

MENDEL UNIVERSITY IN BRNO

Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies

Adaptation Process in Intercultural Relationship with Focus on the Czech Culture

Diploma Thesis

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Brno 2015

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In Brno, May 21, 2015

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all intercultural couples and my special person, E.C.

Abstract

SABOLOVÁ, M. *Adaptation Process in Intercultural Relationship with Focus on the Czech Culture*. Brno, 2015

Diploma thesis refers to the adaptation process in intercultural relationship with the focus on the romantic relationships. The first part is theoretical, discussing the key terms to the topic, namely the main aspects of intercultural relationship, as well as historical background to the development of the intercultural relationship in the Czech Republic. Empirical part of the thesis consists of the research based on the qualitative methods. The research aims to find out the main challenges and opportunities of the intercultural relationship, as well as to describe the aspects of cultural adaptation process in romantic relationship, from the perspective of Czechs women.

Key Words

Culture, Intercultural Relationship, Cultural Adaptation, Czech Culture, Intercultural Couples, Cultural Differences, Intercultural Communication, Multiculturalism

Abstrakt

SABOLOVÁ, M. *Proces adaptácie v interkultúrnych vzťahoch na príklade českej kultúry*. Brno, 2015

Táto diplomová práca sa zaoberá aspektmi adaptačného procesu v interkultúrnych vzťahoch na príklade romantických vzťahov. V teoretickej časti práca ponúka prehľad základných kľúčových pojmov súvisiacich s témou diplomovej práce. V ďalšej časti sa práca zameriava na hlavné aspekty adaptačného procesu a tiež ponúka historický náhľad na rozvoj interkultúrnych vzťahov v Českej republike. Praktickú časť práce tvorí kvalitatívny výskum, ktorý sa zameriava na adaptačný proces v interkultúrnom vzťahu z pohľadu adaptácie Českých žien. Ďalej práca popisuje výhody a nevýhody, resp. benefity a prekážky, ktoré interkultúrny vzťah prináša.

Kľúčové slová

kultúra, interkultúrny vzťah, adaptačný proces, česká kultúra, interkultúrne páry, kultúrne rozdiely, interkultúrna komunikácia, multikulturalizmus

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1 Introduction

Cultures are nowadays extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles of the cultures no longer end at the national borders. It goes beyond and can be found in the same way in other cultures. The high level of the interactions between cultures creates a space for the development of the intercultural relationships. Enlarged space of the cultural mixing increases also the probability to find a partner for life from the other culture than ours. The “partners’ market” expands and it is becoming more common to get married or engage in a relationship with someone of different culture.

Intercultural romantic relationships are becoming recently more of a concern in a field of intercultural psychology and intercultural communication. Intensification in cultural exchange allows culturally diverse individuals to meet, interact and engage in a relationship much more easily than it was in a past, during the times when a world was not yet globalized. Due to the more intensive communication between the different countries and its cultures, there is no surprise that intercultural relationship appears to be relevant topic for discussion and new area for a research, especially from the perspective of the challenges and opportunities of such a relationships.

Related to the topic of intercultural relationships is often discussed a phenomenon of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is recently a topic that is discussed on a global level. The process of globalization and open boundaries for free movement of people leads to the foundation of the multicultural societies. In last few decades not only the interactions between the different cultures has grown significantly all over the world, but also the number of mixed relationships and/or marriages. By this multicultural fusion societies are becoming multicultural and the cultures are “forced” to coexist and interact with each other.

The more cultures collide, the more they influence each other. The highest cultural influences can be found particularly in intercultural relationships where partners are intensively exposed to each other’s culture, but also of the environment, which increase the level of multiculturalism in a relationship, and thus in a society. Partners of different cultures often create a new culture as a results of their mutual influences and also influences of the environment.

The place where people live, environment with its conditions is the physical space where the intercultural relationships develop. Physical space has significant impact on the establishment of intercultural relationships. In culturally heterogeneous environment/society the tendency to engage in a relationship with someone of different culture is much higher than in culturally homogeneous societies. International migration immensely contributes to the heterogeneity in a society, which is also significant factor, creating the conditions for the development of intercultural relationship. With the increasing level of cultural heterogeneity, the “partner market” becomes wider and thus the probability to engage in a relationship with someone of a different culture. Nowadays it is becoming more common that individuals look for the partner elsewhere and the same culture of the partner does not play a role, while in past some traditional societies did not allow interactions between cultures.

What makes the relationship intercultural is different cultural background of the partners (i.e. differences in ethnicity, race or language). There are few approaches for studying intercultural relationships; this thesis focuses predominantly on the cultural adaptation perspective, but also on the challenges and opportunities of the intercultural relationships via theoretical interpretation of the literature and/or other sources, followed with the research conducted by the author of the thesis. The thesis focuses on positive and negative aspects which occur in the adaptation process in intercultural relationship.

2 Objectives and Methodology

With the increasing level of multiculturalism in societies, which is influenced mainly by the process of globalization, the interactions of the cultures become more and more frequent. The more intensive contacts of cultures form the conditions for the development of intercultural relationships. Human relationships are challenging and rewarding in any social context, even more when they concerns individuals of different cultures.

The main purpose of the thesis is to examine the adaptation process in intercultural romantic relationships from the perspective of the Czech women. Firstly we look at the intercultural relationships from the theoretical perspective, followed with the empirical part and the analysis of data obtained in the research.

The motivation to choose the topic was author's interest in the field of intercultural communication. Several travels abroad and intensive interactions with the individuals of different cultures, as well as completing different kinds of cross-cultural courses (either at the Mendel University or other universities) contributed to the decision of the topic for the thesis. Interactions with different cultures, allows person to observe the cultural differences and people's behavior in cultural adaptation process. That aspect inspired author to choose the topic for diploma thesis and look at the phenomenon of cultural adaptation in details. Author decided to focus on the adaptation process in romantic intercultural relationships from the perspective of Czech women. This decision was influenced by a lack of research in this field of study, especially in the Czech Republic where there is not so many research carried out within the intercultural romantic relationships. The increasing number of intercultural relationships offers a new area for further research.

The main objective of the thesis is to gain deeper understanding of the personal experiences with the adaptation in intercultural relationship from the perspective of Czech women who engage in close romantic relationship with someone of a different culture. The minor goals are to describe the challenges and benefits of intercultural relationships.

The objectives of the thesis will be fulfilled after answering the research questions. The research questions were set up on the basis of the theoretical explanation of the topic, with aim to find out the following:

- *What are the main benefits of the intercultural relationship?*
- *What are the key challenges and obstacles of intercultural relationship?*

- *How do Czech females adapt in an intercultural relationship?*

The thesis is divided into two main parts, including the introduction, discussion and conclusion. First part of the thesis is theoretical (chapters 3, 4, 5), providing the definitions of the key aspects to the topic, such as culture, intercultural relationship cultural adaptation. Chapter 4 is a major theoretical part of the thesis, discussing the main aspects of the intercultural relationships and cultural adaptation process. It offers an overview to the influential factors for the establishment of intercultural relationship, firstly on a broad level (expanding trend in migration and multiculturalism), and secondly more in detail, discussing various typologies of the reasons for entering the intercultural relationship. Within the cultural adaptation process we firstly discuss theoretical approaches for studying the cultural adaptation, especially from Berry (2002; 2005). Further focus is on adaptation of partners in intercultural relationship which is a key theoretical base for the empirical part. The last chapter of the theoretical part presents the historical background to the development of intercultural relationships in the Czech Republic, since the thesis focuses on the adaptation of Czech women. The phenomenon is discussed from the perspective of socio-demographical aspects, based on the statistical data about intercultural marriages and the data available from the literature sources. Theoretical part with its chapters builds a foundation for the empirical part, while the empirical part aims to comment on the aspects used in theoretical part and compare the results of the research with the theoretical approaches.

The second of the thesis (chapter 6) is empirical, consisting the research carried out within the thesis. The research is based on the qualitative methods as for the purposes of the thesis this method appears to be the most appropriate. In order to gain deeper understanding of personal experiences, author decided to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the selected sample of the population. Author performed 12 interviews to obtain the data for the analysis. On the basis of data analysis author deduced the conclusion and answered the research questions. The methodology used in the qualitative research is discussed in detail in the introduction to the empirical part.

I. THEORETICAL PART

3 Definitions of the Key Terms

3.1 Culture as a Center of Intercultural Relationship

The key term of intercultural relationship is a culture itself; and therefore it is necessary to provide its definition and discuss it within the context of intercultural relationship.

Basic definition of culture in social sciences says that *culture is a learned pattern of behavior and attitudes shared by a certain group of people* (Shiraev, Levy, 2007, p.3).

Hofstede (2001, p.4) compares the culture with the computer:

“Every person carries the patterns of thinking, feelings and potential acting which were learned throughout the person’s lifetime.”

The cultural patterns change when the cultures interact with each other, since each culture has different patterns.

Trompenaars (2011, p.27) defines the culture in context of its differences and diversity by comparing it to a fish:

“A fish discovers its need for water only when it is no longer in it.”

Our own culture is like a water to a fish, because it sustains us and we live and breathe through it. Trompenaars (ibid.) states that the needs that may regards as essential to one culture, may not be relevant to the other cultures. He points out that the needs and values of cultures differ from each other.

The cultural differences are important part of the intercultural relationship. From one perspective they could be often perceived as an obstacle to enter the relationship with someone of a different culture, but on a contrary, they can be seen as the only reason and/or motivational factor for entering the intercultural relationship.

Martin&Nakayama (2007) notes that some individuals are attracted to people only for their different cultural background. Authors observed interesting phenomenon about the cultural

differences in the context of intercultural relationship. They point out that intercultural relationship presents the intriguing opportunities to experience new ways of living and looking at the world.

Culture could be considered as a central point of every intercultural relationship. Intercultural relationship forms a space where two cultures meet, communicate with each other, share and exchange the features of own cultures and thus influence each other.

Although the basic definition of a culture says that culture is a learned pattern, Mole (2003) points out that culture is also something that changes all the time, especially with the development of new technologies and the process of globalization. Looking at the culture from this perspective indicates that due to the changes in societies cultures are no longer the same which may arise a questions about the originality of culture. Heckmann (1993) states that there exist no pure original cultures anymore, because of the intensive influences that cultures face. The process of globalization immensely contributes to the development of the relationships between the different cultures. Intercultural relationships of people with different cultural background could be seen as a main clash where cultures change, particularly because of the intensive interactions of the partners in a relationship. Partners enter the relationship with its own cultures, but with the development of the relationship their cultures change in some ways.

3.2 Intercultural Relationship

Regarding the “intercultural relationship” which is the key term of the thesis, it is necessary to explain the terminology. The thesis uses the term “intercultural relationship”, with the meaning of close romantic relationship/partnership between a man and a woman. The thesis uses the term intercultural, although some literature sources use the term multicultural. For instance, Harvey&Wezel (2001, p. 238): *“Multicultural relationship is defined as a close relationship involving two individuals who differ in terms of ethnicity and, presumably, cultural background; cultural differences can be measured empirically.”*

In Czech literature source from Morgensternová et al. (2007), which is the key source to the intercultural relationship in the Czech Republic, author uses the Czech term “interkulturní partnerský vztah”(orig.), which can be translated as intercultural romantic relationship.

Martin&Nakayama (2010) in their publication “Intercultural communication in context” used also the term intercultural for describing the relationship between man and a woman of

different cultures. Since there are more literature sources using the term intercultural, we decided to use this term.

It is important to highlight that by using the term intercultural relationship in the context of the thesis is meant *romantic relationship between two individuals of a different culture* (in our case it is the Czech woman and the partner of different culture). The emphasis is put on “romantic”, since we researched on relationships in form of a partnership (between men and women), regardless if partners are married.

Another literature source (Orta, 2013, p.3) uses the term “*cross-group romantic relationship*” which meaning is close to intercultural: “*any romantic relationship between individuals belonging to the different social group (either it is racial, ethnic or religious).*”

As seen, the terminology lacks the clarity which is well explained by Morgensternová et al. (2007). She claims that what makes the relationship intercultural is on the first place different language of the partners. Author uses the language criterion as a main when talking about intercultural relationship in the Czech Republic. On a contrary, other studies on intercultural relationship do not consider different language as a criterion. Those concerns few studies made in US, where the main criterion of intercultural relationship is ethnicity and race, since in US the highest number of intercultural relationships are those of the mixed raced. However, in mixed race relationship, different languages of the partners do not play a role (it is not a main criterion of intercultural relationship), because it is based on a different ethnicity, and different ethnicity does not mean different language. On a contrary, in the Czech Republic the attention is not paid to the ethnicity and race since the numbers of those partnerships is rather low (Morgensternová, *ibid.*). In our thesis we also incline to this approach, and in the research we used the criterion of different language of the partners.

The lack of clarity on terminology is also explained in Silva et al. (2012, p.857). Intercultural couple is defined as “*the union between the people of different nationalities, which may or may not include differences in race, ethnicity, religion and language*”. However, historically the term intercultural relationship has been applied to racially mixed couples, because racial differences are considered as the main cultural differences in many societies. Many researchers opposed, arguing that it needs broader definition, because culture itself is broadly defined. Racial differences do not equal cultural differences, and what makes the relationship intercultural is characterized by greater differences between partners in a wider variety of areas (religion, ethnicity, national origin, language).

At this point it is relevant to mention the term *multinational*, which differs significantly from the intercultural. Multinational relationship is a relationship between people of two different nations, but not necessarily cultures, for example the English man and the Australian woman (Himmelrich, 2010). Based on this definition, we may assume that romantic relationship between Czech and Slovak are rather multinational, based on the fact that Slovak and Czech cultures are immensely close to each other due to the common history as well as uniqueness in similarity of the languages. Since in our thesis we don't focus on multinational relationships, we did not include the respondents of those two cultures to our research. However, according to the Czech Statistical Office (2014), in fact, the most numerous intercultural relationships (in form of a marriage) in the Czech Republic are the combination of the partners of Czech-Slovak culture. Since the center of our thesis is adaptation process in intercultural relationship, it appears more appropriate to research on the cultures that are defined culturally more diverse. For that reason, the empirical part/research of our thesis focuses on the relationship between Czech women with men of a different culture, excluding the Slovak.

