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# **Cross-Cultural Interaction in Multinational Corporations (MNCs): Benefits and Challenges**

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Business

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**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA****School of Management**

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**ABSTRACT:**

This thesis is about the benefits and challenges that employees are facing in a cross-cultural interaction when they are working in multinational corporations (MNCs). The aim is to find out benefits and challenges that employees are facing in a cross-cultural interaction when they are working in multinational corporation. This study also aims to find out how organizations could support employees in cross-cultural interaction and how they are already supporting employees.

The research was made as a qualitative study, and data was collected through a structured online questionnaire. The sample was totally twelve people with different background. Respondents were from different countries, different cultures and different age. Connecting factor of the sample was that all participants were working in MNCs.

As a theoretical framework Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Ting-Toomey's Face Negotiation Theory were used. These theories were providing a foundation for the empirical part of the study.

All in all, employees felt that they gain multiple benefits through cross-cultural interaction, but benefits are not the only thing because there are also multiple challenges when several cultures meet. Different challenges can be overcome with good language skills, open-minded attitude and cross-cultural awareness. Also, organization has a role when building an effective cross-cultural interaction in MNCs.

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**KEYWORDS:** cross-cultural interaction, multinational corporation, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Face negotiation theory

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**TIIVISTELMÄ:**

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee työntekijöiden kohtaamia hyötyjä ja haasteita kulttuurienvälisessä vuorovaikutuksessa työskennellessään monikansallisissa yrityksissä. Tavoitteena on selvittää työntekijöiden kohtaamia hyötyjä ja haasteita kulttuurienvälisessä vuorovaikutuksessa työskennellessään monikansallisissa yrityksissä. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on myös selvittää miten organisaatiot voisivat tukea työntekijöitä kulttuurienvälisessä vuorovaikutuksessa ja miten yritykset jo nyt tukevat työntekijöitä.

Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena ja tiedot kerättiin strukturoidun verkkokyselyn avulla. Otos koostui yhteensä kahdestatoista henkilöstä, joilla oli erilainen tausta. Vastaajat olivat eri maista, eri kulttuureista ja eri-ikäisiä. Otoksen yhdistävänä tekijänä oli, että kaikki osallistujat työskentelivät monikansallisissa yrityksissä.

Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä käytettiin Hofsteden kulttuuristen ulottuvuuksien teoriaa ja Ting-Toomeyn kasvoneuvotteluteoriaa. Nämä teoriat tarjosivat pohjan tutkimuksen empiiriselle osalle.

Kaiken kaikkiaan työntekijät kokivat saavansa useita hyötyjä kulttuurienvälisestä vuorovaikutuksesta, mutta hyödyt eivät olleet ainoa asia, koska useiden kulttuurien kohtaamiseen liittyy myös useita haasteita. Erilaisista haasteista voidaan selvittää hyvällä kielitaidolla, ennakkoluulottomalla asenteella ja kulttuuritietoisuudella. Myös organisaatiolla on rooli tehokkaan kulttuurienvälisen vuorovaikutuksen rakentamisessa monikansallisissa yrityksissä.

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**KEYWORDS:** cross-cultural interaction, multinational corporation, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Face negotiation theory

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## Abbreviations

MNC = Multinational corporation  
FNT = Face Negotiation Theory  
PDI = Power Distance Index  
UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance Index

# 1 Introduction

In this chapter the topic of the thesis is presented. The motivation behind this work and the whole process is explained.

## 1.1 Background of the study

Mockaitis et al. (2018, p. 2139) write that in these days' world is even more interconnected than ever before. In the changing times for example leadership roles and traditional managing ways needs to modify. For example, rapid response and global access are linked to the interconnectedness. They also write that if company wants to keep up with change and bring the best employees from different countries, they need to be flexible. Work environment nowadays is constantly changing because of the increasing complexity. In workplaces there are many changes and complexity because of different phenomena. These phenomena can be for example expansion of multinational corporations and international mobility and labour. (Rozkwitalska, 2019, p. 306)

According to Melwin et al. (2012, p. 217) business environments are expanding when thinking about twenty-first century. They write that when countries are becoming more dependent on each other it is important that countries and organizations understand different cultures and cultural differences so that international business grows and remains sustainable.

Mockaitis et al. (2018, p. 2140) write that global teams have many strengths. These strengths are for example that global teams have an ability to understand needs and demands locally, and they can take advantage cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can be leverage as beliefs, attitudes and experiences between team members.

Still, it is not sure that working in an international work environment is easy or it only include positive sides. Thus, it is important to understand and research both positive and negative sides about cross-cultural interaction in the international work environment.

According to Rozkwitalska's article (2014, p. 231) "Less effort has been made so far to study the positive aspects of human interactions in MNCs" (Rozkwitalska, 2014, p. 231). It is very important to research positive and negative sides and find out how cultures meet in the international work environments and what kind of positive and negative sides this will cause to MNCs and individuals inside of the companies.

## **1.2 Research question and objectives**

The purpose of this thesis is to study what are the benefits and challenges that employees face in a cross-cultural interaction when they are working in a multinational corporation (MNCs). This study aims to find both positive and negative sides that employees are facing in a cross-cultural interaction when they are working in an international environment and in multicultural teams.

This study also aims to find out what employees think about how organizations can support employees in an international work environment where people might face problems like language barriers and misunderstandings. Could there be a chance for example to cultural competence training or does the employees even feel that they need support when thinking about cross-cultural interaction and international working environment.

The main research question of the thesis is *"How do employees experience and face the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)?"*

To help finding an answer to the main research question there are two supportive questions that are following:

*“How do employees experience the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs?”*

*“How do employees experience and handle the challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)?”*

The main objectives of the thesis are to investigate what kind of benefits and challenges employees experience in cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations and how employee’s experiences could be improved.

### **1.3 Definition of key concepts**

**Multinational corporation (MNC):** Multinational corporation is a company that is operating in many countries (Webb, 2023). MNCs can be divided to three different models. These models are “Centralized”, “Regional” and “Multinational”. Shortly, in the centralized model company’s headquarters is in home country and then company builds manufacturing plants and production facilities to the different countries. In the regionalized model, company has its headquarters in one home country and supervises offices that are located to different countries. In multinational model there is a parent company that is working in one country and then they have subsidiaries in other countries. (Webb, 2023)

**Cross-Cultural Interaction:** Cross-cultural interaction is a process where it is recognized differences and similarities between cultural groups so people can engage within a given context (Joubert, 2024).

**Face-Negotiation Theory:** Face-Negotiation Theory is a theory which explains how people handle face-related challenges in different situations (Gu et al., 2021, p. 2585). According to Gu et al. (2021, p. 2585) face negotiation theory is formulated by Stella Ting-Toomey and it is from year 1985. Face negotiation theory is mainly focusing to the face and face-work communication. They are also writing that understanding of the way how

people are managing their face will be different for people from different groups and not only this but also faces are having different meanings.

**Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory:** Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is developed by Gert Hofstede, and the framework is used to understand differences in a culture between different countries (Nickerson, 2025). Hofstede's model includes six dimensions of national cultures, and these six dimensions are "Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 2).

#### **1.4 Delimitations of the study**

Delimitations are the limits or boundaries that the researcher has set for it and those define what the study won't include. Some examples of the delimitations are for example the selection of respondents and the duration of the study. Limits and boundaries are helping researcher to exclude peripheral elements and to keep the research within a manageable size. (Costello, 2023)

The study population is quite small, and it cannot be compared to a larger group of people. The research period is short and with longer research period there could have been more answers. Due to tight schedule, it was not possible to extend the research period. The research data is based on the present moment, and it is possible that in the future data and results could be different.

Everyone who has received the questionnaire has the right to share the questionnaire forward, so it has not been possible to confirm that everyone works in an international work environment and MNCs. Questionnaire and research are anonymous and there is not a chance to confirm the identities of individuals and truthful answers.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. First chapter of this thesis is introduction. Introduction section set the foundation for the study. In the introduction section the topic is introduced, the study is explained and research gap has been presented. After that, research questions are presented, and key concepts are opened and explained. Lastly, in the introduction section the delimitations are presented.

Second section will include theoretical background for the thesis. Theoretical background introduces the most relevant theories for this study. Firstly, multinational corporations and cross-cultural interaction have been discussed. Following multinational corporations and cross-cultural interaction, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is explained and criticism towards it has been presented. After this the other relevant theory for this thesis is opened, that is face negotiation theory by Stella Ting-Toomey. After explaining theories next chapter will focus to the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations and theories in action. After benefits also challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations have been focused on. Lastly this section will include summary where the chapter has been closed.

Third section introduces the research methodology. It presents the research approach, research design, data collection and research sample. In third section also data analysis and reliability and validity are presented.

Fourth section is about research findings. In fourth section findings are gathered and presented. Lastly, fifth section is for discussion and conclusion. In this chapter findings are analysed. Conclusion part includes the key findings and practical implications. Also, theoretical contributions have been presented and suggestions for the future research are discussed.

Artificial intelligence tools, like Google Gemini and ChatGPT were used in different stages of the thesis writing process. Artificial intelligence tools were useful in brainstorming

ideas, improving structure of academic writing and source discovery. All output was checked and assessed by the author and none of it was used directly in the final text. The regulations and rules of University of Vaasa were always followed during thesis writing process and use of artificial intelligence.

## **2 Theoretical background**

Theoretical section includes relevant concepts and theories for this study. Theories used in this thesis are Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Face-Negotiation Theory. In this thesis Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is used to understand and recognise how cultural factors like individualism vs collectivism and power distance are affecting to the employees' opinions about benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. In the other hand, face negotiation theory will be used in this thesis to understand how people are acting while they are interacting with people from different cultures and from different cultural background. In this thesis face negotiation theory is especially focused to the face and facework and face concerns. Multinational corporation and cross-cultural interaction are also important for this study and that's why those topics are discussed in this chapter.

### **2.1 Multinational Corporation and Cross-Cultural Interaction**

According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2019, p. 3) we are living in a global era, and it is almost not possible to even think avoiding intercultural interaction. It is increasingly important to develop intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p. 3). Joubert (2024) writes that when creating successful work environment strong cross-cultural interaction skills are one of the first steps. Different cultural factors are strongly influencing to the way how people communicate with each other. In order to understand what is needed to the effective communication people need to understand these different cultural factors. (Joubert, 2024)

Communication is an interaction within a social context. This is the general view of communication. (Fatimayin, 2018, chapter 2) According to Hamkar et al. (2024) communication is a process. It includes delivering messages between people and that individuals can share different things like ideas, emotions and thoughts (Hamkar et al., 2024, p. 234).

Communication is described as a process of sending messages. Communication is usually verbal or nonverbal. (Kalogiannidis, 2020)

Intercultural interactions are daily occurrence because of globalization (Lifintsev et al., 2025, p. 234). According to Lifintsev et al. (2025) cross-cultural communication is for example changing verbal and non-verbal messages, feelings and thoughts between people who are coming from different cultural backgrounds (Lifintsev et al., 2025, p.234). For the successful international communication both employees and companies must commit to developing the factors that are influencing it. Lifintsev et al. (2025) are writing that companies who are working in divers' markets and who are employing workforce that is multicultural does have a responsibility of creating and encouraging of environment, where there is a successful cross-cultural communication (Lifintsev et al., 2025, 234). Examples of a few strategies that companies can follow are cultural training programs and mentor initiatives (Lifintsev et al., 2025, 234).

Hamkar et al. (2024) are writing that cornerstone of business world is effective communication (Hamkar et al., 2024, p. 242). Effective communication is playing a big role when thinking about interaction with clients and colleagues. Efficient communication includes for example speaking, writing and listening. (Hamkar et al., 2024, p. 242) To navigate all daily actions, it is necessary to rely on the communication. When thinking about personal and organizational goals effective communication is in the central role. (Hamkar et al., 2024, p. 242) To achieve higher performance, employee commitment and organizational growth business communication is vital (Hamkar et al., 2024, p.243).

Multinational corporations are central operators in the global economy because in twenty-first century there has been a rapid expansion of globalization and collaboration that crosses borders. MNCs can have employees from different ethnicities, nationalities and cultural backgrounds while not forgetting the different languages. In multinational corporations it is not possible to avoid cross-cultural interaction. (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76) In cross-cultural interaction people from different cultures may face

different benefits and challenges, when they are interacting with people from different backgrounds. Someone from one culture may experience something as a benefit, while someone from another culture may see the same thing as a challenge. This can be seen for example in the situations where employees let their voices to be heard. People from Asian countries may feel less comfortable speaking up or sharing ideas, while people from for example Western Europe may be more willing to speak up (Reynolds, 2019). In these kinds of situations without cultural awareness, interaction might feel challenging from other side and positive from other side.

