

# A SYNTHESIS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANISATIONS

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**Abstract.** Organisations exist, function and develop through communication. Intercultural communication is a specific communication activity in which the parties involved represent different cultures. The current context, dominated by globalisation, multiculturalism, internationalisation and digitalisation, underlines the importance of studying intercultural communication in an organisational context. The aim of this paper is to develop a comprehensive synthesis of the factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations and to propose research hypotheses for future studies in this area. The methodology used to conduct this study includes the methods of analysis, synthesis, induction (for logical connections), deduction (for identifying theories from the literature), abduction (for identifying causes and factors and building hypotheses) and hierarchical classification (for grouping factors in the three-level taxonomy). The analysis of the factors mentioned in the literature on the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations has led to the development of a three-level taxonomy that groups them into five categories: management-related factors, group factors, individual factors, cultural factors and communication factors. This systematic and clarifying approach suggests linkages and directions for research as well as lines of action for practitioners to ensure sustainable development of multicultural organisations and increase the chances of success of intercultural communication in different organisational contexts. The novelty of the paper lies in the fact that the existing literature does not propose a systemic view of the factors that influence intercultural communication outcomes. Most of the identified research presents comparative, descriptive approaches to the characteristics of intercultural communication in specific cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** culture, intercultural communication, organisations, taxonomy, synthesis.

**JEL Classification:** D83, M14, M16

## 1. Introduction

As long as organisations are made up of people, any kind of activity within and between them will involve human interaction, and therefore communication. It is fair to say that without communication there are no organisations (Keyton, 2011). In turn, they operate in a world dominated by the current context of globalisation, migration, multiculturalism, internationalisation and digitalisation, which emphasises cultural aspects more than ever before. The increasing intensity of the international movement of people, especially the mobility of employees, the expansion of multinational companies and the intensification of foreign direct investment processes, the presence of global entrepreneurs in developing countries, the exponential growth of digital connections through the Internet, etc., are just some of the factors that

highlight the importance of research on intercultural communication in organisations (Okoro, 2013; Zellmer-Bruhn and Gibson, 2014). Therefore, the sustainable development of organisations in the current intercultural environment is not possible without effective communication.

Intercultural communication issues are relevant whether organisations are small or large, local, national or international, local or online. This is because the topic of culture and interculturality has moved beyond a view dominated by national differences to target cultural diversity (Baleviciene, 2022), a heterogeneous mix of cultural layers consisting of ethnic, linguistic, religious, age, socio-economic class or occupational groups (Barker and Gower, 2010; Adler and Aycan, 2018). This culture determines communication, provides the basis for communication

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and is also expressed and cultivated through communication (Okoro, 2013).

Intercultural communication in organisations is concerned with communication both inside and outside the organisation. Communication within the organisation can be both horizontal and vertical (Mogea, 2023) and includes communication within work teams, communication between management and teams, including leadership, vertical communication between managers, etc. Outside the organisation, it could include communication between expatriates and locals, negotiations between organisations, communication with foreign subdivisions in the context of FDI, etc.

Achieving effective intercultural communication brings important benefits to the organisation: high levels of cooperation, performance and productivity of human resources, high efficiency of international management and other competitive advantages in the market, and so forth (Okoro and Washington, 2012; Okoro, 2013).

Most of the studies identified on this topic present a descriptive analysis of the differences between countries/national cultures in terms of the specifics of intercultural communication. Certainly, the results of these studies are important, especially in the context of possible training of employees, including managers, for the development of intercultural competence in a concrete business and national context. Then, any attempt to define the effectiveness of intercultural communication should take into account the cultural specificity given by the value system, the time and the social context in general (Kim and Sharkey, 1995). On the other hand, these descriptive-comparative studies cannot provide the basis for the development of theories in intercultural communication because they only describe specific communicative behaviour, for which a theoretical framework is needed to guide research in this area (Hecht et al., 1989).

The main objective of this paper is to develop a comprehensive synthesis of the factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations and to propose research hypotheses for future studies in this area. This means developing a theoretical framework that can provide a systematic perspective on the determinants of success in intercultural communication.

Studies in this area search for mechanisms that allow cultural differences to be exploited in the most effective way, generating competitive advantage at the organisational level and performance at the individual level (Adler and Aycan, 2018). This is not possible without a clear outline of what is already known in the field about the factors that positively and negatively influence communication outcomes in intercultural organisational contexts.

The article proceeds with the section containing a brief presentation of the taxonomy of factors influencing the effectiveness of intercultural communication. This is followed by sections and sub-sections relating to the categories and sub-categories of factors, and finally the discussion and conclusions of the research.

## 2. Taxonomy of Factors Affecting the Outcomes of Intercultural Communication in Organisations

The analysis allowed to identify five broad categories of factors that influence the outcome of intercultural communication in organisations: management-related factors, group factors, individual-related factors, cultural factors and communication factors (Figure 1). Management-related factors include management style, planning, tasks, co-operative orientation, as well as culture and management. The group factors category is divided into two sub-categories: group characteristics and ethnic issues. The individual-related factors category is divided into sub-categories: self-oriented personality traits, other-oriented personality traits, attitudes towards the new and different, and personality development. The category of "cultural factors" includes elements related to culture in general, basic elements of culture, language and subjective cultural perspective. And last but not least, the factors related to communication par excellence: encoding-decoding messages, communication channels and media, communication style, communication context and communication features.

