

THE ROLE OF A CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN FINNISH AND CHINESE PARTNERS CASE: Kone Corporation

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The Role of a Cross-Cultural Training Program in Interpersonal Communications between Finnish and Chinese Partners. Case: Kone Corporation

Objective of the study

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of a cross-cultural training program in interpersonal communications between Finnish and Chinese partners. In particular, the specific research questions are the following: What are considered in the case study to be the main cultural differences in Finnish and Chinese business communication? What are the key points of a cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation that help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners? What are the recommendations to be considered in organizing cross-cultural training processes in Kone Corporation in order to improve interpersonal communication between Finns and Chinese?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The data for this qualitative single case study was collected from a cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation, Finland. The research method consists of six semi-structured and five email interviews with English trainer of a consulting company, Finnish HR managers/specialists and employees of Kone, a Chinese manager who is working in Finland, and a Chinese PhD student of HSE. The theoretical framework of this study was based on Vihakara's (2006) framework of comparing Finnish and Chinese managers, but it has been modified by adding cross-cultural training program as a tool to help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners.

Findings and Conclusions

Four cultural differences as answers to research question one are related to (1) directness of communication, (2) face saving and hierarchy, (3) masculinity vs. femininity and individualism vs. collectivism and (4) attitudes towards knowledge sharing. The key points of a good cross-cultural training program to research question two are: attracting employees involved in international operations to participate; speeding up employees' adaptation to a new culture; using the tailored coaching method and theories; in addition providing a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback about the usefulness of the program. In the end, two recommendations can be given to answer last research question: first, develop the diversity of the contents for the program; second, group the participants using different criteria (not only nationality).

Keywords

Finnish communication, Chinese communication, international business communication, cultural differences, interpersonal communication, cross-cultural training.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Business has gone global. Even small businesses find themselves working more and more with foreign suppliers, buyers, experts and partners (Longatan, 2008). Culture, as one of key issues in international business communications, needs to be considered seriously and sufficient time needs to be allotted to learning interpersonal communications across cultural boundaries. According to Jia, Lu and Heisey (2002), the study of cross-cultural communication has continued to be the focus of Chinese study of human communication, since its first introduction in the early 1980s. My experience confirms the globally shared view that Finland is a very advanced country and that education, training and communications are strongly emphasized. Hence, the motivation comes up to my mind to keep studying people relationships and cross-cultural business communication between Finns and Chinese.

Differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures do exist, due to a number of reasons, including education. These differences sometimes cause cultural misunderstandings. According to Payne (2009), cross-cultural training adapted to international business demands is increasingly being viewed as a valid and necessary method in enhancing cross-cultural communication and interpersonal relationships between colleagues. The Finland-based company Kone has a cross-cultural training program which has been chosen as the case study for this thesis to explore the role of a cross-cultural training in interpersonal communications between Finnish and Chinese partners.

Studying international business communications in the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) and living in Finland as a Chinese for about three years has given me a precious opportunity to learn about cultural differences between Finland and China. The field of interpersonal communications between Finns and Chinese has not been explored widely and especially not from the cross-cultural training programme's perspective; consequently, interesting findings from the empirical research of this study can be

expected.

During the process of writing this thesis, I have appreciated selfless help from my fellow students at HSE and my Chinese friends who have abundant experience in Finnish/Chinese communications. I would also like to express my thanks to colleagues at Kone Corporation, who showed interest in my research. Finally, my thanks go to the HR managers and specialists whom I interviewed and who made this thesis possible.

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to Selmer (2005), China is an important market for international enterprises. Foreign capital has poured into China on a large scale over the last two decades. Even today the Chinese market has retained a considerable attraction for international business. Although Finland is a small Nordic country compared with the vast territory of China, the two countries started business cooperation in 1953, when China and Finland signed the Inter-Governmental Trade and Payment Agreement. It was the first one of its kind between China and a western country. In addition, as Lahtinen (2006) stated, Finland is active in the field of education and training, research and culture. Finland has a long-term history of cultural cooperation with developing countries, such as China. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC in 2003 stated that Finland established a cultural relationship with China in 1980.

According to Black and Mendenhall (1990), increased internationalization in the economic, political, and social arenas has led to a greater frequency of, and depth in, cross-cultural interactions; that is, contacts between two or more people from different cultural backgrounds. As Huang (2004) stated, cross-cultural communication refers to communication between people of different cultures. The cultural values are significant for individuals, corporations and countries because they help people understand psychological thinking of others, the norms of business enterprises, and the way to establish relationships with other nations. Cross-cultural communication is a multidisciplinary field of study with roots in anthropology, sociology, psychology, and linguistics, among other disciplines. Consequently, Huang (2004) pointed out that it is important to enhance people's skills in a fundamentally important area: cross-cultural communication skills in the international context.

Mari (2000) identifies that the historical development has made China and Finland have quite many cultural differences. Similarly, many differences can be found in interpersonal communication. In the present day China, hierarchy, masculine

domination, respect of age, bureaucracy, importance of interpersonal relationships and saving face are important characteristics. It reflects the fact that Chinese society respects pecking order, the lofty status of men and elder people, as well as people relationships. How well you can get along with people is considered a very important skill in interpersonal communication. On the other hand, Finns endeavor to timetables and other plans faithfully and expect the same from others. Finns are careful and gathering background information in advance, they make decisions quickly. Power distances are low and men and women equal. There is a desire to solve conflicts by negotiation, seeking a result that is the best possible for all parties (Infopankki, 2005). These characteristics imply that the western, individual-based culture in Finnish society is emphasizing flexible distribution of responsibility as well as importance of negotiation for people relationships.

Research (e.g. Fathom, 2002; Koivisto, 1993) shows that Finns and Chinese have different working cultures. Fathom (2002) stated that studies have shown that Chinese are generally more comfortable working in environments, where job descriptions and lines of reporting are clearly defined, and where relationships between superiors and subordinates are formal and distant. In comparison, Koivisto (1993) argued that the most important protestant influences in Finland are individualistic self-concept: clear emphasis on work as value, as well as direct and explicit low-context communication style. He summarizes that self-esteem is very important to everybody in Finland. Moreover, Finns are used to quite a direct way of thinking and speaking, because honesty and transparency are highly respected. Ministry of Trade and Industry of Finland (2006) holds a similar opinion with Koivisto that the Finnish working culture is based on equality. In working life, diligence, individuality and initiativeness are highly valued, together with strict observance of agreements and agreed schedules.

The comparison between Chinese and Finnish cultures implies that cultural differences may cause problems in work-related interactions, thus making people relationships not always successful and effective. Also a cultural shock, even cultural conflicts, may

disturb the interaction on business trips to foreign countries, as well as bring trouble to those employees from different cultural backgrounds but working within one organization. According to Coupland and Wiemann (1991), 'miscommunication' is the term to interpret the reason of problems occurring in the working place. It is usually applied very loosely to any sort of problem that might arise in interaction. They pointed out that a sound interaction among people and the development of relationships are essential to international business communication. Consequently, communication problems should be eliminated or settled by using cross-cultural training as an auxiliary tool.

Kwintessential (2009) says that cross-cultural consciousness is very important to the employees working in global companies, since it enables them to be sensitive about the differences among different cultures. This consciousness can be improved systematically through cross-cultural training. Cross-cultural training deals with the manifestations of culture in the workplace and it has many applications. Its main purpose is to evaluate and constructively tackle the challenges cross cultural differences can bring to the workplace. According to James (2009), the enlightened multinational company recognizes the need to provide general cross-cultural training for all their employees and country-specific training for those who are working with a single country. Moreover, as Smith (2008) stated, interpersonal communication skills play a big role in the corporate communications process. The assessment of these skills is an effective way to discover individual and team strengths in communication. Ellis (2002) also pointed out that now it is the time to strive for measures of competence in the entire sub skills of cross-cultural communication in order to enhance interpersonal relationship.

It is valuable to investigate the role of a cross-cultural training program in interpersonal communication, because the 'norms, roles, rules, customs, understandings and expectations' of interactions in people relationships are primarily defined and transmitted by culture (Berscheid, 1995). As a consequence, Finns working in international companies such as Kone, need to learn about Chinese interpersonal

communication by participating in a cross-cultural training program. It is also of interest to gain deeper and more detailed understandings by studying one case company. According to Karmel (2008), acquiring cultural competence is a lifelong process that can be assisted by the formalization of guidelines and criteria for the provision of cross-cultural training. To explore the role a cross-cultural training program, it is better to find a real case in digging out the phenomenon and analyzing the data. The Finland-based but international company Kone Corporation which has plenty of businesses with China is a good case to study.

1.1 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of a cross-cultural training program organized by the case company Kone in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners. To meet the purpose of thesis, the study focuses on the following three research questions:

- (1) Based on the case study, what are considered to be the main cultural differences in Finnish and Chinese business communication?
- (2) What are the key points of a cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation that help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners?
- (3) What are the suggestions to be considered in organizing cross-cultural training processes in Kone Corporation in order to improve interpersonal communication between Finns and Chinese?

The thesis will introduce the cross-cultural training program in operation by Kone Corporation in recent years and use the writer's own experience to analyze the data. The answer to the first research question will outline the working behaviours of Finns and Chinese in order to summarize cultural differences. The answers to the second research question will introduce the pattern and methods used in the cross-cultural training program run by HR department, Kone Corporation. Then find the key points of a good cross-cultural training program.

Based on the two research questions stated above, the answers to the third research question which aims at giving recommendations for improving interpersonal communication, also come from analyzing Kone cross-cultural training program. In addition, valuable information may emerge in identifying present cultural differences between Finnish and Chinese communicators.

1.2 Case company and cross-cultural training program

The case company of this thesis is Kone Corporation, Finland. Kone Corporation was founded in 1910 and is headquartered in Espoo, Finland. Kone is the fourth largest manufacturer of elevators worldwide and a leading manufacturer of escalators. It also provides maintenance services and modernization solutions in 800 locations in over 40 countries (www.kone.com). Since founding its first Chinese factory in 1998, Kone has become one of the country's top elevator and escalator suppliers. Kone Corporation is chosen as the case company since it has been developing very fast and is now one of the top elevator and escalator suppliers in China with over 30 branches, about 100 depots and over 3,200 employees (www.kone.com).

The HR department of Kone has run a 'cross-cultural training program' since 2006, which is open to all the employees who feel it is necessary to participate in this course. The designer of all the course contents is an English-speaking consultant from a consulting company, but now Kone HR managers are in charge of this program. According to research of Caligiuri (2001) and Gudykunst (1996), the cultural familiarization training could range from brief introductions of less than one day to intensive orientations of several days or a week. The format of this training program is a two-day workshop on general cultural competence development followed by two one-day workshops with approximately four weeks in between. This arrangement is reasonable from the trainer's point of view and it gives a flexible schedule to the participants as well. Furthermore, the target group is specialists/managers who work

internationally, and especially in projects within the focus cultures of the program, China, India, Italy and Russia. The training language is English.

The methods to train in the workshop used by the trainer are based on the model called 'the interpersonal approach' (Earley, 1987), but with tailored contents as shown below:

- (1) A role-playing game or focus culture simulation and case study.
- (2) A simulated cocktail party at which members of the personnel department posed as foreign managers.
- (3) A final presentation in the last class: the participants will be sent back to work for a couple of months in between of the training process.