## **2.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory**

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has been developed by social psychologist Geert Hofstede. Model was introduced in 1980, and it includes six dimensions. (Greene, 2024) Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is appropriate for analysing cross-cultural interaction because approach utilized to understanding differences in a culture between different countries (Nickerson, 2025). Because every individual has own way of thinking and feeling (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 4) people are bringing these different unique patterns to the work and it is affecting to the cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. This is why it is interesting to understand cultures, that people are bringing to a multicultural work community. In this thesis we are focusing to individualism versus collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions have been chosen to this thesis because these dimensions are strongly affecting to the individual's way of interacting. For example, according to Chabika et al. (2024, p. 87) direct effect of those cultural dimensions on social influence has been investigated. Culture is strongly affecting the way how people co-operate and communicate (Chabika et al., 2024, p. 88).

In multinational companies' personnel and people are coming from different cultural backgrounds. Different cultures and cultural values are affecting to people's acting, style of discussing and working. Every person is having some patterns of thinking, feeling and potential learning that we have learned in our whole lifetime. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010,

p. 4) Social environment and collected life experiences are affecting to the person's mental programs. Mental programs differ to the same extent as the social environment which they were acquired. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 5) For this kind of mental software term is culture. Culture commonly means "civilization" or "refinement of the mind" and the results of the refinement for example education and literature. It is important to remember that this is only a culture in a narrow sense. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 5)

Culture is a collective phenomenon as it is shared with at least people who are coming from the same social environment. Culture is a learned thing, and it comes from social environment rather than from genes. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 6) Hofstede's model has been created to understand cultural differences (Connell et al., 2023, p. 33). Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework is a systematic approach to analyse and understand cross-cultural social differences in the setting of international business relations (Greene, 2024).

Hofstede's model includes six dimensions. Those dimensions are "Power Distance", "Uncertainty Avoidance", "Individualism versus Collectivism", "Masculinity versus Femininity", "Long Term versus Short Term Orientation" and "Indulgence versus Restraint" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 8).

### **2.2.1 Individualism vs Collectivism**

Individualism versus collectivism might be even most important dimension when thinking about this thesis. Individualism versus collectivism dimension is strongly linked to other theory that is used in this thesis which is "Face-Negotiation Theory" formulated by Stella Ting-Toomey (Gu et al., 2021, p. 2585). Individualism is tied to the societies where the ties between individuals are loose. In these kinds of societies, people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family. Collectivism then is the opposite of the individualism. Collectivism is associated to the societies where people are integrated to strong and cohesive in-groups already from the birth. In-groups are

protecting people for their whole lives in return for loyalty that is unquestioning. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 92)

It affects to people's behaviour and way of working depending on, are you coming from the country that is considered as an individualistic or considered as a collectivistic. When thinking about individualism Hofstede considered it for example as a focus on rights above duties, taking care of oneself and immediate family and basing of one's identity on one's personal success or accomplishments. People coming from cultures that are individualistic have a leaning to think and believe that independence and personal achievement are important. (Nickerson, 2025) World population review (2026) has listed five countries that have the highest individualism score. Individualism score is from 0 to 100. Those countries are in order Netherlands (score 100), Denmark (score 89), Sweden (score 87), Iceland (score 83) and Belgium (score 81). Finland's individualism score in 2026 is 75. (World Population Review, 2026)

In the collectivistic societies people are integrated to the strong and cohesive in-groups and these groups are often extended families including for example uncles and aunts. They are protecting each other as an exchange for loyalty that is not questioned. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9) Typical things for collectivistic societies are for example stress on belonging, relationships prevail over task, and they have "We"-consciousness (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9). Collectivistic societies are valuing for example communalism and collaboration. They are putting group needs over their own individual needs, and they are thinking that for example respectfulness and social harmony are very important things. (Nickerson, 2025) To compare countries with high individualism score, low scores in 2026 have got for example Kenya (score 4), Indonesia (score 5), Pakistan (score 5) and Ethiopia (score 7). Between for example Netherlands and Kenya there is a significant difference, and it can be stated that cultures and societies differ strongly from each other. All in all, individualism is dominating in developed and Western countries and collectivism is dominating in less developed and Eastern countries. Example of a country that is in middle position is Japan. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 12)

Degrees of individualism is varying within different countries and not only that but also among the countries. This is why it is important to base countries to comparable samples from country to other. Comparability needed was offered by the IBM samples. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 92) In the book of Hofstede et al. (2010) they are listing work-related goals that are most closely linked to cultural dimensions of individualism versus collectivism (p. 92). For the individualist pole they have listed: “1. Personal time: have a job that leaves you sufficient time for your personal or family life”, “2. Freedom: have considerable freedom to adopt your own approach to the job” and “3. Challenge: have challenging work to do—work from which you can get a personal sense of accomplishment” (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 92). For the collectivist pole they have added: “4. Training: have training opportunities (to improve your skills or learn new skills)”, “5. Physical conditions: have good physical working conditions (good ventilation and lightning, adequate workspace, etc.) and “6. Use of skills: fully use your skills and abilities on the job” (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 93). All in all, if IBM employees in a country scored some work goal from individualist pole relatively important they generally also scored other individualist pole goals important, and goals from collectivist pole unimportant. Such a country was considered as an individualist. Same thing in other way too. If one work goal from individualist pole was scored unimportant the same generally held to other goals in individualist pole but at the same time goals from collectivist pole would be scored as a relatively more important. In this kind of situation such a country was considered as a collectivist. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 93)

In this thesis individualism vs collectivism dimensions are used to understand how people are experiencing the benefits and challenges in MNCs and how they are acting and handling different situations that they are facing, when they are interacting with people coming from different cultures. Coming from individualistic or collectivistic culture it affects for example to the group harmony and way of communication. People coming from collectivistic cultures are putting group needs over their own needs and for them social harmony is very important (Nickerson, 2025). In the communication, collectivistic

societies prefer indirect communication when individualistic societies prefer direct communication (Merkin, 2015, p. 2). For example these things are affecting strongly to the everyday life and will affect to the way of experiencing benefits and challenges.

### **2.2.2 Power Distance**

Power Distance has been defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9). Power Distance is taking notice, how a society is dealing with inequalities in their society and among society’s people (Connell et al., 2023, p. 35). Cultures that are having a high degree of power distance are accepting of hierarchy. They are also more likely to value things like status, experience and prestige. People from high degree of power distance are trusting and respecting people who perceived to have expertise. (Connell et al., 2023, p.35) Hofstede (2011) is writing that “All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9). Power Distance is very important dimension for this thesis because it is affecting to employee’s way of communicating. Also, it is affecting to the communication, if it will be successful or not. Power Distance is also affecting strongly to the communication between supervisors and employees. Between them it is affecting to the way of giving and receiving feedback.

To compare different countries level of power distance, there has been research among IBM employees that are working in similar positions in different countries. With this research it has been possible to assign countries a score that is indicating its level of power distance. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 55). Power Distance Index (PDI) was developed by Geert Hofstede in the 1970s (Groff, 2023). Countries that have a high PDI are more likely to be more accepting of large differences in power for example between managers and employees. Are said, that they are also improbable to question superiors. In the other hand countries that are with a low PDI are said to have greater expectations about

equality between people. People in the low PDI countries are expecting that decision making is more democratic regardless of people being in different social positions. (Groff, 2023)

Based on World Population Review countries with the highest power distance in 2026 are Malaysia (score 100), Libya (score 100), Slovakia (score 100), Iraq (score 97) and Guatemala (score 95). The PDI scale is from 0 to 120. For example, in Malaysia where the PDI is very high, people are accepting a hierarchical order where everybody have their place, and it doesn't need further justification. In companies and organizations, it is typical that hierarchy is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities. In organizations employees and subordinates are waiting that they are told what to do, and ideal boss is seen as a benevolent autocrat. (World Population Review, 2026)

In employees' everyday life power distance may appear in many ways. One example where power distance can be shown is between employees' and superiors. According to Dai et al. (2022, p. 10) individuals that have high power distance belief tend to see superiors as authorities. Individuals who have higher levels of authority tend to fear communicate with their superiors ineffectively. They may also keep silence and show less opposition (Dai et al., 2022, p. 10). According to Dai et al. (2022, p. 10) Fear of authority can make silent communication worse. Another example of how power distance may appear in employees' everyday life is getting and giving feedback. Low power distance cultures communicate openly and give direct feedback while employees from high power distance cultures value group harmony and structured feedback (Jordynec, n.d.). People coming from high power distance cultures are seeking feedback more from peers rather than from superiors (Abbate et al., 2025, p. 2).

According to Hofstede et al. (2010) countries with small PDI are for example Austria, Nordic countries, the Baltic States, United States and Great Britain (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 60). For the countries that have small power distance it is typical that they have

limited dependence of employees and subordinates on managers. It is also typical that people preference for the consultation. Emotional distance between subordinates and managers is small. This can be shown for example in the situations where subordinates can contradict with bosses and they can approach easily their managers. (Hofstede, G. et al., 2010, p. 61)

### **2.2.3 Uncertainty Avoidance**

Uncertainty avoidance deals with people's and society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates how much a culture influences people to feel comfortable or uncomfortable when they face unclear and unpredictable situations that are different from usual. In the cultures that are uncertainty avoiding, people are trying to minimize the possibility of these kinds of situations happening. To minimize these situations, they have strict behavioural codes and laws and rules. They are also disapproving deviant opinions and belief in truth. They are thinking that there is only one truth. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10)

Also, for the uncertainty avoidance there are an index that is defined as "a society's tolerance for ambiguity" (Eurokey, n.d., p. 14). People in societies that score high in Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) have the strict codes of behaviour, guidelines and laws. Lower score in UAI means generally more acceptance of different thoughts. In lower score societies they tend to have less regulations and the environment is freer. (Eurokey, n.d., p. 14)

According to Hofstede et al. (2010) highest UAI values have Greece (score 112), Portugal (score 104), Guatemala (score 101), Uruguay (score 100) and Belgium (score 97) (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 191 table 6.1.). In total there are 76 countries listed in the UAI Hofstede, 2011, p. 11). In countries that are strong uncertainty avoidance it is typical that people have a need for clarity and structure. People might also stay in the jobs even if they wouldn't like the job. People might have higher stress and anxiety. They also have emotional need for rules. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10).

According to Hofstede et al. (2010) lowest UAI values have Singapore (score 8), Jamaica (score 13), Denmark (score 23), Sweden (score 29) and Hong Kong (score 29) (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 191 table 6.1.). In countries and societies that are low or weak uncertainty avoidance, it is typical that people dislike of rules and they have higher score on subjective health. They have low anxiety and each day is taken as it comes and uncertainty inherent is accepted. (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10)

Countries that have low UAI, people function well in a relaxed atmosphere, and they are excited to try new things. This is showing also in the companies and in work life. People from low UAI countries are usually innovative and they are taking different chances. (Ungvarsky, 2025) In the other hand, countries and business that have higher UAI employees are happy and most satisfied when they have clear rules and boundaries (Ungvarsky, 2025). Countries and people that have higher UAI might not be that willing to take risks and they are less flexible in changes (Ungvarsky, 2025). Different level of UAI might cause problems in MNCs. Different UAI level can be shown for example in scheduling. People coming from high UAI countries can be very satisfied with strict schedule to follow, but while exact schedule might feel frustrating for the people who are coming from low UAI countries. (Ungvarsky, 2025)

Different uncertainty levels are reflected in employees' everyday lives. Cultures that have high uncertainty avoidance try to have exact and structured information delivery when thinking about communication. They have high need for details. In other hand cultures that have low uncertainty avoidance tend to communicate more flexible and informal, and they are focusing on major directions rather than details and exact information. (Xia, 2026, p. 28) Different expectations in the level of details in communication can cause communication problems, such as delayed decision-making and communication efficiency (Xia, 2026, p. 28).

### 2.3 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory Criticism

Even though Hofstede's model is widely used and it is a useful model and tool to understand cultural differences in international business it has gained also criticism.

