



# An Intercultural Communication Management Framework For Culturally Diverse Organisations

Maria Mushaathoni<sup>1</sup>

## Article History:

Received: 02-07-2025  
Revision: 08-08-2025  
Accepted: 29-08-2025  
Publication: 20-10-2025

## Cite this article as:

Mushaathoni, M. (2025). An Intercultural Communication Management Framework For Culturally Diverse Organisations. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 25(4), 23-33.  
[doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v25i4.1227](https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v25i4.1227)

©2025 by author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License.

## Corresponding Author:

Maria Mushaathoni

Department of Journalism and Integrated Communication,  
Tshwane University Of Technology,  
South Africa. Email:  
[mushaathonim1@tut.ac.za](mailto:mushaathonim1@tut.ac.za)

**Abstract:** In the context of increasing globalisation and workforce diversity, organisations face growing challenges in fostering effective intercultural communication, collaboration, and cohesion among employees from varied cultural backgrounds. Poor intercultural communication can lead to conflict, misunderstanding, and decreased organisational performance. This study aims to propose a comprehensive Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF) to enhance intercultural understanding, reduce communication barriers, and support inclusive, high-performing workplace cultures in multicultural organisations. A qualitative research design was adopted, involving a systematic literature review and analysis of strategic and policy documents to identify key gaps in current intercultural communication practices. The framework is theoretically grounded in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, offering a structured basis for analysing cross-cultural dynamics. The study finds that effective intercultural communication requires more than individual adaptation; it demands an organisational commitment to structured development of intercultural competencies. The proposed ICMF includes three core phases, recognition, planning, and integration, and is supported by four key enablers: motivation, knowledge, skills, and character. These are presented as learnable competencies rather than fixed traits, with particular emphasis on empathy, flexibility, and curiosity. A strategically driven and continuously enhanced approach to intercultural communication can significantly improve intercultural competence and employee cohesion in diverse organisations. The ICMF provides a practical and adaptable model for guiding such efforts. This study contributes a novel conceptual framework that positions intercultural communication as a strategic organisational function, not merely a soft skill. It bridges a critical gap by integrating ethical principles, individual competencies, and institutional strategies. Future research should empirically validate the framework across diverse sectors to assess its practical impact on team performance and organisational outcomes.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Competences, Diverse Organisations, Intercultural Communication Competence

## 1. Introduction

Intercultural Communication (IC) refers to the process through which individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds exchange information and construct meaning, often while navigating distinct linguistic, behavioural, and social norms (Dai, 2024; Debray & Spencer-Oatey, 2022). In an era of increasing globalisation and workforce diversification, organisations are under growing pressure to manage communication across cultural boundaries effectively. A growing body of scholarship affirms that successful intercultural communication is not merely a desirable competency; it is a critical enabler of collaboration, innovation, and sustained organisational performance (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2020).

When individuals from different cultural contexts interact in professional settings, they bring with them divergent values, expectations, communication styles, and assumptions (Nyathi-Saleshando, 2011; African Development Bank, 2012). While this cultural heterogeneity can enrich organisational dynamics, it also creates the potential for miscommunication, tension, and reduced productivity if not proactively addressed. Scholars such as Boldea (2014) have examined the ethical and historical underpinnings of intercultural exchange, highlighting the importance of mutual respect and cultural sensitivity when engaging with difference. Similarly, Ishchuk et al. (2024) underscore the role of linguistic awareness and ethical conduct in navigating diverse organisational environments. Their work affirms the importance of cross-cultural adaptation in facilitating inclusive and effective workplace interactions.

Despite these valuable theoretical insights, existing research tends to emphasise conceptual or individual-level perspectives, while offering limited guidance on how intercultural communication can be managed systemically within complex organisational structures. For instance, Boldea's (2014) work provides strong ethical grounding but lacks practical application for team dynamics or leadership strategies. Similarly, while Ishchuk et al. (2024) highlight key communication challenges, they do not propose a scalable, adaptable model for integrating intercultural practices across institutional levels.

This study addresses that gap by proposing an Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF), a structured, context-sensitive model designed to translate intercultural theory into actionable organisational practice. The ICMF integrates core communication competencies with ethical principles and institutional strategies, offering a holistic approach for

<sup>1</sup> Department of Journalism and Integrated Communication, Tshwane University Of Technology, South Africa

managing cultural diversity in the workplace. The framework emphasises that intercultural competence is not an isolated soft skill, but a strategic asset that must be embedded across leadership, policy, and everyday interactions.

The overarching aim of this study is to develop a practical framework that can assist organisations in systematically fostering inclusive communication practices and improving intercultural competence among employees. By doing so, this research moves beyond descriptive or prescriptive models and contributes a novel, practice-oriented framework tailored for contemporary multicultural workplace dynamics.

To guide this inquiry, the following research question is posed:

*What are the core components of an Intercultural Communication Management Framework for effectively managing diversity in organisations?*

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Importance Of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication and linguistic competence involve the ability to navigate diverse cultural assumptions and behaviours appropriately (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Lieberman & Gamst, 2015). Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2024) argue that effective intercultural communication must go beyond factual knowledge of cultural traits to encompass a deeper understanding of the motivations and values underpinning behaviours and attitudes. However, much of the existing literature tends to define competence in broad terms, such as the ability to adapt or behave appropriately, without offering concrete strategies for cultivating these abilities within complex organisational contexts.

There is also limited consensus on how intercultural competence should be operationalised. For example, while Lieberman and Gamst (2015) emphasise behavioural adjustment, Lustig and Koester (2010) focus more on interpretation and meaning-making. This theoretical fragmentation reveals a persistent tension: many models assume that individuals will naturally adapt when provided with cultural information. However, evidence suggests that adaptation often fails without structured and ongoing support, particularly in organisational settings characterised by hierarchical structures, implicit bias, or resistance to diversity (Mushaathoni, 2021).

