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**EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION IN WORKPLACE
BETWEEN TURKISH AND ESTONIAN EMPLOYEES: A CASE
STUDY BASED ON THREE IT COMPANIES IN ESTONIA**

Master's thesis

Programme International Business Administration

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this master's thesis is to find out problems and differences in communication between Turkish and Estonian employees and provide suggestions to managers for improvement of communication between Estonian and Turkish employees. To achieve this aim, the author investigates the effectiveness of communication between Estonian and Turkish employees and their perception among each other in their working environment based in IT sector. This study will be beneficial for managers who have Turkish and Estonian team members as well as human resource practitioners. In order to reach the aim of this thesis, the author has set these research questions: 1. How effective is Turkish and Estonian employees' communication? 2. How do Estonian and Turkish employees perceive their communication differences between each other? 3. What are the reasons for communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees?

The sample of the thesis includes three IT companies based on in Estonia. The author conducted semi-structured interviews with Turkish and Estonian employees. Eighteen interviews were performed by the author as nine of them with Turkish employees and nine of them Estonian employees from three different companies.

Based on the research results, the author of the thesis found out that communication issues occur due to language competency, different approaches to refusing, and social interaction. Turkish employees encounter difficulties adapting themselves to the Estonian work environment at the beginning and their adaptation takes a long time. Both Turkish and Estonian employees feel the cultural differences and effects of them on their ways of working and collaboration. At the end of the research, the author found out that Turkish and Estonian employees perceive their communication differently. Besides, the suggestions were provided to improve communication at workplaces.

Keywords: Communication, intercultural communication, effectiveness, workplace, employees

INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of the global market has urged nations to work internationally and this has led to being formed multinational companies. Recent technological developments have catalysed movement of skilled employees and as a result number of foreign employees in multinational companies increased. Nevertheless, managing diverse workforce from different cultures is still the biggest challenge for multinational companies. Due to cultural differences; employees may misunderstand each other, have different expectations, and face difficulties while working together.

Estonia is going to be “IT centre” of Europe and Turkish employees are highly interested in being part of it. Turkish expatriates mostly work in IT companies in Estonia due to the job market of the country and the number of Turkish employees are increasing every year (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tallinn Büyükelçiliği, 2020). But there are significant differences between Estonian and Turkish nation in terms of culture. Due to cultural differences, communication problems occur between employees in diversified workplaces. Although communication is a vital fundamental, it is still a great challenge for companies (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). Because cultural differences have major effects on communication and facing communication issues is inevitable (Özdemir-Çağatay & Küllü-Sülü, 2013). These communication problems bring waste of time, poor employee relations, and productivity loss for companies. On the contrary, effective communication help to create a healthy work environment, better employee relations, and higher productivity by decreasing misunderstandings and conflicts in workplaces. Because of these reasons, the author thinks it is worth to research how effective Turkish and Estonian employees’ communication is and what their perception of each other is.

The aim of this study to find out problems and differences in communication between Turkish and Estonian employees and provide suggestions to managers for improvement of communication between Estonian and Turkish employees. This study will be beneficial for managers who have both Turkish and Estonian team members as well as human resource practitioners. In order to reach the aim of this thesis, the author has set research questions as below:

1. How effective is Turkish and Estonian employees' communication?
2. How do Estonian and Turkish employees perceive their communication differences between each other?
3. What are the reasons for communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees?

The sample of this research comprises of three different IT companies that have offices in Estonia and both Turkish and Estonian employees to provide suggestions for current and future managers. In order to achieve this, the author uses qualitative research method and conducted eighteen interviews. Three Turkish and three Estonian employees from each company are interviewed to understand their narratives and perspectives. The identities of respondents and the companies are kept confidential since most of the respondents accepted to be interviewed on the condition that remaining anonymous. In addition to that, the purpose of this research is not comparing the companies but getting the personal experiences of the employees.

Following research assignments have been set by the author to achieve the aim of this study:

1. Reviewing theoretical overviews related to communication and barriers to effective communication at workplaces and previous researches about communication between employees.
2. Preparing interview questions based on theories and previous studies related to the field
3. Selecting three IT companies which operate businesses in Estonia and selecting Turkish and Estonian employees who work together
4. Conducting semi-structured interviews with both Turkish and Estonian employees to understand communication problems and their perspectives for each other
5. Transcriptions of interviews and analysing results by performing cross-case analysis
6. Presenting findings and providing suggestions to managers for improvement of communication between Turkish and Estonian employees and help them to solve possible future issues.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter explores the literature review and theoretical background that includes theories about concepts and previous researches that are done related to the topic. In the second chapter, the author will explain the research sample and research methodology in detail. In the third chapter, the author introduces the result of the analysis and provides suggestions based on findings. The thesis finishes with a conclusion that summarizes the

whole thesis. At the end of the study, interview questions, the links to access full texts of conducted interviews, and cross-case analysis tables are provided in appendices.

The author would like to express appreciation to people who volunteered to be interviewed. Also, special thanks to my husband Caner Gür, for his help and support during this time. I appreciate the time and effort you spent. This study would not have been completed without you. Especially, the author would like to thank her supervisor Virve Siirde for continuous support and guidance throughout the thesis process.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the author gives an overview of theories regarding communication and intercultural communication. After explaining models, barriers to effective intercultural communication and multicultural work environment are explained. Finally, effective intercultural communication notion and previous studies related to this field are discussed.

1.1. Importance of communication

Communication is described by many people with different points of view (Samovar *et al.* 2017). It has many meanings in dictionaries and there are many theories about the communication concept. One of the best definitions is made by Adler (1991). Adler describes the communication as a complex process that exchanging meaning by allowing someone to know what you imply. Communication involves not only a verbal message but also non-verbal message and understanding of the message which is why it is very complicated. According to Adler, every communication includes a sender, a receiver, and a message. Adler's communication theory identifies the process as sending message by sender, receiving message by receiver, sending response by receiver and receiving response by the sender (Adler, 1991).

According to Kelly, communication is complex and fascinating art which includes minimum two individuals, a message, communication skill and feedback to ensure the message is received (Kelly, 2019).

Gudykunst's (1997) approach is different from the other models and includes eight assumptions. The first assumption is the usage of symbols. According to Gudykunst (1997), symbols can represent anything, and it doesn't have to be only words. Even a flag or gesture can a symbol of communication as long as they are accepted by a group of people. The second assumption is transmitting and interpreting messages and explaining communication as a process. With this assumption, Gudykunst (1997) states that message can be sent but meaning cannot. Once a message transmits, it is no longer the same because of other person's interpretation and this is

strongly linked to that person's culture, beliefs, experience, and other aspects. The third assumption includes meaning which is cannot be sent like messages. Meanings are created differently due to the way it said, used channel (verbal or written message), the occasion when message is sent, location and different individuals who get message. For example, we communicate with our family members and boss differently, or it doesn't make the same effect when you send an email or talk to that person face to face. The fourth assumption is awareness regarding the communication behaviour of ourselves. People communicate unconsciously and people need to communicate differently while interacting with different cultures. To be able to communicate consciously, people need to be aware of their own behaviour. The fifth assumption includes speculating the consequence of communication behaviour. When people can predict other people's behaviours, they become more comfortable to communicate. The sixth assumption is intention is not a must. Sending a message may not be done intentionally by people to communicate. Also, many misunderstandings between people, especially from different cultures, occur unintentionally. The seventh assumption says that every message has a content and a relationship dimension. What people say and how it is said have a content and how the message is received may affect the relationship between these two individuals. Eight and the last assumption is making the structure of communication process which has effects on interpretation and prediction of behaviours (Gudykunst, 1997).

Another definition is put forward by Moreau, Campbell and Greener and according to them, communication has five different stipulations such as being dynamic, irreversible, proactive, interactive, and contextual (Moreau *et al.* 2014).

It is said that communication is in every person because people want to share ideas and emotions. It is not very easy to define but possible to say that it is a complex process and has aspects as being symbolic, continuous, irreversible, and unrepeatable (Bakić-Mirić, 2012).

According to Liebenau and Backhouse theory (1990), the communication process includes sender, coding, channel, decoding, and receiver (Liebenau & Backhouse, 1990). The process starts with the sender and sender decides which channel to use (face to face, phone, mail, email, etc.) and which code to choose (language, words, and body language) to send the message. When the message is sent, receiver decodes the message and construes the meaning (Liebenau & Backhouse, 1990). So, this makes communication process a reciprocal process (Elearn, 2007).

Bradford Hall (2014) compares different communication models and emphasizes the forms and functions of various perspectives. As a result, Hall (2014) points out that all perspectives meet on some common grounds: communication can be both verbal and nonverbal form and it must be meaningful to be taken as communication (Hall, 2014). Bourne (2015) defines communication as changing thoughts, requests, and knowledge. The process has three basic steps as formation, transmission, and feedback (Bourne, 2015).

As shown in Figure 1, the communication process is described as a message which is sent by a sender by using a channel and receiving the message and interpreting. According to Croucher’s model both individuals who are interacting encode and decode message. This model differs from others in that explaining the noise aspect. Noise occurs when people misinterpret messages and understand incorrectly (Croucher, 2017).

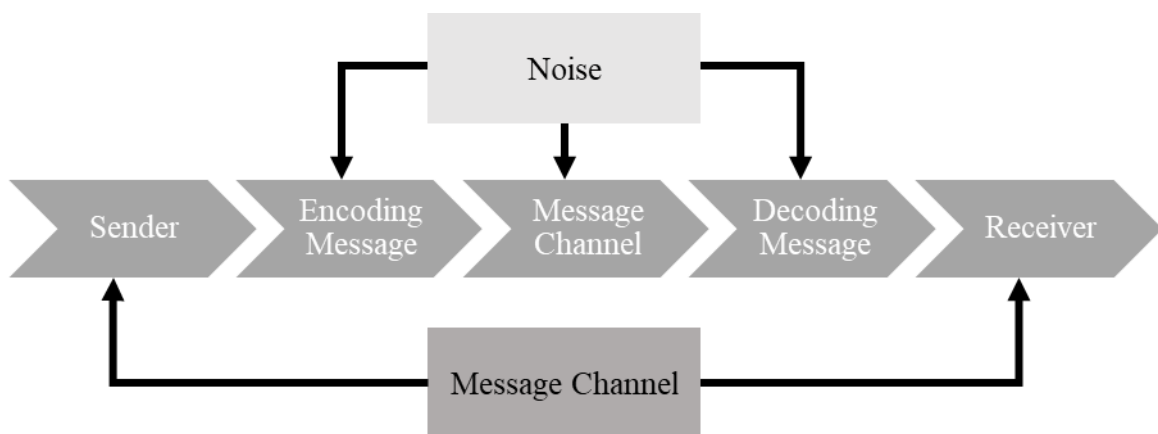


Figure 1. Croucher’s Communication Process Model

Source: Made by the author based on Croucher’s Communication Process Model (Croucher, 2017)

Communication is very important for multicultural organizations, since people from different cultures work together to achieve common objectives (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). Effective communication in workplace helps to achieve job satisfaction, less conflicts, more productivity, better relationships, and efficient usage of resources (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014).

As discussed, there are many theories about the communication process and there are common parts of all these theories. Although the definition of communication is simple as wording, the nature of it very complicated. Verbal and non-verbal signals, behaviours, psychological state, location, and specific situations have effects on communication. There are many aspects of

communication between two people and understanding of meaning is fundamental. The notion of ‘noise’ occurred when people do not understand each other correctly. This study is interested in the noise which means misunderstandings and conflicts while communicating and it is important to understand the source of the noise. One of the reasons of communication noise is belonging to different cultures. Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2017) states that one of the elements of communication is being contextual. Context is created by the behaviours, word selection, actions, and understanding of the symbols. And culture has a great impact on actions of individuals, ways of understanding, and usage of language (Samovar *et al.* 2017). By taking into consideration the important correlation between communication and culture, people encounter communication issues frequently due to belonging to different cultures (Özdemir-Çağatay & Küllü-Sülü, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to discuss intercultural communication and cultural theories, to put forward the connection between communication and culture.

