

# **Cross-cultural Communications Training for Multinational Companies in the 21st Century**

An Independent Learning Project

Presented by

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To

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**Abstract**

This paper points out a new method of training for multinational companies to increase the cross-cultural skills and knowledge of their managers. This training method will be given in a two day class format. Findings in this project will enlighten the reader's knowledge of cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences of Chinese and American cultures were studied closely and examined. A literature review, survey and interviews were used as a research method. This study shows the reader that knowledge of the importance of cultural differences in the business world has advantages in multicultural companies.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This Independent Learning Project (ILP) aims to point out the importance of training and education in multinational companies. In order to understand the importance of this universal problem, I plan to outline this matter by sharing my life experiences and expert opinions. Reason for success and failure stories from multinational companies will also be studied. Not only my research outcomes and opinions, but also surveys and interviews will enlighten the reader about the importance of this subject. I plan to survey employees of multinational global companies and interview experts with global experience. The business world has its global difficulties. Companies try to make profits by creating new ideas and solutions. In order to maintain such success, communication between employees must be at high level. Some of the difficult challenges that multinational companies have are language, cultural and custom barriers. These cross-cultural communication barriers often can be very costly. Low profit margins and short numbers on sales drive companies to look for new solutions.

Especially in today's globalized world, the world economy is always shifting, so economies are more fragile than ever. In order to keep pace with the changing economic, cultural and social conditions, multinational companies are required to sail into new markets. Whether within the same language and time zone or in foreign markets, movement has to happen to reach higher margins. With the invention of the Internet, the world no longer has untouched markets. Knowledge is no longer a hard to reach asset. People get enough education and enough experience to have global vision. Business and management structures are now commonly known internationally. Therefore, this new business era has brought new handicaps.

One of the most known issues for multinational companies is communication problems: Not only language, but also cultural and custom mindsets. In particular, communication efforts between multi-national businesses are often hampered by a lack of understanding in the areas of language, cultural customs, and business customs (Charles, 2007).

If this Independent Learning Project (ILP) can point out the international challenges that multinational companies face, finding solutions will be inevitable. This research and many other studies about this subject will be a useful tool globally. I have an Eastern background but I live in the United States, and I strongly believe Eastern culture and Western culture have always been different from many aspects. Among the most common and known challenges in communicating between these regions are language, customs and culture. We all agree on the fact that Western civilization has led to most of the industrial innovations. This began in the second half of the eighteenth century and continued throughout the nineteenth century. However, a new industrial era has reshaped the current economic world. While the United States is leading this new era, the Eastern side of the world has created a new economic competitor for the West. China, with a population of 1.3 billion, now leads the Eastern side of the world. Even though this aspect seems to be a challenge for the West, it has actually created a totally new global market strategy. In order to explain the importance of cross-cultural training understandably, I will compare and examine the United States and China and try to establish a new training guide for multinational companies.

## **Defining Terms**

### Cross-Cultural Communication

“Communication that is derived from the language as well as the cultural context of the language in terms of context, space, and time” (Moseley, 2009)

### Culture

The implicit and explicit beliefs and behaviors of a group. In the context of business, the dimension of language is added as it pertains to the cultural identity of the business.

### Cultural Literacy

The ability to participate and understand a given culture, where the individual can understand the various symbols of importance, stories, dialects, beliefs, and behaviors of a particular group of people (Hirsch, 2001)

### Language Barrier

A figurative construct that prevents effective communication due to a lack of a common language between two people (Harzing & Feeley, 2007)

### Multinational Company

Companies that operate in other than their origin of nation. These companies can have offices, warehouses and employees within different countries.

## **Historical Case**

Business life is all about successes and failures. Most companies encounter challenges and face them. Moving abroad by entering new markets requires a wide horizon. When it comes to enhancing profit, several actions must be taken.

The most important one of them is market research. The home improvement company Home Depot is one of the most well-known example. When they entered the Chinese market, they used their “do it yourself” business model. However, culturally, people thought there should be a “do it for me” model. Home Depot had experience globally, but they missed the importance of this cultural background for their Chinese customers.

In particular, the concept of personal home improvement did not fit into the Chinese culture; the Chinese widely prefer the “do it for me model” of home improvement (Gao, 2013) This unthinkable mistake caused Home Depot to exit from the Chinese market. This specific case illustrates the importance of cross-cultural awareness in economy. Cross-cultural communication training aims to help companies handle differences in language, cultural customs and business customs. In order to find success in foreign markets, training employees and getting ready to face unexpected difficulties become critically important.

### **Summary**

Generally, understandings of cultural differences will help companies maintain and establish businesses overseas. This Independent Learning Project will break down these matters into pieces and study the outcomes and will help employees and companies to understand the Chinese mindset and culture. Hopefully cross-cultural communication training will help business leaders and managers to understand and act positively in the Chinese market and other similar Eastern markets.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The cross-cultural communication training in this project will be designed for the business world. The target is that it is going to be used worldwide. Human resource departments have come up with employee trainings. Ultimate goal for that is to reach companies profit goals. This involves an important key for decision making and planning. Managers with high training skills are tend to pass on their knowledge to their employees within the professional manners. Of course this helps to enhance the communication between employees. The first step for cross-cultural communication starts with overcoming language barriers, because for basic, daily communication, individuals must be able to understand each other.

