

**INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT  
COMPETENCE  
IN FINNISH MULTICULTURAL WORKING LIFE  
Case: Aamujakelu Oy**

Master's thesis  
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>The current thesis is a qualitative case study, which explores intercultural management competence in Finnish working life. The subject is investigated from the viewpoint of the Finnish supervisors and the international employees at a Finnish multicultural workplace. The aim of the thesis is to determine what kind of intercultural management competence the supervisors of the case company need in their daily work.</p> <p>The case organisation is the Finnish newspaper delivery company Aamujakelu Oy. The supervisors' work at the case organisation includes both management and leadership tasks. Due to the nature of the organisation's operation the supervisors and the employees work at different times and places. Despite this, the supervisors interact daily with the Finnish and the international employees. Smooth and continuous communication between the employees and the supervisors needs to be established in order to reach the organisational goals.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the study is based on cross-cultural management literature. Three different viewpoints on the management competence were identified, including management of multicultural workforce in the manager's home country, cross-cultural knowledge management and leadership skills as emotional intelligence. These management competences are studied from an intercultural perspective, as the main focus is on the interpersonal interaction between the supervisors and the employees.</p> <p>The empirical data consists of ten theme interviews with four Finnish supervisors and six international employees. The study confirms that the supervisors need intercultural management competence in their daily work. According to the empirical findings, all the three viewpoints identified in the literature include relevant competences for the supervisory work. The most focal intercultural management competences at the case organisation are English language skills and empathy. Mastery of these may positively affect the other competences studied. In addition, the study confirms that intercultural management competence determined for internationally operating business organisations is applicable, at least partly, to a domestic multicultural business organisation.</p>	
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<p><b>Tiivistelmä</b></p> <p>Tutkielman aiheena on kulttuurienvälinen johtamiskompetenssi Suomen työelämässä. Aihetta tutkittiin kvalitatiivisen tapaustutkimuksen keinoin suomalaisten esimiesten ja kansainvälisten työntekijöiden näkökulmasta yhdessä suomalaisessa organisaatiossa. Tavoitteena on selvittää millaista kulttuurienvälistä johtamiskompetenssia tapausorganisaation esimiehet tarvitsevat päivittäisessä työssään.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tapausorganisaatio on suomalainen sanomalehtien jakeluyhtiö Aamujakelu Oy. Esimiesten työalaan tapausorganisaatiossa kuuluu sekä asiajohtajuuteen (management) että tunnejohtajuuteen (leadership) liittyviä tehtäviä. Organisaation operatiivisen toiminnan luonteesta johtuen esimiehet ja työntekijät suorittavat työnsä eri paikoissa ja eri vuorokauden aikoina. Tästä huolimatta esimiehet ovat päivittäin vuorovaikutuksessa suomalaisten ja kansainvälisten työntekijöiden kanssa. Sujuva ja katkeamaton viestintä työntekijöiden ja esimiesten välillä on välttämätöntä organisaation tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen teoreettisen perustan muodostaa vertaileva kulttuurienvälisen johtamisen kirjallisuus (cross-cultural management literature). Kulttuurienvälistä johtamiskompetenssia tutkitaan kolmesta eri näkökulmasta. Nämä ovat monikulttuurisen työyhteisön johtaminen johtajan omassa kulttuuriympäristössä, kulttuurienvälinen tietojohtaminen sekä tunnejohtajuustaidot tunneälykkyytenä. Kirjallisuutta lähestytään interpersoonaisen kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän näkökulmasta (intercultural communication), sillä tutkielma keskittyy erityisesti vuorovaikutukseen esimiesten ja työntekijöiden välillä.</p> <p>Tutkielman empiirinen aineisto käsittää yhteensä kymmenen teemahaastattelua neljän suomalaisen esimiehen ja kuuden kansainvälisen työntekijän kanssa. Tulosten perusteella voidaan todeta, että tapausorganisaation esimiehet tarvitsevat kulttuurienvälistä johtajuuskompetenssia päivittäisessä työssään. Kaikki kolme näkökulmaa kulttuurien väliseen johtajuuskompetenssiin sisältävät taitoja, jotka osoittautuvat merkityksellisiksi esimiestyössä. Kaikkein merkittävimmiksi kulttuurien välisen johtamisen taidoiksi tapausorganisaatiossa osoittautuivat englanninkielen taito ja empatia. Näiden taitaminen saattaa vaikuttaa positiivisesti muihin tutkittuihin kompetensseihin. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osa vahvistaa, että kansainvälisesti toimiville organisaatioille määriteltyä kulttuurienvälistä johtamiskompetenssia voidaan soveltaa, ainakin osittain, myös kansallisesti toimiviin monikulttuurisiin organisaatioihin.</p>	
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism in Finland is a topical phenomenon. The number of immigrants in Finland has increased rapidly during the past 20 years. At the moment there are approximately 156 000 immigrants in Finland (Tilastokeskus Website), whereas at the turn of 1990's the number was little more than 20 000 (Trux 2000b, 14). During the past decades multiculturalism has become a part of different sectors of Finnish society, including working life.

Employment is a crucial factor for both immigrants and Finnish society. For the immigrants employment is an important element in the integration into the new society (Juuti 2005, 6). In comparison, Finland can expect a shortage in its available workforce in the coming years due to its demographic development; for example, the retirement of the "baby boomer" generation. Even today the number of employees retiring has exceeded the number of young people entering to the labour market. Augmenting work-related immigration has been actively discussed as a solution for the shortage of workforce.

However, this discussion gained critical tones during the recent economical crisis, as organisations laid off their employees and the number of workplaces decreased. As a result the need for a foreign workforce was questioned. Still, the economical crisis did not stop globalisation. Both people and goods are moving around the world more than ever before. Although immigration flows and perspectives of public discussion might vary because of the world's economical or political situations, globalisation ensures that multiculturalism has become a permanent phenomenon.

The aim of this thesis is to explore intercultural management competence at a Finnish multicultural workplace. In Finnish working life supervisors and line managers, to whom the employees are directly responsible, seem to have a special role in managing multicultural workforce. The reason for this is that general company guidelines on managing multicultural workforce seldom appear (Trux 2000a, 307). The supervisors and the line managers are the very people who have the most contact with the international employees. In the multicultural working environment intercultural

management competence is a necessity for them in order to interact effectively and appropriately with the culturally different employees.

The topic is studied applying a case study methodology. The case here is the newspaper delivery service company Aamujakelu Oy. Aamujakelu Oy operates in two different areas in Finland of which the current study focuses on the Pirkanmaa region. This domestic organisation belongs to the internationally operating media corporation Alma Media, which is one of the largest media organisations in Finland.

Multiculturalism is a salient issue at Aamujakelu Oy. At the moment in the Pirkanmaa region 14 per cent of the total 450 deliverers are international employees, i.e. employees who have an immigrant background. Moreover, the overall number of international employees is constantly increasing. The empirical data for the study is collected by interviewing Finnish supervisors and international employees. A noteworthy fact is that the supervisors and the employees do not work physically in the same premises or meet on a daily basis because of the character of the delivery work. This, however, does not decrease the importance of the research topic of this study, as smooth communication and interaction from upper to lower levels of the organisation are necessary in order to serve the customers.

Intercultural management competence at the case organisation is approached with the following research questions:

1. What intercultural management competences do supervisors of Aamujakelu Oy need in managing multicultural workforce?
  - a. From the supervisors' viewpoint
  - b. From the international employees' viewpoint
2. Are there differences in the perception of these two groups? If yes, what kind of differences?

These questions are answered by reflecting upon inter- and cross-cultural management literature and empirical data. As literature in these fields focuses mainly on international business, a critical approach to the literature is a necessity. Nevertheless, nowadays authors of these fields acknowledge that management of multicultural workforce does not necessarily mean leaving one's home country, and emphasise that intercultural management competence is needed at all managerial levels (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 158; Adler 2002, 136).

Furthermore, the empirical data includes two perspectives on intercultural management competence. Inclusion of both supervisors' and employees' perspectives is of special importance in an intercultural context because perception and expectations of management are culturally-bound, as the overview of previous studies in the following shows. In order to gain a more complete view of the state of intercultural management competence at the case organisation, and to recognise development areas, both perspectives need to be taken into account.

Finally, here the management competence is studied from the perspective of intercultural management, instead of the one of cross-cultural management. Intercultural management focuses on the interpersonal interaction between culturally different managers and employees, whereas cross-cultural management concentrates on contrasting their cultural backgrounds. Interaction with international employees is the central area where the supervisors of the case organisation need intercultural management competence, therefore intercultural management is considered to provide a more fruitful starting point for the research

In the following, I review previous research of the field. After that I turn to presenting the theoretical background of the study, including definitions of the key concepts, i.e. culture, intercultural competence and cross- and intercultural management. Then I continue with determining the intercultural management competence from three different perspectives. In the empirical part I present first the methodology and then the findings of the study. After that I turn the attention into discussion and reflection of the literature on the findings. Finally, I present conclusions and implications for the future.

### **Academic Motivation for the Study**

Intercultural management competence has not yet been examined from the perspective of Finnish multicultural working life. Although cultural issues at workplaces have been studied from the management perspective rather a lot internationally, most of these studies applied the cross-cultural approach.

Newman & Nollen (1996) studied the connection of national cultures and management practices. The correlation of certain cultural dimensions and analogous management practices was measured by means of financial performance. Their research findings indicate that "business performance is better when management practices are congruent with

national culture” (Newman & Nollen, 1996, 10). Similarly, Globokar (1997) investigated the influence of manager’s behaviour on employees’ work performance. This study showed how lack of correspondence in an expatriate managers’ behaviour and local employees’ expectation for that behaviour can deteriorate the work performance of the employees. Both of these studies confirm that the management style or the managers’ behaviour is not culturally insignificant.

Lewis et al. (2001) also studied the congruence of leadership styles, job satisfaction and national culture at multicultural workplaces. The conclusion of their study was that different cultural groups at the same workplace preferred different leadership styles and that the leadership styles influenced job satisfaction in different ways. From the perspective of the current study the most important finding here was that the managers had scarcely recognised any differences in the preferences of their culturally different employees. Thus, the managers in Lewis et al.’s study did not demonstrate intercultural awareness. The current study aims at contributing to the recognition of cultural issues at the case organisation.

Multicultural workplaces in Finland are a fairly new phenomenon and have therefore been studied relatively little up till now. Still there are a few studies conducted on this topic. Some of these studies focused on the overall picture of multiculturalism in Finnish working life, including some insights on managerial issues, such as Juuti (2005) and Trux (2000).

Other studies concentrated entirely on diversity management at Finnish working life. Still the studies were conducted from different perspectives than this one. Sippola (2007) studied the affect of increasing diversity in workplaces on human resource practices. Leponiemi (2008) investigated supervisor-employee communication from a leadership perspective in situations where these come from different cultures. Finally, Pitkänen (2007) examined Finnish multicultural working life from the perspective of intercultural competence. She, however, focused on general intercultural competence, not on the viewpoint of management. Thus, studies reflecting intercultural management competence in Finnish working life have not yet emerged.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The aim of this study is to find out what kind of intercultural management competence the supervisors of the case company need in their work. Theorists in the fields of cross- and intercultural management have determined different kind of sets of essential competences for the management practice at multicultural workplaces.

In the theoretical part of the thesis I will first define the concepts of culture and intercultural communication which form the conceptual basis of the study. After that I will turn the attention to cross- and intercultural management which are the main fields of the current study. Finally, I present three perspectives on intercultural management competence on which the empirical part of the study is based.

### 2.1 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

A multitude of definitions for culture exists in cultural studies, from anthropology to cross-cultural management (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 19; Holden 2002, 21-24). In this thesis I have chosen to rely on the definition of culture by Schein (1992), as it contains important notions of culture. In addition, I will explore how cross-cultural management theorists, such as Holden and Schneider & Barsoux, build on this definition.

In this section I will first present Schein's definition and his model for culture. Then I will discuss its meaning for intercultural communication. After that I turn the discussion to the nature of culture from the viewpoint of Schein's definition. I continue by looking at how theorists of cross-cultural management evaluate this definition. Finally, I will argue why this definition of culture is appropriate for studying the case company.

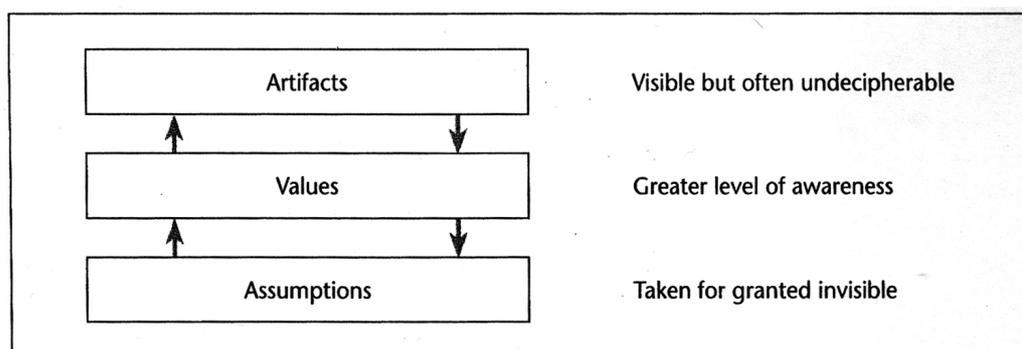
Schein defines culture as:

"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein 1992, 12).

According to Schein's definition, groups continuously encounter problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein 1992, 11). External adaptation refers to a group's survival, growth and adaptation to its environment. Internal integration refers to a group's internal functioning and ability to adapt to each other. To stay together the group has had to develop functional and generally accepted solutions to those problems (Ibid, 11). According to Schneider & Barsoux, all groups encounter the same problems (emic), but the solutions are specific to the particular group (etic) (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 20).

Schein calls these solutions shared basic assumptions that make a codex of how individuals of a particular group should relate to those problems on cognitive and emotional level (Schein 1992, 22). They are so internalised that they are difficult for people to formulate explicitly (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 20). Importantly, they contain the key to why people behave like they do and why they believe in and value certain issues (Ibid, 20).

Culture is passed on as the basic assumptions are taught to the new members (Schein 1992, 11). Schein points out that cultural learning takes place both on behavioural and abstract internal levels. The abstract and deeper level of learning entails the shared basic assumptions, which form the essence of culture (Ibid, 11). Next I will turn to discuss the structure of culture. Additionally, in the following basic assumptions are discussed in more detail.



**Figure 1. Schein's model of organizational culture** (Holden 2002, 25)

Schein differentiates three levels of culture in his model, as presented above in Figure 1. (Schein 1992, 17). These levels are called artifacts, values, and assumption. Artifacts include, for example, architecture, technology and products, artistic creations, manners of address, emotional displays as well as myths and stories told about the organisation, published

lists of values, rituals and ceremonies. Thus, artifacts are issues that can be observed (Schein 1992, 17). Holden has summarized well that artifacts can be physical and behavioural as well as verbal (Holden 2002, 24).

The middle level of the model consists of values. Values express what the group perceives to be right or correct as well as functional or non-functional in specific situations (Schein 1992, 19). Group members are conscious of these values and able to state them explicitly (Ibid, 20). According to Schein, values largely predict an individual's observable behaviour (Ibid, 20). Values also become apparent in the institutions of a society, such as political systems, the role of women and education (Holden 2002, 24).

If values preserve their functionality as solutions to common problems they may become shared assumptions (Schein 1992, 19-20). However, not all values transfer into shared assumptions. Beliefs, moral and ethical rules and behavioural norms remain on the conscious level of values, as they are needed in "guiding members of the group in how to deal with certain key situations and in training new members in how to behave" (Ibid, 20).

Finally, on the third level in the model are basic assumptions. In comparison to values, basic assumptions are so internalised that they are hard, if not impossible to state explicitly (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 20). Basic assumptions function outside of people's awareness (Schein 1992, 12). Members of a particular culture treat basic assumptions as a reality and "believe that nature really works this way" (Ibid, 21). "Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations" (Ibid, 22). Once basic assumptions have been established, they are difficult to change (Ibid, 22).

Behaviour is generally expected to be congruent with basic assumptions (Schein 1992, 22). In fact, other forms of behaviour might be perceived as inconceivable. That is why surrounding events may be denied, distorted, or falsely perceived congruent with one's own basic assumptions to avoid the anxiety of incongruence. Thus, culture has a powerful psychological impact (Ibid, 22).

Speaking of Schein's model on a general level, the division of culture into visible and invisible levels is very important. Artifacts form the visible level of culture, whereas values and basic assumptions form the

invisible levels (Holden 2002, 25). The visible level of culture is observable for everyone, but only members of a particular culture are aware of the values and share the same basic assumptions. Because of this, misunderstandings in intercultural communication might happen (Ibid, 24).

Outsiders might misinterpret or misperceive a foreign culture because of two reasons. On the one hand, this might happen because outsiders are not aware of the meanings of the artifacts they see, i.e. they do not share the same values and basic assumptions as members of a particular culture (Holden 2002, 24; Douglas as cited in Schein 1992, 23). Schneider & Barsoux compare culture to a code: "what is observed must be deciphered" (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 20). A code is visible, but to be able to understand the code's message some external information is needed (Ibid, 20).

On the other hand, outsiders may try to impose their own cultural assumption on a foreign culture (Schein 1992, 22). This can happen easily, because in different cultures "the same behaviour can have different meanings and different behaviours can have the same meaning" (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 21). In the work of the supervisors at the case organisation the possibility of misunderstandings exists. In the analysis of this study, the focus will be on how to resolve misunderstandings once they have occurred.

Next I will discuss what implications Schein's definition has on the nature of culture. Schein describes culture "as accumulated shared learning of a given group" (Schein 1992, 10). I want to look at this characterisation a little closer. Firstly, it implies that culture is shared by a group of people. Different groups have gone through different learning processes and thus developed different cultures.

Secondly, to become a member of a certain culture one has to learn the ways of that culture. The cultural learning takes place when the old members teach the culture to the new members (Schein 1992, 11). The point of view on learning in this study differs slightly from the one of Schein's, as the focus of this thesis on the intercultural management competence of the supervisors whose aim is not to become members of some new culture, but to manage competently employees from different cultures. The important aspect to note here is that culture can be learned. Fang also points out that cultural learning frequently takes place in intercultural encounters in the era of globalisation (Fang 2005, 85).

Cross-cultural management theorists, such as Schneider & Barsoux (1997) and Holden (2002), build on Schein's concept of culture. Schneider & Barsoux consider Schein's work essential because it points out the key challenges that managers of international business might encounter (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 20). The key challenges are developing global strategies for the business as well as creating organisational design and determining HR practices. In Schein's terminology development of strategies represents a problem of external adaptation, whereas planning organisational design and HR practices belong to the problems of internal integration. The challenge of these practices is to find functional solutions which do not violate the values or basic assumptions of the cultures involved (Ibid, 20).

Holden considers the division of culture into visible and invisible levels an important aspect in Schein's typology (Holden 2002, 24). However, he points out that the typology is not watertight, because for example language can be seen to belong to both visible and invisible levels of culture (Ibid, 24-25).

To summarize, because of different cultural backgrounds people perceive and react to their environment and other people differently. Outsiders cannot fully understand a foreign culture, as some parts of it are invisible and shared only by the members of that culture. Still, culture can be learned and the learning process is both conscious and subconscious.

In the case organisation, not merely two or three, but many cultural groups work together. There the supervisors face the greatest challenges, as they are the ones most frequently involved in the intercultural communication situations. As previous studies show, it is important that the line managers understand the cultural backgrounds of their culturally different employees, because the manager's behaviour may affect the productivity and motivation of the employees (Globokar 1997; Newman & Nollen 1996). The supervisors of the case organisation need to have a set of competences to be able to encounter and manage a group of culturally different employees simultaneously.

## 2.2 THE CONCEPT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Intercultural communication is concerned with interpersonal communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In the case organisation, interpersonal interaction with culturally different employees poses the most challenges for the work of the supervisors. For this reason the definition of competence from the field intercultural communication is concerned suitable for the study. Thus, intercultural communication competence forms the perspective, from which intercultural management competence is studied in this study.

In this section I will define intercultural communication competence. I will start with defining the key terms: intercultural communication and competence. Secondly, I will present the criteria for intercultural communication competence in general and from the viewpoint of this study. Finally, I will discuss the location of the intercultural communication competence.

Firstly, intercultural communication means the exchange of messages between culturally different individuals (Adler 2002, 74). It includes both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as intended and unintended messages. All words and behaviour, whether conscious or unconscious, can be communication. According to Adler, "whatever I say or do, I cannot *not* communicate" (italics in original) (Ibid, 74).

Communication involves at least two communication partners, the message sender and the message receiver (Adler 2002, 74). However, communication is not direct in that sense that sent and received messages are not identical. Received message is always receiver's interpretation of the sent message (Ibid, 74).

The word competence means "ability or skill to do something" (Salo-Lee 2006, 81). Firstly, it includes preparedness, i.e. motivation and knowledge. Secondly, it refers to sufficiency: "good enough, yet able and willing to learn" (Ibid, 81). In an intercultural communication context this means that a competent person is both able and motivated to communicate interculturally as well as possesses the knowledge of how to do that. This definition of competence also includes the motivation of an individual to develop his or her competences further.

Secondly, the commonly accepted criteria for someone to be competent in intercultural communication are effectiveness and appropriateness (Chen & Starosta 2005, 241; Koester et al. 1993, 6). On the one hand, effectiveness refers to person's ability to generate intended influence through interaction with culturally different individuals (Chen & Starosta 2005, 240-241). On the other hand, appropriateness refers to proper and suitable behaviour in certain situations within a specific culture (Koester et al. 1993, 6). Thus, intercultural communication competence is defined as "effective and appropriate interaction between individuals" with different cultural backgrounds (Chen & Starosta 2005, 241).

In this study effectiveness means that the supervisors interact with the international employees in a way that the employees are able to accomplish their work as well as act according to the employees' rights and duties. This includes communicating the rules and guidelines of the work as well as knowledge of employees' rights and duties in this particular organisation to the international employees. Employees' rights include for example entitlement to occupational health care at a certain health care institution and the duty and obligation to present a doctor's certificate to the supervisor to be granted sick leave. Furthermore, appropriateness in this study includes two aspects. Firstly, the supervisors are able to interact with the international employees without violating their expectations of the supervisor-employee interaction. Secondly, the supervisor interacts with the international employee in a way that the international employee is comfortable.

In intercultural communication competence research, the criteria for determining someone's competence have varied (Koester et al. 1993, 7). Firstly, the focus of the research has been on the individual's characteristics. Within this view, an individual's attitudes, beliefs and values are identified in order to determine the level of intercultural communication competence. Secondly, a person's competency has been determined by his or her behaviour. This view emphasises the actions of an individual including both verbal and non-verbal communication. Thirdly, the criteria have been extended outside of an individual, that is on social impressions. This means that a competent communication performance cannot be evaluated only by the sender of the message, but needs to be evaluated also by his or her communication partners. According to this view, being competent means that one is perceived to be competent also by the communication partners (Ibid, 7). Finally, it has been pointed out that the context of the interaction situation

should be observed, when determining what is competent (Chen & Starosta 2005, 241).

In this study the third and fourth viewpoints on the location of competence are the most important. The intercultural management competence of the supervisors is determined both by the supervisors themselves as well as by the international employees. The context of the case organisation needs also to be taken into account, as it is rather unconventional. That is because the supervisors and employees work at different times and in different places.

According to Chen & Starosta, “intercultural communication competence is the only means whereby we can move beyond cultural differences in order to succeed in intercultural interactions” (Chen & Starosta 2005, 240). As the working life becomes more multicultural, interculturally competent managers are increasingly needed also in Finland.

## **2.3 CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT: TOWARDS INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT**

Cross- and intercultural management are the main fields of the current study. In this section I will explore these fields more closely. At first, the concepts of management and leadership are defined, as both of these functions are present in the work of the supervisors at the case organisation. Then I discuss the fundamental relationship between management and culture. After that in sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4., cross-cultural management theory and criticism are presented. Lastly, the concepts of cross- and intercultural management are compared and the approach of this study is determined.

### **2.3.1 The Concept of Management: A Task Perspective**

At first, it is necessary to look more closely at the usage of the word management. On the one hand, management is used to refer to a professional group, the managers. On the other hand, management refers to the action of managing, i.e. the tasks of the managers. The overall aim of the management as action is to influence the behaviour of the employees and the recognition of the shared purpose in order to achieve goals and to produce desired results

(Harisalo 2009; Holden 2002, 293). To fulfil these goals both management and leadership are needed in organisations (Harisalo 2009; Kotter 1990, 3). Thus, management is explored from the perspective of the manager's tasks, i.e. what do the managers do and what are the tasks in which they might need intercultural management competence. For this reason both management and leadership need to be defined.

As argued above, the overall purpose of management and leadership is similar. Still the processes are different (Kotter 1990, 5). Therefore the concepts need first to be defined separately. After defining these concepts, I will discuss how management and leadership are linked to each other in the organisational context and what their relationship is. Finally, I will define the managerial context of the study and argue why both management and leadership are important from the viewpoint of this study. After this section I will use the word management to refer to the work of the supervisors of the case organisation, i.e. to their managerial and leadership tasks.

Management is concerned with a system, i.e. goals, means and structure (Harisalo 2009). Thus, from a managerial point of view the overall task of the management personnel is to create a system or a framework in which the work is carried out. Management influences the behaviour and recognition of shared purpose by establishing boundaries for the work and setting the guidelines of how the work should be done.

A more detailed view on management is offered by looking at its core processes which are presented in the following.

- 1) Planning and budgeting,
- 2) Organising and staffing,
- 3) Controlling and problem solving (Kotter 1990, 4).

Firstly, planning and budgeting refers to setting goals for the future as well as determining the steps and creating a budget to achieve the organisational goals. The second process of organising and staffing includes five steps. It starts with creating an organisational structure and job descriptions and continues with employing staff. After that the plan is communicated to the employees and responsibility for the implementation of the plan is delegated. Finally, a system for monitoring the work is created. The third process of controlling and problem solving refers to monitoring the work as well as identifying and solving problems. To summarise, the core processes of management produce consistency and order (Kotter 1990, 4).

Furthermore, Holden (2002) points out changes in the manager's role and in the management practice. According to Crainer, managers are not anymore purely functional specialists, but they are becoming sophisticated generalists. Thus, the aspect of knowledge management is gaining more emphasis in managerial work (Crainer 1996 as cited in Holden 2002, 42). Knowledge management is presented in more detail in the section 2.3.3.2. However, not only the manager's role is changing but also the management practice itself. The meaning of coaching and encouraging in the managerial work has increased, whereas the meaning of ordering and directing has decreased (Moss Kanter 2000 as cited in Holden 2002, 82).

Harisalo's (2009) definition for management is relatively broad. A more detailed view is gained through Kotter's (1990) core processes. Moreover, Holden (2002) reviews important changes in the managerial work. Next I will continue with the definition of leadership.

Compared to management, leadership focuses more on interaction (Harisalo 2009). It is concerned with the questions of how to handle people and gain benefit from social relationships for the organisation. Leadership practices include among others pointing out the direction for the followers, creating an atmosphere that enables learning and an open dialogue as well as augmenting optimism (Ibid). By means of leadership the overall task of the managerial personnel is to influence the behaviour of the employees and the recognition of the shared purpose through relationships and interpersonal interaction.

As for management, three core processes can be identified also for leadership. These are presented in the following.

- 1) Establishing direction,
- 2) Aligning people,
- 3) Motivating and inspiring (Kotter 1990, 5).

Firstly, establishing direction refers to the creation a vision for the future. The second process of aligning people includes communicating the vision to those that participate in its realisation and ensuring their commitment to it. Finally, motivating and inspiring refers to "keeping people moving to the right direction" (Kotter 1990, 5).

Chhokar et al. define leadership in organisations as influencing, motivating and enabling "others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisation" (original in italics) (Chhokar et al. 2007, 6). However, they state that the core of leadership can be condensed to

influencing others in order to accomplish certain goals. They have given rather a broad definition for leadership, as, according to them, the character of each study should be taken into account when formulating a detailed definition for the core concepts (Chhokar et al. 2007, 5).

There are similarities in all of these three leadership definitions. They all demonstrate that the leader interacts with others and aims at benefiting the organisation. On the one hand, Kotter (1990) emphasises more the visionary aspect of leadership, i.e. showing others the direction. This aspect is also mentioned by Harisalo (2009). On the other hand, Harisalo (2009) and Chhokar (2007) seem to emphasise more the interactional perspective of leadership.

At this point I want to mention that management and leadership as activities are not always easily separated. They are closely intertwined in the organisation, as they are executed by the same group of people, the managerial personnel of the organisation (Kotter 1990, 3). Moreover, both are needed in organisations that pursue to succeed (Ibid, 7).

In practice, the managerial level affects the emphasis which managing and leading have in the work of an individual manager. On the one hand, management is concerned more with the operative level. Management serves its own branch and executes the functions that have been assigned to it (Harisalo 2009). On the other hand, leadership includes functions that serve the whole organisation, such as creating visions and strategic planning. These belong especially to the tasks of the upper management (Ibid).

This thesis focuses on the supervisory work at the case organisation. The supervisors work on the operative level and form the first level of managers in the organisation. This level of management is called the line management as well as the managers working on this level are called the line managers (see Answers Corporation Website).