One person who has given criticism towards the Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is McSweeney (Williamson, 2002, p. 1373). McSweeney's criticism is about that it claims that the methodology of the Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is fundamentally faulty. McSweeney criticizes, if it is possible to culture to systematically cause differences in people's actions that are from different countries. (Williamson, 2002, p. 1373) Williamson (2002) is writing that "Unfortunately, McSweeney's own argument is flawed" (Williamson, 2002, p. 1373). Williamson is criticizing the criticism coming from McSweeney. He for example states that McSweeney's paradigm is not clear. McSweeney is criticizing for example Hofstede's logic within evaluative criteria, and he is also challenging the Hofstede's functionalist assumptions. Williamson is writing that together each of these approaches are not compatible. (Williamson, 2002, p. 1375)

McSweeney argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions model should be rejected. He had five assumptions that he says that it is underlying Hofstede's model. He also says that all of five assumptions are flawed and that is the reason why Hofstede's model should be rejected in his opinion. These five assumptions are "National, organizational & occupational are discrete levels of culture", "National culture is identifiable at the micro-level of IBM samples", "National culture creates questionnaire responses", "National culture can be identified from questionnaire", "Hofstede's dimensions are not situation specific" and "Hofstede's model of 4 or 5 dimensions of national culture". (Williamson, 2002, p. 1376)

According to Williamson (2002) "McSweeney argues mainly from the functionalist paradigm, but fails to falsify Hofstede's model" (Williamson, 2002, p. 1391). Williamson justifies this for example with pointing out that McSweeney is not acknowledging the underlying philosophical assumptions of his own critique. McSweeney is for example trying

to challenge functionalist logic with arguments from an interpretive paradigm. He is doing this without recognising the shift in research criteria. (Williamson, 2002, p. 1391) Williamson (2002) is arguing that if people won't recognize the flaws in McSweeney's criticism and argument, there is a risk that people could reject also other functionalist models of national culture like Schwartz (Williamson, 2002, p. 1391).

Even though Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has gained criticism, it is suitable for this study because it offers a valuable model to understand cultural differences and how those differences are shaping individuals' behaviour and experiences in MNCs.

## **2.4 Face Negotiation Theory**

Face negotiation theory (FNT) is used in this thesis to analyse the communication process. In this thesis it is important to understand how employees are managing their face and how they conduct in conflict situations. With FNT this study can explain the benefits and challenges of intercultural action. Face negotiation theory and Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory support each other, and together they create a theoretical framework needed for this thesis. While Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is explaining the culture behind employee's action, FNT will bring those values to the interaction. Culture is affecting to the way we think, but through FNT we can understand how employees are navigating in situations that they are facing in MNCs.

Face negotiation theory is developed by Stella Ting-Toomey and the theory first appeared in the article called "Toward a Theory of Conflict and Culture" by Stella Ting-Toomey in 1985. (Littlejohn & Foss, n.d.) Face negotiation theory is explaining how cultural foundations and situational context are shaping peoples' factors and ways to navigate and manage interpersonal conflicts. (Littlejohn & Foss, n.d.) FNT serves a comprehensive framework for analysing the differences and similarities in how people manage their social identities and communication tactics during conflicts (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 600).

It is expected that people will face challenges and conflicts in cross-cultural interaction and in international work environment. According to Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001, p. 1) people have different expectations about how conflicts should be handled based on what kind of culture they are coming from. Different norms and values that we are getting from our culture will frame conflict expectations. Across cultures and situations people might for example define the conflict problem differently, or people also might have different satisfactory goals for conflict resolution. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 1)

People find themselves increasingly in contact with people from different cultures. In workplace this can be seen for example with different work habits and cultural practices, that people are bringing to the workplace and for example people from different cultures may approach problem-solving tasks differently. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 3)

#### **2.4.1 Face and Facework**

Face negotiation theory is mostly talking about face and face-work communication (Gu et al., 2021, p. 2585) and it is important to understand these two concepts. Face and face-work are the concepts that is used to explain communication behaviour (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 236).

According to Landis et al. (2004, p. 218) “The concept of face is about identity respect and other-consideration issues within and beyond the actual encounter episode”. Individuals attribute their own social self-worth, and self-worth is also given to others. Face is tied strongly to these as an emotional significance and estimated calculations. Face is our identity resource in communication because it can be threatened, enhanced, undermined and bargained over emotional and cognitive evaluations. (Landis et al., 2004, p. 218).

According to Landis et al. (2004, p. 218) "Facework refers to the specific verbal and non-verbal behaviors that we engage in to maintain or restore face loss and to uphold and honor face again". Example of naturally face-threatening situations are conflicts because they arise mismatched identity expectations (Hou, 2023, p. 90). In the conflict situation facework has many functions. Facework is used for example to resolve conflict, avoid conflict, protect an image of person and to worsen the conflict (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384).

#### **2.4.2 Face Concerns**

In 1988 Ting-Toomey advanced only two face concerns in FNT but in the recent versions one concern was added (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384). All in all, face negotiation theory highlights three face concerns and those are "self-face", "other-face" and "mutual-face" (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 603). From these three concerns mutual face was advocated later (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384). Self-face is significance one's own image; other-face is significance another's image and mutual-face is significance both parties' image. Mutual face can also significance the image of the relationship. (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 603) Face concerns serve the foundation for understanding communication because they dictate the focus of a person's messages and influence their emotions and behaviours (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384). Every people have face concerns. It is extremely important to manage face during different conflicts. People are negotiating their face based on their level of face concern (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 383).

According to Ting-Toomey (2015, p. 326) "Self-face concern is the protective concern for one's own identity image when one's own face is threatened in the conflict episode". In the conflict situations self-face concerns make people typically defend their own identities or maintain their position (Yamini et al., 2023, p. 379). People with independent self-construal are mostly in conflict situations using strategy of forcing to solve it. This is because those individuals have stronger face-concerns. (Yamini et al., 2023, p. 379)

According to Ting-Toomey (2015, p. 326) “Other-face concern is the concern for accommodating the other conflict party’s identity image in the conflict situation”. In conflict situations people with other-face concerns are likely to use problem-solving and yielding (Yamini et al., 2023, p. 375). In other way than in self-face concerns, person who has dominant interdependent self-construal is showing strong other-face concern (Yamini et al., 2023, p. 379). People with other-face concerns tend to focus to the relation harmony, and they are focusing to the strategies like for example avoiding, compromising and problem-solving (Yamini et al., 2023, p. 379).

In the empirical part of this thesis self-face, other-face and mutual-face concerns will be used to analyse the responses that have been received. These will help to explain participants feelings about challenges and benefits in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. These concerns will help to understand why individuals perceive something as a challenge. Through face-concerns we can gain in-depth information behind why and how people experience potential challenges.

### **2.4.3 Conflict Management Styles**

According to Hou (2023, p. 88) face and identity are in central for understanding the dynamic of intercultural conflict management. Face and identity are also essential for identifying the motives and reasons for the choice of a facework strategy (Hou, 2023, p. 88). It is important to understand the various ways how people negotiate their face during different conflict situations, as it can help effectual and proper conflict management in personal relationships (Oetzel et al., 2000, p. 398). Facework and conflict style are closely related to each other. These two are closely related because both are explaining strategies and behaviours used in conflicts. (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384) According to Oetzel et al. (2007, p. 384 & 385) “Conflict style refers to patterned responses of conflict in a variety of antagonistic interactive situations”. Conflict style includes patterned behaviour that is used during direct contact (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 386).

Strategies that can be used in intercultural faceworks are dominating –, avoiding – and integrating strategies. Dominating strategies are for example defending and aggressive behaviour, avoiding strategies are for example avoiding, seeking third-party help and pretending and lastly, integrating strategies are for example apologizing, compromising, remain calm and talking about the problem or issue. (Hou, 2023, p. 89)

In this thesis, we are focusing to the three strategies. These strategies are dominating –, avoiding – and integrating strategies. According to Oetzel et al. (2003, p. 106 & 108) self-face concerns are related positively with dominating style, other-face concern is related positively with integrating – and avoiding style and mutual-face concern is related positively with integrating style. These three strategies are used because through these it is possible to analyse the interaction in MNCs. Dominating – and avoiding styles are used to understand and analyse challenges in cross-cultural interaction. In the other hand integrating style will be used to understand and analyse benefits. These three are strongly linked to the employee experience in MNCs, and that's why these three has been chosen for this study.

Every individual has their own conflict style. Conflict style is a combination of different traits and states. Traits can be for example cultural background and personality, when states are for example situation. (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 601) Person's conflict style is showing how person is communication orientated towards conflicts. Everyone has their own predominant conflict style, but it is possible to modify style in different situations. (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 601) According to Oetzel & Ting-Toomey (2003, p. 601) main approaches for interpret conflict styles are the five-style model and three-style model. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003, p. 601) are writing that "Proponents of the three-style model explained that these five styles can be reduced to the following three primary conflict styles: (a) control, forcing or dominating; (b) solution-oriented, issue-oriented, or integrating; and (c) nonconfrontational, smoothing, or avoiding".

Integrating conflict style usually include that person tries and has a need for finding solutions during the conflict situation. Integrating conflict style also includes, that both parties are working towards to resolve the issue. In the integrating conflict style person is usually listening to other people and respects the other feelings and thoughts. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 50)

## **2.5 Benefits of Cross-Cultural Interaction in Multinational Corporations (MNCs)**

Cultural diversity promotes creativity and innovation (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76). Still, it is important to remember, that creativity and innovation might not come without actions. To optimizing performance in MNCs for example targeted cultural training and adaptive leadership are playing a key role (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76). It is very important to understand the dynamics of team diversity, when companies want to have innovative teams with great success. It is also important that companies understand the barriers and opportunities that are presented. (Graham et al., 2020, p. 323) Companies also have responsibility in creating an effective cross-cultural interaction. According to Rozkwitalska et al. (2017, p. 214) people who are managers in multinational corporations should for example highlight group identity. Through highlighting group identity, they will help employees to internalize positive attitudes toward cross-cultural interaction. Managers should also provide language training for the employees. (Rozkwitalska et al., 2017, p. 214)

According to Rother, J. & Grau, A. (2018) "Cultural diversity offers valuable opportunities – such as helping companies increase their innovative power". Companies that have multicultural team and people from diverse cultural background are advantageous placed, when thinking about developing ideas for products, services and processes (Rother & Grau, 2018).

It is not only the company who will gain the benefits from multicultural team but also employees that are part of the team will gain the positive impacts (Eures, 2024). In multicultural teams everyone is bringing their skills together while creating unique skillsets and everyone together are creating a pool with knowledge and expertise. Every individual is bringing unique things to the team, and these are for example personality and learned attitudes and behaviours while not forgetting everyone's experience. In multicultural teams these factors are even more highlighted. People should respect and recognise differences inside the team, and through this they will create a collaboration that is cross-cultural and successful. (Eures, 2024)

When thinking about MNCs it is possible that two extremes meet. It is also possible and even likely that in companies there are employees from individualistic societies and from collectivistic societies. It is important that people are aware where colleagues are from and what kind of culture they have grown up. Knowing if colleagues are coming from individualistic or collectivistic countries people can for example understand how they are seeing their roles and how open they are for the teamwork (Global Coach Center, 2024). In the best case a team where there are both people from individualistic and collectivistic countries can create an innovative team where cross-cultural interaction is effective and creates positive impacts. To create successful cross-cultural interaction, it is crucial that individuals understand the differences between individualism and collectivism (Ultimahub, n.d.)

Individualists and collectivists have different attitude towards for example group harmony. Collectivistic individuals are putting group needs over their own individual needs. For collectivistic people respectfulness and social harmony are very important things. (Nickerson, 2025) People coming from collectivistic cultures tend to have a sense of shared responsibility and strong group cohesion (Sihota et al., 2023). In the other hand, people from individualistic countries emphasizes individual over the group and for example personal achievement (Sihota et al., 2023). When combining individualism and collectivism, corporations can have a balanced environment where both and their

combination have positive effects. When building an effective team, there can be positive repercussions when combining collectivistic goals to achieve collective goals and individualistic goals to individual achievements. Understanding individuals background for example individualism and collectivism it can lead to the respectful and effective cross-cultural communication (Nickerson, 2025).

Coming from individualistic or collectivistic societies, it affects the way how people are communicating. People coming from individualistic societies prefer direct communication, and people coming from collectivistic societies prefer indirect communication (Merkin, 2015, p. 2). This affects straightly to the everyday life in MNCs. In direct communication people are mostly saying what they think. In direct communication the message is conveyed by the words speaker is using. Speaker is responsible for clear communication. (Joyce, 2012) In the opposite way as in direct communication, in indirect communication person might not give any plain statements. In indirect communication people might for example hint their expectations to the listeners, and they can for example use silence to support their points and things. They might also avoid straight answers, so they are able to avoid conflicts. (Indeed, 2025) When communicating with people from different cultures it is important that individuals have cultural awareness. Individuals need to be sensitive to the differences and similarities between different cultures, when communicating with people. This includes for example respecting different communication styles. (Rogers, n.d.) When people are cultural awareness, it improves communication skills (Rogers, n.d.). When employees are cultural awareness different cultures can create a communication environment where everyone is sensitive and understands each other.

