usually understand simple processes of communication, when participants are from different cultures it could raise some difficulties. (Dzenowagis, 2008) Suggests potential barriers to effective communication could be following:

- Cultural frames: Using the window through which an individual defines him/herself, others and the world

- Ethnocentrism: Evaluating another culture according to our own

- False attributions: Attributing our own meanings to behaviors in other cultures, which may not be correct

- Stereotypes: Using generalizations that do not allow for exceptions

- Etiquette and nonverbal behaviors: Understanding the meanings of gestures, facial expressions and body positions requiring specific knowledge of a culture

- Other elements: Including time and place, topic, status and power, and style

- Language: understanding the content could be a barrier even if individuals speak the same language (Walker, 2003).

1.2 Influence of Language

Emphasizing the last factor, language is not studied only in the context of linguistic stricter, Interculturalists pay a lot attention to its importance in cross-cultural relationships. The language is perceived as the "system of representation" of individual's thinking process rather than just a way of communication. Studies are conducted also on the ways of how language is supplemented by non-verbal cues, how "cultural patterns of thinking are expressed in communication styles, and how reality is defined and judged through cultural assumptions and values." (Bennett, 1998)

Perez-Arce in her study of influence of culture on cognition outlines that cognitive psychologists attribute particularly language, along with forms of reasoning and argumentation to a culturally determined cognitive tools, positive to say language does embody the visions of world. This coincides with the perspective of ethno linguists, that societies use language to "interpret, classify and structure perception of external reality".

Not only does the language alter the ways we interpret the stimuli we get from the outside world, it affects communication form, function and content. It's for sure that individual's social and educational background plays a vital role, but cultural determinants heavily influence

communication as well. In a sense of when, to whom and what individual says in a particular setting, the vocabulary that they use and the way they express their thoughts and emotions.

It follows from the idea that the way individual learns how to encode and decode information comes from childhood, period when we are the most receptive to external stimuli. That is when individuals learn strategies how to reach understanding in communication and how to react to the errors in said so understanding. (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1988) as cited in (Perez-Arce, 1999)

1.3 Continuing on Cultural Dimensions (Trompenaars and Demorgon)

Another popular model was suggested by Trompenaars in 1993 that was elaborated based on Hofstede's, Hall's and other's work with addition of his own professional experience in the field of management and consulting. Shortly he suggested that differences between cultures are present in three different aspects of life: regard of time, humans' relationship to nature and interaction with others; arriving to total of seven different dimensions. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1993)

The one encompassing probably the most the idea of culture having influence over the line of thought and behavior, that subsequently affects also the way of communication was developed by French researcher Demorgon (1989). He attempted to cover a large spectrum of possible actions to better categorize the ones that could be unfamiliar for the agent, unveiling the two extremes of the particular orientations. Some of them are the following:

Action orientation – the relation between action and time frame, differentiating between one action at a time or acting simultaneously. Same ideas were presented by Hall in monochromic and polychromic patterns of time.

Attention – the relation between action and directing the attention. That could be either centered or diffused. "When concentration is centered, the focus is on a few things only, albeit with utmost intensity and precision. Accordingly, diffuse attention occurs when an observer perceives any number of aspects of a situation, however, with relatively little precision"

Communication – difference between explicit and implicit communication. One meaning to explain everything as precisely as possible. The other extreme it being supported by the unspoken context.

Communication content – Objective vs subjective speech. During subjective speech speaker makes himself the center of attention, expressing personal views and emotions. Contrary objective speech is detached from the speaker putting focus on acts and tasks at hand.

Motivation – distinction whether the individual is motivated by the task or by the relationship prevailing. Completion of the action is dependent either on the goal itself or because it involves important individuals.

Authority – that could be two types, either external or internalized. Meaning that the efficacy of completion depends on individual itself, or by the order of external individual upper in the hierarchy.

Responsibility – In this orientation we see difference between determination and co-determination. The level to which authoritative figures tolerate interference. Responsibility is either on one person, who also carries consequences or in other individuals are encouraged to participate in decision-making distributing responsibility equally.

Decisions – the orientation of responsibility guides also decision making, Placing dissent and consensus on the two extremes of the mode. "Dissent refers to opposing decision-making behavior", focus of one predominant view is avoided. Consensus is the idea of compromise, collecting all of the ideas together and choosing the ones that are realistic and feasible from the outset. (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010)

The differentiations offered above could be seen as explanatory to differences in pre-behavioral processes among individuals of different cultures as it will be discussed in the following chapter. And it's positive to say that the cognitive processes such as perception, memory, creativity, and so on, bear the characteristics predetermined by culture. (Motevalli, Hamzah, & Michael, 2021)

But it's important to understand how cultural predisposition affects the cognitive processes that lead to particular behavior to value the effectiveness of communication in the workplace. The question stands what factors to consider while communicating in multicultural environment. Do the behavior of managers and their ways of communicating differ intuitively, or based on some acquired knowledge and how relevant it is now or will be in the context of globalization and cultural assimilation.

Summary of chapter 1

This chapter mainly summarized all the traits based on which cultures are grouped together to better understand which of the characteristics and how they affect the formation of cognitive processes. The cultural dimensional models by Hofstede, Triandis, Hall, and Demorgon were discussed to further distinguish between above-mentioned characteristics. The importance of language was highlighted.

Chapter 2 Understanding Cognitive Processes

This chapter provides information for better understanding the cognition and separately discusses particular cognitive processes and communication, tying it up to cultural influence on the said so processes.

2.1 Introduction to Cognition

Explaining it broadly cognition is the way the mind goes about perceiving, remembering and thinking. It's including in itself aspect such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment

As already mentioned cognitive processes are higher mental processes that are heavily affected by external factors. The formation of the processes are based on the schemas, which itself are structures that organize knowledge archived in individuals' memories. It's a mental representation derived from the knowledge, beliefs and expectations.

Since the people in different societies are exposed to different external factors they have different schemas and what is stored in individual memory is also affected. Schemas also include stereotypes and expectations that individuals gather throughout life, but majorly they could be classified into three categories that are scripts, self-schemas and social schemas.

If notions of self- and social schemas are self-explanatory, the perception the individuals have of themselves and of groups and world around them, relatively; scripts could be easily described as the information one may have about a situation, for example the sequence of events, in a particular context.

To better understand the idea of schemas, it's useful to understand the concept offered by Marvin Minsky (1975). He suggested that individual experiences of familiar settings are stored in the memory in generic way as frames that include slots. More precisely like a set of information with default values and with blanks that could be filled in when the context is provided.

A good example of this could be a situation of someone walking into an office, automatically recalling the set of information they have about the office, expecting to see there particular objects, the default values, like the desk with a computer. Even though, if person have not actually seen a computer, they might believe it was there because in their frame it's integral part of the setting.

The famous experiment by Brewer and Treyens (1981) "Picnic Basket" serves as a support for the theory. The study's goal was to determine whether a stereotypical office schema would influence participants' ability to recall information about offices. They were asked to enter to a university student's office for this purpose, left there for 35 seconds, and then taken to a different room. Then, they were instructed to write down whatever they could recall about the room. Naturally majority were not able to recall the wine and picnic basket that was left there on purpose. The findings demonstrated that participants remembered details of an average office in accordance with their schema and omitted whatever they did not associate with usual business supplies.

Same idea was presented by Trompenaars (1994), he adopted a phenomenological approach, meaning that the way in which individuals perceive any kind of situation or phenomena is consistent and structured and it guides how they pay attention, how that translates into behaviors and values, "organizing meanings into mental programs". Thus in the context of organizational behavior and communication, individuals are subconsciously influenced by their mental programmes and mindsets. (Dzenowagis, 2009)

Several predictions could be derived from the knowledge that individual comprehension is based on the ability of retrieving the generic knowledge structures from the memory, the existing schemas, and filling the slots of missing default values with additional information from external context. First of all, people have same schemas if they accumulate the similar experience of common situations and events. Second if they base conclusions on these schemas they will go beyond the information given, influencing their inferences with schemas; and lastly, individuals will have quite clear expectations of the content of situation, as well as the consequent string of events if they guide themselves with script-like structures formed in their minds. (Whitney, 2001)

The ideas proposed before open a window through which we can observe cultural influences on how individuals accumulate information about particular situation, store it, retrieve it and act upon it in a specific setting and how it could change throughput time with different influences.

The example of an experiment that more clearly represents the connection between memory and cultural factors would be the one conducted by Frederick Bartlett "The War of Ghosts". He wanted to look into how culture affected memory, for the experiment he chose participants of English background and asked them to read a Native American folktale "The War of Ghosts". The idea was to test how participants recalled the story over a particular intervals of time.

Two paths were used for different participants, of serial reproduction and repeated reproduction. Relatively one being when participants had to reproduce the story based on the previous participant's alterations of the story and the other participants reproducing their own story with major time intervals.

Not surprisingly both methods gave Bartlett same results, with more time passing the recollection of the story became shorter with a lot of changes. These changes being majorly made to what English natives found unfamiliar to their culture to something familiar for them, based on their experiences and cultural background. They rationalized story to make it more conventional and acceptable of their own, adding in elements that fit with their own cultural beliefs and expectations.

As the result Bartlett concluded that memory could be reconstructed drawn from the individuals' pre-existing schemas and influenced by a cultural context people live in. And it is because, even though memory is universal capability for every human being, the memory strategies differ, as memory is a construct that is influenced by cultural background.

Neuropsychology explores separately cross-cultural phenomena to identify what is universal, what is culturally variable and what unique to the individual. Anthropologists like Bradd Shore (1996) argue that that culture could be transmitted both genetically and through observation of events, individuals, particular verbal and pictorial symbols; basing their theories on ethnographic and social experimentation.

And as stated above culture does influence the view individuals have of the world, what and how they think, react and philosophies they are guiding themselves with. Somewhat culture could be seen as main driver of perception and subsequently of the cognition and it strongly affects individuals both on society and individual level, making causal attributions and influencing individual's ability to see through the prism of other's views. Meaning that it's cultural knowledge and social experience that creates the frames in one's mind to guide their reasoning and problem-solving.

The most obvious being difference between Individualistic/Collectivistic views on individuals' self-perception in a sense of independent and interdependent self-construal, as well as languages that have direct impact on the cognitive processes and behavioral differences. (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999)
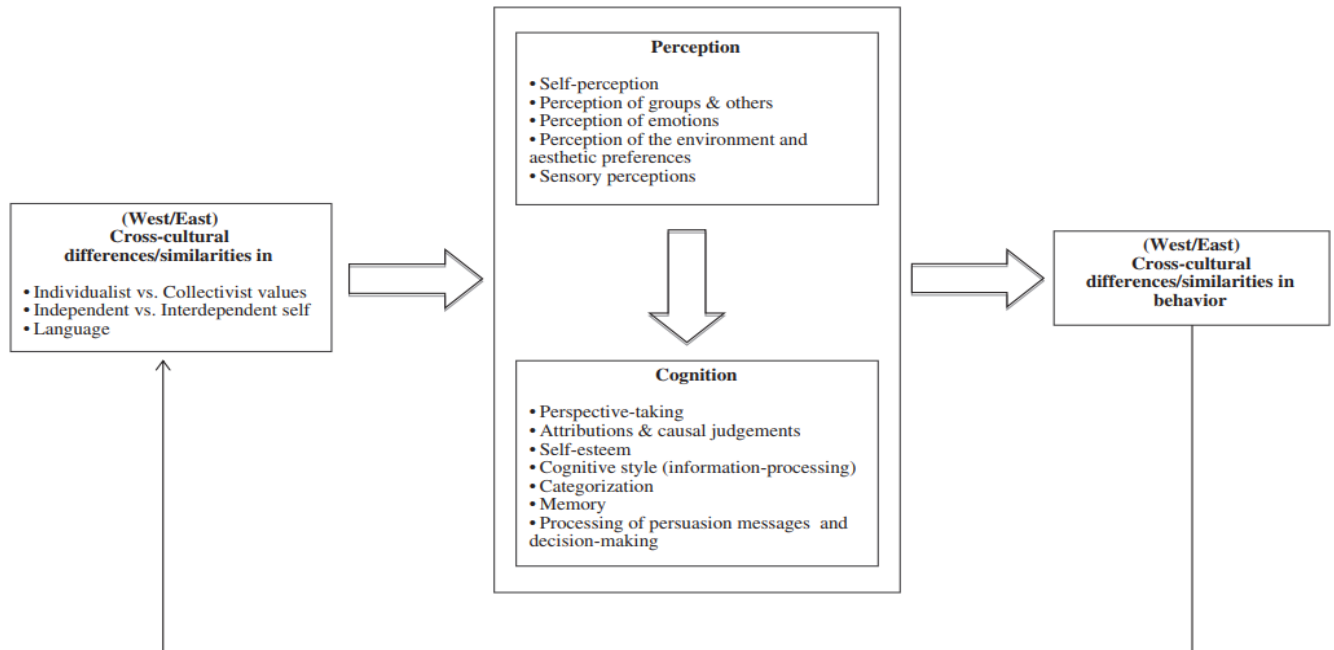
Figure 1 A framework of the role of culture on consumers' perception and cognition (and eventual behavior)
Kastanakis, Voyer 2013

Important to mention that because schemas are internalized and guide processing of information, the more ingrained the belief or social role is in one's memory the harder it is for individual to change the schema, even if the new information that is provided is utterly convincing. In this case we deal with cultural boundness of cognitive processes. (Perez-Arce, 1999)

Furthermore we are familiar with situations when someone's views and values limit what they will perceive empirically. Parallel to this, those who have had a difficult time assimilating into the dominant culture they are in are more inclined to stick to the traditional cultural values of their home country and to be less adaptable to new ideas or ways of behaving. (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993).

