

LAPPEENRANTA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Department of Business Administration

International Marketing

**Intercultural Competence of Masters of Science in Business
Administration and in Technology**

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of the thesis is to find out what kind of intercultural competence graduates of Lappeenranta University of Technology should have in order to be successful in global working environment. This study should also learn is it possible to use the concept of International Professional concerning all graduates of LUT and make a recommendation on that, how can LUT improve intercultural competence of its graduates.

The theoretical part discusses the main elements of intercultural communication, a definition of intercultural competence and professional competences needed by LUT graduates. The empirical part of the study is executed as employer's interviews with focused interview tactic. In the conclusion the findings of the empirical part are compared to the findings of the literature review.

The results show that intercultural competence is formed by three interdependent dimensions; affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioral dimension. Based on theoretical and empirical sections can be also said that affective dimension includes empathy, tolerance for ambiguity and attitudes of curiosity and openness. Cognitive dimension consists of general- and specific-cultural knowledge, knowledge of one's own culture, linguistic ability and professional competence. Communicative, behavioural dimension consists of the interaction management. According to employers, professional know how and language skills are a must. Though today, international experience and cultural knowledge will give graduates extra merit and it can be the crucial point when competing for the future jobs. LUT could improve intercultural competence of its graduates by offering a course of intercultural issues which would be situated among basic studies.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää minkälaista kulttuurienvälistä kompetenssia Lappeenrannan teknillisestä yliopistosta vastavalmistuneilla kauppätieteenmaistereilla sekä diplomi-insinööreillä tulisi olla työnantajien näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on myös tarkastella, että voidaanko kaikkia Lappeenrannan teknillisestä yliopistosta valmistuvia kutsua Kansainvälisiksi Huippuosajiksi sekä kuinka Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto voisi parantaa vastavalmistuvien kulttuurienvälistä kompetenssia.

Teoreettinen osa tarkastelee kulttuurienvälisen kommunikaation tärkeimpiä elementtejä, kulttuurienvälistä kompetenssia ja vastavalmistuneiden kauppätieteenmaistereiden sekä diplomi-insinöörien tarvitsemaa ammatillista osaamista. Empiria koostuu kymmenen työnantajien teemahaastattelun tuloksista. Lopuksi johtopäätöksissä empirian tuloksia verrataan teorian löydöksiin.

Tulokset osoittavat että kulttuurienvälinen kompetenssi koostuu kolmesta dimensiosta: henkilökohtaisista ominaisuuksista, tiedosta ja kommunikointikyvystä. Henkilökohtaisiin ominaisuuksiin sisältyvät empaattisuus, epävarmuuden sietokyky sekä avoin ja utelias asenne. Tieto – ulottuvuus koostuu yleisestä ja erityisestä kulttuuritiedosta, kielitaidosta sekä ammatillisesta osaamisesta. Kommunikointikykyyn puolestaan sisältyvät hyvät vuorovaikutustaidot. Työnantajat olettavat nykyään vastavalmistuneilla olevan ammatillisen osaamisen ja kielitaidon lisäksi, kulttuuritietoutta sekä kansainvälistä kokemusta. Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto voisi parantaa vastavalmistuneiden kulttuurienvälistä kompetenssia tarjoamalla kulttuurienvälisen kommunikaation opetusta.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 The research objective and questions	4
1.3 Limitations	5
1.4 Definitions	7
1.5 Literature overview	9
1.6 Preliminary theoretical framework.....	12
1.7 Methodology	14
1.8 The structure of the thesis.....	15
2. ELEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION	16
2.1 Understanding culture and communication.....	17
2.1.1 Defining culture	17
2.1.2 Defining communication	20
2.2 Dimensions of cultural variability	22
2.2.1 Individualism-Collectivism.....	22
2.2.2 Low- and High-Context Communication.....	23
2.2.3 Power distance	25
2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance	25
2.2.5 Masculinity – Femininity	26
2.3 Understanding intercultural communication process	28
3. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	33
3.1 Affective dimension	34
3.2 Cognitive dimension.....	36
3.2.1 Culture-general knowledge.....	36
3.2.2 Culture-specific knowledge.....	37
3.2.3 Knowledge of one’s own cultural system	38
3.2.4 Linguistic ability.....	40
3.3 Communicative, behavioural dimension	41

4. COMPETENCES NEEDED BY GRADUATES IN ECONOMICS AND ENGINEERING	46
4.1 Professional competencies	46
4.1.1 Masters of Science in Business Administration.....	46
4.1.2 Masters of Science in Technology.....	49
4.2 Intercultural competence	51
4.2.1 LUT and internationality.....	54
4.3 The research framework of this study	57
5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	60
5.1 Three version of interview data	61
5.2 Reliability and validity	65
6. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	67
6.1 Affective dimension	69
6.2 Cognitive dimension	71
6.2.1 Culture-general and culture-specific knowledge	71
6.2.2 Knowledge of one's own cultural system	74
6.2.3 Linguistic ability.....	75
6.2.4 Professional competence	77
6.3 Communicative, behavioural dimension	79
6.4 The model of intercultural competence.....	82
6.5 Employers` expectations concerning intercultural competence of LUT graduates.....	86
6.5.1 The level of intercultural competence.....	88
6.5.2 Improvements	89
6.5.3 Recommendations to business and electrical engineering students	92
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	95
7.1 Theoretical contribution	95
7.2 Managerial implications.....	97
7.3 Further research suggestions.....	99
LIST OF REFERENCES	101
APPENDIX 1.	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Reasons for the increasing need of intercultural competence. (Prolang 2000, 117-118).....	2
Figure 2. The amount of outgoing students of LUT on the basis of departments in the years 1999 - 2005. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005a).....	6
Figure 3. The preliminary framework of the study (adapted from Adler 1997, 69).....	14
Figure 4. Intercultural Communication Model. Adapted from Adler 1997, 69.	30
Figure 5. The structure of the degree in the major of international marketing. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005c)	48
Figure 6. The structure of the degree in electrical engineering. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2004a, 302-303).....	50
Figure 7. Competence profiles of the members of TEK, percents of the respondents (Adapted from Savolainen and Taukojärvi 2003, 13)	52
Figure 8. The research framework of the study (Applied from Gertsen 1992, 347)	58
Figure 9. The final model of intercultural competence (applied from Gertsen 1992, 347)	96

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Intercultural competence as affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioral dimension.....	44
Table 2. Exchange statistics: incoming and outgoing students 1999-2005. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005b)	55
Table 3. Three versions of interview data (Silverman 2001, 87)	61
Table 4. The chosen employers of the departments of business administration and electrical engineering.....	64
Table 5. Dimensions of intercultural competence founded in the theoretical and empirical parts of the study.....	86

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

National economies are increasingly integrated into a global economy and major companies act world-wide. The need for improved communication and the ability to understand different countries and cultures increases, as well as contacts with foreigners without leaving the home base. There is a growing demand for individuals who are interculturally competent, those who can work and live effectively with others from different cultures. (Taylor 1994, 389; Irandoust & Sjöberg 2001, 70) As global competition and cultural diversity in the workplace continue to increase, people possessing intercultural competence will be of extreme importance in managing relationships that cross cultural boundaries. (Bush, Rose, Gilbert & Ingram 2001, 401).

Global companies have to manage cultural diversity both within the company and its external environment. Many jobs now entail an international dimension, so the challenge communicating ideas and making decisions with people from different cultural backgrounds is no longer limited to a relatively elite group of expatriate managers who develop skills and knowledge by living abroad for years at time. (Adler 1997, 124; 126 & Bartlett and Ghoshal 1992, 102) To work effectively, everyone from the Chief Executive Officer to the lowest employee needs intercultural competence (Adler 1997, 124; 126). An interculturally competent staff can be seen as a source of competitive advantage (Hoecklin 1995, 15).

Because of the fast rate of the process of internationalization and globalization also in Finland, intercultural competence, the ability to behave in an effective way in different cultures speaking different

languages and processing different religions is becoming increasingly important for Finns as well (Lehtonen 1998, 302). International contacts and work require awareness of foreign cultures, which goes beyond the traditional learning of foreign language skills. (Prolang 2000, 117-118) Reasons for the increasing need of intercultural competence are summarized in Figure 1.

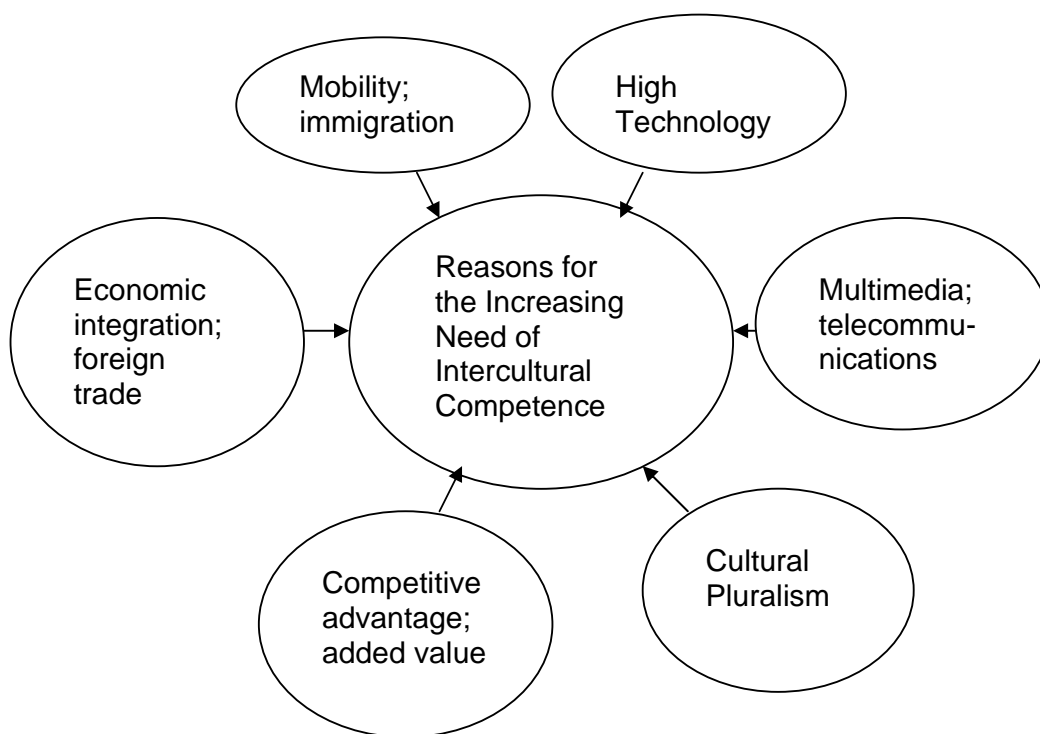


Figure 1. Reasons for the increasing need of intercultural competence.
(Prolang 2000, 117-118)

Even if there are regulations connected with visas and work permits that slow down the mobility of labour, the fact is that more and more Finns work in companies the ownership of which is partially or totally foreign, and the business operations are mostly outside Finland. (Korhonen 2002, 20) As Adler (1997, 298) points out, international mergers and acquisitions take place more frequently than before. Thousands of Finnish international

transfers, or sojourners, and self-initiated international employees work abroad. Furnham and Bochner (1986) defines sojourn as temporary stay at a new place. According to Tahvanainen (1998, 8-9) expatriates have been sent within their companies to work in a local subsidiary of a home country multinational enterprise or with a project-type delivery for a specific time, which usually ranges from six months up to three years.

Most studies of expatriates conclude that lack of technical qualifications is not the main reason for their home coming. When people fail in their assignments abroad it is more frequently because of personal problems or inability to adjust to the foreign cultures. (Gertsen 1992, 346) Failures on international assignments cost a lot of money and sometimes also reputation and that is why intercultural competence should be paid more attention to when recruiting employees. (Korhonen 2002, 178)

Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT) has taken into account the demands of the internationalisation of working life. According to the mission of LUT 2010 strategy, *“Lappeenranta University of Technology will educate International Professionals who have expertise in their own fields and a strong ethical basis as well as the ability to continuously learn and develop themselves.”* (LUT strategy 2002, 3) Lappeenranta University of Technology internationalization strategy 2010 is a sub strategy of the LUT 2010 strategy and it was elaborated concurrently with the main strategy. The internationalization strategy offers a little more information on that, what is meant by International Professional. In the mission on internationalization, a goal of LUT regarding internationalization is defined as follows: *“Lappeenranta University of Technology educates experts in technology and economics for the international labour market.”* According to the vision of the internationalisation strategy, in the year 2010, graduates of Lappeenranta University of Technology are internationally oriented specialists and sought-after employees. In addition, the aim of internationalization at home is formulated as follows: *“graduates of Lappeenranta University of Technology are internationally oriented and*

have the skills to operate in an international working environment.” (LUT strategy 2003, 2-4)

Both the LUT 2010 strategy and the internationalization strategy 2010 take well into account the internationalization perspective. But so long as the university has not a clear definition for the concept of International Professional, it stays just idle speech. There have been developed indicators for both research and teaching to implement LUT 2010 strategy but they are not useful in defining and measuring the competence of International Professional. The term professional also lacks a clearer definition but the purpose of this research is to concentrate on the knowledge, skills and characteristics which a person has who is internationally oriented and has the skills to operate in an international working environment, in other words what kind of intercultural competence this kind of person has.

The research is done by the assignment of the International and Career Services of Lappeenranta University of Technology and it is a part of a three-year project called International Professional. The initiative of the subject of the study came from International and Career Services because it was interested in the definition of International Professional. The interest was extremely essential because internationality related skills, characteristics and knowledge were not properly defined before in the academe. To get an idea what the situation is like in other Finnish universities, a small email survey was sent in December 2004 to the international centres of 18 Finnish universities and they were asked that do they have defined what in fact are the characteristics, skills and knowledge related to internationality. Two responds were received and there were no direct answers to the question. It is also possible that so little responds were received because of work hurries but it though can be said that a clear definition of intercultural competence among academe is really needed.

1.2 The research objective and questions

The objective of this research is to find out **what kind of intercultural competence graduates of LUT should have?** This study should also learn is it possible to use the concept of International Professional concerning all graduates of LUT and make a recommendation on that, how can LUT improve intercultural competence of its graduates.

In the theoretical part the objective will be approached through the following sub questions:

What are the main elements of intercultural communication?

How is intercultural competence defined?

In the empirical part the objective will be approached through the following sub questions:

What are employers' expectations concerning intercultural competence of graduates in engineering and economics?

How can LUT improve intercultural competence of its graduates?

1.3 Limitations

In this research the main emphasis is on studying intercultural communication and competencies needed in intercultural encounters between members of different national cultures. Other various micro- or subcultures are excluded from the study. Intercultural communication is also limited into person-to-person communication.

Graduates of LUT have been limited into two departments, based on the amount of students who have been studying abroad. The included

departments are those who send the most, business administration and the least electrical engineering students abroad. Like shown in Figure 2, the amount of business administration students enrolled exchange programs from 1999 to 2005 is 350, whereas only 13 students of electrical engineering has studied abroad during the same time period. The purpose of the selection is to find out is it possible to use the concept of International Professional concerning all graduates of LUT. Other departments are excluded from the study.

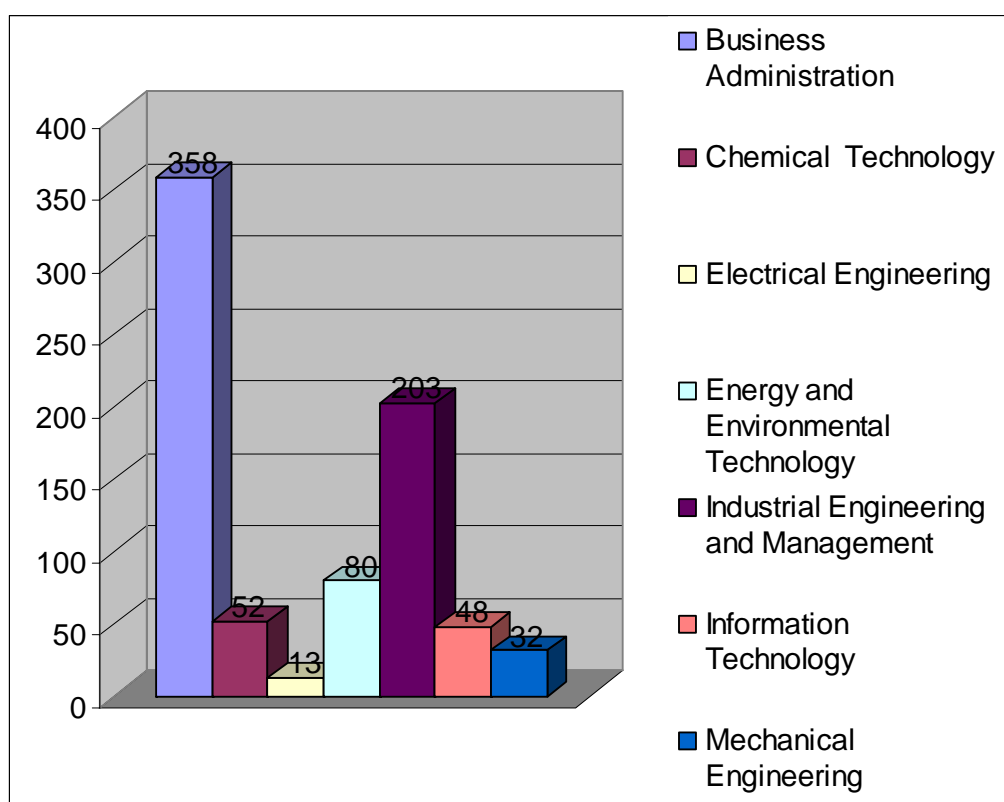


Figure 2. The amount of outgoing students of LUT on the basis of departments in the years 1999 - 2005. (Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto 2005a)

1.4 Definitions

In this chapter short definitions are given for the most essential concepts of this study: culture, communication, intercultural communication and intercultural competence. The concepts of sojourner and expatriate will also be shortly defined. These concepts are discussed in more detail in chapters two, three and four.

Culture

The concept of culture was first defined in print in 1871 by British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor. Over the years, culture has been conceptualized in many ways. The definition used in this study is the combination of Hofstede's and Gudykunst and Kim's definition: *culture distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another and it is learned, it programs us to define what is real, what is true, what is right, what is beautiful and what is good.*

Communication

In this study, a definition of Lustig and Koester (1999, 25) is used. They define communication *"as a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings."* It emphasizes the focus of this study, person-to-person communication and that communication is a process where shared meanings are created. Intracultural communication is described at least intercultural form of communication because it happens between people from the same country. (DeVoss et al 2002, 71).

Intercultural communication

The term intercultural communication was first used by Edward T. Hall in 1959. (Löfman 1993, 147) Intercultural communication is person-to-person interactions among people from different national cultures. (DeVoss et al 2002, 7)

Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language and being able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to one and the other interlocutors. It can be conceptualized as affective, cognitive and behavioural, communicative dimensions. (Byram 1997 and Gertsen 1992, 346)

Sojourner

Furnham and Bochner (1986) defines sojourn as temporary stay at a new place. So sojourners are temporary residents. Byram (1997, 2) argues that *“where the tourist remains essentially unchanged, the sojourner has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions.”*

Expatriate

Persons who have been sent within their companies to work in a local subsidiary of a home country multinational enterprise or with a project-type delivery for a specific time, which usually ranges from six months up to three years. (Tahvanainen 1998, 8-9).