1.2. Intercultural communication and cultural theories

Intercultural communication has been defined by many researchers and the primary definition of intercultural communication is ‘communication between individuals from different national cultures’ (Croucher *et al.* 2015). Since this study investigates communication between two different nations, it is necessary to explain national culture theories. Because national culture has a big impact on communication behaviours (Yuan, 2009). In this study, Hall, Hofstede, and Trompenaars are chosen by the author for the theoretical framework of the culture. Because they emphasize how communication is affected by the culture while explaining their theories.

Hall's theory

In 1976, Edward Hall approaches to culture by relating context (Hall, 1976). He defines the communications styles as low context and high context, typically Western and Eastern cultures. Both cultures have specific characteristics when they communicate and Pfeiffer (1993) categorized low-context and high-context cultures in five aspects such as association, interaction, territoriality, temporality, and learning (Pfeiffer , 1993). Since this study investigates communication between cultures, the aspect ‘interaction’ will be discussed. According to this categorization, interaction refers to the ways of communication between two individuals (Pfeiffer , 1993). Interaction of high context cultures is described as high usage of non-verbal elements, caring context more than words, indirect talking and implications, considering communication as building a relationship

with people, and taking conflicts as personally (Pfeiffer , 1993). On the other hand, the interaction of low context culture is defined as low usage of non-verbal elements, caring words more than context, talking directly without implying, considering communication as exchanging information, and not taking conflicts as personally (Pfeiffer , 1993).

Hofstede's theory

In 1980, Hofstede identified four main cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). Throughout the years, he has developed his theory and identified two more dimensions: long term orientation versus short term normative orientation and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede Insights, 2020). This study focuses on power distance and individualism-collectivism dimensions that are strongly related to communication behaviours.

- Power distance: This dimension represents how power is distributed, either equally or unequally and it has effects on superior-subordinate communication at work. While the communication of cultures with small power distance informal and direct, cultures with large power distance communicates indirectly and formally. When interacting with a person from large power distance, reading between lines is needed. Moreover, being consulted is not common for subordinates with large power distance, they are used to do what they are told. On the other hand, for cultures with small power distance, it is totally normal to be consulted (Hofstede *et al.* 2010).
- Individualism versus collectivism: This dimension describes the choice 'I' or 'We'. Individualistic cultures consider only themselves, while collectivist cultures care about not only themselves but also relatives and some groups. This affects how people communicate and socialize at work with each other.

Trompenaars's theory

Another important cultural theory is Trompenaars's (1997) seven-dimensional model: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, specific versus diffuse, neutral versus emotional, achievement versus ascription, sequential time versus synchronous time and internal direction versus outer direction. This study concentrates neutral versus emotional dimension that is linked to how different cultures communicate. Neutral and emotional cultures have different communication tendencies. Neutral people mostly keep what they think or feel to themselves. It is not very common to see an emotional outburst of these people.

On the other hand, emotional people express their feelings and ideas both verbally and non-verbally. And they don't dissemble their emotions (Trompenaars, 1997).

Comparison of Turkish and Estonian culture

As this study focuses on Turkish and Estonian culture, it is important to discuss the comparison of these two cultures based on mentioned theories. According to Hall's theory, cultures are categorized as high-context and low-context cultures (Hall, 1976). But in his research is very wide (Bennett, 2015) and he didn't do categorization based on each country. In 1990, he published another book and he classified low and high context cultures more detailed (Hall & Hall, 1990). He specified Americans, Germans, Swiss, Scandinavians, and northern Europeans as low context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990). Although they didn't mention specifically Estonians, it is possible to consider Estonians as low context culture by taking into account geographical location. On the other hand, based on Hall and Hall's (1990) classification, Mediterranean people are high context cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990). Turkey is not mentioned specifically in this book, but Turkey can be considered as Mediterranean country, therefore Turkish people belong to high context culture. Based on this categorization, it can be said that Turkish people are indirect, tend to imply, usage of nonverbal elements is high, and conflicts are considered personally. At the same time, Estonians are direct, their words are explicit, low level of nonverbal usage, and conflicts are not considered as personal. In addition to that, Turkish people consider communication as making relations although Estonians communicate for informing or changing ideas.

Hofstede (2010) has categorized countries based on his theory and he mentions both Turkey and Estonia (Hofstede *et al.* 2010). He compares countries by giving points out of 100 for each dimension of the theory. According to Hofstede (2020), Estonia has 40 points for the power distance dimension while Turkey has 66 points out of 100. It means that for Estonians it is convenient to be asked to express their own ideas by their managers and they do not attach importance to hierarchy. On the other hand, Turkey has a higher score than Estonia that refers to the importance of hierarchy. Turkish people care hierarchy and expect to be behaved accordingly. Power is not distributed equally and held by superiors. Unlike Estonians, it is normal for Turkish people to receive orders from managers instead of being asked their opinions. This dimension has also effects on communication and the relationship between employees and managers. Turkish people have formal relationship and indirect communication while Estonians has informal relationship and direct communication between employees and managers (Hofstede Insights, 2020). When it comes to individualism dimension, Estonia has 60 points and Turkey has 37 points.

Based on these scores, Estonian and Turkish culture is different in the sense that being individualist and collectivist. According to Hofstede's explanation specifically for Estonia, Estonians are individualist, task and function oriented for work-related subjects, sensitive about honesty and adherence, direct while talking, and do not do small talk. On the other hand, Turkey is a collectivist country and characteristics of the Turkish nation are paying great attention to family or groups, talking indirectly, engagement is more important than tasks, and escaping from having disagreements (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

Based on Trompenaars' theory, neutral and emotional cultures have different ways of communication (Trompenaars, 1997). But he did not make categorization based on specific countries. According to his theory, Sweden and Finland are neutral cultures while Italy and Spain are emotional cultures. By considering geographical location Estonia can be considered as neutral culture and Estonians are expected not to reveal their feelings and emotions. According to this theory, it is possible that Estonians are avoiding touching, facial expressions, and excessive eye contact. When Turkey considered as an emotional culture, it is expected Turkish people are more emotional, using facial expressing a lot and making eye-contact while interacting.

1.3. Barriers to effective intercultural communication

After theories about cultural dimensions, more researchers started focusing on the sources of miscommunication in cross cultural exchanges. Intercultural interaction is often frustrating and ends up with misunderstandings. Laray M. Barna (1997) explained barriers to effective communication with six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication as below (Barna, 1997):

- Assumption of similarities
- Language differences
- Nonverbal misinterpretation
- Preconceptions and Stereotypes
- Tendency to evaluate
- High anxiety

Assumption of similarities

Laray M. Barna examined why people misunderstanding occur although we all are human beings and basic necessities are the same. The biological similarity does not help when it comes to

communication with different cultures. Because people from different backgrounds have values, beliefs, and attitudes that are shaped by their own cultures. So, assuming similarity instead of difference brings complications to the communication process (Barna, 1997).

Language differences

Language is the other barrier that causes misunderstandings. Vocabulary knowledge, slang usage, or different dialects can make people struggled while communicating (Barna, 1997). In addition to that, many people use the second language while communicating with other cultures, and proficiency of the language has a big impact on communication quality. When one of the parties has very good or very bad language skills comparing to another party, communication becomes very hard and ineffective.

In addition to that, there are researches which prove that non-native speakers frequently compare their native language while talking in a different language (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013). It means that people from different nationalities use and understand the same language differently and this may cause communication problems while interacting. Also, trying to understand different accents, inadequate or false translated documents, feeling left out due to insufficient language skills are other common issues related to language for diverse companies (Hua, 2019).

Nonverbal misinterpretation

Learning the language might be seen as the main barrier to interact with other cultures, there are many situations when language competence is not enough to understand (Barna, 1997). The usage of nonverbal communication differs from culture to culture and can be confusing. According to Vilimek, Makhortova and Sidorova (2019), nonverbal communication has an important role to have efficient communication since it affects the degree of understanding the meaning (Vilimek *et al.* 2019). According to Trompenaars' (1997) research, communication includes both verbal and non-verbal elements. Based on his research, non-verbal elements constitute a great amount of communication it (Trompenaars, 1997).

Preconceptions and Stereotypes

Stereotypes are one of the biggest barriers and hard to overcome since they persist (Barna, 1997). Stereotypes occur due to poor knowledge among cultures and lead to generalize and amplify the ideas about nations (Jenifer, 2015). This aspect is one of the biggest problems that causes miscommunication since it has a great effect on thoughts and ideas (Jenifer, 2015).

Tendency to evaluate

People tend to evaluate the statements and actions of other people from different cultures such as approve or disapprove. Instead of trying to understand real emotions and ideas, people judge based on their own culture and beliefs (Barna, 1997). This behaviour occurs unconsciously, and intercultural awareness is necessary to realize this tendency.

High anxiety

The last dimension is anxiety which is called stress. Because of many uncertainties, people feel anxious while communicating. Also, the other five dimensions have effects on stress level (Barna, 1997).

It is essential to examine the situation in workplaces as well. Jenifer and Raman have identified five aspects of intercultural communication barriers in workplaces such as misunderstandings, norms and roles, beliefs and values, stereotyping and ethnocentrism. They emphasized that misunderstanding is the main barrier among others, and it occurs due to variety of cultural backgrounds. Secondly, stereotyping follows, which creates different ideas while different cultures interacting and cause miscommunication unpleasantly (Jenifer, 2015).

1.4. Multicultural workplace and diversity

Cultural diversity is considered one of the most essential aspects of the workplace (Ulrey & Amason, 2001). Some companies even make their advertisement just by providing how many different nationalities employed. Companies that are running their business in many countries, have to interact with many individuals from various backgrounds (Jonasson & Luring, 2012). Expanding operations to a global level has many advantages for global enterprises and help them to keep their competitive advantages. But there are also many challenges for both managers and employees as well as expatriates. Because in a global working environment, having good relations with different nationalities necessitates comprehending culture and talking styles (Hua, 2019).

International managers are also known as expatriate managers, but this definition is no longer enough to explain. Nowadays, companies search for executives who are multilingual multifaceted and reach across borders. They are expected to operate multicultural teams and interact with

foreigners (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). International managers manage employees from different cultures in one team or sometimes even virtually.

Another aspect of multicultural workplaces is language. Most of the global organizations chose English as company language since their work environment is linguistically diverse. And it means that many of the employees do not speak their native languages, they communicate by using second or third languages (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2013).

It is essential to mention expatriates and their situation in multicultural companies. First of all, adaptation to a new culture and country takes time. Schneider and Barsoux (2003), identified three phases of adjusting process to a new culture: the honeymoon, the morning after, and happily ever after. The first stage is optimism, the second stage follows soon, and it brings confusion, disturbance, and frustration and the last one is finally adjustment. Although every individual might not get through these stages in the same way, they have common feelings and emotions. Motivation, experience with foreigners, and cultural differences between host and home countries are effective in how intense it will be (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

On the other hand, culture is a very delicate subject for organizations and most of them constitute company policies by taking into account cultural diversity. It is not simple to adjust company culture globally and make employees from different backgrounds and experiences engage in it.

As a result of becoming more diverse, multinational companies prefer to recruit employers who have intercultural experience and competency (Yusof *et al.* 2019). It is possible to say that intercultural communication competence is fundamental for managers and specialists for the continuity of their professional carrier (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019).

1.5. Effective intercultural communication in workplace

Communication is very important for most companies since people fulfil duties by communicating with others. Many of the tasks are performed with interacting colleagues or business professionals and it brings the idea that “doing work means doing communication” (Schnurr, 2013). But every culture has its own way to communicate. This special communication system -encoding and decoding message- connects people who belong to the same culture (Ulrey & Amason, 2001). As

the author explained Chapter 1.3, there are verbal and nonverbal communication style differences between cultures that affect how people express themselves and interprets received message. After investigating the sources of misunderstandings and communication barriers, researchers started to discuss how to create efficient intercultural communication.