The following sections provide more detailed information on the identified factors and their organisation within the Synthesis (Annex 1). Relationships that do not cause significant controversy and have been confirmed in more than one study have been transformed into hypothesis proposals. This does not mean that other factors should not be investigated, but due to the large number of factors and in the search for efficiency, the author tried to select the factors that have the most evidence in the identified studies.

## 3. Management-Related Factors

The first broad category of factors that determine the success of intercultural communication relates to managerial aspects. Of course, factors related to management or ensured by managerial actions could also be found in other categories, because the basic elements of their importance correspond to the scope of their best positioning. Factors related to management therefore refer explicitly to managerial aspects, functions and activities. The factors identified in

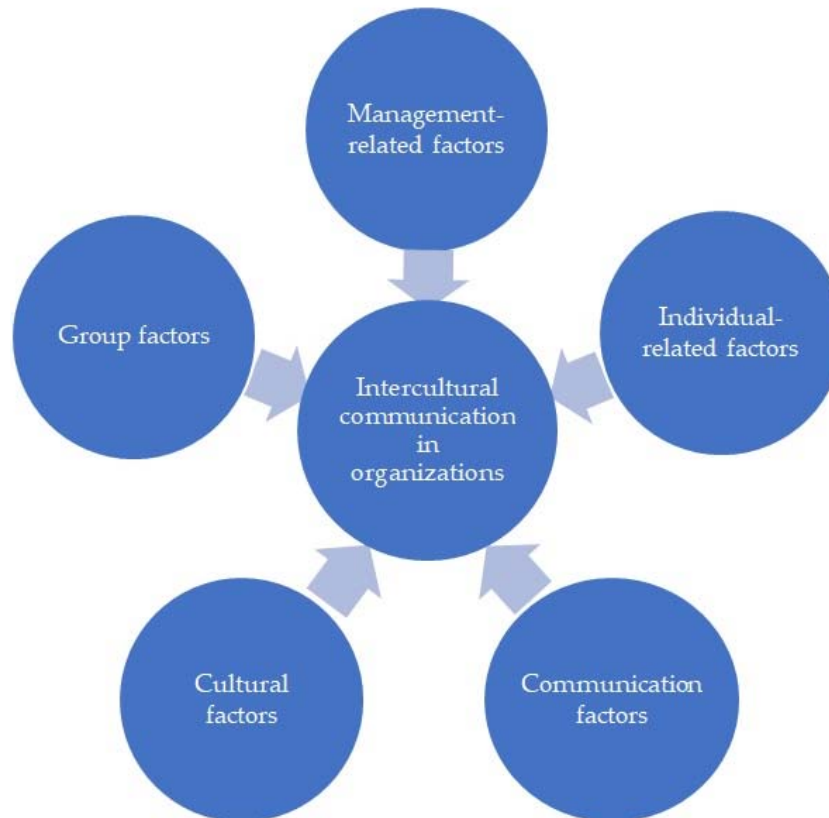


Figure 1. Factors influencing the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations

the literature are grouped into five sub-categories: management style, planning, tasks, co-operative orientation and culture and management. Even within these groups, the factors are interrelated and cannot be clearly distinguished, just as managerial activities involve different aspects of management.

**Management style.** Firstly, management style itself can influence the way intercultural communication takes place in organisations. For example, Paine and Organ (2000) concluded that a directive management style has a negative impact on the effectiveness of intercultural communication. This leadership style involves constant control and monitoring, as well as close supervision of activities within the organisation, with negative effects on different sides of the organisation. At the same time, conclusions regarding the relationship with communication should be treated with caution, as Sylaj (2019), for example, did not find a significant influence of management style on the occurrence of barriers in intercultural communication.

**Planning.** The next category of factors relates to the planning function and includes strategies and deadlines. With regard to strategies, Brownell (2020) highlights two factors that positively influence intercultural communication outcomes: Recipient based communication strategies and strategic decision making. The author argues that communication

strategies should take into account the receiver's interpretive process in response to multiculturalism in the organisation. Intercultural communication will also be more effective because of the strategic vision in management decision making. On the other hand, Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999), in a study on communication in global teams, state that short deadlines and time pressure negatively affect the ability of team members to interact.

**Tasks.** The third sub-category of management factors relates to tasks and includes somewhat opposing opinions, albeit on different issues. Ruben (1977) concludes that an excessive focus on the task to be performed, which he calls extreme task, has a negative impact on the results of intercultural communication, so the author recommends avoiding this situation. Stahl and colleagues (2010) also highlight the positive influence of task complexity (which requires increased attention to tasks) on communication in diverse teams, with the frequency of conflict increasing as task complexity decreases.

**Co-operative orientation.** Another set of factors includes elements of the co-operative orientation of leadership actions. The first factor lies at the intersection of planning and cooperation and implies that co-operative goals and strategies positively influence leadership effects in intercultural communication at work (Chen et al., 2006). On the other hand,

the results of managerial actions materialised in a co-operative atmosphere in the organisation (Lee et al., 2006) positively influence communication and interaction in multicultural teams.

**Culture and management.** Two of the identified factors highlight the link between culture and management, referring to the background of people in management positions and the performance of management activities in multicultural organisations. Thus, bicultural or multicultural managers perform better when dealing with multicultural teams (Karjalainen, 2020), and effective management of cultural differences has a positive impact on effective communication and performance (Lahti and Valo, 2017).

Factors related to management are also found in other categories, and this category was created to highlight the authors' focus on the managerial side of the factors. Future research can use the results of this analysis to develop hypotheses on any of the aspects addressed.

