

# THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF ŠIAULIAI CITY MUNICIPALITY PUBLIC LIBRARY AND JELGAVA CITY LIBRARY FROM THE EMPLOYEES' STANDPOINT

**Santa Gasiūnaitė**  
Šiauliai State College  
Lithuania

**Gintarė Kulbeckienė**  
Šiauliai State College  
Lithuania

**Nijolė Litevkienė**  
Šiauliai State College  
Lithuania

## Annotation

*The comparative analysis of both institutions showed different ways of intercultural communication in libraries: ŠL cooperates with volunteers from abroad, JCL collaborates with trade unions of national minorities. Differences in intercultural communication are found in this case – different work style and language. Both libraries have been found to work together in joint project activities. Libraries did not have major conflicts in the process of intercultural cooperation, the biggest obstacle (difficulty) was the linguistic barrier.*

**Key words:** *intercultural communication, library, employees, comparative analysis, similarities, differences.*

## Introduction

**Relevance of the topic.** Taking into account the current-day actualities and processes driven by globalization, proper communication is one of the key aspects of cultural educatedness. It can be noticed that this phenomenon is becoming increasingly significant for the organizations involved in particularly frequent communication due to cooperation with foreign partners. Intercultural communication provides sufficient conditions for communication with each other at the international level. Communication between cultures provides an opportunity to comprehensively implement new ideas, projects, acquire new competencies or improve existing ones. However, as noted by L. Qili and C. Dong (2016), the area of intercultural communication often lacks knowledge of other cultures.

Not only the public but also many organizations involved in intense intercultural communication manifesting itself by cooperation, project activities, and similar forms with other foreign organizations become much more open and gradually more economically successful. Although, as stated by V. Pruskus (2012), intercultural communication as a field of research (subject) is relatively new, interculturalism is emphasized as one of the essential and most relevant aspects of work for many organizations, seeking successful performance. Based on the said context, it can be argued that intercultural communication is becoming an increasingly broad area of research for both researchers and practitioners seeking to find optimal ways for improving and ensuring efficient communication between individuals and organizations from different cultures.

It is noted that the topics of intercultural communication are analysed by foreign and Lithuanian authors: B. Gwiazda-Rzepecka (2017), A. Andreyeva et al. (2015), D. Baraldsnes (2012), V. Gudoniene (2013), V. Pruskus (2012), etc., who mainly analyse the conception of intercultural communication and its functions. The importance of intercultural communication competencies is highlighted by A. Srbínovska Donchevski and T. Ashtalkoska Baloska (2018), V. Pruskus (2012), D. Janavičienė and A. Gedvilaitė (2011). The topics of intercultural communication in the library are studied by both foreign authors (Eshleman, 2016; Gashurov, Kendrich, 2013; Verschore, Balestrin (2008)) and Lithuanian researchers (Dambraiva, 2013; Janavičienė, Gedvilaitė, 2011; Neverauskas et al., 2009).

**The research problem.** Along with the growing communication flow and popularity of social networks, new opportunities emerge for information exchange, communication and

cooperation regardless of borders, countries, races, and nationalities. On the other hand, the increasing flows of information lead to additional challenges: it becomes increasingly important to understand the significance of intercultural communication, investigate new ideas, select the best practice, and look for meaningful opportunities for strengthening partnership and understanding in both daily and work environments. K. Gore (2007) states that business can be like a driving force, but one needs to understand the language and other people's culture. Similarly, according to N. Abayadeera et al. (2018), the ability to communicate effectively in all cultures increases success in the global market, enables productive interpersonal relationships, and reduces mutual misunderstanding. It must be emphasized that not only businesses but also other organizations such as libraries increasingly often understand and seek the benefit of intercultural communication.

The development of technologies and innovations is also accompanied by the change in societal habits and perception (Bing, 2017). According to A. Glosienė (2010), the essence of library activities lies in communication; i.e., transfer and dissemination of knowledge, information, and cultural values. Based on this principle, libraries of Scandinavian countries are recognized as one of the best in the world. The libraries of these countries surprise by the high and constantly growing quality standards of activities and various on-going intercultural cooperation projects. This only confirms that the library not only issues books to readers but also communicates important information and knowledge to the public, performs an important function of intercultural integration. The importance of intercultural communication is also confirmed by V. Pruskus (2012), whose research reveals that the library needs to maintain communicative relations with organizations from different countries.