At the case organisation the supervisors execute managerial tasks, such as controlling, problem solving, communication and structuring the work. To give a few examples, they explain the rules and guidelines for the employees and make the work schedules as well as solve misunderstanding situations. Moreover, they are also the ones who are in the most contact with the employees. In the interaction with the employees the supervisors need leadership skills. Special tasks where the supervisors need leadership skills are guiding and motivating the employees. Guiding the employees includes for example correcting them if they do something wrong. In the light of this it

seems relevant to include both management and leadership aspects in this study.

It is true that some areas of leadership, such as strategic planning, do not belong to the tasks of the supervisors. For this reason I will later concentrate on the interactional dimension of leadership that clearly is present in the work of the supervisors. In addition, Adler points out that in the era of globalisation organisations have come to notice that leadership skills are needed widely in the organisation, not only by the upper management (Adler 2002, 171).

### **2.3.2 Culture's Influence on Management**

Culture influences management in two ways. Firstly, management theories and definitions are created and developed within some cultural context. This context can have an influence on the development process of the theories and creation of definitions. Secondly, management involves interaction between people. Culture affects the perception and expectations that these people have of management. In the following I will discuss these two aspects in more detail.

Firstly, today many practitioners and researchers acknowledge culture's effect on management theories, as they point out management theories created in Western countries might not be applicable in other parts of the world (Hofstede 2001; Lewis et al. 2001; Tjosvold & Leung, 2003). Schneider and Barsoux point out that ultimately management theories are connected to cultural values and emphasise aspects that are "considered important and deserving attention" (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 30).

The definitions of management and leadership presented above come both from traditional management or leadership theorists (Harisalo 2009, Kotter 1990) and cross-cultural management or leadership theorists (Holden 2002, Chhokar et al. 2007). On the one hand, it can be assumed that the cross-cultural management and leadership theorists are more aware of the culture's influence on the definitions. Thus, their definitions may be for example more general and less detailed. On the other hand, it is necessary to notice that when dealing with management definitions that are more culturally-bound, there is probably more emphasis on some of the aspects and the

others might be completely omitted (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 29). For example, a person from the USA might define management as “getting things done through other people” and an Arab “developing people through work” (Ibid, 29).

Also my study is conducted and written in a specific cultural context, i.e. within the Finnish culture, and has implicitly adopted the assumptions of the management definitions, which are referred here. Furthermore, as the case study investigates intercultural management competence in a Finnish organisation, including a Finnish definition from Harisalo (2009) for management can be considered profitable. Nevertheless, Harisalo’s (2009) and Kotter’s (1990) definitions for management and leadership are rather similar. This might mean that the Finnish definition has been influenced by the American definitions. This would not be very surprising, as the U.S. has long traditions in studying management and leadership academically and has had a great influence on these fields in other countries.

Secondly, management always involves interaction between people. Depending on the context the managers and the employees can have the same cultural background or different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural and intercultural management studies are interested in cases where the people involved in the managerial interaction situations come from different cultures. As argued above, when defining culture, members of different cultures perceive and react to the world around them differently. Thus, their viewpoints on management might also differ. It is likely that they also have some expectations for the management practice. In a multicultural workplace there might be as many different perspectives on management as there are employees from different cultures.

### **2.3.3 Cross-cultural Management**

In this part I will present the theory of cross-cultural management by Schneider & Barsoux (1997) and Holden (2002). These authors do not belong to the most traditional cross-cultural management theorists who focus merely on comparing cultures. Instead of the traditional approach, Schneider & Barsoux view cultural differences as a learning platform for managers (Holden 2002, 18). This approach has been acknowledged profitable by Holden, who intends to build further on this “line of thinking” (Ibid, 18).

### 2.3.3.1 Schneider & Barsoux

According to Schneider & Barsoux (1997), culture affects management on many levels. It shapes not only the behaviour of the individuals working in the organisation, but also the structure of the organisation as well as the way how the management processes are carried out and how organisational strategy and human resource practices are planned. They describe culture as an undercurrent influencing the organisational behaviour and functions (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 18).

Schneider & Barsoux aim at investigating “cultural assumptions underlying” management theories and determining “the potential impact of culture on performance” instead of finding the best way to manage multicultural workforce (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, viii; ix). In addition, they emphasise an organisational design “in which each element preserves its unique value” instead of forcing the elements to change in a cultural melting pot (Ibid, vii). This view is supported by Kandola & Fullerton (1998) who state that the characteristics of diverse workforce need to be managed so that individuals feel themselves valued and “their talents are --- fully utilised”, not forgetting the organisational goals (Kandola & Fullerton 1998 as cited in Sippola 2007, 21).

Schneider & Barsoux emphasise raising cultural awareness in organisations (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 158). According to them, two key elements of cross-cultural management are: Firstly, to recognise “underlying, and often hidden, cultural assumptions” from which different beliefs and values in management practice arise. Secondly, how one’s cultural background affects one’s behaviour and “how others perceive and respond to that behaviour” (Ibid, viii; 1). The second emphasis seems to bring Schneider & Barsoux’s theory closer to intercultural management than traditional cross-cultural management, as it clearly refers to interpersonal interaction.

The theory of Schneider & Barsoux (1997) offers many beneficial views for the current study. Firstly, they acknowledge that cultures influence on management and organisations in a broad sense. Secondly, Schneider & Barsoux (1997) are not searching for the best way to manage multicultural workforce, and thus admit that different ways of management might be more functional in different cultures. Thirdly, becoming aware of one’s culture and using the cultural differences as a learning platform are very fruitful starting points for studying intercultural competence.

### 2.3.3.2 Holden

Holden (2002) presents another point of view on cross-cultural management. That is the one of knowledge management. Today knowledge is considered to be a “company’s most valuable resource for sustaining competitive advantage” (Holden 2002, xiii). The concept of knowledge management is defined as a “systematic and organised attempt to use knowledge within an organisation to improve performance” (Ibid, 15). To be more specific, knowledge management aims at facilitating “inter-organisational sharing of know-how and experience” through management processes (Ibid, xiii).

The perspective of knowledge management is a new theoretical opening in the field of cross-cultural management (Holden 2002, xiv). Within this perspective culture and knowledge about culture are seen as organisational resources which can be applied to benefit the organisation (Ibid, 15). More specifically, culture related knowledge as a form of organisational knowledge can serve for resolving international management problems (Ibid, 15).

Now I will shortly review the tasks of which cross-cultural knowledge management consists. After that I will present a basic process model of cross-cultural management. The six main tasks of cross-cultural knowledge management practice are

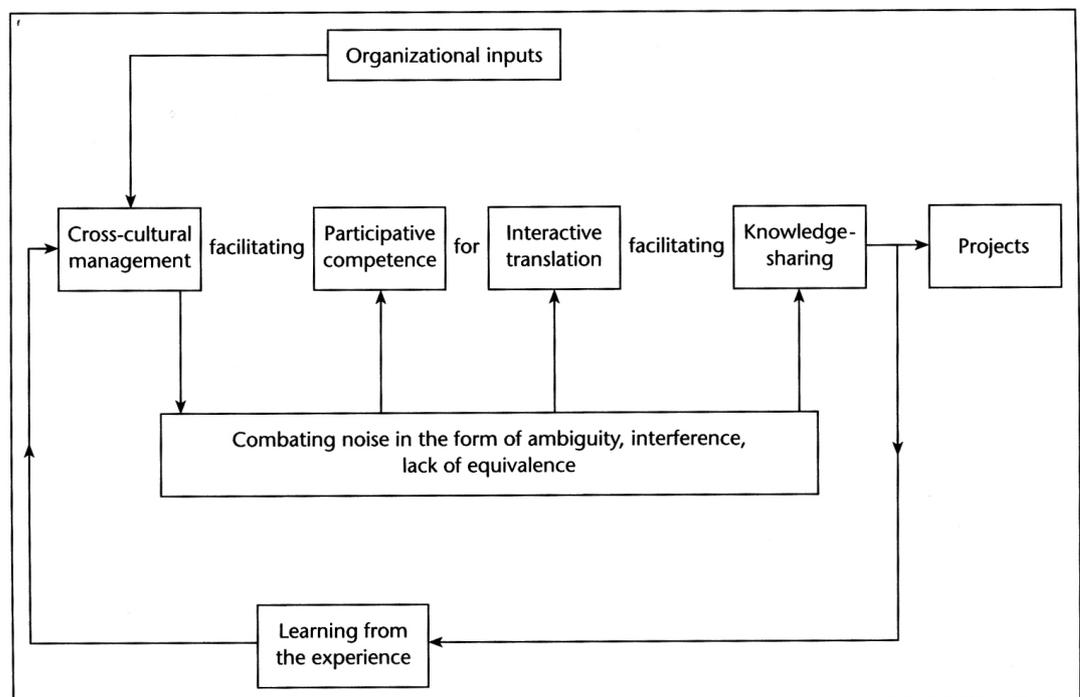
- development of participative competence,
- interactive translation,
- cross-cultural transfer of knowledge, experience and values,
- collaborative cross-cultural learning,
- cross-cultural networking and
- creation of collaborative atmosphere (Holden 2002, 293).

All of these tasks involve intense intercultural interaction (Holden 2002, 293). Firstly, participative competence means being adept in intercultural communication and thus being able to participate productively in discussions (Ibid, 298). Secondly, interactive translation refers to working in a multicultural work community and teams, where individual members participate in the act of negotiating common meanings and common understandings as well as learn themselves “how to be able to work” with other members of the work community (Ibid, 317).

Thirdly, the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge, experiences and values refers to sharing these between culturally different members of the

work community and teams. Especially sharing knowledge across cultures is not always straightforward. On the one hand, transfer of knowledge is hindered by the fact that “knowledge is generated in different language systems, (organisational) cultures and (work) groups” (Venzin 1998 as cited in Holden 2002, 82). On the other hand, knowledge may be highly tacit “and therefore hard to formalize and communicate” (Holden 2002, 68).

Fourthly, collaborative cross-cultural learning means creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge on interorganisational and interpersonal levels in order to support the organisation’s goals and strategy (Holden 2002, 43-44). Fifthly, cross-cultural networking signifies the creation of pathways to key resources, such as human assets, special knowledge and rare competences, across cultures. Finally, atmosphere can have decisive effects on the intercultural work in an organisation (Ibid, 275). Atmosphere is defined as all-encompassing feeling which stems from experience and determines “expectations concerning future cooperation” (Ibid, 315). A cross-cultural manager can help to create and sustain a collaborative atmosphere, although he or she does not have detailed knowledge about the communication partners’ cultural backgrounds (Ibid, 275).



**Figure 2. Basic process model of cross-cultural management and knowledge transfer (Holden 2002, 274)**

Figure 2. presents Holden's basic process model for cross-cultural management and knowledge transfer (Holden 2002, 274). The model shows that the cross-cultural management tasks do not exist as separate and individually performed actions, but are highly connected. They form a process, in which some tasks are sequential and some permanently present.

According to the model, cross-cultural management facilitates participative competence for interactive translation. Still, the cross-cultural manager him- or herself also needs participative competence, as will be discussed in the section 2.4.3. Interactive translation is needed for facilitating knowledge sharing. Continuous learning from experiences follows after these three steps. In general, the cross-cultural management utilises the learned insights and capabilities for future processes.

Networking and creating atmosphere are not mentioned explicitly in this model. However, they are present in the process (Holden 2002, 276). Firstly, networking as well as collaborative learning and knowledge sharing, can be understood as general functions of international organisations, in which participative competence and interactive translation are needed. Thus, knowledge sharing and learning occur at many stages in the knowledge management process. Secondly, the atmosphere is a pervasive element which facilitates performing all the other tasks (Ibid, 275-276). Finally, combating noise in the system refers to the cross-cultural manager's tasks as a communicator, which will be discussed in the following.

Holden's knowledge management perspective has been criticised because of its general character (Juuti 2005, 18). Alvesson (2004) points out that the concept of knowledge remains abstract and obscure as well as lacks of critical perspective (as cited in Juuti 2005, 18). Still, Holden's work is recognised as a positive new opening in the field of cross-cultural management (Juuti 2005, 18).

Furthermore, Holden emphasises the meaning of context. He criticises cross-cultural management of which only aim is to make the managers aware cross-cultural differences (Holden 2002, 5). He doubts if being aware of cultural differences can equip the managers to anticipate culture related problems and solve them once they occur. According to Holden, the relevant cross-cultural knowledge is highly contextual and cannot be solely explained by cross-cultural awareness. The meaning of context is further emphasised by Burton-Jones (1999, as cited in Holden 2002, 5), as he states that "it is the context which gives clarity of understanding". However, context

can also be one of the most difficult to utilise as a knowledge resource (Holden 2002, 5). To conclude, as clashes in cross-cultural management situations appear, the cultural dimensions and values are often easy to recognise, but they cannot be analysed meaningfully without taking the context into account.

Cross-cultural knowledge management may prove beneficial in the work of the supervisors of the case organisation, as sharing cultural knowledge with colleagues might facilitate the development of intercultural management competence among the supervisors. In addition, taking the context of the case organisation into account may be a key factor for understanding cultural differences.

#### **2.3.4 Criticism on Cross-cultural Management Theories**

At this point it is necessary to review critically the theoretical basis of the study. Firstly, I will discuss the use of the terms of management and leadership in cross-cultural management literature. Secondly, I will argue the suitability of international or global cross-cultural management literature for this study.

Firstly, the concepts of management and leadership do not always seem to be defined separately in cross-cultural management literature. In general, cross-cultural management theorists are more concerned with defining the concept of culture than those of management and leadership. For example, Schneider & Barsoux (1997) use both management and leadership but do not define both of these concepts explicitly. To provide an example, as Schneider & Barsoux (1997) list the competences for the international manager both managerial and leadership skills appear, but there are no clear distinctions made to which fields the individual skills actually belong: management or leadership.

This makes it challenging to create the theory basis for the current study. However, when the situation is such as described above, the decision to investigate management from the viewpoint of a manager's tasks seems very suitable. For this reason, intercultural or cross-cultural leadership is not defined separately above. According to the chosen perspective cross-cultural management includes both the management and leadership tasks. For further development of the field it might prove beneficial to make a clearer distinction between cross-cultural management and leadership.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider the differences in the context of the current study and the theory. Whereas, Schneider & Barsoux (1997) and Holden (2002) address their theory to international and global organisations, the case organisation Aamujakelu Oy is entirely Finnish and domestic. Furthermore, considering the character of the case organisation, it is not even likely to strive for internationalisation. Thus, for example transferability of management structures and processes from headquarters to subsidiaries is not an issue in this study. Instead, the focus of this study is on the managerial processes and practices that involve interpersonal communication and cooperation. Still, I argue that the differences in context do not prevent the application of the theory in this study. In the following, I will discuss this matter and review the theories of Schneider & Barsoux and Holden in more detail.

On the one hand, Schneider & Barsoux point out that the management of employees from different cultures does not necessarily mean that the manager needs to travel abroad (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, vii). Today managers may be dealing with multicultural workforce also in their home countries (Ibid, 157-158). This is precisely the situation in the case organisation and the supervisors' need for cultural awareness is evident. As a matter of fact, managing international employees in a domestic company may be even more challenging than managing culturally different employees abroad. The reason for this is that the cultural background of the international employees affects the supervisor-employee relationship and interaction in a more implicit way, as the manager cannot observe the foreign cultural cues in the surrounding environment. He or she can learn about the employees' cultural backgrounds only from the employees themselves.

On the other hand, Holden has investigated the influence of cultural factors on multicultural and international organisations "in globalising economy" (Holden 2002, xiii-xv; 307). Thus, the case organisation falls only partly under the same framework by being multicultural, but not international. However, the case organisation still represents an important part of globalisation. Globalisation does not mean only international contacts between organisations, but also increased mobility of individuals for various reasons. The ongoing globalisation shows as a constantly increasing number of international employees in the case organisation.

Furthermore, Holden's theory might prove extremely useful for the current study for two reasons. Firstly, this study, such as Holden's, focuses on

interaction. He aims at opening new perspectives “for understanding and researching the complexities of human interaction” (Holden 2002, xvi). Secondly, Holden emphasises the importance of context as a key factor for understanding cultural differences (Ibid, 5). The context of the case organisation is rather unique and should be taken into account in the analysis of the empirical data.

In addition, certain analogies can also be found between the international and domestic business contexts in Schneider & Barsoux’s (1997) theory. As Schneider & Barsoux (1997) speak of the relationship of headquarters and subsidiaries on a global scale, a similar situation might exist on an interpersonal level at a domestic multicultural workplace between major population and minority. Here major population refers to the main population of a country sharing the same culture, such as Finns in Finland, whereas minority refers to the individuals who have immigrated to this country.

In the following I provide an example of the situation described above. Schneider and Barsoux write about transferring management structures and processes from headquarters to subsidiaries in international business context as follows: the principle of “effectively transferring management structures and processes relies on the ability to recognise” the assumptions of those structures and processes and then “to compare them with the cultural assumptions of the potential host country recipient” (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 100-101). At a domestic, multicultural workplace this could mean that the manager needs to recognise the assumptions underlying the management structures and processes that are congruous with the culture of the major population and compare them with the cultural assumptions of the minorities present at the organisation, and then determine the applicability of the existing management structures and processes when managing the members of the minority. This analogy can be justified by the fact that organisations consists of people and people ultimately carry out the organisational tasks and make the organisation function.

Finally, it should be noticed that the case organisation does not lack entirely a connection to the international business context. Despite the domestic character of the case organisation’s operation, it belongs to an international media corporation, Alma Media. In fact, developing competence is defined as one of the key areas at this international media corporation (Alma Media Website). Thus, the results of this study concerning intercultural

management competence in the case organisation might later provide aspects for learning for other members of the media corporation.

### **2.3.5 Defining the Field of Study: Cross- or Intercultural Management**

In the focus of this study is the supervisory work at one multicultural workplace in Finland. At least two possible fields exist for studying this topic: Cross-cultural management and intercultural management, both of which have emerged as sub-disciplines of international management (Holden 2002, 19; Jacob 2003, 2). Although the borderline of cross-cultural and intercultural management is not always clear cut, these fields emphasise different aspects of management (Holden 2002, 19). Next I will define these fields of study and clarify which one is used in this study.

Cross-cultural studies in general refer to comparing and contrasting cultures with each other. This is also the case of cross-cultural management studies which focus on revealing and understanding thoughts, feelings and actions of managers and employees in different cultures (Tjosvold & Leung 2003, 2). Traditionally, cross-cultural management studies involve contrasting two or more cultures (Risager 2001, as cited in Holden 2002, xviii). In comparison, the emphasis in intercultural management is on interpersonal interaction at multicultural workplaces (Holden 2002, 19). However, intercultural management does not exclude the comparative aspect, which is emphasised in the term cross-cultural (Ibid, xix).

The most remarkable difference between cross-cultural and intercultural management is that cross-cultural management focuses on comparing management practices in different cultures, whereas intercultural management concentrates on the interaction between individuals from different cultures (Holden 2002, xix). Advocates of intercultural management have been criticised for emphasising the communicational dimension over the managerial dimension (Ibid, xix).

In any case, according to Holden, these terms are often interchangeable and their differences are probably discussed to a lesser extent outside the academia (Holden 2002, xviii-xix). He also points out that a strict distinction of these two might be even counterproductive (Ibid, xix).

What comes to the cross-cultural management theories reviewed above, Schneider & Barsoux do not explicitly label their work as cross- or intercultural management. However, the reference to cross-cultural

management is present in the name of their latest publication: *Managing across Cultures* (1997). Still, as mentioned their work is not about contrasting different cultural management practices. In comparison, Holden argues explicitly his choice for the term cross-cultural management, but he admits that the terms cross-cultural and intercultural can be sometimes seen as synonyms in his work (Holden 2002, xix).

Although the aim of this study is not to emphasise communication over other management tasks, intercultural management seems to offer a more fruitful viewpoint for studying the case organisation. Although some cultural groups are identified and compared, the comparison of these groups is not the main aim of the study. Instead, the aim is to find out what kind of competences the supervisors need in order to interact effectively and appropriately with the international employees.

In addition, it cannot be denied that communication has a special role in the case organisation, as the supervisors and employees work in different times and places. For this reason, for example physical controlling and monitoring are in a minor role and communication becomes more important. The supervisors need to be able to communicate with the international employees to ensure that organisational goals are achieved. ‘

To conclude, cross-cultural elements are present in this study, but the main perspective is on intercultural management. Choosing the intercultural management perspective is not contradictory with the fact that this study bases on the work of cross-cultural management theorists. As argued above, a complete separation of the fields might even be disadvantageous and the comparative aspects can still be included within the intercultural management perspective.

## **2. 4 INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE**

Intercultural communication competence is essential for succeeding in intercultural interaction (Chen & Starosta 2005, 240). Working in a managerial position in a multicultural workplace might still require more than the regular intercultural communication competence. Cross-cultural management theorists have indeed developed different kind of sets of competences especially for managers working in intercultural settings. Thus, intercultural

communication competence is understood here as a broader and less detailed superordinate concept for intercultural management competence.

This section presents the theoretical focus of the study, with which I pursue to answer the research questions. Here I will look at intercultural management competence by three different authors. All of them present a different emphasis for the work of the managerial personnel in multicultural organisations. Firstly, Schneider & Barsoux (1997) focus on the competences needed when managing multicultural workforce in a domestic organisation. Secondly, Goleman (1998) concentrates on certain leadership skills and their significance. Thirdly, Holden (2002) presents the cross-cultural manager as a communicator and a global knowledge worker.

#### **2.4.1 Schneider & Barsoux's International Manager**

Schneider & Barsoux call the managers in charge of multicultural workforce international managers (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 157-158). According to them, international manager meant previously the same as an expatriate manager, but now the situation has changed and "the conventional distinction between international and domestic managers is fading" (Ibid, 158). Today managers may be in charge of multicultural workforce also in their home countries (Ibid, 157-158). Thus, they emphasise that attention should be drawn on the international tasks and responsibilities the managers fulfil in their work and on the competences needed there (Ibid, 158).

Schneider & Barsoux (1997) have determined separately competences for managers who manage differences abroad and for managers who manage differences in their home countries. I will concentrate here on the competences for managing culturally different employees in the home country of the manager and later say few words about the competences for managing differences abroad. The competences for managing differences at home outlined by Schneider & Barsoux (1997) are presented in the table 1.

<b>Competences for managing differences at home</b>
Understand interdependencies
Respond to different cultures simultaneously
Recognise difference 'at home'
Be willing to share power
Demonstrate cognitive complexity
Adopt a cultural general approach
Rapidly learn and unlearn

**Table 1. Competences for managing differences at home** (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 170)

I will focus especially on those competences that are relevant in the work of the supervisors of the case organisation. Thus, competences examined in detail are: ability to “Respond to different cultures simultaneously”, “Recognise difference at home”, “Adopt a cultural general approach” and finally ability to “Rapidly learn and unlearn”.

The following abilities: “Understand business interdependencies”, “Willingness to share power” and “Demonstrate cognitive complexity” fall out of scope of this study, as they all refer to competences needed in international organisation.

Firstly, at a multicultural workplace the international manager is in charge of employees with various cultural backgrounds. There two kinds of challenges on the managerial work emerge (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168). On the one hand, knowledge of a single culture, be it the manager’s own culture or a foreign culture, is not enough. In addition, the authors point out that learning detailed knowledge of the employees’ backgrounds, such as customs, attitudes and tastes might not be possible either. On the other hand, the international manager needs to manage the individual employees with various backgrounds “all at the same time” and enable them to work together towards a shared goal (Ibid, 168). In this kind of situation the international manager needs the ability to “Respond to different cultures simultaneously” (Ibid, 168).

Secondly, international managers encounter the challenging fact that they should be able to “Recognise difference at home” i.e. in their own cultural environment. In general, it might be expected that the international employees adapt to the local ways or try “to fit in with the dominant culture” (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168). However, this may “alienate” the

international employees as well as the assets that they would bring to the organisation may stay unrecognised (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168).

Thirdly, the authors suggest the international manager to “Adopt a cultural general approach” (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 169). According to the cultural general approach, the manager should identify those cultural differences, cues or signals that are relevant in their work. These differences may be national, corporate or functional. At a multicultural workplace this approach is likely to be more beneficial than a cultural-specific approach, which implies to acquiring detailed knowledge of a certain culture. A cultural-specific approach at a multicultural workplace is hardly possible, as pointed out above (Ibid, 169).

The three first of these competences are rather tightly intertwined. If one of the competences is missing, then it may difficult to act out the other two. For example, not recognising cultural differences at home or failing to adopt the cultural general approach may lead to difficulties in responding the cultural differences, as the awareness of cultural issues affecting the work would then be rather low. In addition, the lack of cultural general approach might lead to paying attention to detailed amount of cultural differences or the attempt of that. This might decrease the efficiency of the work, as the attention is aimed too widely on cultural issues.

Fourthly, international managers need to be extremely flexible in learning. They should be able to “Rapidly learn and unlearn”. In practice, this means that they should be open to new perspectives and readily try new approaches. With this kind of attitude, the authors refer to avoiding rigidity and the ability to question the basic assumptions all the time (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 170).

As mentioned above, Schneider & Barsoux (1997) list also competences for managing differences abroad. These are presented in the table 2.

<b>Competences for managing differences abroad</b>
Interpersonal (relationship) skills
Linguistic ability
Motivation to live abroad (cultural curiosity)
Tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity
Flexibility
Patience and respect
Cultural empathy
Strong sense of self (or ego strength)
Sense of humour

**Table 2. Competences for managing differences abroad** (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 163)

According to Schneider & Barsoux, the competences for managing differences abroad are also valid for managers who manage differences at the home (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 167). These competences however, are not discussed in detail here. The reason for this is that the authors discuss the competences in the table 2. strongly from the viewpoint of expatriate managers. Furthermore, similar competences come up under Goleman's (1998) global leadership competence.

Schneider & Barsoux's work has been criticised because of the way of compiling the competences of the international manager (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009, 71). According to Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, the competences have been chosen selectively from management literature and surveys as well as from anecdotal and experiential reports in business press. This however, is a common problem in literature concerning intercultural management competence (Ibid, 71). In any case, the competences of the international manager determined by Schneider & Barsoux (1997) offer a fruitful starting point for the study of intercultural management competences.

#### **2.4.2 Goleman's Emotional Intelligence**

As globalisation expands, organisations have come to notice that leadership skills are needed at many levels in the organisation, not only by the upper management (Adler 2002, 171). As argued above in the section 2.3.1, the supervisors of Aamujakelu Oy also need certain leadership skills. When talking about global leadership competence, Adler refers to emotional intelligence identified by Goleman (Ibid, 171). According to Goleman,

emotional intelligence has proved to be a more distinctive character of great leaders than IQ or technical skills (Goleman 1998, 82-84).

Emotional intelligence can be divided into self-management skills and relationship skills (Goleman 1998, 90). The three skills that belong to the self-management skills are "Self-awareness", "Self-regulation" and "Motivation". Relationship skills consist of "Empathy" and "Social skills" (Goleman 1998, 90). In the following I will define these five characteristics.

Firstly, "Self-awareness" means that a person understands his or her own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives (Goleman 1998, 84). Self-aware leaders "recognise how their feelings affect them, other people and their job performance" (Ibid, 84). Furthermore, leaders with this ability often appear to be self-confident (Ibid, 85).

Secondly, "Self-regulation" refers to controlling ones emotions (Goleman 1998, 85). A self-regulating person appears to be reflecting his or her emotions and is thoughtful. He or she is also comfortable with change (Ibid, 86). Finally, Goleman says that self-regulation increases integrity and decreases impulsive actions. Leaders with this ability can create an atmosphere "of trust and fairness" at the workplace (Ibid, 86).

The third component of emotional intelligence is "Motivation" (Goleman 1998, 88). Motivated leaders work driven by the desire to achieve. Instead of financial or status motivators they are motivated by the work itself. They search for creative challenges, enjoy learning and "take pride in a job well-done" (Ibid, 88).

Fourthly, "Empathy" is defined as an "ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people" and as a skill of responding to people pursuant to their emotional reactions (Goleman 1998, 88). Empathetic leaders take into account employees' feelings at work (Ibid, 89). However, it should not be confounded with "adopting other people's emotions --- and trying to please everybody", which instead of adding value to the leadership process would hinder it (Ibid, 89).

"Empathy" is especially important at today's organisations for three reasons (Goleman 1998, 90). Firstly, because of team work is becoming more and more common. Secondly, it is crucial for preserving the talented employees in the organisation. The third and the most important reason from the point of view of this study is the "rapid pace of globalisation". "Empathy" is especially important in multicultural workplaces (Ibid, 90).

Finally, “Social skills” as a leadership characteristic can be described as “friendliness with a purpose” (Goleman 1998, 90). “Social skills” include competency in “managing relationships and building networks” as well as discovering common ground and reaching a mutual understanding (Goleman 1998, 88). Leaders with these abilities direct their employees into the desired direction in their own human way (Ibid, 90).

