VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Jesse Ikola

EFFECT OF CULTURE ON COMMUNICATION IN SOFTWARE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In Finnish-Vietnamese Context

Technology and Communication
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I have been lucky to spend most of my career working in a multicultural setting, learning from people I otherwise would never have met. For this, I would like to thank every developer, manager, and customer I have met during my years in the IT consultation business. I have no intention of stopping learning from you.

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VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Project Management

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Tässä ylemmän ammattikorkeakoulututkinnon lopputyössä tutkittiin, millaisia vaikutuksia kansallisella kulttuurilla on kommunikaatioon ja muihin ohjelmistokehityksen projektinhallinnan käytäntöihin. Viitekehyksenä työssä toimii suomalaisista sekä vietnamilaisista sovelluskehittäjistä koostuva kehitystiimi.

Työn teoriaosiossa tehdyssä kirjallisuusarviossa tutustuttiin mm. Geert Hofsteden, Richard Lewisin ja Marko Mäkiloukon tekemään kansallisia kulttuureja sekä monikulttuurista projektijohtamista käsittelevään pohjatyöhön. Työ on luonteeltaan kvalitatiivinen tapaustutkimus, ja työn empiirisessä osiossa haastateltiin kuutta sovelluskehittäjää puolistrukturoiduissa haastatteluissa. Kysymykset johdettiin kirjallisuusarviossa käsitellystä teoriasta, ja löydöksistä pystyttiin johtamaan teoreettiset sekä käytännölliset päätelmät.

Työssä todettiin, että kaikki yleistävä teoria Vietnamin ja Suomen kulttuurien eroavaisuuksista ei päde Suomessa asuvien vietnamilaisten sovelluskehittäjien viitekehyksessä, vaikka useita kulttuurisen taustan tuomia eroavaisuuksia löydettiinkin. Näiden löydösten osalta eroavaisuuksia kuvaava teoria pystyttiin todentamaan empiirisen osion haastatteluissa, ja nämä löydökset pystyttiin suoraan johtamaan myös kommunikaation eroavaisuuksiksi. Näitä löydöksiä, muuta tutkittua teoriaa sekä kulttuurien samankaltaisuuksia hyödynnettiin loppupäätelmissä esiteltävässä projektinhallinnan kehyksessä.

Avainsanat	kulttuuri, kansallinen kulttuuri, kommunikaatio, projektinhallinta, sovelluskehitys, Suomi, Vietnam

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Project Management

ABSTRACT

Author	Jesse Ikola
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In this Master's thesis, the effect of national culture on communication practices among other aspects of project management in software projects was studied. In this thesis, the focus was specifically on Finnish-Vietnamese multicultural software project teams.

A literature review was performed in the theoretical section of this thesis, and the work of Geert Hofstede, Richard Lewis, and Marko Mäkilouko on national cultures and multicultural leadership was introduced, among others. The thesis is a qualitative case study by its nature and in the empirical part of the thesis, six software developers were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were derived from the researched theory, and theoretical and practical implications were conducted from the interview findings.

In this thesis, it was concluded that all the generalizing theories on the differences between Finnish and Vietnamese cultures do not apply in the context of Vietnamese software developers living and working in Finland, although several cultural differences were noticed. The theories describing these differences could be validated in the case study interviews and derived into differences in communication practices. These findings, other researched theories, and the similarities between these cultures were used to develop the project management framework presented in the conclusions chapter.

Keywords	Culture, national culture, communication, project management, software development, Finland, and Vietnam

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The idea for this Master's thesis project draws from working life and the challenges the author has met as a project manager and as a software developer working on software projects for Finnish and multinational customers. Like most of the IT sector, the software development industry in Finland is highly internationalized compared to many more traditional businesses. The author has not only an agenda to improve management practices at his business, but also a sheer interest in cultures and, more specifically, in the intersection of different cultures.

The high level of internationality is not unique to the software development industry or a given region. The development of the Internet, communication means, and computing technology in general first made global software development and distributed teams possible in the late 90s and early 2000s, then a notable alternative for collocated teams in the 2010s. By the 2020s, the development of required technology and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the latest introduced remote working and remote teams even for more conservative industries than just software development. Geographically distributed virtual teams bring additional challenges to project management practices, since these teams are not just diverse in their cultural backgrounds but potentially also separated by country borders and time zones and without regular face-to-face contact that occurs with collocated teams. Even though studying the challenges introduced by virtual teams is out of the scope of this Master's thesis, the author's company can leverage the study on cultural effects on software project management in the project management processes also with virtual and partly virtual teams.

1.2. Jubic Oy

Jubic Oy is a software development and consulting company based in Vaasa. Founded in 2014, the company provides turnkey software solutions and development for industrial partners. Depending on the customer's needs, Jubic might handle everything from the specification and project execution to deployment and support, or work as a part of the customer's R&D team. Jubic has specialized in providing full-stack software solutions and integrations to industrial systems using technologies such as Java, .NET, and React.

Jubic also provides consulting services, for example in software tendering, cloud services deployment, and CI/CD implementation. With a history of providing hosting solutions, Jubic has developed a strong background in cloud services and open-source systems.

Currently, Jubic employs 15 people at their Vaasa office while a few are working permanently remotely around Europe. With an average annual growth rate of 37,6%, Jubic Oy hit 1M€ in revenue during the accounting period of 2022.

Since late 2022 Jubic Oy is part of Pinja Group Oy. Pinja is an IT company providing turnkey software projects and consultation on data-based management solutions. Pinja employs more than 500 people in Finland with a revenue of more than 50 million euros.

1.3. Research Problem and Objectives

At Jubic Oy, most of the employees are native Finns, while the official working language is English. The number of employees with non-Finnish cultural backgrounds varies and has peaked at around 20%. Multiple criteria apply to assembling project teams, and conditions vary at project kick-offs. Some project teams end up consisting only of Finnish members, while others are multicultural which also affects the everyday project practices. Even though the official language in

the company is English - including all the systems, processes, and official communication, for example - naturally, homogeneous Finnish teams will use Finnish for their internal communication, joint problem-solving, and status meetings.

Language is only one example of how the team's background affects common project development practices. Cultural differences, such as the respect towards more powerful individuals of the community or culture's tendency to act as a collective instead of individuals are just two notable examples identified when comparing national cultures (Hofstede, 1994). The author wanted to research if aspects like these in national cultures affect the software development project and if a model or a process could be constructed to guide project managers when leading multicultural teams. If such a tool could be developed, it could provide project managers with a way to acknowledge the role of culture better and be conscious of it when working with multicultural project teams. If problems in the software project context caused by cultural differences are identified, the model can work as a tool to potentially diminish the negative effects of cultural differences while retaining the benefits of diverse project teams.

The author wanted to study a culture different from Finnish and most Western cultures while retaining a significant level of practicality in the work. Choosing Vietnamese culture for comparison was a pragmatic decision since the author's company has employed Vietnamese developers more than any other cultural background after Finnish. A local Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, VAMK, is an important source of trainees and future developers for Jubic, and VAMK's Information Technology program has been popular among Vietnamese students (Kauppalehti 2021).

1.4. Theoretical Framework, Research Gap, and Research Questions

National culture is a heavily studied subject. Multiple models to compare national cultures exist, most notably Geert Hofstede's six-dimensional theory he developed

originally in the 1980s while working for IBM. Originally containing four dimensions to describe aspects of national culture, Hofstede extended the model first to five dimensions in 2010 and continued to improve it by adding a final sixth dimension to his model later. In his model, Hofstede has scored national cultures by these six dimensions: the power distance index, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. (National Culture 2022.)

Another widely popular model for comparing national cultures is the Lewis model developed by Richard Lewis and introduced in his 1996 book "When Cultures Collide". Lewis built his model around the three dimensions of human behavior he had identified. These behavioral categories are linear-active, multi-active, and reactive. (Lewis 2006, xviii- xix.)

In this study, we research attributes of Finnish and Vietnamese national cultures, respectively, and then compare the two cultures using both Hofstede and Lewis models to pinpoint the differences and similarities in terms of communication practices and other attributes contributing to project management.

We then continue to research the culture in our context of communication in software project management. In 2003 research Marko Mäkilouko studied Finnish key personnel in multicultural projects introducing three different management styles for multicultural projects. Mäkilouko identified ethnocentric, synergistic, and polycentric management styles. We will analyze the traits of these management styles to see if we can find benefits suiting our Finnish-Vietnamese project team context. (Mäkilouko 2003a.)

The rapid development of technology and management frameworks such as the popularity of scrum and other agile methods have enhanced the evolution speed of the software development industry. The recent COVID-19 pandemic introduced

new challenges for the industry with global remote working practices. Project team culture is known to be a subject where little data exists, although it is a factor that all projects share. Culture is not a popular topic in project management literature, mostly because of the difficulties in measuring culture, the lack of understanding of what culture is, and because of the lack of studies on multicultural team leadership. Because of these factors, the subject of this study is relevant not just for Jubic, but for the whole industry globally. The Vaasa area is popular among exchange students and immigrants, and a relevant part of the workforce for the local software industry comes from a national background other than Finnish. This adds to the interest in the topic for other companies employing software developers in the region too. (Henrie & Sousa-Poza 2005.)

This leads to the research questions of this study:

RQ1: What is the effect of culture on communication practices on software projects in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

RQ2: What type of project management tool can be implemented for managing differences in communication practices in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

The target is to identify key differences between Finnish and Vietnamese cultures, to further analyze whether these differences play a role in communication practices in software project management, and to further develop project management practices at Jubic Oy to better acknowledge these differences.

1.5. Definitions

1.5.1. Culture

The term culture is understood in several ways. In a narrow context, culture often refers to language, education, art, literature, and other significant output a specific civilization produces. However, in social anthropology, culture has a broader

meaning. It refers to all forms of thinking, perceiving, and reacting in all day-to-day interactions common to a specific group of people. Actions, such as communicating, expressing feelings, eating, and the use of physical distance, to name a few, are shaped by the cultures we are part of. Geert Hofstede describes culture as "the collective programming of the mind," meaning that culture is a collection of patterns our brains have learned to use in different situations. (Hofstede, G., Hofstede G. J., Minkov M 2010, 5.)

The roots of the word "culture" are in the Latin word "colere" which means the permanent place of residence. The term culture grew to a synonym for patterned thinking of individuals resident in the same area. Earlier cultures were tightly related to religions and the different behavior associated with various religions. Culture is considered to be required for operative interaction between humans, similar to communication and group behavior. Children begin to assimilate their culture roughly at the age of four, and this helps them to empathize with other people outside of their immediate family. Common culture also greatly reduces communication problems and conflicts in the working environment and project teams. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 17-18.)

Culture can be seen as an inherited way of ethical thinking that is passed on to other members of the culture. People are most receptive to new cultures as a child and learning new cultures or unlearning old ways as an adult gets harder. Different ways culture can manifest itself can be summed into four categories: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. People are always part of one or more cultures. Different culture types exist, and others are stronger in shaping individuals' way of interacting. Examples of different culture types are national culture, corporate culture, professional culture, functional culture, and team culture. In this thesis, we focus on the effects of national culture in the context of software projects. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 5, 7; Dafoulas & Macaulay 2017, 5.)

1.5.2. National Culture

The term national culture refers to a culture that is distinguished from others by the boundaries of the nation where the culture is met. The usage of the term has met some criticism because individuals within a given national culture always show significant variance and because nations often have regional, ethnic, and other sub-cultures. National cultures are developed from multiple layers, such as regional, religious, linguistic, ethnic, gender, generation, social classes, and different organizations. Nations should not be equalized to societies that are organically formed communities in contrast to nations. To gain a greater level of resolution when comparing cultures, we should instead focus on societal rather than national cultures. This way, however, the number of control groups would skyrocket, and it would impose a problem with categorization and naming. Many nations have developed organically around societies sharing similar cultures, and many nations have developed into whole units even with less integrated minorities. In-depth national culture studies have been conducted to debunk some of this critique against the use of this term when comparing cultures. These studies show that traits of sub-cultures within nations tend to align with other sub-cultures of the given nation better than with other similar cultures or geographical regions in other countries. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 21; G. Hofstede & Minkov 2012, 20; Mäkilouko 2003b, 25.)

National culture can act similarly to a shield, protecting one's national identity. It can also reject other cultures and people. However, it does not mean that two individuals from different national cultures could not understand each other. The formation of national culture is affected by cultural concepts such as customs, rituals, traditions, behaviors, and artistic culture. Concepts of national culture are learned at a young age and the primary source for learning one's national culture is school. Enhancing national culture's values continues later even in adult age, for example at workplaces in how one interacts with one's supervisors and colleagues.

The following mechanisms in Table 1 have been identified for integrating an organizational culture. (Koriakina 2020; Mäkilouko 2003b, 26-27.)

Table 1. Mechanisms identified for integrating an organizational culture.

Primary mechanisms	**Secondary mechanisms**
What aspects do leaders monitor, measure and control	Organizational structures
How leaders react to critical crises	Organizational processes
Criteria leaders use to allocate resources	Organizational habits and rituals
Intentional role modeling and coaching	Design of office buildings and premises
Criteria leaders use to give recognition and rewards	Stories and legends about people and events
Criteria leaders use to recruit, promote, and retire employees	Official statements of company ideology and values

1.5.3. Project

Project management framework PRINCE2 defines a project as a temporary organization that is created for delivering one or more products as agreed upon. It states that a project should have a beginning and ending, which separates it from the ongoing activity of a process. A project should always have a justification in a form of a business case, and it delivers a specified product or multiple products as its outcome. The project management body of knowledge (PMBOK) describes the

term project as a “temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result”. PMBOK also emphasizes the temporary nature of the project, clarifying that there should be a beginning and ending for project work or a phase of a project. (Axelos 2017; Project Management Institute 2021.)

1.5.4. Multicultural Team

A multicultural team refers to a group of people from varying cultural backgrounds working towards a common goal. Differences may appear in team members’ language, national characteristics, ethnic differences, and organizational or professional culture. These differences within a team must be identified and addressed. Otherwise, these differences can accumulate to divergence in the ways of working which can be harmful or even catastrophic for the project's progress. Besides these aspects, the cultural background may also affect accents, communication directness, attitudes toward hierarchy, and decision-making norms. Even though a multicultural team is harder to integrate and build compared to a monocultural team, once properly established multicultural teams are seen to outperform monocultural teams when it comes to problem detection and solving. When a multicultural team or multiple teams are working on the same project, the project is called a multicultural project. (Ochieng & Price 2009.)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Different frameworks and theories were researched to find a comprehensive set of tools for analyzing and comparing two cultures, Finnish, and Vietnamese, to pinpoint the key differences when it comes to communicating and collaborating in multicultural teams. Hofstede's six-dimensional model was chosen to analyze the characteristics of the cultures. Lewis's theory of behavioral dimensions was chosen to explain the differences in our national behavior. Mäkilouko's work on leadership styles for multicultural teams was used to find a suitable leading style for our multicultural teams. Also, various articles on intercultural communication were studied to further explain the differences in communication practices within multicultural teams caused by our national culture. At the end of the literature review, a summary of communication differences based on selected theories was conducted.

2.1. Cross-Cultural Comparison

Multiple models have been developed over the years for classifying the traits of national cultures to allow easier analysis of the comparison between different cultures. These models are always based on generalizations, something called the national norm. A cultural context consists of a wide array of components, such as communication and language, appearance and fashion, food and eating, perception of time, the norm in relationships, values, religious beliefs, methods of teaching, and work arrangements. Cultures are a sensitive topic because they deal with archetypes, and when comparing cultures these archetypes should be used as a starting point where knowledge is being built upon. Generalizations like these impose a chance to turn into stereotyping, but after all individuals in any country carry with them certain core beliefs and presumptions of their real-life which will reflect on their acts. (Dafoulas & Macaulay 2017, 5; Lewis 1996, 3; Koriakina 2020.)

Analyzing the traits of national culture is not a relatively easy task. Lewis (1996, 3) described that determining national characteristics is “treading a minefield of inaccurate statements and surprising exception”. That is because culture is not strictly just a national phenomenon. There are countries where regional characteristics can dominate and push the national type to the second position. Lewis (1996, 4) also identified four other cultural dimensions besides the national: corporate culture that affects the lives of many of us to a certain degree, family culture that is particularly strong in countries such as Italy or Spain, individual culture, and according to Lewis perhaps the strongest cultural divide that is the gender identity.

Also, profession, organization, and department where one works may introduce a culture that one will be a part of. Software professionals form an especially strong cultural bond that is stronger than any other culture; they belong to a worldwide computer subculture in addition to other cultures they are part of. A Finnish software developer is more like a Vietnamese software developer than she is like a Finnish marketing professional. This fact certainly reduces the amount of possible cultural conflicts in software development teams, but despite the debate on the matter, it does not eliminate its risk. (Dafoulas & Macaulay 2017, 6.)

Two models for cross-cultural comparison were chosen for this literature review. Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory is probably the most notable such model, and many later works are based on it. Hofstede’s dimensions theory was chosen as part of this literature review because of its significance in the field. Another such theory is Richard D. Lewis’s model of cross-cultural behavior. Lewis has done extensive analysis of various cultures using his model, including Finnish culture. Lewis's model was also chosen as part of this literature review because of his thorough analysis of the traits of Finnish culture.

2.2. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede got accidentally interested in national cultures in the 1960s. While working for IBM he got access to a rich set of data related to IBM employees from multiple countries. Based on his findings, he released a book called "Culture's Consequences" in the 1980s, introducing new ideas that did not perfectly match the widely accepted theories in psychology, organizational sociology, or management theory. In 1991, after teaching the subject to a wide range of audiences, Geert Hofstede released the first edition of "Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind." By third edition of the book, Geert Hofstede had joined his son Gert Jan Hofstede and researcher Michael Minkov to continue his studies further. (Hofstede et al. 2010, xi-xii.)

In his works, Geert Hofstede introduced several dimensions, which are national cultural traits that could be measured concerning others. Each dimension groups an array of a phenomenon that emerges together. Hofstede then went on to score over 50 national cultures across these dimensions. In the second and third editions of the book and additional research later, the research group added even more dimensions to Hofstede's original four-dimensional framework. Currently, Hofstede's model contains six dimensions for comparing differences in national cultures. This 6-D model is a tool for drawing quick comparisons between national cultures. It is important to remember that this model compares national cultures, not the personalities of individuals from different cultures. Personalities are not independent of the culture, but national culture hosts a wide variety of other characters. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 28-32, 40.)

2.2.1. The Power Distance Index

Since the times of early hunter-gatherer tribes, there has been inequality in human societies. Some people are born into influential families, some are strong, some

are smart, or someone might gain status through wealth. It is considered a problem in some societies if individuals automatically gain higher status in one area after succeeding in another. In some societies, this is seen as the norm. Many countries have placed laws to treat individuals equally regardless of their status or capabilities and prevent those in power from exploiting their position. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 54.)

One explanation for differences in nations' power distance levels inherits from their history. Many European countries with the native language of Romance rank higher when measuring the level of power distance, while countries with a Germanic native language rank lower. Many Romance-speaking nations in Europe were once ruled by the Roman Empire, and in Latin America by Portugal or Spain. Many countries speaking a Germanic language remained longer divided into smaller tribes ruled by local monarchs. As seen in Table 2, national wealth and the level of technology also play their parts in the power distance level, although it is unclear if it is its effect or cause. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 82-86.)

Table 2. Traits of nations with higher well-being and lower power distance level.