The assessing method used organizers is collecting feedback from the participants. As Uebergang (2006) stated, feedback is to convey an effective message: how do you really feel, how much you expect, and how satisfied you feel with the results. The overall response rate of feedback towards case training program has been high. Specifically, participants have praised the trainer, although they may hold different opinions towards the training program itself. The cross-cultural training program has been run twice before autumn 2008 and the participants have given excellent feedback by grading and commenting on the practical nature of the program. The participants were asked to give a total evaluation (grade) for the training, and the average was 5.4 (scale 6=excellent and 1=poor). Both teaching skill and design of the training are important to individual when communicating with others from different cultures, so the feedback sheet is divided into two categories: the trainer and other remarks. (Scale 5=excellent and 1=unsatisfactory) The average regarding the trainer has been more than 4.1, while the averages in the category other remarks (e.g. materials, location and facilities) were between 3.3 and 4.7.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. This introductory Chapter 1 has briefly

described the background of doing this research. Section 1.1 stated the purpose of this thesis and presented the three research questions. Section 1.2 introduced background of the case company and especially the cross-cultural training program of Kone. Chapter 2 outlines a review of previous literature. Section 2.1 reviews differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures. Section 2.2 reviews concepts of cross-cultural training program in interpersonal communication. Section 2.3 reviews the theories which are closely related to a cross-cultural training program. Section 2.4 draws the theoretical framework of this thesis. Chapter 3 introduces methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the major findings and thus the answers to the three research questions. The final chapter draws conclusions and discuss the implications. In appendices, the themes of interviews used in the study (semi-structured and email) will be explained.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, previous literature will be reviewed in four sections to cover the key concepts to answer three research questions and prepare for analyzing the data of the case study. Section 2.1 elaborates business cultural differences between Finns and Chinese partners. Section 2.2 reviews the literature related to the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication. Section 2.3 introduces three theories in order to find the key points of a good cross-cultural training program. At the end section 2.4 presents the theoretical framework of this thesis which is based on Vihakara's (2006) framework.

In 1993, researcher Qu made a study of cultural differences by comparing how interpersonal relationships operate in Chinese and Western cultures. Since Finland belongs to the western cultures, his research can be partly applied to the comparison between Finns and Chinese. Table 1 summarizes different parts such as premise, method, background, characteristics and manifestations of interpersonal relationship comparison.

Table 1. A comparison of the traditional Chinese and Western interpersonal relationships (Qu, 1993, p.239)

Text	Traditional Chinese	Western
• Premise	• Linked in hearts kindred spirits	• Disconnected in hearts Different spirits
• Method	• Experiencing with feelings	• Testing with theory
• Background	• The mandate of heaven kinship Hierarchy/order of importance	• Religion Individualism Justice/quality
• Characteristics	• Destiny (yuan) Rules of human feelings (qing) Order of human relationships (lun)	• God's will (divinity) Interpersonal rules (reason) Social contract (law)
• Manifestations	• Blood relationships Return greater than give mutual dependence Other orientation Submit to the will of heaven and be content with one's life	• Rights and responsibility Equal give and return independence Self-orientation Strive for progress

As Table 1 shows, all the five texts of comparing traditional Chinese and Western are the aspects to describe Chinese and Westerners in treating interpersonal relationships. First, the 'premise' for both parties is quite different. Chinese respect the similarities of traditional way of thinking among a clan or a group. A western way is to see that everyone is unique, should have special opinions and they are disconnected in hearts. Second, the 'method' is how they develop interpersonal communication. Chinese do everything depending on their feelings and experiences. Westerners are curious about the existing theories or phenomena, so they try to develop efficient ways to communicate among people. Third, the 'background' is so important in Chinese society in judging people or making relationships. Because same 'heaven kinship' in Chinese people's point of view, is the reason why they get along well. In contrast, westerners respect individualism, because justice is so essential that everybody is measured from

the same line. Fourth, the ‘characteristics’ are a development of how people are regulated and restricted to interpersonal relationships. Destiny is a miracle thing in China dominating in interpersonal relationship in bringing two people together. Westerners see successful communication because of shared goal of group work. At last, the ‘manifestations’ summarize that the return must be greater than give for Chinese whereas equal give and return is a common sense in western interpersonal communication.

In the thesis, two terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘interpersonal’ communications are combined in order to help individuals in complicated people relationships understand how cross-cultural training acts in both one-to-one and group situations. Figure 1 presents a picture of how ‘interpersonal communication’, ‘intergroup communication’ and ‘intercultural communication’ are related to each other according to Humphrey (2006).

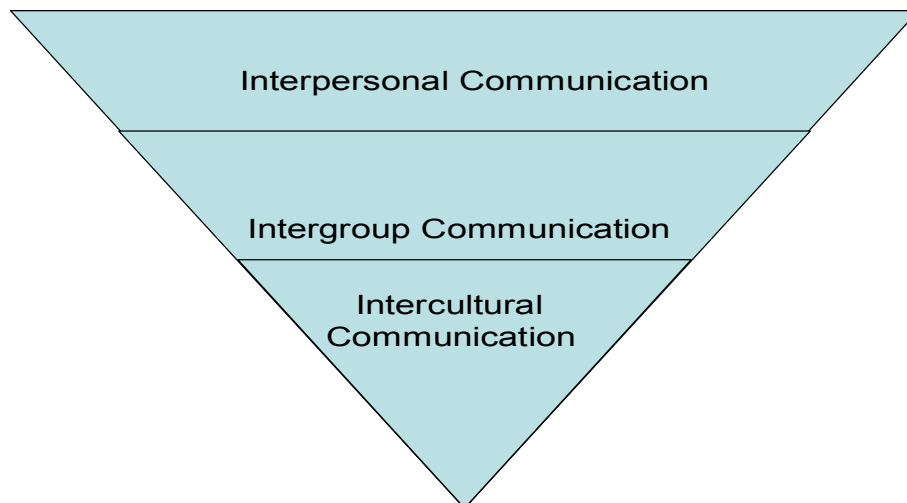


Figure 1. Enhance communication skills (Humphrey, 2006, p.4)

As Figure 1 shows, the grading of importance or difference of the three communication patterns of interpersonal communication, intergroup communication and intercultural communication is ranked from top to down. All three parts have overlapping contents, and to meet the purpose of this study, interpersonal communication is more important to be introduced together with intercultural communication. First, *Interpersonal communication* is related to an organization and is people-oriented: it has a few participants involved, they are in close physical proximity to each other, there are many sensory channels used, and feedback is immediate. In addition, Borchers (1999) used ‘a developmental view’ to define interpersonal communication as that occurs between people who have known each other for some time. Importantly, these people view each other as unique individuals, not as people who are simply acting out social situations. Second, according to Paulsen, Jones, Graham, Callan and Gallois (2004), *inter-group communication* informs many areas of communication, but this is perhaps mostly for interactions in the workplace, between cultures, genders, generations, for mass media phenomena, and political communication. Third, *intercultural communication* generally is conceptualized as communication between people from different national cultures, and many scholars limit it to face-to-face communication (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002). From the definition of Humphrey (2006), ‘intercultural’ implies interaction whereas Victor (1992) defines ‘cross-cultural’ means between or among cultural groups. Hence, the basic difference between ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ is that they focus on different things: cross-cultural is focused on multiple cultures whereas intercultural is focused on the interaction among these cultures. However, intercultural and cross-cultural have overlapping areas, so to some extent, they are exchangeable. In this thesis, ‘cross-cultural’ will be focused on, since the training program of case company focuses on coaching more than one culture.

2.1 Differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures

This section will review how Finnish and Chinese cultures differ from each other based on three scholars’ studies. Sub-section 2.1.1 reviews the literature by resorting to the

theories of Hall (1976): Finnish low-context culture and Chinese high-context culture. Sub-section 2.1.2 compares Finns and Chinese by using Hofstede's (1984) five cultural dimensions. Sub-section 2.1.3 introduces Vihakara's (2006) framework of Finnish and Chinese managers, which is the basis of the theoretical framework of this thesis.

According to Day (2007), cultural differences are potentially different values, assumptions, expectations, and behaviour which people bring to business as a result of their differing backgrounds. Nowadays, with the development of globalization and human mobility, different people who come from different cultural backgrounds learn and work together, and accordingly the communication between cultures also has been increased. Doing culture comparisons is vital for employees to understand their own culture, which can contribute to understanding of other cultures; facilitate the connection and interaction of people; and reduce misunderstandings among people. If the differences are understood positively, cultural differences are opportunities to strengthen the organization through shared learning, better communication and new perspectives.

2.1.1 Finnish Low-context culture and Chinese High-context culture

According to Hall (2000), high and low-context cultures are the watershed of cultural differences. People from different cultures find themselves increasingly working together and communicating. As long as people get in touch with each other, 'communication' takes place, and sometimes when different cultures crash out sparks, probably 'cultural shock' and even 'cultural conflicts' emerge. According to Williams (1994), cultural conflict can be identified by the following signs: (1) It usually has complicated dynamics. Cultural differences tend to create complex combinations of expectations about one's own and others' behaviour. (2) If addressing content and relational issues does not resolve the conflict, it can be rooted in cultural differences. (3) A conflict reoccurs or arouses strong emotions even though the issue of disagreement is insignificant. A concrete review of cultural differences between Finns and Chinese can somewhat prevent culture shock or conflict. Context cultures about different cultural

backgrounds and behaviours in the working life between Finns and Chinese will be compared.

The concept of high and low-context communication is associated with the theory of individualistic-collectivistic cultures. Individualistic cultures are referred to as low-context cultures; collectivistic cultures are referred to as high-context cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). From Hall's (2000) point of view, in individualistic low-context cultures, such as *Finland*, private life is separated from the other life spheres; thus, the interlocutors do not know much about each other and for communication they need detailed information. But in collectivistic high-context cultures, such as *China*, people are involved in close relationships with family members, friends, colleagues; they have extensive information about the life of people around them and therefore do not need to impart detailed information. Moreover, from current explanation of high or low context, Wilson (2009) summarized that high-context cultures are relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative; low-context cultures are logical, linear, individualistic, and action-oriented.

To sum up, the analysis of Chinese and Finnish cultures follows a simple analogy to the basic argument developed by Hall (1976). Chinese culture is a high-context culture which has the following characteristics:

- Rely more on context than content
- Roundabout saying the truth to save face for others
- Value indirectness, see indirectness as dominant
- Value oral statements more than written style

On the other side, Finnish culture is low-context:

- Rely more on content than on context
- Explicitly spell out information
- Value directness, see indirectness as manipulative

- Value written word more than oral statements

From the above comparison, it seems that Finns and Chinese behave quite opposite to each other. However, this definition does not mean a final conclusion for both parties. People from different nationalities have been differently educated in culture and thus hold different angles to analyze others' behaviours. They see their personalities with objective and subjective perspectives. Sometimes others may draw even more subjective definitions without reason than oneself. Diana and Lehtonen (2005) pointed out the same thing that cultural stereotypes are both descriptive and prescriptive in nature. They are outsiders' shared beliefs about the characteristics of the target group and at the same time they also function as social expectations. In initial interactions and in solitary intercultural contacts, people's cultural stereotypes may be used as a source of expectation about the other party, and as a reference applied to the judgment of the other party's behaviour. Hence, the comparison of high or low context culture between Finnish and Chinese cultures is only a reference for a better understanding of the cross-cultural background of Finns and Chinese.

2.1.2 Cultural dimensions between Finnish and Chinese practitioners

Hofstede's (1984) definition of culture is the milestone of culture research development: the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. *Culture*, in this sense, includes systems of values, and values are among the building blocks of culture. Nevertheless, there is usually a gap between academic and business perspectives. Terpstra (1985) aimed at bridging the gap: culture is learned, shared, compelling, an interrelated set of symbols, whose meanings provide a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable. A corporation as an identity located in 'society' sees culture important to organize business.

It has been a long time for Hofstede to gain access to people working for IBM in over 40

countries of the world and analyzing cultural data as findings (Mindtools, 2008). He initially identified four distinct cultural dimensions that served to distinguish one culture from another. Later he added the fifth dimension and that is how the model stands today.

- Power Distance (PDI): the fundamental issue involved is how society deals with the fact that people are unequal.
- Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV): it labelled the relation between an individual and his or her fellow individuals.
- Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS): the division of roles between the sexes in society.
- Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI): how society deals with the fact that time runs only one way, that is, we are all caught in the reality of past, present and future, and we have to live with uncertainty because the future is unknown and always will be. (Hofstede, 1983)
- Long term orientation: persistence (LTO): ordering relationships by status and observing this order; thrift; having a sense of shame (ClearlyCultural, 2008).

To continually illustrate these five cultural dimensions, Hofstede (1967) has drawn a figure to use charts comparing Finland and China. Figure 2 will explain these five dimensions in detail.