### **2.4.3 Holden’s Cross-cultural Manager**

Holden (2002) adds another kind of perspective to the competences discussed above, by approaching the topic from the viewpoint of knowledge management. He characterises cross-cultural manager as a communicator and a global knowledge worker. Although Holden has criticised the traditionally held perspective of cross-cultural management, he states that his approach is not in contradiction with the more traditional views (Holden 2002, 296). I will start with the competences of the cross-cultural manager and present them from two viewpoints: cross-cultural manager as a communicator and as global knowledge worker. After that, I will discuss the actual existence of Holden’s cross-cultural knowledge manager.

Holden describes the cross-cultural manager as a communicator. As discussed above, it is reasonable to start with the tasks needed in this managerial position and then look at the competences that are required to succeed in these tasks. The cross-cultural manager’s primary task as a communicator is to facilitate participative competence which includes limiting noise in the system (Holden 2002, 297). Noise in these situations refers to the factors, such as ambiguity, interference and lack of equivalence, that might hinder the understanding of a message, and thus also the real cooperation (Ibid, 299).

The cross-cultural manager as a communicator him- or herself needs also to master participative competence, which means “Being adept in intercultural communication” and thus refers to the ability to participate productively in a discussion, even when using another language than the mother tongue (Holden 2002, 298). Furthermore, the person in this kind of position needs to be able to equitably contribute to the common task under discussion as well as to “share knowledge, communicate experience and stimulate group learning” (Ibid, 298). Holden emphasises the meaning of

participative competence in situations where more than two people are working together that is in teams or groups (Holden 2002, 222; 297).

To succeed in the facilitation of the communication the cross-cultural manager needs “Language skills” of “higher order” (Holden 2002, 298). The language can be English or any other language. The language skills of other participants of the communication situation may vary and that is why the manager needs to be able to modify his or her language use according to the skills of the others. Modifying refers here to “slowing down speed of speech, using simplified grammatical forms, avoiding obscure phrases or references, pausing between utterances, eliciting questions and opinion and so fort” (Ibid, 298-299).

Having said this about the cross-cultural manager as a communicator, the attention can be directed to the cross-cultural manager as a global knowledge worker. I will again first describe the tasks and then the competences needed in this position.

The cross-cultural manager as a global knowledge worker facilitates certain interactional activities in the company (Holden 2002, 299-300). These are:

- Transfer of knowledge, experience and values
- Collaborative cross-cultural learning
- Networking
- Interactive translation
- Participative competence
- Creation of a collaborative atmosphere for these activities

(Holden 2002, 299-300).

I have presented these activities in detail in the section 2.3.3.2. It is good to note that some of these interactional activities take place in the organisation also without the efforts of the cross-cultural manager. Thus, the “key task [of the global knowledge worker] --- is to facilitate knowledge flows and organisational learning so that others --- can perform their jobs better” as members of certain task groups (Holden 2002, 301). In other words, the global knowledge worker “manages cross-cultural know-how for other managers and decision-makers” (Ibid, 301).

Holden continues that there are two ways to characterise the competences of the cross-cultural manager as a global knowledge worker (Holden 2002, 300). Firstly, it can be done through the job requirements and

secondly through the educational background. In the following I will present both perspectives.

The job requirements of the global knowledge worker include three aspects. Firstly, the global knowledge worker needs to demonstrate cross-cultural know-how, which is the key to effective knowledge management (Holden 2002, 258; 301-302). Cross-cultural know-how is an active and implementational set of skills beneficial in situations where two cultures interact (Ibid, 254).

Cross-cultural know-how consists of three levels of knowledge with which the global knowledge worker should be at ease. First, the global knowledge worker needs to understand tacit knowledge in a given context. This means an ability to recognise implicit knowledge and to make it available for use. Secondly, the global knowledge worker should be able to provide “insights into the dynamics of human interactions”. This ability refers to being aware of and able to explain how relevant message are seen or how they are understood by the receiver (Holden 2002, 257). Thirdly, he or she needs to be able to shed “light on ‘unmappable problems’” (Ibid, 301). Holden describes “mappability” as reducing “complexity to its essential significant components for explanatory and predictive purposes” (Ibid, 257). Thus, the global knowledge worker is also able to clarify problems that otherwise seem extremely complex. According to Holden, the last ability is the most crucial (Ibid, 301-302).

Secondly, the global knowledge worker should have “Business focus”. He or she needs to know the direction the company is heading and also the reason why this direction was chosen. Furthermore, he or she needs to understand what role the cross-cultural management activities have in the organisation and what kind relation they have to the goals of the organisation (Holden 2002, 300).

Thirdly, Kelley (1990) has proposed four professional attributes for global knowledge workers (as cited in Holden 2002, 301). These are “Problem-solving abilities”, “Creativity”, “Talent” and “Intelligence”. “Problem solving abilities” may prove to be the most challenging of these four. Holden emphasises that to be able to solve culture related problems in the organisation, global knowledge worker examines carefully the context where the problem occurred (Holden 2002, 301).

Furthermore, Holden has described the educational background and other competences of the global knowledge worker (Holden 2002, 302).

Firstly, global knowledge worker needs “a good general education”. According to Holden, education in business is not necessary, but fields of study, such as philosophy, history, literature and mathematics might be extremely helpful. Secondly, international experience meaning residing in another country is needed. This international experience should have “*permanently*” widened and deepened the worldview of the global knowledge worker (*italics in original*). Thirdly, the global knowledge worker should have “Know-how to apply intelligence and tact”. Fourthly, knowledge of a modern foreign language and computer literacy is suggested (Holden 2002, 302).

What comes to the competences of a cross-cultural manager as a communicator and a global knowledge worker, they are not as linear as those from Schneider & Barsoux (1997) and Goleman (1998). Furthermore, the level of details and abstractness of these competences is higher. This makes it more challenging to apply them empirically, but the study pursues towards the preserving the same level of details that has occurred in the theory. Lastly, Holden emphasises the role of cross-cultural manager as facilitator of knowledge management processes. Instead of the facilitation aspect I will here focus on the competences and reflect them through the knowledge management processes as much as possible.

Finally, Holden points out that the job title cross-cultural manager seldom appears in business life (Holden 2002, 296). However, anyone who needs to apply the cross-cultural activities as described here and in the section 2.3.3.2 in his or her work, becomes a global knowledge worker or communicator. Thus, according to Holden, he or she may become an example of “what good cross-cultural management practice is held to be” (*ibid*, 296). Although Holden’s cross-cultural manager might still be ideal or hypothetical, the title might come to exist in future, as knowledge as an organisational resource gains even more importance (*ibid*, 296).

#### **2.4.4 Observations on the Competences for Empirical Application**

In the empirical part of this study, the competences presented above will not be studied separately from these three perspectives, but they are brought together to see what is their role and how are they related in the supervisory work at the case organisation. In order to do this, it is necessary to discuss

here how the competences within these three perspectives relate to each other and whether there are any overlaps.

Firstly, certain similarities can be found in the two competences of Schneider & Barsoux (1997): “Recognise difference at home” and “Adopt cultural general approach” as well as in Holden’s (2002) cross-cultural know-how which consists of the following three factors: insights in implicit knowledge, human interactions and complex cultural problems. Insights in implicit cultural knowledge in the case organisation may be considered very similar to recognising cultural differences at one’s familiar environment, where cultural differences might be embedded and unexpected. In addition, the competence “Recognise difference at home” does not only refer to becoming aware of cultural differences, but understanding the benefits of multiculturalism in the organisation. Moreover, both “Recognise difference at home” and “Adopt cultural general approach” may also yield insights in human interactions. Both competences defined by Schneider & Barsoux (1997) include cultural differences related to behaviour among other aspects.

A unique competence in Holden’s (2002) theory is the ability to solve extremely complex problems by identifying the key issues of the problem and being able to explain them to others. According to Holden (2002), demonstration of this ability is a sign of high expertise in cross-cultural knowledge management.

In the empirical part I will focus mainly on the competences from the perspective provided by Schneider & Barsoux (1997). “Recognise difference at home” and “Adopt cultural general approach” will be applied instead of cross-cultural know-how for two reasons. On the one hand, “Recognise difference at home” and “Adopt cultural general approach” are defined in a more detailed way than the more abstract cross-cultural know-how. On the other hand, it is considered important to include the perspective concerning the competences needed in the manager’s home country.

However, it cannot be elided that Holden’s (2002) cross-cultural know-how includes the aspect of utilising the insights in implicit knowledge, human interactions and complex cultural problems for the benefit of different functions of the organisation. For this reason “Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how” is presented as one theme in the interviews. This ability includes making implicit cultural knowledge available for use by explaining how relevant messages of human interaction are seen and understood by the receiver as

well as by reducing the complexity of essential cultural issues for explanatory and predictive purposes.

Secondly, participative competence is the key competence of cross-cultural manager as a communicator. According to Holden (2002), participative competence consists of “Being adept in intercultural communication” and “Language skills”. Here participative competence will not be studied as such, but the focus will be especially on the “Language skills”. Furthermore, “Being adept in intercultural communication” is a very broad concept. In fact, all of the competences presented within the perspective of managing multicultural workforce at the manager’s home country by Schneider & Barsoux (1997) can be considered to fit under the concept of adeptness in intercultural communication. In this study the adeptness along with “Intelligence” as a professional attribute of the global knowledge worker are expected to demonstrate through the other competences studied from all of the three perspectives.

Thirdly, similarity appears between “Self-regulation” and “Know-how to apply intelligence and tact”. The key words of “Self-regulation” are thoughtfulness and control over one’s emotions. In comparison, tact refers to the ability to behave appropriately without disturbing anyone’s feelings, whereas intelligence means learning, understanding and making judgements based on reason (Cambridge University Press Website). Thus both have in common the ability to reflect one’s thoughts and actions as well as interacting with others in a calm and stable manner. In the empirical part the focus will be on “Self-regulation”, because it has been defined in more detailed way.

Fourthly, the competence “Rapidly learn and unlearn” refers to manager’s openness to try constantly new approaches and ability to question customary ways of doing things (Schneider & Barsoux 1998, 170). “Creativity” as professional ability of the global knowledge worker described by Holden (2002) can be considered similar to “Rapidly learn and unlearn”. Both of these competences refer to the ability to moving away from one’s comfort zone (see creativity in Cambridge University Press Website). In the empirical part the focus will be on “Rapidly learn and unlearn”, because it has been defined in more detailed way.

To summarise, here the relations and overlaps between the three perspectives on intercultural management competence were considered. Thus, in the empirical part of the study attention will be drawn on “Recognise differences at home”, “Adopt cultural general approach”, “Ability to apply

cross-cultural know-how”, “Language skills”, “Self-regulation” and “Rapidly learn and unlearn” instead of “Being adept in intercultural communication”, “Know-how to apply intelligence and tact” as well as “Creativity”.

## **2.5 THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURALISM IN FINNISH CONTEXT**

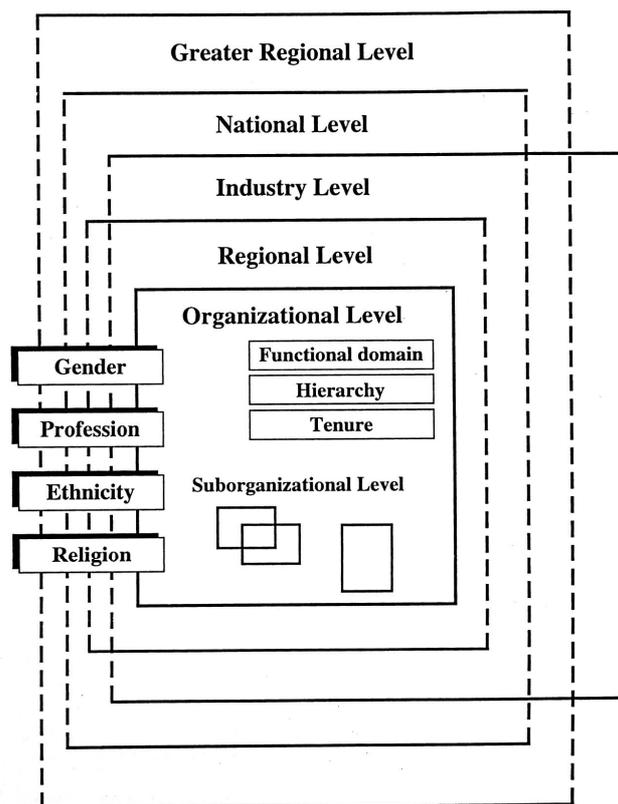
I will start this chapter with defining briefly multiculturalism in society and in organisations generally. Secondly, I will shed light on Finland as a multicultural society. Thirdly, I will turn to Finnish multicultural workplaces and discuss findings of previous research related to the subject of the current study.

In Finland multiculturalism is most commonly defined as a situation where people from different cultures encounter each other (Juuti 2005, 10). However, Juuti points out that sometimes multiculturalism can mean merely internationalisation or a political announcement of the state that aims at decreasing and preventing conflicts (Ylänkö 2001 as cited in Juuti 2005, 10).

The concept of multiculturalism has been criticised about a lack of attention on the interaction between the cultural groups sharing the same living space (Järvinen 2004 as cited in Juuti 2005, 10). Thus, multiculturalism might be used to describe the modernisation of societies, which enables easy and fast mobility of people and knowledge. However, this perspective does not consider the fact what actually happens in multicultural societies, when people from different cultures encounter each other (Järvinen 2004 as cited in Juuti 2005, 10).

According to Salo-Lee, multiculturalism includes not only the parallel existence of different cultural groups, but also the relationships between the different groups who share the same space and time (Salo-Lee 2008). In this study multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of and relationships between the different cultural groups in a shared environment. Mere coexistence would not be a sufficient definition for multiculturalism in this thesis as the interaction of the different cultural groups forms a fundamental rationale for this study.

Furthermore, this study examines multiculturalism in an organisational context. Sackmann (1997) has proposed a sound model for the cultural context of an organisation (see Figure 3.). Her model shows the extent of cultural variety, i.e. multiculturalism that may exist in an organisation.



**Figure 3. The cultural context of an organisation** (Sackmann 1997, 3)

The model shows the cultural environment, in which the organisation is embedded. It also demonstrates the cultural groups that exist in the organisation as well as how some of the cultural groups and some environments overlap.

Firstly, the organisation as whole is embedded in the regional environment. After that come the levels of industry, national and greater regional environments. The cultural environment is discussed in more detail in the methodology part, when defining the context of the case study.

Secondly, the model represents the cultural groups and subgroups within the organisation. The combination of subgroups in an organisation varies according to the backgrounds of the members of the organisation (Sackmann 1997, 2). Sackmann has compiled an extensive lists of possible cultural groups and subgroups with which the organisational members may identify themselves. These are “gender, ethnic background, parent and spouse roles, sports club, city, the university from which they hold a degree, profession, department, division, work organisation, geographical region, industry, nation or greater regions such as Europe, America, or Asia” Sackmann (Ibid, 2). Furthermore, she continues that individuals most probably

identify themselves with several cultural groups (Sackmann 1997, 2) and thus a mixture of subgroups emerges. The current study focuses on the subgroups of supervisors representing the major population and international employees belonging to subgroups representing different greater regions.

### **2.5.1 Multicultural Finland**

The number of immigrants in Finland stayed on a low level compared to other European countries till recently (Trux 2000b, 14-15). The reason for this is that until 1980's Finland's borders were rather closed for immigrants (Juuti 2005, 8). The immigrants who arrived in Finland at that time were mostly asylum seekers and returnees (Ibid, 8). Nevertheless, during the past 20 years the number of immigrants has increased rapidly (Trux 2000b, 15). In 1989 the number of foreigners in Finland was about 21.000, but by the year 2000 it had increased to 91.000 (Ibid, 14). The number of foreigners living in Finland was 155 705 in May 2010 (Tilastokeskus Website).

However, some immigrants, such as international students, might arrive in Finland only temporarily. The number of international degree students in Finland was 14 097 in 2009 (Cimo), which is 9 per cent of all immigrants. Finding employment may be relevant also for them as they do not automatically get the same financial benefits from the Finnish state or from their home countries, as the Finnish students. What makes this group relevant from the point of view of this study is that about 80 per cent of the interviewed international employees are international degree students.

The Finns' attitudes towards immigrants have varied according to the number of immigrants currently living in Finland as well as the economical situation of the country (Juuti 2005, 10). The attitudes have been more positive during economically stable and growth periods as well as at times while the number of immigrants was low or growing. The immigrants' background also affected the attitudes that Finns have towards them (Ibid, 10). Juuti contemplates how the Finns' attitudes will develop as the number of immigrants continues to grow and the interaction between Finns and immigrants increases because of globalisation (Ibid, 10).

The status of the immigrants in Finland is influenced by the attitudes of the major population (Juuti 2005, 12). According to Juuti, the life of an immigrant in Finland is challenging. Based on immigrants' autobiographical

descriptions, it seems that it is still hard for Finns to encounter otherness. Very often Finns experience otherness as a threat (Juuti 2005, 15). In addition, racist thought and talk patterns can be found in the Finnish discourse on immigrants (Ibid, 12-14).

### **2.5.2 Finnish Multicultural Working Life**

The multiculturalisation of Finnish working life is assumingly a permanent phenomenon. Mobility of people in general as well as workforce has increased because of the globalisation. Moreover, work-related immigration may become a necessity in Finland, as the baby boomer generation retires and the number of population decreases and thus causes shortage of workforce. Recruitment of foreign workforce has been discussed both from the point of view of ensuring a sufficient amount of workers in all fields as well as creating new work related immigration policies (Juuti 2005, 9).

Since 1970's the discussion on recruitment of foreign workforce emerges during economical up swing periods (Juuti 2005, 9). The same pattern recurred in Finland during last up swing and recent recession. Recruitment of foreign workforce was discussed frequently during the years of economical growth, but diminished and got more critical tones during the economical crisis. This discussion is also mainly concerned with the recruitment of workforce from abroad, not among the immigrants already living in Finland (Juuti 2005, 9; Keskinen, Rastas & Touri 2009, 7). However, the employment situation of the immigrants living in Finland is rather problematic, as their unemployment rate is about 20 per cent (Tilastokeskus Website). Still, employment issues in Finnish immigration politics are in a rather marginal position (Juuti 2005, 9).

In this current situation Trux calls for a new approach which aims at benefiting from the silent cultural knowledge. With the silent cultural knowledge she refers to changing the differences in worldviews and ways of thinking from obstacles to resource (Trux 2000a, 306).

In the next sections, I will present some studies on multicultural workplaces in Finland. I will first look at what is said about multicultural workplaces in general and then describe the findings about managerial issues at Finnish multicultural workplaces.

### 2.5.2.1 Previous Research Findings on Finnish Multicultural Workplaces

In this section I will discuss the situation of Finnish multicultural workplaces on a general level. I will start with the employment situation of the immigrants in Finland. Then I continue with presenting how the Finns and the immigrants view the Finnish multicultural workplaces. After that I look at some individual aspects that emerged in the studies, including language, rules of the workplace and intercultural interaction.

Immigrants spend rather a long time searching for a job and when they get one, the position is probably low in the hierarchy of the workplace (Juuti 2005, 55). Still, having access to the working life is very important for the immigrants, as they do not want to live on social benefits (Ibid, 39).

Immigrants and Finns perceive their working community quite differently (Juuti 2005, 93). The general difference in the perspectives is that Finns emphasise the sameness of human nature across cultures, whereas the immigrants were stressing more the differences between the cultures (Ibid, 38-39).

According to Juuti, in practice the sameness perspective of the Finns leads to dissipating and concretising cultural differences (Juuti 2005, 35). Finns recognised cultural differences only in observable factors, such as dining habits, religious rituals and different attitudes towards rules of the workplace, such as working hour regulation (Ibid, 35). In comparison, the immigrants experienced Finnish culture very different from their own, for example in terms of language, habits and especially interpersonal interaction. They describe it hard to get to know Finns and were surprised by their less social character (Ibid, 34).

In addition, the Finnish sameness perspective includes two noteworthy aspects. On the one hand, people are perceived as individuals. Thus, there are hard-working and less-ambitious individuals in every culture. According to this aspect, everybody can be treated in the same way, i.e. immigrants do not need any special treatment (Juuti 2005, 35). On the other hand, the sameness perspective ignores other than observable differences. However, those can be eliminated, too, by setting rules. This might mean for example prohibiting religious behaviour at the workplace. On the whole, this perspective leads to a conclusion that the situation does not require anything from the Finns, who in their view have the "right culture and right customs" (Ibid, 97). Thus, the ideal view of emphasising sameness was not water-tight,

but in practice it became clear that immigrants and Finns are not always treated equally (Juuti 2005, 96).

Trux pointed out how people at the same time consider many cultures as richness and are open to learn and discuss about worldviews and cultural identity, but also insists that when in Finland, things should be done the Finnish way (Trux 2000a, 307).

Moreover, Pitkänen's study revealed that equal treatment of all employees is emphasised regardless of the employee's background. However, she argues that this kind of approach is inappropriate at multicultural workplaces. The reason for this is that culturally different individuals may not agree on what is equal treatment (Pitkänen 2007, 404-405). As cultural differences are taken into account, "equal treatment does not mean identical but differential treatment, raising questions as to how we can ensure that it is really equal across cultures and does not serve as a mask for discrimination or privilege" (Ibid, 405).

I will now turn to look at some individual aspects that came up in previous studies. Firstly, language and communication issues pose the most challenges for the work at multicultural workplaces in Finland (Pitkänen 2007, 107). On the one hand, the communication language may cause difficulties. According to Finns, insufficient Finnish skills cause misunderstandings and problems at the workplace (Juuti 2005, 43). On the other hand, the lack of knowledge on the expectations and customary behaviour concerning for example politeness in different cultures may cause hardship in intercultural interaction (Pitkänen 2005, 107).

Secondly, concerning the rules of the workplace, more than a half of the Finns responded that the immigrants are not obeying the rules of the workplace (Juuti 2005, 56). Finns, for example, found it awkward that some immigrants conduct religious rituals at work. They also perceived more often than the immigrants that the immigrants did not respect the regulations of working hours (Ibid, 56).

Thirdly, there was also great difference in the views about whether the immigrants work efficiently and competently. Over 80 per cent of the immigrant participants saw themselves working efficiently and competently, whereas only 50 per cent of the Finns shared this view (Juuti 2005, 46).

Finally, openness and trust are basic factors of interaction (Juuti 2005, 47). The participants estimate that there is openness between the groups, but trust should be developed more. However, the degree of

openness was perceived greater by the Finns than by the immigrants (Juuti 2005, 47).

#### 2.5.2.2 Previous Research Findings on Management at Finnish Multicultural Workplaces

I will now look at the findings of the previous studies on management at Finnish multicultural workplaces. When the management practice is concerned, almost all respondents agree that everyone has to be treated in the same way (Juuti 2005, 46). Over 60 per cent of the research participants responded that Finns and immigrants are treated equally (Ibid, 46). Although the majority of the respondents said that the supervisors treat the immigrants well, about 25 per cent of the immigrants felt that they are kept in a lower position than Finns in the workplace.

More specifically, three kinds of perspectives on management at multicultural workplaces emerged in these studies (Juuti 2005; Trux 2000a). These perspectives show the opinions of the managers, international employees and Finnish employees. Firstly, managers aim at treating everyone at the workplace in the same way. However, the study shows that it is not always so in practice. On the one hand, the managers point out that employing an immigrant means some extra work, for example in orientation (Juuti 2005, 74). On the other hand, in some organisations upper-management had also noticed that the supervisors were more critical towards mistakes made by immigrants and were monitoring their work more closely (Ibid, 75). So in practice, international employees are sometimes perceived as a separate group (Ibid, 75).

Secondly, the international employees were generally satisfied with the supervisors (Juuti 2005, 95). The supervisors had also become some kind of support person for them, as those were the ones to employ them (Juuti 2005, 95; Trux 2000a, 278-279). The international employees have a positive attitude towards the low hierarchies in their company and informal relationship with the supervisors, as they state that "a flat organisation is a good organisation" (Trux 2000a, 299). They felt neither closely monitored nor forgotten. However, they had also noticed that they could only get feedback by asking for it (Trux 2000a, 299).

Thirdly, the Finnish employees, however, were more critical on the fact how the supervisors treat the immigrants at the workplace (Juuti 2005, 95).

One Finnish HR expert pointed out that many different attitudes towards immigrants can be found among the managers, both open and more sceptical (Juuti 2005, 75).

Finally in general, all groups talked about how task oriented management had taken over relationship oriented management, because paper work was nowadays so time consuming (Juuti 2005, 46). In addition, only 25 per cent of the participants thought that the supervisors are very familiar with cultural differences (Ibid, 46).

Trux's most important findings include also the notion that a lot of responsibility of managing diverse workforce is on the line managers and the supervisors, as there have not been any company manifests or campaigns on diversity in the organisations (Trux 2000a, 307). This poses many challenges for the work of the supervisors. She also describes how being able to utilize the competences of the immigrants relies greatly on the supervisor's professional and leadership skills as well as personal style (Ibid, 278). In addition, while managing immigrants the supervisor have needed to be flexible, adopt new roles and being able to come up with creative solutions (Ibid, 279-280).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Finnish multicultural working life has not yet been studied from the perspective of intercultural management competence. Furthermore, the case under investigation is rather unique, as the supervisors and the international employees work at different times and in different places. A qualitative case study was chosen as a methodology to study the topic in this environment for the following reasons. On the one hand, a qualitative research approach aims at deep and detailed knowledge and applies thus very well for topics lacking previous research (Creswell 1994, 146; Creswell 1998, 15-16). On the other hand, a case study approach will help to gain an understanding of the whole phenomenon in this particular context.

#### **3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Qualitative studies concentrate on how different people attach meaning to actions around them and structure the world in which they live, i.e. how they understand the world (Creswell 1994, 145). But meaning cannot be given to the world around before it is perceived or experienced. Perceiving is interpretive and social (Zerubavel 1999, 23-24). To make the perception meaningful, an individual interprets the perception through his or her cognitive system. The cognitive system is a "framework of mental constructs of the external world and of beliefs, images, assumptions, habits of reasoning, and so forth" (Fisher 1997, 23). Furthermore, the cognitive system is shaped by society, culture and education among others (Ibid, 26). Combining the qualitative research approach with interviews forms a coherent methodology for studying a topic from the respondents' point of view. According to Kvale, a qualitative research interview aims at understanding the everyday life of the respondent from his or her own perspective (Kvale 1996, 27).

In the current research, perceiving and giving meaning to the world become emphasised, as the same phenomenon is studied from the point of view of two different professional groups, the supervisors and the employees. According to Selmer, valuable information about managerial work can be

gained from the employees (Selmer 1997, 13). Not to mention that even greater difference in perceiving and giving meaning might be due to the different cultural backgrounds.

In the focus of qualitative studies are processes instead of outcomes or products (Creswell 1998, 16-17). Although being competent is not a process, the intercultural management competence becomes meaningful only in interaction. An individual can possess all characteristics or skills to be competent, but the competency is shown only when some kind of interaction with other individuals takes place. In the current study the supervisors' intercultural management competence is reflected on the interaction with international employees at one Finnish organisation.

The topic of the study suits well to be studied qualitatively. Firstly, research questions starting with *what* and *how* are typical in qualitative research (Creswell 1998, 17). Thus, the first task is to "describe what is going on" (Ibid, 17). This study investigates what kind of intercultural management competences are needed in a Finnish multicultural workplace and describes the topic from the viewpoint of the supervisors and the employees. Secondly, qualitative studies can produce a detailed view on the topic (Ibid, 17). As such a detailed perspective on intercultural management competence in Finnish working life does not exist yet, it is well justified to choose a qualitative approach. Thirdly, qualitative data is collected in a natural setting (Ibid, 17). In this case the data was collected via face-to-face interviews.

### **3.2 CASE STUDY APPROACH**

Case studies aim at examining "a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context" (Yin 2003, 13). The contemporary phenomenon here is intercultural management competence and the context a Finnish newspaper delivery company. Intercultural management competence is a truly contemporary phenomenon, as the history of multicultural workplaces in Finland on the whole is rather short and has not been studied extensively yet. The reason to decide for a single case study is that the company studied presents a unique case in terms of the working environment, where the employees and the supervisors do not work in the same premises or at the same time. Uniqueness is, according to Yin, one of the main rationales for choosing case study (Ibid, 40-42).

Creswell describes the case of a case study as a bounded system which has its limits in time and place (Creswell 1998, 61). For this system a setting can be identified, which may be physical, social, historical or economical (Ibid, 61). The bounded system here is the Finnish newspaper delivery company. The newspaper delivery company has two branches, one in Southern Finland in the Pirkanmaa region and the other in Northern Finland in the Sea Lapland region. The data collection for this study was conducted in the Pirkanmaa region and thus narrows down the location of the study.

As Creswell points out, some cases do not have natural starting and ending points. If this is the case the researcher needs to work with artificial boundaries (Creswell 1998, 64). This study focuses on a business organisation, in which the operation is on-going. It has no ending point in time. Neither is it the intention to study the company since it was established. Thus, I need to rely on artificial time limits in narrowing down the case. As the starting point of the case is concerned the date when that interviewed international employee who has been in the organisation the longest time started work, that is October 2004. The ending point in time is the last interview in November 2009. The reason for these limitations is that the employees cannot reflect the situation any longer than they have been in the company. Some of the supervisors have been working for the organisation even longer, but as intercultural management competence forms the focus of this study, it is more reasonable to limit the study to the period when there are international employees working in the company. For this reason, it makes no sense to extend the starting point to the earliest starting date of a supervisor. A noteworthy fact is that within these time limits an organisational change took place in October 2009. That is very close to the ending point and thus the respondents were aware of it, but did not yet know all of its effects on the everyday work.

