

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF MANAGERS AND CONFLICT BEHAVIOUR STYLES IN MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS INTERACTION

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Abstract. This article examines the relationship between managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills and their conflict behaviour styles in multicultural business interactions. It focuses on four components of intercultural communicative competence: intercultural sensitivity; tolerance of uncertainty; active listening; and message adaptation. The empirical basis consists of two comparable cross-sectional survey datasets, each comprising 100 manager responses, collected in 2023 and 2025. The research employed a shortened self-report questionnaire that was based on the conceptual logic of the following models: intercultural sensitivity; tolerance of uncertainty; active listening; message adaptation; and conflict behaviour. The results showed that managers in both samples rated their intercultural communication skills as above average. The 2025 sample had higher mean values for most components than the 2023 sample, particularly for tolerance of uncertainty and message adaptation. Collaboration and compromise were the most common conflict behaviour styles in both samples, while avoidance, competition and accommodation were less common in 2025. Correlation analysis revealed strong positive associations between the components of intercultural communicative competence and constructive conflict behaviour styles, particularly collaboration and compromise. Active listening and message adaptation were found to be most closely associated with constructive responses. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution as all indicators were self-reported and measured using shortened scales within a correlational design. While the results do not prove causal effects, they do indicate consistent patterns between managers' communication self-assessments and conflict behaviour styles. The study's practical value lies in its implications for the foreign language training of future managers. This should encompass professional vocabulary and standard business dialogues, as well as intercultural negotiation scenarios, conflict resolution exercises, active listening tasks, and adapting messages. It should also involve working with uncertainty.

Keywords: intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competence, managers, conflict behaviour, multicultural business interaction, active listening, message adaptation, tolerance of uncertainty, foreign language training, professional training.

JEL Classification: M12, M14, F23, D74

1. Introduction

International business interactions are increasingly taking place in conditions that are culturally, linguistically and organisationally diverse. This means that professional communication cannot be reduced

to the exchange of information, adherence to formal business communication rules, or the ability to use foreign languages beyond routine workplace phrases. In a multicultural environment, managers need to understand different ways of expressing agreement and

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disagreement, recognise indirect signals, adapt their messages for their audience, remain open to alternative viewpoints and act constructively in tense situations.

The importance of intercultural communication competence, which encompasses intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening and message adaptation, becomes especially clear when professional interactions move into conflict-related situations. Cultural differences can affect expectations regarding hierarchy, negotiation style, decision-making speed, limits to directness, how criticism is given, acceptable emotional responses and willingness to openly discuss disagreements. Even with sufficient foreign-language training, a manager who cannot listen, clarify meaning, adapt the way a message is expressed flexibly, and tolerate uncertainty will not be able to interact effectively.

This is directly relevant to training future managers. Foreign language training should not be limited to vocabulary, grammatical structures and standard business dialogue models. Rather, it should equip individuals with the ability to navigate culturally conditioned differences, conduct negotiations, recognise communicative tension, adopt constructive conflict behaviour styles, and foster mutual understanding while maintaining their professional position. This approach is consistent with the broader concept of professional skills as a combination of knowledge, cognitive actions, emotional responses, motivational readiness and behavioural manifestations (Lamri & Lubart, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is related to cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, an inclusive organisational climate, team effectiveness and innovative behaviour (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022; Li et al., 2021; Men et al., 2023; Zhang & Hao, 2022). At the same time, there is still limited empirical evidence on how specific components of managers' intercultural communication align with particular conflict behaviour styles. This issue is important because conflict situations test the practical value of communicative competence. It demonstrates a person's ability to transition from declarative openness to collaboration, compromise, clarification of positions, and the pursuit of a mutually agreeable resolution.

This article aims to examine the relationship between managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills and their conflict behaviour styles in multicultural business interactions. It also seeks to identify the implications of these results for the foreign language training of future managers.

In accordance with this aim, the following research objectives were formulated: firstly, to describe the level of managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills based on two comparable cross-sectional datasets from 2023 and 2025; secondly,

to compare the indicators of specific components of intercultural communicative competence in these two datasets; thirdly, to identify relationships between intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening, message adaptation, and conflict behaviour styles; and fourthly, to outline practical implications for updating the foreign language training of future managers.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that it considers managers' intercultural communication skills not only as a general professional quality, but also as a system of self-assessed characteristics that align with either constructive or less constructive conflict behaviour styles. This approach allows the managerial, communicative and educational aspects of the issue to be connected. The empirical data obtained from managers can be used to improve the foreign language and professional training of future management specialists.