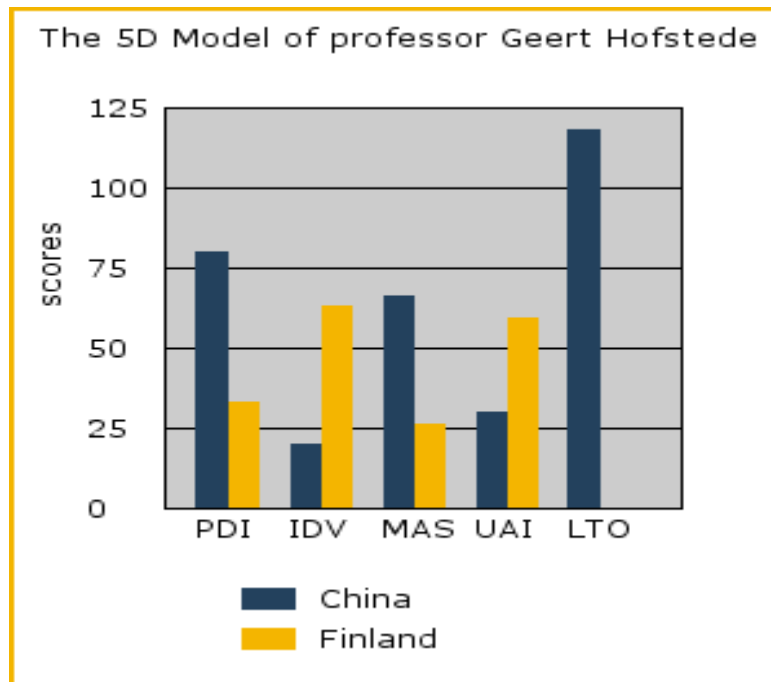


Figure 2. Comparison of Finnish Culture with Chinese Culture (Hofstede, 1967)

As Figure 2 shows, apparently, Finnish culture and Chinese culture are usually described as two extremes in many cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede. First, China has high PDI (index above 75) whereas the index of Finland is around 30; second, China has low IDV (index below 25) versus higher individualism of Finland (index=60); third, China is more masculine (index around 65) than Finland (index around 25); fourth, Finland has high UAI (around 55) while index of China is only around 27; since the fifth dimension LTO is focused more on Asian countries, China is a long-term orientation country (index over 110); there was no mention about how Finns act in 1967.

To fill the blank space of where Finland locates in the fifth cultural dimension, a concrete survey conducted in the mid-eighties by Michael Bond developed a saying that China was ranking the first among other countries with index 118 (Clark, 2007). From the survey, on the long-term orientation pole, Chinese have following characteristics:

- persistence (perseverance)
- ordering relationships by status

- thrift
- having a sense of shame

On the opposite short-term orientation pole, Clark (2007) wrote that Finns have:

- personal steadiness and stability
- protecting your face
- respect for tradition
- reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts

In sum, Yan and Gu (2007) compared Finland and China based on Hofstede's five cultural dimensions in the present research (see Figure 2). The result is exactly the same as Hall had done, stating that China is a high-context and long-term oriented country whereas Finland is a low-context and short-term oriented one. They also come to the same conclusion of the other four cultural dimensions as Hofstede did:

- Long (China) vs. short (Finland) power distance
- Individualism (Finland) vs. Collectivism (China)
- Femininity (Finland) vs. masculinity (China)
- High (China) vs. low (Finland) uncertainty avoidance

2.1.3 Vihakara's framework of cultural comparison

Vihakara (2006) investigated the behaviors of Finnish and Chinese managers in a joint-venture company. The reason to use Vihakara's comparison of the leadership or management style of Finnish and Chinese managers is that it is a good basis of drawing up the theoretical framework of this thesis. Since the first research question of the thesis is to find the cultural differences in Finnish and Chinese business communication, a conclusion made by Vihakara in 2006 draws an effective framework in helping learn how the differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures are and even pointing out the differences of these two countries. Figure 3 shows the framework of two comparisons in four boxes: Finnish manager compared to Chinese manager and Finnish country compared to Chinese country. In addition, a small link in between Finnish and Chinese

manager about the interactions.

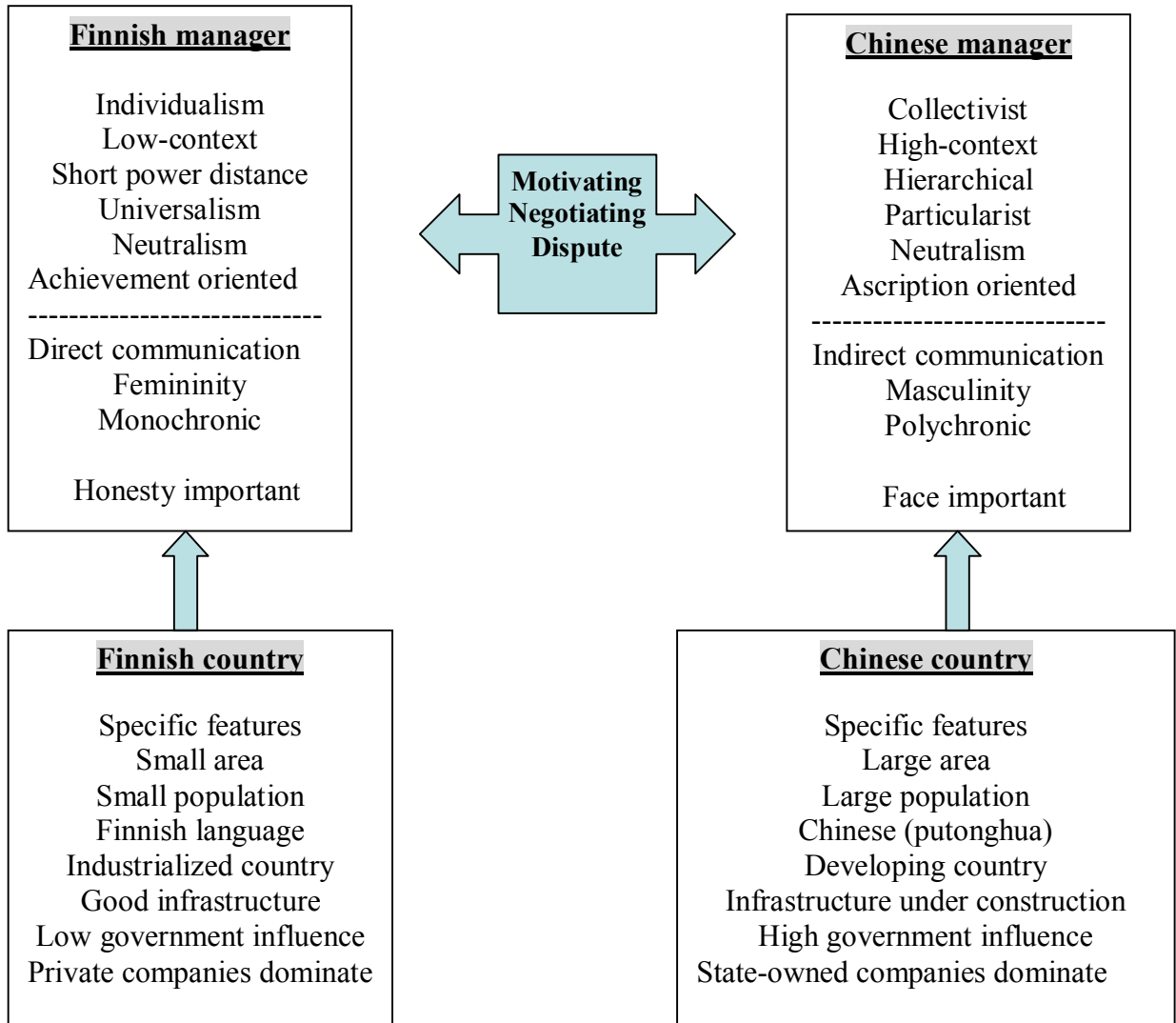


Figure 3. Stereotypes of Finnish and Chinese Managers (Vihakara, 2006, p.122)

As Figure 3 shows, there are two boxes below to compare Finland and China as country level. The main differences of Finland and China are the territory of the nation, population, language, the nature of society, business domination and the influence of government. Located in far away two continents, Finland is a small country with a small

population and area comparing to the greatness of China. The specific feature of climate has always played a large role in both culture and general existence of Finland.

Randburg (2009) agreed that one of the special features of Finland is the long winters with constant darkness; it formulates people's mood to some extent: either live in harmony with beautiful winter scenes or get depressed by loneliness. Moreover, the languages of Finnish and Chinese are hard to be understood. Although the history of development of Finland is short, industrialization gave Finland a good infrastructure: family-owned companies survived and dominated in Finland during economic revolution; quite in contrast, China is government oriented and influenced. The backgrounds of these two countries are almost counter to each other which are why the ways of communication are different.

As Figure 3 also shows, the other comparison is the differences of managers which are grouped into two categories. First, Finnish managers are the representatives of individualism; low-context; short power distance; universalism; neutralism and achievement oriented. Chinese managers are named as a group of people, who respect collectivism, high-context culture, high hierarchy, particularism, neutralism and ascription orientation. Second, the differences are also reflected in the way they choose to communicate. Finns are more direct whereas Chinese are indirect; Finns represent femininity whereas Chinese represent masculinity; Finns are monochronic while Chinese are polychronic; honesty is advocated in the working place in Finland, but face-saving is a subconscious conduct for Chinese managers.

As a consequence, the channel or the connection between Finns and Chinese is a communication box with three components: motivating, negotiating and disputing. The meaning of this box is that the process of Finnish/Chinese communication needs both parties first to motivate each other to make communication keep going on; second, when problems take place caused by cultural differences, Finns and Chinese should develop communication skills in peaceful negotiation; and sometimes open dispute is also critical to Finnish/Chinese business communication.

2.2 The role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication

In this section, in order to better understand the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication, three sub-sections will follow to explain the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication. Sub-section 2.2.1 explains interpersonal communication by introducing business communication model, since interpersonal communication is part of it. Sub-section 2.2.2 introduces the linear model of interpersonal communication in order to explain how cross-cultural training plays in the model. Sub-section 2.2.3 introduces the key points of a good cross-cultural training program and discuss the benefits it can bring to interpersonal communication.

2.2.1 Interpersonal communication through business communication model

According to Wilson (2003), communication does not only consist of language communication, but includes also people-oriented communication. A business communication model is a big umbrella incorporating interpersonal communication as a branch. A model is essential to start researching interpersonal business communication, since the propositions and the characteristics of the model will help understand a communication. A 'better communication model' is shown in Figure 4 to show a basic loop of how a message transfers back and forth between the sender and the audience in business communication. 'A better communications model' by Wilson (2003) is the same as a business communication model.

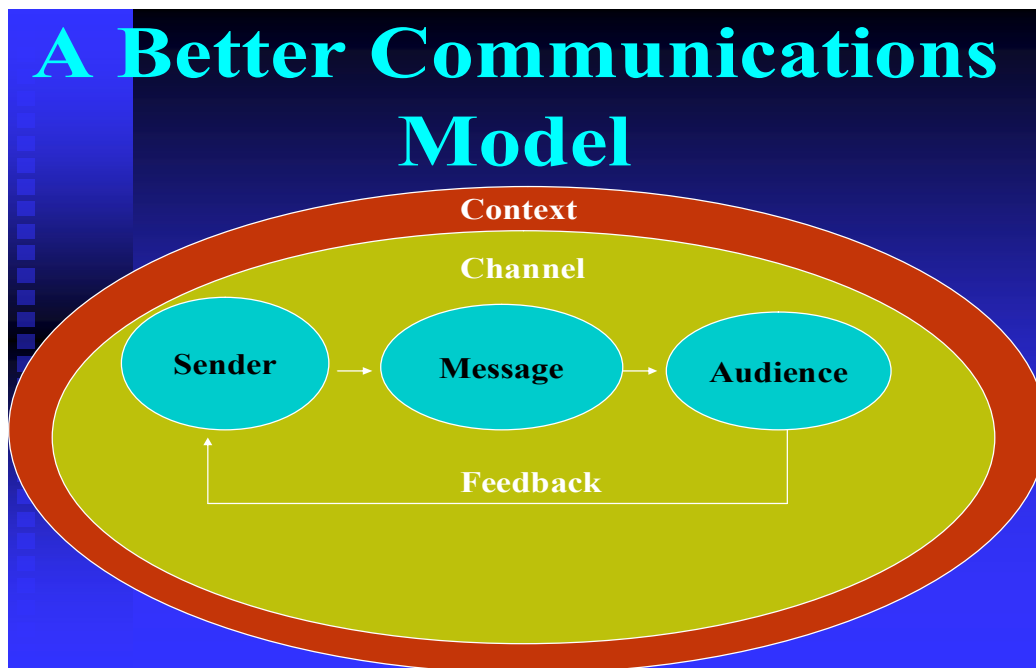


Figure 4. Development of Communication Model (Wilson, 2003, p.2)

As Figure 4 shows, business communication or any other kind of communication has two sides, the ‘sender’ and the ‘audience’. The ‘messages’ are the words, deals, non-verbal conducts, which are being transferred. It is no longer a linear transfer of message from sender to audience, but a better process that audience gives instant ‘feedback’ to the sender, so that this conversation is an endless cycle. Furthermore, communication cannot exist without media. In the figure, the bigger circles ‘channel’ and ‘context’ are the media, where all the performances of communication take place. In other words, communication can be split into two parts: the message or content and the channel it is transmitted on.