Along identifying the limits of the case in time, it is important to identify its setting, that is the environment in which the case is embedded. From the possible settings mentioned above, relevant settings for this study are social and economical settings. On the one hand, the social setting encompasses all immigrants in Finland. It can be further narrowed down to immigrants having employment and finally immigrants employed by the case study organisation. On the other hand, the economical setting includes the organisation's operations in the Pirkanmaa region within the organisation as a whole. The organisation is a part of an international media corporation that

operates in several fields of today's media business. So a national and international level can be identified in the economical setting.

Creswell (1998) presents different kinds of case study designs. The design chosen for this study concerns a single case with multiple units of analysis, which is also called embedded case study design (Yin 2003, 43). In the current case two units of analysis have been identified. These are the international employees and their closest supervisors. The phenomenon under investigation will be studied from the perspective of the both groups. This kind of research design can offer an enhanced insight to a single case (Ibid, 46). However, the challenge of case studies with multiple units is to avoid mere analysis of the subunits and to bring the analysis back to the level of the original case (Ibid, 45).

### **3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This thesis explores intercultural management competence of the supervisors at one multicultural workplace in Finland. The theoretical focus for the study has been presented in chapter 4. To summarize the focus here, I have identified three perspectives on intercultural management competence proposed by different authors; Schneider & Barsoux (1997), Holden (2002) and Goleman (1998). Schneider & Barsoux (1997) consider intercultural management competence from the viewpoint of managing multicultural workforce in the home country of the manager. Holden (2002) sees the intercultural manager as a communicator and global knowledge worker and describes the competences needed from the perspective of knowledge management. Goleman (1998) brings into the discussion the leadership skills, which are also widely needed among the managerial personnel. These competences will be critically analysed and reflected from the perspective of Finnish working life. I approach this topic with the following research questions:

1. What intercultural management competences do supervisors of Aamujakelu Oy need in managing multicultural workforce?
  - a. From the supervisors' viewpoint
  - b. From the international employees' viewpoint
2. Are there differences in the perception of these two groups? If yes, what kind of differences?

With the first research question I want to find out what intercultural management competences are considered beneficial and even necessary in connection to Finnish working life and especially the case organisation. Furthermore, I will argue the necessity of these competences through empirical examples.

The second question concentrates on exploring the possible differences in the perception of the needed competences between the two groups. This question aims in particular at showing the development points in the intercultural management competence of the supervisors, i.e. which competences the international employees consider important, but are not demonstrated by their supervisors. In the discussion about the second research question the different cultural backgrounds of the interviewees are kept in mind.

Besides studying in detail the research questions defined above, this study sheds light on two more issues. It will pursue revealing the way how the supervisors at the case organisation develop their intercultural management competence. Moreover, it will investigate the best practices in the working procedures of the case organisation.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION**

The research data was collected in in-depth interviews with the Finnish supervisors and international employees of the organisation. In the following sections I clarify the interview process and the selection of the respondents.

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Multiple methods of data collection are suggested for case studies (Creswell 1998, Yin 2003). The main data collection method of this study was semi-structured theme interviews. According to Kvale, the advantage of a research interview is that it captures “the multitude of subject’s views” and pictures “a manifold and controversial human world” (Kvale 1996, 7). In addition, background knowledge of the case organisation and its parent company was gained from their websites ad hoc. In the following I present the progress of the interview process step by step.

The interview process started with identifying the interview themes. The themes for this study are based on the literature on intercultural management competences presented earlier. At first I labelled the themes with the names of the competences, as mentioned in literature. After that I modified the wording of the themes and combined some of them in order to make them more colloquial and thus easier to approach for the interviewees, as the themes would be presented to them beforehand. Some exemplary questions were also formed to support the themes. These themes and exemplary questions compose the interview protocol (see Appendix 1.).

A semi-structured interview method was chosen because it allows the respondents to bring up issues that they consider significant on the studied themes, but still gives the researcher a tool to guide the discussion so that it remains on the intended themes. Moreover, the semi-structured interview method allows the researcher to change the order of the themes and present follow-up questions on topics that seem relevant from the point of view of the research topic. Instead of following strictly the protocol, I emphasised the freedom to make follow-up questions, which proved to be a very useful strategy.

The second step included identifying the respondents. Concerning the nature of work at the case organisation, the ways of contacting possible respondents depended on the fact whether they were supervisors or employees. The supervisors were contacted for the first time via e-mail, whereas the employees were contacted via normal mail. The first contact, whether mail or e-mail, included a letter of request to participate in the interview (see Appendix 2.). The upper-management discussed about the participation to the study with the supervisors. Therefore no consent to participate was asked from the supervisors separately. In case of the employees, consent to participate was gained verbally via phone call few days after sending the requests to participate. The communication with the respondents continued either via mail, e-mail or phone according to the preference of the person. For communication with the international employees the organisation granted the right to use the logo of the organisation.

Thirdly, the modified interview themes were sent to the supervisors and to the employees who had agreed to participate, so that they could make themselves familiar with them beforehand. Knowing the themes beforehand is advisable when in-depth interviews are concerned, so that the intended depth on the topic is also reached in reality. The respondents were not asked

whether they had had a look on the themes or not. In any case if not thinking about them actively, being aware of the themes can still lead to more in-depth answers, than having not seen them at all.

The interview language with the supervisors was Finnish, which is the mother tongue of all the supervisors. The interviews with the international employees were conducted in English, as that was the only common language of the respondents and the researcher that reached a sufficient level for this purpose.

Fourthly, the interviews were conducted in October and November 2009 at the premises of the case organisation. At first, one pilot interview with an international employee took place. After that the interview protocol was reviewed and slight changes were made. All interviews were conducted day time, which means the working time of the supervisors and the free time of the employees. Interviews were conducted in conference rooms at the company premises behind closed doors. All interviews were taped and transcribed. These transcripts are and remain in the possession of the researcher after the study is completed.

### **3.4.2 Participants**

The data of the study consists of ten in-depth theme interviews. The group of interviewees includes four supervisors and six newspaper deliverers. All the interviewed supervisors are Finnish. To be more specific, the management level personal in the company is entirely Finnish. In the selection of the supervisors, the suggestion of the company was followed and I interviewed persons, who had been thought to be rich in information by a person belonging to the upper-management of the organisation. The four supervisor-interviewees make 75 per cent of the supervisor personnel in the Pirkanmaa region.

In the Pirkanmaa region 14 per cent of in total 450 deliverers are international employees. International employees working in the company less than six months were excluded from the pool of respondents. The reason for this was that the employees with more than six months work experience can be expected to be familiar with the work, the company and the supervisors and to show commitment to the company.

The international delivery personnel clearly represents three different continents or according to Sackmann great regions; Europe, Asia and Africa. At the moment of the interviews there were no delivery persons with North American or Latin American background. The delivery persons were selected randomly from these three groups representing the great regional areas: Europe, Asia and Africa.

The procedure of the random selection was conducted according to the following steps. Each employee included in the pool of possible interviewees was assigned a consecutive number. At the same time the employees belonging to different great regional areas were kept separated. Then the interviewees were selected in such a way that everyone had an equal chance to be chosen.

The cultural groups of the international employees were not equal in size, which was taken into account in the selection of interviewees. The group of international employees with African background was the largest, the Asian group the second largest and the European group the smallest. Thus, four deliverers with African background, three deliverers with Asian background and two with European background were selected and asked to participate in the research. In the end, four interviews with deliverers from Africa and two interviews with deliverers from Asia took place. The other three, including both deliverers with European background, refused to participate in the research. Demographic details concerning the interviewees are presented in the tables 3. and 4.

Inter- view number	Age (bet- ween the years)	Position	Time working in Aamujakelu Oy (years)	Time working with international employees (years)	Meeting international employees at work	Other experience of international or multicultural work
3	35-44	Personal planner	18	13	Daily	No
4	35-44	Delivery supervisor	8	8	Daily	No
5	25-34	Delivery supervisor	9	9	Several times a week	No
7	45-54	Delivery supervisor	20	5	Daily	Diversity training

**Table 3. Supervisors' demographic details**

Interview number	Age (between the years)	Country of origin	Time living in Finland	Time working in Aamujakelu Oy
1	25-34	Nepal	1 year	10 months
2	35-44	Tanzania	5 years	5 years
6	25-34	Nigeria	1 year, 3 months	11 months
8	25-34	Nigeria	1 year, 2 months	11 months
9	25-34	Nepal	2 years, 4 months	2 years
10	25-34	Nigeria	1 year, 2 months	11 months

**Table 4. International employees' demographic details**

### 3.5 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

In the analysis of the interviews I apply phenomenological meaning condensation. In short, meaning condensation as an analysis method means identifying the complete units of thoughts expressed by the respondents from the interview texts and condensing the main topic into few words, on which the analysis is based later on. On the whole, meaning condensation will be applied here from the phenomenological perspective. According to Kvale, the philosophical foundations of research are less discussed in research theory (Kvale 1996, 38). However, different philosophical lines of thought emphasise different aspects of knowledge and thus affect on the perspective of the research (Ibid, 39). Next I will look at the theory of research in more detail by presenting first the phenomenological approach and then meaning condensation.

The phenomenological approach was chosen for this study for several reasons. Firstly, it emphasises the “understanding of the social phenomenon from the subject’s perspective” (Kvale 1996, 52). Secondly, it describes “the world as experienced by” the respondent. Thirdly, the phenomenological approach relies on “the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Ibid, 52). Adopting the phenomenological approach emphasises the different viewpoints of the two subunits of the case study, the supervisors and the employees. I believe that this approach will prove to be the most fruitful to find out the most relevant

issues for developing the management practices in the case organisation in the future.

According to Kvale, meaning condensation can be of help, when “extensive and often complex interview texts” need to be analysed (Kvale 1996, 196). The ten interviews of this study yielded approximately 100 pages of transcripts. The complexity of the interview texts may also have been increased by the fact that in some interviews both interview partners were not talking their mother tongue. Thus, the advantage of the phenomenological meaning condensation is that the texts are transferred into a more workable form without losing touch to the original ideas expressed.

In the meaning condensation the basic elements of analysis are called natural meaning units and central themes (Kvale 1996, 194). The natural meaning units are passages of the interview text, in which the interviewee expresses a one whole thought. The central theme is the main topic of the natural meaning unit expressed by the researcher in few words (Ibid, 194). Examples of these are presented in the tables 5. and 6.

Interview text	Natural meaning unit	Central theme
<p>but I think like the culture is the most important thing, of course the living things, I mean about eating things, about different outside things, directly or indirectly the culture will be affecting you, so you really can't feel it but, but you can't really feel but your behaviour shows you know, what I mean, it's a little complicated to explain but yeah, you know the festival things,</p>	<p>but I think like the culture is the most important thing, of course the living things, I mean about eating things, about different outside things, directly or indirectly the culture will be affecting you, so you really can't feel it but, but you can't really feel but your behaviour shows you know, what I mean, it's a little complicated to explain but yeah</p>	<p>culture affects an individual's behaviour directly and indirectly</p>
<p>, you know the festival things, you know in the Christmas there are holiday here and all the people enjoy it and Vappu something like that and when we have that national festival in our country and my family will be celebrating and there will be festival having holiday and that time, that night they will be intriguing and they will be celebrating, but the same night when I'm in Finland, I'll be riding my bike with this 50-60 kilograms of paper, that time, I mean, it sucks you know, but you should work with the time, that's called compromising life that we do, so that kind of cultural difference, I can't say my boss "today is our national festival, you should also give me holiday in Finland" and what he's telling, he won't agree because it's a different time,</p>	<p>, you know the festival things, you know in the Christmas there are holiday here and all the people enjoy it and Vappu something like that and when we have that national festival in our country and my family will be celebrating and there will be festival having holiday</p>	<p>Interviewee describes cultural festivals</p>
<p>and that time, that night they will be intriguing and they will be celebrating, but the same night when I'm in Finland, I'll be riding my bike with this 50-60 kilograms of paper, that time, I mean, it sucks you know, but you should work with the time, that's called compromising life that we do, so that kind of cultural difference, I can't say my boss "today is our national festival, you should also give me holiday in Finland" and what he's telling, he won't agree because it's a different time,</p>	<p>and that time, that night they will be intriguing and they will be celebrating, but the same night when I'm in Finland, I'll be riding my bike with this 50-60 kilograms of paper, that time, I mean, it sucks you know, but you should work with the time, that's called compromising life that we do, so that kind of cultural difference, I can't say my boss "today is our national festival, you should also give me holiday in Finland" and what he's telling, he won't agree because it's a different time,</p>	<p>interviewee might be working when there's festival in his home country</p>

**Table 5. Example of natural meaning units and central themes, (extract from an interview with an international employee)**

Interview text original	Translation of interview text	Natural meaning unit original	Translation of natural meaning unit	Central theme
J: niin minkälaisia haasteita sun mielestä aiheuttaa kieli? H4: käsitteet, sinällään meistä ei kumpikaan osaa englantia täydellisesti en minä eikä vastapuoli, ja sitten meillä on vielä omat käsityksemme tietyistä asioista, et käsitteitten luominen ja se ympäristö, että he ymmärtää ja että me ymmärretään, se on se, se on se, sit tietysti kielessä tulee se, että tiettyjen afrikkalaisten kanssa on todella vaikee keskustella, kun siellä on ranskalainen aksentti ja he puhuu vähän huonoa englantia, niin välttämättä puhelimessa ei ymmärrä yhtään mitään, ja sit ku sitä tulee konekiväärivauhdilla niin niin ei tajua mitään J: no kuinka tärkeä se kielitaito sun mielestä on tässä työssä? H4: ohan se meillä molemmilla se on tärkeä sekä mulla että sillä jakajalla, jos hän ei ymmärrä niin hän ei pysty tekeen meidän työtä, ja jos mä en osaa esittää asiaani, niin en mä pysty myöskään johtaa, mutta kyl se tärkeä on tänä päivänä ainaki	J: so what kind of challenges does the language cause? H4: concepts, neither of us are perfect in English, not me and not my communication partner and then we have our own views on issues, so creating concepts and the environment, that they understand and we understand, that's the thing, that's the thing, then what comes to language, there's the fact that discussion with some Africans is very difficult, if they have a French accent or have somewhat low English skills, then it may be that on phone you don't understand anything, and if they speak extremely rapidly, there's no chance to understand them J: Then how important is language in this work? H4: it is important for both me and for the deliverer, if he or she does not understand he cannot do our job, and if I don't understand, then I cannot manage, but it is important at least today	J: niin minkälaisia haasteita sun mielestä aiheuttaa kieli? H4: käsitteet, sinällään meistä ei kumpikaan osaa englantia täydellisesti en minä eikä vastapuoli ja sitten meillä on vielä omat käsityksemme tietyistä asioista, et käsitteitten luominen ja se ympäristö, että he ymmärtää ja että me ymmärretään, se on se, se on se, sit tietysti kielessä tulee se, että tiettyjen afrikkalaisten kanssa on todella vaikee keskustella, kun siellä on ranskalainen aksentti ja he puhuu vähän huonoa englantia, niin välttämättä puhelimessa ei ymmärrä yhtään mitään, ja sit ku sitä tulee konekiväärivauhdilla niin niin ei tajua mitään J: no kuinka tärkeä se kielitaito sun mielestä on tässä työssä? H4: ohan se meillä molemmilla se on tärkeä sekä mulla että sillä jakajalla, jos hän ei ymmärrä niin hän ei pysty tekeen meidän työtä, ja jos mä en osaa esittää asiaani, niin en mä pysty myöskään johtaa, mutta kyl se tärkeä on tänä päivänä ainaki	J: so what kind of challenges does the language cause? H4: concepts, neither of us are perfect in English, not me and not my communication partner and then we have our own views on issues, so creating concepts and the environment, that they understand and we understand, that's the thing, that's the thing, then what comes to language, there's the fact that discussion with some Africans is very difficult, if they have a French accent or have somewhat low English skills, then it may be that on phone you don't understand anything, and if they speak extremely rapidly, there's no chance to understand them J: Then how important is language in this work? H4: it is important for both me and for the deliverer, if he or she does not understand he cannot do our job, and if I don't understand, then I cannot manage, but it is important at least today	Challenge is the communication between two non-natives.  There is a need to create concepts that are understood by both communication partners  Strong accent, speed of speaking or insufficient English skills of the communication partner makes it difficult to understand him, especially on phone.  Language skills are important for both employee and supervisor

**Table 6. Example of natural meaning units and central themes, (extract from an interview with a supervisor)**

Kvale outlines five steps for the phenomenological meaning condensation (Kvale 1996, 194). The first, the transcribed interviews are read through in their entirety. The second, the researcher identifies the natural meaning units from the interview text as expressed by the interviewees. The third step involves stating the main issue, i.e. the central theme, of each natural meaning unit as shortly as possible. At this phase Kvale points out the importance of the researcher's attempt to work as unprejudiced as possible and condensing the central theme from the interviewee's viewpoint (Ibid, 194). In the fourth step, the central themes are studied from the viewpoint of the research questions, that is what the central themes tell about the research topic. The fifth, the essential and non-redundant themes of the whole interview are brought together in a descriptive statement (Ibid, 194).

The analysis of the interview texts follows the outline of the phenomenological meaning condensation presented above with one change. Kvale suggests to work through one interview at a time (Kvale 1996, 194). I have, however, approached each interview theme at a time. The chosen approach is suggested for theme interviews by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2002, 141-142).

Thus, after completing the first step and before entering to the second, I identified the interview themes in the transcripts. At this point I labelled the themes with the names of the competences from the literature and those names will be used from now on. What comes to theoretical background, the themes 1-3 come from the theory of Schneider & Barsoux (1997), the themes 4-7 from Holden (2002) and 8-10 from Goleman (1998) as presented below. However, it was not possible to identify a theme from the interviews corresponding to every competence mentioned in the literature for mainly two reasons. On the one hand, not all competences appeared in the interviews. On the other hand, there were some overlaps in the competences, as discussed in the section 2.4.4 The more colloquial interview themes referred to in the section 3.4 about data collection served only for making the topic easier to approach for the respondents.

Thus, the themes identified from the interviews are 1) "Respond to the different cultures simultaneously", 2) "Recognise difference at home", 3) "Adopt cultural general approach", 4) "Business focus", 5) "Problem solving abilities", 6) "Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how", 7) "Language skills", 8) "Empathy", 9) "Social skills", 10) "Self-regulation", 11) "Best practices" and 12) "Development of intercultural management competence".

At this point I will provide some interview extracts in order to illustrate how I identified some of the above mentioned interview themes. In the theme “Recognise difference at home” I included the discussion of cultural differences both on a general and on a more detailed level, as seen in the examples below. The respondents described cultural differences in connection to work. The international employees also made comparisons between the Finnish culture and their cultural backgrounds through their personal experiences.

“They don’t, the employees with immigrant background, they don’t understand the basic issues that how Finnish society works, how to act and behave here, this knowledge is naturally very limited, and multiculturalism shows also in the way how the [international] employees take the interaction with supervisors, it is very obvious” (H7)

“For example I fell sick, seriously sick, but I don’t like to collect sick leave back in my country, I really don’t like it, but it gets that stage that I know I just have to stay at home, here [in Finland] doctor gave me 5 days, you don’t work for 5 days, I said ‘Doctor, 5 days is too much, can’t you make it 3 days’, ‘I take decisions your health matters, 5 days’ and after 3 days I went to work, but when I told my boss I was thinking he should be happy [thinking] that okay he [this employee] really wants to work, but my boss was telling me ‘No, why didn’t you wait that five days?’ and I was like oh my god, in my country they [supervisors] are gonna say ‘Okay, good, is good’”, (H6)

The theme “Language skills” includes discussion about communicating with a non-native speaker or communicating in a foreign language. In this theme I subsumed also discussion about the meaning of language for management as well as aspects of verbal and written communication.

“Sometimes if I like try to tell him [supervisor] something, he tells me “speak slowly, speak slowly”, of course I don’t know how to speak slowly, I found it so difficult sometimes, I like talk with him, [he says] ‘You are too fast’ and I don’t know, I try to ask myself, am I too fast to speak English, because I have been speaking like these for so many years and if I try to slow it down, I-want-to-go-to, it seems so ridiculous to me, I tried to learn the hard way because if he tells me to speak slowly, he’s my boss, I have to calm down” (H10)

“Well language [is a challenge] as neither of us are native Englishmen, English speakers, so the terminology we use, sometimes misunderstandings happen” (H7)

The theme “Social skills” includes discussion about the supervisor’s personal characteristics, such as friendliness or unfriendliness. It also contains the supervisor’s way of behaving and interacting with the international employees generally as well as directing the employees to a desired direction.

“He [supervisor] texted me ‘I see, I understand in the beginning it could be though, it could be difficult but don’t worry you will get used to it’, words that encouraged me that’s what we need, when your boss encourages you it makes you feel that okay you can do better” (H10)

“Realistically if my boss would call you, if my boss would give you a call, if you see he’s phone number, if he’s calling you know that there’s a problem, he never calls you to tell that you’re doing well” (H8)

After the themes were identified, I grouped together all text passages concerning one theme from all interviews, as suggested by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, 141-142). This required a careful reading of the interview transcripts, as semi-structured interviews are concerned and thus each theme might occur in the interviews once or several times and the order of the themes might vary.

After that the analysis continued according to Kvale’s outline presented above. During the third and fourth phases I was constantly checking if the central themes matched to the interview theme. If I noticed that the central theme was not listed under the right interview theme I located it under the matching topic. The final presentation of the findings, that is the fifth step, happened within the interview themes and can be seen in chapter 4.

The theme “Rapidly learn and unlearn” was not discussed in the interviews, as this kind of ability is not applied by the supervisors of the case organisation. Questions aimed at investigating this theme produced answers for other themes, such as “Recognise difference at home” and “Respond different cultures simultaneously”. Thus, “Rapidly learn and unlearn” is left out from the analysis part. Later in chapter 5, I will discuss the possible reasons for the lack of this ability.

### **3.6 EVALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGY**

Frey et al. (2000) divide the validity of research into internal and external validity. Internal validity includes measurement validity and measurement reliability, whereas external validity contains the generalisability of the findings (Frey et al 2000, 109). I will reflect these factors from the viewpoint of the current study. Finally, I will also concern the ethical aspects of research.

Firstly, measurement validity concerns the fact how well the study measured the topic it was intended to measure (Frey et al 2000, 111). Here measurement validity can be assessed only on conceptual level. It can be concluded that the empirical data answered the research questions proposed

for the study. The data captured authentic point of views on the research topic. Thus, measurement validity is established.

Secondly, measurement reliability refers to consistency and stability of the studying methods (Frey et al. 2000, 111). This factor of internal validity is concerned with the question, whether another researcher would be able to gain the same results with the same method. Generally, measurement reliability can be expected. However, slightly different emphasis of the needed intercultural management competences might emerge, if different respondents are interviewed. Furthermore, this case study is rather strictly bound to time and therefore different findings might appear, although the method would be the same. On the one hand, it should be noted that one's competences develop more or less over time. On the other hand, an organisational change occurred shortly before conducting the interview.

Thirdly, external validity or generalisability can hardly be expected from the current study. In general, instead of generalisability qualitative studies aim at providing an in-depth perspective on the studied topic. The study may present relatively widely the supervisors' perspective on the research topic, whereas the international employees' viewpoint is scarce. In conclusion, the findings of this study cannot be generalised on other Finnish multicultural workplaces, considering the uniqueness of the case organisation.

Finally, what comes to the research ethics, the respondents could freely decide on the participation to the study and after that the researcher aimed fully protecting their anonymity. The anonymity of the respondents can be considered especially important in a delicate research setting such as this one, where employees talked about their supervisor's competences. Trust between the researcher and the interviewees was established, assumingly because of the outsider role of the researcher in the organisation. This made especially the interviewed international employees more relaxed. In addition, because of the anonymity no issues on gender differences can be discussed here, as there was only one female interviewee.

## 4. FINDINGS

In this section the findings of the study are presented and illustrated with genuine examples from the interview data. I will start with introducing the case organisation, as suggested by Creswell for case studies (Creswell 1998, 153-154). After that I cover the findings of the study theme by theme. I have structured the discussion of each theme so that first is presented the supervisors' and then employees' point of view to the theme. The discussion of each theme ends in a summary of the viewpoints of the two groups.

### 4.1 CASE DESCRIPTION

In this section I present the case organisation. I will start with briefly introducing the state of Finnish newspaper industry. Then I will present the case organisation Aamujakelu Oy including its history, operational context and some important figures. After this I will turn to the details of the newspaper delivery work in the organisation.

Finland is in many ways a promised land of newspapers. A great variety of different national, regional and local newspapers exists in Finland (Sanomalehtien liitto Website). The total number of the circulation of all Finnish newspapers has stayed on a high level despite the digitalisation of the media. Newspapers reach from 60 to over 80 per cent of Finns within different age groups. In a global comparison, the circulation numbers of subscribed newspapers are among the highest in Finland. The most common way to distribute the subscribed newspaper to the customers is via early morning delivery, which means that the newspaper is brought to the subscriber's house in the early morning hours (Sanomalehtien liitto Website).

Aamujakelu Oy is the largest newspaper delivery company in Finland. Its market share is 13 per cent of the early morning delivery in the whole of Finland. The company was founded in 1996. Before that it functioned as a part of the newspaper company Aamulehti, which has been operating over 120 years.

Aamujakelu Oy belongs to the international media corporation Alma Media (Aamujakelu Oy Website). Alma Media operates in six European

countries besides Finland and aims at expanding its operations even more (Alma Media Website). The main business areas of this media corporation are newspaper publishing, business information and services as well as online market places (Alma Media Website). Newspaper publishing is the greatest of these three.

About 180 000 newspapers are delivered by the Aamujakelu Oy employees daily (Aamujakelu Oy Website). These include the national, regional and local newspapers of 20 different titles (Aamujakelu Oy Website). Aamujakelu Oy operates in two regions in Finland called Pirkanmaa and Sea Lapland. In total the company employees about 25 officials and 850 deliverers (Aamujakelu Oy Website; Alma Media Website). To the officials belong the managerial, development and salary office personnel of the company. In the focus of this study is the Pirkanmaa region, where about 450 deliverers work. Thus Pirkanmaa is the largest of the two regions (Aamujakelu Oy Website). Employees in the Pirkanmaa region distribute the leading regional newspaper Aamulehti and seven other papers (Aamujakelu Oy Website).

Delivery is the last, but not the least link in the newspaper production chain. In fact, it is a very essential part of the newspaper production, as in this phase the product reaches the customer (Lammasaari 2008, 53). In most cases the newspapers are delivered to the subscribers daily. Quality of delivery means that the customers receive the newspaper by a certain time, i.e. 6 a.m. during the week and by 7 a.m. on weekends. The quality objective of the delivery work is maximally 0.5 ‰ mistake level, which means one mistake per subscriber in six years (Aamujakelu Oy Website).

As the early morning delivery is the most common way of newspaper distribution, the deliverers work from 3-5 hours per night between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. At work the employees are affected by weather conditions of the current season, such as light nights in the summer and snow and darkness in the winter. At work the most commonly used vehicles are bicycle and car, which the deliverers arrange themselves.

At the moment 14 per cent of the deliverers in the case organisation are international employees. The number of international employees is constantly increasing. In May 2009 the same number was around 5 per cent. It is important to note that all the officials are Finns. Shortly after the turn of the century, the organisation decided that they start to employ also foreigners without Finnish skills. Since 2006 bilingual communication is being developed more systematically. In practice this means that the officials

communicate in English with the employees who have no command of Finnish and written materials are being translated into English. In the current situation often both the supervisors and the employees communicate in a non-native language, i.e. none of them is using their native language.

Every one of the delivery personnel belongs to a team of 15-30 deliverers (Lammassaari 2008, 53-54). The aim of the teams is to increase interaction and well being in the work. The teams meet from three to five times in a year (Ibid, 54). Since 2005 there is a special team organised for the international employees called "Insiders". This team has slightly different emphasis than the other teams. It focuses on issues of Finnish working life, such as occupational health care and taxation and aims at informing the employees about the issues of Finnish culture that might not be familiar for them.

The setting in which the case organisation operates is rather unique. Officials, including the supervisors and the delivery personnel work in different times and places. The officials work day time in the company premises, whereas the delivery personnel work during the night in the delivery areas assigned to them. During their normal working shifts the deliverers do not meet any other employees of the company. They are neither required to visit the company premises daily or even weekly. Thus, the supervisors and the employees do not meet regularly outside the team meetings. Basically meetings are arranged when the need arises, which mostly means clarifying a problem situation.

The supervisors and the employees communicate mostly via phone and e-mail and sometimes in face-to-face meetings in the office. The supervisors are in contact with international employees daily or at least several times a week. They prefer to communicate via phone or e-mail with all employees, because face-to-face meetings are too time-consuming. However, according to the supervisors, meeting face-to-face with the international employees is in some cases more effective. Preferred way of communication among international employees varies and no clear preference emerges.