Before proceeding to explanation of differences in communication, the emotional showcase the differences between preferences of written and oral discourse and so on, it is important to explore

the underlying cognitive processes, in particular the information processing, reasoning, perception of content, context and perception of self and society. Majority of the following comparisons focuses on Eastern VS Western cultures, primarily differentiated by being collectivistic vs individualistic.

2.2 Self-perception and Perception of Others

As culture influences self- and social schemas, the ways of how individuals become aware of the environment differs among Westerners and Easterners, so it's a perception of oneself VS others, and relationship between two. (Markus, Kitayama, 1991) Understanding the self-construal is important as it affects how much attention individuals pay to the social connections and how they build them through communication.

Differentiating between the two, Western cultures tend to have independent self-construal, perceive themselves as autonomous actor, and focus mainly on self-related goals, might as well join groups to serve their own needs. Contrary Eastern cultures possess interdependent self-construal, meaning they do not separate themselves from social context, serve the groups they belong to and focus quite a lot on their interpersonal-domain, how they appear to others. In-group balance, collective well-being, group's image, conformity matter quite a lot, emphasizing the difference in motivations individuals hold and how they maintain harmonious relationships.

The same dominant mode of self-construal influences the individual's ability to take perspective and their self-esteem. Even though both cultures clearly distinguish between their own perspectives and of others, collectivists tend to be better perspective takers as they focus attention on others' emotions, leading to different ways of how they manage conflicts and perceive contradictory information. Same reasoning with self-esteem, high independence leads to higher need to view oneself in positive light and engaging in more self-protective mechanisms when threatened. Contrary interdependent self-construal leads to valuing group-esteem more over self-esteem; but causes individuals to engage in self-criticism more. (Kitayama et all, 1997; Schmitt, Allik 2005; Wu and Keysar 2007) as cited in (Kastanakis, Voyer 2013)

2.3 Causal Reasoning

It's argued that the causal reasoning is affected by cultural belonging based on some studies conducted in 90s. (Lee, Hallahan, & Herzog, 1996) (Choi & Nisbett, 1998). As in majority of the researches the difference is usually drawn between Eastern and Western cultures. The path of reasoning is usually guided either by dispositionism or situationism. And as studies show the difference is drawn by existing of strong situationism among Asian cultures rather than the absence of dispositionism. It's argued that Asians see individual behavior as the result of both factors having complex interaction with context. And it's attributed to the holistic way of thinking, more in depth described later, the ability to establish causality of the observed object and the field. Contrary Western cultures tend to see the action as a result of actor's disposition. (Norenzayan & & Nisbett, 2000) (Choi, Nisbett, & & Norenzayan, Causal attribution across cultures: Variation and universality, 1999)

2.4 Information Processing

As mentioned in some studies cultures differ in the way they perceive the context of the given information based on the visual representation of so said content.

Based on behavioral research Westerners pay dominant attention to central focal objects, contrary easterners pay as much attention to the background movements in given conditions. This has the major influence on the perception of the information and the context. Leading by the studies unlike Westerners, Easterners perceive information more context-dependently and it makes it hard at the end to separate the focal object or information from the context. The term coined to represent this phenomena is "change blindness", (i.e., people are at times blind to changes happening in the environment) and again some scholars concluded that Western Cultures are "less sensitives to the overall changes in the scene and situational cues compared to the eastern cultures". (Pae, 2020)

The same processes influence the attention focus and distraction among individuals. Amer, Hasher and Joan Ngo suggest that "cultural differences in attention extend to task-irrelevant background information, and demonstrate for the first time that such information can boost performance when

it becomes relevant on a subsequent task". Two studies were conducted, in which second was conceptual replication of first one but with different encoding and knowledge tasks. The first study concluded that cultural differences in attention are not eliminated even when instructions and rules are adjusted to presumably phase them out. And as the result of holistic pattern individuals carry the information from task to task with broader attention, that at the end could be very beneficial. Second study showed the consistent results. The differences in performance could as well be attributed to the different value systems among cultures. So said Eastern individuals being engaged in social practices that emphasize collectivism and prioritizing collective goals, as opposed to western individuals stressing on personal accomplishments and independence. (Amer, Joan Ngo, & Hasher, 2017)

The same perception of back/foreground also affects the importance of perceived detail. Consistent with the studies previously conducted by Masuda and Nisbett, Pae and Sun in their relevant researches concluded that representatives of eastern cultures described the given backgrounds with more details than the focal objects and simultaneously build the chain of relationships between background objects and made assumptions regarding the context. (Sun, Zhao, & Pae, 2020)

As mentioned before language is thought to have an influence on perception as well. When eastern and Western languages are compared the clear difference in the focus on the subject is seen. As languages such as "Chinese and Korean are topic-prominent, whereas English for example is a subject-prominent language."

Subjects in most cases are simply omitted from the sentences and listener perceives the subject based on the context, again whereas English has more rigid sentence structure and subject has to be mandatory present in the sentence. This argument is again consistent with the previous studies by Nisbett and Masuda regarding to attention to Focal objects and context. (Pae, 2020)

Relatively the ways of processing visual information leads to the different thinking styles, those to be "holistic" and "analytical". It's concluded that those are heavily culturally dependent cognitive styles. Witkin & Goodenough rather assign the holistic thinking style to collectivistic cultures as they require more attention to contextual information and contrary analytical thinking style to individualistic cultures. (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981)

One more important factor that could be affected by the difference between thinking styles is the procession of contradictive information. Again holistic thinkers tend to value the both sides of the

information, weighting and "finding truths". When analytical thinkers could be perceived as supporters one truth. Similarly their decision making is affected as one group is able to go on compromise considering both their interest as those of others, while the other would prefer solutions of the side they support. It also could be supported by the perspective-taking.

The same way of thinking translates also into communication style. The study conducted by Pae et al regarding the argument structures and descriptive tendencies showed that Eastern cultures tend to use way more hedge words rather western ones. Usually used as "tools to soften the degree of confidence, passion or tension associate with expression and "mitigate assertiveness in a message". (Pae, 2020)

The difference between thinking styles as well affects the ways the information is related to one another and how it could be categorized. For instance Westerners group objects or information using a rule-based categorical classification, decontextualizing objects from their contexts, and using only their properties. As opposed to this Easterners instead use a relational type of classification. Correspondingly reasoning and problem-solving processes are also affected, resulting from the pre-existing schemas in individuals; mind. (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005) (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001) (Nisbett R. E., 2003) (Pae, 2020) (Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000) (Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004)

Pae suggests also that since westerners categorize while trying to solve the problems, they tend to be guided by rules and principles and it lead to the logic and trace of thoughts to be more linear, when easterners pay more attention to context and relationships. Though it's not quite right to generalize the same behavior into the workplace. Many studies and particularly the one Pae uses as an example of Ji et al (2004) shows that even though cultures tend to follow tendency discussed above, it's present mainly when they are working in their native language and in their own culture. However when the study language was switched the drastic difference present before almost disappeared, categorization was less based on relational cues. Another interesting finding that Ji et al presented was that bilingual groups of participants in their studies did not show any effect of language switch during studies. In any way these studies and implication give a good base to better understand the "nature of thought, thought processes, and cognitive tools that each cultural group uses to make sense of the world". (Pae, 2020)

2.5 Content Order

Interesting observation was made by Jang and Shin regarding the order of the content presented for the different cultures. The study itself focuses on representation in advertising but sheds light on effectiveness of processing of information when the way it is presented is altered. As mentioned in the paper and supported by other researches (Brunel and Nelson 2003; Chiou, Wan, and Lee 2008; Haugtvedt and Wegener 1994; Loginova 2009) "individuals use heuristics in processing information and that their attitudes, judgments, and choices could be affected by the order in which they receive information."

The studies of Jang and Shin support the notion that interaction between the order in which information is presented and culture affects processing effectivity. As well as influences the attitude towards the presented information. Study itself differentiated between adverts showing product or ingredients first, and as presumed holistic and analytical thinkers had their preferences. As to say so analytic thinking styles predominantly perceives the final product more important when it's presented first, holistic vice versa. Meaning that "holistic thinkers, try to connect and integrate content—both visual information and verbal cues—and tend to perceive the entire information as a part-whole relationship among elements." (Jang & Shin, 2019) In the context of workplace it could be translated into presentation of Goals and the ways on how to reach it. While presenting the task shall managers put focus first on the final objective, or present the tactics and strategies for better understanding from the subordinates, and as well improving their attitude and motivation towards completing the task.

2.7 Communication

When people of different cultures collaborate, values frequently clash. There are plenty of chances for misunderstanding. The University of Huston-Victoria (2020) summarized the patterns of differences that make it difficult to communicate between cultures:

Different styles of communicating. As already mentioned language is the system of representation, so even the expressions used in the same language but in different cultures could bear a different

meaning. Comprising in itself the nuances of the situation in which individuals are, like perception of time, perception of personal space, emotional showcase, all the non-verbal cues and so on.

Different Attitudes Regarding Conflict. How cultures perceive and deal with the disagreements again differs. Individuals resolve problems either directly, with involvement of all the parties, considering it as a helpful, accompanying, unavoidable circumstance of an action; or privately and generally try minimize its possibility.

Completing tasks in different ways. Here the differentiation is made between the goal and the process, whether the end-result is considered a priority or the process through which the relationship between the team is built. Again the line is drawn between Asian and Hispanic cultures that are more collectivistic, compared to the European, American ones that bear characteristics of individualism, considering also the timespan and resources.

Differences in decision-making. The involvement of the managers into the work of subordinates depends on how the decision making is delegated between the cultures. And how appreciated the independency is. The difference is drawn between plain delegation of the task and learning by example. Also should be considered the fact how the choices are made, by the majority rule that is more suited for individualistic cultures or by compromise among colleagues, the way that is preferred for collectivists.

Differences in attitudes toward disclosure of information. The degree to how open the colleagues are with each other differs again according to the worldviews of the cultures. Asking for personal information could be considered as too invasive, some topics could be tabooed.

Different approaches to knowing. The value of the data is assessed based on its origin. It could be coming from the numerical analysis or the symbolism, or the validity of information that was obtained through excellence.

Typically, cultures cannot be categorized strictly into high or low context based on the model suggested by Hall. The majority of civilizations fall somewhere in the middle of the range and can, to varied degrees, exhibit both high context and low context qualities.

By presuming that the audience will think similarly to the speaker or writer and understand the underlying message latent in their speech or writing, communications can be contextualized through these shared experiences for the high context cultures.

For low-context cultures, opposite is a more accurate. Since they are so oriented on the individuality of the person, less attention is paid to the group dynamics, and enough differences exist within the culture, communication seeks to be easily understandable for everyone in the society. (United Language Group)

Quite a lot is affected the way how the "word" is respected. Comparing low and high context cultures again, it may be obvious that for some the written, legal documentation is perceived as the binding circumstance. Contrary for some cultures, just saying informally, is enough, as the personal bond is respected a lot. In the same way differs the expectations from the communication. It's expected to receive very direct, self-explanatory information, in oral or written way. On the other side for high context cultures assuming based on the context, reading between the lines is more common. (Kinsey Goman 2011)

When communicating with people from high-context cultures, corporate executives from low-context cultures may make the mistakes that would cost them a lot by ignoring the value of relationships that they could have built

2.7.1 Direct and Indirect Styles

As summarized before, cultural difference presents itself in the preferred way of communication. First language in a sense dictates how people would like to be addressed. Conclusion that was suggested by many scholars regarding the communication style, was mainly based on the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. With Individualists being precise, direct, eloquent and using specific modes of communication to put more focus on content and avoid miscommunication. Contrary collectivists being less able to communicate in linear style, rather being indirect leaving a lot of room for digression and reading between the lines. Being more open to different perspectives that is also consistent with the way different cultures react to contradicting statements.

While these differences could be quite clear when communicating in First language, second language communication and writing could be majorly affected but not quite similar. The notion used to describe the second language communication was coined as contrastive rhetoric. And while

it is essentially criticized, researches in the field like Kaplan and Connor were able to show differences in rhetorical and narrative structures based on culture. (Pae, 2020)

2.7.2 The medium of Communication.

It's could be argued that the aspects of global communications are heavily influenced by the cultural differences. And the medium used to communicate usually has cultural overtones. Considering the development of the technology in the recent years, it could be argued that the countries much technologically advanced would be relying more on the use of the technology and emphasize written messages over oral or face-to-face communication. Definitely some of the countries like US and Canada, or UK support this idea, but on the other spectrum we have countries like japan and Korea, that despite the very high level of industrialization still respects a lot the face-to-face talk. Thus leading to a conclusion, that it rather depends on the characteristics of the culture, let's say it falls into high or low category than the rate of technological advancement. (Kinsey Goman 2011)

Generally speaking, oral communication is the preference for high-context cultures, written to low-context cultures.