### **Cross-Cultural Communication Context**

Just like any other training, cross-cultural communication has some benefits and difficulties. There are four different guidelines that organizational leaders need to follow when they are attempting to facilitate cross-cultural communication in the business world. The first is having clear outlines for how the organization will manage to meet its objectives. (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012)

Regardless of what improvements companies bring to educating and training employees, the employees first must know their roles and responsibilities. There are several advantages of training for employees. First of all, employees appreciate this special treatment and training.

Witnessing their companies spending time and effort for the higher and better communication makes them like their company more and increases their loyalty. Information provided in the training can also be added to their resume. One other aspect about training is that the information that has been taught to employees is very useful, but it would easily take a long time to see the results. Observation of the training, determining the information given, applying this knowledge to the work and the reflection of this information on the outcome would definitely take time. But benefits can be shared for employees and managers. (Singla, 2009, p 47)

This training is not only for employees but also for managers, so they can have stronger communication skills between them. Charles (2007) stated that the basic concept of globalization is based on three waves that integrate countries, then businesses, and finally individuals. Therefore, what we can understand from this is that language not only affects communication but also affects business models.

Nevertheless, differences in language create difference in our thinking. Benjamin Whorf expressed his thoughts about links between language and behavior as follows:

I undertook the task of analyzing many hundreds of reports of circumstances surrounding the start of fires, and in some cases, explosions. My analysis was directed toward purely physical conditions.... But in due course it became evident that not only the physical situation qua physics, but the meaning of the situation, was sometimes a factor, through the behavior of the people, in the start of the fire.... This factor of meaning was most evident when it was a linguistic meaning... (Whorf, 1956, p. 135)

What we can understand from his thinking is that we are the outcome of our thoughts and our thoughts relate to way we speak.

This may create communication problems in a workplace at both micro and macro levels. People in a workplace communicate with each other via emails, formal letters or verbally. The messages will be delivered to the other side in any of these ways. However, 67% of senior executives and managers said their organization's productivity would increase if superiors communicated face-to-face more often. (Launch Workplaces , 2015) Therefore, enhancing verbal communication skills is crucial. Language has a power to unite or divide people. Language is a way of how we express our feelings, thoughts and emotions. If the links between employees are strong via language, success rates and margins go higher. These aspects would take enough attention for business leaders to understand the importance of cross-cultural communication training in their workplace.

### **Language and Culture**

Language is the most powerful tool of communication. Extremely flexible, throughout centuries, it has been demonstrating an incredible capability to evolve and adapt. Since the estimated number of languages is the staggering 5000, we may be confident that they '(...) differ dramatically in terms of how they describe the world'. (Boroditsky 2009, p.1)

According to the work of Boroditsky, language is one of the basic means of communication between people, a nation's legacy and history relates to the language they use. The history of language is also guidance for the future. A common language represents the common fate of the nation.

People who speak the same language share the same history, the same culture, same habits and values. Forms of language and culture takes place at the beginning of the important elements. (Tischauser, 2002, p 7)

According to Risager, (2006) society's culture and our daily habits, emotions, enjoyments and values are expressed through the language we use. Therefore, there is an inevitable link between language and culture.

Values distinguish people, groups and communities from each other. Societal norm can be described as the rules to be observed by people with specific roles. Norms are bases on values and determine what is right and what is wrong for societies and people. These values can be detected in different ways in different countries. Some behaviors can be misunderstood by other cultures For example, a manager in Turkey can visit a sick employee and give her a flower, but this could be differently perceived in another country and might cause some unintentional problems. In order to have effective communication, knowledge of cultural differences plays a crucial role.

(Gudykunst, 2004, p 246)

Many of the misunderstandings between people are caused by miscommunication. Often, even the same language speakers cannot understand each other very well. As mentioned earlier, language is a backbone of cultures. "Trade between individuals is facilitated when all traders share a common culture and language.

A common culture allows individuals to trade with one another without intermediaries." (Lazear, 1999, S97) As discussed in his article, this trade or exchange between individuals in terms of culture and language can be applied to the business world without any problem. These two realities are bound together from the beginning.

Unfortunately, a common mistake is that multinational companies fail to examine the cultures that they are doing business with. An example can enlighten this matter. When a Chinese company representative comes to the United States for a business meeting, American business hosts try to show their hospitality by taking their guest to fine Chinese restaurants. Even though this seems to be very normal, the Chinese businessmen eat Chinese food every day and actually they want to experience real American cuisine. Applebee's, TGI Fridays or a steak house are a few places they hope to go to. At the end of the trip one side thinks that it showed very good hospitality, but the other side thinks the opposite. This type of cultural expectations shapes the road to success or failure in business life.

Language “can shape organizational change processes, information exchange, competitive activities, global coordination, and intra-corporate value creation” (Luo & Shenkar, 2006, p. 321). Their article cited Citigroup as an example of the potential advantages and disadvantages of language barriers due to the fact that almost 60 percent of their employees do not speak English (Luo & Shenkar, 2006, p. 321). In other words, language barriers can be costly for multinational companies. On the other hand, there are some benefits of having language conflicts. If diversity can be tracked, companies can consult their international employees before they decide to enter into new global markets.

Some multinational companies, however, choose to use only one language in all their facilities. Language discrimination is unfair treatment for employees (Workplace Fairness, 2016). Some Germany based companies have manufacturing factories in China and Mexico.

