THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES

Authors: Tímea Lázár, János Farkas, Ildikó Tar, Mária Czellér
University of Debrecen, Faculty of Economics and Business, Institute of Business Communication and Professional Language Studies
timea.lazar@econ.unideb.hu
farkas.janos@econ.unideb.hu
ildikotar@econ.unideb.hu
czeller.maria@econ.unideb.hu

Abstract: *Globalisation and internationalisation have caused massive changes in several fields of life worldwide, with significant transitions in Hungary. The advent of multinational companies, including SSCs (Shared Service Centres), has impacted the labour market both internationally and domestically. The activity and the management of these companies have increasingly required good intercultural communication competencies and a high level of foreign language skills from graduate entrants. Considering multinational companies' predominantly culturally diverse environments, where employees can only complete their jobs effectively and successfully if they possess the necessary skills, the expectations are hardly surprising. Internationalisation has also influenced university education. International students often come to Hungarian higher education institutions to participate in international programmes offered by universities. Excellent intercultural communication competencies and foreign language skills may be the key to students' success.*

Keywords: intercultural communication competencies, university language teaching, non-parametric statistical procedure, foreign language use at work

1. Literature review

The most pressing problems of the 21st century can only be solved at international level. Such issues include sustainable development, climate change, global health, infectious diseases, and overpopulation. As a result, the role of universities has also changed, with increased collaboration between universities, through international research projects, joint publications and international conferences across borders. Moreover, universities and colleges should also provide global and international education, given the growing demand in that area (Edelstein, 2014).
One of the most dynamically developing sectors in the economy of Hungary is the SSC sector. It emerged in the 1990s, and its presence in Hungary has been determined mainly by access to skilled labour. However, its most significant obstacle to future development may be the inadequate language skills (Juhász, 2017). In addition to professional knowledge, SSCs expect graduates to prove

competence in a variety of soft skills, such as motivation, teamwork, loyalty, proactivity, dedication, the ability to work independently, openness to learning and knowledge of at least one foreign language (English).

Training workers to meet these expectations constitutes a significant challenge for educational institutions. Subjects that develop students' skills and abilities, even by non-standard teaching methods, should be included in the curriculum alongside the professional topics (Juhász, 2018).

Fast paced global technological and economic change has led organisations to demand new competencies. In the future, there will be a shift in competence expectations to which both higher education institutions and graduates will have to adapt. As regards the companies, there is a need to change the selection and training strategy (Tóthné and Hlédik, 2017). Employers and students assess foreign language, IT, and communication skills as crucial competencies. Employers see the development of critical competencies mainly in education through professional practice, independent project work, dedicated classes, and competence development training.

Today's labour market has become highly competitive, and professionals who can meet global challenges are more likely to succeed. In addition to excellent qualifications, professionals must meet the international market requirements: they must be fluent in at least one foreign language. This state of affairs poses a challenge to higher education institutions, as the expectations of foreign language skills vary from subject to subject, and the language background of incoming students can be very different. According to companies, graduates and the existing workforce cannot meet their foreign language needs satisfactorily. Employers use recruitment and selection methods – interviews in a foreign language, work-related tests, placement tests, group work and case studies in a foreign language – to select the candidates with the best language skills (Szűcs et al., 2013).

In multicultural organisations, where employees come from diverse cultural backgrounds, intercultural communication may be hampered by a combination of factors: language and behavioural differences, differences in role expectations of the interacting partners, differences in situational understanding, different ways of thinking and working, different time orientation and time management. Problematic tasks include setting up and running multicultural teams, managing cultural conflicts and decision-making in multicultural organisations (Borgulya, 2015).

Intercultural competence is part of the international competencies skill set, together with interpersonal, foreign language, global scientific and professional competencies. The acquisition of intercultural competencies covers the following four areas: attitudes, extensive cultural knowledge, intercultural skills, and critical cultural awareness. If individuals can develop these four dimensions, they will be able to behave and communicate appropriately in intercultural situations (Van den Hoven et al., 2015).