3.2.1 Approaches to Studying Intercultural Relationship

Most research study the intercultural relationship from a perspective of either acculturation process (adaptation) or the challenges of the relationship. Our thesis looks at both perspectives, with the main focus on the adaptation.

Martin&Nakayama (2010) sums up *3 main approaches* to studying intercultural relationship which are unique in understanding how the relationship is developed across differences:

- *The social science approach* studies intercultural relationship on a base of identification of cross-cultural differences
- *The interpretative approach* is focused on a depth of the intercultural relationship and the role of communication
- *The critical approach* emphasizes the influence of various contexts (political, historical and institutional) in development and maintenance of intercultural relationship

This thesis uses the features of all the mentioned approaches, however, the main part inclines mostly to the interpretative approach (empirical part of the thesis). Theoretical part uses the critical approach, discussing historical and political aspects that influencing the development

of intercultural relationships. Interpretative approach is used mainly in empirical part, where we look at the intercultural relationship in depth, discussing the challenges which partners face and the adaptation strategies they use to cope with them. The social science approach which focus on cross-cultural differences in intercultural relationship is used also in the empirical part mainly in the analysis of the obtained data.

3.3 Cultural Adaptation Process

Cultural adaptation process is commonly explained as a concept that generates some change in culture. Instead of cultural adaptation, Berry (2005, p.698) uses the term acculturation, defining it as:

“A dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of the contacts between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.”

Morgensternová (2007) emphasizes that the adaptation can be observed after the certain period of time on the individuals who have intensive contacts with foreign cultures.

Martin and Nakayama (2007, p.320) defined cultural adaptation as:

“A process by which individuals learn the rules and customs of the new cultural contexts”.

The crucial point of cultural adaptation is some kind of a change that appears after certain period of time either in one or both cultures which interact with each other.

4 Main Aspects of Intercultural Relationship

4.1 Influential Factors for the Establishment of Intercultural Relationships

4.1.1 Expansion of Migration

Migration is the process that creates the conditions for the development of intercultural relationships. By the increase in number of people travelling from country to country, the probability of meeting someone of a different culture and form close relationship increases also. International migration is one of the factors contributing to the establishment of the intercultural relationship. Increasing trend of movements of individuals of different cultures, increases also diversity of the foreign cultures in societies, and thus the possibilities to choose the partner for life from another culture.

When discussing the migration, the key is to clarify that it is a movement of people from one place to another while they change the permanent residence. However, in context of the respondents of our sample we cannot talk about the process of migration as such. Majority of our respondents met their partners due to the temporary stay in a foreign country, when one of the partners travelled to another country for certain period of time (either studying or working), not changing the permanent residence. Clyne&Jupp (2011) called this movement as *temporary migration*.

Drbohlav (2009) points out that recently 2% of the world population live else than home country (which is around 150mil.people worldwide). The highest number of immigrants indicates the statistical data of the most developed countries, namely US, Canada, Germany, Great Britain and France. Due to the migration movements and intensive cultural exchange, societies become culturally diverse.

Motives of the individuals who migrate could be various, but as for the most common is considered a motivation to find better conditions for life (mainly economic and social). Drbohlav (ibid.) noticed that around 30% of all migrants worldwide migrate because of the political, religious or ethnical problems in their home countries. The recent trend in migration situation of the Czech Republic is discussed more in details in chapter 5.2.

4.1.2 Multiculturalism and Multicultural Societies

As mentioned above, the fluctuation of immigrants contributes to the increase in multicultural situation in societies, which brings both positive and negative effects. Multiculturalism in societies is a recently discussed phenomenon, since nearly every country in a world has to deal with the multiculturalism in certain ways, such as the immigration and integration policy, attitudes towards immigrants in a country, adaptation practices, etc. There exist a contradiction between the attitudes towards multiculturalism. Some experts argue that multiculturalism as a system failed and multicultural societies recently faced numerous challenges resulting from open multicultural policy. On a contrary, there exist positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, emphasizing its benefits. Regardless if the attitudes are positive or negative, in a context of intercultural relationships it needs to be highlight that it is one of the factors contributing to its establishment.

4.1.2.1 Definitions of Multiculturalism

The definition of Heckmann (1993, p.245) says that multiculturalism refers to the *changing composition of the population, from rather homogenous to the heterogeneous*. Author defines the term multiculturalism in a seven different contexts, one of them is the cultural context and socio-romantic view which is related to the topic of the thesis.

In the cultural context, Heckmann (ibid.) defines multiculturalism as an interpretation of the concept of a culture, stating that there are no pure, original cultures. Each culture has incorporated the elements of others, and cultures are the results of the interactions with one another in a continuous process and change. Within this concept cultures are seen as opportunities for the enrichment of one's own culture. Thus, looking at it from the perspective of the immigrants' interactions with the "home culture", the immigrant are seen as positive elements.

Heckmann (ibid.) looks at the multiculturalism also from the perspective of socio-romantic view, and he points out that the *immigrants are viewed as people with qualities that we have lost*, for instance emotions, stable social relations, spontaneity, religion, etc., and we could learn from them.

Moreover, multiculturalism can be also seen *an attitude and a norm*: a tolerance and supportive behavior towards the others (immigrants) and democratic attitude which are based

on learning from the errors and consequences of nationalism and ethnic intolerance (Heckmann, 1993).

4.1.2.2 Historical Overview to Multiculturalism

The development of multiculturalism is well described by Clyne&Jupp (2011) in their publication “*Multiculturalism and integration: a harmonious relationship*”. Firstly, authors explain multicultural situation as one where there is a dominant ethnicity, usually based on early settlers, who see itself as a “founding nation”, although others have been established in the modern territory for much longer, but in smaller numbers. Authors use Australia as an example of a country, explaining that Europeans have only formed the majority since 1830s (Clyne&Jupp, 2011, p. xiv). The founding nations are those who define the characteristics of a nation as a whole, including its language, religious and a way of life.

Multiculturalism as a term was used in few countries over Europe (e.g. Sweden) or in Canada, where it was defined as a political system resulting from the culturally diverse population emerged from the international migration. On a contrary, some countries with the high ethnic variety dealt with the ethnical situation differently; by establishment the federation as a political system, instead of multiculturalism. That means that ethnic communities have its own political institutions and geographical boundaries. The examples of these system are Russian Federation, India or former Yugoslavia.

Multiculturalism was not strongly felt in most liberal democracies until the period after the World War II. Prior to that, especially during the period after the end of the World War I. empires began to break up into the components, based on the Wilsonian notion of determination resulting with the foundation of 200 sovereign states, each with the status of nation states(Clyne&Jupp, 2011, p. xiv). However, those states are ethnically not uniform, and as a migration grows, also the ethnic variety grows. Authors further point out that the states which broke away from others in past are facing the danger of further breaking away from them. As an example serves the previous ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia and most recent one in Ukraine.

The states with high ethnical diversity, but no distinct concentration of minorities, may turn to multiculturalism as a solution. Although many liberal democracies, such as US, Germany and France rejected multicultural approach and did not accept it as a national policy, some of its practices have been adopted. For instance, many cities with large immigration population

adopted welfare services, interpreting systems, etc. This situation can be found in some provinces in Germany, France and US (Clyne&Jupp, 2011).

Multiculturalism as a political ideology has been for the first time introduced in Europe, in Switzerland in the 50s of the last century. It has become a synonym for the *ideal society of people with different cultural, ethnic and religious background, but still live in a mutual harmony* (Barša, 2003, p.7).

Multiculturalism as an ideology and a public policy has been copied by the liberal and social democratic political parties, especially in Canada, Scandinavia, GB, Australia and New Zealand. The concept of multiculturalism was a base for the integration policies of several countries.

4.1.2.3 Recent Trend in Multiculturalism

Clyne&Jupp (2011) note that multicultural system has recently weakened in the most liberal democracies, especially in political election. Multiculturalism as an ideology of some political parties in the countries which has been primarily multicultural has not been recently supported. On a contrary, political parties with conservative critical attempts to multiculturalism prevailed and became victorious. The situation happened lately in few countries in Europe, namely Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands. Clyne&Jupp (ibid.) identified several reasons of the resistance in electoral support of multiculturalism as following:

- the collision between liberal democracy and Islamic fundamentalism
- resistance to continuing, increasing and frequently uncontrolled immigration from developing countries (especially Africa, Latin America and South Asia)
- economic and social problems which social democracy has failed to solve
- poverty and social dislocation in some concentration of immigrants and refugees
- the perception that distinct civilizations and cultures built on the European basis are losing their pre-eminence

Based on these reasons, the main factor of the resistance appears to be “anti-immigrant feelings”. In the context of the development of intercultural relationships it might be considered as a possible obstacle to enter the relationship, and/or in certain cases the reason why people prevent from getting involved in a relationship with someone of a different culture.

As noted above, multiculturalism brings both positive and negatives. Heckmann (1993) sees the opportunities for the enrichment of own culture as a positive effect, which is the optimistic point of view towards the multiculturalism.

One example of the negative factor resulting from the multiculturalism could be a „transformation of home culture“; by the numerous influences of new cultures, the original culture sometimes becomes suppressed. Accepting new aspects of foreign culture into the own culture may lead to conflicts, for the reason that people could feel anxious about losing the own values, which may also remarkably influence the development of intercultural relationships. To demonstrate an example, if we look at it from the perspective of a family and the parents who feel anxious about the foreign cultures, such a parents would not allow their children to get in touch with them. Partial goal of our research was to find out if the respondents experience such a situation, therefore we asked them about the social attitudes towards their intercultural relationship. The results are discussed in the empirical part.

4.2 Entering Intercultural Relationship

Reasons to engage in a relationship with a person of other culture differ in every individual intercultural relationship. However, there are some theoretical approaches that summarize the most common factors. The main factors affecting engagement in the relationship with someone of a different culture are *environment* and *personal characteristics of an individual*.

The environmental influences well described Bronfenbrenner (1986) in the environmental system. It explains broad concept which allows people of different cultures to interact with each other, which may later results in intimate relations. Personal characteristics of the individuals with a tendency to enter the intercultural relationship are well described in Romano's approach (1997). Additionally, the influences for entering the intercultural relationship explain also Martin&Nakayama (2010) via dialectical model of intercultural relationship.

4.2.1 Dialectical Model of the Intercultural Relationship

Martin, Nakayama (2010) explain Baxter's dialectical model of intercultural relationship that presents dynamics of a relationship and discusses the reasons for entering the relationship. The model identified several basic dialectical tensions in a relationship:

- novelty-predictability

- autonomy-connection
- openness/closeness

The crucial dialectic to the intercultural relationship is *personal-contextual dialectic*, which is based on the social influences. Number one predictor of whether individual engage in intercultural relationship in the contextual dialectical model is the diversity of social network. If the diversity of an individual is high, then it is more likely that he or she will meet and go out with people from different cultures. On a contrary, personal dialectic means that people believe that they choose the partner outside the social influences. However, as Martin&Nakayama (2010) remind, individuals must be attentive to the contextual discourses and realize that there is a tension between both personal and contextual forces in any intercultural relationship.

Regarding the reasons of entering the intercultural relationship, there are two dialectics - *similarity principle and differences approach*.

“Similarity principle is a principle of relational attraction suggesting that individuals tend to be attracted to people they perceive to be similar to themselves” (Martin&Nakayama, 2010, p.390). Finding the person who is similar to us and who shares the same beliefs provide the person with cognitive consistency¹. On a contrary individuals of other cultures may be attracted to the others because of their difference. The difference of individual initiate the attraction. Martin&Nakayama (2010) reminds that individuals involved in intercultural relationship must consider the differences and similarities at the same time, because it is often a key step for reaching the balance.

4.2.2 Bronfenbrenner’s Environmental System

Bronfenbrenner (1986) outlines the ways of interactions of cultures in the system called *“environmental system”*. According to this system people interact with each other on the 4 different levels. First level is macrosystem; the broadest environmental level of interactions, which is related to the globalization and immigration. Migration is seen as a principal way of people coming together with different cultures and thanks to the globalization people are able to travel for work, studies or tourism without less difficulties compared to the past. Both

¹ logical connection between existing knowledge and a new stimulus (Martin&Nakayama, 2010)

immigration and globalization are important macrosystemic factors that influence the probability of meeting someone of different culture.

Countries with open migration policies and positive attitudes towards immigrants provide an opportunity for people to interact with various cultures which may result often in intercultural relationship or marriage. To return to an earlier point, Morgensternová et al. (2007) state that the topic of intercultural relationship has been previously an object for research only in the countries with the open immigration policy and high immigration rate, while in the countries that previously belonged to the emigration countries, including the Czech Republic, the phenomenon is almost not discussed and not many research carried out within the topic.

The second level of Bronfenbrenner's environmental system is exosystem, which can be seen as a space where families and individuals grow, develop and interact with each other. Communities in this space have a tendency to exclude people who are different, and thus oppose the intercultural relationships. As an example Bronfenbrenner (1986) uses the ethnic enclaves in US that became isolated because of the prejudices and discrimination. The interactions of different countries related to exosystem always depend on a community and its level of openness/closeness. If the community is more open, then it is more likely that individuals would meet with other cultures and possibly develop an intercultural relationship.