Following this circle of understanding communication, Ouellet (2003) said that interpersonal communication is one of the fundamental underpinnings of society, and it has a similar process with the business communication model to transmit messages or information but with a specific context. In detail, Hartley’s (1999) definition of interpersonal communication will be emphasized. It has the following propositions:

1. Face-to-face meetings between two participants.
2. Two people in varying roles and relationships to one another.
3. Always two-way communication.
4. The creation and exchange of meaning.
5. A partly or wholly intentional act.
6. An ongoing process rather than an event or series of events.
7. A relationship that builds over time.

From these seven points, the main characteristic of interpersonal communication is the conversation happening between two people, meaning a two-way and normally face-to-face contact. The two participants will exchange ideas and feelings with changing roles over time, so the relationship is varying now and then and being affected by intentions of both sides. This communication depends on the skills of interpersonal relationship building, success or failure is attributed to how two participants communicated their own meanings and how to keep people relationship going. The interpersonal relationship is not a one time act, but a careful long term process. These propositions are only the standard index to measure and analyze interpersonal communication, it is not a must-be rule.

In this thesis, interpersonal communication theory is part of the theoretical framework, but it is altered based on the cultural differences found to exist (e.g. Hofstede, 1967) between Finns and Chinese. As a consequence, the 'two people' from Hartley's definition is changed to be Finnish and Chinese communicators. Since the case study is related to a cross-cultural training program, all kinds of face-to-face meetings are the ones being studied and simulated by participants in the courses organized by the trainer. The Chinese and Finnish cultures are two different roles in interpersonal communication. The Finns here are one party to deal with their partners as the other side of Chinese background. This two-way communication starts from quite an early phase when they are not familiar with each other but have to work together. The on-going process of relationship building is full of information, messages and views created and

exchanged.

Besides the above mentioned characteristics, interpersonal communication has more properties than business communication. According to Donnell (2000), interpersonal communication is irreversible, which means once a word goes out, it cannot be taken back. There are some principles underlying the features of interpersonal communication besides 'irreversible', such as 'complicated'. King (2000) also noted that whenever people communicated, there are really at least six 'people' involved in interpersonal communication:

- 1) Who you think you are
- 2) Who you think the other person is
- 3) Who you think the other thinks you are
- 4) Who the other person thinks he/she is
- 5) Who the other person thinks you are
- 6) Who the other person thinks you think s/he is.

These six roles of people exist at the same time, which means that the participants in interpersonal communication are not only acting as sender or audience, but position themselves in different situations. Always stand in the interests of others to consider questions, measure the advantage or disadvantage he/she has in the process of relationship building. In this definition, for a successful interpersonal communication, Finns need to summarize their own cultural type; to understand the cultural behaviours or habits of Chinese partners; try to find out how Chinese evaluate them; to know how well Chinese are acquainted with themselves. The point here is how you see yourself is not always what others think you are.

To sum up, this section reviewed the propositions of interpersonal communication based on a business communication model by Wilson (2003). Then a definition of the characteristics of interpersonal communication in particular between Finnish and

Chinese partners was added. However, Thomlison (2000) argued that it is not enough to simply know what a relationship is. There are models and explanations about how interpersonal communication happens, the evaluation method can be enlarged to assess communication. A cross-cultural training program is chosen to assess interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners.

2.2.2 Cross-cultural training through interpersonal communication model

Nowadays, training concerning cultural issues becomes more and more important to big companies all over the world. Economy runs over country boundaries, people can no longer stay in domestic field to do business. To learn vital skills in order to improve cultural business communication, some possible sources of training are the many consultancies that offer business-specific, culture-specific, or general training. According to Reid and Barrington (1997), training can be described as a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behaviour through learning experience to achieve performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization.

According to Carbaugh (1990), the field of cross-cultural communication training has developed extensively since World War II. It refers to formal efforts designed to prepare people for more effective interpersonal relations when they interact with individuals from cultures other than their own. In order to show the strength of cross-cultural communication in helping interpersonal relationship, Mead (1995) stated that one way is training, to help employees effectively manage cross-cultural issues in international business communication. This consists of training employees to work with members of the other culture, tolerating differences so far as possible, and recognizing their priorities when developing shared priorities.

Everyone who works in a cross-cultural environment should be able to manage

interpersonal relations, which becomes one of key purposes of a cross-cultural training program. Previous studies mentioned awareness, knowledge and skills continuums and the knowledge, attitude and skills continuums as focused contents for cross-cultural training (Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Smith and Varquez-Nuttal, 1982). Furthermore, Brislin and Yoshida (1995) proposed four requirements to analyze whether a cross-cultural training program would be effective in helping communication, that is, (1) awareness, (2) knowledge, (3) emotions (includes attitudes), and (4) skills (involving visible behaviours). To sum up, cross-cultural training should make participants aware of its contents, change their emotions, and share knowledge, teach skills, then to be professionally communicating in people relationships.

To find out what the key points of cross-cultural training are in interpersonal communication, Hartley's (1999) linear model of interpersonal communication is introduced. Figure 5 shows Hartley's linear model of interpersonal communication in order to introduce the process and components of interpersonal communication first, then to explain the role of cross-cultural training.

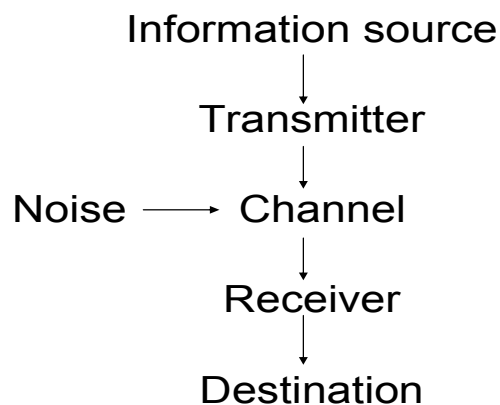


Figure 5. Linear Model of Interpersonal Communication. (Hartley, 1999, p.33)

According to Figure 5, 'information source' is the message a transmitter uses to transfer. Sender equals to 'transmitter' and audience changes to 'receiver'. The 'channel' to transmit information has 'noise', which has effects on the smoothness of the interpersonal communication process. If the information source is transmitted successfully, 'destination' means that interpersonal communication satisfies both sides in a meeting or conversation. It is a good example of analyzing how the information source is linearly transferred; however, since it is only one way, how receiver gives feedback and how the following communication goes are not clear enough to trace.

To apply a cross-cultural training program to Hartley's (1999) linear model of interpersonal communication, the 'transmitter' is the trainer; 'receiver' is the participants; 'information source' are the background information of all the participants and the materials the trainer uses for the training; the 'channel' is varied: courses, group discussion, assignment, presentation, readings, and practical experiences. The main problem may occur in channel, for example, if the way the trainer teaches communication skills is inappropriate, or if the two-way communication gets blocked by miscommunication, 'noise' emerges. If the noise cannot be settled down appropriately, the messages are difficult to be reached to receiver, or incorrectly transferred, which at last has side-effect on 'destination' - successful interpersonal communication.

Thus, the interpersonal relationship needs a tool to improve the quality of communication. Sometimes, the initiatives of both sides are misunderstood, or communicators are without strong willingness to reach agreement. According to Buller and Burgoon (1996), senders in interpersonal communication attempt to manipulate messages so as to be untruthful, which may cause them apprehension concerning their false communication being detected. Simultaneously, receivers in interpersonal communication try to unveil or detect the validity of that information, causing suspicion about whether or not the sender is being deceitful. Moreover, if transmitter and receiver have totally different personalities, education background, growing up situation,

opposite religions, and different understanding of each other's culture belief, there is no doubt they will meet much 'noise' during interpersonal communication. The next section will discuss the benefits of cross-cultural training program to interpersonal communication in order to prevent noise.

2.2.3 Benefits of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication

According to Hayes and Zaccarelli (1988), training in general can provide many benefits to internal and external management and communication, such as saving money, maintaining employees, maintaining customers and making new ones, saving time, reducing staffing concerns, and maintaining relationships. However, the complicated cultural diversity will bring challenges to interpersonal communication even though the employees have been educated by certain training. Understanding and appreciating cross-cultural differences ultimately promotes clearer communication, breaks down barriers, builds trust, strengthens relationships, opens horizons and yields tangible results in terms of business success (Multimedia, 2009).

A good cross-cultural training program has its strength in focusing on cultural issues only, and the cross-cultural communication skills will be taught during the training process to help participants with interpersonal communication across cultures. According to Payne (2004), a cross-cultural training program should reach the following ten benefits:

- 1) People learn about themselves
- 2) Encourage confidence
- 3) Break barriers
- 4) Build trust
- 5) Motivate
- 6) Open horizons
- 7) Develop interpersonal skills

- 8) Develop listening skills
- 9) People use common ground
- 10) Career development

These ten benefits are suitable to test all kinds of cross-cultural training programs no matter who the participants and trainer are. Finnish and Chinese communicators here are the exchangeable roles of transmitters and receivers in interpersonal communication. The first benefit is to help participants learn about themselves, in other words, cross-cultural training should help participants understand their own cultural types, how they behave, how their personality reflect based on their own culture. Then while learning others' cultural type and communication tips, the barriers may disappear day by day. Participants can have wider horizons, high interest in listening, and the noise will not emerge any more. The harmonization brings people to a common ground to cooperate. Last, when people feel they improve interpersonal communication skills through being trained in a cross-cultural program, the working environment will become a peaceful place. The more comfortable the participants feel, the more confidence they have, and the more boost they will have for their motivation, morale, or even career promotion. The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of cross-cultural training in helping interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese business communications. A good cross-cultural training can be extremely beneficial to improve interpersonal communication.

2.3 Key theories of a good cross-cultural training program

This section will introduce three concepts which are related to understanding the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication. Sub-section 2.3.1 introduces the 'U-curve', which identifies the role of cultural adaptation in cross-cultural communication and interpersonal relationship building, in order to see how an individual can lead him/herself in a multicultural environment, to survive, to position, and to consolidate his/her status. Sub-section 2.3.2 introduces the 'face' concept in

relation to Chinese high-context culture. In long-term or short-term orientation of cultural dimension, ‘face-saving’ expands the meaning of face in specific situations. Sub-section 2.3.3 presents the self-leadership structure, which includes consciousness and regeneration.

2.3.1 The U-curve of cultural adaptation

In Dracine’s (2008) definition, the U-curve of cultural adaptation is made up of four phases that are referred to by the following headings: *home*, *adjustment*, *adaptation*, and *host*. There is no time limit for any phase, and the length of each phase is relative to the individual and the impacting cultures. Figure 6 illustrates cultural adaptation through U-curve.