In order to eliminate the misunderstandings and problems of language and cultural differences, these companies require employees to speak and write only in German in their facilities. If the world spoke only English, all of these dilemmas would never exist, but this is something impossible because the world has always been multilingual. The British, for example, forced all the people to speak and write only in English in their conquered countries. If they had removed the essence of the local cultural heritage, maybe they could have succeeded in dominating these countries today. However, in many countries where the British ruled, local languages continued to be spoken by some groups. These groups kept their traditions and customs as well. The British could only change the language to some extent. One reason for this is the difficulty of changing cultures. Therefore, cultures can never be changed completely by others although they can be affected by popular cultures. In order to summarize, constituting the culture would explain the main reasons for differentiation. According to Aycan (1998). culture includes: observable characteristics, such as

- art , clothing, dance, cuisine,
- shared historical past and knowledge,
- political life and political structures,
- architectural monuments and major works of nature,
- organizational structures, social organizations and institutions,
- settlements and the environment,
- educational background,
- customs and traditions,
- ethnics, groups,
- language, dialects,
- beliefs and religion,
- laws, rules and order,

- assumptions,
- values , attitudes and preferences and
- norms and the typical behaviors.

"When the music changes, so does the dance" --African proverb. What this means is cultural and linguistic changes and differences require quick changes in the business world. When we look at the history of the business world in the 1980s companies were adapting to these changes, but in the 1990s with the effects of globalization, trainings for companies became one of the most important matters managers faced. Today, companies not only need to manage technical and financial duties, but also need to manage multinational capital and assets. Therefore, managers of multinational companies had to learn to work with people from different countries. This of course required managers to have better understandings of each other and became accustomed to different methods of thinking. (World bank book, 1997)

There is a famous political humor which explains multicultural management around the world. Paradise is a place where cops are English, cooks are French, mechanics German, lovers Italian, and organizers Swiss. But hell is a place where cops are German, cooks British, mechanics French, lovers Swiss and organizers Italian. This story actually uses a humorous way to convert multinational assets into an advantage. It is all a matter of using the right tools.

According to Vance (2014) multicultural management aims to have mutual logic, language and goals. These aspects must use an integrated approach. Decreasing problems in a workforce can only be done by understanding and utilizing differences, because every culture brings a different perspective and this creates new methods.

According to the work of Grieg we need languages and cultures and we cannot ignore the power of diversity in our lives. However, “for interaction to occur, not only must the means for communication exist, but some degree of commonality must also exist. Without this degree of communality, there is no basis for understanding and interaction” (Grieg, 2002, pg. 226). Therefore, the solution is to understand the factor of diversity in language and culture in business world and find effective ways of communication.

### **Cultural Differences and Communication**

There are different definitions of the concept of culture. This has been the subject of many scientific disciplines. Many researchers have studied on communication and culture and the relationship between them and how it transforms the world, different nations, cultures and backgrounds. (Schirato & Yell, 2000)

This shows us that one of the most common problems of multinational companies is cultural difference-related issues. Therefore, in terms of solving such issues, knowledge of cross-cultural communication is very important. Problems related to cultural differences themselves are not an issue for human resources. It is a matter that organizations need to answer directly. These global differences needed to be thought to managers periodically and particularly when the company enters into a new country.

According to Woods (2010) Cultural differences have always been studied. Most companies now realize the importance of teaching this subject, because situations always change in the global business world.

Earning profits and high margins are the ultimate goal, but in business life we first must convince of others our friendship and positive attitude. Regardless of whether our product is best, people tend to do business with others they easily understand. Therefore, understanding how people's minds shape their perceptions differently from one another and how Easterners and Westerners see things is important.

Huang (2010) says, the United States has always attract foreigners because of it is beauties and opportunities. This unification, maybe a melting pot, gathered people all around the world. At first glance Americans might seem rugged aggressive individuals on negotiation with others. However, this is a sign of being straightforward and come to the point approach. Americans are generally frank, light hearted, confident and risk-taker individuals. As much as they value the time, productivity and obeying the rules of society, they also don't pay too much attention to rules of society, rituals and formality.

All of this aspects can be explained as American nation is young nation compare to other nations. These values made American culture very popular and currency valuable. World communicates with each other in English. This explains the success itself. When Chinese culture compared with American culture, differences can be seen notably. (Huang, 2010)

'The Chinese look upon time as elastic, which can be stretched or contracted depending on the circumstances. Punctuality is not important, long delays are sometimes necessary before taking action. As the Chinese saying goes "Think twice before you act", although it might take them too long to think twice.' (Huang, 2010)

## Culture and Management

According to Yell (2000), people differ from one another in terms of:

- Gender
- Sexual preference
- Age
- Religion
- Occupation
- Wealth
- Political affiliation
- Entertainment interests
- Social values
- Ethnicity
- Educational qualifications and
- Cross-cultural experiences

Yell continues ‘that communication practices are always informed by and produce within cultural contexts and those cultural practices and the contexts that produce and constrain them, are closely connected to the notion of cultural literacy, which can be understood as both: a familiarity with the rules and conventions of a culture; and a feel for negotiating those rules and conventions’

What we can understand from this is that cultural habits directly affect the way our decisions and decision making are done. Some cultures require to be modest and some cultures value being upfront.