Interculturally effective persons will be referred as IEPs and Lappeenranta University of Technology will be referred as LUT.

1.5 Literature overview

In this chapter a short literature overview is presented in order to introduce different streams of literature before going deeper into the main review. The main literature review will be presented in the second and third chapters. In this overview first will be discussed intercultural communication and then intercultural competence.

A field of communication that deals with interaction between members of different national cultures, subcultures, races, and ethnic groups is recognised as intercultural communication. The term intercultural communication was first used by Edward T. Hall in his book *The Silent Language* in 1959. Hall gave a name to the already existing study of culture and communication and in this way stimulated the development of the area. In the U.S.A. after World War II there was a strongly felt need to find solutions to problems created by different races and nationalities living working and studying together and intercultural communications is one of those fields which have grown out of practical needs. (Löfman 1993, 147, 149)

The 1970s saw the establishing of the field of intercultural communication and that time publications started to appear, institutions were established and ethnic and cross-cultural issues were taken account of in educational programmes. The 1980s saw advances in theory and research in intercultural communication. (Löfman 1993, 149) Today intercultural communication can be considered an independent, multi- and interdisciplinary academic field including history, geography, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, business economics, linguistics, communication and information technology at least. The scholarly literature in intercultural communication reveals an enormous, interdisciplinary, and terminologically fragmented domain (Spitzberg 1989, 242). Most theories and models developed in intercultural communication are based on social psychology, or they apply the concepts of social

psychology. A wide range of research data and theoretical models have been published in the field to serve the increasing needs of international and multicultural negotiations, international trade, global advertising, as well as education and training. When considering intercultural communication as an academic field, one of the challenges nowadays is to find equally correct concepts to describe various cultures equally correct. (Korhonen 2002, 45)

Much of the impetus for the study of intercultural competence arose out of efforts to cope with practical problems encountered by individuals living and working overseas, and by their institutional sponsors. There were difficulties of culture shock, personal adjustment, cultural adaptation and cross-cultural effectiveness. The definitions of each were then, as many would argue they remain today, relatively ambiguous and undifferentiated. But regardless of whatever terminological confusion existed, there could be little doubt that these were obstacles of significance. (Ruben 1989, 229) The problems were apparent in the business community, where measurement came in the form of project failures, botched negotiations, early return of workers and lost time and money (Gertsen 1992, 346). Perspectives were needed that would help to meet four essential needs: to explain overseas failures, to predict overseas success, to develop personnel selection strategies and to design, implement and test sojourner training and preparation methodologies. Each of these four needs has played an important role in directing theory and research activities in the field since the earliest days, and each has contributed to the development of one's thinking relative to intercultural competence. In large measure it was these problems, and the efforts to solve them which provided motivation for the kind of academic study that led to interest in the concept of intercultural competence (Ruben 1989, 229-230)

Numerous researchers have proposed different perspectives in approaching intercultural competence (Imahori and Lanigan 1989, 269). Gertsen (1992) classifies literature concerning intercultural competence into adjustment approach, personality and attitudes approach, cognition

and knowledge approach and communicative behaviour approach. Part of the literature dealing with intercultural competence concentrates on the adjustment process. It is generally assumed that people who move to another culture go through various stages and there are a number of different stage models but they are all very similar to the following list from Oberg in 1960: Honeymoon state, crisis, recovery and adjustment. This adjustment process sometimes goes wrong if the crisis is felt too strongly or if the expatriate is unable to recover from it for one reason or another. Difficulties in adjustment cannot always predict the level of competence eventually achieved by an expatriate. That is why the adjustment approach is inadequate in this context. (Gertsen 1992, 342-343)

The concept of intercultural competence has also been approached from a personality perspective and attempted to identify attitudes and other personality traits that characterize interculturally competent individuals. However, majority of the studies show relatively modest results when it comes to predicting a person's success in a foreign culture on the basis of personality traits. This can be partly explained by inadequate measurement of personality traits and attitudes. In addition, some of the mentioned traits seem to be contradictory, since they can hardly be expected to be found in the same individual. The most serious problem is that attitudes do not always result in the implicitly expected behaviour. For example, if a person has very positive attitudes towards a culture but is unable to express this in his behavior, it has no effects. A very comprehensive and contradictory literature exists on this topic and it is unclear which degree attitudes decide behavior. Generally has been agreed that attitudes are seldom the only factor influencing behaviour (Ruben 1989, 234 and Gertsen 344). What it comes to intercultural competence, it can be concluded that attitudes are relevant only to the extent that they determine a person's actual communicative behaviour in another culture. "Other personality traits are relevant in the same way. This can be designed as the affective dimension of intercultural competence". (Gertsen 1992, 343-344)

Number of writers has mentioned the importance of cognition; how human beings acquire and use information and knowledge about other cultures. In 1980 for instance, Detweiler examined the relation between intercultural competence and the cognitive process by which information is grouped and organized in categories or dimensions of meaning in the human mind called categorization. In 1977 Triandis argued that increased knowledge of another culture implies increased understanding of ways of thinking and of behavior in the culture in question. These factors constitute the cognition dimension of intercultural competence. (Gertsen 1992, 345)

The most common approach is that of conceptualizing intercultural competence as a behavioural construct (Imahori and Lanigan 1989, 270 and Gertsen 1992, 346). A group of writers see intercultural competence as determined by the ability to display the appropriate communicative behaviour. It does not help a person much to have positive attitudes and a lot of knowledge about local culture if he or she is unable to express it. That is why intercultural communication is a field of utmost interest in this context. The ability to adopt an effective communicative behavior is the behavioral, communicative dimension of intercultural competence. (Gertsen 1992, 346)

To summarize, the past studies reflect different perspectives when approaching intercultural competence; adjustment, personality and attitudes, cognition and knowledge and communicative behaviour. A clear and uniform conceptualization of intercultural competence is really needed. It will be presented in the chapter four.

1.6 Preliminary theoretical framework

Figure 3 presents a preliminary theoretical framework of this research. It positions the study phenomena in relation to existing theory. In Figure 3 are shown the process of intercultural communication and all the main

elements which affect it and make it special compared to intracultural communication. It can be seen that *intercultural communication* is a complex process which is affected by many *cultural dissimilarities*: individualism/collectivism, low- and high-context cultures, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity.

In Figure 3 is shown a sender from a culture A which sends a message to a representative of a culture B. The culture A and the culture B are different so there are cultural dissimilarities between those two cultures. In order that the representative of the culture B will understand correctly the message of the sender from the culture A, they both have to have *intercultural competence*. Sender needs to know for instance are high- or low-context communication used in the culture B in order to be able to send right kind of message and receiver has to also be aware of the communication model used in the culture A in order to interpret the message correctly.

To be able to say that two people communicated effectively requires that sent and received messages should be as similar as possible. To communicate effectively between two cultures, requires that senders and receivers possess *intercultural competence*. In order to be effective intercultural communicator in the field of business administration or electrical engineering, in addition to intercultural competence, one should have *professional competence* as well. The final research framework will be presented in the chapter four.

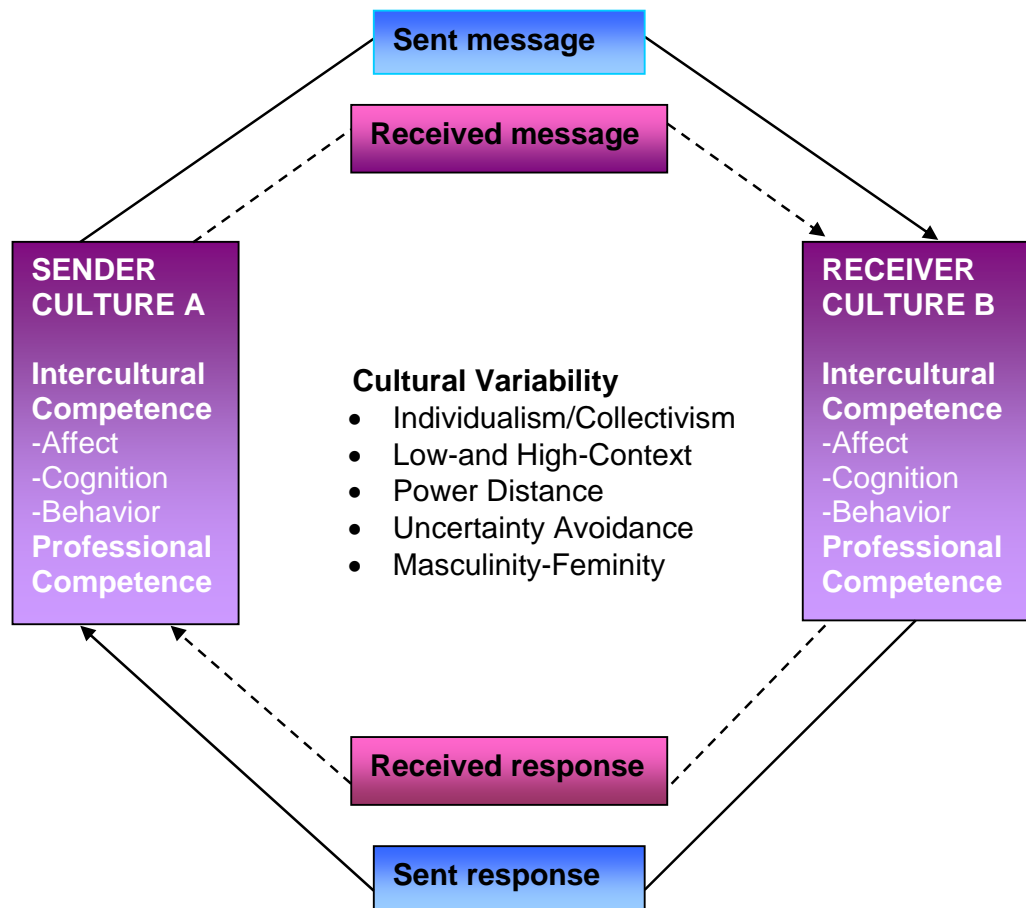


Figure 3. The preliminary framework of the study (adapted from Adler 1997, 69)

1.7 Methodology

According to Silverman (2001, 4) methodology refers to the choices one makes about cases to study, methods of data gathering, form of data analysis in planning and executing a research study. This research is a qualitative study and by qualitative research is meant the research of certain phenomenon's qualities, models, characteristics and meanings, the ways which these can be observed, documented, analyzed and interpreted. (Leininger 1985, 1-7) The purpose of qualitative study is to understand the phenomena (Uusitalo1991, 79-81).

The approach of the thesis is both theoretical and empirical. The theoretical information is gathered from academic literature, articles and Internet publications. Empirical part of the research will consist of employers' interviews. Employers are selected on the basis of a survey made by International and Career Services in 2004, which has listed the most employed employers based on training programs. The focus of this study is in business administration and electrical engineering so the chosen employers are the employers of those departments. More about research methodology will be discussed in the chapter five.

1.8 The structure of the thesis

This chapter explains study's structure. In the theoretical section the aim is to research how this diverse phenomena, competence in intercultural communication could be conceptualized in theory.

The thesis is divided into seven main chapters. After the introduction chapter, chapters two three and four present an overview of the current literature that was reviewed before entering the empirical stage of the research. The literature review was done in order to form a conceptual understanding of intercultural communication and to find out what kind of characteristics, knowledge and skills is needed in order to be interculturally competent. The literature review is also targeting to develop a useful theoretical framework for the empirical part of the study.

The chapter two discusses the main elements of intercultural communication. The third chapter discusses the competences needed in order to be interculturally competent. The fourth chapter reviews the professional competences needed by graduates in engineering and economics and presents the final research framework of the study. The fifth chapter introduces the research methodology of this thesis and the concepts of reliability and validity of the research will be also discussed.

In the empirical section in the chapter six, the objective is to introduce employees` insight into the issue and how they see the intercultural competence of graduates in business administration and in electrical engineering. In this case empirical material is gathered through interviews and then analysed based on the theoretical part of the study.

Based on theoretical and empirical sections, final conclusions concerning the research objective of the study will be made in the chapter seven. It will aggregate and summarize the most important findings of this study: compare the theoretical and empirical findings of this research. The final chapter will also give suggestions for further research.

2. ELEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

There are many different approaches to the study of culture and communication, among them international, cross-cultural and intercultural. International communication typically focuses on communication between nations and governments (Samovar et al 1981, 35; DeVoss et al 2002, 7) Cross-cultural communication generally refers to comparing phenomena across cultures (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 14 & Jandt 2000, 38) that does not involve interaction, whereas intercultural communication focuses more on what is interactive. Intercultural communication refers to face-to-face interactions among people from different national cultures (DeVoss et al 2002, 7)

2.1 Understanding culture and communication

To understand intercultural interaction one must first understand the main elements of intercultural communication, culture and human communication. Although the parties involved in intercultural communication represent diverse backgrounds, they are, nevertheless, subject to the same types of experiences that people with similar type of backgrounds encounter whenever they attempt to communicate. (Samovar et al 1981, 10) Therefore, in order to be able to understand intercultural communication process, this chapter discusses first the concepts of culture and communication.

2.1.1 Defining culture

According to Marx (1999, 42) the biggest challenge in international management is to understand other people's culture, which manifests itself different ways. The concept of culture was first defined in print in 1871 by British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor. Over the years, culture

has been conceptualized in many ways. Extensively used definition of culture is Geert Hofstede's "*the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another*" (Hofstede 1991, 5). Hofstede also emphasizes that culture is learned, not inherited. It drives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Scollon and Wong Scollon (1995, 126) define culture as "*any of the customs, worldview, language, kinship system, social organization, and other taken for granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group.*" Jandt (2000, 24) in contrast, has a more common definition: "*the word culture describes everything that makes a large group of people unique.*"

All these cultural elements are learned through interaction with others in the culture (Jandt 2000, 9). Through the process of enculturation, cultural patterns are etched into nervous system and become part of people's personality and behaviour. This internalized learning enables to interact easily with other members of one's culture who share a similar image of reality. In other words, the culture of one's youth provides a common pattern for one's cognitive, affective, and behavioural structure and processes so that persons belonging to the same culture tend to have a similar understanding of and responses to reality. "*It is culture that programs us to define what is real, what is true, what is right, what is beautiful, and what is good.*" (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 247-248)

The definition of culture used in this study is the combination of Hofstede's and Gudykunst and Kim's definition: culture distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another and it is learned, it programs us to define what is real, what is true, what is right, what is beautiful and what is good. The combination of these two definitions was chosen because the definitions of Jandt and Scollon and Scollon do not emphasize that culture is learned and the combination of those two definitions described best all the features of culture.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 6) point out that *“culture comes in layers, like an onion. To understand it, you have to unpeel it layer by layer”*. At the highest level is the culture of a national or regional society, the French or west European versus Singaporean or Asian. The way in which attitudes are expressed within a specific organisation is described as a corporate or organisational culture. Organisational culture is shaped not only by technologies and markets but by the cultural preferences of leaders and employees. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997, 7; 157) Professional culture is the culture of particular functions within organisations: marketing, research and development, personnel (Schneider and Barsoux 1997, 56). People with certain functions will tend to share certain professional and ethical orientations. Varner (2000, 44) argues that business people are members of several cultures: they are tied to their corporate culture, the general business culture and their national culture. Varner points out that in addition to the knowledge of national culture, business people have to be aware of the business culture and business environment in a country where they are operating.

Despite the fact that business people are tied to their organization culture, Adler 1997, Hofstede 1991 and Laurent 1989 argue that organization culture does not erase or diminish national culture because employees and managers bring their ethnicity to the workplace. Adler (1997, 61) points out that while business practices across companies may look very similar, the underlying national values remain divergent. National cultural differences reside mostly in values and less in practices. For organizations, the reverse is true. This is due to differences in socialization experiences. Basic assumptions and values are acquired early in life by upbringing and schooling. Organizational practices, on the other hand, are acquired through socialization at work by which time most of the fundamental values are firmly in place. (Hofstede 1991, 229) According to Laurent (1989) national culture may shift but very slowly. Like an iceberg the tip can melt but below the surface the reach of culture remains

profound. Laurent argues that while organization culture may be more amenable to change, real changes in national culture may take generations.

Therefore the main focus of culture is on the national level in this study.

Next chapter will shortly discuss about communication. Culture and communication are very closely connected and to great extent, culture decides with whom people communicate, how they communicate and what they communicate and the way individuals communicate can change the culture they share. (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988, 17; Gertsen 1992, 345)

2.1.2 Defining communication

Defining communication is a difficult task because of the complexity of the subject. According to Bennett (1998, 10) the process of communication can be thought of as the mutual creation of meaning – *the verbal and nonverbal behavior of communicating and the interpretations that are made of that behaviour. The meaning itself can be called the content of the communication.* Samovar et al (1981, 13) are more specific in their view. They see communication as “*a two-way, on-going, behavior-affecting process in which one person, a source intentionally encodes and transmits a message through a channel to an intended audience (receivers) in order to induce a particular attitude or behavior.*” In this study, a definition of Lustig and Koester (1999, 25) is used. They define communication “*as a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings.*” It emphasizes the focus of this study, person-to-person communication and that communication is a process where shared meanings are created.

Communication must take place between a source and a receiver. Usually this implies two or more people. When the source and receiver is different people interacting directly with each other, the communication is called

interpersonal. Unlike other forms of communication, interpersonal communication involves person-to-person interactions and clearly identified participants who are able to select those with whom they interact. (Samovar et al 1981, 16 & Lustig and Koester 1999, 27) Intracultural communication is described at least intercultural form of communication because it happens between people from the same country, although they may have distinct cultural background for instance in terms of race, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (DeVoss et al 2002, 71).

According to Gudykunst and Kim (1992, 8-9) communication takes place at varying levels of conscious awareness. Communication includes consciously sent messages as well as messages that the sender is completely unaware of having sent. Communication therefore involves a complex multilayered process through which we exchange meaning. (Adler 1997, 68) Many intercultural misunderstandings are due to the unintentional behavior of a person from one culture being perceived, and interpreted to by a person from another culture. In other words, behavior that was not meant to communicate was interpreted by another person and influenced the messages that person sends. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 8)

The major elements of intercultural communication; culture and communication have now been introduced. However, the other element culture has many effects on intercultural communication in the forms of cultural variability. Because of that, it is necessary to discuss about the dimensions of cultural variability before one is able to fully understand intercultural communication and how is it possible to be interculturally competent.

2.2 Dimensions of cultural variability

Chen and Starosta (1998, 349) point out that the study of cultural values is the most important gateway to reach intercultural awareness. Much of research has been conducted to examine cultural values, models developed by Hall (1959), Hofstede (1980), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1960) and Parson (1951) are commonly mentioned. This chapter focuses on the two broad dimensions: individualism-collectivism and low- and high-context communication, used most widely to explain how communication varies across cultures. Then there will be a short discussion of Hofstede's (1980, 1991) dimensions of cultural variability.

