PRZESTRZEŃ Społeczna
Social SPACE

Cultural intelligence: key influences

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Acknowledgements

The authors (1) wish to thank the anonymous respondents who provided the data used for this study, which allowed to increase the value of this article; (2) express their gratitude to James Whittle for English language proofreading and linguistic advice; (3) appreciate the editors to adjust the text to the requirements of the journal.

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to discover what the main factors are in successful integration into living and working abroad. The research was based on a 53-item questionnaire conducted online using the snowball method. Altogether 347 respondents' data were used. For the empirical analysis, SPSS was used to identify correlations. The level of cultural intelligence mainly depends on the number of countries an individual has lived in during his/her life, while the number of languages (s)he speaks can also influence its values. To an extent, cultural intelligence can be developed prior to a move into a new culture in order to help an individual through the stages of integration in a faster and more efficient way. The different dimensions of cultural intelligence predict success in various aspects of life in a foreign environment. For example, successful integration is predicted by a high level of motivational and cognitive cultural intelligence. The originality of this work lies in studying some aspects of successful integration abroad, to show how using the measurement and development

techniques of cultural intelligence, and understanding the importance of integrational competencies, can help people to form an ethnorelative approach. The ethnorelative approach, and preparation for achieving that state, can help to lower the negative effects caused by cultural differences and culture shock, which can in turn negatively impact the efficiency of a company and its employees.

Key words: cultural intelligence; multiculturalism, integration, intercultural

1. Introduction

Modern global cultures are increasingly interacting, and increasing cooperation is needed between them. To achieve this, it is necessary to develop skills that will help overcome cultural differences. The level of one's 'cultural intelligence' indicates how successfully one can integrate oneself into other cultures and operate efficiently. There are different phases of cultural integration, usually from a starting position of ethnocentricity in which all of one's own cultural artefacts are perceived to be superior, to full ethnorelative integration, from which is believed the differences can no longer be judged. The objective of this paper is to discover what the main factors are in successful integration into living and working abroad. The measurement of cultural intelligence and competence, along with personal ethnocentric/ethnorelative views before hiring a person for a job abroad can assist Human Resources (HR) departments in developing international selection methods. These measurements can also subsequently be used for preparing for the cross-cultural experience. Value added, using the measurement and development techniques of cultural intelligence, and understanding the importance of integrational competencies, can help people to form an ethnorelative approach. The ethnorelative approach, and preparation for achieving that state, can help to lower the negative effects caused by cultural differences and culture shock, which can in turn negatively impact the efficiency of a company and its employees. For this paper data collected through an online questionnaire was analysed about experiences about cross-cultural experiences.

In the literature review section, the concepts of ethnocentrism/ethnorelativism and cultural intelligence, and their correlation are introduced. In the materials and methods section the focus is expanded on the study to discover what influences the level of cultural intelligence. To conclude, the results found to examine the

hypothesis that 'intercultural experience gained in an individual's life contributes to a higher value of cultural intelligence' are displayed. An assumption is made that cultural intelligence levels rise with age, the number of years spent in work, the number of languages spoken, the level of education, and the number of countries a person has lived in.

2. The problem

2.1. Ethnocentrism vs ethnorelativism

With increasing diversity in the world, researchers have become increasingly interested in the attitudes that people have toward each other. The attributions people make and the behaviours in which they engage are related to the attitudes they have about people from different cultural groups. Attitudes are people's predisposition towards objects or people. They include their likes and dislikes, and they are a key cognitive component for communication (Oetzel 2009).

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Greek historian Herodotus, whom Cicero called 'The Father of History', related a story about Darius, the first monarch of the great Persian Empire. Darius, so the story goes, sent for the Greeks at his court to ask them their price for devouring the corpses of their ancestors. They replied that no price would be high enough. Thereupon the Persian king summoned the representatives of an Indian tribe which habitually practiced the custom from which Greeks shrank, and asked them through the interpreter, in the presence of the Greeks, at what price they would burn the corpses of their ancestors. The Indians cried aloud and beseeched the king not even to mention such a horror. From these circumstances the historian drew the following morals: if all existing customs could somewhere be set before all men in order that they might select the most acceptable for themselves, every nation would choose, after the most searching scrutiny, the customs they already practiced (Gomperz 1901: 403-404). Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester (2010) claim that Herodotus described what is now called ethnocentrism. A more precise definition is from Milton J. Bennett (1993: 33): 'being ethnocentric… is to assume that the world-view of one's own culture is central to all reality'.

Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta (2000) state that one particular attitude is intercultural sensitivity, which is the progressive capacity to accept and accommodate cultural difference. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), developed by M. J. Bennett (2013), is a framework that explains how people experience and handle cultural difference (see Fig. 1). 'Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model (DMIS)' is grounded theory; it is based on observations made in both academic and corporate settings about how people become more competent intercultural communicators.

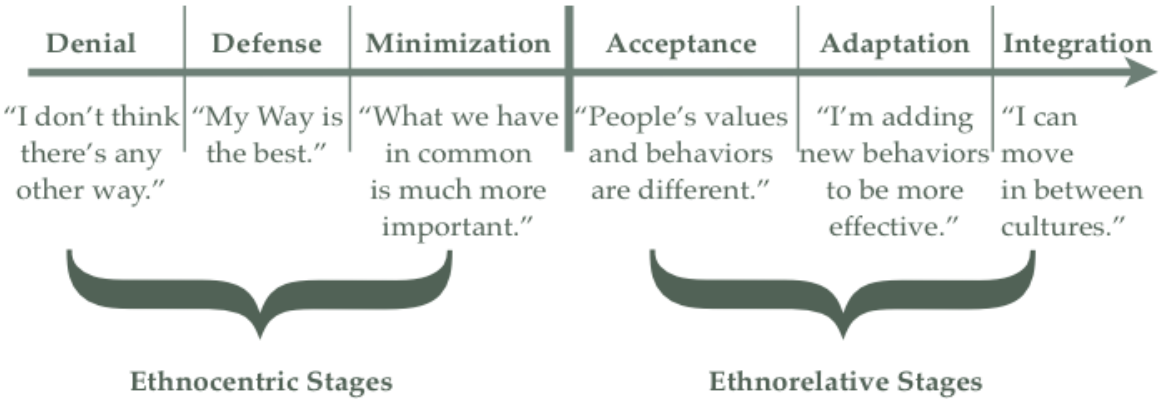

Figure 1. Intercultural Sensitivity Development Model (DMIS)

Source: Endico (2008)

'The model uses concepts from constructivist psychology and communication theory to organize these observations into positions along a continuum of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference. … The DMIS continuum extends from ethnocentrism – the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality" – to ethnorelativism – the experience of one's own and other cultures as "relative to context". Developmental movement is one-way, permanent, and applicable to anything defined as cultural difference, although there may be "retreats" from some positions. More or less familiarity with a particular culture does not change one's level of sensitivity, although it affects the breadth of competence one can enact' (Bennett 2013).

Ethnorelativism does not view difference as threatening; rather it attempts to create a new categories and interpretations and does not force people to fit into existing categories. While the model is not meant to be an evaluative one, it implies

that there is an optimal place to be; in other words, it implies that it is better to be at the 'integration of difference' stage, which opens this up as an ethical debate (Oetzel 2009).

M. W. Lustig and J. Koester states that 'Ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are so familiar and comfortable that overcoming them requires a commitment both to learning about other cultures and to understanding one's own. A willingness to explore various cultural experiences without pre-judging is necessary. An ability to behave appropriately and effectively with those who are culturally different, without invoking prejudiced and stereotyped assumptions, is required. Although it is impossible completely to overcome the obstacles to intercultural competence that naturally exist, the requisite knowledge, motivation, and skill can certainly help to minimize the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination' (Lustig, Koester, 2010: 163).

Kai Hammerich and Richard D. Lewis (2013) write that 'Boards and management play a vital role in ensuring the company has adequate cultural alignment with the chosen strategy. Herein lies the risk. Companies are often blind to their own national culture. And because corporate culture so soft and complex, dysfunctional behaviour is easily swept aside with subjective arguments and dismissed as not being important… Diversity of thinking and respect for other people's perspectives are two critical virtues that should govern this for leadership of most global corporations' (Hammerich, Lewis, 2013: 266).