Individuals coming from collectivist cultures are usually basing their conflict approaches on other-face or mutual-face (Cardon & Okoro, 2010, p. 36) According to Ting-Toomey (2015, p. 326) "Mutual-face concern is the concern for both parties' images and the image of relationship". Typical behaviour for the people having other-face concerns is that they remain calm, apologize and they like to have private discussion (Oetzel et al., 2007,

p. 382). In other-face concern and mutual-face concern individuals have concerns for others and both's face. When having other- and mutual-face concerns individuals are attentive to the feelings and individuals strive for mutual respect and understanding. Individuals are balancing the needs and preserve harmony and positive relationships. (Williams, 2024) Through the other- and mutual-face concerns, harmony and positive relationships strive to maintain even in the event of conflicts.

It is extremely important that individuals interacting with each other are recognizing each other's face concerns because that allows them to empathize with their emotional needs (Williams, 2024). When people communicating respect their need to maintain face, they are able to create an environment that is supportive and both parties are comfortable to express themselves freely without any judgements (Williams, 2024). Recognizing and respecting other's face concerns comes even more important in cross-cultural interaction. For example, in negotiations two different cultures may meet and with respecting face concerns they can build trust and facilitate successful negotiation. When people recognize different cultures, they are able to adjust different communication strategies and reach mutually beneficial results. (Williams, 2024)

Individualism vs. collectivism is not the only thing that may has positive impacts for multinational corporations. Also, power distance as a dimension is strongly affecting to communication in MNCs and business life. Because of that, power distance is significant for this research. Communication in the organization is in important role when economic globalization is developing. One thing that affects to the communication in organization is cultural factors. (Dai et al., 2022, p. 1) Effective communication enhances company's productivity and prevents workplace accidents (Dai et al., 2022, p. 10) so it is very important that company is aware of different power distances, so they are able to have as efficient and smooth communication as possible throughout the organization.

Power distance is also affecting to the ability to give and get feedback. Based on Dai et al. (2022) subordinates with high power distance are less likely and willing to give

feedback. Feedback seeking has positive impacts to organizational identification and task performance (Gong et al., 2019, p. 1). Constructive feedback is for example strengthening effective behaviour and stops ineffective behaviour (Gong et al., 2019, p. 1). When in company there are people from high – and low power distance cultures, two different ways of giving and getting feedback will combine. It is possible that through the combine, company will find a way to give and get feedback that is respectful and transparent at the same time.

Power distance is integrated to the concerns (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 37). Opposite than in self-face concerns, high-power distance cultures have more other-face concerns (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 235). According to Ng (2008) Eastern countries are usually more orientated to other-face concerns. One example of a country that emphasize other-face concerns and harmony is Japan (The Comm Spot, n.d.).

Without understanding different conflict styles, there might not be effective conflict resolution or interpersonal communication (Williams, 2024). Different styles are used in different conflicts and situations. It is also important that different styles are used in right places with an effective way. For example, in the relationship between manager and subordinate, manager has more power and higher status. Usually, manager is able to influence to the employee's behaviour for example through pay raises, promotions and performance evaluation. In conflict situation managers are often relying on dominating style like forcing. In the similar situations employees are often relying to avoiding and accommodating styles. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 139) In this kind of situations managers are likely to have high self-face concerns and employees tend to have high other-face and self-face concerns, because those are necessary when thinking about maintaining their job or their current position. Employees are trying to keep a good relationship with the manager and for example avoiding is giving a chance for employee to support the manager's face. It is important to notice that this is in line with large power distance cultures, when small power distance cultures may not have a hierarchical distance between managers and employees. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 139-140)

Uncertainty avoidance is affecting to the people's communication style. It is for example shaping communicators tone and formality. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are communicating in a formal and direct way, when low uncertainty avoidance cultures are communicating in an indirect, informal and more flexible communication styles. (Inoyatova, 2025, p. 27-28) With high and flexible communication styles and strategies, there can be a balanced way to work together. When corporation and individuals inside the corporation will understand the cultural avoidance, it will build strong mutual respect and effective partnerships between different cultures. (Inoyatova, 2025, p. 29)

## **2.6 Challenges of Cross-Cultural Interaction in Multinational Corporations (MNCs)**

Even though companies and employees do have a responsibility when thinking about cross-cultural interaction in multinational companies, there is still no certainty or guarantee that communication takes place without problems. There are things that will make communication more difficult in multinational companies, where there are many nationalities and different cultures.

Businesses that are expanding internationally are not same as the traditional businesses (Xie & Lou, 2021, p. 712). Internationally expanding businesses need to deal with cross-cultural issues that local businesses don't need to deal with. People from different cultures are thinking in different ways. Cross-cultural challenges that companies and individuals may face are for example language barriers and differences in values and personalities. People from different cultures may also have different attitudes towards work. (Xie & Lou, 2021, p. 712) According to Harzing & Feely (2008 p. 50) growing operations and multiple different languages can make the negative influence of the language barrier even more challenging when thinking about presented problems.

When MNCs want to maintain their competitive advantage, they are reliant on multicultural teams (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76). Cultural diversity is not only competitive advantage, but it also presents some challenges. Differences for example in cultural values and communication styles can make collaboration either easier or more difficult (Aqarini, 2025, p. 70). Challenges in cultural diversity can be in communication, leadership, conflict resolution and employee expectations (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76). Challenges that cultural diversity might cause if company is not managed effectively are for example misunderstandings and inefficiency. If company cannot take notice of the cultural context of their employees, they may face, for example, ineffective decision-making processes, communication breakdowns across cultural lines and misunderstandings in intentions and expectations. (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 77)

In MNCs people may face many barriers that are affecting to the company and to the work environment. Barriers that MNCs and individuals in MNCs are facing can be for example language differences, cultural misalignments and hierarchical communication structures (Aqarini, 2025, p. 69). One example in what kind of situation cultural background can cause a conflict situation or different attitude towards communication is seen for example in high power-distance cultures and egalitarian cultures. Person coming from high-power distance culture and in junior position may hesitate to provide feedback because she/he can fear disrespect. In the other hand, egalitarian cultures are encouraging people to open dialogue, and people coming from egalitarian countries may not feel any concerns when providing feedback. (Aqarini, 2025, p. 74)

For the successful cross-cultural interaction, it is essential that individuals are understanding cultural values (Merkin, 2015, p. 1). People coming from different cultures are having different perspectives, and people are balancing for example with attaining goals between people coming from different cultures (Merkin, 2015, p. 1). Individualism and collectivism can have an impact for example to communication, management styles and teamwork (Ultimahub, n.d.). Lack of understanding and recognizing cultural perspectives like individualism and collectivism may weaken mutual understanding, lead to

miscommunication and weaken the overall effectiveness of cross-cultural interaction and collaboration (Azmi et al., 2023, p. 201)

It is believed that during the conflicts person's culture affects to the facial expression management. This means that cultural dimensions collectivism and individualism have direct and indirect consequences to the person's behaviour and communication. (Mehellou et al., 2019, p. 2) For people who are individualists and independents or coming from countries that are individualistic are more likely to be concerned of protecting self-face image during different conflict situations. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 37) Individualists with a high self-face concern is usually leading to dominating conflict strategies and self-honouring face behaviour in case of the competitive of conflict situation (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 239). Dominating conflict strategy may not align with collectivistic values because it emphasizes making decisions by using dominance or control (Williams, 2024). This may lead to situations where conflict situations may not be solved in a best possible way.

Individualism vs collectivism is not only dimension that may arise and cause challenges in MNCs. Also, power distance is affecting to individuals' actions and may cause some challenges. Actions between people from small power distance countries versus large power distance countries are differentiated from each other. For example, corruption is rare in small power distance countries and in other hand, corruption is frequent in large power distance countries (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9). It is also affecting to studying and working life. For example, education in small power distance countries is student-centred and subordinates and employees are expecting that they are consulted, when in large power distance countries education is teacher-centred and subordinates and employees are expecting that they are told what to do. (Hofstede, 2011, p.9). In small power distance countries salary range between top and bottom of organization is narrow, and in the large power distance countries salary range between top and bottom is wide (Baumgartner, n.d.). When people from small and large power distance countries are working together for example expectations may cause challenges. People might have different kind

of expectations. There can be a situation where employee and manager are from different power distance cultures, when without understanding differences between those it may cause misunderstandings.

Based on Dai et al. (2022) subordinates with high power distance are less likely and willing to give feedback. They are also writing that individuals with high power have the low openness in communication and that is causing problems in the information exchanging. (Dai et al., 2022 p. 2). Based on the findings of Dai et al. (2022) high power distance has the negative impact to the organizations and workplace's communication (Dai et al., 2022, p. 10). Effective communication enhances company's productivity and prevents workplace accidents (Dai et al., 2022, p. 10), so it is very important that company is aware of different power distances to have as efficient and smooth communication as possible throughout the organization.

Power distance is integrated to the concerns and people coming from small power distance culture tend to be saving self-face images in conflict situations. (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 37) Power distance is linked to the horizontal and vertical facework (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 239). Western countries are oriented towards self-face. Mostly people from Western countries like Germany or France people want themselves to look good. (Ng, 2008) For example in the research by Oetzel et al. (2010, p. 235) they found out that people from Germany have more self- and mutual-face concerns than people from United States. Germans were also using more defending in conflict situations than Americans. (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 235)

In MNCs there can be many uncertainties. Possible uncertainties could be for example different cultures, different languages and for example changes in the organization. Uncertainty avoidance as a dimension is important for this thesis, because it will help us understand how people are acting in case of facing for example, changes and uncertainties. Possible challenges that uncertainty avoidance can cause are for example, decision making situations in the team or in the company. Decision making in cultures that avoid

uncertainty is made with multiple details and structured plans. Cultures that avoid uncertainty tend to want to know risks and be prepared for different kind of situations. In the other hand, cultures that are comfortable with uncertainties make decisions more flexible and they adapt to changes. (Kähärä, n.d.) When people from different cultures are working together two or multiple ways of doing things are crashing. According to Kähärä (n.d.) for people coming from cultures where they are comfortable with uncertainty long planning and structured plans may feel uncomfortable for them.

## **2.7 Summary**

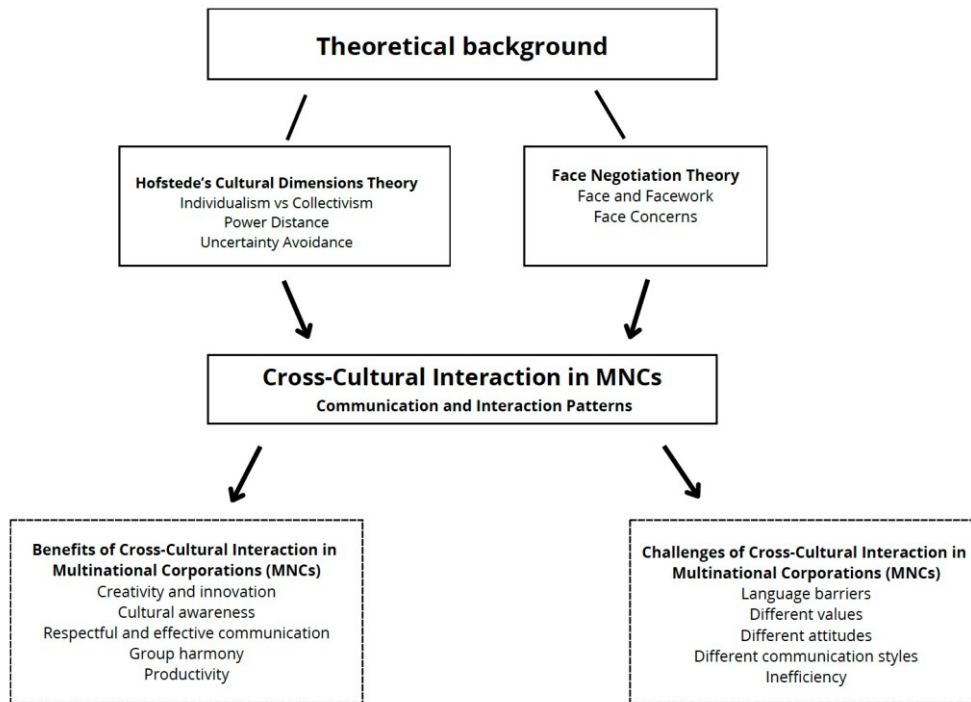
Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory are providing a strong theoretical framework for this thesis. Both theories are in key role when finding answers to the research questions. Cultural dimensions theory and face negotiation theory together explain how cultural values and cultural background interacts with practical communication strategies and actions in different kind of conflicts.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are explaining what kind of values and cultural backgrounds people are bringing to the multinational environment and workplace. Framework is for example helping managers to understand cultural differences, that are strongly affecting to the employee behaviour, like motivation and things that employees are waiting from leaders and leadership, while not forgetting also employee's conflict resolution styles (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76). Especially individualism and collectivism are affecting strongly to the relationships in the work environment. For example, depending on are you coming from individualistic or collectivist culture you might have different goals and different attitude towards work and the pursuit of success (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 92). Coming from individualistic or collectivist culture it is also affecting to person's mind as how important they see the social harmony (Nickerson, 2025) and this can affect strongly to the work environment and dynamics in the team.