The cultural background of members in a culturally diverse group also influences effective leadership styles, and the lack of language skills can be a barrier to successful performance (Aritz and Walker, 2014). Language barriers can be a source of negative emotions within a multilingual group. Within the group, conflict can arise between native and non-native speakers of the group's working language, as the latter may feel they have limited communication skills and, consequently, experience anxiety, confusion, stress, shame and frustration. Managing these conflicts constitutes one of the tasks global managers are

expected to perform, and it requires intercultural competence (Tenzer and Pudelko, 2015).

Intercultural competencies should start during the learning years in secondary school and should continue during university and college studies (Mcguire-Snieckus, 2015; Awad, 2016; Dodge, 2016). Students need to receive training that prepares them for the challenges of the 21st century: they need to be able to function effectively within and outside their own ethnic and cultural communities (Banks, 2001). However, it requires well-trained teachers who possess, in their turn, high intercultural competencies. Multicultural teaching competence is necessary to enable educators to adequately address diversity issues in multicultural classrooms (Kucuktas, 2016). Multiple measurement tools are now available to measure the multicultural competencies of academic staff (Acar-Ciftci, 2016; Banks, 2018). Nowadays, there are several types of foreign study tours/ visits, students can access higher education institutions across borders, and scholarships are also available. Universities can collaborate with local authorities and NGOs to develop students' skills for future employment while training abroad (Fantini et al., 2017). Staying abroad can significantly contribute to the development of intercultural competencies. Living abroad develops self-confidence, self-initiative, determination, resilience and the ability to work in a team, although the individuals' personal characteristics also play an important role, just like the host culture, the length of stay, or the acculturation strategies (Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012; Belt et al., 2015).

When selecting employees for expatriate assignments, it is essential for global organisations that they choose those who are best suited for intercultural development (Saarentalo-Vuorimäki, 2015). This calls for the use of a tool that can measure such progress. Kumar and Kamalanabhan (2014) developed the Measurement of Intercultural Development (ICD), which can help HR professionals, managers, consultants, universities, and educational institutions to select the right individuals and manage intercultural groups, facilitating self-assessment, self-improvement and increasing overall effectiveness (Kumar and Kamalanabhan, 2014). The selection of staff suitable for the international job market depends on several crucial factors. One of these is the country to which the study tour is made, as the cultural distance between the two countries is not always the same. Faster intercultural integration and better performance can be expected with less cultural distance (Matveev, 2017). Several studies have been conducted on how employees in the host company can adapt to the multicultural working environment occasioned by the arrival of foreign workers, who need to be able to interact with workers within their own country and culture (Lefringhausen, 2017).

Intercultural communication competence refers to the ability of an individual to establish and maintain effective communication in a multicultural environment, taking into account and assimilating different cultural backgrounds. It requires developing the right intercultural mindset, skills and sensitivity (Ihtiyar, 2017). In a semiotic interpretation, intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability of individuals to cope in a foreign culture and environment (Topcu and Eroglu, 2017).

The best way to measure intercultural communicative competence is to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. These may include skills and personality traits tests, case studies, interviews, observations, as well as self- and peer assessments (Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012; Neculaesei, 2016; Matveev, 2017).

2. Material and method

In order to examine the students' competencies, a questionnaire was designed and applied to students at the University of Debrecen. The questionnaire was compiled based on the work of Hunyadi and his co-authors' suggestions concerning the methodology (Hunyadi et al., 2000), and it included numerical, open and closed, textual, and attitude questions.

Since it was essential to examine the students' intercultural communicative competence, which includes attitudes, we also used Babbie's (2000) method, which argues that the best way to assess attitudes is to formulate them in the form of short statements and ask the respondents to what extent they agree (Babbie, 2000). Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, with the following options: 1= rather untypical, 2= hardly typical, 3= moderately typical, 4= very typical, and 5= fully typical.

The 20 statements used in the questionnaire were formulated based on a study of the instruments used to measure intercultural communication competencies. The statements included dimensions and attitudes that could be tested when assessing these competencies. The data obtained was analysed with the Windows 23.0 SPSS statistical software. Our research applied the following methods:

A non-parametric statistical procedure, Pearson's chi-squared test, was used to examine the correlation between the variables in the study. This method is a non-parametric statistical procedure that tests the existence of a significant difference between an empirical and a theoretical/ conditional frequency table. The latter represents the independence of the variables of interest (variables of low ordinal measurement level at most). Therefore, if we reject the null hypothesis, we can say that the variables under investigation are not independent of one another.