2.2.1 Individualism-Collectivism

Individualism-collectivism is the major dimension of cultural variability used to explain cross-cultural differences in behaviour (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 42). This dimension is depended on one's definition of self. Individuals from individualistic cultures use personal characteristics and achievements to define themselves and they value individual welfare over the group. Individuals from collectivistic cultures make more reference to the group as part of their self-definition and consider common goals and group's welfare most important. (Marx 1999, 50 & Adler 1997, 25)

The organization of firms in individualistic and collective societies differs. In individualistic societies such as North America and northern Europe, organization charts generally specify individual positions, each with a detailed job description listing formal duties and responsibilities. Group-oriented societies such as Hong Kong, Indonesia and Malaysia, describe assignments, responsibilities and reporting relationship in collective terms. (Adler 1997, 26)

Individualism-collectivism –dimension influences also negotiations, decision making and motivation. In collectivistic cultures, negotiations are often attended by a group of people, as opposed to a sole representative in individualist cultures. This has the implication that unaccompanied people may be seen as lacking status in collectivist societies. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997, 51) Individualistic decision making is relatively quick, although implementation frequently gets delayed while the decision maker explains the decision and gains concurrence from other members of the organization. Collectivistic decision making takes longer because many people make the decision, rather than one. The advantage is that decisions are well thought through and implementation can usually proceed quite smoothly. (Adler 1997, 26 & Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997, 51)

The relationship between individual and group also plays an important role in what motivates people. People work for extrinsic money rewards and for the positive regard and support of their colleagues. In more communitarian cultures, this second source of motivation may be so strong that high performers prefer to share the fruits of their efforts with colleagues than to take extra money for themselves as individuals. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997, 61)

2.2.2 Low- and High-Context Communication

While individualism-collectivism defines broad differences between cultures, Hall's (1976) low-and high-context scheme focuses upon cultural differences in communication process. Hall (1976) differentiates cultures on the basis of the communication that predominates in the culture. Hall (1976, 70) defines low-context communication as communication where the mass of information is vested in the explicit code. High-context communication, in contrast is one in which the most of the information is already in the person while very little is in the coded, explicit transmitted part of the message (Hall 1976, 79). Bennett (1998, 17; 20-21) calls low-

context communication digital and linear, and high-context communication analogical and circular or contextual. While no culture exists at either end of the continuum, the culture of the United States is placed toward the lower end, a bit above the German, Scandinavian and Swiss cultures. In contrast, most Asian cultures, like Japanese, Chinese and Korean, fall toward the high-context end of the continuum. (Hall 1976, 98)

According to Hall (1976, 98) high-context cultures make also greater distinction between the insiders and outsiders than low-context cultures do. People raised in high-context systems expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems. When talking about something they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what's bothering him, so that he does not have to be specific. The result is that he will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing it properly - this keystone - is the role of his interlocutor.

Understanding the form of communication that predominates in a culture is critical to correctly interpreting and predicting the behavior of people from that culture, in other words to be interculturally competent. For instance, people from low-context cultures like the United States must understand that people from high-context cultures like Japanese tend to communicate indirectly to be effective. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 43)

Hofstede (1980) empirically derived four dimensions of cultural variability in his large scale study of a multinational corporation. The first dimension isolated in his study, individualism, already has been discussed. The other three dimensions were power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity - femininity.

2.2.3 Power distance

Hofstede defined power distance as “*the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally* “. (Hofstede 1991, 28) Power distance is useful in understanding behaviour in role relationships of people from different cultures, particularly those involving different degrees of power or authority. For instance, people from high power distance cultures do not question their superiors' orders; they expect to be told what to do. In contrast, people in low power distance cultures do not accept superiors' orders at face value; they want to know why they should follow them. When people from the two different systems interact, misunderstanding is likely unless one or both understand the other person's system. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 47)

In high power distance cultures, such as the Philippines, Venezuela and India, superiors and subordinates consider bypassing to be insubordination; whereas in low power distance countries, such as Israel and Denmark, employees expect to bypass the boss frequently in order to get their work done. When negotiating in high power distance countries, companies find it important to send representatives with titles equivalent to or higher than those of their bargaining partners. Titles, status, and formality command less importance in low power distance countries. (Adler 1997, 51)

2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

According to Hofstede (1991, 113) uncertainty avoidance can be defined as “*the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations*”. This feeling is, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and in a need for predictability: a need for written and unwritten rules. People in high uncertainty avoidance

cultures try to avoid ambiguity. Therefore they develop rules and rituals for virtually every possible situation in which they might find themselves, including interacting with people from other cultures than their own. Interaction with strangers in cultures high in uncertainty avoidance may be highly ritualistic. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 47) Lifetime employment is more common in high uncertainty avoidance countries such as Japan, Portugal and Greece; whereas high job mobility occurs more commonly in low uncertainty avoidance countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Denmark. (Adler 1997, 51-52)

Weak uncertainty avoidance stands also for low anxiety. At the workplace, the anxiety component of uncertainty avoidance leads to noticeable differences between strong and weak uncertainty avoidance societies. In strong uncertainty avoidance society's people like to work hard, or at least to be always busy. In weak uncertainty avoidance society's people are quite able to work hard if there is a need for it, but they are not driven by an inner urge towards constant activity. (Hofstede 1991, 120-121)

2.2.5 Masculinity – Femininity

Masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct, for example men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap. (Hofstede 1991, 83)

Masculine versus feminine countries excel in different types of industries based their cultural characteristics industrially developed masculine cultures have a competitive advantage in manufacturing, especially in large volume. Feminine cultures have a relative advantage in service industries like consulting and transport, in manufacturing according to customer specification, and in handling live matter such as high-yield agriculture and biochemistry. Japan is the world leader in high-quality

consumer electronics; Denmark and the Netherlands excel in services, in agricultural exports, and they harbour the world's leading companies in biochemistry. (Hofstede 1991, 95)

All above mentioned dimensions exist in all cultures, one end of each dimension however tends to dominate. According to Bennett (1998, 6) despite with the problem of stereotypes, it is necessary in intercultural communication to make cultural generalizations. Cultural generalizations can be made while avoiding stereotypes by maintaining the idea that all possible beliefs are represented in all cultures at all times but each different culture has a preference for some beliefs over others.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 26) and Bennett (1998, 6) argues that individual personality mediates in each cultural system. Individuals can, of course, be found in any culture that holds beliefs similar to people in a different culture. There just are not so many of them and they do not represent the preponderance of people who hold beliefs closer to the norm or central tendency of the group. Bennett (1998, 7) points out that cultural generalizations should be used tentatively as working hypotheses that need to be tested in each case; sometimes they work very well, sometimes they need to be modified, and sometimes they do not apply to the particular case at all. The idea is to derive the benefit of recognizing cultural patterns without experiencing too much hardening of the categories.

Successful companies and employees are those who see cultural diversity as an opportunity rather than as a threat, as something that can be learned, managed and made use of, as an opportunity to higher productivity and more profits, and who are willing to develop their intercultural competence (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 221). To successfully manage global negotiations, negotiators need to know how to communicate with people from other cultures and how to influence them. Along with intercultural competence, diversity can become a source of

competitive advantage and added value when attempting to reposition the company: to create a new idea, plan a new operation, develop a new marketing plan, launch a new product, or assess emerging trends from a new perspective. (Holden 2002, 144-145; 189)

To summarize, the major elements of intercultural communication, culture and its variability and communication has now been discussed. Now one is able to understand the process of intercultural communication. It will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.3 Understanding intercultural communication process

Communication is involved in all business activity. Within the global business environment, activities like leading, motivating, negotiating, decision-making, and exchanging information and ideas are all based on the ability of managers and employees from one culture to communicate successfully with colleagues, clients, and suppliers from other cultures. (Adler 1997, 67-68)

Everything so far said about communication applies to intercultural communication. But what especially characterizes intercultural communication is that sources and receivers come from different cultures. (Spitzberg 1989, 261 and Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981, 28) The intercultural communication approach is difference-based (Bennett 1998, 2-3). According to Robinson (1996, 57) intercultural communication is a process full of excitement and frustration; these extremes may be especially heightened in business and professional communication, where the financial success of an enterprise is at stake. In fact, upward mobility and promotion in tomorrow's corporate world may depend on one's knowledge of intercultural communication. (Chaney and Martin 1995, 3)

Like interpersonal communication, intercultural communication focuses on face-to-face or at least person-to-person interaction among human beings. All participants must see themselves as potentially engaged in communication and capable of giving and receiving feedback. The issues of international satellite broadcasting and culture-specific cable productions are fascinating but they are essentially one-way events. However, individual, mediated communication such as faxing, e-mailing, and Internet chat room dialogue does fit the definition of person-to-person communication. (Bennett 1998, 10)

Lustig and Koester (1999, 59) define intercultural communication as follows: *“a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what are regarded as competent behaviours that should be used to create shared meanings.”* According to Samovar et al (1981, 32) intercultural communication can best be understood as cultural variance in the perception of social objects and events. The barriers to communication caused by this perceptual variance can best be lowered by a knowledge and understanding of cultural factors that are subject to variance, coupled with an honest and sincere desire to communicate successfully across cultural boundaries.

Lustig and Koester do not emphasize that the sender and receiver are from different national cultures. That is why the simple definition used in this study is the one of DeVoss et al (2002, 7): *Intercultural communication is person-to-person interactions among people from different national cultures.*

According to Beamer (1992, 285) intercultural communication process, shown in Figure 4, can be best understood from the perspective of the receiver, not the sender or the channel or even the encoded message

itself. Since it is impossible to transmit electrical impulses directly from one's brain to that of another person, one has to give one's messages symbolic form by using language or nonverbal communication such as tone of voice, facial expression, behavior, and physical setting. This process is called encoding and decoding is the reverse. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 6, Gertsen 1992, 346 & Adler 1997, 68) Message senders must encode their meaning into a form that the receiver will recognize – that is, into words and behaviour. Receivers must then decode the words and behaviour - the symbols – back into messages that have meaning for them. (Adler 1997, 68) There is no guarantee that the message one encodes is decoded by the receiver as one intended it to be, and the more different the participants in communication like in figure one, the greater the risk of misunderstanding. Therefore, intercultural communication can involve a considerable risk of misunderstanding. (Gertsen 1992, 346) The study and understanding of intercultural communication can reduce or nearly eliminate these difficulties (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981, 28).

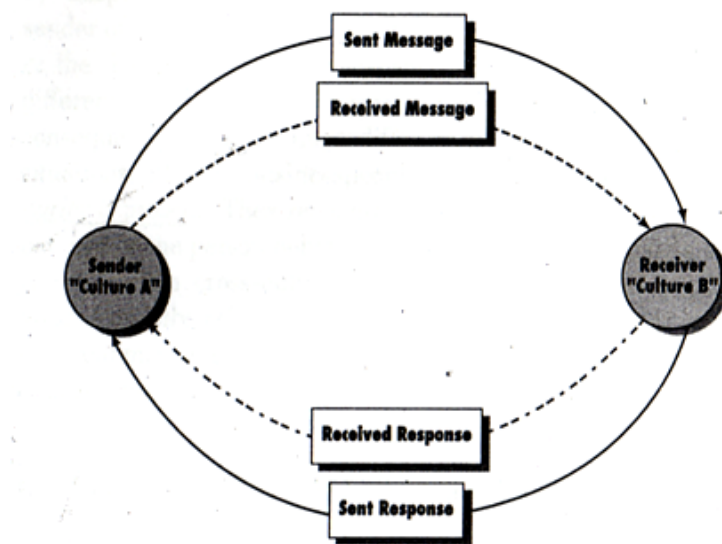


Figure 4. Intercultural Communication Model. Adapted from Adler 1997, 69.

Bowman and Targowski (1987, 17) have also pointed out that communication does not occur without the perception that communication

is taking place. Perception begins with the recognition that signals are being sent. The initial recognition of signals is not random, but selective. A person chooses to encounter some signals but not others, and to pay attention to some but not others. Recognition does not equal communication, however, because at this point the perceiver may choose to “lose” the signal - not to retain it. (Beamer 1992, 286) Then signals are structured into categories that exist in the receiver’s mind, since each human being possesses internal images of the physical and social world. (Samovar et al 1981, 106) Culture conditions the categories, so the signal is structured in a way dictated by culture. Finally, meaning is attributed to the structured perceptions. (Beamer 1992, 286)

Attribution means that one takes meaning which one already has and assigns or attaches it to behavior one observes in one’s environment. It can be imagined that stored somewhere in one’s brain is a meaning reservoir in which one has stored all of the meanings one possesses. These various meanings have developed throughout one’s lifetime as a result of one’s culture acting upon one as well as the result of one’s individual experiences within that culture. Meaning is relative to each of us in that we are all unique human beings with unique backgrounds and experiences. (Samovar et al 1981, 13) As people are enculturated into a society, they learn to make fairly accurate attributions about others’ behaviours (Brislin and Yoshida 1994, 44). At this point, cultural influence is profound. The meaning attached to a signal will derive from a store or repository of meanings that are culturally determined. No two meaning reservoirs are identical, but the differences are pronounced when life experiences come from different cultures. The greater the difference in background between senders and receivers, the greater difference in meanings attached to particular words and behaviours. (Adler 1997, 69; Beamer 1992, 286; Lustig and Koester 1999, 27; Samovar et al 1981, 28).

According to Gudykunst and Kim (1992, 230) to say that two people communicated effectively requires that the two attach relatively similar

meanings to the messages sent and received. Similarly Triandis (in Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 230) argues that effectiveness involves making isomorphic attributions, isomorphic implies being similar; attributions involve assigning a quality or characteristic to something. The interpretive nature of communication suggests that correct meanings are not just “out there” to be discovered, meanings rather are created and shared by groups of people as they participate in the ordinary and everyday activities that form the context of common interpretations. Therefore, the focus must be on the ways that people attempt to “make sense” of their common experiences in the world. (Lustig and Koester 1999, 27)

This chapter has presented the fascinating process of intercultural communication. As a conclusion can be said, that intercultural communication is a multiple process which is strongly affected by cultural variability. In order to be able to communicate effectively and interculturally, one has to possess intercultural competence. The concept of intercultural competence will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Over the last 25 years, many studies have been conducted on the concept of intercultural competence. It has been explored and researched under many different labels like cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural effectiveness, multiculturalism, intercultural effectiveness, cultural competence, intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence. (Taylor 1994, 391) According to Byram (1997) intercultural competence can be defined as an ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language and being able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to oneself and the other interlocutors.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, intercultural competence has been conceptualized in a variety of ways (Imahori and Lanigan 1989; Spitzberg 1989, 242 and Gertsen 1992). Plenty of researches have proposed different perspectives in approaching intercultural competence. These scholars typically investigated intercultural competence as a cognitive, an attitudinal or a behavioural construct. The data collected from these studies are frequently based on one individual's perception, for example, a sojourner's self-evaluation of competence or a host national's perception of sojourner's competence. Past studies also utilized hypothetical intercultural contexts or interculturally naive subjects to obtain data. Consequently, the results of these studies have been incomplete. (Imahori and Lanigan 1989, 269)

Imahori and Lanigan (1989, 272) argues that instead of asking whether intercultural competence is a behavioural, an attitudinal, or a cognitive construct, intercultural competence is a combination of all of these factors. Also Wiseman (2003, 192) argues that intercultural competence involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures. These arguments are supported by Gertsen (1992, 346) who points out that intercultural

competence can be conceptualized as made by three interdependent dimensions: an affective dimension, a cognitive dimension, and most importantly, a communicative, behavioural dimension.

3.1 Affective dimension

Considering the concept of intercultural competence from a personality perspective, trait that is indicative of intercultural competence and has been mentioned very often is empathy (Ruben 1976; Samovar et al 1981; Gudykunst and Kim 1992; Schneider and Barsoux 1997; Kealey and Protheroe 2000). Ruben (1976, 340) defines empathy as capacity to *“put oneself in another’s shoes”, or to behave as if one could.* According to Ruben, empathy has been suggested as important to the development and maintenance of positive human relationships between cultures. There are differences in individuals’ abilities to display empathy; some individuals find it easier to appreciate the thoughts, feelings and experiences of others. Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 11; 30) argues that interculturally effective persons can empathize with, not just understand intellectually, how the locals see the world. Theoretically and sympathetically try on the foreign worldview so that they can appreciate its logic although not necessarily agreeing with it. According to Schneider and Barsoux (1997, 165) focused listening and a non-judgemental approach help managers to understand the other person’s viewpoint. But one’s capacity for empathy is deeply rooted in one’s character and may not be a skill easily acquired. This capacity may be critical to effective interaction in intercultural communication. (Ruben 1976, 340)

Tolerance for ambiguity is also mentioned by many authors (Ruben 1976; Gudykunst and Kim 1992; Marx 1999; Schneider and Barsoux 1997) The ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort is an important asset when adapting to a new environment. Some people seem to meet new or changing situations as a challenge;

they appear to function best wherever the unexpected or unpredictable may occur and seem to adapt quickly to the demands of a changing milieu – a capacity that may be essential to rapid cross-cultural adaptation. (Ruben 1976, 341) Ruben and Kealey suggest that people who have a higher tolerance for ambiguity are more effective in completing task assignments in other cultures than are people with lower tolerance. In extension, Gudykunst and Kim (1992, 241) also argue that people who have a higher tolerance for ambiguity are more effective in intercultural communication than are those who have lower tolerance for ambiguity.

Closely associated with the level of tolerance for ambiguity are the attitudes of prejudice and ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the attitude by which one sees one's group as the centre of the world and evaluates the rest of the world based on one's own group standards. People who have a low tolerance for ambiguity tend to be ethnocentric and prejudiced. They do not recognize alternative interpretations or evaluations of behavior enacted by "strangers" because they use their own cultural perspective. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 241) Everybody is ethnocentric to some degree but an extremely high degree of ethnocentrism may mean that behaviours of people from other cultures are interpreted within one's own frame of reference and thereby misunderstood (Gertsen 1992, 344) To be able to gain intercultural competence one should be able to develop less ethnocentric attitudes; they need to be attitudes of curiosity and openness (Byram 1997, 34 and Arensberg and Niehoff 1971, 56).

Self-knowledge has also been mentioned often to be indicative of intercultural competence (Kealey and Protheroe 2000; Schneider and Barsoux 1997; Samovar et al 1981; Jandt 2000). According to Schneider and Barsoux (1997, 166) a strong sense of self allows interaction with a person from another culture without fear of losing one's own identity and it also reinforces the ability to handle stress. Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 25) argues that interculturally effective persons with self-knowledge have insight into the sources of their cultural conditioning but are also able to

challenge that programming or at least be more accepting of someone else's programming by being able to: articulate the negative attributions and stereotypes that are prevalent in their own society concerning the host country, culture or region and avoiding using these and act outside their own cultural values without feeling they have compromised their core sense of self.

3.2 Cognitive dimension

The importance of cognition, how human beings acquire and use information and knowledge about other cultures considering intercultural competence is mentioned by a number of writers: Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Scollon and Wong Scollon 1995; Schneider and Barsoux 1997; Bennett 1998 and Lustig and Koester 1999.