To ensure help and advice for urgent problem situations during the working shifts of the deliverers, the organisation has created a night service. The night service can be reached only via phone. In comparison to Finnish delivery personnel, the international employees contact more often the night service, for example if they have problems with the Finnish language.

In 2006 the line management personnel of the case organisation was trained on diversity issues. In the training workplace diversity was considered from the viewpoint of foreign, disabled and aging employees as well as employees representing sexual minorities. The training was called “Tools for diversity” and organised by Tampere Adult Education Centre. In total two persons from the case organisation participated in it. Later, materials from the training were distributed to everyone in line management and discussed together. That opened a discussion on the special aspects of management and as a result multiculturalism was decided as one of the special development areas of the management in the case organisation.

In October 2009 an organisational change took place in the case organisation. This organisational change is relevant from the viewpoint of this study, as it caused changes in the supervisory work. Before the change individual supervisors were in charge of certain delivery areas and the employees working in those areas. The organisational change introduced a circulating system in which each supervisor manages certain delivery area for a certain time after which he or she moves on to supervise the next areas. As the interviews were conducted right after the organisational change, both the supervisors and the employees were aware of it but they were not sure how it would affect their work.

#### **4.2 COMMENTS ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE FINDINGS**

In the theoretical part of this study intercultural management competences were reviewed separately from three perspectives. In the empirical part, however, the different perspectives are brought together and the competences are grouped into cognitive and interactional competences. This approach helps deepening the discussion of the supervisor’s competences at the case organisation, as the interdependences of the competences may be revealed. The division of the competences into cognitive and interactional competences is presented in the table 7.

Type of competence	Competence	Author
Cognitive competences	Recognise difference at home	Schneider & Barsoux
	Adopt cultural general approach	Schneider & Barsoux
	Business focus	Holden
	Self-regulation	Goleman
Interactional competences	Respond to different cultures simultaneously	Schneider & Barsoux
	Problem solving abilities	Holden
	Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how	Holden
	Empathy	Goleman
	Social skills	Goleman
	Language skills	Holden

**Table 7. Division into cognitive and interactional competences**

In the following I will first consider the cognitive competences and after that the interactional competences. Each theme is presented separately from the viewpoint of the supervisors and the employees. After each theme I will provide a summary in which the viewpoints of these two groups are combined.

What comes to Goleman's leadership skills, the discussion on supervisor's "Self-regulation", "Social skills" and "Empathy" emerged almost entirely from the employees' point of view. The supervisors commented on the leadership aspects very shortly and those fell under other themes, such as "Best practices". Moreover, when discussing the leadership skills, the employees refer to their positive and negative experiences as well as to their ideals. What comes to the tables compiled for these three themes, the blank squares mean that those aspects did not emerge in this study. They do not mean that those aspects would not exist in the organisation at all.

For this case study in total ten semi-structured theme interviews were conducted at the case organisation. The group of respondents consists of four Finnish supervisors and six international employees. Each interviewee is assigned with a personal number, which consist of the letter H and the ordinal number of the interview. Thus, H1 was the first interviewee, H2 the second and so on. These numbers appear after quotations and as source references in the text.

If several interviewees brought up the same issue, I have indicated the number of persons discussing the issue in comparison to the total number

of the supervisors or the employees in parenthesis, such as (2/4) or (6/6). Thus, (2/4) means that two supervisors of the total four and (6/6) means that all six employees of the total six mentioned the issue.

### **4.3 COGNITIVE COMPETENCES**

Cognitive competences mean the abilities to apply cognitive processes in the management of a multicultural workforce. The cognitive processes include knowing, perceiving and being aware (Answers Corporation Website). In addition, expressions of intellectual capacity are seen as demonstration of cognition (Answers Corporation Website). All of the competences discussed in the following base on certain cognitive processes. For example, perceiving is crucial for recognising cultural differences at home and possessing knowledge of the operational context for “Business focus”. Because of the cognitive character, these competences are not necessarily demonstrated visibly in the supervisory work.

#### **4.3.1 Recognise Difference at Home**

The Finnish culture and society form the cultural context, in which the case organisation operates. “Recognise difference at home” refers to the challenging situation of recognising cultural differences in one’s familiar environment. On the one hand, it may be difficult to see characteristics of foreign cultures within the familiar cultural environment. On the other hand, it may be difficult to notice the unfamiliar characteristics for those having other cultural backgrounds in one’s own culture. Both of these aspects emerge in the interviews and they are called issues foreign to Finnish culture and issues typical of Finnish culture respectively.

At this point it is important to note that the respondents’ viewpoints to Finnish cultures differ. For the supervisors Finnish culture is the familiar culture, whereas for the international employees it is the foreign culture. Thus, issues foreign to Finnish culture may be new and unfamiliar for the supervisors, but at the same time they may be typical of the cultures of the international employees. In comparison, the supervisors are familiar with the issues typical of Finnish culture, but the international employees may not be.

## Supervisors

Within this theme the supervisors discuss in detail the cultural differences they have encountered at work. They also describe the situations in which the cultural differences appear. I will start with looking at the issues foreign to Finnish culture and then continue with the issues typical of Finnish culture.

An overview of the issues foreign to Finnish culture is presented in the table 8. of which the most remarkable are: looser time concept, lower degree of precision, hierarchical differences as well as the way job applicants try to benefit from their contacts. The hierarchy issues are discussed in more detail in the section 4.3.2 on “Adopt cultural general approach”. In this section they are brought up only from the point of view of how to handle differences in the supervisory work.

Issues foreign to Finnish culture	Number of supervisors mentioned	Mentioned by
Looser time concept	3/4	H4, H5, H7
Lower degree of precision	3/4	H3, H4, H5
Hierarchical differences	3/4	H4, H5, H7
Benefiting from contacts	2/4	H4, H7
Setting clear limits	1/4	H4
Cultural festivals and holidays	1/4	H4
Special diet because of cultural background	1/4	H4
Open and polite behaviour	1/4	H5
Vilification of co-workers	1/4	H4

**Table 8. Supervisors: Issues foreign to Finnish culture**

Firstly, the time concept is in the core of performing the delivery work and punctuality is an important characteristic for the deliverers, as the newspaper must be delivered to the customer before 6 a.m.

“At six o’clock the delivery must be done, it really means at six, not two minutes past, or five minutes past, not to speak of quarter past six. Somewhere in the world this might sound like niggling; who cares if the paper is half an hour late and this might be true, but in reality the customers expect the newspaper to be delivered by six, that’s what we have promised and that is how it should be in Finland.” (H3)

The need to emphasise the meaning of punctuality is reported by all the supervisors. Furthermore, the supervisors recognise that punctuality might be understood differently.

“There’s one fellow, he’s very good worker nowadays, comes from Canary Islands, I explained him that the delivery should be done by 6 a.m. On the first morning he was reached from his area little before 8 a.m., [he told us:] ‘I understand, delivery must be ready by six’, but for him it was not so exact definition that it really is 6 a.m.” (H7)

Secondly, the supervisors point out the issue concerning lower degree of precision. This cultural difference refers to the rules and guidelines given for the work. Precision in the work must be emphasised because, as some, especially African employees might easily develop their own solutions for the work. For example, one supervisor points out untidiness (H4), with which he means that the international employees are not as careful with bringing garbage to the right disposal places as the Finns.

“I use the word untidiness, with which I do not mean that they [international employees] are dirty, but that they are not as careful with garbage disposal as we [Finns], there might be bundle strings, there might be paper. Once at Valkeakoski we needed to go to clean a near by forest two times, because they had left panniers there a lot. Every time someone quit work he left his pannier there and the new employee asked for new equipment, this is what I mean when talking about untidiness” (H4)

Thirdly, the supervisors explain how international job applicants try to benefit from their contacts during the application process. They mention two ways how this has come up. On the one hand, the international applicant might refer to someone whom they know and who is already working as a deliverer and thus recommend him- or herself for the job. On the other hand, when an international employee is quitting the job, he might come to the office with a person he recommends for the job. Next, I will turn to the cultural differences mentioned only once in the interviews.

The fourth cultural difference concerns culture related festivals and holidays. When the international employees ask for a day-off, a cultural festival might be in the background. Knowing that such festival exists, holiday request can also be anticipated by the supervisor. This might affect for example planning of the working shifts.

Fifthly, a special diet because of the cultural background is brought up. The workplace offers often refreshments at the meetings and the special

events for the deliverers. Then it is important to know for example that Muslims do not eat pork.

“Three persons [deliverers] were about to arrive to the office [for a meeting], I realised just in time that ham sandwich is not the best thing to offer for them” (H4)

Sixthly, it is also pointed out that the behaviour of the international employees differs from the Finnish employees. The international employees are often more open and polite than the Finns.

“They are often more open and polite, Finns are often taciturn, they only say their matter, but nothing more” (H5)

Finally, the vilification of co-workers was also mentioned once. One supervisor told that he had received anonymous e-mails, in which international employees were vilified. The supervisor thinks that it is very important to clear out such cases. So he contacted the university because the international employees concerned were students. From there he received a great deal of information about the background situation. According to him, there are some power issues behind such situations.

Another viewpoint to “Recognise difference at home” is offered through the issues typical of Finnish culture. In general, the supervisors do not talk about the issues typical of Finnish culture as often as about the issues foreign to Finnish culture. The variety of the issues typical of Finnish culture is presented in the table 9.

Issues typical of Finnish culture	Number of supervisors mentioned	Mentioned by
Taxation	2/4	H3, H7
Employer's responsibilities	2/4	H5, H7
Occupational health care and sick leave	2/4	H4, H7
Recycling	1/4	H4
Social security system	1/4	H7
Honesty of Finns	1/4	H5

**Table 9. Supervisors: Issues typical of Finnish culture**

The supervisors mentioned societal issues, such as taxation and occupational health care as well as Finnish procedures, such as recycling, that often need to be explained to the international employees. Furthermore, the

concept of Finnish honesty was also pointed out once and will be discussed in more detail in the section 4.4.2

According to the supervisors, cultural differences show more in the interaction situations between the supervisors and the employees or in the supervisor-employee relationship than in the way how the international employees perform their work (2/4: H4, H7). Still, the supervisors also point out many cultural differences related to the delivery work, such as lower degree of precision.

Finally, the supervisors also talked about how to deal with the cultural differences. The basic idea is that cultural differences must be accepted (H4). However, it is also pointed out that cultural differences should not affect negatively the way international employees work (2/4: H4, H5).

All in all, the supervisors point out slightly different ways for dealing with the differences in everyday work situations. Firstly, one supervisor reminds himself that he is dealing with a non-Finnish person and pays attention to being patient and careful with details, when explaining something to an international employee (H5).

Secondly, it is mentioned that it is always important to become acquainted with the employees somewhat regardless of their background (H4). In addition, when talking with the international employees, it is necessary to be aware of taboo topics, such as religion. Through the conversations it is also possible to learn about the cultural traditions, such as festivals mentioned above.

Thirdly, setting clear limits has proven beneficial, when supervising international employees. Making clear what is acceptable and what is not can have a great influence on the behaviour of an international employee.

In general the way of working might be less precise, and for some employees I've needed to give a warning for that, then they change their way of working completely, when they notice that there's a limit that cannot be exceeded. Stating explicitly to the employee that "that is something you cannot do and if you continue like this next time you'll get a warning", that really helps (H4)

Fourthly, establishing hierarchies is pointed out, although it might feel awkward for the Finnish supervisors, because an authoritarian management style is not typical in the Finnish working life.

It feels strange for me, but establishing kind of leader figure, it seems to be working well with the international employees, if you become their buddy, it does not work ... then they start to visit the office too often, they want to tell things and

bring their friends and things like that, a small distance to the employees is good, I do not mean bossing around (H4)

### International employees

The two viewpoints: issues foreign to Finnish culture and issues typical of Finnish culture emerge also, as the international employees discuss the cultural differences. I will start with looking at the differences concerning the issues foreign to Finnish culture presented in the table 10.

Issues foreign to Finnish culture	Number of international employees mentioned	Mentioned by
Looser time concept	6/6	H1, H2, H6, H8, H9, H10
Hierarchical differences	5/6	H1, H2, H8, H9, H10
Religious traditions	1/6	H9
Vilification of colleagues	1/6	H6

**Table 10. International employees: Issues foreign to Finnish culture**

On the whole, the most frequently mentioned cultural differences are looser time concept and hierarchical differences. All employees have paid attention to the difference of perceiving time and all but one talk about differences in the hierarchies. When speaking of these two differences, the employees compare the Finnish culture to their own culture. Next I will look at the issues foreign to Finnish culture as reported by the international employees in more detail.

When discussing the time concept, employees bring up different issues, such as punctuality in Finland generally and in the case organisation as well as its importance for the functioning of the organisation. Firstly, employees discuss the differences of perceiving time generally in Finland and in their home countries (5/6: H1, H2, H6, H8, H10).

“Maybe Finnish punctuality is more punctual than my Nepalese punctuality”. (H1)

“We have this kind of timing system, when I tell I’m going to see you ten o’clock am it’s possible I’m going to see 10.30 and it’s sometimes given sort of a nickname called African time” (H6).

Secondly, according to the employees, the organisation disseminates information to them always on time (3/6: H8, H9, H10). For example, if there is an extra advertisement to be delivered to the customers

the employees are informed weeks beforehand. Third, the employees point out the fact that it is important that the customers to receive the paper on time (2/6: H1, H10). Otherwise extra costs for the company are caused through delivering a second copy of the day's newspaper later during the same day.

"If the customers get their papers late ... when they don't see paper [by 6 a.m. and they call to customer service] so they end up having 2 papers in the box and that's an extra cost for the company" (H10)

Next I will turn to the hierarchical differences. The employees mention issues, such as the employee-supervisor relationship and respecting persons with higher status. Firstly, both the African and the Asian employees say that the hierarchy differences between the supervisors and the employees are greater in their own cultures (3/6: H1, H8, H9). They are happy with the situation in Finland and they would not like it to change the way it is in their cultures. The Asian employees tell that the supervisor's authority in their own culture is greater.

"There [in Nepal] was authority, but it was more like friendly relationship with the bosses here, so and that was something good here. I wouldn't like the authority of Nepalese culture here." (H1)

"You get more freedom like Aamulehti work, because if you do all kind of work [in Nepal] the boss will be in front of you, like you get many complaints, many comments, but here ...it's a free work like, nobody's there, like I mean [there is no one saying] "do like this, don't do like this" like I can do my own way" (H9)

Furthermore, the African employees mention that they do not want to disagree openly with their supervisor because of the supervisor's status (2/6: H2, H10). In that kind of situations they might even admit making a mistake they have not make, instead entering into a disagreement with the supervisor.

"Because your boss you say I make mistake, okay I agree, how can make conflict like that your boss talk and you talk" (H2)

Secondly, the African employees mention respect in connection to the hierarchies (3/6: H8, H9, H10). They describe respect as a natural part of the interaction situations with people of higher status than themselves.

"Because where I come from, we always address someone as 'sir', 'mam' ... whenever you call someone, if the person is a doctor, you say doctor, if I wanna say 'excuse me', if that's a professor I cannot say 'excuse me [name of the person]', never, I say 'excuse me professor' with respect" (H8)

Showing respect to the supervisor is considered as good behaviour. Although the Finnish culture is less hierarchical, the employees want to show the respect also to their Finnish supervisor. If the supervisor denies the ways of showing respect, the employees might feel awkward and think that their good behaviour is not appreciated.

“The first day I came here and I went to my manager like ‘sir’, he was like don’t please, he said I should never call him ‘sir’.”(H8)

Some issues foreign to the Finnish culture are only mentioned once in the interviews with the employees. These are religious traditions and vilification of colleagues. Firstly, one employee explains how he sees the relationship of the delivery work and religious traditions typical of his culture, such as fasting and festivals. According to him, it is common to fast one day in a week and on those days the employee might feel so weak that he could not work. He, however, does not fast weekly. Neither does he expect that the supervisor would give a day-off in that kind of situation. Nevertheless, he points out that compromises are familiar to him, when cultural festivals are concerned. When there is a festival in his home country, he is probably working.

“When we have that national festival in our country and my family will be celebrating, and that time, that night they will be celebrating, but the same night when I’m in Finland, I’ll be riding my bike with this 50-60 kilograms of paper”. (H9)

But each country has its own festivals and the employee does not expect holidays in Finland, when there’s a festival in his country.

Secondly, vilification of colleagues is pointed out by one employee (H6). According to him, it is quite common in his own culture and if a supervisor receives an anonymous vilification letter, he neither cares about it nor acts in any way on it. The employee says that vilification of colleagues happens because people in his culture easily become jealous on their friends’ success.

“When you are making good ways, if you have ten friends, two is happy, eight is never happy ... this jealous ego.” (H6)

This particular employee found out that someone had written an anonymous e-mail to his supervisor vilifying him. As he was familiar with this custom, he knew that the supervisor would not have needed to take any actions, but he knew that his supervisor was investigating the issue. Still, he

thinks that this was a very serious incident, but could not say or do much to defend himself.

“Do anything you wanna do, investigate and check me at work because I can’t say more than this”. (H6)

Now I will turn to the cultural differences concerning the issues typical of Finnish culture mentioned by the international employees. An overview of these issues is presented in the table 11.

Issues typical of Finnish culture	Number of international employees mentioned	Mentioned by
Riding a bike	1/6	H10
Numbering of post boxes	1/6	H10
Giving a Christmas gift to the deliverer	1/6	H9
Supervisor’s behaviour towards employee	1/6	H6
Following rules	1/6	H10
Honesty of Finns	1/6	H6

**Table 11. International employees: Issues typical of Finnish culture**

As the table shows, all employees talk about different issues. Still, some common characteristics emerge among them, such as differences experienced during the delivery work, at the Finnish workplaces and behavioural differences.

The international employees have mentioned three issues typical of the Finnish culture concerning the delivery work: numbering of post boxes, giving a Christmas gift to the deliverer and riding a bicycle. As the following examples show these issues might come up completely unexpected. Firstly, in Finland even and uneven house numbers are on different sides of the road and in some cases the post boxes might be arranged accordingly. One employee had been wondering the numbering of the post boxes, as he was not aware of the fact that it might be something typical of the Finnish culture.

“I try to look the number of the box, 1, 3, 5, there should be 1, there should be 2, there should be 3” (H10).

Secondly, giving a Christmas present to the deliverer is an old Finnish tradition. One employee had found a present next to the post box around Christmas.

“Like for example Christmas, they’ll want to give us a Christmas gift, like they left something in the post box, like this is for you take it, last like, in the year 2007 there was a Christmas gift and it was written and it was gift, there was money, I didn’t know what was written there so I called to the night service and told, ‘what is written here?’, I told them the Finnish thing and they just they told it’s for you it’s a gift take it, it’s money” (H9).

Thirdly, the most common way to deliver the newspaper in residential areas is by riding a bike. One employee pointed out that he had never ridden a bicycle in his country.

The employees reported two differences concerning Finnish working life. Firstly, one employee had been very surprised for the supervisor’s concern of the employee’s health, as he had taken only three days sick leave of the five that had been granted for him.

“When I told my boss, I was thinking he should be happy and see that I really want to work, but my boss was telling me ‘No, why didn’t you wait that five days’ and I was like oh my god, in my country they’re gonna say ‘okay, good, is good’.” (H6)

In his culture this would have been seen as the employee’s initiative, which is appreciated greatly by the supervisors. Because of this incident he understood that his health actually mattered for the supervisor and that a healthy employee is more valuable for the organisation in the long run.

Secondly, the way of conducting work has been commented on, as one employee has experienced an emphasis on following rules in the organisation.

“I have to adapt to the way of life, to the way you handle things here, you don’t only handle things rationally, you handle things orderly and then you try to make sure that you do, what you’re suppose to do on the right time.” (H10)

Finally, a typical characteristic of the Finnish behaviour is pointed out, that is honesty. Before coming to Finland one employee had been told that Finnish people are very honest. However, at work this employee had experienced that Finns are not as honest as he expected.

“What I’m trying to say is that I deliver Aamulehti wrongly to somebody who’s not a subscriber, he has cancelled subscription, he got free newspaper from me for four months, can you imagine! ... that is when you can know that honesty is not completely part of some Finns.” (H6)

## **Summary of Recognise Difference at Home**

In their work the Finnish supervisors have both encountered and recognised many cultural differences. Time is clearly the most important cultural difference to be taken into account in the work. It is mentioned by all supervisors and all employees. The international employees recognise that the time system in Finland is different from their own and how important being on time in their job is. The supervisors mention as another remarkable cultural difference working with precision. However, only one employee has paid attention on this. The cultural differences may also be unexpected such as the vilification cases and Finnish honesty.

Both the supervisors and the employees talk about the issues foreign to Finnish culture and the issues typical of Finnish culture. The issues typical of Finnish culture are in the minority of the cultural differences reported. The international employees also speak of the issues typical to Finnish culture slightly more than the Finnish supervisors.

### **4.3.2 Adopt Cultural General Approach**

“Adopt cultural general approach” refers to identifying those cultural differences that are relevant in the managerial work. In this section the relevant cultural differences are discussed from the viewpoint of the fact how individuals with certain cultural background typically behave at work.

#### **Supervisors**

The supervisors spent quite a lot of time describing the general cultural characteristics that they have encountered in the interaction with the international employees (3/4: H3, H4, H7). I will first present how the supervisors grouped different cultures and discussed other possible reasons for the differences between the groups and individual international employees. Then I continue with the cultural characteristics the supervisors reported.

As the supervisors talked about the differences between the cultural groups, three different categories emerged. The supervisors mention great regional areas, such as Asia or Africa, small cluster of countries, such as India, Pakistan and Nepal or individual countries. When speaking of the

employees from the great regional areas, the supervisors do not necessarily specify the countries from which the employees in question originate. In addition, the supervisors say that the educational level along the cultural background might affect the behaviour of the international employees (2/4: H3, H4). However, it is also pointed out that one should not forget the differences between the individuals and the individual countries (H3). Now I will turn to the groups and their characteristics mentioned by the supervisors, starting with Asia and the more specific groups within that great regional area and then continuing with Africa.

Asians generally respect the guidelines of work and do not question them (H3). Nevertheless, the supervisors point out some communication challenges in managing the Asian employees. On the one hand, the supervisors need to communicate the tasks and how to do them carefully as well as to become sure that the Asian employees have understood what the supervisors intended to say. On the other hand, if the supervisors need to point out the employee's mistake or neglect, they pay attention to the way how they express themselves, as for example shouting might cause a person with an Asian background to lose face. (2/4: H3, H7).

"I have noticed that they might easily feel that they loose their honour, when I would express myself as strictly as to a Finn". (H3)

Because of that a mistake or neglect is communicated to an Asian employee in the same way as any other announcement.

Furthermore, the supervisors discuss separately some general cultural characteristics of two more specific Asian groups: the country cluster of India, Pakistan and Nepal as well as China. Concerning Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese employees, one supervisor described their high respect towards hierarchies, which becomes apparent in the supervisor-employee relationship (H7). Generally, when communicating with the supervisor, the employees from these countries often have a fawning attitude towards the supervisor and never show it, if they did not understand entirely what they are asked to do.

"It must be some kind of hierarchy related cultural difference. I mean that it seems that for them what supervisor says is a law, they must obey it, and they mustn't question it, neither can they show that they did not understand anything, they just try to behave nicely so that they may continue to work." (H7)

The supervisors have also noticed the collective character of the Chinese employees (2/4: H4, H7). For example, one supervisor reports an

incident according to which a group of Chinese was collectively taking care of one delivery area, where normally only one deliverer would work (H4).

“One [Chinese] person was employed here, but you could not be sure who delivered the papers, the group took care of the area without any problems, no missing papers, nothing like that, everything was always perfect, but it was a group taking care of it, that was their livelihood and they took care of it well.” (H4)

In addition, within the group of Chinese a leader often emerges (H7).

Furthermore, the supervisors describe the general cultural characteristics of the other great regional area, i.e. Africa (3/4: H3, H4, H7). The attitude of the African employees towards work in general is relaxed (2/4: H3, H4). They dare to question the guidelines and rules of work more as well as easily develop their own suitable solutions for the work.

“They more easily, how can I say this, use their own reasoning, or develop their own solutions, and may forget or disregard given instructions, because they have come up with another solutions that suit them better.” (H3)

This also shows in the supervisor-employee interaction, as the African employees readily enter into a discussion with the supervisor and ask why things are done as they are (H7).

For this reason a negotiating communication style suits for pointing out mistakes or neglects of the African employees (H7).

“With them [African employees] I use more negotiating style, like ‘you have been working well, but you should still fix these’.” (H7).

### **International employees**

This theme was discussed relatively little by the international employees. Only one employee described the work related to general cultural characteristics of certain cultural groups. His views are presented in the following (H6).

According to this employee, Africans are highly motivated to work and loyal to the employer. They can be asked to work also on their holidays and they would come, whereas the Europeans are not as flexible.

“I know about the Dutch, that when you employ them they are also very serious at work but ... they don't joke with holidays you can't call them when they are on break, when they are on break, they keep away from work, so you can still try to call a Ghanaian when he's on break and he still comes, and if you employ people like from Tanzania, Tanzanians have big spirits to work, like for example maybe he's on leave and then something is wrong in the company ... [if you ask him to

work,] a Tanzanian would say 'Okay, I'm coming, I'll come', whereas if you do that with Dutch, he would tell you 'You know I'm on break, I can't come'". (H6)

However, attention should be paid to the African employees' relationship to time. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the Nigerian or the Nepalese might write vilification letters against their co-workers.

One can learn about this kind of cultural differences by watching how people normally behave. Finally, the employee thinks that his supervisors already know quite a lot of different cultures and have a lot of experience (H6).

### **Summary of Adopt Cultural General Approach**

In the case organisation each supervisor deals with a great number of employees. In this kind of working environment they have already noticed that employees with different cultural backgrounds do not all behave in the same way and have identified typical ways of behaving among different cultural groups.

#### **4.3.3 Business Focus**

"Business focus" refers to the supervisor's awareness of the organisational goals and to their understanding of the role of managing multicultural workforce in the organisation as well as the relation of these two aspects (Holden 2002, 300). This theme has been brought up only by the supervisors.

#### **Supervisors**

"Business focus" has been discussed from two perspectives. Firstly, the supervisors outline the regular delivery work, where cultural issues are in a minor role. Secondly, they point out the meaning of the increasing number of the international employees for the organisation future.

Firstly, in the focus of the management process, according to the supervisors, is ensuring that the organisational goals are reached. In the case organisation it means a completed delivery process without mistakes. In order to complete the delivery without mistakes, certain rules and regulations of the work must be followed, which are indeed emphasised strongly by the supervisors.

All the supervisors emphasise that completing the daily or in this case nightly work, according to the rules and regulations of the workplace has always the priority (4/4: H3, H4, H5, H7). For this reason individual solutions or changes due to cultural or personal reasons are not possible, as long as the normal delivery work procedure is concerned.

“Takk [local adult education centre] was trying to persuade us once that for example we should provide Muslim employees a chance for praying [at work] ... well, if they can do it along the delivery, I’m not sure if they even need to do that in the night, but if they can do it so that the delivery is not disturbed and customers get the paper on time, it is no problem, but we cannot change to delivery areas for that or the delivery mustn’t be delayed” H3

Secondly, the management of the multicultural workforce has emerged as a special development area in the organisation, as in the future there will probably be even more international employees. How to develop the management was not discussed in detail in this study. Still the supervisors mentioned few issues concerning the development of management such as, development of written communication in English and benefiting from the international employees in recruitment.

### **Summary of Business Focus**

Managing multicultural workforce has many levels in the case organisation. The development of management is necessary in order to manage the international employees better and to sustain functional management processes. Moreover, cultural issues have a minor role in the actual delivery work process. Nevertheless, the cultural issues are not indifferent in the management which is argued in more detail under other themes.

#### **4.3.4 Self-Regulation**

“Self-regulation” refers to reflecting one’s own emotions and being thoughtful (Goleman 1998, 85). According to Goleman, self-regulating leaders may create an atmosphere “of trust and fairness” at the workplace (Goleman 1998, 86). When aiming at a fair and trusting atmosphere the way how the supervisor expresses him- or herself is not insignificant. This particular aspect has become discussed by the employees in the case organisation. For general remarks on leadership skills see the section 4.2. Although the choice

of words is discussed under “Language skills” in the section 4.4.6, the focus in this section is on larger units than individual words. An overview of the supervisor’s verbal and nonverbal behaviour is presented in the table 12.

Positive experiences		Negative experiences	
Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned	Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned
Gentle, subtle way of talking	1/6: H2	Talking harshly and shouts at employee	4/6: H2, H8, H9, H10

**Table 12. Supervisor’s self-regulation from the international employees’ viewpoint**

On the whole, the supervisor’s self-regulation has been discussed especially by the African employees, but also by one Asian employee. Within this theme the employees pointed out more negative than positive examples. The negative examples include denying an apology, using insulting expressions, questioning the employee’s competence to work as well as shouting at the employee.

“I’m careful talking to the boss ‘Look I’m sorry, I’m sorry’, he said: ‘don’t, you don’t have to be sorry’, it was so harsh” (H10)

“The boss shout on you that time, I really feel bad.” (H9)

It is also pointed out that different supervisors may have very difference approaches towards an employee’s mistake.

