

**UNIVERSITY OF MYKOLAS ROMERIS
FACULTY OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT AND POLITICAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE**

DARYNA ZAHORODNIA

**LEADERSHIP AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES
IN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT TEAM: A CASE STUDY OF GEYRA GROUP**

Master's thesis

Supervisor
Prof. dr. Andrius Valickas

**VILNIUS
2025**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	3
LIST OF ANNEXES.....	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION.....	8
1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS	8
1.2. EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP THEORIES AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION	10
1.3. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION MODELS AND LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS	12
1.4. THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS	14
1.4.1. <i>Classical and trait-based leadership theories.....</i>	<i>15</i>
1.4.2. <i>Behavioral and contingency approaches.....</i>	<i>15</i>
1.4.3. <i>Transformational and transactional leadership</i>	<i>15</i>
1.4.4. <i>Distributed, ethical, and adaptive leadership.....</i>	<i>15</i>
1.4.5. <i>Cultural influences on leadership.....</i>	<i>16</i>
1.5. MODELS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION.....	17
1.5.1. <i>Hofstede’s cultural dimensions.....</i>	<i>17</i>
1.5.2. <i>Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s seven dimensions</i>	<i>17</i>
1.5.3. <i>Hall’s high-context and low-context communication</i>	<i>18</i>
1.5.4. <i>The GLOBE Project</i>	<i>18</i>
1.5.5. <i>Integrating cultural models.....</i>	<i>19</i>
1.6. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND CROSS-CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL TEAMS.....	21
1.6.1. <i>Leadership adaptation and cultural intelligence.....</i>	<i>21</i>
1.6.2. <i>Conflict and negotiation across cultures</i>	<i>21</i>
1.6.3. <i>Regional leadership variations.....</i>	<i>21</i>
1.7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP.....	22
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	25
2.1. RESEARCH METHODS.....	25
2.2. OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANIZATION	26
2.3. RESEARCH PROCESS AND DATA COLLECTION	27
2.3.1. <i>Research design and paradigm.....</i>	<i>27</i>
2.3.2. <i>Data collection methods and justification.....</i>	<i>27</i>
2.3.3 <i>Participant profile and selection criteria.....</i>	<i>28</i>
2.3.4. <i>Ethical considerations and confidentiality measures</i>	<i>29</i>
3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION IN GEYRA GROUP.....	31
3.1. LEADERSHIP FINDINGS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT TEAM	31
3.2. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION FINDINGS	39
3.3. SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	49
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	58
LIST OF SOURCES.....	62
SUMMARY.....	65
ANNEXES.....	66

LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1.1. Framework of multicultural leadership and communication.....	10
2. Table 1.2. Key leadership theories and their relevance to cross-cultural adaptation.....	12
3. Table 1.3. Leadership practice in multicultural environments	14
4. Table 1.4. The key leadership theories and their relevance for multicultural contexts	16
5. Table 1.5. Comparison of cross-cultural communication models	19
6. Table 1.6. Comparative leadership styles across different regions.....	22
7. Table 1.7. Multi-Level Conceptual Framework of Cross-Cultural Leadership.....	23
8. Table 3.1. Respondent codes and their characteristics in the study.....	31
9. Table 3.2. Key leadership aspects in the international Geyra Group team.....	37
10. Table 3.3. Main leadership problems and challenges in the international team	38
11. Table 3.4. Level of communication style adaptation among participants	43

LIST OF ANNEXES

1. Annex 1.....	66
2. Annex 2.....	67

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of cross-cultural leadership and communication in international project teams has become a central topic in contemporary management research. In the current era of globalization, digital transformation, and the expansion of multinational enterprises, collaboration among individuals from diverse cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds has become the norm rather than the exception. Successful integration of such collaboration requires a deep understanding of leadership behavior and communication dynamics, as both factors determine the success or failure of international projects. Cultural diversity provides valuable opportunities for innovation and creativity, but simultaneously increases the risks of misunderstanding, inefficiency, and conflict. Therefore, exploring the challenges of leadership and communication across cultures is not only relevant but essential for organizations striving for sustainable competitiveness in the global environment.

The significance of this study lies in the growing importance of effective leadership and communication in cross-cultural project management. Traditional leadership models, primarily developed within single cultural contexts, often fail to capture the complexities of managing international teams characterized by diverse norms, values, and communication patterns. The widespread adoption of remote work and virtual collaboration has further intensified the need for leaders to possess cultural intelligence and adaptability. Leaders who disregard cultural differences risk creating divisions and tensions, while those with intercultural competence can transform diversity into a catalyst for innovation and team cohesion. Thus, the topic of this research directly responds to contemporary managerial challenges by linking leadership effectiveness with intercultural communication competence.

The novelty of this work lies in its comprehensive integration of leadership theory, cross-cultural communication frameworks, and project management practices within the context of a real international organization. While prior studies often explored these domains separately, this research approaches them as interdependent components of a single system. A distinctive contribution of the thesis is its focus on a small-scale multinational enterprise, Geyra Group, which serves as a representative case of how leadership and communication function within culturally diverse teams in practice. Existing research has predominantly concentrated on large corporations, leaving a gap in understanding how smaller international firms address these issues. By investigating this underexplored setting, the study provides new insights into leadership and communication dynamics in compact, agile project environments.

The object of the research is international project teams composed of members with varied cultural and professional backgrounds.

The subject of the research is the interaction between leadership practices and cross-cultural communication processes within such teams, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities that arise.

The problem of the research concerns the difficulty of managing communication and cooperation in culturally heterogeneous teams, which can undermine leadership effectiveness and overall project performance.

The aim of the research is to explore how leadership styles and communication strategies influence collaboration in multicultural environments and to identify practical approaches for overcoming cultural barriers and improving team outcomes.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives have been formulated:

To analyze theoretical approaches to leadership in international and multicultural contexts, identifying their strengths and limitations.

To examine the role of cross-cultural communication in shaping collaboration within diverse teams and to identify major barriers and enablers.

To explore, through a qualitative case study, how leadership and communication practices are manifested in the Geyra Group international team.

To systematize effective practices derived from both theory and empirical findings.

To develop evidence-based recommendations for enhancing leadership and communication effectiveness in culturally diverse project teams.

The methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative research approach, combining theoretical analysis with an empirical case study. A comprehensive literature review establishes the conceptual foundation of leadership and intercultural communication theories. Empirical data are obtained through semi-structured interviews with employees of Geyra Group, representing diverse cultural backgrounds. The collected data are analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). This methodological design enables an in-depth exploration of leadership and communication patterns within an authentic organizational setting, ensuring contextual validity and depth of understanding.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in its interdisciplinary integration of leadership theory, intercultural communication, and project management. The study enriches academic discourse by emphasizing cultural intelligence, empathy, and adaptability as essential components of leadership effectiveness in international contexts. Furthermore, it critically examines the limitations of existing leadership theories when applied to multicultural teams and proposes conceptual refinements that reflect the realities of global collaboration.

The practical significance of the research is equally important. In a globalized economy, organizations increasingly depend on cross-cultural project teams to drive innovation and implement complex initiatives. However, many leaders lack the necessary skills to manage cultural diversity effectively. The findings of this study offer practical recommendations for fostering trust, managing communication, and resolving conflicts within diverse teams. The results can inform leadership development programs, cross-cultural training initiatives, and organizational policies aimed at improving

collaboration in multicultural settings. These insights are also relevant to educators and policymakers preparing professionals for international careers.

The originality of this thesis lies in its empirical focus on a single case study of Geyra Group, which allows for an in-depth exploration of leadership and communication within a real cross-cultural context. By combining academic theory with practical evidence, the research bridges the gap between abstract conceptual models and real-world managerial practice. The work not only contributes to academic understanding but also provides actionable strategies for enhancing collaboration, inclusivity, and performance in international project teams.

In conclusion, this introduction establishes the conceptual, methodological, and practical foundation of the study. It justifies the relevance and novelty of the topic, formulates the key elements of research design (object, subject, aim, problem, and objectives) and highlights both the theoretical and practical value of the work. The study ultimately seeks to advance knowledge in the field of leadership and cross-cultural communication while offering tangible recommendations that support effective management in a world where cultural diversity is both a challenge and a strategic advantage.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer: How do leadership styles and cross-cultural communication strategies influence collaboration and performance in multicultural project teams?

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

1.1 Theoretical framework of leadership in multicultural contexts

Leadership and cross-cultural communication in international project teams represent a multifaceted intersection of management science, organizational behavior, and intercultural studies. Leadership can be broadly defined as the ability to influence, motivate, and guide individuals or groups toward achieving shared objectives, while cross-cultural communication involves the exchange of information and meaning between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Within international project teams, these dimensions are inseparable, creating both opportunities and challenges shaped by differences in values, communication norms, and expectations of authority and collaboration. The effectiveness of such teams largely depends on how leaders integrate cultural understanding with strategic and communicative competence to achieve project goals (As'ad, A., Junaidin, J., Syarifuddin, S., Herison, R., & Syukur, A., 2024).

Effective leadership in multicultural contexts extends far beyond traditional management functions. It involves an ability to interpret cultural dynamics that influence team interactions and performance. Deanne N. Den Hartog (2024) emphasizes that leadership effectiveness “depends not solely on personal traits but on the dynamic interplay between leader behavior, team composition, and cultural context.” This perspective aligns with the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) - the ability to adapt one's leadership and communication style in response to different cultural environments. Leaders with high CQ are more likely to understand unspoken cultural assumptions, anticipate misunderstandings, and manage conflicts in ways that respect diverse viewpoints.

According to Aidane (2024), cross-cultural leadership is a multidimensional skill that combines emotional intelligence, situational awareness, and intercultural competence. Leaders must move beyond standardized practices and instead cultivate the ability to perceive subtle cultural signals and respond flexibly. For example, a directive leadership style might be well-received in cultures with high power distance, while participative or transformational styles tend to be more effective in egalitarian or collectivist environments. This adaptability enhances collaboration and trust, helping teams maintain alignment despite cultural diversity.

Organizational research further underscores that leadership success in multicultural settings is influenced not only by the leader's personal adaptability but also by institutional and structural factors. Alvarez (2024) argues that organizations play a crucial role in shaping leadership outcomes by creating policies, norms, and systems that promote inclusivity. He suggests that international project leaders thrive in environments that foster equitable communication, recognize diversity as a strategic asset, and establish cultural awareness as part of organizational values. This perspective shifts responsibility from the individual

leader to the organization as a whole, positioning leadership as an embedded practice within a cross-cultural institutional context.

Research by Brett, Behfar, and Kern (2006) highlights how cultural diversity affects trust, negotiation, and conflict management within international teams. They observe that misunderstandings are often inevitable due to divergent communication norms and assumptions. However, effective leaders can mitigate these issues through active mediation, setting shared behavioral norms, and reinforcing a collective understanding of goals. This balance between task orientation and relational sensitivity is critical for sustaining both performance and cohesion in global projects.

Empirical insights by Jurado (2025) indicate that transformational and participative leadership styles tend to be particularly effective in multicultural environments. Such leaders inspire creativity, foster engagement, and encourage collaboration by empowering team members. Conversely, transactional leadership, focused on control and compliance, often proves less effective in culturally heterogeneous teams because it fails to address underlying motivational and relational needs. Jurado concludes that leadership flexibility, or the capacity to balance structure with empowerment, is one of the most critical determinants of success in international projects.

Den Hartog (2024) further stresses the need for evidence-based leadership training tailored to specific cultural and project environments. Many leadership programs still rely on Western-centric assumptions that may not translate across cultures. Thus, training initiatives should include cross-cultural simulations, intercultural dialogue exercises, and reflection on real-world project experiences. This evidence-based approach ensures that leaders do not merely learn abstract concepts but develop actionable strategies for applying cultural awareness in practice.

The role of communication remains central in cross-cultural leadership. Heimbürger (2018) introduces the concept of “cross-cultural knowledge spaces,” referring to the distinct ways information, norms, and meaning circulate within different societies. Leaders who understand these knowledge spaces can better facilitate knowledge sharing, reduce misinterpretation, and build a shared cognitive framework among team members. Oertig and Buergi (2025) extend this argument to virtual international teams, showing that technological mediation further complicates cross-cultural leadership. In remote environments, leaders must establish transparent communication protocols and culturally adaptive digital practices to avoid alienation and fragmentation within the team.

The following table summarizes key theoretical constructs that define leadership and communication in multicultural contexts and their practical implications for international project management.

Table 1.1. Framework of multicultural leadership and communication

Concept	Definition	Implications for International Leadership Practice
Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	The ability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts by understanding and responding appropriately to cultural cues.	Enhances flexibility and helps leaders build trust across diverse teams.
Cross-Cultural Communication	The exchange of meaning between individuals from different cultural backgrounds through verbal and non-verbal channels.	Requires leaders to mediate misunderstandings and foster shared understanding through empathy and clarity.
Transformational / Participative Leadership	Leadership approaches that focus on vision, empowerment, and shared decision-making.	Promote engagement and creativity, especially in culturally diverse environments.
Organizational Support Systems	Institutional frameworks that provide diversity training, equitable communication policies, and inclusive norms.	Create conditions for sustainable intercultural collaboration and leader effectiveness.

Compiled by the author from Den Hartog (2024); Aidane (2024); Alvarez (2024); Brett, Behfar & Kern (2006); Jurado (2025); Heimbürger (2018); Oertig & Buergi (2025).

The institutional dimension of leadership has become increasingly significant. Osaghae (2024) and Den Hartog (2024) both emphasize that inclusivity and communication transparency are no longer optional but strategic imperatives for modern organizations. The European Union's (2014) directives on diversity reporting underline this shift by framing diversity not just as an ethical concern but as a driver of organizational performance. This broader institutional view reinforces the notion that leadership effectiveness depends on systemic support for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps remain. Many studies continue to focus predominantly on Western cultural contexts, limiting their global applicability. Additionally, relatively little is known about how leadership and communication evolve over the life cycle of international projects or how cultural differences manifest in digital collaboration. Future research should explore longitudinal dynamics, non-Western perspectives, and hybrid team structures to build a more holistic understanding of cross-cultural leadership.

In summary, leadership in multicultural project environments is best understood as a dynamic process that integrates interpersonal sensitivity, communicative adaptability, and institutional support. It demands that leaders develop not only managerial expertise but also cultural literacy and emotional intelligence. The success of international project teams depends on leaders' capacity to build bridges across cultures, transforming diversity from a source of friction into a foundation for innovation and collective achievement.

1.2. Evolution of leadership theories and cross-cultural adaptation

The evolution of leadership theory reflects profound changes in management science and in the broader societal values that shape organizational life. Initially, leadership was conceptualized through the

Great Man Theory, which emphasized innate traits such as charisma, intelligence, and courage, assuming that leaders were born rather than developed. This perspective mirrored hierarchical and patriarchal organizational norms of the early twentieth century but proved limited because it did not account for variation in leadership effectiveness across contexts or cultures (Talaera, 2023).

By the mid-twentieth century, behavioral theories of leadership emerged, shifting the focus from who a leader is to what a leader does. The influential studies at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan identified two major dimensions of leadership behavior: task orientation and people orientation, suggesting that effective leadership could be developed through experience and training. This transition democratized leadership and emphasized the importance of adaptability, a principle that is especially relevant to international project teams operating across cultural boundaries (Thunderbird School of Global Management, 2025).

The next major stage came with contingency theories in the 1960s and 1970s, which recognized that no single leadership style is universally effective. Models such as Fiedler's Contingency Theory and the Situational Leadership Theory of Hersey and Blanchard emphasized that leadership success depends on the interaction between leader style, follower maturity, and situational variables. In multicultural contexts, these theories are particularly valuable because they recognize that leadership must adapt to cultural expectations, communication preferences, and contextual complexity (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Later, transformational and transactional leadership theories redefined leadership as a dynamic process of mutual influence. Transformational leadership, as developed by Burns and Bass, focuses on inspiring and motivating followers toward shared values and long-term goals, while transactional leadership emphasizes structure, control, and rewards. Transformational leadership has proven especially effective in international settings because it promotes vision, inclusivity, and cultural cohesion among diverse team members. However, the effectiveness of each approach depends on cultural context – cultures with high power distance may favor structured transactional leadership, while egalitarian cultures may respond more positively to participative and transformational styles (United Nations, 2015).

In the twenty-first century, the concept of distributed or shared leadership emerged, emphasizing collaboration and decentralization. This approach reflects the shift toward networked, globalized organizations in which leadership responsibilities are shared among team members rather than concentrated in a single figure. Shared leadership is particularly relevant for multicultural and virtual teams, where collaboration, trust, and empowerment are critical for success (Van Vliet, 2023).

Modern research also highlights the influence of culture on leadership itself. Studies such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the GLOBE project demonstrate that leadership perceptions vary widely across societies. Hierarchical leadership may be effective in collectivist cultures, whereas participatory approaches resonate more strongly with individualistic societies. This recognition underscores

that leadership is not a fixed construct but an adaptive process shaped by cultural and contextual realities (Welsch et al., 2023).

The following table summarizes the evolution of key leadership theories and their relevance to cross-cultural adaptation in international project management.