Based on the said context, the following **problem question** is raised: How does intercultural communication of libraries of different countries take place?

**The research object** is intercultural communication of Šiauliai City Municipality Public Library and Jelgava City Library.

**The research aim** is to analyse intercultural communication of Šiauliai City Municipality Public Library (hereinafter, ŠL) and Jelgava City Library (hereinafter, JCL) from the standpoint of employees.

#### **Research tasks:**

1. To determine the influence of intercultural communication on the activities of ŠL and JCL;
2. To identify the most developed areas of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL;
3. To define the forms of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL;
4. To highlight differences of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL.

#### **Research methods and tools:**

1. The analysis and synthesis of scientific literature.
2. A qualitative research (interview).
3. A comparative content analysis.

#### **Literature Review**

**The conception of intercultural communication.** O. A. Andreyeva, S. K. Tuleubayeva et al. (2015) name intercultural communication firstly as communication; similarly, communication is distinguished by D. Baraldsnes (2012) and G. Dubauskas (2006): in the first case, it is communication between personalities speaking different languages; in the second, communication between cultures; and in the third, interpersonal communication is indicated.

Other authors such as V. Gudonienė (2013) and V. Pruskus (2012) name intercultural communication as a field of science. V. Gudonienė (2013) states that this is the field of science, focusing on differences and similarities in communication of cultures of different countries, while V. Pruskus (2012) notes that intercultural communication constitutes theoretical interests of several fields of science.

Intercultural communication as information exchange is defined by D. Baraldsnes (2012), V. Baršauskienė and B. Janulevičiūtė-Ivaškevičienė (2005), all of them stating that it is the process of information exchange between people representing different cultures.

Thus, different authors define the conception of intercultural communication differently, but all definitions have the following features in common: different cultures, information exchange, and the communication process. Such variety of definitions of intercultural communication enables to highlight different existing approaches to the conception of intercultural communication.

According to V. Gudonienė (2013), the required knowledge about the main features of other cultures reduces surprises, provides advance insights and helps to communicate with the

representatives of other nations more successfully. In intercultural communication, knowledge of national peculiarities is particularly important for the representatives of international business. This is significant not only for organizations related to tourism, advertising, education and cultural exchanges but also in everyday life, as globalization and integration processes lead to an inevitable encounter with people from other cultures.

One of the most important factors, implementing all functions of intercultural communication, is acquisition of intercultural communication competencies enabling proper perception of the barriers to intercultural communication (Gwiazda-Rzepecka, 2017). Another very important function of intercultural communication is to identify and constructively solve different types of conflicts. D. Baraldsnes (2012) states that interest in intercultural conflicts has been especially increasing for more than fifteen years. Conflicts arise due to a wide range of reasons. According to V. Pruskus (2012), the main cause of intercultural conflicts is differences in nationalities, which can provoke certain contradictions. This explanation is supplemented by D. Baraldsnes (2012) who states that this is the emotional despair or non-fulfilment of expectations of persons from different cultures, when different values, norms, strivings, limited resources are incompatible in the intercultural interaction (p. 171). Because the modern society is not culturally homogeneous – it has different values and norms, tensions and misunderstandings are inevitable. Therefore, in order to maintain good intercultural relationships, intercultural communication recognizes arisen conflicts and looks for ways to manage and resolve them (Pruskus, 2012).

Thus, it is important in intercultural communication to recognize cultural differences and properly communicate with people from other cultures, identify and constructively resolve different types of conflicts, overcome communication barriers, identify peculiarities of interpersonal relationships in multicultural organizations, and analyse cultural similarities and differences.