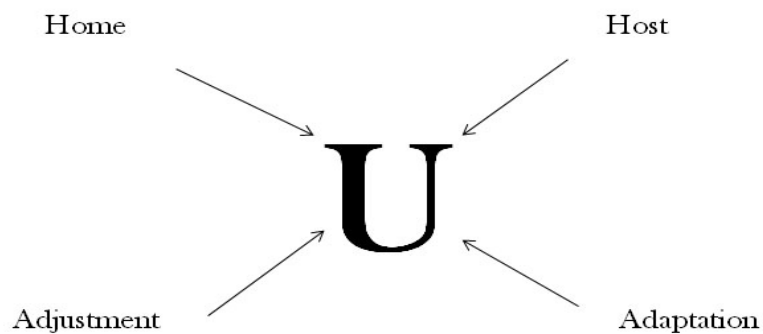


Figure 6. Cultural adaptation through U-curve (Dracine, 2008)

In Figure 6, ‘home’ is the starting point of cultural transition. It is sometimes described as the honeymoon phase because it is a time of new beginnings and anticipation of what is to come. During the ‘adjustment’ phase, a person begins to see and feel the differences between him/her and the new culture. The ‘adaptation’ phase usually denotes a period where the transitioning person begins to acclimatize to the new culture. The last phase

‘host’, also referred to as the at home phase, occurs when the person begins to identify with the host culture. Take Finnish and Chinese for instance, when Finnish come into contact with Chinese, the fresh and interesting feeling will emerge, but it may stay for a short time. Then both Finns and Chinese recognize cultural differences. This thesis is aiming at finding the key points of a good cross-cultural training program, so that these benefits can help Finns become veterans to build relationships with Chinese partners. If the training is good enough, Finns easily have no longer the sense of discomfort and being an outsider.

Dracine (2008) explains that the aim of the whole process is to get rid of cultural shock first by adjustment and adaptation and then ultimately by mixing home culture with host culture. Guanipa (1998) says that the term, ‘culture shock’, was introduced for the first time in 1958 to describe the anxiety produced when a person moves to a completely new environment. It expresses the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. Oravec (2005) has a similar opinion that the experience of culture shock is a well-documented one, and is part of the process of cultural adaptation. The degree to which one experiences culture shock depends on a variety of factors and is expressed differently in each individual. This four-step process - home, adjustment, adaptation and host - describes how everything is going on when a new-comer comes to another cultural environment, including problems that might occur and suggestions how these problems can be handled.

2.3.2 ‘Lian’ and ‘Face-saving’ concepts

The theory of ‘face’ or ‘lian’ has many explanations and consists of different meanings. According to Rosenberg (2004), Chinese term ‘*lian*’ is the source for the concept of face. It represents the confidence of the society in the integrity of moral character. Loss of face occurs when one fails to meet the requirements of one's position in society. In terms of cultural shock or cultural conflict, the cornerstone for the conflict resolution process in Chinese culture is that both parties care about the other's face. Melendez

(2007) has a similar opinion that for those not well-versed in Chinese culture, there is something they should know about the concept of *face* or *having face*. Stemming from this, there are also the related concepts of *losing face*, of *saving face*, and even of *lending face*. Losing face is the situation someone feels losing credibility, or one's honour and pride. On the contrary, if someone wants to save face; it means to protect his/her reputation. In social interaction, lending face is sometimes saving others' face.

The importance of 'face' in understanding Chinese culture is because this concept is closely related to developing dynamic 'guanxi' with Chinese partners. According to Lo (2004), 'guanxi' literally means relationships and stands for any type of relationship. In the Chinese business world, however, it is also understood as the network of relationships among various parties that cooperate together and support one another. He pointed out that 'guanxi' is very important in maintaining people relationship in China, because if someone hurts other's face with purpose or without compensation afterwards, the relationship is challenged, and friendships quickly disappear.

The behaviour and understanding of 'face-saving' is not exactly the same in Finnish and Chinese cultures, since they represent two ends of the high-low context culture scale. According to Kim, Pan and Park (1998), in high-context cultures the intimate human relationships and the well-structured social hierarchy and norms serve as a broad context in which human communication takes place. The key difference to remember here is that high-context cultures want to repair or build relationships while low-context cultures most often desire to simply problem-solve and move on. As Clark (2007) summarized, high-context Chinese culture is obviously face-saving orientated to maintain people relationship. However, he also said that low-context Finnish culture is protecting face. Ting-Toomey (1992) argued that the application of face giving is critical. Beyond face-saving, a high-context culture participates in face giving (mutual face giving). It means that Finns are likely to protect their own face, but Chinese think more in terms of saving their own face and lending others face.

2.3.3 Self-leadership structure

Each participant in a cross-cultural program acts as an individual to listen, to learn, to perform and to respond in the training courses, so whether he or she can improve communication skills and get benefits after being trained sometimes depends on self-leadership. According to Manz and Neck (2006), self-leadership has been broadly defined as the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform. To introduce the self-leadership structure, Sydänmaanlakka's (2004) model will be explained. This structure has importance in analyzing how well an individual can digest the knowledge of cross-cultural issues after being trained. In particular, self-leadership is drawing on the power of participants' own awareness and inner capacity to lead them. This model is in support of introducing the key points of cross-cultural training and exploring the role of self-motivation and self-leadership in interpersonal skills improvement. Figure 7 demonstrates aspects of a process for employees to experience during self-leadership. These concepts are beneficial to the study, since interpersonal communication is usually a two-way and face-to-face interaction and cross-cultural training helps the participants be aware of cultural differences and explore a process of communication skills regeneration.

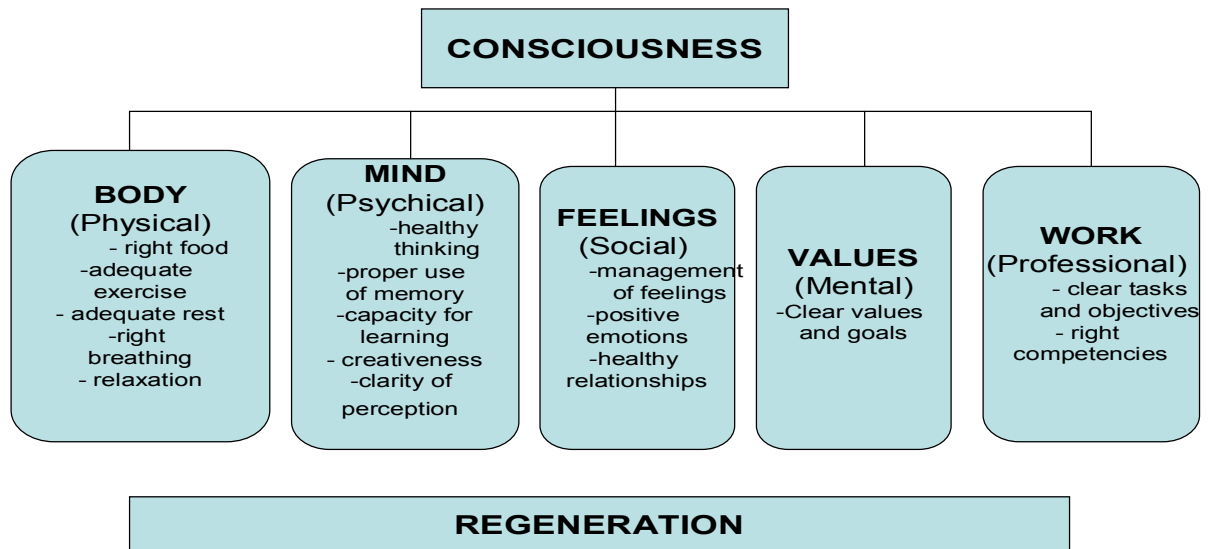


Figure 7. Self-Leadership: Who am I? (Sydänmaanlakka, 2004)

As can be seen from Figure 7, CONSCIOUSNESS is an overall issue of the whole umbrella of self-leadership in interpersonal communication across cultural boundaries. From Sydänmaanlakka's (2004) point of view, consciousness has five parts to be taken into consideration. At first, if an employee is assigned to work within a new culture, the physical problem (BODY) may occur first due to adjustment to a totally new environment. The time zone, the food, working hours and entertainment sound different, and he or she needs help in getting familiar with them. Second, if the body gets shocked by cultural differences, the MIND psychically will be affected as well. In particular, a positive attitude towards cultural difference is important: in cross-cultural training program everyone have the ability to link theories to memory, and creating their own case of cross-cultural communication skills, furthermore to correct any improper perception of the new culture. Third, the social FEELINGS will have impact on the new comer as well. They need to cumulate high mood and consistency in building and keeping healthy people relationships with native partners. Fourth, clear VALUES and

goals are necessary to be kept in mind. Employees should set up their own goals in interpersonal communication with local people, but also think over the values of local culture. Fifth, in relation to WORK, being professional is important. Fair competence, clear and right rules are important for any task which will positively affect the motivation or morale of employee to work in a new cultural working environment.

Also, as Figure 7 shows, a REGENERATION step occurs when the participants become aware of more efficient communications skills after they have taken a cross-cultural training course. It takes some time to absorb new knowledge, real cases, and changes in communication behaviour within new culture, such as body, mind, feelings, values and work. As a consequence, everyone automatically has a regeneration process of consciousness.

To sum up, the whole process is called self-leadership to identify who you are, to manage behaviour towards new cultural circumstances and to improve your interpersonal communication skills. This can also be seen as a measurement of a cross-cultural training program individually. This self-leadership structure helps analyze the behaviours of each participant as individual in the case training program, and can give recommendations to employees to communicate with different cultures in order to help interpersonal communication.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on the framework by Vihakara (2006) (see sub-section 2.1.3). However, the aim of this paper will not be limited to comparing differences only at the country level or only at the managerial level between Finnish and Chinese cultures. Her framework is a reference to support the case study of this thesis, rather than a must-do rule for all the employees who care about cultural issues to obey. Ratiu (1983) found that individuals who were rated as the most internationally effective by their colleagues were more likely to alter their stereotypes of foreigners, whereas

those rated as the least internationally effective were more likely to maintain their stereotypes. Communicators need to suit measures to local conditions, and then unavoidably change the previously maintained stereotypes to some degree.

Figure 8 illustrates the theoretical framework of the thesis. It includes theories related to the comparison of Finnish/Chinese cultural differences in interpersonal communication. The role of cross-cultural training of self-leadership to cultural adaptation in order to improve interpersonal communication will be included as well. In the previous literature, some explanations have already been made to prepare for the theoretical framework, such as 2.2.1 introduction of interpersonal communication, 2.2.2 introduction of cross-cultural training program, 2.3.2 Face-saving concept, and 2.3.3 self-leadership structure.