In the other hand, Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory explains, how cultural background and different values are affecting to the communication and people's communication in different kind of conflict situations. Hofstede's cultural dimension's theory and face negotiation theory are walking hand to hand, because cultural background is strongly affecting to the actions and for example to the face concerns that people are facing. During conflicts situations, individuals that are coming from individualistic countries are mostly concerned of protecting their self-face image (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 37). Opposite than in individualistic countries, collectivist cultures are usually having more other-face and mutual-face concerns (Cardon & Okoro, 2010, p. 36). Face-concerns are led to the different conflict management styles. Conflict style is a combination of different traits and states (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 601).

Together Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory are providing a foundation for the empirical part of this study. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is creating a cultural base and context, when in other hand Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory is explaining the behaviour. Together with these two theories, we are able to find out benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations. In Figure 1 theoretical framework of the thesis has been presented.

Theoretical framework has been presented in Figure 1. Theoretical framework will be used, when interpret and observe the results of the empirical section. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory will be used to understand, how especially individualism vs collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance is affecting to the employees' experiences of benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Face negotiation theory is used to understand, how people are behaving while they are interacting with people from different cultures and from different cultural background during conflicts and positive situations. With both theories it is possible to figure out how and why participants felt something as a benefit or as a challenge.



**Figure 1** Theoretical framework of the thesis.

### **3 Research methodology**

The methodology section outlines the processes that are used in this thesis to address the research questions and the objectives of the study. This section provides the framework to ensure the validity and reliability of the study by selecting appropriate data collection methods and ensuring the accuracy of the findings. In the first section research approach is described. The second section is about research design, and third section about data collection methods. Fourth section presents research sample. Fifth section is about analysing the data and finally, sixth section discuss the reliability and validity of the data.

#### **3.1 Research approach**

To ensure successful research, choosing the correct research approach is in a key role. In this study the chosen research approach is qualitative research method. This research method was chosen, because study is aiming to gain in-depth information from the employees, who are working in an international environment and in multinational corporations. According to Kovalainen and Eriksson (2016, p. 4) qualitative research approaches are focusing to interpretation and understanding, when quantitative approaches are focusing for example to testing the hypothesis and statistical analysis. This study is aiming to understand what kind of benefits and challenges employees are facing in a cross-cultural interaction in the multicultural environment and according Nor Rashidi et al. (2014, p. 28) "Qualitative research is useful for exploring and understanding complicated matters, for explaining beliefs and behaviour, as well as identifying norms of a society". By employing qualitative research there is a possibility to find comprehensive answers to the research questions.

### **3.2 Research design**

According to Saunders et al. (2007, p. 130) research design is turning research question to a research project. People are choosing their way to answer to the research question in a different way. The way how people will answer to the research question is influenced by person's research philosophy and approach (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 130). Research design is a general plan how researcher will go about to answer to the set research questions (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 130). The plan will contain for example clear objectives, sources from where the data will be collected and consideration about the constraints that researcher will inevitably have. This includes, for example, access to data and time. Researcher should have valid reasons for all research design decisions. (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 130)

Qualitative research process with feelings, ideas or experiences (Ugwu & Eze Val, 2023, p. 20). In this research I wanted to understand experiences and feelings behind individuals' actions in multinational corporations. To understand feelings and experiences, it is not possible to measure it with numerical data. According to Ugwu & Eze Val (2023, p. 20) qualitative research is created to collect non-numerical data to produce insights. With qualitative research, it is possible to understand, what employees are thinking, and it allows a broader understanding of their thoughts. With qualitative research approach we are able to explore, how employees are navigating in the cross-cultural interaction.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Data for this research was collected through a structured online questionnaire. This data collection method was chosen, because greater number of responses will give more data of different experiences and greater number of different perspectives. According to Saunders et al. (2007, p. 355) questionnaire is one of the most used data collection technique methods. This study aimed to collect information about the participants' experiences and thoughts. Structured questionnaire enables to collect enough of the

information about experiences and through this research will have enough data to conclude end results. Questionnaire included closed and open questions, because through open questions respondents had a chance to open more about their thoughts and explain their experiences. Also, closed question had follow-up questions because we wanted to gain as much in-depth knowledge as possible. With open questions and follow-up questions we had a chance to in-depth knowledge to help us answer to the research questions.

Questionnaire was created through Webropol. Questionnaire was sent as a link through email and WhatsApp. All participants who received the link had also permission to send link forward to the people they know that are working in MNCs. Through email questionnaire was sent to the company who agreed to send it to all their employees. All questions were mandatory and participants didn't have the right to move forward without answering to everything. In the questionnaire we also tried to ensure careful and truthful answers and that's why first part of the questionnaire was consent. Questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, and this was stated at the beginning of the survey.

Questionnaire was designed to be clear and easy to understand. The aim was to minimize participant fatigue, but at the same time obtain comprehensive answers. That's why questionnaire included multiple-choice questions, yes/no-questions and open-ended questions. Multiple-choice questions were asked only in the first part of the questionnaire, that was about participants background information. Questionnaire was anonymous and that's why general questions were asked about the background, which did not identify the participant. The questionnaire was created and planned based on the theoretical framework (see Figure 1).

First part of the questionnaire was background information. It included five multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions. These questions were asked because different things like nationality, language and experiences may affect to the person's way to interact in multinational corporations. Through these background questions, I tried to

determine if for example age, gender or work years in MNCs affect to the people's experience of benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction.

Second part of the questionnaire was about cross-cultural interaction generally. Through these questions, I tried to get a general experience with cross-cultural interaction. I wanted to figure out if, for example, the will of learning more about different cultures has an affection to the way of thinking and communicating in MNCs. Questions was about different things like are participant willing to learn more about different cultures and communication styles and if the participant is aware how his/her own cultural background affects to his/her style of working and communicating. Second section had three yes/no-questions and based on your answer you needed to explain it shortly.

Third section of questionnaire was focusing to the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Questions of third section aimed to identify positive impacts of cross-cultural interaction. Through this section, I also tried to gain information what kind of positive impacts there can be in multicultural teams and in MNCs. Third section included three yes/no-questions and three open-ended questions. Again, in yes/no-questions you needed to open your answer with short explanation.

Fourth section of the questionnaire was focusing to the challenges of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Through these questions I tried to understand, what kind of challenges participants are facing in the cross-cultural interaction in MNCs and their work environment. Fourth section included three yes/no-questions and three open-ended questions. Also, in this section participant needed to explain the answer shortly after answering yes or no.

Fifth and last section was about future and organizational support. I wanted to identify how organizations support cross-cultural interaction and understanding of different cultures. I wanted to understand how organizations are supporting employees and how

they could support employees even more effectively. Last section included four open-ended questions.

### **3.4 Research sample**

The sample for this research was collected in April 2026. The sample was collected through questionnaire, and it consist of twelve respondents. All respondents, their codes and response date as well as responses end time has been presented in the Table 1. The target population was people who are currently working in MNCs. Respondents had different backgrounds. Respondents were from different countries, different age and different culture. Connecting factor of the sample was that all participants were working in MNCs. Demographic information of the participants has been presented in Table 2.

In Table 1 we can see that the number of respondents were twelve and all respondents have a code, so data analysis is possible to make. Codes for respondents are R1, R2, R3 and so on. Code is coming from "Respondent" and then participant number. To increase reliability, in the table there are also date when respondent has made the questionnaire and what time he/she has ended it.

**Table 1** List of respondents.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Response date and end time</b>
1	R1	13.04.2026, 15.53
2	R2	13.04.2026 19.13
3	R3	15.04.2026, 16.04
4	R4	16.04.2026, 17.45
5	R5	17.04.2026, 14.34
6	R6	20.04.2026, 10.30
7	R7	20.04.2026, 10.49
8	R8	20.04.2026, 11.25
9	R9	20.04.2026, 12.10
10	R10	22.04.2026, 12.20
11	R11	26.04.2026, 17.21
12	R12	26.05.2026, 19.31

As we can see in Table 2 the sample included people from four countries, and it included both men and women who are working in different roles in MNCs. All in all, nine (75 %) of the participants were male and three (25 %) were female. Seven participants were Finnish and spoke Finnish as a native language, three were Portuguese and speak Portuguese as a native language, one was Italian with Italian as a native language and lastly one was Ukrainian with native language of Ukrainian. In the research, we also got participants from different positions in organization, but still 75 % total nine participants were employees. One participant was senior and two participants answered option “other, what?”. Other one was executive and other one was a lower official. The sample of this research provided multiple perspectives and opinions about the topic even though the number of responses was quite low.

**Table 2** Respondents background information.

Variable	Category	Sample/amount	%
Age	< 18	0	0,0%
	18-24	0	0,0%
	25-39	7	58,3%
	40-54	5	41,7%
	55+	0	0,0%
Gender	male	9	75,0%
	female	3	25,0%
	other	other	0,0%
Nationality	Finnish	7	58,3%
	Portuguese	3	25,0%
	Italian	1	8,3%
	Ukrainian	1	8,3%
Native language	Finnish	7	58,3%
	Portuguese	3	25,0%
	Italian	1	8,3%
	Ukrainian	1	8,3%
Position in organization	employee	9	75,0%
	manager	0	0,0%
	senior	1	8,3%
	other, what?	2	16,7%
Experience (years) in MNCs	less than 3 years	2	16,6%
	3-5 years	2	16,7%
	6-10 years	3	25,0%
	more than 10 years	5	41,7%

In the first part of the questionnaire, sample was asked to specify how often they are interacting in their work with colleague from different cultural background (see Table 3). In the Table 3 we can see that total eight participants so 66,7 % of participants were interacting daily with colleagues from different cultural background. Three participants (25 %) were interacting with colleagues from different cultural background weekly and lastly, one participant was interacting with colleagues from different cultural background monthly. Other options occasionally and rarely were empty, and this is good for the research because most of participants have daily experience from cross-cultural interaction.

**Table 3** How often do you interact in your work with colleagues from different cultural background?

<b>How often do you interact in your work with colleagues from different cultural background?</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>%</b>
daily	8	66,7 %
weekly	3	25,0 %
monthly	1	0,0 %
occasionally	0	0,0 %
rarely	0	0,0 %

### 3.5 Data analysis

Questionnaire was built in Webropol, and from there data and research material were transformed to Microsoft Excel, so it was possible to examine and analyse the data. In this thesis, qualitative analysis was made through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 4). Thematic analysis is a method for analysing and interpreting patterns in a qualitative dataset and it involves data coding to develop themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p 4). In this thesis, theoretical framework guided the data collection and its' analysis.

First, the data was familiarised by checking all answers that I got to the questionnaire. All responses were read carefully so that there was a comprehensive understanding of the data. After this, data was coded based on the repetitive answers and experiences. In this stage coding was still initial. After initial coding data was shared to the broader themes, so it was easier to understand the experiences that connected the respondents. Themes were categorized under the research questions to find a connection to answer the research questions. For example, based on the raw data one code was language barrier. Language barrier was linked to the theme of challenges, so it was a part of

answering to the other of supportive research questions. Later, this code was also linked to the social harmony and collectivism vs individualism. During coding, there was a particular focus on finding the benefits and challenges that respondents have experienced. Because theoretical framework guided also data analysing, codes and themes were linked either Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory or both. To ensure consistency and relevance the themes were analysed in relation to the research questions.