Methodologically, the article is based on a quantitative correlational study with two comparable cross-sectional datasets. Consequently, the results are not interpreted as evidence of a causal influence of intercultural communicative competence on conflict behaviour, or as individual changes among the same respondents over time. The present study aims to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the alignment between managers' self-assessed communication skills and their self-assessed styles of responding in conflict situations.

2. Literature Review

Intercultural communicative competence is currently understood as the ability to interact effectively, ethically and appropriately with people from other cultures. This includes having knowledge of cultural differences, being open to different experiences, having respect for different behavioural norms, being able to adapt communication methods and being able to maintain interactions in uncertain situations. This competence is particularly valuable for managers, whose professional activities often involve negotiations, team coordination, client work, conflict resolution and trust building in multicultural environments.

Klimova and Chen (2024) emphasise that developing intercultural communication competence in higher education requires more than just providing information about the cultural features of a particular country. This requires learning situations in which students learn to act in conditions of cultural difference, interpret another person's position, adapt their own message and reflect critically on possible communicative risks. This approach is particularly important in the foreign language training of future managers because knowing a foreign language does not necessarily mean that one can act constructively in situations of cultural tension.

A related concept is that of cultural humility and culturally sensitive leadership. Markey et al. (2021) argue that effective intercultural teamwork requires knowledge of other cultures, continuous reflection on one's own cultural assumptions, an openness to differences and a readiness to reconsider one's own ways of interacting. For managers, this means that intercultural competence is not an inherent trait that is formed once and for all. Rather, it develops through interaction experience, analysis of communication errors, self-observation, and awareness of the influence of culture on professional expectations.

The concept of cultural intelligence plays an important role in explaining intercultural interaction. Alifuddin and Widodo (2022) define it as the ability to recognise, understand and adapt to cross-cultural situations. Their study showed that cultural intelligence is related to interpersonal communication, psychological capital, and organisational citizenship behaviour. This suggests that cultural adaptability is not an isolated trait. It emerges in broader professional behaviours such as the ability to co-operate, support others, accept social roles within an organisation, and act constructively in challenging situations.

Li et al. (2021) discuss the organisational dimension of cultural intelligence. The authors demonstrated that, in organisations with cultural diversity, employees' cultural intelligence is positively associated with sustainable innovative behaviour, and that this relationship is mediated by knowledge sharing. This is important for the study of managers' intercultural communication for two reasons. Firstly, managers in multicultural environments should adapt personally and create conditions for knowledge exchange among people with diverse experiences. Secondly, constructive conflict behaviour can facilitate such an exchange, whereas avoidance or competition may hinder mutual understanding and the transfer of professional experience.

Men et al. (2023) contribute to this area of research by demonstrating that organisational communication regarding diversity, alongside employees' cultural intelligence, fosters an inclusive climate, thereby enhancing employee engagement. This suggests that a manager's intercultural competence should be considered not only as an individual quality, but also as an element of organisational interaction. This competence is either supported or weakened by corporate culture, leadership style, diversity policies, and the organisation's readiness to openly discuss differences.

Another line of research focuses on developing intercultural competence through education, mobility and experiencing immersion in a different cultural environment. Przytuła et al. (2023) demonstrated that short-term international mobility programmes enhance students' cross-cultural competence, encompassing

knowledge, negotiation skills, conflict management abilities, tolerance, openness, and trust. These findings are important for training future managers, as they highlight the need to incorporate negotiation scenarios, conflict analysis, role interaction and reflection on cultural differences, as well as language exercises, into foreign language learning.

The emotional dimension of intercultural communication is also important in a managerial context. Zhang and Hao (2022) found that project managers with high emotional intelligence tend to have more effective teams, and that team cohesion mediates this relationship. Akhter et al. (2021) demonstrated that emotional and cultural intelligence are significant predictors of employee satisfaction within the banking sector. Santa et al. (2023) found that emotional intelligence influences operational effectiveness via organisational citizenship behaviour. Taken together, these studies suggest that constructive professional communication requires knowledge of culture, as well as the ability to regulate emotions, maintain trust and prevent negative interactions in tense situations.