1. Less old agriculture
2. More modern technology
3. More urban living
4. More social mobility
5. A better educational system
6. A larger middle class

The power distance index is a dimension that measures these attitudes in national culture. A smaller power distance level indicates that individuals should have equal rights in society and that talent, wealth, and strength do not need to go hand in

hand. On the contrary, cultures with high power distance levels tend to share beliefs that influential individuals are entitled to special rights and that positive traits seen in some people go automatically together. Cultures with a low power distance index believe in dialog and that rulers should be legitimate. In contrast, a higher power distance level is a sign that influential individuals should rule, and the importance of dialogue is neglected. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 83.)

2.2.2. Individualism Versus Collectivism

One key difference in societies is the role of an individual compared to the role of a group. Most societies implement thinking where the interest of a group is prioritized over the interest of an individual. The first group a person belongs to in their life is their family. In societies with collectivist thinking, families are often of type extended families. In these families not only do children live with their parents, but also with their grandparents and possibly other relatives. This enforces the thinking of "us" over "I" and forms a bond that people are often reluctant to break. Only a minority of societies are considered individualists. In these societies families often consist of parents and their children, and single-parent families are a common phenomenon. Relationship with other relatives is less important, and children become independent significantly faster than in collectivist societies. In individualist societies, it is not considered healthy or practical to be dependent on a certain group. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 90-91.)

The individualism level of society measures the degree to which an individual is expected to look only after themself or just after their immediate family. The higher the score, the more individualistic thinking is the norm in society. On the other hand, the lower the score, the more often individuals in society are integrated into groups forming strong and lifelong bonds. In the IBM study, Hofstede identified that employees from individualist and collectivist societies found different work goal items more important than others, as seen in Table 3. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 92-93.)

Table 3. Important work goal items for individualist and collectivist societies.

Individualist	**Collectivist**
Working in a position that leaves time for personal interests such as family or hobbies	Opportunities to train and learn new skills
Freedom to implement the work in a way suitable for the employee	Good physical working conditions
Enough challenge in daily tasks to feel a certain level of accomplishment	Possibilities to fully utilize personal skills in daily tasks

2.2.3. Masculinity Versus Femininity

In traditional hunter-gatherer tribes, gender roles were defined by necessity. Females gave birth to children and breastfed them, greatly limiting their freedom and movement in traditional cultures. Men on the other hand were not as limited by these constraints: they were able to move more freely, hunt and gather for their families, and to provide protection from various threats. This steered the way of thinking for males of society into competitive, assertive, and tough, while females took a tender direction, for example, taking care of the family and the home. These traditional ways of masculine and feminine thinking are inherited over generations and are still met in societies to varying degrees. The terms masculine and feminine are relative. A man can behave in a feminine way and a female in a masculine way: their behavior just differs from the conventions of their society. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 137-138.)

From the IBM questionnaire, Geert Hofstede identified the 8 work goal items seen in Table 4 that were diverging in importance between female and man respondents. Among these work goal items, men and women consistently answered differently, apart from the countries heavily at the feminine pole of the index. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 139.)

Table 4. Work goal items identified to diverge between men and women.

Masculine	**Feminine**
Opportunities for high earnings	A good relationship with direct supervisors
Recognition received from a good job	Work with people who cooperate well
Opportunities to advance to high-level jobs	Living in an area desirable for you and your family
Having challenging work to do	Security to work in the position for as long as you want to

From the prioritization of these work goal items, Hofstede built the masculinity versus femininity index. This index describes how traditional the gender roles in society are: men are expected to be self-assured, tough, and interested in material success while women are expected to be modest, caring, and interested in the quality of life in cultures with high masculinity versus femininity index. In cultures with low masculinity versus femininity index, gender roles overlap. Both women and men are expected to be more modest, caring, and concerned about the quality of life. As with every index, these are generalizations, and highly masculine individuals can be found in countries with a low masculinity index, and feminine individuals can be found in countries with high masculinity versus femininity index. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 139-140.)

2.2.4. The Uncertainty-Avoidance Index

The fourth dimension included in Hofstede's original IBM study was the uncertainty-avoidance index. The uncertainty-avoidance index measures to which degree the members of a given national culture feel threatened by unknown and uncontrolled situations. Hofstede discovered the uncertainty-avoidance index when studying the score of the power distance index. By asking questionees about

the frequency they feel stressed, to which degree they believe company rules should be followed, and the determination to stay with the company for a long period Geert Hofstede found a national correlation. Individual responses did not always align perfectly between all three questions, but in national answers, the correlation could be seen. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 190-191.)

Hofstede compared his findings to an older study by Richard Lynn, who studied anxiety levels in eight countries by using suicide death rates, alcoholism, accident death rate, and the rate of prisoners per population as his data. Hofstede concluded that his uncertainty-avoidance index and Lynn's anxiety level study showed a strong correlation: countries listed as high-anxiety countries by Lynn can be found closer to the top in Hofstede's uncertainty-avoidance index. This means that some national cultures are more anxious than others as the rate of anxiety varies from country to country. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 195-196.)

In countries with a low uncertainty-avoidance index, the levels of anxiety are lower too. In these countries, expressions and dialogue are more restrained and emotions are not supposed to show. Medium or low levels of the uncertainty-avoidance index can be met in Asian countries except for Japan or South Korea, Anglo and Nordic countries, and African countries. In countries with high levels of the uncertainty-avoidance index also anxiety levels are higher. In these countries, dialogue is very expressive and emotions play an important role in day-to-day communication. Medium to high levels of the uncertainty-avoidance index can be met in Latin America, Latin Europe, Mediterranean countries, and German-speaking countries. Lynn also found that factors such as high consumption of caffeine, high daily intake of calories, higher occurrence of coronary heart disease, and higher occurrence of chronic psychosis negatively relate to the anxiety level of a country. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 195-196.)

2.2.5. Long-Term Orientation Versus Short-Term Orientation

In 1985 Michael Bond and his Chinese colleagues developed a Chinese Value Survey (CVS), a study that resulted in four dimensions describing the behavior in different aspects across twenty-three countries. Hofstede noticed that three of these dimensions aligned with his findings across twenty common countries between the studies. In the results of the fourth dimension, Hofstede found a deficiency in the original IBM questionnaire. Using CVS data, and later filling in for missing countries, Hofstede built the fifth dimension of his model, the long-term orientation versus short-term orientation (LTO). LTO measures the objectives a national culture has towards receiving rewards from their actions in the short-term versus in the long-term. Common traits of both high- and low-level LTO cultures can be seen below in Table 5. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 236-239.)

Table 5. Common traits in high- and low-level LTO cultures.

Short-term orientation	**Long-term orientation**
Social pressure to spending	Thrift is seen as a virtue
Work should produce quick results	Work is optimized for slow results
Respect for traditions	Respect for conditions
Humility is considered feminine	Humility is considered neutral
"Old age" is considered to begin later in humans' lives	"Old age" is considered to begin earlier in humans' lives

A high long-term orientation index shows that the average mindset in national culture is towards optimizing for future rewards, and traits such as thrift and perseverance are seen as virtues. In a national culture with a low long-term orientation

index actions favor past and present, and there is respect for tradition, preserving one's reputation, and for filling social obligations. In countries with a high level of LTO, marriage is often seen as a pragmatic decision, whereas in low-level LTO countries marriage is usually a moral decision. There are multiple ways culture's LTO level might show in business too. In countries with high-level LTO, values such as thriftiness and long-term thinking are often implemented. Instead of focusing on this year's profits, entrepreneurs might be looking into profits a few years into the future. Long-term orientation is high in many East Asian countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and China. Also, Germanic countries and ex-Soviet countries have relatively high long-term orientation levels. Mid-level LTO can be found in Anglo countries such as Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Scandinavia. Extremely low levels of LTO can be met in multiple South American, African, and Muslim countries such as Colombia, Morocco, Iran, Nigeria, and Egypt. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 240-245, 255-258.)

2.2.6. Indulgence Versus Restraint

Happiness and subjective well-being (SWB) are thoroughly studied subjects. Some cultures and religions, like Buddhism, resent the quest for happiness and see it as a waste of life. In some cultures, happiness, and well-being are seen as a goal worth prioritizing over work and career. Studying SWB usually comes down to two main factors: evaluation of one's life and a description of one's feelings, since satisfaction with life and emotional affect are not always going hand in hand. It is not uncommon that countries with most respondents considering themselves very happy are poor countries. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 278-279.)

From the vast database of the 1980s World Values Survey (WVS) colleague of Geert Hofstede, Michael Minkov extracted a new dimension dubbed indulgence versus restraint. Based on Ronald Inglehart's WVS dimension "well-being versus survival", Minkov split the dimension in two. The split was made for items that are

related to relationships between groups of individuals, and for items that are between individuals and groups. The WVS formulated the well-being versus survival dimension by questioning respondents' self-assessments on happiness in life, sense of life control, and the importance of leisure. Happiness, life control, and the importance of leisure are together correlated. The dimension was found to be positively correlating with the importance of having friends and negatively with the respect towards thrift among others. Higher happiness was predicted by the sense of acting as one pleases, spending money, and considering leisure as important in life. Based on these findings Minkov named the new dimension indulgence versus restraint. It aims to measure the culture's view on how freely one can enjoy life by themselves or with their friends, or whether such pleasures are judged by social norms. The higher level of indulgence versus restraint index, the more accepting attitude towards leisure time and pleasures. High levels of indulgence versus restraint are met in Southern American countries such as Venezuela and Mexico, as well as in African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. Also, many Anglo countries for example, Sweden, New Zealand, and Denmark pose a relatively high level of indulgence versus restraint. Low levels of indulgence versus restraint are met in Egypt, Pakistan, and many of ex-Soviet countries such as Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 279-285.)

2.3. Lewis's Dimensions of Behavior

In his 1996 work 'When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures', and later in the revised version of the opus 'When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures from 2006 Richard D. Lewis first introduced his three-dimensional model for cross-cultural communication. Lewis bases his model on studying the behavior of individuals. When we focus on the cultural source of persons' national behavior, we can predict other people's reactions to our plans for them with a surprisingly high level of accuracy. We can also make some educated speculations on how others will approach us. Lewis states that the need for such powerful categorization

is obvious because it provides us with a set of features, as seen in Table 6. (Lewis 2006, xvi, 29.)

Table 6. Benefits of cultural categorization.

Benefits of cultural categorization
1. Predict a culture's behavior 2. Clarify why people did what they did 3. Avoid giving offense 4. Search for some kind of unity 5. Standardize policies 6. Perceive neatness

Lewis introduced three groups from which every national culture in the world draws its traits. He summarizes that all national cultures can be roughly classified into three groups: task-oriented and very organized planners in the linear-active group, people-oriented and talkative individuals in the multi-active group, and introverted, respect-oriented listeners in the reactive group. In Table 7 are listed some of the most significant traits of each group defined by Lewis. Some cultures, while being placed into a certain group, may still pose traits of other categories in certain situations. Instead of strict groups, Lewis's LMR classes form a triangle with axes of linear-active/reactive, linear-active/multi-active, and multi-active/reactive, as seen in Figure 1. Lewis stresses that most individuals however are of a hybrid type, not belonging strictly just to a single category. This is because, in addition to just their national culture, an individual is also affected by their previous studies, their profession, and their personality preferences. (Lewis 2006, xviii-xix, 27, 38, 46.)

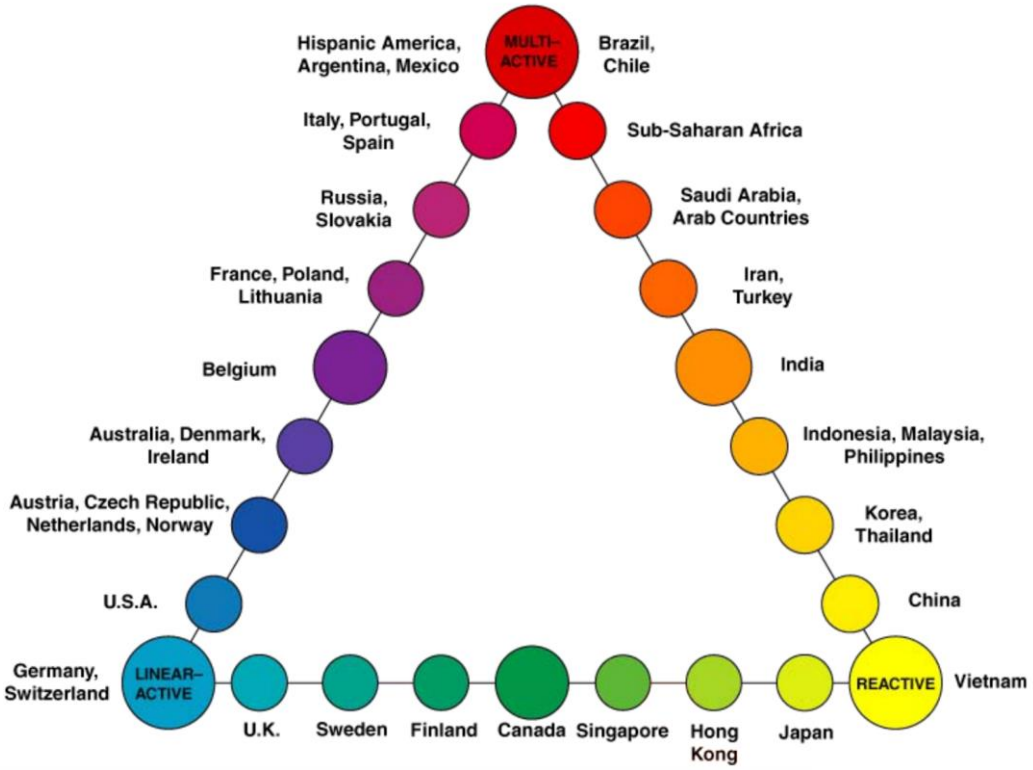

Figure 1. Lewis's placement of selected nationalities on LMR axes. (theHRDIRECTOR 12/2006.)

Cultures behave differently also when it comes to building trust. Lewis agrees with Francis Fukuyama's findings on cultures splitting into high-, medium- and low-trust groups. Factors affecting nations' placement in trust groups can be traced to what kind of a role family, state, and officials play in these cultures and how trustworthy officials in these cultures are. For example, the level of corruption in a nation's government may reduce the nation's trust level. (Lewis 2006, 145-148.)

Table 7. Significant traits of LMR groups. (Lewis 2006, 33-34.)

Linear-active	**Multi-active**	**Reactive**
Introvert	Extrovert	Introvert
Patient	Inpatient	Patient

Quiet	Talkative	Silent
Rarely interrupts	Interrupts frequently	Does not interrupt
Plans ahead methodically	Plans grand outlines only	Looks at general principles
Job-oriented	People-oriented	People-oriented
Dislikes losing face	Has ready excuses	Must not lose face

2.3.1. Linear-Active Group

Individuals in linear-active cultures are consistent and precise people who perform a single task at a time, focus hard on that matter, and execute the task at hand within the agreed schedule. This attitude towards the timeline is called linear-active time. People in this group think this way they perform more efficiently and get things done better. Linear-active people emphasize studying a project thoroughly, classifying things, and solving one issue at a time in a linear fashion. Linear-active people put their focus systemically on one issue at a time and are thus achieving good results. Lewis mentions Germans, Swiss, and Americans as examples of linear-active cultures, although these cultures pose differences in attitude. (Lewis 2006, 29, 30, 32.)

Preferred communication in linear-active cultures is dialogue. One may interrupt others' monologue with comments and questions, signifying interest in the topic of discussion. When one person stops speaking, the other is taking their turn immediately to avoid any unnecessary silence. (Lewis 2006, 35.)

Cultures belonging to the linear-active group tend to rank in the group of high-trust national cultures. Individuals in the linear-active group usually have by default a high level of trust towards their countrymen and assume others will also follow the rules and have honest intentions. As a rule of thumb, a fellow citizen can be trusted unless they prove unworthy of the trust. In high-trust societies, trust is based on factors such as individuals' performance, consistency, scientific truth, and the efficiency of bureaucracy. (Lewis 2006, 145-149.)

2.3.2. Multi-Active Group

People from national cultures classified with multi-active tendencies do not hold timetables or punctuality in too great value and pretend to follow strict schedules mostly only if people from linear-active cultures insist so. They consider real life more important than artificial schedules. They hold human interaction of great value and invest their time easily in socialization and communication. Individuals from multi-active cultures follow multi-active time. The more things people from multi-active cultures do at the same time the better and more accomplished they feel. In multi-active cultures, it might be better not to show up on time for meetings in order not to mess up the schedules. Lewis classifies many cultures from Southern Europe and Southern America, such as Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian, and Argentine cultures, into the multi-active group. (Lewis 2006, 30, 55.)

Multi-active cultures similar to linear-active prefer a communication style of dialogue. Discussion is constantly interrupted and shifting from person to person. However, unlike in many linear-active cultures where discussion is heavily data-oriented, in multi-active cultures there is a strong correlation with dialogue-oriented communication style. With a dialogue-oriented communication style, individuals can set events and business possibilities better in the context because of having a wider perspective on matters because of their networks. In their opinion, facts are only one part of the bigger picture. (Lewis 2006, 35, 48.)

A high level of trust seen often in linear-active cultures is a rarer phenomenon in multi-active cultures. Bureaucracy is slower and faith in officials tends to be lower. In multi-active cultures, truth is often seen as flexible and creative. These people put their strong trust in the closest members of their social circle. Trust can be built with multi-active individuals through compassion, closeness, refusing to exploit others' weaknesses, and exposing one's weaknesses to them. (Lewis 2006, 145-149.)

2.3.3. Reactive Group

The third class in Lewis's communication model is reactive cultures. Reactive cultures rarely initiate action or discussion, and they prefer listening and understanding others first before reacting. Reactive people are good listeners since they rarely interrupt the speaker. After listening to what the speaker had to say there is a decent period of silence to emphasize the importance of what was just said. Even then, a reactive listener probably wants to ask more questions to fully understand others' positions. Besides the unique style of discussion, reactive cultures are also proficient at nonverbal communication using subtle body language. Lewis classifies for example China, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Turkey, Finland, and Vietnam as reactive cultures. (Lewis 2006, 32, 35, 42.)

In reactive cultures, the preferred communication mode is a monologue – pause – reflection – monologue. Silences are not just tolerated well, but they are considered a meaningful part of communication. If one ask a reactive Finn what they think, they actually start thinking. Reactives are introverted people, who may grow suspicious of a vast number of words used. Reactive discussion is context-centered, and the listener is assumed to have a lot of knowledge if they spoke first. Because the listener can be considered knowledgeable, a reactive speaker might speak in half-utterances and assume the listener can fill in the rest. They might also politely avoid using personal pronouns when describing what has happened.

Compared to the multi-active and linear-active communication methods, the interaction is less personal and avoiding. (Lewis 2006, 35, 36.)

Trust is not as binary with reactive cultures as it is with multi-active and linear-active cultures. Like multi-actives, reactives often have a more flexible attachment to rules and laws. This makes individuals trust less their nationals. This is especially true within some reactive Asian cultures such as China and Korea where both family and the state have a great influence on individuals' life. On the other hand, national cultures such as Japan and Finland rank high in trust while being heavily reactive. With reactive cultures, trust can be built by protecting the other's face and with courtesy, sacrifice, and two-way attention. (Lewis 2006, 145-149.)

2.4. Leadership Styles in Multicultural Projects

In 2003 Marko Mäkilouko released his findings on various multicultural team leadership styles in his book "Multicultural Leadership – Strategies for Improved Performance". His work was based on mostly studying small-group behavior and leadership in Finnish companies. Mäkilouko stresses the importance of cultural empathy and leadership's interest in new cultures when looking for success in multicultural projects. In his book, Mäkilouko describes three different leadership strategies: cultural synergy, cultural ethnocentrism, and cultural polycentrism. Mäkilouko also briefly mentions cultural geocentrism where differences in national cultures are diminished to a minimum through extremely strong corporate culture. This culture is enhanced through training and common rituals. However, Mäkilouko dismisses this approach as a promising idea that in practice falls short. Because of its theoretical nature, Mäkilouko does not concern with it more thoroughly. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 7-8, 85-87.)