In our case, the independent variables are the three variables assumed to be important in job placement. The dependent variables are the different intercultural communicative competence variables, which were initially twenty in number, but were combined during the analysis and only twelve of them were included in the analysis. The first and the last two response anchors of the five-point Likert scale categories in the questionnaire were merged, so the following categories were used in the analyses: 1= rather untypical, 2= moderately typical, and 3= rather typical. In cross-tabulation analyses, we also looked at the adjusted residuals, i.e. whether we found an over-represented value in a cell compared to the expected distribution. If the value of the adjusted residuals was greater than |2|, the value in the given cell was highlighted. According to Lázár (2009), if the value of the adjusted residual is higher than |2|, there is a significant relationship between the two categories. The analysis also took into account the Cramer'V coefficient, which provides information on the strength of the relationship between the variables as follows: <0.3: weak relationship; 0.3-0.5: moderate relationship; >0.5: strong relationship (Crewson, 2006).

3. Research questions and hypotheses

Does the perceived importance of written and oral communication in a foreign language impact the students' intercultural communicative competence?

Do students' perceptions of the importance of participating in professional trips abroad influence different intercultural communicative competencies?

We formulated two hypotheses for our two research questions, the first of which included two sub-hypotheses.

H1.a. Hypothesis: "The perception of the importance of adequate written foreign language communication significantly influences the students' various intercultural communicative competencies."

H1.b. Hypothesis: "The perception of the importance of adequate oral communication skills in a foreign language has a significant impact on the students' various intercultural communicative competencies."

H2. Hypothesis: "The perception of the importance of participating in professional trips abroad and of the importance of getting along there (lectures, conferences) has a significant impact on the students' various intercultural communicative competencies."

4. Results

Our research has revealed significant differences between several empirical and theoretical/ hypothetical frequency tables, i.e., we have successfully identified several correlations between variables perceived to be important in job search and different communication competencies.

In the first stage of our analysis, we investigated whether there was a noteworthy correlation between the variable "Ability to communicate well in writing at work (with colleagues, clients) in one or more than one foreign language" and different intercultural communication competencies. (Table 1.) The first significant correlation was identified with the competency variable "I would be happy to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and collaborate with foreign colleagues" (χ^2=16.08; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.11). Students who are happy to communicate in writing in a foreign language are significantly more likely to be glad to communicate orally in a foreign language at their future job and work with foreign colleagues. However, those who are reluctant to communicate in writing in a foreign language are significantly more likely to be unwilling to communicate orally in a foreign language at their future job and work with foreign colleagues.

The subsequent strong correlation was found for the competence variable "I enjoy learning and communicating with foreign students" (χ^2=16.80; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.12). Students who enjoy communicating in writing in one or two foreign languages are significantly more likely to enjoy learning and communicating with international students. On the other hand, the number of respondents who are reluctant to communicate in writing in a foreign language is significantly higher among those who are unwilling to learn and communicate with international students. Essential correlations were also measured for the variable "I like to make friends with foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners" (χ^2=12.91; df=2; p <0.05; Cramer'V=0.10). Students who considered it essential to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages in their job were more likely to meet foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners than students who did not consider written communication in a foreign language essential and were significantly less likely to be comfortable in the company of foreigners and make friends with foreigners. The following notable correlation was

found for the variable "I like to watch foreign language programs, films and read foreign language newspapers and news" (χ^2=19.28; df=2; p <0.05; Cramer'V=0.13). Students who considered it vital to be able to communicate in writing in one or more foreign languages were significantly more likely to watch foreign language programs and films and read foreign language newspapers and news compared to students who did not consider it important to be able to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages. Conversely, students for whom it is not vital to communicate well in writing in a foreign language are significantly less likely to watch foreign language programs and films and read or watch foreign language news.