#### 4. Group Factors

Factors related to group characteristics have been included in a special category because they emphasise the relationships between people forming groups in the communication process. Group factors can manifest themselves in horizontal communication between team members, vertical communication between managers and the team, or in communication between representatives of different organisations. Two sub-categories were identified into which group factors can be grouped: group characteristics and ethnicity issues.

**Group characteristics.** Group characteristics are to some extent based on Shamir and Melnik's (2002) view of boundaries and refer to the barriers that exist between the parties involved in the communication process. Thus, differences between the parties in terms of power and social status are perceived as barriers in the relational process and negatively affect intercultural communication (Adair et al., 2001; Leonardi and Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2013; Rosa and Karimov, 2018). Another type of barriers is mentioned by Adler and Aycan (2018) and refers to differences in rewards between the parties involved in communication, with Compensation Boundaries also having a negative impact on communication outcomes. On the other hand, as expected, Permeability of Boundaries (Shamir and Melnik, 2002), the ability of a culture to facilitate the overcoming of various social and mental barriers, has a positive impact on intercultural interactions within organisations. There is another factor within this category that represents a cultural dimension, namely collectivism. It is included in this category because it relates to the way people approach the world around them in terms of groups (Hofstede et al.,

2010). In the process of intercultural communication, collectivist negotiators have a greater willingness to understand and adapt to the needs and interests of the other (Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999; Adair and Brett, 2005), thus overcoming barriers and determining the success of communication.

**Ethnicity issues.** The second sub-category of group factors relates to ethnic issues. From this perspective, research findings confirm some intuitive perspectives. Communication problems occur more frequently when parties have different ethnic and/or national backgrounds (Okoro, 2013), while shared ethnicity has a positive impact on intercultural communication, especially in leadership contexts (Chong and Thomas, 1997). On the other hand, tensions between ethnic groups, often historically rooted, create barriers to communication that negatively affect the outcomes of the process (Rensburg, 1993; Kumar, 2004).

#### 5. Individual-Related Factors

Another broad category of factors that determine the success of intercultural communication was called individual-related factors, because it includes factors that characterise the individuals involved in the communication. These factors were divided into four sub-categories: self-oriented personality traits, other-oriented personality traits, attitudes towards the new and different, and individual development.

**Self-oriented personality traits.** The first sub-category includes self-centred personality factors. Of these, self-centred attention and the resulting behaviour have a negative impact on intercultural communication (Ruben, 1977). Another factor, self-confidence, associated with confidence in one's own initiative, is thought to positively influence the outcomes of intercultural interactions (Hawes and Kealey, 1981). However, in a study of managers, Clarke and Hammer (1995) found no significant relationship between this factor and the outcomes of intercultural communication. Self-monitoring and evaluation is the final factor within this category and has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the intercultural communication process (Johnson et al., 2003; Brownell, 2020). The elements that make up this factor have been addressed separately in the literature. Brownell (2020) mentions self-monitoring among the factors that determine effective communication in diverse organisational environments. On the other hand, self-evaluation, which includes self-efficacy, internal locus of control and emotional control, also promotes intercultural communication (Johnson et al., 2003). The author has combined these elements into one factor, as they both traditionally belong to each other and are functionally related in the context of self-control.

**Other-oriented personality traits.** The next sub-category includes other-oriented personality traits.



Given that intercultural communication is about relating to others, it is not surprising that factors within this category are addressed and highlighted in numerous studies. An important factor in this context is the interpersonal orientation of the individual, which refers to the individual's emphasis on openness to relating to others. Four studies have been identified that mention the positive impact of this factor on intercultural communication (interdependent self-concept, interpersonal orientation, interpersonal communication, or friendly personality) in one form or another (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Rao and Schmidt, 1998; Okoro and Washington, 2012; Georgescu, 2016). Another important factor often referred to by scholars is sensitivity. Even if, at least in some respects, this factor could be classified as a subcategory of individual development, it is included here because it is a personal characteristic that is primarily aimed at being accessible to others. All the identified studies show a positive impact of sensitivity on the effectiveness of intercultural communication and the outcomes of intercultural interaction in general, whether it is vigilance and sensitivity (Ruben, 1977), cultural sensitivity (Okoro, 2013), intercultural sensitivity (Yu and Chen, 2008; Okoro and Washington, 2012; Bennett, 2017), sensitivity to cultural differences (Brownell, 2020), sensitivity to specific contexts (English, 2001) or sensitivity to one's impact on others (Brownell, 2020). Empathy, its cultivation and its appropriate manifestation (especially by leaders) are also considered important for successful intercultural communication (Ruben, 1977; Brownell, 2020; Shahid, 2022). A factor within this category that negatively influences the effectiveness of intercultural communication is the judgmental perspective: low accuracy of judgement (Adair et al., 2001) and judgmental behaviour in general (Ruben, 1977) should be avoided to increase the chances of successful communication. The last two factors, each identified in only one study, are assurance, which positively influences communication by showing openness and attentiveness to the other (Shahid, 2022), and lack of trust, each of which creates barriers in intercultural communication (Lifintsev and Canavilhas, 2017).