According to L. Kazykhankyzy and A. Nuray (2019), perception is one of the most important things for acquisition of cultural communication and competence skills. There are three main kinds of intercultural competence – linguistic, communicative and cultural, which promote cross-border research, help to develop projects, organize transnational trainings, correct behaviour or cope with potential conflicts, and etc. These three competencies of intercultural communication are particularly necessary for a modern expert. Based on the principle of communication and tolerance, they form a basis for professional mobility, preparation for rapidly changing living conditions, increase opportunities for professional realization (Andreyeva et al., 2015; Dolan, Kawamura, 2015; Srbinovska-Donchevski, Ashtalkoska Baloska, 2018; Norhafezah et al., 2019).

**Manifestation of intercultural communication in library activities.** Employees are an important factor determining intercultural communication and its successful dissemination in public libraries. The IFLA Multicultural Library Manifesto (2010) accentuates that library employees are an active mediator between users and resources. Such employees mirror the community's cultural and linguistic type in order to ensure intercultural understanding, to reflect the community served by the library, and to promote communication. **This manifesto emphasizes that the diversity of cultures and languages is a common heritage of the humanity and must be nurtured and protected for the benefit of all. It says that it is a source of exchange, novelties, creativity and peaceful coexistence between people. Respect to cultural diversity, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in an atmosphere of trust and common understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security. Therefore, all types of libraries must reflect, support and promote cultural and linguistic diversity at international, national and local levels, this way seeking intercultural dialogue and active citizenship.**

The IFLA Multicultural Library Manifesto also highlights that the key function of libraries is to serve various interests and communities. Libraries must act as centres of learning, culture and information. Given cultural and linguistic diversity, libraries must ground their services on the commitment to provide access to information and knowledge, based on the principles of fundamental freedoms and equal opportunities for all with regard to cultural identity and values.

Libraries can carry out intercultural communication by choosing not one but several areas of activities. There are quite many of them, but, according to D. Janavičienė and A. Gedvilaitė (2011), cooperation, project activities and digital services for non-nationals are the most important and most mentioned while developing the field of intercultural communication in libraries.

Today, cooperation between organizations is becoming increasingly important and is an essential feature of organizational life. It opens up opportunities to effectively pursue set goals, learn from others, acquire leadership knowledge and initiative in implementing various ideas. I. Gashurov and C. L. Kendrick (2013) name the reasons for cooperation: if we do not contribute

to building the future, the future may not accept us. Organizations or separate individuals working together can become an integral part of the future. Cooperation, like competition, always goes side by side. Implementation of various cooperation projects contributes to the focus on human factors: trust, commitment, culture of cooperation. By establishing and maintaining cooperation relationships, we can discover or increase new opportunities in the field of introducing innovations, creating new added value for both organizations and their employees individually (p. 36). It is important to emphasize that various companies and organizations increasingly become more open for cooperation not only in their own country but also on the international (intercultural) scale.

The library is one of the organizations that promotes uniting of different cultures by ensuring the availability of information and culture for everyone, regardless of the person's race, nationality, and culture. Another important factor determining successful intercultural communication in libraries is employees who are an active mediator between users and resources (Janavičienė, Gedvilaitė, 2011). Such employees reflect the community's cultural and linguistic type, seeking to ensure understanding of cultures, take into account the community served by the library, and promote interaction. Although libraries perform quite a number of intercultural activities, the main and most important distinguished activities are cooperation, project activities and digital services for non-nationals (Gashurov, Kendrick, 2013).

I. Gashurov and C. L. Kendrick (2013) point out that many initiatives of libraries have disappeared due to the lack of communication, due attention, and consistent leadership. Library cooperation is related to risks and reward, the benefit of which may be difficult to prove before beginning the project. It is difficult to justify the limited resources allocated for the project to support various initiatives. It is therefore important for organizations to know and seriously decide when to cooperate and when not to. Sometimes, excessively intense cooperation involving too many countries leads to low efficiency or overestimation of the project.

I. Gashurov and C. L. Kendrick (2013) present one of several successful examples of library cooperation through project activities – the BeCAP project. Having merged with Princeton and Columbia Universities, the New York Public Library sought to develop scientific research. This project allowed the partners to set up larger study spaces, preserve historical book collections, and etc. Although every party had different organizational styles, their strengths supplemented each other, provided knowledge and benefit, new experiences. Such division of labour management throughout the project was a very important factor that has led to great achievements. This example of cooperation through project activities demonstrates that libraries have great potential and a wide range of opportunities. Thus, proper communication, developing joint projects, becomes an integral part of the future.