2.4.1. Cultural Synergy

Mäkilouko starts by describing the leadership style of cultural synergy. In cultural synergy, the team leader considers all individuals and every culture residing in the

team to combine their strengths. Like all teams, also multicultural teams develop their own set of rules, communication practices, and norms. With multicultural teams, this tends to be a slower process because of differences in the team and because of the challenges posed by the potentially dispersed nature of the team. The lack of face-to-face interaction slows the process of team formation. The leader should include cultural agreements in the team formation process whenever possible. An important factor is to reach a common understanding of how to settle different expectations with the team. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 89.)

Key tasks for managing a team using cultural synergy are to develop a common style of working together, monitor cultural differences, and generate trust within the team. Individuals that come from different cultures usually have different expectations for the practicalities of the work, such as how is the decision process working, what are the preferred ways of communication, and how the roles are defined. A common agreement is needed for the team to freely focus on the issues rather than on the process. It is easy to spot cultural differences, but also cultural similarities should be found to be used as the basis for the leadership style. Cultural differences should be discussed openly in the team, even though it is a sensitive topic, and takes a strong mindset to be open to self-reflection. It requires good human relationship skills to learn about cultures, and relationships also increase the integrity of the team. Relationships are also required for building trust within the team. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 90-93.)

It is impossible to build trust with the team in a negative environment, and the core of trust-building is relationships. Leaders should place their swift trust in team members and decide to trust in them. This trust should be equal regardless of the team member's background and expertise. The team usually responds to swift trust with respect which accelerates the growth of trust. Possible problems should always be handled in a way that does not break the cycle of trust. General misunderstandings should not be quickly judged as a display of missing trust but rather

studied from the perspective of cultural differences. The leader of a culturally synergistic team should use the active style of leadership rather than just delegate tasks to the team. The active style of leadership consists of discussions and personal interactions with team members. This reduces the risk of falling into ethnocentric leadership. The synergistic leadership style is not always easy to implement, and it might fail more often than succeed. Reasons for this can be found in team members' human interactions with people outside of the team. These interactions may support the old way of working, old values, and old beliefs. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 93-96.)

2.4.2. Cultural Ethnocentrism

The second leadership style described by Mäkilouko is cultural ethnocentrism. In cultural ethnocentrism, leaders dismiss the aspects of foreign cultures in their team and lead solely from the perspective of their own national culture. With very diverse teams ethnocentrism may be the only option because assuming a leader to master multiple foreign cultures is unrealistic while learning just one foreign culture well might take a decade. Another relevant situation for ethnocentrism is a fast-moving project where the leader and team simply do not have the time to learn each other's cultures well enough. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 99.)

Cultural ethnocentrism is a heavily task-oriented management approach. Human leaders often have a natural will to learn their team members better, which often emphasizes respecting other cultures as well. Task-oriented leaders are often ethnocentric by default, paying attention to technical details and task completion. A rational approach to a project helps leaders with little knowledge of cultural differences. An important factor to remember with ethnocentric management is to use a sufficient level of detail with task descriptions and work breakdowns. This diminishes the negative effects that foreign cultures working towards a common goal might have. Such a great level of description is often not needed when work-

ing with a homogeneous team. Different cultures can affect several aspects of project execution, such as reporting delays or being otherwise open about work progress. Tight control and supervision over the project are recommended with the ethnocentric leadership style. Written reports should be favored over discussions since this reduces cultural messages. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 100-102, 104.)

Ethnocentric leadership plays an important role in projects and teams. It provides a good starting point for getting things moving quickly at first. It also starts the learning process for the leader and the team. However, ethnocentrism as a choice is to be avoided in the long run. Tasks, problems, and specifications for example have people behind them, and ethnocentrism as a choice does not provide a solution to culture affecting these aspects. Ethnocentrism as a choice might be a result of leaders' personal choices or encouragement by the organization. Common thinking leading to ethnocentrism as a choice is that personality is a static concept that cannot be altered or learned. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 103-108.)

2.4.3. Cultural Polycentrism

The third leadership style Mäkilouko details are cultural polycentrism. Mäkilouko states that cultural polycentrism is often the most effective leadership style in multicultural environments. In cultural polycentrism, the leader treats every culture in the team equally, and preserves them as they are, while learning from the cultures and adjusting the leadership style to agree with cultural preferences. Depending on the team this might mean one style for the whole team, or multiple different leadership styles inside the team. In some cases, with more cultural distance inside the team, every cultural group could be considered separately. It is usually easier for the leader to adapt to multiple separate cultural groups inside a team rather than for all team members to adapt to every culture within the team. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 119.)

Polycentric leadership requires lots of expertise and knowledge about multicultural teams. The leader should also be competent with the cultures involved in the team. Mäkilouko describes cultural polycentrism as the last phase on the learning path of a multicultural leader, and it is preceded by ethnocentrism and cultural synergism. A competent polycentric leader understands other cultures involved in the team, and how cultures affect team structures, preferences for power, communication, decision-making, and autonomy for example. He maintains good relationships and understands that culture can be learned only through individuals of said culture. In good cultural polycentric leadership, the leader trusts the team with the required level of autonomy to build further rapport. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 119-120.)

Leaders with a cultural polycentric style tend to be confident about their knowledge of other cultures. However, in multicultural project environments, experience and expertise do not always correlate. Factors that are preventing learning in multicultural environments are the style of ethnocentrism as a choice, or simply the lack of learning opportunities. Multi-cultural knowledge is hard to pass on from one leader to another. Often multicultural knowledge is not logically justified or teachable. The actions made just feel right for the situation, through cultural values, beliefs, and the cognitive process the leader has adopted. However, greater cultural differences require more conscious actions from the leader. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 121.)

2.5. Communication Practices

Communication can be defined as the transmission of information from one person to another person or a group of individuals. Part of the communication process is to attain the required information, interpret it, and ensure that all relevant parties will receive the required information. Communication is not only required from the project manager. All team members need to contribute by sharing infor-

mation and knowledge to succeed in the project task completion. In project management, the communication capability of the project manager is the biggest factor for succeeding in the project execution. Communication is the tool that binds the iron triangle of project management: cost, scope, and time. (Zulch 2014.)

Hierarchies greatly affect communication practices. Within a traditional organizational hierarchy, four directions of communication have been identified. Downward communication happens when higher-ups deliver a message to the project worker level. Downward communication is often used for keeping subordinates up to date on policies, goals, and strategies. Upwards communication takes place when a message is being delivered to a higher level about what is happening on lower levels. Lateral communication takes place when people on the same level are coordinating the work. Diagonal communication happens between people on different levels in the hierarchy, and it is used for sharing information, assistance, or coordination. In addition to these internal communication directions, also external communication has a significant role in project execution. External communication takes place between people who are not working on the project and the project team. One example of external communication is the project manager's status reporting for external stakeholders. (Zulch 2014.)

2.5.1. Communication Practices in Multicultural Projects

Communication is often overlooked but it is a significant factor in project success. In a 2009 study, cross-cultural communication was detected as one of the core pillars that enabled highly functional cross-cultural teams among other factors such as leadership style and team selection. The usage of language and the body varies greatly between countries and national cultures. Language is a tool for delivering a message, but it also carries weaknesses and strengths varying between different cultures. Everyone processes received information through their own ideas and world views. The information is passed through a cultural filter when it

reaches its recipient. French people tend to speak in a fast-phased way while cleverly using their language, aiming to corner their opponent verbally in the heat of an argument. English people use their language cleverly and carefully but rather rely on downplaying and being undemonstrative against their opponent's arguments. A common trait in the communication of Scandinavians is that they have usually thought of the matter and its pros and cons, and they often have formed their opinion beforehand. Scandinavians are democratic in their communication, having generally only a little personal agenda involved. The Finnish are often friendlier in their communication style, and their language is generally livelier than Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian. The fact that the speaker's cultural background affects greatly the language and communication style used can lead to misunderstanding of both expression and intent. (Ochieng & Price 2009; Lewis 2006, 63-64; Koriakina 2020.)

The meaning of communication in project management is to acquire or send information, provide instructions, or team building. The success of communication often depends on the communicators speaking, writing, listening, and reasoning capability. Back in 1948 American scientist, Harold Lasswell identified five components that make up the communication process: communicator, recipient, message, channel, and effect. In intercultural communication, the communicator and recipient represent different cultures messaging with a certain agenda. Cultural symbols also affect both verbal and non-verbal communication through which people act daily in their lives. (Zulch 2014; Koriakina 2020.)

Cultural communication has seven performance variables that affect communication effectiveness within a cross-cultural team. These variables are establishing clear lines of responsibility, cultural empathy, establishing team effectiveness, implementing value management techniques, establishing trust, implementing honesty, and encouraging respect for others. Out of these variables, different national

cultures tend to emphasize some over others. Commonly most valued performance variables were establishing clear goals, team effectiveness, implementing trust, and encouraging respect. Besides these variables, common language as a vehicle of communication is crucial. Project managers in a cross-cultural project should be cross-culturally competent enough to understand and communicate team goals, roles, and norms to everyone on their team. (Ochieng & Price 2009.)

The message is transmitted in a specific language, which carries always traces of cultures, traditions, and assumptions. Language also affects its carrier as a tool of thinking, and it is carried through messages. Yet, expertise in a language does not guarantee a complete understanding of a message. The channel is mostly determined by the technology provided for us. The development of the modern Web, or Web 2.0, turned static information websites of the 90s into platforms of back-and-forth communication between users and content creators. Users themselves are the content creators on Web 2.0, and communication is no longer tied to a certain place or time. A vast amount of information available on the Web makes it possible to study foreign cultures in advance before the interaction. The rise of communication technologies has not diminished the need for cultural understanding. It is an illusion that technology would bring us all into a digital village where our cultural differences would cease to exist. Technology has significantly increased the amount of information available, but it has not affected our limited ability to absorb information. We still interpret messages through our built-in filters formed by our cultural backgrounds. (Koriakina 2020; Hofstede et al. 2010, 391-392.)

Intercultural interaction can have four different outcomes: genocide, assimilation, segregation, and integration. What precedes intercultural interaction is intercultural communication, and that determines the balance of power between the communicators. Since every communicative act is another step toward one of the four outcomes of intercultural interaction, a culture that is most qualitative with

most communication channels has an advantage in sharing its values and has the best chance to attain more people. The ground for cultural integration is constructive communication, and the division of media space only leads to cultural segregation. In the integration of two cultures the cultures cannot unite in the same society, and this assumes compatibility between the cultures. (Koriakina 2020.)

2.5.2. Integration Into a New Cultural Environment

Exposure to a new culture is always a shock for foreigners. While one can learn symbols and rituals - such as communication patterns - of a new culture, it is unlikely that one can fully grasp their underlying value. In a sense, a visitor to a new culture reverts to a child trying to learn the simplest things about the surrounding culture. This often causes a feeling of distress, helplessness, and even hostility toward the new culture. Foreigners residing within a new culture often report shifts between different phases about how they feel towards the new culture, as described in Figure 2. The first phase is euphoria, which is the honeymoon of meeting a new culture. This is the excitement of traveling and seeing new countries. This is followed by culture shock when real life settles in, and the foreigner starts to grasp the differences in cultures. After the culture shock foreigners often report a phase of acculturation, where foreigner slowly starts to function in a new environment according to newly learned rituals. Foreigner accumulates self-confidence and starts to integrate into this new culture. The final phase is the stable state. Depending on multiple factors such as the attitude of the foreigner and the treatment he or she receives affect the outcome in this final phase. The attitude towards the new culture in a stable state can remain negative, it can be seen as good as the old cultural environment, or it can be viewed even as better than the old situation. In this final case, we can safely say that the foreigner has “gone native” in this new cultural environment. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 384-385.)

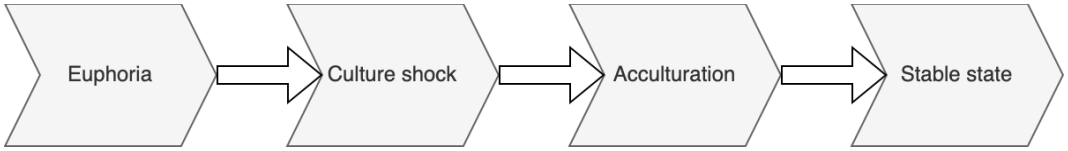

Figure 2. Acculturation curve according to Hofstede.

2.6. Summary of the Literature Review

Two individual models for analyzing national cultures were studied: Hofstede's six-dimensional model of the characteristics of national cultures and Lewis's model of cultural behavior. In addition to models analyzing national cultures, Mäkilouko's work on multicultural leadership styles was assessed and applied when developing best practices for managing Finnish-Vietnamese multicultural teams. Various articles about multicultural communication were used to better understand the process of communication and how it is affected by our national culture.

2.6.1. Comparison of the Characteristics of Cultures

Geert Hofstede with his team has built a comprehensive archive of data about differences in national cultures in six dimensions identified in his studies at IBM. These dimensions are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Hofstede's data for comparing characteristics of national cultures was fetched for Finland and Vietnam and was visualized in the bar chart of Figure 3. (Hofstede Insights.)

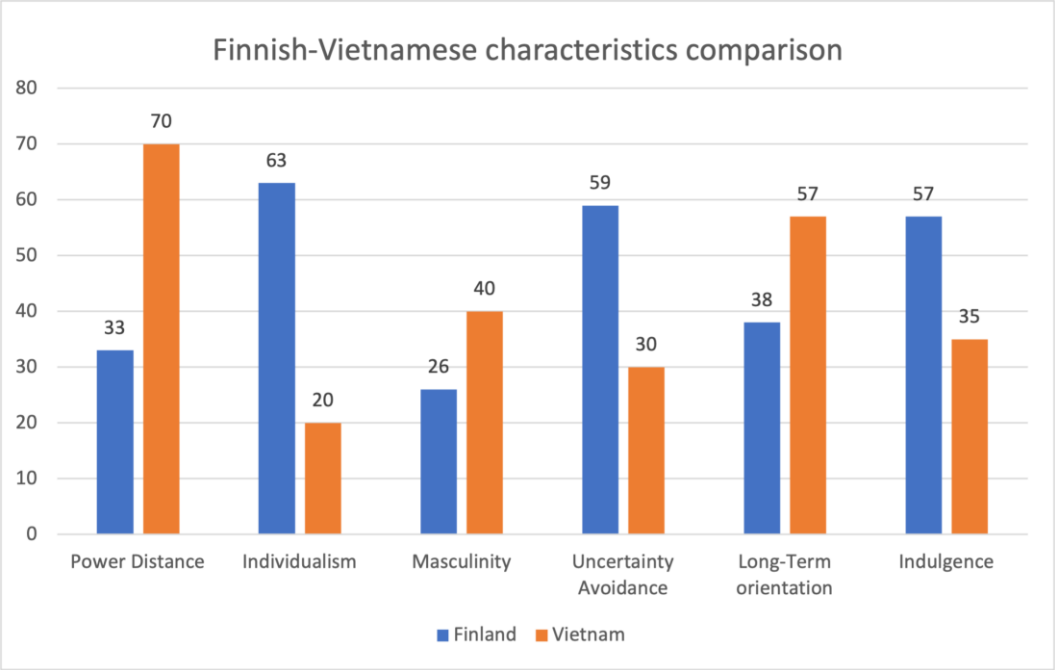

Figure 3. Comparison of Finnish and Vietnamese national cultures using Hofstede's dimensions.

Vietnam has a significantly higher power distance compared to Finland. In Scandinavia, equality is a traditional value, and it is a common thought that all individuals in society should have equal rights. Skill, wealth, and power are not seen as one set of attributes that should always go together. Factors identified to contribute to a low power distance are all met in Finland: little old agriculture, a high level of modern technology, an urban way of living, social mobility, a good educational system, and a large middle class. Vietnam scores 112% higher in power distance compared to Finland, marking a significant difference.

According to Hofstede's research, the biggest difference between Finnish and Vietnamese national cultures is individualism. Finland is a highly individualistic country where families are often small and consist of parents and their children. People are not generally expected to look after their aging relatives, and children are independent of their parents earlier than in low individualistic countries. Hofstede detected that in countries with high individualism scores the important work goal

items are generally different from countries with low individualism. In highly individualistic countries important work goal items are for example to work in a position that leaves time for personal interests, freedom to implement the work in a personal way, and to have tasks challenging enough to feel accomplishment. In low individualism countries, the important work goal items are having training opportunities, good working conditions, and utilizing personal skills in daily tasks. Finland scores 63 on the individualism index compared to a score of 20 in Vietnam, ranking Finland 215% higher.

The masculinity versus femininity score is relatively low in both cultures, but Vietnamese culture still scores 50% higher in the index. In cultures with higher masculinity scores, the gender roles are more traditional with men respecting more work goal items such as high earnings, recognition, advancing in their career, and having enough challenge in the work while generally, women are more interested in having good relationships at work, working with cooperative people, living in a family-friendly location, and securing their work position.

The uncertainty avoidance index differs also greatly between Finnish and Vietnamese cultures. Finland has a 100% greater uncertainty avoidance index, which translates to higher general anxiety toward unfamiliar or new situations. This affects the communication patterns of the culture too. In cultures with lower levels of the uncertainty avoidance index, the dialogue is more restricted, and emotions are not supposed to be shown, while with higher levels on the index, the dialogue is more expressive. In Finland, the uncertainty avoidance index is still only medium level; for example, emotional expression in communication is not usual.

Like other Scandinavian and Germanic countries, Finland has a mid-level long-term orientation with a score of 38. While many East Asian countries rank extremely high in terms of long-term orientation, Vietnam scores 57, placing it in the higher mid-section of the scale. A lower LTO score indicates that values in society encour-

age spending, quick results from work, and thinking in shorter timespans in business. Even though Vietnamese culture scores 50% higher in respect of LTO compared to Finland, neither of the countries represents the extreme ends of the scale.

The indulgence versus restraint index signals how much society values leisure time over strictly working, with a lower score signaling towards restricted attitude towards pleasures and free time. Neither of the countries represents the extreme ends of the scale, but Finland scores over 62% higher with a score of 57 compared to Vietnam with a score of 35. This shows that leisure time, work-life balance, and spending agree with a more positive attitude in Finland, while attitudes in Vietnam are more toward hard work, and free time is not considered important. This could introduce conflicts worth pointing out in Finnish-Vietnamese teams, for example when prioritizing family time over project schedules. In Table 8 the greatest cultural differences in the Finnish-Vietnamese context according to Hofstede have been listed.

Table 8. Significant differences between Finnish and Vietnamese cultures according to Hofstede's theory.

Finnish culture	**Vietnamese culture**
People are respected for their skills and traits, not just for their position	Individuals in higher positions are considered often better in every way
Highly individualistic. Dependency on a certain group is not seen as optimal	Highly collectivistic. Strong family ties and loyalty toward your social group
More equal gender roles. Less difference in a career versus family choices between genders	Slightly more traditional gender roles. Men generally look for more career

	opportunities while women are family oriented
More anxious in general	Less anxious
Livelier and more emotional communication style	More restricted and less emotional in communication manners
Aims for faster results	Thinks and acts in a more long-term manner
More accepting of spending	Values thrift
More accepting towards leisure and personal free time	More work-oriented attitude
Values good work-life balance	Values opportunities to learn new skills

2.6.2. Comparison of Cultural Behavior

To compare the differences in cultural behavior between Finnish and Vietnamese cultures Richard D. Lewis's theory presented in his work "When cultures collide" was used. Lewis's theory is based on three dimensions or groups of cultural behavior with every national culture posing various amounts of each dimension. Groups presented by Lewis are linear-active, multi-active, and reactive.