Knowledge refers to the cognitive information one need to have about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that operate in a specific culture. It is unlikely that a person is able to interpret correctly the meanings of other people's messages or be able to select appropriate and effective behaviours in a particular context without such knowledge. Culture-general, culture-specific knowledge and linguistic skills is included this kind of knowledge that is essential in achieving intercultural competence. (Lustig and Koester 1999, 69)

3.2.1 Culture-general knowledge

According to Scollon and Wong Scollon (1995 10-11:13) to improve communication between different cultures people must know as much as possible about the culture that they are communicating with. Business people may find themselves interacting with people from a multitude of different cultures in any one given day. Although it would be ideal for them like Scollon and Wong Scollon argue, to know all the pertinent cultural rules of all the people they interact with, it is less than likely that they will

have the time or perseverance to do so. One alternative is to acquire culture-general knowledge. (Brislin and Yoshida 1994, 37) Culture-general information provides insights into the intercultural communication process abstractly and can therefore be a very powerful tool in making sense of cultural practices, regardless of the cultures involved. For instance, the knowledge that cultures differ widely in their preferred patterns of interaction should help to sensitize the need to be aware of these important differences. Knowledge about interpersonal communication and the many ways in which culture influences the communication process is very useful in understanding actual intercultural interactions. (Lustig and Koester 1998, 69) Although these may not provide perspective behaviour or concrete answers to one's dilemmas, they provide clues as to where the problems may lie (Brislin and Yoshida 1994, 30) The knowledge of the main dimension of cultural variability introduced in the second chapter, individualism - collectivism, low- and high context cultures, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity and femininity are extremely useful in this context.

According to Schneider and Barsoux (1997, 169) managers dealing with multiple cultures need to develop a cultural-general approach. Rather than a thorough knowledge of one particular culture, international managers need to be aware of the cues signalling culture differences be they national, corporate or functional. The authors favour cultural-general approach and according to this approach, it is important to identify which dimensions of culture may be relevant, rather than knowing the central tendencies of each particular country represented in meetings, or encounters in the course of a day's work.

3.2.2 Culture-specific knowledge

Intercultural competence also depends on culture-specific information which is used to understand a particular culture. The kind of knowledge should include information about the forces that maintain culture's

uniqueness and facts about cultural patterns that predominate. (Lustig and Koester 1999, 70) Culture-specific knowledge is useful when businesspeople are sent to some specific country for a longer period. The culture specific knowledge themes should provide broad guidelines as to what exactly needs to be learned from the specific culture in question. The topics that fall in this category are: geography and climate, economy, political systems and social structure, work including the attitudes towards work, social roles in the family and the workplace, attitudes towards time and space, non verbal language, religion, most important behavioural norms, information regarding practical problems and quality of life in general and language lessons. (Brislin and Yoshida 1994, 45 and Gertsen 1992, 354)

Bennett (1998, 3; 10) points out that specific knowledge of culture needs to be framed in culture-general categories and coupled with an understanding of both the general and specific intercultural processes involved. Knowledge of the difference between U.S American and Japanese decision making styles is not, in itself, particularly useful. It needs to be framed in more general value contrasts such as individualism and collectivism and linked with an understanding of how individualists and collectivists generally misconstrue each other's behavior, joined by an awareness of how those misunderstanding manifest themselves in dysfunctional communication patterns and finally applied to avoiding negative spirals and other miscommunication in an actual joint decision-making effort.

3.2.3 Knowledge of one's own cultural system

Hall (1970, 30) argues that *"culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants."* The importance of the knowledge of one's own cultural system considering intercultural competence has been recognized by other authors as well: Lustig and Koester 1999; Yousef 1988; Kealey and

Protheroe 2000. Yousef 1999 has suggested that the best way to train businesspeople who must deal with cultural differences might be to teach them about characteristics of their own culture rather than those of others. According to Lustig and Koester (1999, 71), the idea behind this admonition is that if people are able to understand how and why they interpret events and experiences, it is more likely that they would be able to select alternative interpretations and behaviours that are more appropriate and effective when interacting in another culture.

Also Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 25) argues that interculturally effective persons have an understanding of their own culture: how it is shaped, how they think, feel and react to people and events. They are able to describe: their behaviour in terms of their own cultural logic and how their own filters such as perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of communication affect relations and communications with international colleagues. Hall points out that the real job in understanding culture is not to understand foreign culture but to understand one's own and one of the most effective ways to learn about oneself is by taking seriously the cultures of others. (Hall 1970, 30; 32)

Ruben (1976, 340) emphasizes that the more a person recognizes the extent to which knowledge is individual in nature, the more easily she or he will be able to adjust to other people in other cultures, whose views of what is true or right are likely to be quite different. Brisling and Yoshida 1994, 30 points out that it is not possible nor is it healthy for people to adapt themselves to every value system in which they find themselves. People should not be afraid to recognize and admit that there are differences. In addition, they should feel comfortable with the awareness that they may not be able to behave according to these other values.

As one comes to terms with the roots of one's own ethnocentrism and gain new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture, one gains an objectivity that comes from not being rigidly limited to one particular

cultural group. Such an objectivity enables one to interpret and evaluate intercultural encounters more accurately and thus to act as a communication link between two cultures. (Gudykunst and Kim 1992, 254)

3.2.4 Linguistic ability

According to Schneider and Barsoux (1997, 164) having total command of the other language may not be feasible and may be less important than trying to develop a feel of local expression, information and interests. On overseas assignments in particular, efforts to speak the local language may have more symbolic than practical value, but the impact is highly significant. It indicates an eagerness to communicate and to connect with host nationals. (Gertsen 1992, 346) points out that *“naturally, knowledge of the local language is a great advantage, but human beings have other ways of coding messages than using words. Non-verbal forms of human communication are very important too”*

Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 30) argues that interculturally effective persons (IEPs) possess sufficient local language capacity to show that they are interested in the people with whom they work and interact. IEPs develop a growing language capacity over the course of the sojourn by using foreign greetings, making increasing use of opportunities to use the local language, continually improving linguistic capacity so as to be able to function in the local language in more and more situations and by showing a growing ability to use local metaphors appropriately.

Brislin and Yoshida (1994, 48) mentioned the concept of a “fluent fool.” According to them a fluent fool is someone who can speak a language fluently yet knows nothing about the culture. Since these people are fluent in the language, host nationals tend to assume that they must be equally fluent in the culture as well. A cultural misunderstanding therefore is less likely to be interpreted as due the person's good-natured ignorance. This does not imply that people should avoid language acquisition. Not attempting to learn the language is usually attributed to disinterest or

condescension toward the host culture. The solution therefore is to integrate language training with culture training. (Brislin and Yoshida 1994, 48)

3.3 Communicative, behavioural dimension

The ability to adopt an effective communicative behavior is the behavioral, communicative dimension of intercultural competence. It does not help a person much to have positive attitudes and a lot of knowledge about foreign culture if he or she is unable to express it. That is why intercultural communication is a field of utmost interest in this context. (Imahori and Lanigan 1989, 270 & Gertsen 1992, 345) Interculturally effective persons are able to convey their thoughts, opinions and expectations in a way that is understandable yet culturally sensitive (Kealey and Protheroe 2000, 28).

A communicative behaviour which has been mentioned often to be related to intercultural competence is the display of respect (Ruben 1976; Schneider and Barsoux 1997, 165; Kealey and Protheroe 2000). The expression of respect confers status upon the recipient, contributes to self-esteem, and fosters positive regard for the source of the communicated respect. Respect is conveyed in a plenty of ways; through eye contact, body posture, voice tone and general displays of interest. (Ruben 1976, 339) Though Schneider and Barsoux argue (1997, 165) that while having respect may be the golden rule of international business, it seems to be the one most often broken.

Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 15) points out that interculturally effective persons demonstrate by word and deed that they appreciate and indeed seek out and acknowledge the contributions that foreign culture brings to the work issues at hand. They:

- can acknowledge the distinct skills of their foreign colleagues and are also willing periodically to question their own way of doing things
- avoid uncomplimentary remarks about aspects of the local culture

- ask foreign colleagues how they understand work issues and how they would handle them in their culture

Despite the importance of modesty and respect, interculturally effective persons nonetheless have the self-confidence to take initiatives and promote change where called for by the assignment. (Kealey and Protheroe 2000, 15)

The capacity to be non-judgemental is also essential when considering intercultural competence from behavioral perspective. It is the ability to respond others in a descriptive, nonevaluating and nonjudgemental way, which is often positively related to effective interpersonal functioning. Ruben (1976, 340) points out the ideal situation, that one should not pass judgements on what others have to say until one has enough information to be fairly certain that his or her evaluations will be based on a reasonably complete understanding of the other person's point of view. When people believe that they have been listened to fully and attentively, they are generally much more receptive to hearing reactions whether positive or negative. Additionally, to improving the fidelity of transmission, nonevaluative postures seem likely to increase the receiver's regard for the source of nonevaluative messages and thereby improve the quality of the relationship.

Effective interaction management is mentioned by Ruben 1976; Marx 1994; Schneider and Barsoux 1997 and Kealey and Protheroe 2000. People vary in the manner in which they manage interactions of which they are a part. Effective management of interaction is displayed through taking turns in discussion and initiating and terminating interaction based on a reasonably accurate assessment of the needs and desires of others. Other individuals are less proficient at these dimensions and proceed in interactions with little or no regard for time sharing and initiation and termination preferences of others. Skill in interaction management is as

important between members of differing cultures as it seems to be between individuals from a single culture.

According to Kealey and Protheroe (2000, 28-29) interculturally effective persons are able to:

- demonstrate willingness to engage in meaningful communication with foreigners without having an undue fear of making mistakes
- articulate the elements of a model of interpersonal communication, including verbal and non-verbal aspects of interpersonal and especially intercultural communication by: employing a diversity of means of communication
- are able to establish shared meanings with local people so that foreigners and local people understand what is said in the same way

To summarize, intercultural competence is formed by three interdependent dimensions: affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioral, shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Intercultural competence as affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioral dimension.

AFFECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ empathy ▪ tolerance for ambiguity ▪ self-knowledge ▪ attitudes of curiosity and openness
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ culture-general and culture-specific knowledge ▪ knowledge of one's own culture ▪ linguistic ability
COMMUNICATIVE, BEHAVIORAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ability to express respect ▪ a capacity to be non-judgemental ▪ effective interaction management

According to Gudykunst (1991, 103-104) when defining intercultural competence, it must first be remembered that competence does not actually reside in the performance, but is “an evaluation of the performance by someone” The same performance may be evaluated to be competent by one person and incompetent by another, in other words, competence is something that is perceived. The standards, or criteria, people use to evaluate competence vary across cultures (Gudykunst & Kim 1997, 252-253).

Secondly, competences are not static but change along with time. Therefore, people should look for generic competencies that are important in international and multicultural work in general and specific one when necessary (Marx 1999, 195). Generic competences prepare for learning

how to learn, provide a broader perspective, and make movement to culture-specific training easier. Finally, even the importance of intercultural competence varies from one culture to another (Adler 1997, 296).

Marx (1999, 151) argues that *“there is also the question of whether we can assume a universal international competence or whether some individuals are more suited to a specific culture or geographic location. For instance, a manager who has been successful in Mexico may not necessarily be successful in Thailand.”* Not all competency areas will be needed by all international or domestic multicultural workers. For instance, a person on a short-term assignment will likely require a narrower range of desirable skills than someone on a longer placement. Also the cultural distance or gap between one’s home country and the host culture will affect the range of competencies needed.

As a conclusion it can be said that intercultural competence refers to the sensitivity to cultural diversity including the ability to behave in an appropriate way and to adapt one’s communication and interaction according to the context. This chapter introduced the three dimensions of intercultural competence. The next chapter discusses briefly professional competencies needed by business and engineering graduates and finally, the theoretical framework will synthesize the theory section at the end of the fourth chapter.

4. COMPETENCES NEEDED BY GRADUATES IN ECONOMICS AND ENGINEERING

This chapter discusses the professional competences among graduates in business administration and engineering. Needed intercultural competence and possibilities to develop one's intercultural competence offered by LUT will be also discussed. The final theoretical framework will be presented at the end of this chapter.

4.1 Professional competencies

As mentioned earlier, this study is limited into graduates in business administration and electrical engineering. Because of the limitation, this chapter presents the professional competences needed by graduates in business administration and in electrical engineering.

4.1.1 Masters of Science in Business Administration

Master of Science in Business Administration degree consists of 240 ECTS credits in Finland. The degree includes basic studies in business administration and economics, intermediate studies in the major subject which include the master's thesis and the related maturity test, an extensive curriculum of intermediate studies in one minor or short curriculum of intermediate studies in two minor, language and communication studies and other elective studies. When comparing the degrees among school of economics in Finland, there are variations in majors, for instance. In LUT, the students studying for the degree can choose their major from the following eight options: accounting, international marketing, technology research, business law, management and organisations, supply management, finance and knowledge management. Graduates should be highly skilled and adaptable professionals, who understand the laws of economics and the importance

of technology as the driving force of business. The crux of operation is, however, expertise in business economics that is where everything begins. (Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto 2005c)

In the 2003 SEFE researched the professional competence of masters in business administration at employers' point of view. According to the evaluations of employers, the strengths of masters in business administration are: (Suomen Ekonomiliitto 2004/, 6-7)

- management accounting/financial
- marketing
- wide general know-how
- systematicity / analyticality and
- language skills and international interaction

The weaknesses of business graduates are

- leadership
- interpersonal skills
- hands on know how
- humble attitude towards assignments which are not so demanding
- teamwork

Internationality shows in the business administration education mostly in language studies and in English lectured courses. The requirements of language studies are 19, 5 ECTS credits in at least two languages. Students whose major is international marketing have to study languages at least 28, 5 ECTS credits and English is compulsory. They have obligatory study abroad period as well. There are also growing amount of business administration students who join one of LUT's exchange programs. For instance in the academic year 2004-2005, the number of business administration students studying abroad is 74, whereas the total number of LUT's students studying abroad were 170. The same figures during the years 1999-2000 were 52 and 133. The amount of courses

lectured in English is also growing. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005a and 2005c)

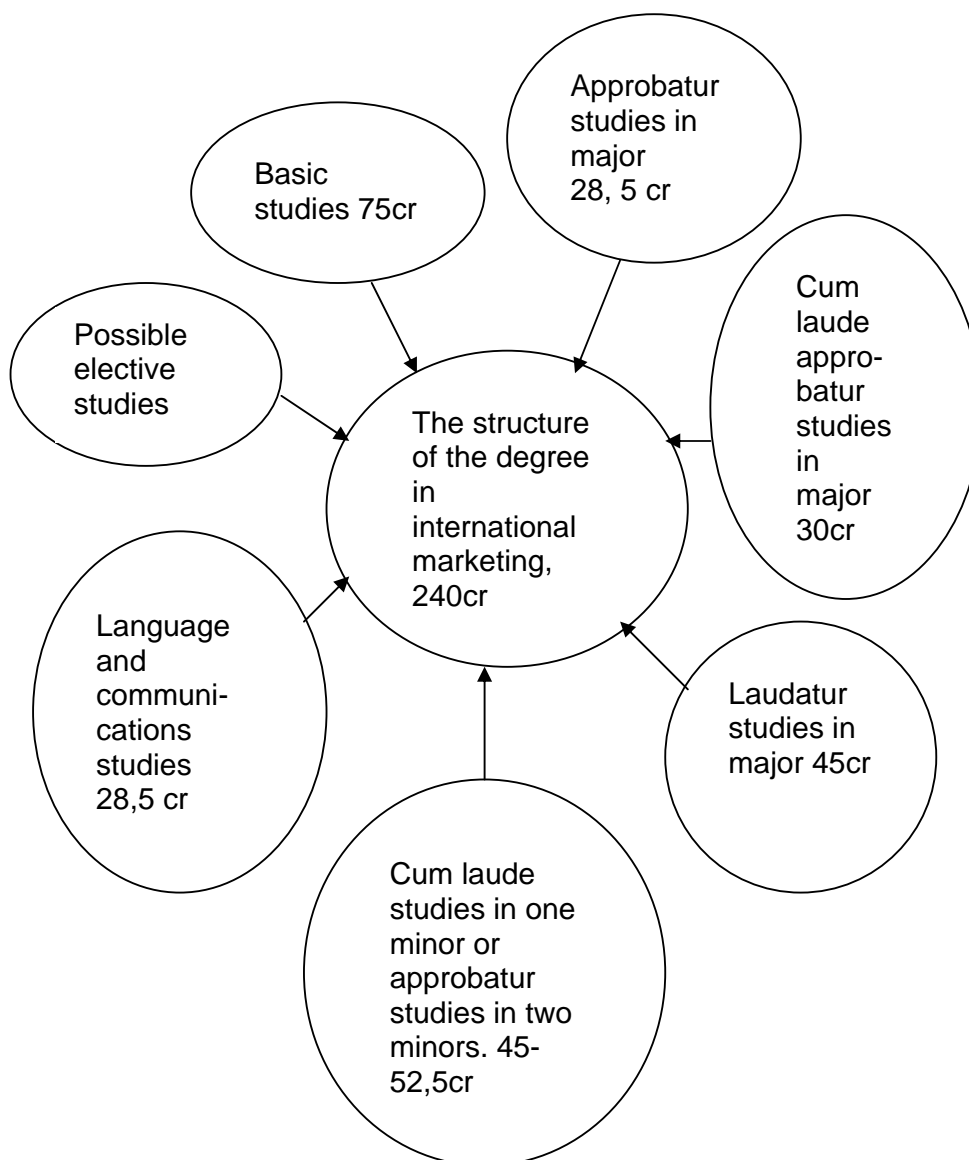


Figure 5. The structure of the degree in international marketing.
(Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005c)

Kettunen et al made a report in 2003 which evaluates Finnish business administration education in universities and polytechnics. According to this report LUT should pay more attention to internationalization of business administration education. The report also advises the university to think further developing exchange programs also for education personnel. One important point concerning all the researched institutions were that internationality has to be a permeable principle in all business education and language studies should support this aim. Separate internationality emphasizing subjects and training programs are not useful anymore. Developing truly international training programs for Finnish and foreign degree students are an important and challenging job in the new structured curricula.