In order to manage successfully in multinational companies, managing people from different cultures depends on creating a common cultural environment, which must be made by working together.

According to Gibson (1997), this common culture can be created by analyzing human nature. We all have similar DNA with slight differences. He suggests that we have to start looking for an answer from what we have in common.

For people from different backgrounds in multinational companies, agreeing on shared values even with cultural differences takes attention. Giant multinational companies, such as Coca Cola, Sony, General Motors and Microsoft regularly organize events to gather managers from all around the world so they can interact and exchange their experiences. Regular rotation from one country to another teaches managers how to minimize cultural problems. (Lewis, 2011 p 193)

Some multicultural companies use slogans that are effective globally. These slogans are united and reduce cultural barriers. Language, religion and nationality move to the background and lose their importance.

Examples are:

- The Power of All of Us by eBay
- A Real Company in a Virtual World by Amazon.com
- Because You're Worth It by L'Oréal
- Solutions for a Small Planet by IBM
- World is yours by Good Year
- Connecting People by Nokia
- Where Dreams Come True by Disney
- The Power of Dreams by Honda
- The Choice of the New Generation by Pepsi
- Drivers wanted by Volkswagen
- Intelligence Everywhere by Motorola
- The World On Time by FedEx
- Good Food. Good Life by Nestle

Creating a strong bond among people from multiple cultures can only be done by uniting around our mutual values. We live in a world where intercultural interaction increases every day; the large number of multicultural organizations try to catch up with this flow. (Leavitt, 2003)

Management is a part of how we act. According to Davenport (1910, pg. 166) we get our personal characters from our past. These features have been transferred to us via our ancestors. Traits like being angry, being talkative, being moody, etc., all are part of our genes. What shapes the culture is individuals' behaviors. For example, street cats are known to have a wild side. This is because in order to survive in difficult conditions they have to be tough. When we adopt a kitten from the street and keep him inside only and never let him interact with other cats, we will experience some wild behaviors such as scratching. The reason for this is in the genes that were transferred from the mother. The same thing applies for all living beings. When it comes to management, customs and cultural rules affect it directly.

According to Cultural Savvy (2010), the Chinese will state their last name first, followed by the given name, which may be one or two syllables. For example, Liu Jianguo, in Chinese, would be Mr. Jianguo Liu using the Western style. Never call someone by only his or her last name, unless specifically asked to; do not call someone by his or her first name. Calling people the right name or title is important in every culture.

Also arguing with someone who has a higher position is considered rude and disrespectful in Chinese culture. But in American culture, an “argue for your right as long as you believe you are right” mentality is common. Another factor that needs to be mentioned is the hierarchy of power. In Chinese companies, this is an unwritten rule that everyone accepts and obeys. But in American culture people rely on written rules and act upon them. Culture means differences and this project aims to point out and compare all types of problems that were caused by language culture and customs differenced in cross-cultural training.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

The main goal of this Independent Learning Project is to show the reader that changes in multicultural companies can be improved by cross-cultural training. I wanted to use the Chinese culture as an example, because people from such an old and strong culture can have communication problems in Western companies. American culture is a very different from Chinese culture so training it may be useful to focus on the interactions between the two cultures.

There are many sources on cross-cultural education and the importance of it. However, it was necessary to establish training for managers who have already had trouble with this matter. Based on information gathered from books, websites, surveys and interviews, I tried to address the issues and solutions. Outcomes from this ILP can be a guide for the upcoming projects.

Cross-cultural communication is a broad topic. There are many written articles, books and blogs about this topic. I narrowed my research by focusing on cultural differences between Chinese and American parts of the world, because each represented different cultural features. I used keywords such as importance of cultural differences, management and language, problems of 20<sup>th</sup> century companies, managing in a global economy and Chinese culture vs American culture. Using these and other keywords, I tried to collect as much as information as possible.

The methods of collecting written information differed from one another. Most of this information was gathered from the Boston Public Library and Cambridge College Online Library. Some of the information was retrieved from internet with citations.

First data collection a method used was a survey. Respondents from different companies enriched the data and outcomes of this research. Because companies in different fields have different agendas, goals, projects, problems and cross-cultural issues. Questions of the survey focused on gathering information about the respondent's multicultural experiences, ideas about biggest barriers in American companies with Chinese companies and what would improve Chinese–American business interactions. Survey was sent out as a Word attachment to an email to a sample of managers, the researcher knew. Each respondent sent their answers in Word attachment. The researcher reported their answers question by question, followed by an analysis of the overall survey results. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Second method used while working on this project was to do interviews. Information was gathered from people who are already in the multinational business world, who shared their experiences. Interview questions were designed to address common and specific issues in the workplace. This interview has many benefits such as reaching out quickly to managers and employees in a very short time. Researcher visited them in their offices and took notes during the interviews, then prepared a transcript of the interview notes. Their answers were compared with each other, noting where they agreed and where they differed. Overall findings from the interviews were discussed. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

## Chapter Four: Survey & Interviews and Analysis

### The Survey:

The total number of respondents to the survey was 5 and they were picked from different companies and sectors.

- MERL, Mitsubishi Electric Research and Development center (2 people).
- State Street Financials (1 person).
- Sweet Story LLC (1 person).
- Siraeva International Consulting Company (1 person).

The survey Questions were sent to participants via email in Word format. Their answers were also received in Word format.