Redmond and Bunyi (1993), identified six items for effective intercultural communication such as understanding others' feelings, communicate well, easily resolve misunderstandings, understand others' points of view, empathize and interpret other's nonverbals (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993).

Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze emphasized that the communication process is not linear and has effects on both sender and receiver. They pointed out that it makes the communication process transactional that means interpretation is crucial (Yusof *et al.* 2019). The theory of the interpretation and effectiveness of messages in global workplaces identifies many aspects like sender receiver, message channel, noise, feedback, and context (Goodall, 2010). In addition to that, being a good listener is very important for effective communication (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). Empathising the other person helps to increase the efficiency of communication (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014).

To overcome intercultural issues, companies should apply strategies among employees, and improving cross cultural competence is one of the important ways to do it. Improving cross cultural skills can be done by cultural knowledge training, language training, and creating new policy within an organization (Jenifer, 2015). Besides, companies should implement a human resource strategy and appropriate management processes to achieve efficient communication in the workplace (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014).

1.6. Previous studies on intercultural communication in workplaces

Several studies have been done related to multicultural companies that contain within itself people from various countries. Most of these researches discuss subjects like employee engagement, marketing, and employee training. Yuan (2009) has realized that there are not enough researches related to communication topic. Therefore, Yuan has decided to focus on this and performed in-depth interviews with 42 people from 28 different organizations that have French and Chinese employees to understand how efficient intercultural communication they have in their workplaces.

By doing these interviews, Yuan had the chance to hear their real experiences and to collect detailed data regarding intercultural communication issues between these two cultures and put forward outstanding results (Yuan, 2009).

Jonasson and Luring (2012) conducted a study to put forward how different communication styles affect intercultural communication problems at work. they performed 12 interviews with people from different nationalities who work at the same company (Jonasson & Luring, 2012).

In 2017, Gut, Wilczewski and Gorbaniuk researched cultural differences, stereotypes, and communication issues in a global company. They distributed questions to the employees and asked them to write down their answers. Their aim was to examine employees' personal opinions regarding cultural differences and communication efficiency, and they end up with a result of how awareness of cultural differences in workplaces affects their communication and daily work (Gut *et al.* 2017).

Wilczewski, Soderberg and Gut, (2018) investigated language and communication issues foreign employees' point of view in a multinational company. They performed six interviews to get expatriates narratives. The result has shown that companies should more focus on foreign employees' cultural orientation and language competencies within the company (Wilczewski *et al.* 2018).

Another research has been done recently by Yusof, Kaur and Lynn-Sze in the year 2019. They identified a teaching strategy for post graduate students and measured their understandings about intercultural communication in global workplaces. The result has shown that they improved their intercultural communication competency and helped them to work efficiently in their global working environment (Yusof *et al.* 2019).

There is a very limited number of studies that emphasize communication, and they mostly focus on the relationship between managers and employees, not between employees who work together. In addition to that, there is not any study which handles specifically Turkish and Estonian employees.

The author of the thesis brings out that, effective intercultural communication is still a big challenge for multicultural companies and managers. Although there are many theories and

approaches to achieve efficient communication at workplaces, they are not very easy to implement. Because every culture has its own characteristics and individuals do not always present their own culture as it is defined in theories and books. Since culture is not stable phenomenon, making assumptions can be misleading. In addition to that, every company has its own unique work environment and employee profile. Therefore, companies should make their own research to understand the source of the problems and find ways to achieve efficient communication between employees.

2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter elaborates on the research approach that is employed for the study. In order to make outcomes given in Chapter 3 understandable, it is aimed to clarify the data collection and analysis process. Research design, sample and sampling, data collection, and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

2.1. Research design

In this research, qualitative research approach was applied to understand underlying communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees. Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect relevant data to achieve the research aim. Interview questions are presented in Appendix 1. The reason for choosing semi-structured interview is, it gives the flexibility to observe interviewees' body language and enrich the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition to that, this approach gives the opportunity to explain questions if interviewees do not understand questions correctly.

To formulate the interview questions, theories related to national culture, communication across cultures, barriers to effective communication and effective communication were researched. First, national culture theories were chosen, to understand cultural differences that affect communication between Turkish and Estonian employees. Hall's high context-low context cultures, Trompenaars' neutral-emotional cultures, and Hofstede's individualistic-collectivist cultures and power distance aspects were chosen to identify communication differences between these two nations. The first five questions were formed based on these theories. Secondly, another five questions were formed based on Barna's barriers to effective intercultural communication theory. After that three questions were prepared based on Redmond and Bunyi's effective communication theory. The questions were open-ended questions to allow participants to describe a situation or case (Saunders, 2009).

2.2. Sample and sampling

This study seeks to investigate communication between Turkish and Estonian employees based on IT companies in Estonia. Although there are many IT companies in Estonia, the number of Turkish employees in this sector is a minority. Because of that, the author chose companies that were subjected to this study based on the number of Turkish employees. Chosen companies have at least three Turkish employees for more than one year. In addition to that, none of them are start-ups, they are big size multicultural companies. Since identifying cases was very difficult, snowball sampling which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques was the most appropriate for the research (Saunders, 2009).

The author of the thesis conducted qualitative research by performing nine interviews with Turkish employees and nine interviews with Estonian employees from three different companies. The author used her own network at the beginning and then snowball sampling to conduct interviews. The author asked interviewees to identify further cases and stopped when the sample reached to the expected size.

Table 1. List of interviewees

Interviewee	Nationality	Age	Gender	Company	Experience in Multinational Company in total
Interviewee 1	Turkish	34	Male	A	2 years
Interviewee 2	Turkish	31	Male	A	7 years
Interviewee 3	Turkish	29	Male	A	2 years
Interviewee 4	Turkish	29	Female	B	4 years
Interviewee 5	Turkish	31	Male	B	9 years
Interviewee 6	Turkish	30	Male	B	4 years
Interviewee 7	Turkish	29	Male	C	4 years
Interviewee 8	Turkish	38	Male	C	5 years
Interviewee 9	Turkish	35	Male	C	5 years
Interviewee 10	Estonian	32	Male	A	16 years
Interviewee 11	Estonian	31	Female	A	3,5 years
Interviewee 12	Estonian	33	Male	A	10 years
Interviewee 13	Estonian	28	Male	B	5 years
Interviewee 14	Estonian	38	Male	B	14 years
Interviewee 15	Estonian	35	Female	B	5 years
Interviewee 16	Estonian	25	Female	C	9 years
Interviewee 17	Estonian	31	Female	C	2 years
Interviewee 18	Estonian	31	Male	C	2,5 years

Source: Created by the author

Table 1 shows the list of interviewees' backgrounds. The author conducted interviews with three Turkish and three Estonian employees who have worked together in the same company. Companies were categorized with letters A, B, and C. These letters refer to which interviewee works at which company. For example, Turkish interviewees 1, 2, 3 and Estonian interviewees 10, 11, 12 work at Company A.

According to the European Commission, staff headcount is one of the factors that defines the size of the enterprises (EU, 2020). Based on that classification, Company A is a medium-sized enterprise that has employees less than 250. This company has started business in Estonia more than ten years ago and is operating in Europe, Asia, and America. Although the company has offices in different countries, the interviewees stated that they have foreign employees in Estonia office only for three years. Company B and Company C are large enterprises that have employees more than 250. These companies are operating their businesses globally. Both Company B and Company C have foreign employees for many years in Estonia offices.

2.3. Data collection

The author collected data by performing eighteen semi-structured interviews in total during March and April in year the 2020. Interviews were conducted interviews in three parts. The first part was introducing the author herself and the research topic. During the second part background questions were asked such as age and professional experience in a multicultural company. After this part, the author asked interview questions to interviewees. As the nature of semi-structured interviews, the order of questions was defined based on conversations with interviewees (Saunders, 2009). Additional explanations were provided to interviewees when they asked for more clarifications. All interviews were recorded during the interviews and interviewees were informed about recording. In addition to that interviewees were informed to be kept their identities confidential to make them feel more comfortable with sharing their own opinions with the author.

Interviews with Turkish employees performed in the Turkish language. Since the author's native language is Turkish, all Turkish interviewees preferred to make interviews in Turkish to be able to express themselves easier. The used language for interviews of Estonian employees was English. Interviews took minimum of 30 minutes and the audio recording as done. After interviews, the English text transcribed from the audio records by using a computer program. The author

transcribed Turkish texts by listening the audio records and translated to the English language. In Appendix 2, the links to access all interviews are provided.

2.4. Data analysis

The analysis of the interviews was performed based on transcriptions (Appendix 2) and marked the most relevant parts. The author provided all transcripts via links that are given in Appendix 2 and it is possible to see taken parts of the interviews. The transcriptions were analysed with keywords/comments and the results are reflected in the cross-case analysis tables that are presented in appendices 3-9. The reason for conducting cross-case analysis is this method helps to compare similarities and differences of cases (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). In the cross-case table, the comments were summarized to have a better comparison of the result. With the help of cross-case analysis, the answers that were given by all the interviewees are shown in one table to have a systematic overview of all the aspects.

After creating cross-case table, the author has decided to categorise three sub-themes to present the results of the interviews in order to provide meaningful patterns. This approach helped to show the results in relation to the research questions of the study. Based on given answers and cross-case analysis, the author identified categories as communication problems, differences between Turkish and Estonian employees, and their approach and perception for communication effectiveness. This categorization creates the structure of Chapter 3. In addition to that, the author also compares companies to have a better understanding of whether the results are valid for all chosen companies or the size of the company has effects on the outcomes.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The research tasks of this thesis are to investigate communication problems, differences, and effectiveness of communication between Turkish and Estonian employees in their work environment. The previous chapter discussed the used data collection method which is semi-structured interviews with 18 interviewees. This chapter analysis the gathered data by using cross-case analysis and defined categorization based on given answers by the interviewees.

3.1. Communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees

The author discusses communication problems by dividing into two sub-categories such as usage of second language and barriers to effective intercultural communication. All the interviewees are communicating with each other in English which is the second language for both Turkish and Estonian employees. Because of that, the author investigated language related issues between interviewees. In barriers to effective intercultural communication part; three aspects such as saying 'no', interaction outside of the work, and stereotypes are discussed.

3.1.1. Usage of the second language

According to interview results, language competency is the main problem in workplaces. Both Turkish and Estonian employees stated that they encounter difficulties or misunderstandings due to language. Turkish employees face difficulties due to language while they are working with their Estonian colleagues. When one of them can speak with a better level of English than the other, this may cause misunderstandings or require an extra explanation. *“Their vocabulary knowledge is very well; they use some words and phrases that I do not know sometimes”* (Interviewee 1). There is another Turkish employee who has the same issue and he thinks that this is a result of using the second language. *“Sometimes I hear English phrases that I am not familiar with or I do not know. This might be one of the issues. I think the reason is using second language. When I talk in English, I relate my mother tongue Turkish in my mind. I think Estonians also do the same thing. Because we translate most of our statements from our mother tongue. When I talk to Estonians, these kinds of things sometimes get my attention. But overall, I don't have a big problem. Their accents are fine for me. The emphasis of some letters of Turkish and Estonian is similar. So, it's easy to understand their accents. I do not understand most of the time when I speak some who is native in English, but I do not experience such situation with my Estonian colleagues.”* (Interviewee 2). The

answer of Interviewee 2 shows that they cannot express themselves as the same as their native languages. But they also have problems when they speak someone whose mother tongue is English both with the accents and understanding. It is very important to have similar language skills while communicating. *“My level of English is lower than theirs, so this might be a problem.”* (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 3 thinks that his colleagues have better English than he has, and it causes misunderstandings sometimes. Interviewees 1,2 and 3 works at Company A, and all of them stated that they are facing language related issues at work. Interviewee 4 and 5 think that their Estonian colleagues speak English with a good level, and they don't have problems due to language. Unlike Interviewees 4 and 5, Interviewee 6 said that there are misunderstandings sometimes, although he also thinks that Estonian colleagues have a good level of English. *“I think both sides try to explain what we want to tell with simple sentences. And this makes period of understanding longer than usual. I mean if I talk with someone in Turkish, I explain it much faster and that person gets it faster. Using the second language makes the explaining-understanding process slower. In addition to that using the same English phrase in an unusual way creates misunderstandings. Then I have to reconfirm and ask extra questions.”* (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 also has similar issues with Interviewee 1 and 2 regarding using English phrases differently. He also thinks that it takes more time to explain or understand something when people use a second language. Besides, he says that he is much faster when he uses his native language Turkish while explaining something. Interviewee 7 and 8 from Company C did not mention any issues while Interviewee 9 stated that he encounters difficulties often. *“Some of them are not proficient in English, they don't understand what I'm saying. As a result, the work is slowing down, or sometimes mistakes are done. I have to explain what I mean over and over again.”* (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 9 says that his English is better than some of his Estonian colleagues and this causes serious problems at work. He stated that this may lead to make mistakes and slow down his work. These answers have shown that half of the Turkish employees face difficulties related to the usage of English or English competency and most of these answers are belong to employees from Company A.