The next correlation was measured for the variable "I enjoy learning a foreign language" (χ^2=24.20; df=2; p <0.05; Cramer'V=0.14). Students who indicated in the questionnaire that it was important to be able to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages in their job were significantly more likely to learn a foreign language than those who did not consider it important to be able to communicate well in writing in a foreign language. We explored another significant relationship for students for whom being able to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages was irrelevant. They are significantly less likely to be willing to learn a foreign language compared to those for whom communicating in written foreign languages is essential for employment. A correlation was found regarding the variable "I like to learn and read about other cultures." (χ^2=16.42; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.12). Students for whom good written communication in one or more foreign languages is significant for employment are significantly more likely to learn and read about other cultures compared to students for whom written communication in one or more foreign languages is irrelevant. Students for whom it is unnecessary to communicate in writing in one or more foreign languages in the workplace are significantly less likely to be willing to learn and read about other cultures than students for whom it is critical to communicate well in a foreign language.

The subsequent correlation was identified for the variable "I can easily understand foreign language texts and speech" (χ^2=7.72; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.08). Students for whom it is necessary to communicate well in writing in one or two foreign languages in the workplace are significantly more likely to understand foreign language texts and speech compared to students for whom this is not important. At the same time, students for whom it is not important to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages are significantly less likely to understand foreign language texts and speech in the course of their careers compared to students for whom it is essential to communicate well orally in one or two foreign languages.

The following correlation concerns the variable "I consider foreign language education and language skills important." (χ^2=12.12; df=2; p <0.05; Cramer'V=0.10). Students for whom it is useless to communicate in writing in one or two foreign languages at work, as opposed to those for whom it is meaningful, are significantly less likely to consider foreign language education and language skills necessary.

The last remarkable correlation identified was for the variable "I consider my foreign language skills to be good" (χ^2=19.66; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.13). Students for whom it was essential to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages in their job were significantly more likely to rate their foreign

language skills as good compared to those for whom it was not important to communicate well in writing in a foreign language. However, students who did not consider it significant to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages rated their foreign language skills as significantly lower compared to those who believed it was imperative to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages.

Overall, in the cross-tabulation analysis of our variable "Ability to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages at work (with colleagues, clients)" with our intercultural communicative competence variables, we measured nine significant correlations, which confirmed H1.a. hypothesis.

Table 1: The importance of written communication in a foreign language at work in correlation with the intercultural communication competencies

Ability to communicate well in writing at work in one or more than one foreign language	Rather untypical *N* (adjusted residual)	Moderately typical *N* (adjusted residual)	Rather typical *N* (adjusted residual)
	I would be happy to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and collaborate with foreign colleagues.		
Not important	231 3,9	109 -0,7	185 -3,3
Important	235 -3,9	159 0,7	269 3,3
	I enjoy learning and communicating with foreign students.		
Not important	222 3,5	173 -0,2	130 -3,5
Important	230 -3,5	237 0,2	242 3,5
	I like to make friends with foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners.		
Not important	211 3,4		217 -3,1
Important	218 -3,4	135 0,3	356 3,1
	I like to watch foreign language programs, films and read foreign language newspapers and news.		
Not important	164	68	293

	4,4	-0,8	-3,3
Important	144	103	462
	-4,4	0,8	3,3
	I enjoy learning a foreign language.		
Not important	45	159	321
	1,5	4,4	-4,9
Important	45	138	526
	-1,5	-4,4	4,9
	I like to learn and read about other cultures.		
Not important	93	159	273
	3,5	1,2	-3,5
Important	77	193	439
	-3,5	-1,2	3,5
	I can easily understand foreign language texts and speech.		
Not important	220	98	207
	2,6	-0,2	-2,4
Important	245	135	329
	-2,6	0,2	2,4
	I consider foreign language education and language skills important.		
Not important	60	35	430
	3,4	-1,2	-1,7
Important	43	60	606
	-3,4	1,2	1,7
	I consider my foreign language skills to be good.		
Not important	245	81	199
	4,3	-0,5	-3,9
Important	245	117	347
	-4,3	0,5	3,9

Method: cross-tabulation analysis
Source: Authors' own compilation, 2023

In the second stage of our analysis, we examined whether there was an outstanding correlation between the job-related variable "Ability to communicate

well orally in one or more foreign languages at work (with colleagues, clients)" and the different intercultural communication competence variables (Table 2). A significant correlation was first identified for the competence variable "I like watching foreign language programs and films and reading foreign language newspapers and news." (χ^2=7.30; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.77). Students who are comfortable communicating orally in a foreign language are significantly more likely to be moderately comfortable with watching foreign language programs, films and reading foreign language news compared to students who do not consider it essential to communicate well in one or more foreign languages in their job.