**Attitude to the new and different.** Factors related to individuals' attitudes towards the new and different were included in a separate category. In this regard, tolerance, both towards cultural differences (Okoro, 2013) and towards ambiguity (Ruben, 1977) in general, positively influences the outcomes of interactions in intercultural contexts. Factors such as turn taking (Ruben, 1977) and openness to new experiences (Arman and Aycan, 2013) also stimulate the effectiveness of intercultural communication. And last but not least, individuals can demonstrate flexibility and adaptability when dealing with a new and different

environment or person (Lahti and Valo, 2017; Brownell, 2020), which determines the success of the communication process. At the same time, Brett and Okumura (1998) found that intercultural communication outcomes in negotiation contexts are poorer when adaptation is achieved by only one of the parties.

**Individual development.** Beyond these factors, there is room for development and improvement at the individual level. These actions can bring significant benefits to the communication process in intercultural contexts. A large number of studies highlight the positive impact of training on communication performance, be it training in general (English, 2001; Okoro, 2013; Adanlawo et al., 2021; Shahid, 2022), cultural awareness training (Sun, 2013) or intercultural communication training (Rensburg, 1993; Oz et al., 2016).

As a result of training, awareness can be developed, which positively influences the effectiveness of intercultural communication (Kim and Sharkey, 1995; Okoro, 2012; Georgescu, 2016; Lahti and Valo, 2017; Hatakka, 2021). Some authors refer to specific aspects of awareness, such as self-awareness (Georgescu, 2016) or intercultural awareness (Okoro, 2012). At the same time, it should be mentioned that Yang and colleagues (2022) did not find a significant relationship between intercultural communication awareness and communication effectiveness in multicultural organisational environments.

The training aims to develop intercultural competence in general and intercultural communication skills in particular. The factors presented below are based on the traditional view of competence, which encompasses knowledge, skills and abilities, slightly expanded by Barrett and colleagues (2013) to include knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and actions. Firstly, the author identified studies that, in one form or another, addressed competences in a general way, without referring to their elements, and highlighted their positive impact on intercultural communication success (Imai and Gelfand, 2010; Okoro and Washington, 2012; Okoro, 2013). These studies referred to cultural intelligence (Imai and Gelfand, 2010), non-verbal communication competence (Okoro and Washington, 2012) or intercultural communication competence (Okoro, 2013).

Since competences have a positive impact on intercultural communication, it is expected that other elements related to competences have a similar impact, and this is indeed the case: no results or opinions were found in the reviewed studies that would contradict this logical assumption. Therefore, knowledge (Ruben, 1977; Busch, 2012; Hussain, 2018; Yang et al., 2022) and understanding (Okoro, 2013; Georgescu, 2016; Shahid, 2022; Yang et al., 2022) facilitate intercultural communication, whereas

ignorance (English, 2001) hinders it. The view of knowledge differs from researcher to researcher, starting with personal orientation to knowledge (Ruben, 1977) and continuing with culture-specific knowledge (Busch, 2012), knowledge of cultural differences (Yang et al., 2022), and knowledge of nonverbal communication (Hussain, 2018). The view of what needs to be understood is also heterogeneous and includes understanding of cultural backgrounds (Shahid, 2022), understanding of cultural differences (Okoro, 2013; Yang et al., 2022) and understanding of different behaviours (Georgescu, 2016).

Other elements of competence have received less attention from researchers. The development of skills, particularly interpersonal (Clarke and Hammer, 1995) and communication skills (Rensburg, 1993), determines the success of intercultural communication, while their absence hinders it (Rensburg, 1993). Specific skills, in particular the ability to show respect (Ruben, 1977) and the ability to learn about other cultures (Okoro, 2013), also facilitate communication in multicultural contexts. The action element, which Barrett and his colleagues (2013) call the competence element, was referred to in the current study as "intercultural experience". Intercultural experience (global exposure, contact with local hosts) has a positive impact on the effectiveness of intercultural communication (Okoro, 2013; van Bakel et al., 2014), and its lack has a negative impact on communication (Lifintsev and Canavilhas, 2017), as expected.

This sub-category is one of the most frequently discussed in the literature, which is quite expected, given that personality development in this context is aimed at improving the effectiveness of intercultural communication, among other things.

## 6. Cultural Factors

When approaching the topic of intercultural communication, it is to be expected that cultural factors receive a lot of attention from researchers, and this is the case. Some factors related to cultural aspects can be found in other broad categories, such as managerial aspects, group factors or communication characteristics, but others could only be included in a specific category aimed at highlighting the emphasis researchers place on assessing the impact on communication in an intercultural context.

**Culture in general.** Given the specificity of the topic, a large number of studies refer to cultural factors in general and intercultural differences in communication in particular. Cultural differences are one of the most frequently mentioned factors, along with their negative impact on communication effectiveness (Gelfand and McCusker, 2002; Shamir and Melnik, 2002; Ogbonna and Harris, 2006; Hussain, 2018; Lifintsev

and Wellbrock, 2019; Jhaiyanuntana and Nomnian, 2020). Some researchers simply refer to cultural nuances (Li, 2010) or cross-cultural factors (Mogea, 2023), which is important to note because it is not only cultural differences that can negatively affect the flow of communication, but also the elements of cultural specificity. Interestingly, Ayoko and colleagues (2002) highlight the possibility of the positive influence of cultural differences on communication, as awareness of differences can encourage further discussion and increase the effectiveness of decisions made. However, Sylaj (2019) found no significant relationship between cultural differences and communication success in multicultural contexts. On the other hand, cultural proximity provided by shared cultural identities facilitates collaboration and intercultural communication (Adler and Aycan, 2018).