The highly globalised world, with its far-reaching and diverse business processes, demands reinterpretation of the previous definitions. If a firm is located in one country and all its sales are in the same country, ethnocentric management practices are employed. This style of management does not account for cultural differences in the workforce. Often management practices rely one individual's views of how the organisation should be run (Moran, Stripp, 1991). Competencies that are thought to be indispensable for overcoming cultural differences are not present consciously in the minds of managers. (Though their approach is positive and welcoming they are not prepared properly) – (Rudnák 2015: 148).

A growing level of cultural intelligence is a guarantee that human relations and economic activities in the globalised world will become more successful in the near future.

2.2. Cultural intelligence

2.2.1. History of Cultural Intelligence research

We live in an increasingly globalised world, where all workers, not just people in management positions, have the potential to move abroad to live and work; a great many people therefore leave the country in which they grew up, the culture where they socialised, and that which they know. Their successful – or failed– integration affects their work, and even can leave a mark on their personality, individuality, physical and mental health.

Research has shown that management skills are influenced by general and emotional intelligence, but these findings were true for people working in their own home country; successful management abroad has not been examined (Rockstuhl et al., 2011).

The pioneer of the research of cultural intelligence is Soon Ang, who was asked to find the reason for a failure in cooperation between team members recruited for solving Y2K issues in 1997. The team consisted of people who were the best in their field, yet despite this their work together was not efficient. S. Ang turned her attention to this problem and started working with Christopher Earley, which resulted in a new concept they dubbed 'Cultural Intelligence', and a 2003 book of the same name (Livermore 2011). Since then several researchers have started working with the concept including David C. Thomas (2009), David Livermore (2011), Linn Van Dyne (2006), Kerr Inkson (2009), Thomas Rockstuhl (2011) and Elaine Mosakowski (2005).

2.2.2. Introduction to Cultural Intelligence

What is cultural intelligence? "A person's capability to function and manage effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Ang, Van Dyne, 2007: 3).

Emotional intelligence is a reliable forward indicator of how successfully a person can cooperate with people from the same culture (Livermore 2011). "Cultural intelligence is related to emotional intelligence, but it picks up where

emotional intelligence leaves off" (Early-Mosakowski 2005: 139). A person with a high emotional intelligence value in a given culture does not necessarily have a high emotional intelligence value in another culture (Ang et al., 2007). "EQ (emotional intelligence) is a strong predictor of your success when you are working with people who come from the same culture as you, but your CQ (cultural intelligence) is a much better predictor of how you'll do working with people from different cultural backgrounds" (Livermore 2011: 13).

The concept of cultural intelligence differs in several ways from the approaches of intercultural competence and multicultural relationships. Cultural intelligence is not culture specific (Ang et al., 2007), and nor does it tell us how to behave with a person from a given culture or in a specific cultural environment. It deals with learned capabilities, not personal traits, and thus it develops over the years with our experiences and can be further developed in a conscious way. Knowledge of culture-specific data and features is only part of cultural intelligence; it does not equal it (Livermore 2011).

2.2.3. Four dimensions of cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence includes four dimensions (drive, knowledge, strategy, and action), each of which contributes to one's overall cultural intelligence level[1] (Livermore 2011). These four dimensions as seen in Table 1. 'Different Cultural Intelligence capabilities' correspond to the four dimensions of general intelligence (Ang, Van Dyne, 2007).

[1] Feedback Report for the test available on http://cq-portal.com/v7/cqdifference/index.php

Table 1. Different Cultural Intelligence capabilities

CQ Drive		Motivation	Level of interest, drive, and confidence to adapt to multicultural situations.
CQ Knowledge		Cognition	Level of understanding about how cultures are similar and different.
CQ Strategy		Metacognition	Level of awareness and ability to plan for multicultural interactions.
CQ Action		Behaviour	Level of adaptability when relating and working interculturally.