Table 1.2. Key leadership theories and their relevance to cross-cultural adaptation

Era / Theory	Core Idea	Cross-Cultural Implication
Great Man / Trait	Leaders are born with inherent qualities.	Limited in diverse cultural contexts; ignores situational and cultural variation.
Behavioral	Focus on leader behaviors (task vs. people orientation) rather than innate traits.	Accessible across cultures; highlights adaptability but may overlook deep cultural differences.
Contingency / Situational	Leadership effectiveness depends on context and follower readiness.	Highly relevant to multicultural teams; emphasizes flexible adaptation to cultural norms.
Transformational / Transactional	Leaders inspire and empower (transformational) or control and reward (transactional).	Effectiveness varies by power distance and communication culture.
Shared / Distributed	Leadership is a collaborative, collective process rather than individual authority.	Ideal for global, multicultural, and virtual teams emphasizing empowerment and trust.

Compiled by the author from Talaera (2023); Thunderbird School of Global Management (2025); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997); United Nations (2015); Van Vliet (2023); Welsch et al. (2023).

In summary, the evolution of leadership theories illustrates a shift from static, trait-based views to dynamic, situationally adaptive and culturally responsive models. For international project teams, these developments are essential. They demonstrate that leadership is not about rigid adherence to one model but about integrating flexibility, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural sensitivity. Understanding the trajectory of leadership theory helps modern leaders align their approach with diverse team expectations, fostering inclusivity, motivation, and collective success in a globalized environment.

1.3. Cross-cultural communication models and leadership implications

Effective leadership in international teams depends not only on management competence but also on the ability to communicate across cultures. The interaction of cultural values, communication styles, and leadership practices determines how effectively teams share information, make decisions, and resolve conflicts. Several major theoretical frameworks provide insight into how culture shapes communication and leadership in global environments.

Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (1980, updated 2010) remains one of the most influential tools for understanding value differences across nations. His six dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint: explain why leadership behaviors perceived as empowering in one culture may

be interpreted as disrespectful or inappropriate in another. For example, in high power-distance cultures, subordinates expect leaders to make authoritative decisions, whereas in low power-distance settings, team members value participative leadership and open dialogue. Despite its widespread use, Hofstede's model has been criticized for conceptualizing cultures as static and overly homogeneous, neglecting the dynamic evolution of cultural identities and subcultures within nations.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) extended Hofstede's approach by examining how cultural values influence organizational relationships and managerial behavior. Their seven dimensions: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, neutral versus emotional, specific versus diffuse, achievement versus ascription, sequential versus synchronous time, and internal versus external control, highlight how leaders must balance procedural fairness with relational flexibility. For instance, in universalist cultures such as the United States or Germany, adherence to rules and standards is essential, while in particularist cultures such as China or Mexico, leaders often rely on personal connections and trust. The implication for international project leaders is clear: success depends on knowing when to emphasize structure and when to rely on interpersonal understanding.

Hall's (1976) theory of high-context and low-context communication adds a critical perspective by focusing on how meaning is conveyed. In high-context cultures (for example, Japan or Saudi Arabia), communication relies heavily on nonverbal cues, shared experience, and implicit understanding, while in low-context cultures (such as Germany or the United States), messages are explicit, direct, and verbally detailed. Misinterpreting these differences can lead to significant communication breakdowns. A leader from a low-context culture may perceive indirect communication as evasive, whereas a high-context communicator may view directness as rude or overly confrontational. Effective cross-cultural leaders therefore cultivate contextual awareness, interpreting silence, tone, and body language alongside verbal messages.

The GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004) represents a more comprehensive empirical framework that integrates and refines earlier theories. It identifies nine key cultural dimensions: performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, and explores their relationship with leadership prototypes. Crucially, the GLOBE researchers differentiate between cultural values (what people believe should be) and cultural practices (what actually occurs). This distinction is essential for leaders navigating between formal organizational expectations and informal social norms within multicultural teams. More recent analyses (Xu et al., 2023) reaffirm the GLOBE framework's relevance, emphasizing its ability to predict leadership preferences and communication effectiveness in international project settings.

Together, these theoretical perspectives form a comprehensive foundation for understanding how cultural patterns influence leadership communication. Hofstede provides a macro-level view of value

systems; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner highlight relational and behavioral dimensions; Hall explains the process of message transmission; and the GLOBE Project integrates these approaches into an empirically grounded model. Each framework contributes to developing cultural intelligence (CQ) – the leader’s capability to interpret cultural signals accurately and adapt behavior accordingly. (Irving, J. A., 2025).

The table below summarizes the key models of cross-cultural communication and their implications for leadership practice in multicultural environments.

Table 1.3. Leadership practice in multicultural environments

Model / Author(s)	Core Concept	Leadership Implications
Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions (1980/2010)	Six national value dimensions explain behavioral differences between societies.	Guides leaders in anticipating hierarchical expectations, risk tolerance, and individual-collective balance.
Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997)	Seven relational and organizational dimensions show how cultures balance rules, relationships, and status.	Helps leaders decide when to apply formal procedures or rely on trust-based interactions.
Hall’s Context Theory (1976)	Distinguishes between high-context (implicit) and low-context (explicit) communication styles.	Trains leaders to interpret indirect cues and adapt their messaging for clarity and respect.
GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004)	Identifies nine cultural dimensions linking societal culture to leadership prototypes and behaviors.	Enables evidence-based leadership adaptation to align team practices with cultural expectations.

Compiled by the author from Hofstede (1980/2010); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997); Hall (1976); House et al. (2004); Xu et al. (2023); Irving (2025)

Overall, these models emphasize that successful cross-cultural leadership requires far more than technical or managerial expertise. It demands intercultural empathy, active listening, and flexible communication. Leaders who integrate these frameworks into their daily practice build environments of mutual understanding, reduce conflict, and enhance cooperation across national and cultural boundaries. In international project teams, such competence translates directly into improved performance, innovation, and sustainable collaboration.

1.4. Theories of leadership in multicultural contexts

The intellectual development of leadership theory reflects the evolution of management science from rigid, hierarchical structures to adaptive, culture-sensitive models. Leadership, understood as the ability to influence, motivate, and guide individuals or groups toward shared goals, has undergone a series of conceptual transformations throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The modern understanding of leadership integrates psychological, sociological, and intercultural perspectives, emphasizing that effective leadership depends not only on personal traits but also on situational, relational, and cultural variables.

1.4.1. Classical and trait-based leadership theories

Early research in leadership was dominated by the Great Man Theory, which viewed leadership as an innate quality tied to personal traits such as charisma, intelligence, or courage. This approach reflected the industrial realities of its time, emphasizing authority, hierarchy, and control. However, it failed to explain why individuals with similar traits produced different leadership outcomes under varying cultural and situational conditions (Talaera, 2023). The limitations of trait-based approaches led to a shift in scholarly focus from who leaders are to what leaders do, giving rise to behavioral and situational theories (Jurado, E., 2025).

1.4.2. Behavioral and contingency approaches

The mid-twentieth century saw the emergence of behavioral leadership theories, notably the Ohio State and Michigan studies, which identified two central dimensions of leadership behavior: task orientation and relationship orientation. These findings helped democratize leadership, suggesting it could be learned and developed through experience rather than inherited.

The 1960s and 1970s introduced contingency theories that argued there is no single best leadership style. Fiedler's Contingency Model and Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory proposed that effective leadership depends on the fit between leader style, follower readiness, and the situational environment. In multicultural project teams, these theories are particularly valuable because they recognize that leadership effectiveness varies across cultural contexts where communication patterns, expectations of authority, and group values differ significantly (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

1.4.3. Transformational and transactional leadership

The late twentieth century marked the rise of transformational and transactional leadership theories, which remain foundational in modern leadership studies. Transactional leadership emphasizes structure, order, and control through clear rules and performance-based rewards. Transformational leadership, in contrast, focuses on vision, inspiration, and emotional engagement, motivating individuals to transcend self-interest for collective success. Burns and Bass demonstrated that transformational leaders achieve superior outcomes by appealing to followers' intrinsic motivation and shared purpose.

In international project teams, transformational leadership is particularly valuable because it promotes inclusion, flexibility, and collaboration across cultural boundaries (United Nations, 2015). Yet, transactional leadership remains effective in hierarchical or high power-distance environments, where employees expect formal guidance and stability. Hence, cultural context determines the relative effectiveness of both leadership forms.

1.4.4. Distributed, ethical, and adaptive leadership

In the twenty-first century, leadership research has shifted toward decentralized and ethically grounded models. Shared or distributed leadership emphasizes the collective responsibility of all team members and encourages open participation in decision-making. This model aligns with the operational

realities of international project teams, which often function without rigid hierarchies and rely on diverse expertise (Kumar, S., Pandey, N., & Mukherjee, D., 2022).

Simultaneously, ethical, authentic, and adaptive leadership theories have gained importance. These frameworks focus on integrity, transparency, and inclusivity as essential values in culturally diverse workplaces (Van Vliet, 2023). Ethical leaders promote fairness and trust; authentic leaders foster openness and credibility; adaptive leaders modify strategies and communication styles to suit cultural and situational demands. Together, these approaches reinforce leadership as a moral, participatory, and context-sensitive process.

1.4.5. Cultural influences on leadership

Cross-cultural studies, notably Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions and the GLOBE Project, emphasize that leadership effectiveness is context-dependent and shaped by cultural values. For example, hierarchical leadership is more accepted in high power-distance and collectivist cultures, while participative and transformational styles are more effective in egalitarian or individualistic societies (Welsch et al., 2023).

These insights underscore that leadership cannot be universally defined. Rather, it must be understood as a dynamic process that reflects local cultural norms, social expectations, and the evolving nature of global interaction. Effective multicultural leaders therefore combine strategic, emotional, and intercultural intelligence, adapting their behavior to diverse organizational and cultural contexts.

The table below summarizes the key leadership theories and their relevance for multicultural contexts.

Table 1.4. The key leadership theories and their relevance for multicultural contexts

Theory / Approach	Core Concept	Relevance to Multicultural Leadership
Great Man / Trait Theory	Leadership is based on innate traits and personal characteristics.	Limited in cross-cultural settings; ignores contextual and cultural variability.
Behavioral Theories	Effective leadership arises from specific task- and relationship-oriented behaviors.	Provides learnable skills applicable across cultures with adjustments for communication norms.
Contingency / Situational Theories	Leadership effectiveness depends on matching style to situation and follower readiness.	Highly adaptable; essential for leaders managing diverse, multicultural teams.
Transformational / Transactional Theories	Leaders inspire (transformational) or control through structure and reward (transactional).	Transformational leadership supports inclusion; transactional suits hierarchical cultures.
Distributed / Ethical / Adaptive Theories	Leadership is shared, transparent, and value-driven.	Aligns with collaborative, diverse, and globally networked teams; fosters ethical unity.

1.5. Models of cross-cultural communication

Effective leadership in international project teams depends equally on the leader's ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. Cross-cultural communication theory provides a vital lens for understanding how values, norms, and cognitive patterns shape interaction and collaboration in global organizations.

1.5.1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede's (1980; 2010) framework remains a cornerstone of intercultural research. His six dimensions (power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence) explain how national cultures influence organizational behavior and communication. For instance, direct feedback that appears constructive in low power-distance cultures may be viewed as disrespectful in hierarchical societies. Each dimension highlights a specific aspect of societal behavior that influences how people interact in the workplace (Mhlongo, N. Z., Olatoye, F. O., Elufioye, O. A., Ibeh, C. V., Falaiye, T., & Daraojimba, A. I., 2024).

For example, in cultures with low power distance, employees feel comfortable expressing disagreement, questioning decisions, or giving candid feedback to supervisors. In contrast, in high power-distance societies, such direct communication may be interpreted as inappropriate, confrontational, or disrespectful, even if the intention is constructive. Similarly, leaders must adjust their communication approaches when working with team members from individualistic cultures, who prioritize personal initiative and autonomy, compared to collectivist cultures, where harmony, group consensus, and shared responsibility are valued more highly (Sertel, G., Karadag, E., & Ergin-Kocatürk, H., 2022).

The strength of Hofstede's model lies in its systematic comparison of national values, while its main limitation is its tendency to treat cultures as homogeneous and static entities.

1.5.2. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's seven dimensions

Expanding upon Hofstede's earlier work, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) developed a more relational model focusing on how people balance universal rules and particular relationships, individual autonomy and community, or achievement and ascription. This model helps explain why decision-making and trust-building vary across societies. Their framework identifies seven cultural dimensions that illustrate how people across different societies reconcile tensions between universal rules and personal relationships, between individual freedom and collective responsibility, and between status earned through accomplishments versus status granted by social position. These dimensions, such as universalism versus particularism, individualism versus communitarianism, neutral versus emotional expression, specific versus diffuse relationships, and achievement versus ascription, offer a nuanced perspective on how cultural preferences influence everyday workplace behavior (Shirayev, E. B., & Levy, D. A., 2024).

For example, in universalist cultures, formal contracts dominate; in particularist cultures, personal relationships carry greater weight.

1.5.3. Hall's high-context and low-context communication

Edward T. Hall (1976) made a significant contribution to cross-cultural communication theory through his distinction between high-context and low-context communication styles. His model explains how different societies encode meaning in interaction and why communication failures often occur in multicultural settings. In high-context cultures, such as Japan, China, or many Middle Eastern countries, much of the message is conveyed implicitly. Shared history, social roles, nonverbal signals, tone, silence, and indirect gestures carry substantial communicative weight. Because meaning is embedded in the surrounding context rather than in the literal words, speakers often rely on subtle cues and expect listeners to "read between the lines."

In contrast, low-context cultures, such as Germany, the United States, or Scandinavia, prioritize clarity, precision, and direct verbal expression. Messages are expected to be straightforward, explicit, and detailed so that the meaning is unmistakable even without additional contextual knowledge. Individuals in such cultures often value transparency and unambiguous communication, viewing indirectness as inefficient or vague (Mukhtar, A., Zhu, Y., Lee, Y. I., Bambacas, M., & Cavusgil, S. T., 2022).

Misunderstandings frequently arise when people from these contrasting communication traditions interact. For example, leaders accustomed to low-context communication may interpret indirect feedback, pauses, or silence from high-context team members as uncertainty or disengagement rather than as signals of respect, reflection, or politeness. Likewise, individuals from high-context cultures may perceive the directness of low-context communicators as overly blunt, insensitive, or confrontational. Hall's framework therefore provides an essential tool for leaders in multicultural teams, helping them recognize hidden layers of meaning, adjust their communication strategies, and foster smoother interpersonal interactions across cultural boundaries.

1.5.4. The GLOBE Project

The GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004) represents one of the most comprehensive cross-cultural leadership studies to date. It identifies nine cultural dimensions and distinguishes between values (societal ideals) and practices (real behaviors). This differentiation enables leaders to understand discrepancies between normative expectations and actual workplace conduct. The GLOBE Project provides an empirical foundation for understanding leadership preferences across regions, such as the prominence of charismatic and team-oriented leadership in Central and Eastern Europe, including Lithuania (Xu et al., 2023).

A key strength of the GLOBE model is its distinction between cultural values (what societies believe *should* be) and cultural practices (what actually *is* observable in daily life). This separation helps leaders understand why there may be tensions between a society's aspirations and its real workplace dynamics. For example, a culture may value participative leadership in theory but still display hierarchical practices in

organizational settings. By recognizing these discrepancies, leaders can design communication, motivation, and decision-making strategies that align more realistically with how people behave rather than with abstract national ideals (Schroevens, S., Higgins, C., & Doğan, A. (Eds.), 2023).

1.5.5. Integrating cultural models

Taken together, these frameworks provide complementary perspectives: Hofstede identifies structural value differences, Trompenaars explores relational dynamics, Hall explains communication processes, and GLOBE contextualizes leadership practices. Effective leaders integrate these models to enhance cultural intelligence, anticipate potential misunderstandings, and adapt strategies to the specific context of their teams. Leaders who draw on all four models are better equipped to interpret team dynamics, anticipate sources of misunderstanding, and tailor their communication and decision-making styles to specific cultural contexts. This integrated approach enhances cultural intelligence, enabling leaders to navigate diversity with sensitivity, build stronger relationships, and create more inclusive work environments. Instead of applying a one-size-fits-all strategy, culturally intelligent leaders adapt their methods to the diverse values, communication patterns, and leadership expectations present within their teams. Through such informed flexibility, they foster trust, collaboration, and high performance in global organizational settings (Zegers, C., & Auron, M., 2022).

Table 1.5. Comparison of cross-cultural communication models

Model / Theorists	Core Focus	Key Dimensions	Strengths	Limitations	Practical Implications for Leaders
Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (1980; 2010)	Structural cultural value differences at the national level	Power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, indulgence-restraint	Provides systematic, empirical comparison of national cultures; widely validated and easy to apply	Treats nations as culturally homogeneous; may oversimplify dynamic cultural change	Helps leaders anticipate communication styles, feedback expectations, decision-making tendencies, and attitudes toward authority in multicultural teams
Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's Seven Dimensions (1997)	Relational dynamics and social dilemmas shaping interpersonal interactions	Universalism-particularism, individualism-communitarianism, neutral-emotional, specific-diffuse, achievement-ascription,	Highlights interpersonal relationships, trust-building mechanisms, and real-life behavior patterns	More complex to apply; requires deep contextual understanding	Supports leaders in managing negotiation styles, relationship-building, conflict

Table 1.5 continued

		sequential-synchronic time, internal-external control			sensitivity, and expectations around status and authority
Hall's High-Context and Low-Context Communication (1976)	Communication preferences and encoding of meaning	High-context vs. low-context communication	Explains common causes of miscommunication; clarifies role of nonverbal cues and implicit meaning	Offers only one dimension; may not capture full cultural complexity	Guides leaders in adjusting directness, message clarity, feedback style, and interpretations of silence or indirectness
GLOBE Project (House et al., 2004)	Leadership expectations and cultural practices across societies	9 dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, performance orientation, humane orientation, future orientation	Distinguishes cultural values vs. practices; large multinational dataset; connects culture directly to leadership styles	Highly complex; data may not apply equally to all organizational contexts	Supports leaders in aligning leadership style with cultural expectations; helps adapt team management, motivation, and vision-setting across regions
Integrated Cultural Model (Hofstede + Trompenaars + Hall + GLOBE)	Holistic perspective combining macro, meso, and micro cultural influences	Structural values, relational patterns, communication styles, leadership expectations	Offers comprehensive understanding of cultural behavior; supports adaptive leadership	Requires careful synthesis; may be overwhelming without training	Enables leaders to anticipate misunderstandings, adjust communication, balance structure with relationships, and lead multicultural teams with cultural intelligence

Compiled by the author from Hall (1976); Hofstede (1980, 2010); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997); House et al. (2004); Mukhtar et al. (2022); Schroevers, Higgings & Doğan (2023); Xu et al. (2023); Zegers & Auron (2022)

1.6. Leadership practices and cross-cultural challenges in international teams

International project teams operate in complex cultural environments where leadership effectiveness depends on the ability to adapt, communicate, and build cohesion across diverse values and expectations. Modern leadership practice thus requires more than managerial competence; it demands cultural intelligence, strategic empathy, and the capacity to mediate between differing worldviews.