### **3.6 Reliability and Validity**

The following chapter will go through how reliability and validity of this study and research were guaranteed.

According to Saunders et al. (2007, p. 149) reliability refers to how well data collection techniques and analysis methods produce results that are consistent. It can be assessed by, for example, with questioning if similar observations are reached by other observers, and by questioning if there is transparency in interpreting raw data (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 149). In this study reliability has been ensured through explaining how data has been collected and how analysing the data has been done. Reliability has been ensured with transparent process. For example, in findings use direct quotes from the responses so reader can confirm that the findings are based on real data.

According to Saunders et al. (2007, p. 150) validity is showing if findings are really about what they emerge to be about. Generalisability is sometimes directed to as external validity. Generalisability is referring to the level of how generalisable the results of the study are (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 150). Validity of this thesis has been verified by creating a survey based on a theoretical framework of this thesis. Through this it has been ensured that the responses of the questionnaire provide answers to the research questions. The goal was to gain in-depth information, and this was ensured with open questions. With open questions respondents were not guided to any direction.

## 4 Research Findings

This chapter will present the empirical findings of this study. This study aims to find out the benefits and challenges that employees are experiencing in cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations. In this chapter, first theme that will be analysed is commonly observed experiences from MNCs. After this, benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs will be presented. Lastly, we will focus to the future and organizational support.

### 4.1 Cross-cultural interaction generally

In the second part of the questionnaire participants were asked questions about cross-cultural interaction generally. To understand participants' approach to work in multinational corporations these questions were useful. It was also needed to understand if willingness to learn more about different cultures may affect to the participants way of thinking and communicating in multinational corporations.

Hundred percent of participants answered that they feel comfortable when they interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Even nine respondents out of twelve felt that all in all they want to learn more about different cultures and understand differences between different cultures. Below there are listed some answers that participants wrote about learning and understanding different cultures.

*I try to communicate the best I can and understand the differences between us.  
(R9)*

*I like learning about different cultures. (R8)*

*We learn from different cultures. (R3)*

*Because interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds is generally rewarding, fostering personal growth, empathy, and unique, lasting friendships.*

*(R1)*

Another thing that was mentioned twice, when thinking about feeling comfortable when interacting with people from different background was English as a language. This possibly came up because none of participants was speaking English as a native language, but English may be commonly used and official language in MNCs.

*It happens in English so it's easy. (R12)*

*I have no trouble using English and I've been interacting with people from various cultures my whole adulthood. (R6)*

In the second part of the questionnaire willingness to learn more about different cultures and communication styles that people from different cultures are using were asked. Eleven of the twelve participants answered yes and only one person answered no. The one person who answered no was feeling that he/she is not willing to learn more about those because he/she knows already enough. For this, answers were divided and respondents wanted to learn multiple different things. Generally, culture was mentioned in multiple answers. Also, effective interaction and communication was mentioned in two answers.

*Different ways to communicate and process information. (R9)*

*Work-wise: there are differences between cultures in punctuality and truthfulness-politeness scale when communicating work/schedule related topics. Understanding this and understanding what exactly the other party means when they say something is highly beneficial. (R6)*

*Yes, learning about different cultures and communication styles is crucial for effective interaction, building trust, and fostering inclusivity. (R1)*

Lastly in the second section participants were asked, if they are aware how their cultural background is affecting to their style of working and communicating. All in all, nine participants answered that they are aware how their cultural background is affecting to their style of working and communicating and only three participants answered that they are not aware of how their cultural background is affecting to their style of working and communicating. To gain in-depth information participants were also asked how, after their chose of yes or no. A point to note that recurs in four answers out of twelve is Finnishness and Finnish style or culture.

*I have very Finnish style to communicate. (R12)*

*Finns tend to value honesty above politeness and punctuality above flexible schedules in working environment. This affects how I communicate and it might clash with some other working cultures. (R6)*

*Many people see Finns as often a bit grumpy looking and I think I still come across as like that sometimes. (R4)*

*Because, for example, Finnish people are very direct and could face a confrontation. (R3)*

Other answers that can be highlighted from answers are the answers, where different positions are mentioned. Even though this theme appeared only in the respondent's R3 answers it is significant to mention it because power distance and different positions are important part of this thesis. Because of the significant theoretical component this should be addressed in more detail later in the discussion section.

*The way we talk to a different colleague, and if we have a different position, we can easily see differences a way to lead. (R3)*

*I find it more difficult to communicate with colleague from different culture whose style is very different from my own if they have a position of power on us. But if you are good and understand, no problem. (R3)*

## **4.2 Benefits of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)**

Third part of the questionnaire was focused to the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Third section aimed to identify positive impacts of cross-cultural interaction. Through this section it was aimed to find answers to the supportive research question that was “How do employees experience the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs?”. Also, in this section theoretical framework was guiding the questionnaire construction and design.

When thinking about creativity and innovation, seven participants felt that cultural diversity in team promotes creativity and innovation. In the other hand, even five participants answered that they don’t feel that cultural diversity in the team promotes creativity and innovation. Participants were also asked how this manifests itself in everyday life. Even six individuals highlighted different perspectives, ways of thinking and different knowledge. Similar answers emerged during considering overall team performance.

*Because people come different backgrounds so the perspectives can be different. I think that those things are good for yourself to use and learn something new. (R10)*

*You can bring different knowledge. (R7)*

*Different ways of thinking. (R4)*

*Different cultures, different perspectives that can help you in your daily life. (R2)*

*More variety and more opinions and more ways to solve different tasks. (R9)*

*Significantly improve team performance by fostering innovation, broadening perspectives, and enhancing complex problem-solving. (R1)*

*Innovation, enhances problem solving, and increases productivity by bringing diverse perspectives together. (R1)*

*More innovation & creativity. (R7)*

It is possible that interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds can improve employee's communication skills and cultural awareness. As well as in the second part of the questionnaire, English as a language came up also in the communication skills that respondents feel that has improved.

*I am more comfortable to use English. (R10)*

*Well, maybe speaking English has improved a little when you must use it when you're forced to. (R5)*

*More you speak English, more you learn. (R11)*

Different ways to communicate and different ways to handle things were brought up in different questions. Participants were feeling that interacting with colleagues from other cultures has improved their working – and communication skills, and through these they have faced positive impacts like flexibility and cultural-awareness. These things have been seen as a benefit in workplace, but also as a thing that individuals have gained

positive impact. Below you can see direct answers from participants on how they experience positive effects in themselves.

*I've gained more flexibility and patience. I've also learned to talk about various subjects with more ease. (R6)*

*Interacting with diverse cultures enhances communication by fostering empathy, improving active listening, and teaching adaptability, breaking down stereotypes while building trust. This exposure forces self-reflection on personal biases, resulting in more inclusive, respectful, and effective interpersonal interactions and increased cognitive flexibility. (R1)*

*This experience taught me that true collaboration involves flexibility and valuing diverse perspectives, leading to a much stronger result than if we had worked alone or ignored differences. (R1)*

*The culture in which we work in different countries and with different people opens our minds to look at life in a different way. (R3)*

*Clarity of communication. (R10)*

### **4.3 Challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)**

It is likely that there are challenges in multicultural environment, such as misunderstandings and conflict situations. In fourth part of the questionnaire, it was aimed to found answers to the second supportive research question that was “How do employees experience and handle the challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)?”.

From the answers of the questionnaire, it was clearly seen that most of the participants feel that language barriers and different styles of communication is causing misunderstandings in daily work. Miss of common language or language barrier was mentioned multiple times. Even eight participants out of twelve felt that language barriers are causing misunderstandings in their daily work.

*Language barriers. (R3)*

*Language issues and the differences in work culture and laws. (R9)*

*If we don't find any way or language that will work for us. The job will be hard to explain and to do. (R10)*

*Language barriers have often been challenging; I haven't really had challenges caused by cultural differences. (R4)*

*The most challenging times are when you have no common language. There's only so much you can resolve by pointing and "sign language". (R6)*

*One time I had to work with truck driver who didn't speak any English, so it was little difficult to explain him what to do. We solve it with google translate. (R10)*

Many participants were feeling that there is language barriers or different languages that may cause misunderstandings, but four people out of twelve also mentioned safety and from answers we can see that safety issues may happen for example in the construction sites. When thinking about safety issues that language barriers and different language can cause it is a challenge that needs to be taken very seriously. Below there are couple examples from answers where safety has been raised as a challenge.

*Language barriers can be a huge issue if people you're communicating with simply don't have any common language with you. In my work, I have to communicate critical safety related issues for example, and not getting anything across can lead to serious situations. Sometimes differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstandings about what is needed and when. That makes organizing unnecessarily difficult. (R6)*

*Often the language barrier here only adds to the problems and causes unnecessary dangers. (R5)*

In the research it was noticeable that language barriers are not the only challenge that may be faced in the MNCs. Also, seven participants out of twelve thought that cultural differences sometimes lead to conflict situations. Different way of communicating emerged in different kind situations and caused challenges, such as misunderstandings in way to do work and challenges in giving instructions. Also, situations where feedback was given came up totally in four participants answers but multiple times. Below there are examples where different way of communicating was highlighted. Below are also examples of answers where feedback situations have been raised as a challenge.

*Sometimes the other person doesn't speak English, and we don't have common language, so the working gets harder. Also, sometimes we just don't understand things the same. Communication and understanding the differences help a lot. (R9)*

*Simply doing something completely different what was told, even after checking to make sure they understood the instructions. (R5)*

*Different way of working. (R12)*

*Leading to project delays, reduced productivity, and tension in daily work. (R1)*

*Different ways to give feedback. (R12)*

*People from certain countries are more stubborn; they don't take orders, suggestions, or opinions well.*

*People from certain countries often cannot handle criticism and get nervous very easily. (R5)*

*I gave feedback and the other one was not ready to get any feedback from colleague, so he got mad. We talked it through and everything was good after. (R12)*

#### **4.4 Experiences and thoughts of future and organizational support**

Lastly questionnaire was focused in the future and what kind of organizational support participants have already got to the cross-cultural interaction and understanding different cultures and what kind of support they would like to receive in the future. From the last part of the questionnaire, it was aimed to identify how organizations support cross-cultural interaction and different cultures while working in MNCs.

It was clear that many of the participants have not received any support or tools from organization to manage cross-cultural interaction effectively. All in all, seven participants out of twelve were feeling that. At the same time most of the participants had ideas and thoughts how organization could improve employee's cross-cultural interaction and what kind of trainings or support would be useful. Again, language was brought up multiple times. Respondents were clearly feeling that language courses could be helpful when thinking about improving cross-cultural interaction skills and navigating in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs.

*Maybe more courses in English that will help you at work. (R10)*

*Language lessons to people who doesn't speak English because many other issues can be solved when you understand each other. (R9)*

*Put the new employees on language courses. (R5)*

*Offer language training, translation services, and promote the use of simple, clear, and inclusive language. (R1)*

*By only hiring subcontractors who at least speak English. (R5)*

Other theme that came up when thinking about support and training was group chemistry and team building. Four respondents out of twelve felt that team buildings in company and in cross-cultural environment could help in cross-cultural interaction. Many participants also felt that simply interacting with people and sharing information between each other will be helpful and educational. This came up in seven participants answers. Below are excerpts from participants' responses about team buildings and chemistry as well as about sharing information and interacting with people from different cultures.

*Spend enough time with the group you are working with, to build good team chemistry. (R12)*

*Team building workouts. Great bonds. (R3)*

*Create group team buildings. (R7)*

*Team buildings!!!! You learn a lot about your colleagues during them. (R8)*

*Everybody bringing their own experiences and cultural knowledge and sharing it. (R7)*

*You can only learn interaction with other people by interacting with other people. (R6)*

*Overall open-mindedness and sharing knowledge are key things. Also, having patience with new employees who do not yet have the experience navigating cross-cultural work environment. (R6)*

In case of challenges, it is needed to resolve the situations, for example when thinking about cultural misunderstandings. For the best solution to resolve the challenges respondents were thinking respect towards everyone and not to have any prejudice but to give chances to everyone. Also, patience was seen as a key to resolve the situations. These themes came up in total of eight participants answers. Below is listed some examples to support the finding. Examples are straight from participants answers.