**Basic elements of culture.** If one delves into the details, one can find studies that address elements of culture, especially those related to its core: values and norms. Differences in cultural values are a frequently mentioned factor in the literature, highlighting their negative impact on the communication process in multicultural contexts (Mayer, 2010; Li, 2010; Lifintsev and Canavilhas, 2017; Rosa and Karimov, 2018). The factors mentioned by the authors sometimes combine values with other aspects, such as identity (Mayer, 2010) or worldviews (Rosa and Karimov, 2018). On the other hand, similarities in values promote effective intercultural communication (Byrne, 1971; Varma et al., 2016). In addition, a study was found that looks at another important element of culture: norms. Ngai (2000) states that different norms regarding non-verbal communication negatively influence the course of communication in multicultural organisational contexts.

**Language.** An extremely important cultural factor in general and especially in the context of communication is language. As such, it is the most frequently addressed factor in the literature reviewed, often with a negative connotation, namely language differences and barriers. Whether it is language barriers (Li, 2010; Lifintsev and Canavilhas, 2017; Rosa and Karimov, 2018; Lifintsev and Wellbrock, 2019; Bodomo and Che, 2020; Brownell, 2020), language issues (Rensburg, 1993), language differences (Adair and Brett, 2005; Liu et al., 2010; Lahti and Valo, 2017; Mogea, 2023) or language diversity (Fredriksson et al., 2006), the impact on communication efficiency is negative. Then there are studies that look at more specific linguistic factors. For example, Lauring and Selmer (2010) analyse the implementation of a common language, and since the common language in intercultural communication is most often English, the authors also examine a variety of variables related to the use of English. The vast majority of variables have a positive impact on communication

in multicultural organisations. In the same context, differences in language level negatively affect communication (Lifintsev and Wellbrock, 2019), while the number of languages spoken does not significantly influence the flow of intercultural communication (Lauring and Selmer, 2010).

**Subjective cultural perspectives.** There are factors related to culture that have their basis in cultural specificity, which refers to the subjective perspective on culture: both one's own culture and other cultures. Ethnocentrism is one such factor. It refers to the view of one's own culture as superior to other cultures. Naturally, an ethnocentric approach negatively affects intercultural communication (Adair et al., 2001; Li, 2010; Hussain, 2018), while reducing ethnocentric tendencies promotes it (Arman and Aycan, 2013). Subjective perspectives on other cultures that present a simplified view based on labelling and exaggerated generalisation (Beamer and Varner, 2009) and distort cultural reality are called stereotypes. Stereotypes create barriers and negatively affect the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisational contexts (Li, 2010; Leonardi and Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2013; Jenifer and Raman, 2015; Lifintsev and Canavilhas, 2017). Li (2010) also talks about cultural prejudice, referring to the opinion of an individual based on the perception of the group, a factor that also hinders effective communication. Another factor that has been included in this sub-category, but not merged with other factors, is called distorted view of cultural identity, which, regardless of the causes of the distorted view, negatively influences the process of intercultural communication in organisations (Segers, 2002).

## 7. Communication Factors

Some of the factors identified relate directly to the communication process, its technical elements, the characteristics of the communication and the context in which it takes place. They have been grouped into a separate category, which in turn is divided into five sub-categories: message encoding-decoding, communication channels and media, communication style, communication context and communication features.

**Message encoding-decoding.** This sub-category includes factors that relate to the communication process, with its specific elements and stages (message, encoding, communication channel, decoding, and so forth). To be effective, communication must be characterised by reciprocity in both speaking and listening (Shahid, 2022).

Firstly, it should be emphasised that the clarity of the message, expressed in simple words (Georgescu, 2016), is an important element that promotes efficient communication (Georgescu, 2016; Shahid, 2022).

Some researchers emphasise the care with which encoding must be carried out, taking into account the receiver's interpretive process, in order to ensure successful intercultural communication (Okoro, 2013; Brownell, 2020). From this perspective, differences in the language that characterises the parties involved in the communication negatively affect the quality of the encoding and the subsequent intercultural interaction (Rosa and Karimov, 2018). Grisham (2006) also proposes a form of message, stories, that increases the effectiveness of intercultural communication, especially in the context of leadership.

Once the message is received, the receiver decodes it. Increased attention to the decoding process to ensure accurate interpretation of meanings positively influences the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisational contexts (Okoro, 2013; Brownell, 2020).

**Communication channels and media.** Once encoded, the message is transmitted through the communication channel. Okoro (2013) notes that if the sender is selective in choosing the channel, it will improve the quality of intercultural communication.

The analysis conducted enabled to identify three studies that confirm the positive relationship between concrete communication media and communication effectiveness in intercultural contexts. These studies refer to lean media (e.g., email) (Klitmøller and Lauring, 2013), digital communication tools (Lifintsev and Wellbrock, 2019) and storytelling (Barker and Gower, 2010).

**Communication style.** The style of communication also influences the outcome of communication. The analysis carried out confirms this assertion with regard to the differences between the sometimes conflicting communication styles (Adair et al., 2001) used by the parties involved in the communication. These differences create barriers in communication and reduce the efficiency of the intercultural communication process (Adair et al., 2001; Adair and Brett, 2005; Liu et al., 2010; Mak and Chui, 2013). On the other hand, Greeff and de Bruyne (2000) concluded that using the integrating style in conflict management can increase the efficiency of intercultural organisational communication.