Participants answered each question as follows:

#### *1. Position in the company:*

1. Business Development Manager. Domestic and International
2. Senior Principal Researcher
3. Cofounder
4. Fund Accounting Manager
5. Senior Business Strategist

#### *2. Number of years with the company:*

6, 13, 5, 6.5, 2 years.

3. How frequently does your company engage in direct business with Chinese companies?

Never            Rarely (1)      Sometimes      (1)      Often (2)      Very Often (1)

4. Which type of business best describes the company to which you belong?

Sales (1)

Manufacturing (3)

Financial (1)

5. Rate the greatest barriers faced when communicating with Chinese companies from 1-5, with 1 being the least effective barrier and 5 being the greatest barrier to communication.

Language barrier	5-3-5-3-3:19
Cultural differences	3-4-4-5-3:19
Gender differences	1-1-3-3-4:12
Physical distance	4-1-2-1-4:12
Status differences	2-1-1-1-4:11

6. Rate the following items in terms of their importance to business communication between your company and a Chinese company on a scale of 1-5: 1 is the least important and 5 is the most important

Similar management Structure	2-3-3-1-3:12
Common language	5-3-1-5-2:16
Similar Culture/customs	2-4-5-5-1:17
Comparable Business goals	5-4-2-5-5:21
Willingness to accommodate	3-4-4-5-5:21

7. Rate the best means to improve communication with Chinese companies based upon your position using a scale of 1 through 5, where 1 is least important and 5 is more important.

Translator	4-1-1-5-5:16
A Diverse workforce	5-3-2-5-2:17
Cultural training	5-4-4-5-5:23
Language training	4-3-5-5-4:21
Management communication	4-4-3-5-5:21



### **Analyzes of the Survey**

Five people filled out the survey. They were all high level managers in a variety of disciplines. They all worked for their companies for at least 5 years. Half of them worked for manufacturing firms while the rest are in sales and financial businesses.

They stated that the greatest barriers in communicating with Chinese companies were language barrier and cultural differences.

They said the most important thing in business communication between them and Chinese companies were comparable business goals and willingness to accommodate.

Finally they suggested the best ways to improve communication were cultural training, then language training and management communication. Survey responders emphasized cultural and language differences as the biggest problems and best ways to improve communication with the Chinese companies. In addition, they pointed out that the American and Chinese companies should have comparable business goals and willingness to accommodate, which can be addressed by management communication.

In summary, managers in the survey conveyed to us, they believe that cross-cultural training would be an important way to improve their work with Chinese companies.

## The Interviews

Zafer Sahinoglu - Senior Business Strategist MERL ([zafer@merl.com](mailto:zafer@merl.com))

1. *What is your position, ethnic background and length of your work with this company?*

I am from Turkey. I have been living in the states since 1997. I have worked for Mitsubishi Electric Research and Development Center (MERL) for 15 years. My current position is senior Business Strategist.

2. *What do you do for this company? How many people work under your division? Their background?*

I lead the innovation team. Me and my team constantly try to find some new technological solutions. My team has nine members, eight of them from United States and one of them is from China.

3. *Have you ever heard about Cross-cultural training?*

Not in this term. But I am aware of similar trainings. Actually, we never thought of such trainings in Mitsubishi. Because we never had to deal with problems that is related with cultural differences.

4. *Have you ever had to face on a cultural misunderstood related problem in your workplace? How did you solve it?*

I actually had a problem when I was in Mitsubishi office in Japan. It was time related issue. Japanese people care for time management even more than Americans do. I was late for a meeting for only 3 minutes and they brought it up kind of warned me. But over here in America, people can be late for few minutes even for 5 minutes.

Another experience I had was, in Japan, you cannot express your thoughts to other party if your manager is with you. He has to give you permission to speak. But here in America, people can speak and share their thoughts regardless of who they are with. These were a very interesting few experience I gained in Japan.

5. *Have you ever felt that you can't express yourself clearly or the way you want to others in a workplace?*

Not at all. Because America is based on immigrants. That means no matter where you go, you find someone culturally different from you. I think this is a beautiful fact. I believe this makes America great place to live and work. But I had a lost in translation in Japan and it was a very useful experience.

6. *Do you agree that companies should create or update to approach toward this issue? What could be the solutions?*

I think that companies should take solutions to boost interactions between employees. My six month business trip to Japan has left significant remarks on my cultural experiences. Similar exchange programs could be done within different divisions. We call it shuffling.

7. *Do you agree that Cross-cultural values and behavior influence business interactions?*

I strongly agree. Because I believe in education and regardless of all type of trainings will bring advantages in every aspect. If communication between employees increase, creativity would also increase.

8. *Would you rather work with people who culturally same people or in a international group?*

I really enjoy working with people who has a different background. This teaches all of us something. I would not only work with my own people. Not because I sense anything bad, I just like to learn different things from different people. When we look at the international companies diversity, we can see that colorful structure also help to get into new markets. Because there is always someone within the company from that targeted market.

9. *If you were to be the CEO of your company, would you make any changes regarding these cultural barriers?*

This is a research and development laboratory. I would merge all the divisions so they can have a closer and better idea of what is actually happening in the lab. This would help to create new technologies.

10. *Do you think Cross-cultural training is somewhat different than other giving trainings?*

Other training courses simple can be done via online. Real interaction, face to face communication and training would be a better and more reliable way to teach this training.