Semenog et al. (2024) and Hrona et al. (2024) also discuss the relationship between the culture of professional communication and emotional intelligence. The authors emphasise that professional communication involves recognising the emotional state of one's interlocutor, understanding one's own reactions, preventing the escalation of tension and maintaining professional relationships. This point is particularly relevant in the context of studying managers' intercultural communication, given that cultural differences can often increase the risk of emotional misunderstandings. In such situations, active listening and adapting messages are not just technical skills, but also a means of preserving mutual understanding.

Active listening and message adaptation are behavioural manifestations of intercultural communicative competence. Studies of active empathic listening view this skill as a combination of perception and the cognitive processing of information, resulting in a communicative response that demonstrates an understanding of the interlocutor's position (Bodie, 2011). Portalla and Chen (2010) argue that message adaptation involves tailoring the style, pace, language and presentation of information to the interlocutor. In a managerial context, these skills help to clarify meanings, reduce the risk of misinterpretation and maintain dialogue, even when parties have different cultural expectations.

Studies of effective communication in teamwork also confirm the importance of these components. For example, Meneses-la-Riva et al. (2025) found a strong relationship between effective communication and teamwork. They emphasised the role of communication in coordinating team processes, motivating team members, and resolving conflicts.

While this study was conducted in a healthcare setting, its findings can be applied to managerial interactions. The quality of communication affects not only the exchange of information, but also a team's ability to act in a coordinated manner in challenging situations.

Managing conflict in a multicultural environment requires a combination of intercultural sensitivity, emotional self-regulation, active listening and negotiation skills. According to the model by Thomas and Kilmann (1974), there are five styles of conflict behaviour: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accommodation. Intercultural business interactions are especially productive when they are based on collaboration and compromise, as these approaches are oriented towards discussing positions, coordinating interests, and finding an acceptable solution. While avoidance, competition and excessive accommodation are not always destructive, in situations of cultural tension they can hinder mutual understanding, exacerbate underlying disagreements and increase power imbalances.

The development of digital technologies has created new opportunities for developing intercultural communication skills. Rudenko et al. (2022) justified the use of web quests in the professional training of management students. This learning format is effective in developing such competence because it supports the development of negotiation, analytical and conflict management skills through role play, team decision-making and presentation of results. Klimova and Chen (2024) observe that artificial intelligence tools, such as chatbots and virtual simulations, can facilitate the modelling of intercultural situations and the practice of communicative responses in digital environments. However, the authors also highlight risks stemming from algorithmic cultural insensitivity, unequal access to technology, and the need for human support. Research on career expectations in the age of AI (Semenikhina & Drushlyak, 2026) also shows that digital and AI tools can facilitate negotiation modelling and communication error analysis, but their use must be critical.

Thus, a review of the current research shows that the intercultural communication competence of managers lies at the intersection of several research areas, including cultural and emotional intelligence, an inclusive organisational climate, team effectiveness, professional communication, conflict behaviour and foreign language training. Nevertheless, existing studies do not empirically explain how specific components of managers' intercultural communication relate to their particular behavioural styles in conflict situations. This study addresses this research gap.

3. Research Methodology

The study examined the relationship between managers' intercultural communication skills and their

behavioural styles in tense communication situations involving multicultural business interactions. The study was designed as a quantitative correlational study, with two comparable cross-sectional datasets collected among managers of Ukrainian companies in 2023 and 2025. This design enabled the level of managers' self-assessed intercultural communication competence to be described, the indicators to be compared in the two time periods, and the statistical relationships between communicative characteristics and conflict behaviour styles to be identified.

The decision to employ a correlational design was informed by the nature of the study. The analysis focused not on experimentally induced changes, but on the relationships between managers' self-assessed communication skills and their typical responses in conflict situations. Consequently, the results were not interpreted as evidence of a causal effect of intercultural communicative competence on conflict behaviour. These were regarded as empirical evidence of alignment between the relevant self-assessed indicators.

The main analytical variables in the first group were the four components of ICC: intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening and message adaptation. The second group of analytical variables included five conflict behaviour styles: collaboration, compromise, avoidance, competition and accommodation. Background characteristics of the respondents included age, gender, years of managerial experience, experience of working in a multicultural environment and proficiency in a foreign language for workplace communication. These indicators were used to describe the sample and interpret differences between the two cross-sectional datasets, exercising caution. The structure of the variables corresponded to the research design, in which the components of intercultural communicative competence were considered characteristics of constructive or less constructive conflict behaviour styles.