Another level of environmental system is microsystem with its 2 subsystems: *the family and the individual*. Families are seen as the elements providing the most direct means of socialization and through family individuals learn the roles society expects them to fill. Concerning intercultural relationships, if family encourages individuals to maintain the contact with other cultures, the probability of entering the intercultural relationship is much higher than in families which would not allow and /or accept the interactions at all.

Individual subsystem is based on the personal characteristics of people who entered the intercultural relationship. It is important to say that general reasons for entering intercultural relationship are mostly the same as those of entering the monoculture relationship. The most common reason is particularly attraction and love. However, Silva et al.(2012) specifying that some individuals, mainly those coming from the middle class or from families with previous cross-cultural marriages, tend to be more attracted to people from different cultural backgrounds.

For personal characteristics of an individual who enter intercultural relationships, could be considered assertiveness, adventurous, open-minded personality, as well as some specific aspects that differs an individual from his own family.

Regarding the differences as a motivational factor to engage in a relationship, Martin&Nakayama (2010) state that individuals are attracted to those who differ from them. But they reminds that if the desire of being with someone is rooted in a difference, it evokes an intriguing opportunities concerning the new ways of living and looking at the world. Therefore, intercultural relationship requires to search the balance between similarities and differences.

4.2.3 Romano's Approach

People entering intercultural relationships tend to have similar personal characteristics and/or point of views, which is well described in Romano (1997). Author introduces 8 different types of individuals who tend to enter intercultural relationships as following:

- **Social pariahs** – individuals who feel like they don't fit in their own country and culture, therefore they also tend to seek partners in other cultures; a motivation is to find new home and society which will accept them (mostly those are individuals of minorities, either ethnical or racial)
- **Rebels** – individuals who protest against the own culture (radical and/or idealistic type of a person)
- **Eccentric people** – individuals who have no interest in cultural ethnicity and don't feel attached to the own culture; in general they avoid human interactions (“the loners”)
- **Compensators** – individuals who feel incomplete and dissatisfied in life, blaming own culture for their situation; they are looking for partner somewhere else
- **Adventurers** – individuals with a need to explore the “unknown”, in order to reach exciting adventurous life (typically these types of individuals cannot last in a boring, ordinary relationships, hence they have a tendency to seek for something exotic in other cultures)

- **Immigrants** – individuals who escape from their own countries, with the main motivation to find better conditions for life; often economic reasons for entering the relationship (for instance to obtain a citizenship)
- **Emotionally unstable people** – reasons for entering the intercultural relationships rooted in immaturity (individuals with unstable personalities, often trying to protest against something, mainly against own families who doesn't approve partner of a different culture)
- **Cosmopolitan people** – individuals who frequently travel, either because of the education or work; adaptable types with cosmopolitan way of thinking

From the subjective point of view of the author, the respondents of our research inclines mostly to the last mentioned category – cosmopolitan people, since we interviewed young people of age category 20-35 who have experienced living in foreign country. Few of them appear to have the characteristics of eccentric types and adventurers. However, it is only an assumption based on author's observation, therefore respondents cannot be strictly defined as certain types.

Khoo (2001, as cited in Clyne&Jupp, 2011) studied the reasons why people enter the intercultural relationship by comparing intermarriage rate in a past and nowadays. Author points out that today's marriage market is no longer local, but global; people now look for marriage partners abroad if the local marriage market is limited from their own perspective. This could be also considered as one of the factor why people engage in intercultural relationship – simply by not being able to find a partner who would meet individual's preferences in own culture.

Martin&Nakayama (2010, p.403) answer the question why people date someone of the different culture as following:

Probably the same reason as we form any intercultural relationship. We are attracted to them and the relationship offers benefits – increased knowledge about the world and breaking stereotypes.”

In contrast, Lampe (as cited in Morgensternová, 2007) sums up the main arguments for not entering intercultural relationship resulting from his research made in US, as following:

- lack of attractiveness towards certain culture (not towards the individual, but the entire cultural group)
- insufficient interactions with other cultures
- low tolerance of a family and society towards the intercultural relationship

4.3 Intercultural Communication in Intercultural Relationship

With increasing trend of multiculturalism increases also the need for an understanding of intercultural communication. The relationship between communication and culture is complex. Communication and culture are interconnected; culture influences communication and vice versa. Martin&Nakayama (2010) see the culture as a core concept of intercultural communication. They state that culture is more than merely one aspect of the practice of intercultural communication; how person thinks about the culture will frame his ideas and perceptions. According to Martin&Nakayama (ibid.) the best approach to understand the complexities of intercultural communication is to view the culture from the different perspectives.

Intercultural communication is an inherent component of intercultural relationship; it is a tool which forms the base that intercultural relationship is built on.

Tubbs&Moss (2005,p.17) defines intercultural communication as *a communication between members of different cultures, defined in terms of racial, ethnic or socioeconomic differences.*

A central element of intercultural communication is language, which is often seen as an obstacle in intercultural communication.

4.3.1 Language as an Obstacle in Intercultural Communication

When cultures collide at any occasion it is generally expected to be in some ways challenging, even more in romantic relationships when people have to face every day problems, and intercultural communication of partners is much more frequent and intensive. Partners in intercultural relationship are “forced” to talk more than “normal couples” (i.e. couples of the same culture).

Berry (2012) notes that linguistic and nonlinguistic forms of a communication play an important role in intercultural communication, however, the most important is a language. If two people do not share a common language their communication is partly restricted.

Why communication between the different cultures is considered to be challenging? Shiraev (2010) states that language is not something that we can simply memorize, it is a complex system that is intricately related to the culture, and it cannot be mastered by simple substitution. It is important to note that learning aspect of a given culture will not allow a person to understand that culture in a same way than the own. Shiraev (ibid.) adds that the more diverse cultures are, the less they can understand each other.

When couples enter intercultural relationship, the communication is a first challenge they have to face. However, even though diversity of cultures in many intercultural relationships prevails high, they can function well. A possible reason could be the way of communication that couples develop in a relationship. Pogrebin (as cited in Martin&Nakayama, 2010) states that intercultural relationships take more “care and feeding” than those between people who are of a same culture. He contributes it to the deeper level of explaining between partners in a sense that couples are forced to explain more to themselves, as well as to other individuals. Communication is a key aspect of well-functioning intercultural relationship. On the other hand, communication between the partners clearly brings misunderstandings, especially when partners do not speak common language. One of the most problematic aspects of intercultural communication is its misinterpretation.

Mole (2003) sees the language also as one of the main obstacle in intercultural communication, stating that language is not only the vehicle for the communication but also gives an insight into the ways of people’s thinking, attitudes and behavior, which gives it a great significance. Therefore, misinterpretation of a language may lead to a conflict; most likely in a close romantic relationship. The most spoken common language among intercultural couples is English. Mole (ibid.) notes that non-native speakers who speak English have a tendency to keep the language to their own usage. It means that individuals use the language in a way of translating into their own, keep using it that way, which can cause barriers in communication, especially for the native speakers who may misinterpret non-native’s way of speak.

With intercultural communication often comes partners’ confusion. As Morgensternová (2007) says, the main reason of confusion is that one of the partners may not understand a foreign language (or language that the partners use for the communication) properly or may not interpret the nonverbal messages the way they are meant. Generally, it is more complicated to understand both verbal and nonverbal messages in communication with

different cultures as with the same cultures. The communication barrier is considered as an obstacle in intercultural relationship, especially during the early stages of the relationship. Intercultural couples have to choose the way of communication which is a key step for the maintenance of the relationship.

Romano (1997) says that misunderstandings in the intercultural communication are often caused by the fact that partners typically use the mother tongue merely of one of them or third language which is usually English. Due to the using the other language than mother tongue, the nature of the communication may change, as well as the interpretation. Human personality is tight with the mother tongue, therefore not using the mother tongue may lead to the partial personality loss of the partners (Romano, 1997). When partners shift from the mother tongue to the foreign language on a daily basis, their personal characteristics may change (concerning the way of individual's self-expression). Intercultural couples are confronted with numerous obstacles in communication, carrying out in every discussion they perform. Inability to use the mother tongue requires enormous effort from both of the partners. As Morgensternová (2007) points out this aspect is often a main reason why intercultural relationships fall apart. Partners are not willing to hold on and maintain the relationship simply because it is too demanding.

Problems related to language and communication in intercultural relationship occurs relatively often, because lack of a common language typically leads to misunderstanding. Regarding the intercultural relationship, the lack of a common language brings more challenges to both partners. For instance, inability to explain some issues to the partner due to the lack of a common language, leads to frustration and disappointment. In our research we focused on a language barriers and asked the respondents about their experiences.

4.4 Cultural Adaptation Process

Cultural adaption (or acculturation) is a field of study where a lot of research has been made, especially concerning the immigrants' adaptation. As Berry (2005) notes, much of the concern of an adaptation was carried out initially in the immigrants receiving countries, such as Australia, Canada or US, but nowadays these issues becoming more and more important also in the rest of the world. As we already mentioned, the main reason is the massive growth in interactions between the cultures. Following chapters offer an overview to the cultural adaptation on a general level and also in the context of intercultural romantic relationship.

4.4.1 Theoretical Approaches to the Cultural Adaptation

Martin&Nakayama (2007, p.320) define cultural adaptation as *a process by which individuals learn the rules and customs of the new cultural contexts*. How a person adapts depends particularly on a host environment.

Instead of using the term adaptation, Berry (2005,p.698) uses the term **acculturation**, explaining it as *a dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contacts between two or more cultural groups and their individual members*. It is seen as a concept that generates certain change in a culture; either in one or both cultures that interact.

Cai&Rodriguez (1996, p.34) defines the intercultural adaptation as *the process through which persons in cross-cultural interactions change their communicative behavior to facilitate understanding*. It refers also to the adjustment of communicative behavior in order to decrease the misunderstanding in communication with a person of different culture. Cai&Rodriguez (ibid.) presented few models of the adaptation process, such as longitudinal approach or communication accommodation theory.

- **Longitudinal Approach** – based on the stages in the adaptation process through which individual goes when adjusting to the culture (for example the culture shock theory); these approaches predict that person will learn and adapt to the differences of a culture over time
- **Communication Accommodation Theory** – focuses on attuning of communication behavior by a speaker to a conversation partner, it suggest that speakers use the strategies of convergence (trying to imitate the partner in terms of dialect, tone of voice to be similar to him)

Both models of the adaptation could be found in the adaptation process in intercultural relationships, based on the fact that partners adapt many features of each other's culture.

As seen above, the definitions of adaptation/acculturation (Martin&Nakayama, Berry and Cai&Rodriguez) share the similar meaning. Because of its complexity, further we discuss Berry's approach to the acculturation.

According to Berry (2005), acculturation is a process that has been taking place for a long time, but contemporary research resulted of a concern for the effects of the European

dominations of indigenous people, and later the immigrants' adaptation. However, more recently much of a research have been focused on the issues of ethno cultural groups' adaptation. It is important to note that there are differences in how people engage in a process of acculturation. Berry identified acculturation strategies (Figure1), based on the attitudes (the preferences of individuals how to acculturate) and behaviors (actual activities performed in day to day intercultural interactions).

Figure 1: J.W. Berry - Acculturation Strategies

J.W. Berry / International Journal of Intercultural Relations 29 (2005) 697-712 705

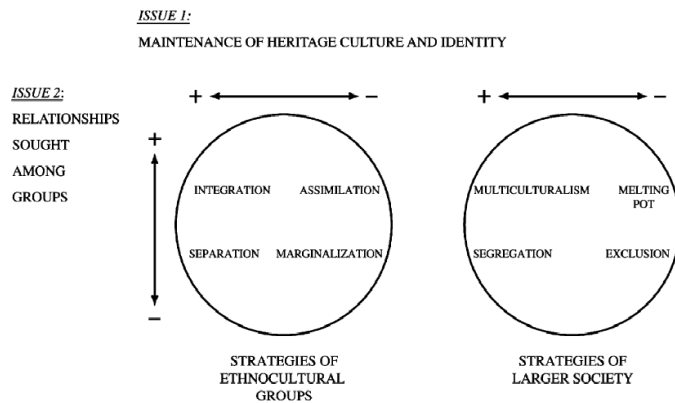


Fig. 3. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society.

Source: Berry (2005)

Figure 1 presents four acculturation strategies of the ethno cultural groups and larger society. Ethno cultural groups (on the left in the figure 1) are considered as non-dominant group, i.e. minorities and immigrants, while larger society is a dominant group. Based on the previous Figure1, we designed figure 2 to demonstrate the strategies better.

Figure 2: Acculturation Strategies of Dominant and Non-Dominant Groups

STRATEGY	Strategy from the perspective of non-dominant group	Strategy from the perspective of dominant group
	integration	multiculturalism
	assimilation	melting pot
	separation	segregation
	marginalization	exclusion

Source: own work based on Berry (2005)

On the left can be seen four types of strategies from the point of view of non-dominant group, while on the right the same strategies, but from the point of view of the dominant group. As seen, the strategies of non-dominant and dominant groups differs in names.

Integration strategy is applied when non-dominant group shows the interest in maintaining own cultural heritage and at the same time daily contacts with the other groups. From the perspective of dominant group this is the strategy of *multiculturalism*.

Assimilation strategy is identified when individuals from the non-dominant group do not wish to maintain own cultural heritage, instead they interact with other cultures, and thus become absorbed into the dominant society. From the dominant group perspective it is called *melting pot*.

On a contrary, *separation strategy* holds on the individuals to own culture and avoid the interactions with others. From the dominant group it is *segregation*.

Marginalization strategy is a combination of integration and assimilation; individuals show the little interest in maintaining own cultural heritage, and at the same time they possess no interests in interactions with others. From the perspective of dominant group it is an *exclusion*.

4.4.2 Models of the Cultural Adaptation

Martin&Nakayama (2007, p.320-323) identified following models of cultural adaptation, focusing on the adaptation of immigrants.