Ye Wang – Research Scientist MERL ([yewang@merl.com](mailto:yewang@merl.com))

1. *What is your position, ethnic background and length of your work with this company?*

I work here as a research scientist. I was born in China but I moved to states when I was 1 years old. So basically I am an American. I have been working here for 3 years now.

2. *What do you do for this company? How many people work under your division? Their background?*

I manage the information security and privacy of the laboratories. I am by myself here but I have consultant, I meet him once a week. Also every summer I hire an intern from Boston University.

3. *Have you ever heard about Cross-cultural training?*

Not really. But I assume this training is for culturally diverse companies. Mitsubishi is somewhat diverse company.

4. *Have you ever had to face on a cultural misunderstood related problem in your workplace? How did you solve it?*

Actually I never faced any issue before. But people always ask me where I am from and sometimes I have to give them little information about my background.

5. *Have you ever felt that you can't express yourself clearly or the way you want to others in a workplace?*

I never had any trouble communicating with people but in terms of explaining technical matters, I have had some difficulties to express myself.

6. *Do you agree that companies should create or update to approach toward this issue? What could be the solutions?*

Here in Mitsubishi, I do not see any problem in regards to this issue, because we are multinational company. Most of staff we hire has already experience so human resource never had to deal with such issues.

7. *Are you agreeing that Cross-cultural values and behavior influence business interactions?*

I am a technical guy; I would not know from the business perspective. But I believe that right communication always pays off.

8. *Would you rather work with people who culturally same people or in a international group?*

I never thought about it but I can work with whomever as long as they know what they are doing. I prefer to work with people who are good at what are they doing.

9. *If you were to be the CEO of your company, would you make any changes regarding this cultural barriers?*

Mitsubishi is fine as it is. I would not make any changes regarding to address this issue. I don't see any problems.

10. *Do you think Cross-cultural training is somewhat different than other giving trainings?*

I believe it is different than other trainings. Because technical trainings for instance, always need to update themselves. Technical staff also needs to update their knowledge. Otherwise it would create big problems for divisions.

## Analysis of the Interviews

Both interviewees had a similar background and work for MERL (Mitsubishi Research and Development Center). Zafer has worked for 15 years and Ye for 3 years. They work for different divisions and have different hierarchical levels. Ye a technical professional and Zafer is the head of innovations. Both of them have technical backgrounds. Zafer has a PhD and his team of 9 people creates innovative solutions. Ye work for himself and he is in charge of the cyber security of online data.

Neither of them works directly with customers and they did not face cross-cultural problems in their workplace. But Zafer mentioned his experience when he was in Japan. This “lost in translation” experience was unique for him. After he returned from his 6 months-long trip, he suggested that shuffling staff to other countries within the company must be applied more frequently.

One of the differences between the interviewees was that they come from different cultural backgrounds. Zafer spoke Turkish with me sometimes during the interview, because he was born and raised in Turkey. This shared language and background helped both of us to express our feelings in a much better way. Ye was born in China but moved to the United States when he was a baby. From his family he knows the main characteristics of Chinese culture. Having been raised within the American culture helped him to distinguish the cultural differences.

Both of the interviewees were aware of the importance of cross-cultural training but they have not had bad experiences in the company. Hopefully this ILP and the interviews created awareness on both interviewees and if they ever face Cross-cultural related issues, they can seek this training for their workforce.

## Chapter Five: Plan for Cross-Cultural Training

This chapter gives the reader an idea of how cross-cultural training can be done by creating an example. The basic idea and structure of this project have been modified with information combined from the literature review, survey and interviews. This training is for managers who work for multinational companies and goal is to its increase their understanding of cultural differences and their ability to confront related problems. This training is most useful for managers who work in countries with different cultures. Most of professionals within the business world have their own way of solving problems. However, if they had professional training in cross-cultural interactions, solving problems would become easier and take less time.

Trainers for this project should be from a professional training and consulting company specializing in teaching cross-cultural skills and related topics. Trainers must be informed about the positions and responsibilities of the attendees and where they were originally from and which culture they belong to. However, trainers should not be informed about the hierarchical levels of attendees so everyone can be treated equally and trainers can do their teaching stress-free. At the end of this training, attendees should receive a certificate of completion. From this training attendees will be able to:

- Notice cultural differences among people;
- Deal with related problems;
- React skillfully and handle cultural and language differences;
- Learn about their own cultural features and characteristics; and
- Use the learnings and training for their personal life.

Attendees will expand their knowledge of world history and geography. They will experience the significant relationship between language and the person's way of thinking and making decisions. They will also see the important role of cultural history in management. In the training attendees will experience role plays, games, tests and new opportunities to try cross-cultural interactions.