When it comes to written mediums like emails, texts, and online messaging, low-context cultures use it as a way of a quick and frequent response. Emphasizing just the important, precise information like:

What is the occasion?

Where the meeting is held?

When the meeting is held?

How's it going to happen?

Contrary could be said for the high-context cultures that use written mediums as longer forms of communication, providing more detailed information, sometimes even irrelevant, avoiding the main questions. (United Language Group)

Another aspect of written and oral communication is the fact that they both include the subzone of verbal and non-verbal elements. Nonverbal communication refers to voice tone, facial expression, body language, and other nonverbal cues in addition to the words used to communicate. Verbal and nonverbal components are also present in written communication. The verbal dimension consists of the words selected. The nonverbal aspect is how you represent or display things, and it can include the format (an email or printed document), the typeface or font, or the way your signature appears on a letter. In this way, oral and written communication are somewhat distinct in their application but are similar in their method. It could be argued that the preference of the aesthetic visual of the message could be heavily influenced by the culture as well. As the emotion that could be seen from the message may not necessarily be the one that the sender conveyed.

The written message again could be used in different ways, either as frequent quick exchange or long-term communication. It does allow to be dynamic but majority of the time it could be asynchronous. Therefore it's important to consider how the reader perceives the information and adjust it to their needs, as we don't get a feedback immediately from them, to know if the information was understood correctly. (McLean 2016)

2.7.3 The Differences in Structures of the Oral and Written Discourses

Discourse happens in spoken language and in writing, and it often looks different in different fields, settings, and venues. Some of the common cultural differences in oral discourse come up to be following:

Conversational Openers

Some may be accustomed to conversations opening with many greetings and questions about each participant and how their families are doing. Contrary others perceive that conversation with a colleague should open with discussions of the people and issues they have in common.

Conversational Closers

Some tend to end conversations rather abruptly, finishing when a topic over. Others are is used to more extended goodbyes and prolonged conversational closings.

Timing of Response

Some are expecting an immediate response after the question is asked, whereas other cultural backgrounds lead to a pause before a response to indicate that conversational partner is thinking through what will be said.

Turn-Taking

Some may think that different people in oral discourse will inevitably take up different amounts of time in a conversation, for others turns should be pretty even.

Volume

Some cultures may tend to speak at about the same volume, but in any case one's tonality could be odd or disrespectful for another.

Use and Role of Silence

For some cultures silence is considered an important part of any communication. For others though, silence is a sign that something is wrong or that the other person is not paying enough attention to the discourse.

2.7.4 Participation in the Oral Discourse, Understanding the Task, Learning

Based on some studies conducted mainly among the children and university students. The participation in the oral discourse is encouraged differently in different cultures. Eastern cultures tend to participate less, since their essence of participation in the activity is seen differently. The discourse for some cultures is structured in the way of statement about the activity that is given, then the reply from the audience and reaction to it. For some cultures the reply/ reaction mode is different, it's more silent as the audience expects for the authority to give straight directions on what to do, they are heavily surveillanced while completing the task. (Ainsworth 1986)

2.7.5 Emotion Showcase during the Communication

In international business dealings, it's important to consider emotions and rationale. Whether we are affective (quick to express feelings) or emotionally neutral in our approach determines which

of these predominates. People from neutral cultures don't express their emotions out loud; instead, they keep them under tight control, without of exposing their emotional state. "In cultures with high affect, people show their feelings plainly by laughing, smiling, grimacing, scowling, using the exaggerated face expressions and gestures." (Kinsey Goman 2011)

This should not imply that those who live in neutral societies are emotionless or cold. However, neutral cultures are more watchful to control how much emotion they show throughout routine business activity. Only some cultures, according to research with people who were upset about something at work, encouraged expressing their feelings out loud. Japan, Indonesia, the U.K., Norway, and the Netherlands were found to have the low acceptability for emotional reactions, while Italy, France, the U.S., and Singapore had the highest support.

There is no one optimum method for communicating with one another in today's global business community. Just the principal to be successful in cross-cultural setting is to be understanding and respectful towards the existing differences. (Mesedahl, 2016)

2.7.6 Face to Face Meeting Preferences and Oral Discourse

Different cultures have different standards for proper communication and coordination behaviors, and these norms have an impact on team dynamics in multicultural teams.

Köhler and Berry found, that the degree of collaboration and the time and frequency of communication in Finnish-American teams were significantly influenced by cultural norms about preferred levels and types of autonomy. (Köhler & Berry, 2008)

Millhous also found that the format of meetings, as well as the timing and type of information sharing, are affected by the context and norms of the firms. (Millhous, 1999) As cited in (Köhler, Cramton, & Hinds, 2012)

Elaborating more on the topic, (Szabo, 2007) demonstrated how cultural variations in the definition of and need for autonomy had a significant impact on meeting participation.

Culturally based norms of cooperation and communication are sure to influence expectations and preferences for the way meetings are conducted. One might anticipate that norms defining how,

when, and what to communicate will influence preferences for meeting frequency, scheduling, structure, participation, and decision-making. (Brannen & Salk, 2000)

Value, standard, expectation, and behavior differences between social groups are revealed and defined through cultural comparison. Organizational communication genres are socially embedded, therefore culture comparison can help reveal the underlying distinctions in genre material, form, and regulations. Additionally, it might be beneficial to comprehend how particular meeting elements and formats are affected by more general institutional and cultural ideas, such as variations in cultural communication norms.

"In the United States, a team meeting is held to make decisions. . . . In Japan, a team meeting is held to publicly confirm decisions that were discussed among members in smaller groups as they developed their analyses. . . . In Mexico, a meeting is a time to build relationships and trust with each other. . . . In the Netherlands, a meeting may be a time to identify all the weaknesses and criticisms of a particular approach or plan." (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000) As cited in (Köhler, Cramton, & Hinds, 2012)

Meyer (1993) pointed out that for Americans it was important to stat talk with general topics, like sports, weather and so on, thus engaging in small talk. On the other hand Germans and Japanese preferred not to. Germans also tended to include in conversations direct questions, they did not hesitate to interrupt or correct the interlocutor. For Americans this type of communication seemed to be rude and intrusive.

Angouri, (2010) though suggests that majority of the time, this assumptions could be wrong as one does not take into consideration the variation in organizational and cultural context, and overgeneralize the situations with shallow statements.

By providing a sense of purpose, behavioral norms, and role descriptions and by preventing deviation from the form, expectations and behaviors about the meeting form assist perpetuate current arrangements, as detailed in earlier sections. However, because these forms are typically taken for granted, the social forms' pervasive influence is largely unnoticed.

Cultural differences could be seen on different dimension, five in practice: first of all, why the meeting is being held, the purpose. Second what is the main topic discussed in the meeting. Next comes the role of the participants, who they are and how they contribute to the topic. How the

meeting is structured, how it's conducted and last but not least the timeframes, important deadlines to be mentioned, how the time is respected and so on.

An insightful study was conducted by Kohler and colleagues about the differences in the meeting preferences among American and German employees. The study conducted by Kohler suggests that relative to Americans, Germans first need to review the task requirements prior to starting the completion of the task. In order to confirm that their task work is in keeping with the mission, they also refer back to the task definition more frequently. American analytical behavior is more characterized by linearity. Furthermore, speaking turns in German task talks are lengthier and less likely to be cut short by jokes. Focused and easygoing episodes alternate in American task talks.

The finding that American teams in Sample 1 had higher emotional display in comparison to the Germans is consistent with the finding that US teams perceive problem solving as a challenge while Germans aim to obtain a rational solution. The findings demonstrate that Americans attempt to propose a solution while determining who has strong opinions on the subject. The American idea of a meeting as a spontaneous activity that creates commitment, is further developed by this. In contrast, a German meeting is oriented on building consensus where the qualities of the best solution are determined and the decision is made. It is a decision-making activity that incorporates sophisticated and in-the-moment, intricate problem solving.

Regarding the meeting size from the perspective of the American team, the meeting size may be seen as less of a restraint because we can observe from the video data how much participation differed within American and German teams, it was clearly more uneven in American.

Norms of cooperation and communication have a significant role in shaping many meeting practices, thus cultural variations in meeting standards well reflect cultural variations in norms for coordination and communication.

The difference could be seen also in the rapport of the meetings. Germany maintains the image of the critical thinking during the meetings, with putting much emphasize on the valuation of the ideas proposed by team members. This comes from very clear separation of work and private life. Hence humor, joking and emotions are kept far away from the meetings. Contrary Americans do a lot of small talk, they aim of creating more amicable atmosphere to foster relationships, and humor is a great way of loosening the tension among participants.

Study gave an insight also on the ways of expressing disagreement. Again American teams quite often dealt with dissent with humor, wrapping their arguments in jokes. Germans were more extreme with defending their ideas, the expression of their positions was also more direct and with so softening of the edges. Americans on the other hand tended to readjust their opinions, and change their point of view.

The meeting's structure reflects cultural contrasts between the German and American participants, who tend to collaborate and think quickly while the Germans prefer to listen, watch, and ponder before contributing to a debate. Germans chatted for substantially longer periods of time as their teammates listened carefully in the video data. Their contributions were more nuanced and almost always included a range of issues or viewpoints. Americans generally discussed a single topic before moving on to the next one and took far shorter rounds.

German recurrent cycles of refinement, particularly those related to task definition, can be contrasted in an interesting way with American style, which tends to flow more haphazardly and linearly. Strong and noticeable discrepancies that are difficult to identify and quantify could lead to considerable conflict in multicultural teams.

Summary of chapter 2

Starting from the explanation of cognition, this chapter elaborated on how the cognitive processes affect the way of thinking of individuals, leading them to the difference in thinking styles, holistic vs analytical thinking. Forward on, the preferences of communication styles was explained based on the thinking styles. The chapter touched topics like mediums of communication, structure of the discourse both written and oral, emotion showcase and structural preferences of the meetings.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The following chapter is dedicated to a discussion of research approach of the thesis and all the strategies used in the duration. This chapter provides detailed information about the conceptual framework, research approach, ethical considerations, quality assessment, data collection tools, information regarding selection and formation of the focus group.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework for the research is designed based on the theories discussed in previous chapters. It's undeniable that cultures have effects on cognition and individual behavior. And there is a major group of the researches in the field that focus mainly on these differences from the perspective of consumer behavior, and relationship between company and its customers, but it is as important factor for communication inside the firms as well.

Previous chapters in detail showed all the components of cognition from theoretical lenses, and shed light to the certain behavior patterns, and development of ways of thinking. Furthermore observing the differences in the context of communication. As the worldview of the individuals impacts how well they communicate with others.

Misunderstandings and challenges that are evolving as a result of ineffective communication are common problems in the workplace. But the question is how much of an effect cultural differences pose in that matter.

Thus this study focuses on the relevance of cultural effects on cognition in the context of managerial communication. By itself testing the theoretical elements of one's attribution to their culture, the awareness on the topic from the both sides of the communication and possible reasoning behind the acquired outcome.

Following paragraphs review the possible approaches to the research and factors essential to consider for the design, as well as the reasoning as to why particular method was chosen as the preferred one.

3.2 Research Approach

For the research of this topic qualitative approach was chosen as the main methodology, as it seemed to be the best suited for the assessing the outcome of the study. The main driver being the fact that qualitative research seeks to develop comprehensive understanding of meaning by using interpretive approaches and reconstructuring ideas from the statements given by individuals (Sinnverstehen). Ideally as described by (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 16) it being the "journey of knowledge acquisition".

Even though there could be possibly a variety of defining features of qualitative research, and none of them could be exhaustive, one of the central features as described by Pertti Alasuutari (1995: 7) is a particular kind of analysis that is similar to riddle solving, unlike quantitative that "seeks to explain outcomes by examining the frequency with which they are empirically associated with possible causes". (Hammersley 2013) More precisely the focus of the qualitative study is on the meanings the participants attach to their social setting.

"Qualitative data refers to descriptive, nonnumeric data in the form of written text, including field observations, interviews, and documents as well as images, video, and audio material that has been transcribed" (Miles/Huberman 1994: 9) as cited in (Peters 2014). So the main take away from the research is virtually researcher's interpretation of motives, objectives, ideas, and beliefs of the focus group. "It is particularly suited to the analysis of meanings that people attribute to structures, processes, and events." (Peters 2014)

Adopting a perspective of theoretical lenses is quite common for qualitative research and serves as a main orientation during the study, primarily influencing the typology of questions addressed and the ways data is gathered and analyzed. It could be the case that research starts with purely observational data that by itself is based on the already existing methodologies and theories. (Creswell, 2003)

One definition that could unite all the aspects this research attempts to cover was offered by (Sandelowski 2004: 893) that explains study as an umbrella concept for undertaking research question that are aimed at learning how people understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world."

To summarize we could identify 5 definitive features of the qualitative research:

1)   Inductive orientation, meaning that it is data-driven, open-ended and flexible

2)   Structure of the data used, more precisely that it's relatively unstructured. Meaning that during the interviews the researcher encourages elaboration of the subject, provision additional detail, or exemplification where necessary, without seeking to quantify their content.

3)   Subjectivity. It's recognized that it's hard to eliminate the effect of researcher's characteristics and the way research was carried out. But this does not imply that research should be standardized and all personalization should be excluded.