Source: Cultural Intelligence Center, LLC – Feedback Report for the test available on http://cq-portal.com/v7/cqdifference/index.php (Livermore, 2011)

2.3. Correlation between ethnocentrism and cultural intelligence

In 2011, in a study conducted at the Payame Noor University in Tehran, Iran, Yaaghob Ahmadi and his colleagues examined the connection between ethnocentrism and the four factors of CQ, among other issues (Table 2). "Pearson Correlation Test of Ethnocentrism and Four Dimensions of CQ" shows the correlation between ethnocentrism and dimensions of cultural intelligence. For the study, Ahmadi used a questionnaire and used data from 325 responders. The questionnaire consisted of a 20-item self-relating CQ measure, the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), and a 16-item socio-psychological instrument to measure ethnocentrism.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test of Ethnocentrism and Four Dimensions of CQ

		CQ	Behavioural	Motivational	Cognitive	Metacognitive
Ethnocentrism	R	-0/218	-0/176	-0/154	-0/194	-0/021

Source: adapted from (Ahmadi et al., 2011)

The study found that there is an inversely proportional relationship between ethnocentrism and CQ (cultural intelligence). Looking at the details they found that there was a negative and meaningful relationship between ethnocentrism and only three dimensions of CQ (Behavioural, Motivational and Cognitive), but there was no meaningful relationship of ethnocentrism with the Metacognitive CQ.

3. Material and methods

In our study the progress of integration into an intercultural environment is analysed by examining cultural intelligence levels. Beginning with the level of cultural intelligence, the development of ethnocentric/ethnorelative views in connection with the factors (age, number of spoken languages, living abroad, highest education) influencing it are analysed. It is assumed that the intercultural experience gained in an individual's life contributes to a higher value of cultural intelligence. The assumption is made that cultural intelligence levels rise with age, the number of years spent in work, the number of languages spoken, the level of education, the more countries a person has lived in.

For the study a questionnaire was used which was shared and completed online. To receive as many responses as possible it was shared out using the snowball method. Given the nature of the study, a representative research was not possible; thus, the study used non-representative samples. The questionnaire was available in both Hungarian and English.

In the questionnaire mainly closed questions were used but there were 7 open-ended questions as well for which freeform answers were expected. Within the closed questions there were alternative, selective and scale types. With two exceptions, all questions were compulsory.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts and 53 questions. The first part collected demographic data, the second asked about working in multicultural environments using rating scales, and in the third part respondents were asked to use rating scales to judge their own levels of intercultural competence and cultural intelligence.

The questionnaire was answered by 347 people, out of which 42% were male and 58% female. After sorting the people into age groups, it was shown that most of the respondents were from the 31-40 group and the fewest from the 15-20 age group. The average age of the respondents was 37 years. Seventeen people declared themselves to be dual-or multi-national.

Eleven per cent of the respondents only spoke on their mother tongue, 38% spoke one additional language, 35% could speak three languages and 16% spoke four or more languages. On average the respondents knew 2.57 languages, out of

Hungarians 2.58, on average English mother-tongue speakers 1.92, and people with other nationalities spoke 3.36 languages.

Regarding language knowledge according to native language: 6% of Hungarians only spoke one language (their mother tongue), whereas 45% of the English-speakers only spoke English. Since the questionnaire was available in Hungarian and English only there were no people with other mother tongues who did not speak any foreign language. In the largest proportion, non-English-speaking foreigners (not Hungarians) spoke four or more languages.

Almost half of the respondents (49.6%) have already lived abroad, and 68.5% have worked in a multicultural environment.

Data was collected from an accessible sample of people, which was achieved using the snowball method shared over the internet using an online questionnaire. The survey included self-assessment questionnaires. One of the biggest concerns about using self-assessment questionnaires was that it limited the circle of respondents to those who are willing to respond to such requests, which inherently distorts the composition of the sample. However, the method also has several advantages: it is inexpensive, fast, and intimate. Inexpensive, because interviewers do not need to be employed; fast, because immediate access to the collected data is possible; intimate because certain sensitive questions are more likely to be honestly answered if the interview is self-completed, anonymously and in the absence of an interviewer. Since the questionnaire was shared and completed online the anonymity of the respondents were guaranteed.

With this method, it was possible to obtain rich responses, and although the sample was not representative, it can form the basis for further research and can be linked to a database that that have been compiled over the last three years from structured interviews. Our goal was to measure features of intercultural competence to evaluate cultural intelligence and culture-shock levels, from which areas can be pointed out that need further development, as well as to teach university students and others to accept that an ethno relative viewpoint can represent a universal value. Thus, using this database, which is suitable as the basis for further research in several other areas, there is a plan to perform several sub-studies into the previously mentioned topics.