1.6.1. Leadership adaptation and cultural intelligence

Recent scholarship emphasizes cultural intelligence (CQ) as an essential leadership competency. CQ enables leaders to interpret unfamiliar behaviors, navigate cultural ambiguity, and foster trust among diverse team members. Leaders with high CQ demonstrate not only cultural awareness but also behavioral adaptability and motivation to learn from intercultural interactions. Nosratabadi et al. (2020) confirm that transformational leaders with strong CQ achieve superior outcomes in multicultural environments by combining visionary leadership with sensitivity to cultural nuances.

In practice, culturally intelligent leaders act as interpreters and integrators of meaning, aligning communication styles, expectations, and team dynamics. They are aware that directness may be valued in some cultures but perceived as disrespectful in others, and they adjust accordingly. By modeling respect, curiosity, and emotional control, such leaders create psychological safety, a key factor in maintaining cohesion and creativity in international teams. (Welsch, D., Burk, L., Mötefindt, D., & Neumann, M. 2023).

1.6.2. Conflict and negotiation across cultures

Conflict within international project teams often arises not from professional or technical disagreements but from hidden cultural assumptions regarding hierarchy, time, or communication. Hofstede's and Hall's frameworks illustrate how these assumptions shape interaction: in monochronic, low-context cultures, conflict may be approached directly and analytically, whereas in high-context or collectivist cultures, open disagreement can be perceived as confrontational or disrespectful (Talaera, 2023).

Effective global leaders therefore manage conflict proactively, framing it as a constructive learning process rather than a threat to group harmony. They employ cross-cultural negotiation techniques that emphasize empathy, rephrasing, and cultural framing-translating viewpoints into mutually acceptable terms. Empirical evidence from Lithuanian and other European organizations confirms that structured communication protocols and cross-cultural mediation training reduce misunderstandings and project delays, improving both collaboration and trust (Thunderbird School of Global Management, 2025).

1.6.3. Regional leadership variations

Comparative research demonstrates that leadership practices vary considerably by region, reflecting historical traditions, social structures, and organizational cultures. Scandinavian leadership is distinguished by egalitarianism, empowerment, and trust. Leaders tend to delegate responsibility and encourage consensus-based decision-making, promoting innovation and work-life balance.

In contrast, Asian leadership models, particularly in Japan, China, and South Korea, emphasize harmony, loyalty, and long-term vision. Decision-making often follows hierarchical channels but aims at maintaining group cohesion. This collective orientation fosters stability yet may hinder rapid adaptation in dynamic project environments.

American leadership, grounded in individualism and pragmatism, prioritizes efficiency, measurable outcomes, and direct communication. However, this performance-driven approach can clash with high-context cultures, such as Japan or the Middle East, where relationship-building and informal negotiation precede formal agreements (Ogbogu, P. U., Noroski, L. M., Arcoleo, K., Reese Jr, B. D., & Apter, A. J., 2022).

Meanwhile, Lithuanian organizations, located at the intersection of Eastern and Western traditions, exhibit a balanced style combining structured task orientation with relational sensitivity. This hybrid model allows Lithuanian managers to act as mediators in multicultural collaborations, effectively bridging communication gaps and fostering mutual understanding (Jurado, 2025).

The comparative distinctions among these leadership cultures are summarized below.

Table 1.6. Comparative leadership styles across different regions

Region / Model	Core Leadership Features	Primary Strengths	Potential Limitations
Scandinavian (Nordic)	Low hierarchy, empowerment, consensus-based management	Promotes creativity and employee engagement	May slow decision-making in large organizations
Asian (East Asian)	Hierarchical structure, harmony, collective goals	Builds loyalty, long-term cooperation	Can resist rapid innovation or conflictual debate
American (U.S.)	Efficiency, directness, performance measurement	Ensures accountability and productivity	May conflict with high-context communication norms
Lithuanian (Hybrid)	Balanced structure and empathy, relational focus	Facilitates intercultural mediation and teamwork	Requires flexibility to manage Western and Eastern expectations

Compiled by the author from Ogbogu et al. (2022); Jurado (2025); Thunderbird School of Global Management (2025); Nosratabadi et al. (2020); Talaera (2023); Welsch et al. (2023)

1.7. Conceptual framework of cross-cultural leadership

A comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural leadership requires an integrative conceptual model that unites the key theoretical and empirical insights discussed above. The framework situates culture as a dynamic, multi-layered construct encompassing values, norms, and behaviors.

Macro level: Hofstede's and GLOBE's cultural dimensions explain societal influences on leadership. These models provide insights into why leadership behaviors perceived as effective in one part of the world may be ineffective or misunderstood in another. Macro-level analysis helps leaders anticipate

broad cultural expectations and align their strategies with what is considered legitimate or desirable within a given cultural environment (Thapliyal, K., & Joshi, M., 2022).

Meso level: Trompenaars' and Hall's theories reveal organizational and interpersonal communication patterns. Meso level insights help leaders design communication processes, team structures, and trust-building mechanisms that fit the cultural composition of their teams (Aririguzoh, S., 2022).

Micro level: Cultural intelligence and conflict management theories capture individual adaptability and negotiation strategies. At this level, theories explain how leaders and team members negotiate meaning, respond to misunderstandings, and adjust their behavior to reduce friction in culturally diverse settings (Perera, A. P. K., 2025).

This layered model acknowledges that leadership in international project teams is both systemic and personal, requiring the simultaneous management of cultural diversity, organizational complexity, and interpersonal dynamics. It emphasizes that effective leadership emerges not from a single style but from adaptive integration – the ability to select, combine, and adjust approaches according to context.

Table 1.7. Multi-Level Conceptual Framework of Cross-Cultural Leadership

Level of Analysis	Core Focus	Key Theories / Models	Main Components	Leadership Insights	Practical Applications in International Teams
Macro Level	Societal and structural cultural influences shaping leadership expectations	Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions; GLOBE Project	National values, historical traditions, societal beliefs, leadership prototypes, cultural ideals vs. practices	Explains why leadership styles succeed in some regions and fail in others; highlights societal expectations regarding authority, hierarchy, uncertainty, collectivism	Helps leaders align their communication, decision-making, and authority style with culturally grounded expectations; supports anticipation of value-based conflicts
Meso Level	Organizational culture and interpersonal communication patterns within multicultural teams	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner's Seven Dimensions; Hall's High-/Low-Context Communication	Relationship vs. rules, emotional expression, status expectations, communication style, contextual meaning, negotiation approaches	Reveals how team dynamics, trust-building, and collaboration are shaped by cultural interaction patterns	Enables leaders to design culturally appropriate communication systems, manage relational tensions, and develop team structures that support diverse working styles

Table 1.7 continued

Micro Level	Individual capabilities, psychological skills, and adaptive behaviors that enable effective intercultural interaction	Cultural intelligence (CQ); intercultural competence; conflict management frameworks	Self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, behavioral flexibility, interpretation of cultural cues, personal adaptability	Highlights the personal skills needed to decode meaning, reduce misunderstandings, and manage conflict sensitively	Equips leaders with tools to adjust their behavior in real time, interpret subtle cues, and respond appropriately to individual cultural expectations
Integrated Multi-Layer Model	Holistic leadership approach combining macro, meso, and micro perspectives	Synthesized leadership framework (macro + meso + micro harmonized)	Culture as a dynamic, multi-layered system; interconnections between values, norms, communication, and individual behaviors	Emphasizes adaptive, flexible leadership rather than one universal style; promotes a contextual approach to decision-making	Supports leaders in managing cultural diversity strategically, strengthening cohesion, and achieving high performance in global project teams

Compiled by the author from Thapliyal & Joshi (2022); Aririguzoh (2022); Perera (2025); Hofstede (2010); House et al. (2004); Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997); Hall (1976)

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research methods

The theoretical reflection on leadership and cross-cultural communication forms the basis for the empirical component of this study. In order to align theoretical assumptions with practical analysis, it is necessary to clearly define the methodological approach that shapes the logic and structure of the research. The choice of methods is determined by the nature of the research problem, which focuses on examining how leadership styles and communication strategies influence interaction within multicultural project teams. Since these phenomena relate to human experience, individual perceptions, and social interaction that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative indicators, a qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate.

The study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that social reality is constructed through human interaction and shaped by subjective interpretations. From this perspective, understanding leadership and communication requires analyzing how team members perceive and explain their collaboration in everyday professional settings, rather than measuring these processes numerically. The interpretivist orientation corresponds well with the chosen qualitative strategy, as it makes it possible to focus on meaningful interpretations, cultural context, and the lived experiences of members of the international project team at Geyra Group.

Applying a qualitative methodology allows the research to examine the phenomena within their natural organizational environment and to develop a deeper understanding of how employees interpret cultural diversity and respond to it in workplace situations. Unlike approaches that involve testing predetermined hypotheses, this study seeks to identify meaningful patterns and regularities emerging from participants' experiences.

To achieve the research objectives, a case study method was selected, focusing on the activities of Geyra Group – a Portuguese company that manages ecological housing facilities and works with a multicultural project team. This research design enables an exploration of leadership and communication processes in a real organizational context and allows observation of how theoretical concepts manifest in practice.

The empirical part of the study is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the project team. This method combines a defined thematic framework with the opportunity for respondents to express their thoughts and experiences more freely. The collected material was analyzed through thematic analysis following the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which makes it possible to identify recurring themes and interpretive patterns in participants' responses.

Thus, the methods applied in this study integrate both theoretical review and empirical analysis. The theoretical section systematizes academic approaches to leadership and cross-cultural communication,

while the empirical section demonstrates how these concepts appear in the real environment of an international organization. This combination ensures the scientific value of the research and allows the development of practical recommendations for improving management and communication in multicultural project teams.

2.2. Overview of the case study organization

Geyra Group is a Portuguese enterprise whose activities focus on the development and management of eco-friendly cottages, as well as the promotion of ecotourism initiatives. The company operates mainly in the northern regions of Portugal, combining environmental responsibility with contemporary architectural solutions and digital approaches to operational management. Its core mission involves creating nature-oriented residential environments through the use of sustainable construction technologies, renewable energy sources, and efficient facility operation systems.

In addition to its primary focus on hospitality and real estate, the company actively collaborates with local suppliers, tourism operators, and international partners to support the development of sustainable tourism in the region. Such cooperation contributes to the economic empowerment of local communities, the promotion of environmentally responsible travel practices, and the strengthening of the region's international reputation.

The project team that serves as the central subject of this case study consists of approximately six to eight members of different national backgrounds. The team includes both administrative representatives and specialists responsible for technical, design, and operational aspects of ongoing projects. Communication within the team takes place mainly remotely through email, Telegram, and project management software. This structure enables a combination of direct interpersonal interaction and mediated digital communication, which is particularly important given the cultural and linguistic diversity among team members.

Leadership within Geyra Group follows a shared model based on cooperation between the Chief Executive Officer, who is responsible for strategic vision and development initiatives, and the project manager, who oversees daily operational activities. This structure requires constant coordination, feedback exchange, and clear role allocation, creating favorable conditions for examining leadership styles and communication approaches in multicultural teams. The company's emphasis on teamwork, adaptability, and innovation reflects a broader global trend toward collaborative project management in small and medium-sized enterprises.

From a research perspective, Geyra Group represents a relevant example of a small, flexible, and internationally oriented organization operating in an intercultural environment. The combination of diverse professional profiles, cultural behavior patterns, and communication styles forms a complex yet productive context for analyzing how leadership approaches and cross-cultural communication influence cooperation

and project performance. This makes Geyra Group a valuable empirical case capable of enriching theoretical discussion and providing practical insights for organizations seeking to improve the effectiveness of multicultural project teams.

2.3. Research process and data collection

2.3.1. Research design and paradigm

This study applies a qualitative case study design situated within an interpretivist research paradigm. The interpretivist perspective is based on the assumption that social reality does not exist as an objective phenomenon independent of individuals, but is constructed through perception, experience, and interpersonal interaction. Consequently, the aim of the research is not to measure leadership and communication through quantitative indicators, but to understand how employees of Geyra Group perceive and interpret these processes within the context of their multicultural project activities.

The decision to employ a single-case design stems from the intention to conduct an in-depth examination of a specific organizational setting, allowing the identification of subtle social and cultural dynamics that would likely remain unnoticed in large-scale surveys or statistical analyses. This approach enables a detailed immersion into the natural working environment of the team and provides an opportunity to observe how cross-cultural differences manifest in everyday interaction, management practices, and communication behaviors.

An important feature of the selected research design is the use of multiple data sources, which makes it possible to develop a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Semi-structured interviews, internal company documents, and contextual observations of work processes were utilized as key sources of evidence. The combination of these materials allows the development of a coherent analytical picture in which individual participant accounts are connected with actual organizational practices.

The Geyra Group case serves as a micro-model of broader processes of intercultural cooperation, offering an opportunity to trace how general theoretical concepts of leadership and cross-cultural communication are implemented in the practical activities of an international team. The interpretivist paradigm also enables the identification of individual meanings and personal experiences of participants, which is essential for a deeper understanding of intercultural interaction within modern project-oriented organizations.

2.3.2. Data collection methods and justification

Data collection for this study was carried out primarily through semi-structured interviews, complemented by an analysis of publicly available company information and internal project documentation to which the researcher had access. The use of multiple data sources made it possible to

develop a more comprehensive understanding of leadership and cross-cultural communication within Geyra Group, while also increasing the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation.

The decision to employ semi-structured interviews was based on their ability to balance structure and flexibility. Pre-formulated open-ended questions ensured comparability between participants' responses, while allowing respondents to freely express their perspectives, provide examples, and introduce additional issues they considered relevant. This format facilitated the identification of new thematic directions that might have remained unnoticed if strictly structured survey tools had been used.

The chosen method aligns fully with the interpretivist orientation of the study, as it enables the capturing of participants' subjective meanings, experiences, and individual interpretations in their own words. The interviews typically lasted between 25 and 30 minutes, depending on participant availability, and were conducted either in person or via online communication tools. This approach ensured the participation of all members of the international team, regardless of their geographical location.

Interview questions addressed key topics such as leadership style within the team, communication practices, cultural differences in interaction, challenges in collaboration, mechanisms for conflict resolution, and perceptions of project performance. When necessary, follow-up questions were asked to deepen understanding and reveal underlying aspects of team dynamics. The list of questions that were used during interviews is in Annex 1.

With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Data processing was conducted using thematic analysis based on the methodology proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach consists of six sequential phases: familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, refining and defining them, and final interpretation. The method enables the systematic identification of recurring thematic elements and the structuring of data in a way that reflects both individual and collective patterns in participants' responses.

The application of thematic analysis is particularly suitable for small, context-rich samples, as it supports both the inductive discovery of new thematic directions and the interpretation of results within the theoretical framework of the study. The selected data collection methods provided depth and reliability to the empirical part of the research, enabling well-founded conclusions regarding leadership and cross-cultural communication within Geyra Group.

2.3.3 Participant profile and selection criteria

The research sample consisted of six participants from the international project team of Geyra Group, including both managerial representatives and employees involved in daily operational activities. The group included the chief executive officer (CEO), the project manager, and four team members representing diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. This composition made it possible to obtain a

wide range of perspectives on leadership practices, communication processes, and intercultural interaction within a single organizational structure.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a common approach in qualitative research when the goal is to gather rich and meaningful information rather than achieve statistical representativeness. This method allows researchers to involve individuals who possess direct experience and relevant knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation, thereby increasing the analytical value of the data collected. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), purposeful participant selection enables a deeper exploration of the research problem.

The primary inclusion criteria were:

1. Direct involvement in ongoing or recently completed Geyra Group projects;
2. Regular collaboration with team members from at least one other culture or nationality;
3. A minimum of three months of experience working within the team.

This structure ensured diversity in perspectives regarding leadership interactions, communication challenges, and mechanisms of intercultural adaptation within a shared organizational environment.

Additional criteria considered included:

- participation in international and cross-functional company projects;
- active engagement in daily communication and task coordination;
- representation of different hierarchical levels and cultural contexts;
- willingness to openly share professional experiences in a confidential setting.

The participants represented several countries, including Portugal, Brazil, Poland, the UK, France, and Germany, which contributed to cultural diversity and broadened the interpretive potential of the study. Such a sample allowed the research to capture both managerial viewpoints and practical aspects of team collaboration.