“He [supervisor] says ‘what, you don’t know your job? you can’t do your job’ you know that is so embarrassing ... he is saying that I don’t know how to do my job, it’s like a slap on my face.” (H10)

“One [supervisor] can say ‘oh, try to make sure that you don’t make mistake’”. (H2)

### **Summary of Self-regulation**

The way how the employees described their supervisor’s verbal behaviour might reveal something about the supervisor’s self-regulation. In fact, it seems that the supervisors with whom the employees had made their negative experiences act rather impulsively and thus would not be completely self-regulating.

#### **4.4 INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCES**

Interactional competences in this study mean the abilities that appear in interaction with others. Interaction refers to situations where two or more individuals are involved in communication or otherwise reacting to each other (Cambridge University Press Website). Furthermore, the term interactional is defined as capability “of acting on or influencing each other” (Wordreference.com Website). Thus, all of these competences require some form of interaction to be demonstrated.

##### **4.4.1 Respond to Different Cultures Simultaneously**

“Respond to different cultures simultaneously” refers to the manager’s capability of reacting to employees with different cultural backgrounds at the same time. The interviewees discussed the theme on a general and on an interpersonal level. On the one hand, the general principles of managing multicultural workforce were discussed. On the other hand, the role of cultural differences in the supervisor-employee communication was debated.

##### **Supervisors**

The supervisors discussed responding to different cultures simultaneously on general and interpersonal level. On the general level they emphasised the equal treatment of all employees. On the interpersonal level they described how they take cultural differences into account in interpersonal interaction with the international employees.

First of all, the supervisors emphasise the equality of all employees (2/4: H4, H7). A principle of the equal treatment of employees regardless their background is expressed. It is seen as the most important factor in encountering the employees.

“I think that the most important aspect is that we encounter everyone as human being, and everyone of us [supervisors] does that as much as the others, it does not matter where the person comes from or what is his or her cultural background.” (H4)

Still, cultural differences cannot be completely omitted. The responsiveness to cultural issues shows in two ways in the supervisory work (2/4: H4, H7). Firstly, the supervisors sometimes adjust their behaviour in the interaction with the international employees. Secondly, the international employees need to be informed of certain issues typical of Finnish culture and society. This happens both in the interpersonal interaction with the international employees and in the team meetings organised especially for them.

“Then we have organised for them an own English speaking team, where we aim at communicating these issues directly to them, so I think that it is one thing were clearly take the international employees into account.” (H4)

To be more specific, the responsiveness to cultural differences benefits the supervisors especially in the way how to communicate with and manage the employees with certain cultural backgrounds. On the one hand, the supervisors point out that knowing how to express themselves successfully to the international employees is very important (2/4: H3, H7). On the other hand, there is a need to vary the management style and find the right approach somewhere between an authoritarian and a democratic management style (H7). What cultural differences in particular appear in the supervisory work is discussed in more detail under “Recognise difference at home” as well as “Adopt cultural general approach”. Finally, the supervisors add that detailed knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the employees is hardly needed (2/4: H3, H7).

### **International employees**

The international employees discuss the management of the multicultural workforce from an ideal point of view. They emphasise creating a norm or a shared basis for the managerial work and describe how they expect the cultural issues to be taken into account within the norm.

The international employees agree on establishing a norm or a shared guideline for the management of multicultural workforce.

“That norm should be followed for everybody and like nobody should be feeling left out.” (H1)

“If I were to be the boss and I have people from different backgrounds I would let them know what I prefer, this is what to do, this is what we act here this is the rules and the regulations” (H10)

However, when the cultural differences are concerned, some differences between the views of the Asian and African employees emerge. The Asian employees think that it is impossible to address each employee in accordance with his or her cultural background. So following the culture of the majority is suggested.

“If there are like 90 per cent or 80 per cent Nepali people working in Aamulehti, then the boss, if I’m a boss I will give the holiday looking at the Nepali calendar.” (H9)

In comparison, the African employee would also pay attention to the cultural differences. He would take the preferences of the culturally different employees into account as far as that is possible within the shared guideline (H10).

### **Summary of Respond to Different Cultures Simultaneously**

The views of the supervisors and the employees are not clearly congruous, but do not exclude each other either. The similarity of the views is evident in the wish to establish a norm or a shared basis for the management. In addition, the principle of the equal treatment pointed out by the supervisors as well as the management norm with which everyone feels comfortable discussed by the employees seem to have a similar purpose, too.

However, the views differ in the way how to respond to the cultural differences. The supervisors’ point of view seems to be closer the one of the African employee than the one of the Asian employees. Whereas the Asian employees think that taking any cultural differences into account at the work is not necessary or possible, the supervisors define situations where cultural knowledge may prove beneficial for conducting the supervisory work.

#### **4.4.2. Problem Solving Abilities**

According to Holden “Problem solving abilities” belong to the competences of a cross-cultural manager as a global knowledge worker (2002, 301). Furthermore, problem solving is seen as one area of interactive translation. Because of this, interactive translation as one of the knowledge management tasks is brought up when analysing this competence. Under this theme the

interviewees discuss issues causing misunderstandings or confusion. They also comment on the ways how to solve the misunderstanding situations.

### **Supervisors**

I will first present the cases in which the supervisors have needed to clarify cultural or societal issues, such as religious traditions or occupational health care. Interestingly, besides explaining these issues to the international employees, they need to communicate with groups outside the organisation (4/4: H3, H4, H7, H5). After that I will look at the ways the supervisors use for solving the misunderstanding situations.

I will start with the issues, which the supervisors have needed to clarify to the employees only. Firstly, according to the supervisors, sick leave regulations and other issues related to occupational health care often cause confusion among the employees and need to be explained (2/4: H4, H7). For example, the employees might not know that only a doctor can grant sick leave and which health care institution they should go in order to get the workplace to cover the costs.

Secondly, the concept of honesty in Finland has also emerged as a topic demanding clarifications (H5). The international employees often think Finland as a safe country and Finns as an honest people. Trusting this impression, some international employees have left their keys in the car or on the bicycle when they take the newspapers in the apartment houses during their work in the night. In some of these cases the keys or even the vehicles have been stolen. Lost keys can cause great costs for the organisation, if the locks of several apartment houses need to be changed. In such cases the supervisors need to explain that the behaviour of the Finns might not be as honest in the night time as it is during the day.

“Quite often something is stolen from them [international employees], they [international employees] do not understand that there are different kind of people out in the night, they do not know like the Finns do that they need to be careful, that they should not leave the keys hanging.” (H5)

Now I will turn the attention to the cases, where the supervisors have needed to communicate issues both to the employees and to outsiders of the organisation.

Third, taxation and payment have raised questions among the employees (2/4: H3, H4). For example, Polish employees thought that they

are paid less than announced in their employment agreement and talked about this to individuals outside the organisation (H3). The Polish employees were not aware of the fact that in Finland always a gross payment is announced in the employment agreement, whereas in Poland a net payment is announced. In this situation the supervisor needed to explain the cultural difference for the Polish employees as well as for outsiders of the organisation and to ensure the latter that the payment for the Finnish and the international employees is the same.

“If they [international employees] have been talking in public, then of course there will be doubts and some people have asked us that do we pay them smaller salaries, is that the reason we want to employ them.” (H3)

Fourth, foreign religious traditions of international employees have caught the attention of individuals outside the organisation (2/4: H3, H4). An outsider had seen a Muslim deliverer praying at work. This person called the Aamujakelu Oy’s office and told what he had seen.

“The person speaks clearly and tells what he has seen, that your employee is praying in the hallway of the other apartment house in the morning about 5 o’clock, that he can see the hallway from his house and as the discussion proceeds, it becomes clear that he is scared, he is really scared that all the Muslims are now here and he does not know anything about them.” (H4)

The fact that the incident happened in the night and short after terrorist attacks abroad might have increased the feeling of insecurity even more. After this kind of feedback from the outside, the supervisor called the employee in question and negotiated with him so that the employee could carry out the praying, but not in such a public place. According to the supervisor, the employee lived near by and went home to pray from that on.

Finally, the supervisors describe the approaches they use for solving the misunderstanding situations (2/4: H4, H7). The approaches of these two supervisors are clearly different. One of them starts with explaining the right way to handle the situation and explains what went wrong.

“Solving misunderstandings is quite straightforward, as there are no alternative solutions. So the person is told how the issue should be handled and what he or she did wrong”. (H4).

The first time something happens there are no consequences, but if the same issue comes up again with the same employee, the supervisor makes a note about it for himself. In comparison, the other supervisor emphasises solving misunderstandings in a dialogue (H7). At first, he wants to hear the

employee's point of view, then he explains what was meant to be done and finally points out the difference in these views.

"I do not want to put the words in his mouth, but he gets to express how he understood the issue himself". (H7)

### **International employees**

The same structure of the discussion as above is followed. Thus, I start with discussing the issues causing misunderstandings or confusion and after that suggestions for solving these situations are presented.

According to the employees, cultural or societal issues as well as organisational rules have caused them confusion at some point (4/6: H1, H2, H6, H10). Firstly, occupational health care is pointed out by one employee (H6). He, for example, wondered who is responsible for the health care costs, if he falls ill at work and goes to the local hospital, because the occupational health care centre is not open 24 hours a day.

"I fell sick when I was working ... I go to general hospital and I didn't know that I was going to get a bill after that ... then I get bill, who pays for the bill I don't know..." (H6)

Secondly, what comes to the honesty of the Finns, the international employees have experienced that the Finns are not as honest as they expected (H6). The concept of honesty in Finland has been discussed in detail from the employees' point of view under "Recognise difference at home".

Thirdly, the confusion concerning rules, instructions and feedback of the delivery work are brought up (3/6: H1, H2, H10). For example, it was not clear for one employee how many newspapers should be left at the end of a shift so that he could be sure that he did not do any mistakes (H2). The employees also wondered why customers report undelivered papers, although they surely delivered the newspapers to those customers (2/6: H2, H10). At the moment of the interviews these confusing issues were not entirely clear for the employees.

Solving misunderstandings in a dialogue is suggested by one employee (H10). Dialogue is preferred, because then the employee can also present his point of view.

"If there's a misunderstanding let me be invited to a dialog". (H10)

According to the employee, misunderstandings in the case organisation are not always solved in a dialogue.

### **Summary of Problem Solving Abilities**

The supervisors and the employees bring up clearly similar cultural and societal issues that have caused misunderstandings or confusion. However, the employees add rules, instructions and feedback to those issues, which however, have not been mentioned by the supervisors. Furthermore, the supervisors bring up examples of the incidents where the misunderstandings have also been solved, whereas the employees discuss issues that have not been clarified yet.

What comes to the way of solving misunderstandings, a dialogical approach is preferred by the employees. In practice only some supervisors apply the dialogical approach, when solving misunderstandings.

#### **4.4.3 Ability to Apply Cross-cultural Know-how**

Cross-cultural know-how is defined as one of the competences of a cross-cultural manager as a global knowledge worker (Holden 2002, 301). The perspective on cross-cultural know-how emphasises applying cross-cultural knowledge and insights in practice for the benefit of the organisation. Furthermore, sharing knowledge, values and experiences is one of the interactional knowledge management activities defined by Holden (2002, 299-300), which emerges as a clear application area of this ability. No qualified answers for this theme were gained from the employees.

### **Supervisors**

I will first present the issues that are most commonly shared and then the situations where the knowledge sharing abilities are applied. Lastly I present few other sources for relevant knowledge outside the organisation.

According to the supervisors, knowledge about the international employees and the experiences on managing them are shared among the line management personnel (4/4: H3, H4, H5, H7). To be more specific, the

supervisors discuss the cultural knowledge and experiences they have gained in the interaction with the international employees as well as create procedures and guidelines for handling certain situations and problems concerning the management of the international employees.

“When cultural general characteristics emerge, such as recommending friends for the job, we do talk about this kind of things, we agree procedures, what to do, when such things happen, and we talk somewhat about how international employees behave and what is typical for their cultures.” (H4)

In general, the procedures of working with the international employees have become internalised and smooth within the team of the line management personnel (2/4: H5, H7). However, some differences in the views about sharing knowledge, values and experiences emerge. On the one hand, sharing is considered as a common habit concerning all aspects of management, not only the international employees (H3). On the other hand, it is pointed out that sharing about the international employees is more frequent than about other managerial issues (H5).

Some relevant knowledge is also gained from outside of the organisation. Firstly, authorities handling immigration issues may provide relevant knowledge concerning legal procedures of employing foreigners. Secondly, one supervisor participated in training on workplace diversity (H7). Material from this training was later distributed to everyone in the line management and discussed together. Thus, everyone in the line management benefited. The training also opened a discussion on the special aspects of the management and as a result multiculturalism was decided as one of the special development areas of the management in the case organisation. However, one of the interviewed supervisors was not aware of the training at all.

### **Summary of Ability to Apply Cross-cultural Know-how**

Sharing knowledge and experience among the line management personnel seems to be a common habit. The comments about smooth and internalised procedures seem to refer to the fact that the line management works well as a team, where people know what to do.

#### 4.4.4 Social Skills

The supervisor's "Social skills" have been defined as an ability to direct the employees into a desired direction in a humane way (Goleman 1998, 90). The table 13. presents a summary of the supervisor's social skills brought up by the employees. For general remarks on the leadership skills see the section 4.2.

Positive experiences		Negative experiences		Ideals	
Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned	Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned	Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned
Friendly	2/6: H9, H10	<b>Harsh</b>	1/6: H10	Friendly atmosphere	2/6: H9, H10
<b>Easy to approach</b>	1/6: H10				
<b>Encourages</b>	1/6: H10			<b>Encourages</b>	1/6: H10
<b>Motivates</b>	2/6: H8, H10	<b>Does not motivate</b>	2/6: H8, H10	<b>Motivates</b>	2/6: H8, H10
		<b>Degrading</b>	2/6: H8, H10	<b>Treats as equals</b>	2/6: H8, H10

**Table 13. Supervisors' social skills from the international employees' viewpoint**

(In bold: issues mentioned only by African employees)

The social skills or characteristics include friendliness, encouragement, motivating as well as easy to approach and supervisor's attitude towards the employees. Social skills have been brought up by four different employees with both Asian and African backgrounds (4/6: H1, H9, H8, H10). In the following, I will first discuss the issues pointed out by both the Asian and the African employees, and then look at the issues reported only by the African employees.

Both the Asian and the African employees describe that they have a friendly relationship to their supervisor (2/6: H9, H10). Friendliness is also expected in an ideal supervisor-employee relationship (H10).

"If I were the boss and I have people from different backgrounds ... I would like to make the atmosphere friendly first of all, because you can't win the hearts of your staff, if you're not friendly to them" (H10)

However, one employee also points out that in some situations the supervisor's behaviour has been harsh.

"I'm careful talking to the boss 'Look I'm sorry, I'm sorry', he said: 'don't, you don't have to be sorry', it was so harsh" (H10)

Issues discussed only by the African employees are supervisor's motivating and encouraging behaviour (2/6: H8, H10). They emphasise the importance of these strongly. The supervisor's motivating and encouraging behaviour is both experienced in the interaction and expected from the ideal supervisor-employee relationship.

"He [supervisor] texted me 'I see, I understand in the beginning it could be though, it could be difficult, but don't worry you will get used to it', words that encouraged me, that's what we need, when your boss encourages you, it makes you feel that okay you can do better." (H10)

"You have to always motivate them, even if they are not doing well 'hey, man you're doing so well' 'you just do it so well, we appreciate you'" (H8)

Nevertheless, the African employees also tell examples of situations, where the supervisor's motivating approach is lacking.

"Realistically ... if my boss would give you a call, if you see he's phone number, if see he's calling you know that there's a problem, he never calls you to tell that you're doing well" (H8)

On the whole, the employees describe as motivating factors: the supervisor's friendliness, supportiveness and consideration for the employee as well as regular contacts, positive feedback from the supervisor and the feeling that their work is appreciated. In practice, for example contacting the employee and asking how the work is going in a friendly tone, can be considered as a motivating act.

The African employees also bring up the point that how they would like to be treated by the supervisor (2/6: H8, H10). Ideally, the supervisor would treat the employee as equals. However, negative experiences on this matter are reported, such as a degrading attitude towards the employee and comparing him to children.

"He gave me an example of his son that the his son is 7 years old, when he talks to his son 'don't do this, don't do that' the son understands that and I was like 'oh you're comparing me to your son', problem and you know what am I" (H10)

On the whole, equality from the viewpoint of the African employees seems to refer to equality as human beings, because they still want to respect the supervisor's authority, as pointed out in the section 4.3.1.

Finally, the supervisors in the case organisation are easy to approach (H10). This character has been experienced as positive.

### Summary on Social Skills

The most frequently discussed factors of “Social skills” are the supervisor’s friendliness and the ability to motivate the employee. Motivation, encouragement as well as treating the employees as equals were mentioned only by the African employees. Furthermore, in this section only the African employees discussed also their negative experiences.

#### 4.4.5 Empathy

Empathy is described as an ability to recognise other people’s emotions and to respond to them in a way that takes their emotions into account (Goleman 1998, 88). The table 14. presents an overview of the skills and characteristics that relate to supervisor’s empathy. For general remarks on the leadership skills see the section 4.2.

Positive experiences		Negative experiences		Ideals	
Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned	Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned	Characteristic	Number of employees mentioned
Considerate	3/6: H2, H9, H10			Considers the situation and the person involved	3/6: H2, H9, H10
<b>Understands employee’s point of view</b>	3/6: H2, H6, H10	<b>Does not understand employee’s point of view</b>	2/6: H2, H8		
		<b>Does not believe</b>	2/6: H6, H8	Is able to tell whether employee tells the truth or not	2/6: H6, H9
<b>Listens</b>	1/6: H6	<b>Does not listen</b>	2/6: H8, H10	Listens	2/6: H9, H10

**Table 14. Skills and characteristics related to the supervisor’s empathy from the international employees’ viewpoint**  
(In bold: issues mentioned only African employees)

In total five of six employees with both Asian and African backgrounds comment on the supervisor's empathy. They bring up the following aspects: consideration for the employee, understanding the employee's point of view as well as an ability to differentiate truth from lie.

Before going into more detail on the findings about "Empathy", I will clarify how these aspects are linked to each other, i.e. how the employees understand the manifestation of empathy. First of all, being considerate refers to the willingness and the act of making oneself aware of the other person's situation (Answers Corporation Website). One way to familiarise oneself with the other person's point of view is listening. Only after becoming aware of the situation of the other an understanding may emerge. Understanding means accepting and being sympathetic towards something (Answers Corporation Website). Thus, the opposite of understanding is disbelief or denial. Consideration and understanding seem to be the most important components of empathy that the employees expect from the supervisors.

Now I will turn the attention to the aspects of empathy following the order in which they are presented in the table 14. above. According to the employees, the supervisors show consideration for them at work, which they would expect to happen in an ideal situation as well (3/6: H2, H9, H10). Ideally, the supervisor should consider the particular situation and the employee personally (H9). This could be done for example by asking questions frequently.

"I would try to understand the people (employees) how they react to their work, I always wanna ask them questions I always wanna, always sit down and ask "is there any problem?," "can we support you with anything?" and that that that you know ... the fact that she [Finnish co-worker] asks questions a lot, she gets to know that this is the Achilles' heel, this is the problem, this is what is going on and she has to work on it" (H8)

However, it is pointed out that the supervisors could consider the employees even more.

What comes to the supervisor's understanding of the employee's viewpoint, both positive and negative experiences are reported (4/6: H2, H6, H8, H10). According to the international employees, the positive experiences emerged when communicating with a particular supervisor. In comparison, one of the employees thinks that his supervisor does not understand his point of view (H8). Because of that he might admit mistakes he has not made.

“If I tell him number one he doesn’t care, number two he might not believe, number three he’s not ready to listen to you now, you know, it’s so, it’s so painful” (H8)

The importance of this aspect of empathy is emphasised especially by the African employees.

Compared to the feeling of being understood, the employees had also felt that the supervisor does not believe what they say (2/6: H6, H8). Both of the cases where disbelief occurred relate to the employee’s health issues. In other words, the supervisor had not believed that the employee was sick, when he told him so. Once, the truthfulness had been questioned openly by the supervisor:

“He [supervisor] said ‘I don’t believe this is true.’ ” (H8)

Ideally, the supervisor should be able to differentiate whether the employee is telling the truth or not.

“They should have the ability to differentiate, is he lying or is he telling the truth, that ability the boss should have that is called the real boss, I think so, because it’s their duty to know the employee better.” (H9)

Listening is one way for the supervisors to become aware of the employee’s situation (3/6: H6, H9, H10). Ideally, the employees expect the supervisor to listen to them.

“We want our boss to know our feelings, my difficulties, my situations, so who can listen to me, I like such bosses.” (H9)

In addition, the employees mention both situations where the supervisors have listened to them and where they have not been heard (3/6: H6, H8, H10).

“He [supervisor] is keeping quiet to make you [employee] say it [describe the situation] again, and when you say it, he tells you straight: so that’s what has happened, you don’t need to try to lie to him, you don’t need to make him feel the other way, he knows what is going on, if he asks you one, two questions, he’s asked then to conclude [by the employee] and his conclusion is exactly what has happened” (H6)

According to the employees, one reason for failing to understand the employees’ viewpoint might be that the employees and the supervisors work at different times and in different places (2/6: H2, H10). That is why the supervisors should give more attention to the listening of the employees and to consider their point of view.

“They [supervisors] don’t understand what they say, because they are not in the operation, they are not in there that time and they don’t see what you [employees] are doing.” (H2)

### **Summary on Empathy**

Discussion on “Empathy” emerges from different perspectives by several employees, both African and Asian. It is discussed even in such a detail that the manifestation empathy for this study could be structured. On the one hand, considering and understanding seem to be the most important components of showing empathy towards an employee. On the other hand, listening is an important way to become aware of the employee’s situation. Finally, the African employees discuss “Empathy” especially actively. Thus, some aspects emerged only among them. Only the African employees discuss the positive and negative experiences concerning the supervisor’s understanding of the employees’ point of view. Furthermore, only the African employees reported incidents where the supervisor had not believed them.

#### **4.4.6 Language Skills**

Shortly at the turn of the century the organisation decided to open the delivery positions to applicants without Finnish skills. Then knowledge of the English language was added to the job requirements. As the number of the international employees with no command of Finnish increases, the pressure to develop communication in English becomes greater. The language issues are presented from the point of view of the supervisory work, on which this study focuses.

#### **Supervisors**

The number of the international employees increases, but only few of them know or learn even the basics of Finnish. Because of that, the proportion of languages used in the supervisory work has changed. Finnish used to be the main language in the supervisor-employee communication, but not anymore (H4). Now it is necessary to communicate more comprehensively also in English.

The current situation makes language a salient issue at the case organisation. All supervisors point out first language, when they are asked to describe the changes caused by multiculturalisation of the workplace. The supervisors describe communication in English as a necessity for the functioning of the organisation and a requirement when working in a managerial position.

“Without knowing English, it would not be possible to work in this position, [language skills] are important” (H5)

Next within this theme the supervisors discuss the effects and the difficulties of communicating in a non-native language as well as comment on the English skills needed. Communication in a non-native language has certain effects on the supervisor-employee communication. Firstly, more efforts need to be made to ensure a common understanding.

“Even more important is possibly the fact that I am sure that the other has understood the issue, as I intended, that he has not made his own interpretation” (H7)

Secondly, creation of concepts and terminology that are understood by both of the communication partners is clearly needed (2/4: H4, H7).

“As neither of us are native Englishmen, English speakers, so the terminology we use, sometimes misunderstandings happen ... that’s why we have to create that kind of terminology that they [international employees] understand, it is not necessarily [the terminology a native would use], such as delivery, a native speaker would not use that word, it is dispatch, delivery is not familiar for them [natives], delivery means for them distribution of goods for retail via vehicles, we use the word delivery and it is commonly in use and we will use it in the future because they [international employees] understand that” (H7)

Language skills needed in a managerial position in the case organisation are discussed in detail both on a general and on a personal level. In general, the supervisors need practical language skills, meaning that they are able to address the international employees, who are often non-native speakers of English and whose English skills vary. The supervisor does not need to speak English perfectly to be able to do the job (H5). However, the language skills are not important only for the supervisors, but also for the employees. They, too, need to reach certain level of English so that reciprocal communication with the supervisor is possible (2/4: H3, H4).

On the personal level, the supervisors reflect their own language skills. Both aspects: improvement needed and progress recognised concerning the language skills arise.

“In the long run I need to develop myself, I need to be able to speak better, so that we [organisation] can, as there’s no doubt that we’ll become even more international, so I have to develop my language skills” (H3)

“It [communicating in English] has become quite natural” (H5)

The need to improve the English skills is mentioned more often than the recognised development of language skills. For example, expanding one’s vocabulary is mentioned as one improvement area. The organisation supports the language learning of the supervisors and has organised training in English for them. One supervisor searches also support for his language skills from an online dictionary, which he points out as a frequent tool in his work (H5).

The supervisors bring up rather similar issues about the challenges or difficulties they have encountered when communicating in English with the international employees. Communicating in a foreign language is pointed out as a general challenge factor (H4). On a more detailed level, strong accent of the communication partner is often mentioned to hinder the understanding (3/4: H3, H4, H5).

“[Communication with] some employees who have a strong accent is a little challenging ... if there’s French or some other accent I need to strive to understand the speaker” (H5)

The speed of speech and lower English skills are also pointed out as causing difficulty for communication. The communication difficulties accumulate, if the situation involves some of these aspects. Then communication via phone may become even more difficult (H4). However, it is also pointed out that not all international employees are difficult to understand (H5). Some of them speak almost like they were natives.

### **International employees**

The employees discuss language issues on a more concrete level. They reflect the English skills of the supervisors and describe the effects communicating in a non-native language in the supervisor-employee

communication. Finally, they make some suggestions for the fact how to improve the current communication situation.

The employees comment the English skills of the supervisors. Their opinions of the supervisors' English skills differ somewhat. One employee says that the supervisors are doing mostly well when communicating in English (H8).

"They really do well, at least my bosses, I could give them like 75 per cent, they are doing really well when it comes to English" (H8)

However, another employee says that the English skills of the supervisors vary from good to sufficient (H10). Still, the employees have an understanding that using a foreign language at work is challenging for the supervisors (3/6: H6, H8, H10).

The employees describe in detail various effects that communicating in a non-native language has on the supervisor-employee communication. Firstly, the level of the supervisor's English skills influences on the fact how successful the employees experience communication in different situations. On the one hand, according to the employees, communication with the supervisors who speak English well is uncomplicated. For example, the supervisors with higher English skills can even communicate smoothly on the phone. On the other hand, the supervisor's lower English skills may complicate the communication. If the employee is uncertain, whether his message was understood, he uses different ways of communication (H10). For example after unsuccessful phone call, he comes to the office to discuss the matter face-to-face and if possible tries to speak with someone of who surely can understand English well.

I say "okay, can I come and see in the office?", I always ask for that because one on the one, I see my boss face to face, in person I can talk slowly, as little as I can, and then try write some things down, then probably he's gonna understand, and of course one thing does the most is send a message, so when I send message to him, probably tends to understand that better than me speaking (H10)

It is also pointed out that misunderstandings may occur in connection to insufficient language skills of the supervisor (H10).

Secondly, the employees become more aware of their own way of speaking, when communication with non-native English speakers, such as their supervisors. The employees acknowledge that their way of speaking might be difficult to understand and that it is not possible to speak as fast with the non-natives as with the native speakers. Because of this, employees tell

that they need to modify the way they speak English when communicating with their supervisors (2/6: H6, H10).

“Sometimes if I like try to tell him [supervisor] something, he tells “speak slowly, speak slowly” of course I don’t know how to speak slowly, I found it so difficult sometimes, I like talk with him “you are too fast” and I don’t know, I try to ask myself, am I too fast to speak English, because I have been speaking like these for so many years and if I try to slow it down I-want-to-go-to, it seems so ridiculous to me” (H10).

Thirdly, the employees comment on the choice of words made by the supervisors. They wish that the supervisors with lower English skills would check what kind of vocabulary they use in feedback situations. For example, one employee describes a situation where he had been working over time and some papers had been delivered late to the customers. According to the employee, the boss called him the next day asking “*What is that? You had a problem last night?*” But the employee himself did not think that he had had a problem, so he could not give a positive answer. Because of this the employee suggests another way of asking that, for example whether the employee worked overtime last night.

“They should change that language, he [supervisor] doesn’t have problem, I don’t have a problem, ‘Probably last night were you working late?’, that should be the language, so I can now respond good, but [when he] says problem, what problem? I don’t have problem.” (H10)

For the employee the case above presents one type of a misunderstanding, but there is also disagreement about the used language, i.e. the choice of words in that situation. Similarly, the employee is a little critical about calling undelivered papers *mistakes*, because it is so negative.

When speaking about language with the employees they also refer to the night service. Employees think that the night service should be able to help with urgent language problems (3/6: H6, H8, H9). For instance, one employee points out an incident, where he could not get help in a serious attack situation in the night from the organisation’s side, because the night service person was not able to communicate in English (H6).

Finally, the employees make some concrete proposals for the supervisors concerning the improvement of the language skills or communication in foreign language. On the one hand, employees suggest continuous training in the English language (H10). On the other hand, the supervisors should cooperate more in situations, where communication

problems due to language between the supervisors and the employees arise (H10).