4. Results and discussion

In this paper the assumption is made that the intercultural experience gained in an individual's life contributes to a higher value of cultural intelligence. In details the cultural intelligence levels rise with:

(1) age,

(2) the number of years spent in work,

(3) the number of languages spoken,

(4) the level of education,

(5) the more countries a person has lived in.

Below these assumptions are tested.

The mean average value of cultural intelligence was 4.93 on a scale of seven, with 1.92 as the lowest and 6.76 as the highest value.

(1) It is assumed that that cultural intelligence levels rise with age.

There was a weak 0.157 correlation significant on the 0.01 level between the age and the average CQ values. The CQ value rose with age until the age of 50. From that age, only the motivational CQ values were higher; the other CQ dimensions either did not change or fell a little (see Figure 2). 'Mean average of cultural intelligence by age groups'.

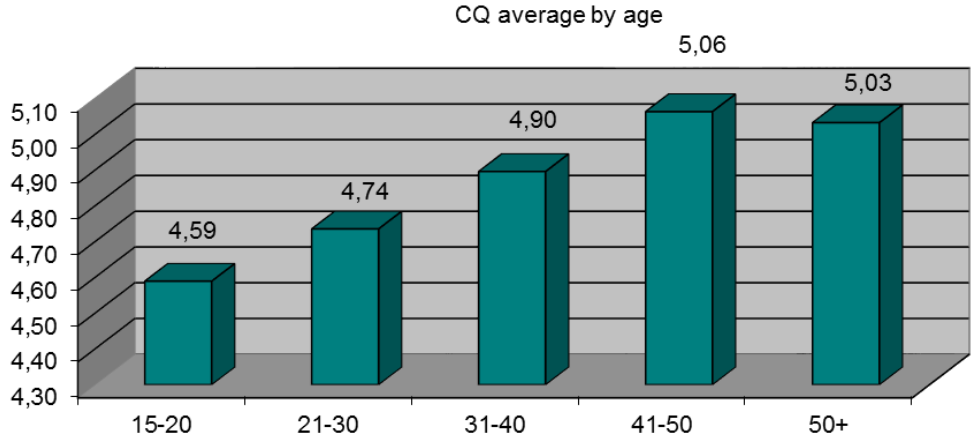

Figure 2. Mean average of cultural intelligence by age groups
Source: own elaboration

(2) It is assumed that that cultural intelligence levels rise with number of years spent at work.

The respondents' age and their work experience in years understandably correlate very strongly (0.949) on 0.01 level as seen in Figure 3. 'Correlation of age with work experience in years'. The explanation for this sub-hypothesis is explained in the next section, which is about the respondents' age.

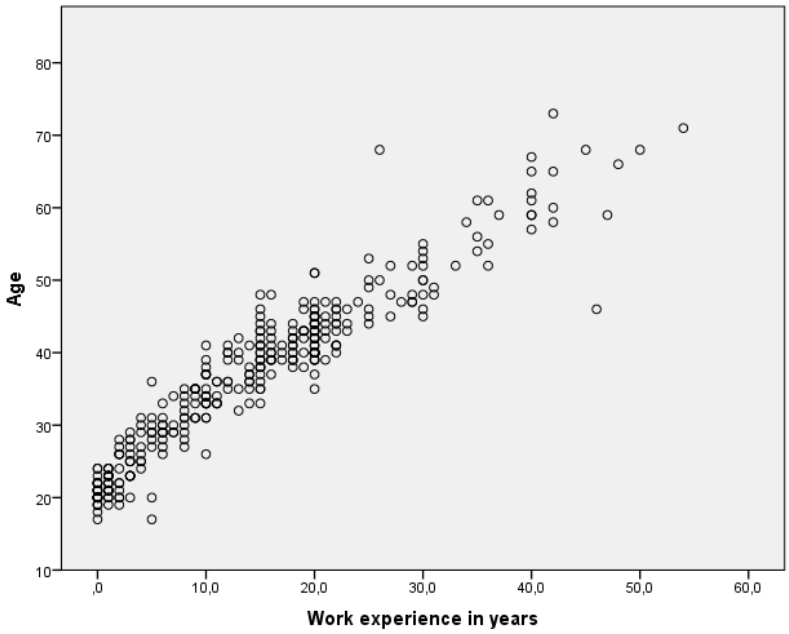

Figure 3. Correlation of age with work experience in years
Source: own elaboration