Project activities are a popular form of cooperation carried out by libraries, because relevant problems of efficiency and quality of performance are solved and ways and methods of activities are developed or adjusted in a relatively short period of time. Libraries working together on the project find it easier to cope with many challenges and simpler to adapt to the competitive environment, introduce innovations and learn required competencies from each other.

One more important area of intercultural communication activities in the library is to ensure services not only for the citizens of one's own country but also to adapt them to foreigners' needs.

Libraries seek to expand intercultural cooperation not only with other organizations but also within library activities. According to D. Janavičienė and A. Gedvilaitė (2011), libraries often create information leaflets about library activities in English, Russian and other languages. Public libraries also often issue information publications providing information for foreigners where they can study, find a job, a place of residence, and inform about various cultural events. Cooperating with other institutions or centres that are concerned with foreigners' integration into the society, libraries compile lists of newly acquired books and periodicals, from which those institutions order certain publications, etc. Electronic services are also being expanded. This proves that libraries provide information to the population not only in Lithuanian, but also in the most popular foreign languages: English, Russian, and etc.

D. Janavičienė and A. Gedvilaitė (2011) distinguish the following main public library services for foreigners: electronic catalogues; International Interlibrary Loan (ILL); information resources; foreign language training courses; projects and programs; immigrant centres; elementary learners' dictionaries and their publishing; other library services encouraging foreigners' children to develop reading, writing and intercultural skills.

Thus, the library is treated as an institution that disseminates education and culture, shares information and knowledge, promotes personal development and integration of citizens of other nationalities into the life of the country's society. Therefore, it is required that the library should provide services not only to its country's citizens but also expand areas of services so

that the latter can be adapted to the needs of non-nationals as well. The following main library services for foreigners are distinguished: electronic catalogues, International Interlibrary Loan, information resources, foreign language training courses, projects and programs, immigrant centres, elementary learners' dictionaries and their publishing. It should be assumed that providing these services, libraries carry out intercultural communication, promoting cooperation between citizens of different cultures, using library services.

### **Methodology**

*The period of conducting the empirical research.* The qualitative research was conducted on April 16-25, 2019. The results of the qualitative research were processed and analysed in April-May, 2019.

*The empirical research method.* Based on the analysed intercultural communication competencies and the library's main activity areas, it was sought to analyse the intercultural communication of libraries from employees' standpoint and to perform the comparative analysis of two similar institutions. It was selected to conduct the study in one Lithuanian library – Šiauliai City Municipality Public Library (hereinafter, ŠL) and one Latvian library – Jelgava City Library (hereinafter, JCL). These libraries were chosen because of the similar size of cities and the number of users, the number of stocks and cooperation between them.

Empirical research was carried out employing the qualitative research method, aiming to investigate intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL from employees' standpoint. The research instrument – the interview questionnaire – was compiled on the basis of the analysis of scientific literature. The interview questionnaire was created by the researcher herself.

The possibility of the quantitative (questionnaire survey) research was rejected, as it would not ensure full disclosure of manifestation of intercultural communication in the organization itself as a whole as well as the most important aspects of intercultural communication manifesting themselves in the position of each individual employee.

*Organization of the empirical research.* The sample of the qualitative research consists of 6 informants who encounter intercultural communication in libraries. The general population of this study encompasses the analysis of two cases – ŠL and JCL; therefore, in order to ensure the accuracy of the research results, all persons who could provide sufficient information about the investigated problem were surveyed. The sample was formed regardless of informants' age and gender. Therefore, it can be stated that the sample of the study is representative as it covers the entire population of both institutions under investigation.

The informants were surveyed individually, giving all informants the same questions. The informants were presented the interview questionnaire in advance in order to ensure a smooth interview process. During the presentation, the employees of JCL requested that the interview should be conducted in writing due to the lack of time and knowledge of oral English. In order to ensure equal interview conditions for both organizations under investigation, it was decided that written interviews would also be provided to informants of ŠL.

