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**The Structure of Cross-Cultural Competence and Levels of its Formation**

**Структура крос-культурної компетентності та рівні її сформованості**

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**Abstract. Introduction.** *The factors responsible for effective interactions between the representatives of different cultures have been investigated by numerous researchers. Such interest is caused by growing tendency for globalization as it means increasing in the number of contacts in many spheres such as international politics, business, trade, education and many others. Therefore, those who are involved in international communications due to their profession have to possess certain abilities and obtain essential knowledge, which help them to develop specific skills for successful communication. To analyze and structuralize these abilities, knowledge and skills is the purpose of the present research.*

**Methods.** *To achieve the goal, the differences in theoretical definitions and conceptualizations of cross-cultural competence structure were analyzed. The generalization of its components was considered, and the conclusions were made about the interaction of these components, and how they influence and impact behavior, action, and outcomes.*

**Research results and their discussion.** *A preliminary conceptual model of cross-cultural competence consisting of nine elements was offered. In different sources, similar structures were denominated with different terminologies. However, based on the numerous studies, it became possible to create a cross-cultural competence structure, which shows the correlation of cognitive knowledge, abilities, attitudes, traits, performing and behavioral skills while communicating cross-culturally. Cultural experience and foreign language knowledge also contribute to cross-cultural efficiency, which level can be measured. The measurement results are divided into external and internal. External outcomes include behavioral outcomes and outcomes of adapting to a cross-cultural environment, participating in it, and demonstrating appropriate behavior.*

**Key words:** *culture. competence, skills, attitudes, abilities, effectiveness, interaction.*

**Introduction.** Cross-cultural competence is commonly measured according to three aspects:

- cognitive, which includes knowledge about other cultures, attitude toward them, lack of prejudice, tolerance, flexibility, and critical thinking;
- emotional, connected with empathy and emotional control;
- behavioral, which means effective interactions.

This is due to the fact that the most commonly used definition of cultural competencies refers directly to the three-dimensional model: knowledge—providing culturally specific information; skills—covering strategies; attitudes—cultural empathy, openness, curiosity, tolerance, flexibility, lack of prejudice, awareness of a different system of values and its limitations, norms and behavioral patterns [4].

**Literature Review.** A large diversity of

factors, which influence an individual's level of cross-cultural competence, have been researched by many scientists. These factors were investigated by such researchers as Abbe, Caligiuri, Tarique, Deardorff, Gabrenya, Hannigan, Harrison, Johnson, Shaffer et al., van Der Zee and many other. They conceptualized the cultural competence structure differently, as some researchers focused only on the individual-level factors (Abbe, Deardorff, Johnson, et al.), while others included non-individual situational and external factors (Gabrenya).

Knowledge, abilities, and skills such as knowledge of the dominant and other cultures, cultural dimensions and differences as well as behavioral skills are commonly used to define the structure of cross-cultural competence. However, researchers often conceptualize the elements differently.

Personality traits and attitudes are also frequently quoted in the literature (Black, Caligiuri, Van der Zee). The following are commonly mentioned: open-mindedness, ethnocentrism, sociability, emotional stability, self-confidence, empathy, and tolerance for ambiguity. Some of them are stable personality traits, while others, such as ethnocentrism and empathy, are attitudes (Shaffer).

**Methods.** To achieve the stated goal, the following research methods were used: literature analysis, analysis and synthesis of conceptual definitions, generalization method for formulating research conclusions.

**Results of the research and their discussion.** A preliminary conceptual model of cross-cultural competence was proposed to measure it by Thornton, Ross and Cooper in 2008. Nine factors were proposed based on the integration of the data within the literature reviews.

*Self-efficacy*, which relates to a person's perception of their ability to reach a particular goal [2].

*Ethnocultural empathy* entails the ability to understand another's emotions as well as the cognitive ability to take on the perspective of another person [23].

*Open-mindedness*, which represents an individual's extent of interest in learning about and gaining new experiences, including cross-cultural experiences [2].

*Willingness to engage.* This construct represents an individual's willingness or

persistence to stay engaged in making sense of unfamiliar social situations in dissimilar cultures [9].

*Cognitive flexibility* is the ability to be flexible in one's approach in order to allow an individual to solve a range of problems in complex and dynamic situations [12].