“They [supervisors] can easily come together and help the person [supervisor] who could not speak, I’m not blaming him, but I can speak very well, but they can meet each other [and explain] this is what this person [employee] needs, this and this” (H10).

Third, Finns should not be afraid of speaking English in general, although they might make few mistakes (H2).

### **Summary of Language Skills**

English language skills in the work of the supervisors are essential, as the company has knowingly made a decision that the knowledge of Finnish language is not required from the international employees. The challenges in communication between two non-native speakers have been noticed by both the supervisors and the international employees. The supervisors say that a strong accent makes understanding the communication partner difficult. The employees have noticed this and admit that their accent or way of speaking might be difficult to understand. The employees tell that they modify their way of speaking, when they communicate with the supervisors, so that it would be easier for the supervisors to understand them. They for example try to speak more slowly. Both groups have also noticed that communication on the phone can be challenging because of this.

Training is one solution to reduce the communication difficulties. The supervisors do get language training, which was also suggested by one employee.

### **4.5 BEST PRACTICES**

“Best practices” refer to work practices that are considered very good and functional at the workplace. In the current study “Best practices” concern all aspects of the organisation, not only the supervisory work. This theme aims at finding out what are considered as the best practices at the case organisation.

## Supervisors

Best practices pointed out by the supervisors relate to communication and management of multicultural workforce. An overview of the best practices is presented in the table 15. In general, the opinions of the best practices vary somewhat.

Best practice		Number of supervisors mentioned
Communication	Face-to-face communication	2/4: H5, H7
	Development of written materials in English	1/4: H3
	Insiders-team for international employees	1/4: H3
Management of multicultural workforce	Personal contact with the international employees	2/4: H4, H7
	Establishing clear authority	1/4: H4
	Showing trust and understanding to international employees	1/4: H4

**Table 15. Supervisors: Best practices**

What comes to the communication, face-to-face communication has been experienced as the most effective form of communication with the international employees.

“I have noticed that asking them to come to the office and communicating face-to-face functions the best [in order to make my point clear]” (H5)

Other well-functioning communication practices are related to communication in English. Firstly, developing more and more materials in English, such as the employment agreement and newsletters, and secondly, organising an English language Insiders-team for the international employees are considered important.

“Very few of the international employees participate in the meetings of the regional teams, but then we also have a team called “Insiders”, there the team language is English, it crosses the whole team structure, so international deliverers from all areas participate in that, thus that team does not concentrate on issues of certain areas, but the topics are discussed especially from the point of view of the international employees” (H3)

Three best practices related to management of the multicultural workforce are pointed out. Firstly, a personal contact between the employees and the supervisors makes the interaction more effective.

“If you handle the issue personally, they [international employees] accept it a lot better, a personal contact might be even more important for them than for the Finns” (H7)

Secondly, establishing a more authoritarian relationship to the international employees works better than an egalitarian relationship, which in comparison commonly exist between the Finnish deliverers and the supervisors. Finally, showing trust and understanding the employee’s viewpoint is considered important, when managing the international employees.

“If they [international employees] feel that they are understood, for example at the area of one international deliverer the number of missing papers increased suddenly a lot, and it was not his fault, so when he noticed that we trust him on that matter, he was ready to do anything to solve the matter, of course this might have happened with anyone, but especially with the international employees because they are outsiders, foreigners it is crucial.” (H4)

### **International employees**

Best practices mentioned by the employees cover communication, the supervisor’s attitude on the employees as well as the way of working in the organisation. These are presented in the table 16.

<b>Best practice</b>		<b>Number of international employees mentioned</b>
Communication	Distribution of information to employees	3/6: H8, H9, H10
Way of working	Flexibility in unexpected situations	1/6: H9
	Systematic and punctual structuring of work	1/6: H9
Supervisor’s attitude on employees	Supervisor’s consideration on employee’s health	1/6: H10

**Table 16. International employees: Best practices**

Firstly, a communication related best practice according to the employees is the distribution of information. They describe that they are always informed well and in advance about the issues that concern them.

“They inform almost everything on the time, they don’t do delay, till now we haven’t suffered in our work because of the lack of information ... now this company informed all the workers on time about winter vacation, about summer vacation or some activities or some like extra paper is coming this day, I think if some extra paper is coming next months, they will inform you like this month because they give us sufficient time, enough time to prepare ourselves for anything so I think they are best in that.” (H9)

Secondly, best practices related to the way of working are pointed out. On the one hand, the organisation is flexible when unexpected events occur, such as at very snowy weather one might get little extra time to work.

“There’s a storm in winter, there’s snow and you went for work and you think you can’t work that night, you tell your boss, you call that the situation is very difficult, like I can’t work and that time they tell to wait until the snowing stops” H9

On the other hand, the work is structured systematically and punctually. Thirdly, supervisor’s consideration on the employee’s health is appreciated.

### **Summary on Best practices**

Generally the topic areas of best practices mentioned by both groups are rather similar. The supervisors and the international employees have both mentioned issues related to the communication and management. However, when looking at the individual practices mentioned, the groups have brought up different issues. Furthermore, the employees have pointed out some best practices concerning the way of working in the organisation, which are not mentioned by the supervisors.

## **4.6 DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE**

The theme “Development of intercultural management competence” aims at shedding light on the question how the supervisors develop their intercultural management competence. Although this question is not directly discussed in the literature, the interviews provide an interesting insight to this theme. Developing intercultural management competence means in this study

conscious pursuing towards the improvement of the competences that have been analysed in this study.

Within this theme the supervisors reflect their experiences and the employees present some suggestions. As the foundation of developing the intercultural competence and all learning, can be considered openness and interest as well as the willingness to learn (cf., Salo-Lee 2006).

## **Supervisors**

At first I will present the supervisors' views on why developing intercultural management competence is needed. Then I will present the methods that the supervisors use for developing their intercultural management competence. I will also discuss their preferences for the methods. Finally, I will look at how the competence becomes activated in actual work situations.

Developing intercultural management competence is important for the supervisory work (2/4: H4, H5). Both cognitive and interactional competences are pointed out. Firstly, the supervisors need to learn about other cultures. They need to understand especially how and why the cultural background may affect the behaviour of the international employees. Secondly, they should be able to adapt in the interaction situations with the international employees.

Both learning through the practical experience as well as the theoretical training are brought up as methods for developing the intercultural management competence. However, the emphasis is clearly on learning through practice (3/4: H3, H4, H7). Sometimes experiential learning happens through critical incidents, as unexpected events at work make the supervisors ponder the point of view of the other person involved. For example, the organisation recruited employees directly from abroad for the first time, whereas they usually employ people, Finns and immigrants, who are living in Finland on a permanent basis. The organisation had planned that these new international employees start immediately after their arrival, but to the supervisors' surprise they had more problems in the beginning than new deliverers on average have. This made the supervisors feeling frustrated at first, but then they realised that starting a night job in a new country in so short time might be quite challenging.

“Then I was thinking that if I arrived in X [name of a town in Poland, unclear] and the next night I would need to start delivering paper somewhere even some kilometres away, I would have some problems too, new job in the dark, in a place, where you do not yet know where the closest convenience store is.” (H3)

What comes to the training, both the language training as well as the theoretical training on diversity issues have been organised for the line management personnel. The opportunity to the language training is mentioned once (H5). However, it is not discussed in detail, although the need to improve English skills is pointed out a few times (2/4: H3, H4). Besides the training in the English language, an online dictionary can serve as a tool in the supervisory work (H5). The English skills and other language issues are discussed in more detail in section 4.4.6. on “Language skills”.

The training on the diversity issues was discussed more frequently. Only one of the interviewed supervisors had participated in the diversity training, but the training materials were distributed afterwards to everyone in the line management and discussed together. The opinions of this training varied among the supervisors. On the one hand, the training had helped the organisation to decide on the most important development areas of the management (H7). On the other hand, all training is considered often to be too theoretical and generalising (H3).

“I think [with emphasis] that practical work is more educating, we have so many employees with so many different backgrounds, I've gained more from working with them, training remains always very theoretical, or it is always generalising, they are both wrong and useless.” (H3)

The supervisor who participated in the training had a more positive attitude towards the usefulness of the training than those who did not participate.

The supervisors also describe how the developed skills and knowledge are applied in the actual work (2/4: H4, H7). On the one hand, the knowledge and skills may be well internalised and thus applying them in the practical work is rather automatic.

“If I need to point out a mistake, need to guide the employee, I automatically express myself in a different way to a person from such a culture were people bow a lot.” (H7)

On the other hand, the insight may come when the situation is on. For example, one supervisor describes an incident where he had a meeting with Muslim employees and just before the employees' arrival realised that ham sandwiches are not suitable refreshments (H4).

## **International employees**

Few aspects for “Development the intercultural management competence” were also brought up by the employees (2/6: H6, H10). These concern the language training and cultural learning. Firstly, the need for continuous the language training is emphasised, as communicating in English with some supervisors has not been without complications (H10).

“In every organisation there should be kind of training and retraining for the staff in English, it could be a kind of talk show, could be a kind of presentation in English, just to train them” (H10)

Secondly, learning about the ways of other cultures is suggested. This could happen by observing typical behaviour of people with certain cultural background, for example while travelling. The time spent abroad may make one more culturally sensitive, i.e. aware of the existing differences in others and in oneself. If travelling is not possible, cultural issues might also be trained in one's country.

“[On the] vacation you're having [abroad], try to look what is appreciated in there and [when you] come back and tell us ... or if they [supervisors] can't travel let here be somebody who is from there teach them” (H10)

## **Summary of Development Intercultural Management Competence**

Because of the increasing number of the international employees, management of the multicultural workforce has become a special development area in the case organisation. The supervisors have recognised that different kinds of competences are necessary in the management of the international employees compared to the management of the Finnish employees. To succeed in their work the supervisors have needed to develop themselves. However, the discussion on the individual competences from the perspective of development stays on a rather general level, except for the language skills.

The supervisors mainly develop their intercultural management competence through their daily work. They clearly think that practical learning is more useful for them than theoretical training and do not seem to value the latter a lot. The employees do not express clear preferences between the forms of learning they suggest, but they emphasise the importance of

continuous training. Furthermore, the employees point out some aspects that are not discussed by the supervisors, such as learning while travelling.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this qualitative case study is to critically reflect how literature on intercultural management competence can contribute to the supervisory work at one Finnish multicultural workplace. This aim was studied through the following research questions:

1. What intercultural management competences do supervisors of Aamujakelu Oy need in managing multicultural workforce?
  - a. From the supervisors' viewpoint
  - b. From the international employees' viewpoint
2. Are there differences in the perception of these two groups? If yes, what kind of differences?

The discussion on the first research question focuses on reflecting the competences identified from the literature and the findings of the study, whereas the discussion on the second research questions concentrates on the possible differences between the views of the two interviewee groups: the Finnish supervisors and the international employees. In addition, the study provided data on the ways and tools that the supervisors use for developing their management competences as well as on best practices of the organisation. These are also discussed in the following. Finally, I discuss the meaning of the intercultural management competence in the light of these findings for the case organisation.

At first, I want briefly to point out similarities in previous studies on Finnish multicultural workplaces and the current study. According to Juuti, international employees are employed to work in the lowest positions of the workplaces (Juuti 2005, 55). That is also the case of this study. All international employees belong to the delivery personnel, whereas all supervisors are Finns. In addition, Finnish workplaces have been generally recognised as low in hierarchies previously. According to Trux, the international employees are satisfied with the low hierarchies (Trux 2000a, 299). The same finding was made in the current study, as none of the international employees would like to change the egalitarian relationship to the supervisors to a more hierarchical one which is typical in their home countries.

Lastly, both the supervisors of the previous studies and the supervisors of the current study have pointed out that employing international employees means somewhat more work for the managerial personnel (Juuti 2005, 74).

## **5.1 REFLECTION ON FINDINGS AND LITERATURE**

The competences identified from the literature for this particular study present three different perspectives on managing a multicultural workforce. They include the aspects of managing the multicultural workforce in the manager's home country, cross-cultural knowledge management and leadership skills as emotional intelligence. In the current part of the thesis I follow a similar structure as in the analysis, where the individual competences were divided into cognitive and the interactional competences. I will first discuss the findings on the cognitive competences and after that the interactional competences. This approach may bring the discussion on the intercultural management competences to a deeper level, as the interdependences of these competences may be revealed. Furthermore, I reflect the benefits of these competences through the managerial tasks discussed in theory. Finally, I will also discuss the competences that did not appear to be relevant in the case organisation.

### **5.1.1 Cognitive Competences**

Now I will discuss the findings of four cognitive competences: "Recognise difference at home", "Adopt cultural general approach", "Business focus" and "Self-regulation". Firstly, the findings reveal that the supervisors recognise cultural differences in their work. Thus, they have been able to encounter the challenge of becoming aware of cultural differences in their familiar environment (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168). To be more specific, the cultural differences at the case organisation include both issues foreign to Finnish culture and issues typical of Finnish culture.

Nevertheless, the issues typical of Finnish culture are in the minority of the cultural differences reported. Furthermore, they were discussed slightly more by the international employees. Such issues typical of Finnish culture as riding a bike or the numbering of the post boxes can be easily

forgotten or taken for granted by the Finns. Thus, the supervisors might need to pay somewhat more attention on those issues typical of Finnish culture that are relevant in the work, as the awareness of the cultural differences includes also recognising differences in one's own culture, not only in the foreign cultures (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 159).

What comes to the individual cultural differences reported in this particular study, they may provide useful information for the supervisors in two ways. On the one hand, the supervisors can become aware of the cultural differences they might not have noticed yet. On the other hand, the findings can reveal how the supervisors have succeeded in communicating such values as being precise and punctual to the international employees.

Interestingly, some supervisors have the opinion that the cultural differences arise mostly in the interaction, such as job applicants trying to benefit from their contacts in the recruiting phase. However, both of the interviewee groups report also quite many differences that concern the way of working, such as precision. One possible reason for the emphasis of the differences in the interaction might be that once cultural differences, such as looser time concept, appear they are eliminated with rules and guidelines as far as possible, whereas setting rules for the behaviour that appears in the interpersonal interaction might be more difficult. The emphasis on the rules of the delivery work becomes evident under "Business focus" below.

In the second competence "Adopt cultural general approach" the supervisors concentrate on the typical behaviour of the international employees with certain cultural backgrounds. They focus entirely on the employee's behaviour in connection to work situation at the case organisation. This shows that the supervisors have successfully encountered the challenge of identifying those cultural dimensions that are relevant in their work (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 169)

What comes to the both competences discussed so far, Schneider & Barsoux have pointed out that gaining as much knowledge as possible is not the aim of these competences (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168-169). In fact, detailed knowledge of all the cultures present at the multicultural workplace might not even be impossible. The interviewees see this issue in the same way, as they point out that detailed knowledge is irrelevant or impossible to gain.

Thirdly, the supervisors show that kind of "Business focus" that has been suggested by Holden (2002). On the one hand, the supervisors

acknowledge the importance of developing the management of the multicultural workforce, as the number of international employees will probably even increase in the future. This is likely to bring advantages to the organisation, as organisations investing actively the development of multicultural issues at work are more probable to avoid the challenges caused by multiculturalism (Leponiemi 2008, 26). On the other hand, the supervisors conduct their work keeping in mind the organisational goals, i.e. the newspaper delivered on time to the customers. Still, the supervisors emphasise rather strongly the rules of the delivery work, which includes denying the possibility to take cultural issues contradicting with these rules into account. In his study on Finnish multicultural workplaces, Juuti has noticed that rules were used to eliminate some visible cultural differences (Juuti 2005, 97). This appeared in connection to ensuring equal treatment of all employees. At the case organisation, however, changing the basic functional patterns of the delivery work in order to take the cultural differences better into account may indeed hinder the realisation of the organisational goals.

Fourthly, "Self-regulation" belongs to the leader's emotional intelligence defined by Goleman (1998). More specifically, it is a self-management skill (Goleman 1998, 90). Because of this, "Self-regulation" may be more difficult to observe in interaction. However, the way how the employees described their supervisor's verbal behaviour might reveal something about the way how the supervisors use "Self-regulation". Based on the impressions of the interviewed employees' non-verbal communication, the supervisor was acting quite impulsively when they expressed themselves harshly to the employees. Being impulsive and thus acting in a harsh way is not in accordance with the self-regulation skill described by Goleman. Instead of being impulsive, Goleman suggests thoughtfulness and self-reflection (1998, 86).

Finally, some of the competences defined in the theory do not seem to be applied at the case organisation. These are "Rapidly learn and unlearn" and "Creativity" as well as other self-management skills than self-regulation. Next I will discuss possible reasons for the lack of these competences.

On the one hand, "Rapidly learn and unlearn" and "Creativity" refer to the manager's open-mindedness towards new approaches and the ability to question the customary ways of doing things (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 170; Holden 2002, 301). The lack of these competences would imply that the

supervisors persist to the customary ways and have rather a rigid attitude towards changing their ways, as emphasising the organisational rules also suggests. One reason behind this kind of attitude might also be that the operations of the organisation are very repeatable and not many changes are expected. This kind of working environment does not encourage the supervisors to question the customary ways. On the other, the self-management skills “Self-awareness” and “Motivation” by Goleman (1998) did not appear in the interviews. The first one refers to the manager’s awareness of his or her own emotions, strengths and weaknesses as well as the latter to being motivated by work well-done. The reason for the disappearance of these competences is likely to be due to weaknesses in compiling the interview protocol and it is hard to say anything more about these competences without additional knowledge.

To conclude on the cognitive competences, most of them appear to be relevant in the supervisory work at the case organisation. Possessing these competences can provide clear benefits for the supervisors, as will be argued in the following. The competences that did not occur in the data are “Rapidly learn and unlearn”, “Creativity” “Self-awareness” and “Motivation”. It is still questionable, whether “Rapidly learn and unlearn” would be entirely indifferent for the supervisors. This will be discussed in more detail, when development of the competences is concerned.

Most importantly, the cognitive competences provide a starting point for conducting the supervisory work at the case organisation. On the one hand, they provide tools for interacting with the international employees, for example in guidance and communication situations. On the other hand, they help the supervisors to be prepared on various cultural issues that might appear when managing multicultural workforce, such as holiday requests around cultural festivals. Furthermore, when considering the relation of the cognitive and the interactional competences, the knowledge gained through the first can equip the supervisors for the application of the latter. In some cases cognitive competence may be considered as a pre-requisite for the interactional competences, as will be argued in more detail below.

### 5.1.2 Interactional Competences

Now I will turn the discussion to the following interactional competences: “Respond to different cultures simultaneously”, “Problem solving abilities”, “Empathy”, “Social skills”, “Language skills” and “Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how”.

Firstly, the findings on “Respond to different cultures simultaneously” revealed two little different perspectives. On the one hand, the interviewees think that all employees should be treated in the same way. On the other hand, it is evident that the responsiveness to employee’s cultural background in certain situations is beneficial. At first these may seem contradictory, but may be proved not so, as I will argue in the following.

Clear differences emerged among the views of the interviewees about what would be the best way to treat all the employees. Therefore a detailed discussion of the different viewpoints will take place under the second research question in the section 5.2. However, I would like to point out the supervisors’ equality perspective, according to which all employees should be encountered as human beings. This approach resembles the sameness-perspective discovered by Juuti (2005). According to Juuti’s findings, Finns at multicultural workplaces emphasised the sameness of human nature across cultures (Juuti 2005, 35). All aspects included in this perspective, however, by and by lead to ignoring the cultural differences of the foreigners and strengthening the Finnish ways at the workplaces (Juuti 2005, 35). As pointed out under “Business focus”, it is typical for Juuti’s sameness perspective that some visible cultural differences are eliminated by rules. The sameness talk might be considered a typical characteristic of the Finnish multicultural workplaces, as it emerges from the side of the supervisors who are all Finns.

Keeping in mind Juuti’s findings, the equality perspective suggested by the supervisors of the case organisation, might lead to ignoring cultural differences and become rather a disadvantage than an advantage for the case organisation, when applied strongly. Still, there does not seem to be a great danger for that, as the supervisors describe that they adjust their way of communicating or managing in accordance with the employee’s cultural background. This also speaks for the relevance of the responsiveness to different cultures simultaneously at the workplace.

Literature on this competence does not try to suggest any right way for responding to the cultural differences (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168). However, it seems to imply that the manager should vary his or her approach somewhat when managing employees with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, equality as a general principle for management of multicultural workforce with certain adjustments in interpersonal communication is still in line with the literature.

Still, the authors emphasise strongly that the challenge of “Respond to different cultures simultaneously” is in achieving the organisational goals in the multicultural working environment (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168). Thus, this competence is connected to the supervisor’s “Business focus”. “Business focus” may provide an understanding to what extent and in which situations the responsiveness on different cultures is possible. In the case organisation, the responsiveness is possible in interpersonal interaction, but hardly on issues concerning the delivery work, which becomes evident in the supervisor’s emphasis on the rules of the workplace.

It should be noted that simultaneity in the sense of working together as a group at the same time and in the same place does not appear at the case organisation at all, as suggested by Schneider & Barsoux (1997, 168). Instead of that, simultaneity in the case organisation means that the supervisors interact with many international employees individually during their daily work.

To conclude, “Respond to different cultures simultaneously” appears to be a relevant competence for the supervisory work in the case organisation, as the supervisors need to adjust their behaviour, when communicating with or managing the international employees. In fact, the supervisors might need even more abilities for interaction than merely responding, as in some cases they are the one’s initiating the communication.

Secondly, the need for “Problem solving abilities” in the supervisory work is evident, as misunderstandings and confusion appear regularly in the work. An interesting finding is that in order to solve the misunderstandings on cultural issues the supervisors need to communicate not only with the international employees, but also with groups outside the organisation, such as the example of payment and taxation differences demonstrates.

A dialogical approach to solving misunderstandings has been brought up by both the supervisors and the employees. It can be considered

as the most fruitful way for that, because in a dialogue both parties may present their views freely. The supervisor's empathy and language skills may further have an important meaning in problem solving. On the one hand, as the dialogical approach suggests, it is important for the employees to become heard and understood. Both of these are crucial parts of the supervisor's empathy, as will be argued in the following. On the other hand, the employees find it easier to communicate with the supervisors with better English skills. When communicating with these supervisors the employees feel more often that they are understood. There is some evidence from a pattern that in misunderstanding situations the international employees talk to the empathetic supervisors, who are fluent in English.

Interactive translation is one of the interactional activities of knowledge management defined by Holden and refers to pursuing towards a common understanding and finding ways of working together (Holden 2002, 316). Problem solving situations can be seen as one area of interactive translation, as there the necessity of reaching a common understanding in order to continue the work is evident. Holden has described interactive translation as negotiation (2002, 317), whereas dialogue may be negotiation at its best where both parties get to express their views and together pursue towards a shared understanding.

In practice, any cultural difference may become a problem to be solved or an issue to be translated interactively. Because of the great variety of cultures and people involved, interactive translation can become a very challenging task for the supervisors, as it requires some basic knowledge on the issue in question. It is probable that interactive translation is a task that is never finished, as the number of the international employees in the organisation is increasing.

Thirdly, "Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how" in practice refers especially to sharing and explaining cultural knowledge to others. The supervisors seem to apply this ability in their work, as they have described sharing cultural knowledge among the managerial personnel as a common characteristic. They share the knowledge and the experiences gained in the interaction with the international employees and negotiate approaches and guidelines on these. Sharing happens also with important cooperation partners outside the organisation. Furthermore, comments about smooth and internalised procedures among the supervisors seem to refer to the fact that the managerial personnel works well as a team.

The “Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how” is needed especially for the knowledge management task of transferring knowledge, experiences and values. However, at the moment sharing in the case organisation is rather intracultural, as all the supervisors and the cooperation partners are Finns, whereas Holden talks about sharing as an intercultural act (2002, 82). Nevertheless, he also point out that sharing knowledge interculturally is more difficult than sharing knowledge intraculturally (2002, 82). Sharing the views on cultural and societal issues with the international employees systematically is still lacking. In any case, the international employees also have valuable knowledge on their own cultures, which is not necessarily the same information that the supervisors posses. For example, the international employees could tell about the vilification of colleagues in their own cultures as well as the supervisors could explain how honesty actually is expressed in Finland and what its limits are. This way both groups could gain a better understanding of the occurred events. According to the basic process model of cross-cultural management and knowledge transfer (See Figure 2, p. 24), interactive translation facilitates knowledge sharing (Holden 2002, 274). In this case, solving misunderstandings in a dialogue might indeed facilitate the start of systematic sharing of knowledge, values and experiences also interculturally.

In all three interactional competences discussed so far the possession of the cognitive competences is essential. “Responding to different cultures simultaneously”, “Problem solving abilities” as well as “Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how” are very difficult if not impossible without any culture related knowledge that may be gained for example through “Recognising differences at home” and “Adopt cultural general approach”. For instance, the looser time concept of the international employees needs first to be observed, before the supervisors can in any way respond to it. After becoming aware of the looser time concept, the supervisors can start to emphasise the importance of delivering papers on time to every new international employee. In addition, only after the looser time concept has been recognised it can be discussed together with other supervisors for example in order to create a guideline for handling this particular cultural difference. Finally, differences in the time concepts between cultures may also become a key issue in a problem situation, where the supervisor needs to be able to explain the difference in perceiving time between the cultures of the persons involved.

Fourthly, “Empathy” appears to be the most focal leadership skill in the case organisation. The importance of empathy at multicultural workplaces has also been emphasised by Goleman (1998, 90). The employees discussed this leadership skill in detail, whereas the supervisors do so only very little under the theme “Best practices”. Both of the groups emphasise the meaning of understanding the employee’s point of view. Listening to the employees may also have a special importance as the way to become aware of their viewpoint, because the supervisors and the employees work at different times and places.

Showing empathy may prove to be an important part of the problem solving abilities in a dialogue, because a dialogue requires willingness to listen and understand the other person’s point of view. If empathy is lacking from the problem solving situation, a dialogue can hardly emerge.

Fifthly, under “Social skills” the supervisor’s friendly and motivating behaviour emerged as the most important factors. The African employees discussed this theme very actively. One issue brought up only by them is the work motivation. Interestingly, when talking about motivation and encouragement at work, they never mentioned financial rewards, such as paid holidays or salary bonuses, as a way to increase the motivation to work. Instead of that, they focused on the supervisor’s behaviour as a key to increase their motivation to work.

The creation of collaborative atmosphere is mentioned as one of the tasks of the cross-cultural manager by Holden (2002, 293). The way the supervisor behaves may indeed have an important effect on the atmosphere, in which the interaction takes place. In this case, the supervisor’s friendliness or empathy may function as a decisive characteristic for the creation of collaborative atmosphere, i.e. the eagerness of the employees to cooperate with them. At the moment the international employees have pointed out both positive and negative experiences on the cooperation with the supervisors, which implies that there is room for improvement of the atmosphere.

Sixthly, what comes to the “Language skills”, the ability to communicate in English is a salient issue in the case organisation. The fact that English is a non-native language for many in the organisation makes the situation challenging. Especially the level of the supervisors’ English skills is a central issue in the organisation. Although being a non-native speaker is frequently discussed as a reason for the language difficulties, this study did

not investigate the fact who actually is a non-native speaker. With certainty it can be stated only that the supervisors are non-native speakers of English. A noteworthy fact is that the supervisors speak as if all the international employees were non-native speakers as well.

Holden has described the ability to modify one's expression in the communication language of the organisation as one of the competences of the cross-cultural manager as a communicator (2002, 298-299). In the current study the supervisors slightly imply that they modify their way of speaking by pointing out the need to be able to address the international employees with varying English skills. However, they emphasise more the issues that hinder the understanding of the communication partner. In comparison, the international employees have noticed the need to modify their way of speaking, when communicating with the supervisors. This situation implies that the employees demonstrate more of this competence than the supervisors. Instead of tackling with the language difficulties, the supervisors should be able to modify their way of speaking in order to make themselves understood also for those with lower English skills.

This situation might be due to the fact that some employees actually have better English skills than the supervisors. At least it may be assumed that those international employees who are also students are more accustomed to speaking English in their everyday lives, as without Finnish skills their study programmes are most likely conducted in English. What comes to this particular study, 80 per cent of the interviewed international employees were students. According to Holden, in order to be able to modify one's expression, one has to have excellent skills in that language (2002, 198). Although the supervisors acknowledge their need to develop their English skills, they point out that one does not need perfect English skills in the supervisor's position. In the light of Holden's (2002) theory, the supervisors might need first of all to appreciate the high level English skills more in their work so that they recognise how better English skills could benefit them.

Indeed, the supervisor's high level of English skills might have several positive effects on the functioning of the company. For example, it might help the supervisor to avoid the use of harsh words and expressions, as reported by the employees in the interviews. One reason for the use of hard words and expressions might be the lower level English skills, because then the supervisor might not be aware of how or not able to express oneself in a polite or fluent way, which might lead to expressing oneself in a rather harsh

way. Such as Holden argues, higher language skills may provide one with alternative ways of expressing oneself (2002, 298). Furthermore, the higher language skills one has the better one can recognise different nuances and styles of language. On the other hand, fluent English skills could equip the supervisors for the problem solving situations. For example, being able to understand the employee's way of speaking English well, the supervisor might also be able to understand the employee's point of view more easily.