- 1) **Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Model** – based on reduction of the anxiety and uncertainty in order to reach effective communication and adaptation
- 2) **Transition Model** - involves certain changes, including losses and gains for the individual; adaptation depends on the **individual's approach** towards it :
 - a) *flight approach* – when individuals face new situations, they tends to hang back and wait
 - b) *fight approach* – “jumping and participating” , trying to adapt, individuals don't mind if they make mistakes
- 3) **Integrative Model** – sees the adaptation as a process of stress, adjustment and growth; adaptation occurs through communication (migrants gradually develop new way of thinking and behaving via communication)

Berry (2005) distinguishes between 2 types/models of the cultural adaptation: *psychological and sociocultural*. Psychological adaptation involves individual's psychological and physical well-being, and is predicted by personality variables, life changing events and social support.

On a contrary, sociocultural adaptation model refers to how well an individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context, predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contacts, and positive intergroup attitudes. Berry (ibid.) states that better adaptation is achieved only by pursuing integrative strategies in adaptation process (in terms of attitudes, identities and behaviors).

4.4.3 Outcomes of the Adaptation Process

Adaptation process is a complex process which in a long-term affects the individuals' personalities and has an impact on the personal development. Berry (ibid.) explains two main outcomes resulting from the acculturation. The first outcome is *behavioral shifts*, i.e. the changes in individual's behavior, which is usually seen as non-problematic. On the other hand, more problematic is the second outcome of adaptation process which is an *acculturative stress*. Acculturation stress is defined as *a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation* (Berry, 2005, p.708). Author uses the term acculturation stress instead of culture shock, arguing that the notion of culture shock carries only negative connotations, while the acculturative stress can be both positive (eustress²) and negative (distress³). Therefore the stress conceptualization matches more to the acculturation.

4.4.4 Adaptation in the Intercultural Relationship

The cultural adaptation does not necessarily happen at every occasion when cultures interact, but in context of intercultural romantic relationship it plays a key role. As Morgensternová (2007) states, the adaptation in intercultural relationship is necessary in order to reach the balance and harmony.

The adaptation in intercultural relationship is based on partner's level of acculturation to each other's cultures and cultural context in which they live. According to Silva et al. (2012), individuals need to be proficient in each of the cultures represented in their relationship.

Romano (2001) points out that individuals who respect partner's culture, willing to adapt some of their values and practices as their own, experience more stable relationship.

² Positive stress characterized by motivates, energy focuses, feelings of excitement, improvement of performance

³ Negative stress characterized by anxiety, decrease in performance, leading to mental and physical problems
(cited online: <http://www.mentalhelp.net>)

Orta (2013) looked at the intercultural relationships from the perspective of its effects on reducing the prejudices. He states that people who have a romantic partner from another ethnic group may be able to gain first-hand experience of the norms, beliefs and lifestyle and the affectionate bond between them (love and feelings) also reduce prejudice and stereotyping through decreasing intergroup anxiety.

4.4.4.1 Strategies for the Cultural Adaptation in Intercultural Relationship

Partners in intercultural relationship use various adaptation strategies to deal with the cultural differences and thus to reach the balance and harmony. There are few authors who researched on intercultural couples with the main aim to identify the strategies that partners use in adaptation process. For instance Morgensternová (2007) interprets few strategies based on the research of McDermott&Fukunaga (1977, as cited in Morgensternová). Authors distinguish 2 categories of strategies - destructive and constructive (figure3).

Figure 3: Strategies of Adaptation in Intercultural Relationship

DESTRUCTIVE STRATEGIES	CONSTRUCTIVE STRATEGIES
“ Cold war strategy ” (partners are switching the roles – one is active, another is passive, and other way around)	“ Complementary strategy ” (one of the partners has a dominant role, while another one agrees and supports him)
“ Competitive strategy ” (partners compete with each other because one wants to be dominant in a relationship)	“ Incorporation strategy ” (partners incorporate each other’s values and habits, support each other’s cultural background)

Source: own work based on Morgensternová (2007)

Similarly, Romano (1997) researched on intercultural couples to identify the adaptation strategies. She recognized four different styles of partners’ adaptation in intercultural relationship as following:

- **Submission** – one partner submits to the culture of the other partner, abandoning of denying the own culture
- **Compromise** – each partner gives up some of the cultural features to accommodate the other person. With this strategy author points out the fact that although it may seem fair, in reality it means that partners have to sacrifice some cultural components that are important to them

- **Obliteration** – both partners deal with the differences by attempting to erase their cultures; they may form new own culture, with new habits, especially when they live in other than their home country
- **Consensus** – based on agreement and negotiation; both partners give and take. This model may incorporate some elements of all of the above models

As the most desirable model of adaptation in successful intercultural relationship Romano (ibid.) considers consensus. She recommends to the couples who are considering permanent international relationships to prepare for the commitment by living together, spending extended time with each other's families, studying the partner's language and/or other cultural features.

Beside the adaptation strategies, Romano (ibid.) also sums up the key elements of the successful adaptation in intercultural relationships as following:

- good communication
- flexibility
- attachment (love) as a main motivation
- interests in partners culture
- devotion
- sense of humor
- adventurous personalities of the partners
- thoughtfulness

Above mentioned factors appear as a key elements of any successful relationship, not only intercultural. However, those factors play the most significant role in intercultural relationship, because intercultural relationships are generally appear as more challenging to maintain. Intercultural couples have to face more obstacles from the external environment than those consisting of one culture. External circumstances are seen more often as obstacles rather than opportunities. External factors which are seen as obstacles could be for instance: stereotyping, prejudices, negative attitudes from the society and/or family disapproval, different religious or communication barriers (Morgensternová, 2007). The influences of external factors are seen especially during the first phase of the relationship.

4.4.5 Benefits of Intercultural Relationship

One of the main goals of the empirical part was to research on the benefits in intercultural relationships. Romano (ibid.) defined six main benefits as a result of her long-term research on intercultural couples as following:

- 1) self-development and self-realization
- 2) acquiring knowledge about the world
- 3) new ideas for lifestyle
- 4) cultural enrichment
- 5) international identity
- 6) bilingualism/biculturalism of the kids

It is important to note that intercultural relationships are generally considered as very beneficial for both partners and/or their families too. Respondents of our sample in the research identified almost identical benefits in their intercultural relationships. We discussed it more in details in the empirical part.

5 Development of Intercultural Relationship in the Czech Republic

5.1 Historical Background

Although intercultural relationship is a phenomena of new age, Morgensternová (2007) emphasizes its long-term existence. Involve in a relationship or marriage with someone of a different cultural group or tribe depended in the past on the rules of a tribe (endogamy⁴ or exogamy⁵). Today's Czech society is a result of long-term historical development. Over the time the Czech population was exposed to the influences of various cultures and ethnics. It emphasizes the fact that intercultural relationship was not that unknown term in the Czech history. However, only 20th century is considered to be a crucial period for the development of the relationships between various cultures. The cultural diversity in the choice of partners has grown. From the broader perspective, it was caused mainly by external political reasons, particularly the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and fall of the Iron Curtain, as well as following events of the division of the Czechoslovakia, and more recently accession to EU and Schengen group. Due to these events, contacts between different cultures intensified and thus the potential for the development of intercultural romantic relationships, mainly because of the expansion of the migration. Therefore, in the next chapter we analyze migration situation in the Czech Republic.

5.2 Czech Republic and Migration

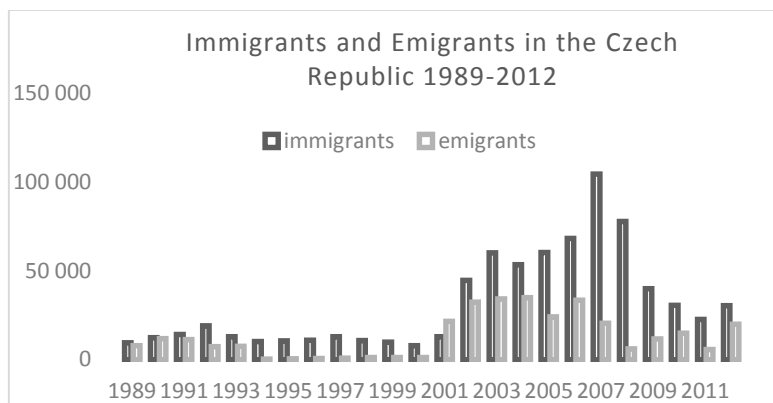
The Czech Republic recently represents one of the most important targets for immigrants within the Central and Eastern Europe. Before the 1989 Czech, respectively Czechoslovakia typically and/or traditionally had been an emigrant country, i.e. people were moving out and country was not an attractive for immigrants. The situation has changed after '90s and following years when the number of immigrants were gradually growing every year (see Figure below).

⁴ Endogamy - marriage within a specific tribe or similar social unit

⁵ Exogamy - marriage outside a specific tribe or similar social unit

Cited online: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/>]

Figure 4: Immigrants and Emigrants in the Czech Republic, 1989-2012



Source: Own work based on the data retrieved from the Czech Statistical Office

The impacts on changes in movements had the events such as Velvet Revolution in 1989 and fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, following with the division of the Czechoslovakia, and more recent events such as accession to EU and Schengen group. Due to all the mentioned events, the conditions for immigrants improved, and thus the volume of international migration has increased. In first decade (1990-2000) the numbers of immigrants were not that significant, according to data from the Czech Statistical Office (as cited in Drbohlav et al., 2009) the average annual increase was 10 000. Following years (2001-2007) brought the increase in number - from 13 000 in 2001 to 104 000 in 2007. As a primary reason of this significant increase Drbohlav et al. (ibid.) sees the change in the registration of the foreigners. Foreigners in the Czech Republic were counted as immigrants already after one year of residence.

5.3 Marriage Rate of Intercultural Couples in the Czech Republic

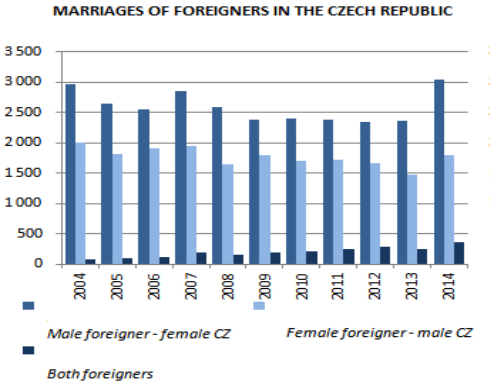
To estimate the amount of intercultural couples in the Czech Republic would require a broad research in a whole country, which was not the aim of our thesis. However, it is interesting to look at the statistical indicator of the marriage rate, which is the only available statistics relevant to the topic of intercultural relationship.

Khoo (2001, as cited in Clyne&Jupp, 2011) researched on intermarriages and identified the intermarriage as one of the most definitive measures of the dissolution of social and cultural barriers and therefore of social and cultural integration, because it is a results of close social interactions between people of two different ethnicities. Intermarriage rate as an indicator shows the progress of multiculturalism in societies, where there are opportunities for social interactions between people of different ethnicities.

Similarly, Amato et al. (2008) sees the racial and interethnic marriages as an indicator of the boundaries between groups; low rates indicate strong boundaries, while high rates are more permeable.

According to the data available on the website of the Czech Statistical Office (2015) marriage rate of the Czech citizens with the foreigners is in recent years at the level of 9-10 % of all marriages. The latest data available from CSO presents that 5215 intercultural marriages (11% of all marriages) was pronounced in the Czech Republic in the year 2014 (see figure below). The first place of the foreign nationality of the partner takes Slovak nationality (either Czech man with Slovak woman, or Czech woman with Slovak man), the second place takes the Ukrainian and Russian nationality, and the last mentioned by the Statistical Office is German and British.

Figure 5: Marriages of Foreigners in the Czech Republic in years 2004-2014



Source: Retrieved from the official website of the Czech Statistical Office, edited by author, 2015

II. EMPIRICAL PART

6 Empirical Research

Title of the Research:

“Adaptation Process of Czech Woman in Intercultural Relationships”

6.1 Introduction to the Research

The main aim of the empirical part is to gain deeper understanding of the perceptions and personal experiences of Czech woman with their adaptation in intercultural relationship. Following chapters describe the main aspects of the research, such as objectives, research questions, ethical issues and the methodology used. Author decided to conduct qualitative research with the appropriate methods for data collecting (semi-structured interview). The main part of the empirical research consists of the analysis of the data obtained in the research based on the techniques of the grounded theory method (open coding). The analyzed data are interpreted in form of a discussion. The last chapter deduces the conclusion of both theoretical and empirical part.

6.2 Objectives and Research Questions

The main goal of the research is to describe the adaptation process in intercultural relationship from the perspective of Czech women. Minor goal is to discuss the main challenges and benefits of intercultural relationships. To achieve the goals author conducted the qualitative research to gather the data for analysis. The data have been collected by performing the semi-structured interviews – one of the most common qualitative research methods. On the basis of the theoretical explanations to the topic described in theoretical part author set up the research questions as following:

- What are the main benefits (opportunities) of the intercultural relationship
- What are the key challenges (obstacles) of the intercultural relationship
- How do Czech females adapt in an intercultural relationship

The questions for the interviews were reposed on the research questions. Structure of the interview as well as the research questions were firstly discussed with the thesis supervisor,

PhDr. Zdeňka Vykoukalová, Ph.D. By her recommendation author established the basis for the empirical research.

6.3 Methodology

This chapter presents the utilized methodology performed throughout the empirical part of the thesis, explaining the method of data collecting, data processing and data analysis with its appropriate tools. The empirical part is fully based on the qualitative research method. Qualitative research methods aim at understanding people's experiences and interpretations (Dan&Kalof, 2008). The qualitative method appeared as the most suitable for the purposes of the thesis. Main purpose was to gain personal experiences of Czech women engaging in intercultural relationships. This qualitative research is based on the theoretical approach of the grounded theory described by Corbin&Strauss (1997). Grounded theory method (GTM) is the most used method in the qualitative research. Corbin&Strauss (ibid.) described it as a method of questions proposing and constant comparison. A key action to develop GTM is to search for the differences, similarities and its specifications among and inside the categories.