Critically, existing models tend to overlook how organisational contexts influence intercultural communication. Most emphasise individual capabilities, rather than systemic or contextual factors such as leadership practices, institutional policies, or team dynamics. This significantly limits their practical application within real-world organisations.

Moreover, analysing the characteristics of communication is fundamental to developing intercultural competence. Effective and meaningful intercultural interaction requires individuals to adapt to new conventions and engage in behavioural change within unfamiliar cultural contexts. As Lieberman and Gamst (2015) argue, intercultural communication influences both social behaviour and cultural identity. Therefore, this study responds to a clear gap in the literature and strategic policy: the need for a structured, organisation-wide framework that integrates ethical communication principles, individual competencies, and organisational practices to support intercultural engagement in a sustainable, context-sensitive manner.

### 2.2. Intercultural Communication Competence

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2024) define intercultural communication competence as “the symbolic process whereby individuals from two or more different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation.” Scholars widely acknowledge the challenges individuals face when adjusting to unfamiliar cultural norms and belief systems, especially within organisational environments. Lieberman and Gamst (2015) note that such adaptation often involves internal conflict between deeply ingrained behaviours and the expectations of a new cultural setting. While this view emphasises behavioural adjustment, it risks oversimplifying the dynamic and emotionally complex nature of intercultural encounters.

Lustig and Koester (2010) extend the discussion by highlighting the importance of interpreting cultural symbols and meanings, a more cognitive and interpretive perspective. Yet both approaches predominantly focus on the individual's ability to adapt, without sufficiently considering how organisations themselves support, or hinder, this adaptation.

Mushaathoni (2021) argues that this individual-centric approach to intercultural competence neglects the influence of organisational structures, leadership behaviours, and institutional norms. Furthermore, the assumption that individuals will automatically behave “appropriately” once they understand cultural expectations ignores important challenges such as power imbalances, implicit bias, and organisational resistance to change. These factors are particularly salient in professional settings and suggest that behavioural and interpretive competence, while essential, are insufficient in isolation.

There is a clear lack of integrated, system-level approaches that equip not only individuals but entire organisations to foster meaningful intercultural communication. This study addresses that gap by proposing a practical framework that accounts for both personal adaptation and the organisational mechanisms needed to sustain ethical and effective intercultural engagement over time.

### 2.3. Understanding of Effective Intercultural Communication

Effective intercultural competence is developed alongside other general competencies that individuals acquire throughout life, during formal education, professional experiences, and broader socialisation processes (Peleckis, Peleckienė, Liučvaitienė, & Stankevičienė, 2013). According to Pruskus (2013), key elements of communication competence include:

1. The ability to interpret signals indicating willingness (or unwillingness) to interact;
2. Sensitivity to how much time should be allocated to listening versus speaking, depending on cultural norms;
3. The ability to clearly express and understand thoughts;
4. The capacity to adjust language appropriately.

5. The ability to recognise and enact communication roles and closing signals;
6. Maintaining culturally appropriate interpersonal distance;
7. Effective use of both verbal and non-verbal cues to show cultural acceptance;
8. Flexibility in adapting to the social status of interlocutors;
9. The ability to modify one's behaviour in real-time during intercultural interactions.

These abilities are interdependent and non-exhaustive. They evolve throughout life and require ongoing learning and reflection (Grebliauskienė & Večkienė, 2017).

Organisations, as hubs of human interaction, must prioritise the development of human capital as a key driver of innovation and adaptability. They must foster an environment that encourages openness to change, creative problem-solving, and a willingness to navigate intercultural challenges, particularly in business and team communication (Rackauckas, 2021). Employees should be empowered with opportunities to harness their creative potential and apply it toward organisational success and personal satisfaction.

However, promoting adaptability within diverse organisations requires more than individual empowerment. It demands a structured approach to intercultural communication. While Rackauckas (2021) emphasises the value of encouraging innovation and flexibility, such efforts can be undermined if cultural misunderstandings go unaddressed. Therefore, organisational support for creativity must be rooted in inclusive communication practices that foster cultural awareness, mutual respect, and psychological safety.

This study recognises that there is a pressing need for an intercultural communication framework that integrates ethical principles, cultural competencies, and organisational strategy, positioning communication as a foundational tool for enabling innovation, collaboration, and cohesion in culturally diverse environments.

## 2.4. Theoretical Framework

### 2.4.1. Hofstede Cultural Dimension Theory

The theoretical foundation supporting this study is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, which provides a basis for understanding how cultural values influence behaviour within organisational contexts. Developed by Geert Hofstede in the 1970s, the theory has been widely used to examine how national cultural norms shape workplace interactions (Tung & Verbeke, 2010).

Tung and Verbeke (2010) note that Hofstede's framework has sparked substantial debate among intercultural researchers, particularly regarding what constitutes culture, how it should be measured, and what implications it holds for managerial practice. This debate is important, as researchers and practitioners often adopt cultural models without critically reflecting on their limitations, potentially leading to oversimplification of complex cultural realities.

Hofstede's six dimensions are summarised below:

- Power Distance Index (PDI): Measures the extent to which less powerful members of society accept unequal distribution of power. High-PDI cultures often favour hierarchical structures, whereas low-PDI cultures prefer egalitarian relationships.
- Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV): Individualistic cultures emphasise autonomy and personal achievement, while collectivist cultures prioritise group cohesion and shared goals.
- Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS): Reflects the distribution of gender roles. Masculine cultures value competitiveness and success, whereas feminine cultures emphasise care, cooperation, and quality of life.
- Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI): Indicates the extent to which a culture tolerates ambiguity. High-UAI cultures prefer rules and predictability, while low-UAI cultures are more comfortable with risk and change.
- Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Normative Orientation (LTO): Long-term oriented cultures emphasise future rewards, perseverance, and thrift, while short-term oriented cultures focus on traditions and immediate results.
- Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR): Captures the degree to which societies allow free gratification of basic human drives. Indulgent cultures encourage expression, while restrained cultures regulate it through strict social norms.