4.1.2 Masters of Science in Technology

In Finnish technical universities, Master of Science in Technology degree shown consists of 270 ECTS credits. The degree structure of electrical engineering is shown in Figure 5. Graduates from the field of electrical engineering should be able to work in the internationally expanding Finnish electronics industry which during the recent years has risen to become the third pillar of Finnish industry. Among degrees, there are dissimilarities between Finnish technical universities. In LUT, the degree program consists of five fields of specialisation: electricity markets, industrial electronics, communication electronics, integrated control systems and entrepreneurship in the field of electric engineering. The Swedish language and one foreign language, totalling six ECTS credits are compulsory. A maximum of nine ECTS credits of language studies can be included in the group of elective studies. A maximum of 15 ECTS credits of languages can be included in the degree. Students are also able to study abroad but the interest has remained low. For example, there are five electrical engineering students studying abroad in the academic year 2004-2005 and the same figure in the 1999-2000 were zero. (Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto 2004a and 2005a)

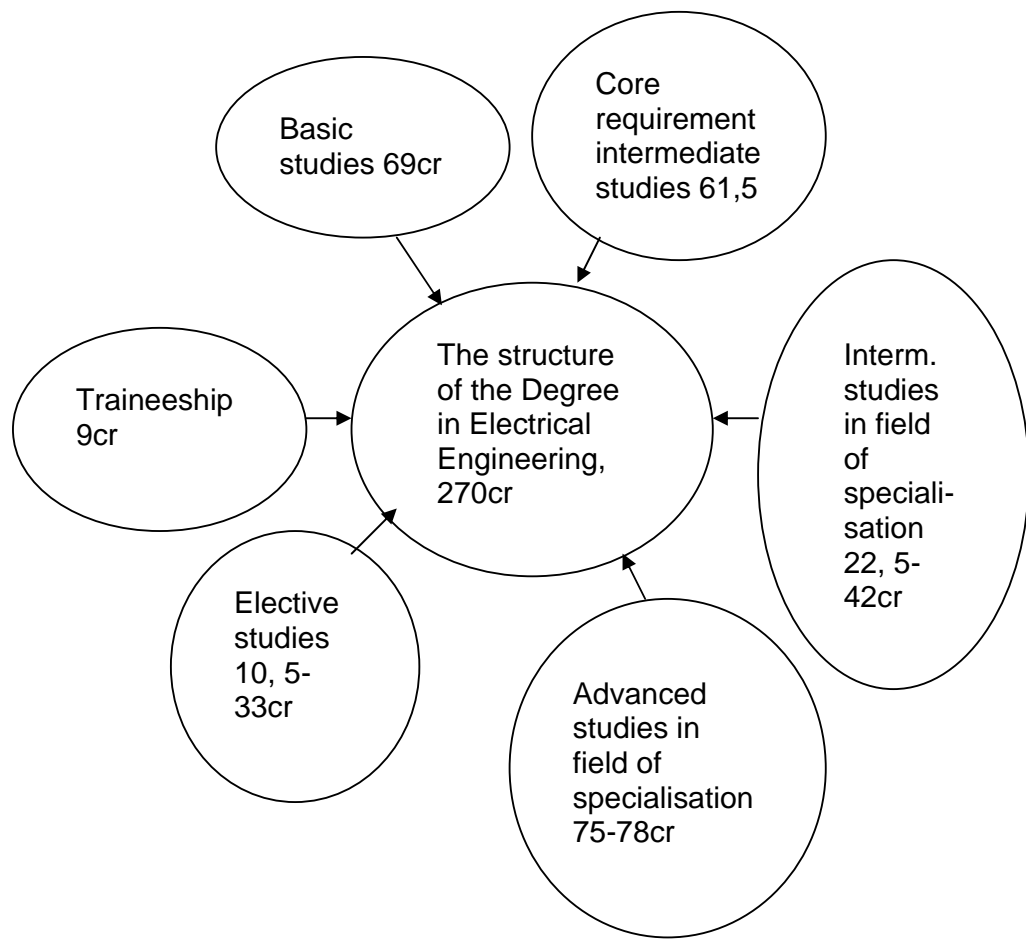


Figure 6. The structure of the degree in electrical engineering.
(Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2004a, 302-303)

To summarize, there are more language studies in the degree of business administration than of electrical engineering. Business students are also very active to study abroad compared to the students of electrical engineering. On the other hand, electrical engineering degree contains more studies and gives a broad know how in the field of electrical engineering. What might be then the needed intercultural competence in their assignments? It will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.2 Intercultural competence

Finnish Association of Graduate Masters of Science in Business Administration, SEFE researched in 2003 what kind of internationality related competence is required in the tasks of SEFE members. There were 5160 respondents in the survey and internationality related work assignments were divided into professional field of know how and interaction. The most needed professional competence was the basic skills in international business which was needed often or continuously among 38 percent of respondents. The most needed skills related to interaction were writing emails in foreign language which 59 percent admit to do often or continuously. 50 percent of the respondents were chatting in foreign language in informal situations and 44 percent of the respondents were using foreign language in meetings often or continuously. Operating in international networks often or continuously was part of the assignments of 42 percent of the respondents. (SEFE 2003)

In the research made by SEFE can be seen that interaction is important, especially oral and written foreign language skills are required in the tasks of SEFE members. The ability to operate in international networks was also needed among almost half of the respondents. In the business administration education, there are an adequate amount of language studies. What comes to operating in international networks, it depends mostly on the activity of the students.

Internationality seems to be also an essential part of the tasks of TEK members. Finnish Association of Graduate Engineers, TEK researched professional competence of its members in 2003. According to the research, the assignments of technical professionals vary in terms of core competence significantly. Same education gives abilities for diverse tasks. The competence profiles are shown in Figure 6. (Savolainen and Taukojärvi 2003, 13)

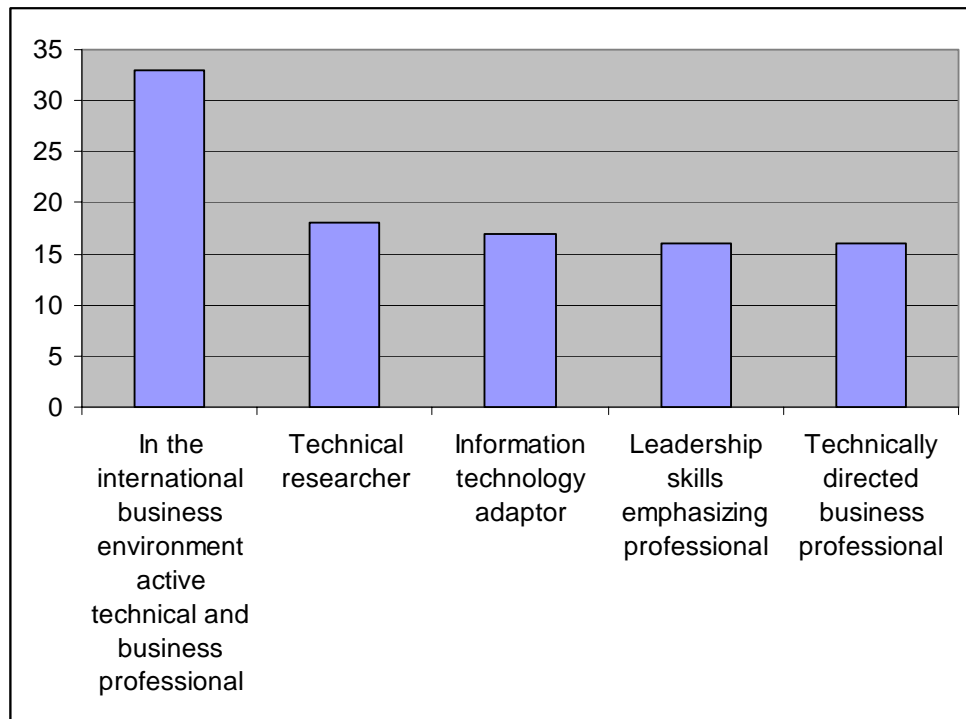


Figure 7. Competence profiles of the members of TEK, percents of the respondents (Adapted from Savolainen and Taukojärvi 2003, 13)

One third of technical professionals have a job which requires continuous intercultural interaction. Their job consists of many different competence areas: interpersonal skills, business and technical knowledge and multiple leadership skills are needed on daily basis. One fifth of the respondents have technical research assignments. The job description includes interpersonal skills, foreign languages, and writing in addition to technical knowledge and the skills of information technology. 17 percent of the respondents were information technology adaptors. Foreign languages, writing and interpersonal skills are needed often but not continuously. 16 percent of the respondents were leadership skills emphasizing professionals. Their job consists of multiple interpersonal and presentation skills in addition to management and leadership. Technical competence was not a part of the actual assignment but it is a good basis for managing the job. Assignments of the technically directed business professionals

include continuous understanding of the business, interpersonal and presentation skills and management. 16 percent of the respondents belong to this group. (Savolainen and Taukojärvi 2003, 13-14)

Another noteworthy observation is that according to Savolainen and Taukojärvi (2003, 10) foreign languages are included often or continuously about 80 percent of assignments, internationality and understanding foreign cultures to almost as many. As shown in Figure 6, the most assignments of electrical engineers require intercultural skills. The degree program in electrical engineering offers excellent abilities in the field of electrical engineering but less competence in intercultural skills what is also extremely important today's global working environment.

Internationality seems to be an essential part of the most assignments of SEFE and TEK members. However, LUT does not offer a separate course of intercultural issues which would be clearly open for everyone and for example situated in the basic studies. International Business and Technology Management (IBTM) -program which is mainly directed for exchange students, there are a course of cross-cultural encounters. The researcher joined the course this year because of the own interest. In addition to researcher, there was just one Finn who took part the course. In addition to this course LUT offers one elective two credits course "going international and intercultural communication" which is included in English studies. The aims of this course are to develop knowledge, skills and awareness of aspects of communication related to culture and working with people from other countries. There are variety ranges of different business and technical English courses, such as English for marketing and information technology available, so the probability that students will choose the course of intercultural communication is low, especially with electrical engineering students, who have only six credits obligatory language studies. Though, it would be extremely useful to both, students in economics and engineering to study intercultural communication to be able to work in global labour market.

Researcher has compared course offerings among Finnish technical and business universities and there were not a course which would handle only intercultural issues. By offering this kind of course, LUT would gain competitive advantage compared to other technical and business universities in Finland. Students would become aware of the importance of intercultural issues already at the beginning of their studies and they would be able to develop their intercultural competence during the studies. What other possibilities there are then for students to develop their intercultural competence? The next chapter discusses international possibilities offered by LUT.

4.2.1 LUT and internationality

LUT has four different exchange programs and cooperation universities in 35 countries. The amounts of outgoing and incoming students between the years 1999 and 2005 are shown in Table 2. There are still a little bit more outgoing students than incoming students. The yearly amount of outgoing LUT students has increased in the last two years and in the academic year 2004-2005 as many as 170 LUT students studied abroad sixth months or a year. Yearly approximately 30 LUT students do also practise abroad. There are different organizations which organizes training places, among them Centre for International Mobility, CIMO and the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience, IASTE. (Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 2005b)

Table 2. Exchange statistics: incoming and outgoing students 1999-2005.
(Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto 2005b)

STUDENT EXCHANGE	1999- 2000		2000- 2001		2001- 2002		2002- 2003		2003- 2004		2004- 2005	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
SOCRATES	75	71	84	75	86	74	94	69	106	91	120	94
NORDTEK/NOREK		16		17		10		8		8		9
BILATERAL	3	30	12	21	13	24	8	35	7	47	16	52
ISEP	2	4	2	2			2	1	2	2	1	4
OTHER	12	11	14	18	7	7	2	1	2	12	2	11
TOTAL	92	132	112	133	106	115	106	114	117	160	139	170

The Universum Graduate Survey profiles the students studying at one particular university and contrasts them against the total survey population. Every year, Universum surveys students to find out what they expect from their future employers. In the year 2004, 3136 students at 20 schools across Finland participated in the survey. The amount of respondents from LUT was 81. According to the Survey students of LUT are very willing to work abroad. Even 81 percent of the respondents wanted to work abroad, whereas 72 percent of all respondents were eager to work abroad. (Universum Communications 2004, 5; 24)

Internationality as studying or working abroad or meeting foreign students in home university in Finland are important elements that enrich one's studies. More international atmosphere and continuous contact to students from other cultures are excellent ways to give international feeling also to those students who can not study part of their degree in a foreign cooperation university. One condition to get international degree students to study in Lappeenranta is the credence of LUT as an international university. Plenty of foreign exchange students come from EU –countries. The amount of foreign exchange students is growing continuously and due to that the number of courses lectured in English is aimed to grow. The most of them join the IBTM –program but the number of foreign students

taking part the normal tuition offered by different departments is still growing. (LUT the plan of strategy 2005, 4) There will be four international master degree programs operating at LUT in the academic year 2005-2006:

- Mechanical Engineering: Design, Manufacturing and Wood Technology
- Information Technology: International Master's Degree Programme in Information Science
- Chemical Technology: Product and Process Development
- Energy Technology: International Master's Programme in Bioenergy Technology

Altogether about 100 students from Finland and abroad will be chosen to the programs and the tuition will be organised wholly in English. (LUT the plan of strategy 2005, 4)

A great improvement has been the European credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) recognition. The European Commission has awarded LUT the label for ECTS for three academic years beginning in the 2004-2005. This award is a proof that LUT has successfully implemented the ECTS and is thus even more trustworthy partner in student exchange. This was the first time that higher education institutions could apply for the ECTS label. Ten institutions out of 91 applicants were selected. The number of both applicants and awardees is expected to increase substantially in the coming years. LUT was the only Finnish university to be awarded. Arcada Polytechnic from Finland was also awarded. Recently ECTS is developing into an accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European level. This is one of the key objectives of the Bologna Declaration of June 1999. (Lappeenranta teknillinen yliopisto 2005c)

As a conclusion, there are good possibilities to develop one's intercultural competence while studying at LUT. One can get to know international students and learn new cultures at the same time or study or work abroad. However, all of them depend totally on the activity of students. Assignments of SEFE and TEK members require intercultural competence mostly on daily basis or often. That is why it would be extremely essential that intercultural issues would be taught already in the academe. The next chapter presents the final research framework.

4.3 The research framework of this study

This chapter synthesises the literature presented in the earlier chapters and presents the final theoretical framework for the empirical part of the thesis. Intercultural communication is a multi- and interdisciplinary academic field including history, geography, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, business economics, linguistics, and communication and information technology at least. That is why the intercultural communication literature is enormous and lots of different theories and models have been experienced. The major factor which differentiates intercultural communication from other forms of communication is culture and the multiple variability of culture.

As mentioned earlier this study aims to answer to the question: what kind of intercultural competence graduates of LUT should have? On basis of the theory section can be said that the model of intercultural competence includes three interdependent dimensions: affective, cognitive and communicative. Affective dimension consists of personal characteristics and attitudes: empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, self-knowledge and attitudes of curiosity and openness. The cognitive dimension includes culture general and culture specific knowledge, knowledge of one's own culture, linguistic ability and professional know how. Communicative, behavioural dimension includes ability to express respect, a capacity to be non-judgemental and effective interaction management.

In order to be competent in intercultural communication in the field of business administration or electrical engineering, one should have the needed professional know how as well. Figure 7 presents the research framework of the study.

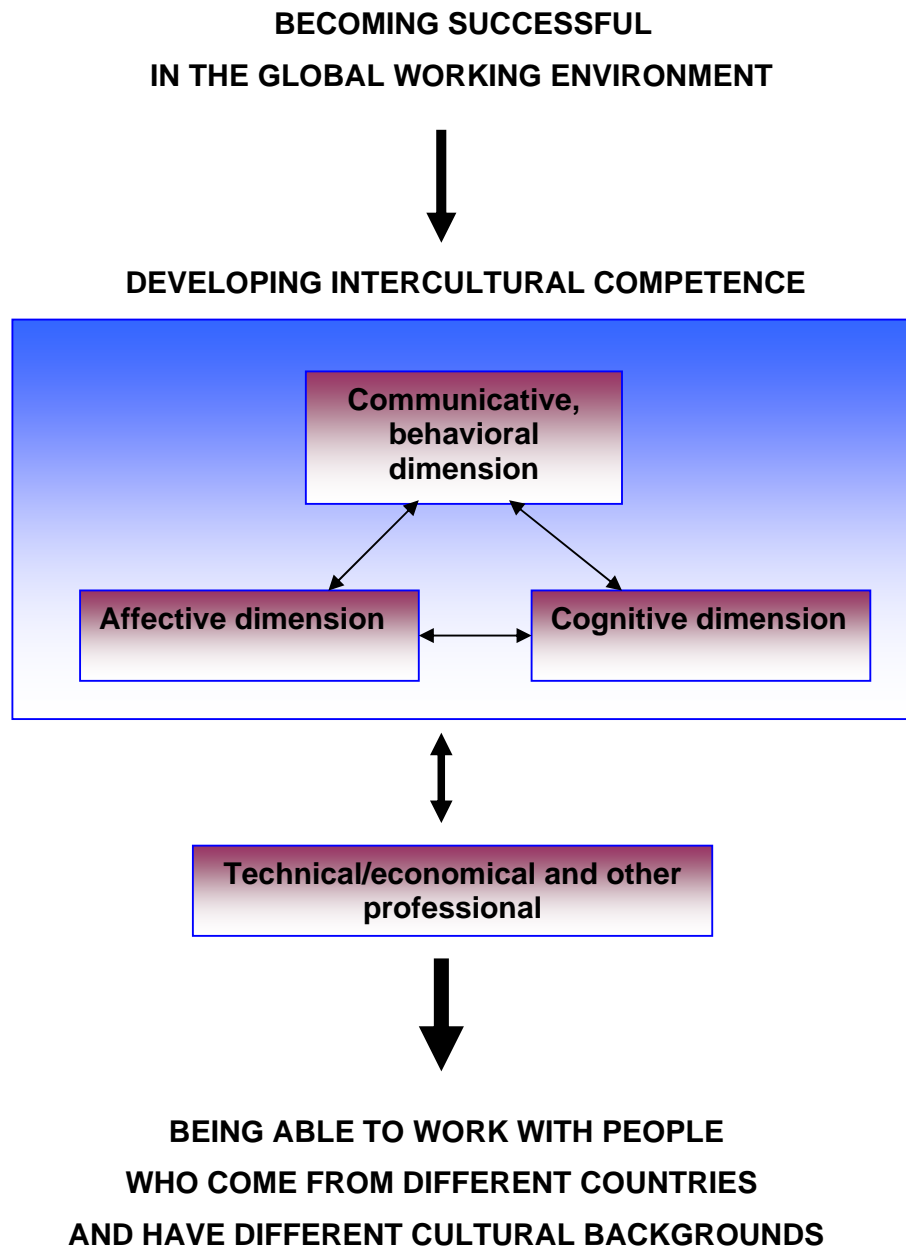


Figure 8. The research framework of the study (Applied from Gertsen 1992, 347)

The next chapter concentrates on the research methodology of this study. Chosen research, data collection and analysis methods will be introduced and reliability and validity of the research will be also discussed.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains how the study was conducted and which methodological choices were made. Methodology refers to the choices one makes about cases to study, methods of data gathering, form of data analysis in planning and executing a research study. So the methodology defines how one will go about studying any phenomenon. "Like theories, methodologies cannot be true or false, only more or less useful. " (Silverman 2001, 4)

By qualitative research is meant the research of certain phenomenon's qualities, models, characteristics and meanings, the ways which these can be observed, documented, analyzed and interpreted. Qualitative research focuses on recognizing, documenting and interpreting the concept of the world, values, meanings and thoughts. At the same time it describes events in life, situations and the phenomena being studied. (Leininger 1985, 1-7) Silverman (2001, 23) points out that "in fact, the choice of between different research methods should depend upon what you are trying to find out." The purpose of qualitative study is to understand the phenomena (Uusitalo 1991, 79-81).