On the other hand, most of the Estonian employees stated that they do not face problems due to language while communicating with Turkish colleagues. Interviewee 11 mentioned that sometimes she has difficulties due to language, but it is mostly related to the sophistication of the topic itself. *“I think I've had some misunderstandings, but I'm not sure if it's due to the culture, region, or maybe I'm also explaining it in a way that people don't understand. Because sometimes some software topics are pretty complicated, so put it in a way that the other person understands, like*

exactly the same way. Sometimes tricky. Writing creates more confusion, so it is better to have a call or talk face to face.” (Interviewee 11). Another similar opinion was stated by Interviewee 12. *“Maybe they are speaking better English than me in technical level. For example, if the technical person is trying to explain something to me and, then it's quite hard the time for them to explain it because I don't know all the terms and, words what they're using. So, they need to make clear for me.”* (Interviewee 12). So, their opinion about language miscommunication shows that knowledge of technical terms is also as important as second language competency. Interviewee 13 mentioned that pronunciation might be an issue sometimes. Interviewee 16 is the only respondent who says misunderstandings occur with the colleagues whose English level is not good enough. According to these answers, Estonian employees from Company A encounter language difficulties while most of the Estonian respondents from Company B and C do not face similar problems.

3.1.2. Barriers to effective intercultural communication

One of the barriers to effective intercultural communication that interviewees emphasized is “willingness to say no”. All Turkish employees stated that their Estonian colleagues can say “no” very easily comparing to themselves. This approach brings confusion and hesitation at work to Turkish employees. *“If something is "No" for them, they don't bother themselves, they express their opinions clearly. For example, when we ask our opinion in a community, if we want to say something negative, we say it slowly and softly. But Estonians express their opinions directly. Sometimes you can get it wrong as a Turk, you can feel upset or offended. You can be surprised how he said no immediately. At first, I had difficulties in this matter, especially in meetings. But when you get used to it, when you hear the word no, it means that that person doesn't support it. A newcomer will have difficulty with this, while interacting with them.”* (Interviewee 1). From the answer of interviewee 1, it is very clear to understand how much he surprised once he got an answer as “no”. He also mentioned that he felt very offended at the beginning. But interviewee 1 is not the only Turkish employee who thinks the same. *“As far as I can see, they have no hesitation about that. If they directly reject something, that is okay for everyone. No one sees any issues with that. It seemed very strange to me when I first moved here. I was very surprised at this situation during my first months, now I am a bit more used to it. But still strange.”* (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 2 also surprised by this reaction at the beginning. *“They say it very easily. They have no approach to be polite or not to offend anyone.”* (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 4 stated that her Estonian colleagues are not trying to be polite. According to her, they do not think that they may offend their colleagues at work. *“They can say “No” much more than we do. They say the negatives things straight forwardly as well. They say without hesitation when there is a negative situation*

about someone else. Sometimes I think this is a little bit cruel. During my first job in Estonia, I had a lot of trouble with this. I didn't even want to go to work, it decreased my motivation a lot. But I got used to it in time, I learned that I should not take it personally. In Turkey we try to express ourselves in a polite and soft way when we need to say something negative. We mostly imply it and expect from the other person to understand. But here in Estonia, this approach makes the other person not to understand the negative situation." (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 has similar ideas as interviewee 4, like they are not trying to be polite. In addition to this, he mentioned this approach decreased his motivation significantly, so that he even considered not going to work. *"They are very generous to say no. Sometimes they even say ridiculous excuses to refuse."* (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 9 also thinks that his Estonian colleagues do not hesitate to say no and their excuses when they say no are not valid. Based on given answers, it is possible to say that tendency to say no easily is very uncommon for Turkish employees. In addition to that, this situation leads to make them feel negative emotions and affect their work performance. The interviewees who mentioned how they feel about this behaviour work at Company A and B. The interviewees from company C didn't mention any feelings.

This is not only a problem for Turkish employees. All the Estonian employees realize that Turkish people hesitant to say no. Some of the interviewees stated that they were not aware of this until this interview. *"I don't think you say that much this. I think you don't. I never thought about it. I think you are trying to avoid rather than say no."* (Interviewee 11). Not willing to say no, makes communication complicated for Estonians as well. *"I think it's a much more of this, not directly saying no, but rather like just avoiding the question then. So rather than saying like no, like "I can't do this", they just cut themselves out and then don't say anything to you and then be like, "Oh, did you ask me anything?". So, they are avoiding saying no."* (Interviewee 16). Interviewee 16 thinks that her Turkish colleagues prefer to avoid conversation, instead of saying "no". *"Oh, they never say no. Once I had to force one Turkish colleague when he had to work long hours. He said it is okay, but no, he doesn't have to work at night. Sometimes they don't say no or anything, but it may happen that they fail on some tasks. Because they have to say something if they need some more time or something like that. Sometimes they are afraid to say this takes some more time. And we have to figure it out later, why you didn't say anything, and it was already too late. Then they feel embarrassed. They should express themselves more even if there is something negative."* (Interviewee 12). Interviewee 12 shared his experience related to this question, and he stated that because of not willing to say "no" approach, they failed on task as a team. Some of the Estonian interviewees think that hesitancy to say no approach of Turkish colleagues is because of being nice

and polite. By taking into consideration given answers, it can be said that all Estonian employees agree on Turkish colleagues' approach to saying no. In addition to that, the majority of the issues are mentioned by the employees from Company A.

Interaction outside of the work is perceived differently by the Turkish and Estonian employees. Both nations stated that they do not interact much except company or team events. During these events, problems occur due to cultural differences. *"They are not very social other than work. When the Estonians come together, they immediately start speaking Estonian. For example, we went to a sport event, almost everyone made groups among themselves. And I felt that I was left out."* (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 1 mentioned that he felt that his Estonian colleagues do not want him in their group. *"We usually talk for hours when we gather with colleagues in Turkey, I think this is in our culture. Our events are about sitting and talking in Turkey. But here they turn the events into activities all the time. This is weird for me. There is not any interaction related to the personality or personal life of the people. They don't have a curiosity about your life. In Turkey we talk about politics, workplace, family, but no one talks about these stuffs here"* (Interviewee 2). The answer of interviewee 2 shows that his expectations from Estonian colleagues were different. *"We spend time with colleagues from other nations"*. (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 4 stated that she spends time with her colleagues from other nationalities, not with Estonians. *"When a foreigner starts job at a company in Turkey, people consider that this person may not have any friends or social environment. So, they invite you to their environment to help you feel good in their country. I haven't seen any of these behaviours from Estonians, they don't even invite for lunch. It takes a long time to communicate. I no longer expect a response"* (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 5 also had different expectations at the beginning, based on his answer. He was expecting to be invited by his Estonians colleagues. *"There are company events or team events. But these are occasions that happen with an arrangement by the company. It doesn't happen spontaneously. Nobody invites me somewhere, not even for lunch. Since we don't even eat lunch together; I don't expect to do something outside of the work with them."* (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 has similar expectations as interviewee 5. He thinks that they should have invited him at least for lunch. *"Having an intimate relation takes a lot of time, at least 4-5 months. I have friends now and we meet outside of the work as well. But you have to make an effort to be friends. You shouldn't expect them to make any efforts."* (Interviewee 7). Interviewee 7 stated that he has Estonian friends from work, but it took a lot of time to reach this level. He said that expecting effort from Estonians are not the best way to have intimate relations. All Turkish interviewees stated that their interactions with Estonians are very limited and this is a problem for most of them. On the other hand, none of

Estonian interviewees mentioned any problems, although they also think that their interaction is not much. This result shows that Turkish and Estonian expectations and perceptions of interaction with colleagues are different from each other. According to the author, this situation should be handled from different aspects as well. Since this study investigates the situation in chosen companies in Estonia, it should be considered that Estonian employees are already in their own environment. It is possible that expatriates want to make friends more than Estonians due to living in a different country, knowing less people, and trying to adapt themselves to a new environment. On the other hand, Estonian employees live in their own country and they are not in a similar situation with Turkish employees.

Stereotypes are one of the biggest problems of effective intercultural communication in workplaces. During the interviews, the question about stereotyping is asked to find out if employees face any unpleasant cases at work. Both Turkish and Estonian employees stated that they do not have any problems regarding stereotyping at work.

3.2. Differences between Turkish and Estonian employees

The author presents results related to differences between Turkish and Estonian employees in four sub-categories. Perceptions towards communication styles, attitudes towards direct and indirect communication, ways of working, and employees' knowledge of Turkish and Estonian cultures are discussed, respectively.

3.2.1. Perceptions towards to communication styles

According to Trompenaars' theory (1997), it is very common to perceive different talking styles while communicating different cultures (Trompenaars, 1997). The author asked the interviewees how they perceive their talking styles. Most of the Turkish employees have stated that the Estonian talking style is direct and monotonous. Some of them consider this as being not friendly and not polite. On the other hand, Estonians' opinions about the talking style of Turkish employees differ from each other. Some of them think that they are laud, some of them think they are modest and normal. According to Estonian interviewees' answers, it can be said that most of them perceive it differently, but they have various ideas about that. The author tried to analyse based on companies as well, but a meaningful outcome is not achieved by that.

The second aspect that is asked by the author is the perception of emotions. The majority of the Turkish interviewees think they Estonians do not reveal what they feel. *“Frankly, this is a little bit problematic, they don’t reveal at all. It is not very easy to understand whether one person wants to get rid of you, or just takes it seriously. When I don’t get their emotions, I hesitate to talk to that person or ask questions again.”* (Interviewee 2). Most of the Turkish employees stated that it was hard for them to understand at the beginning. But in time, they started to overcome this problem and manage the situation better. *“They never reveal their emotions. But after I managed to become good friends with them, I started to understand what they think in a particular situation.”* (Interviewee 4). As the author stated in Chapter 3.1, becoming friends is very important for Turkish employees and it helps them to solve communication problems. On the other hand, Estonian interviewees have three different opinions on that such as more emotional, very clear, and hard to understand. The Estonian interviewees who say that it is hard to understand, are from Company A, B and C and they are working in multicultural workplaces for 16, 10 and 9 years respectively. Based on this result, it can be said that even experienced employees may feel the cultural differences when they interact with different cultures.

The previous question is also linked to non-verbal communication styles. One of the biggest differences between Turkish and Estonians is the usage of non-verbal communication styles. Turkish people use non-verbal communication styles much more than Estonians, and this brings confusion or misunderstanding sometimes. All the Turkish interviewees think that their Estonian colleagues are distant, and they use less body language than they used to. *“I think we are more dynamic, and we do more gestures. We love to touch; they are more distant.”* (Interviewee 2) *“Their facial expressions never change.”* (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 2 and 3 stated that Estonians use less non-verbal communication compared to themselves. There are also opinions that this situation makes their communication process harder. *“They use body language with minimum level. And I think this leads to miscommunication.”* (Interviewee 4). *“This was one of my hardest issues. They are very neutral about gestures and body language. It’s so hard to understand.”* (Interviewee 5). Most of the Turkish interviewees think that it is hard to understand, very confusing and it brings communication issues while working. *“They almost never use body language. Very limited. They speak without any movements or gestures. It was very confusing at the beginning for me, it was a different way of communication that I could not understand.”* (Interviewee 9). Based on the given answers, it is possible to say that Turkish employees are confused, and they are not familiar with this kind of communication style. Although some of them think that this is no longer an issue for them, most of the respondents still feel the difference strongly.