These dimensions offer valuable insights into how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interpret authority, relationships, time, and communication styles. As such, Hofstede's framework remains relevant as a diagnostic tool to identify potential areas of tension or synergy in intercultural workplace settings.

However, while Hofstede's model has been foundational in intercultural communication research, it is important to recognise its limitations. Critics argue that the framework is overly reductionist, portraying culture as static and relying heavily on national averages that may overlook subcultural or individual variations (McSweeney, 2002). Moreover, Hofstede's original data, collected from a single multinational corporation during the 1970s, may no longer reflect the realities of the contemporary global workforce, particularly in multicultural, hybrid, or digital-first environments.

To address these limitations, this study integrates Hofstede's framework within a more dynamic and context-sensitive model, the Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF). Rather than treating cultural dimensions as fixed categories, the ICMF uses them as entry points for organisational analysis. The framework encourages leaders to recognise internal diversity, including organisational subcultures and individual differences, while also considering intersectionality and the fluid nature of cultural identities (Fang, 2003).

Thus, while Hofstede's theory provides an initial orientation for diagnosing intercultural challenges, the ICMF moves beyond it by embedding flexibility and adaptability at its core. It promotes a systems-level understanding of intercultural competence, integrating communication, ethics, leadership, and policy. In doing so, the framework supports organisations in developing tailored communication strategies suited to their unique operational contexts.

This approach allows the ICMF to better address the complex demands of contemporary, multicultural organisations, offering a practical yet theoretically grounded foundation for effective intercultural communication.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to develop a conceptual framework aimed at managing intercultural communication within organisational contexts. Specifically, the research involved a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature and an analysis of strategic and policy documents relevant to organisational diversity and communication practices. These sources were examined to identify theoretical and practical gaps in existing models and to support the construction of a context-sensitive and actionable framework.

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for exploring complex, socially embedded phenomena, especially those shaped by cultural, linguistic, and contextual variables. As Leedy and Ormrod (2005) and Baynard and Hanekom (2006) suggest, qualitative approaches enable researchers to characterise, interpret, and derive meaning from naturally occurring processes within specific social environments. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data, qualitative research facilitates the deep exploration of concepts, meanings, perceptions, and lived experiences, providing a richer and more holistic understanding of the issues under investigation (Bhandari, et al, 2020).

In the context of this study, qualitative inquiry served as the foundation for synthesising interdisciplinary insights and constructing an Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF) that reflects the dynamic, multi-layered realities of communication within diverse organisational settings. The conceptual nature of this research required a flexible, interpretive approach that could accommodate the fluid and evolving characteristics of intercultural interaction in the workplace.

### 4. Data Analysis

To analyse and organise the data, this study employed concept mapping, a methodological technique that facilitates the systematic visualisation and organisation of relationships among key ideas. Concept mapping is particularly valuable for synthesising large volumes of literature and policy documents, as it enables researchers to identify patterns, clusters, and thematic linkages across diverse sources (Rosas & Kane, 2012). By visually representing these connections, concept mapping strengthens both the clarity and the rigour of the analytical process.

In this study, the concepts that informed the proposed framework were derived from two primary sources: (1) existing academic literature on intercultural communication, and (2) official organisational documents outlining strategic and policy priorities related to diversity and communication practices. Through the concept mapping process, these diverse inputs were integrated and synthesised into a cohesive and logically structured framework, ensuring that the resulting model was both theoretically grounded and practically relevant. The outcome of this analytical process is the Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF), which is presented and explained in detail in the subsequent sections of this paper.

#### 4.1. Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF)

The ICMF constitutes the central contribution of this research. It offers a structured, conceptual model for managing intercultural dynamics in contemporary organisations. Designed to enhance inclusive communication and foster cohesive workplace cultures, the ICMF is organised into three interrelated phases: Recognition, Planning, and Integration. Each phase builds upon the previous one to support a continuous, organisation-wide approach to intercultural development.

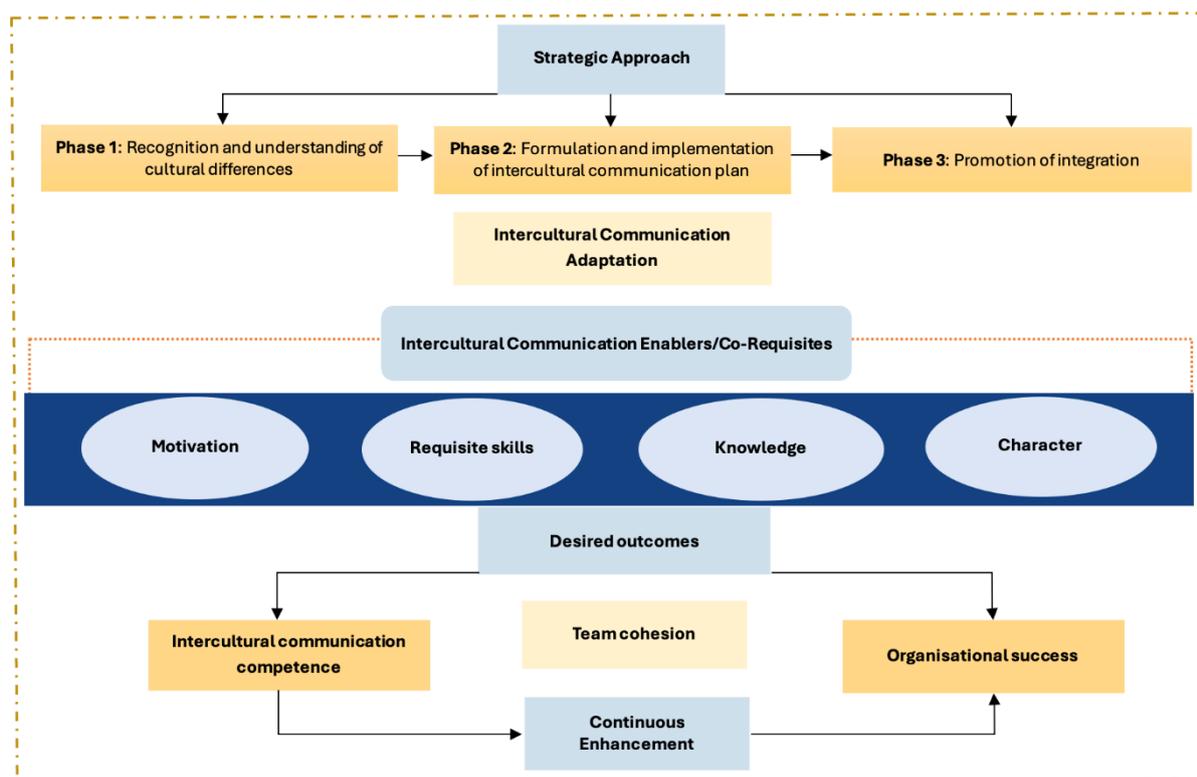
The first phase, Recognition, involves the identification of intercultural communication challenges within the organisation. These may include communication breakdowns, cultural misunderstandings, exclusionary practices, or systemic biases. At this stage, awareness of cultural differences is cultivated, and current communication practices are critically assessed. A key enabling factor in this phase is motivation, both at the individual and organisational level, as readiness for cultural engagement and transformation is foundational to any sustainable change.