An anonymous questionnaire survey was used to collect the data. This was developed as a shortened self-report instrument based on the conceptual logic of well-known scales and models of intercultural communication, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening, message adaptation and conflict behaviour styles. However, the study did not use the full, original versions of these standardised instruments. The instrument used in this study had a compact structure and was adapted to its specific aims.

The questionnaire included a section for providing general information, in which respondents indicated their age, gender, years of managerial experience, experience of working with people from different cultural backgrounds, and proficiency in foreign languages for workplace communication. The response options for foreign language proficiency were categorised as basic (A1–A2), intermediate

(B1–B2), sufficient (C1) or fluent (C2). This section was used to describe the sample and interpret differences between the two time periods.

The main part of the questionnaire comprised five content sections. The first section measured intercultural sensitivity, which is the emotional component of intercultural competence. This section contained statements about the enjoyment of communicating with people from other cultures, respect for cultural customs, confidence when interacting with people from different cultures, and reactions to different cultural norms. Items 2 and 5 were reverse-coded. This section adhered to the general logic of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale by Chen and Starosta in terms of its content, but did not reproduce its full 24-item structure. The original scale has a broader factor structure that includes interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment and attention to verbal and non-verbal signals.

The second section focused on tolerance of uncertainty. It recorded how respondents reacted to unpredictable situations, novel experiences, unexpected changes in conversation, and having to act without clear instructions. Following the logic of the MSTAT-I questionnaire, this section was conceptually related to the measurement of tolerance of uncertainty, but it was presented in a shortened form and assessed on a five-point scale.

The third section assessed the ability to engage in active listening. It included statements about focusing on the speaker, summarising what had been said, paying attention to tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures, not interrupting and asking clarifying questions. This section reflected the behavioural dimension of intercultural communication because, in multicultural interaction, understanding the interlocutor depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the ability to recognise semantic, emotional and non-verbal cues.

The fourth section focused on message adaptation, i.e., the manager's communicative flexibility. This included adapting communication style to the interlocutor, speaking more slowly and using simpler words when communicating with foreigners, avoiding unclear words or expressions, adjusting communication style during interaction and choosing topics based on the interlocutor's cultural background. Item 19 was reverse-coded. While this section was conceptually related to message adaptation indicators, it was also used as a shortened self-report subscale rather than a full standardised instrument.

The fifth section assessed conflict behaviour styles. Respondents were presented with statements that described various responses to conflict or tense communication situations. Five styles were identified: collaboration, compromise, avoidance, competition

and accommodation. Each style was represented by two statements, which were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 'not at all characteristic' to 'always characteristic'. Collaboration and compromise were considered constructive because they involve seeking a mutually acceptable solution or being willing to make concessions. The concepts of avoidance, competition and accommodation were interpreted more cautiously. While they are not inherently destructive, in situations of intercultural tension, they may suggest challenges in openly discussing disagreements, an overzealous adherence to one's own position, or the abandonment of one's own interests to maintain external harmony. It is important to note that this section does not represent the full Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, which uses a different measurement procedure in its classical form. This study used short self-report indicators of conflict behaviour that were conceptually aligned with the Thomas-Kilmann five-style model.

All items in the main sections were assessed using a five-point scale. Some items in the sections on intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty and message adaptation were reverse-coded. Then, mean values were calculated for each respondent for the relevant subscales. The general index of intercultural communicative competence was calculated by taking the mean of the four component scores: intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening and message adaptation. Mean values were also calculated for each of the five conflict behaviour styles separately. This approach corresponded with the structure of the available data, which comprised the ISS, TU, AL and MA variables, as well as indicators of collaboration, compromise, avoidance, competition and accommodation.

The empirical basis of the study consisted of two survey datasets: the 2023 and 2025 datasets. Each of the datasets under consideration included 100 responses from managers, thus yielding a total of 200 empirical observations. The data were considered as two comparable cross-sectional datasets. Consequently, the comparison between 2023 and 2025 was interpreted as differences between two time periods, rather than as individual changes among the same participants.

The data quality was checked before the statistical analysis. This involved examining the completeness of the questionnaires, the presence of missing values, whether the responses corresponded to the valid range of the five-point scale, whether the respondent identifiers were unique within each dataset and whether the variable coding was correct. No missing values, responses outside the 1–5 scale or duplicate identifiers were found in any of the datasets. Therefore, all 200 questionnaires were included in the subsequent analysis.