*Self-monitoring*, which involves the observation and adjustment of one's own behavior to the situation in culturally appropriate ways [2].

*Emotional self-regulation*, which is similar to self-control and refers to the ability to regulate one's emotions effectively so that they do not interfere with one's performance [9].

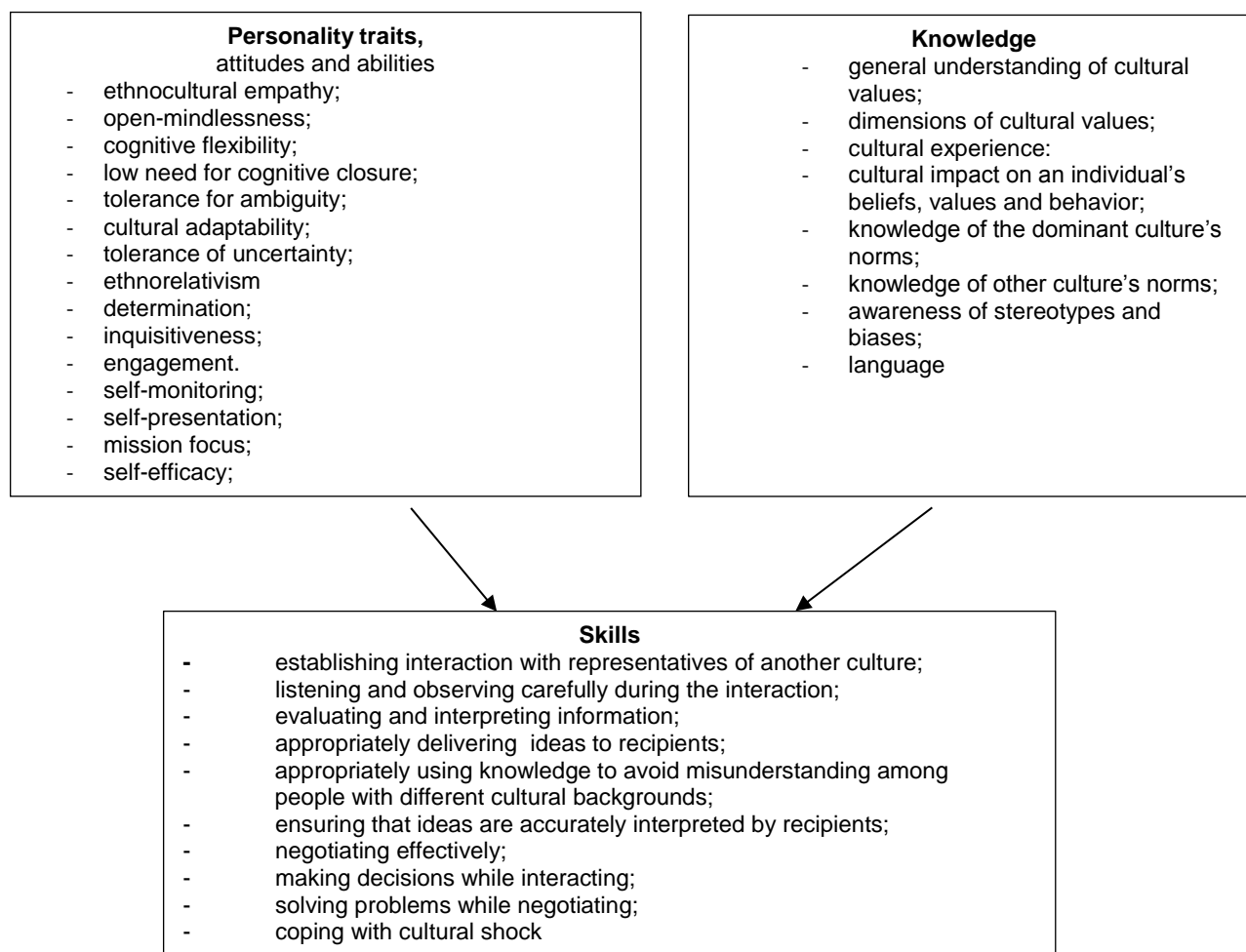
*Low need for cognitive closure*, which is defined as the extent to which a person, faced with a decision or judgment, desires any answer rather than exist in a state of confusion and ambiguity [24].