Following this, the second Planning phase centres on the formulation of strategies to address the gaps identified during the recognition stage. This includes designing and implementing cultural awareness training, establishing clear diversity and inclusion goals, and developing inclusive communication policies. Here, knowledge and skills emerge as core competencies, allowing planning processes to be informed by a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics and supported by practical tools that enhance intercultural competence.

The final phase, Integration, is concerned with embedding intercultural strategies into everyday organisational routines and practices. This includes fostering inclusive leadership, creating channels for continuous feedback, and institutionalising learning processes that support sustained change. Crucially, this phase relies on the development of intercultural character traits such as empathy, openness, curiosity, and adaptability. These traits reinforce long-term behavioural change, support trust-building across cultural boundaries, and strengthen organisational cohesion.

The ICMF thus provides a comprehensive, context-sensitive roadmap for organisations seeking to enhance intercultural communication. By linking ethical principles, personal competencies, and systemic enablers, the framework supports the unification of culturally diverse employees around shared values and common organisational goals. Ultimately, effective implementation of the ICMF contributes to improved intercultural communication competence and, by extension, to enhanced organisational performance and long-term success.

Figure 1 below depicts the proposed framework that recognises effective intercultural communication can contribute to the improvement of intercultural communication competence, an intercultural communication variable relevant for the unification of culturally diverse employees to a common purpose and, ultimately, effective functioning of an organisation and achievement of organisational success.



**Figure 1:** An Intercultural Communication Management Framework to enhance intercultural communication

#### 4.2. Core Features Of A Proposed Framework To Enhance Intercultural Communication

Figure 1 illustrates the importance of strategically enhancing internal communication in culturally diverse organisations. Effective intercultural communication is essential for unifying employees toward a shared organisational purpose. The proposed framework posits that all initiatives to improve intercultural communication must be strategically driven, rather than ad hoc or reactive. In this context, the organisation's strategic orientation should serve as the central guiding principle. This is particularly vital because employees from different cultural backgrounds must adapt to one another to foster mutual understanding and develop intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam, Banerjee, & Dembek, 2011).

The framework also advocates for the continuous improvement of intercultural communication practices, a dynamic and ongoing process aimed at enhancing the intercultural competence of employees over time. To achieve this, the framework recommends the integration of regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess whether the organisation's efforts are achieving their intended goals. If current strategies fail to yield measurable improvements, refinements and adjustments should be implemented to realign with the desired outcomes.

To support this process, the framework proposes the adoption of the convergence technique as an accommodative strategy. As described by Lussier (2015), this strategy involves encouraging employees to move toward one another, culturally, communicatively, and relationally, to foster shared understanding and collaboration. The convergence approach is particularly effective in promoting intercultural communication competence, as it facilitates reciprocal adaptation and shared meaning-making across cultural lines.

Furthermore, Figure 1 outlines a framework structured around three fundamental phases: (1) recognition and understanding of cultural differences, (2) formulation and implementation of a strategic intercultural communication plan, and (3) promotion of long-term integration. These phases are supported by four critical enablers, motivation, knowledge, skills, and character, each of which contributes to creating a conducive environment for effective intercultural communication.

Given that the literature consistently shows that intercultural communication adaptation significantly influences other intercultural variables, the framework emphasises adaptation as the foundational principle for developing communication strategies. The ability of employees to adapt to culturally diverse environments forms the basis for unifying team members and fostering team cohesion across cultural lines. As Lieberman and Gamst (2015) and Ang and Van Dyne (2015) suggest, the effectiveness of intercultural communication is directly tied to how well adaptation determinants are embedded within an organisation's communication strategies.

Moreover, the proposed framework promotes an inclusive approach by ensuring that all employees, regardless of background, are actively engaged in the intercultural enhancement process. Inclusivity, in this sense, becomes both a value and a method for ensuring that communication strategies are participatory, empowering, and representative of the organisation's cultural complexity.

Therefore, this study argues that a strategic, inclusive, and continuous approach to enhancing intercultural communication offers a viable pathway toward improving intercultural competence. By doing so, organisations can unify culturally diverse employees around shared goals and strengthen their capacity to achieve long-term success. The following section will present and further explain the core phases and enabling attributes of the proposed Intercultural Communication Management

Framework, detailing how these components collectively support the development of competent intercultural communicators within organisational settings.

#### 4.3. Recognition And Understanding of Cultural Differences

This study identifies the recognition and understanding of cultural differences as the essential first step in the proposed Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF). These two elements, recognition and understanding, are mutually reinforcing and foundational for enhancing intercultural communication and improving intercultural competence. As noted earlier, communication practices are largely shaped, maintained, and transmitted through cultural norms and values (Boldea, 2014). Culture not only guides interpersonal behaviours but also serves as a unifying force among members of an organisation. Therefore, regardless of the individual uniqueness of employees, recognising and understanding cultural differences must serve as the foundation upon which all intercultural communication enhancement efforts are built.