**Communication context.** The context in which communication takes place forms the following sub-category of factors. Among them, the different communication context for each of the communication participants leaves its mark on the formulation (encoding) and interpretation (decoding), distorting the meanings and reducing the effectiveness of communication in multicultural organisations (Rosa and Karimov, 2018). In terms of the cultural context of communication, high context cultures are associated with a greater willingness to understand and adapt, which facilitates intercultural



communication, particularly in negotiations (Gelfand and Christakopoulou, 1999; Adair and Brett, 2005). These findings are very interesting considering that high context cultures are characterised by a high complexity of communication and a high importance of non-verbal elements. On the other hand, Brownell (2020) recommends that managers assume that they are communicating in a low context environment to ensure that the message is explicit and complete.

Referring to the general context in which communication takes place, Hesse (2018) states that digitalisation has a positive impact on communication effectiveness, especially in the area of leadership.

**Communication features.** Finally, factors related to communication characteristics and associated with communication effectiveness were grouped into a separate sub-category. The analysis suggests that frequent (Lauring and Selmer, 2010) and positive (Shahid, 2022) communication and feedback (Shahid, 2022) ensure effective intercultural communication. Taking a more complex approach, Liu and colleagues (2010) discuss quality of communication experience (QCE) as a determinant of superior intercultural communication outcomes in negotiation contexts. QCE refers to the clarity, reciprocity and conflict experienced in the communication process, which also explains the impact on outcomes.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusions

Communication characterises the organisation, ensuring and mediating its existence, functioning and sustainable development. In today's context, the issues of intercultural communication are becoming increasingly evident and relevant for all types of organisations, small or large, local, national or international, local or online. The aspects of intercultural communication in an organisational context addressed in this paper cover different aspects of an organisation's communication activities, communication within and between organisations. The conclusions, ideas, suggestions and hypotheses derived from this analysis can and should be used in all contexts of organisational intercultural communication, such as communication within multicultural teams, communication between managers and teams, leadership, all types of negotiation in a multicultural context and other communication activities within and outside the organisation.

Much of the research in the field of intercultural organisational communication is concerned with the specifics of communication in different cultural contexts. This aspect highlights the relevance of this study, which aims to provide a systematic approach to the determinants of successful intercultural communication in organisations, proposing their taxonomy and starting points for future research in the field.

The analysis of the factors mentioned in the literature on the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations led to a synthesis that grouped them into five categories: management-related factors (Table A1), group factors (Table A2), personality-related factors (Table A3), cultural factors (Table A4) and communication factors (Table A5).

The category "management" includes factors for which the emphasis on management aspects was noted. This is not to say that the other categories do not contain management-related factors; on the contrary, many of the factors in the other categories are management tools or are enhanced by management actions. In this sense, the goal was to position the factors as best as possible to emphasise the meaning that the authors put into them. The category of factors related to management is rather poorly covered in the literature, so the paper proposes only one possible hypothesis arising from the analysis of this category, related to the positive impact of co-operative management orientation on intercultural communication. Managers therefore need to view communication as a receiver-defined process (Brownell, 2020). On the other hand, this should encourage researchers to more actively investigate the factors within this category. More attention to specifically managerial factors is needed to identify managerial mechanisms that stimulate and inhibit communication effectiveness in intercultural contexts.

The category of group factors is the smallest in terms of the number of factors, but also in terms of the sub-categories in which they are organised. On the other hand, the average frequency with which these factors are addressed is higher than in the case of managerial factors. This category has been organised to highlight factors that emphasise relationships between people who form groups. These can manifest themselves in horizontal communication between team members, vertical communication between managers and the team, or communication between representatives of different organisations. One of the main ideas suggested by these factors is the need to overcome barriers between communication parties, particularly in terms of power, in order for communication to achieve its objectives. The existence of inter-ethnic tensions must also be taken into account and measures taken to mitigate their impact on the communication process.

The literature often focuses on individual factors. This is understandable given that individuals are the ones who participate in communication and therefore their characteristics largely determine its outcomes. Individual-related factors have been grouped into four broad sub-categories, including factors related to the individual's orientation to self, to others, to the new and different, and to the development of the individual in the context of



intercultural communication. This is also the category that suggested the most examples of potential research hypotheses. Elements such as self-monitoring and evaluation, interpersonal orientation and empathy, tolerance, flexibility, sensitivity need to be promoted and developed for effective intercultural communication. Development through training aimed at increasing awareness and competencies related to intercultural communication (knowledge and understanding, skills, abilities, intercultural experience) demonstrates effectiveness manifested in successful communication. Shahid (2022) believes that the main focus of intercultural communication training should be on improving behaviour, cultural awareness, developing communication skills and intercultural sensitivity.

It is impossible to talk about the success of intercultural communication without considering cultural factors. The same conclusion seems to have been reached by a large number of researchers in the field: cultural factors are among the most popular in the studies identified. Cultural factors are also found in other categories, e.g., collectivism among group factors and high context among communication factors. There are also several factors related to culture in the other categories. These factors are not included here because the author wanted to emphasise the focus of these factors (on group or communication, managerial or personal aspects). However, most of the culture-related factors had to be included in a separate category in order to highlight the emphasis placed by the researchers in assessing the impact on communication in an intercultural organisational context.

Most of the relationships identified and mentioned in the literature relate to the negative impact of cultural factors on communication effectiveness, which is not surprising given that research is often concerned with cultural differences, inconsistencies and barriers. The elements that need to be considered and overcome relate to differences between cultures, both in the broad sense and in terms of other cultural elements (values, norms, practices) or language. Adler and Aycan (2018) propose five alternatives for managing intercultural interactions: (a) imposing one's own approach, (b) acquiring the other's approach, (c) developing a creative compromise, (d) tactically avoiding the situation, and (e) improvising in the process of synergistically resolving the situation.