The number of years spent at work influences the Motivational CQ value the most. There a continuous rise can be found. The overall CQ average and the value of the other three dimensions starts to decline after more than 30 years' work experience, even though it is only a slight fall. This is consistent with results found at the previous sub-hypothesis that examines age: the same trend could be observed there too. The hypothesis was partially confirmed by this: the number of years of work experience raise the CQ value to an extent, but after more than 30 years the values started to fall (see Figure 4). 'CQ average by work experience'. The difference between the values of CQ with the least work experience and the most work experience was 0.34, which shows an increase, but that increase was not continuous, and cultural intelligence average dropped by a tenth between the 10-30 and 30+ year work experience groups. The reason for this might be found in the difference between generations, and the recent history of globalisation. Older generations worked more in the times before globalisation became as prevalent as it is today.

Currently people travel much more, either as tourists or for work-related reasons. People with 30+ years of work experience are the ones who have the highest ration of speaking only their mother tongue (29.7%) and they have the least experience in working at multicultural companies.

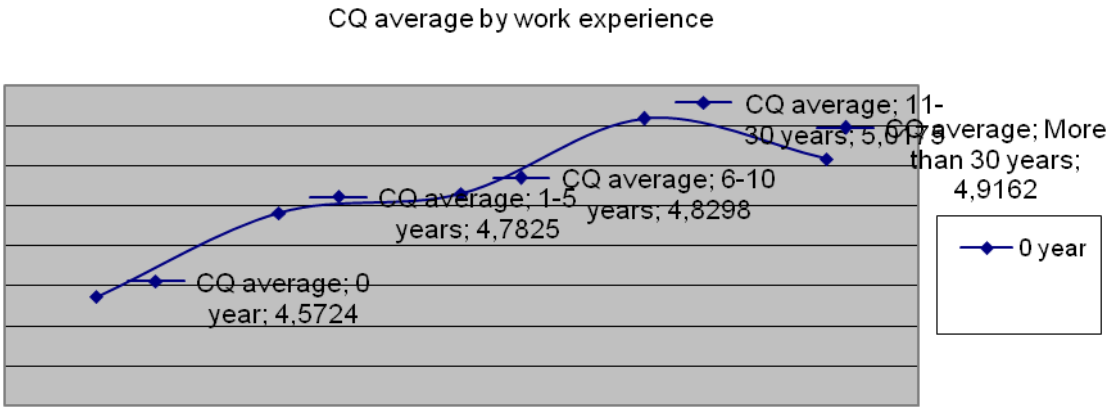

Figure 4. CQ average by work experience
Source: own elaboration

(3) It is assumed that that cultural intelligence levels rise with the number of spoken languages.

There was a weak 0.208 correlation significant on the 0.01 level between the number of spoken languages and the average CQ values. Examining the data it can be seen that the values of behavioural, motivational and metacognitive CQ of people who only one foreign language not only did not rise, but even fell slightly compared to people who only spoke their mother tongue. This was not true for values of cognitive CQ, for which the values were so much higher that the overall trend was a (small) rise in the overall CQ average (see Figure 5). 'Cultural intelligence average by number of spoken languages'. From this the rise was continuous, which indicates that the actual difference is between people who only speak one foreign language and people who learned more than one language. The reason for this might be that the first foreign language learned is usually English, and speaking English has become a basic requirement for doing international work. Thus, this does not indicate any particular significance other than learning further languages show interest in, curiosity, and a motivation towards learning about other cultures. On the other hand, every time people learn a further language they inevitably meet a new culture, thus raising their cultural intelligence.