*Tolerance for ambiguity*, which is an ability to avoid or reduce dichotomous thinking, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism [1].

Presumably, there is still disagreement on the categorization, denomination, and proposed correlation among cross-cultural competence components. It is common to see similar structures denominated with different terminologies. Quite often, different names have been used by researchers to refer to similar cross-cultural competence components. However, based on the numerous above-mentioned studies, it is possible to create a correlated cross-cultural competence structure, which shows that abilities supporting by cognitive knowledge lead to the formation of performing and behavioural skills while communicating cross-culturally, as it is shown in *figure 1*.

The cross-cultural competence is validated and measured to provide meaningful information to professionals responsible for selecting personnel in the sphere of international relations. These measurements help to understand who will benefit from training and intercultural experiences and who are more likely to be successful performing assignments cross-culturally. In addition, the measure may be useful for those want to develop their proficiency in managing challenges in cultural diverse contexts. Also, they provide feedback and recommendations for individuals to improve their cross-cultural competence.

Fig. 1.



So that, numerous measure scales and questionnaires were developed to define the formation level of each component as well as the impact of the abilities, attitudes and knowledge on the performing and behavioural skills.

The ethnocultural empathy scale [23] was developed to assess the four hypothesized dimensions of ethnocultural empathy: empathic feeling and expression; empathic perspective taking; acceptance of cultural differences; and empathic awareness. The level of empathy is considered to evaluate personnel ratings in the field of international relations on leadership, decisiveness, initiative, problem-solving, and stress tolerance and defines the level of individuals' ability to negotiate effectively and consciously.

Open-mindedness is defined as having an open and unbiased attitude towards members of a group with other cultural norms and values. Open-mindedness is the

readiness or preparedness to engage in and with the situation and the other person, and the willingness to question or have questioned own action patterns and familiar viewpoints. It influences the skills to listen and interpret the ideas, avoiding misunderstanding as well as the skill to express ideas regarding the recipient's attitude. Cognitive flexibility involves being open to learning from one's mistakes and then adjusting one's behavior accordingly [22]. It enables individuals to adapt to changing circumstances, to choose the best strategy of interaction, to adjust the behavior to changing demands. It is highly supported by the level of knowledge and influences the skill to negotiate effectively.

The low need for cognitive closure is the ability to find immediate answers and solutions, to accept new information that conflicts with a person's previous opinions. Research on the need for closure is limited, but allows making a conclusion that those

with the high need for closure are more likely to depend on stereotypes, while those with the low need are more successful in building relations with people from different backgrounds.

Tolerance for ambiguity is a very similar construct to cognitive closure. The behavioral rating of tolerance for ambiguity is significantly correlated with self-reported culture shock. Because cross-cultural interactions are ambiguous by their very nature, the ability to tolerate it may be extremely important for the ability to avoid cultural shock or to interact successfully despite it.

The cross-cultural adaptability scale measures the level of adaptation to other cultures. The four dimensions it measures are: emotional resistance; flexibility and openness; perceptual acuity; and personal autonomy. It includes understanding the point of view of people from a different culture and different methods of problem-solving, the ability to get used to living in a different culture, respect for others' norms, curiosity and willingness to learn about different cultures, so supported by general and specific knowledge, it helps develop communication skills.

Tolerance of uncertainty relates to an individual's readiness for changing plans at the last minute, unpredictable and uncertain situations, disorganized life and speech.

Ethnorelativism states that no one culture it is superior to another and recognizes differences between cultures as those that should be respected and so that helps to use the knowledge about their peculiarities in order to establish beneficial relation.

Inquisitiveness, or motivation is defined as the desire to engage in cultural interactions for the purpose of understanding and learning about other cultures [2]. So, it is possible to describe it as the capability to pay attention and to learn about cultural differences and to function in such situations. Empirical studies on inquisitiveness in the context of cross-cultural competence are relatively rare, but some relevant findings exist [7]. They found that inquisitiveness was viewed as one of the major capabilities of effective global leaders in their three-year research among more than 130 executives in 50 companies located in Europe, North America and Asia [12].