From this point of view, there are subjective cultural perspectives given by ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudices that negatively affect the results of intercultural communication in organisations and need to be eliminated and overcome. Suggestions made by Rensburg (1993) include language training, communication skills training, cultural awareness

courses and intercultural communication training, specifying that the latter should be factual and experiential. Hussain (2018) reaffirms the usefulness of language and intercultural training, among others. For the most part, individual development factors aim to overcome these barriers through learning, awareness, knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and activities. In terms of activities, Leonardi and Rodriguez-Luessma (2013) suggest international visits to learn about how others work and to overcome stereotypes. In the context of communication, people should be encouraged to learn as much as possible about each other's identities and to present their own identities openly (Busch, 2012).

Naturally, some of the factors identified in the literature have been included in a separate category because they relate, par excellence, to the communication process, its elements, characteristics and context. Despite the fact that they are relatively frequently mentioned in the literature, there are also some that require more attention from researchers in order to identify meaningful relationships and suggest areas of action to improve intercultural communication. Research in this area should pay more attention to technical factors related to message encoding and decoding, communication channels and media, and communication characteristics. Research in this area shows that increased attention to the process of encoding and decoding a message, as well as its comprehensibility, increases the chances of success in intercultural communication in an organisational context. If there is any doubt about the clarity of the message, repetition and clarification should be requested (Adanlawo et al., 2021). On the other hand, differences in communication styles need to be managed carefully and action taken to overcome them. A starting point for understanding specific communication practices is to conduct a communication audit, a survey that provides information about employee perceptions and communication behaviours (Brownell, 2020).

This analysis makes a significant contribution to the literature in several ways. An important aspect is the provision of research hypotheses for future research in this area. From this point of view, the synthesis of factors (*Appendix 1*) will be useful for researchers in this area, and the author provides several examples that follow from the most reasonable conclusions:

H1. Power-related boundaries between communication participants have a negative impact on the process of intercultural communication in an organisational context.

H2. Inter-ethnic tensions have a negative impact on communication between members of the target ethnic groups.

H3. Interpersonal orientation and empathy contribute to successful communication in an intercultural context.

H4. Development of sensitivity improves the results of intercultural communication in organisations.

H5. Training has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the communication process.

H6. Awareness is positively associated with effective communication in a multicultural organisational context.

H7. The development of intercultural communication competence and its elements (knowledge and understanding, skills, abilities, intercultural experience) has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the communication process.

H8. Differences between cultures (including cultural values) have a negative impact on the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations.

H9. Language barriers have a negative impact on organisational communication in a multicultural environment.

H10. Ethnocentrism negatively affects the effectiveness of intercultural communication.

H11. Stereotypes have a negative impact on intercultural communication within and between organisations.

H12. Differences in communication style have a negative impact on the communication process in multicultural organisations.

The results of this research contribute both to the level of knowledge in the field and to specific actions in organisational practice to increase the effectiveness of intercultural communication. This study proposes a systematisation of the factors that influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication in organisations by synthesising a comprehensive taxonomy of them. It provides a systemic view of the determinants of communication in multicultural contexts, suggesting relationships, interconnections and interdependencies. It then suggests possible directions for research based on the current state of knowledge in the field, and much more can be deduced from the synthesis provided.

The systemising vision is also clarifying and inspiring for practitioners. They need to continuously monitor and improve communication structures (Brownell, 2020). The clarifying picture of the factors and how they influence intercultural communication suggests lines of action and issues that need to be considered in order to ensure the sustainable development of multicultural organisations, but also to increase the chances of success of intercultural communication both inside and outside the organisation.

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### Appendix 1 Synthesis of factors influencing the effectiveness of intercultural communication in the organisational context

**Table A1. Management-related factors**

Category	Sub-category	Factor	Relationship		
			Positive	Negative	Insignificant
Management-related factors	Management style	Directive management style		Paine and Organ (2000)	Sylaj (2019)
		Receiver-based strategies	Brownell (2020)		
	Planning	Strategic decision making	Brownell (2020)		
		Tight deadlines		Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999)	
	Tasks	Extreme task		Ruben (1977)	
		Task complexity	Stahl <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
	Co-operative orientation	Co-operative goals and strategies	Chen <i>et al.</i> (2005)		
		Co-operative atmosphere	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2006)		
	Culture and management	Multicultural managers	Karjalainen (2020)		
		Effective cross-cultural management	Lahti and Valo (2017)		

**Table A2. Group factors**

Category	Sub-category	Factor	Relationship		
			Positive	Negative	Insignificant
Group factors	Group characteristics	Power boundaries		Adair <i>et al.</i> (2001); Leonardi and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2013); Rosa and Karimov (2018)	
		Compensation boundaries		Adler and Aycan (2018)	
		Border permeability	Shamir and Melnik (2002)		
	Ethnic issues	Collectivism	Gelfand and Christakopoulou (1999); Adair and Brett (2005)		
		Different ethnicity		Okoro (2013)	
		Shared ethnicity	Chong and Thomas (1997)		
		Interethnic tension		Rensburg (1993); Kumar (2004)	