According to the answers of the Estonian interviewees, they sometimes feel uncomfortable when they are exposed to the non-verbal communication style that they are not used to. *“Turkish people really like looking to you while talking. They like to look into your eyes and Estonian people feel uncomfortable. We sometimes need to look away. It doesn’t mean that we are not interested in, it is just we are not used to it.”* (Interviewee 18). Interviewee 18 is not the only one who has a similar opinion on that. *“I would say it’s definitely more than an average Estonian has and definitely more eye contact. I think Estonians never look into the eyes. So, when Turkish people make eye contact then everybody freaks out. We feel like “Oh no, please don’t look me in the eye”.”* (Interviewee 16). Even if they feel intimidating by the eye contact, Estonians do not think their Turkish colleagues’ body language is confusing. They think that Turkish colleagues are more expressive than they are. *“It’s not too much for me. But for introverted people it might be too much. Comparing to average Estonian you are using much more body language and definitely more eye contact. For some people excessive eye contact is intimidating or, they feel like why are you staring?”* (Interviewee 11). Most of the Estonian interviewees mentioned excessive eye contact and based on their answers, this might be perceived as disturbing. But this statement is not very easy to generalize since there are Estonians who likes Turkish style as well and think easier to communicate with comparing to Estonians. *“I feel comfortable because I like active people. I like this open communication and a gesturing with hands. Not many Estonians are like this. It’s sometimes more comfortable to talk to Turkish people because, they actually answer something not with one word but with the story. They don’t say just words, they contribute to the conversation. If you talk something, then they talk back. They don’t just answer the questions. In that sense it is a bit easier.”* (Interviewee 12). These answers show that Estonians feel the difference while working with Turkish colleagues and some unpleasant situations might occur. Even though Estonians are not confused as Turkish people, it takes time for them to get used to this different style at work.

3.2.2. Attitudes towards direct and indirect communication

Direct communication is another aspect that the author investigated during interviews. Based on Hall’s theory (1976), low context culture has direct communication while interacting, on the other hand, reading between lines might be necessary while talking someone from high context culture (Hall, 1976). Since Estonians are considered as low context and Turkish people considered as high context, the author decided to search for communication directness between these two nations at work. Based on the answers of Turkish employees, it can be said that they adapted themselves to direct communication approach and they are very positive about being direct, although they faced

difficulties in the beginning. *“Estonians say directly, whatever they want to say. Because it's their habits. They say something straightforwardly. They say both bad and good things directly, they do not talk around something like us. They are very direct and clear about this. I think it's a good way of communication.”* (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 1 mentioned that he gets this approach as a good way of communication, instead of implying. *“In some cases, I cannot understand if what I said means anything for them. Because they never think what a person actually means. They get it as information, not as an implication. Also, communication with superiors is not the same as Turkey. Here they say directly. In Turkey, managers worry if their worker misunderstands or feels offended, they are more cautious. So direct communication here sometimes makes me feel strange. I wonder if there is an order or I am irritating someone. We recognize this in time by experiencing some cases. I am not sure if this is how Estonians talk among themselves or if happens when they talk in English. Maybe they are different in their conversations among themselves. I think this can happen for two reasons. Either people are speaking very straight and directly, and it is a cultural thing or the incompetency of the foreign language skill and lack of expression in the foreign language. Everything can be better if I learn Estonian.”* (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 2 stated that directness of communication between him and Estonian colleagues makes him feel strange and he has doubts either they understand what he would like to say. He also thinks that if he learns Estonian, he can overcome this problem. One of the advantages of being direct is the increase of understanding of a topic or task. Even if this approach was unusual for Turkish employees at the beginning, it helps them to understand and work easier. *“They say quite directly what they want to say. Actually, I like this attitude. I can understand that if they love me or have negative opinions about me. I think they are honest. I felt strange first, but I got used to it.”* (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 4 also positive about this approach and she considers this as being honest. *“More direct compared to us. They don't think if they hurt your feelings or offend. They don't imply anything. This can be perceived as rudeness in Turkey. This does not mean that Estonians are rude, this is only their culture. It was very difficult to adapt to this at first. It took 1-2 years to get used to it, then I started not to take it personally. I realized that I had to adapt to this. This is how they communicate and work. If you don't say anything directly, they can't fully understand you. Also, there is no small talk in their communication style.”* (Interviewee 5). As interviewee 5 stated, direct approach might be considered as rude by some high context cultures. But they get used to this in time and they are trying to adapt themselves to the Estonian environment. *“We usually talk about technical issues. When they need something, they directly demand it without having a small talk like how I am. When I first started to work, I thought that before asking what I need, I should do the small talk. Then I realized that this is weird for them. You cannot continue the conversation*

and a strange situation occurs. I get the feeling that they are thinking like this: “just tell me what you want! Stop asking unnecessary questions”. Now I am trying to be more direct.” (Interviewee 6). Based on the answers above, it is possible to say that Turkish employees have already adapted themselves to direct approach and they consider this as a good communication method for working together.

Answers of Estonian interviewees support Hall’s theory. Most of them stated that they do not have any issues when their communication is direct. “For work related topics it is as clear as anybody else, but for social topics, sometimes it is hard to understand what exactly is meant or what exactly do they want from you by telling you some random things.” (Interviewee 16). It is also important how long these people work together; it has effects on understanding each other. “It depends on the topic of the conversation and how well do I know the person. With the person which I already know by quite long time, then I clearly understand what's the motives and what he means and what's all behind so there's no like read between the lines. It depends on how well you already know the person.” (Interviewee 18). When they discuss a technical topic, they express themselves directly, without implying. “I think it is pretty clear for both sides. If we are discussing a technical issue, it has to be concrete. You cannot continue without having confirmation from other side. But if we are having some other communication than technical, then I have to understand what the co-worker is thinking as well.” (Interviewee 10). One of the Estonian interviewees stated that she would not recognize if her colleagues imply something instead of saying directly. “I have no idea. If I need to read between lines, I wouldn't understand this. I think if it's not something that very well-known, I wouldn't notice it. It would be hard to notice.” (Interviewee 11). The working period is also very important to have common understandings. “For technical topics, then of course, we understand each other well. Then it doesn't matter if the person is Turkish or Estonian. Of course, at the beginning it was so hard to understand, but it goes easier and easier in time. Couple of time I had to ask again and again, but when passing time, they started to feel more comfortable with us.” (Interviewee 12). One interviewee said that her understanding is depending on how close they are. “If I have a closer relationship with then I understand perfectly. But then with the ones that I don't work so closely, I don't always understand what they actually want to say.” (Interviewee 15). According to the given answers above, it can be said that Estonian employees prefer to have direct communication, especially for technical topics. And their understanding of non-direct communication depends on the subject and duration of the interaction. It can be said that, Estonian interviewees feel more comfortable in time for communicating with Turkish employees.

3.2.3. Differences in ways of working

It is also important to emphasize differences in ways of working and thinking. When different cultures work together, working methods or understanding of time might be a problem to collaborate. Turkish and Estonian perception of this subject is very different from each other. According to collected data, Turkish people have different opinions about their Estonian colleagues. *“They are very different from us in doing business, no one wants to take responsibility here. They do the responsibility given, but nobody takes initiative themselves, they don't say “I will handle it”. I have experienced this situation several times. When a problem occurs in the customer project, everyone tries to blame someone, so the problem remains at the end. Nobody tries to solve it. I think this is due to their culture. “I do my responsibility, but don't do any extra work”. I think this is a bad approach, it is not like this in Turkey. Whenever there is a problem, everyone tries to solve in Turkey. But you get used to it over time. I had a few problems with that here, and I think I finally became like them. They are also very sensitive about documentation. If you have just started to job or task, they give documents immediately, and expect from you to read it, learn it, ask when it is needed. So, they want you to read and write the document first. In Turkey, they give you a mentor, you learn the work by working together and mentor tells you step by step. Here you learn from the document yourself. In our opinion, they are too individual in that sense.”* (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 1 stated that his Estonian colleagues are not willing to do extra work except their responsibilities and this attitude makes harder to solve an issue according to him. He also thinks that Estonian colleagues are very sensitive about documentation and they expect from even new employees to read the documents. He also mentioned that this approach is very different the way he used to. *“They are very responsible people and very strict for to the rules. They do their job well. But their vision is not very broad. They have no approach about developing a new idea or project or innovation. Instead, they have a critical approach to those who want to develop new methods. This situation made me feel very uncomfortable. I think they are closed to innovation. They are reserved.”* (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 4 stated that her Estonian colleagues like to work by following certain rules and she thinks that they are reserved and close to innovation. *“They are more reliable, especially in terms of quality work and deadlines. They are much stricter about the rules. They don't do any exception or shortcuts.”* (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 5 mentioned that he thinks that his Estonians colleagues are reliable, and they provide quality good quality work. At the same time, he also thinks that Estonians obey the rules more than he does. *“Turkish people are used to work with short cuts. If something is short, we prefer to use it. But Estonians are generally following written rules instead of thinking about the short cut or an easy way. For example, I found*

a short and easy way of doing a task, it has to be written in the rules for them to use this way, otherwise they do not take the initiative to even try it. I think makes them be slow. We are faster and more practical compared to them. But I have to admit that they are doing their job with good quality and properly. They are much better than us in that sense.” (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 agrees on for Estonians being strict by the rules. But he thinks that because of this attitude they do very quality work although this makes them work slower. *“There is no such thing as helping each other here. Nobody helps you if you don't ask for it. For example, one of my colleagues learned an easy way to do a task from another person, he would not come and share it with anyone. I figured it out that there is an easy way to do it 2-3 months later, during a meeting. Then I asked why he didn't tell me that there is another and easy way to do this. He just said there wasn't any appropriate time to say it. It was so awkward and unacceptable behaviour according to me. I can recall another example. I had a mentor at my work during my first months. Whenever I asked a question, she would only send instructions instead of answering. But the document is too big and complicated. It takes a lot of time to find and extract relevant information. So, I had a lot of difficulty during my probation, it took my 4-5 months to communicate with Estonian colleagues. In this period, I was always on my own, and it took more time for me to learn the job than usual and I felt alone. Other than that, I can say that they dedicate themselves to work, but they only do their part. The number of Estonian colleagues who do extra work than their responsibilities is small. They don't take much initiative. Even if they have an idea, they do not declare, they remain silent. And they are more committed to the rules than us, they do not want to anything against the rules.”* (Interviewee 7). Interviewee 7 is the one who recognizes differences frequently and dense at the beginning of his work life in Estonia. Based on his answers, it is obvious that how important to have a good mentor for the first months. *“We are faster, our approach is getting work done as soon as possible. We have a bad habit to do the task at the last minute or find a shortcut. We do not make detailed plans or take precautions. But Estonians are the opposite. They work according to the rules within a certain plan. So, this attitude makes them slow. They are also very slow in decision making processes as well. Everything progresses more slowly here. But the good thing is we don't work under pressure and stress here, they are more humanistic. They trust people more about business.”* (Interviewee 8). Interviewee 8 also thinks that his Estonian colleagues are slower than they are, but he thinks that this is more a humanistic way to work. *“They are hesitant to help. They don't want to help much. And I think they don't trust foreigners very much. Comparing to us, they follow the rules much more, they pay more attention to this. They do not have an approach to do something practical and fast. I think it's about following the rules. They have no practical intelligence. They do not add something from themselves to what they do at work. They don't add*

or share their own thoughts and comments, they do not take the initiative. They just obey the rules.” (Interviewee 9). Turkish interviewees’ answers have shown that they recognize many differences at work while interacting with Estonian employees. But the common idea is that Estonians are stricter for the rules than Turkish employees. Turkish interviewees have stated that they tend to use quicker ways to achieve results faster, and the Estonian approach is not fitting their working method.