6.3.1 Sampling Methods

The selection process of the sample was based on the selective sampling method. This method is described by Corbin&Strauss (1997) as a method in which the researcher selects respondents according to the aim of the research, defined by certain criteria such as gender, age, nationality or others. Based on this method and the purpose of the research, we set up the criteria for our research sample as following:

- women of the Czech nationality
- duration of the relationship for at least 2 years, maximum duration not limited
- minimum age of 20, maximum not limited
- respondent must be in a heterosexual relationship and/or marriage
- respondent's partner must be any other nationality than Czech and/or Slovak

The reason to focus on female perspective is mainly better understanding of female perception, as the author of the thesis is also female. Moreover, in the beginning author conducted a testing interviews with both male and female respondents. Testing interviews showed that women are more open to share their personal experience compared to men. We assume that the fact that author is a female also contributed to the willingness of the female respondents to talk openly, while men consider talking about the relationship to be rather

private and thus they tend to be reserved to share such a private experience. Therefore author decided to interview females only. However, this assumption is based on author's observation and personal experience in testing interviews and cannot be generalized.

Concerning the nationalities of the respondents' partners, the intention was to achieve the variety of partners' nationalities. For instance, after 2 interviews performed with women with Italian partner, we did not add another respondent with the same nationality of the partner, but intentionally looked for a respondent with the partner of different nationality. We assume that homogenous sample (regarding the same nationalities of partners) in our qualitative research would influence the results. The reason why we set the criterion of not including the relationship where partner is Slovak nationality is explained in the theoretical part in chapter 3.2.

After the criteria were set, we found the respondents using the snowball sampling method. Miovský (2006) described this method as a method of sampling via certain institutions or personal contacts of the researcher. The respondents of our sample were found mainly among author's friends and their friends or acquaintances. After introducing the research idea, respondents were eager to participate and share their personal experience.

6.3.2 Data Collecting Methods

The data have been collected by performing qualitative research via 12 semi-structured interviews with the selected sample. Interviews have been performed between the time periods of February/March 2015. All the interviews have been recorded on a voice recorder (author used recording audio system on a mobile phone). Due to the distance which did not allow author to meet each respondent in person, few interviews had to be performed online, via telecommunications application software Skype. The Skype interviews were also recorded on a laptop (via G-recorder app for Skype recording). The reason of conducting 12 interviews was that we reach the point where the answers tend to repeat and thus not much new information were received. That is called "saturation point", described by Corbin&Strauss (1997) as a point in which researcher does not obtain any new information in a process of collecting the data. We reached the saturation point after performing the 10th interview. However, we still decided to add two more interviews, which proved that answers we received were rather similar to the previous interviews. Therefore the process of data collecting was completed with the 12th interview.

Semi-structured interview is the type of interview which researcher prepares in advance, but during the interview some additional questions may occur (Corbin&Strauss, 1997). This type of the interview proved to be the most suitable for the thesis purposes. During the interview there were several situation when interviewer asked some additional questions, mainly regarding the examples (e.g. about the cultural differences). For example, if respondent answered: *In my opinion, generally culture plays the main role in an intercultural relationship, and I can see it in my relationship too*, interviewer asked respondent to elaborate and give an example by asking additional question: *What made you think that culture plays main role in your relationship*.

Each interview lasted on average between 45-60 minutes. Due to the extensive length of individual interviews that were transcribed by the author, we decided not to attach them in annexes. However, full transcripts of interviews are available if required for further purposes or interests and can be provided by the author. As an example we attached one selected transcription of the interview with the Respondent 8 as Annex 3 (see in Annexes).

6.3.2.1 Structure of the Interview

As mentioned, the questions of the interview were discussed with the supervisor, based on the research questions. To collect the background data, author firstly asked each respondent to provide the basic information, such as nationality of the partner, duration of relationship and language of communication. Each individual transcription of the interview contain a table with the basic information about the respondent (see in Annex). Interview questions were listed into the categories to achieve more precise classification.

Categories of the Interview Questions

- 1) *general questions about respondents and relationship* – aim to gain basic information about the respondents such as nationalities, where they met each other, relationship duration and previous experiences with intercultural relationship
- 2) *challenges of the relationship* – aim to find out the problems and obstacles
- 3) *benefits of the relationship* – aim to find out the positives of being in a relationship with someone of a different culture
- 4) *adaptation in a relationship* – aim to find out the role of the culture and cultural differences in a process of adaptation

Examples of the Interview Questions

- a) What do you consider to be the most beneficial for you in your intercultural relationship?
- b) What opportunities/benefits does intercultural relationship offer?
- c) What was your motivation to engage in a relationship?
- d) What do you see the most challenging? How did you cope / or still coping with the challenges of intercultural relationship?
- e) Do you find it more difficult to adapt in intercultural relationship as in one with someone of the same culture?
- f) Do you find it more difficult to communicate in a relationship in other than your mother tongue?

Full transcript of the interview questions is attached to the thesis as an Anex1 (see in Annexes).

6.3.2.2 Characteristics of the Research Sample

Following table offers the overview of the basic information about the interviewed respondents and their relationships.

Table 1: Respondents Profile

Respondent	Nationality of Partner	Age of Respondent	Spoken Language	Previous Experience with Intercultural Relationship	Duration of Relationship	The Place of Living
R1	Italian	26	Italian	yes	3 years	living together in Italy
R2	Russian	28	English	no	6 years	living together in the Czech Republic
R3	Italian	25	English	no	2 years	partners live apart
R4	German	24	English	no	2 years	partners live apart
R5	Dutch	27	English	no	2 years	living together in Denmark

R6	South African	24	English	no	2 years	long distance
R7	Spanish	24	Spanish	yes	2 years	living together in Czech
R8	Dutch	25	English	yes	2 years	long distance
R9	Greek	26	English, Greek	no	3 years	living together in the Czech republic
R10	Danish	28	English, Danish	yes	7 years (3years married)	living together in Denmark
R11	Spanish	26	English	no	3years	long distance
R12	Swedish	25	English, Swedish	no	2 years	living together in Sweden

Source: own work based on data obtained in research, 2015

6.3.3 Data Processing and Data Analyzing Methods

After completing the sampling and data collecting, the next step was to process and analyse the data. As previously mentioned all the interviews were recorded on audio recorder. Besides the audio recording, each interview was transcribed into the separated sheet in MS Excel. For better classification the responses were listed into the categories, mainly for the purposes of the categories identification. This method of data processing is called “open coding” and it is an essential part of the grounded theory. Corbin&Strauss (1997) described open coding as a method of categorization and labelling of the concepts while studying the data. Authors named the code as an equivalent to any product of the research analysis (in our case the products were the responses from the interview).

While structuring the interview questions, we listed them into the main categories – general questions, challenges and benefits of the intercultural relationship and adaptation process in intercultural relationship. These four categories served also as the categories for the data processing and open coding. In practice it means that we assigned all the responses to the above mentioned categories with the codes that were identified in each category. By using the method of open coding, we listed the data we received in the interviews (the codes) into the excel tables and matched them with the categories. Excel sheets have been converted to the simplified word tables because of the more suitable visualisation effect for the reader. The

tables are presented in each chapter of the analysis and the categories with codes are interpreted.

6.3.3.1 Data processing language

The interviews were performed both in English and Czech language. Respondents were offered the possibility to choose the language for the interview. They were informed that in case they wish to answer in Czech, their answers will be translated into English for the purposes of the thesis as the language of the thesis is English. Only one respondent decided to answer in Czech, since the level of her English was not sufficient. The interview was translated by the author. The rest of the data collecting, processing and analyzing have been completed in English language.

6.4 Ethical Issues

Respondents were promised that the information they provided will be used only for the purposes of the thesis, and shall not be published elsewhere. Respondents agreed with the recording of the interviews and they were assured about the anonymity. However, they were informed in the beginning of the interview that few personal characteristics will be mentioned in the thesis (such as nationality, age and relationship duration), as well as they were informed about the transcription of the interviews for the needs of the data analysis.

The respondents are marked with the numbers: Respondent 1, Respondent 2, etc., matched with the interviews as Interview 1, Interview 2, etc. (Respondent 1 = Interview 1, etc.).

7 Analysis of the Results

Following part consists of the analysis of the results, which is based on the methods described above (grounded theory and open coding). For each topic we designed the tables with the categories and codes that were identified within the interviews responses.

7.1 Benefits of the Intercultural Relationship

Table 2: Benefits of the Intercultural Relationship

PERCEPTION OF BENEFITS IN INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIP		
	EXPERIENCE NEW WAY OF LIFE	LANGUAGE
<i>R1</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>bilingualism</i>
<i>R2</i>	<i>cultural enrichment, travelling</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>R3</i>	<i>cultural enrichment, travelling</i>	<i>learning new language</i>
<i>R4</i>	<i>cultural enrichment, travelling</i>	<i>learning new language</i>
<i>R5</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>R6</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>improvement of language</i>
<i>R7</i>	<i>cultural enrichment, travelling</i>	<i>improvement of language</i>
<i>R8</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>learning new language, bilingualism</i>
<i>R9</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>learning new language</i>
<i>R10</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>learning new language</i>
<i>R11</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>R12</i>	<i>cultural enrichment</i>	<i>learning new language</i>

Source: own work based on the data obtained in research, 2015

Category 1: Experience new way of life Codes: *cultural enrichment, travelling*

Category 2: Language Codes: *bilingualism, learning new language, improvement of language skills*

Firstly, it is important to note that all the respondents agreed that their intercultural relationships are definitely beneficial. The most common benefit among the respondents appeared to be the overall cultural enrichment for both partners (category1). For example, respondent 6 says: *“The most beneficial for me is the overall enrichment of each other’s lives. Also the fact that some of our cultural differences create new experiences, knowledge of each other and continuously having a complete interest in each other’s lives.”*

Respondent 8 shares similar view about the cultural enrichment of the relationship: *“Dating someone of a different culture offers you an exclusive possibility to get to know new culture via your partner’s family and friends, you can observe the habits, try national food and so on, and thus you become “culturally enriched”. It also offers exclusive opportunity to speak new language, get to know interesting people who can inspire you in many ways.”*

Respondent 3 has also a positive view towards intercultural relationship: *“Such a relationship shows you the world from another perspective, and it is also very attractive that the partner is different and you can introduce him your world. It offers you completely new experience and strong emotions, you can learn the language and get to know new culture and also be a part of a culture.”*

Respondent 5 shared an interesting point about the benefits based on the cultural differences: *“It challenges me to think differently and be more understanding and that’s the most beneficial to me. You learn the new perspectives of looking at things, and you have two homes, one in each family.”*

Respondent 7 points out the tolerance and open-mind that person can develop in intercultural relationship as the most beneficial: *“A person in intercultural relationship become more tolerant and open-minded, which is the most beneficial not only in a relationship but even if you are out of a relationship. It offers you also new way of look on common things and habits in life, different thinking, lots of crazy situations, new language skills, travelling... It makes you culturally rich!”*

Respondent 10 sees benefits of intercultural relationships in experiencing new way of life: *“Benefits of intercultural relationship are to experience new holidays, traditions, values, to get new ideas of how to live, work, dress up, communicate – there are plenty of benefits!”*

Another frequently mentioned benefit of the intercultural relationship was language. Respondents indicate language either as a benefits for their selves (to learn or improve new language skills) or as a benefits for the children to speak two languages (bilingualism). For example, Respondent 1 identified bilingualism as a benefit number one: *“I consider bilingualism of kids as the most beneficial aspect in intercultural relationship.”*

Respondent 12 appreciated the possibility to learn the language thanks to intercultural relationship and thus get an insight on life in a country:

“I learned a new language and thus a lot about the country. I could get an insight on actual life of the country, plus I speak Swedish now.”

Respondent 8 sees intercultural relationship as an exclusive opportunity to speak new language, and/or improve language skills not only for herself, but also for partners’ families: *“It offers you an exclusive opportunity to speak new language. On the other hand it can be also beneficial for your families. My partner’s mom is happy that she can practice and thus improve her English skills by talking to me. Another benefit is bilingualism of kids for couples who plan having them.”*

Respondent 6 sees a benefit in dating native speaker: *“My English skills improved significantly thanks to dating native speaker.”*

Similarly, Respondent 7 sees the improvement of language as the benefit of intercultural relationship, not only for herself, but also for family: *“My Spanish skills got improved, and my mom was also happy to have an opportunity to practice her Spanish skills.”*

Respondent 11 says that using the third language for communication it is beneficial for both partners: *“For both of us English is not mother tongue so if we have difficulties finding correct word, we describe it another way. In this we understand each other. Our skills in English are improving every day which benefits us.”*

7.2 Challenges and Obstacles of the Intercultural Relationship

Table 3: Challenges of the Intercultural Relationship

PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGES			
	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	PHYSICAL DISTANCE	PREJUDICES, STEREOTYPING
R1	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>family disapproval</i>
R2	<i>the way of spending holiday</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
R3	<i>x</i>	<i>limited time with each other</i>	<i>family disapproval</i>
R4	<i>another way of thinking</i>	<i>limited time with each other</i>	<i>x</i>
R5	<i>another way of thinking</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
R6	<i>differences in cultural background</i>	<i>living apart</i>	<i>x</i>

R7	<i>dealing with cultural differences in another country</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
R8	<i>x</i>	<i>living apart</i>	<i>x</i>
R9	<i>x</i>	<i>limited time with each other</i>	<i>x</i>
R10	<i>another way of thinking</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
R11	<i>x</i>	<i>limited time with each other</i>	<i>x</i>
R12	<i>dealing with cultural differences in another country</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>

Source: own work based on data obtained in research, 2015

Category 1: Cultural Differences Codes: *another way of thinking, differences in cultural background, different cultural norms and values, the way of spending holiday, dealing with cultural differences in another country*

Category 2: Physical Distance (partners live apart) Codes: *limited time with each other, living apart*

Category 3: Prejudices, Stereotyping Codes: *family disapproval*

As seen in table above, this category indicates higher variability in responses. Several respondents considered cultural differences in various forms as the main challenging aspect in intercultural relationship. For instance, Respondent 4 sees another way of thinking as a challenging aspect of her relationship: *“It is challenging to understand another way of thinking which cannot be seen firstly. After some time I observed differences, especially in perception of planning. My partner insists to have a plan for everything. He is German and it is a part of his culture. It was always challenging for us to find a compromise.”*

Respondent 6 sees different cultural background as challenging aspect, but at the same time she thinks that it is more enriching: *“Different cultural background could be challenging, in terms of the different norms and life style, but overall from my experience I find an intercultural relationship much more enriching and exciting than the one with someone of the same culture”*.