Emotional stability helps to find flexible solutions to difficult issues which they may face in the new environment. Therefore, emotional stability is a critical ability to an individual's cross-cultural competence and impacts cultural effectiveness. Emotional stability reflects an individual's capacity and capability to control and manage their emotions in challenging situations. Those who are more emotionally resilient are more likely to manage the challenges of the host environment[6].

Orientation in the present is connected with paying attention to the present situation and being more aware of context and less controlled by the experience and previous mindsets [15]. Home cultures influence the formation of people's worldviews and behavioral patterns. They then may feel more frustrated and dissatisfied with the new cultural circumstances, and therefore perform worse while interacting cross-culturally

Self-presentation describes an individual's ability to maintain a friendly attitude when they feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied in the environment, and is extremely important for negotiating in challenging situations.

Determination relates to concentration skills, avoiding uncertainty, being decisive, so it helps to form and develop the skills to cope with unexpected problem and to make decisions.

Mission focus also relates to the ability to find several solutions when coping with a problem, understands what is important to others, and is important in the situations which require cooperation and understanding.

Willingness to engage is defined as one's tendency to actively seek out and explore unfamiliar situations, including cross-cultural situations [9]. As cross-cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with those from other cultures, willingness to engage seems to be essential for interpreting and expressing ideas.

Self-efficacy refers to a person's perception of his/her ability to reach a particular goal. Therefore, it is important in motivating oneself to persevere in the face of challenging situations.

Emotional self-regulation shows that those who are able to self-regulate are expected to perform better because they are not distracted by negative emotions. This

ability is related to the choice of coping strategies.

As it was mentioned above, different questionnaires were developed to assess the personality traits and abilities an individual may possess. Questions to the candidates for self-evaluation were proposed by numerous scientists at the end of the twentieth century and are commonly used in more recent works.

There are questionnaires which require only *yes/no* answers and are divided into direct and reverse-scored. Here we give an example of ethnocultural empathy survey:

- When dealing with people of a different ethnicity or culture, understanding their viewpoint is a top priority for me.

- It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to be a person from a different culture.

- I feel offended when I hear people make jokes about or use slang words to describe people from other ethnic backgrounds or cultures.

- I rarely think about the impact of an ethnic joke on people who are targeted. (reverse-scored)

- I feel sorry for people of other ethnicities or cultures if I think they are being taken advantage of.

- I share the anger of those who face injustice because of ethnic or cultural differences.

- It is difficult for me to put myself in the shoes of someone from another culture. (reverse-scored)

- When making a group decision, I think that considering each person's perspective is more important than making a decision that's completely fair and impartial [23];[5].

The same type of questionnaire was developed to evaluate self-efficacy:

- I am confident that I will be able to socialize with people from different cultures.

- I am unsure of my abilities to deal with the local population if placed in a different culture. (reverse-scored)

- I am sure I would be able to handle all of the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.

- Having to live in a culture that is drastically different from my own would be a problem for me. (reverse-scored)

- I am confident that I can get used to the unusual conditions of living in another

culture.

- I am uncertain how much I would be able to influence the local population of another culture. (reverse-scored)

- I expect I would get along very well with people from other cultures.

- I am confident of my ability to communicate well with all kinds of people from all kinds of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

- I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

- It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals [2];[18].

It should be mentioned that all the abilities may be estimated due to the similar questionnaires developed in recent decades.

There is another type of a questionnaire where for each statement candidates have to indicate the level of agreement with it, from 1 being that they *strongly disagree* with the statement, to 6 being that they *strongly agree* with the statement. They are usually more general and define the overall level of cross-cultural competence:

- When dealing with people of a different ethnicity or culture, understanding their viewpoint is a top priority for me.

- I am confident that I can get used to the unusual conditions of living in another culture.

- A job is often successful because you understand the people you are working with well.

- I feel impatient when communicating with people of different ethnicities or cultures, regardless of how well they can communicate.

- I would enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.

- People have different methods that can be equally successful in solving a problem.

- When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.

- When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.

- I am sure I would be able to handle all of the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.

- I could change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) if a cross-cultural interaction [20].