The statistical analysis comprised several stages. At the first stage, the data were prepared by checking the coding, recoding reverse-coded items, calculating the mean values for the subscales and forming the general index of intercultural communicative competence. The second stage involved calculating descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations and minimum and maximum values for the main indicators, separately for 2023 and 2025. In the third stage, the indicators from the two time periods were compared. As the data was self-reported and presented on Likert-type scales, parametric and non-parametric tests were both used for the comparison. When interpreting the results, priority was given to those that were consistent across different testing procedures.

The fourth stage involved analysing the correlations between the components of intercultural communicative competence and conflict behaviour styles. Particular focus was given to the relationships between intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening, adapting messages and constructive behaviour styles, particularly collaboration and compromise. Additionally, the relationship between the general index of intercultural communicative competence and the avoidance, competition and accommodation styles was analysed. As some of the indicators were conceptually similar and were measured using the same self-report questionnaire, the correlation coefficients were interpreted as indicating alignment in response patterns rather than independent behavioural effects.

At the fifth stage, the results were interpreted in terms of their practical value for the foreign language training of future managers. As the questionnaire included a self-assessment of foreign language proficiency for workplace communication, the results showed that language training can be considered not only as learning lexical and grammatical means, but also as developing a broader ability to act in intercultural business interactions. This includes listening, clarifying meanings, adapting messages, tolerating uncertainty and searching for constructive solutions in situations of communicative tension.

The study's limitations are primarily related to the self-report nature of the questionnaire. Respondents' answers reflect their perception of their own communication behaviour and may therefore be influenced by socially desirable ideas about the 'correct'

behaviour of a manager. Another limitation is the use of shortened indicators instead of full standardised scales, meaning the obtained indices must be interpreted with caution. Another limitation is the correlational design, which does not permit direct causal inferences. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as indicating statistical relationships between the different indicators, rather than as evidence that a particular component of intercultural communicative competence directly causes a specific conflict behaviour style to be chosen.

4. Results

Both datasets were structured to include the respondents' socio-demographic and professional characteristics, as well as their responses to shortened self-report indicators of intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening, message adaptation and conflict behaviour styles. The mean age of the respondents was 41.29 years. Their mean managerial experience was 5.08 years, and their mean experience of working in a multicultural environment was 3.61 years. There was a slight difference in the structure of foreign language proficiency between the two samples: in 2023, most respondents reported an intermediate level, whereas in 2025, a higher proportion of respondents reported sufficient or fluent proficiency.

Initial descriptive statistics showed that managers generally assessed their intercultural communication skills highly in both time periods. In the 2023 sample (see Table 1), the mean score for the general index of intercultural communicative competence was $M = 3.84$, with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.89$. In the 2025 sample, this indicator was higher, with a mean of $M = 4.06$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 1.01$. Thus, the 2025 sample showed higher mean scores for self-assessed intercultural communicative competence than the 2023 sample. The most visible difference concerned tolerance of uncertainty: $M = 3.70$ in 2023 and $M = 4.04$ in 2025. Furthermore, the 2025 sample demonstrated higher levels of message adaptation, active listening, and intercultural sensitivity.

The highest indicators in both samples were intercultural sensitivity and active listening. This suggests that respondents generally assessed their

Table 1

General index of intercultural communicative competence

Indicator	2023 M	2023 SD	2025 M	2025 SD	Difference
Intercultural sensitivity	3.98	0.79	4.12	0.93	+0.13
Tolerance of uncertainty	3.70	0.99	4.04	1.05	+0.33
Active listening	3.89	0.88	4.06	1.02	+0.17
Message adaptation	3.78	0.93	4.04	1.05	+0.26
General ICC index	3.84	0.89	4.06	1.01	+0.22

openness to representatives of other cultures, their readiness to respect cultural differences, and their ability to listen, clarify, and avoid interrupting the interlocutor positively.

The conflict behaviour styles of managers were analysed separately (see Table 2). In 2023, the highest mean values were observed for compromise ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.74$) and collaboration ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.92$). In 2025, these two styles also remained dominant: compromise $M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.99$; collaboration $M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.03$. Consequently, in both samples, self-assessed constructive styles were more prevalent than avoidance, competition, and accommodation.