The chosen approach fully aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on understanding subjective meanings and lived experiences. The aim was not to generalize findings to a wider population, but to develop a contextually rich description of leadership and communication dynamics within a real organizational setting.

Given the qualitative nature of the research, detailed socio-demographic data (such as age, gender, or length of employment) were not collected. Instead, attention was directed toward participants' roles within the team and their direct experience of intercultural cooperation, as these elements were considered most relevant for achieving the research objectives and answering the central research question.

2.3.4. Ethical considerations and confidentiality measures

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of Mykolas Romeris University and the general principles of responsible research in the field of social sciences. Before data collection

began, all participants received a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.

Prior to each interview, participants provided digital informed consent. Particular attention was given to ensuring confidentiality: the names, positions, and any information that could potentially identify individuals or reveal organizational details were anonymized in the transcripts and in the final report. General role descriptions, such as CEO, project manager, or team member code like TM-FR, were used instead of personal identifiers.

During the interviews, the researcher maintained a neutral position, avoiding leading or evaluative questions and ensuring an accurate and respectful representation of participants' views. The interviews were conducted in a non-intrusive manner, which encouraged openness among respondents. Since English is the working language of the team, participants were able to express themselves freely, eliminating potential barriers related to translation or language adaptation.

As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), ethical considerations are crucial in qualitative research, particularly when it involves discussions of personal experience and workplace dynamics. Compliance with principles of respect, transparency and the protection of participants' rights is essential for maintaining the credibility and reliability of the research. Therefore, this study strictly adhered to the ethical requirements of the university and broader academic standards.

To ensure anonymity and protect sensitive information, audio recordings, interview transcripts and field notes are stored in secure digital repositories accessible only to the researcher. All materials are password protected, minimizing the risk of unauthorized access. No internal company information was disclosed or used in a manner that could harm the organization or any of its members.

The study is based on the principle of non-harm, formulated by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019). In line with this approach, every effort was made to prevent any psychological, professional or reputational risks for participants or the Geyra Group as an organization. The presentation and interpretation of the data were structured to prevent identification of respondents and to avoid any negative impact on their professional activities or working relationships within the company.

The ethical measures implemented throughout the research helped establish trust with participants, ensured their comfort and protected their privacy, which in turn increased the validity of the empirical findings. Maintaining confidentiality and professional ethics enabled the collection of authentic data that accurately reflects the real experience of cross-cultural interaction within an international project team.

3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION IN GEYRA GROUP

3.1. Leadership findings in the international project team

According to the chosen methodology, the empirical investigation of leadership within the international project team of Geyra Group was conducted on the basis of semi-structured interviews with participants occupying different positions in the organization and representing diverse cultural contexts. The sample included six respondents: the chief executive officer, the project manager, and team members from Poland, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. This composition ensured a variety of managerial perspectives and enabled the development of a comprehensive understanding of leadership functioning in a multicultural environment.

To ensure confidentiality and protect participant anonymity, all respondents involved in the empirical part of the study were assigned individual codes. These identifiers reflect the participant's role within the project team and their country of origin, allowing different perspectives to be presented without disclosing personal data or sensitive information. The use of codes also provides clarity when referring to participants' statements during the analysis of findings. The summarized coding system is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Respondent codes and their characteristics in the study

Respondent code	Role in the team	Cultural context	Participation in decision-making
CEO-PT	Chief Executive Officer	Portugal	Strategic decisions
PM-BR	Project Manager	Brazil	Operational decisions
TM-PL	Team Member	Poland	Limited
TM-DE	Team Member	Germany	Limited
TM-FR	Team Member	France	Moderate
TM-UK	Team Member	United Kingdom	Moderate

Compiled by the author

The use of coded identifiers enables consistent and transparent presentation of participant statements while preserving their anonymity. This supports analytical accuracy in interpreting different perspectives within the international team and does not violate the confidentiality agreements established during data collection. The coding system also provides a practical foundation for further analysis of leadership manifestations within the Geyra Group case study.

The collected empirical material includes detailed accounts of experiences of interaction in the international team, communication practices, leadership styles, conflict resolution approaches, and trust-building mechanisms. The following analysis aims to systematize these data, identify key thematic categories, and reveal patterns that characterize leadership approaches within Geyra Group. This structure

enables a consistent transition from the description of the empirical base to the interpretation of the main research outcomes.

The interview analysis showed that leadership within Geyra Group is based on cooperation and a minimal level of formal hierarchy. Respondents identified as CEO-PT, PM-BR, TM-UK, TM-FR, and TM-DE repeatedly emphasized that the company does not operate under a rigid “manager-subordinate” structure typical of many international organizations. Leadership responsibilities are shared between the chief executive officer and the project manager, while specific tasks are delegated to team members depending on their experience, professional strengths, and current workload.

According to CEO-PT, this distribution of responsibility helps create an atmosphere of trust and openness, where employees feel free to initiate changes, propose new ideas or ask questions. PM-BR highlighted the importance of combining formal planning with informal conversations, emotional support and regular dialogue with the team. For an international group, direct access to management has a noticeable psychological impact: employees feel that their opinions are genuinely taken into account rather than merely being informed about decisions made elsewhere.

Team members TM-PL and TM-FR noted that a horizontal approach strengthens their sense of involvement in shared work. The opportunity to participate in decision-making and influence project progress is perceived as a strong motivational factor. This working format also supports professional development, as employees gradually take on more complex tasks, explore new roles and develop a broader understanding of how the company operates.

However, the cooperative structure also brings certain organizational challenges. Respondents TM-UK, TM-DE and TM-PL pointed out that the lack of clearly defined areas of responsibility sometimes creates uncertainty: it is not always clear who should make the final decision or coordinate a particular task. During periods of heavy workload and strict deadlines, this may slow down processes, create a sense of mild disorder and increase stress levels.

Despite these issues, respondents acknowledged that a degree of informality forms part of Geyra Group’s organizational culture and is perceived more as a characteristic feature than a problem. The horizontal leadership model helps accommodate cultural diversity: different communication and working styles are not suppressed but incorporated into the overall process. For instance, the more expressive and emotional approach described by PM-BR coexists with the structured and planning-oriented style emphasized by TM-PL and TM-DE. Balance in daily cooperation is maintained through dialogue, mutual compromise and readiness to adapt.

Cooperative leadership and reduced hierarchy foster trust, enhance employee engagement and encourage initiative. At the same time, the organizational structure requires additional coordination mechanisms and clearer expectations, particularly within a multicultural environment and under dynamic project conditions.

Flexibility in communication and employee management emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned aspects in the respondents' statements. All interview participants emphasized that the effectiveness of leadership in a multicultural team largely depends on the leader's ability to adjust their behaviour according to the cultural context and individual expectations of team members. Leaders vary their tone, level of emotional expression, and manner of delivering criticism and instructions, taking into account how employees perceive directness, support and feedback.

The most common difference described by respondents concerns reactions to criticism and ways of assigning tasks. TM-DE and TM-PL noted that they feel more comfortable when receiving clear and structured messages with specific wording regarding tasks and deadlines. In their professional experience, such directness is associated with efficiency and responsibility. In contrast, PM-BR and CEO-PT pointed out that employees from Portugal and Brazil respond better to a softer approach that begins with a positive comment and includes elements of emotional support. For them, a sense of mutual respect and warm personal contact creates a favourable psychological climate and increases motivation.

Several respondents shared personal examples where the absence of adaptation led to misunderstandings. TM-FR described a situation in which direct feedback was perceived as harsh criticism, causing tension in communication. A similar case was mentioned by TM-PL, who provided a brief remark in a familiar concise manner, but colleagues interpreted it as dissatisfaction. After discussing the issue, both respondents adjusted their approach by adding explanations and using more considerate wording, which considerably improved interaction.

Adaptation is reflected not only in tone but also in the pace of communication and the chosen communication channel. TM-UK explained that slowing down speech and avoiding slang helps ensure accurate understanding. PM-BR referred to another aspect: the use of non-verbal cues and more expressive facial expressions, which work well with some colleagues but may cause discomfort among individuals from more reserved cultures. As a result, he learned to regulate the intensity of emotional expression depending on the interlocutor.

CEO-PT views adaptability as the foundation for building trust within the team. In his opinion, a leader should "listen more than speak" and give space for others to express their ideas, especially employees for whom English is not a native language. This approach fosters a sense of safety in the team and enables everyone to participate in decision-making without fear of being misunderstood or judged.

Many responses reflect the idea that adaptability requires not only empathy but also self-reflection. Several participants, including TM-DE and TM-UK, stressed that working in an international environment prompted them to reconsider their own communication habits. They realized that a style perceived as professional or neutral in their home culture could cause misunderstandings or be interpreted as abruptness within Geyra Group. Respondents associated the adjustment of these communication patterns with personal development and the formation of a more conscious leadership approach.

Respondents therefore view adaptive leadership in the international team of Geyra Group as a necessary condition for effective cooperation. Flexible adjustment of communication behaviour helps prevent conflicts, increases trust, and contributes to the creation of a stable working environment where diverse cultural norms and expectations can coexist without tension.

The interviews indicate that the relationship between structure and flexibility within Geyra Group is closely linked to the leadership style adopted in the organization. CEO-PT and PM-BR shape a managerial approach in which the leader defines strategic priorities and expected outcomes, while the execution of tasks is delegated to the team, granting members considerable autonomy. Respondents describe this as a deliberate leadership choice aimed at fostering responsibility and initiative among employees.

For TM-PL and TM-DE, the balance between control and autonomy serves as an indicator of leadership effectiveness. They associate leadership with a clear distribution of roles and oversight of task completion. Their comments reveal an expectation that the leader should ensure process structure and take the final decision when necessary. In contrast, CEO-PT emphasizes that excessive control restricts creativity and hinders professional growth, which is why he intentionally limits intervention in the team's daily work.

Several responses illustrate moments when the leader's position directly influenced outcomes. There was a situation involving a supplier, where a prompt leadership decision allowed the team to quickly redistribute responsibilities without additional bureaucracy. The team perceived this as a demonstration of confidence and the leader's ability to assume responsibility in a critical moment.

At the same time, TM-DE and TM-PL recalled situations where insufficient leadership oversight resulted in confusion and duplicated efforts. For these respondents, the lack of a clearly assigned responsible person was interpreted as a sign of weak leadership and created a sense of uncertainty.

Respondents view the balance between structure and freedom in Geyra Group as the result of leadership choices rather than merely an organizational characteristic. The extent to which the leader exercises control or delegates authority to the team influences motivation, decision-making speed and the overall effectiveness of work processes.

Interviews indicate that the emotional dimension of interaction has a significant influence on how leadership is perceived within the Geyra Group team. Respondents describe attentiveness to employees' emotions and the ability to listen as an important component of effective coordination and the maintenance of a positive working atmosphere.

PM-BR repeatedly emphasized the importance of empathy in leadership behavior, noting that “, so active listening, just by listening you already solve a lot,” and articulating a communication principle for the team: “in order for the person to feel in a safe environment to talk, you must provide it to them.” For

him, emotional awareness plays a decisive role in preventing misunderstandings and supporting team cohesion. Full interview transcript of PM-BR is in Annex 2.

TM-UK links active listening to the prevention of communication difficulties, stating that “when you listen carefully, you understand not only the words but also the emotions.” In her view, attention to the interlocutor’s reaction makes it possible to notice confusion or discomfort and respond appropriately.

TM-FR provides an example where insufficient emotional warmth in written communication created tension within the team: “the message was perceived as too ‘cold’ because I did not use many emojis or polite expressions.” After discussing the issue, she consciously adjusted her style by adding more friendly elements to her messages, which improved interaction.

A different perspective is expressed by TM-DE and TM-PL, for whom emotional expression in communication is not a priority. TM-DE stresses that “for me being clear and direct is normal,” associating directness with professionalism. TM-PL highlights the need for structure in work, stating that she “likes to prepare everything in advance” and values clarity in task distribution.

Despite contrasting cultural approaches to emotional expression, respondents acknowledge that attentive listening and the ability to notice the interlocutor’s reaction help avoid misunderstandings and contribute to effective teamwork. Emotional sensitivity is viewed as a tool for maintaining trust and creating a working environment in which team members feel heard and included.

Interviews show that inclusiveness within the Geyra Group is perceived as an everyday managerial practice aimed at involving all team members in discussions and decision-making processes. Leaders focus on creating conditions in which each employee can express their position, regardless of cultural background, confidence level, or language proficiency. This is particularly relevant for participants for whom English is not a native language, as they often require more time to formulate their thoughts.

One notable element of inclusiveness is the practice of directed invitations during meetings, when the leader addresses quieter participants and encourages them to share their views. This approach helps prevent the dominance of individual voices and supports a greater diversity of ideas. Another common practice is summarizing discussion outcomes in written form, allowing all members to review agreements once again and clarify any unclear points.

Clear communication plays a significant role in this process. The use of simple language structures, clear instructions, and structured messages reduces the risk of misinterpretation, which frequently occurs in multicultural teams. Reconfirming tasks after meetings and providing opportunities to ask questions without criticism contribute to a sense of psychological safety.

Trust within the team develops through consistent managerial actions, transparency of motives, and openness in explaining decisions. Employees respond positively when leaders clarify the reasons behind changes in processes or task distribution, as this reduces uncertainty and reinforces confidence in the fairness of decisions. Human-centered interaction also plays an important role, including willingness to

listen, provide support in challenging situations, and acknowledge individual contributions to collective outcomes.

In some cases, trust is strengthened through the delegation of responsibility and granting autonomy in decision-making within project tasks. This encourages initiative and demonstrates leadership confidence in the professional competencies of the team. At the same time, a balance between autonomy and coordination is maintained, preventing disorganization.

Inclusive practices and an emphasis on mutual trust create an environment in which employees feel valued and motivated to engage in collaborative activities. They reinforce interaction stability, increase engagement levels, and promote shared responsibility for results. For an international team, this is especially important, as differing cultural behavioral models may lead to misunderstanding, while an inclusive approach helps bridge these differences and sustain effective cooperation.

Interviews indicate that conflicts within the international Geyra Group team most often arise from differing approaches to planning, task execution pace, and feedback style. Respondents associate this with cultural differences in the perception of directness, urgency, and the role of emotions in professional interaction. TM-PL described a situation in which her communication style caused tension: “Yes, once during a meeting I gave feedback quite directly. I said: ‘This isn’t working; we need to fix it.’ For me it was normal, just solving the problem. But later I saw that some people considered it too harsh.” For her, directness is a familiar approach, yet within a multicultural environment it may be interpreted as excessively critical.

Similar misunderstandings in communication are mentioned by TM-FR, who states: “If a conflict happens, I try to speak directly and calmly with the person to understand their point of view. Usually it’s not about the person but about a misunderstanding.” She emphasizes that most tense situations stem not from personal disputes but from differing expectations or communication styles. In more complicated cases, according to her, “the project manager helps as a mediator,” which supports conflict resolution without escalation.

TM-UK describes her own strategy for preventing conflicts, highlighting the importance of private discussions: “I prefer to discuss things directly but calmly. If disagreements appear, I ask to talk about them privately, not in the group chat. Usually, once you explain your intention, everything becomes clear. The project manager also helps as a mediator if needed, and this supports a constructive approach.” This format helps avoid public confrontation, which can negatively affect the team atmosphere.

Respondents note that clarifying agreements after a conflict helps prevent similar situations in the future. Written summaries of meetings or confirmation of decisions are viewed as an effective mechanism for aligning expectations, especially for team members working remotely and relying on digital communication.

Delegating responsibility in certain cases becomes a way to reduce tension. When each team member is assigned a specific area of work, disputes over task distribution and accountability largely disappear.

Respondents also emphasize that public criticism within the team is avoided. CEO-PT points out that open confrontation undermines trust and creates a sense of insecurity, therefore the team focuses on explaining the reasoning behind decisions rather than on the manner in which feedback is delivered.

Conflict resolution practices in Geyra Group rely on private discussions, clarification of intentions, alignment of expectations, and the involvement of the project manager as a mediator in more complex situations. This creates a sense of safety and supports trust among members of the international team, even when disagreements arise.

Based on the systematization of the collected interviews, the main leadership aspects shaping interaction within the international Geyra Group team were identified. The respondents' statements made it possible to determine characteristic manifestations of managerial behaviour related to collaboration, communication adaptation, trust, work structuring, and emotional sensitivity. Summarizing these elements allowed the identification of key directions that influence teamwork effectiveness and the participants' perception of leadership. For clarity, the results are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Key leadership aspects in the international Geyra Group team

Leadership Aspect	Manifestation in the Team	Respondents Mentioning
Collaboration and horizontal structure	Task delegation, absence of rigid hierarchy, accessibility of management	CEO-PT, PM-BR, TM-PL, TM-FR
Communication adaptation	Adjusting tone, pace, and wording of feedback depending on the interlocutor	PM-BR, CEO-PT, TM-UK, TM-PL, TM-FR
Trust	Opportunity to express proposals, openness of management, support for initiative	CEO-PT, TM-FR
Need for structure	Unclear roles, task duplication, expectations for clearer responsibility distribution	TM-DE, TM-PL, TM-UK
Emotional sensitivity	Considering employee emotions, avoiding confrontation, adjusting written communication style	PM-BR, TM-UK, TM-FR

Compiled by the author

The presented data indicate that the perception of leadership within the team is shaped by several interconnected factors, with the most significant being opportunities for collaboration, flexibility in communication behaviour, and the accessibility of management. At the same time, expectations regarding process structure and a clear distribution of roles remain important for some respondents, suggesting a need to balance autonomy and coordination. This systematization provides a basis for further analysis of how leadership approaches manifest in specific work situations and how they influence the performance of the international project team.