Lewis describes Finns as feet-on-the-ground type people who often have an inferiority complex over their knowledge, ability to speak foreign languages, and manners. Finland is a strongly reactive national culture, only behind some Asian countries such as Japan and China. Finns are warm-hearted and solitude-seeking but still willing to communicate. Finnish values are democracy, tolerance, and the idea

of equality. Like in many Asian cultures, Finns are afraid to “lose their face”. The national self-consciousness in Finland is high, like in Japan and France. In business life, Finns often keep a low profile which might be cumbersome to see through for foreign leaders. Finnish leaders are often described as people leaders who like to lead by showing an example. Finns like to work efficiently, starting and finishing their days early. Personal space and schedules are highly respected in Finland. The Finns have some obvious disadvantages in their communication patterns: their shyness and need to avoid conflicts often put them in a bad position in international communication situations. Finns appreciate it when one shares their plans and ideas with them early on. Finns appreciate a low-key approach and can be motivated by being open and straight to the point in communication. Finns do not like formalities or loose-ended and unfinished tasks. (Lewis 2006, 330-337.)

According to Lewis, Vietnamese cultural traits are their respect for education, resistance to foreigners, their tenaciousness and strength of will, nationalism, society over the individual -thinking, and pro-western. French influences and long contact with Americans have left their mark on Vietnamese national culture. Even though Vietnamese culture is reactive, they are dialogue-oriented and pose emotive behavior such as the use of body language and facial expression in communication. Even so, they are cautious to not give away too much in negotiation situations. Vietnamese are good listeners, and they expect clarity from the speaker. To gain their respect one must appear just in their eyes. Vietnamese have high self-respect and are very conscious about losing their face. Their sense of time is less relaxed compared to many neighboring countries. Vietnamese do not have immediate trust towards Westerners, Japanese, and especially not towards Chinese. The resistance to China is a central theme in Vietnamese society. The idea of equality is absent in Vietnamese culture, and bureaucracy is corrupt by Western standards. Key behavioral traits of both cultures have been listed in Table 9 pointing out the differences and similarities between the two cultures. (Lewis 2014.)

Table 9. Behavioral traits of Finnish and Vietnamese cultures.

Finnish culture	**Vietnamese culture**
Reactive culture	Reactive culture
Afraid to lose face	Afraid to lose face
High nationalistic thinking	High nationalistic thinking
Schedules are highly respected	More respect towards schedules compared to many other Asian counties
Good listeners, but avoids conflicts in communication	Good listeners, but give away little in negotiations
Idea of equality	Equality is not an important value
Highly individualistic society	Highly collectivistic society

2.6.3. Analysis of Leadership Styles in Multicultural Teams

In addition to cultural behavior and characteristics, various leadership strategies for multicultural teams were analyzed. In his 2003 work, "Multicultural Leadership" Marko Mäkilouko described three leadership styles encountered in multicultural settings. Mäkilouko detected the benefits of using different styles over others and suggested a moving pattern between the styles as seen in Figure 4.

Cultural ethnocentrism is an effective leadership style for complex projects, tight schedules, and diverse project teams. Since it is easy to implement, it suits as a starting point for multicultural projects. Ethnocentrism is a strictly factual leadership style, relying on thorough work breakdowns, descriptive issues, and written project communication. Written communication diminishes the negative effects

of different cultures but is not able to eliminate them. Mäkilouko suggests cultural ethnocentrism as a good starting point to get quickly moving with a multicultural project. However, ethnocentrism as a choice should be avoided in the long run since it prevents learning. Behind every task, problem, and plan there is always an individual with a cultural background. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 99-108.)

In the cultural synergy leadership style, the leader considers every culture within the team. It is important to agree on the expectations, communication patterns, and decision processes used within the team. For multicultural teams, it usually takes longer to develop their communication practices and rules for the team to properly form. During the team formation process, it is important to include cultural agreements, and for team members to be open when discussing the effects of their own culture. Leaders should embrace also cultural similarities found within the team. Leaders should focus on building trust quickly within the team by placing their trust in every team member equally regardless of their background or experience. To manage a multicultural team using cultural synergy, the leader should use an active leadership style and build a personal relationship with team members. This reduces the risk of falling back to cultural ethnocentrism. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 89-96.)

Mäkilouko describes cultural polycentrism as the ideal but still achievable leadership style for multicultural teams. With cultural polycentrism, the leader persists in the various cultures of the team, learns from them, and adjusts the leadership style according to the culture at hand. With teams where the cultural differences are great, leaders could even consider every culture separately within the team. Cultural polycentrism is challenging for the leader and asks for expertise from cross-cultural management, especially from the cultures at hand. Multicultural expertise is hard to teach or pass on, which slows down the adaptation period within the organization. Other factors slowing down or even preventing the adaptation

of cultural synergy are the lack of learning opportunities for leaders and ethnocentrism as a choice. Different cultures can be studied, but they can be properly learned only from individuals of said culture. (Mäkilouko 2003b, 119-133.)

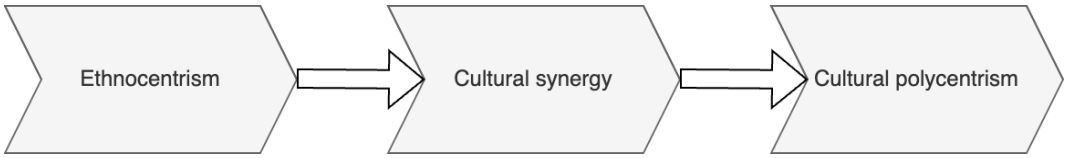

Figure 4. Progression between leadership styles in multicultural projects.

2.6.4. Summary of Communication Practices in Multicultural Teams

Communication is a critical component of project management, which ties other aspects of the iron triangle: cost, scope, and time. It is often overlooked, especially in multicultural projects where team building should be emphasized. Hierarchies affect communication in projects, and different cultures may have different attitudes towards hierarchies and power distances. This should be taken into consideration when the project manager leads the team through the team-building period. A project manager's competence in cross-cultural environments is crucial when establishing clear goals, building team effectiveness, implementing trust, and encouraging team members to show respect. These attributes in addition to language have been identified as most critical for cross-cultural communication.

Communication patterns and practices differ greatly between different cultures. Everyone processes the received communication through their filter which is formed by exposure to their own home culture. What is considered normal and neutral by someone can be interpreted as hostile or aggressive by another. The display of feelings can be seen as normal, honest, or completely unnecessary, depending on the individual's cultural background.

Cultural differences affect all five components that form communication: communicator, recipient, message, channel, and effect. However, the effect of cultural

differences does not limit just to verbal communication. Cultural symbols, rituals, and heroes affect also our daily non-verbal communication patterns.

A skilled project manager should also pay attention to how well-adapted the foreigner is to the dominant culture of the team. The acculturation curve goes through four phases over time when a foreigner exposes to a new social culture. After the initial honeymoon period of euphoria, culture shock usually occurs. This may affect the project management practices and communication since this phase is often associated with negativity towards the new culture. What follows the culture shock is the acculturation phase and the stable state, which may have even extremely positive outcomes.

The explosion of communication technology available to us may seem like it has diminished the need for cultural understanding, but that is an illusion. Technology has greatly increased the amount of information we have access to, but all the communication we receive we still interpret through our filters and understanding of the surrounding world. Communication technologies have increased our understanding of differences between various cultures and countries in general. These technologies can also be among the tools for intercultural learning, and they have enabled social interactions that would have never been possible without them.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1. Qualitative Research

Academic research methods are often divided into qualitative and quantitative research. The more traditional scientific approach of quantitative research is often used for hypothesis testing, generalization, to identify patterns, and it is especially used when using numerical data for the research. Even though used earlier in addition to quantitative research methods, qualitative research became popular as a term and has been seen as a valid option since the 1960s. Hammersley (2013) defined qualitative research as "a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis". Traditional traits of qualitative research are its flexibility, data-driven approach, descriptiveness, use of unstructured data, subjectivity, study occurring in the natural setting of the subject, a small number of studied cases, and it being verbal rather than statistical. (Hammersley 2013, 10-14.)

Opposite to quantitative research where a relatively narrow research question remains fixed throughout the study, qualitative research often begins by setting the research question, which can be revised and narrowed down later as the research progresses. Qualitative research contains three main methods for providing the research: interviews, focus groups, and observations. Interviews can have a different style to them, for example, they can be strictly organized, or they can provide freedom for open-ended discussion. Focus groups are discussions where the researcher acts as a facilitator, bringing the target group together usually to clarify data collected elsewhere. Observations are a data collection method where the researcher studies a phenomenon in its natural setting. The observer can be a participant observer, or the researcher can stand outside of it and be a non-participant. With qualitative research data is collected until the saturation point is

reached, and emerging concepts have been explored. With qualitative research, the sample size is usually smaller than with quantitative research. Usually, interviews and focus group discussions are audio recorded with the permission of participants and later transliterated. With observations, broad field notes are recorded at the time of the event and after it. (Denny & Weckesser 2022.)

For this thesis, the qualitative research method was chosen because it best suits the purpose of the thesis: to see if we can find objects that especially stand out when comparing communication practices in software development between Finnish and Vietnamese professionals. We want to get as deep into the subject with our cases as possible through extensive interviews, and then we validate our findings by comparing them to the existing theories covered in the literature review. We see if we can then conclude to create a management framework to diminish the negative aspects of cultural differences in communication while enhancing positive aspects. Also, such specifically defined cases could be hard to obtain on a scale that would suffice for the data requirements of quantitative research.

3.2. Research Logic

In this study, we started with the literature review to cover the topic of our first research question: what is the effect of culture on communication practices on software projects in the Finnish-Vietnamese context? We found multiple theories that classify, compare, and analyze national cultures from different perspectives, including communication. Using these theories and the researcher's own experience we can form the questions for the interviews to see if our selected study cases have theory-supporting experiences from their career in the software industry. We aim to analyze if the theories apply to our cases too if we can add some important findings that our found theories did not cover, and finally see if we can develop a management tool when working in the Finnish-Vietnamese software

project context. The research logic of this study is deductive by its nature. Deductive research logic starts from existing theory and aims to verify or disprove the associated theory. The result of deductive research is to provide universal generalization. The theory will be used as the basis of the research, also guiding our case study interviews, and allowing us to perform further research on the subject. From these findings, we can draw conclusions and further claims as we reflect our findings to the original theory. (Rashid, Y., Rashid, A., Warraich, M. A., Sabir, S. S., Waseem, A. 2019.)

3.3. Data Collection Method, Analysis, and Evaluation

This research is a case study. In a case study, the research aims to explore a certain phenomenon in depth using well-specified selected cases, such as individuals or a specific group. A qualitative case study enables the study of a phenomenon within a certain context using different data sources. In this research methodology, the researcher observes a phenomenon in its natural setting. A case study is one of the most famous methods in qualitative research, and it consists of an elaborate investigation of a well-defined subject. The use of a case study for this research is justified since a case study is the preferred practice when the researcher has little control over the studied subject, and when the study focuses on modern phenomena within a real-world context. (Rashid et al. 2019.)

For this research, six cases were selected. Half of the interviewed individuals are Vietnamese software professionals living and working in Finland, with experience from working in Finnish-Vietnamese cross-cultural project teams. The other half are Finnish software professionals with various project experience. By selecting both Finnish and Vietnamese professionals for our interviews we can better detect if some aspects of project communication are specific to a certain natural culture. There are no known major relations between interviewees, and they represent multiple software companies.

Before the researcher collects the material, it is useful if the researcher knows the studied cases well beforehand. This builds trust between the researcher and the participants and eases the data collection process. Before proceeding to interviews, the researcher should be well prepared to collect and record the material. In this thesis, semi-structured interviews were used as the framework of the interviews. With semi-structured interviews, the questions are selected before the interviews, but they are open-ended and supposed to provide only initial answers. In addition to questions prepared in advance, the researcher also asks follow-up questions based on the provided initial answers. This enables interviewees to freely describe the studied phenomenon from their perspective. The interview questions were derived from the researched theory and labeled to match various themes of the theory as described in Figure 5. The interviews of this research were performed using online meetings that were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Interviews were later transcribed from these recordings for analysis. The language used for the interviews was English with Vietnamese software professionals and Finnish with Finnish professionals. Finnish transcribed interviews were then translated into English for analysis purposes. (Rashid et al. 2019; Hancock & Algozzine 2006, 40.)

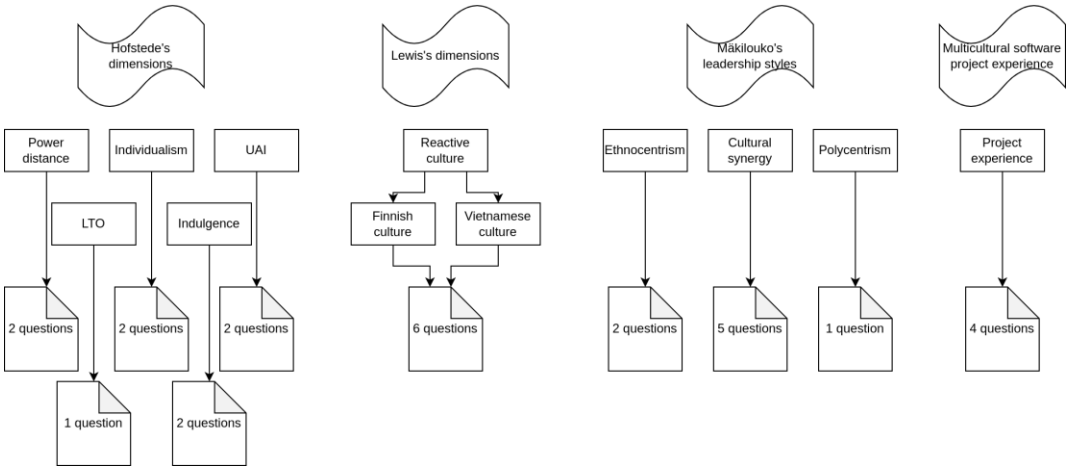

Figure 5. Relation between the interview questions and researched theory.

After the interviews, the recordings were used to transcribe the data into written format. The questions and the collected material were carefully analyzed and labeled for occurring themes and concepts corresponding to the topics detected in the literature review. Analysis was also performed along the way after each interview. Experience from interviews was used to fine-tune the questions to obtain deeper information.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1. Data Collection and Sampling

As described in the previous chapter, the interviews for this case study research were semi-structured by their nature. The initial questions were designed and labeled by a theme to cover the research theory. Discussion during the interviews was encouraged, and the aim was to get as deep into the subject with the interviewee as possible. The interviews were held both as online meetings and in meeting rooms, depending on the location of the interviewee. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewee, transcribed, and in the case of Finnish project managers finally translated into English. Interviews spanned from 40 to 60 minutes in length and ultimately covered 60 pages of transcribed, translated, and proofread material. Each question was labeled with a theme corresponding to the covered literature to make the analysis and the comparison of the interview answers to the theory easier.

The selected interviewed cases are software professionals with work experience from Finland and Finnish-Vietnamese teams. They represent multiple different software companies, and they have experience working in different cities in Finland. However, a group of six software professionals is still a relatively small sample from the software industry in Finland. All interviewed cases are relatively the same age between 25 to 32 years, and most of them are men. However, performing interviews as online meetings is not ideal, although the only possible solution when interviewing individuals with dispersed locations. Interviewing using one's native language would be ideal, but in this case, half of the interviews were performed in English due to the researcher's incapability of speaking the Vietnamese language.

In Chapter 4.2 the interview findings are introduced case by case, and Chapter 4.3 provides a summary and a comparison with the theory. Interviews were conducted in February 2023, and because of the partly sensitive topics covered in the interviews, interviewee names and companies have been left out. The profiles of the interviewees as well as their case names have been compiled in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Summary of the interviewed cases.

Name	**Software work experience (<2, 2-5, 5> years)**	**Nationality**	**Date of interview**
A	<2	Finnish	16.2.2023
B	2-5	Vietnamese	19.2.2023
C	5>	Finnish	21.2.2023
D	2-5	Vietnamese	21.2.2023
E	5>	Vietnamese	28.2.2023
F	2-5	Finnish	2.3.2023

4.2. Interview Findings

In this chapter, the interview findings will be introduced one by one, in the order of the interview date. The interview questions were arranged to first cover the six dimensions of Hofstede's theory on cultural characteristics, then Lewis' theory on cultural behavior, and finally the three leadership styles described by Mäkilouko.

A couple of extra questions related to culture, teamwork, and project management were asked at the end of the interviews to spark additional discussion on the topic.

4.2.1. Interview A

Software developer A is a developer with a Finnish cultural background. Out of all interviewed cases, he has the least experience in the software industry. Developer A does not agree that years in the industry should provide someone automatically with authority in a project when asked if the most senior person automatically has a bigger say in the project's technical questions. However, he agrees that experience should provide someone with more decision-making power:

"This should not be a built-in feature. But a more experienced guy should have more decision-making power in these matters, that is right. "

When asked if he thinks software project managers should have a technical background before pivoting to project management:

"Not necessarily. The project manager must understand the context, but it does not have to be very technical. You must have some kind of knowledge, but it does not have to be knowledgeable of, for example, any specific technology."

Developer A does not think that the project's success can be counted on developers working overtime whenever needed. Rather, he sees a situation like this as a warning sign of potential problems with the project.

"If flexibility is needed, something unexpected has happened, or the project has been resourced incorrectly. It does not hurt if they are flexible, but it should not be necessary for the success of the project. But on the other hand, if everyone else is ready for it, it (refusing to work overtime) would be a bit difficult."

Flexibility from the employer in terms of freedom to choose a working location and working time is considered a key motivator by Developer A. Working equipment on the other hand does not play a key role.

“It (the possibility to choose between the office and remote work) is important. Working time is important to me, while in terms of the hardware, it is pretty much the same with whatever laptop I work on.”

When asked about other key motivators in a job, he adds:

“That the project is interesting. That it is not too repetitive, but it is not too heavy either. In addition, the team around you is also an important part of the whole.”

When asked about project uncertainties, Developer A sees these uncertainties as a manageable burden that one can even gamble with if there is a chance of achieving benefits for the project.

“You cannot completely get rid of them at any point, and you just must live with them. If something can be achieved with those uncertainties, then it is worth considering them. You can play with small stakes.”

Developer A thinks that little humor in internal meetings benefits the project, but communication with the customer should usually be kept professional:

“Communication with the customer must be quite professional. More relaxed communication with the customer is possible if the relationship is more relaxed.”

However, he promptly dismisses the idea of personal matters and emotional conversations in project work: “Not part of the work environment.”

In software development, technical debt is a term describing decisions preferring fast results over best practices and sustainable decisions. When asked whether increasing the technical debt is sometimes justified:

“It is possible to prioritize time resources and add technical debt. But then again, if something new is being built that will be in use for a longer period, then it does not make sense. But basically, it is not worth making bad quality if you can make it durable and high-quality from the start. It (taking technical debt) should be an informed risk, and you should be ready to fix it later. It is the project manager's decision. The project manager must use his judgment.”

Team-building activities are seen as a positive thing, but Developer A would be careful to include team-building activities in the project budget. Developer A summarises ideal team-building activity as anything that gets the team excited and participating.

“That is (spending money on team building) not a bad thing at all. I was just wondering how the matter should be communicated to the customer. From the point of view of the project, this is a good thing, and it makes the work more efficient.”

Software Developer A does not see sticking to precise working hours, or the prioritization of personal life as unprofessional, if the person is available at the agreed time: “It is his way of prioritizing his time. There is nothing unprofessional about that. Of course, there must be a certain window of time when someone is available.”