*Give some advice how to work with people and how to treat people with respect. Learn how to listen other people thoughts and be open to interact with different cultures. Don't have any prejudice. (R10)*

*People need to learn how to work with different cultures so the best is to give chances to everyone and show how things should be done beforehand. (R9)*

*Every situation is different so maybe have an open mind and listen to doubts before they turn into a situation. (R7)*

*Trying to calmly get people to see things from everyone's point of view and bringing all parties together to discuss the misunderstanding. (R4)*

## **5 Discussion**

In this chapter findings will be analysed and compared to the theoretical literature, so it is possible to create an exhaustive understanding of how employees experience and face the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. First the cross-cultural interaction experiences will be discussed and after that benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs will be discussed. Finally, future and organizational support will be discussed and lastly updated theoretical framework will be presented.

### **5.1 Cross-cultural interaction generally**

Different things like knowledge and will to learn more about different cultures may affect to the individual's way of thinking and communicating in MNCs. These factors may also affect your way of thinking about benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. It was important for this thesis to understand participants approach to work in MNCs because different cultural factors like individualism vs collectivism and power distance will be shown in work community and in employee's everyday life. For example, power distance and individuals cultural background may appear in everyday life while getting and giving feedback. It is necessary to understand these different cultures and cultural factors to consider how these appear in everyday life and how these lead to perceived benefits and challenges.

Overall results of the questionnaire showed that people who are working in MNCs feel comfortable when they are interacting with people who are coming from different cultures. Results showed that participants felt like that because they want and they are willing to learn more about different cultures and they wanted to understand differences between different cultures. During the willingness to learn more about different cultures and communication styles it was also asked what kind of things they would like to learn and for this, participants wanted to learn multiple different things, but culture was mentioned several times and also effective interaction, and communication was mentioned

in couple responses. Willingness to learn from new cultures is very important thing when thinking about effective communication because for individuals to understand what is needed for the effective communication it is necessary that people understand different cultural factors (Joubert, 2024). When companies want to have successful work environment effective cross-cultural interaction is one of the first steps (Joubert, 2024). It is possible to state that willingness to learn from new cultures is playing a key role in pursuit of effective cross-cultural communication.

From the participants none of them spoke English as a first language. Clearly from the findings it is possible to see that still most of the participants were using English as the primary working language. English as a language stood up multiple times at various points when analysing the results. When thinking about cross-cultural interaction generally it was asked if participants feel comfortable when interacting with people from different background English as a language was many times mentioned. Participants felt that they have no trouble using English and they feel that English is easy for them. This is a good thing because in MNCs it is not possible to avoid cross-cultural interaction and MNCs have possibly many different languages (Bhadoriya & Kushwah, 2025, p. 76).

Most of the participants felt that they are aware of how their cultural background is affecting to their working – and communicating style. In the answers Finnish culture was mentioned several times and it was clear that participants had clear view of how Finnish people are and how Finnish culture is. For example, direct and honest style of communication was mentioned couple times. Direct communication is typical for individualistic societies (Merkin, 2015, p. 2). Typical for direct communication is that the message is conveyed by the words that speaker is using (Joyce, 2012).

Different positions and power to the employees was mentioned couple times. Some participants were feeling that if people are in different position it is easy that they see differences in a way how to lead. Someone was also feeling that communication with a person from different culture may be difficult if he/she is in a position that he/she has a

power to someone. This can be strongly linked to the face negotiation theory because in the relationship between manager and employee manager has more power and in conflict situation they might use very different styles. Manager may use dominating style in conflict situation, when employees may use for example avoiding styles (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 139).

## **5.2 Benefits of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)**

When analysing the results many different benefits emerged. This was important to get the answer for the supportive research question. Majority of respondents felt that cultural diversity in the work team promotes creativity and innovation. To get more in-depth knowledge participants were also asked how this is seen in everyday life and there was a theme that emerged and it were different perspectives, different ways of thinking and different knowledge between cultures. Participants were feeling that every individual can bring different knowledge and different perspectives to the work community and to the interaction. This was seen clearly as a big benefit for the individuals and for the organization. These thoughts were in line with the Rother & Grau (2018). They have written that companies that have multicultural team are advantageous placed when developing ideas for example products and processes (Rother & Grau, 2018). Answers were also aligned with Eures (2024) when they wrote that every individual is bringing unique things to the work community and individuals should respect differences inside the team, so they are able to create cross-cultural and successful collaboration.

Participants were also feeling that cultural diversity improves team performance and enhances problem solving in the team. According to Ting-Toomey & Oetzel (2001, p. 3) different cultures may approach problem-solving tasks differently. People coming from different cultures are also bringing their own work habits and cultural practices to the workplace (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 3).

Interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds may improve employee's communication skills and cultural awareness. English as a language came up as a clear thing that has evolved when participants have been working in cross-cultural interaction. When English speaking skills are developing, also communication between different cultures in MNCs may feel easier and be more efficiency. For example, self-expression may feel easier when you feel more comfortable while speaking language that is not your mother tongue or emotional language. Different language may also be seen as uncertainty in organization and uncertainties will affect to the individual's way of acting. This can be linked to the dimension uncertainty avoidance and to the face-negotiation theory through facework and face loss. In this case, people are feeling more confident when speaking English so probably they have higher tolerance for ambiguity and they feel more comfortable when they face a situation where English need to be used. When thinking about face negotiation theory people who have gained confident when speaking English may not feel situation where they need to speak it as a face-threatening situation. They probably are not scared to face-loss in case of situation where English is spoken. According to Landis et al. (2004, p. 218) "Facework refers to the specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors that we engage in to maintain or restore face loss and to uphold and honour face again". Facework is for example used to protect an image of person (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 384), and with more confident they may not feel the need to protect their image in case of need for speaking English.

As we can see from the findings, different ways to communicate and different ways to handle things were brought up multiple times in different questions. Participants are clearly feeling that interaction with colleagues from different cultures has improved not only their working skills but also their communication skills. Through improved work – and communication skills participants have faced positive impacts that are, for example, flexibility and cultural awareness. Cultural awareness can, for example, improve individuals' communication skills (Rogers, n.d.). Cultural awareness may be helpful in situations where employees are letting their voices to be heard. Some countries may feel less comfortable when speaking up, while other countries may be more willing to speak up

(Reynolds, 2019). With high level of cultural awareness individuals may know that people from some country may not be as willing to share ideas as you may be. This finding is aligned with for example Reynolds (2019). Increased flexibility may be seen in everyday life in MNCs in different situations. Flexibility can be seen in a company as a benefit because it will create agility in the company. This can also be linked to the theories in many ways. Flexible employee may for example tolerate better with uncertainty avoidance. Cultures that are uncertainty avoiding have strict rules and codes and they are thinking that there is only one truth (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10). Even though person who is coming from culture that is uncertainty avoiding but is flexible may be ready to be flexible about the rules and think more open-minded. Flexibility can also be seen in power distance and facework. For example, flexible manager can be a manager for people from high- and low-power distance cultures because he/she can integrate to the many different situations. Also, flexible person may be able to change communication strategies based on the situation. For example, in the conflict situation person can change communication style based on face concerns, if colleague is for example having other-face concerns. It is extremely important to manage face during different conflicts. People are negotiating their face based on their level of face concern (Oetzel et al., 2007, p. 383).

### **5.3 Challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)**

Many challenges were also found through the research and through analysing the results. It is likely that employees will face challenges in cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Different cultures are meeting and this may cause different cross-cultural challenges. Businesses that are expanding internationally needs to deal with cross-cultural issues that local businesses may not face at all and don't need to deal with those (Xie & Lou, 2021, p. 712).

From participants answers it was clearly seen that most of them felt that language barriers and different styles of communication is causing misunderstandings in daily work.

Participants were mentioning miss of common language or language barrier multiple times in the questionnaire. Miss of common language or language barriers were causing situations and challenges for example in dividing work and giving instructions. This finding was aligned for example with Xie & Lou (2021). They were writing that cross-cultural challenges that companies and individuals may face is language barriers (Xie & Lou, 2021, p. 712). For the collectivistic cultures social harmony is important (Nickerson, 2025). Language barriers may affect to the social harmony because through language barriers people might feel left out from the group. This may be hard situation for a person who is coming from collectivistic country and value social harmony over own needs. Opposite as in benefits in challenges, language difference may be an uncertainty that will cause challenges inside of the work environment. Cultures that avoid uncertainty want to know multiple details and structured plans (Kähärä, n.d.). This may be a hard situation for person from high uncertainty avoidance culture because details can be hard to convey due to language barrier. Because of language barrier there may also be misunderstandings in details and plans which will affect for example to decision making.

One clear exact example that came up because of the language barrier was safety issues. It was possible to interpret that participants who answered about safety issues may be working for example in the construction sites where safety is in key role. When thinking about employee's safety it is a challenge that needs to be taken very seriously. In these kinds of situations, for example, language tests and courses could be useful to avoid safety issues which are consequences from language differences and language challenges.

Participants were also clearly feeling that cultural differences are sometimes leading to the conflict situations in MNCs. Mostly about conflict situations that came up most were the situations where feedback is given. This is clearly in line with theories that are used in this thesis. Feedback is strongly linked to the dimensions like power distance and individualism vs collectivism, but it is in line also with face negotiation theory like facework. Low power distance cultures tend to give direct feedback when in the other hand high

power distance cultures value structured feedback (Jordynec, n.d.). When two power distance cultures are meeting there can be situations where different ways of giving and getting feedback collide and cause challenging situations. There is also difference in seeking feedback. Individuals that are coming from high power distance cultures are seeking feedback from peers rather than superiors (Abbate et al., 2025, p. 2). Individualistic countries prefer direct communication when collectivistic countries prefer indirect communication (Merkin, 2015, p. 2). This is aligned with the answers, and different communication styles can be seen in feedback situations. In case of situation where feedback is given, it is important to understand facework. For example, Western countries want themselves to look good (Ng, 2008) and constructive feedback may be hard to receive in face-threatening situation. In these kinds of situations there are also many different conflict styles and employees are facing the situations in different ways.

#### **5.4 Experiences and thoughts of future and organizational support**

In the questionnaire it was wanted to figure out what kind of organizational support companies are already providing to the cross-cultural interaction and what kind of support participants would like to receive in the future from the company.

It was clearly noticeable that companies have not provided any support or tools to manage cross-cultural interaction effectively. Most of the participants still had ideas how organization could support their employees to improve cross-cultural interaction. Also, in here language stood out the most. Participants felt that language courses and language training could be helpful and prevent other challenges that are caused by language problems. Participants felt that understanding each other in the work environment will solve many other challenges and problems. Based on the ideas and thoughts that stood up, companies should offer language training especially English courses so cross-cultural interaction would be more effective.

Another theme that came up was chemistry and team buildings. Respondents felt that different kind of team building in cross-cultural environment could be helpful when thinking about cross-cultural interaction. Participants also felt that sharing information and interacting with people will raise awareness and develop skills. Through team buildings it could be possible that employees will get to know each other better and find out new things about different cultures. This could raise cultural-awareness, and it could be easier to understand different ways of communicating and acting. This could prevent potential conflicts from arising and also resolving the problems.

As we can see from the findings, there will be challenging situations in MNCs and those challenges and conflicts need to be solved. For the best solution to resolve challenges respondents felt that respect towards everyone is a key. They were also thinking that individuals should not have any prejudice and everyone should give a chance to everyone. Another key to resolve the situations and conflicts was patience. These keys could be helpful when thinking about different cultures and cross-cultural interaction. By listening each other people will learn about different cultures and will figure out how people are reacting to different situations and figure out for example what kind of face concerns people have. By following these solutions and keys challenges can be overcome and it will affect positively to the interaction and efficiency.