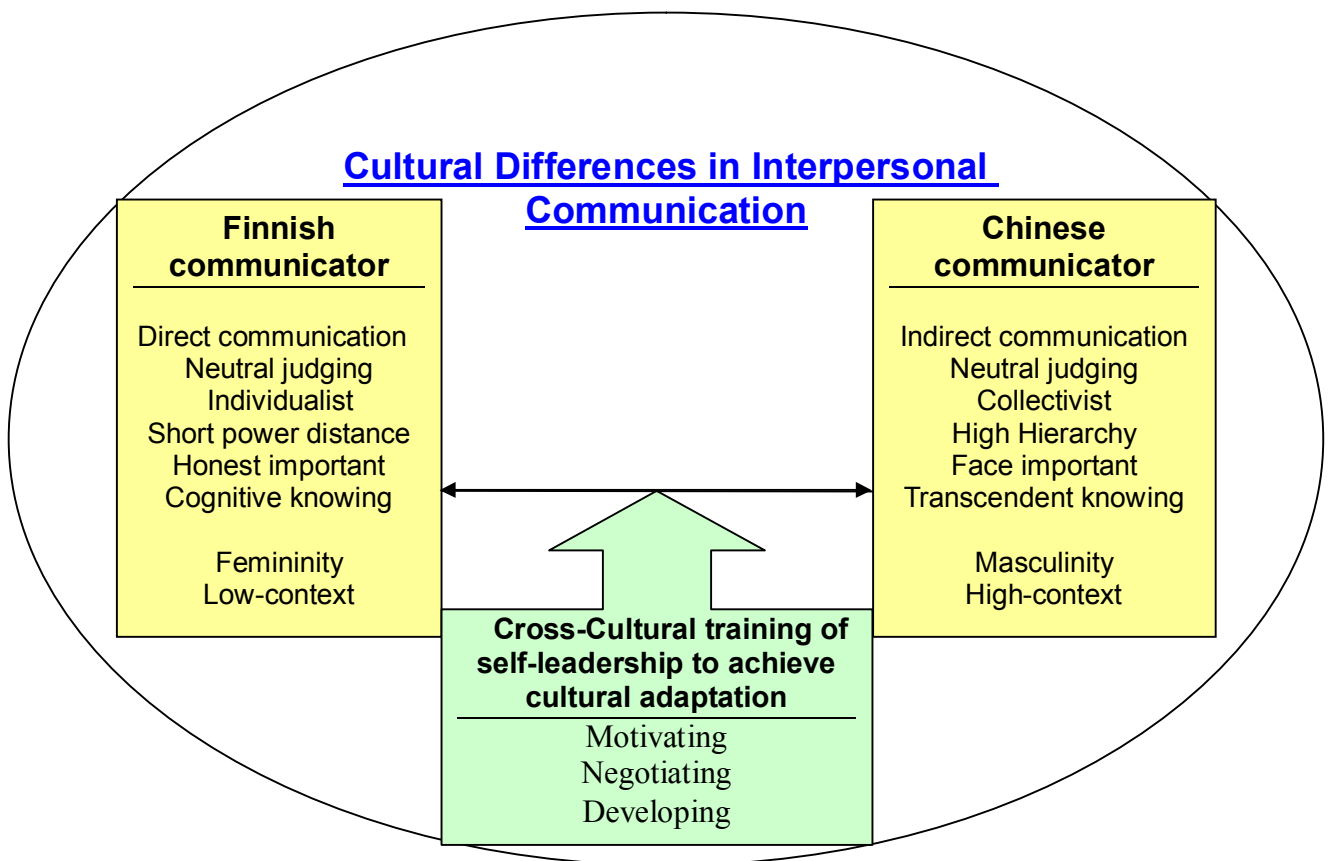


Figure 8. Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

As Figure 8 shows, there are two boxes listing the characteristics of Finnish and Chinese communicators focused on Vihakara's (2006) study. Finnish and Chinese communicators are the two sides of interpersonal communication and all kinds of cultural differences are reflected positively or negatively when they work together. As Hartley's (1999) (see also Figure 5 in 2.2.2) six components of interpersonal communication, here Finns and Chinese are the two participants in face-to-face meetings. The research examines this two way varying roles and relationship through channels. Meanings (information) are created and exchanged during interpersonal communication. Finnish interpersonal communication is a wholly intentional act towards Chinese partners. The relationship builds over time between Finnish and Chinese partners in interpersonal communication. This kind of communication is an ongoing process rather than an event or series of events. Furthermore, the information is transmitted between Finns and Chinese through varied channels to reach successful interpersonal communication destination. The miscommunication coming from cultural differences is the noise of interpersonal communication. Cross-cultural communication training is expected to act as an efficient tool in the case company Kone, to help better interpersonal communication.

As can also be seen from Figure 8, the other two points of Chinese and Finnish communicators are in latter part of boxes: high or low context and masculinity or femininity. As analyzed before, the structure of relationships and the type of cultural knowledge in high or low context culture are different. Chinese culture refers to dense, intersecting networks and long-term relationships, strong boundaries, relationship oriented than task oriented. But in Finnish society, it is a loose, wide network, shorter-term oriented, compartmentalized relationships, and task is more important than relationship. Paralleled, more knowledge is implicit, patterns that are not fully conscious, hard to explain even if you are a member of that culture in high context culture (China). But explicit and consciously organized culture knowledge is interest in Finnish culture. For such a long time, China is supposed to be masculine whereas Finns are proud of femininity (Hofstede, 1984). However, it does not mean the opinion or attitude of

Finnish practitioners towards masculinity will not change at present. As Louie (2002) points out, amidst the ever-growing hubbub generated about the 'silenced' female gender, work on Chinese masculinity has been conspicuously absent. As a consequence, the case study of this thesis will go beyond literature review to explore present findings.

The key word of studying 'cross-cultural training' in Figure 8 is summarized as '*motivating, negotiating and developing*'. This is the bridge stretching over interpersonal relationship between Finns and Chinese. Because 'motivating' is raised according to the reviewed theory of cross-cultural training, the basic goal of this training is to help participants recognize self-leadership, analyze and improve, and then to experience the 'U-curve' of cultural adaptation. Furthermore, all the above mentioned cultural differences in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese should be taken into account in 'negotiating'. At last, 'developing' means that Finns should develop their own abilities in achieving cultural adaptation after being trained. Since China is a developing country and Finland is open to the world, the research of cultural differences in interpersonal communication between these two parties will be continued from traditions as well.

To sum up, the comparison between Finnish and Chinese communicators can be also summarized from Dupraw and Axner's (1997) six points: different communication styles, different attitudes toward conflict, different approaches to complete tasks, different decision-making styles, different attitudes towards disclosure, and different approaches to knowing. First, Finns are used to a direct communication style whereas Chinese are indirect in their communication. Second, both of them are neutral to face conflicts, because the indexes of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1976) of them are close to each other, they can tackle conflicts calmly. Third, the power of joining together is respected in China so that a collectivism way of completing tasks is often seen at work. But Finns are more individual leadership oriented, so a quiet and free environment is preferred by Finns to get fruitful result. Fourth, the decision making styles are quite different. In Finland, everybody's personal suggestion is easily adopted;

they can decide which way to go where they think is the best. On the contrary, a hierarchical framework both in business and society of China places restrictions to decision makers, since always reporting to your boss first is the rule to follow and a tight sieve process composes stress on the decision makers as well. Fifth, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions in China which can be explained as a face-saving habit. But in Finland honesty comes first; nothing can be hidden to cover the truth. At last, European cultures (Finns) tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. According to Eugenia (2007), Asian cultures' epistemologies (Chinese) tend to emphasize the validity of knowledge gained through striving toward transcendence.

3 METHODS

This chapter will present the research methods of the study, and it has two sections. First, the qualitative method is introduced. Second, the trustworthiness of qualitative research is examined. This thesis is built on a case study that uses the qualitative method. To Yin's (1989) definition, a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. A case study should connect the current phenomenon and people's context together.

The overall feedback of the cross-cultural training program of Kone was introduced in Chapter 1; however, the feedback only reflects how it is beneficial to practitioners. Soy (1997) updated the significance of case study: case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object, as well as extending experience or adding strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Interpersonal communication is a type of social issue. As a consequence, this study will examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods of qualitative research.

3.1 Qualitative research method

This research was conducted according to qualitative methodology. According to Erearut (2007), qualitative research is all about exploring issues, understanding phenomena and answering questions. It is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, and culture or lifestyles. To get useful feedbacks of research with a clear purpose, qualitative method offers logical support. In particular, interviews were chosen as a method to collect data, because they allow the interviewer to control, direct, and shape the verbal interchange between the two protagonists. This involves regulating the length, focus, and depth of the interviewee's discourse as well as imposing limits and direction through the interviewer's questions and interventions (Beck & Perry, 2008).

To explore this topic, Kone Corporation was chosen as the case company since it has a concrete cross-cultural training program to be assessed. The attitudes, perspectives, behaviours, concerns and experiences of interviewees have been recorded during interviews. In order to illustrate how qualitative research is organized, Figure 9 shows the correlation and meaning of qualitative research with four multiple focal points.

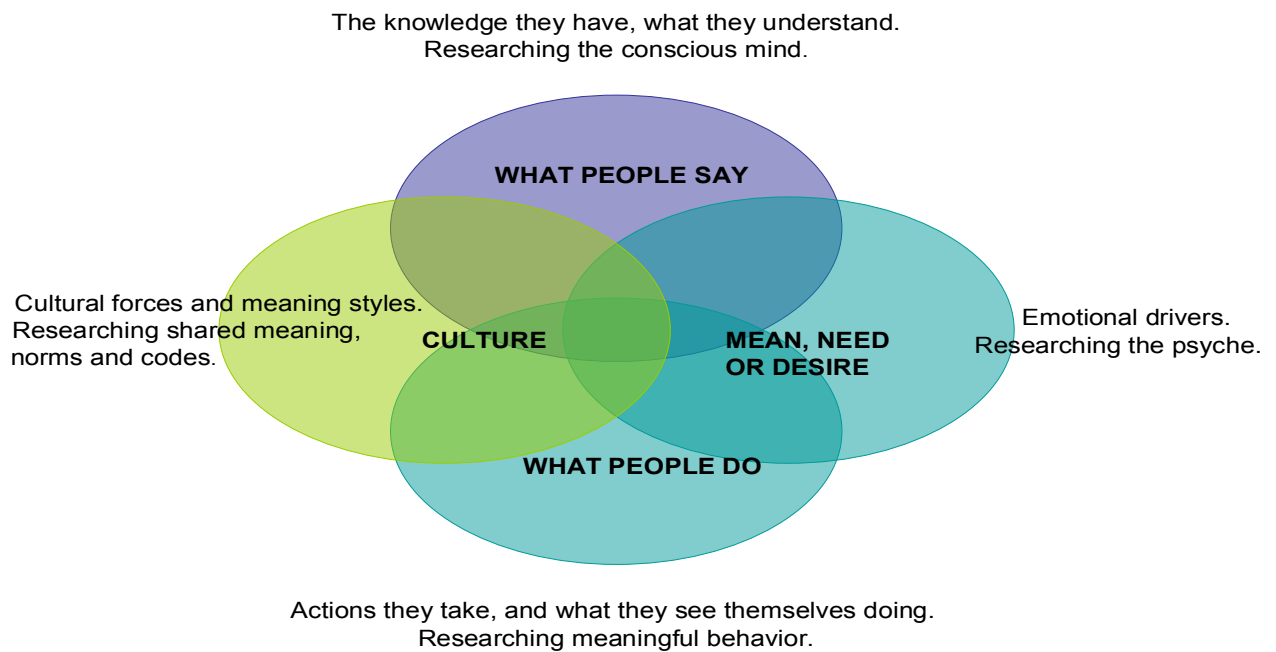


Figure 9. Focal Points of Qualitative Research (Ereaut, 2007)

As can be seen from Figure 9, the four circles are balanced, because ‘people’, ‘culture’, ‘need’ and ‘practice’ are all necessary in qualitative research. First, the researcher needs to find out *what people say* about the topic and what people do frequently by different means under specific research culture. The trustworthiness of qualitative research is ensured by people’s conscious mind, using of emotional drivers to guide them speaking out real needs and desires. Second, it is very interesting that the context of launching research is called *culture*. Each scientific study has norms and codes to restrict the sources researchers will quote. Third, in this case study, the drivers and forces to do qualitative research are the *meaning and desire* of exploring interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese cultures, cross-cultural training is the assessment tool. Fourth, the researcher needs to find out *what people do*, and what

actions they take in particular. Each qualitative research has a clear target, and then the behaviour of interviewees is important.

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Trying to cover all the advantages qualitative research should reach, a semi-structured interview was used. According to Grove (1990), semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework, which allows for focused, conversational, and two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a framework of themes to be explored. There are different types of qualitative interviews, as Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) show: many qualitative interviews can be used to study both ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions. A semi-structured interview can also be called a guided interview, since the interviewer prepares an outline of topics, issues, or themes, but still has the possibility to vary the wording and order of questions in each interview. They also point out that the major advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the materials are somewhat systematic and comprehensive, while the tone of the interview is fairly conversational and informal. The questions of semi-structured interviews were summarized into themes; the details can be found in appendix 1.

To meet the aim of this thesis, six semi-structured interviews were carried out in Finland during 2008. These interviewees were contacted due to their contribution to cross-cultural and interpersonal study in Finnish and Chinese business communication. They are also familiar with and interested in cultural study in a cross-cultural environment. All the semi-structured interviews were recorded; the email interviews were kept in files. The language of interviews was English. Information about the interviewees is shown in Table 2, with the name, job description, and nationality, and time and duration of the interview.