Table 2: The importance of oral communication in a foreign language at work in correlation with the intercultural communication competences

Ability to communicate well orally in one or more foreign languages at work (with colleagues and customers)	Rather untypical (person) (adjusted residual)	Moderately typical (person) (adjusted residual)	Rather typical (person) (adjusted residual)
	I enjoy watching foreign-language programs and films and reading foreign-language newspapers and news.		
Not important	45 1.2	11 -2.6	100 0.8
Important	263 -1.2	160 2.6	655 -0.8
	I enjoy learning foreign languages.		
Not important	22 3.5	37 -0.1	97 -1.9
Important	68 -3.5	260 0.1	750 1.9
	I like travelling abroad.		
Not important	10 0.8	26 2.8	120 -2.9
Important	53	100	925

	"I consider foreign language learning and language skills important."		
	-0.8	-2.8	2.9
Not important	22 / 2.8	16 / 1.3	118 / -3.0
Important	81 / -2.8	79 / -1.3	918 / 3.0

Method: cross-tabulation analysis
Source: Authors' own compilation, 2023

The following essential correlation was explored for the competence variable "I enjoy learning a foreign language." (x^2=12.45; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.10): students for whom it is not vital to communicate well orally in one or two foreign languages are significantly less likely to learn a foreign language compared to those for whom good foreign language oral communication is crucial at work.

We also measured a correlation for "I like to travel abroad." (x^2=9.16; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.09). Students who do not consider it essential to communicate well orally in a foreign language in their job are significantly less likely to enjoy travelling abroad compared to those who think it is important to communicate well orally in one or two foreign languages.

The last crucial correlation concerns the competence variable "I consider foreign language learning and language skills important." *(x^2=10,08; df=2; p<0,05; Cramer'V=0,09).* Students for whom it is vital to communicate orally in one or more foreign languages are significantly more likely to consider foreign language proficiency and foreign language learning to be essential. Students for whom it is crucial to communicate orally in one or more foreign languages are considerably more likely to assess foreign language learning and proficiency as meaningful.

Overall, we found four essential correlations in a cross-tabulation analysis of our variable "Ability to communicate well orally in one or more foreign languages at work" with our intercultural communicative competence variables, which confirmed H1.b. hypothesis.

In the third stage of our analysis, we investigated whether there was a significant correlation between "Taking part in professional trips abroad and being successful there (lectures, conferences)" and various intercultural communication competencies (Table 3).

A significant correlation was first identified for the competence variable "I like communicating in a foreign language" (x^2=10.08; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.09). Students for whom the ability to go and do well on professional trips abroad is vital, are significantly more likely to be willing to communicate in a foreign language compared to students for whom the ability to go on work trips abroad as part of their job is not essential. At the same time, students who do not consider the ability to go on a professional trip abroad and get along well there important were significantly less likely to communicate in a foreign language than students who considered it essential to go on a professional trip abroad.

The next vital correlation was measured for the variable "I would like to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and collaborate with foreign colleagues" (χ^2=43.58; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.19). Students who feel that the ability to travel abroad and do well there is crucial are significantly more likely to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and collaborate with foreign colleagues compared to students who do not find the ability to travel abroad for professional trips in their job search essential. However, students for whom the ability to travel abroad on business trips is not essential are significantly less likely to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and to work with foreign colleagues.

The following notable association was measured for the competence variable "I enjoy learning and communicating with foreign students" (χ^2=24.40; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.14). Students who consider it vital to travel abroad for professional trips and be successful in the workplace were significantly more likely to study and communicate with students from abroad than students who do not consider it vital to travel abroad for professional trips. Alternatively, students who do not consider it vital to go and do well on professional trips abroad are significantly less likely to study and communicate with students abroad.

We discovered an strong correlation for the variable "I like making friends with foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners" (χ^2=35.94; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.17). Students for whom the ability to travel abroad and do well in their careers is crucial are significantly more likely to make friends with foreigners and feel more comfortable in the company of foreigners than students for whom travelling abroad for professional trips is not vital. In contrast, students for whom the ability to go on professional trips abroad is not an important part of their job prospects are significantly less likely to make friends with foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners.