A comparison of the two time periods indicated that the differences in the general index of intercultural communicative competence were moderate. The parametric t-test revealed that the discrepancy in the general ICC index did not attain the customary statistical significance threshold, though it did approximate it ($t = -1.66$; $p = 0.098$; $d = 0.24$). Concurrently, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test revealed a statistically significant discrepancy in the overall ICC index ($U = 4187.00$; $p = 0.042$). Consequently, it is logical to discuss the observed cross-sectional differences in self-assessed indicators of intercultural communicative competence.

The most significant statistical discrepancy was identified in the tolerance of uncertainty ($t = -2.32$; $p = 0.021$; $d = 0.33$). The non-parametric test yielded statistically significant differences in active listening, message adaptation, and the general ICC index. This finding indicates that in the 2025 sample, respondents exhibited a heightened propensity to act in ambiguous situations, to exercise greater attentiveness towards their interlocutor, and to adapt messages to the conditions of intercultural interaction.

The most significant difference in conflict behaviour styles was the decrease in accommodation, which fell from $M = 3.24$ in 2023 to $M = 2.66$ in 2025 ($t = 4.77$; $p < 0.001$; $d = -0.67$). The general indicator of less constructive responses was also lower in 2025: $M = 2.49$ compared to $M = 2.83$ in 2023 ($t = 2.44$; $p = 0.016$; $d = -0.35$). This means that, compared to the 2025 sample, respondents were less likely to describe themselves in terms of avoidance-

related, competitive, or passive-accommodation-related behaviour. At the same time, the increase in collaboration and compromise was less pronounced. Therefore, while the results suggest a shift in the structure of self-assessed responses towards more constructive ways of reacting, they do not prove a change in conflict behaviour.

Correlation analysis confirmed strong positive relationships between the components of intercultural communicative competence and constructive conflict behaviour styles (see Table 3). In 2023, the general ICC index exhibited very strong positive correlations with collaboration ($\rho = 0.97$, $p < 0.001$), compromise ($\rho = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$) and the general constructive style ($\rho = 0.98$, $p < 0.001$). At the same time, the relationship with less constructive styles was negative ($\rho = -0.89$; $p < 0.001$). This tendency remained in 2025: the relationship between the general ICC index and the constructive style was $\rho = 0.99$, while the relationship with the less constructive style was $\rho = -0.97$.

The strongest correlations with constructive behaviour were found for active listening and message adaptation. This is important when interpreting the results because these components are most directly connected to real communication. For example, a manager who declares respect for cultural differences will also change their way of speaking, clarify meanings, control the pace and form of the message, and respond to the interlocutor's non-verbal signals.

Thus, the results allow several empirical generalisations to be made. Firstly, managers in both samples assessed their intercultural communication skills as above average. Secondly, the mean values for most ICC components were higher in the 2025 sample than in the 2023 sample. Thirdly, self-assessed ICC components were positively correlated with collaboration and compromise, and negatively correlated with less constructive behavioural styles. Fourthly, active listening and message adaptation were the components most closely aligned with constructive responses in conflict situations.

5. Discussion

The results show that managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills align with their

Table 2
Managers' conflict behaviour styles

Conflict behaviour style	2023 M	2023 SD	2025 M	2025 SD	Difference
Collaboration	3.89	0.92	4.06	1.03	+0.18
Compromise	4.01	0.74	4.09	0.99	+0.08
Avoidance	2.60	1.02	2.41	1.22	-0.19
Competition	2.67	1.04	2.41	1.22	-0.26
Accommodation	3.24	0.74	2.66	0.98	-0.59
General constructive style	3.95	0.81	4.07	1.01	+0.13
General less constructive style	2.83	0.84	2.49	1.14	-0.35

Table 3

Relationships between ICC components and constructive conflict behaviour styles

ICC component	Collaboration 2023	Compromise 2023	Less constructive styles 2023	Collaboration 2025	Compromise 2025	Less constructive styles 2025
Intercultural sensitivity	0.97	0.96	−0.90	0.99	0.99	−0.97
Tolerance of uncertainty	0.96	0.94	−0.90	0.99	1.00	−0.98
Active listening	0.98	0.95	−0.89	1.00	1.00	−0.98
Message adaptation	0.97	0.95	−0.89	0.99	1.00	−0.98
General ICC index	0.97	0.95	−0.89	0.99	0.98	−0.97

conflict behaviour styles. In two comparable cross-sectional samples from 2023 and 2025, higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening and message adaptation were associated with higher levels of collaboration and compromise. At the same time, these components were negatively related to less constructive response styles. These findings support the view that a manager's intercultural communicative competence is not only a general professional quality, but also a resource for behaviour in situations of communicative tension.