An analysis of the organisation's strategic and policy documents revealed that there is institutional awareness of cultural diversity. The documents acknowledge that employees come from various cultural backgrounds and express a general commitment to fostering inclusivity. As part of this effort, cultural diversity training sessions have been implemented to promote shared understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. However, a critical gap emerged: while diversity is acknowledged, intercultural communication is not explicitly positioned as a tool for managing those cultural differences.

The findings suggest that current diversity training initiatives are not fully integrated with communication enhancement strategies. To address this gap, the study recommends that intercultural communication practices be incorporated into cultural diversity training programmes. Doing so would help employees better understand the role of culture in shaping communication behaviours and improve their ability to interact across cultural boundaries. Although cultures differ in their specific characteristics, they share universal functions, namely, connecting individuals and fostering social belonging (Boldea, 2014).

Consequently, the organisation should strengthen its cultural diversity efforts by embedding intercultural communication enhancement activities within training sessions. This approach would help create a shared identity among employees and provide a structured environment for intercultural interaction. Introducing such activities would also signal the organisation's commitment to building a workplace that promotes cultural empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative engagement.

Ultimately, the integration of intercultural communication practices into training can reduce the frustration often associated with cultural adaptation and support team cohesion. By encouraging employees to move toward mutual understanding, organisations not only improve intercultural competence but also align their workforce toward achieving a shared organisational purpose.

#### 4.4. Formulation And Implementation of An Intercultural Communication Action Plan

A strategic approach to enhancing intercultural communication requires deliberate action through the formulation and implementation of an intercultural communication plan. This constitutes the second phase of the proposed Intercultural Communication Management Framework. From an operational standpoint, the plan should be developed in alignment with the organisation's strategic orientation concerning intercultural communication (Liebermann & Gamst, 2015). The study underscores that all efforts to enhance intercultural communication must be closely aligned with the broader strategic objectives of the organisation. Such alignment ensures a structured and coherent approach, allowing communication initiatives to contribute meaningfully to long-term organisational goals.

The framework aims to restructure and guide the flow of communication within a diverse organisational context. Given the complexities of a multicultural workforce, establishing a unified and consistent communication strategy is essential for ensuring clarity, reducing misunderstanding, and promoting cohesion. With a strategic direction for intercultural communication already established, the next logical step is the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive action plan, which should clearly outline the steps, responsibilities, and resources required to achieve this strategic priority.

The proposed plan should serve as a blueprint, clearly articulating the goals and desired outcomes of intercultural communication within the organisation. Furthermore, the plan must be designed with a strong emphasis on inclusivity. It should explicitly support the participation of all employees, including those from underrepresented or marginalised backgrounds, ensuring their voices are recognised and valued in communication processes. In alignment with the organisation's values of care, diversity, inclusion, and equity, the plan should promote respectful communication, cultural sensitivity, and fair treatment of all employees (Martin & Nakayama, 2004).

An inclusive communication plan, anchored in dignity, respect, and equity, can help cultivate a positive organisational climate. By clearly defining what successful intercultural communication looks like and setting shared expectations, the organisation can foster a sense of unity and collaboration across cultural lines. It is anticipated that such a plan will encourage employees to move in a common direction, ultimately supporting the achievement of shared goals and enhancing organisational harmony (Samovar et al., 2012).

#### 4.5. Promotion of Integration

The literature review confirms that employees experience intercultural communication adaptation in varied ways. As a result, this study strongly advocates for the promotion of integration as a critical step toward fostering adaptation and improving intercultural communication competence. In practice, intercultural communication is widely recognised as a mechanism for building team cohesion. Cultural awareness and training can serve as a bridge between employees by equipping them with the knowledge and understanding necessary to appreciate the complex relationship between culture and communication, as well as to value the diverse cultural backgrounds represented within the organisation (Kim, 2006).

To enhance these efforts, the organisation should intensify its cultural training and awareness programmes. Current initiatives primarily address cultural diversity but lack a focused emphasis on how intercultural communication itself can be leveraged to unify culturally different individuals toward a common purpose. It is therefore recommended that the organisation expand its existing diversity training to include dimensions of intercultural communication, with a particular focus on the

dynamics of cultural differences. Cultural awareness campaigns, such as informational flyers, cultural events, and structured training sessions, should become integral components of the organisation's broader intercultural communication enhancement strategy (Kiss, 2008).

Aligned with the framework's emphasis on a continuous approach to intercultural communication enhancement, the study proposes that ongoing cultural awareness and training activities be embedded within organisational practices to consciously support integration efforts.

Early-stage intercultural awareness and training are especially important, as they help reduce the anxiety and uncertainty employees may feel during initial intercultural interactions. The framework, therefore, suggests that proactive training at the outset of employment can expedite the integration process, strengthen intercultural communication competence, and reduce the likelihood of communication barriers (Samovar et al., 2012).

Early integration initiatives are likely to be more effective when accompanied by formal induction programmes, which orient new employees and familiarise them with the organisational environment. The framework proposes that cultural awareness induction should act as a stepping stone toward more sustained and advanced cultural awareness and training interventions.

#### 4.6. Intercultural Communication Enablers/Co-Requisites

Drawing on insights from a range of data sources, this section discusses four key enablers, or co-requisites, that the proposed Intercultural Communication Management Framework identifies as essential for developing competent intercultural communicators. The study finds that individuals who are motivated, possess a strong knowledge base, demonstrate effective communication skills, and exhibit positive character traits are more likely to succeed in intercultural interactions. These four attributes are therefore positioned at the core of the proposed framework.