There are certain research problems in which the qualitative research methods are better and more reliable than quantitative. Qualitative research is not simply tied to forehand restricted data and therefore by qualitative methods more deep and reliable data can be gathered, for instance, delicate intimate and difficult things for interviewees. Also while researching phenomena which the interviewees are not used to discuss on a daily basis, or things that cannot be remembered easily or become conscious of. These are for example: values meanings and believes. Different forms of culture can not be described purely by quantitative methods. Also series of events or different kinds of descriptions of processes are impossible by only quantitative methods. In these cases it is impossible to get deeper than the surface, where as by qualitative methods it is more possible and probable. (Grönfors 1982 11-15 and

Mäkelä 1990. 45-46) In this chapter, the research problem is qualitative by nature.

According to Silverman (2001, 23) there are four major methods used by qualitative researches: observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews and recording and transcribing naturally occurring interaction. "Authenticity" rather than reliability is often the issue in qualitative research. The aim is usually to gather an authentic understanding of people's experiences and it is believed that open-ended questions are the most effective route to this end. (Silverman 2001, 13) That is why the interviewing and open-ended questions were used in this research.

5.1 Three version of interview data

Silverman (2001, 86) emphasizes, there are versions of interview data: positivism, emotionalism and constructionism, shown in Table 3. Each model provides different answers to questions about whether one should gather interview data and, if so how to analyze them.

Table 3. Three versions of interview data (Silverman 2001, 87)

	Status of data	Methodology
Positivism	Facts about behaviour and attitudes	Random samples Standard questions Tabulations
Emotionalism	Authentic experiences	Unstructured, open-ended interviews
Constructionism	Mutually constructed	Any interview treated as a topic

According to positivism, interview data gives an access to facts about the world. The primary issue is to generate data which are valid and reliable, independently of the research setting. The main ways are the random selection of the interview sample and the administration of standardized questions with multiple-choice answers which can be readily tabulated. (Silverman 2001, 86)

According to emotionalism, interviews are viewed as experiencing subjects who actively construct their social world. The primary issue is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences. The main ways to achieve this are unstructured, open-ended interviews usually based upon prior, in depth participant observation. (Silverman 2001, 87)

According to constructionism, interviewers and interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning. Rather than treat this as standing in the way of accurate depictions of "facts" or "experiences", how meaning is mutually constructed becomes the researcher's topic. Because of this, research interviews are not treated as specially privileged and other interviews are treated as of equal interest, i.e. interviews are treated as topics rather than as a research resource. A particular focus is on how interviewees construct narratives of events and people and the turn-by-turn construction of meaning. (Silverman 2001, 87)

The focus in this research is on emotionalism because the primary issue is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences. Unstructured, open-ended interview is naturally used.

5.3 Data collection and analysis

The theoretical information is gathered from academic literature, articles and Internet publications. The empirical data of the study is gathered by interviewing chosen employers with the focus on emotionalism.

In the qualitative research it is very common to use a key-person to find interviewees. The role of the key-person is to help the researcher to create contacts for interviews. In this research is one key-person, project secretary Tarja Sipiläinen from the department of electrical engineering of LUT, who helped to create a contact to the chosen employers of electrical engineering department.

The amount of the interviews was ten. Chosen employers were selected on the basis of a survey made by International and Career Services in 2004, which has listed the most employed employers based on training programs and the help of the contacts of electrical engineering department. The chosen employers are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The chosen employers of the departments of business administration and electrical engineering.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING
Larox Oyj HR Assistant Sanna Puranen	ABB Oy Business Unit Manager, Machines Juha Silvennoinen
National Board of Customs Director of International Affairs Hannu Aarnio	Elektrobit Corporation Manager, Mobile Software and Integration Group Sami Jukonen
Nordea Bank Finland First Vice President Heikki Viitanen	Jaakko Pöyry Oy Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering Olli Saari
Stora Enso / International Office HRD Manager Kari Kähäri	LUT Deputy Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering Jarmo Partanen
Tietoenator / Forest Marketing Communications Manager Heini Pertta	Robert Bosch Head of the Department of Energy and Body systems Georg Blume

The interviewees had to fill two criteria: an experience of international assignments and they had to be employers of business and electrical engineering graduates of LUT. The years they had worked abroad varied from few months to over ten years but all of them still worked in the companies which operated over country boundaries on daily basis. Three of the interviews had also studied at LUT. Also a representative of electrical engineering was among interviewees because the department of electrical engineering had employed even 15 graduates in electrical engineering in 2004.

All the interviews were made during the April 2005. Three of them were made in Lappeenranta, six in Helsinki and one interview was made over the phone in English because the interviewee worked in Germany. Interviewing over the phone is more suitable for structured interviews because there are no visible hints from the conversation which were offering the context for the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 64). That is why all the other of the interviews were made face-to-face. The interviews were held at interviewees' work places during the working day and conducted in Finnish. The duration of the interviews differed from 45 minutes to two hours.

The interview began with warming up questions and continued to more specific ones. All the three dimensions of intercultural competence were first asked separately and after these questions, the theoretical model of intercultural competence was drawn in every face to face interview and the interviewees could express their opinions of the model and were also able to comment on more on the each earlier discussed dimension, if necessary. This kind of tactic was needed because of the multiple nature of the research phenomenon. The researcher also asked interviewees specific questions that were initiated in the interview situation. All the interviews were done with the focused interview tactic and with an interview frame that can be seen in Appendix 1.

All the interviews were recorded and later transcript. In that way, the need for low-inference descriptions has tried to be satisfied. The permission to record the interview was always asked beforehand on the phone when making appointments. All the interviews were written afterwards word to word for closer analysis. The quotations are translated by the interviewer. The Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 160) divide qualitative data analysis methods into quantitative analysis techniques, theme and type methods, content analysis and discourse analysis. In this research the collected data was analyzed with the theme method because the interview frame gave a natural ground for the theme analysis.

5.2 Reliability and validity

The concepts of reliability and variability come from quantitative research and they are based on the idea, that researcher is able to get hands on the objective reality and objective truth. What reliability involves and its relation to validity can be understood simply by following Kirk and Miller's (1986, 19) example of using a thermometer: *"A thermometer that shows the same reading of 82 degrees each time it is plunged into boiling water gives a reliable measurement. A second thermometer might give readings over a series of measurements that vary from around 100 degrees. The second thermometer would be unreliable but relatively valid, whereas the first would be invalid but perfectly reliable"*. So validity means the capability to measure what was intended to be measured and reliability refers to the repeatability of the results (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001, 186).

Reliability of interview studies can be improved by satisfying the criterion of using low-inference descriptions. When one does e-mail interviews, one can readily satisfy this criterion because the participants have already done their own transcribing. When reporting other interviews, one can satisfy the need for low-inference descriptors by: (Silverman 2001, 229-230)

- tape-recording all face-to-face interviews
- carefully transcribing these tapes according to the needs of reliable analysis
- Presenting long extracts of data in one's research report – including the question that provoked any answer.

In this research the low-inference descriptors were satisfied by using tape recording device in all of the interviews. All the data in the tapes was extracted word for word, so that researcher's own attitudes and opinions could be minimized from the empirical part of the study. Reliability can also be improved by comparing the analysis of the same data with several researchers. (Silverman 2001 and Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001, 186) To confirm the reliability of the empirical research, the results are compared to theoretical findings in the chapter seven.

Cook and Campbell classify four different forms of validity: statistic validity, construct validity, internal validity and external validity. Statistic validity mainly deals with specific statistical problems so it is not relevant in this context. *Construct validity* is connected to the definition of validity, it means the study's capability to measure what was intended to be measured, in other words are there any concepts used in the research which reflect the research phenomenon. It is a question of the interpretation. According to Cook and Campbell *internal validity* deals with the issue that if one concludes that X has created Y, this really is true and some third factor has not created Y. *External validity means* the generalisation of the results in different situations or with different people. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001, 188)

However, some researchers such as Holstein and Gubrium argue that it could be not wise to use the concepts of validity and reliability anymore. Giving up the traditional forms of reliability and validity does not mean that the research could be done however. The research should still aim to exposing opinions and the world of the research objectives in a best possible way. That is why the construct validity is the most important.

Researcher has to be able to document, how and way the description of the world of the research objectives has been done as the way it has been done and researcher has to be able to argument the results but other researchers may still have different results without that it is because of the weakness of the research method or the research. On the other hand, the most near the traditional concept of reliability will be in the areas which deal with the quality of the empirical data. Then reliability deals more with the operation of the researcher than the responses of the interviewees, in other words how reliable is the researcher's analysis of the research data. Reliability deals with the issues that are the all usable data taken into consideration and have the data been literate properly. It is important that the results reflect the world of the research objectives as well as possible. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001, 186-187).

To summarize, reliability and especially construct validity are taken into consideration by using tape recording device in all of the interviews and extracting data word for word so that researcher's own attitudes and opinions could be minimized from the empirical part of the study. To confirm the reliability of the empirical research, the results are also compared to theoretical findings in the chapter seven. The next chapter presents the empirical findings of this study

6. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter is written on basis of the empirical material received from the interviews and discusses intercultural competence from employer's standpoint. Internationality was a part of every interviewee's daily work in the forms of international colleagues, customers, and business projects. Here is one of the examples how different cultures affect business:

"If I think my international experience, I have got to know quite well different types and it is really important in this job. Actually that is the most rewarding part of the job because the technical issues are quite same, operations in Europe, in the USA, I mean the basics. Any engineer can talk to another engineer those matters but the difference comes in that you understand the effects of different cultures. There are some things that you can not say like that to Koreans and then with Americans you have to do the small talk and build up their fine army, for example. That is a little bit different then." (Jukonen 2005)

According to theory, intercultural competence is formed by three interdependent dimensions: affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioral. The empirical results will be also represented based on this classification of intercultural competence founded in theory. Professional competence of LUT graduates will be also discussed in the connection of cognitive dimension. After the employers' views about the three dimensions have been discussed, the opinions concerning the model of intercultural competence will be presented. At the end of this chapter, employers' exceptions of intercultural competence of LUT graduates and suggested improvements will be discussed.

6.1 Affective dimension

The most commonly mentioned traits among employers were attitudes of openness and curiosity and the real understanding and accepting of dissimilar backgrounds: *“In my opinion, International Professional is in a certain way humane and tolerant and has a respect for dissimilarity. Being mindful and understanding of dissimilar backgrounds are the most important characteristics of International Professional. On the other hand also right kind of humbleness is wished from the graduates who come to working life.”* (Puranen 2005)

“In international operations there are always situations which are unfamiliar. What comes to attitudes, the most essential is that person is curious, interested in new things and able to receive and accept difference. I do not mean that one should adjust oneself; one’s own thoughts and principles are allowed and recommended to adhere. Some kind of broadmindedness is needed and also desire to learn new things. Very different types get along well on the world but one has to have the courage to ask and the desire to ask.” (Silvennoinen 2005)

“It is clear that you understand that there are differences and you accept it. And another big thing is that you have the ability to get your message across in different cultures and business environments. You can not present in the similar vein to Chinese and to European. We do not expect that business graduates have the skill but they have to have the right kind of mindset: of course it is like that, we understand that they are different. You will learn it by doing, there is no perfect person in the world.” (Kähäri 2005)

“International Professional is interested in other people and cultures, they have sensitivity against behavioural characteristics of other people, they are able to integrate, they have knowledge about cultural characteristics, they are able to know what behaviour can be changed and what not, they

have methodology and process knowledge to work around cultural differences.” (Blume 2005)

Tolerance for ambiguity was emphasized in this example: *“You have to understand the other party and you should not become nervous if you for example, in Poland ask somebody something, you won’t get similar responses twice. You just have to understand it and develop your cultural knowledge in the culture and go behind those things and it does not happen fast.” (Viitanen 2005)*

Flexibility was also mentioned in addition to the commonly mentioned traits: *“I would say openness, curiosity and being interested in things and taking own initiative to research and speak out, not waiting for that one is being asked, pushed to some situation, one should self actively go along. That is surely the most important characteristics. And also flexibility is important. If you are thinking internationality in working life, there will be time lags and it is impossible to have negotiations on the phone with North Americans before the six o’clock in the evening, so flexibility is needed.” (Pertta 2005)*

Right attitudes were considered extremely essential for intercultural interaction among all interviewees and they were the condition for an international work. Graduates have to have the right kind of mindset and willingness for international assignments. At Jaakko Pöyry it was viewed like that: *“It is hard to me to push; I can give some help when we go to international projects but the want has to be there and the courage to leave there. Normally when we come back, everybody thinks positively that it was many ways much rewarding trip as it was thought beforehand. The feedback is by us so. Always there is, of course difficulties, especially in the beginning of the project but it will be fine.” (Saari 2005)*

To summarize, attitudes of curiosity and openness and tolerance for ambiguity that are indicative of intercultural competence and most commonly founded in theory, were also mentioned by all of the interviews.

Employers also emphasized understanding and accepting of difference which was in theory mentioned as empathy. None of the employers mentioned directly self-knowledge and a new trait which was not mentioned in theory was flexibility. Next chapter will introduce employers' opinions concerning the cognitive dimension of intercultural competence.

6.2 Cognitive dimension

The importance of cognition, how human beings acquire and use information and knowledge about other cultures and foreign languages considering intercultural competence is mentioned by all of the interviewees. All the interviewees had lots of interesting experiences of different cultures. Here is one of them:

“One example of what kind of different cultures there are. In my previous life in Nokia, I had flown about 24 hours to get there and all the possible things had gone wrong on the way and when I got into meeting, it was in practice over in ten minutes when the Korean said to me: your product is full of shit. I was there with my red face and I thought that damned. So you have to understand with the help of this example, that for example in Asia, the customers are really demanding and they will attack when you are still on the front line and you have not any other kind of possibility than touch in the bull. There will be a full attack if they have a reason for that. You have to understand that if they are not satisfied they will really attack you and if they are satisfied, they are quiet.” (Jukonen 2005)

6.2.1 Culture-general and culture-specific knowledge

The classification between culture-general and culture-specific information depended on the assignment, like stated also in theory. If one is continuously working with a specific culture, culture-specific knowledge is needed. It is also needed if one is dealing with really different country than

one's own or working in a specific country. According to Lustig and Koester (1998, 70) culture-specific knowledge should include information about the forces that maintain culture's uniqueness and facts about cultural patterns that predominate. Otherwise, culture-general knowledge which means the understanding of the main dimensions of cultural variability introduced in the second chapter, individualism - collectivism, low- and high context cultures, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity and femininity is enough: *"Culture-general knowledge is enough but when you live in a foreign country, you have to know the history and after all the only way to gain that is to read local magazines, to study local language and to get to know local people. If you do international work from Finland, the general level is enough; nobody does expect that you can join the local discussion. But if you live there, the international assignment will be much more rewarding if you know the local culture."* (Viitanen 2005)

"We have to distinguish between three cases: person continuously working with a specific country needs culture specific knowledge, person temporarily working with other countries needs general knowledge and person temporarily working with other critical countries such as Japan and China needs general knowledge but might ideally be accompanied by a person with culture specific knowledge." (Blume 2005)

It was also experienced that when the cultural differences are big enough like between Europe and Asia, one should have culture specific knowledge: *"I have to say that when you go to the target country, you should have some kind of all-round education about the culture and country habits, you do not have to be a cultural expert or consult, but it is a good ice breaker. When you discuss for the first time with people, it is good if you show to know something but equally important is that you are interested to ask more. But then there are also cultures where you can blow really badly if you do not know anything about the culture. For instance, Asian cultures are like that, you can give a really bad impression as a representative of a firm if you do not know how to behave. Of course, Asians understand that Europeans do not know all their habits but it*

makes much better impression if you are able to receive business cards with both hands and hand yours. (Pertta 2005)

According to Bennett (1998, 6) it is necessary in intercultural communication to make cultural generalizations. Cultural generalizations can be made while avoiding stereotypes by maintaining the idea that all possible beliefs are represented in all cultures at all times but each different culture has a preference for some beliefs over others. At Pöyry it was also pointed out that it is essential to have the openness towards the difference: *"I think the most important is openness towards different cultures and you should not think that when you go to Korea, Koreans are...you should not take a stand beforehand, you should have the openness and believe in yourself and how you experience it but you have to be open to communicate and desire to communicate, Finns tend to be a little bit uncommunicative than other cultures."* (Saari 2005)

Adler (1997, 61) pointed out that while business practices across companies may look very similar, the underlying national values remain divergent. At TietoEnator it was also emphasized that is essential to recognize the effect of the national culture: *"It is really essential in the communication to understand how the things are traditionally done in the country. One can sometimes laugh about Swedes' discussing mode, but one should not to get nervous about it, rather try to understand the cultural differences. Our Swedish colleagues have also learned working habits of Finns. So TietoEnator's own corporate culture will form with the time and those country habits will not stay so strong. However it is good to recognize those. Especially in an acquisition situation, it is really important to be aware of them and educate the personal to be aware of the differences."* (Pertta 2005)

Some useful tips were also given for the future business trips: *"Sport is for example really good, when you go to Spain, you should read a little bit how Real Madrid has done. When you have few tips, small talk will be*

easy. In my opinion, sport is like that where you could little bit prepare yourself you know that you are going to this kind of trip. When you go to business trips, you will normally at least to go eat together in the evening and it is always nice if the conversation is going smoothly outside the business matters.” (Saari 2005)

Concerning the cultural knowledge, it was emphasized at Nordea that it is essential to realize which countries are important in the future: *“If you are dealing with a retail business, which banking also is, a service, you have to know the people. It is really useful to know the framework which those people in that specific country have. I think that business concepts can be quite international but the success is local so you have to adapt them then. You have to pay attention to it. One thing which came to mind when I heard about your topic and which also can be quite important thing, is that one realizes in which countries in the future the operations will be placed. They are not necessarily the same countries than before but considering the point, Lappeenranta is situated in a good place, in the East next to Russian.” (Viitanen 2005)*

6.2.2 Knowledge of one's own cultural system

Knowledge of one's own culture was considered also very important. Understanding of the home culture: how it is shaped, how people think, feel and react to other people and events. People should be able to describe their behaviour in terms of their own cultural logic and how their own filters such as perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of communication affect relations and communications with international colleagues.