Respondent 2 did not see her relationship as challenging, but admits that to make a decision in whose family they are going to spend holiday, mainly Christmas were always an issue: *“I take the challenges as fun, they don’t bother me, but I must say that Christmas were always*

difficult to decide whose family we are going to visit or how we are going to spend our holidays.”

Related to the cultural differences were mentioned issues concerning moving to partner's country. Respondents who moved to the partner's country considered that step for the most challenging: *“When you have to move to your partner's country, and take care of „serious stuff“ such as looking for a job, living together, find new friends, get used to new culture and live without your family and friends. That's the most challenging about the intercultural relationship.”*

Similar experience with living in partner's country share Respondent 12: *“Sometimes I feel like everything else around is challenging, but not the relationship. For me, it is challenging to live in Sweden and showing every day that you are as good as them and that makes me feel tired and also frustrated. You have to fight your way in life in a different language and customs. That is definitely a challenge.”*

Two respondents experienced family disapproval because of the cultural difference. Respondent 1 experienced disapproval from her partner's mother:

“The most challenging was the disapproval of our relationship from my partner's mother. Although I speak the language, and I live in Italy for a long time, she has never accepted me as a “member of a family” and refused to accept any of my Czech habits.”

Respondent 3 dating also an Italian man did not experience negative attitudes in her partner's family, but in contrast her Czech parents find it difficult to accept her partner because of the prejudices: *“There are prejudices about Italian men which had a significant influence on my parents' reaction. They have a problem to accept that I am dating Italian men.”*

At this point it is important to emphasize that Respondent 3 is the only one who experienced disapproval from the Czech family, the rest of our respondents have encountered only positive reactions. For instance, Respondent 11 says: *“Our families support us as much as possible from the early stage of our relationship.”*

As few relationships of our respondents are long-distance, they logically put the aspect of living apart as a challenge number one. For instance, Respondent 6 admits that distance is very difficult: *“The most challenging is definitely distance. There is no real way of*

overcoming this, other than one partner making the decision to move to a new country and start a new life.”

7.3 Communication Barrier in Intercultural Relationship

As mentioned in the theoretical part, communication barrier is generally seen as challenging aspect of the intercultural relationship. In our research it was mentioned within the category of challenges in intercultural relationship, but since it appeared as the most frequent mentioned challenge we created a separated category, discussing this aspect more in details. We discuss the type of the situation when partners face barriers in communication, as well as the coping strategies.

Table 4: Experience with the Barriers in Communication

BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION			
SPOKEN LANGUAGE	PERCIEVED BARRIER	TYPE OF BARRIER SITUATION	COPING STRATEGY
ITALIAN	<i>yes</i>	<i>emotional situation and arguing</i>	<i>work on the language skills</i>
ENGLISH	<i>no</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
ENGLISH	<i>yes</i>	<i>emotional situations and arguing</i>	<i>explaining to each other, work on language skills</i>
ENGLISH	<i>yes</i>	<i>emotional situations and arguing, language barrier in partner's families</i>	<i>explaining to each other</i>
ENGLISH	<i>partly</i>	<i>culturally defined jokes</i>	<i>to learn partner's language</i>
ENGLISH	<i>partly</i>	<i>slang words in language and partner's advantage of native speaker</i>	<i>explaining to each other</i>
SPANISH	<i>yes</i>	<i>slang words in language and partner's advantage of native speaker</i>	<i>explaining to each other, work on language skills</i>
ENGLISH	<i>partly</i>	<i>culturally defined jokes</i>	<i>explaining to each other</i>
ENGLISH	<i>partly</i>	<i>language barriers in partners' families</i>	<i>interpreter</i>

ENGLISH DANISH	<i>no</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
ENGLISH	<i>no</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>
ENGLISH, SWEDISH	<i>no</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>

Source: own work based on data obtained in research, 2015

Category 1: Barrier Codes: *yes, no, partly*

Category 2: Type of Barrier Situation Codes: *emotional situations and arguing, language barrier in partners' families, slang words in language and partners advantage of native speaker, culturally defined jokes, x (none)*

Category 3: Coping Strategy Codes: *work on the language skills, learn partner's language, explaining to each other*

8 of 12 respondents confess that the language barrier is at some point challenging aspect of their relationship. For example, Respondent 4 states about the language issues: *"I believe partners in this kind of relationships have to be very patient and need to talk even more than "normal couples. It is also more difficult with language barrier, especially to argue in foreign language, which is also a part of relationship."*

Similar experience has respondent 3, seeing a language barrier in emotional situations:

„It is not easy to express yourself, especially in emotional situation, vocabulary is missing, we always have dictionary with us, some things I can never express in English like in Czech.“

Respondent 7, who uses Spanish language to communicate with her partner, points out rather negative experience regarding the communication:

"Although my Spanish is on level C1, I still have some problems with understanding (especially slang words on Canary Islands where my partner comes from). Sometimes my partner laughed at my pronunciation and grammar mistakes I made. I guess it is better to speak in the language which is not mother tongue for both partners. What's more, I think you can't capture whole personality of someone if Spanish is not your mother tongue. "

Respondent 6 also communicate in mother tongue of her partner shares her experience: *"It is not a real obstacle, but I had to get used to my partner's style of communication. His South African English is different from English I was used to. Picking up his style of communication*

took some time and was challenging in the beginning when I didn't understand him completely. I was forced to ask him very often to explain what he means, so you and your partner need to be patient and understanding. On the other hand, we experienced also funny situations, and sometimes he laughed at my pronunciation or style, since I am not a native speaker. But now, from my experience, I can say that I improved in English much, and adapt to my partner's style. I think that if you are dating native speaker, eventually you start talking like him."

Two of our respondents did not identify the language barrier as an issue in their relationship, however it appears as an obstacle in communication within the partners' families. Respondent 8 experiences communication barriers due to the inability of her parents to speak English: *"My family and some of my friends don't speak English, so they are unable to talk to my boyfriend. Of course, there is a way to cope with it (interpreter), but it is very limiting. I wish we didn't have this problem. Another thing that can be named as a barrier is a difficulty to explain some culturally defined jokes (concerning history, communism, etc...). Although it is partly a barrier, it doesn't mean that we do not understand each other, there are only some parts of our cultures that can't be fully understood unless you grew up in it."*

Respondent 4 also experiences language barrier in her family: *"My mom was little bit sad as she is limited with the language so the conversation is not as free and easy-going as she wishes."*

Respondent 10 don't see it generally as a challenges, but admits that there are situation when it would be handy if her husband spoke Czech: *"Sometimes there are a few tiny things when I wish my husband spoke Czech as the Czech language can be used in so many ways to explain certain things, but other than that it is ok."*

Four respondents did consider language barrier as a challenging aspect of their relationships. For instance, Respondent 2 does not see different language of partners as challenging, mainly thanks to the "beauty" of Slavic languages (Czech and Russian). She notices: *"If I can't express myself in English I just say it in Czech or any close term I know in Russian and we come up with some common word."*

Respondent 10 thinks that due to high level of language skills, there are no communication barriers. She says: *"My partner's English skills are on very high level and we communicate*

also in Danish, plus my husband is studying Czech – it is just perfect. Although, it takes a lot of effort because Czech is very difficult but I guess he gets better when we have kids.”

Respondent 12 does not mention any communication barriers in her relationship, she shares the same opinion with Respondent 11: “*Luckily, we have never had any problems in communication because of the language. Our English language skills are on high level plus I managed to learn Swedish language. The communication is perfect.*”

7.4 Adaptation Process in Intercultural Relationship

Table 5: Adaptation Process in Intercultural Relationship

ADAPTATION PROCESS				
Nationality of Partner	Perceived Cultural Distance	Adaptation Process	Cultural Difference	Supporting Aspects in Adaptation Process
<i>Italian</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>perception of gender roles</i>	<i>previous knowledge of the language and culture, love and attachment, tolerance</i>
<i>Russian</i>	<i>very similar</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>similar cultures</i>
<i>Italian</i>	<i>very different</i>	<i>difficult</i>	<i>perception of gender roles</i>	<i>love and attachment</i>
<i>German</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>planning issues</i>	<i>open mind, tolerance</i>
<i>Dutch</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>planning issues, eating habits</i>	<i>accepting and practicing cultural habits of both partners</i>
<i>South African</i>	<i>very different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>accepting and practicing cultural habits of both partner</i>
<i>Spanish</i>	<i>very different</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>daily regime and way of socializing</i>	<i>previous knowledge of culture and language, open mind</i>
<i>Dutch</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>eating habits, planning issues</i>	<i>love and attachment, family support, accepting and practicing cultural habits of both partners</i>
<i>Greek</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>eating habits</i>	<i>love and attachment, tolerance</i>
<i>Danish</i>	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>easy</i>	<i>way of celebrating holidays</i>	<i>open communication, flexibility of partners</i>

Spanish	<i>slightly different</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>daily regime, way of socializing</i>	<i>love and attachment, tolerance</i>
Swedish	<i>very different</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>perception of gender roles</i>	<i>language knowledge</i>

Source: own work based on the data obtained in research, 2015

Category 1: Cultural Distance codes: *slightly different, very different, very similar*

Category 2: Process of Adaptation codes: *easy, medium, difficult*

Category 3: Cultural Difference codes: *perception of gender roles, way of socializing and daily regime, eating habits, planning issues, way of celebrating holidays*

Category 4: Supporting Aspects in Adaptation Process codes: *previous knowledge of the language and culture, family support, open communication, love and attachment, accepting and practicing cultural habits of both partners, tolerance*

Due to the extensive responses, the process of coding in this category was more difficult. In this category we combined the data from other categories, especially cultural differences and challenges which respondents mentioned repeatedly in context of adaptation process. New category we added is supporting aspects in adaptation process which aimed to find out coping strategies of partners. Respondents were asked to evaluate the process of adaptation in their relationship as easy, medium or difficult, as well as to determine how distance they perceive their cultures (slightly different, very different or very similar).

Majority of respondents perceive adaptation process in their relationships as easy or medium. The only exception is Respondent 3 who evaluated the adaptation process as difficult, and Italian and Czech culture as very different. Based on the respondent's answers we assume that the reason why this respondent perceives adaptation as difficult could be partly low support of her family and different perception of gender roles. She states: *"It bothers me that woman in Italy are expected to be housewives and men do not support woman in carrier. My partner and I are trying to find a compromise. Love is strong supporting element but I feel that it is not enough and such a relationship requires much more. It is especially tolerance and willingness to make compromises as well as giving up and giving in."*

In contrast, Respondent 1 whose partner is also Italian sees the adaptation process in her relationship as rather easy, due to the previous knowledge of the culture and language, but she

points out different perception of gender roles. She explains: *“I don’t find adaptation process as an issue. I guess it is partly because I spoke the language and I had a previous experience and the knowledge about the culture, before I get into relationship with my partner. It means that he did not have to help me to adapt, because I was kind of adapted and had experiences with the Italian culture (and relationship too). However, there was an important aspect that a woman has to adapt to if dating an Italian man. It is a different perception of gender roles. In Italy, a woman is a housewife, while a man take care of finances. I adapted to that model while living in Italy, but I am sure that I would have a problem with it at home, in the Czech Republic. I think culture plays a role in adaptation process but it depends how different cultures are and how flexible are the partners. What helped me was my previous knowledge of the culture, I could expect that we would have to deal with the issue mentioned above. Besides, if you are truly in love, you are capable of accepting the things that you normally wouldn’t.”* These two responses reveals the relationship between the adaptation process and environment. Respondent 1 found it easier to adapt concerning the gender roles because she got used to the Italian culture by certain time period of living in a country. However, she reminds, that if she lived in the Czech Republic she would find it more difficult to adapt.

Respondent 7 also thinks that previous knowledge of language helped her to adapt, however, she notices some challenging situations. She explains: *“For me it was rather easier to adapt since I knew the culture quite well, I have been studying the Spanish language since secondary school and also lived in Spain for some time. However, as much as I tried, there were still some challenging situations. For example, the intonation and a slang words in language I could not pick up completely, it took long time. I think that in some cases it is not possible to understand a way your partner perceives it from his culture. So, there are some things that you will probably never adapt, but it does not mean that your relationship can’t work. If you accept some aspect just the way they are, it can work perfectly.”*

Respondent 10 did not see the adaptation as a challenging aspect in her marriage, and don’t see much cultural differences that would be challenging. She thinks that *“a key in adaptation process is generally open communication and the flexibility of the partners”*.