To gain a deeper understanding of leadership processes within the international team, the difficulties mentioned by respondents in their daily interaction were summarized. The interview analysis made it possible to identify key problem areas related to work organization, communication, and task coordination. Systematizing these issues enables the identification of links between cultural characteristics, leadership style, and the effectiveness of team performance.

Table 3.3. Main leadership problems and challenges in the international team

Identified Issue	Causes	Consequences
Unclear role distribution	Lack of formalized hierarchy	Duplication of work, delays
Different communication styles	Cultural differences in directness and emotional expression	Tension, misunderstandings
Insufficient coordination	High level of team autonomy	Sense of uncertainty
Risk of excessive control	Expectations for structure	Reduced creativity
Absence of public criticism	Avoidance of conflict	Moving discussions to private channels

Compiled by the author

The presented systematization shows that most difficulties arise at the intersection of autonomy and structure, as well as from differing communication expectations among team members. Variations in feedback style, work pace, and perceptions of the leader's role influence coordination and mutual understanding within the team. At the same time, these challenges are not critical, as they are typically resolved through private discussions, delegation, and the project manager's mediation. The summarized issues provide a basis for further analysis of the mechanisms used to address them and their impact on the effectiveness of international project collaboration.

The findings indicate that leadership within the international Geyra Group team is based on cooperation, trust, and a low level of formal hierarchy. CEO-PT and PM-BR shape a managerial approach in which strategic decisions are defined centrally, while daily activities and task distribution are delegated to the team. TM-PL and TM-FR note that the opportunity to influence processes and participate in decision-making increases motivation and supports professional development. At the same time, the effectiveness of collaboration largely depends on the leader's ability to adapt their communication style to different cultural expectations, adjusting tone, pace, and the manner of delivering feedback.

Alongside positive aspects, several organizational risks were identified. TM-UK, TM-DE, and TM-PL pointed to situations where unclear role distribution and insufficient coordination led to duplicated work and delays in task completion. This creates expectations for clearer responsibility allocation and more coherent coordination mechanisms. The horizontal model encourages initiative and engagement, but requires structural support to ensure process stability in a dynamic international environment.

3.2. Cross-cultural communication findings

Intercultural communication within the international Geyra Group team plays a central role in ensuring the daily functioning of project processes, shaping working relationships, and coordinating tasks. The joint activity of team members representing different cultural and professional contexts requires continuous alignment of approaches to communication, information exchange, and collaboration. The conducted interviews showed that team members interpret communicative situations differently and apply their own interaction strategies shaped by cultural norms, previous experience, and individual behavioural patterns.

The collected data make it possible to trace how team members perceive the intercultural environment, which communication practices they consider effective, and which factors create potential barriers in interaction. Particular attention is drawn to differences in information delivery style, work pace, ways of responding to feedback, and expectations regarding the organization of communication processes. Respondents describe their experiences and demonstrate varying levels of adaptation to the multicultural context, reflecting the depth of integration into the team dynamics.

The material gathered provides a basis for further systematic analysis of intercultural communication within the team, including the identification of key thematic areas that emerged during the interviews: characteristics of daily interaction, challenges of intercultural communication, adaptation of communicative styles, the role of active listening, trust-building, inclusiveness, managerial approaches, and mechanisms for resolving misunderstandings.

The linguistic dimension plays a central role in the interaction of the international team, as English functions as a universal communicative tool. All respondents emphasize that it enables task alignment, coordination of work, and the maintenance of daily collaboration among participants from different countries. At the same time, the level of English proficiency and individual language characteristics influence the speed of information exchange, the accuracy of formulations, and overall communication comfort. For some team members, English is a second or third language, which requires additional time to formulate ideas and clarify the meaning of messages.

Respondents note that linguistic diversity directly affects communication style. Some participants adjust their language use by simplifying vocabulary, avoiding complex grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions. This aims to increase message clarity and prevent ambiguous interpretation. This is particularly evident in the responses of TM-PL and TM-FR, who highlight the importance of clear wording and simple English for effective information exchange. For them, the use of direct and structured language is associated with professionalism and responsibility.

Certain participants emphasize the need to adjust speaking pace. TM-UK noted that slowing down and avoiding slang contribute to more accurate understanding, especially during online communication. This confirms the need to consider individual differences in speech perception and varying levels of English

proficiency within the team. Such an approach minimizes the risk of misinterpretation and ensures more equal participation in discussions.

The collected data demonstrate that linguistic interaction extends beyond the technical transmission of information and includes social and psychological aspects. It influences overall communication comfort, affects participants' confidence, and determines their level of engagement in group discussions. For some team members, the language barrier becomes a limiting factor, so leadership and more active participants often apply supportive strategies such as message reformulation, clarifying questions, and additional written explanations after meetings. This creates favorable conditions for the involvement of all team members and reduces communication risks.

The approach to expressing opinions varies significantly among representatives of different cultures, shaping diverse expectations regarding tone, directness, and emotional expression in messages. For TM-PL and TM-DE, direct communication is associated with professionalism and efficiency, as clear formulation of tasks and comments enables a quick transition to their implementation. TM-PL emphasized the importance of understanding cultural differences in interpreting statements, noting: "It matters a lot. You begin to understand that people do not mean the same things as you do. For example, if someone does not respond immediately, it is not disrespect; maybe they are just thinking or working differently." This comment illustrates an effort to interpret communication through a cultural lens rather than personal perception. Direct communication becomes effective only when correctly interpreted by other team members.

In contrast, representatives of Southern European and Latin American cultures display a more emotionally oriented communication style. PM-BR stated in his interview: "...getting curious about what they bring with them, what are their backgrounds, and how we can work together and provide a healthier workspace." This reflects a conscious adaptation of communicative behavior aimed at creating harmonious working relationships where interpersonal connections form the foundation of effective collaboration. An emotionally oriented style in this context supports cohesion and trust within the team.

An important component of communicative diversity involves differing attitudes toward emotional expression in written communication. TM-FR described a misunderstanding that occurred when a concise message without emotional markers was interpreted as cold: "Once, a message I sent was taken as too 'cold' because I didn't use many emojis or polite expressions... Now I try to write in a warmer way, because I know it matters for some people." Such situations highlight the importance of emotional context even in text-based communication and its influence on message interpretation. Considering implicit emotional cues in written interaction increases trust and reduces the risk of misinterpretation.

TM-FR also emphasized the need to simplify speech and avoid idioms: "I try to be simple and clear when I speak, and avoid using too many idioms... If someone does not understand, I rephrase or give examples." For her, adapting linguistic structures serves as a way to reduce misunderstanding and maintain

equal access to information. Linguistic flexibility in this case acts as a means of overcoming communication barriers in a multicultural team.

CEO-PT highlighted differing expectations regarding communication pace and interaction styles, stating: “In Portugal we are very people-oriented; we like to take time for conversations and relationships. But some team members prefer quick responses and clear plans. Finding a balance between these rhythms is probably the biggest challenge.” This comment stresses the need for continuous alignment of communicative rhythms that influence work tempo and overall team atmosphere. Balancing interpersonal orientation with responsiveness creates conditions for stable cooperation.

TM-DE described his own strategy for preparing to work in a multicultural environment: “I read about cultural differences and observe how my colleagues communicate. I try to stay open and flexible, even if something seems unusual to me.” This behavior reflects the conscious development of cultural awareness as a tool for effective communication and reducing potential conflicts. Proactive learning about cultural specifics supports the formation of efficient interaction models.

Further analysis shows that differences in communication styles influence information exchange, psychological comfort, and participants’ confidence during interaction. Direct communication facilitates rapid problem identification and increases managerial transparency, whereas a diplomatic and emotionally supportive style contributes to a stable team atmosphere, strengthens mutual support, and reduces interpersonal tensions. Optimal communication emerges through mutual adjustment of styles rather than the dominance of a single approach.

Harmonizing these styles requires active adaptation, manifested in changes in tone, pace, wording, and communication channels. Recognition of differences and readiness to account for them make interaction more predictable and constructive. In the international environment of Geyra Group, this process functions as a core mechanism for maintaining effective cooperation and establishing a shared communicative space. Communication adaptability can be considered a key competence for members of an international project team.

Adaptation of communication style is most visible processes within the international Geyra Group team, as participants from different cultural backgrounds rely on distinct linguistic and behavioural models.

Most respondents consciously adjust their manner of communication depending on the interlocutor and the working context. PM-BR highlighted the importance of emotional sensitivity: “...some nationalities will be more task-oriented and other ones will be social, and then we are dealing with different people in the same tasks. We must find what we have in common, how can we work together in a way that's productive, and we can move forward.” Such practice helps prevent misunderstandings, reduces tension, and creates a more comfortable environment for interaction. Considering the emotional reactions of others strengthens mutual understanding and supports the development of trust.

Some participants view adaptation as part of their professional growth. PM-BR noted: “You must get to know the person and their working style and also the preference, like how the person likes to be listened and to talk and to share and to receive feedback, so there are many details that we need first to assess.” His statement reflects a deeper awareness of how individual behaviour influences the team atmosphere. For him, modifying communication style became a way to achieve more effective leadership, where emotional expression is used in a measured and appropriate way. This development shows that intercultural interaction encourages reflection and behavioural adjustment, broadening leadership competencies.

The linguistic dimension also plays an important role. TM-PL emphasized the value of simplicity: “I try to speak simple and concise English... I smile more and use a softer voice to sound friendly.” TM-UK confirmed the deliberate nature of these changes: “Yes, exactly. Small adjustments, slowing down a bit, avoiding slang, checking if others understood what I said.” These strategies aim to ensure equal access to information for all team members, regardless of language proficiency. They also lower participation barriers during discussions, which is crucial in a multicultural setting.

TM-FR pointed to the need to avoid idioms and complex structures: “I try to be simple and clear when I speak, and avoid using too many idioms... If someone doesn’t understand, I rephrase or give examples.” For her, linguistic flexibility serves as a way to prevent misinterpretation and increase clarity. Her position highlights that accessible communication is an essential element of effective teamwork, not just a linguistic technique. Clear and understandable expression supports participants’ confidence and enables smooth interaction.

Tone adjustment is also a widespread practice. TM-DE stated: “I try to be softer in my tone... I add more polite expressions and explain my thoughts more carefully.” Such efforts help avoid the perception of directness as rudeness in an international context, reducing the likelihood of conflict. This demonstrates an understanding of politeness as a tool for maintaining professional relationships. A softer tone helps preserve neutrality in sensitive situations and supports constructive cooperation.

CEO-PT emphasized the importance of listening: “I try to stay calm and listen more than I speak. Portuguese people are usually warm and emotional, but not everyone likes that, so I balance warmth and clarity.” His comment highlights the value of restraint and attentiveness to the needs of others, especially when English is not their first language. This creates a space where each team member can express themselves without fear of being misunderstood. Leadership based on listening contributes to psychological safety within the team.

A comparison of respondent perspectives shows that communication adaptation involves changes in tone, speech pace, vocabulary choice, and emotional expression. These adjustments form a shared communicative space where different cultural interaction models can coexist without conflict. The

behavioural changes described by respondents indicate gradual integration within the team and the emergence of common communication norms.

To summarize the obtained results and illustrate the differences in respondents' communicative behavior, it is appropriate to present a systematization of the adjustments they implement in their communication styles. During the interviews, participants described specific modifications in tone, speech pace, vocabulary choice, and emotional expression that help maintain effective interaction in a multicultural environment. Presenting these elements in a tabular format makes it possible to clearly trace individual adaptation strategies and relate them to the objectives respondents seek to achieve in teamwork.

Table 3.4. Level of communication style adaptation among participants

Respondent	Key Communication Style Adjustments	Purpose of Adaptation
PM-BR	softening tone, controlling emotional expression	reducing tension
TM-PL	simplifying English, using a softer voice	ensuring accessibility for everyone
TM-UK	slowing down speech, avoiding slang	improving accuracy of understanding
TM-FR	avoiding idioms, rephrasing	preventing misunderstanding
TM-DE	adding polite expressions	avoiding the perception of rudeness
CEO-PT	listening more, balancing warmth and clarity	maintaining trust

Compiled by the author

The presented data show that each participant adopts a personal model of communicative adaptation aimed at increasing clarity, reducing the risk of misunderstandings, and maintaining a positive team atmosphere. Despite differences in approaches, all respondents demonstrate a willingness to adjust linguistic and behavioral strategies for more effective collaboration. This indicates a high level of flexibility within the team and the ability to form shared communication norms, which is an important prerequisite for productive work in the international environment of Geyra Group.

Flexibility in communication enhances interaction quality, supports trust, and fosters a positive working atmosphere. It also determines the team's ability to work effectively in culturally diverse conditions and manage complex project tasks. Within Geyra Group's international environment, communicative adaptability becomes a key competence that ensures successful collaboration and stability of work processes.

Awareness of cultural differences is viewed by the respondents as an important component of team interaction, as it helps interpret colleagues' behaviour more accurately and avoid incorrect assumptions. TM-PL emphasized that understanding cultural specifics changed her approach to communication: "You begin to understand that people do not mean the same things as you do. For example, if someone does not respond immediately, it is not disrespect; maybe they are just thinking or working differently." Such comments indicate the development of tolerance and reduced emotional reactivity in communication. When team members stop evaluating others' behaviour through the lens of their own cultural norms, collaboration becomes more stable and predictable.

Some respondents describe the development of cultural awareness as part of their professional growth. PM-BR noted: “The thing that worked the best for me was being open for new experiences, to get to know people, their culture.” His position reflects a desire to better understand the context of interaction and adapt to different behavioural styles. CEO-PT also pointed out differing expectations regarding communication: “In Portugal, we are very people-oriented... but some team members prefer quick responses and clear plans.” Cultural awareness helps leadership adjust its behaviour, creating comfortable conditions for different participant groups.

TM-DE described his own approach to enhancing cultural sensitivity: “I read about cultural differences and observe how my colleagues communicate.” This demonstrates an intentional effort to accumulate knowledge about other cultures and apply it in practice. For some participants, such behaviour became a tool for preventing conflicts, as it supports a better understanding of colleagues’ motives and reactions.

Cultural awareness influences the overall team climate by fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness. When participants acknowledge different behavioural models as equally valid, the basis for offence, misunderstandings and emotional tension diminishes. This creates conditions for more constructive discussion of work-related issues and strengthens trust among members of the international team. As a result, collaboration becomes more cohesive, and the decision-making process becomes more effective.

Inclusivity in communication plays an important role in the interaction of the international Geyra Group team, as it ensures the involvement of all members regardless of language proficiency, cultural background, or communicative confidence. Respondents repeatedly emphasized the importance of creating conditions in which everyone has the opportunity to express themselves and be heard. During meetings, attention is given to allowing quieter team members space to participate so that their ideas are not overlooked. This format of interaction reduces the risk of dominance by more communicative participants or native English speakers and fosters a more equitable environment.

Inclusivity also manifests through the use of multiple communication channels that help compensate for linguistic or emotional barriers. Several respondents noted that after oral discussions, information is duplicated in written form via Telegram or email, allowing those who need more time to process or formulate their thoughts to participate without feeling pressured. This is particularly important for non-native English speakers or for participants who feel less confident during fast-paced real-time discussions. Such practices equalize communication opportunities and encourage broader engagement.

Attention to emotional comfort represents another important dimension of inclusivity. PM-BR emphasized the need to adapt tone and communication style, stating that some colleagues need clear, direct messages; others need more time and softer wording. This organization of communication helps reduce fear of criticism and enables participants to feel safer when expressing their ideas. TM-PL highlighted the

importance of a friendly tone and smiling during conversations, which makes interaction less formal and more accessible. Sensitivity to emotional cues contributes to an atmosphere of acceptance and openness.

Some respondents noted that inclusivity is supported through paraphrasing and clarifying complex points. TM-FR described her practice of avoiding idioms and using examples when someone does not understand what was said. This helps prevent situations in which participants hide their lack of understanding due to embarrassment or fear of appearing incompetent. Inclusive communication ensures transparency in information exchange and supports professional confidence.

CEO-PT emphasized the importance of listening as a mechanism for involving all team members: “Sometimes people need space to speak, especially if English is not their first language.” Providing opportunities to speak and allowing time for reflection enables participants from different cultural backgrounds to take part in discussions without feeling rushed or pressured. This contributes to the development of psychological safety, an environment in which team members are not afraid of making mistakes or being misunderstood.

Inclusivity in communication within Geyra Group fulfills not only a social but also a functional role: it enhances the quality of decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences. Participants who feel heard and included demonstrate higher motivation and responsibility. The inclusion of multiple voices contributes to more balanced decisions and improves team dynamics. In an international context, inclusivity becomes the foundation for stable collaboration and enables the team to operate more effectively in culturally diverse conditions.

Typical misunderstandings within the international Geyra Group team most often arise from differing expectations regarding communication style, response pace, feedback format, and the way information is delivered. Respondents noted that the same behavior may carry different meanings depending on the cultural context, which sometimes leads to incorrect assumptions about a colleague’s intentions or emotional state. TM-PL’s directness was perceived by some team members as excessive harshness, although he considered it a sign of professionalism and efficiency. This situation illustrates how differences in communication norms influence the interpretation of messages and may create tension in interaction.

Misunderstandings also stem from varying attitudes toward written communication and emotional signals in text-based messages. PM-BR recalled situations in which short messages without emotional markers were perceived as cold or dissatisfied, even though the real reason was a lack of time. Such cases highlight that the absence of nonverbal cues in digital communication increases the risk of misinterpretation and requires adjustments in tone, structure, and message pace. Emotional sensitivity becomes an important condition for preventing conflict and maintaining a balanced working atmosphere.