4)   Small number of cases included in the research that allows in-depths investigation of the individual situations and their comparison

5)   Less of statistical and more verbal analysis of the data, description and interpretation with support of evocative examples. (Hammersley 2013)

3.3 Quality Assessment

Qualitative research implies that in order to truly comprehend a subject, we must look at it from the perspectives of individuals who have firsthand experienced the given situation. As to oppose the subjectivity of the study some kind of quality standards should be met while conducting the research. According to Ina Peters the evaluation should be based on three criteria: objectivity, reliability and validity.

It's suggested that all three of the above mentioned criteria are impaired and quality criteria could not be directly transferred to qualitative research, as the data collected during the study could be easily manipulated and misunderstood. (Bergman/Coxon 2005: par. 8; Steinke 2005: 322).

Subjectivity that is inevitable and unavoidable should be accepted as a natural part of the research. It is better to expose it as a fault and apply some strategies to eliminate it by improving the research design, considering that research could be heavily influenced by the researcher's personality while taking perspective of interviewees. That's why Corbin and Strauss acclaimed the objectivity in the qualitative research as a "myth" and proposed focusing on meaning from the researches perspective but in the lens of enclosed subjectivity. (Corbin/Strauss 2008: 32). (Bergman/Coxon 2005: par. 29).

3.4 Conducting Interview Research in a Foreign Language

As previously suggested the language could heavily impact the behavior and thinking process of the individuals. Ideally interviews should be conducted in the native language of the participants to get more precise understanding of their ideas, as they feel more comfortable in expressing themselves while speaking mother tongue. (Kruse/Schmieder 2012: 248).

Though Kruse et al. suggest that conducting interviews in foreign language could also bear some advantages, like controlling the pace of the conversation and asking for more in-depth, detailed explanation of the answers given by the respondents. (Peters, 2014)

Despite the fact that it was possible to conduct interviews in the native languages of some of the participants English was chosen as a main communication language, as a translation would never be the exact equivalent. And with an assumption that majority of the participants were fluent in English as their working language, though one of the questions during the interview it was tested how confident they felt in expressing their thoughts in said so language.

3.5 Ethical Considerations of Qualitative Method

"Ethics, also called moral philosophy, is the discipline concerned with what is morally good and bad and morally right and wrong. The term is also applied to any system or theory of moral values or principles." (Britannica) By classical definition it's the concern of doing just good and not doing any harm (Beauchamp & Childress, 1989). As qualitative research requires researching private lives and experiences and is based on the honest information provided by the respondent, it is researcher's duty to create safe environment for the participant to express themselves and follow code of ethics.

Orb et al. summarize 3 ethical principles that could alleviate difficulties inherent in qualitative research, specifically autonomy, beneficence and justice.

Autonomy – one of the main principles that should be guiding the qualitative research is respect towards the participants. And according to Capron (1989) that respect could be attained by giving the respondent the right of being fully informed about the study itself, of its aim and the processing

of information. The right of freely deciding whether to participate in the research or no and the right to withdraw from the study without any consequences.

Beneficence – in essence it coincides with the original definition of ethics: doing good for others and preventing harm. The vulnerability of the information provided by the participants should be taken into consideration and researches need to ask for consent to share the data collected, also preserving the confidentiality principle and guarding anonymity of the participants.

Justice – "the principle of justice refers to equal share and fairness. One of the crucial and distinctive features of this principle is avoiding exploitation and abuse of participants." (Orb, 2000)

Generalizing the idea of morality "research must not only consider the protection of human subjects but also consider what constitutes socially responsible and acceptable research. " (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012) Ethical standards should also be considered for data collection and sample selection methodologies. According to Raudonis (1992) it's essential to consider inclusion criteria when selecting the potential participants for the research.

3.6 Concept of Critical Consciousness in the Research

An interesting claim was raised by Dilmi Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) regarding the participation of the researcher in the study. According to the theory of critical consciousness proposed by Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire researchers themselves should be involved in the so said process while deriving the meaning from participants' experience.

In essence critical consciousness is the process of questioning one's consciousness to become more open-minded and self-aware. Freire suggests that this theory could be applicable to research in a way that both researcher and respondents should be participating in the meaning-making. "Thinking subject does not exist in isolation but, rather, in relationship to others in the world" thus putting the researcher in the position where (s)he will be able to create environment for respondents to openly reflect on their experience, build up a "shared, transparent and democratic world between the researcher and participant" as Aluwihare-Samaranayake calls it.

Even though Freire's theory is derived from the experience of vulnerable and oppressed groups, and focus group of the following research does not necessarily involve the following groups,

participants still could feel the pressure of power imbalance while recalling their experiences. Therefore considering the theory is relevant to critical understanding of respondents' realities rather than just plain restatement of content.

3.7 Vignettes

Vignettes as a stimulus materials are becoming more and more used in the social sciences and based on plethora researches are proving to be an effective way of acquiring information for qualitative research.

The effectivity of using vignettes is based on the fact that visual stimuli encourage participants to express their opinion and thoughts on given topic more openly, as they establish the connection between their reality and proposed situation, furthermore extending the discussion.

In particular real-life vignettes allow researchers to become an insider of the individual experience and get very honest and extensive material from the interview. Moreover it could serve as a way of building credibility and trust, when participants wouldn't feel so sure and reduce the tendency among them to answer with "idealized answers" that they would perceive as one's researcher would be willing to hear. (Sampson, Johannessen, 2019)

3.8 The Approaches in Qualitative Research and Research Design

A research design is the framework or plan for a study that serves as a direction for data collection and analysis. It's essential as it improves the efficiency and accuracy of data collecting while also smoothing some procedures and the flow of information. There are three types of research designs:

•   Fixed - the framework never changes and everything starting from research question finished with tools are specified and set in advance

•   Flexible – there is room for development of some aspect of the research during the study itself, though some kind if pattern is elaborated from the beginning

- Responsive – the planning is reduced to minimum and direction of the research is decided with the continuation of the study on the go

What concerns of the types of the research, it could be segregated in various ways but main types that are common in every framework are: Phenomenology, Ethnography, Grounded theory, case study and Narratives. (Creswell, 2003)

Phenomenology – primarily involves looking at a situation or activity from several perspectives. For data collecting, the researcher use a variety of techniques, including conducting questionnaires, reading documents, viewing videos, and visiting locations. Being an experience- or perception-based approach, it focuses on how people feel, how they learn, and how they see the world.

Ethnography – In this study, a focus group of people and their actions in the natural environment are examined. For better observation, the researcher should become involved in and follow the subject's everyday activity. It's a great approach to comprehend someone's way of life, and by extension, their culture and way of thinking.

Grounded theory – is typically employed during the data collecting to create a theory. It gives an explanation to an event or for what happened. It is an excellent technique to build new hypotheses and can be done through interviews or reviewing written documentation.

Case study - It is used to gather in-depth and detailed information about the subject. It is a thorough study of a person, group, or event. It's great for developing theories and creating better descriptions.

Narratives – This kind of research involves looking into people's lives and asking one or more of them to share stories about their experiences; it is narrative in nature, may involve interviews or document analysis, and gives the researcher the opportunity to tell a story with conflicts, themes, and challenges.

3.8 Data Collection Method

Ina peters in her study uses the theory suggested by Hopf (2012) that qualitative interviews help to understand respondents' personal interpretation of situations and what motivates them for an action. The variations between the interview types could be grouped in the following categories.

1) The level of rigidness of the interviews, its structure

2) How truthful the information could be

3) What roles are given to interview and respondent

4) How precise the interviewer could be, and

5) If interviewer possess any information   (Helfferich 2009: 37–38).

The most popular interviewing approach for qualitative research is the semi-structured in-depth interview, which can be conducted either individually or in groups and might take anything from 30 minutes to several hours. They are typically structured around a set of open-ended questions that have been established in advance, with more questions coming up during the interviewer-interviewee discussion.

Comparing group and vis-à-vis interviews, the one-on-one in-depth interview enables the interviewer to delve more deeply into societal and personal issues, however the group interviews enables to gain greater spectrum of knowledge regarding the situation, though limiting the personal perspective. (DiCicco-Bloom, Crabtree 2005)

It's very important for researcher to design interview carefully, that it would be adjusting based on the particular situation, because semi-structured interviews are still predetermined in a sense and that might cause respondent to face some restrictions in self-expression. (Przyborski/Wohlrab-Sahr 2010: 139).

Questions that are used in the interview are structured in such a way that they follow a funnel principle starting from the ones that are used to gather information about the respondents, followed by the ones that introduce the topic to respondents, questions that create a base for the key issues and lastly questions that are touching the main topics.

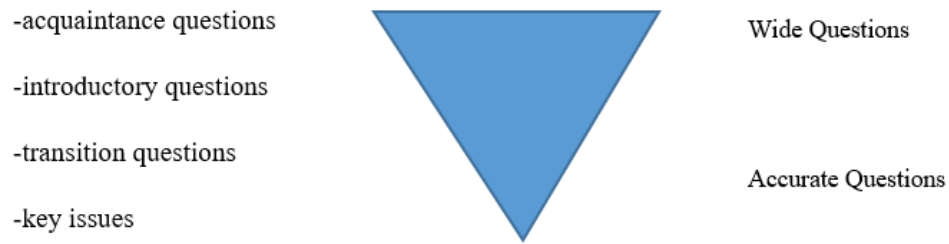(For more detailed description of questionnaire refer to the Appendix)

-acquaintance questions

-introductory questions

-transition questions

-key issues

Wide Questions

Accurate Questions

Figure 2 Structure of the Questionnaire

So the main tool as of collecting information was chosen to be semi-structured in depth interviews with using vignettes. Interview consisted of question mainly grouped in 15 topics interrelated with each other.

The opening set of questions were oriented on creating respondents profile, followed by the set of questions that tested if respondents had any theoretical knowledge of the topics analyzed in the research and affiliation of the respondents with their corresponding cultures. Following sets of questions were experimental, understanding if the cognitive processes and the cultural belonging were corresponding with each other, based on the theory presented in the second chapter. Later set of questions focused solely on the communication preferences, reinforced by the understanding of individuals' perception, problem-solving and information processing preferences.

3.9 Sample Composition

In order to increase the scope of the research, the sample was created using purposive sampling techniques.

Also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling, this method is a non-probability method, and it implies selecting participants for the research by the judgment of the researcher. (Black 2010). In other words participants are selected because they possess the characteristics needed for the research and help to exploit to the fullest existing resources and information-rich cases. (Nikolopoulou 2022)

Purposive sampling is especially effective when studying anthropological situations where the researcher is relying mostly on intuition and it enables researches to collect enough data to make

other types of generalizations based on the group that is studied. On the other hand it is prone to research bias as other non-probability sampling techniques. As the participants are chosen based of the researcher's own opinion, it's prone to subjectivity and results bear high risk of observer bias.

Purposive sampling comprises several methods that could be used for the research:

• Heterogeneous variation (or maximum) sampling – fully depends on researcher's judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics. This is done to guarantee that the raw data from the research contains the most variability possible.

• Homogeneous sampling – orientation is directed towards a subgroup in which all the sample members bear similar characteristics, the idea is to focus on precise similarity

• Typical case sampling – uses factors that are considered typical, normal, average

• Extreme (or deviant) case sampling – derives cases that are not considered typical, focusing more on outliers.

• Critical case sampling - focuses on certain cases that are deemed illustrative and descriptive of other similar cases.

• Theoretical sampling - based on an inductive method of Grounded Theory. (Saunders et al, 2012)

The definition of the characteristics of the sample follows after defining the research problem and determining the population, for this particular research the maximum variation sampling was considered as the most appropriate.

The principles of iterative approach were considered to identify the saturation point, after which no particularly new responses were received to the questions.