The first result relates to the general level of self-assessed intercultural communication skills. In both samples, managers rated their own skills as above average. In the 2025 sample, the mean values for most components were higher than in 2023. However, these differences should be interpreted as cross-sectional, rather than as individual changes among the same respondents. Nevertheless, the tendency towards higher scores in 2025 may suggest that intercultural communication is becoming increasingly important for managers in a business environment characterised by international contacts, digital interaction and collaboration with partners from different cultural backgrounds.

The most visible difference in cross-sectional analysis was found in tolerance of uncertainty. This result has a clear explanation. In intercultural business interactions, uncertainty is a common feature of professional communication. This arises because people may have different views on negotiation styles, power distance, direct expression of disagreement, decision-making pace and acceptable emotional expression. A manager who can tolerate uncertainty better is more likely to remain in the space of discussion, clarification, and the search for a mutually acceptable solution, rather than moving into avoidance or competition. This aligns with the findings of Przytuła et al. (2023), who demonstrated that experience of international mobility fosters tolerance, openness, trust, negotiation skills, and conflict management abilities.

The second result relates to the structure of conflict behaviour. In both samples, the mean values for collaboration and compromise were the highest. This suggests that respondents more often described themselves as engaging in constructive responses.

However, the 2025 sample showed lower levels of the indicators of avoidance, competition and, in particular, accommodation. This suggests a difference in the structure of self-assessed responses between the two samples. According to the Thomas and Kilmann (1974) model, this can be interpreted as indicating a stronger orientation towards coordinating interests than towards avoiding conflict, dominating, or showing passive compliance.

The third result is the strong positive correlation between the components of intercultural communicative competence and constructive behavioural styles. This finding is consistent with studies of cultural intelligence, which have found a link between the ability to recognise and adapt to cross-cultural situations and interpersonal communication, organisational behaviour, knowledge sharing and innovative activity (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022; Li et al., 2021). A similar pattern emerged in this study with regard to conflict behaviour: managers who rated their intercultural communication skills more highly were also more likely to describe themselves as inclined to collaboration and compromise.

At the same time, the very high correlation coefficients indicate strong alignment in response patterns. While this does not diminish the value of the results, it does define the limits of their interpretation. The most meaningful relationships were found between active listening, message adaptation and constructive behavioural styles. These components are not confined to a generally positive attitude towards cultural diversity. Rather, they reflect specific communication actions such as listening, reformulating, asking clarifying questions, noticing non-verbal signals, and adapting the pace and form of the message according to the interlocutor. This is consistent with Bodie's (2011) definition of active listening as a combination of perception, cognitive processing, and responding in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of another person's perspective. Similarly, Portalla and Chen (2010) argue that effective intercultural interaction hinges on the ability to adapt messages to specific communication contexts.

This result is important for managerial practice. In a conflict situation, a manager cannot always eliminate cultural differences or organisational

contradictions immediately. However, they can influence communication by avoiding hasty judgements, clarifying the meaning of messages, checking their own interpretations, changing the wording and reducing the categorical tone of statements. These actions create the conditions necessary for transitioning from tension to collaboration or compromise. The findings of Meneses-la-Riva et al. (2025) on the relationship between effective communication and teamwork support this logic, demonstrating that communication serves not only as a channel for information exchange, but also as a mechanism for coordination, motivation, conflict prevention and trust restoration.

The results of the study can also be explained by the relationship between professional communication and emotional intelligence. In an intercultural environment, tension can arise from both the content and the manner in which a disagreement is expressed. For example, what is perceived as honest directness in one culture may be perceived as aggression or disrespect in another. What constitutes caution in one professional group may appear to be a lack of responsibility in another. Therefore, managers need to be able to recognise the emotional state of their interlocutors, regulate their own reactions, and maintain interactions without them escalating. This aligns with studies by Zhang and Hao (2022), Akhter et al. (2021) and Santa et al. (2023), as well as the conclusions of Kharchenko and Semenikhina (2024) regarding the relationship between professional communication culture and emotional intelligence.