Planning of interviews and data recording was based on the recommendations provided by K. Kardelis (2016), V. Žydžiūnaitė (2011) and R. Tidikis (2003) and the main discussed aspects of interviews. After conducting all interviews, the comparative content analysis was performed.

*Methodology of the empirical research data analysis.* The content of the answers to the interview questions was analysed using the *qualitative content analysis method*. Based on K. Krippendorff (1980), V. Žydžiūnaitė et al. (2005) argue that the content analysis is a reliable method because the analysed text allows to draw specific conclusions.

In the initial stage, the qualitative content analysis of interview texts was performed. The text was interpreted in accordance with the research questions raised. The informants' speeches are not corrected and edited, except for grammatical or style errors in order to correctly understand the speaker's thoughts. The semantic elements singled out in the structure of the interview text and defined are divided into categories and subcategories. Categories are integrated into the context of the phenomenon under investigation and their content is described. By grouping the informants' answers assigned to individual questions and distinguishing frequently recurring statements, categories were formulated, which were later studied in the analysis of the results of the interviews.

One of the particularly important aspects in social research is adherence to research ethics. The following basic ethical principles are distinguished in the methodological literature: clarity, voluntariness, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, goodwill, and the like (Kardelis, 2016; Žydžiūnaitė, 2011; Tidikis, 2003). In this study, based on the code of ethics identified in the methodological literature, the above-mentioned basic ethical principles were followed.

## Results

The process of intercultural communication is characterised not only by its advantages but quite often also by various obstacles, difficulties, barriers that hinder successful communication, aggravate seeking common goals, which is emphasized by many researchers as a particularly important process in all intercultural communication. The qualitative content analysis revealed main advantages and shortcomings of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL. Two qualitative categories were distinguished: *Advantages of intercultural communication* and *Shortcomings of intercultural communication*.

The following subcategories came to prominence in the qualitative category *Advantages of intercultural communication*:

- Knowledge of new cultures: "Advantages: the opportunity to communicate with the representatives of other nations <...>", "Advantages: it is the opportunity to learn something new about other cultures, about human thinking <...>".
- Experience, relations: "Advantages: opportunity <...> to expand relations, business opportunities, and the like", "<...> to gain new knowledge, perspectives and grow".
- Foreign language learning: "Advantages: foreign language development, proficiency <...>".

In the qualitative category *Shortcomings of intercultural communication*, the interviewees distinguished the following subcategories:

- Language barrier: "Shortcomings: language barrier. The language barrier creates difficulties in communicating with foreigners, correct conveyance/perception of information", "In my opinion, the biggest problem is the language barrier".
- Different attitude: "<...> it falls to encounter <...> different attitude towards the same thing, situation".
- Slow communication: "Shortcomings/difficulties: <...> partners' inefficiency, slow communication, delays, don't hurry to reply to messages".
- Different temperament, traditions: "Disadvantages: <...> different temperament, traditions, different work styles".

The majority of respondents from both ŠL and JCL emphasized that one of the biggest advantages of intercultural communication in the organization was the opportunity to meet and interact with the representatives of other cultures, enabling to learn new things. Respondents from both investigated libraries presented expansion of contacts and acquisition of new experiences as a particularly important thing as well. The interviewee from JCL added that increasing tolerance contributed to personal growth. Another advantage distinguished by the employee of ŠL was the foreign language development; however, the representatives of JCL did not present this as an important advantage, although the problem of the language barrier came to prominence in the whole context of the study. The use of the foreign language always allows to learn new phrases and words, even if the skills are not the best, which means that one can learn a lot over time.

It should be emphasized that along with the advantages of intercultural communication in libraries the study also revealed its essential shortcomings. It has been found that the employees of both libraries singled out the language barrier as the biggest shortcoming (difficulty) in communication. ŠL and JCL unanimously agree that if one does not have a good command of the main foreign language (English), he/she faces difficulties in conveying the desired message correctly and communicating important information understandably. Interviewees of both libraries answered that the language barrier sometimes caused difficulties and miscommunications. The informants of ŠL added that it was sometimes difficult to interact when the attitude to one thing or another differed and when the approach to the speed of communication varied. The response is not always fast; sometimes, employees feel response delays. The informant from JCL named another difficulty affecting communication that is not always efficient – different temperaments of interacting persons or their groups, different work styles, and traditions.