A vital correlation was revealed for the variable "I like watching foreign language programs and films and read foreign language news" (χ^2=32.83; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.16). Students who think it is relevant to travel abroad and do well in their jobs are significantly more likely to watch foreign language programs, films and read foreign language newspapers and news than those who do not think it is necessary travel abroad for professional trips. In contrast, students who do not think it is critical to travel abroad for professional trips and do well there are significantly less likely to watch foreign language programs and films and read foreign language news compared to students who think it is imperative to travel abroad for work.

The variable "I enjoy learning a foreign language" (χ^2=22.80; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.14) similarly suggested a strong correlation. Students who feel it is paramount to go on professional trips abroad and do well there are significantly more likely to learn a foreign language enthusiastically than students who do not feel it is necessary to go on professional trips abroad. Students for whom it is inessential to travel abroad on professional trips are significantly less likely to gladly learn a foreign language compared to those for whom it is relevant to travel abroad on professional trips.

The variable "I like learning and reading about other cultures" (χ^2=16.42; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.12) affirmed another robust correlation. Students who rate the ability to go and do well abroad on professional trips relevant are significantly more likely to be willing to learn and read about other cultures than students who do not

rate it as decisive to go and do well on professional trips abroad. At the same time, students who do not think it is vital to travel for professional trips abroad and do well in a job are significantly less likely to study and read about other cultures than those who think it is essential to travel for professional trips and do well abroad.

A good correlation was also pereceived for the variable "I like travelling abroad" (χ^2=26.29; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.15). Students who find it crucial to travel abroad for professional trips and do well there are significantly more likely to want to travel abroad than students who rate it as unimportant to travel abroad for work and do well there. However, students for whom the ability to go and do well on professional trips abroad is inessential are significantly unlikely or moderately likely to enjoy travelling abroad compared to students for whom it is important to go on professional trips abroad.

Another strong correlation was also revealed for the variable "I would like to study or work abroad" (χ^2=48.96; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.20). Students who think the ability to go on professional trips abroad is critical are significantly more likely to study and work abroad than students who think it is insignificant to go on professional trips abroad. At the same time, those for whom the ability to go on professional trips abroad is unnecessary are significantly less likely to want to work abroad compared to students for whom it is crucial to go on professional trips abroad and do well there.

The variable "I can easily understand foreign language texts and speech" *(χ^2=24,78; df=2; p<0,05; Cramer'V=0,14) also suggested a robust correlation*. Students for whom it is relevant to go and do well on professional trips abroad have a significantly higher level of comprehension of foreign language texts and speech compared to students for whom it is inessential to go on professional trips abroad. At the same time, students for whom the ability to go on professional trips abroad is unimportant, have significantly more difficulty understanding foreign language texts and speech than students for whom it is vital to go on professional trips abroad and be successful there.

The following variable where we found a significant correlation was "I consider foreign language education and language skills important" (χ^2=35.80; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.17). Students who rated it as imperative to go and do well on professional trips abroad were significantly more likely to rate foreign language education and language skills as essential than students for whom going on professional trips abroad was secondary. However, students for whom the ability to go and do well on professional trips abroad is inessential are significantly unlikely or moderately likely to enjoy travelling abroad compared to students for whom it is important to go on professional trips abroad.

The variable "I consider my foreign language skills to be good" (χ^2=30.43; df=2; p<0.05; Cramer'V=0.16) proved also significant, and it was the last notable correlation tested on the employment-related variables. Students who think the ability to go on professional trips abroad and get by in the global job market are relevant are significantly more likely to go on professional trips abroad and become successful. However, students who find it irrelevant to go abroad and do well on professional trips judge their foreign language skills as significantly poorer compared to students for whom going abroad is essential for their job prospects.

Overall, in the cross-tabulation analysis of the variable "Ability to go on professional trips abroad and do well there (lectures, conferences)" with our intercultural

communicative competence variables, we measured a consequential correlation for all 12 competence variables, which confirmed our H2. Hypothesis.

On the whole, the third job-search related variable („Ability to go on professional trips abroad and do well there (lectures, conferences)" measured the most outstanding correlation on the intercultural communicative competence dimension, showing that this variable has the highest effect on students' various intercultural communicative competences.