Sample was comprised of individuals that had work experience, not only with one, but several cultures, majority of the time also in several countries; were chosen individuals that were either the only foreign employees in the workplace, or contrary were working in an international team; were speaking different number of languages including both monolingual and bilingual individuals; having one or more living experiences abroad; and were representatives of cultures from different

parts of the world, including north America, Eastern Europe, North Africa, Central, East and South-East Asia.
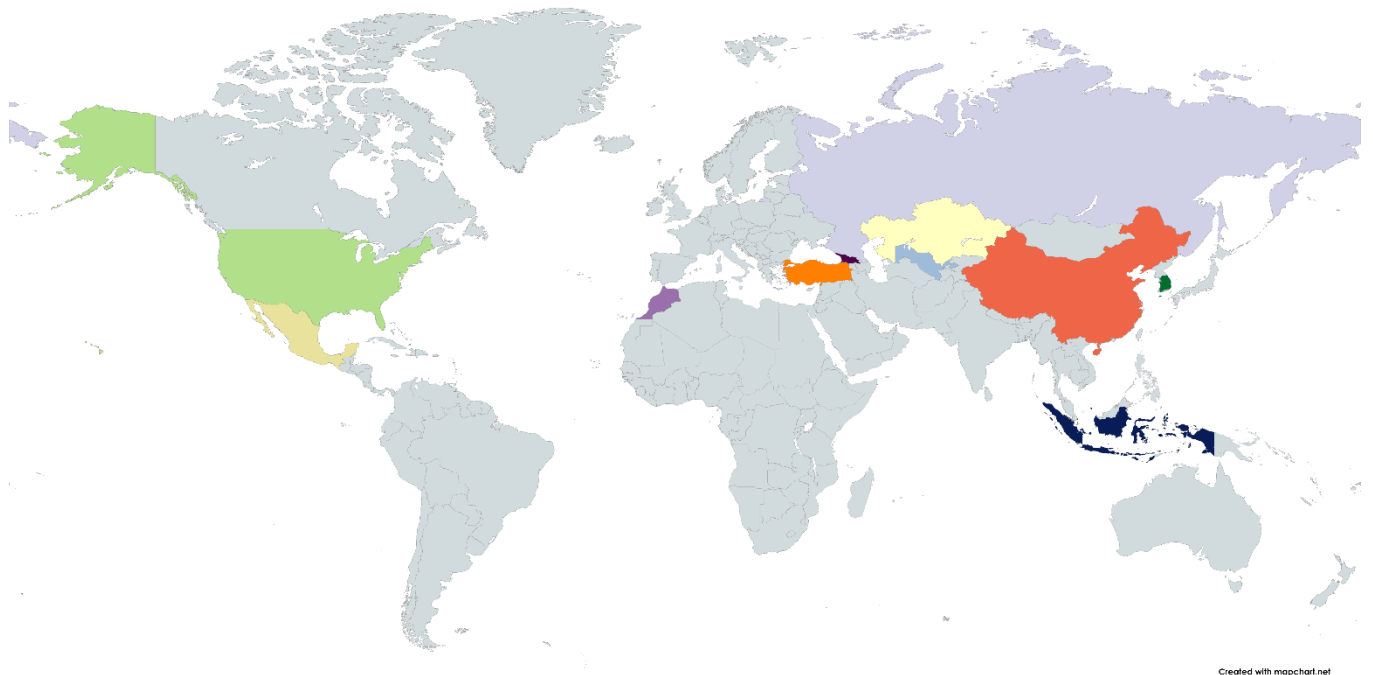
Figure 3 Distribution of Participants

3.9.1 Participant Profiles

	Respondent N1	International Environment
Age	28	Respondent was referring to the current experience in the company in Germany, past experience of remote work in Italy with British company, working in Latvia as well in an international team
Nationality	Uzbekistan	
Country where based	Germany	
N languages spoken	4	
Educational background	Economics	
Field of work	Sustainable development	

	Respondent N2	International Environment
Age	26	Respondent was referring to the current experience in the Italian company, working primarily with Italians, and previous experience of working in Spain
Nationality	Mexico	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	5	
Educational background	Hospitality	
Field of work	E-commerce	

	Respondent N3	International Environment
Age	26	Respondent was referring to the current experience as the communications lead in an international organization, having very diverse group of subordinates, and experience of living in Columbia and Italy
Nationality	Russia	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	5	
Educational background	International Relations	
Field of work	Communications	

	Respondent N4	International Environment
Age	27	Respondent was referring to the previous experience of working for major consulting firm, working on international projects with offices in UAE, US, Italy, Singapore, Hong Kong. Living experience in Australia, and pro bono work in Italy
Nationality	Indonesia	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Economics	
Field of work	Consulting	

	Respondent N5	International Environment
Age	24	Respondent was referring to the previous experience of working in hospitality industry in USA, comparing the working environment to their home country
Nationality	Kazakhstan	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	4	
Educational background	Corporate Management	
Field of work	Hospitality	

	Respondent N6	International Environment
Age	25	Respondent was referring to the current experience of working in Morocco, with the supervision of French team, previous experience of internship in Italy
Nationality	Morocco	
Country where based	Morocco	
N languages spoken	4	
Educational background	Law	
Field of work	Consulting	

	Respondent N7	International Environment
Age	24	Respondent was referring to the current experience of working with expats hub, with Irish and Estonian team, previous experience of working with British company and team in Egypt
Nationality	Georgia	
Country where based	Georgia	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Business Administration	
Field of work	Marketing	

	Respondent N8	International Environment
Age	28	Respondent was referring to the current experience of working in Italy, partnering with Austria, Slovenia, Croatia; previous experience of teaching and orientation, having colleagues from Argentina, Russia, France, Spain,
Nationality	USA	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Economics	
Field of work	Retail industry	

	Respondent N9	International Environment
Age	24	Respondent was referring to the previous internship in Italy, working in an Italian company and comparing it to the work culture in home country
Nationality	Turkey	
Country where based	Germany	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Industrial Engineering	
Field of work	Marketing	

	Respondent N10	International Environment
Age	31	Respondent was referring to the current experience of working in Italy, comparing with the work culture in home country
Nationality	Korea	
Country where based	Italy	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Law, Medicine	
Field of work	Medicine	

	Respondent N11	International Environment
Age	25	Respondent was referring to the previous experience of working in Lithuania, with colleagues from Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Lithuania comparing with the work culture in home country
Nationality	Georgia	
Country where based	Lithuania	
N languages spoken	5	
Educational background	International Relations	
Field of work	Sales	

	Respondent N12	International Environment
Age	24	Respondent was referring to the previous experience of working in USA comparing with the work culture in home country
Nationality	China	
Country where based	USA	
N languages spoken	3	
Educational background	Business Administration	
Field of work	Sales	

3.10 Data analysis

The questionnaire was designed specifically to identify the dependence between the cognitive processes and subsequent formation of communication preferences, in relation to cultural influences on the said-so processes. During the interviews participants brought up some of the other factors that in addition to culture were influencing the process of communication between them, managers, subordinates or colleagues.

For better analysis of the data, coding was used as the main analytical tool. The method was used to identify, categorize, and thematically sort the recurrent motifs from respondents' answers. Exist three basic types of coding: open, axial and selective systems that could be used to create data loops in linear and non-linear analysis. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

Following the method of Open Coding, the first level of data is identified. It's possible to find some general themes and categorize them into broad concepts by analyzing the respondent's answers and searching for similar statements. After identifying the categories and sub-categories, the process proceeds to axial coding, that implies testing the relationship between categories and sub-categories. Lastly, selective coding helps to identify the core category that would be the combination of all previously revealed categories.

To sum up briefly, by using open coding, it's possible identify the general motifs from the data obtained throughout the research, afterwards the axial coding is used to put into categories previously discovered themes. And finally selective coding enables to determine the unique theme for the research. (Moser & Williams, 2019)

For this research open and axial coding methods were used to identify first and second order categories of the influential factors for the respondents. After thorough analysis of the interviews some similarities and contrary the differences were identified that were on the same spectrum of the broad category. After, with the use of axial coding the relationship between first order categories was identified to form second order categories that could be presented as dominant factors that had influence on the communication. (Figure 4)

The second order categories that were identified from this study were the factors that influenced cultural assimilation for some of the participants. And the factors that affected communication, in particular most influential deemed by respondents were: task specificity, the structure of the organization itself and respondents' position in the hierarchy, majorly comparing managerial and subordinate roles; Effects of Covid pandemic on the working style and communication mediums; the difference between generations and language influence.

Living Abroad	
Exposure to Foreign Media	
Learning Languages	Cultural assimilation
Travel	

| Creativity of the Task | |
| Performance Indicator | Task Specificity |

Being an Intern	
Strict Rules and Guidelines	Organizational structure and position in the company
Start-up Mentality	

| Gen Z being Curious | |
| Gen Z being Digitalized | Generational Gap |

| Work from Home | |
| Digitalization of Processes | Effects of Covid Pandemic |

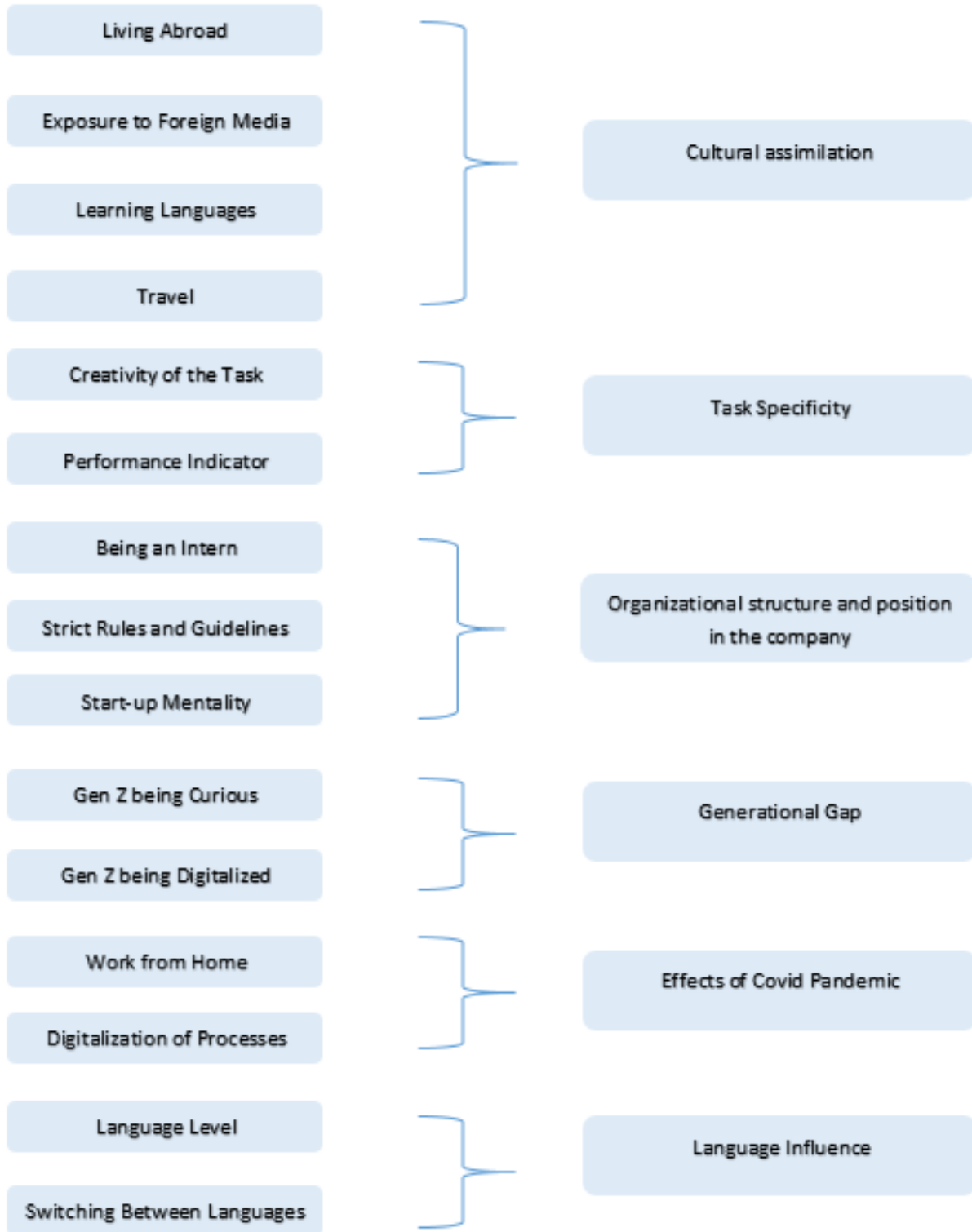| Language Level | |
| Switching Between Languages | Language Influence |

Figure 4 First and Second Order Categories

Summary of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 illustrates the conceptual framework that was created for the study based of the literature review. The chapter describes the qualitative approach in detail and why it was chosen for this particular study. It is explained the rationale behind the choice of the research tools and principles that lay in the base of interviewing process and sample composition. Alongside the description of interview questions, their meaning and purpose. Findings and analysis will be presented in the following chapter

Chapter 4 Analysis of the Empirical Research

The process of the interviews conducted followed the sequential questionnaire presented in the previous chapter with minor changes depending on the flow of the interview and respondents corresponding answers.

Interviews was opened with the presentation of the thesis topic, following the brief explanation of the research question and contribution of the responses to the research. Interviewees were informed about their privacy and the use of the data provided.

4.1 Opening Questions and Affiliation to the Cultures

All of the interviews were initiated with the questions related to the respondent's background, giving them an opportunity to better describe the international environment they were working in, with leading them to better understand their position in the situation. Respondent were reminiscing on their study background, the knowledge of the spoken languages, their previous work experiences and their current place in life.

Before assessing the cultural affiliation respondents felt, it was principal to understand, how participants viewed culture in a first place, and if they were familiar with the existing dimensional models, that assessed cultures based on their traits, so for reference it would be easier for participants to compare and differentiate between their experiences.

The answers differed, as the sample was composed from the respondents of different educational backgrounds. As anticipated participants coming from the economics/business administration background, in particular ones who pursued management were familiar with cultural theories. Other respondents on the other hand in the duration of the interviews were introduced to the main characteristics and distinctions, specifically individualism/collectivism and power distance. It helped to identify whether the respondents were conscious of their possible altering of behavior due to the cultural background.

All of the respondents were asked to think about their respective cultures and reflect on their affiliation towards their culture. The opening question enabled participants to contemplate on their values, mentality and worldview in the context of the environment they are coming from. The

majority of the respondents had mixed feelings towards the belonging to their cultures, when asked to explain further, they "measured" their associations expressing the affiliation in "50%" or "70%"; the line was drawn between the mentality or the worldview and characteristics of the people.