**Table A3. Individual-related factors**

Category	Sub-category	Factor	Relationship		
			Positive	Negative	Insignificant
Individual-related factors	Self-oriented personality traits	Self-centered behavior		Ruben (1977)	
		Self-confidence	Hawes and Kealey (1981)		Clarke and Hammer (1995)
		Self-monitoring and evaluation	Johnson <i>et al.</i> (2003); Brownell (2020)		
	Other-oriented personality traits	Interpersonal orientation	Markus and Kitayama (1991); Rao and Schmidt (1998); Okoro and Washington (2012); Georgescu (2016)		
		Sensitivity	Ruben (1977); English (2001); Yu and Chen (2008); Okoro and Washington (2012); Okoro (2013); Bennett (2017); Brownell (2020)		
		Empathy Assurance	Ruben (1977); Brownell (2020); Shahid (2022)		
		Judgmental perspective		Ruben (1977); Adair <i>et al.</i> (2001)	
		Lack of trust		Lifintsev and Canavilhas (2017)	
	Attitude towards the new and different	Tolerance	Ruben (1977); Okoro (2013)		
		Turn taking	Ruben (1977)		
		Openness	Arman and Aycan (2013)		
		Flexibility	Lahti and Valo (2017); Brownell (2020)	Brett and Okumura (1998)	
	Individual development	Training	Rensburg (1993); English (2001); Okoro (2013); Sun (2013); Oz <i>et al.</i> (2016); Adanlawo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Shahid (2022)		
		Awareness	Kim and Sharkey (1995); Okoro (2012); Georgescu (2016); Lahti and Valo (2017); Hatakka (2021)		Yang <i>et al.</i> (2022)
		Competence	Imai and Gelfand (2010); Okoro and Washington (2012); Okoro (2013)		
Knowledge and understanding		Ruben (1977); English (2001); Busch (2012); Okoro (2013); Georgescu (2016); Hussain (2018); Shahid (2022); Yang <i>et al.</i> (2022)			
Skills		Rensburg (1993); Clarke and Hammer (1995)			
Abilities		Ruben (1977); Okoro (2013)			
Intercultural experience		Okoro (2013); van Bakel <i>et al.</i> (2014); Lifintsev and Canavilhas (2017)			

**Table A4. Cultural factors**

Category	Sub-category	Factor	Relationship		
			Positive	Negative	Insignificant
Cultural factors	Culture in general	Cultural differences	Ayoko <i>et al.</i> (2002)	Gelfand and McCusker (2002); Shamir and Melnik (2002); Ogbonna and Harris (2006); Li (2010); Hussain (2018); Lifintsev and Wellbrock (2019); Jhaiyanuntana and Nomnian (2020); Mogeia (2023)	Sylaj (2019)
		Cultural similarities	Adler and Aycan (2018)		
	Basic elements of culture	Differences in values		Mayer (2010); Li (2010); Lifintsev and Canavilhas (2017); Rosa and Karimov (2018)	
		Value similarities	Byrne (1971); Varma <i>et al.</i> (2016)		
		Differences in norms		Ngai (2000)	
	Language	Language barriers		Rensburg (1993); Adair and Brett (2005); Fredriksson <i>et al.</i> (2006); Liu <i>et al.</i> (2010); Li (2010); Lahti and Valo (2017); Lifintsev and Canavilhas (2017); Rosa and Karimov (2018); Lifintsev and Wellbrock (2019); Bodomo and Che (2020); Brownell (2020); Mogeia (2023)	
		Language level difference		Lifintsev and Wellbrock (2019)	
		Number of languages spoken			Lauring and Selmer (2010)
		Common language	Lauring and Selmer (2010)		Lauring and Selmer (2010)
	Subjective cultural perspective	Ethnocentrism		Adair <i>et al.</i> (2001); Li (2010); Arman and Aycan (2013); Hussain (2018)	
Stereotypes			Li (2010); Leonardi and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2013); Jenifer and Raman (2015); Lifintsev and Canavilhas (2017)		
Cultural prejudice Distorted view on culture			Li (2010) Segers (2002)		

**Table A5. Communication factors**

Category	Sub-category	Factor	Relationship		
			Positive	Negative	Insignificant
1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication factors	Message encoding-decoding	Clarity of the message	Georgescu (2016); Shahid (2022)		
		Carefulness in encoding	Okoro (2013); Brownell (2020)		
		Differences in expression Stories	Grisham (2006)	Rosa and Karimov (2018)	
		Carefulness in decoding	Okoro (2013); Brownell (2020)		
	Communication channels and media	Selective in choosing channel	Okoro (2013)		
		Lean media	Klitmøller and Lauring (2013)		
		Digital tools	Lifintsev and Wellbrock (2019)		
	Storytelling	Barker and Gower (2010)			
1	2	3	4	5	6

(Continuation of Table A5)

<b>Communication style</b>	Differences in communication style		Adair <i>et al.</i> (2001); Adair and Brett (2005); Liu <i>et al.</i> (2010); Mak & Chui (2013)
	Integrating style	Greff and de Bruyne (2000)	
	Different communication culture context		Rosa and Karimov (2018)
<b>Communication context</b>	High context	Gelfand and Christakopoulou (1999); Adair and Brett (2005)	
	Digitalisation	Hesse (2018)	
	Positive communication	Shahid (2022)	
<b>Communication features</b>	Communication frequency	Lauring and Selmer (2010)	
	Feedback	Shahid (2022)	
	Quality of the communication experience (QCE)	Liu <i>et al.</i> (2010)	