When asked about the importance of communication skills, Developer A states that good speaking skills are important to a certain degree. He also thinks that the importance of listening skills culminates in project managers.

“There is no harm in that, and it is a good feature. Of course, he does not have to be a public agitator of the people. The project manager may emphasize the skill of listening. That you can internalize the messages from the customer and the team.”

Continuing the topic, Developer A sees also other traits that are important specifically to project managers:

“That he is fair and justified. Interpersonal skills. Being able to sense what the team's and customer's current state of mind is. The project manager must be able to build trust in that project for the team.”

However, he does not think that the project manager should have an ultimate vision of the project outcome from day one.

“Not necessarily. That vision is built during the first weeks when the work starts. There must be an overall picture of what will be done. The project manager must have a bit more insight than the developers.”

Developer A believes in openness when it comes to sharing plans for the team early on. He sees the negative side in postponing the sharing of information from the team, even if the feedback would not lead to any changes.

“Yes, there are some problems with that. You must present such things and ask for comments on them. You do not have to react to all comments, but that they are listened to.”

When asked about different communication practices, Developer A thinks that a straight-to-the-point style works, even if it is boring: “There is nothing wrong with that, but it is a bit boring.” He adds that the team should let the inexperienced members have decision-making experiences: “An open discussion culture is good. And an open discussion culture includes the fact that everyone gets to say their point of view on the matter if they want. However, you also must let inexperienced people make decisions, even if they might seem a little bad.”

Software Developer A thinks that utilizing written documentation has clear benefits to it, but he still sees a role for verbal discussions as well.

“The good thing about written documentation is that it decreases misunderstandings. But it is not as easy to converse with the written text. Written communication

is often clearer and more definitive, but oral communication is more creative and open. These should be combined, and written communication can be used, for example, as a final expression of will."

He thinks that the own language and terms teams eventually tend to form is generally a positive thing, even though there is a risk of making onboarding of new members harder.

"It creates a sense of togetherness, which is a good thing. However, this may make it difficult for new team members to join. Own terminology may bring with it the risk of misunderstanding, but they can make communication more efficient."

According to Developer A, the discussion about cultural differences in a team is a topic that should be approached carefully to avoid bad feelings:

"You should be aware of these things (the cultural differences), but I would not necessarily hold a meeting where the team members' cultural differences are listed. I do not see this kind of discussion as terribly good, comparing how you are different from us. Even more so, those cultural differences should be acknowledged, especially by the project manager. For example, what kind of communication and messaging does the other person expect? But there is no need to make a big deal out of it. There is always a risk, but I could see that as long as the conversation remains good-natured, it is safe. Let's let everyone talk about their own culture and, if necessary, make jokes about their own culture only. This way, each party can bring out the things from their own culture that they want. This way the conversation can be conducted in a good spirit."

Developer A thinks that trust should exist in the team by default, and it is not something that should be specifically earned:

“Basically, there has to be trust right from the start. If there are trust problems within the team, then we are already in a crisis internally. Trust should not be earned; it should be there when you join the team.”

4.2.2. Analysis of Interview A

Developer A showed only little signs of power distance thinking when asked about who should have the biggest say in the project. Developer A thinks that the years of experience should not be the measurement for having a bigger say in technical decisions, but rather the actual cumulated experience. He also thinks that it is possible to lead a project without a long career and technical background, as long as one has an understanding of the key software development processes.

When asked about how much emphasis willingness to work overtime should have on project success, Developer A stated clearly that requirement to work overtime is a sign of project problems, such as work amount estimation problems. Also, Developer A displayed a great appreciation towards employers’ flexibility in agreeing on workplace and time freely. This is a sign of appreciation toward individualistic thinking. However, he notes that it could be challenging to refuse a request to work overtime in case everyone else in the team agrees to the request and that the working equipment is not such an important factor for him. These aspects show a great deal of practicality in addition to simply individualistic thinking.

When asked questions showing Developer A’s attitudes towards uncertainty avoidance, he described that at times of uncertainty, he tends to “retreat into a space of familiarity and safety”, where he can safely continue doing what he was doing. He mentions resistance to change, even though he sees himself as being able to position himself out of the responsible role in case of uncertainties. This answer shows some uncertainty avoidance tendencies, however, he continues that he can accept a gamble on uncertain aspects of the project if there is a risk of achieving benefits for the project. Developer A sees humor as an important aspect

of internal project communication but sees that customer communication should usually be more professional. This is in line with the higher-than-average uncertainty avoidance index. When it comes to uncertainty avoidance, Developer A shows an interesting mix of uncertainty avoidance tendencies and risk-taking abilities.

Software Developer A sees technical debt as a viable option, as long as everyone in the project understands and accepts the risk. He remains practical, stating that if the project goal is to build a sustainable long-term solution, then accumulating technical debt simply makes no sense in the long run. The answer is neutral towards technical debt, signaling mid-level long-term orientation when it comes to technical debt in software projects.

Unofficial team-building activities he sees as a positive thing if the question about the budget and sponsor has been settled. Even though completely unrelated to the project work, Developer A sees a relaxed team-building event as a nice way to build team spirit but adds that he does not consider them mandatory. He also adds that a few years ago, before pivoting to the software industry he would have had a different and less positive perspective toward team-building. When asked about his opinion on team members prioritizing family time and hobbies overworking, he sees no problems at all. Once again, he rationalizes with a practical point of view: it is completely fine as long as the team member is available at agreed times. These answers show a relatively relaxed attitude towards working, while remaining conscientious towards the project work, displaying an above-medium level indulgence.

Finnish culture is a strongly reactive one according to Lewis, and many assumptions related to a reactive culture apply to Developer A's answers. He believes that a project manager should be a clear speaker, and strongly emphasizes managers listening, and interpersonal skills. He sums these skills up as an ability to read team

members' and customers' states of mind. Finnish value of equality shows in Developer A's answers, as he promptly states that the project manager should be fair and justified, and he thinks that openness is a key attribute in successful project communication. All Software Developer A's answers to questions labeled with reactive culture theme signal typical reactive thinking.

When asked about his attitude towards written project communication and documentation, Developer A summarizes perfectly Mäkilouko's point on ethnocentric leadership: "The good thing about written documentation is that it decreases misunderstandings. But it is not as easy to converse with the written text." Developer A sees no problem in written documentation and communication but would not rely solely on it to leave room for creative brainstorming.

He sees the team's communication practices developed in the cultural synergy phase as a positive thing if the team is mindful of the challenges new team members are facing when trying to onboard existing projects. However cultural differences are a topic he would avoid openly discussing. He thinks that one should be aware of such differences, but to avoid pinpointing these differences openly since there is a great risk of offending someone. Mäkilouko has a different approach to cultural differences when applying the leadership style of cultural synergy. In the ideal level of multicultural leadership, one faces every team member as an individual and are mindful also of their cultural backgrounds. Developer A sees no problem in building personal relationships between the manager and the team member, as long as this does not lead to favoring certain individuals within the team.

Finally, Developer A thinks that generally long-running teams are beneficial, as long as there are no unnecessary tensions within the team. He has not witnessed the phenomenon of someone overlooking other individuals' technical competence because of communication issues but agrees that such a phenomenon could

occur. He adds that in such a case the root cause behind the issue would probably be a strong individual overrunning other people within the team.

4.2.3. Interview B

Software Developer B is a developer with Vietnamese cultural background. He has been working in the industry for 2-5 years. Developer B does not think that most seniors on the project should automatically have a say in the project's technical decisions, and he shared an example from a Vietnamese project. When asked if seniors should have more say in a project, he states:

"I do not think so because, in the real world, I have learned in my part-time job for the software company, so it is like a pretty big tech in Vietnam... It (team size) can go up to 15 or 20 people. Like we have few seniors. But when they like to push the project fast because it is a product company, they have to make the product quick to compete with the community. So, the seniors take a lot of responsibility, and this is a real case, when they take too much responsibility, they sometimes missed something, so they designed that database missing a few database tables". When continuing on the topic, he clarifies that main reason why he does not think seniors should have automatically say in important decisions is that their knowledge might be outdated: "They (senior developers) work in the software industry, like for five to ten years. So, I do not think all of them, but a few of them do not have the technology up to date. So (they) keep using old technologies." Instead, Developer B thinks that display of competence should be the measure for how much of decisions one can make in a project team: "Yes, so like anyone can tell some of their ideas, but they have to prove it so that it is going to work or work better or some kind of like something like that."

When asked about the ideal background of the project manager, Developer B states that he does not assume they understand everything, but they need to be knowledgeable: "The way I see it is like the project manager is a bridge between

the developer and other departments...So they need a wide knowledge, but they do not need to go too deep in the technical details."

Software developer B thinks that requirement for working overtime in a project is a sign of project problems: "I am not sure about that (requirement to work overtime) because the long hours do not mean it is going well... So, the longer hours mean that the design has some problems." Instead, he emphasized the importance of timing in the software product market and can see that overtime is required for project success: "But sometimes we had a lot of products coming, and the long hours may be required because when they come to compete with other companies. So, the timing is a very important factor." Developer B sees no problems if someone in the team refuses to work overtime but has a practical aspect to it: "I think that is up to them, as long as they work the hours of the contract. That is fine".

He admits that flexibility with work location and working times are key motivators for him. He provides insight that the working life in big Vietnamese companies can be inflexible. "Yes, I think when I chose a job, that was a really big factor. Because, the Vietnamese companies, like the big ones, have very strict working hours... I will not work for a company like that..."

Choosing the working equipment does not matter to him. He sees that developers should be fine using a broad repertory of different devices: "That is not important to me that much because we developers can do the work in any operating system or equipment".

When it comes to project uncertainties, Developer B does not stress the matter too much. If the current sprint is planned out, the work for the remaining of the project can be uncertain. Also, he does not see the uncertainties in the project's budget as relevant for the developers of the team.

“I think with any product they do have some uncertainty, but they need to clear the scope. Like they have the scope of the sprint... But they need to be clear about the first month first. But for the (next) three months, they can be uncertain after they finish the first sprint, so it does not matter that much. And the budget thing. I am not sure how it can affect me. … I will try my best with what we have.”

Developer B thinks that a factual and straight-to-the-point style in communication works the best for the project: “Yes, I think that also saves time for the other people. In some meetings, they invite a lot of people, but some people do not even know why they are there. So, go straight to the point and list out the problem and what we are going to do about it”. Also, Developer B does not see a reason for including emotional discussion in the project. When asked if the emotional discussion should be left out of the project, he says that: “I think so, but I am not sure about the emotional... Why we... What do we have (with) that emotional way? I think (if) we have the meeting we need to clear things in (that) official meeting".

However, he thinks that humor has an important role in project team communication. He mentions that he knows people who have left companies because of too strict communication: “Yeah, I think that is an important factor. I know a lot of friends who left companies because they cannot communicate... So, they said whenever they come to the company so they cannot chit-chat so they just go to their desk and do the work and it is all quite boring, and then soon they will leave the company...”

Software developer B thinks that increasing technical debt is sometimes justified because of project deadlines: “Yes, I think sometimes you need to do it because the deadline is set. So, you need to deliver on time and the technical debt (increases). So, you can buy time to later resolve that problem”. When asked whose responsibility it is to communicate this, Developer B thinks the responsibility is shared: “I think it should be like the whole project team, so the developer needs to let the team know that okay we have this problem...”.

Team building is a practice worth the investment according to Developer B. He also emphasized the stiff working life of Vietnam that makes people he knows to leave their companies: “That is a good thing to do, the team buildings. And I said, in the previous question that a lot of people just leave the company because of the workspace... So, team building is very nice.” Developer B does not think the activity needs to stay formal, as long as people enjoy themselves: “No I do not think it should be formal, because it is a place where people play together and do the chit-chat and are joking... So, it should not be formal”.

He also thinks that prioritization of personal life for example with strict working hours is not a sign of unprofessionalism: “I think that is up to them because as long as it is outside of work, that is their time. So, they had their own decision and…we should respect that”.

When asked if it is important for the project manager to be a good speaker, Developer B says: “I think so. I think you should be a good speaker...because we know that a lot of developers... they do not do that, the communicating. So, I think the project manager is a bridge between the developer and the other team. So, they need to be very clear when speaking”. He also sees those listening skills play an important role in project management: “So the project manager should listen and work together with the developers to get the final result”.

He thinks that the project manager should be righteous and have a clear vision of the project to motivate the team: “Yeah, I think so because... of the outcome of the project and the aim of the project. So that the team sees the aim of the project, then they have the motivation to work to achieve that goal.”

When asked about other key traits a good project manager poses, he mentions the ability to protect his team: “...the one important thing is so that the project manager can protect their team, because in a lot of meetings some customers they

can boss their team around, and they do not agree to listen... So, I think that the project manager should stand up and make things clear."

Software developer B does not think that it is the project manager's responsibility to monitor the status on the task level if the bigger picture is under control: "You know, I do not think that it is quite important for the project manager. I think they should keep track of the bigger thing. Of how a sprint is and that in a sprint there is a few tasks."

He thinks that it is generally a good idea for a project manager to share plans with the team early on to get feedback: "I think that they should share the idea and the plan. Because someone can contribute to that and bring benefits." Developer B believes in openness in project communication, and when asked if openness is important for him, he states: "Yeah, I think it is. We should be open and communicate things and saying, like, what is the problem and what is that what is bothering the team members".

Developer B sees the benefits of written task descriptions and project communication in general. He says that personally, it is not that important for him, but he has encountered the language barrier in a project personally before. However, he clearly says that project communication cannot rely just on written communication alone. "I think that is not quite an important factor. Then again, sure writing and speaking (are important). It does not matter that much to me. I like writing more because, you know, the language barrier sometimes... like sometimes I do not get the ideas and reading a written thing makes me understand it... I think verbal communication is still needed. As for myself I still want to do verbal communication with someone else, and not only written". He also mentions that task descriptions cannot remain just verbally agreed, as people cannot remember agreed details for too long.

He thinks that teams' language and inside jokes are a good thing, signaling openness in the project team. When asked about team building with remote members, he thinks that building the relationship and communication plays a key role: "Yeah, we need to get to know each other even if they work remotely...It would be good to build the relationship and the communication with remote workers."

Developer B has a relaxed attitude towards discussing cultural backgrounds openly in a team: "But I think it is a good idea to share something...So we have a lot of developers coming from different cultures, right? So, sharing, it is fun to know some other cultures. So, I think it would be good". When asked if he thinks it is a controversial topic to discuss: "No, I think it is just like a chit-chat, so we do not take it too seriously... You get to know the other person from different countries... It can be a risk, but I do not think that it is a big risk".

When asked if the project manager should trust everyone in the team by default, he does not agree simply because one does not know them and their way of working immediately: "I do not think so because everyone works differently. Like, two developers can spend different time working on the same task". He is also in favor of individuals in a team building more personal relationships and to know each other better.

When asked if he has witnessed any cases where someone's technical competence was overlooked because of communication problems he does not remember an exact case. However, he mentions that it is frustrating if the project budget does not allow the implementation of ideas as extensively as there is a desire.

4.2.4. Analysis of Interview B

Software developer B shows only a medium level of power distance thinking when discussing project authorities. He does not think that the most senior in the project should automatically have a bigger say in project decisions, but rather the ones who have cumulated relevant competence. He clearly states that seniors might

have outdated knowledge that is unusable for the current project. He only shows a little bit of power distance thinking when he states that the project manager should have preferred a wide experience before their project management career, but he adds that their knowledge does not have to be too deeply technical.

He agrees with Developer A that the requirement to work overtime is a sign of wider problems in the project and that the project's success should not rely on the flexibility of the team. The only proper use case for requesting flexibility from the team in terms of working times can be found in the product development world where the release date plays a significant role in his opinion.

Developer B shows interestingly individualistic thinking when asked about the importance of flexible remote working possibilities and working times. He mentions the inflexibility of big Vietnamese technology companies and states that he has zero interest in working in such a company. With his working equipment, he is mostly practical, mentioning that technical software developers should be able to work with any equipment provided.

He shows extremely low uncertainty avoidance tendencies when it comes to project uncertainties. He states that it is required to know the content of the current working sprint and that the project manager should pay attention to assigning tasks for the next month. Beyond that, he says, almost every project has uncertainties that one needs to accept. The same thinking applies to the project budget. He does not see budget uncertainties affecting his work in any way. He also thinks that a formal communication style works best for projects and that emotional discussion does not belong to project communication, even if humor plays an important role in project work. This too is a strong sign of low uncertainty avoidance.

Developer B is permissive towards taking technical debt to meet project deadlines, and in his opinion agreeing on this should be mutual consent. This shows relatively little long-term thinking.

He thinks that team-building is only a positive thing and that spending a budget on team-building is worth the investment. He mentions again the stiff working culture of Vietnam that does not leave room for relaxed communication. Also, he sees that someone prioritizing their personal life is understandable and not a sign of unprofessionalism. It could be argued that Developer B displays a relatively high amount of indulgence index and that the does not share the common Vietnamese view on working life.

Software developer B thinks that the project manager should be a good listener and speaker to represent on behalf of the developers. He also thinks that the project manager should stand up for the team, for example when a customer loudly disagrees with the team. The project manager should have a vision that he can share with the team to motivate them. He agrees that it is important to emphasize written task descriptions and project communication to reduce the language barrier, but that verbal communication is crucial and still needed and that otherwise, he does not mind too much about the format of communication. He strongly believes in openness and thinks that team's language and jokes are a sign of openness in the team.

He thinks that it is beneficial to openly discuss cultural differences in the team and that it is fun to learn about new cultures. He does not think there is a serious risk of misunderstanding since one can always clear things up and ask.

It is worth noting that he does not think that trust is something that should be equally there from day one. Developer B sees that since one cannot know others' working styles and skills yet, one should not trust them equally yet. In his opinion trust comes after one has proven themselves first by completing given tasks in time.

4.2.5. Interview C

Software developer C is a Finnish developer with the most experience out of all interviewed cases. He thinks that the most experienced person in the project should have the biggest say, and he thinks that the type of experience matters: “From a consultant's point of view, previous background matters. You may be a senior developer in a product house, but you are incompetent in the consulting world. I think the consulting background is the most important thing.” He also thinks that the experience on that customer should be considered: “In the consulting world, it is who has the most knowledge about the customer's product. He has the most know-how and is ready to decide on things. It can also be a junior developer who just happened to be in that project the longest.”

He does not think that the project manager should have a technical background, even though it might help. “I would trust it works myself if you have experience specifically in management. For example, the Scrum master role can be played without technical skills.”

When asked if he sees working overtime as crucial to project success he says: “No. I have never been in favor of overtime myself. I feel that it often does not bring anything good in the end, and I personally do not encourage it in any way.” He also adds that it would be more than fine if someone would refuse to work overtime.

Freedom to freely choose a working location between remote, hybrid, and office is a key motivator for him: “Really important. I am remote 80% of the time, so I have found that it is a method that works for me. I feel that it is useful that I can work at my workstation, and I do not have to be in an open office listening to the commotion.” Flexible working hours are important only to a certain degree, mostly because of practical reasons: “It is useful to a certain extent that everyone would be at work at the same time for a certain part of the day. Successful teamwork requires a lot of communication, which is easier if everyone is present.” He

feels likewise towards the possibility to choose working equipment; it is important to a certain degree, but the requests from employees should stay reasonable.

He thinks that the uncertainties in projects are hurting the team. “They hurt the team. In our situation, workload estimates are not that important... But, for example, making a specification for the next two weeks is important.” He also adds that the uncertainties should always be aimed to reduce to the minimum, but that it is not the project manager's sole responsibility: “Yes absolutely. That matter is the responsibility of the whole team. It is easiest for everyone if everyone participates in some way.”