Table 2. Nationality and job description of the interviewees, time and duration of interviews

Interviewee	Nationality	Job description	Time	Duration
Interviewee A	Chinese	Managing director, Cosfim	Feb 28, 2008	1 hour
Interviewee B	Finnish	HR specialist, KONE	April 18, 2008	1 hour
Interviewee C	Chinese	Research fellow, HSE	April 23, 2008	1 hour
Interviewee D	Finnish	HR specialist, KONE	July 1, 2008	30 min
Interviewee E	Finnish	HR manager, KONE	July 1, 2008	30 min
Interviewee F	English	Trainer (Expert), Pertec	July 11, 2008	1.5 hrs

As Table 2 shows, three interviewees were Finns, two interviewees were Chinese, and the trainer was from the U.K. The nationalities of all the interviewees cover both representatives from Finland and China; furthermore, the third interviewee was a British, a native English speaker. Although two Chinese interviewees are not in charge of the cross-cultural training program within Kone, one of them is working now on her PhD on Finnish/Chinese business communication and the managing director of Cosfim runs a business in Finland. All the six interviews were carried out in 2008, and the duration was between 30min and 1.5 hours. Additional contacts were made with them though email and telephone. The themes of interviews were all around three research questions, but also based on the cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation.

Interviewee A is the managing director of Cosfim who has fruitful experiences working outside China for over 30 years (United States, Japan, Nordic countries, etc.). The Finnish agency Cosfim Oy was founded in 1995 as a joint venture of Cosco Europe GmbH, the European head office of China Ocean Shipping Company (www.cosfim.fi). He was chosen as one of the interviewees not only because he is a Chinese manager but also due to his experience working in Finland and China. Interviewee C is working in the Centre for Markets in Transition of HSE, which was founded in 1998 to coordinate the university's activities related to the Central and East European economies in transition.

In addition to these markets, the Centre for Markets in Transition broadened its scope in 2004 and it now conducts research also on rapidly transforming markets and economies in Asia. She, as a doctoral student of HSE, is doing research on the topic: Adoption of Human Resource Management Practices in MNC Subsidiaries, the Case of Finnish Companies in China (<http://www.hse.fi>). She was chosen due to her experience and profession as a specialist in cultural issues between Finns and Chinese. She will give opinions as a Chinese, and especially as a highly educated female.

Interviewee B is the assistant of an international trainee program (ITP) of KONE, who can also give suggestions about cross-cultural training program. Interviewees D and E are the key persons responsible for the cross-cultural training program. Both of them are from the HR department of Kone Corporation. They are familiar with the design and the rules of the program and regular operation of training within Kone. Interviewee F is an expert of cross-cultural communication and also the trainer of the case program, who will give first-hand material benefiting the topic of the thesis.

3.1.2 Email interviews

The other method used in this qualitative research was email interviews. The face-to-face interviews were aiming at getting opinions, suggestions and experiences from managers and scholars, while email interviews were used to ask questions from the participants who have taken part in the cross-cultural training program. According to Brislin and Yoshida (1995), effective email interviews of any training should actually allow people to practice changing some of their typical behaviours that are irritating to people in other cultures. The email interview was designed to find out whether the cross-cultural training program leads Finnish practitioners to understand Chinese culture; so the emails sent to participants aimed:

1. To identify some of the reasons why people in their own culture behave the way that they do. In particular asking respondents about their typical behaviours,

cultural type definitions, and studying feedback documents.

2. To identify reasons why some behaviours of participants will not be appropriate in other cultures. In other words, the aim was asking respondents about performance satisfaction towards the cross-cultural training program: what have been learned of various cultural dimensions about focus cultures, etc.
3. To practice changes in their own behaviours so that their behaviours will be more appropriate in the other culture. Particularly asking the respondents whether their perspectives changed after being trained; are there any benefits reached; and whether interests raised, etc.

The five email interviews were finished when the interviewer worked as a summer trainee in Kone in 2008. The respondents were all Finnish participants of cross-cultural training programs in 2007 or 2008 launched by the HR department of Kone. They were recommended to answer the questions by the HR manager. More information of the themes of the email interview can be found in appendix 2. The background information of all the five respondents is listed in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Gender, age, qualification and job description of respondents

Respondents	Gender	Age	Qualification	Job description
Respondent A	Male	27-33	M.Sc.	Chief design engineer and project manager
Respondent B	Male	27-33	M.Sc.	Mechanical vibration and sound specialist
Respondent C	Male	Over 48	B.Sc.	Spares pricing analyst
Respondent D	Female	27-33	Ph D	Legal counsel
Respondent E	Male	Over 48	Undergraduate certificate	Project manager

As can be seen from Table 3, there are two male respondents who had a master's degree and both of them are in the 27-33 age group, but with high positions in the company. There are also two males from old generation whose age is over 48. Their qualifications are also lower than others. There is only one female, but with highest qualification. Both age and education are important factors to be considered. What is more, respondents are working in different areas: respondent A is the chief design engineer and with title 'project manager' similarly with respondent E. Respondent B is an expert in mechanics and sound, while respondent D is an expert with legal issues. Respondent C is a price specialist. With these differences of their background, the elder people (C and E) sometimes answered the questions with more rigid attitude, but can still catch the trend of interpersonal communication development. Three respondents under 33 have higher education level, beyond bachelor degree. In general, the people with whom they have communicated, the tasks they deal with every day, their experience and horizon are quite different from each other, so the responses from them can be useful. They were active in responding, some of them are even eager to hear about the research result.

3.2 Trustworthiness of the study

In Pulkkinen's (2003) point view, the key elements to test qualitative research have different meanings in relation to trustworthiness of quantitative research. The validity and reliability are under enthusiastic discussion regarding qualitative research. Because the reality of qualitative research is dynamic, the reality changes with changes in people's perceptions. In qualitative research, random mistakes can be born, for example, if the interviewee remembers wrong or interprets the question differently than what the interviewer meant. However, Pulkkinen (2003) argues, that the advantages of qualitative research by using interviews (open-ended questions) are apparent to utilize trustworthiness. It produces more in-depth, comprehensive information; uses subjective information and participant observation to describe the context or natural settings, so it seeks a wide understanding of the entire situation. From definition of Key (1997), qualitative research is a generic term for investigative methodologies, which are

described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observing research. He points out that the interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open ended questions that provide direct quotations. In this research, adequate open-ended questions were raised during semi-structured and email interviews, which offers a platform where interviewees can feel relaxed and willing to give opinions to the topics at hand.

In this research, four advantages of doing qualitative research can support the validity and reliability of the thesis. One of the advantages is that it follows a route of 'abstract-concrete' and 'general-details' of question design. All the pre-designed open-ended questions were asked during the semi-structured interviews from managers and specialists to get a general idea first. After this, email interviews were conducted with those participants who have taken part in the cross-cultural training program. Second, all of the interviews were recorded and were immediately written down after interviewing, which guarantees that the answers were correctly written down. Third, the willingness to answer questions was supposed by the recommendation by HR managers. Since respondents are staff from different positions, age and gender, they are representatives to express opinions towards the cross-cultural training program of Kone. Another advantage of this research is that it was taken during the writer of the thesis worked in the case company, so some internal materials were accessible easily and practical experiences help with analyzing the data as well.

Another way of assessing trustworthiness of qualitative research was introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). It states the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth paying attention to must be supported. According to Fenton and Mazulewicz (2008), four issues of trustworthiness demand attention: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. *Credibility* is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a "credible" conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. *Transferability* is the degree to which the findings of this inquiry can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project. *Dependability* is an assessment of the quality

of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. *Conformability* is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected.

As introduced earlier, this empirical part of the thesis has four advantages to satisfy these four issues: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. First, the data of the case study is original because the contents of the cross-cultural training program of the case company were downloaded from Kone intranet when I was working there. Second, the feedback documents were collected from the organizers of the training, and the founder of the program was interviewed. Since there are several training programs in the case company, the results coming from this research can reflect the pros and cons of launching a training program within such international company. Third, the organizers in charge of this training programs working in HR department, they keep in touch with the trainer and participants can offer the afterwards contribution to the development of this program. Fourth, this research is integrating different sources by listening to experience of those interviewees who are Finnish and Chinese interpersonal communication experts, and real practices from those respondents in the case company in person. Since the email interviews were series job, the three steps of asking questions to respondents can be found in appendix 2. These back and forth exchanging ideas on the topic can improve the accuracy of the data. In a word, the trustworthiness is high in terms of the nature of a qualitative research.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will present the findings from both the semi-structured and email interviews. Since two groups of interviewees were discussing the topic from different angles, the perspectives will be analyzed together to answer all the three research questions, and then the main conclusion as a summary will be drawn up in Chapter 5. The three questions below were used to investigate the role of a cross-cultural training program in help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners:

- (1) What are considered the main cultural differences in Finnish and Chinese business communication on the basis of the case company?
- (2) What are the key points of a cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation that help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners?
- (3) What are the suggestions to be considered in organizing cross-cultural training processes in Kone Corporation in order to improve interpersonal communication between Finns and Chinese partners?

4.1 Main cultural differences in Finnish and Chinese business communication

The main cultural differences between Finnish and Chinese business communication will be summarized in the following four sub-sections. Sub-section 4.1.1 presents differences stemming from the direct communication of Finnish and the indirect communication of Chinese. Sub-section 4.1.2 describes different understandings of face-saving and comparison of flat-hierarchy of Finns and high-hierarchy of China. Sub-section 4.1.3 summarizes individualism and equality of Finns and collectivism and masculinity of Chinese. Sub-section 4.1.4 introduces open attitude towards knowledge sharing of Finns and conservative attitude of Chinese. Since the findings are all from the interviews, some quotations will be used with explanations, while some points will be narrated only. All these four findings are supported by theories which were mentioned before in literature review.

4.1.1 Directness versus indirectness of communication

From analyzing the results from the interviews, Chinese have an indirect way of communication while Finns are direct. As the two Chinese interviewees explained:

The personal relationship 'guanxi' is centralized in traditional thinking of Chinese way to communicate.¹

¹ All the translations from Chinese to English of interviews were made by the author of this thesis.

Chinese people care more about potential things which may undermine relationship with others, in other words, this indirect communication can be a guard of well developed interpersonal communication. On the contrary, interviewees who are Finnish stated:

Finns go directly to the point, 'yes' is 'yes', 'no' is 'no'.

When Finns keep silence, its meaning bears no special opinion or show respect to others. Take a simple example to explain from respondent A: if a Chinese lady asks her colleague with a smile 'how does my blouse look, pretty, right?' The Chinese way of thinking, no matter of the answer is 'yes' or 'no' in real feeling, the answer from the respondent's mouth must be 'yes, pretty good! I like it!' Sometimes this behaviour seems to be a kind of cheating, but it is kind of 'a white lie' to protect other's face.

From the answers of both interviews, the results show a positive view that both Finnish and Chinese communication way is as:

Directness and indirectness of communication are both powerful.

One interesting question asked in email interviews was quoted from Wilson (2005): 'if someone has food stuck in the teeth after a meal, do you tell them, or do you just let it go, only to giggle about it with someone else later?' As Finnish respondent D said that:

It would be appreciated if people tell them directly what happened in the teeth without noticing others.

Regardless of how embarrassed at that moment, Finns still feel grateful that you spare them from further humiliation. But, the Chinese interviewee C answers as follows:

The indirect way Chinese always take is to avoid conflicts, since being too straightforward will cause toxic relationships in communication, especially under circumstances you are not quite familiar with the person you are speaking with.

So probably a Chinese will turn blind of food stuck in the teeth even if they are talking to each other. The Chinese will not make someone embarrassed in public or in a private conversation.

However, there are other cases to argue this division of communication ways. One of the respondents noted against direct communication of Finns:

We are not always direct saying things which are bad or not that important.

He made an example to explain that normally the Finns are accustomed to sending emails back and forth to discuss work issues. Sometimes the transmitter and the receiver are sitting opposite each other in the same office. Because from their point of view, this kind of conversation saves one's face if the transmitter wants to flatter the receiver without face-to-face chatting or sending email to scold something with quite severe words. Often this is done because the contents of the emails are not urgent to be worthy of dialling a phone call or holding a meeting. However, in the interviewee A's view:

Email is a useful tool to spread information in a large group but it is no need to stick to it.

He cannot at all understand why this form of communication is so prevailing in internal and external communication among Finns. Sometimes, as a Chinese manager, he prefers to have conversations or discussions face-to-face, in order to gain more information from body language. He believes that an immediate meeting instead of communicating by emails can save time and be efficient in tackling issues. His opinion

also reflects that, Chinese are not always insisting on indirect communication, it depends on the personality of the transmitter and the receiver.