"Adeptness in intercultural communication" and "Intelligence" were included to the cross-cultural manager's competences by Holden (2002, 298; 301). As explained in the section 2.4.4 these competences were not studied through separate themes in the empirical part of the study because of the broadness of these concepts. When looking at the competences discussed in this section, it can be stated that the supervisors generally demonstrate both the "Adeptness in intercultural communication" and "Intelligence".

If anything can be said about the importance of the intercultural management competences by looking at the frequency in which they were discussed by the interviewees, "Language skills" appear as the most essential competence at the case organisation. The "Language skills" were discussed actively by both groups. Also in previous research language and communication issues emerged as the most topical challenges at multicultural workplaces (Pitkänen 2005, 107). Although it should be noted that in the previous studies not English, but Finnish was probably used as common language at work. In general Finnish skills are a requirement for the majority of work positions in Finland. In comparison, the leadership skills were not only discussed almost entirely by the employees, but emerged also as a salient topic among them.

Competences that were discussed fairly little are "Business focus" and "Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how". Furthermore, both of these competences as well as "Adopt cultural general approach" became mainly or only discussed by the supervisors. The reason for this might be that "Business focus" and "Adopt cultural general approach" are rather invisible competences for the international employees, the latter especially because of the small amount of interaction between the deliverers. What comes to the "Ability to apply cross-cultural know-how", it has clearly applied mainly intraculturally.

All the competences studied were identified from the literature aimed at international or global business organisation, and not for a domestic business. In addition, Holden's knowledge management perspective is aimed

especially at groups working together (2002, 222; 297). However, the findings have shown that the application of these intercultural management competences is possible and more importantly beneficial at a domestic multicultural workplace, where regular contacts between the supervisors and the employees are rare. The findings show that the intercultural management competences are a necessity in various supervisory tasks at the case organisation. The competences are needed mostly in the interaction situations. More specifically, the intercultural management competences prepare the supervisors for the interaction by providing them with knowledge and skills that help them to interact with the international employees more successfully and so that the both persons involved in the situation are at ease. Because of the increasing number of the international employees in the organisation, the importance of the intercultural management competence may also even increase in the future.

The intercultural management competence developed at the case organisation may also prove to be of interest of its international parent company Alma Media for two reasons. The corporation is committed in keeping the competences and skills of its employees up-to-date, as systematic development of these is written down in the corporation values (Alma Media Website). Moreover, Alma Media has also expressed the aims at expanding its businesses internationally even more (Alma Media Website).

## **5.2 DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS OF THE INTERVIEWEES**

In this section I will discuss in detail the differences that emerged in the viewpoints of the supervisors and the international employees on the intercultural management competences. In general, no clear differences appear in the views of the supervisors and the employees concerning the cognitive competences. Still the findings provide interesting data for the discussion of some individual cultural differences. What comes to the interactional competences, clearer differences in the viewpoints of the interviewees emerge, especially on the leadership skills. Other interactional competences that are discussed in this section are “Respond different cultures simultaneously” and “Problem solving abilities”.

Before entering into a detailed discussion on the individual competences, I want to point out few general aspects on the comparison of

the viewpoints of the two groups. At first, it should be noted that the international employees have commented on intercultural management competence from two different perspectives. On the one hand, they speak of their own experiences at the case organisation. On the other hand, they describe their ideals. In comparison, the supervisors focus entirely on their experiences of the supervisory work. In the international employees' answers both perspectives are important for identifying the development points of the intercultural management competence at the case organisation.

Secondly, the findings on some cognitive competences are one-sided, i.e. the interviewee data on some competences was gained only from one of the interviewed groups. To be more specific, only the supervisors discussed "Business focus" and "Adopt cultural general approach", whereas only the employees discussed "Self-regulation". Therefore, the comparison of different viewpoints is not possible. Next I will turn the discussion to individual cultural differences.

A lot of data on cultural differences was gained mainly under the competences "Recognise difference at home" and "Adopt cultural general approach". A detailed discussion of all cultural differences falls out of the scope of this study. However, as the sharing of cultural knowledge interculturally between supervisors and employees in the organisation is lacking, I will discuss few individual cultural differences now in more detail. The cases for the discussion were chosen because of they present new interesting viewpoints.

Firstly, hierarchy issues were discussed quite a lot, but the meaning of respect was discussed only by the African employees. They described respect both in the regular interaction and hierarchical relationships. On the one hand, mutual respect is expected from everyone in every-day interaction situations. On the other hand, if the other person has a higher status than oneself, showing respect by addressing the person as "sir" or "doctor" is considered as good behaviour. In the supervisor-employee communication, the African employees consider an open disagreement with the supervisor disrespectful, so they rather not express their viewpoint at all, if it might contradict with the one of the supervisor. The African employees might even admit making a mistake they have not made in order to avoid the disagreement with the supervisor, but afterwards they feel misunderstood. In this light, the meaning of empathy and dialogical problem solving becomes even greater.

The respect in the interaction or lack of it might also explain why the African employees pointed out the supervisor's use of harsh words and expressions. Probably on those situations they might have expected a friendly way of talking as a sign of mutual respect. In addition, accepting the fact that the African employees wish to call the supervisors with respectful titles would be beneficial, although it would feel awkward. That might give the African employees a feeling that their good behaviour is appreciated.

The second cultural difference discussed is flexibility. Flexibility emerged from two different perspectives in connection to the way of working of the African employees. According to the supervisor, the African employees easily develop their own ways of working in cases where it cannot be accepted, because those solutions contradict the rules of the work. A similar finding was reported by Juuti, as more than a half of the Finns said that the immigrant employees are not obeying the rules of the workplace (Juuti 2005, 56). From the supervisors' viewpoint flexibility appears in a rather negative light, as it causes the need to correct the behaviour of the African employees.

In comparison, the African employees themselves have described that they are very flexible in what comes to the relation of work and holiday. In case the company would ask an African employee to work, although he is on holiday, he would come. Thus, the flexibility may also have a positive side and which could be utilised by the case organisation also. The fact that such different aspects appear on the same cultural issue for different groups is a good example of the need for sharing cultural knowledge interculturally and more systematically in the case organisation.

Now I will turn the attention to the differences in the interactional competences. Firstly, "Respond to different cultures simultaneously" provided a variety of differing opinions. Although some similarities may be found between the groups, the answers form a rather complex perspective on this competence. In addition, under this theme the interviewees separate into three groups instead of two: the supervisors, the Asian employees and the African employee. On the whole, responding to different cultures was discussed on two different levels. On the one hand, the interviewees discuss the creation of a general principle for managing all employees. On the other hand, they debate the role of cultural differences in interpersonal interaction.

All the interviewees discussing this competence agree on the creation of a general principle on managing the multicultural workforce. However, their perspectives on the content of the principle are all different.

The first, the supervisors emphasise the equality in encountering all employees. The second, the African employee would use the rules and regulations of the work as a guideline. The third, one Asian employee suggests establishing a management norm with which everyone is comfortable. Fourth, the other Asian employee would follow the ways of the major culture at the workplace in managing the multicultural workforce. There is some similarity in the first and third viewpoints. Both seem to aim at taking the employees into account as personalities. The second one resembles the supervisors' view presented under "Business focus". In comparison, the fourth one stands out from the rest and is less in line with the findings of the theory, as will be argued below.

Furthermore, the responsiveness was also discussed from the viewpoint of interpersonal communication. The Asian employees see responding to cultural differences impossible at the multicultural workplace, whereas according to the supervisors and the African employee, responsiveness in certain situation is needed. It is hard to say whether there are some cultural reasons affecting the viewpoint of the Asian employees, as their suggestions for the general principle of managing multicultural workforce are still different from another. All in all, the viewpoint of the Asian employees not to pay attention on cultural differences at all or to stick to the cultural ways of the major culture is in contradiction with the findings of the study and the literature. Schneider & Barsoux suggest adjustments in the manager's behaviour according to the employee's cultural background (Schneider & Barsoux 1997, 168), which the findings of the study have proven beneficial especially from the point of view of interpersonal communication and management style.

Secondly, two different ways for problem solving emerged in the data. In one approach, the employee is invited to describe his or her point of view to the problem in a dialogue. In the other approach, the employee is told right away what he or she did wrong. The first approach was suggested by one supervisor and one employee, whereas a different kind of approach was suggested by one supervisor. Although the dialogical approach was not discussed very frequently, it assumingly is a very useful approach to problem solving. The fact that the supervisor's empathy emerged in the interviews as a focal skill, should be remembered when choosing the approach to problem solving. Solving problems in a dialogue is indeed a concrete situation where the supervisor can show empathy, by taking time to listen to the employee and

make an effort to understand his or her point of view. In comparison, the 'straight forward' approach does not leave any room for hearing the employee's viewpoint.

Moreover, solving problems seems to be in need of improvement in the organisation. Generally, the problems or confusing issues pointed out by the employees were still unsolved. This is another factor supporting the fact that sharing knowledge interculturally in the organisation is lacking.

Finally, I will discuss the differences in the relationship skills, i.e. "Empathy" and "Social skills". Under these themes differences appeared especially between the supervisors and the African employees, of which the latter discussed relationship skills especially actively. In the following I will present two examples which imply that the working principles of the supervisors are not transferred very well into practice.

Firstly, the supervisors described trust as an important part of interaction. Still the African employees have reported few cases where the supervisor has not believed them. To question the other person's truthfulness is a clear sign of distrust. The need to develop a more trusting relationship between the Finnish and international employees was reported also in previous studies on Finnish multicultural workplaces (Juuti 2005, 47).

Secondly, the African employees pointed out the equal treatment of employees. With that they seem to refer to equal treatment as human beings, as respecting supervisor's authority has been emphasised by them while discussing cultural differences. Interestingly, although the supervisors brought up the equality aspect as a general principle in encountering all employees in "Respond to different cultures simultaneously", the African employees did not tell any positive experiences about being treated as equals. However, both of these cases do not mean that showing trust to the employee or the equality would be lacking entirely. Still, it might be needed to check how these principles are transferred into the practice. What comes to the equal treatment, there might also some difference in the views of the interviewee of what equal treatment means for them, as pointed out also by Pitkänen (2007, 404-405).

Thirdly, the supervisor's behaviour seems to be a key to motivating and encouraging especially the African employees. They have described both positive experiences on the supervisor's motivating behaviour as well as negative experiences on the supervisor's demotivating behaviour. However, the supervisors did not bring up the topic at all. Motivated employees are probably more satisfied with their job and the workplace in general. Thus, this

might be something for the supervisors of the case organisation want to pay attention in the future.

To conclude, not so many differences between the views of these two groups emerge, as could have been expected. On general, most of the differences in the views on the supervisor's intercultural management competence seem to concern the interactional competences. "Empathy" appears in the background of the differences of several competences, such as problem solving and respect issues. The leadership issues have gained relatively lot attention above, as an area that might need special attention in the future. The supervisors should pay special attention on improving "Problem solving abilities" in a dialogue, showing trust and treating employees equally, as the employee's expectations are not entirely met within these aspects. However, it should be noted that the organisational change occurred shortly before the interviews. At that time it was not yet sure, what effects it might have on the supervisor-employee relationships.

### **5.3 BEST PRACTICES**

The most essential "Best practices" can be considered those that have been mentioned by more than one interviewee. These are face-to-face communication and personal contact from the supervisors' point of view as well as the distribution of information to the employees from the international employees' viewpoint. All of them belong to the topic communication.

The interviewees have pointed out "Best practices" related to communication, management and delivery work. Of these three, "Best practices" related to communication were discussed the most frequently by both groups. In fact, communicating successfully with the international employees had been pointed out as one of the main challenges of managing multicultural workforce earlier. The supervisors have clearly been able to recognise the importance of the interpersonal communication in the supervisor-employee interaction, as a personal contact and face-to-face communication are mentioned in "Best practices" both from the point of view of communication and management.

#### 5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE

The supervisors have developed their intercultural management competence both through theoretical training and experiential learning. The latter, however, has clearly been the main and preferred method by the supervisors. Moreover, the supervisors also seem to trust quite a lot on the competences they have developed through practice. Still the meaning of the theoretical training cannot be entirely disregarded, as it may enrich the insight on multicultural workplaces and the management of multicultural workforce.

Reasons for the supervisors' rather negative attitudes towards theoretical training might be due to three reasons. Firstly, multiculturalism at Finnish workplaces is rather a new issue, but the case organisation has had international employees for rather a long time. Secondly, the working environment is unique. Within this context the supervisors might feel that they have developed their own expertise during the years and outsiders do not have insight into their daily work in order to provide useful information for developing it. Finally, what comes to the particular diversity training in which some of the managerial personnel participated, the way of transferring the knowledge gained in the training to the rest of the managerial personnel should be questioned. Would another way of transferring the knowledge to the others made it approachable and accepted? There is not enough knowledge to answer this question in this study. The current case supports Pitkänen's view that training on multiculturalism may become a challenge for the management (Pitkänen 2005, 109). Nevertheless, participating in a theoretical training does not mean that the contents of the training could not be critically reflected from the point of view of each case.

In any case, three points for improvement concerning the development of the intercultural management competence emerge. Firstly, some more openness towards the ways of developing the intercultural management competences might be beneficial. As the supervisors seem to be rather competent in their own area, they should also be able to critically reflect new information on the development of multicultural issues from the perspective of the organisation. Thus, they should also be able to differentiate, what new knowledge or competences would be beneficial for them and the organisation. A lack of openness towards new knowledge might further be a reason for the disappearance of the competence "Rapidly learn and unlearn" in this study.

Secondly, intensive language training might be a very concrete way of improving the intercultural management competence at the organisation, which would affect positively also on the other competences, as have been argued above. Thirdly, a more systematic approach towards the training would also benefit the organisation, as at the moment the newest supervisor interviewed was not aware the training material at all.

The “Development of the intercultural management competence” has been also discussed by the international employees. On the one hand, they emphasise continuous language training for the supervisors. On the other hand, the employees have suggested travelling as a good way to observe other cultures in their natural environments and learn from them. Similarly Holden has suggested international experience in the sense of residing abroad to widen and deepen one’s world view permanently (Holden 2002, 302). Although the role of international experience was not directly studied in this study, the background knowledge reveals that none of the supervisors have this kind of experience.

The benefit of the supervisors’ successful development of the intercultural management competence should decrease the amount of the international employees’ negative experiences of interaction with the supervisors. Still, to be able to decrease the international employees’ negative experiences, all supervisors at the case company should develop their competences equally. There the sharing of learning experiences may have great importance.

What comes to the “Talent” that Holden calls for as a professional attribute of a global knowledge workers (Holden 2002, 301), the supervisors seem to demonstrate that kind of “Talent”, as they have succeeded relatively well in developing their intercultural management competence through experiential learning without other international experience. Sharing knowledge and experiences among the managerial personnel has probably supported this way of developing the own competence. Still, spending time in a foreign country might help them to take their skills to the next level.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The current study confirms that the supervisors of the case organisation need intercultural management competence in their daily work. Intercultural management competence is not only beneficial, but may appear as a necessity for successful interaction with the international employees. More specifically, intercultural management competence provides the supervisors knowledge and skills for effective and appropriate interaction with the international employees.

The fact that there are relatively little regular contacts between the supervisors and individual employees does not decrease the importance of intercultural management competence in the supervisors' work at the case organisation. On the contrary, the interviewees acknowledge that if there was more interaction, more cultural challenges would surely occur. In fact, most of the supervisors interact with the international employees on a daily basis, as they are in charge of rather a large amount of employees. Moreover, the time spent managing international employees is likely to increase, as the number of international employees in the organisation is constantly increasing. Thus, intercultural management competence may become even more important at the case organisation in the future. Moreover, the intercultural management competence developed at the case organisation may also prove to be of interest to its international parent company Alma Media which pursues international expansion and continuous development of its employees' competences (Alma Media Website).

This study shows that intercultural management competence determined for internationally operating business organisations is applicable, at least partly, to a domestic multicultural business organisation. Three different perspectives on intercultural management competence were identified from the literature, including management of multicultural workforce in the manager's home country, cross-cultural knowledge management and leadership skills as emotional intelligence. The empirical study shows that all of these perspectives include relevant competences for the supervisory work at the case organisation.

Firstly, competences defined for managers in charge of multicultural workforce in their own country aim at making the manager aware of relevant cultural issues in their familiar environment and able to adjust their behaviour in interaction with the culturally different employees. Secondly, cross-cultural knowledge management emphasises the meaning of knowledge as an organisational resource. Competences defined within this perspective are closely related to the activities that aim at utilising cultural knowledge for the benefit of the organisation. Thirdly, leadership skills as emotional intelligence refer to the leader's awareness of his or her emotional composition and its effects on the interaction with others. In this study especially relationship related leadership skills gained special importance.

In the analysis two general categories emerged across these perspectives. Thus, the individual competences within the above described perspectives can be divided into cognitive and interactional competences. Cognitive competences are based on cognitive processes, whereas interactional competences are demonstrated in interaction with others. Cognitive competences emerged partly as a prerequisite for the interactional competences, as certain knowledge may be necessary for steering one's behaviour in intercultural interaction. For example, the supervisor has to be aware of the looser time concept in other cultures in order to communicate successfully the meaning of punctuality in the delivery work to the international employees.

The most focal competences at the case organisation according to the empirical part of the study are English language skills and empathy. Firstly, English is the main communication language of the supervisors and the international employees and therefore a sine qua non of the verbal communication. Without English skills communication between the supervisors and the employees is interrupted. Similar findings have been made in previous research, where language and communication issues were reported as the most crucial difficulties at Finnish multicultural workplaces. Secondly, empathy emerges in the sense of understanding the employee's point of view. Taking the employee's viewpoint into account is especially important at the case organisation, because the supervisors and the employees work in different times and places. Otherwise the employees easily feel misunderstood.

Moreover, an important aspect is that English language skills and empathy might affect positively other intercultural management competences.

On the one hand, supervisors with higher English skills understand better the employees' point of view and may appear thus more empathetic. On the other hand, being empathetic may help the supervisors to solve problems in a dialogue. Furthermore, the dialogical approach to problem solving abilities appears to be quite important as well, because the supervisors and the employees meet mostly when a problem arises. Then the supervisor's ability take the employee's viewpoint into account is crucial.

Also some differences in the views of the supervisors and the international employees on intercultural management competence occurred. The supervisor's relationship skills gained much more attention among the international employees than among the supervisors. Thus, empathy and social skills appear as crucial skills in the supervisor's work from the international employees' perspective. The international employees expect the supervisors to consider their viewpoint as well as to motivate and to encourage them at work. In addition, the supervisors and the international employees had different views on the degree of responsiveness to cultural issues at a multicultural workplace. There the supervisor's viewpoint which included responding to cultural issues in interpersonal interaction is more in line with the literature than the international employees' viewpoint which rejected the responsiveness.

According to the findings, the supervisors have developed their intercultural management competence mainly through experiential learning and succeeded in it rather well. Lastly, the supervisors and the international employees recognised best practices in the functioning of the organisation.

## **6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations of the current study concern the selection of literature, the methodology and the interviewees. Firstly, intercultural and cross-cultural management are vast fields of study, in which the manager's competences have emerged as a special interest area of the researchers. This study was not able to analyse these competences vastly. The studied intercultural management competences were identified on a rather ad-hoc method. A more comprehensive analysis of the existing literature on inter- and cross-cultural management competences as well as more systematic selection of the

competence sets to be studied, might have enabled gaining a more in-depth view of the supervisors competences needed at the case organisation.

Secondly, the interviews concentrated rather rigidly on exploring the competences identified from the literature. Taking into account the unique working environment of the case, a more open approach in the interviews might have brought up competences needed especially in this working environment. Moreover, this study was able to utilise only part of the competences presented under the three perspectives. Instead of exploring all competences from the viewpoint of Finnish multicultural working life, few competences were excluded from the study because of assumed inapplicability due to the close relation to international business context of these competences.

Thirdly, more attention should have been paid on the preparation of the interview protocol, as now some themes provided data mainly from the viewpoint of one of the interviewee groups. Although it is natural that some themes were more actively discussed only by one of the groups, now the viewpoint of the other group on some competences, such as the one of supervisors on the leadership skills, was almost lacking. A more careful introduction of all themes to the both groups of the interviewees would have yielded more comprehensive data.

Fourthly, the findings are lacking the perspective of the European delivery personnel, as none of the requested deliverers with European background was willing to participate in this study. The European delivery personnel refer to the international employees with European background, excluding Finnish deliverers. Because of this the findings cannot be considered as representative for all international employees.

Finally, a detailed discussion of the cultural differences discovered falls out of the scope of this study. To analyse the differences in detail against the cultural backgrounds of the interviewees who reported them might become a topic of another master's thesis with a cross-cultural approach. The differences are still presented in order to gain a more detailed picture of the working environment of the case organisation and to demonstrate the cultural issues the supervisors are dealing with.

## 6.2 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Now I will consider the implications of this study both for future research and practice. The current study explored intercultural management competence at one Finnish multicultural workplace. To be able to generalise the findings of this study, a quantitative approach to the topic is necessary. In addition, at the case organisation a very unique working environment is concerned. Therefore it would be interesting to see what needs for the intercultural management competence emerge at workplaces where the interaction is more frequent.

The usage of English as a second company language provides a fruitful topic for further research at the case organisation, as language issues in the interviews were discussed more broadly than could be studied in this thesis. A possible research topic for the future could concern the written communication between the office and international employees and phenomena related to it. Exploring the role of language more vastly would be beneficial because of the salience of language skills discovered in this study.

In order to develop the management practice at Finnish multicultural workplaces in general further research on the topic is needed. Exploring the expectations of different cultural groups on good management and leadership could benefit practice in ensuring good performance at Finnish multicultural workplaces.

What comes to the practical implications, the supervisors demonstrate intercultural management competence as well as willingness to develop themselves in this area. That should provide a sound starting point for further development. However, more openness towards the development of intercultural management skills through theoretical training would be beneficial.

Also some special development areas emerged. Firstly, the supervisors' English skills may be the most important competence to be developed, as it seems to be a key in succeeding in other competences. Secondly, the relationship skills, empathy and social skills, were actively discussed by the international employees. Their opinions included also examples of negative experiences and thus improvement of relationship skills seems to be needed. Thirdly, the ability to share culture related knowledge interculturally should be developed because it would bring benefits for the organisation. At the moment the sharing of cultural knowledge appears to be mostly intracultural.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Interview protocol

Themes for the supervisors:

- A. Monikulttuurisuudesta aiheutuvat muutokset
- B. Kulttuurierojen huomioiminen työpaikalla
- C. Kulttuurierot ja johtaminen
- D. Kieli
- E. Väärinymmärrykset ja niiden käsitteleminen
- F. Monikulttuurisen tiedon välittäminen organisaatiossa

Themes for the employees:

- A. Recognising cultural differences and taking them into account
- B. Language
- C. Relationships at work and atmosphere
- D. Cultural differences and bosses
- E. Solving misunderstandings
- F. Rules and habits at work

#### Esimiehet

##### Monikulttuurisuudesta aiheutuvat muutokset

1. Onko organisaatiossa ilmennyt jotain muutoksia, kun on palkattu työntekijöitä, joilla on erilainen kulttuuritausta? Jos on, millaisia?
  - a. Miten tämä näkyy sinun työssäsi? uusia haasteita?
2. Onko sinun tarvinnut kehittää jotain uusia taitoja työssäsi maahanmuuttajien esimiehenä? Jos kyllä, millaisia taitoja?

##### Erilaisuuden huomioiminen työpaikalla

3. Onko kulttuurierot tarpeellista ottaa huomioon? Miksi?
4. Mitä Aamujakelussa on tehty eri kulttuuritaustoista tulevien työntekijöiden huomioimiseksi?
  - a. Onko monikulttuurisen työvoiman johtamiseen jotain yleisiä ohjeita?
  - b. Onko järjestetty koulutusta, jossa käsitellään monikulttuurisuuteen liittyviä asioita?
  - c. Oletko saanut jotain materiaaleja, joissa käsitellään monikulttuurisuuteen liittyviä asioita? Millaisia ja missä tilanteessa?

### **Kieli**

5. Mitä kieliä käytät viestinnässä maahanmuuttajatyöntekijöiden kanssa?
6. Aiheuttaako kieli jotain haasteita työssä? Jos kyllä, niin millaisia?
  - a. Kuinka tärkeä kielitaito mielestäsi on?

### **Kulttuurierot ja johtaminen**

7. Mitkä on tärkeimpiä kulttuurieroja, joihin olet kiinnittänyt huomioita työssäsi maahanmuuttajien kanssa?
  - a. Miten ne tulevat ilmi?
8. Miten huomioit kulttuurierot johtamisessa?
  - a. Toimitko maahanmuuttaja-työntekijöiden kanssa jotenkin erilailla kuin suomalaisten työntekijöiden?
  - b. Miksi juuri näin?
  - c. Oletko havainnut jotain käytäntöjä, jotka toimivat erityisen hyvin?
9. Miten yksityiskohtainen tieto maahanmuuttajien kulttuureista on mielestäsi tarpeen johtamisessa?
  - a. Miksi?
  - b. Miten paljon tiedät heidän kulttuureistaan?

### **Väärinymmärrykset ja niiden käsitteleminen**

10. Jos huomaat, että on tapahtunut jokin väärinymmärrys, miten lähdet selvittämään tilannetta ja millaisia taitoja tällaisessa tilanteessa mielestäsi tarvitaan?

### **Monikulttuurisen tiedon välittäminen organisaatiossa**

11. Ovatko monikulttuurisuuden liittyvät asiat yhtäläillä tuttuja kaikille organisaatiossa?
12. Millainen rooli sinulla on ollut ja on monikulttuurisuuden liittyvän tiedon välittämisessä eri tahojen välillä organisaatiossa?
13. Onko sinun koskaan tarvinnut selittää kulttuuriin liittyviä seikkoja sellaisille henkilöille, jotka ovat vähemmän tekemisissä maahanmuuttaja työntekijöiden kanssa? Esimerkki?

**Aamujakelu employees:****A. Recognising cultural differences and taking them into account**

1. Does culture come up in some way in your work? How?
2. Is there something related to culture you wish would be noticed that has not been given attention yet?
  - a. Why?

**B. Language**

3. What languages do you need in your work?
4. What language do you use with your boss?
5. Does language create some challenges for the work? If yes what kind of?
  - a. How important you think that language skills are in your work?

**C. Relationships at work and atmosphere**

6. How are you getting along with people at the workplace when you meet them?
  - a. What about your boss?
7. What kind of expectations you have on relationship with your boss?  
Example
  - a. How would you prefer to communicate with your boss?
  - b. How often would you like to meet?
8. Are immigrant- and Finnish employees treated equally at the workplace?
  - a. If not, how does it show?
  - b. What should be done for that?
9. Do you feel that your boss can put himself in your shoes? (Do you feel that you are understood?)
  - a. If yes, how does this show? If no, should something be done?

**D. Cultural differences and bosses**

10. Can you tell me an example what you think your boss should know about your culture? Why?
11. What if you were the boss, what would you like to know about the employees' culture if they come from different culture than you? Or is there anything?
  - a. Details or something on general level
  - b. What would you prefer and why?
12. If you were a boss, what do you think what kind of new things are necessary to learn if the employees come from many different cultures?

**E. Solving misunderstandings**

13. If a misunderstanding occurs, what you expect from your boss?
- Example?
  - How was the misunderstanding noticed?
  - How was the misunderstanding solved?

**F. Rules and habits at work**

14. During the time you have been working in Aamujakelu, from the start to today.

When your boss explained the rules or habits at your workplace, was there anything that was surprising for you?

- Can you think why you were surprised?
  - If something like this comes up do you ask someone to explain why things are done as they are?
  - Who do you ask?
15. What do you think works well in the organisation?

**G. Recognising cultural differences and taking them into account**

16. Do you think that it is important that everybody knows something about cultural issues?

- How in your opinion should cultural issues, experiences and values be made known in the organisation? (communicating and explaining)

## Appendix 2. Request for interview

Aamujakelu Oy

Request for interview

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Request for interview

I am soon collecting data for a study at your workplace Aamujakelu. The study concerns multicultural workplaces in Finland. I would appreciate it a lot if you would be interested to participate in the study.

The data is collected in individual interviews at the office of Aamujakelu. In the actual interview situation no other persons will be present than the interviewer and the interviewee. Language of the interviews is English. The interview lasts about one hour. The interviews will be taped for later analysis.

Participation to the study is voluntary. The information gained in the interviews will be handled entirely confidentially. In the interview I will ask questions about your experiences and expectations concerning your workplace. The interviews will be used only for this particular study and they will be analysed anonymously. In addition, the data will be seen and analysed only by the researcher.

The interviews are part of my Master's thesis in the field of Intercultural communication and the results of the study will be reported in the final product. Aim of the study is to enhance understanding between cultures and shed light on the expectations and needs of culturally different members of the workplace.

As a reward for participation Aamujakelu gives the participants a movie ticket to Finnkinno cinema. The ticket will be sent to you after the interviews.

I will contact you within a week via phone to settle the date and time for the interview.

I would appreciate your participation a lot. The information gained in the interviews is very valuable and important.

Sincerely,

Johanna Metsä-Ketelä