On the other hand, Estonians think that Turkish people perceive time differently than they do. *“I think it depends on whether it's a Turkish person has lived in Estonia for a long time or not. When they have lived in Estonia for a long time then they kind of have taken the Estonian approach to work and then it doesn't, it doesn't show that much. But then yeah, I think in some ways definitely it's different. I would say Turkish people are more relaxed and they are more like “Yeah, I can do it this later” and like “the work doesn't run away from me”. At the same time as you know we Estonians like to work. Work is all we have. So, it's like work is here and you have to do it now, tomorrow there's no work anymore.”* (Interviewee 16). Interviewee 16 thinks that it is important how long that person has been living in Estonia, but still perception of time is different. *“When we're doing some business, Turkish people have more time. And also, punctuality. Turkish people are less punctual compared to Estonians. And you are faster. It is definitely a different approach.”* (Interviewee 17). Interviewee 17 also thinks that Turkish people are less punctual comparing to Estonians, but they are faster in terms of working. *“Estonian people are like quite strict being on time. We consider it to be rude if you are even late for 1 minute. Turkish people are more relaxed on that. They don't see any issue being late.”* (Interviewee 18). Based on that answer, it is possible to say that Turkish employees do not consider being rude when they are late. It can be said that most of the Estonian interviewees agree on Turkish employees perceive time more relaxed compared to them. Time is not the only difference, from Estonian interviewees’ point of view. *“I think they are sometimes too confident about their decisions. When I speak to Estonian, if he's not confident enough, they say that it might not work or something like that. I had a case with one Turkish colleague. He was pretty confident even if he was not 100% sure. I don't know is it the confidence inside or how you say that they are willing to take risks more. They are confident about the parts that they didn't even think through. They don't expect defined rules or steps.”* (Interviewee 10). According to some answers, including Interviewee 10, Estonians perceive that Turkish employees do not work based on specified rules and this behaviour is considered by the Estonians as being overconfident. It can be said that Estonian interviewees think that Turkish

people consider time different than they do. In addition to that Estonians consider their Turkish colleagues as faster than they are.

3.2.4. Employees' knowledge of Turkish and Estonian cultures

In addition to the above questions, the author asked how much interviewees are familiar with Turkish or Estonian cultures. The majority of the Turkish employees think that they know Estonian culture a little and they didn't have any information before moving to Estonia. A few Turkish interviewees said that they know the culture very well now, but they stated that they gained this knowledge by experiencing different cases here. The situation is not very different for Estonian employees as well. The majority of the Estonian interviewees said that they do not much idea or have general ideas about Turkish culture. Few of the Estonian interviewees said that they know a lot because they travelled to Turkey many times. According to these answers, it can be said that knowledge of culture is still very little for both Turkish and Estonian interviewees.

3.3. Employees' approaches and perceptions for effective communication

The author decided to investigate approaches of employees while communicating in order to find out their methods to achieve efficient communication. First, the author asked their approach to resolve misunderstandings between them. The majority of the Turkish interviewees stated that they prefer to talk directly and find the common ground. First, they try to understand the source of the problem and organize a meeting to set a common working method. Some of them mentioned that they approach more carefully and cautiously, not to hurt feelings or offend anyone. On the other hand, Estonian interviewees said they have a similar approach as Turkish employees. They try to solve by talking and understand where the miscommunication came from. Although some of them think that Turkish colleagues might be stubborn and hard to convince sometimes, they always find a way to solve conflicts.

The second question about the communication approach is making sure of the message is received correctly. The majority of the Turkish employees said that they are trying to be more direct, specific, and clear. Some of them prefer to be more careful about word selection while some of them expect an answer. On the other hand, Estonian interviewees prefer to reconfirm and write down to answer to be sure on the same page. In addition to that, most of them said that this behaviour is not special for Turkish employees, their approach is the same for everyone.

As the last question, the author asked what they think about communication between Turkish and Estonian employees. The majority of the Turkish interviewees think that their communication is limited or not good enough. Some of the respondents stated that they communicate good if the subject is work-related. *“Social communication is very weak, but work-related communication is good. After all, we are professionals and have to work together. I think our communication as professionally is good. In the beginning I wanted to socialize with my colleagues. But social communication with Estonians is very difficult, it takes a lot of time. I'm not that patient. I don't want to try so hard to become friends. So now, I keep my communication only at a professional level.”* (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 stated that it takes a lot of time to have good communication, so he decided to communicate only for work issues. Almost half of the Turkish interviewees think that their communication is not good and not effective. *“We have no communication in the sense that we used to in Turkey. I think our communication is very distant and only work oriented. It takes a lot of time to establish a close relationship.”* (Interviewee 2). *“We have no effective communication. Communication with Estonians is entirely up to yourselves; you shouldn't expect anything from them”* (Interviewee 7). *“Not good. It is not effective either. I think it is not possible to have a good and efficient communication with Estonians”* (Interviewee 4). *“I don't think we have a good communication. Our communication styles and characteristics are very different. I have given up already, I am not trying to communicate with them”* (Interviewee 9). According to given answers, it can be said that Turkish employees think that it is not worth to try to communicate better. Most of them said that they made an effort to change this, but they could not succeed. Answers also analysed based on the companies as well, but a meaningful outcome has not been achieved by that.

The majority of Estonian interviewees think that their communication between Turkish colleagues is good and effective. *“It's effective enough and everything is good. In the technical side, English is like universal anyway, and I think it will not impact much who do you work or who do you talk to. You get used to it in time.”* (Interviewee 10). Although some of them say that there might be miscommunication, overall it is good and effective. According to given answers, it can be said that Turkish and Estonians do not agree upon their communication and they perceive differently.

3.4. Discussion and suggestions to managers

The author will discuss the conclusions based on the results of the data collection and analysis in this part. The conclusions are given by taking into consideration research questions. In addition to that, the author brings suggestions to managers who have Turkish and Estonian team members in the light of theoretical research and findings of data collection from the employees' interviews.

The first research question of this thesis was “What are the reasons for communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees?”

The first and main problem for both Turkish and Estonian employees is the language. As Barna (1997), mentioned in her barriers to effective communication theory, vocabulary usage has a great impact on communication (Barna, 1997). Interview results support Barna's theory since most of the interviewees stated that they are having issues due to word selection. Sharifian (2013) discussed that people tend to think through their native languages while communicating with other languages (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013). During the interviews, respondents commented that they are affected by this as well. Based on the results, answers that are related to language problems at work are given by employees from Company A. Both Turkish and Estonian employees from Company A commented that communication gaps occur due to language competency. The employees from Company B and C face language related issues less than Company A. It is recommended for Company A to provide language training especially related to technical topics to employees.

The second communication problem comes from different approaches to willingness to say “no” or something negative. Based on Hall's theory (1976), it is not common for high context cultures to refuse, while it is common for low context cultures (Hall, 1976). Based on the interview results, Estonian employees are more comfortable when they need to refuse something, although Turkish employees are hesitant to express their opinion directly. When Turkish employees receive the answer “no” from their Estonian colleagues, they consider this approach as being rude and sometimes they feel offended. The results of interviews support Hall's theory. Although he did not specifically mention Estonia and Turkey in his research, based on his geographical classification the author considered Estonia as low context culture and Turkey as high context culture in Chapter 1.2. According to the replies of interviewees, this consideration is supported. In addition to that, analysis has shown that both Turkish and Estonian employees face serious issues due to this such

as doing mistakes, failing task, or demotivation of employees. The interviewees from Company A, B and C mentioned issues regarding this cultural difference, but most of the answers were from Company A.

When it comes to interaction outside of the work, the results have shown that Turkish and Estonian employees have different expectations. Based on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of cultures, individualist and collectivist cultures consider relationships differently (Hofstede, 1980). According to Hofstede's theory, Estonia is an individualist culture and Estonians communicate only for a certain purpose (Hofstede Insights, 2020). The results of Estonian employees' interviews, all respondents stated that they do not interact much outside of the work, but this does not pose a problem for them. Turkey is a collectivist country and Turkish people consider communication as a way of engaging people (Hofstede Insights, 2020). All Turkish interviewees stated that they do not interact much outside of the work and it is hard to become friends with them. This result has shown that Turkish people were expecting different behaviours from their Estonian colleagues. This causes issues for Turkish people such as demotivation and low performance since they tend to build closer relationship with the people they work together. And the results are similar for both Turkish and Estonian employees from Company A, B and C.

Based on the literature review, stereotyping is the main issue to achieve effective communication (Barna, 1997). The results have shown that there are not stereotyping issues between Turkish and Estonian interviewees from Company A, B and C. This is a very good result to achieve because it means that improvements are easier to be implemented, when there are not strict ideas that needed to be changed.

The second research question of this thesis was “How do Estonian and Turkish employees perceive their communication differences between each other?”

According to Trompenaars (1997), neutral and emotional cultures have different talking styles such as neutral cultures are straightforward and emotional cultures are more expressive (Trompenaars, 1997). When the author asked the respondents what their opinion is, Turkish interviewees agree on Estonians are direct and monotonous. This result support Trompenaars theory as Estonian culture us being neutral. On the other hand, Estonian interviewees have given various answers, but the majority of them think that Turkish people have a different style. Talking styles are explained by Hofstede (1980) as well (Hofstede, 1980). According to Hofstede (1980),

the degree of power distance is important for communication styles, since the cultures which have high power distance talk formally at work (Hofstede, 1980). Some of the Estonian interviewees stated that their Turkish colleagues is formal and polite. The reflection of culture is perceived obviously in the workplace.

According to Redmond and Bunyi (1993), understanding others' feelings is one of the aspects of effective intercultural communication (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). In addition to that Trompenaars explains revealing emotions are not the same for neutral and emotional cultures (Trompenaars, 1997). Because of that, the author asked the interviewees how they perceive their colleagues' emotions. Turkish interviewees think that Estonians do not reveal what they think or feel and sometimes they hesitate to ask questions since they cannot interpret the situation. On the other hand, Estonians did not say common phrases regarding this question. After analysing the answers to this question, an interesting outcome is achieved by the author. Even if employees have many years of experience in working multicultural environments, still they may have issues for understanding the emotions of people from different cultures. And this result is valid for all sample companies.

Barna (1997) has stated that even if language competency is good enough, misunderstandings might occur (Barna, 1997). The literature review has shown that interpreting non-verbal communication elements affects the level of understanding (Vilimek, Makhortova, & Sidorova, 2019). In addition to that, Trompenaars research findings show that the communication process is generated by mostly nonverbal elements (Trompenaars, 1997). Because of that, the author would like to emphasize the importance of non-verbal communication styles. As it was discussed in the literature review of the thesis, different culture uses non-verbal communication styles differently. Based on the interviews, it can be said that both Turkish and Estonian employees recognize the difference. They have agreed upon that Turkish people express themselves by the help of more non-verbal communication, whereas Estonians tend to use less body-language and eye contact. The Turkish interviewees stated that this situation sometimes causes confusion and miscommunication. On the other hand, the Estonian interviewees said that they feel intimidated when they are exposed to eye contact from Turkish colleagues.

According to Hall's theory (1976), low context cultures communication is direct, while high context culture is opposite (Hall, 1976). As the author discussed in Chapter 1.2, Estonians are considered as low-context culture and their communication is direct. It is expected that this

communication style is not common for high context cultures such as Turkey, Turkish interviewees stated that they like to communicate directly since it makes everything easier and clearer. According to interview results, both Turkish and Estonian employees are pleased with being direct. Although this was problematic for Turkish employees at the beginning, they have accustomed to behaving like their Estonian colleagues. Direct communication approach is considered as a positive aspect by the Turkish and Estonian employees and helps them to collaborate better. A similar result is achieved for all three companies. This outcome has proved that clarity of the message is very important for effective communication.