Another significant source of misunderstandings involves differing expectations regarding response speed and decision-making formats. CEO-PT noted that participants from some countries prefer planning

and clear procedures, while others are more flexible and improvisation-oriented. These differences sometimes result in confusion in task distribution, leading to feelings of uncertainty or duplicated work. TM-DE pointed out situations in which the autonomy of team members led to insufficient coordination, creating an impression of disorganization. Such discrepancies confirm that misunderstandings often stem not from personal conflicts but from differing perceptions of how work processes should be organized.

Several respondents emphasized that differing perceptions of hierarchy and roles frequently cause misunderstandings. In some cultures, clear leadership and defined responsibilities are expected, whereas others favor a partnership-oriented and horizontal structure. TM-UK described situations when discussing issues in group chats created unnecessary tension, which led her to choose private communication to avoid emotional escalation. This experience demonstrates the importance of selecting an appropriate communication channel depending on the sensitivity of the issue and the preferences of participants.

The synthesis of respondents' perspectives indicates that most misunderstandings have a systemic nature and are linked to cultural behavior patterns, varying levels of emotional expressiveness, language-related factors, and differing professional standards. Recognizing these factors reduces the risk of misinterpretation, supports the development of tolerance, and establishes conditions for stable team collaboration. In the international environment of Geyra Group, understanding the origins of misunderstandings becomes an essential factor in maintaining productive and harmonious work dynamics.

The communication infrastructure of the international Geyra Group team is based on a combination of several digital platforms that serve different functions within daily collaboration. Respondents most frequently mentioned Telegram as the primary channel for rapid information exchange. It is used for quick clarifications, coordination of ongoing tasks, and informal communication. CEO-PT emphasized the importance of this tool: "We use Telegram for quick messages and email for important updates, but real communication happens face-to-face. We encourage open dialogue and value diversity rather than simply tolerating it." This position demonstrates that the company combines digital tools with interpersonal interaction, maintaining a balance between efficiency and depth of communication.

TM-DE also highlighted the role of daily messaging: "We use Telegram and email every day, which allows everyone to stay connected. It is informal, but mostly effective. There are no strict systems, but the culture of openness compensates for that." His statement shows that communication effectiveness is supported not by formal regulations, but by an internal culture of trust and responsibility. At the same time, TM-DE and TM-PL noted that the high volume and speed of messages sometimes lead to the loss of important details, especially when several topics are discussed simultaneously or information is shared in fragmented form.

Email serves a different function. It is used for structured communication, document sharing, formalizing agreements, and confirming decisions. TM-FR emphasized the accessibility of leadership and the effectiveness of channel integration: "The atmosphere is friendly, we can easily reach the CEO or the

project manager. We also use online tools such as Telegram and email, which keep everyone connected.” This indicates that written duplication of information complements informal channels by providing clarity and preserving data. Email ensures greater accuracy and reduces the risk of misunderstandings compared to instant messaging.

Online meetings via videoconferencing play an important role, and respondents described them as a key tool for addressing complex issues that require discussion. The presence of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, intonation, pauses, helps better interpret intentions and reduces the risk of emotional misinterpretation. CEO-PT confirmed the value of personal interaction, noting that “real communication happens face-to-face,” which underscores the importance of video communication in building trust.

Some respondents mentioned voice messages as a useful tool when it is difficult to formulate thoughts quickly in written English. TM-PL and TM-FR noted that spoken format allows for more accurate transmission of tone and emotional context, although its effectiveness depends on whether others can listen to messages promptly. In such cases, audio recordings are often supplemented with a brief text summary to ensure accessibility for all team members.

TM-UK summarized the general communication atmosphere: “We have a very open atmosphere. Everyone is accessible, even the CEO. We use Telegram for daily chats and email for official updates, which allows us to stay connected.” Her comment illustrates that leadership accessibility and the absence of communication barriers are important components of channel effectiveness.

Several respondents emphasized the need for additional documentation tools, such as shared spreadsheets or internal knowledge bases where important materials can be stored and task status can be tracked. These suggestions were associated with instances of duplicated work or lost information in the fast flow of messages. The introduction of a more structured information space is viewed as a way to increase efficiency and transparency of work processes.

Comparing respondents’ statements indicates that the effectiveness of communication channels depends on their purpose and context of use. Telegram provides speed, email ensures accuracy, videoconferencing enables deeper interaction, and written duplication maintains information accessibility for all participants. The combination of various communication tools forms a flexible system that supports the work of the international team and reduces the risk of misunderstandings.

Trust occupies a central position in the interaction of the international Geyra Group team, shaping the participants’ willingness to openly exchange information, make joint decisions, and take responsibility for outcomes. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that feeling supported and having access to colleagues creates a foundation for stable cooperation. CEO-PT stated: “We create an atmosphere of trust. We encourage open dialogue and value diversity,” reflecting the importance of transparent relationships between leadership and the team. Such interaction encourages members to voice suggestions or report problems without fear, perceiving the team as a safe space for professional activity.

Interpersonal relationships are formed through regular contact, informal communication, and attention to the emotional state of colleagues. PM-BR noted, “I think the first step is accessing the boundaries and the knowledge the person has, so we find a common ground again, like what we can talk about, because working is not, at the end of the day, just delivering the tasks,” demonstrating a conscious effort to maintain a comfortable atmosphere. Emotional sensitivity helps reduce tension during complex discussions or periods of high workload. Team members who feel that their emotions are acknowledged show greater engagement and confidence in collaboration.

Trust is also linked to leadership accessibility and horizontal communication. TM-UK emphasized: “Everyone is accessible, even the CEO,” which strengthens the sense of equality and reduces psychological distance between roles within the team. This structure facilitates the discussion of sensitive issues and accelerates decision-making, as participants can quickly contact a competent person for clarification. Leadership accessibility creates conditions that support responsibility and confidence in one’s role.

Informal interactions serve as an additional mechanism for strengthening trust. Respondents mentioned that discussing everyday topics, sharing common interests, or exchanging friendly messages fosters positive emotional connections that later carry over into the professional environment. TM-FR described that using a friendlier tone in communication helped her improve mutual understanding with colleagues. Such everyday elements of interaction create a sense of unity and support within the team.

Trust influences the willingness to delegate and make decisions. When participants are confident in the competence of their colleagues, they more readily transfer responsibility for specific tasks, improving the efficiency of workload distribution. Conversely, insufficient trust may lead to excessive control, repeated verification of completed tasks, and delays. Respondents indicated that confidence in each other’s professionalism reduces the likelihood of conflicts and misunderstandings.

Overall, trust and interpersonal relationships shape the quality of team interaction, affecting the emotional climate, communication speed, and effectiveness of project implementation. The established system of mutual support within Geyra Group contributes to stability, flexibility, and the team’s ability to work successfully in a culturally diverse environment.

The conducted research showed that intercultural communication within the international Geyra Group team is a complex process that encompasses linguistic, behavioral, emotional, and organizational aspects of interaction. Respondents demonstrate a high willingness to adapt their communication style, adjusting tone, speech pace, vocabulary choice, and methods of conveying information depending on the interlocutor. Flexibility in communicative strategies contributes to the formation of a shared communicative space in which different cultural models can coexist without conflict. Particular importance is attributed to simplicity of language, avoidance of idioms, verification of understanding, and the use of additional support channels, which ensures equal access to information for all team members.

An important outcome of the study is the identification of key factors influencing successful interaction: trust, openness, psychological safety, and inclusiveness. Leadership accessibility, informal communication, and attention to colleagues' emotional states create a supportive atmosphere that reduces the risk of misunderstandings and encourages active participation among all members. At the same time, typical sources of difficulties were identified – differing expectations regarding response pace, communication style, decision-making formats, and team roles. These discrepancies often have a systemic nature and are connected to cultural behavioral models, emphasizing the need for a conscious approach to intercultural interaction.

The findings confirm that effective communication in an international environment is not formed through a single dominant model, but through mutual adaptation and the combination of different styles. The integration of digital tools, personal interaction, a supportive communicative culture, and mutual respect creates a foundation for stable cooperation and high team performance. In this context, communicative flexibility, cultural awareness, and trust can be considered key competencies of the international project team of Geyra Group.

3.3. Summary of empirical findings

The empirical investigation of intercultural communication within the international Geyra Group team made it possible to thoroughly examine the interaction among representatives of diverse cultural backgrounds, identify key factors contributing to effective collaboration, and determine the barriers that influence overall team performance. The collected material encompasses verbal and non-verbal communication practices, features of organizational behaviour, mechanisms of adaptation and trust-building, as well as systemic sources of misunderstanding. The interview results allow for an assessment of the extent to which the research objective has been achieved—namely, identifying the patterns and specific characteristics of intercultural interaction in an international project environment and determining the team's ability to establish a shared communicative space.

The linguistic dimension of interaction proved to be one of the most significant aspects of the international team's work, as the language environment directly determines the speed of information exchange, the accuracy of formulations, and the level of participant engagement. Respondents emphasized that English as the working language enables task coordination, supports daily communication, and facilitates joint decision-making; however, varying levels of proficiency create discrepancies in access to information and the ability to participate fully. For those who use English as a second or third language, the process of formulating ideas requires additional time and is sometimes accompanied by doubts regarding the correctness of terminology or the stylistic appropriateness of expressions. This affects the pace of work processes and may reduce confidence during real-time discussions.

In response to these challenges, the team gradually developed a range of adaptive communication strategies aimed at ensuring equal access to information and comfortable participation for all members. The most common practices include simplifying vocabulary, avoiding complex grammatical structures and idioms, paraphrasing key messages, as well as providing written duplication of spoken information in messaging platforms or emails. Some respondents noted the effectiveness of clarifying questions, summarizing key points at the end of discussions, and using examples to explain complex issues. Such measures help reduce the risk of misunderstandings, improve message comprehension, and create conditions in which participants with different linguistic backgrounds can express themselves more confidently.

The emotional dimension of linguistic interaction also requires particular attention. Several participants noted that language difficulties may lead to feelings of insecurity or fear of appearing unprofessional, which in turn reduces engagement in discussions. Supportive behaviour from colleagues, a friendly tone, and a willingness to repeat or clarify information help overcome these barriers and contribute to the development of psychological safety. The use of multiple communication channels (spoken, written, and voice messaging) allows the team to compensate for individual linguistic differences and ensure more balanced participation in collaborative work. Thus, linguistic adaptation functions not only as a technical necessity but also as an essential component of a supportive communicative culture that fosters effective interaction in an international environment.

The identified differences in communication styles are clearly reflected in respondents' behaviour and significantly influence the dynamics of team interaction. Representatives of Central and Northern Europe, particularly participants from Poland, Germany and the United Kingdom, demonstrated a tendency toward concise and logically structured expression. Their communicative messages are characterized by brevity, clear formulations, unambiguous instructions, and the absence of emotional markers. For this group, the primary priorities include speed of decision-making, clarity of information interpretation, and adherence to agreed procedures. One participant emphasized the need to use "simple and understandable English without unnecessary details," explaining that such an approach enhances professionalism and contributes to the optimization of work processes. This pragmatic orientation ensures communication efficiency and reduces ambiguity; however, it is sometimes perceived by other team members as excessive rigidity or emotional distance.

Participants from Southern Europe and Latin America, particularly representatives from Portugal and Brazil, demonstrated an opposing communication style oriented toward emotional expression and interpersonal connection. Their communication typically includes metaphors, humor, friendly tone, expressions indicating closeness, and elements of non-verbal expressiveness even in written messages. One respondent stressed that communication for him is not only a method of transferring information, but also a way of establishing personal connection, therefore before discussing tasks he attempts to create a warm

atmosphere and maintain relational contact. A managerial representative emphasized that in his cultural context it is important to build human interaction first and only then move to work-related matters, reflecting a tradition of stronger social orientation.

The contrast between these approaches often caused misunderstandings in collaborative processes. Concise and structured messages typical of more direct communicators were interpreted by emotionally oriented team members as signs of dissatisfaction, coldness or detachment. Conversely, longer messages containing friendly expressions, jokes or emotional elements were perceived by representatives of more rationally oriented cultures as digressions from the topic or a waste of time. One respondent described a situation in which his short message without a greeting or emotional markers was perceived as harsh, although he was simply attempting to respond quickly during a period of intensive workload. This indicates that the absence of non-verbal cues in text-based communication increases the risk of misinterpreting a colleague's intentions.

Analysis of such situations demonstrates that different communication styles shape different expectations regarding tone, structure, and informational content of messages. In response, the team began developing adaptive mechanisms aimed at reducing tension: adding emotional markers to messages, providing brief explanations of intent, clarifying formulations, and using softer introductory phrases. These practices help mitigate cultural differences, enhance mutual understanding, and maintain a constructive working atmosphere. This reflects the international Geyra Group team's ability to develop shared communication norms that acknowledge cultural diversity and support productive collaboration.

Adaptive communicative behaviour has become one of the most notable characteristics of interaction within the international Geyra Group team, as the ability to flexibly adjust one's communication style directly influences the successful coordination of shared tasks. Respondents described specific actions they consciously implement in daily communication: slowing down speech during online meetings, avoiding specialised terminology, using simpler grammatical structures, clarifying key points at the end of conversations, and reformulating information in written form. For example, TM-UK noted that when communicating with colleagues for whom English is not a native language, she "slows down, avoids slang, and checks whether everyone understood what was said," which helps prevent misunderstandings during discussions of urgent work-related issues. Such practices illustrate a deliberate focus on ensuring accessibility of information.

Several respondents emphasised the importance of tonal adjustments. TM-DE explained that he had learned to "add polite expressions and explain thoughts in more detail," as his direct manner of speaking was sometimes perceived as overly harsh. Meanwhile, TM-UK described a comparable experience, noting that his neutral or concise written messages had occasionally been misinterpreted as signs of irritation. He therefore began adding brief greetings or emojis to convey friendliness more clearly. These examples

demonstrate that adaptation occurs not only at the linguistic level but also within the sphere of emotional sensitivity.

Changes also affect the structural organisation of communication. TM-FR reported that she began “avoiding idioms and presenting information in short, structured blocks,” providing examples to clarify complex issues. Some participants use the practice of summarising agreements in messages after meetings, which helps document key decisions and prevent differing interpretations. CEO-PT stated that he actively uses video communication for discussing complex topics, as nonverbal cues help prevent misinterpretation of intentions.

These actions indicate that communicative adaptation is not a spontaneous reaction but a structured mechanism aimed at increasing the accuracy and transparency of interaction. Flexibility in linguistic and behavioural strategies reduces the risk of conflict, enhances mutual understanding, and creates conditions for equal participation among all team members, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. This allows communicative adaptation to be viewed as an essential component of professional competence within an international project environment.

Cultural awareness and the appreciation of diversity emerged as an essential component of effective interaction within the international Geyra Group team, as understanding colleagues’ cultural norms and behavioural patterns directly influences the accurate interpretation of their actions and statements. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that a lack of cultural context often leads to incorrect assumptions regarding a colleague’s intentions or emotional state. TM-PL noted that after becoming more aware of cultural differences, she no longer perceived delayed responses as ignorance or disrespect, acknowledging that “people may work and think differently.” Such reflections illustrate a shift from evaluating behaviour through one’s own cultural lens to attempting to interpret it within a broader intercultural context.

For some respondents, the development of cultural awareness has become an integral part of their professional growth. CEO-PT emphasized that in the Portuguese cultural context, interpersonal relationships play a crucial role, making the establishment of trust a prerequisite for productive collaboration. He noted that some team members expect quick responses and structure, while others require time to build personal connections, which demands flexibility in managerial approaches.

Cultural awareness is also reflected in practical actions aimed at preventing conflicts and misunderstandings. TM-DE described reading materials on intercultural differences and observing colleagues’ communication habits in order to “understand their motives and reactions.” Several respondents recalled instances where neglecting cultural specifics led to misinterpreting directness as aggression or emotional expressiveness as unprofessionalism. For example, one participant described a situation in which a joke typical in his national context was perceived as inappropriate, causing temporary tension within the team.

Understanding cultural differences contributes not only to avoiding misunderstandings but also to strengthening team cohesion. Participants noted that viewing diversity as a resource rather than a barrier helps create an atmosphere of respect and openness. This is reflected in greater tolerance toward alternative viewpoints, willingness to discuss complex issues, and readiness to adopt unconventional solutions. Cultural awareness within Geyra Group thus performs a dual function: on the one hand, it reduces the risk of conflict, and on the other, it enhances the team's potential by leveraging diverse experiences and approaches. This allows it to be considered a strategic asset in international collaboration and an important competence within the modern project environment.

Cultural awareness and the ability to recognize differences in colleagues' behavior emerged as an important factor in successful interaction within the international Geyra Group team. Understanding cultural norms, communication traditions, and work habits directly influences how team members interpret one another's statements and actions. Respondents repeatedly noted that a lack of awareness of cultural context had led to incorrect assumptions about a colleague's intentions or emotional state. TM-PL explained that after becoming more aware of cultural differences, she stopped interpreting delayed responses as signs of ignorance or disrespect, acknowledging that people may work and think differently. This reflects a gradual shift from evaluating colleagues' behavior through personal norms toward a more balanced interpretation of communicative situations.

For some participants, the development of cultural awareness became part of their professional growth. CEO-PT emphasized that in the Portuguese business tradition, establishing a trusting relationship often precedes the transition to work-related issues, which is why he dedicates time to informal interaction with new team members.