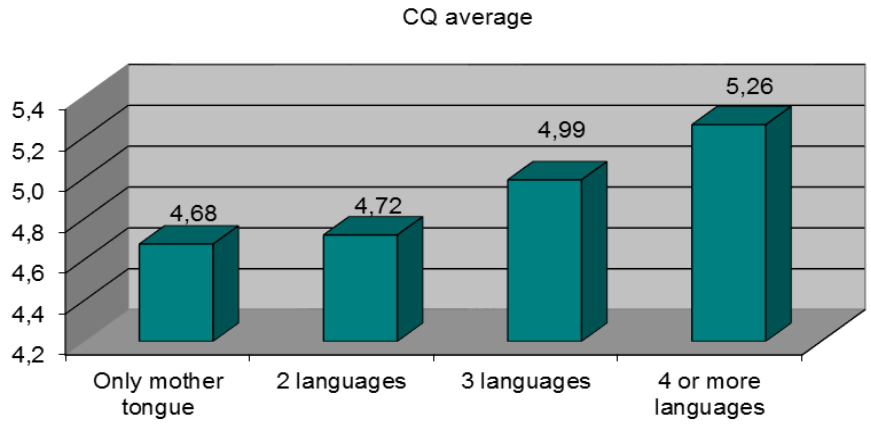

Figure 5. Cultural intelligence average by number of spoken languages
Source: own elaboration

The significance of the difference between the averages was checked with T-probe and found that the strongest relationship with knowledge of languages is with cognitive CQ, while the weakest is with behavioural CQ. The same relationship was shown by the fact that the greatest difference between groups of people speaking only their mother tongue, and people speaking more than four languages, was in cognitive CQ, while the smallest difference was in behavioural CQ, was closely followed by motivational CQ (see Table 3). 'CQ values by number of spoken languages'.

Table 3. CQ values by number of spoken languages

Number of spoken languages	CQ average	Motivational CQ average	Cognitive CQ average	Metacognitive CQ average	Behavioural CQ average
Mother tongue only	4.68	5.36	3.80	4.75	4.98
2 languages	4.72	5.21	4.09	4.73	4.98
3 languages	4.99	5.39	4.57	5.02	5.08
4 or more languages	5.26	5.63	4.93	5.36	5.21
Difference	0.58	0.27	1.13	0.61	0.23

Source: own elaboration

(4) It is assumed that that cultural intelligence levels rise with the level of education.

There is no continuous rise in the value of CQ with education level. For all four dimensions falls are visible with higher level of education. See figure 6. 'Cultural intelligence averages by level of education'. In the case of behavioural CQ and motivational CQ there is a minimal overall rise: educational level appears to influence cognitive and metacognitive CQ. A decrease was found in three CQ dimensions and overall CQ values at the BA/BSc educational level. The hypothesis was only partly confirmed, because the rise was very small in terms of overall CQ values.