They expressed the understanding and love towards the culture, and highlighted the similarities in the characteristics of people and the ways of behavior, but accented on the differences in the vision, some values and attitudes. Some of the respondents differentiated as well the working culture from the everyday life, and if in a sense saw the resemblance with majority of their surrounding circle of acquaintances in the terms of their regular behavior, they did not associate themselves in the context of workplace, especially in negative connotation.

As the main reason of the formation of these differences was named an experience of living abroad. Respondents highlighted that it drastically affected their perspective on life and shaped their vision. Additionally they reminisced on their first exposure to a different cultures, starting from the school courses and learning the languages, accordingly the cultures, travelling and consumption of foreign media.

"Now I probably identify 50/50 because of long term exposure, I moved to Germany when I was 16, and it is 11 years now" [RN8]

"I would say 70% Korean, I am definitely not 100% and I would say it's because of living abroad for quite some time" [RN10]

"I was very much exposed to different cultures since I was very young, because my family travelled a lot, my father had a passion for travelling so I was discovering different cultures and languages" [RN3]

"My views on many things changed a lot after I moved to Lithuania, I had quite a process of reevaluating life and everything overall" [RN11]

"I don't think that I associate myself at all with Georgian culture, especially the bad culture of work that my foreign colleagues spotted" [RN7]

"I build very different values being in Europe after studying there and everything, and my values correspond to Turkish people let's say 30%, just because I grew up here" [RN9]

"I think my worldview first start changing when I started watching some foreign content, like movies and series, first it started changing like this, but the biggest change was when I first came

to Europe and started seeing people from different countries and generally European culture"
[RN9]

Some of the participants made a distinction between the worldview of people of their own culture as well. It's true that with the very big gap of development between the capital and big cities of developing countries and the rest of the area, and evaluation of cultures according to the dimensional models could not be accurate, as an example if we take quite a few collectivistic countries, people from particular areas show an increase in individualism and materialism, and even the idea of collectivism manifests itself differently across the areas.

"It's a very hard question actually, because it's a developing country (Turkey) right and there is a distinction between city life and village life, and I think in village life it's very prone to collectivism, but in city life everyone is becoming more and more individualistic actually" [RN9]

In the beginning of the interviews it was important to understand if respondents were still bearing the general traits of their cultures after being in different environment and high exposure towards new views. And to summarize, the whole sample expressed very high influence on their understanding and their life philosophy, enabling them to adapt to the new working environment. Though some of the characteristics respondents maintained and it affected their behavior.

4.2 Distinguishing Between the Thinking Processes

To what extent the way of thinking pertained among participants was identified by the subsequent questions. Based on the descriptive research from previous chapters, different ways of thinking were attributed to different cultural groups. We differentiated between collectivistic and individualistic cultures according to their causal reasoning, information processing and perception of self vs others. These differences in the cognitive processes were the cornerstone of the diverse preferences of communication among cultures.

The following group of questions in the interviews was aimed at understanding if the theory was consistent with the realities of the workplace, and if external factors and accumulated experience influenced cognition to the extent that it affected preference and efficiency of communication.

The main objective was to interpret the participants' perception and understanding of context. How relevant it is from managerial side to provide situational context to achieve the high level of effectivity of the task.

Before asking respondent's to recall from their experience the different attitudes towards context, respondents were explained the theory by replicating in a simplified way two experiments conducted by Richard Nisbett and colleagues.

Participants were introduced to the concepts of holistic and analytical thinking that form as a result of processing visual information. Respondents were shown the short video that depicted the underwater scene, and were asked to describe it with first thoughts that came to mind.

The answers majorly were consistent with the theories suggested by Nisbett and colleagues. Respondents from collectivistic countries tended to establish the relationship between the objects seen in the scene, building up the context and relating the context to their personal experience. Respondents who perceived themselves as more individualistic described the scenery without identifying the relational ties between objects. Some answers from the respondents that were from the collectivistic cultures and closely identified themselves with them proVided following answers:

"I see a man that is swimming and frightening the fish around him" [RN3]

"The diver is swimming away, as he was hurt, could be attacked by some fish" [RN7]

"It's a diver in an ocean, maybe looking for something ... maybe a creature, just discovering the ocean" [RN6]

"First thing that comes to mind is the diver, and the ambience, this infinite blue, and I always wanted to dive, and that was the first thing I realized, the ambience that is coming from the very deep blue" [RN9]

Another experimental question was regarding the problem-solving tendencies among cultures, differentiating between the linear trace of thought, guided by logic, rules and principles or focusing again on relational ties and context.

Participants were given three pictures of panda, monkey and banana, from which they had to choose two they considered more related to each other. With almost 90% accuracy, as dictated by the Nisbett's theory respondents with collectivistic mindset grouped monkey and banana, seeing

the dependency between them, contrary respondent's with high influence of individualism grouped together panda and monkey based of their belonging to the same category "animals".

Two of the respondents generalized their answer based on their experience:

"In my opinion people in South-East Asia, could be even all, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, thy would answer monkey and banana, also maybe people from China and India, I would say they would answer similarly to us ... we are kind of all Asian countries ... even though they are different at some point they are all collectivistic mentality ... it's my opinion though" [RN4]

"Ok now when I think about it, I know exactly who of my friends or colleagues would answer monkey and banana, and who would go for panda and monkey, when you think about it, it's actually obvious" [RN1]

After explaining the underlying theory behind the experiment, participants were asked if they could translate the attachment to the context and its importance to the workplace setting.

"It depends on working position, they showed exactly what should I do they didn't say anything additionally, maybe they wanted me to focus on my job, it was too precise" [RN5]

"well from my experience, if I am supervising the team, I am trying to provide as much information as possible, even highlight important points in the e-mail ... but there are definitely some nations that just attach the file saying: this is the material figure it out by yourself, if you have any questions let me know ... They come from western countries I would say, US or Europe ... I think they just want to be simple, and that's what I do, I skim materials and then if in doubt ask questions ... but if I am in charge, I make sure that the message is received and understood well" [RN4]

"In Spain, when I first arrived t the department, I had a very hard time to understand what department was, it took me months to understand what we were doing. I could see a single task, but what for, I didn't understand what our role was, it was complicated because no one explained what we were doing" [RN2]

"Absolutely it depends, there is no specific choice of strategy, for me it depends on the goal and the task we are having, if we have very creative task and we understand that very important that I would love to give more context and as much freedom as possible to the person or freedom that is

going to do the task. The second thing when I understand when I need this person's expertise as operational director, as communications lead, somebody has better expertise than me, in this case I would also try to explain context the goal that we need and try to give as much freedom as possible so the person uses their skills and knowledge, to help us achieve what we need. In the case when work is operation there are some specific tasks to be done, and it's kind of routine things, just explain what exactly needs to be done, with number, with details, but in the case where creativity is not much needed, just operational things need to be done" [RN3]

" When I was working with British colleague, it was our goal to focus on giving enough or more than enough context, not just the task, we wanted people to outperform and see the value of the task, not just completing it, Now for the new company that I work, (Estonia and Ireland) we always have this situation where they don't explain things to me, whenever I am explaining things to them, they don't understand but they don't ask questions, and then some weird situations happen because of that" [RN7]

"let's say there is some context, generally the idea, they give you something to do, but they never give you a timeframe, until they need it, they have their own timeframes, which I need to know, but they don't include it in the context, and also if they give you a task, and let's say you don't know they don't really help. In US they were more understanding in that sense, they explain to you the first time, and then you needed to know how to do it, but I have a feeling that in Italy it's assumed, and if compared to Germany it's just a rule" [RN8]

"I think it was in a strategical sense, they (Italian company) would tell me that in longer term we want to achieve this strategies and this goals, we are doing this task for particular clients and we have this particular goal. In the beginning they were trying to give me context so I would be learning something and not just simply giving me the task. But as I worked more it became more routine, they would give the task and not explaining much. But overall majority situations I would say it was giving the task with the context" [RN9]

The overall experience of the respondents was mixed, in some situations matching the theoretical suggestions of behaviors that were in accordance with collectivistic or individualistic cultures, but in some instances they were contradicting, thus raising additional nuances of the situations, like the experience of the workers, level of their position, the need of using creativity for the task.

4.3 Communication Preferences

After completing the second set of questions, interviews were introduced to the third set of questions that already targeted the communication preferences that could emerge due to the pertaining differences of the cognitive processes.

Participants were asked to elaborate on their preferred ways and mediums of communication, starting with the distinction between direct and indirect communication, physical face-to-face, written communication, narrative structures and use of non-verbal cues.

Respondents were able to identify their preferences, and reflect on how much their preferences were considered in the workplace, while communicating with manager's colleagues or subordinates.

Interesting distinction was spotted between the attitudes towards the considering preferences and altering the ways of communication, between participants that were holding managerial positions and the ones that did not. Manager's expressed the readiness and strong will to adapt to their subordinates, teams or audiences; on the other hands subordinates had no expectations of alternation. One of the reasons could be the pertaining characteristics of power distance, as majority of the respondents were from collectivistic cultures.

Additionally some of the respondents highlighted factors not regarding the cultural differences that in their understanding affected the modes and ways of communication. Some of them being again the position in the hierarchy, the specificity of the field and industry they were working in, the effect that Covid had on the development of fast growing levels of digitalization, Generational gap between the employees, Company specific guidelines and rules, and the information exchanged itself.

"Maybe because I was an intern everybody saw me as a person that was learning, I don't know about other juniors or seniors, but communication with me was super straightforward and direct" [RN9]

"If I have an option among two I think I prefer indirect one but in my field (medicine) it's not relevant to the tasks" [RN10]

"Depends if it's something negative I'd prefer e-mail, but if it's positive or something simple, I'd just go face to face" [RN10]

"Hard to answer because of the digitalization and post pandemic time nature of workplaces has changed a lot our team is completely digital, we sometimes have face-to face communication (which is even less natural for us), we speak on video platforms, we use both written and face to face. Written is faster because we are a digital team, and if there is an urgent stuff it's faster than speaking with the person. I would say for setting the goals, understanding the KPIS it's always better to have written, and face to face we use more to give context. Say some news and set the whole mood" [RN3]

"I think what is also important to take into consideration is that we have different generations, millennials gen z are more informal they are more digital, and they are sometimes called Igen, so we work in digital field, and I see it as the global trend" [RN3]

"For juniors like me they give very direct tasks … the written communication is preferred because it stays there, if you tell something, or write someone, it stays there, it's documented, you have the proof … since it's consulting whatever you are writing it needs to be formal, we do use special words, following special policy, both in Italy and Morocco" [RN6]

"It again depends on the aim of communication, if it's just a reminder or a memo, it could be just an e-mail, but if it's a discussion of a task and that person is in the office, let's have a physical face-to-face encounter. If it's not so important e-mail chains or digital communication is fine" [RN4]

"… I was in hospitality so it was face-to face, 100% face-to-face" [RN5]

Going back to the cultural influence, one of the participants recalled their experience on how they choose their medium of communication:

"Absolutely true that for different cultures, different types of communication could be important. If I write very structured e-mail, with KPIs that for me would be very comprehensive and motivational for completing the project. I see sometimes that for some cultures it could be not so effective. From experience working with Latin employees I see that that for them it's very important to speak with them and have very empathetic talk, in order to let the project go. For some of my Americans colleagues some things could be done very fast in written form of communication, (face-to-face) it could be just an additional thing" [RN3]

Subsequently respondents were asked to recall form their experience, if the way of communication caused any instances of miscommunication/misunderstand in their workplace, by analyzing the factors other than content, the structure of speech, non-verbal cues and writing style.

"… pay to attention to nonverbal cues very much, I'd pay attention to the tone and body language a lot, maybe a bit too much at times, I'd over interpret … yes over thinking" [RN10]

"… communication was very understandable … but they (Americans) were looking in my eyes, but I didn't see anything in their eyes, faces were very standard, they were always smiling, I even couldn't understand if they like me or not …" [RN5]

" I would pay attention a lot, of course with the facial expressions it's easier to understand people … one thing I pay attention to is the tone, but there are some people whose tone is high, but that's just the wat they talk, it doesn't mean they are rude or mean, that's something that I do myself (talk in a high tone while working), but I try not to, as it could be interpreted in different way … but it's important to pay attention to tone … I would say people who speak fast, because of their accent, for example Australians, sometimes it seems they are mean, but they aren't" [RN4]

"Compared to Lithuanians I felt like I always exaggerating with my emotions … we didn't write each other e-mail, but when I called their answers were quite neutral, monotonous I would say even, with colleagues from Poland it was better … It took me a bit of time to adjust how I controlled my emotions" [RN11]

"When I was in Spain I paid so much attention to it, even unconsciously, but now (in Italy) no … the thing is that, my Italian is good, but I am not there yet, I can't identify those cues … it happens quite a lot in Spain, may seem quite aggressive, after a while you get used to it, but form the beginning it's a bit intimidating…" [RN2]

"I always control myself, try to act nice, even when I am mad, not show emotions and seem professionals, and it's important for me to get emotions from others as well, if I do a presentation on our future plans and I don't get reaction, I get an awkward feeling … from experience with Simon who is British, he is very emotional person, you can see what he is thinking even if he doesn't say anything, for person from Ireland you never understand until he speaks up, for the one from Estonia, he is very in-between" [RN7]

To sum up, the answers provided by the respondents coincided with the theoretical arguments regarding the attention no-verbal cues used in communication. Everyone deemed to pay attention to the additional factors other than content, they were aware of misinterpretation of the cues, thus preventing being more understandable towards the situation. Even though everyone deemed it to be important, none of the respondents could recall a situation in which cultural influence on the way of speaking affected how the task was communicated or overall effectivity of the job. Although, it had an impact on their emotional state, respondents mentioned terms like "intimidating", "awkward", "uncomfortable" to describe their feelings in particular situations.