Developer C thinks that projects should have a relaxed atmosphere and that the communication should not be too official, even though he appreciates straight-to-the-point style: “Straight to the point, yes, but communication does not have to be too official. I personally like it if the project has a relaxed atmosphere. However, it is pointless to deal with pointless issues or messages.”

He does not like increasing technical debt in projects but sees that sometimes it is necessary: “Good question, and it is ok. Sometimes it is even mandatory. I personally do not like to make such a decision, but sometimes it is necessary.” He thinks decisions like this should always be discussed with the customer: “I think it is more important to talk with the customer himself. Value is produced for customers in the project. The issue should also be discussed among the team, and if the technical debt threatens to grow by an absurd amount, it should be addressed.”

Team-building and other unofficial activities together with the team are a good thing in his opinion: “I think it is a good thing. In our team, we get to spend money on what we see fit, and we have found it a nice thing that we sometimes hold team days.” He thinks these events do not need to stay official: “We consider perhaps 70% of the events to be official, and 30% unofficial. I think both have their place.”

Software developer C thinks that communication skills are the most important traits of a project manager: “I think that (the communication skills) are one of the most important qualities of a project manager. Communication must be a certain way with the customer and another way with the team or supervisor. The project manager can have three different communication channels that must be in order.” For the developers, he thinks communication skills are slightly less important.

He thinks that the project manager should be as fair as the situation allows: “It is important to aim for it, but I do not think it is a given that it is always possible.” In his opinion, the project manager should have an as clear vision of the project as possible, but it is equally important for the project manager and the rest of the team. When asked about other traits he sees the ideal for a project manager: “...that you know how to read people and you know how to interpret from them what is needed now and what is not. Being able to admit one's mistakes and accept feedback. If the project methods are bad, the team must be able to say so and receive the feedback.”

He thinks that the tasks should always be completed before moving to the next ones, whenever the definition of done allows so: “Yes if it is defined according to the definition of done. Then definitely. But if for some reason the definition of done was only 90% ready, that is a different matter. But I cannot figure out why such a thing would be done.” He also thinks that it is the project manager’s responsibility to monitor the completion of tasks, but ideally, the team handles that themselves.

He also believes in openness in team working: “If something is planned that affects the whole team, then the whole team should definitely be involved in it... It is one of the most important things in the team that everyone is aware of the situation.”

When asked about the importance of written project documentation and communication: “I personally support the fact that all the definitions are written down

somewhere. Otherwise, communication becomes difficult if you must go through the same issues in, for example, several meetings." When asked if project communication can be completely written: "In theory, yes, but I bet that it is not nearly as effective as when oral communication is involved." He also adds to emphasize the importance of verbose task descriptions. "Every task description should be such that any team member can take ownership of it just by reading the description."

Developer C mentions the lack of body language as an important factor that makes remote relationships harder: "It is really different when you cannot read another person's body language in the same way as face-to-face. It is then always more difficult to read because only speech is used. It is even more difficult if the other person never keeps the camera on and you cannot even see their face... If one person in the team is always remote and the others are present, it can easily create an outsider feeling. There is quick communication with those present."

Software developer C sees a lot of value in sharing each other's cultural backgrounds openly in the team: "In the current project, we have a Vietnamese developer, and everyone is interested in his culture. We have talked about it a lot." He thinks that for some, cultural background can be a controversial topic to discuss: "Yes, it can be for some. I have not encountered such a thing myself... There is always a risk. Let's get to the point that you must know how to read the situation and those people. It is not for everyone, and it is not something anyone should be pressured into."

He thinks that project managers should trust new team members equally, but in theory, one could also lose one's trust if someone would act in a bad way on purpose. When asked about building more personal relationships with team members, he thinks it is a good idea if one can do it. When questioned when this would not work: "If there is a person in the team who does not want to do anything but work together. If the rest of the team tries to get to know each other more closely,

conflict situations may arise." He does not think the relationship between developers and a developer, and a manager should be different in the team.

Developer C thinks that it is mostly positive if the team has worked together for a long: "Communication works well, and we get to know each other. Of course, there can also be downsides. If you work in the same group for too long, you may lose interest and work starts to feel boring. But it can also work." He does not have experience of someone being overlooked because of communication problems, but he thinks that this is possible: "Yes, it is definitely possible. If you are a genius who cannot communicate, this is possible."

4.2.6. Analysis of Interview C

Software developer C stated that in his opinion the most experienced member of the team should automatically have also more say in project decisions. However, he added that the type of cumulated experience is important and that even the junior developer in the project could be the most senior in this case if he knows the customer or the project the best. This displays a low level of power distance thinking, to trust the inexperienced team member in such a way. He also has no strong opinion on whether the project manager should have an extensive technical background before project management, even though it might prove useful.

He does not think project success can rely on the team's flexibility to work overtime, and that it is fine if someone would refuse working overtime. The possibility to choose a freely working location is a key motivator for him, allowing him to avoid the open office for focus time. He shows a practical attitude towards flexible working hours: it is important to him, but he also adds that the team should be available during working hours. This shows high individualistic thinking and retaining a practical attitude towards working.

Developer C shows high uncertainty avoidance attitude claiming that "uncertainties are hurting the team", and that the project manager with the team together

should avoid uncertainties whenever possible. This is further proven by developer C's attitude towards communication. He appreciates straightforward communication but thinks that relaxed and open communication works best in projects.

He shows a reserved attitude towards taking technical debt for the project. He thinks sometimes it is mandatory, but it should be avoided whenever possible. If the decision needs to be made, it should be disclosed clearly to the customer, and it should be a mutual decision with the whole project team. This could be interpreted as medium to high-level long-term thinking.

Software developer C thinks the budget should be spent on team-building activities, and that such activities should not always stay formal and official. He also thinks that it is fine for one to prioritize personal life and free time for example by following strictly fixed working times. This shows high levels of indulgence in his views.

In his opinion, both speaking and listening skills are the most important traits of a successful project manager. He sees that the project manager should be able to communicate in different styles depending on if the recipient is a team member, a customer, or a supervisor. He also thinks that the project manager should be fair whenever he can, but he states that it is not always possible. When asked about other important traits of a project manager, he mentions people's reading skills and the ability to admit their own mistakes and learn from them.

He believes that it is the project manager's responsibility to monitor task completion and that the tasks are properly finished before moving to the next ones. Developer C thinks that a task should always be completed according to the definition of done before proceeding to the next issues and that it bothers him if a task is left dangling for whatever reason. He also states that openness is a key factor in successful project communication and that one should share unfinished plans with the team early on. All in all, the software developer shows clear signs of reactive

culture in his answers, and his views match mostly with Lewis's descriptions of reactive culture.

Software developer C strongly agrees when asked if the project manager should emphasize written documentation and communication. This reduces the need for going through the same details repeatedly. He also thinks that in theory project communication could be even completely written, but he sees great benefits in verbal communication in terms of efficiency. He thinks that communication is harder with people always working remotely since it eliminates body language from the communication. This is especially true if someone is avoiding a web camera. Developer C's answers match well with Mäkilouko's views on how written project communication can be used to strengthen project communication and to help avoid negative aspects of cultural differences.

He shows a great interest in learning more about the cultural background of his team members. He thinks that it is beneficial and helps one to understand one's team members better, as long as no one is pushed to talk about their culture. He sees only a small risk of misinterpretation and believes that these possible issues can be communicated. He thinks that trust is something that should be displayed equally towards everyone in the team, no matter new or experienced member. However, it is possible to lose trust if someone acts against the team on purpose.

He also sees only benefits in building close relationships with team members, as long as both parties are willing to do so. He thinks that developers and project managers should not have any different relationships compared to the ones between developers. These views support Mäkilouko's polycentric approach to multicultural leadership.

4.2.7. Interview D

Software developer D is a software professional of Vietnamese cultural background working in Finland. She has less than five years of experience and is the

only female case interviewed for this thesis. She thinks that experience and technical skills should give someone more say in a project in important technical decisions. “Yeah, just the experience and the technical skill. Are quite big (factors) to have a bigger role.”

She does not think that the project manager needs to be a technical person, but she sees that it is important for the project manager to understand the context. When asked if the project manager needs to have a long technical career first: “I do not think so, but I think the project manager is the person who should understand the product and the final goal very well.” However, she adds that technical background is beneficial.

Developer D thinks that overtime should not be a factor for project success and that she sees no problem if someone refuses to work overtime for a project: “I do not see any problem with it. I will try not to work overtime either... It is about how we work. Effectively.” She sees the requirement to work overtime as a problem of project estimation, not in developers’ flexibility. “That means that the problems are at estimation for the project when designed initially. And I think it might be a bit of a management mistake.”

She clearly states that flexibility in choosing one’s working location is a key motivator for her: “Yeah. I think I do prefer hybrid mode. Because it made me feel free if I wanted to go to the office and talk to the people or if I just wanted to stay at home and focus that day.” The possibility to work shorter hours when needed is not important for her, but she appreciates the possibility to choose freely her working equipment as she sees it improves her efficiency: “I think the MacBook will speed up my working process.” When asked about other key motivators for her, she mentions the people one works with, their technical skills, and possibilities to affect things: “I think it is all about the people whom you work with, and for me, it is also about the technical skills. And how much you can have an impact.”

When asked how uncertain aspects of projects affect her, she only comments on her juniority and her need to help in the projects sometimes: “I think as a junior developer that I am still now... I cannot really (say). Sometimes, I need help and cooperation with other people to understand better about the project and the technology in the project.” However, she is clear in that she thinks that the project manager and the team should always aim to reduce the uncertain aspects of the project whenever possible.

Software developer D thinks that project communication should be official and to the point if possible. She thinks that personal and emotional discussion does not belong to project communication but is fine with the team outside of the project context: “I think it would be fine outside of the project work. For example, now I think we do have happy hour work meetings with each other with the team now where we do not talk about work at all. We just share some small stories with each other.”

She thinks that technical debt might be sometimes justified if clear benefits are achieved that way: “It depends, I guess. I think that is something we all have to consider. If we can speed up, yeah, very fast. Then we can take the tech debt for results.” She does not think that this can be the developer’s sole decision but should consider the whole team. “I think maybe we should discuss. From my point of view, I should discuss it with the product owner, and I think that person is in the position that will decide if we need to talk with the customer about it, or if we can decide on our own.”

Team-building and other unofficial activities are important according to Developer D: “Yeah. I think that is something where we should invest so we can work better together.” Team-building activities can be laid back in her opinion if everyone is having fun and behaving. She also thinks that prioritizing private life and free time is completely fine: “If that is outside of working time then it should be fine.” She has a practical aspect to the matter, like previous interviewees.

Developer D thinks that it is important for a project manager to be a good and clear speaker and a good listener. She also thinks that the importance of speaking skills stands out for project managers and is less important for the developers of the team. “That is what makes a good project manager, I guess. Yeah, that person should spot any problem we have been having now and suggest ideas.” When asked if she thinks someone with less speaking skills could be a successful project manager: “It can be improved, right? I am not sure because I think I have been working with really well-speaking project managers. So, I could not imagine.” She also thinks that in addition to good communication skills the project manager should be just and equal, treating everyone in the team equally.

She also thinks that the project manager should be the one with the clearest vision of the project: “I think everyone on the team should have the key vision of the product we are working on, but the project manager should have a bit better vision of that thing. It is a part of that work.” Software developer D adds that she finds it distracting if there are unfinished tasks before moving to the next tasks. “I think that makes me distracted at work so much. So, I keep jumping between two tasks.” She continues that she thinks the project manager should be the one monitoring the situation: “In case it has got any issues along the way, the manager should know that too.”

When asked if the project manager should share his plans with the team early on or wait until the plan is finished, she states that she does not expect the project manager to immediately have answers to everything so unfinished plans are okay to be shared: “Oh, I think it is fine if he could not find an answer to everything. Yeah, the team, we should gather together and discuss that and help him to find his solution, or we can just decide to not continue with that.”

She says that she does not appreciate very strict and formal communication style in projects: “I do not like that. We should be mindful and caring about each other when we work together.” When continuing with the topic and asked if she thinks

openness in communication is important for her: “I think we all should be very open, but constructive about whatever we want to provide feedback to other people.” When asked if she can see situations where it is better to remain silent than say something she says: “Yeah, sometimes I am not sure if I am correct about something. So, I will check that later. And when I am sure about what I am going to say I am going to make a note about it and say it later.”

Developer D says that she thinks focusing on good documentation and communication, in general, is a good idea, so project managers focusing on written communication works too. She cannot see project communication remaining completely written: “I think you need both. Talking to each other and documentation. Yeah, and sometimes writing down your ideas.” Project managers should emphasize thorough task descriptions and work breakdowns, and when asked if she thinks task descriptions can be minimal and filled in later verbally: “Oh no. I do not think that is a good idea. Then the project manager is the documentation himself which is not good.”

Software developer D does not have strong opinions on how the team’s language and terms affect the project. She thinks that it is a sign of the team caring for each other. When discussing remote team members, she says that relationship is harder to build with fully remote team members. She shares a story about how her project manager came up with a team-building plan to include remote members better: “... for example, we have some fully remote members, in another country. But I think our manager somehow came up with a pretty nice idea on how we can connect with each other. Yeah, for example, a team meeting. You know, one or two times a year we will try to get everyone in one city and have fun together.”

When asked about the effects of cultural differences on communication, she sees a practical aspect to it and thinks that everyone should follow the company’s com-

munication policy. She does not see that discussing each other's cultural backgrounds in a team could be a controversial topic that some would avoid: "Yeah, no, I do not think so. Yeah, we should all respect each other's culture."

She thinks that in project work, one should be able to trust each other since the team has already been through interviews to get there in the first place. However, one should not trust everyone in the same way, for example, with newcomers one needs to take their technical experience into account: "Introducing a new person to a project is a different thing. And yeah, the experiences with a project can be different from each other. So, based on that, we should give some tasks that are suitable for each other." She thinks that building more personal relationships with team members is fine, and that should not be different between two developers or a developer and a manager.

When discussing if she sees any traits that Finnish project managers often share, she mentions the nice way they can provide feedback in her opinion: "I think all Finnish, they all give feedback in a very nice way. Yeah. Open, but very constructive, and not trying to make others feel bad... It would affect the project in a positive way. Because for me it is easy to be open to someone that is nice."

She sees that it is only beneficial if the team has worked together for a long time: "They just know how to work better with each other. That they know each other's strengths and weaknesses." When asked if she has ever witnessed someone overlooking another's technical competence because of communication problems, she shares that she remembers a time when she had a technical solution on her mind, but she did not share it, and finally, someone else came up with the same plan.

4.2.8. Analysis of Interview D

While Developer D has also a practical point of view, she clearly states that more experienced people should also have a bigger say in the project when it comes to technical decisions. However, she does not think that it is required for a project

manager to have an extensive technical background before moving to project management. These ideas signal only a medium level of power distance thinking.

Software developer D poses a very high amount of individualistic thinking when asked about flexibility in terms of working overtime, and the importance of flexibility in terms of working location. She says that a project's success should not rely on people working overtime and that a requirement for this is a sign of management mistakes. The ability to choose freely between remote and office work is a key motivator for her when looking for a job.

She cannot say what she thinks of uncertainty in projects since she considers herself still a junior developer and requires help from the team anyways. However, she is very clear that in her opinion project communication should be official, and that emotional discussion does not belong to the project context. This is a sign of a lower than the medium level of uncertainty avoidance tendency. When asked about her attitude towards technical debt, she thinks that it is sometimes justified although not an ideal solution. She adds that this should be discussed with the product owner whose responsibility is to discuss this with the customer. This signals lower long-term orientation.

She has a permissive attitude towards unofficial team-building activities, and she thinks that it is worth the investment. She does not see that these team-building activities should stay too formal and mentions an example of attending a team-building event held in a pub. This could be interpreted as a sign of a higher level of indulgence.

Software developer D thinks good communication skills are the most important trait of a successful project manager. When asked if someone can be a successful project manager with weaker communication skills, she hints that the communication skills could be improved in that case. She also thinks that the project manager should treat everyone on the team equally. She assumes the project manager

has a stronger vision of the project than the developers of the team, and that the project manager is the one who helps the developers stay focused on one task at a time when possible. However, she does not assume the project manager knows everything, and that it is fine to share unfinished plans with the team for their opinion.

Developer D does not appreciate too formal straight-to-the-point type communication in projects but emphasizes the importance of showing empathy to each other. She strongly believes in openness in project communication, and she wants to show it to others too. She thinks that it is easier for her to be open towards someone if they are nice to her and able to share their feedback constructively. She agrees that thorough documentation and written communication greatly help in a project, but verbal is still needed. In her opinion task specification cannot remain only verbal so the project manager is not the only source of details.

She thinks that one should be able to trust everyone in a team to a certain degree since the team has been through interviews to get to the position. However, she emphasizes that one needs to take people's technical skills into account when assigning tasks, even if one shows them trust. Cultural backgrounds are something that she would openly discuss in a team since she does not see a risk of misinterpretation there. "You should respect all cultures", she explains.

4.2.9. Interview E

Software developer E is a Vietnamese professional who has been living and working in Finland in the software industry for more than five years, making him the most experienced interviewed developer with Vietnamese cultural background. He thinks that the most experienced person on the topic in question should have the biggest say, not the most senior person. He adds that cumulated experience might not always be relevant to the topic in question: "And even though some

guys have like 20 years of experience in software development, they do not necessarily know that he's the one who knows about one specific technology more than some new guy." When asked if he thinks project managers should ideally have an extensive technical background before moving to project management: "But that task (project management) is not really related to experience because if you are the project manager, it means that you are not going to, or most likely you're not going to implement the task. If we are talking about technical project management then it is a different story, but all the project manager, then I do not think that it is needed." However, he thinks it is beneficial because it provides one with a better understanding of the team and allows one to communicate with the customer better: "...yes, in software, definitely beneficial. ...if you know about the technology and even if you have done something like that, then it is really beneficial that you understand what your team is doing. And for example, when you communicate with the customer, it is easier for you to explain to them because you also understand it, and then when you understand it..."

Developer E thinks that project success and failure can be defined through multiple criteria, and if the budget is dynamic but deadlines are fixed then it is a viable option to ask the team to work overtime. However, that should be completely voluntary since people have their personal lives. "Usually I do not recommend it (working overtime to meet project deadlines) unless it is agreed beforehand. Meaning as far as I know some developers are willing to do extra time but some have other stuff to do... They have their wife and kids to take care of, so that should be agreed beforehand, but it should not be mandatory."

When asked if the flexible working location and working hours are key motivators for him, he mentions that he is a flexible person, and these things do not matter too much to him. He also sees the practical aspect of flexibility, and states that the working times should not make the project work too hard: "Well, flexibility is always good, but for me, it should not be mandatory... I am kind of really flexible.

Or flexible with working hours and working location. But the flexible hours should not be too flexible. Meaning that if you come to work at four and you work the whole night, for seven and a half hours, that is not recommended." He adds that work should be flexible enough to allow irregular visits to a doctor or make it possible to take the car to repair. Also, working equipment does not matter to him if the workstation is powerful enough. "No, to be honest, I kind of hate picking those things myself. That is my personal opinion. I mean, if the company just provides me with a really high-end laptop that they choose themself then that is good."

Software developer E thinks that as a project manager, one should not let any uncertainties occur in a project. "Well, basically, as a project manager, you should not let any uncertainty happen. So, meaning, that you should have the budget clear. You should have milestones; you should have the target and everything clear. And then you should have risk and change management in place, meaning that nothing will surprise you. So that is what I mean when I say that there is no uncertainty allowed in project management." He thinks that as a project manager one should ideally care about the team's private life too, and that might involve also emotional discussion. If the communication and relations are too cold, then the project will most likely fail.