Practical manifestations of cultural awareness are reflected in various behaviors. TM-DE mentioned that he reads materials on intercultural differences and observes colleagues' behavior to better understand their motives and reactions. Respondents described situations in which the directness common among Central European participants was perceived as rudeness, while the emotional expressiveness of Southern European members was interpreted as a lack of seriousness. In one case, a friendly and expressive communication style was viewed by a colleague from Northern Europe as a distraction from the main topic, creating short-term tension.

Cultural diversity not only creates risks of misunderstandings but also opens opportunities for more effective teamwork. Respondents noted that combining different approaches helps generate unconventional solutions. For example, during one stage of the project, the team applied a structured planning format proposed by a German participant together with a creative presentation style developed by colleagues from Brazil and Portugal. This combination allowed the team to present project results to the client more convincingly.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that cultural awareness within Geyra Group extends beyond conflict avoidance. It influences decision quality, collaboration style, and the level of trust among team members, gradually becoming a practical team resource and an important competence within the international working environment.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that understanding colleagues' cultural backgrounds significantly changes the nature of interaction within the team. A lack of awareness about how communication is structured in different countries had previously led to incorrect assumptions regarding a colleague's intentions or emotional state. TM-PL explained that after becoming aware of cultural differences, he stopped interpreting delayed replies as ignoring or disrespect, acknowledging that other team members may work at a different pace and require more time to formulate their thoughts. This shift demonstrates a gradual transition from evaluating behavior through personal standards to interpreting communicative situations within a broader cultural context.

For some participants, developing cultural awareness became a deliberate component of professional growth. PM-BR mentioned that through working together, he consciously studies colleagues' working styles, communication preferences, and cultural habits, considering this necessary for better settling the "common ground." CEO-PT emphasized that in his cultural environment, establishing interpersonal connection is an important stage of communication, which is why he dedicates time to informal interaction at the beginning of collaboration.

Practical manifestations of cultural awareness are visible in specific actions: TM-DE noted that he reads materials on intercultural differences and observes colleagues' behavior to better understand their motives and reactions; TM-FR highlighted the need to avoid idioms and use examples when explaining complex issues; TM-UK stressed the importance of slowing down speech and checking understanding during online communication. Such practices aim to reduce the risk of misinterpreting messages and increase clarity in communication.

In this context, cultural awareness is viewed not only as a way to prevent misunderstandings but also as a factor that supports trust-building and comfortable interaction. Respondents noted that recognizing and accepting cultural differences helps maintain openness and ensure equal participation in teamwork. This allows cultural diversity to be interpreted as a resource that strengthens cooperation and stability within the international environment of Geyra Group.

Cultural awareness and the ability to recognize differences in colleagues' behavior emerged as an important element of team interaction, and this conclusion is based on specific statements made by respondents during the interviews. Participants repeatedly noted that in the early stages of collaboration, a lack of knowledge about cultural peculiarities led to incorrect assumptions regarding a colleague's intentions or emotional state. TM-PL emphasized that she had previously interpreted silence or delayed responses as deliberate ignoring, but after working with international colleagues she began to understand

that such behavior may result from a different style of processing information or a need for additional time to formulate thoughts in English.

For some participants, the development of cultural awareness became the result of conscious effort. PM-BR stated, “Because the culture is different, so we have different challenges, different speaking styles, we have different type of humor and different expressions, so all of those little details they sum up and the more you understand a culture and the more you are aware of those details, the easier it will be for relating to the other person and bonding, and this really helps in the workspace.”

CEO-PT highlighted that in his cultural environment, establishing a trusting personal connection precedes the discussion of work-related matters, which is why he intentionally dedicates time to informal conversations with new team members.

Practical manifestations of cultural awareness also appeared in communication strategies. TM-DE mentioned that he reads materials on intercultural differences and observes colleagues’ behavior to better understand their reactions in various situations. TM-FR stressed the importance of avoiding idioms and using examples when explaining complex issues, as this helps colleagues with different levels of English proficiency understand information in the same way. TM-UK emphasized the importance of slowing down speech and checking understanding during online communication, which she believes reduces the risk of misinterpretation.

These observations indicate that cultural awareness within Geyra Group develops not theoretically, but through real work situations that require adaptation. Respondents noted that acknowledging cultural differences helps maintain openness, avoid conflicts, and ensure equal participation in teamwork. This allows cultural diversity to be viewed not as a barrier, but as a resource that strengthens interaction and supports stability in the international working environment.

During the interviews, participants repeatedly noted that trust and personal contact noticeably influence the team’s daily functioning. The CEO-PT stated that leadership openness and the ability to approach management without formal barriers make collaboration easier. TM-UK also emphasized that the possibility to message the manager directly “without unnecessary procedures” helps resolve work-related issues more quickly and reduces tension in complex situations.

Respondents provided specific examples in which trust helped prevent conflicts. TM-DE described a situation in which a colleague’s lack of immediate replies made him feel ignored and dissatisfied. However, after a brief conversation, he learned that the colleague simply did not check messages after work due to cultural habits. He emphasized that openly discussing emotional reactions and expectations helped resolve the misunderstanding quickly. TM-FR observed that adding a few explanatory sentences or a friendly greeting makes communication feel “warmer” and helps clarify the sender’s intentions.

Several participants mentioned the role of informal interaction. Short Telegram messages, exchanging jokes, or brief everyday conversations before a meeting, according to some respondents, create

a sense of “togetherness” and establish a more comfortable background for work discussions. TM-DE noted that after such interactions, discussions of complex issues tended to proceed more calmly and efficiently.

Trust also affected task distribution. Respondents stated that when they were confident in a colleague’s competence, there was no need to control every step, which saved time. In cases where such confidence was lacking, repetitive checks and delays in decision-making occurred.

A comparison of respondents’ statements shows that trust has practical significance in the team’s everyday work. When participants feel assured of their colleagues’ professionalism, tasks are completed more quickly, without additional supervision or repeated clarifications. In contrast, when trust is insufficient, respondents reported delays, repeated verification, and the need for further explanations. These observations suggest that the level of trust directly affects the speed of decision coordination and the amount of communicative effort required to complete work stages.

The obtained results correspond to a number of theoretical positions presented in contemporary models of leadership and cross-cultural communication. The horizontal interaction observed within the Geyra Group team, the accessibility of leadership, and the involvement of team members in decision-making align with the characteristics of low power distance environments described by G. Hofstede. According to this theoretical model, individuals from cultures oriented toward equality and shared responsibility expect open dialogue and opportunities to influence processes. During the interviews, respondents emphasized that they can contact the manager directly without formal procedures, which confirms the presence of low hierarchical structures within the team.

The identified differences in communication styles reflect the patterns described by E. Hall in the context of high- and low-context communication. Participants from Poland, Germany, and the United Kingdom demonstrated a direct and structured manner of expression focused on clarity and time efficiency, which corresponds to low-context communication models. In contrast, representatives from Portugal and Brazil attached importance to emotional elements and informal contact, which is typical of high-context cultures. According to Hall, differences in the degree of explicitness of messages often lead to misunderstandings, which corresponds to cases described by respondents during the interviews.

Differences in attitudes toward personal relationships and work-related interaction correlate with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model. Representatives from Portugal and Brazil emphasized the importance of establishing personal contact before addressing tasks, which reflects a relationship-oriented approach, whereas participants from Central Europe expected a structured and procedural start to discussions, demonstrating a universalist perspective. This helps explain the differing interpretations of tone and message content within the team.

The findings also align with the concept of cultural intelligence presented in the works of Earley and Ang. Respondents described deliberate behavioural adjustments such as slowing down speech, avoiding idioms, clarifying meaning, and moderating emotional expression. These actions correspond to

components of cultural intelligence, including behavioural flexibility and the ability to adapt communication to context, indicating the development of practical competence anticipated by the theory.

In terms of leadership models, the behaviour of the Geyra Group leadership partially corresponds to Jurado's findings on the effectiveness of transformational and participative leadership styles. Respondents noted involvement in decision-making, leadership openness, and confidence in team members' professional capabilities, which contributed to faster task alignment. This interaction style supports motivation and autonomy, aligning with Jurado's conclusions regarding the effectiveness of flexible leadership in multicultural project environments.

The data concerning the influence of trust on work pace can be related to the conclusions of Brett, Behfar, and Kern (2006), who argue that the level of mutual confidence affects the intensity of control and the frequency of communicative clarifications in international teams. Respondents described situations in which trust reduced the need for monitoring and accelerated task completion, confirming these theoretical assumptions.

Observations regarding the effectiveness of informal communication differ to some extent from traditional research findings, which often emphasize a high likelihood of conflict in multicultural groups due to communication barriers. In this case, participants highlighted that brief personal contact and private clarification allowed misunderstandings to be resolved quickly. This may indicate the influence of the horizontal structure and leadership accessibility, partially adjusting expectations formed by previous theoretical models.

Summarizing the findings, it can be stated that the research objective and tasks have been successfully achieved. The Geyra Group team demonstrates a high level of adaptability and the ability to integrate different communication models, which ensures effective interaction in a culturally diverse environment. The identified factors contributing to successful cooperation, such as communicative flexibility, trust, inclusiveness, and cultural awareness, form a foundation for further development of the organization's communication practices and can be applied in shaping recommendations for international project management.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the implementation of the qualification thesis, the outlined objectives were fulfilled consistently and comprehensively, which made it possible to achieve the stated research aim and obtain a holistic understanding of the relationship between leadership and cross-cultural communication in international project teams.

The theoretical analysis of leadership approaches in international and multicultural contexts made it possible to identify their strengths and limitations. It was determined that traditional concepts focused on personality traits or behavioral models insufficiently account for cultural variability and the interaction context. In contrast, contemporary approaches, including transformational, distributed, and adaptive leadership, demonstrate higher effectiveness in culturally diverse environments due to their flexibility, emotional sensitivity, and participatory nature.

The role of cross-cultural communication was identified as a key factor shaping cooperation in diverse teams. The theoretical models of Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, and the GLOBE study helped reveal the sources of communication barriers, including differing levels of communication contextuality, attitudes toward hierarchy, response speed, emotional expressiveness, and language difficulties. At the same time, several enablers of effective interaction were identified: trust, inclusiveness, active listening, communication transparency, and adaptation of communication style.

The empirical findings confirmed that cross-cultural communication is not a secondary but a determining factor in collaboration effectiveness. Respondents repeatedly described situations in which delayed responses, lack of greetings, or excessive emotionality were interpreted as signs of dissatisfaction or disrespect. For example, TM-PL noted that she previously perceived silence as ignorance, while PM-BR recalled an instance when a joke typical in his cultural context caused tension within the team. These examples illustrate the real impact of cultural differences on work processes and the need to adapt communication strategies.

The horizontal leadership structure within Geyra Group played a particularly important role in ensuring effective interaction. The accessibility of management and the possibility of contacting the CEO without formal procedures facilitated faster decision-making and strengthened trust. Respondents emphasized that the leader's openness positively influenced motivation and reduced tension during challenging project phases. At the same time, several problematic aspects were identified: unclear role distribution led to task duplication and delays, indicating the need for clearer formalization of responsibilities.

The systematization of effective practices based on theoretical and empirical data showed that the most successful strategies in culturally diverse environments include speech adaptation (avoiding idioms, simplifying vocabulary), checking understanding, duplicating information in written form, adjusting

message tone, and engaging in brief informal communication before work discussions. Respondents confirmed that these actions helped prevent misunderstandings and accelerated decision alignment.

The analysis demonstrated that a combination of cultural awareness, trust, and a flexible leadership approach creates conditions for stable and productive interaction in an international project team. Communicative adaptation evolves from an individual skill into a collective behavioral norm, which further enhances collaborative effectiveness.

The obtained results have practical significance for organizations operating in a global environment, as they demonstrate how specific communicative and leadership practices influence work pace, decision quality, and the psychological climate within a team. The research findings can be applied in the development of internal communication policies, staff development programs, and management models for international projects.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the study was based on the analysis of a single case: the Geyra Group, which limits the ability to generalise the results to other international project teams or organisational contexts. Second, the sample consisted of six participants, which is acceptable for qualitative research but does not allow for a broader comparative analysis. Third, all data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which may have been influenced by participants' subjectivity, selective memory, or willingness to share confidential information. Fourth, English was not the native language of most respondents, which may have affected the depth of their statements or the accuracy of certain assertions. Finally, the researcher's own interpretation during thematic analysis may introduce some interpretative bias, which is inevitable in qualitative research. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into leadership and the dynamics of intercultural communication in a real international project environment.

Based on the obtained results, a set of recommendations has been formulated to enhance leadership and communication effectiveness in culturally diverse project teams:

1. Improvement of role and responsibility structure. Strengthening the internal organization of the team requires a clearer and more systematic approach to defining roles, tasks, and authority levels. It is advisable to formalize the distribution of responsibilities by developing explicit role descriptions, appointing individuals accountable for each major project stage, and clarifying reporting lines. Such structuring minimizes the likelihood of task duplication, prevents gaps in responsibility, and contributes to smoother coordination across culturally diverse subgroups. A transparent framework of roles also supports accountability, accelerates decision-making processes, and ensures that each team member understands how their contribution aligns with overall project objectives.

2. Development of cultural awareness. To improve communication and reduce cross-cultural misunderstandings, the team would benefit from systematic efforts to enhance cultural awareness. This may involve implementing short training sessions, interactive workshops, or micro-learning modules that

introduce team members to key principles of intercultural competence. Such activities can address cultural differences in communication styles, time orientation, attitudes toward hierarchy, conflict resolution preferences, and behavioral norms. Expanding cultural understanding helps create a more inclusive environment in which employees feel respected, valued, and better equipped to interpret colleagues' actions within their cultural context.

3. Support for an adaptive leadership style. Leaders in multicultural project teams must cultivate flexibility in their approach, developing the ability to shift between directive, collaborative, and delegative styles depending on situational demands. An adaptive leadership style enables managers to balance strategic vision with operational support, adjust expectations according to cultural preferences, and respond effectively to the evolving needs of the group. By demonstrating openness, situational awareness, and responsiveness, leaders foster trust, motivate team members, and cultivate a shared sense of responsibility for project results.

4. Streamlining communication processes. It is recommended to clearly define rules for the use of communication channels and implement mechanisms for documenting key agreements (meeting protocols, written summaries).

5. Strengthening inclusiveness and psychological safety within the team. Practices that ensure the involvement of all team members in discussions should be supported, creating conditions for freely expressing opinions without the risk of criticism or misunderstanding.

6. Development of active listening and empathy skills. It is recommended to encourage practices of clarification, paraphrasing, and emotional support, which contribute to building trust and mutual respect.

7. Optimization of digital interaction. To ensure efficient coordination and information flow, it is advisable to introduce a unified digital platform for storing project documentation, sharing materials, and tracking task progress. Centralizing information reduces the risk of data fragmentation or loss, enhances transparency, and allows team members from different time zones or cultural backgrounds to access up-to-date materials at any time. Well-organized digital infrastructure supports accountability, facilitates collaboration, and creates a stable foundation for effective remote teamwork.

The proposed recommendations are based on theoretical foundations and supported by empirical data, which ensures their practical relevance and applicability for improving management processes in culturally diverse project teams.

To conclude, let me return to the main question of the study: **How do leadership styles and cross-cultural communication strategies influence collaboration and performance in multicultural project teams?**

The results of this study showed that leadership styles and cross-cultural communication strategies have a direct and significant impact on collaboration and performance in multicultural project teams. The

horizontal and participatory approach to leadership observed at Geyra Group enhances motivation, psychological safety and engagement, allowing team members to participate in decision-making and feel trusted by management.

At the same time, intercultural communication strategies such as adapting tone and clarity, checking understanding, simplifying language, and using multiple communication channels reduce misunderstandings and create a shared communication space in which team members from different cultural backgrounds can collaborate effectively.