**Poster for Cross-Cultural Training**

# CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING

## FOR MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- ▮ **INCREASE EFFECTIVENES IN MARKETING**
- ▮ **IMPROVE NEGOTIATION SKILLS**
- ▮ **MANAGE EMPLOYEES BETTER**
- ▮ **GET YOUR MESSAGE RIGHT**
- ▮ **END YOUR COMMUNICATION ISSUES**
- ▮ **AVOID MISINTERPRETATIONS**

**Be better at Presentations, Emails, Meetings and Face to Face Conversations.**

**Day 1:** How culture relates to Management  
 Know who you are and where you come from  
 Cross-Cultural situations  
 Critical problems in work environment

**Day 2:** Communication among Cultures  
 Role play; you be me, me be you  
 Related case study  
 Team building and conflict management  
 Practicing learnings

\*Our Professional Trainers have over 10 years of experience.  
 Contact info: [esatgok@gmail.com](mailto:esatgok@gmail.com)

*"Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn."  
 Benjamin Franklin*

## Chapter Six: Conclusions

Financially surviving in today's world becomes harder every day. The business world is a reflective window to financial freedom. Reaching for high benefits has become the number one priority for multinational companies. Crossing borders, in other words leaving the local zone become inevitable for companies. This, of course has brought many problems; one of the most known of them is cultural problems. Even though this seems to be only disadvantage, this actually can be turned into an advantage. Companies need to pay close attention to this issue and take necessary actions.

Globalization requires companies to learn to manage people with different backgrounds and cultures. In order to accomplish it, the following goals have to be addressed:

- Creativity in strategies
- Ability to adapt to new situations
- The sensitivity to different cultures
- Ability to work with multicultural teams
- Ability to learn and understand the language
- Better understanding of international marketing
- Effort to understand international differences.

Every teaching implies the importance of education, because our existence started with knowledge. A key to knowledge is education and most of us relate success to better education. There are many forms and methods of education. People educate themselves by talking with each other's, sharing with others, and reading of others. We are in a process of learning 24/7. Education and learning new things are not enough in themselves. Applying knowledge into our lives is also important. We also have to constantly renew and update our level of knowledge.

In general, successful multinational companies have one thing in common: training and educating employees. This process has to happen because there are many different cultures in this world and every market has its own business methods. The best way to adapt and answer these realities is to give necessary training courses to the employees. Not only employees, but also managers have to know these basic aspects of cultural training and pass them along to their employees. This also shapes the multicultural corporate culture.

This project's cross-cultural training was created to help professionals in the global business world. Regardless of how many years of experiences have been accumulated, information always has to be updated. Some experiences are earned from mistakes we make. Some of them are taught to us. In order to keep up with aspects of global life, knowledge has to expand. This cross-cultural training focused on two great cultures: Chinese and American. By comparing the differences of these cultures, possible misunderstandings were pointed out, cultural problems were addressed and creative solutions were discussed.

## Chapter Seven: Statement of Learning

This ILP project has become a milestone for my life. I registered in Cambridge College for my bachelor's degree in 2004. After my graduation, I realized the importance of a master's degree. So with no hesitation I enrolled in Cambridge College for my Master's in Management degree. My classmates graduated in 2011 but I had to be in Turkey at that time. Therefore, I could not complete my ILP then. Recently I came back to the United States for only this purpose.

All those years I always felt incomplete, because any start without a finish never exists. I am so happy at this moment that I am finally completing my ILP. Hopefully teachings and findings from this project will guide other professionals throughout their education. ILP projects or any other thesis projects are very useful for students to show what they learned during their studies.

My training-related topic showed me that regardless of wherever or whenever, education is a golden key for us. This project taught me to finish projects on time and by myself. Time is a golden asset; it is a present. Showing special appreciation for it and using it wisely are valuable for us. Unfortunately, generally we understand the importance of three things after we lose them: youth, time and health. We know the importance of all three aspects but we pay very little attention to acting accordingly. Now I will be able manage my time effectively and, when I need to find information about a special matter, I will be able to know how to research it.

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### Appendix A: Survey Questions

Thank you for taking this survey. My name is Mustafa Esat Gok and I am a student of Cambridge College School of Management. This survey is being used to learn more about the communication habits of individuals who represent companies that engage in multinational business relations with Chinese companies. The goal is to develop a form of cross-cultural communications training that will be used to create more favorable communication techniques between western business and China.

Your responses will be solely used for the sake of a research assignment and will be kept confidential with no information linking them to a specific individual. When you are finished with this survey, please return it to the email from which it originated.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

1. Position in the company: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Number of years with the company: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How frequently does your company engage in direct business with Chinese companies?

Never                  Rarely                  Sometimes                  Often                  Very Often

4. Which type of business best describes the company to which you belong?

- Legal
- Sales
- Marketing
- Manufacturing
- Shipping

5. Rate the greatest barriers faced when communicating with Chinese companies, From 1-5, with 1 being the least effective barrier and 5 being the greatest barrier to communication.

- Language barrier                  \_\_\_\_\_
- Cultural differences              \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender differences                \_\_\_\_\_
- Physical distance                 \_\_\_\_\_
- Status differences                 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Rate the following items in terms of their importance to business communication between your company and a Chinese company on a scale of 1-5: 1 is the least important and 5 is the most important

- Similar management Structure \_\_\_\_\_
- Common language \_\_\_\_\_
- Similar Culture/customs \_\_\_\_\_
- Comparable Business goals \_\_\_\_\_
- Willingness to accommodate \_\_\_\_\_

7. Rate the best means to improve communication with Chinese companies based upon your position using a scale of 1 through 5, where 1 is least important and 5 is more important.