Important issue was raised in regards of the working language, as one of the participant mentioned that speaking in the different language, which they did not knew well, made them focus solely on content, ignoring other external signals. It does align with the theory discussed in the previous chapters, regarding how some of the characteristic of cognitive processes disappear when switching the language, while also creating an emotional distance with the spoken content.

As in support of the same theory, another participant expressed the freedom switching the language gave them that also affected their way of thinking and communication.

"The way I communicate differs a lot between Korean and English, although I'm more fluent in Korean, I feel more free to say what I want to say when I'm speaking in English ... I feel more like there is no hierarchy when I speak English, even when I am talking to older people ... and I can be more direct " [RN10]

Interview proceeded with the assessing the involvement of managers and subordinates in the task explanation and completion. This question allowed to reflect if general characteristic of power distance followed participants to new working environment. Some of the participants did feel the pressure from their own worldview, in the new environment where it did not actually existed, that made them behave more reserved and hesitant to participate, or ask questions.

"If we take the power distance for example, actually when I was working I thought I shouldn't be very social with them, but I realized many Italian people didn't think like this, there was no distance between them, that I could observe, but I felt like I should be more respectful, ask for their approval, that I think coming from Turkish traits, what I saw here, there is distance here, and I got that trait I would say". [RN9]

"In Asia generally, if you are a student, or a junior doctor or an intern, or resident you don't really speak but you just take what you are being told by the professor or the chief resident

I heard from a friend who went to the US for his residency, he was evaluated as not so good of a resident initially because he would not express his opinion or thoughts on the case in front of senior residents or the professors

He was being respectful by not expressing his different opinion (and at the same time because probably the doctor is right) but the hospital thought he was not saying anything because he had no opinion or he knew nothing ... This hierarchy is a real thing in Asia" [RN10]

On the contrary other participants, even though their general characteristic would dictate them to be more reserved, felt very open in participation and discussions. It was mainly reasoned by the structure of the organization, for example that it was company with the typical start-up mentality that empowered and enabled employees, by the young age of the colleagues, and the position itself, leading to the conclusion that main factor was not the national culture but the organizational culture and personal traits of people.

"I just think that our generation is so curious, that it won't stay back and never say something or ask for something, my point of view, and of my colleagues that are the same age as me, we are always looking, asking something ... I'm just a junior I need to learn, discover..." [RN6]

"For the big consulting company like XXX involvement is valued for sure but to some extent ... For the NGOs initiatives are valued, because as the smaller the company goes they do not have yet specific scope, they are still growing, they want to grow and they take initiatives a lot ... if we look at cultural perspective, I don't know it really depends on the person, but what I have noticed from my experience people from Singapore and Hong Kong they try to micromanage you, follow your every move, just bombing you with reminders ... European offices, US or Australians gave independency more ..." [RN4]

The respondents that held the managerial positions, accented a lot that they try to create more open environment for the subordinates, as it affected the effectivity of their work as well

"Regarding the hierarch, I have soft horizontal management approach, atmosphere of being friends, field and team requires a lot of creativity and I strongly believe that creativity could be killed by hierarchy, that's why I try to reduce it, especially I work with gen z it's very important

to create atmosphere of friendship and family, not boss employee, I not have these situations where person is afraid to ask questions because we have this gap" [RN3]

"I was very hesitant at the beginning myself ... but my boss would encourage me ... it took me several months to feel free to ask question, and then I started to encourage my subordinates to do the same, I would ask stupid questions, say "hey I don't know that", be very honest, especially in the team we are all young, so you cannot know everything ... it builds trust and relationship better ..." [RN7]

The questions regarding the handling of the conflict and perceiving contradictory information was not very insightful, all the participants has observed the differences between perspective taking, but rather reasoning it by the cultural affiliation or generalizing, they reduced it to the personal level; also considering the professional work ethics.

Continuing the discussion about the ways of how to make the working environment more comfortable for the employees, respondents were asked to reflect on how the meeting were held and generally the importance that was assigned to the meeting itself. Every respondent's answer was quite unique from the experience point of view, because all of them differed in time, meaning, structure and so on. But the tendencies were seen between the justifications of the ways, again main themes were the overall organizational culture of the company, position of employees in the company and the effect of pandemic

"I always adjust all the meetings to the teams, according to the people, whether it's the platform that is the most comfortable to use or meeting lengths, ... team member need to be most comfortable, as I am taking their expertise ... I want them to unleash their creativity, knowledge and skills ... I often change characteristics based on culture" [RN3]

"We used to have relatively big structured meetings, once a week , but other than that since I was an intern, I had a lot of short, small meetings quite often to just decide on tasks, but they were not structured and informal" [RN9]

"I work for a start-up in e-commerce now, so all the meetings are informal, It differs from experience in Spain a lot, because it was a luxury hotel, with many hotels in the chain around the world, everything was super formal, ... I think it's because of the type of the company itself... "
[RN2]

"In Spain we had longer meetings, but they had very specific point, like you knew what had to come out of the meeting, whereas here I think we have so many short meetings … I feel we waste do much time but at the same time we don't because it's only 15 minutes … I feel we could have less " [RN2]

"All the meetings are online, since there is always someone working from home, and even in the office I see people doing their own thing during the meetings, no one really wants to have those, but I am not sure they would be willing to change, I feel like they have this startup mindset and they think they need to involve everyone" [RN2]

"In big 4, or generally in consulting meetings are very structured, we address one topic that we get communicated before by e-mail … would address that more to the structure of the company itself, rather than the culture, but one thing I see, I don't know if it's cultural or not, even foreigners that come from different study backgrounds, let's say from Japan, South Korea or Australia, the university they went to, shapes the ways they want to have communication and how they work later, usually people graduating from Europe and US they tend to be more direct … and since our main office is in UK we have to often follow that office and it differs …" [RN4]

Two of the respondents provided a great insight on how additionally to the culture the internal policies of the organization may affect the communication, both referring to the experience in hospitality but in Spain and US:

"We had long meetings, very structured, but I think it was their general policy, done same way in all the hotels in all the countries they had a branch" [RN2]

"we didn't have super official meetings but very day before starting the day we had, we had small meetings to outline the day … so small meetings not official ones … I think it was because of the culture yeah and maybe of the policy of the hotel" [RN5]

Interesting observation was made by one of the respondents in respect of formality and following the guidelines, also implying how important for certain cultures is the sense of the collective society.

"There was one thing that happened between me and my colleague from the US, one of my customers brought her kid with her, around 10 years old to the meeting. After, my colleague told me it's unacceptable in this situation, she said "if something happens, we can't take responsibility". But for me it seemed very normal, because in china we like to be a crowd, we call

it "rè nao, I would say to bring her kid also, because it would help me build a better relationship with my customer. For my colleague, in her mind this was a company, and it's not allowed to accept something if it's not written on paper, I think Chinese are more flexible with this." [RN12]

The particular point in regards of presentation of the task, opposing views on content order, first presenting the overall goal and later the detailed plan vs presentation of the action plan and then explaining the broad context, demonstrated that respondents thought very differently from their cultural propensity. Majority of the respondents found it more effective first to present the general overview of the task and later going deeper into detail of the action plan. Except for one of the respondents that thought vice versa.

"for me the more important was to see the steps first, so if I have any doubts I would be more prepared, but other colleagues in America they were much more concerned about the results and goal overall" [RN5]

Same concerned the visual presentation of the task, respondents were not able to identify any preferences that could be attributed to their cultural influence, it was generally the personal view on the matter and personal taste, but all the respondents highlighted the importance of visual presentation for better understanding of the task or given information. One of the participants pointed out how the use of colors affected an attitude towards the task, and how it affected an overall emotional state

"I have actually this perception, never realized before you asked, when they put yellow stickers I would have much motivation, I found it easy to complete the task. But there would be red notes as well, and it would always make me feel intimidated" [RN9]

Another interesting point was raised by respondent in regard of the perception of spaces that was influenced by their natural environment.

"One thing I pay attention to, wherever I go, is the how the space is, because there are so many earthquakes in Mexico, I always think of the exit plans of the room, but like I only notice when the space is terrible, now at work everything is fine, I hadn't even thought about it, but if it was otherwise, I would be constantly worried" [RN2]

4.4 Language and Overall Sentiment

When asked about the working language, majority of the respondents named English as their working language, and since their educational background was also in English, working in that language was not a barrier for them to be more open, additionally majority stressed out that they felt more open in English than in their native language, same in regards of the interview, they felt comfortable to communicate in English, with the exception of two respondents, from whom one named the as a reason that it's just a perspective of switching mindsets, another named as a barrier the understand of the language itself. For those who worked in a language with relatively low level of knowledge, it definitely occurred to be an issue.

"I'm more open in English, I am so used to it, even Russian, if I may sound more convincing in English, in Georgian Definitely no, since I haven't worked much … but sometimes the problem is the knowledge, I had this case when me and my boss were saying the same thing, but he was using such hard words, that only native people know, I didn't follow, and he had to adjust afterwards, it happened that we were arguing for nothing" [RN7]

"I can say that in Italian I am more reserved than in English, but I think it comes from the level of comfort … but there has been miscommunication when I translated something direct from or to English and it sounded offensive … it's sometimes hard to understand the emotion, if they are happy or mad because the tone is the same, but you also have a lot of other visuals, body language to get the idea …
if I go to the American, we have the same background, same language same education so we can say something that makes complete sense to each other, but no one else. But if I go manage someone from the country I've never been to I would have some reservation because I don't know how communication works, what can I say what can I not say. I was very scared when I started working in Italian, how would it be a foreigner in Italian office, but in the end I think I understood their communication skills and they understood mine" [RN8]

"for me it's very different when I speak different language, me in Russian and me in English it's like a different person, I switch to another mindset … maybe now it wouldn't affect too much our interview, but if it was in Russian I would have been more talkative, I would say some things that are probably not even necessary …" [RN5]

"even though we communicate in office in native language, our email chains were in English still, sometime It's even easier to write in English for me ... now for the interview, even in English was better" [RN4]

"I came to the point where I think more about the sense of conversation rather than language, I look at it like the mechanisms, like a metaphor of putting different clothes every day, it's still about my personality, I would say I feel different not because of language but topic and context" [RN3]

Overall attitude towards the topics discussed during the interviews was quite positive, all the respondents emphasized the importance of understanding and accepting differences caused due to the various reasons including culture, they had an opportunity to reflect on the experiences and reevaluate them. Everyone raised an issue of awareness and how it would make the communication easier.

"it's already hard when two people from different cultures work together, one of them already has to tolerate something, if everyone would be aware of the issues in the work environment because of the cultural differences, and if they paid more attention to smaller details, it would be more comfortable and reliable space for people to work with them " [RN7]

"I think I realized some things I didn't know, I found color red intimidating (for our culture we don't use it often), but when you pointed it out I was like, hmm ok, that's it" [RN9]

"I can say about the ones that I've lived in, Morocco Italy France Spain and I wouldn't say I've seen much of the difference, but I think it exists like compared south and north Europe, or US ... when you are in the moment you don't pay attention to the difference of culture, now that you are asking all those questions, I think I should pay more attention to it ... I will for sure" [RN6]

"the thing that I said the understand is the intention behind the message, that's what can wary the most amongst cultures, but I also think it's important to be aware of yourself, how can you be affected by that, I know for example I am sensitive because that's part of my culture, sometimes I need to stop and think am I overreacting or it's meant that way ... that used to happen a lot to me when I was in Spain" about interview" I don't sure, that it's more because you can be more yourself in another language, but also because you may be lacking the resources in that language to express yourself" [RN2]

Based on the analysis of all the interviews, it's very obvious that the cultural characteristics pertain for the respondents, it affects their way of thinking and perceiving the world around, cognitive processes do not change much, but with accumulation of new experiences and forming new schemas, it's possible to easier see the bigger picture of the situations and alter perspectives.

Cognition does affect the ways of communication, and in the workplace, the differences existing translate into the factors affecting emotional state, the research did not show any severe effects on the effectivity of the task completion or the work overall, but highlighted the relevance of it for the overall emotional well-being.

Based on the study it's possible to conclude that the communication in the workplace is a complex process, including in itself factors other than the national culture of employees and it differs for the communication outside of the work context. Which some of the respondents found difficult to establish, because of the perception and building of relational ties differed.

"I was thinking that in the work environment I didn't feel much communication barriers but in the social context; like eating out with people or chatting together I felt like I wasn't able to integrate so well" [RN9]

4.6 Conclusions

Globalization is not a new phenomenon, it's been slowly and gradually making its way in the world economy. Associated with quite plethora of benefits and challenges for the companies and driving workforce diversity. It is argued that companies with diverse workforce are more likely to improve their productivity, compared to the ones with limited workforce. But on the other hand this poses one of the biggest challenges for the organizations.