Among these, motivation is considered the foundational enabler upon which the others are built. A motivated workforce is more open to adaptation and learning, which in turn facilitates the development of the other critical elements: knowledge, skills, and character. The following section will explore these four enablers in more detail, elaborating on the roles they play in enhancing intercultural communication competence within culturally diverse organisational settings.

##### 4.6.1. Motivation

Motivation, as it pertains to intercultural communication competence, refers to an individual's willingness and desire to engage with people from cultures different from their own. To succeed in such interactions, communicators must be genuinely committed to improving their ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. This motivation is shaped by feelings, intentions, and actions, which together foster an attitude conducive to becoming a competent intercultural communicator (Samovar et al., 2012).

Feelings refer to the emotional states individuals experience when interacting with someone from a different cultural background. Intentions involve the goals, plans, and desires that guide behavioural choices in intercultural interactions. Actions, in turn, are the observable behaviours deemed appropriate and effective in cross-cultural communication settings (Kiss, 2006.) If individuals allow negative emotions such as anxiety, ethnocentrism, or prejudice to dominate their responses, they are unlikely to possess the motivation needed for effective communication. On the contrary, effective intercultural communicators are those who embrace the communication process with openness and commitment.

In a culturally diverse organisation, employees must have positive feelings about personal transformation and the intention to change their behaviours in ways that demonstrate intercultural sensitivity. Their actions should reflect a sincere desire to adapt and grow through intercultural encounters. Therefore, motivation plays a foundational role in enabling employees to become competent intercultural communicators (Martin & Nakayama, 2004; Kim, 2006; Kiss, 2008; Samovar et al., 2012).

In the context of this study, motivation encompasses not only the individual's internal desire to improve intercultural communication competence but also the external support provided by the organisation. Managers play a crucial role by inspiring and encouraging employees to engage in intercultural learning. This includes providing financial resources and institutional support for initiatives aimed at fostering intercultural adaptation and communication enhancement.

From an organisational perspective, it is essential to create an environment that nurtures and sustains employees' desire to grow as intercultural communicators. This includes fostering a positive attitude toward diversity, promoting inclusive values, and embedding intercultural competence development into the workplace culture. Accordingly, the proposed framework emphasises that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is a critical enabler for achieving successful and sustained intercultural communication within diverse organisational settings.

##### 4.6.2. Knowledge

Knowledge represents the cognitive dimension of intercultural communication competence, as articulated by Kim (2006). This cognitive aspect refers to the process through which individuals acquire the necessary understanding to function effectively and interact meaningfully across cultures (Kim, 2006; Vevea, 2011). In order to engage in successful intercultural interactions, individuals must possess a broad base of knowledge, including awareness of their own culture, the cultures of others, and the contextual norms of appropriateness that guide communication within specific cultural settings (Samovar et al., 2012, p. 315). Without such knowledge, it becomes difficult to choose behaviours that are contextually appropriate or to achieve desired intercultural communication outcomes.

Penceliah (2008, p. 336) underscores that knowledge of both culture and the fundamental principles of communication is essential for successful intercultural interactions. To communicate effectively, one must understand what culture is, how cultures differ, and how cultural differences shape human behaviour. This highlights the importance of both culture-general (broad cultural understanding) and culture-specific (detailed knowledge of particular cultures) information as foundational elements of intercultural communication competence (Kiss, 2008, p. 438).

In the organisational context, knowledge of different cultural perspectives enables employees to understand that customs, social norms, behavioural expectations, and communication patterns may vary significantly across cultures. Such awareness fosters greater empathy, reduces stereotyping, and prepares employees to engage more effectively with their culturally diverse colleagues. Consequently, knowledge becomes a powerful enabler in cultivating competent intercultural communicators.

Within the scope of this study, knowledge is defined as the possession of accurate and relevant cognitive information about various cultures, including one's own. This understanding is particularly critical in multicultural organisational settings, where culture acts as a filter through which messages are sent, interpreted, and understood. Accordingly, the proposed framework asserts that employees must expand their knowledge of the institution's cultural landscape in order to adapt effectively and attain intercultural communication competence.

In line with the organisation's slogan, "*We empower people*," the framework recommends that the institution take proactive steps to empower employees with the cultural knowledge necessary for effective cross-cultural communication. Equipping staff with such knowledge not only enhances individual competence but also contributes to a more inclusive, responsive, and high-performing workplace culture.

#### 4.6.3. Requisite Skills

Skills, in the context of intercultural communication competence, refer to the ability to adjust one's behaviour and act appropriately within a given cultural environment. Within this study, the proposed framework emphasises that employees must possess practical communication skills, the capacity to apply specific actions that support the achievement of intercultural communication goals. To become competent intercultural communicators, employees must be able to identify the communication norms embedded within institutional structures, meet the contextual demands of those norms, and appropriately navigate communication in intercultural interactions.

This behavioural dimension of competence is aligned with Kim's (2006) definition, which frames skills as the ability to communicate effectively with individuals from other cultural backgrounds. According to Kim, this behavioural aspect involves the cultivation of concrete communication skills to achieve defined objectives. These include recognising communication rules, responding to contextual expectations, and adapting to communication practices across diverse cultural settings.

Key behavioural skills necessary for intercultural effectiveness include language proficiency, behavioural flexibility, interaction management, maintenance of identity, and relationship cultivation (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, pp. 530–531). These skills are not merely performative but are goal-directed, as they are deployed with the intention of achieving specific communicative outcomes (Samovar et al., 2012, p. 315; Jandt, 2017).

In the organisational context, these skills are essential for adapting to culturally embedded communication practices. Employees must be capable of recognising institutional communication rules, adjusting their communication behaviours accordingly, and navigating varied cultural expectations across contexts. The framework posits that such skills are critical for employees to enhance their intercultural communication competence and contribute positively to team dynamics and organisational cohesion.

Ultimately, the acquisition and continuous development of these skills can help minimise intercultural communication conflicts and support employees in becoming competent, adaptable communicators. Effective intercultural communication is not only about intention or knowledge; it requires the practical ability to act appropriately within culturally diverse environments.