While most personality traits are more or less stable, attitudes and abilities may be developed, acquired and trained, and being supported by cross-cultural knowledge, and experience, form the skills which are essential for cross-cultural communication.

Culture knowledge was proposed as a precondition of cross-cultural communication and its effective outcome [21]. It includes culture-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, and additionally some researchers recommended knowledge of interaction rules as a third type of cultural knowledge [8].

Cultural knowledge is an important resource to understand new cultural situations and to communicate in them. Without cultural knowledge cultural shock will be more distressing.

Culture-general knowledge involves the understanding of cultural values and dimensions in general meaning, cultural roles and their impact on an individual's beliefs, opinions, expectations, values and behaviors. Culture-specific knowledge can be divided into knowledge of one's own culture and knowledge of the host's culture.

Knowledge also may be divided into popular knowledge, scientific knowledge and beliefs. The popular knowledge is shared by the members of the same group and consists of everyday experience of its people. Beliefs based on explanations and interpretations of phenomena, and sometimes include superstition and ignorance made by the group members. Even though the beliefs cannot be proved scientifically, they play an important part in societies. Scientific knowledge is defined as a combination of the explanations and interpretations which can be verified. It consists of a set of rules governing the behavior of the members of the society which are required in specific situations; all of them are learned in the processes of socialization and enculturation. Even if there is no clear information regarding the institutionalization of these rules, their compliance is obligatory [16].

Also, it may be mentioned that knowledge of the communicative and interactive rules in another culture is procedural knowledge. Such procedural knowledge may be equally important in achieving cultural effectiveness.

Cross culture experiences, has been

suggested to be an important component of cross cultural competence [1]; [3]; [7]. It may be gained by different ways such as living abroad, working abroad, studying abroad, travelling abroad, family diversity, culture-related training, and personal contact or relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds [3].

Exposure to more than one culture may also raise people's awareness of the potential benefits of cross-culturalism. Having experience of interacting cross-culturally is likely to make individuals more tolerant of ambiguity, more flexible and adaptable. In addition, individuals who experienced greater cultural dissimilarity showed less ethnocentrism [19].

Cultural knowledge is the foundation of cultural-awareness. By knowing their own culture, people understand the strength and weaknesses of it culture and maintain awareness that their home cultural values and norms may lead to some stereotypes and bias. So, the knowledge and awareness of the host culture helps to avoid stereotypes in interaction with its representatives.

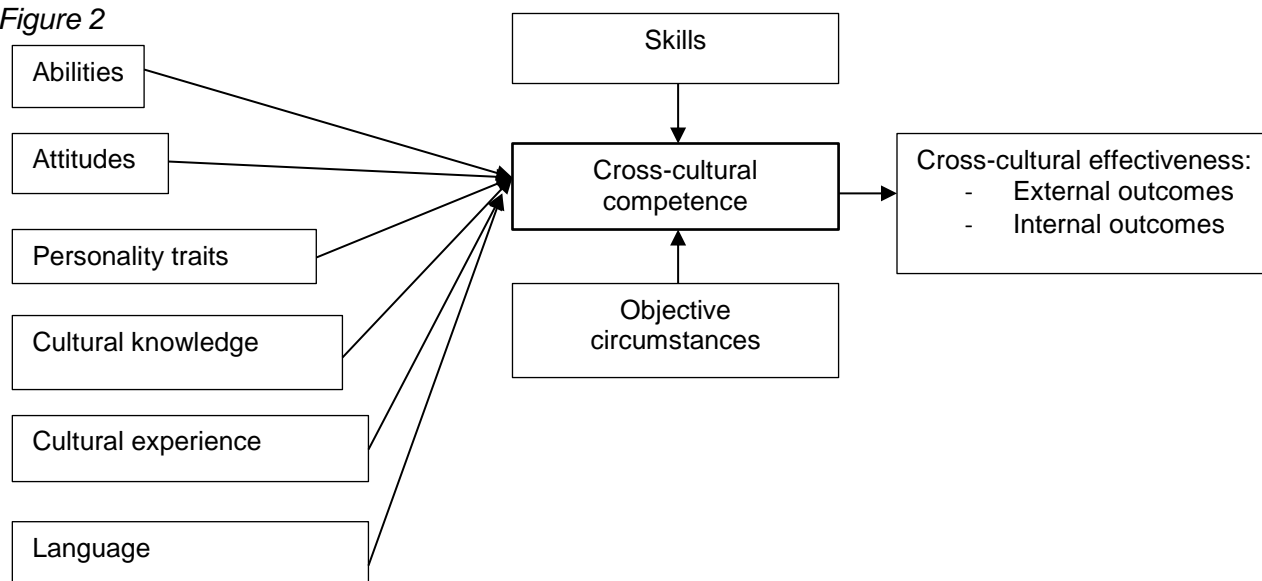
Although language skills are not often mentioned by researchers, they are an important factor which directly influences individuals' cross cultural competence. Speaking the same language makes communication less effortful. The competent use of the host country language is essential to cultural adaption. Human Resources professionals often put the priority to the candidates with a high level of the foreign language. However, only a few cultural researchers mention it [1]; [10]. It is probably due to the fact that foreign language competence is often taken for granted in cross cultural communication as the dominance of English as the universal language is undoubtful. However, knowledge the language of the host country demonstrates high level of adaptability, engagement and empathy.