Software developer E states that he does not think taking technical debt is a good idea but agrees that everyone does it from time to time and that eventually, it is the customer who should take the risk. "History says that is not the thing that you want to do, but everybody does that from time to time. And that is the one thing that a project manager should teach to the client or the customer. If they wanted to have the result fast then when things backfire, do not blame us." When asked if a single developer can decide to take more technical debt, he says that: "That should consider the whole team. Everyone should know about that."

When asked about Developer E's views on team-building, he says that he does not see the importance on the project level. Company-level team-building however is

an important factor in his opinion. “At the company level so that everyone knows each other and so on, but projects, I do not see the benefits. Of course, you can go hang out, have some drinks, and discuss something related to the project, but that should not be something that is officially agreed in the project, and it should not be taking any budget from the project.” When continuing the same topic, and asked if team-building should stay formal in his opinion, he does not see the point: “No. Why? No, I do not think so. That should be some activity that people can enjoy. You are going to do team building. So that people enjoy and talk and know each other. You do not do team building so that they get more stressed.”

Software developer E admits that he sees it as a risk if there is someone in a project who prioritizes personal life and family: “In the project’s point of view, that is one risk that you can have. For example, if you already know that that developer is family oriented, I would say.“ He mentions as an example the possibility to stay home with a sick kid: “I know that according to the law as well, if for example, your kid is sick, then you can stay home to take care of the kid. So that is according to the law, so you cannot do anything about that.” However, he does not see any problems if someone is strictly sticking to his working hours, as long as they fulfill their required hours: “It does not matter because at least if they stick to nice to five (working schedule) then that should fulfill the working hours every day, so I do not see that there is a problem.”

Developer E thinks that it is an advantage for the project manager to be a good and clear speaker and that it is more important for the project manager than it is for the developers of the team. The same applies to listening skills in his opinion. He also thinks that the project manager should be fair towards all team members. He summarizes the ideal role of the project manager: “But you should be the leader, you should not be a boss.” He sees a project manager’s lack of vision mainly as a motivator issue: “Let's say if you have a team and you do not tell them what

exactly is the purpose of what they are doing, then they will tend to lose motivation." He understands that sometimes tasks have dependencies that prevent them from finishing, and because of that sometimes it is need to start a new task before properly finishing the previous one. He thinks that in a sense task status is the project manager's responsibility since the definition of done plays a key role in validating task statuses. He also thinks that the project manager should share his plans with the team early on if possible, especially if it is a technical plan.

Software developer E thinks that a straight-to-the-point and open communication style works best between the project manager and the team. He explains that in his opinion an ideal relationship between the project manager and his team is a relationship where the project manager serves the team whenever they have a problem, and the team understands this and is willing to ask for help if needed. When asked if he sees any situation where it is better to remain silent and not to share what one actually thinks: "Oh, I do not think so. We have within the team (open communication), especially related to the thoughts and the work. And if you have any idea, you can say."

Software developer E strongly emphasizes that written documentation is key to a successful project. "Clearly written and documented, yes. Everything. Every decision. And for every change, every plan, every meeting you should take notes and so on. So, everything should be written because, obviously, no one can remember after like, one hour." He also believes that verbal communication is the most effective way to agree on something or to solve a problem, but all the decisions should be properly documented: "Well, verbal communication is, for example, like a live session and a live call is the best way to solve a problem… But after that decision, everything should be written down." He adds that these task descriptions should be as thorough as possible, and they should contain all information related to the task. He does not see it being a viable option to document only the bare minimum and to fill in the rest verbally.

When asked about his opinions on the importance of the team's own language and terms, he does not see that as an important factor. His concern is that there might be someone who does not understand the jokes other people are telling, but he does not see a big risk of misinterpretation there. He does not see that building relationships with remote team members is too different from the ones at the office. However, he sees it as beneficial if one can meet with remote team members to have a common lunch for example.

Developer E would avoid the discussion about different cultures in the team because of the risk of offending someone, even though the risk is not too high: "No, you know, I do not see that discussing the culture is (beneficial). I do not see the benefit because you do not know when you offended someone." He elaborates on his answer and explains that the discussion could work if it is based on free will, it is unofficial and it is not forced. He says that the project manager should trust everyone in the team by default, but trust is something one can lose: "Trust on the team members. But if someone…does something that makes you lose your trust, then it is kind of (bad)… you need to get it back."

He thinks that it is a good idea to build even more personal relationships within the team, but in his opinion, it should not be the manager who makes the initiative: "It is a good idea. But you should not force it. I mean, you should keep that professional… But I do not think that the manager should be the one who establishes that. It might be that they do not feel comfortable with it." However, when asked if he thinks the relationships in a team should be any different between team members and the manager than they are between team members, he says: "No, no. Well basically. The relationship should be like… we respect each other, and we make others' lives easy. But it should not be any different."

He agrees when asked if he thinks it is beneficial when the team has worked together for a long time: "Oh well when they know each other's way of working then

it is easier to work." Developer E thinks that it is possible that someone's competence might get overlooked in a project because of communication problems, and that the project manager should be professional enough to ask for enough details in that case: "I think so. But as a project manager, when you hear new ideas, from anyone, then do not judge that. Like if you do not really understand what they mean, you should ask them to elaborate."

4.2.10. Analysis of Interview E

Software developer E has the longest working history out of all interviewed cases with a Vietnamese cultural background. He does not think that the most senior developer in the team should automatically have the biggest say, but rather the most experienced person in question should. This could mean that a junior developer has more experience on the matter at hand than the senior developer of the team. He thinks that technical background for a project manager might be beneficial, but it is not required by any means. These views indicate a relatively low power distance thinking.

He thinks that working overtime is possible if the budget for example allows it, but it should always be voluntary. He understands if someone has a private life that does not allow them to be always flexible with working overtime. This signals high individualistic thinking, however, Developer E thinks that flexible working location or working times are not an important factor for him. He also adds that it is important for flexible working hours not to interfere with project productivity. This on the other hand signals rather low individualism. We can argue that all in all Developer E has a mixed attitude towards individualistic thinking in working life, averaging a medium level of individualism.

Developer E shows strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies when asked about his opinion on project uncertainties. He emphasizes that the project manager must

make sure to minimize all uncertainties in a project, and he stresses the importance of proper risk and change management. He also thinks that project communication should be relaxed, and one should care about team members' private lives too. This confirms high uncertainty avoidance thinking even further.

His thoughts on accumulating technical debt are identical to many other interviewed cases: he does not think it is ideal, but that it might be necessary in some cases. These decisions should always be agreed upon with the customer. This is a sign of a neutral attitude when it comes to long-term thinking.

He thinks team-building events are beneficial to have if they do not consume the project budget. He makes it clear that he does not think team-building is that important on a project level, and it should be a company-wide activity. He thinks that it is a risk when there is someone in a project who prioritizes private life, but it is still fine as long as they fulfill their working hour requirements. These answers indicate lower levels of indulgence compared to previous cases.

Software developer E thinks that it is beneficial for a project manager to be a good and clear speaker and that it is a more important trait for a project manager than for a developer in a team. He thinks that project managers should be fair towards everyone and summarizes his ideal project manager as: "But you should be the leader, you should not be a boss.".

He appreciates a straight-to-the-point style in communication and strongly believes that everyone should be open in the team, not hide their true opinions. He further explains that he believes that the project manager should be a servant in the team and that in a successful project, the team dares to ask for the project manager's help.

Developer E thinks that it is extremely important for a successful project to rely heavily on written documentation and communication. He emphasizes that every

decision, meeting, and task should be properly documented to prevent misunderstandings and forgetting of the details. However, he sees that verbal communication also plays an important factor in project communication, and that is needed alongside written communication. In his opinion, verbal communication is the ideal way of agreeing on things, but after the decision, the details should be written carefully down. This view strongly supports Mäkilouko's idea of ethnocentrism being an effective starting point for project communication.

He does not think that teams' own terms or language is a too important factor, and he rather sees there a danger of misinterpretation. He does not think that relationships with remote team members are too different to build for located teams, but he sees that it is beneficial to meet with remote team members whenever possible. Software developer E does not think a project should force the team to openly discuss cultural differences since there lies a great danger of misinterpretation and of accidentally offending someone. However, this discussion might work if it is based on free will and it occurs unofficially. He thinks that the project manager should trust all team members by default, but trust is something that one can lose. His ideas regarding trust align with Mäkilouko's views on cultural synergy, but conflict in terms of openly discussing the cultural backgrounds of the team.

Developer E thinks that more personal relationships within the team work as long as they remain professional and are not initiated by the project manager as some might not feel comfortable that way. This somewhat conflicts with Mäkilouko's ideas to build more personal relationships with team members to meet others from their unique perspectives.

He believes it is only a good thing if a team has worked together for a long. In his opinion, the better one knows how other in the team works, the easier it is to work together. Developer E agrees that it might be possible for someone to get their technical competence overlooked because of communication problems, but he has not witnessed that in real life. He makes a point that it should be the project

manager's responsibility to ask for more details in case he misses the point, rather than immediately dismissing the idea.

4.2.11. Interview F

Software developer F is a Finnish developer with 2-5 years of experience in the industry. He does not think that the most senior person in a project should automatically have the biggest say in a project's technical decisions because in his opinion experience does not necessarily correlate with knowledge: "In my opinion, it cannot be assumed that the most experienced person knows the most, because the experience of the most experienced person may be limited. Everyone should give what they know, and based on that the whole picture is formed." He thinks that it is beneficial if the project manager has a technical background, but he can see a project manager being successful without this experience: "Somewhere in the project, the experience must come that not everyone is lost if the project has new developers. In this case, it is good for the project manager to have technical knowledge so that he can advise the team in a certain direction. That is a good thing, but of course, it is possible that there are good project managers who are good at what they do, even if they do not have technical experience. However, it is always positive."

He does not see working overtime as a healthy option for a project's success, and that it is something that has to be completely voluntary: "Overtime is the worst possible scenario when development is stuck for a long time or there are other similar problems that need to be solved. In this case, the employees must be ready to be flexible up to a certain point, but this cannot be demanded." He also thinks that everyone has the complete freedom of declining work overtime, especially so if the person performs well during working hours.

Software developer F thinks the freedom of choosing the working location is a key motivator for him: "I have used these options extensively myself, and it is very

important to me. It has increased my well-being at work significantly." He also strongly supports the idea of moving to a four-day working week in Finland: "I have not negotiated this, and it would lead to a decrease in the salary level. I am in favor of the idea that a shorter working week should be tested more widely in Finland and that less working time should be used more efficiently." However, the importance of freely choosing working equipment is more of a practical question to him: "…as long as you get good enough equipment from the employer to perform the work. I do not need that much control over this."

He thinks that project uncertainties do not have too much effect on him, but he sees the uncertainties hurt mostly the customer: "I always try to go one day at a time. I work on what I am given to do at any given time. If the scope changes later, it will be stressful for the developers because it will cause unnecessary work. But the way I see it is that it is mostly away from the customer." Still, he thinks that the project manager should aim to reduce uncertainties, and he emphasizes communication with the customer. He makes a point that the project manager should not accept absolutely everything from the customer. In his opinion project communication can be more relaxed, and when asked if the communication in projects should be as official and factual as possible: "Not necessarily. I do not see anything negative about talking more casually in a multi-supplier environment as well. One must not take life and work too seriously… The work gets done when people feel comfortable working on a project together." To a certain degree, this applies to customers as well, but he makes a point that this depends a lot on the type of relationship with the customer.

He does not think that taking technical debt in a software project is justified but admits that in the real world, this still happens due to many reasons. At the end of the day, he thinks it is the customer's responsibility to pull the trigger on such decisions: "It is never nice, but the decision is ultimately the customers'. As a devel-

oper, I try to describe the situation and its risks to the customer as clearly as possible and give them the best possible picture of what they are doing. If they decide to do so after that, then my job is to make sure that it works regardless."

Software developer F is strongly in favor of team-building and similar informal activities: "I support it in every possible way. You can also do too much of everything, but this is the kind of thing that I think will definitely pay off, and it will improve everyone's working life in general. We spend so much of our life in the office and it is such a big part of life. The more you make it feel comfortable, that is important." He thinks these team-building activities should stay relaxed and informal, and everything goes as long as the team enjoys it. However, he makes a good point that Finnish alcohol culture might be challenging sometimes. Especially so if you do not drink yourself. He also thinks that it is perfectly fine if someone strictly sticks to their working times, and prioritizes personal life over work. He still understands that his approach is not possible for everyone. "I think that is the way people should act, and I fully appreciate it. I myself strive for such an approach that I do not take on too much work in my spare time. For some people it is mandatory, and for some, it is business critical."

Developer F thinks that good communication skills for a project manager are good to have since they decrease misunderstandings, but they are not necessary. He thinks that listening skills are even more important than speaking. He sees project managers mostly as an organizer who keeps everyone relevant for the project up to date by sharing information throughout the team. "Of course, it can be handled in many ways, and everyone does it in their own style. Certainly, in many situations, it is very useful to be a good speaker, but I see that you can do well as a project manager in other ways." He also thinks that project managers should treat everyone in a team equally and that the project manager should be on the same level as his team members.

He thinks it bothers him if tasks are left in progress while starting the next task. He sees that there is a need for the project manager to dig into the problem if there are a lot of unfinished tasks in the project backlog. “A project should only have things that need to be done and things that have been done. There should not be tasks that hang unfinished for months.” When asked if he thinks the project manager should disclose his plans as early as possible for the rest of the team: “It depends on the size of the project. If, with the help of the team's feedback, it is possible to cut the amount of work to be done, then it is worth it.” He does not feel it bothers him to discuss unfinished plans, and similarly, he can share unfinished features for gathering feedback.

Software developer F thinks it is perfectly fine to use a straight-to-the-point style in communication, and in fact, he recognizes this style in his communication too. He sees openness and transparency in project communication as beneficial: “That is a good thing. It is nice that people are really honest. No one benefits from going around things.” He thinks that it is a good idea to share openly what one is actually thinking, but not to waste time and energy fighting for the idea if the whole team strongly disagrees: “… so there is no need to fight about it. However, you can still present that I have such a different view.”

He thinks it is a good situation when a project manager heavily focuses on written communication: “No problem. I am very satisfied. In the endgame, things can be handled very largely in written form. It is always good to have a written plan, especially during development.” He thinks verbal communication is still needed, and it keeps the project moving: “According to my experience, without verbal communication, such as small status talks, it is difficult to keep things moving. It often seems that when people talk to each other, quick and effective decisions are made. Otherwise, things might get stuck.” He also thinks that project managers should emphasize written task descriptions, for example by keeping project management systems up to date. He clarifies that the task description does not need

to be anything special if it is clear what is expected. He would avoid relying too much on verbally agreed plans since people tend to forget details.

When asked about his opinion on the use of teams' own terms, jokes, and memes, he thinks that it brings the team closer together: "These things unite people. It is unlikely that anything negative will result. When things are discussed with the help of humor, they are better remembered. I personally like it if things can be taken more lightly." He agrees that because of this it might be harder for new people to join an existing team. Developer F thinks it is harder to build relationships with remote team members compared to people who work in the same office. When asked what in his opinion contributes to this, he ponders: "Hard to describe. When you see how someone else behaves with people in the office, you get a better idea of what kind of person they are." He adds that he is still a strong supporter of remote working possibilities.

Even though he has experience working with people from different cultural backgrounds, he has not experienced openly discussing the cultural backgrounds in a team: "Nothing non-mandatory has been discussed with them, and communication has always been related to the project. They have not brought up their culture in any way, and I have not presented my own culture to them that much." He thinks that it would be an awkward topic to discuss forced but would be a nice conversation if occurring naturally. He also thinks that it might be a controversial topic for some: "It sure can be. Especially for foreigners who move to Finland. They do not necessarily want to make a big deal about where they are from. They are just trying to do their work and adapt to the workplace." When asked if he thinks there is room for misunderstanding in such discussion: "There is in the sense that everyone experiences their own culture differently. There are always subjective things. I can say that Finns are quiet and do not like small talk, but this is not a

universal truth, but my view on the matter. Every culture has very different people." When discussing trust with him, he says that he trusts everyone by default, unless they give him a reason not to trust them since trust can also be lost.

He thinks that it is fine to build more personal relationships within a project, although personal relationships always come with their own risk: "You should also be able to keep free time and work separately. If you create a close relationship with someone, it can be a positive thing, and both of you can enjoy it. But there is a flip side to that if something unpleasant happens and it affects the work." In his opinion building relationships should not be any different between two developers than it is between a developer and the manager: "A project manager should be at the level of other people without any ego. It is positive if you can communicate with all people in the same way and with the same freedom."

Developer F does not see any problems in long-running teams if everything still works seamlessly, and he does not see any negative sides to it. When asked what aspects it affects, he lists: "You know very well how the other works, and how the other approach different things. You know what to expect from the other person in each situation." He thinks that someone's technical capabilities may be getting overlooked because of communication problems.

4.2.12. Analysis of Interview F

Software developer F does not think that seniority should automatically give someone a bigger say in a project's technical decisions. Rather, developers' knowledge of relevant topics should matter more. He does not think that it is required for a project manager to have a technical background, but in his opinion, the project manager should be experienced in the domain so that he can guide the project team forward. This signals only a low to medium level of power distance thinking.

Developer F thinks that working overtime is a worst-case scenario, and it should base on developers' voluntariness. In his opinion, it is completely acceptable to refuse to work overtime when asked. Employers' flexibility in terms of working location is a key motivator for him, and he also supports the idea of the possibility to work shorter weeks if the employee so wishes. He does not require the freedom to pick any hardware he wishes, and he is happy if the hardware is powerful enough to handle the working tasks. These ideas reflect a relatively high level of individualism.

Software developer F admits that uncertainties like scope changes in projects are somewhat taxing for the developers, but in his opinion mostly they affect the customer. The project manager should aim to reduce uncertainties whenever possible. He does not see the need for keeping discussions within the team and with the customer always formal and straight to the point: "One must not take life and work too seriously…" Wishes to get the project manager to reduce project uncertainties, and a relaxed attitude toward customer communication are strong indicators of higher uncertainty avoidance tendencies.

He thinks that increasing the project's technical debt is never justified but admits that it still happens. In his opinion, the decision should ultimately be the customers', and his role in all this is to describe the situation for the customer as verbally and clearly as possible. If the customer still decides to do it, he tries to make the best out of the situation. This answer is in line with a medium level of long-term orientation.

Developer F is strongly in favor of team-building and other unofficial activities. He thinks that whatever can be done to make everyone feel better in their job is worth the investment. He sees no problems in prioritizing one's personal life over work, for example by sticking to strict working hours. He adds that he understands that this is not possible in every position. These ideas are a signal of strong levels of indulgence for Developer F.

He mainly sees project managers as organizers, and because of this, he emphasizes the importance of listening skills even over speaking skills. He admits that in many situations it is beneficial to be a good and clear speaker, but he sees that a project manager can be successful even without being a world-class speaker. He summarizes that the project manager should see themselves on the same level as the developers when asked if project managers should be righteous and fair. It bothers him if unfinished tasks are hanging in the backlog, and the project manager should be the one digging into the issue if this keeps happening.

It does not bother him to discuss or share unfinished ideas, and he can see the benefit of reducing the work amount later in doing so. He sees no problem in using a straight-to-the-point style in their communication, and he admits that he uses this communication style as well. Developer F thinks that openness in project communication is always beneficial and that one should openly share what they are actually thinking. He adds that there is no point wasting energy fighting other people in case they all disagree, but one should still tell them what they are thinking. All the software Developer F's answers reflect a typical reactive culture in his behavior patterns.