#### 4.6.4. Character

Character in the context of intercultural communication competence refers to the ability to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences. It may be regarded as the sum of a person's choices during intercultural interactions. Kim (2002) identifies this as the affective dimension of intercultural communication competence. How individuals enact their choices when engaging with people from different cultural backgrounds reflects their character attributes, such as integrity, sincerity, altruism, trustworthiness, honour, and goodwill.

Littlejohn and Foss (2009, p. 530) developed a valid instrument for measuring intercultural sensitivity that includes these elements. Their work highlights the importance of open-mindedness toward cultural differences, flexibility in adapting to unfamiliar cultural norms, and the ability to adjust one's behaviour based on the cultural context in which communication occurs.

Within organisational settings, employees must possess the flexibility to adapt to the languages and communication styles prevalent in their workplace. Since communication is inherently interactive, its effectiveness is strongly influenced by an individual's ability to respect cultural variety, maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, and apply cultural understanding to improve those relationships. As Samovar et al. (2012, p. 317) argue, employees must consistently seek to understand how communication differs across cultures and apply this understanding in ways that enhance organisational cohesion and collaboration.

Developing intercultural character attributes can prepare employees to respond positively to initiatives aimed at improving intercultural communication competence. These character traits, as identified by Kim (2006) and Samovar et al. (2012), function as core enablers or co-requisites for intercultural communication competence in diverse organisations.

Based on the discussion, the following competencies are essential for employees to become effective intercultural communicators:

- The ability to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences.
- The behavioural flexibility to adapt one's communication in alignment with different cultural environments.
- Possession of cognitive knowledge about both one's own culture and those of others.

- A strong motivation and desire to enhance one's ability to communicate effectively across cultures.

Thus, for the purpose of this study, intercultural communication competence is operationally defined as the ability to (1) remain open-minded about cultural differences, (2) modify behaviour appropriately, (3) possess relevant intercultural knowledge, and (4) demonstrate the motivation to improve cross-cultural communication.

The way individuals respond to cultures different from their own is pivotal to enhancing their intercultural communication competence. In the following section, the study turns to intercultural communication theory, which provides the theoretical foundation upon which the proposed Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF) is built. This framework is designed to help organisations enhance intercultural communication in a way that supports employee development and promotes intercultural competence across diverse workplace settings.

In conclusion, the ICMF demonstrates how fostering strong intercultural communication skills can improve teamwork and organisational success. At its core lies intercultural competence, the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. When individuals possess this competence, it cultivates team cohesion, where members feel connected and collaborate successfully despite their cultural differences. This collective harmony enhances overall organisational performance. Surrounding these elements is the principle of continuous enhancement, which involves sustained efforts through training, feedback, and learning to improve communication and cultural awareness. Taken together, these components illustrate how managing intercultural communication strategically contributes to stronger teams and better organisational outcomes.

## 5. Conclusion

This study contends that competent intercultural communicators are individuals who not only possess the desire to improve their intercultural communication abilities, but also have the necessary knowledge about different cultures, the behavioural flexibility to adapt in various cultural contexts, and the capacity to understand and appreciate cultural differences. The attributes of motivation, knowledge, skills, and character are identified as fundamental enablers of intercultural communication competence. Among these, motivation is viewed as the foundational element, without which the development of the other attributes may be hindered. This research maintains that if employees lack motivation to improve their intercultural communication competence, efforts focused on developing skills, knowledge, or character are unlikely to succeed.

Thus, the study concludes that motivation, when supported by the other enablers, can significantly improve intercultural communication competence and contribute to organisational success. To achieve this, culturally diverse organisations must intentionally invest in fostering motivation among employees and use it as the foundation upon which other competencies are developed.

The Intercultural Communication Management Framework (ICMF), depicted in Figure 1.1, represents the central contribution of this study. It offers a structured, strategic approach to enhancing intercultural communication in diverse organisational settings. The accompanying narrative details the core features and enabling attributes of the framework. The ICMF is proposed as a practical guide for organisations navigating culturally complex environments and aiming to enhance communication practices that unify diverse employees and improve team cohesion.

Consistent with the findings of earlier studies, such as Mampane (2019), this study reinforces the view that cultural differences can pose significant barriers to effective communication. However, it goes beyond previous models by proposing a framework that is strategically aligned and oriented toward continuous enhancement of intercultural communication. In doing so, it elevates the role of intercultural communication from a peripheral activity to a core strategic function that supports both team cohesion and organisational performance.

In summary, the ICMF provides a practical, ethically grounded, and future-oriented framework for enhancing intercultural communication. Unlike traditional models, which often treat communication as a soft skill or focus solely on individual competence, the ICMF recognises intercultural communication as a strategic resource, critical for innovation, cohesion, and ethical organisational behaviour. A key contribution of the framework is its dual emphasis on individual and institutional responsibility, addressing the limitations of models that ignore the organisational context in which communication takes place. Furthermore, the integration of ethical considerations and practical enablers into each phase ensures the framework's relevance to the complex realities of multicultural work environments.

However, the framework remains conceptual and literature-based. Its real-world applicability and impact have not yet been empirically tested. Therefore, future research is needed to validate the framework in diverse organisational settings through case studies, action research, or cross-sector comparative studies. Such efforts are essential for understanding how the ICMF can be adapted and implemented effectively in practice.

## 6. Implications And Future Direction

The ICMF offers a structured roadmap for organisations seeking to integrate intercultural communication into their strategic operations. HR professionals, diversity officers, and leadership teams can use the framework's phased approach to assess communication challenges, train staff, and institutionalise inclusive practices. It also provides a foundation for aligning organisational policies and culture, thereby supporting ethical and inclusive engagement in multicultural environments.

Future studies should focus on piloting the ICMF in various organisational settings to evaluate its feasibility, adaptability, and impact, particularly on team dynamics, innovation, and employee well-being. Additionally, researchers may develop diagnostic tools or survey instruments aligned with each phase of the framework to facilitate implementation and monitoring.