Respondent 8 evaluated the adaptation process as rather easy, mainly because of the family support. She shares an interesting points about the adaptation process:

“Adaptation process can be challenging, because being in intercultural relationship brings you many challenging situations, especially if you are in a foreign country, without your

family and friends, and you don't speak the official language, not knowing the cultural habits. It requires higher level of tolerance, open mind and respect compared to the relationship with someone of the same culture, but this cannot be generalized, because in monoculture relationship it can be also as difficult as in intercultural. In this case, it is hard to say to what extent is culture and what extent it is a personality, or how much the personality is affected by the culture. But what helps me the most in adaptation process in my intercultural relationship is my partner's support, mutual respect of each other's cultures and of course love. Secondly, very important role plays my partner's mom and her enormous support. She makes me feel to be a part of the family, even though I come from the different culture and I don't speak the language. She is always there for me. I believe that having this in your intercultural relationship is a win. It is a treasure you get "for free" and if you have it you are the lucky one. I am the lucky one."

Respondent 4 determined adaptation process as medium, due to the cultural differences. She highlights the importance of patience and tolerance of partners: *"If a couple is happy and wants to fight for relationship, it is not that difficult to adapt, however, it is very important to be patient and talk about your feelings and observations. I personally had to adapt to "German planning", for months ahead, and I need to understand the way he thinks about the planning."*

Respondent 5 thinks that adaptation depends on partners' flexibility and willingness to accept each other's cultural features. She demonstrates with an example concerning different planning and eating habits: *"My partner thrives in structure and plans his day through, which is a typical Dutch feature, while I have always preferred to be spontaneous or keep the day open. We found out that this difference between us comes from different family structure and culture. But that does not play a significant role, because we deal with it individually, we kept our habits as they were. But one thing I had to adapt to is a daily Dutch habit of eating a dinner together. It is very important for Dutch families to eat always together, and so it is for my partner. He insist to keep this tradition although we do not live in the Netherland, and I accepted it and changed my habits because I know how important it is to him. The only way how it can work in intercultural relationship is to accept some of your partner's cultural habits and find compromises."*

8 DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the data obtained in the research and presents the results. Within each category we compare the results with the theoretical aspects discussed in the first part of the thesis. The aim of the research performed throughout the thesis was to find out the following aspects of the intercultural relationships:

- Benefits
- Challenges
- Adaptation Process from the perspective of Czech women

High similarity of the responses can be observed in the results of the category “benefits”. Each respondent named at least 3 and/or more benefits and each considered their personal relationships for beneficial. As the main benefit perceived by respondents was overall cultural enrichment in various forms, such as: experiencing new way of life, travelling, getting to know new cultures, new habits, adopting new cultural features, etc. Few respondents identified the language as a main benefit of the intercultural relationship, either from the perspective of improving the skills or learning new language, as well as the bilingualism of children. All the respondents expressed positive attitude towards the intercultural relationship, mainly because of all the above mentioned benefits.

Comparing the results of our research with the Romano’s main benefits of the intercultural relationships (see chapter 4.4.5), we can observe almost identical responses. Based on the results we assume that benefits of the intercultural relationship are rather universal and people generally share the opinion that intercultural relationships are beneficial in many ways. The possible question for further research then arises: “How do people “use” the benefits gained in intercultural relationships in common life?”

The similarity observed in the category of benefits, cannot be observed in the category of challenges. The responses indicate higher variability, which could be explained by higher variability of the relationships of our sample. Some respondents experience long distance relationship, when partners live apart, while another live together, and therefore each relationship faces the different challenges. The respondents in a long distance relationship, logically mentioned a physical distance as a challenge number one, due to the fact that living apart significantly affects their relationship.

Our sample includes four respondents in a long distance relationships (i.e. they do not live in one country) and all of them identified distance as a main challenge.

Several respondents pointed out certain cultural difference as a challenging aspect, for instance different way of thinking. We could observe the similarities in responses about the cultural differences among the respondents whose partners are the same nationality, which may indicate certain level of the cultural stereotyping. For example, two respondents in a relationship with the Dutch man and respondent in a relationship with German man observed the same cultural feature. We assume that reason could be the similarity of the Dutch and German culture. Mentioned respondents identified cultural difference in approach to planning, stating that their partners (of Dutch and German nationality) insist on precise planning and organizing, while Czech people generally don't. Our Czech respondents named this cultural difference as a challenging element in their relationship.

Related to the cultural differences were mentioned issues concerning a dealing with the cultural differences in foreign country. Respondents who experienced living in partner's country and/or another then home country considered that step for the most challenging aspect of the relationship, due to the various difficulties concerning the cultural differences in new country.

One respondents encountered with the disapproval from the family, and named it as the most challenging factor. Her Czech parents have difficulties to accept her Italian partner because of the prejudices towards Italian men. However, it is important to emphasize that the rest of our respondents have never experienced any negative attitudes, neither from the family nor from the other people in their surroundings. Instead, majority emphasized a support and a positive attitudes towards their relationships.

Another challenging aspect that has arisen from the research was communication barrier. Communication is a key aspect of any kind of relationship, especially when it concerns the communication between the individuals of different cultures. In intercultural relationship, the communication is often considered as a challenging aspect. Only three respondents in our research did not identify any barriers in communication. In first case a reason was similarity in languages (Czech and Russian); respondent communicate in English and in case they don't know how to express in English they help with the "Slavic words". The other two respondents did not identify any communication barriers because of the high level of English language

skills and also their partner's language skills (Swedish and Danish). The rest of the respondents identified certain barrier in communication.

Most frequently it concerned barriers or limitations of language skills in emotional situations and inability to explain some culturally defined aspects (for example jokes, historical facts about the country, etc.). Two respondents also mentioned a communication barrier in their families (inability of parents to talk to the partner because of a lack of a common language). Within this category we also asked the respondents how they cope with the barriers and the results are following:

- working on language skills
- learn your partner's language
- patience in explaining to each other
- interpreter in family

The main aspect we focused on in the research part was the adaptation process in a relationship. Within this category we identified the culture and cultural differences as the key elements in adaptation process. Respondents were firstly asked to evaluate the cultural adaptation as either easy, medium or difficult, and then to demonstrate the situations in adaptation process. Lastly we asked about the coping strategies/supporting elements in adaptation process. Respondents named certain cultural differences which played and/or plays a role in the adaptation process in relationship.

Results of the research shows the connection between cultural differences and the adaptation process. Based on the results it can be said that cultural differences plays significant role in adaptation process and respondents were able to demonstrate such a situations in their relationships. Moreover, the adaptation strategies described by respondents of our sample indicates similarity with the adaptation strategies mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis (Romano, 1997, see chapter 4.4.4.1). Especially it concerns the compromise, obliteration and consensus strategies. To demonstrate on example, Respondent 6 described the situation when she gave up on some of her cultural features and accepted her partner's to accommodate him. Romano (ibid.) described that as compromise strategy. Another respondent's experience with adaptation indicate the obliteration strategy which is described as a strategy of creating new culture when both partners attempt to erase their cultures. As

Romano (1997) notices that normally happens when couples live somewhere else than their home countries. The experience of our respondent proved the Romano's assumptions.

The results also showed the features of the consensus adaptation strategy (Romano, 1997).

The core of this strategy is based on agreement and negotiations. Majority of our respondents described their "adaptation practices" based on the mutual agreements of the partners.

As the supporting elements or coping strategies in adaptation process were mentioned following aspects:

- *previous knowlegde of the language and culture*
- *family support*
- *strong feelings (attachment) of partners*
- *accepting and practicing cultural habits of the partner*
- *tolerance and flexibility of partner*
- *open communication*

These supporting elements mentioned by our respondents can be found in Romano's interpretation of the key elements of successful adaptation in intercultural relationship. As seen, the category of adaptation process shows high similarity with the theoretical approaches to the cultural adaptation that we described in the first part of the thesis (especially Romano's approaches).

Another aspect that we observed in the results of our research is the relationship between adaptation and cultural distance. The results showed that partners whose cultures are relatively close did not experience serious challenging aspects in adaptation process, while partners whose cultures are rather more distant found adaptation process as rather difficult due to the certain cultural differences or external circumstances, such as environment, family, or the place where partners live. External circumstances could be either as an obstacle and/or supporting elements in intercultural relationship. The example of such a circumstance in our research was family. One respondent experienced very positive attitudes and support from her partner's family, while another encountered with the disapproval of her relationship from her parents. Within the category cultural adaptation in intercultural relationship arises few question for further research. For example, author thinks that it would be interesting to measure how successful are intercultural relationships/marriages, if they break down more often than monoculture relationships.

Although it wasn't primary the goal of the research (it was not part of research questions), our results revealed the influence of migration and the level of multiculturalism in societies on the establishment of intercultural relationship. Our respondents engaged in their intercultural relationships due to the temporary migration (see Jupp&Clyne, 2011), either during studying or working abroad, which reveals positive relationship between migration and intercultural relationship in terms that migration supports the development of intercultural relationships.

Possibilities to travel, work or study abroad increased significantly in recent years, mainly due to the globalized world and multicultural societies, has an impact on the establishment of intercultural relationships. The results of our research proved that migration and globalization has impact on the development of intercultural relationships. Several respondents of our sample met during the study exchanges and/or working abroad. Interestingly, two of our respondents met their partners via "online dating".

As mentioned in the theoretical part, Heckmann (1993) states about the cultures that are no pure, original cultures, because each culture has incorporated the elements of others, and cultures are the results of interactions with one another in a continuous process and change. It can be assumed that intercultural relationships support this statement, since partners incorporate the elements of each other's cultures. Based on the responses of the sample, author could observe level of multiculturalism in the relationships of several respondents. By their intensive contacts with foreign cultures, experience with living abroad and most importantly their intercultural relationship, respondents appeared to have a characteristics of multicultural person.

Limitations of the research

There were few limitations in the research. Firstly, the size of our sample, which was rather small. Secondly, it was the variability of the respondents' relationships (living apart/living together), which caused higher variability in the results, especially in the category "challenges". As it was qualitative research, we cannot generalize the results. However, as it was shown, the results of the research indicated high comparability with the theoretical approaches and we think that results of the research are enriching.

9 CONCLUSION

This diploma thesis aimed to examine the adaptation process in intercultural romantic relationships from the perspective of the Czech women.

Intercultural relationships which are the key elements of the thesis are firstly discussed from the theoretical perspective. Theoretical part offered an overview to the most important aspects of intercultural relationships. Firstly we evaluated influential factors, such as migration and multiculturalism on a broad level, as well as their impact on the establishment of intercultural relationships, including the analysis of the situation in the Czech Republic. Further we looked at intercultural relationships more in details from the perspective of individuals entering relationships. We devoted one chapter to the intercultural communication due to its significance in intercultural relationships. The emphasis of the theoretical part is placed on the cultural adaptation process which is the key element of the thesis. Cultural adaptation process was discussed in the context of intercultural relationships. Theoretical part of the thesis served as a foundation for the empirical part.

The main aim of the empirical part was to gain personal experiences with intercultural relationship of the selected sample. We conducted a qualitative research among the Czech women who get involved in intercultural romantic relationships. As a method we used semi-structured interviews with 12 respondents. The interviews aimed to gather the information on the challenging aspects, benefits and adaptation process in a relationship. The analysis of the data obtained in the results was based on the grounded theory method and the technique of the open coding. We searched for differences, similarities and its specifications among and inside categories, which was the key action to develop a grounded theory. Data were processed by finding the codes in the responses, followed with the classification and data interpretation. The results of each category are presented in the tables, and discussed in the text parts, which includes also several examples of the respondents' answers.

In the last part of the thesis (discussion) we evaluated the research process by answering the research questions and deduced the conclusion to the results we obtained. Moreover, we compared them with the theoretical approaches discussed in the first part of the thesis.

We consider the results of the research as satisfying as we achieved desired goals to answers the research questions. The purpose of the research was fulfilled and via respondents'

experience we discovered an interesting views towards the cultural adaptation process in relationships. We observed strong relationship between cultural differences and cultural adaptation process. Respondents shared their experience with those cultural differences which have a significant impact on the adaptation in these kind of relationships.

In the category of benefits we noticed high similarity in respondents' answers, while the category of challenges exposed the differences. We assumed that it was caused by higher variability of respondents' relationships. Similarly, the categories of adaptation displayed more differences in the responses, concerning the types of challenging situations in adaptation process. However, the category of adaptation strategies/supporting elements indicated more similarities. We could observe similarities and differences in responses, but since the main purpose was to describe the adaptation process of the partners in intercultural relationship from the Czech female perspective, the role of the similarities or differences in answers was not that significant. The purpose of the thesis was fulfilled by answering the research questions. Although our sample was rather small, we think that the data obtained in the research were rewarding. In this place, I would like express my gratitude to all the respondents who participated in this research, especially for their willingness to help. I appreciate your time you devoted me and your honest answers. Moreover, your enthusiasm to participate makes the process of writing this thesis more pleasant.

Finally, I would be pleased if the results of the research conducted in this thesis or the thesis itself serve as an inspiration for further research in this area.

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12 ANNEXES

ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW

General information: age, nationality of partner, duration of relationship, how partners met, where partners live

1. What language do you use to communicate with your partner?
2. What do you consider to be the most beneficial for you in your intercultural relationship?
3. What was your motivation to engage in a relationship? Has it changed after time?
4. What opportunities/benefits does intercultural relationship offer? What do you see in your relationship as most beneficial for you and your partner?
5. What do you see the most challenging? How did you cope / or still coping with the challenges of intercultural relationship?
6. What about the social reactions and family? Have you faced negative attitudes towards your relationship just because you are dating someone of other culture?
7. Does religion play a role in your relationship? Is it different from your partner?
8. Do you find it difficult to maintain your relationship because the cultures are different? Does it take more effort or energy?
9. How much did culture play a role to enter the relationship? Were you interested/curious in your partner's culture, was it new for you? And how is it now?
10. Do you find it more difficult to communicate in a relationship in other than your mother tongue? Or – to native speaker – do you find it challenging to understand your partner who is not a native speaker? Can you give a concrete example?
11. What do you think is the main benefit of intercultural relationship (in general, not your)
12. Before you enter your recent relationship, have you ever experienced one with someone of a different culture?
13. Do you have someone in your family with the intercultural relationship? (do you come from multicultural family?)
14. How do you perceive adaptation in intercultural relationship, do you find it difficult to adapt in intercultural relationship?
15. When you were growing up, did you interact with the foreign cultures often?
16. Do you see the culture of your partner very/slightly or not different from yours? Can you give an example that would demonstrate the cultural differences? Is there some specific (interesting or unusual) thing in your partner's culture that you had to adapt to during your relationship?