One of the most important differences in workplaces is ways of working and thinking. Even if theories discuss some aspects, reflection of culture on this hard to identify without experiencing. Because when people do not have enough information regarding one particular culture, they tend to behave similarly to their own cultures (Barna, 1997). So, it is essential to find out differences to create a nice and efficient work environment by increasing collaboration between two nations. According to answers of Estonian interviewees, perception of time is different. While Estonian employees consider being late is rude and unacceptable, Turkish employees are less punctual and more comfortable with the deadlines. Even if it is important how long Turkish employee has been living in Estonia, time perception does not change much. Another aspect that Estonian interviewees stated is the observation of Turkish employees are working fast. Most of the Estonian interviewees mentioned that their Turkish colleagues work much faster than they do. Some of the Estonians think that their Turkish colleagues are overconfident for the things that are not certain yet and they do not expect any plans to work. When we look at the answers of Turkish employees, we see that their opinions are not the same with Estonian interviewees. Most of the Turkish employees think that their Estonian colleagues only do their given responsibilities, they do not want to do any extra work. Some of them said that Estonians do not take initiatives and put something from themselves to the work. Turkish interviewees agree that Estonians are strict by the rules and they do not search for any shortcuts or easy way to do some task. Two of the Turkish interviewees said that Estonians attach particular importance to documentation. They stated that this approach is not common in Turkey and it makes the first months of new employees harder in terms of learning how to do the job. Turkish employees expect to be explained by a mentor or superior, instead of reading from instructions. Based on the answers, it can be said that Turkish employees recognize that Estonian employees work slow but provide high quality work as an outcome.

According to the results of interviews, the level of knowledge about Turkish and Estonian culture is very limited among the interviewees. And this is one of the reasons for communication gaps.

The third research question of this thesis was “How effective is Turkish and Estonian employees’ communication?”

According to the theory of Redmond and Bunyi (1993), easily resolving misunderstandings is key to achieve effective communication (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). The author decided to investigate which methods Turkish and Estonian employees use to overcome miscommunication issues. The majority of them prefer to talk directly and try to find common ground to agree on. It is important to find the source of issues and discussing transparently is preferred methods by the Turkish and Estonian employees. Regardless of which company they work at, similar answers were given.

Interpretation of the message is crucial for effective communication (Yusof *et al.* 2019). Because of that, the author asked the interviewees how they are sure if their message is received correctly. After analysing the interviews, the result is shown that Turkish employees are trying to be direct, although this is not in their culture. The importance of sending a clear message is proved once again, according to this result. On the other hand, the majority of the employees stated that they do not behave according to a specific culture, this approach is the same for every nation.

The perception of communication is very different for Turkish and Estonian employees. Majority of Turkish employees that the author interviewed think that their communication with Estonian is not good or just professionally good. They all stated that it takes a long time to have communication with Estonians. Even if they figure out how to communicate for work-related subjects, it is not very easy to create social communication with them. Some of them think Turkish and Estonian communication styles are too different and it is not possible to communicate effectively. On the other hand, most of the Estonian employees perceive as the communication between them and Turkish employees good and effective. This result shows that Turkish employees are not satisfied with their communication between their Estonian colleagues, although Estonian employees think the opposite.

There were not many differences based on gender, age as well as the company. This is very essential for the study; because the author was aiming to find common problems for all Turkish and Estonian employees. The employees might have issues in their work environment due to the company’s organizational culture. But this study has shown that employees can have similar

difficulties or ideas although they work at different companies. In addition to that, personalities, gender, and age have effects on how people perceive their environment, independently of cultural identities. Based on the results, it can be said that people from the same culture have common approaches and perceptions among the people from another culture despite the fact that different experiences and characters.

Another important result of the research is having experience working in a multicultural company. This experience brings to employees to be more tolerant and careful about colleagues from different nationalities who have different backgrounds. They gain cultural awareness and intercultural competency from this experience. This makes them communicate with people from different cultures much easily, collaborate harmoniously, and overcome miscommunications or conflicts.

In addition to the above conclusions, this research was done based on IT companies in Estonia. Although there are many multicultural companies in the country, the majority of the employees are from Estonia. As a natural consequence, work environments are based on Estonia and Estonian culture. The Turkish employees who were subjected to this study moved to Estonia willingly to work and live in this country. They all think that they are the ones who should adapt themselves to the country. But the problem is, the adaptation time is very long due to big cultural differences and this study shows that the adaptation process is essential for foreign employees. The author also asked all interviewees how long they have been working in a multicultural environment not depending on their current company. The results have shown that the interviewees who have more experience working in a multicultural environment adapt themselves easier compared to less experienced ones to a new working environment.

Based on the discussions above, the author brings suggestions to managers who have both Turkish and Estonian employees in their teams:

- First of all, it is important to understand the root cause of communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees. In this study, the author conducted interviews with the employees who accepted to be involved in this research. However, there are other employees who are not subjected to this research. Managers should speak to each team members to identify all issues.
- Language is the most problematic aspect that causes miscommunications across cultures. Language trainings should be provided by the multi-cultural companies for business

language which is English in this study. The employees who have insufficient level of English should be supported to overcome communication issues that are caused due to language. According to results, all three companies should provide language trainings to both Turkish and Estonian employees, but it is highly recommended for Company A at least for the technical terms and definitions.

- In addition to that, it is beneficial for Turkish employees to learn Estonian language. It will be helpful for Turkish employees to adapt themselves to Estonia easier and faster. Learning the local language also has advantages while communicating in English, since foreigners can understand the way of local employees' English usage. The employees of Company B and C stated that their company provides Estonian language courses. The Turkish employees should be encouraged to participate.
- Managers should consider that Turkish employees are hesitant to refuse or make a negative statement. It is likely for a Turkish employee not to express their opinions or feelings even if they are demotivated or frustrated. Managers should encourage to Turkish employees to express their negative opinions.
- Arranging team events is helpful to create bonds between team members. Based on research results, most of the Turkish employees expect to have more interactions with Estonian colleagues in order to have better communication. Team building events should be arranged by the managers or human resource practitioners to establish an environment for employees to know each other. By doing this, the collaboration between Turkish and Estonian employees can be increased. Since the employees from all three companies stated similar opinions, this suggestion should be implemented by selected three companies.
- Based on the interview results, problems related to stereotyping is not observed in selected companies between Turkish and Estonian employees. But it does not mean that this is valid for each employee. The sample of this research is limited by the author's resources and further investigation should be done by each company for each employee.
- Cultural awareness is one of the requisites for the multinational company employees. Most of the companies provide cross-cultural knowledge trainings to their employees, but these trainings only discuss generic topic about cultures. For the teams that consist both Turkish and Estonian employees, trainings should be specialized for Turkish and Estonian cultures. These cultural trainings should include communication and ways of working differences to make them recognize their cultural differences, interpret emotions and non-verbal communication styles and to be more tolerant towards each other. It will help to decrease

misunderstandings and conflicts, and gain cultural awareness, communicate more efficiently and better collaboration.

- Result of this study has revealed that Turkish and Estonian employees prefer direct communication when they work together. Although Turkish nation is a high-context culture, they adapt themselves easily. Managers should pursue a policy to communicate directly within their departments and warn new Turkish employees about this strategy at the beginning.
- Another suggestion is to shorten the adaptation time of Turkish employees in order to achieve efficient communication. Turkish employees mostly face adaptation difficulties when they move to Estonia. One of the best ways is assigning a mentor to fast and easy adaptation. But managers should be very careful about the mentors. According to the research result, assigning a mentor is not enough to ease the transition. Mentors must be interculturally competent, open for communication, and preferably knowledgeable regarding Turkey and Turkish culture.
- A strategy for mutual benefits for every culture that exists in the organizations should be implemented by Company A, B and C. According to results, Company A is facing more issues than Company B and C. As the employees of Company A stated that their workplace is diverse for the only couple of years, they encounter more problems than other companies in this study. It is highly recommended for Company A to insist on a new strategy in the workplace.
- It is essential to have efficient communication in multicultural companies. A sustainable communication platform to be provided by the managers to help employees to discuss new ideas or problems in order to embrace cultural diversity and recognize its advantages. This is recommended for Company A, B and C that are subjected to this study.
- Lastly, to create mutual understanding between cultures and cross-cultural awareness; effort, eagerness, and high tolerance are necessary attitudes for both managers and employees.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to find out problems and differences in communication between Turkish and Estonian employees and provide suggestions to managers for improvement of communication between Estonian and Turkish employees. The author stated three research questions as below, in order to achieve the aim of the study:

1. How effective is Turkish and Estonian employees' communication?
2. How do Estonian and Turkish employees perceive their communication differences between each other?
3. What are the reasons for communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees?

As a summary of the theoretical overview, concepts about communication theories and national culture theories were researched in order to put forward how effective culture is to communicate across cultures. After these theories, the author investigated the barriers to effective intercultural communication at work and the environment of multicultural workplaces. Based on the literature review, language differences, lack of intercultural competence, nonverbal misinterpretation, assumption of similarities, and stereotypes are main barriers to achieve efficient communication in multicultural workplaces. Then, the author discussed the theories and ways to effective intercultural communication in workplaces. The author found out that there are few studies related to effective communication between employees from different cultures and there is not any study that is subjected to Turkish and Estonian employees.

The literature review has shown that diversity is still one of the biggest issues for multicultural companies although there are many advantages to the global market. Managing different cultures from all over the world is very complicated and requires strong management and intercultural skills. At the same time, employees have serious issues while working together from different cultures. Managers face issues to overcome these problems and as a result waste of time, poor employee relations, and productivity loss for companies are inevitable. On the contrary, effective communication is the key to achieve good relations and higher productivity.

The thesis was focusing on IT companies based on Estonia. The significant increase of Turkish employees for IT companies in Estonia was one of the reasons why the author decided to choose this topic. But Turkey and Estonia are distant countries in terms of geography, history, and politics. This also brings huge cultural differences between the two nations that cause substantial communication problems. The aim of this thesis to make suggestions to managers for improvement of communication between Turkish and Estonian employees based on IT companies, where the author is an employee as well.

In order to understand what Turkish and Estonian employees' opinions are for their communication, the author decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with Turkish and Estonian employees. First, interview questions prepared based on the theoretical framework. The sample consisted of three Turkish and three Estonian employees from three different companies. The author used networking and snowball sampling to collect the data. As a result, eighteen interviews were performed by the author as nine of them with Turkish employees, and nine of them Estonian employees.

Based on the research results, the author of the thesis found out that communication issues occur due to language competency, different approaches to refusing, and social interaction. Turkish employees encounter difficulties adapting themselves to the Estonian work environment at the beginning and their adaptation a takes long time. Due to this, their motivation for working is decreasing and it takes more time than usual to learn the job. On the other hand, Estonians have fewer problems regarding their Turkish colleagues. Both Turkish and Estonian employees feel the cultural difference and its effects on their ways of working and collaboration. The employees who are interculturally competent or experienced to work with other cultures are already aware of those cultural differences and can adapt themselves to work easier. At the end of the research, the author found out that Turkish employees perceive communication with Estonian colleagues as not effective, whereas Estonian employees think it is good and effective enough.

Based on the theoretical background and results of the research, the author brings out some suggestions about improving communication for multicultural workplaces. The first suggestion is knowledge. The first step for effective communication is to understand the source of communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees. The second and third suggestions are English and Estonian language trainings. Both English and Estonian language trainings should be offered by the company and supported by the managers. The fourth suggestion

for managers to aware that Turkish employees may be hesitant to refuse or express negative thoughts. The fifth suggestion is having team building events to improve relations and collaboration between employees. The sixth suggestion is to investigate issues related to stereotypes. The seventh suggestion is to provide specialized cross-cultural trainings to Turkish and Estonian employees to increase cultural awareness towards each other. The eighth suggestion is to follow a policy for direct communication. The ninth suggestion is assigning correct mentor to a Turkish employee to decrease adaptation time and make adaptation process smooth. The tenth suggestion is to create new strategy for mutual benefits. The eleventh suggestion is creating sustainable communication platforms where employees can discuss their opinions or problems freely and comfortably, in order to achieve efficient communication between them. The last suggestion is related to required attitudes to create mutual understanding between Turkish and Estonian cultures.