Given the increasing prevalence of remote and hybrid work models, future research should also explore how the ICMF can be adapted to virtual environments, especially in globally distributed teams. This will be vital for ensuring the framework's continued relevance in a rapidly evolving workplace landscape.

**Acknowledgement Statement:** The authors would like to thank to all participants and the reviewers for providing comments in helping this manuscript to completion.

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Authors' contribution statements:** Author 1 contributed to the Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, and Writing - Original Draft; Software, Validation, and Data Curation, Resources; and Project Administration.

**Funding statements:** The fund has been paid for by the Tshwane University of Technology.

**Data availability statement:** Data is available upon request. Don't hesitate to get in touch with the corresponding author for any additional information on data access or usage.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and contributor(s) and do not necessarily reflect JICC's or editors' official policy or position. All liability for harm done to individuals or property as a result of any ideas, methods, instructions, or products mentioned in the content is expressly disclaimed.

## References

- African Development Bank. (2012). *African Bank report: Towards green growth in Africa*. Retrieved from <https://www.afdb.org>
- Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315703855>
- Arasaratnam, L. A., Banerjee, S. C., & Dembek, K. (2011). The integrated model of intercultural communication competence (IMICC). *Australian Journal of Communication*, 38(3), 103–116.
- Bhandari, T. R., Khatiwada, B., Rajbhandari, B., Bestman, A., Mistry, S. K., Rayamajhee, B., ... & Yadav, U. N. (2021). A qualitative study to understand drivers of psychoactive substance use among Nepalese youth. *PLoS ONE*, 16(11), e0259021. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0259021>
- Boldea, I. (2014). Globalization and intercultural communication. In I. Boldea (Ed.), *Globalization and intercultural dialogue: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 7–18). Arhipelag XXI Press.
- Brynard, P. A., & Hanekom, S. X. (2008). *Introduction to research in management-related fields* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik Publishers.
- Dai, D. W. (2024). *Assessing interactional competence: Principles, test development, and validation through an L2 Chinese IC test*. Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b21295>
- Debray, C., & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2022). Co-constructing good relations through troubles talk in diverse teams. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 192, 85–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.02.006>
- Fang, T. (2003). A critique of Hofstede's fifth national culture dimension. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 3(3), 347–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595803003003006>
- Hampden-Turner, C., & Trompenaars, F. (2020). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business* (4th ed.). Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Ishchuk, A., Khrypko, S., Palinchak, M., Dobrodum, O., & Spudka, I. (2024). The sign-symbolic evolution of heroism: Exploring the intersection of pop philosophy and postmodern linguistics in the phenomenon of the heroic personality. *Synesis*, 16(2), 33–46.
- Jandt, F. E. (2017). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a global community* (8th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2006). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory*. Multilingual Matters.
- Kiss, G. (2008). A theoretical approach to intercultural communication. *Communication*, 7(3), 435–443.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Liebermann, D. A., & Gamst, G. (2015). Intercultural communication competence revisited: Linking the intercultural and multicultural fields. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 48, 17–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.007>
- Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (Eds.). (2009). *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412959384>
- Lussier, D. (2015). Assessing, documenting, and certifying intercultural language learning: A critical review. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 9(3), 363–383.
- Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (2010). *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Mampane, S. T. (2019). Managing diversity in South Africa in South African higher education institutions. In M. R. Olivás-Lujan & T. Bondarouk (Eds.), *Advanced series in management: Vol. 21. ATLAS of Latin American management* (pp. 139–156). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1877-636120190000021008>
- Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2013). *Intercultural communication in contexts* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- McSweeney, B. (2002). The essentials of scholarship: A reply to Geert Hofstede. *Human Relations*, 55(11), 1363–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267025511005>
- Mushaathoni, M. (2021). *Assumptions motivating a framework to enhance intercultural communication within a diverse organisation: The case of Tshwane University of Technology* (Doctoral dissertation). North-West University.
- Nyathi-Saleshando, L. (2011). An advocacy project for multicultural education: The case of Shiyeyi language in Botswana. *International Review of Education*, 57(5-6), 567–582. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-011-9254-4>
- Peleckis, K., Peleckienė, V., Liučvaitienė, A., & Stankevičienė, A. (2013). Theoretical and practical problems of negotiating competencies development for business management students: Case of Lithuania. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 4(11), 62–75.
- Penceliah, Y. (2008). Managing across cultures for organisational success. *Journal of Public Administration*, 61(3), 330–341.
- Pruskus, V. (2013). Internetinės kultūros produktų kūrimo ir teikimo etiniai aspektai [Ethical aspects of creation and provision of internet culture products]. *Logos*, 74, 183–189.
- Rackauckas, J. (2021). Developing intercultural competences and creativity: The foundation for successful intercultural communication. *Creativity Studies*, 14(1), 197–217. <https://doi.org/10.3846/cs.2021.14583>

- Rosas, S. R., & Kane, M. (2012). Quality and rigor of the concept mapping methodology: A pooled study analysis. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 35(2), 236–245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2011.10.003>
- Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (Eds.). (2007). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (11th ed.). Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2012). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (13th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Dorjee, T. (2024). *Understanding intercultural communication* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Tung, R. L., & Verbeke, A. (2010). Beyond Hofstede and GLOBE: Improving the quality of cross-cultural research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 41(8), 1259–1274. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2010.41>
- Večkienė, N. P., & Eidukevičiūtė, J. (2017). Komunikacinės kompetencijos raiška profesinio identiteto paieškoje [The expression of communicative competence in the search for professional identity]. *Tiltai*, 75(3), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.15181/tbb.v75i3.1421>
- Vevea, N. N. (2011). *Integrated intercultural employee communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation). North Dakota State University.

#### About the Author(s).

**Maria Mushaathoni** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Integrated Communication with a particular interest in language, culture, and communication, specifically in communication theory, intercultural communication, organisational communication, media studies, communication for specific purposes, and the effects of motivation and attitude on language proficiency.