As it is seemed from the *figure 2*, above mentioned knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and personal qualities lead to cross cultural effectiveness or effective functioning in culturally diverse environment. Its level can be measured. The measurement results are divided into external and internal. External outcomes include behavioral outcomes and outcomes of adapting to an cross-cultural

environment, participating in it, and demonstrating appropriate behavior. These results are an assessment of performance of one's duties and level of productivity during cross-cultural interaction [14]. Internal

outcomes are primarily related to how comfortable an individual feels in intercultural interaction. Also, objective circumstances may influence the cross-cultural effectiveness to some extent.

Figure 2



**Conclusions and future perspectives.** As the issue of cross-cultural competence is of a great importance, more theoretical and empirical studies are in need to explore significant external factors which influence its components and cross cultural effectiveness. Also, more attention should be paid to the evaluation of cross cultural effectiveness in terms of individual's performance, behaviors and psychological

well-being. Studies are also needed to track the effect cross-cultural competence on individuals' accomplishments, achievements and mental state in culturally diverse environments. With continued efforts in the sphere of research, it is possible to better understand the structure allowing international organizations to select and train employees for global success.

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**Анотація. Вступ.** Фактори, що відповідають за ефективну взаємодію між представниками різних культур, вивчали численні дослідники протягом останніх десятиліть. Такий інтерес викликаний зростаючою тенденцією до глобалізації, оскільки це означає збільшення кількості контактів у багатьох сферах, таких як міжнародна політика, бізнес, торгівля, освіта та багато інших. Тому ті, хто задіяні у міжнародних комунікаціях за своєю професією, повинні мати певні здібності та володіти необхідними знаннями, які допоможуть їм розвинути специфічні навички для успішного спілкування. Діагностика крос-культурної компетентності особистості надає важливу інформацію професіоналам, відповідальним за підбір персоналу у сфері міжнародних відносин. Проаналізувати та структурувати ці вміння, знання та навички є метою даного дослідження.

**Методи.** Для досягнення поставленої мети було проаналізовано відмінності в теоретичних визначеннях та концептуалізації структури міжкультурної компетентності. Розглянуто узагальнення його компонентів і зроблено висновки про взаємодію цих компонентів та як вони впливають на поведінку особистості, дії та результати.

**Результати дослідження та їх обговорення.** Аналізовано концептуальну модель міжкультурної компетентності, що складається з дев'яти елементів. У різних джерелах подібні конструкції позначалися різними термінами. Однак на основі численних досліджень стало можливим створити структуру міжкультурної компетентності, яка показує співвідношення когнітивних знань, здібностей, установок, рис, робочих і поведінкових навичок під час міжкультурного спілкування. Культурний досвід і знання іноземної мови також сприяють міжкультурній ефективності, рівень якої можна виміряти. Результати вимірювань поділяють на зовнішні та внутрішні. Зовнішні результати включають поведінкові результати та результати адаптації до міжкультурного середовища, участі в ньому та демонстрації належної поведінки.

**Ключові слова:** культура, компетентність, навички, ставлення, вміння, ефективність, взаємодія.