Table 3: The importance of professional trips abroad in correlation with the intercultural communicative competences

Ability to go on professional trips and perform well (lectures, conferences)	Rather untypical (person) (adjusted residual)	Moderately typical (person) (adjusted residual)	Rather typical (person) (adjusted residual)
	I enjoy learning foreign languages.		
Not important	330 5.3	100 -0.3	168 -5.3
Important	255 -5.3	111 0.3	270 5.3
	I want to communicate orally in a foreign language at work and with foreign colleagues.		
Not important	277 6.0	130 0.0	191 -0.6
Important	189 -0.6	138 0.0	309 6.0
	I like learning and communicating with foreign students.		
Not important	260 4.8	184 -1.8	154 -3.3
Important	192 -4.8	226 1.8	218 3.3
	I like making friends with foreigners and feel comfortable in the company of foreigners.		

Not important	252 5.3	118 0.8	228 -5,7
Important	177 -5.3	114 -0.8	345 5.7
	I enjoy watching foreign-language programs and films and reading foreign-language newspapers and news.		
Not important	183 4.4	98 2.5	317 -5,7
Important	125 -4.4	73 -2.5	438 5.7
	I enjoy learning foreign languages.		
Not important	59 3.4	165 2.8	374 -4.5
Important	31 -3.4	132 -2.8	473 4.5
	I enjoy learning and reading about other cultures.		
Not important	100 2.9	185 1.8	313 -3.7
Important	70 -2.9	167 -1.8	399 3.7
	I like travelling abroad.		
Not important	41 2.7	83 4.1	474 -5.1
Important	22 -2.7	43 -4.1	571 5.1
	I would like to study and work abroad.		
Not important	166 5.4	187 2.5	242 -6.6
Important	97 -5.4	158 -2.5	381 6.6
	I can easily understand foreign language texts and		

	speech.		
Not important	263 **4.4**	116 0.4	219 -4.7
Important	202 -4.4	117 -0.4	317 **4.7**
	I consider foreign language learning and language skills important.		
Not important	75 **5.2**	58 **2.6**	465 -5,7
Important	28 -5.2	37 -2.6	571 **5.7**
	I consider my foreign language skills to be good.		
Not important	283 **5.3**	93 -0.5	222 -4.9
Important	207 -5.3	105 0.5	324) **4.9**

Method: cross-tabulation analysis
Source: Authors' own compilation, 2023

Out of all the significant correlations found, the most robust relationship in the cross-tabulations was identified for the Cramer'V coefficient value "Communicate well orally in one or more foreign languages at work (with colleagues, customers) and "I enjoy watching foreign language programs and films and reading foreign language newspapers and news." (Cramer'V=0.77). The weakest link has been established with the variables "Ability to communicate well in writing in one or more foreign languages at work." and "Understanding foreign language texts and speech easily" (Cramer'V=0.08).

Based on the completed methodological analyses and the results obtained in response to our research questions, it can be stated that the significance of written and oral communication in a foreign language and the students' perception of the importance of participating in professional trips abroad influence the different intercultural communicative competences.

5. Summary

It is well known that the role and significance of intercultural communicative competences in foreign language teaching are becoming increasingly essential. Consequently, foreign language teaching in higher education also seeks to

respond to the new demands of globalisation and equip students with the knowledge to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there is no doubt that developing intercultural communication competences, assessing students' needs and meeting their expectations are crucial pedagogical tasks. The research presented here sought to answer the question of how students' perceptions of the significance of foreign language written and oral communication affect their intercultural communicative competence. A further part of the research examined whether students' perceptions of the importance of participating in professional trips abroad affect their various intercultural communicative competencies. In our analysis, we only pointed out the significant results. Based on our methodological analyses and the results obtained in response to our research questions, we can state that the importance of written and oral communication in a foreign language and the students' perception of the significance of participating in professional trips abroad influence the intercultural communicative competencies. In light of this, all our hypotheses have been confirmed. However, the significant relationships obtained require further analysis and are beyond the scope of this study. In conclusion, we can say that the proper development of intercultural communicative competence is a vital prerequisite for both foreign language learning and language teaching success.

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