ANNEX B: OVERVIEW OF THE CATEGORIES AND CODES IN DATA ANALYSIS

CATEGORIES AND CODES IN DATA ANALYSIS				
TOPIC	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES	BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION	ADAPTATION PROCESS
CAT.1	EXPERIENCE NEW WAY OF LIFE	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	PERCIEVED BARRIER	PERCIEVED CULTURAL DISTANCE
<i>codes</i>	<i>cultural enrichment, travelling</i>	<i>another way of thinking; cultural background; cultural norms and habits; the way of spending holidays; dealing with cultural difference in another country</i>	<i>yes, no, partly</i>	<i>slightly different, very different, very similar</i>
CAT.2	LANGUAGE	PHYSICAL DISTANCE	TYPE OF BARRIER SITUATION	PROCESS OF ADAPTATION
<i>codes</i>	<i>bilingualism learning new language improvement of language skills</i>	<i>living apart limited time with each other</i>	<i>emotional situation and arguing; slang words in language and partner's; advantage of native speaker; culturally defined jokes; language barrier in partners' families</i>	<i>easy, medium, difficult</i>
CAT.3	<i>x</i>	PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPING	COPING STRATEGY	CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
<i>codes</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>family disapproval</i>	<i>work on language skills learn partner's language; explaining to each other, interpreter</i>	<i>perception of gender roles; way of socializing and daily regime; eating habits; way of celebrating holidays</i>
CAT.4	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	SUPPORTING ASPECTS IN ADAPTATION PROCESS
<i>codes</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>previous knowlegde of the language and culture; family support; open communication; love and attachment; accepting and practicing cultural habits of both partners; tolerance</i>

ANNEX C: TRANSCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW 8.

Basic Information of the Respondent 8.	
Age of the respondent	25
Nationality of the partner	Dutch
How the partners met	got to know each other in Finland during the internship
Language of communication	English
Duration of the relationship	2 years
How often partners meet	partners meet irregularly, but at least once in two months for longer period of time
Previous experience of the respondent with intercultural relationship	yes

INTERVIEW

Q: What was your motivation to engage in a relationship? Are you able to say if it has changed after time?

Respondent 8: *“It was literally love at the second sight (laugh). At first I liked him physically and when we started to talk he got my attention right away, I found him as a very interesting person and I really wished to get to know him better, but the time was limited, we only met for few days for short while he was visiting Finland. When we met the second time, after two months, during my visit in the Netherlands where I went for a trip, I let him know that I was around and we met again, on a completely different place and in much different situation. There was a sparkle, and my interest in him was the same as two month ago, or even bigger. From that moment we both decided that we go for it no matter what, because the feelings we had for each other from the early stage of our relationship were strong. The motivation was definitely affection (strong feelings) and interest in a special person you meet, it is something that does not happen every day. Sometimes you must travel to several countries to find him. :) The motivation to be in a relationship has not changed after time, love is the main aspect why we engage in this relationship. By getting to know his personality, I feel in love with him even*

more, and if you love the way your partner is, it makes a strong bond and you get attached to him.”

Q: Before you enter your recent relationship, have you ever experienced one with someone of a different culture? If yes, and the relationship broke down (obviously), did culture / cultural differences contributed to break up?

Respondent 8: *“Yes I did, but never would I say that cultural differences contributed to the break up. However, the relationship was rather short, which makes it difficult to judge, but still I think cultural differences did not play a role. I guess you realize the differences only in serious situation that comes with the relationship later, when your relationship develops into something “bigger and serious”. Generally I think that it comes when you have to sort out the serious issues, such as living together, moving to your partner country, or bringing up the kids, etc... If you have to face “reality”, then you probably realize also some cultural differences.”*

Q: Do you see the culture of your partner very different/slightly/not different from yours? Can you give an example that would demonstrate the difference?

Respondent 8: *“Dutch culture is very specific, and generally speaking I would consider it to be rather different, but not very different, neither slightly. I would put it somewhere to the middle. There are few differences, as one example I can pick the “directness” of Dutch people. Dutch person would talk to you straight - it is x and y, end of story, while Czechs rather want you to find out yourself, they are not that direct. However, I am talking here on a general level about the Dutch people, because although my partner is Dutch he does not really have Dutch features (from what I observed). It is partly because he comes from mixed family (Dutch-Indonesian), so his culture is also rather mixed. Although he is Dutch and he feels Dutch, I cannot observe typical Dutch features, he doesn’t “practice” cultural habits that everyone in the Netherland does. “*

Q: What do you see the most challenging? How did you cope / or still coping with the challenges of intercultural relationship

Respondent 8: *“The most challenging is physical distance with which we are still coping. We see each other quite often, but it is always a challenge to arrange it, and it requires a lot of time, energy, plus the financial aspects. The challenge that occurs as a result of coping with the distance which we both hate is the decision that we have to make for future to “get rid of*

the distance". I guess that's the most challenging thing that every intercultural couple has to face at some point in the relationship. This challenge may be both positive and negative, sometimes it means happily ever after and sometimes it is the end of a story. That depends fully on partners how they make it for their selves. I consider the reason for breakup "we are too different and our cultures are different" for an excuse. If you are not strong enough, and not patient, lazy and so on... you would rather find a partner who is more similar, because it is too demanding to be with someone of a different culture...Therefore, I think intercultural relationship is really not for everyone."

Q: What about the social reactions and family? Have you faced negative attitudes towards your relationship just because you are dating someone of other culture?

Respondent 8: *"Towards our relationship never, our families are supportive, but my mom is a bit skeptical towards long distance relationship. Also some individuals (either in the Netherlands or Czech) are skeptical towards these kind of relationships, seeing it as something unrealistic. Although it sometimes makes me think when people are constantly questioning you how you manage, what are your plans to future, don't you mind dating someone of other culture, etc., and those questions can be "annoying" but I try not to take it seriously and focus entirely on us instead of people around."*

Q: Do you find it difficult to maintain your relationship? Do you find it more difficult (does it take you more effort and energy) to maintain the relationship because the cultures are different?

Respondent 8: *„I fully agree with the statement that it takes more effort and energy to maintain the relationship but not because of the cultural differences on a first place. Cultural difference definitely play an important role, and I guess it is more difficult, because you have to deal with the issues that "normal couples" (those of one culture) don't have to. For example, your families don't speak a common language, so they can't communicate with each other and you have to take care of the "interpreter" in your relationship, there are more aspects that are maybe more challenging...but I want to emphasize that there might be many challenges also in monoculture relationships. It can be as difficult as in intercultural, and vice a versa. It really depends on circumstances."*

Q: Do you find it more difficult to communicate in a relationship in other than your mother tongue? Or – to native speaker – do you find it challenging to understand your partner who is not a native speaker? Can you give a concrete example?

Respondent 8: *“The lack of common language requires much more talking and explaining to each other which takes more effort and energy, because if you want your partner to understand you properly and correctly, sometimes you have to try hard and focus. Moreover, there are some cultural differences that you wish to explain, but in some cases it is simply impossible. For example some jokes, that comes from communism, or some special slang ...It is the same, many times I hear from my boyfriend, ah I can’t explain that to you, it’s the thing Dutch people do, I can’t translate it. But it is not that we do not understand each other, there are only some parts of our cultures that can’t be well explained unless you grew up in it. “*

Q: Does a religion play a role in your relationship?

Respondent 8: *“It doesn’t play any role to us.*

Q: What do you consider to be the most beneficial for you in your intercultural relationship?

Respondent 8: *“It’s hard to pick one thing, but from my perspective and my feelings, I would say that the most beneficial for me is to be loved and to love such a wonderful person and at the same time to be enriched by his personality and the culture. Another beneficial thing is definitely a family support. In my case, it is especially my boyfriend’s mom, who gives me the feeling of being part of the family, even though I come from the different culture and I don’t speak their language. Having this in your intercultural relationship is a win. It is a treasure you get "for free" and if you have it you are the lucky one. Because being in intercultural relationship brings you many challenging situations, especially if you are in different country, without your family and friend , and you don’t speak the official language, not knowing why do people do this and that. Those are not easy things to deal with and by having a full support of your partner and his family you are given the biggest benefit you can get.”*

Q: What opportunities/benefits does intercultural relationship offer?

Respondent 8: *“There are so many! Dating someone of a different culture offers you an exclusive possibility to get to know new culture via his family and friends, by observing the habits, trying national food and so on... It is also a great opportunity for you to share your*

culture with someone who doesn't know it yet. It gives you new ideas in many fields. "It offers you an exclusive opportunity to speak new language. On the other hand it can be also beneficial for your families. My partner's mom is happy that she can practice and thus improve her English skills by talking to me. One of the benefits for intercultural couples who wants to have kids is the advantage of speaking two languages from the childhood (bilingualism)."

Q: How much did culture play a role to enter the relationship? Were you interested in your partner's culture, was it new for you? And how is it now?

Respondent8: *"I was definitely interested in Dutch culture, because before I enter the relationship with my boyfriend, I only knew few Dutch people for a short time and I couldn't really say how they are so I was curious and wanted to get to know more. I love travelling and I went to the Netherland for holiday to get to know new places and culture as well, and instead I accidentally fell in love with the Dutch man :) But I want to emphasize that culture was not motivation to date him, because although I was curious but I would never date someone only because I was curious about his culture. In this case I would be dating probably million guys because I am interested in every culture! I simply feel in love with someone who happened to be a Dutch :) and yes, Dutch culture was definitely new for me, as I said before, I had only few Dutch friends who introduced me to the culture on a very "basic level" (I learned one Dutch word and tried a Dutch beer). At this point, I know the culture much more, however, I am still interested in getting to know it better and I am also trying to learn the language. I think it is very important in intercultural relationship to "pay attention "to each other's cultures. The culture is a part of who you are and once you fall in love with the person, you partly fall in love with his culture because it is the part of him."*

Q: Do you find it more difficult to adapt in intercultural relationship as in one with someone of the same culture (can you compare based on your personal experience? Or if not, what is your point of view in general?)

Respondent 8: *"personally, I do not find it more difficult, but it requires higher level of tolerance, open mind and respect compared to the relationship with someone of the same culture, but it is not always a case. Sometimes it can be more difficult in a relationship with someone of a same culture. Therefore, I don't see culture as crucial aspect of adaptation process, it is more about the personality. Though, it is hard to say to what extent it is culture and what extent it is a personality, or how much the personality is affected by the culture.*

Sometimes I have a feeling that culture does not exist if you fall in love with the right person. Then you create a brand new culture that is entirely about you two. But to add to this question, for me personally I think that it is actually easier to maintain the intercultural relationship, because there are so much excitements of not knowing things, so much new things to explore and thanks to different cultures this process of getting to know all of takes much longer. It is beautiful to share with someone your life, to show him the places where you grew up, and you have that feeling that there is still so much to do together, and it is also a motivation for future to work on your relationship. Since, in monoculture relationship, what I observed among my friends, they get bored after a while. While I am always excited, especially when he comes to my country I plan a things, I want him to experience completely new things, to give him another perspective. I guess I am such an enthusiastic person, always been, also towards my foreign friends, so maybe that's why for me personally it is easier to maintain it. I believe that it is individual and depends on personality. If you find it difficult to maintain the relationship it doesn't matter if it is monoculture or intercultural."

Q: When you were growing up, did you interact with the foreign cultures often? If not, when did it change?

Respondent 8: *"From the early childhood not really, or actually not at all, but when we travelled for holiday to Italy for the first time, when I was 9, from that moment on I have started to be interested in other cultures, languages, and I kept saying to my parents that I was going to move to another country, and I was going to study somewhere else. And I actually did it. But at first the interactions with foreign cultures were not that intense. It has changed on a high school, I went to multilingual college, and we were in touch with foreign lecturers and some exchange students. The most intense interactions with foreign cultures were during the university studies (exchanges, working in international associations) and intensive travelling. "*

Q: Is there some specific example of the cultural feature in your partner's culture that you had to adapt to? Do you think that culture plays the main role in adaptation process in a romantic relationship?

Respondent 8: *"I don't think it play the main role, but it has a significant role for sure. It depends how distant the cultures are. To demonstrate the example - In the Netherlands the main meal of the day is dinner, and people do not really eat during the lunch (or just a small snack). In the Netherland I have to adapt, if I want to "socialize". People socialize over*

dinner, that's the way it is, while in Czech the main dish of a day is lunch and people use to lunch together during break. To have a lunch on a daily basis is also part of a culture, and living in different country you have to adapt to another habits (eating habits in this case). Other thing I want to mention is also "unwillingness of Dutch people to talk English". It happens very often that people in the Netherlands (despite the high level of proficiency in English) are not willing to talk to you English, and if they are, they switch to their mother tongue very often, which is really difficult in socializing with people. So, these kind of situations force you to learn the language to adapt better. Of course, it also depends if you want to live in a country or you just visiting, but in both cases I want to speak the language anyway, because it has a great meaning to me to know my partner's language. On the other hand, I also wish my partner to learn my language particularly for a reason that my family does not speak English, and thus they cannot communicate with each other."