In summary, it can be stated that the employees of ŠL and JCL envisaged the following main advantages of intercultural communication: knowledge of new cultures, relations, experience, foreign language learning. The employees of ŠL and JCL identified the following shortcomings: the language barrier, slow communication, different temperament, traditions, attitude to work, work style.

Seeking to find out the forms of communication with non-nationals and foreign partners, chosen by the employees of both libraries, it turned out that the following forms dominated:

1. Written communication: "Usually in writing, but I also have to communicate orally", "By e-mails, messages", "I mostly use e-mail <...>"; "<...> we communicate by writing and speaking".

2. Face-to-face communication: "E-mails and directly", "When you meet, live communication. In the foreign language (in English)", "In the meeting, of course, we communicate face-to-face. And I think it's the best form of communication <...>", "We communicate by writing and speaking. Of course, the best way is the dialogue."

To sum up, it can be stated that the employees of both libraries distinguish both written and oral communication. The informants revealed that they usually communicated with foreigners in writing (by e-mails, via social media, and the like) and face-to-face when they met, although this happened much less frequently. The interviewees of JCL emphasize that such communication when they can see the person live is the best form of communication, because seeing another person makes it easier to understand whether the interlocutor has correctly understood what has been said to him/her. The interviewees of JCL note that face-to-face communication allows to see another person's body language, which makes it even easier to understand others.

Finding out what intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL is like, the focus was to discover the obstacles of intercultural communication and cultural differences. The qualitative category *Differences of intercultural communication* was distinguished, which reveals barriers to intercultural communication in the studied libraries through subcategories proving differences: *Mentality and Language Barrier*.

Based on the informants' answers to the questions "Have you noticed any cultural differences when communicating with the representatives of another culture? What obstacles, conflicts, misunderstandings have arisen? If so, how did you adapt to it, solve it? Give examples", it can be seen that there were almost no such obstacles and conflicts in both institutions. The interviewee of ŠL, who works with volunteers from foreign countries, stated that sometimes obstacles due to differences in mentality occurred, but solutions were always sought: "It happens. It depends on the volunteers' mentality, the ability to adapt. If there is a situation that needs to be solved, we are always looking for solution ways." The informants of JCL have not encountered any significant barriers to intercultural communication too; however, they acknowledge that the communication process poses some problems due to the language barrier but ways are always being sought to address this: "Yes, sometimes we don't understand each other, but this is a problem that we accept, we got used to it and we find other ways to present information". The head of JCL emphasized that their institution liaised not only with European but also with US organizations; however, no big cultural differences occurred: "We liaised with European and US organizations. However, cultural differences are not so obvious. All obstacles can be solved and challenges, overcome. For example, we used an interpreter's services to successfully communicate with our partners in France. Nevertheless, the encounter with another culture only brings an even more interesting and valuable experience".

Summarizing and comparing the responses of informants from ŠL and JCL about barriers and differences in intercultural communication, it is obvious that the employees and managers of both libraries under investigation presented the same or similar barriers and differences of intercultural communication. ŠL singled out the mentality and JCL, the language barrier as a cultural difference constituting the biggest obstacle to intercultural communication.

The qualitative research also sought to find out what manifestation and assessment of intercultural cooperation in the libraries were like. The content of informants' answers enabled to distinguish two qualitative categories: *Manifestation of intercultural cooperation* and *Assessment of intercultural cooperation*.

The comparison between ŠL and JCL reveals that the manifestation of intercultural cooperation in the organizations differs. Intercultural cooperation in ŠL manifests itself through volunteering, project activities, and events; while in JCL, through project activities and communication with the representatives of cultural minorities. In both libraries, the common aspect of manifestation of cooperation distinguished by the informants is project activities.

The assessment of intercultural cooperation in both libraries also did not vary, the informants unambiguously named it as the organization's benefit. The benefits of intercultural cooperation in the investigated libraries are intercultural experiences ("Incoming volunteers from other countries "bring" their cultural experience to our institution, and, at the same time, they learn from us too. Such mutual communication (cooperation) that is useful to both parties"); improvement of language skills ("At the same time, not only job-related practice but also language skills are improved <...>"); new ideas, innovativeness ("Benefits – broadening of horizons, presentation of innovative, new ideas").