The ability to tell to foreigners about one's own culture was considered important: *“That is true, the ability to tell about your own culture. If we go to Korea, Korean might ask something about Finland, when it is really good if you can tell it. If you have your roots in Finland, Finnish culture and*

about your hobbies is good to learn to tell. You can also prepare for it, if it won't come naturally. Many things can be learned if you want to. If you are International Professional, you do not have to be born like that. (Saari 2005)

It was pointed out that with the knowledge of one's own culture; it is easier to be interested in other cultures as well. Though, with the help of curious and enthusiastic attitude, it can be gained very positive effects as well: *"Knowledge of one's home country and culture is extremely useful. If you are interested, enthusiastic and know and you are able to respect or hate, however, in your own culture, then it is much easier to understand other cultures. Typically, if you are at least a bit familiar with your own culture, it is of course easier to be interested in other cultures as well. For example, if you are going to work in other country, foreign country, it will ease to be there and to communicate with people if you know things but also with the help of curious, enthusiastic attitude that you want to find out, you will get plenty of new friends and good relationships. When you are actively asking and trying to learn, you will learn and build the contact net in the same time. It is a good topic to ask people about their habits, why are the electrical wires outside and not inside, for example."* (Silvennoinen 2005)

One of the interviewees also pointed out that everybody does not necessarily have the home culture anymore: *"Master culture, now when there are also Globetrotters, you do not necessarily have the home culture anymore. Probably the amount of these kinds of types is still really low but we are very interested in those types because they can be seeded everywhere."* (Kähäri 2005)

6.2.3 Linguistic ability

Linguistic ability is nowadays a must and the employers considered fluent skills in few foreign languages more useful than knowing the basics of many languages. In the seven of the ten interviewed firms, the working language was English. English had also the highest priority in the three

other firms regardless of the industry: *"We demand excellent English, both written and oral. It is absolute demand, our operation language is English. I speak more English than Finnish during the working day, so it is not an option to speak and write bad English. Typically persons coming from Indian or Pakistan speak good English because they study in English, the top universities educate in English and then you know that they speak good English. (Jukonen 2005)*

"English has highest priority, customers would like to be addressed in their home language, basic language skills are sometimes helpful but often also fluent language skills are required." (Blume 2005)

"English has the highest priority, it is the language of our corporation. If we think about electrical engineering or any other industry, English is the most used language because it is an internationally approved language and it can be demanded everyone to handle. (Silvennoinen 2005)

Other languages which employers considered to be important depended on the main markets. Commonly mentioned languages were German, French, Russian, Swedish and Spain: *"Of course English and it is better if you can fluently one language than many languages badly. Then are of course French, German and Sweden and partly Russian in those Russian relations, it depends on what are you doing. Of course people will be partly selected on the basis of the language skill and English is the number one but then in the informal interaction, it would be good if you knew French, German and Swedish." (Aarnio 2005)*

"If a Finn who knows Symbian would walk there and say that he or she speaks fluent Korean, I would recruit the person right away. But I know that there are not any, maybe. And what comes to other language skills, German and French are those, we have a big office in Germany, so the languages are considered as a plus." (Jukonen 2005)

Then we have, of course big markets, if you knew Chinese for example, it would be a really wanted skill. Germany is a very big market and German is essential. France is also a big market where you can not manage without French. Anyway, English and any other language, when you have a firm like ABB which operates everywhere in the world and we have quite strong position in every market so any language in addition to English is useful if you know it well enough.” (Silvennoinen 2005)

In the banking industry, the following languages in addition to English were considered essential: *“Then the languages of the northern countries, such as Swedish are also important. In the future Russian certainly will be also important, we there a partnership bank, international Moscow bank. In Russian, the banking business is still in a certain way quite undeveloped but the possibilities can be quite big there. Then also the languages of the neighbourhood countries like Estonian. They are small countries but for a Finn it is a not a big thing to learn some Estonian.” (Viitanen 2005)*

To summarize, fluent language skills, both written and oral are a must. English has the highest priority and other languages are considered as a plus. In the following, the dissimilarities between needed professional competence in Finland and abroad will be discussed.

6.2.4 Professional competence

The assignments of the business and electrical engineering graduates were equally international in the interviewed firms. Most of the firms have international personnel also in Finland and the job requires continuous intercultural interaction in the forms of international colleagues, international customers, suppliers and business projects.

Until now, the employers of business administration and electrical engineering have had identical views. Though, employers had different views about the dissimilarities in needed professional competence in

Finland and abroad. Employers of the electrical engineering experienced that the field of electrical engineering is really international and the needed competence is the same in Finland or abroad: *“In my opinion the department of electrical engineering is the best compromise. It is because they educate to understand electrical equipment and the good thing in electrical engineering is that it is international because, it is the same, if you are operating with equipment which weights 20 tons such as electric motors or with a mobile phone. There are good candidates and I know that there are skilled people. The universality is a really good thing in electrical engineering, if you are working for ABB, you are basically working with the same kind of components as I here plus those people who are working for ABB in Sweden, USA, Italy or by us in Germany, for example. The same kind of things is done and the same goes also quite well with information technology but I think that electrical engineering is the best compromise when considering purely the internationality.”* (Jukonen 2005)

If you have learned in Finland to plan electric machines, the understanding is the same. (Silvennoinen 2005)

On the other hand, employers in the field of business administration considered that there are differences and the differences depend on the assignment. The main differences in the field of business administration between working in Finland and abroad were the comprehensiveness of the job and the usage of the communication technology. At TietoEnator, the situation was described like that: *“You have to be able to do the work in an environment, where you have not necessarily ever met the person physically. Of course we try to meet the nearest colleagues at least once or yearly but it is not always sure that it will happen. We do video conferencing but I run lots of meeting over the phone and email, of course. In the telephone meetings the communication situation is different and it requires a skill to use communication technology. Still these meetings are extremely important in order to be able to manage the things with your team although you are not physically together. The ability to network is more important skill in international assignments, than nationally. I would*

also add the importance of following the same rules. The bigger the unit will be, the more there will be colleagues in different countries and the more important it is that common rules are clear to everybody. If we think marketing communications, to document for instance visual instructions and instructions for the brand developing, is definitely more important when the unit gets bigger.” (Pertta 2005)

The global aspect of the handled business issues was also mentioned: *“We on the global side think about the strategy and how we are going to support the entire business in terms of human resource, we think the rewarding models of the top management, options and this kind of global things. Global issues, which are tried to follow through the world uniformly and in that way, that they holds together and there will be transparency and measurability then. It differs a lot.” (Kähäri 2005)*

However, it was also mentioned by business employers that despite the fact that the needed professional competence is different abroad and Finland, the most important thing is that graduates have the abilities to assume new things: *“It depends on the specific field where you will be. If we think personnel management, then would be good if you knew for instance labour law, visa and working permits arrangements and on the other hand if you are dealing with the export, then you have to have concrete knowledge about customs procedures but these that kind of competences can not any university to offer and it is no use that something so specific would be taught. The abilities are the most important that you are able to assume new things and to control these changing issues.” (Puranen 2005)*

6.3 Communicative, behavioural dimension

All the employers pointed out the importance of good communication skills. The employers did not much differentiated communication skills into ability to express respect or a capacity to be non-judgemental like founded

in theory but all of them considered the communication skills as fundamental: *“Communication skills are extremely useful. You have to be able to make presentations; you have to be able to tell your things like that, that it is short and concise. You should not be in a panic if someone presents bad questions because there will be bad questions. You have to always consider that if you do not know an answer to something, you should not make up or apply, it is a part of the communication ability that if you do not know the answer, you admit it honestly that I do not know, I will find it out.”* (Jukonen 2005)

In addition to good communications skills, it was also considered very important that one has courage to ask. At ABB it was pointed out that the most problems could be avoided with a help of better communication: *“In my opinion the biggest problems in international operations, for example in the field of technique, 90 percent of all problems what is happening in the world are connected to communication. It is because of somebody did not remember to ask or did not bother to ask and assumes that it will be done like we always have done it. Although the problem would occur as a technical problem, the biggest reason is not that somebody could not do it properly; it is because of the coding mistakes and because of the wants of the customer is not understood properly or at all. It goes for home country as well but it is extremely essential in the international operations that you have the courage to make stupid questions and make sure that you will definitely understand. In my opinion it is the most essential.”* (Silvennoinen 2005)

The listening ability was also mentioned by three of the interviewees: *“Active listening contents-wise and expressively reflecting in the light of different cultures, continuous follow up in detail, finding the correct equilibrium between following the own target and let the other keep his face.”* (Blume 2005)

“Of course you have to be able to present our matters clearly, staidly but the most important is that you are listening and you can especially...We

Finns are used to straightforward progress. When we go to southern of Alps, it feels amazing when they might there do a project three months and everything goes fine and systematically but then, the following day when we come to work, everything will be started in a way from the beginning again. We think very systemically, when this is fixed, we will build next on it and then again the next but specially in the southern of Alps, we are used to say that the culture changes and there they are able to anytime to do the foundations again and it feels sometimes difficult for the Finn. Also there are big differences when we go to Sweden.” (Saari 2005)

In addition to listening ability, effective interaction management was considered important: *“Nothing is more important than a good communications skills, in other words you can clearly present your matter but especially in the international assignments that you are able to listen and pay attention to others that there won’t be a feeling of throwing one’s weight around.” (Pertta 2005)*

As mentioned earlier, according to Gudykunst and Kim (1992, 43) understanding the form of communication that predominates in a culture is critical to correctly interpreting and predicting the behavior of people from that culture, for example people from high-context cultures like Japanese tend to communicate indirectly to be effective. At Larox, it was pointed out as well that an ability to recognize and interpret high-context communication is especially needed in Asia: *“In international assignments especially important are negotiation skills. Always when we are with clients in very different places in very different cultures so always diplomacy, negotiation skill and “analytical situation eye” that you are able to observe the situation and sense the feelings. For example, when we do business a lot in Asia with the local customers, they are very reserved people and they won’t directly tell that what is bothering them. Then you have to also be able to observe the situation, read locals’ minds and be sensitive to notice this kind of things.” (Puranen 2005)*

6.4 The model of intercultural competence

All the employers agreed that intercultural competence is formed by affective, cognitive and communicative, behavioural dimensions. All the employers also agreed that the model of intercultural competence was relevant and rational in practice: *“I would say that it is so. I also argue that if you are a good communicator, then the role of your personality and knowledge will be smaller. I do not underestimate the part of the knowledge, it is really important when we go into technical details but it does not necessarily have so big role at the beginning of the conversations with a firm but you have to have the specific know-how, the specific knowledge always there because it brings clearly self confidence. In that way, it is a wise picture what you have there.”* (Jukonen 2005)

Employers emphasized the importance of different dimensions of intercultural competence: *“If we think that, somebody is representing our department of the electric technology in an international meeting, communication can be managed although it would be a little bit clumsy. It might not be called International Professional but one is able to handle the things. You really have to have the professional competence. If I’m alone there, I would totally lose my credence because probably in the group there are always one fellow who really knows the things. It will simply be realised soon if there is a fellow, for example as a representative of Jaakko Pöyry and he is bluffing to some extent. They will soon call me and say that send here a type who really knows the issue. Professional skills you are not able to bluff, it has to be there in the background and then studying and developing the others is much easier when you have some framework on what you can depend. In the electrical technique there are still lots of theoretical know-how and the understanding of those things. Always when we are away from the familiar working environment, there will be technical solutions, what might, if you do not have the openness, experience and the real knowledge, the fellow might say that you can not do like that, we never do it like that in Finland. But in the country, there*

might be much bigger industrial plants which are working fine and everything has been done properly. It is extremely essential to understand technically different cultures as well. There are different kinds of assignments, if we go to sell some project, the communication is really important but it can be trained.” (Saari 2005)

There were also opposite views: “In my opinion, communication through personality and especially like that, there are people who have an excellent knowledge but their personality is like that they do not want to communicate with anybody. Then there are people who have excellent communication skills when they are in a meeting, where are just few people and they are familiar. Personality comes into picture in the stage when you are in the front line presenting things and you know nothing about the opposite, you can not freak out. It does not help that you have good communications skills when we talk together; you have to be able to make presentations in unfamiliar surroundings. It requires a specific type. I do not underestimate the part of the knowledge, it is of course important but what I have seen here on the project level, that very often one talks about: when does the project start, what will happen in the project, when does it end, what will happen between and when do we supply the things to the customers. Then when those kinds of things have been discussed, communicated and agreed, then one of my designers somewhere will do the job. Actually you can say that it depends on the situations and the person, that if you have a situation where the knowledge is power, then we will start dissolving from there but I consider communication and personality quite important.” (Jukonen 2005)

“Knowledge can be added, communication skills can be learned, you won’t become necessarily a stand up comic but in a way you are able to learn. And also personality can be affected to the some extent but it will start from the person itself, actually all these dimensions are depended on the personality, if, you want to learn the communications skills and, cultures or not. If I have to choose one of them I would say the personality because I

can not push these things up you unless you are not interested in, but as you said, all of them are needed. I think that it is important to notice because with a cultural knowledge, you might become a culture consult of something but separate these elements do not bring any job. There has to be the professional competence but it is probably as a default there. Cultural knowledge and so on are normally extra characteristics when we are searching for a new worker and we know that he or she would work in international assignments, we first define the criteria for professional competence after that the personality. If we test those skills, it is nearly the personality what will be tested and maybe communication skills but cultural knowledge we do not necessarily test but the general impression of the person. Of course, if we are looking for a salesman for China, it will be one hundred per cent found in China because then he or she is a local. Then we can assume that he or she has at least some kind of cultural knowledge from China because he or she comes from China.” (Pertta 2005)

“Everything is important, but if have to put in an order of priority: professional skills, behavioural skills, cultural skills and language skills” (Blume 2005)

As a conclusion, it can not be said which dimension is the most important but it can be said that the model was considered to be useful in the practise as well. Professional competence is a must and on the basis of the interviews, it is added to the cognitive dimension in the final model of intercultural competence which will be presented in the chapter seven. However, today the professional competence is not merely enough. In international assignments which many tasks today are, cultural knowledge is really useful. Table 5 summarizes the main theoretical and empirical findings concerning the model of intercultural competence.

Table 5. Dimensions of intercultural competence founded in the theoretical and empirical parts of the study.

FOUNDED IN THEORY	EMPLOYERS` VIEWS
<p>AFFECTIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ empathy ▪ tolerance for ambiguity ▪ self-knowledge ▪ attitudes of curiosity and openness 	<p>AFFECTIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding and accepting of difference ▪ curiosity, interested in new people and cultures ▪ tolerance for ambiguity ▪ flexibility
<p>COGNITIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ culture-general and culture-specific knowledge ▪ knowledge of one's own culture ▪ linguistic ability 	<p>COGNITIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ professional competence ▪ linguistic ability ▪ culture-general and culture-specific knowledge ▪ knowledge of one's own culture
<p>COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIORAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ability to express respect ▪ a capacity to be non-judgemental ▪ effective interaction management 	<p>COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIORAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ courage to ask ▪ listening ability ▪ interaction management

Next chapter discusses employers` expectations: the level and suggested improvements concerning intercultural competence of LUT graduates.

6.5 Employers' expectations concerning intercultural competence of LUT graduates

This chapter presents the employers' opinions concerning the expectations of intercultural competence of LUT graduates, the level of intercultural competence and the suggested improvements. At the end of this chapter, recommendations for the students of business administration and electrical engineering are represented.

Employers do not expect that graduates are supermen who can do everything. Graduates must be able to show one's ability to learn and apply, for instance by showing success in an international environment. Professional competence and language skills are a must. Written language skills were also considered really important in order to be able to successfully manage the job. Today it is also essential that graduates have culture-general knowledge and they have been in situations where one has been able to test and develop the dimensions of intercultural competence: *"Language skills are a must, ideally English plus at least one other common language fluent such as French or Spain. Behavioural skills can't really be trained. Basics towards self-consciousness about behaviour are very helpful. Specific cultural skills can't be expected by a company, but an applicant must be able to show his/her ability to learn and apply, for instance by showing success in an international environment. General knowledge about cultural classifications is also helpful."* (Blume 2005)

In addition to oral language skill employers pointed out that especially a written language skill is important: *"Definitely English, one has to be able to speak it really well and especially one has to be able to document it extremely well as well. Although the oral language skill is usually good, the written ability when we write official documents such as contracts, it is in a way emphasized. I do not want to underestimate the importance of the oral skills but often the written ability may be worse."* (Puranen 2005)

International experience were emphasized in the following examples:
“When I consider intercultural competence, there is then some concrete with it, then one has to have some knowledge, experience or...language skill, it is the tool which makes intercultural competence possible and it is needed. But then if I think that there are 15 graduates and one job, then I’m easily looking, particularly if we are recruiting for something international, and everything is basically international in our firm, every kind of international hands-on experience which is related to personal characteristics and proving that the person has these kinds of abilities and there have been situations where the person has been able to develop them. That kind of experience is all valuable.” (Silvennoinen 2005)

It was also stated that the abroad period has to be long enough and it has to have a purpose, few months without any goal are not enough: *“In my opinion, if the graduate has a clear credit and he has been active and have been abroad and I have still positive image about him or her and our testing, interviews gives a tip that it is a successful deal but it is a minimum requirement by us, that they have it. Otherwise he or she should be extremely competent and normally those extremely competent types are clever enough to gain international experience. Of course, we do not expect that a graduate is able to translate income statement into every language but that he or she has gained abroad experience and has the view that things can be done differently as well. It is the most important that they have it and party trips are not enough that I have been somewhere two months. I do not see any use of that. It should be long enough and have some kind of goal, not like that; I will go there and look around. It does not hit, those biers can be drunken at home as well.” (Kähäri 2005)*

To summarize, professional competence, language skills, general cultural knowledge and international experience are considered really important in order to be able to successfully manage the job. Do LUT graduates then have the expected skills?

6.5.1 The level of intercultural competence

Employers thought that the level of intercultural competence is really varying among LUT graduates. They also think that every graduate is an individual and it is impossible to say that LUT graduates either are or are not interculturally competent: *“Do the graduates have enough intercultural competence...it depends on individuals, some do and some don’t.”* (Pertta 2005)

“It depends on the individual, if the individual has done this kind of work, so probably the cultural knowledge is better than those who have not. But if we start from a clean table and look through the path it is bad because it won’t be discussed. Actually it can not be described with any other word than bad.” (Jukonen 2005)

“Of course, the level of intercultural competence is really varying. Communication ability depends on the personality, and personal characteristics depend on the personality and this can be, if we take the facts from the knowledge, this is being taught to an engineer a lot. But then, how the graduate in electrical engineering will handle these, is a personality thing that the knowledge he or she has and when he or she goes abroad, in the field of electrical engineering he will manage and understand what is being discussed and can use the knowledge. But this issue then, it is utmost little what we have intercultural communication in our education, there won’t it come. Hopefully some day, when we have more international students, the atmosphere will change and here will be met, seen and learned how to work and live with different cultures and people. It would help a lot if it was not the first time when you meet somebody from a different culture when you do business abroad.” (Partanen 2005)

Also positive experiences were gained from business students: *“I have to say that both have the right attitude and they are in the right way humble and on the other hand diligent and ready to put some effort and gain*

foothold in that way. It will be weighed at your every day work what and how actively you do it, it effects a lot. I have been really satisfied with the competence what comes from LUT.” (Puranen 2005)

To summarize, it can not be generalized that LUT graduates either are or are not interculturally competent. They all are individuals and if the graduate has been clever enough to develop his or her intercultural competence and has been in situations where he or she has needed it, the level is much better than it would be if he or she had not developed it. In the next chapter, the suggested improvements for students and LUT will be discussed.