Multinational and multicultural management stays a complex topic, as it combines individuals with very different cultural background and emphasizes the need for sensitivity, acceptance and understanding of various scenarios.

One of the factors that happens to be affected by the growing diversity is communication process within the company, between managers, subordinates and colleagues. This research was oriented on identifying the underlying reasoning for communication preferences among cultures, more precisely the differences in the cognitive processes that subsequently shape individuals' perceptions, information processing and problem-solving methods.

The research started with the review of theoretical material on cultural dimensional models and cognition. The aim was to build a relationship between the formation of cognitive processes and cultural characteristics, in particular individualism vs collectivism and power distance.

Subsequently the relational ties were made between the abovementioned characteristic and communication preferences among cultures. The study was directed to assess the relevance of cultural effects on cognitive processes in the context of managerial communication. For which the qualitative research methodology was chosen.

It was decided to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews on the sample that was chosen according to maximum variation purposive sampling technique. 10 participants were chosen based on the predetermined characteristics of their cultural background, international experience and knowledge of the languages.

Interviews consisted of questions grouped around 15 main themes, and lasted approximately for 45-60 minutes. First set of questions was introductory, enabling participants to reflect on their experience in international environment and asses their familiarity with the topic of cultural dimensional models and pertaining differences. Followed by the experimental questions assessing

their cognitive processes, to see the correlation between their cultural affiliation and cognition, based on the literature review. And lastly followed by questions specifically addressing respondent's experience, related to their own communication preferences, the common patterns in their workplaces, how the two of them coincided and what was the major influential factors in their perception that affected their relationship/communication with colleagues.

The data obtained from the interviews was deconstructed using the open and axial coding methods. Firstly with open coding to separate the main motifs of the respondent's experience and later with axial coding to build the relationships between motifs and group them in categories.

The study showed that the respondent's affiliation with their culture is majorly on 70% because of the influence external factors, such as travel, education, exposure to media and living experience abroad. All of the respondent's though highlighted the difference between their behavioral characteristics and their values. Behaviors being much more consistent than the values, which was later reinforced by the two experimental questions form the questionnaire.

The experience of the respondents' could be interpreted by the theories of cultural assimilation. Even more precisely the chameleon effect or the mimicry. With high exposure, people tend to take on the mannerism and behaviors of those around them, naturally adapting to changes in social environmental settings by blending in. Chartrand and Bargh (1999) suggested that reason for this was perception-behavior link that implied the existence of non-conscious connection between the act of perceiving and the act of behaving. Meaning, it's likely for an individual to engage in the same behavior, when perceiving an action done by another person. It was also suggested that the link exist between chameleon effect and rapport, arguing that mimicry serves as adaptive function to foster liking between people and create smooth, harmonious interactions.

During the interviews some of the motifs were identified that respondent's deemed to be the most influential on their communication processes, with the exception of cultural differences. These motifs being categorized into several groups of: organizational structure and position in the company; task specificity; generational differences; and effects of Covid pandemic.

Overall it could be concluded that the culture has very heavy influence on the cognitive processes that shape individuals way of thinking, their perceptions, problem-solving, information processing and other. Subsequently these processes influence individuals' way of communication. After entering international environment, we could say that cognitive processes still follow their regular

way. After being in new, international environment for some time, individuals gain experience, create new schemas, store new memories and cognition could adjust; but it's not changed drastically. In the context of managerial communication it does not have a big impact on the effectivity of the work done, as the respondents highlighted, but it does have an impact on the emotional state of the individuals.

That is the main reason that the topics of cultural diversity, differences in communication and cognition should be brought to light. And managers should ensure the awareness, acceptance and understanding towards the preferences of individuals. Therefore the research in this area should be encouraged, more in depth considering all of the factors that were revealed in this study, to create enthusiastic, safe and motivation-elevating environment for all of the employees.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter was comprised of thorough analysis of the data retrieved from the research. Summarized all of the factors mentioned by the respondent's during the interviews, relating to the chapter 3 where the first and second order categories were presented. The chapter concluded with the discussion of the overall research findings. Following chapters provide useful recommendations to managers, as well as highlight the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 Implications and Recommendations

5.1 Research-oriented Implications

This study was oriented on exploring the differences between cognitive processes that affected the ways individuals choose to communicate in the workplace setting on the basis of their cultural affiliation. Previous studies focusing on how culture affects communication preferences, excluded the exploration of underlying higher mental processes, however understanding the formation of cognitive processes helps to acknowledge the reasoning behind the emergence of said so preferences.

The study aimed to assess how far the influence of cultural effects on cognition follows individuals, when they move into new, intercultural environment, based on experimental approach understand how consistent the actions of individuals were with their perception of self.

During the research several directions were emphasized, like comparison of behavioral characteristics of individuals they perceived typical to their cultures, opposed to their mentality; the changes that individuals encountered after exposure to different lifestyles and worldviews; the concept of mimicry and cultural assimilation; the comparison of how the behaviors and communication differed in workplace and social context; the effects on effectivity of tasks as opposed to the individual's mental state; and the factors that apart from culture could be influencing differences in communication preferences.

All the directions could be taken separately as the topics for further research, concentrating on one particular circumstance, rather than following the maximum variation method used for this study, aimed to create broader picture of the matter.

5.2 Managerial-oriented Implications and Recommendations

Managerial actions have significant impact on the organization's resources, processes, and people, as well as the potential for positive or negative consequences for the organization's performance and goals. That including not only strategic decision-making, but actions involving communication within their teams and colleagues.

Even though based on this study, respondents did not express much of the expectations of adaptation from manager's side, and no major effects on task effectivity was spotted; it's undeniable that wrong communication could have a negative consequences on employee's emotional and mental state, creating the feeling of unease and discomfort in the workplace.

Important role plays the awareness of possible differences in cognitive processes and subsequently communication preferences in creating harmonious environment. The method of trial and error could lead to unconscious adaptation, but guiding with the practical knowledge could be faster and more bearable process.

Managers should be educated on the cross-cultural communication topics, and integration into the national culture as well as personnel should be more supported by the organization. Some of the ways could include:

Cultural trainings - both for the foreign and domestic employees on the topics of cultural norms and communication styles; Offering language support – overcoming language barriers, plays crucial part in the integration and as research showed adaptation of communication preferences; Offering support in other fields like financial and legal advisory; Teambuilding activities and in general encouraging team collaboration; etc.

Chapter 6 Limitations

The research shed some light on important points of cultural effects on communication considering the underlying cognitive process and unveiled additional factors that could be affecting the preferences among employees. However several limitations should be mentioned, that could have potentially influenced the outcome of this study.

First of all the novelty of the material needs to be considered. Major, global level events that occurred in the past years, including Covid, heavily influenced the society, and reshaped the values and worldview of individuals throughout the world. It begs for a question how relevant the studies on the values and perception of self and society are nowadays, furthermore expressing in the accuracy of cultural dimensional models, as major changes are seen within the cultures.

On top of that the field of cognitive psychology keeps evolving in the various fields. With the new studies and experiments, more light could be shed on the reasoning of the differences in cognitive processes. Should be taken into account the number of researches done in the direction of managerial communication, if consumer-behavior is very heavily examined, field of communication is lacking the empirical evidence.

Now zooming onto the empirical research itself, one of the most important factors to be looked at, is the sample. The interviews conducted were informative but the relatively small sample size and its diverse composition could have not been exhaustive. The bigger, but more coherent sample could have led to different results.

The future research should take into consideration above mentioned limitations, as well as influential factors revealed during the study. Separate, more precise studies could be conducted comparing the cultural differences in different types of organizational structures and cultures, comparing the cultural impact on different levels of organizational hierarchy, could be considered the overall experience of an international workers, or contrary of the company, the number of languages spoken, the specificity of the tasks and so on.

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APPPENDIX - Questionnaire for the Interviews

Greetings, introduction of the thesis topic and small description, statement about the use of information / confidentiality.

Background of the respondent

Initials:

Age:

Nationality:

Where is based:

Educational background (field):

Work position and field of work:

For how long they have been working in international environment:

How many languages they speak:

1)   How much respondent associates themselves with the culture they are from, have they lived for a long time abroad and all the connection is lost or they strongly perceive themselves as the part of their culture

    1.1)   if they do not identify themselves as part of their own culture, which culture they perceive to be connected the most

    1.2)   if they believe to be part of their own culture, how much were they exposed to other cultures while growing up? Media, travel, languages, education

2)   Ask an ice-breaker question (relation VS categorization): from given three words which two are most closely related to each other

Panda, monkey, banana

Test to see if the respondents from collectivist cultures tend to focus on relationships and functions within the context, and individualists use categorization as way of problem-solving, consider bilingual effect on the results

2.1) Regardless of the answer ask if respondents would assume that the answer they give could be influenced by the culture they are coming from, followed by explanation that in fact it could be affected

3)   Ask if the respondents are familiar with the theoretical models of cultures, mention Hofstede, Globe, Hall etc. Test to see if respondents coming from the economics/BA background are aware of theories compared to respondents coming from other fields.

4)   Going back to the ice breaker question do they agree with the statement that difference in the way of thinking exists based on the culture, have they experienced similar differences while communicating with their colleagues/boss/subordinates.

5)   Replicate the Masuda/Nisbett 2001 experiment. Introduce the concept of analytical and holistic way of thinking, with an example of this experiment explain the attention to foreground and background subjects in the experiment, perception of context and contextual tasks and its importance. Ask if they have experienced the same differences among their colleagues/ boss/ subordinates.

6)   Again based on the experiments on the context, ask if it is hard for the respondents to separate the information given from the context in the workplace setting, if the task presented by the manager, is clear and understandable, if managers are focusing on providing context, or assuming that the context is already given and do not provide much details.

7)   Following the topic of context continue with the clarity of task given, ask the respondents regarding the communication styles, do they seem to prefer the direct or indirect communication styles (explanation with examples), which one of them is common in their organization do their managers/subordinates take into consideration their preferred style

8)   Ask if in their workplace they rely more on virtual or face-to-face communication, do they have a preferred way of communicating, if their preferred way differs from the majority and if their preference is considered.

8.1) if it is face-to-face communication how much the non-verbal cues matter to them if their understanding of the non-verbal cues also coincides with the intention of the communicator

8.2) knowing the preference of the other person, do they control and adjust their non-verbal cues for example tone, silence / pauses, facial expressions and gestures, emotional display, gaze

8.3) if the written communication is preferred do they think that the communication style is affected by their culture. For example the narrative structure of the e-mail or memo, the use of caps lock, the use of formalities. If they have seen that the communication mediums were adjusted based on another person, could they recall any incident of miscommunication or misunderstanding from their own experience (Pae, contrastive rhetoric)

8.4) do the respondents think that adjusting abovementioned attributes would help them better understand and perceive information, if they could recall any example from their own experience

8.5) do respondents think that their communication should be adjusted based on their preference, if they believe that misunderstanding and miscommunication affects the effectivity of their tasks, if not just their own mental state, anxiety or nervousness if it is affected.

9)   Ask the about the expectations from managers regarding of their decision-making, if their independency valued, if management involvement is strong, how they feel more comfortable in their orientation, focusing mostly on their own or teams' benefit. Is their preference respected, or they have to adjust, and if there have been any misunderstanding on the basis of this topic

10)   Ask about participation during the task explanation, how they feel more comfortable, do they allow themselves to ask questions during explanation and then complete tasks independently or they are provided an example, guided and observed during the task completion and only after allowed to do the task themselves. Maybe their lack of participation is perceived negatively and if they have experienced discomfort / misunderstanding because of the issue

11)   Ask about the handling of conflict, how the colleagues perceive the difference in the ideas, if it is alright to ask questions during discussions, how the disclosure is evaluated, for example some questions could be considered intrusive, are these questions still asked.

11.1) do colleagues have mostly black and white attitude towards the task/issues or they are ready to discuss all the perspectives

11.2) If respondents have experienced misunderstanding because of their attitudes, how managers are leading the discussions selectively considering the preferences, and

12) The format of the meetings. When they started working was the meeting format a surprise for them, was it different from their own culture. Focus on the main questions what was the main purpose of the meeting, were they rigidly structured, what was the length of the meetings, if it's altered based on the participants preferences

12.1) Content order – what is more important to present first goal or the steps to achieve it, for respondents and for the colleagues for example, how managers are presenting the task and if they alter presentation structure again based on the participants

13) What is the respondents sentiment regarding the visual presentation of the data and the tasks. Is if different in style from what they are used to/ expecting. If the aesthetic side matters for them and if it affects the sentiment towards the task, for example the use of colors, does it affect the presentation or if in their experience it was altered based on the preference. General attitude towards the aesthetics also in terms of space where the work is done or meeting is held if their comfortability is taken into consideration.

14) Their overall feeling towards the cultural effects on cognition, were they aware of the differences mentioned during interviews, did they themselves paid attention to it, could they justify now some of the actions of their own or colleagues by this differences, will they consider it in the future for example altering the way of communication and presentation to better understand their interlocutor

15) Ask about the language of the interview how confident they were in expressing their thoughts in English, would interviewing in their native language would somehow influence their answers