In summary, it can be stated that intercultural cooperation is important and beneficial for the library's activities. Intercultural cooperation of ŠL and JCL manifests itself in a range of ways: in ŠL, through volunteering practice, project activities, and events; in JCL, through project activities, cooperation and communication with the representatives of national minorities. Comparing two libraries from managers' and employees' standpoint, it was found that ŠL did

not cooperate with the representatives of national minorities and their groups, while JCL did not participate in events and did not engage in the integration of volunteers from abroad into their activities. It can be assumed that there are not many non-nationals who live in Šiauliai or address the library, compared to JCL; therefore, ŠL does not cooperate with various trade unions of national minorities. The common aspect of manifestation of intercultural cooperation of both ŠL and JCL is project activities that manifest themselves in implementation of international projects.

The interviewees of both institutions emphasize that intercultural cooperation is important and beneficial for the library's activities. It provides the organisation's employees with intercultural communication and cooperation experience, enables to improve language skills, job-related practice and create new, innovative ideas.

This study aimed to find out how intercultural communication takes place in two libraries in Lithuania and Latvia. It was found that one of the most important aspects of manifestation of intercultural cooperation in the library for both investigated organizations was project activities. According to the interviewees of SL, project activities in intercultural communication are important because this allows to improve competencies: "Joint intercultural projects allow to improve competencies <...>", attract funding: "It is therefore important because it helps to attract funds <...>" and because of new activities: "It is therefore important as it helps <...> to come up with new activities that are useful both for the library's employees and visitors".

The informants of JCL state that the importance of project activities in the library's intercultural communication manifests itself by acquiring new contacts: "We get new contacts that also open up new opportunities for our library's development <...>", experience: "<...> We acquire experience <...> become more flexible and resilient", and by gaining recognition: "<...> we become more recognized not only locally but also internationally".

Although the employees of both libraries emphasized the importance of project activities, it was noted that both parties named it differently. ŠL distinguishes the importance of project activities due to competence improvement, attracting funding, and new activities, while JCL envisages the advantages of project activities due to new contacts, experience and recognition.

Summarizing the duties, responsibilities and competencies of ŠL and JCL informants in the library's intercultural communication, it can be concluded that project activities constitute the most important part of intercultural communication of both libraries under investigation. On-going joint projects require that all interviewees should assume the main responsibility and duty – to communicate with foreign partners, pursuing common goals. It was distinguished that the area that needed to be improved most was the linguistic competence (to improve the foreign language – English).

Being asked "What area of intercultural communication activities could your organization improve and in what ways?", the interviewees gave ambiguously coinciding answers. The analysis of the research data demonstrates that the approaches of ŠL and JCL to the improvement of intercultural communication activities differ. The majority of employees of ŠL state that intercultural communication in their organization is good enough; only one interviewee emphasizes the necessity for improvement of the linguistic competence. The informants of JCL present a more critical view of their organization. This manifests itself through different responses of all three informants: improvement of linguistic, communicative and cultural competencies, improvement of the foreign language (English) skills, and expansion of the International Relations Department. It can be assumed that differences in the attitude of employees of investigated libraries towards certain organisational improvements and shortcomings are due to cultural and personal differences that manifest themselves through the approach to work, work style, and the like.

### Conclusions

1. Intercultural communication affects the activities of ŠL and JCL by attraction of funding, introduction of innovations, knowledge of new cultures, establishing new contacts, acquisition of experience and recognition, learning foreign languages and improvement of professional competencies.

2. The most developed areas of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL are project activities and cooperation; the least, the area of digital services for non-nationals.

3. The forms of intercultural communication in ŠL and JCL are direct oral and written communication. The biggest obstacle to intercultural communication of ŠL and JCL is language (the need for the improvement of the linguistic competence).

4. Intercultural communication differs in ŠL and JCL in that ŠL cooperates with volunteers from abroad, while JCL, with trade unions of representatives of national minorities.



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