When management openness is combined with communication adaptability, trust within the team grows, conflicts are resolved more quickly, and tasks are coordinated more effectively. Conversely, unclear role distribution and differences in communication expectations can slow down processes, demonstrating that effective collaboration depends on aligning leadership behaviour with communication practices that take cultural characteristics into account. In general, leadership and communication reinforce each other and together form the basis for high-quality

LIST OF SOURCES

1. Aidane, S. (2024). Cross-cultural leadership: What does it mean for project managers? OnlinePMCourses. <https://onlinepmcourses.com/cross-cultural-leadership-what-does-it-mean-for-project-managers/>
2. Alvarez, S. C. (2024). A review of cross-cultural leadership and management in international projects. Technoarete Publications. <https://technoaretepublication.org/economics-and-busniess-system/article/review-cross-cultural-leadership.pdf>
3. Alvarez, S. C., & Sahija, D. (2022). A review of cross-cultural leadership and management in international projects. *Technoarete Transactions on Economics and Business Systems*, 1(2), 23-28.
4. Aririguzoh, S. (2022). Communication competencies, culture and SDGs: effective processes to cross-cultural communication. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1), 1-11.
5. As'ad, A., Junaidin, J., Syarifuddin, S., Herison, R., & Syukur, A. (2024). The Impact of Cross-Cultural Management on Global Collaboration and Performance. *Bata Ilyas Educational Management Review*, 4(2), 30-42.
6. Blyznyuk, T. (2022). Assesment of leadership development: cross-cultural aspects.
7. Brett, J. M., Behfar, K. J., & Kern, M. C. (2006). Managing multicultural teams. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(11), 84–91. <https://hbr.org/2006/11/managing-multicultural-teams>
8. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
9. Den Hartog, D. N. (2024). Cross-cultural leadership: What we know, what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-110721-033711>
10. European Union. (2014). Directive 2014/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 amending Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups. *Official Journal of the European Union*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>
11. Heimbürger, A. (2018). When cultures meet: Modelling cross-cultural knowledge spaces. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1805.09635>
12. Irving, J. A. (2025). Cross-cultural perspectives on servant leadership. In *Servant leadership: Developments in theory and research* (pp. 175-199). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
13. Juhre, F., & Heinen, C. (2000). Managing international and cross-cultural projects. Project Management Institute. <https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/managing-international-cross-cultural-projects-8924>

14. Jurado, E. (2025). Cross-cultural collaboration in project teams: A comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative findings. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 13(3), 1202–1222. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2025.132063>
15. Kumar, S., Pandey, N., & Mukherjee, D. (2022). Cross Cultural and Strategic Management: a retrospective overview using bibliometric analysis. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 29(1), 171-194.
16. Mhlongo, N. Z., Olatoye, F. O., Elufioye, O. A., Ibeh, C. V., Falaiye, T., & Daraojimba, A. I. (2024). Cross-cultural business development strategies: A Review of USA and African. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 11(1), 1408-1417.
17. Mukhtar, A., Zhu, Y., Lee, Y. I., Bambacas, M., & Cavusgil, S. T. (2022). Challenges confronting the ‘One Belt One Road’ initiative: social networks and cross-cultural adjustment in CPEC projects. *International Business Review*, 31(1), 101902.
18. Nosratabadi, S., Bahrami, P., Palouzian, K., & Mosavi, A. (2020). Leader cultural intelligence and organizational performance. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2010.02678>
19. Oertig, M., & Buergi, T. (2025). The challenges of managing cross-cultural virtual project teams. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235263716_The_challenges_of_managing_cross-cultural_virtual_project_teams
20. Ogbogu, P. U., Noroski, L. M., Arcoleo, K., Reese Jr, B. D., & Apter, A. J. (2022). Methods for cross-cultural communication in clinic encounters. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*, 10(4), 893-900.
21. Osaghae, E. (2024). Key drivers of value amongst multicultural teams in large projects. Taylor & Francis Online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15623599.2023.2221059>
22. Perera, A. P. K. (2025). Cross-Cultural Leadership in Global Teams.
23. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
24. Schroevers, S., Higgings, C., & Doğan, A. (Eds.). (2023). *Glocal Leadership Outcomes: Mapping cross-cultural differences in leadership practices*. CCBS Press.
25. Sertel, G., Karadag, E., & Ergin-Kocatürk, H. (2022). Effects of leadership on performance: a cross-cultural meta-analysis. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 22(1), 59-82.
26. Shiraev, E. B., & Levy, D. A. (2024). *Cross-cultural psychology: Critical thinking and contemporary applications*. Routledge.
27. Talaera. (2023). 9 signs of cross-cultural communication challenges in your team. <https://www.talaera.com/blog/9-signs-of-cross-cultural-communication-challenges-in-your-team>

28. Thapliyal, K., & Joshi, M. (2022). Cross-cultural management: Opportunities and challenges. *Integrating new technologies in international business*, 31-53.
29. Thunderbird School of Global Management. (2025). Global leadership: Managing teams across cultures. Thunderbird. <https://thunderbird.asu.edu/thought-leadership/insights/managing-global-teams>
30. Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
31. United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
32. Van Vliet, R. (2023). Leadership and communication in global cross-cultural teams. Lepaya. <https://www.lepaya.com/blog/leadership-and-communication-in-global-cross-cultural-teams>
33. Welsch, D., Burk, L., Mötefindt, D., & Neumann, M. (2023). Navigating cultural diversity: Barriers and potentials in multicultural agile software development teams. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2311.12061>
34. Xu, H., Liu, M., Bu, Y., Sun, S., Zhang, Y., Zhang, C., Acuna, D. E., Gray, S., Meyer, E., & Ding, Y. (2023). The impact of heterogeneous shared leadership in scientific teams. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2306.15804>
35. Zegers, C., & Auron, M. (2022). Addressing the challenges of cross-cultural communication. *Medical Clinics*, 106(4), 577-588.

SUMMARY

This master's thesis explored how leadership styles and communication strategies influence collaboration and performance in multicultural project teams, using a qualitative case study of the Geyra Group's international team.

The research concluded that traditional leadership models, such as trait-based, behavioral models, are often insufficient in culturally diverse environments because they fail to take into account cultural differences. More modern approaches, such as transformational, distributed, and adaptive leadership, prove to be more effective.

As seen after the research, the Geyra Group team demonstrated a high level of adaptability and integration of different communication models. Communicative flexibility, trust, openness, inclusiveness, psychological safety, and strong cultural awareness are the key factors that contribute to their successful cooperation.

However, difficulties frequently arise from cultural behavioral models, leading to different expectations regarding response pace, communication style, decision-making formats, and team roles. Furthermore, while English is the working language, varying levels of proficiency among members create discrepancies in access to information and full participation. It is a challenge that the team tries to solve by simplifying vocabulary and paraphrasing key messages.

The thesis provides evidence-based recommendations, advocating for the development of cultural awareness through systematic efforts like training and workshops. These programs should specifically address differences in communication styles, attitudes toward hierarchy, and conflict resolution preferences. Also, it recommends supporting an adaptive leadership style, where leaders cultivate the flexibility to shift between directive, collaborative, and delegative styles based on situational demands and team members' cultural preferences, ultimately fostering trust and motivation.

Key words: cross-cultural communication; leadership; international project team; cultural awareness; cultural intelligence.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

The interview questions

1. How do you define cross-cultural communication in your daily work at Geyra Group?
2. What are the main challenges you face when collaborating across different nationalities?
3. In your experience, how does cultural awareness or cultural intelligence influence teamwork and leadership here?
4. How would you describe the leadership approach at Geyra Group?
5. How do you adapt your leadership or communication style when working with people from different cultural backgrounds?
6. Can you share an example of a situation where you had to modify your communication or management approach to bridge cultural differences?
7. What practices help ensure communication remains inclusive and respectful of everyone's perspectives?
8. Have you ever experienced a misunderstanding caused by cultural or language differences within the team? How was it resolved?
9. How do you handle conflicts that arise from differences in hierarchy, feedback style, or decision-making preferences?
10. What role does active listening play in preventing or resolving cross-cultural misunderstandings?
11. How do you prepare yourself for working with people from different cultural backgrounds?
12. What helps you build trust and good relationships with international colleagues?
13. How have you personally developed your cross-cultural competence while working at Geyra Group?
14. How does Geyra Group, as an organization, support effective communication and collaboration among international team members?
15. What could be improved at the organizational level to strengthen cross-cultural collaboration and leadership practices?
16. From your experience, what could be done to improve collaboration in multicultural teams like yours?
17. What advice would you give to future leaders managing international project teams?

Annex 2

Transcript of the interview with PM-BR

Researcher:

Hello, thank you very much for taking time to speak with me today. My name is Daryna and I'm conducting interviews for my master's thesis at Mykolas Romeris University. The topic of my research is "Leadership and cross-cultural communication challenges in international project teams: A case study of Geyra Group." The purpose of this interview is to better understand your personal experiences and perspectives about working in Geyra's multicultural project team—how communication, teamwork, and leadership work in practice.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and everything you share will be treated confidentially. The interview will be anonymous, meaning that your name and any details that could identify you will not appear in the thesis. If it's okay with you, I would like to record the conversation for accuracy, but the recording will only be used for transcription and analysis. You may choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any moment. The interview should take around 25 to 30 minutes.

Do you have any questions before we start?

PM-BR:

No, I don't.

Researcher:

Okay, um, so I would like to start with the question such as, "How would you describe cross-cultural communication in your daily work at Geyra Group?"

PM-BR:

For me, the communication is the most important part of the daily work because you are handling different tasks and there are different outcomes like the owner expects us to achieve, so being able to communicate and give instructions is really important and I feel like the language plays a big role in that because even though we all speak English, we have a different culture and there is like expressions and tones that may vary from each of us, so I think the language is really important in those cases where we have like multicultural people working together to achieve the same goal.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you. It leads me to the next question, which is what are the main challenges you face when collaborating across different nationalities?

PM-BR:

For me, the main challenge is finding common ground because I feel like some nationalities will be more task-oriented and other ones will be like social and then we are dealing with different people in the same tasks, we must find what we have in common, how can we work together in a way that's productive and we can move forward.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you. In your experience, how does cultural awareness or cultural intelligence influence teamwork and leadership in Geyra?

PM-BR:

It's really really important because as in the other question, like it really changes. For example, I'm Brazilian, I speak Portuguese and I have teammates that are Portuguese people and even though we speak the same language, it kind of doesn't really help totally because the culture is different, so we have different challenges, different speaking styles, we have different type of humor, different expressions, so all of those little details they sum up and the more you understand a culture and the more you are aware of those details, the easier it will be for relating to the other person and bonding and this really helps in the workspace.

Researcher:

I see, thank you. How would you describe the leadership approach at Geyra Group?

PM-BR:

I like to lead by example, I think it's the strongest thing we can do. Each of us, like if we give examples for our teammates, it's easier than just giving orders and also about orders, I feel like we have a very horizontal workspace where everybody kind of takes part of the decision making process, so it's not something really vertical where we have like the CEO, the manager and then the other roles, it's something more like we all have high stakes in the project, so everybody is like responsible and takes ownership in the deliverables.

Researcher:

Thank you. How do you adapt your leadership or communication style when working with people from different cultural backgrounds?

PM-BR:

I think the first step is like accessing the boundaries and the knowledge the person have, so we found a common ground again, like what we can talk about, because working is not, in the end of the day, working is not just delivering the tasks. Many people would like to share a good work environment and to be able to do it, you must get to know the person and their working style and also the preference, like how the person likes to be listened and to talk and to share and to receive feedback, so there are many details

that we need first to access, like talking with the people and getting to know the person before actually starting to work and have a productive environment.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you. So, in this case, can you share an example of a situation where you had to modify your management approach to reach cultural differences?

PM-BR:

Yeah, totally, there are many, but I think the most common one is like under-communication and over-communication. I feel like I'm, most of the time, I'm straightforward with most of the people, but some people, they really need like, I really describe a task with many instructions and following apps, so usually with different themes, this is the topic that I most change and I try to adapt in order to fit like cultural differences.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you, let's move on. Is there any practices that help you to make sure communication remains inclusive and respectful of everyone's perspectives?

PM-BR:

Yeah, there are different methodologies, I really like Scrum, I have some tech projects as well and I feel like it helps to everybody share their thoughts and it's not just freestyling because there is like a methodology that we follow step by step, mostly like the stand-up meetings with everybody has like, within 15 minutes everybody needs to talk about their deliverables, if they have blockers or anything that we can help, so it really helps making it inclusive without freestyling, like there is a methodology step by step where we and it just works quite well.

Researcher:

That's interesting. Okay, thanks. Have you ever experienced a misunderstanding caused by cultural or language differences within the team, and if so, how was it resolved?

PM-BR:

There are a few that appears here and there, I think accent is really important because sometimes they lead to a lot of misunderstanding, we sometimes we try to translate right because the English is not our native language, so we are listening somewhat and they're all at the same time kind of translating to our mother language and I think this can lead to a lot of misunderstandings when the person doesn't have like fluent accent and then we're thinking about and if you don't ask questions then it leads to an even worse place, so I always prefer to ask sometimes once, sometimes twice to make sure I really understood what the person is saying.

Some other small things that can happen is like even in Portuguese, we are speaking the same language but we have different expressions, we use sometimes different words for the same stuff, so we need to ask once, sometimes twice and I think that's it.

Researcher:

Okay, thanks. How do you handle conflicts that arise from differences in hierarchy, feedback style or decision-making preferences?

PM-BR:

I never avoided conflicts, I think they are quite healthy for the workspace, it's better you to talk and expose your thoughts than just hiding it and suffering with those. There is even this model I really like, it's called documenting development, it says that most of the things that really thrive goes through a phase of like it's called storming where basically everything is going wrong and no one is able to communicate quite well but it's necessary in order to find common ground to move to the next steps and there are a few other important things to do, I guess, during those phases. There is a book I really like, it's called «Crucial Conversations» and basically says in order for the person to feel in a safe environment to talk about, you must provide it to them, so being able to listen and to think about what the person is saying, relating to them and giving a point right, not just assuming things and forcing them to behave in a way that you'd like because everybody is one and people are different, so the safe environment is really important for these conflicts to happen and having something good out of it.

Researcher:

Okay, that actually was interesting, thank you. My next question I would like to ask you is, in your opinion, what role does active listening play in preventing or resolving cross-cultural misunderstandings?

PM-BR:

For me, I think this could be the most important skill you can have, not just in professional life but even in personal life. Active listening is really important. I had a business advisor in the past and he used to use expression, in Portuguese would be something like and the direct translation would be something like, talk to the donkey, maybe it doesn't make any sense but basically the idea is that when someone is able to express themselves, like the ideas and there is someone listening, it's not even necessary, like sometimes not even any answer, just the act of the person being able to process by talking, it already helps them to find maybe a solution for the conflict, maybe the idea that was missing for some trouble they had, so active listening, just by listening you already solve a lot, it's really really important to be to develop this skill and perform it in our daily life.

Researcher:

Thank you. Are there any ways that you prepare yourself for working with people from different cultural backgrounds?

PM-BR:

Actually, I don't think so, I've done many volunteerings in my life, I've been to different places, so the thing that worked the best for me was being open for new experiences, to get to know people, their

culture, not really getting prepared but getting curious about what they bring with them, what are their backgrounds and how we can work together and provide a healthier workspace.

Researcher:

Okay, thanks. What helps you build trust and good relationships with international colleagues?

PM-BR:

Of course, it's really important to be reliable in the workspace when someone needs information or help, being able to provide those things to them, but I also think many leaders they lack on good feedback, they lack on recognizing the strength and the power that each teammate have and for me this is really important in building trust and good relationship recognition, providing people not only bad and critical feedbacks but actually providing a good one, recognizing when they do good work, when they progress and everyday work basically.

Researcher:

Okay, thanks. So, my next question is, how have you personally developed your cross-cultural competencies while working at Geyra Group?

PM-BR:

It's really rich the environment because not only the team is made of people from different parts of the world but also as we are dealing with guest houses and we have guests from all around and it's it's funny to like get their feedbacks and manage their expectations because it really shows off when they are paying for something is different, like it's not the same way as the teammates because it's someone hiring a service, so I think it's very rich getting these feedbacks from the guests because they are from every place, everywhere and it really changes like some people really appreciate like minimalism, other people feels like it's missing stuff in the kitchen, so it really varied and it's really fun to get access to those insights and work with them to provide the best guest experience.

Researcher:

Thank you. So, how does Geyra Group as an organization support effective communication and collaboration among international team members?

PM-BR:

Diogo is a really nice guy, it's our CEO and he provides like many dynamics in the course of the activities we have, the workspace is really chill and light and those dynamics it's really good for team building, it's something that would not have in a traditional and vertical workspace, so I think Diogo is the main one really helping us to build this effective communication and collaboration among us by being active, like he's really acting and pushing this as much as most he can and for me it really works out when everybody engage and participate in those activities.

Researcher:

Thank you, let's move on. In your opinion, what could be improved at the organizational level to strengthen cross-cultural collaboration and leadership practices?

PM-BR:

In Geyra we are like every day trying to improve our workflow and we receive a lot of feedbacks from our team in order to find out what's working and what's not and I think nowadays we have kind of many tasks that are on the go, like they just appear based on guests needed or infrastructure that we need to handle and sometimes this could be overwhelming for some people, like the imprevisibility of the work that we should do, they are sometimes from the same day, it just appears and we need to solve it, so I think if it could be possible for us to find a way to structurize a bit more those events, this would make easier for some of the colleagues that we have to handle better like the the test, because it's not every day that we can really find a task for each individual based on their skills, sometimes there are things that are urgent and we need to work on availability, so if they're to help with something, it could be something that just pop up and you must handle, so this is the part of the work that has less structure nowadays and I think could be improved.

Researcher:

Okay, thanks, we're almost done with our interview, just a few questions left and from your experience what could be done to improve collaboration in multicultural team like yours?

PM-BR:

I see this is a really important goal for Diogo, so he's working really hard on finding these improvements, something I see that over this past months he's really focusing on, he's creating more like real human connection, not only focusing on tasks, but really talking, have conversations about life and things outside of the work sphere, recognizing that besides the work, besides the colleague you have, there is a human with his own history, his own path, I think it's really important and creates an environment that is much easier to have real collaboration.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you and we have come to our last question for today, what advice would you give to future leaders managing international project teams?

PM-BR:

The most important advice I can give to anyone that pretends to be a leader is to be empathic, to listen to the others, try to relate and understand that there is a person, there is goals, there is uniqueness in everybody, so being able to recognize their strengths and helping them to achieve their goals, it's really important for any leader.

Researcher:

Thank you and it was the last question for today, thank you very much for your time and openness, your insights are really valuable for my research and before I finish, is there anything you would like to add, something we didn't cover but you think it's important about teamwork, communication or leadership in international environments?

PM-BR:

Yeah, I think those things will only work if you have the right team, we cannot force, it's really important to have a culture for any type of company or startup to develop a working culture and finding the people that fit this culture, otherwise you can be like the best leader ever and you face a lot of problems, so it really helps in the very early stage to find the right people to fit those positions in order to be effective as a leader because leadership also has to do with bonding, relating, so finding the right people will really help.

Researcher:

Okay, thank you, that is a really nice insight, so once again thank you for participating and everything you have shared will remain anonymous and be used only for academic purposes.