Software developer F strongly favors written communication in project management but thinks that verbal communication is still needed to keep the project moving in status checks and otherwise. In terms of written task descriptions, he sees it beneficial to focus on making them clear. He adds that he does not require anything special from them if the descriptions are clear. His views strongly support the beneficial aspects of ethnocentric leadership.

He sees teams' own language and jokes as a sign of successful team-building, and these things bring team members closer. He admits that it is harder to build a relationship with remote team members because one does not learn their behavior as well. He thinks that sharing about one's own culture in a multicultural project team would be nice, but not something that should be forced as a conversation

topic. In his opinion, it is a controversial topic for some, and some foreigners just want to fit into the Finnish working culture without highlighting their differences. Developer F's ideas partly align with the leadership style of cultural synergy, but his caution on discussing cultural backgrounds conflicts with it.

4.3. Discussion and Analysis

In this master's thesis, we have been studying different theories that describe the differences between Finnish and Vietnamese national cultures, provide insight into multicultural team leadership, and what kind of role communication plays in all this. The goal of this thesis is to learn how national culture affects our communication practices, what kind of role this can have in software project management, and what possibilities we have for strengthening positive and similar views while diminishing the negative aspects. This led to two research questions for this thesis:

RQ1: What is the effect of culture on communication practices on software projects in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

RQ2: What type of project management tool can be implemented for managing differences in communication practices in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

All interviewed cases agreed unanimously when asked about what factors should give someone a bigger say in a project's technical decisions: everyone agreed that rather than seniors having more power by default, it is the experience and the type of experience that should matter. Every interviewed case also agreed that it is not required for a project manager to have a technical background, although many of the cases mentioned it being beneficial. Even though power distance levels differ greatly between Finland and Vietnam, it did not show in any way in these interviews. In Finland, equality is a traditional value, and strong power distance thinking might conflict with such value. However, we can conclude that we see no great difference in attitudes toward power distance.

Like power distance, also individualism appears to be high among interviewed cases. According to Hofstede's dimensions analyzed in Chapter 2.6.1, individualism in Finnish culture ranks over three times higher compared to Vietnamese culture. However, only modest differences were detected between cases. All Finnish and Vietnamese developers agreed that working overtime should not be a key tool for project success and that it should be voluntary. Only one Vietnamese developer did not consider freedom of working location and flexible hours a key motivator in their job, unlike everyone else. In terms of project communication, this could mean that Vietnamese tendencies for group-first thinking do not apply as often in the software development industry and that individualistic practices are met with a permissive attitude.

Attitudes towards uncertainty avoidance are more mixed between interviewed cases from different cultural backgrounds. All Finnish developers mentioned that uncertainties in projects are taxing and hurting the team, but they all do not agree that the uncertainties should always be minimized by default and one developer even pondered the idea of gambling on the project with uncertainties. The opinions of Vietnamese developers are conflicting. One does not feel uncertainty affects him at all, and one agrees with Finnish developers. In terms of ideal communication practices, the answers align well with Hofstede's theory. Finnish culture poses more uncertainty avoidance tendencies, which could also show in more relaxed and emotional communication practices. All Finnish developers think that project communication does not need to be that serious, and little humor is only beneficial. To a certain degree, this can be applied to customer communication as well. One Vietnamese developer agreed, but the other two see that project communication should be straight-to-the-point and that emotional discussion does not belong to a project environment. In multicultural projects, this could cause unhappiness if others see the project communication as too stiff and formal, or if others see it as unnecessarily emotional and relaxed.

Attitudes towards long-term orientation were charted by asking developers about accumulating technical debt in a project. All developers across the board agreed in a similar manner: technical debt is a bad choice in the long run. There were only slight variances when discussing when technical debt can be increased in a project. Most radical answers said that such a decision is never justified while the most permissive answer stated that sometimes it is an option, although a bad option. There were no differences in answers between Finnish and Vietnamese software developers, and according to Hofstede, both cultures pose a medium level of long-term orientation.

According to Hofstede's dimensions, there is over 60% greater level of indulgence in Finnish culture compared to Vietnamese. To validate this theory, interviewed cases were asked about their opinions on unofficial team-building events and towards team members who are clearly prioritizing their personal life over work, for example by sticking strictly to certain working hours. There were only minor differences in answers. Most developers saw team-building events as beneficial and worth the investment, and they mentioned that these events should stay informal and relaxed. Also, most developers said that there is nothing unprofessional in prioritizing private life over working life for example with strict working hours. Multiple individuals mentioned that everyone should fulfill the working hours mentioned in their contracts. One Vietnamese developer mentioned that people prioritizing their family can be seen as a risk for the project because it can be assumed that they have more sick leaves for example. He clarifies that he is aware that this is allowed by the law, and thus it should be fine, but nevertheless, it is a risk one should consider. The views towards indulgence are mostly similar among all developers, with Vietnamese being slightly more reserved or practical towards prioritizing one's private life. In project communication, this could at worst increase frustration in the team and is something that could be mitigated with open communication.

Richard Lewis described both Finnish and Vietnamese cultures as reactive cultures. In his opinion, the cultures are identical in many aspects when it comes to behavior, but they also pose significant differences such as the idea of equality in Finnish culture, or the Vietnamese tendency not to give away too much in negotiations. With interviewed cases, these said differences could not be clearly detected. Every developer mentioned that good speaking and listening skills are the key traits of a successful project manager and that the project manager should be fair towards all the members of his team. Most interviewed cases said that straight-to-the-point and open communication within the project works the best, however, there were mixed answers regarding the emotional and personal discussion in the project. Some dismissed the idea, while some mentioned that it is important to care for team members outside the project work too. There was no clear pattern between the two cultural backgrounds. Multiple individuals from both cultures mentioned that the project manager is an organizer who makes sure there is work for the next few weeks and that there are no tasks left hanging in progress for too long. Lewis's views on the differences between the two cultures were less apparent between interviewed cases, and with answers that differed there was no clear pattern between the two national cultures.

Marko Mäkilouko described three multicultural leadership styles in his book Multicultural Leadership: Strategies for Improved Performance. He describes ethnocentrism as the first easy-to-implement choice for a quick-moving project to receive instant benefits, although the project manager should strive to quickly progress forward from ethnocentrism. Every interviewed developer agreed with Mäkilouko's view on why ethnocentrism is a beneficial tool to implement as the first method in a project: written communication reinforces the information exchange in a project and reduces the language barrier. Thorough task descriptions reduce the need for discussing the same details multiple times and mitigate the problem of developers forgetting details. Also, every developer agreed that verbal

communication is still needed, or at least it is beneficial compared to written communication alone since it is the most efficient way of agreeing on things and keeping a project moving. However, Mäkilouko sees ethnocentrism merely as a first tool to implement before moving to more sophisticated leadership styles.

Mäkilouko suggests leaders of multicultural projects eventually move from ethnocentrism to cultural synergy. With cultural synergy, the project manager acknowledges all cultures present in his team and agrees on communication patterns, decision processes, and responsibilities of the team. Different cultures in the team should be openly discussed, not only to mitigate cultural differences but to embrace cultural similarities. The project manager should quickly build trust in the team by showing it to every team member regardless of their background or experience. Most of the interviewed individuals mentioned that they appreciate the team's communication practices, inside jokes, and memes. Only one Vietnamese developer mentioned that he does not care for the team's terms or jokes and that there is a risk of misinterpretation. The views towards openly discussing cultural backgrounds and differences were mixed. Two Finnish developers and one Vietnamese developer saw a big risk of misinterpretation in such a discussion, and they would avoid it in a project context. One Finnish developer and two Vietnamese developers saw the discussion about cultural backgrounds as interesting and beneficial with no real danger of being misunderstood. Even so, almost everyone agreed that knowledge about different cultures present in the project team is beneficial. Mäkilouko's theory suggests openly sharing different cultures in a team, and emphasizing cultural similarities discovered. Based on interviews, this discussion should be carried out carefully and without making anyone feel pressured to share more than they are comfortable with. Most interviewed developers stated that they trust their team members by default, but many remembered to add that it is certainly possible to lose this trust. Only one Vietnamese developer mentioned that because of practical reasons he would not trust new team members equally to others, simply because there is no knowing yet how well they can perform with

the tasks trusted for them. Someone not showing trust toward new members of a project team could potentially cause conflicts later, and this should be mitigated with an open discussion. While one cannot simply force anyone to trust someone else, it could be rationalized that showing trust towards others does not mean assuming equal competence.

As an ideal multicultural leadership method Mäkilouko introduced polycentrism, where the leader treats every culture in the team equally and preserves them as they are while learning from the cultures and adjusting the leadership style to agree with cultural preferences. If the cultural distance within the team is too big, the leader could address cultural subgroups with a project separately. In our opinion, Finnish-Vietnamese software projects pose no such difference, but polycentric leadership introduces other beneficial views to consider. Interviewed software developers were asked if they think it is unprofessional or inappropriate for a project manager to build more personal relationships with team members to more easily address different cultures and individuals from their perspectives. All developers agreed that this is not unprofessional as long as the interest in such a relationship is mutual and the relationship stays appropriate, and they saw mostly beneficial aspects to it. One Finnish developer raised a concern that personal relationships also introduce a risk of bringing personal issues into project work if a relationship has problems. One Vietnamese developer said that in his opinion the project manager should not be the one making the initiative to build a such relationship as some might not feel comfortable with that. In general, it can be said that the idea of building more personal relationships within project teams was met with a favorable response. This supports Mäkilouko's idea of eventually moving towards polycentric leadership once team-building and project manager's experience allow it.

After thorough interviews with six software developers from both Finnish and Vietnamese cultural backgrounds, we can conclude our analysis when comparing

the researched theory with the answers of the interviewed cases. The most significant differences according to Hofstede's theory were the power distance and individualism, but with these interviews, no such difference was spotted. Observed differences were minor, supporting still Hofstede's differences, but smaller by a magnitude. Attitudes towards uncertain aspects of the project were the greatest difference between individuals from the two national cultures, and the case study supports Hofstede's findings perfectly. Attitudes of Finnish software developers are generally more anxious towards uncertain aspects of the project compared to that of Vietnamese, and Finnish developers show clearly more relaxed communication patterns. In terms of long-term-orientation answers were almost identical between all developers. Findings regarding indulgence partly align with Hofstede's theory. All developers saw unofficial team-building as beneficial and worth the investment, but one Vietnamese developer had a reserved attitude towards team members prioritizing their private life. Vietnamese and Finnish cultures are both reactive cultures according to Richard Lewis, but he still detected many differences between the two. These differences could not be clearly detected in the interviews. All interviewed individuals agreed on the benefits of thorough documentation and written communication, as suggested by Mäkilouko. Vietnamese developers displayed a more reserved attitude towards Mäkilouko's points in cultural synergy in terms of displaying trust within a team and encouraging teams to develop their communication practices. Everyone agreed that building more personal relationships within a team is beneficial, as long as both parties are willing to do so. A few key areas were detected where attitudes between Finnish and Vietnamese developers differed. The biggest discovered differences affecting project communication are the differences in uncertainty avoidance since this affects the communication patterns of individuals directly according to Hofstede. This was also confirmed in the case study interviews. Another big factor was the difference in attitude towards trust and the team's own communication practices. However, mostly the attitudes were more in a line across all developers than the researched

theory might have suggested. It is worth mentioning that typically the answers were aligned more towards how researched theory assumed Finnish national culture would affect. Possible explanations for this phenomenon are the prolonged influence of Finnish culture since all interviewed Vietnamese developers have been working in Finland for multiple years, and the global nature of the software development industry in general. Dafoulas and Macaulay (2017) argued that the computer culture connecting IT professionals is one of the strongest observed cultures.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Theoretical Implications

What is the effect of culture on communication practices on software projects in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

After the theory gathered as part of the literature review and concluding the analysis of case study interviews, we were able to conduct theoretical implications. We know that culture plays a significant role in communication since different cultures act as filters we interpret and pass information through. Communication is carried through a certain language, and the used language always carries with it traces of culture. Communication consists of the communicator, recipient, message, channel, and effect, and for successful communication we need to consider all parts.

Using identified theories, we were able to classify and compare cultures, and we detected both similarities and great differences between the two cultures. Both Hofstede and Lewis's theories were derived into interview questions, and through case study interview findings we were able to conclude that in our Finnish-Vietnamese software project management context several theories did not clearly apply. However, we were able to confirm that the uncertainty avoidance attitudes differ greatly between Finnish and Vietnamese software developers with Finnish developers showing more anxiety toward new and uncertain situations. Uncertainty avoidance tendencies directly affect communication practices as well. In our case study interviews, we were able to confirm this, and it shows that Finnish developers generally appreciate more relaxed and personal communication patterns compared to their Vietnamese colleagues.

Other key areas where views differed were the attitude toward the work-life balance and the trust toward new team members. Finns were slightly more permis-

sive towards prioritizing one's private life compared to Vietnamese, and Vietnamese displayed a slightly more reserved attitude in showing immediate trust toward new team members. Both findings affect also greatly the communication practices within multicultural teams and are something that should be addressed to avoid misunderstandings and possible conflicts. Effective ways to address these differences are introduced as part of the practical implications in Chapter 5.2. Most interviewed developers saw openly discussing cultural differences within the team as a beneficial thing but also agreed that it is a controversial topic that should be completely voluntary.

5.2. Practical Implications

What type of project management tool can be implemented for managing differences in communication practices in the Finnish-Vietnamese context?

From these theoretical implications, a project management framework was designed. The framework is more of a cheat sheet for project managers to better consider aspects that multicultural teams introduce than it is a strict guideline of dos and don'ts. The framework is specifically tuned for the Finnish-Vietnamese multicultural context but could easily be further developed to fit other multicultural settings.

The framework displayed in Figure 6 consists of three key components: checkpoints, management actions, and cultural observations. Checkpoints are derived from Mäkilouko's leadership theory for multicultural teams. The checkpoints are included to remind project managers to quickly move past ethnocentrism to cultural synergy, and eventually towards polycentrism. Management actions are concrete actions project managers should implement as part of their day-to-day management tasks. Rather than just tasks ticked off a list, the management actions are aspects a successful project manager should include in their management work throughout the project's life. Finally, the framework includes cultural observations

to remind the project manager of cultural similarities and key differences in the Finnish-Vietnamese project context.

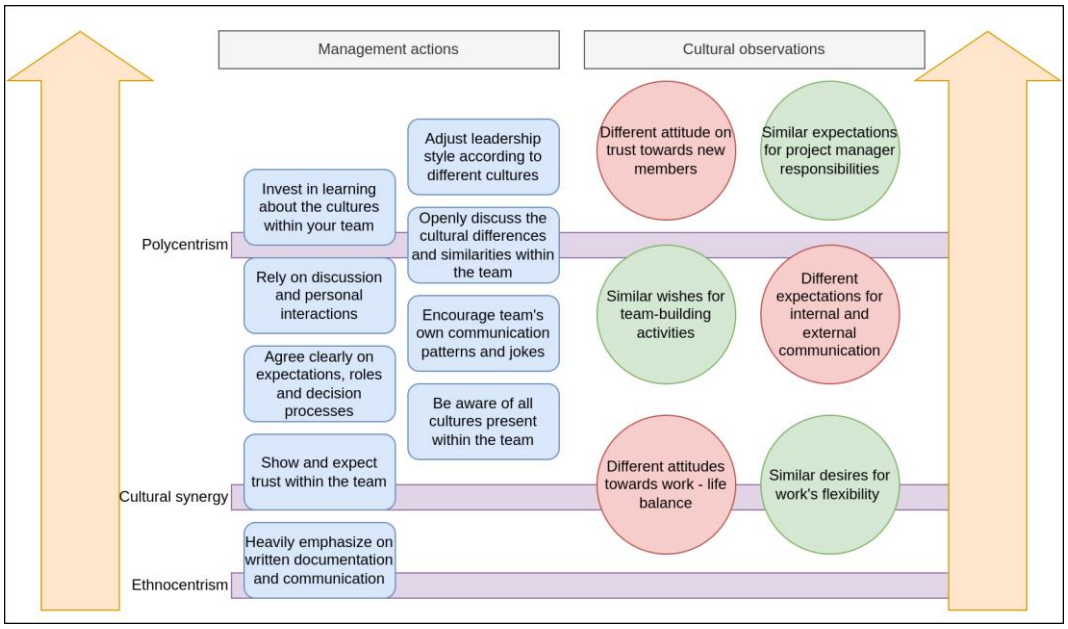

Figure 6. The project management framework for Finnish-Vietnamese multicultural software project context.

5.3. Limitations and Further Research

Several limitations and places for further research were noticed throughout the study. Even though project team cultures and cultures in project management are topics where relatively little data exists, culture itself is a thoroughly studied subject. A more thorough literature review might have generated a broader variety of material for case study interviews to provide richer data. Also, broader case study interview questions could have been derived from the current theory alone. It is uncertain how answers would have varied had the key theories been covered more thoroughly. This thesis had a focus on communication practices, and it relied mostly on using the communication sub-topics of the identified key theories. The thesis would have benefited by introducing additional key theories focusing solely on communication practices.

The cases selected for the interviews present a relatively homogeneous group of software developers. Although not considered key attributes such as nationality and years of experience, the cases were all relatively the same age, and most of them were men. Also, all interviewed cases either currently live and work in Finland or have done so in the past for multiple years. It would have been interesting to compare how answers differ between Vietnamese software developers living in Finland and ones without any relation to Finland. One idea for further research is to study how quickly these cultural attitudes that affect software project management change once the developer settles into the Finnish working culture. Even though Vietnamese software developers living and working in Finland are a well-defined group, it would have been interesting to combine quantitative data collected from this group as part of the study.

While performing the study it came apparent how vast topics cultures and their effect on project management are. Multiple sub-topics of the researched theory alone would have been suitable topics to dive deeper into but had to be overlooked to limit the scope of this research.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

Characteristics and behavior of cultures

1. Do you think the most senior in the project team should automatically have a bigger say in important technical decisions within the project?
2. Do you think the project manager should preferably be someone with a long career and technical experience before his/her management position?
3. Do you think it is important for the project's success if everyone in the team is willing to work sometimes long hours when asked?
4. Is the complete freedom of choosing between remote, hybrid, and office working a key motivator for you in your job?
5. How do you feel uncertainty in projects (scope, budget, estimates, timescales, etc.) affects your work?
6. Do you think that project communication should be kept official and to the point whenever possible?
7. Do you think it is justified sometimes to make decisions that increase the technical debt to deliver project results faster?
8. What do you think about spending time and money on unofficial team-building activities?
9. Do you consider it unprofessional to prioritize personal time or family time over project work?
10. Do you think it is important for the project manager to be a good and clear speaker?
11. Do you think the project manager should be righteous to be successful in the position?
12. Does it bother you if a task is left unfinished before moving to work on the next task?

13. Do you think it is better if the project manager introduces plans only after they are finished?
14. Do you think a straight-to-the-point style in project management communication is unprofessional?
15. Do you think in meetings it is a good idea to disclose openly what you actually think of the matter at hand?

Multicultural leadership methods and intercultural communication

1. What do you think about project managers heavily relying on written project communication?
2. Do you think the project manager should emphasize thorough task descriptions and work breakdowns?
3. How do you feel the team's own communication practices, like their own language and memes, affect the project work?
4. Do you think that the relationship with remote team members or managers is different to build?
5. What kind of experience do you have in openly discussing cultural differences within a project team?
6. Do you feel there is a risk of misinterpretation when talking openly about cultural differences?
7. Is trust something that should be earned in the team?
8. What do you think about building more personal relationships between individuals in the project team?

General culture questions

1. What characteristics do you see as typical for Finnish project managers?
2. How do these characteristics affect projects?
3. Do you think it is beneficial for the project when the team has worked together for a long?

4. Do you think technical competence can be overlooked because of communication problems or misunderstandings?