- Translators \_\_\_\_\_
- A Diverse workforce \_\_\_\_\_
- Cultural training \_\_\_\_\_
- Language training \_\_\_\_\_
- Management communication \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. *What is your position, ethnic background and length of your work with this company?*
2. *What do you do for this company? How many people work under your division? Their background?*
3. *Have you ever heard about Cross-cultural training?*
4. *Have you ever had to face on a cultural misunderstood related problem in your workplace? How did you solve it?*
5. *Have you ever felt that you can't express yourself clearly or the way you want to others in a workplace?*
6. *Do you agree that companies should create or update to approach toward this issue? What could be the solutions?*
7. *Are you agreeing that Cross-cultural values and behavior influence business interactions?*
8. *Would you whether work with people who culturally same people or in a international group?*
9. *If you were to be the CEO of your company, would you make any changes regarding this cultural barriers?*
10. *Do you think Cross-cultural training is somewhat different than other giving trainings?*

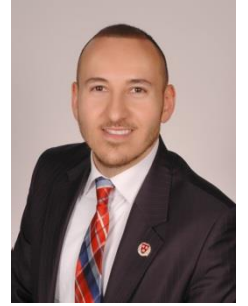
## Resume

### Mustafa Esat GÖK

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✉ mustafa.gok09@go.cambridgecollege.edu



### PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Date of Birth and Place** : 11/08/1982 Ankara  
**Marital Status** : Single  
**Military Duty** : Completed (2012)

I have worked for different variety of companies within the USA and Turkey for over 13 years and I am well versed with the communication demands of an entity working for conservation. I am highly skilled in building and strengthening connections between employees, grantees and the public in general in order to bring about strategic leadership for internal communications and drive change management. Additionally my collaboration, facilitation and communication skills are excellent for the management positions. Furthermore my previous work experiences enable me to have success as a part of a dynamic team.

### EDUCATION

<b>2008-Expected to finish June 2016</b>	<b>CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE</b>	Cambridge, MA -USA
	Master of Management in Business (MBA)	
<b>2005-2007</b>	<b>CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE</b>	Cambridge, MA -USA
	Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	
<b>2002-2004</b>	<b>QUINCY COLLEGE</b>	Quincy, MA -USA
	Associate of Science in Business Administration	
<b>1993-1999</b>	<b>KADIKÖY İMAM HATİP LİSESİ (High School)</b>	İstanbul - TR

**WORK EXPERIENCE****ENGLISH TIME LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

Corporate Sales Manager

**İstanbul - TR**

July 2014 – September 2015

- English Time is an international group of language schools with branches in London and Turkey (28 branches). We provide high quality English courses, combining academic tuition (grammar, writing etc.) and practical skills (presentation and job interview training) in small, lively classes. As a corporate sales manager I am responsible for the overall achievement of a company's sales goals, for hiring and managing the company's sales force, projecting annual sales, tracking sales performance and interacting with other areas of the company to ensure that business orders are executed properly and profitably.

**TURK TELEKOM HEADQUARTERS**

Department of Customer Experience Management

**İstanbul - TR**

June 2013 – December 2013

- Examining data, feedback, and research pertaining to the sale or cancel of goods from Telekom.
- Working closely with the marketing or advertising department to develop advertising campaigns according to the customer's desires and needs.
- Dealing more with customer satisfaction in the long term, as well as strategies that turn customers into advocates and built-in advertisers.
- Facilitating the development of the accountability action chain, establishing the approaches and implementation of research to understand customer loyalty and return it into investment.

**T-MOBILE & CUSTOM WIRELESS**

Customer Relations and Sales Representative

**Boston, MA-USA**

January 2006 - September 2008

- Maintaining a specific and primary focus on assisting and enhancing sales of units in all store activities.
- Training retail sales reps and back office corporate sales reps on the benefits and features of the products.
- Developing ongoing customer relationships, enhancing future, seasonal and special sales.
- Sales activity planning, including reviewing existing customer files to identify sales opportunities.

## **CERTIFICATES AND MEMBERSHIPS**

- Harvard University - 3 MBA courses taken  
Managing in a Global Economy / Financial Accounting / Marketing Management
- United States Small Business Administration: (Guide to Winning Customers)  
05.16.2010 – Massachusetts State Government
- Former President of Junior Chamber International (JCI) – İstanbul Megapol branch
- Founder membership of Turkish Student Association of Harvard University
- Founder President of Cambridge College International Student Association
- Worked with Former US President Bill Clinton during elections in 2008 - USA
- General consultant of TUMBIAD (All Bureaucrat 's and Businessmen's Association for Social Solidarity – İstanbul)
- Member of Young Birlik Vakfi
- Founder of a weekly radio show on [www.buradyo.com](http://www.buradyo.com) - İstanbul

## **OTHERS**

- Foreign language: Fluent in English, intermediate arabic.
- Advance in computing, Microsoft works; MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint.
- Soccer, swimming and gym.

## **REFERENCES**

### **Ahmet Gok**

Former General Manager of Istanbul Ulasim AS.  
Former Secretary General of Ilim Yayma Cemiyeti.  
Secretary General of Railways Association. (RAYDER)  
E-mail: ahmetgok99@gmail.com

### **Doc.Dr. Kahraman Emmioglu**

Former Secretary General of Istanbul Municipality.  
Former President of Ilim Yayma Cemiyeti.  
TBMM 20th Term Member of Turkish Grand National Assembly.  
E-mail: kemmioglu@hotmail.com

### **Ismail Kahraman**

President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey  
Former Republic of Turkey Minister for Culture. (54th.Government)  
Principal President of Birlik Vakfi. (Foundation)