The practical value of the results lies in the fact that future managers' foreign language training should focus not only on language accuracy and professional vocabulary, but also on typical business dialogues. It should also include exercises in intercultural listening, reformulating positions, clarifying meanings, selecting neutral and culturally sensitive wording, and dealing with uncertain or conflict-related situations. This can make future managers' foreign language training more relevant to real managerial situations, in which language competence is combined with intercultural sensitivity, emotional self-regulation and the ability to reach agreement.

In this regard, the approach of Rudenko et al. (2022) is useful. The efficacy of web quests in the professional training of students in management specialities was justified. It is possible to adapt a web quest to the topic of intercultural business communication by ensuring that it includes negotiation situations, culturally ambiguous cases, conflicts between team members, or tasks that require the preparation of a joint solution in a foreign language. This format fosters not only language practice, but also active listening, argumentation, analysis of positions, teamwork, and the ability to coordinate interests.

The results of the study also have broader organisational implications. Men et al. (2023) demonstrate that cultural intelligence and communication about diversity among employees fosters an inclusive climate and engagement. In this study, this concept can be applied to the behaviour of managers in conflict situations: even highly developed individual communication skills require organisational cultural support. If an organisation does not encourage open discussion of differences and punishes mistakes in intercultural communication rather than analysing them, it becomes more difficult for managers to encourage collaboration and compromise. Therefore, developing managers' intercultural communication competence should combine individual training with organisational practices that support diversity.

In view of this, the results can be related to the broader approach of Omelyanenko et al. (2020), who consider the innovative development of society in terms of the relationships between technological, economic and socio-cultural factors. According to this logic, managers' intercultural communication skills form part of an organisation's human capital. These skills support the ability to act in an international environment, coordinate different professional and cultural perspectives, prevent destructive conflicts and foster co-operation. Therefore, these skills should not be considered secondary 'soft' skills, but rather as a component of managerial preparedness for innovative and international activities.

Consequently, the study's findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of a manager's intercultural communicative competence as an applied professional ability. This is evident not only in a positive attitude towards representatives of other cultures, but also in the ability to act in situations of misunderstanding, tension, or conflict. Active listening, message adaptation, and tolerance of uncertainty are especially important for such behaviour. If the aim is not only to achieve formal foreign language proficiency, but also to prepare future managers for constructive professional interaction in a multicultural business environment, these components should be strengthened in their training.

6. Conclusions

The study enabled the relationship between managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills and their behaviour styles in conflict situations involving multicultural business interactions to be described. Intercultural communicative competence was considered in terms of four components: intercultural sensitivity, tolerance of uncertainty, active listening and message adaptation. The results show that these components are associated with constructive response styles, particularly collaboration and compromise.

A comparison of two comparable cross-sectional samples from 2023 and 2025 revealed that, in both samples, managers assessed their intercultural communication skills at or above the average level. In the 2025 sample, the mean values for the majority of components were higher than in 2023, especially for tolerance of uncertainty and message adaptation. Concomitantly, these disparities should be interpreted as cross-sectional rather than individual changes among the same respondents.

Analysis of conflict behaviour styles showed collaboration and compromise to be dominant in both samples. Compared to 2025, respondents in 2025 gave lower self-assessments of their tendency towards avoidance, competition, and accommodation. This may suggest a reduced tendency towards passive or tense responses. The most notable decrease was in accommodation, i.e., behaviour in which a person gives up their own position to maintain external harmony.

Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between the components of intercultural communicative competence and constructive behavioural styles. Active listening and message adaptation were most closely associated with collaboration and compromise. This suggests that, in addition to knowledge of cultural differences and general openness to other cultures, managers need to

take concrete communicative actions such as active listening, clarifying, reformulating and choosing clear, culturally sensitive wording.

The practical value of the results lies in their potential to update the foreign-language training of future managers. Such training should encompass not only professional vocabulary and typical business dialogues, but also the modelling of intercultural negotiations, the analysis of communicative misunderstandings, role-playing of conflict situations, the practise of active listening, the adaptation of messages, and the management of uncertainty. It is recommended that these components be incorporated into the foreign language training of future managers, as they were found to be most closely aligned with constructive response styles in this study.

The limitations of the study are related to the self-report nature of the data, the use of shortened indicators instead of full standardised scales, and the correlational design. Consequently, the results should not be interpreted as evidence of a causal effect of intercultural communicative competence on conflict behaviour. It is recommended that further research be conducted on larger samples. Such research should utilise situational tasks, expert assessment and educational interventions to develop future managers' intercultural communication skills.

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