6.5.2 Improvements

Commonly professional competence was considered to be generally really good among business and electrical engineering graduates: *“Professionally, theory education in Finnish polytechnics and technical universities, it gives an excellent basis. If you have taken a degree, I can believe that it is like that.” (Saari 2005)*

Financing was considered to be a useful field for business students if they are interested in the banking business: *“On an average, everything is good, language abilities and IT skills and so on. Financing is the one which is useful for the bank if somebody has studied it at the university.” (Viitanen 2005)*

At Pöyry, the importance of written and oral delivery among electrical engineering graduates was emphasized and the skills were considered to be inadequate: *“Average written and oral delivery, the both are like that. Somehow, I don’t know, electricity maybe is so theoretical that there are types that are mathematically quite talented and not necessarily do want to study languages, but it is though in real life that were the job how theoretical ever, also our project responsible has to continuously write*

reports and it is difficult if somebody else have to check them. Finnish masters of electrical engineering are really varying, there are some who are really talented but averagely it is pretty low. When you have read one book of Antti Tuuri and you have assumed it that the sentences are short and they have something to say. It is a good piece of advice for engineers, that in the way you should express yourself. That is also learnable, no problem but in my point of view, if someone comes here to international assignments, that is then something what you have to learn. For me, it is useless because I would hope that it would already be known. Then we could concentrate on the learning of wood processing technique and then the differences between the target countries and also on the knowledge of cultural and technical dissimilarities. But otherwise I would say that Finnish universities and polytechnics give those abilities and we have better theoretical abilities than Anglo world averagely. You should also think when you start your studies that Finland is a quite small country if the whole career will be done here.” (Saari 2005)

One interviewee also pointed out the activity of the students: “And how could these things be improved, I think that the Lappeenranta University of Technology offers excellent language education for example. There is a really good language centre where you can study languages as much as you like. And then an excellent way to study cultures is the student exchange where the university offers really good possibilities. Then if you self do not do the exchange, at the university there are lots of exchange students who you can get to know. Those individuals who use those possibilities, there are good to study cultures and internationality and to gain those abilities and language skill but as I said, it always starts from the person's personality and a desire to do so. In my opinion when I self studied there, there were full abilities to develop International Professionals.” (Pertta 2005)

To summarize, graduates should pay attention to oral and written delivery and to be self active to use all the possibilities offered by LUT to develop

their intercultural competence. In the following will be discussed how the university could improve the level of intercultural competence of LUT graduates.

All the employers pointed out that it would be essential if already in the university would be learned basics of intercultural communication. Intercultural training was common in big firms but in smaller ones, there were none of it: *“At least offering a possibility to study these things. In my point of view it would be extremely useful if the business life can not offer it, it would be done in the academe, that there would be taught different cultures because many can think...when I was studying at LUT I was thinking that what I will do with all that mathematics but now I know what I do with them. What goes around comes around. Somebody might think that what an earth I will go and listen about the culture of Japan or Korean, but then after a little time you will surely notice that it was a good thing. More or less these jobs, despite of are you working at forest industry or IT business or pure electrical technique, you have to travel, you can not avoid it although you have made excellent equipment, it does not exclude the thing that sometimes you have to be present. It is so that graduate engineers might start as planners like I did but if he or she has at least a bit ambition and desire, he or she will be promoted and later they are in a situation where is a must to discuss with other cultures and people.”* (Jukonen 2005)

It was also pointed out that intercultural communication might be difficult to teach but the most advantage would be that students would come interested in intercultural issues by studying these things: *“Yes, sure. The most advantage would become from that people would become interested in intercultural issues. It is really difficult to teach intercultural communication otherwise than learning oneself, this can be a little bit old folk’s point of view but it of course counts, that there are still lots of young who don’t have a clue about international activities before going to university. They might have had vacations in Sweden or in Italy but there*

is still a long way to go to a situation where you have to communicate with the people to earn your living. But yes for these kinds of courses.”
(Silvennoinen 2005)

It was also considered that it would not have to be a board course, a little input could also be essential: *“Yes sure, I believe that there with a little input could have positive effects. It don’t have to be more than 1, 5 ECTS.”*
(Viitanen 2005)

“I’ll pick up on the department of electrical engineering and it also goes for other departments as well, it concentrates on giving the basic knowledge what is needed to manage electrical equipment whatever they might be. The rest is like ad hoc or extra if the student understands to take advantage of it. And the rest, what he or she understands to use, it is not a much and this is the point. In my opinion, a course of intercultural matters should be at least possible to offer. I don’t mean that it has to be 15 ECTS but at least, somewhere it has to start.” (Jukonen 2005)

In the department of electrical engineering, the view towards teaching intercultural communication was also positive: *“Firms educate a lot personnel for intercultural matters and what comes to that, can university give intercultural training, the university can give general as if it were shaping of attitudes but if we begin to tell how man behave in different area of China, Japan and Thailand, it is impossible because there are hundreds of different ways but we can give examples.”* (Partanen 2005)

6.5.3 Recommendations to business and electrical engineering students

Employers recommended uniform students to spend some time abroad already during student days. This advice was especially given to electrical engineering students because they are not as active as business students to study abroad: *“In my opinion students should if it is by any means*

possible already during the study days to go abroad. Tell to those electrical engineering students that in the same extent as business students do exchanges, they have to spend a year as an exchange student because the job is as international as business jobs.” (Saari 2005)

“If it is possible, it is recommended to students to spend abroad at least few months: a summer working or a whole year studying. Somehow it is always more difficult to leave the later you will do it. You might lose some income or studies delay but it normally is an experience which pays itself back a one way or another. It definitely is a worth of doing.” (Partanen 2005)

International experience was also the deciding factor when recruiting people if there were otherwise identical applicants: *“Of course there are different recruiters but at least in my eye every type of international experience is a worth of gold, and typically in the beginning of the studies, the work experience can not be very professional. If you go to skiing two times per year to Alps, I don’t know does it bring any extra merit but it does not cause any harm.” (Silvennoinen 2005)*

“You should really use the student exchange programs and the settings for the internationality, what they have created, for an example becoming a tutor for international students. International students have good parties as well and nothing is a better way to train language skills and to learn new cultures and normally they are very happy to know the locals as well. There is also the brilliant possibility to study languages, a good of quality education just like that; you should take advantage of it as well.” (Pertta 2005)

A good idea about how to begin systematically to develop interculturally competent graduates was presented by Kari Kähäri: *“At the beginning of the studies, you should do a simply test, a cross cultural awareness and readiness test for example. With the help of the test, you could wake up those types that the world has changed and needs after your master’s*

thesis, these kinds of profiles. Then there should be an alarm in the head of the types if his or her values do not support the profile. I can not put Chinese into your head; you have to decide that I want to study Chinese because I feel that I want to learn it. There have to be the win-win situation. The person is still young and the future is out there, one should wake up the types because those kind of international types are never too much and Finland is an island as you know. Here will be not enough work to every one, at least not for them who do not see the wholeness. For instance, a more difficult test could be done at the end of studies. If I were still studying and intercultural module would be possible to choose, it would be extremely import for my future to handle these intercultural issues.” (Kähäri 2005)

As a conclusion, employers do appreciate international experience a lot. International experience is an excellent proof that graduates has been in situations where they have been able to test and develop their intercultural experience. The assignments of business and electrical engineering graduates are nowadays equally international and that it is why it would be essential that this would be taken into consideration already in the academe by offering a course of intercultural issues. When recruiting new personnel, employers considered that international experience is often the crucial factor.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Theoretical contribution

Like Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 81) argue that a good research start with the theory and returns to it again. Theory and practise support each other in this research. The objective of this study was to answer to the question: what kind of intercultural competence a graduate of LUT should have? Past researchers had researched different approaches to intercultural competence and there were no uniform definition about intercultural competence and what kind of characteristics, skills and knowledge is included in that. Now, it can be said on basis of the theoretical and empirical parts that intercultural competence really is a combination of affective, cognitive and communicative dimensions. Based on theoretical and empirical sections can be also said that affective dimension includes empathy, tolerance for ambiguity and attitudes of curiosity and openness. Cognitive dimension consists of general- and specific-cultural knowledge, knowledge of one's own culture and linguistic ability. Communicative, behavioural dimension consist of the interaction management.

Like Gertsen (1992, 346) argues: "intercultural competence is not the only factor that influences expatriates success. Of course, technical or other professional qualifications are important if one has to work in a foreign culture. Professional competence contains also linguistic and communication abilities. Competences differ in knowledge abilities; intercultural competence contains cultural knowledge and professional competence professional know how. Understandably, professional competence does not contain affective qualities. On basis of the interviews it can be said that if one is International Professional in the field of business administration or electrical engineering, one have to have professional competence as well. In today's working environment professional expertise has to include intercultural knowledge and an understanding of different cultures. That is why professional knowledge

will be added to the cognitive dimension. The final model of intercultural competence of LUT graduates in engineering and business administration is shown in Figure 8.

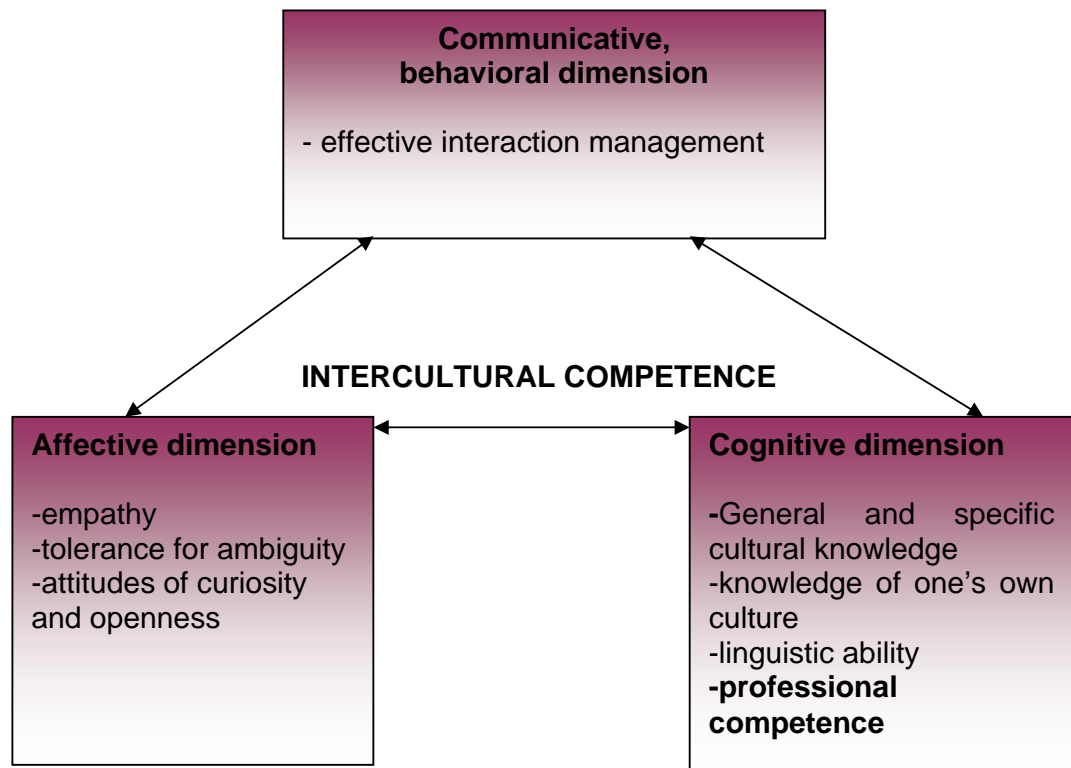


Figure 9. The final model of intercultural competence: characteristics, knowledge and skills founded both in theoretical and empirical sections of this thesis.

The need for intercultural competence varies among different cultures. If one is dealing with a culture, which is similar to one's own culture, the level of the needed intercultural competence will be lower. If one is dealing with a culture which is totally different of one's own, one will need for example more culture-specific knowledge than if one was dealing with a culture which is similar to one's own culture.

7.2 Managerial implications

All the interviewees were dealing on daily basis with the cultural issues. What comes to the question: what kind of intercultural competence do employers expect LUT graduates to have, professional know how and language skills are a must. Though today, international experience and cultural knowledge will give graduates extra merit and it can be the crucial point when competing for the future jobs.

How it would be then possible that LUT could improve intercultural competence of its graduates? Employers recommended unanimously, that LUT should offer a course of intercultural issues. Employers also pointed out that the length of the course would not have to be more than few ECTS credits. The most important effect of this kind of course would be that the students would become aware of intercultural skills and probably also interested in intercultural issues and would be willing to improve their intercultural competence. Then, in the future when they will apply for a job, they will have a clear competitive advantage because they would be able to define their intercultural skills and to show what kind of experience they have.

Also Gertsen (1992, 353-354; 357) emphasizes that intercultural competence is possible to learn. The concept of intercultural training is based on the assumption that intercultural competence can be learned and taught – at least to some extent. It is not an inborn quality that a person either has or has not. It seems most likely that the right kind of preparation and training will enhance most people's intercultural competence. The affective dimension of intercultural competence is mostly innate: people either do have positive attitudes towards foreign cultures, empathy and tolerance for ambiguity or not. The other dimensions of intercultural competence on the other hand can be affected. It is quite easy to raise participants' level of knowledge, both of the concepts of culture in general and of a specific culture. This may in turn influence their

attitudes, for example by reducing prejudice and their behaviour but will not necessarily do so. That is also why intercultural issues should be thought in the academe.

It is excellent that LUT has courses like cross-cultural encounters and going international and intercultural communication but a course of intercultural issues should be also among basic studies, not only among IBTM program or English studies because it is hard to find there and among English courses there are so many courses to choose from and for example, electrical engineering students have just four credits obligatory foreign language studies so the possibility that they choose the course is low. Intercultural course should be among basic studies because students would study the course at the beginning of their studies and then they would be possible to develop their intercultural competence during the studies if they would like to. It would be also good if the course of intercultural communication would contain an introduction about how the students could improve their intercultural competence while studying at LUT: exchange and trainee programs, home internationalization and in English lectured courses. The course could contain things like:

- basics of intercultural communication: cultural variability and the process of intercultural communication
- introduction of intercultural competence
- introduction of the possibilities offered by LUT to develop intercultural competence such as exchange and trainee programs, home internationalization and in English lectured courses
- real life examples of experiences from international assignments

By offering this kind of course, LUT would gain competitive advantage compared to other technical and business universities in Finland because they do not have a course of intercultural issues. However, according to theory and interviewed employers, intercultural competence is really needed in today's working life in order to become successful in the global working environment. In the future, it could be also useful to offer courses

about some specific and current cultures such as Chinese, Korean and Russian cultures. Separate international study paths could also be developed where the student would be able to concentrate one's studies to some specific area, such as Eastern Europe. New degree structure will also offer interesting possibilities to do a bachelor degree in a one country and a master degree in another.

On basis of this research, it can be said that International Professional is a person who has positive attitudes towards foreign cultures, cultural knowledge in addition to linguistic abilities and professional competence and an ability to communicate the positive attitudes and the knowledge what the person has. What comes to the point that is it possible to use the concept of International Professional concerning all graduates of LUT, it have to be said that it is not possible because it is possible to graduate with four ECTS credits foreign language studies and without any study of intercultural issues or studying abroad. To be truly International Professional, a graduate have to posses in addition to professional know how, the other elements of the cognitive dimension such as cultural knowledge as well. Graduate have to also have the right kind of mindset and the abilities to communicate it. It can not be said that all the graduates of LUT are International Professional, but they can be some day, but it requires the university to offer intercultural education and also activity from the students to use also the other possibilities offered by LUT to develop intercultural competence.

7.3 Further research suggestions

The study of intercultural competence is a fascinating field which offers many challenges. In the future it would be interesting to research what kind of effects the teaching of intercultural communication would have to students and would they, for example become more interested in intercultural issues and more open for cultural differences.

It would be also interesting to research the needed intercultural competence in a specific context, for example between Finnish and Korean organization cultures: what kind of intercultural competence is needed when doing business with Koreans.

This research has made it clear that it is impossible to be International Professional if one does not possess intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is needed also in Finland. Like Gertsen argued, intercultural competence is not an inborn quality, it is possible to learn. The sooner the learning begins, the better the results will be. That is why the learning of intercultural competence should be done already in the university. The best effect of a course of intercultural communication is that students would become interested in intercultural issues and realize that; *life is like a book. Those who read just the first page stay at home.*

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Silvennoinen Juha, Business Unit Manager, ABB, 25.4.2005.

Viitanen Heikki, First Vice President, Nordea Bank Finland, 26.4.2005.

APPENDIX 1. Interview frame

HAASTATTELURUNKO

Aloituis: gradun aiheen esittely

Kokemukset monikulttuurisista työtehtävistä

- Miten kansainvälisyys näkyy työssänne? Oletteko esim. työskennellyt ulkomailla tai onko teillä eri kansallisista kulttuureista tulevia kollegoita Suomessa?
- Minkälaisia taitoja tarvitsette näitä työtehtäviä suorittaessanne?

Kansainvälinen osaaminen

Mitä kansainvälisyyteen liittyviä tietoja, taitoja ja ominaisuuksia on kansainvälisellä osaajalla:

- Millaisia henkilökohtaisia ominaisuuksia/asenteita kansainväliseen osaajaan voitaisiin mielestänne yhdistää? Mitkä ovat ei – toivottuja ominaisuuksia/asenteita?
- Millaista kielitaitoa on kansainvälisellä osaajalla? Mitkä kielet ovat Mielestänne tärkeitä? Täytyykö olla sujuva kielitaidon taso kaikissa vieraissa kielissä vai onko hyötyä myös jonkin kielen alkeista?
- Minkälaista kulttuurituntemusta kansainvälisellä osaajalla tulisi olla? Riittääkö kulttuurierojen tunteminen yleisellä tasolla vai tarvitaanko myös kohdemaan kulttuurin erityistä tuntemusta?
- Minkälaiset kommunikointitaidot ovat tarpeellisia kansainvälisissä tehtävissä? Entä käyttäytyminen?
- Millaista ammatillista osaamista kansainväliset työtehtävät edellyttävät verrattuna kansallisiin työtehtäviin?

Mitkä ovat Mielestänne tärkeimpiä taitoja edellä mainituista asioista?

Piirretään kuva teoreettisesta kolmiomallista, tuleeko Mieleen vielä jotain uutta?

Odotukset LTY:stä vastavalmistuneiden kansainvälisestä osaamisesta

- Mitä edellä mainituista kansainvälisyyteen liittyvistä tiedoista, taidoista ja ominaisuuksista odotatte vastavalmistuneella kauppatieteenmaisterille/diplomi-insinöörillä olevan?

- Onko Mielestänne vastavalmistuneilla tarpeeksi kansainvälistä osaamista?
- Mitä taitoja voitaisiin parantaa?

- Kun palkkaatte/valitsette uusia työntekijöitä yritykseenne, miten testaatte tai testaatteko ylipäättään, onko hakijalla kansainvälisiä valmiuksia?

- Mitä valintakriteerejä yrityksessänne käytetään kun arvioidaan työntekijän valmiuksia kansainvälisiä tehtäviä varten?

- Miten kansainvälisiä taitoja voisi oppia?

- Neuvot opiskelijoille

Koulutus kansainvälisiin tehtäviin

- Koulutetaanko yrityksenne henkilöstöä kansainvälisiä tehtäviä varten?

Jos kyllä niin millaista koulutusta annetaan esim. kielikurssit, kulttuuriopetus, maakohtainen informaatio yms.? Kuinka paljon ja ketä koulutetaan?