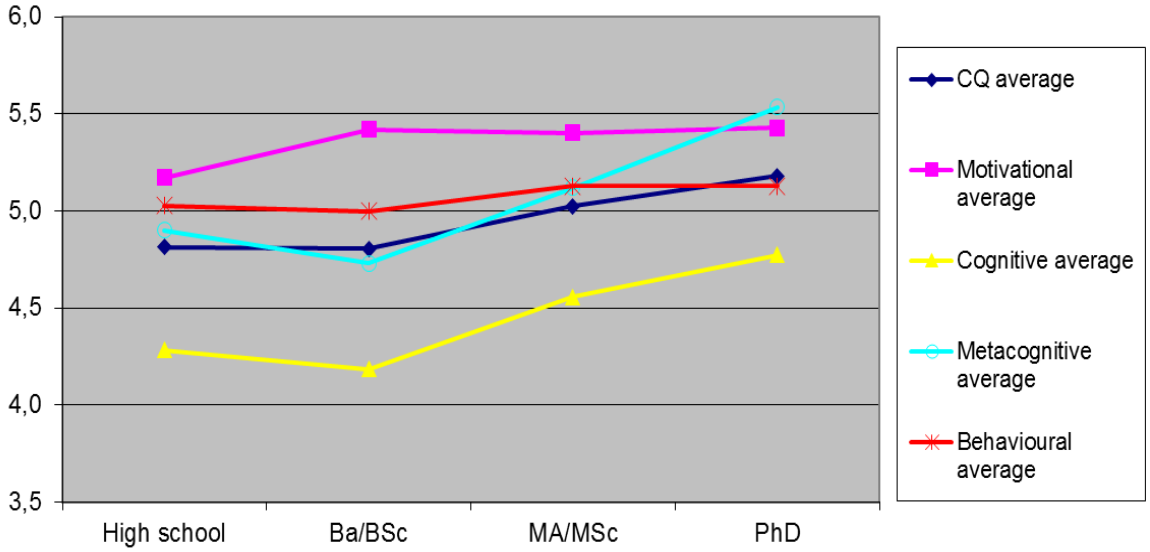

Figure 6. Cultural intelligence averages by level of education
Source: own elaboration

(5) Lastly it is assumed that the cultural intelligence levels rise with the number of countries a person has lived in.

There was a weak-moderate 0.342 correlation significant on the 0.01 level between the number of countries a person lived in and the average CQ values. CQ values rise after someone moves and spends time abroad, and these values rise further if they move to other foreign countries. The more culture they are exposed to, the higher the cultural intelligence they achieve. The smallest rise was in behavioural CQ and the greatest was in cognitive CQ (see Table 4). 'CQ averages by number of countries'.

Table 4. CQ averages by number of countries

Number of countries?	CQ average	Motivational CQ average	Cognitive CQ average	Metacognitive CQ average	Behavioural CQ average
Never lived abroad	4.59	5.02	3.95	4.60	4.94
1 foreign country	5.11	5.56	4.69	5.21	5.07
More than 1 foreign country	5.34	5.90	4.9	5.36	5.31
Difference	0.75	0.89	0.95	0.76	0.37

Source: own elaboration

Examining the differences from a different angle, the biggest difference caused by the different factors was in cognitive CQ average. Except for education and age factors, the other factors affected this dimension the most (see Table 5). 'Highest difference in average CQ by examined factors'.

Table 5. Highest difference in average CQ by examined factors

Studied factor	Motivational CQ average	Cognitive CQ average	Metacognitive CQ average	Behavioural CQ average	CQ average
Work experience	0.53	0.60	0.53	0.10	0.34
Education	0.26	0.49	0.64	0.10	0.36
Languages	0.26	1.11	0.56	0.21	0.58
Number of countries	0.89	0.95	0.76	0.37	0.75
Age	0.70	0.39	0.27	0.38	0.44

Source: own elaboration

Another summary is presented in Table 6. 'Highest difference in average values by CQ dimensions' shows that the number of countries lived in by a person influences the motivational and metacognitive CQ dimensions the most, and it was also the second most significant factor for the other two dimensions. Thus, the number of countries lived in was the most important factor for the overall CQ values.

Table 6. Highest difference in average values by CQ dimensions

Studied factor	Motivational CQ average	Cognitive CQ average	Metacognitive CQ average	Behavioural CQ average	CQ average
Work experience	0.53	0.60	0.53	0.10	0.34
Education	0.26	0.49	0.64	0.10	0.36
Languages	0.26	1.11	0.56	0.21	0.58
Number of countries	0.89	0.95	0.76	0.37	0.75
Age	0.70	0.39	0.27	0.38	0.44

Source: own elaboration

5. Conclusions

The strongest effect on a person's ethnorelative or ethnocentric view with another culture is determined by if the person has ever lived abroad, and indeed how many countries they have experience with. In these cases, the repeated integration process and progress do not start from zero in terms of ethnorelativism.

An ethnorelative attitude can be developed without spending extended time abroad, but those people's cultural intelligence levels, which can be connected to ethnorelativism, are lower than of those who have lived outside their home country.

The strongest experience that can help the most in developing people's cultural intelligence levels comes from living abroad. The study has shown that there is also a strong relationship with experiences gained at multicultural work environments, meaning that an ethnorelative attitude can be developed even if a person doesn't move abroad, but has a daily connection with different cultures within the person's home country.

Cultural intelligence has a significant correlation with the level of ethnorelative attitude: the higher the cultural intelligence value, the closer a person's view to ethnorelativism is. The strongest impact on ethnorelativism comes from living abroad but obtaining experiences within the person's home country is strong too.

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Wpłynęło/received 11.01.2017; poprawiono/revised 20.03.2017