## **5.5 Updated theoretical framework**

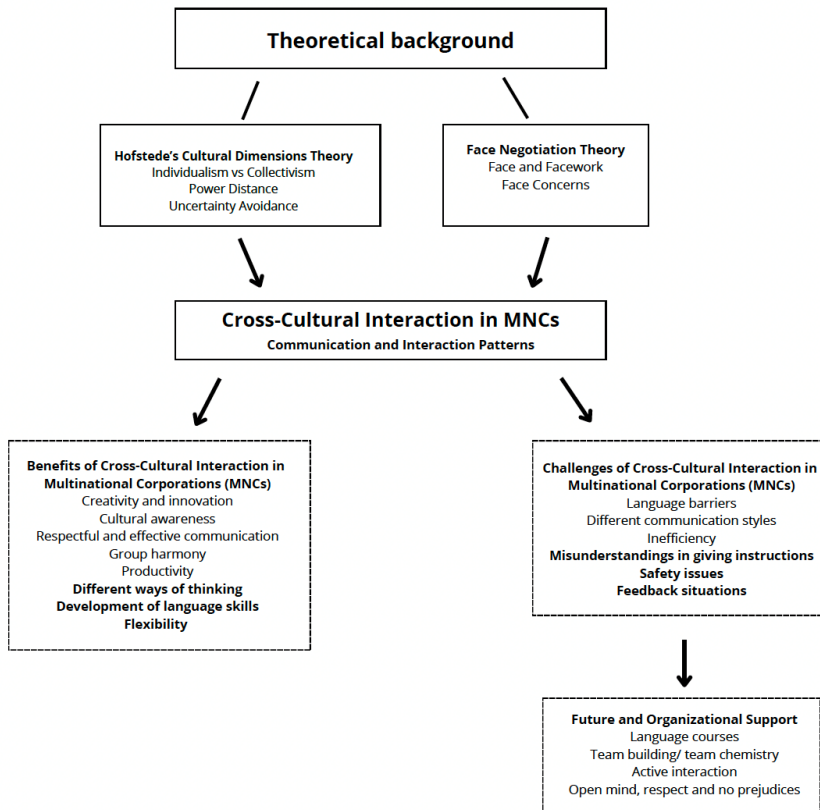
In the chapter 2.7 Summary original theoretical framework was presented. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Ting-Toomey's face negotiation theory were providing a foundation for the empirical part of the study. With these theories, it was expected that benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs will be found out. In Figure 1 original theoretical framework of the thesis has been presented and figure is explained in the chapter 2.7.

The empirical part supported many of the benefits and challenges that was presented in the original framework. From the benefits none of them were deleted because all of those were results also from this research. Majority of respondents of this research felt that cultural diversity in the work team promotes creativity and innovation. Respondents were also feeling that cultural awareness will grow. This is aligned with Rogers (n.d.) when he wrote that cultural awareness is important when communicating with people who are coming from different cultures (Rogers, n.d.). Cultural awareness also improves individuals' communication skills (Rogers, n.d.). Also, respect and increased respectfulness came up from the results, as well as, group harmony through team building and team chemistry. Group harmony is straightly linked as a positive impact and collectivistic cultures are thinking that social harmony is very important (Merkin, 2015, p. 2). Also, productivity came up from research as a benefit.

However, from the research it was possible to found other themes that was needed to add to the updated theoretical framework. These are different ways of thinking, development of language skills and flexibility. These were added to the box of benefits because these themes stood out strongly in the results. Different ways of thinking were seen as a clear benefit in the findings. Participants felt that different ways of thinking will, for example, promote innovation and creativity. Different language may be an uncertainty, and it will affect to the individual's way of acting and communicating. When individuals are feeling more confident while speaking English, they have higher tolerance for ambiguity and cross-cultural interaction is easier for them. This is linked to the uncertainty avoidance and to the face negotiation theory through facework and face loss. Individuals may not think different language as an uncertainty, and they are not scared of face loss when speaking English. Lastly flexibility was added to the framework as a benefit and in results it is possible to see that respondents felt they were more flexible because of cross-cultural interaction experiences. This is linked to the uncertainty avoidance, power distance and facework.

In the challenges of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs more changes have been made, because challenges that stood out from literature was not stood out from responses. Different values and different attitudes were taken out because these challenges did not arise in this research. In the other hand, misunderstandings in giving instructions, safety issues and feedback situations were added in the box where challenges have been listed. For example, feedback situations are strongly in line with theories used in this thesis. This observation is strongly linked to the power distance, individualism vs collectivism and facework.

Lastly, to the updated theoretical framework was added future hopes and thoughts as well as hopes for organizational support. In the last box it is seen that in findings participants were hoping for language courses, team building and team chemistry, active interaction inside of the company with different cultures and lastly open mind, respect and no prejudices. Based on the respondents, these are the things and keys that employees want to have from the organization, so cross-cultural interaction will be as successful as possible.



**Figure 2** Updated theoretical framework.

## 5.6 Managerial implications

In this chapter couple recommendations have been presented for managers in MNCs based on the findings of this study.

Participants were feeling that language barrier is one challenge and from this, giving instructions and safety came up. Safety is critical challenge and that should not happen. As a solution to the language barriers company and managers could offer language courses to the employees. Also, language skills should be checked already at the recruitment process. Language courses could be organized online so everyone could take part of those. Also, language courses should be mandatory for personnel of the company.

Other thing that managers and company could require is not only oral communication but also written communication. By written communication the instructions could be clearer, and the instructions could be revisited if necessary.

Respondents also felt that to have efficient cross-cultural communication team chemistry, and team spirit should be in good shape. To have a good team spirit managers and company could organize regular meetings or events that are not about work. Employees could freely discuss about different topics that they like to. This could increase cultural knowledge and relax the atmosphere. If managers would also take part of the meetings and events, this could lower the hierarchy and, for example, giving feedback could become easier when people feel that they are on the same level. About giving feedback, it could also be more efficient if you know a person's personality. Through this you can adapt your communication style based on who are you interacting with.

According to findings, respondents felt that open-mind and respect towards everyone is playing a key role when thinking about effective cross-cultural interaction in MNCs. Through open-mind and respect, every employee can be seen as an individual and everyone can be oneself in the work community. Through this, for example, concerns decrease and there is a possibility for the open communication. Through open communication employees can for example be more open with their ideas and make their voices heard. Managers should encourage and demand that everyone respect others and intervene if this does not happen. Managers need to be easily approachable and present in everyday life so that concerns can be raised with them.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter is presenting main findings, theoretical contributions, limitations and lastly suggestions for future research. Main findings will be presented by answering all three research questions. After these theoretical contributions are presented. Then, study's limitations are presented and lastly suggestions for future research are given.

### 6.1 Main findings

This chapter summarises main findings of this study with answering to the research questions. This thesis had one main research question and to help find answers to the main question two supportive questions were set. All questions have been presented down.

***Main RQ: "How do employees experience and face the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)?"***

All in all, employees are thinking that cross-cultural interaction is a possibility to the individuals and also for the team and companies. Employees are feeling that they and company can gain multiple benefits through cross-cultural work environment, but benefits are not the only thing, there are also many challenges when several cultures meet. Challenges arise but they can be overcome with good language skills, open minded attitude and cross-cultural awareness. Different cultures need to be respected, and everyone need to be faced as an individual. Company has a role when building effective cross-cultural interaction in MNCs and possible actions can be for example offering language courses and gather the team together to the team buildings.

***Supportive RQ: "How do employees experience the benefits of cross-cultural interaction in MNCs?"***

Employees are thinking that there are many benefits based on their experiences of cross-cultural interaction while working in multinational corporations. Employees are feeling that cross-cultural interaction and cultural diversity is promoting creativity and innovation in work team. Through different ways of thinking, different styles are combining and bringing culture that would not be created without many cultures. Different things like advanced language skills will reduce uncertainties and employees will be more confident when interacting in a language other than their native language. Through flexibility employees will be able to be flexible about different things, such as power distance and combining different facework.

***Supportive RQ: “How do employees experience and handle the challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations (MNCs)?”***

Employees are facing different challenges during working in multinational corporation and interacting in cross-culturally. Cross-cultural interaction is continuous learning and encountering different situations. Different communication styles and language barriers cause ineffective communication and even safety issues. Language barrier is a big uncertainty that may cause uncertainty avoidance and stressful situations. Feedback situations are causing challenges where participants may experience for example different face concerns. Different challenges can be overcome by being open-minded and respect every individual as well as their culture. By giving everyone a chance, regardless of culture and for example language skills, it is possible to handle and prevent challenges of cross-cultural interaction.

## **6.2 Theoretical contributions**

This study contributes to the existing knowledge of benefits and challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations. This study also offers further theoretical and practical insights. This study and theoretical framework are providing comprehensive information about how employees are experiencing and facing the benefits and

challenges of cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations while not forgetting important theoretical views. Findings are linked to the theoretical framework, and the theoretical framework guided the entire process. Findings are showing that when thinking about cross-cultural interaction it is not only positive impacts that employees and company are facing but also challenges that must be solved and overcome. Findings are also showing that it is not only employees who are facing the benefits and challenges, but it is also organization and work environment.

Organizations need to support employees in cross-cultural interaction through different actions like offering language courses and organizing different team buildings so employees can feel more confident and gain all possible benefits. Organizational support is important for the effective cross-cultural interaction. This study is also providing significant information about employees' experiences and thoughts how organizations can support cross-cultural interaction more efficiently.

### **6.3 Limitations**

The primary limitation of this study is the sample size. This research included only twelve participants but all of them offered comprehensive and in-depth information. Because of the small sample size, findings can't and should not be generalized to the different sections. In addition to this, because of the use of qualitative structured online questionnaire and not interviews it may have been affecting to the depth of some individual responses. In the online questionnaire there is also no possibility to ask clarifying questions. Questionnaire was open to everyone, and it was anonymous, so it has not been possible to confirm the identity of respondents or their position in the multinational corporation.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for future research**

We are living in a global era, and it is hard to avoid cross-cultural interaction. Because of this it is important that cross-cultural interaction will be studied through many different perspectives. In this thesis it was only twelve participants, so it is based on experiences from small group. More research is required to better understand benefits and challenges that employees are facing in cross-cultural interaction in multinational corporations.

We are living in an era where cross-cultural interaction happens not only face to face but also remotely. People might not see the people who he/she is interacting with, and this may affect for example to the different ways of communicating and also to the experiences of benefits and challenges in cross-cultural interaction. An interesting avenue for the future research could be a comparative study between face-to-face and remote cross-cultural interaction. Remote work could add many benefits and challenges that employees are facing in cross-cultural interaction.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire

#### Consent

1. I consent to participate to this study and I commit to answering the questions carefully and truthfully. \*

Yes

No

#### Part 1: background information

2. How old are you? \*

- < 18
- 18-24
- 25-39
- 40-54
- 55+

3. What is your gender? \*

- Male
- Female
- Other

4. What is your nationality? \*

5. What is your native language? \*

6. What is your current position in the organization you are working? \*

- Employee
- Manager

- Senior
  - Other, what?
7. How many years you have been working in multinational corporations (MNCs)? \*
- Less than 3 years
  - 3-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - More than 10 years
8. How often do you interact in your work with colleagues from different cultural background? \*
- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Occasionally
  - Rarely

**Part 2: Cross-cultural interaction generally**

9. Do you feel comfortable when you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds? \*
- Yes, why?
  - No, why not?
10. Are you willing to learn more about different cultures and communication styles that people from different cultures are using? \*
- Yes, what kind of things would you like to learn?
  - No, why not?

11. I'm aware how my cultural background is affecting to my style of working and communicating. \*

- Yes, how?
- No

### **Part 3: Benefits**

12. Do you feel that cultural diversity in your team promotes creativity and innovation? \*

- Yes, how does this manifest itself in everyday life?
- No, why not?

13. Do you feel that you gain positive impacts from multicultural team? \*

- Yes, what kind of positive impact?
- No, why not?

14. Do you feel that cross-cultural interaction and cultural diversity improves overall team performance? \*

- yes, in what way?
- No, why not?

15. How interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds has improved your own communication skills and cultural awareness? \*

16. Please give an example of a positive experience that you have had when you have been interacting with colleague from other culture. \*

17. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of cross-cultural interaction in your workplace? \*

**Part 4: Challenges**

18. Do you think that language barriers or different communication styles often cause misunderstandings in your daily work? \*

- Yes, what kind of misunderstandings?
- No

19. I have faced situations where cultural differences sometimes lead to conflict situations. \*

- Yes, what kind of situations?
- No

20. I find it difficult to communicate with colleagues from different cultures whose style is very different from my own. \*

- Yes, why?
- No

21. Have you faced a situation where your own cultural background and communication style lead to misunderstandings with your colleagues? Please give an example. \*

22. Please give an example of a challenging experience that you have had in communication when you have been working with colleague from other culture. How did you resolve it? \*

23. What are the biggest challenges in cross-cultural interaction that you are facing in your work environment? \*

**Part 5: Future and organizational support**

24. Have you received needed support and tools from the organization to manage cross-cultural interaction effectively? What kind of support and tools? \*
25. What kind of training or support would you find most helpful from the organization for improving your cross-cultural interaction skills at work, and why? \*
26. How do you think organization could support employees with navigating cross-cultural interaction? \*
27. How do you think that organization could better support employees when resolving cultural misunderstandings and developing overall cultural awareness in the future? \*