Within the scope of this thesis, nine Turkish and nine Estonian employees from three different IT companies were analysed. Future research should be done with more people from different companies in order to understand common problems for all companies. Also, Turkish people are not the only different nationality who are employed by the multicultural companies in Estonia. Future studies would handle communication between other nations and Estonians. In addition to that, other sectors would be studied as well as IT sector.

The goal of the masters' thesis has been achieved and suggestions for improvement of communication is provided to managers. The presented results have shown that there are communication problems between Turkish and Estonian employees that need to be solved. With this study, the author confirms that the thesis gives suggestions and ideas to overcome current communication issues and achieve effective communication at workplaces.

The author brings out the limitations of this thesis. One of the limitations comes for the small size of the sample. Due to limited time and resources, the author could perform eighteen interviews from three different companies. To achieve more correct results, the sample size would be increased. Lastly, as the author is Turkish, interviews were performed in Turkish with Turkish interviewees and in English with Estonian interviewees. This might have caused disadvantages of expressing ideas for Estonians since they could not have the chance of using their mother language. In future researches, each nation should have the same opportunity to use their own native language or only English interviews should be performed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Background questions

- How old are you?
- How long have you been working in a multicultural company?

Culture differences in communication

- Q1: What do you think about Turkish/Estonian way of talking/talking style?
- Q2: How do you perceive their emotions?
- Q3: How do you define your understanding about what your colleagues intend to say?
- Q4: What do you think about their willingness to say no/ or something negative?
- Q5: Please tell me your interaction outside the work.

Barriers to effective intercultural communication

- Q6: What do you think about English level of Turkish/Estonian colleagues? Please give me an example of a situation where you have had difficulties/misunderstandings due to language.
- Q7: How much do you know about Turkish/Estonian culture?
- Q8: What do you think about Turkish/Estonian way of thinking and way of working?
- Q9: What do you think about their non-verbal communication styles (body language, gestures, postures, eye contact)?
- Q10: What kind of stereotypes they have about your culture?

Effective communication

- Q11: How do you resolve misunderstandings with Turkish/Estonian colleagues?
- Q12: When interacting with Turkish/Estonian colleague, how do you ensure that your message is received?
- Q13: What do you think about your communication between Turkish/Estonian colleagues?
How would you describe it?

Additional question

- Q14: Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 2. Interview transcriptions

Interview transcriptions are available May 11th until June 12th, 2020 in following web addresses.

Turkish employees' interviews link:

https://1drv.ms/b/s!ArkQpxvngINvsmbf0IT9QKNwYgq_?e=AaKcz4

Estonian employees' interviews link:

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!ArkQpxvngINvsmXqCwMVOZBoLKXS?e=ZpciN4>

Appendix 3. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 1-2

	Q1-Difference	Q2-Difference
I1	reserved, speak if necessary, monotonous	easy to misunderstand, speeches and movements do not overlap
I2	directly	don't reveal, I don't get it, I hesitate to talk to that person or ask questions again, communication gaps
I3	quietly and monotonously, very individual, not friendly, directly	-
I4	directly, not try to be polite, clearly and slowly, never engage in small talks	never reveal, poker-face
I5	different, too direct	don't reveal emotions much.
I6	monotonously in English, melodic in Estonian	neutral, not possible to understand angry or happy
I7	without emotions, monotonously, neutral	They don't reveal. It was so hard for me at the beginning
I8	clearly, understandable, not fast	don't reveal emotions, facial expressions don't change, hard to understand.
I9	quiet, monotonous, boring	never reveal feelings
I10	silent, really relaxed, good listeners	so cheerful, always positive, hard to understand if they have some worries
I11	less reserved, more emotions	base emotions understandable
I12	modest and too silent, too polite	quite modest, hard to understand what they're thinking
I13	normal	understanding from body language and from tone of voice
I14	modest, easy to understand, no loud talkers	more emotional
I15	louder, more temperament	more emotions
I16	when speaking Turkish, super loud	confusing, hard to understand angry or joking
I17	really fast, angry or arrogant, easy to talk with	more emotions, loud and intimidating
I18	calm, steady and focused	clearly understandable facial expression and tone of voice

Appendix 4. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 3-4

	Q3-Difference	Q4-Problem
I1	direct, straight forwardly, clear	feeling upset or offended surprised
I2	communication with superiors is not the same, they say directly	no hesitation, make me feel strange
I3	directly, without implying	they just say it
I4	quite direct, honest	say easily, no approach to be polite or offend
I5	more direct, don't think hurt feelings or offend, don't imply anything, no small talk	they say it directly and don't think if you are upset or offended
I6	directly, no small talk	they can say much more and straight forwardly, without hesitation, , this is a little bit cruel, it decreased my motivation
I7	directly, very clear and understandable	can say no very easily
I8	very directly and straight forwardly	very comfortable in saying no, never hesitate
I9	directly	very generous to say no, say ridiculous excuses to refuse
I10	pretty clear	can't really say no
I11	not understand to read between lines	trying to avoid rather than say no
I12	for technical topics, understandable	never say no
I13	direct enough	They don't say often
I14	I had difficulties	don't say no, nice people
I15	If I have a closer relationship with then I understand perfectly	hesitant to say
I16	work related topics is clear, social topics is hard to understand	not directly saying no, avoiding the question
I17	–	don't know how to say no, more polite
I18	depending on the topic of the conversation and how well do I know the person	haven't heard any no

Appendix 5. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 5-6

	Q5-Problem	Q6-Problem
I1	less social, feeling left out	unknown words and phrases
I2	no interaction related to the personality or personal life of the people	phrases that I am not familiar with
I3	no interactions	low English level
I4	spend time with other nations	English level is good, no problems
I5	they don't invite, it takes a long time to communicate	very good English, no problems
I6	nobody invites anywhere, not expect anything anymore	good at talking in English, , using second language makes explaining-understanding process slower, , using English phrases in an unusual way creates misunderstandings
I7	takes a lot of time, not expect them to make any efforts	is good accented, very clear, understandable, no problems so
I8	not done anything, distant, not make friends easily	very good and very understandable, no problems
I9	I have only one friend	average, , Some of them are not proficient, they don't understand, the work is slowing down, or mistakes are done.
I10	don't hang out much, would like to interact more	really good
I11	more open to invite or hang out together, easier to become friends	pretty good, some software topics are pretty complicated
I12	don't interact with anyone	quite good, speaking better English than me
I13	company events	good, issues due to pronunciation
I14	don't do much things	Just fine, no problems
I15	Not too much	quite good, no issues
I16	go out couple of times	good, , had misunderstandings with the ones whose language skills are not that good
I17	don't have any interactions	pretty good, easy to understand, no issues
I18	Sometimes hanging out	fluent, clear, no issues

Appendix 6. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 7-8

	Q7-Difference	Q8-Difference
I1	a little	doing only responsibility, not taking initiatives, sensitive about documentation, too individual
I2	a little	step by step, according to plan, calmer, slower
I3	I didn't know before	slow, punctual, respect time, planning.
I4	I had no information before	very responsible, strict for to the rules, do job well, vision is not very broad, closed to innovation, reserved
I5	very well	more reliable on quality work and deadlines, much stricter about the rules, no shortcuts
I6	Although I don't know every detail, I learned behaviours of Estonians in the work environment, based my own experience.	following written rules, slow, doing job with good quality and properly
I7	I have learned by living here, I didn't know anything before I came to Estonia.	not helping each other, not doing extra work than, don't take initiative, committed to the rules
I8	not much	work according to the rules within a certain plan, slow, slow in decision making, more humanistic
I9	pretty much	hesitant to help, follow the rules, do not add something from themselves to work
I10	not much	too confident about their decisions, don't expect defined rules or steps.
I11	a lot	more relaxed with the time, no hurry
I12	some	should express themselves more
I13	not much	more open and more ready to ask clarifications, achieve results quicker
I14	not much	independent, tend to find their own solution to problems
I15	pretty general	very hardworking
I16	a lot	more relaxed
I17	a lot	have more time, less punctual, more formal, like to negotiate or bargain, faster
I18	quite poor	relaxed on time, don't see any issue being late

Appendix 7. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 9-10

	Q9-Difference	Q10-Problem
I1	cannot express themselves, do not like touching, unsocial	They don't have
I2	more distant	I don't think they have
I3	facial expressions never change, using less body language	I don't think they have
I4	using body language with minimum level, leads to miscommunication	I don't think they have
I5	very neutral, hard to understand	I don't think they have
I6	almost never use body language	they don't have
I7	don't use at all.	I don't think they have
I8	don't use much, a little confusing	I don't know, I haven't felt anything yet
I9	almost never use body language, very limited, speak without any movements or gestures, very confusing, different way of communication	they have, at least against some nations
I10	–	I think they have, every culture has some
I11	more body language, more eye contact, intimidating, more expressive	I don't think they have
I12	I feel comfortable	Estonians are quite strict and cold
I13	different, livelier, more hands and eye contact	I don't think they have
I14	–	I don't know.
I15	no difference	I don't think they have
I16	more than an average, more eye contact	Estonians are quite cold, not heartfelt, and like the social distancing
I17	normal	I don't know, I have never asked.
I18	like looking to you while talking, Estonian people feel uncomfortable	Just about our food I guess, and this is not a big problem at work

Appendix 8. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 11-12

	Q11-Communication Effectiveness	Q12-Communication Effectiveness
I1	approach more carefully and cautiously	say things briefly and directly
I2	be kind, descriptive and careful	according to the reaction
I3	talking about the problem and how to solve	be simpler and clearer
I4	try to understand why, , talking directly	wait for answer or, feedback, ask question, be as clear as possible
I5	handle issue based on the case, speak directly, trying to adapt myself to them	more careful about word choice, be more specific, not be vague
I6	find the common ground	try to explain as simple and clear as possible
I7	solve by talking	waiting for an answer, , explain as simple and clear as possible
I8	by talking, , try find a common ground	speak less detailed and more directly
I9	try to understand the problem, organize a meeting and set a common working method	I don't do anything special
I10	say that out and agree	I don't really recall that I did something
I11	approach by personality	reconfirm, , be simple and straightforward, be as clear as possible
I12	talking	ask to confirm
I13	talking	write down most of our decisions
I14	I cannot say	ask to be on the same page
I15	I don't really do anything different	ask after if they understand
I16	Try to understand where the miscommunication came from, then try to explain it again	I wouldn't say that I am doing anything different than with everybody else
I17	Turkish people are maybe a bit more stubborn	If you're sending the email for the very first time, then you have to read it through like 3 times
I18	you can't resolve it right away, They are stubborn and hard to convince.	avoid any assumptions and seek for confirmation with written form to have the same understanding

Appendix 9. Cross-Case Analysis Questions 13-14

	Q13-Communication Effectiveness	Q14
I1	communicate less but enough	communication is not very strong
I2	very distant and only work oriented, takes a lot of time	shared information is insufficient, becoming friend is very difficult takes a lot of time
I3	good communication for work related subjects, not for social life	–
I4	Not good, not effective, not possible to have a good and efficient communication	big problems in communication, distant, not friendly, very individual, thinks about only themselves
I5	we communicate well in the work environment; it takes more time	do not take anything personally
I6	Social communication is very weak, work-related communication is good	social communication with Estonians is very difficult, it takes a lot of time, keep communication only professional level
I7	We have no effective communication	Regardless of any race, the purpose of those team events should be knowing a few details about people's life
I8	it is good	–
I9	I don't think we have a good communication	keep communication very limited and lower expectations
I10	It's effective enough and everything is good	–
I11	Effective	it has been so easy to communicate with Turkish people
I12	not so good, no effective enough	–
I13	I think it's OK, but sometimes I'm a bit vague	they are great
I14	good end effective enough	–
I15	very good, easy to communicate	they're pleasant to work with
I16	it's good,	–
I17	It is good	–
I18	effective	Communication and everyday work maybe a little bit easier if you understand the cultural differences and personalities

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