In summary, one of the reasons for grouping Chinese people into indirect communication is because they always think over before action and care more about people relationships. The direct communication way of Finns is indicating that Finns prefer to obey common rules and moral disciplines; as a consequence, they are not always able to adapt to circumstances only because of people relationships. Finnish direct communication and Chinese indirect way are both seen by the interviewees as traditional and right way of doing so. From analyzing these findings regarding cultural differences, no serious problems which may have side-effects on interpersonal communication have come up.

4.1.2 Face-saving and high-hierarchy versus flat-hierarchy

The face-saving phenomenon and the nature of high-hierarchy are the two other characteristics of Chinese culture which are different from Finnish culture of flat-hierarchy. About Chinese culture, interviewee A says:

'Face' in high-context cultures is a psychological-affective construct that is tied closely with other concepts such as honour, shame, and obligation.

Praise others in a proper way can give face as 'honour'; guilty does not mean 'shame' in face-saving, since both the transmitter and receiver feel guilty if they break face-saving rule during their interpersonal communication, and they use different ways in identifying, experiencing and reacting. In Chinese culture, if someone really wants to keep a certain relationship going on, he or she has the 'obligation' to do face-saving; it is also not an easy task to manage. The trick here is to understand the psychological thinking of others, then make behaviours cater to others' flavour.

Although from the definitions in the literature review, Finland is a low-context and short-term oriented country, in case of ‘face’, the answers from interviews indicate that Finns are more or less caring about that as well, but with a different way of expressing and receiving messages in interpersonal communication. Respondent A said that:

It is not a contradiction, but to emphasize Finns is also saving face, but more thinking to protect oneself.

This kind of ‘face-saving’ of Finns is not the same as the same concept of Chinese. The Chinese ‘face’ concept usually concerns ‘saving face’ or ‘giving face’ but with different levels of importance, whereas the Finnish way of understanding face depends on the culture or society that they deal with. For Finns, understanding Chinese ‘*saving face*’ is more familiar than ‘losing face’, because ‘saving face’ simply means not being disrespectful to others in public, or taking preventive actions so that they will not appear to lose face in the eyes of others.

The Chinese interviewee D agreed that ‘losing face’ is embarrassing and all the Chinese try to avoid it, especially those people with high social reputation. But at the same time, she holds the opinion that:

Communication is two-way, so although you are saving your face, you need to take care of others’ face as well, which is ‘giving face’.

In her point of view, the face-saving phenomenon is the traditional way of performing for Chinese people. They are afraid of losing face and try to save face and always thinking about how to give others face. Chinese often choose an indirect way of complaining, blaming, and expressing. On the contrary, respondent D’s experience of communicating with Finns tells that although ‘face-saving’ is no longer new to Finns, the understanding of it is not exactly the same, and some Finns still feel a little uncomfortable about that. In the low-context Finnish culture, ‘face’ exists only in the

immediate time space that involves the two conflicting parties. That is why members of low-context cultures can manage conflicts via face-to-face negotiation from an instrumental, solution-oriented perspective.

From the answers of respondents B and E, comparing to the high priority of keeping people relationship in China:

Finnish people maintain a serious face and are unwilling and hesitant to talk, but this is not a show of hostility.

The social exchanges in Finnish society are often transitory and established to meet personal needs at a certain time. Unlike Chinese, who are willing to build friendships with purposes, Finns are reluctant to start shallow friendships, and sometimes face-saving also means not going to be active in building a new friendship. Respondents B and E also illustrated that the common experiences and similar views among two Finns, who have not known each other before, do not automatically qualify for friendship. In terms of looking for a partner in the training program teamwork, the interviewee F said:

Finnish participants will be blushed if he or she cannot find a partner in time but are standing there alone.

But maybe from his or her deep feeling, he or she will shrug one's shoulders and say, 'it does not matter, maybe I can manage it even better by myself.' If the same situation happened to a Chinese, he/she will be angry or sad of losing face in public, because it is a feeling of being isolated by others, that means he or she is not popular in teamwork or does not have enough friends in work place.

Besides 'face-saving', the difference of hierarchy is another factor to compare Finnish and Chinese cultures. High-hierarchy is to some extent linked to face concept in China.

Interviewee C recognized that:

You should accept the pecking order of Chinese culture of hierarchy.

Hierarchy is very important in China, a group is more important than an individual. As part of the definition of face-saving, in business, Chinese people often do not like taking responsibility individually and may not like giving opinions in front of their peers, in case they lose face. Sometimes, losing face is not only an uncomfortable feeling. In a high-hierarchy organization in China, losing face only once may cause losing the appreciation of your boss, or even if you speak out what exceeds your rights and responsibility, you may lose your job. In Chinese culture, all the decisions go to central management; the only time for the higher authorities to show their responsibilities is making decisions or giving orders to others.

According to interviewee D, the situation is different in Finland:

The hierarchy is not much observed in a Finnish work place.

A flat-hierarchy in Finland means more relaxed atmosphere compared to the tight structure of Chinese business. There are personal networks and groups inside Chinese society that save more time than individual work. But in Finnish society, initiative action is encouraged, individual ability inspires creative work. Most of the decisions are supported by one or a few key persons, which are enough. They believe that motivated individuals with freedom can be more successful, and they are open-minded to share visions with know-how from any resources with their colleagues.

To sum up, Chinese care about their face so much that if the Finns want to build and maintain people relationship with them, it is essential to keep 'face-saving' in mind in any interpersonal communication. However, Finns also respect face-saving, probably focusing on their own face, that is, individual reputation. Additionally, the high

hierarchy in Chinese culture makes atmosphere in the working environment tight. Everybody has the fear of losing their job all the time, and nobody wants to invade superiors' responsible areas. Sometimes it causes no personality in developing creation ability, because people are used to hiding real feelings. In contrast, Finns take hierarchy at ease, in other words, hierarchy in Finnish culture is typically flat. Hierarchy in Finland is not going to break the tie of people relationships. In other words, Finnish working culture gives more space for self-orientation and respecting justice.

4.1.3 Collectivism versus individualism and masculinity versus femininity

In this section, findings related to two other cultural dimensions are presented: collectivism versus individualism and masculinity versus femininity. First, due to the experience of working with Finnish colleagues and training Finns, some important comparisons concerning individualism versus collectivism are summarized below by Chinese interviewee C:

- *China is a collective society while Finland is more individual.*
- *Chinese are 'group-oriented': organizational ranking is important, social hierarchy is also important, social context is everywhere.*
- *Finns emphasize individual initiative and equality.*

Thus, Chinese are collective, group-oriented and have high hierarchy and Finns are individualist and respect equality. Interviewee C made a joke saying that:

Most of the time, where Chinese are, there is bustling with noise and excitement.

In other words, Chinese like to stay together: they feel that the larger the number of people, the more powerful their strength is. The social context is too important in Chinese culture to be neglected. Reversely, Finns prefer a quiet place and better if it is a private one. Interviewee C gave an example to explain her joke: on the bus or in the

subway of China, even people who have just met can talk for a long time, only because they have nothing to do during the trip. But what she has seen Finnish people do is that they are chatting on the cell phone alone or reading the newspaper in silence; it is rare to find two Finns talking loudly on the public transportation.

According to respondent B, in accordance with individualism, Finns value independence:

They believe each person is unique and can be idealized; both men and ladies are autonomous and self-reliant.

Finnish people prefer to spend less time with their friends and family than Chinese. Chinese Interviewee A agreed that there are lots of old people over eighty years old who still prefer to live alone in Finland, which cannot be imagined in China. Although there are more and more Chinese old people who ask to be sent to a nursing home for the aged if their family can afford the expensive fee, it is still often seen as not obedience of young generation doing this. The family is considerably more important in China than in other cultures; Chinese are proud of having a complex circle of friends; it makes them have power and prestige in others' eyes. In contrast, respondent C said:

Finns often dislike being dependent on other people or having others dependent on them.

Finns respect their own individualism and hope the same from others. But from Chinese interviewee C's point of view, Chinese culture may view this as selfishness or as a healthy freedom from the constraints of ties to family, clan or social class.

Femininity versus masculinity is also important for Finnish and Chinese cultural differences in interpersonal communication. It was discussed by interviewee F:

In Finland, there is a long tradition of sexual equality in the sense that women's participation in political activity and public life has been encouraged.

The literature the trainer interviewee F used for cross-cultural training courses introduced that Finland was the first country to provide equal voting rights to women, instituting female suffrage in elections to the national parliament in 1906. The female and Finnish interviewees and respondent are proud of the high and equal status for both sexes in Finland, in particular the open and flexible rules of working life for ladies.

The Chinese interviewee C has the same opinion:

China from Asian-Pacific countries is almost ranking the first in masculine dimensions (males expect an "in-charge" role).

The high-hierarchy of Chinese society indicates that everybody especially males are so caring about how much power or right that can be held in hands. According Chinese interviewee A, he felt there was nothing wrong with his management style and he was confident in setting up his reputation among Finnish colleague. In China, it is kind of an invisible rope to tie up people's thoughts that the old should be respected each time and men are more powerful than ladies in most circumstances. Since he is over fifty years old, he is used to being dominant in the working place, in particular, since he has already reached a certain higher position. He believes that if a man is really talented and competent in the work place, the confidence which reflects masculinity is his personality of making decision. He argued about the reason of respecting masculinity as follows:

The natural instincts of females are irresolution, reluctance or an inability to make up one's mind, so that the opportunity may run away from the chink of their fingers.

In contrast, respondent D argued:

The Nordic country Finland has a strong feminine dimension, which means that roles are more fluid between males and females.

She refers to her own experience that people who have been promoted to a high position in work place are likely to go further and have the motivation to manage more and be the boss of more employees; males in China are in particular of this type, whereas this phenomenon may happen on females in Finland. Interviewee C quoted the theory of Hofstede in 1984 to summarize:

In high masculinity Chinese culture, the characteristics are small families in wealthy countries; segregation of the sexes in higher education; and lower percentages of women in professional and technical jobs.

High Chinese masculinity society pays women less, even though a large percent of women may work. To compare, interviewee E said:

In a feminine such as country Finland, an interesting saying is that people 'work in order to live', whereas in high masculinity countries such as China, people 'live in order to work.'

Even from tiny things between Chinese and Finnish, the powerfulness Finnish females feel they are can be easily told from. As interviewee C stated:

A Chinese mother may feel exhausted after giving birth to a child, and she is so worried about losing her job when the boss knows she is pregnant.

The female interviewee C keeps explaining that this is possibly due to the fierce competition and 'one-child' policy in China; however, Chinese women are, indeed, showing compromise although they suffer a lot. In contrast, interviewee B and respondent B argued as follows:

Finnish women have maternity leave with salary and they enjoy having babies during summer holidays.

Some of the mothers even utilize this chance to move to a new job from a no longer exiting company. They are more active and positive towards working, have useful working experience earlier than Chinese well-educated women, and they feel that it is fun to exercise oneself with trying different kinds of jobs. But for Chinese women, a permanent and stable job is what they normally want.

After being trained in the program and having had experiences from the books and television, respondent E expresses his opinion as follows:

There is a common sense for the Chinese society to take women as vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, there are fewer chances for women than men to find a job or get promotion in business life.

He pointed out that still in some rural places, women do not have an equal statue in the family, and they have to do more in house working and taking care of children, which are sometimes called sex discrimination. However, the Chinese interviewee C said that:

At present, more and more young Chinese ladies feel confidence in their abilities in different working areas, they are sure they can do extra difficult tasks than men.

The only difference is that this thinking has emerged in recent years, but females in Finland sometimes feel they can in charge of everything they are capable of, so the roles are exchangeable between males and females in Finland more common than in China.

In sum, this sub-section first found that that Finnish people are individually behaving in working life whereas Chinese people are used to staying together as a group, which can be described collectivism. The uniqueness of each person is regarded as treasure in

Finnish culture. On the contrary, Chinese culture respects the power of collective. The other finding was that masculinity is rooted in Chinese culture; they suppose that men are always in charge of everything. However, this opinion is changing nowadays since more and more Chinese women have stepped into business life. They call for more attention from the society than before, and they are more open and powerful than the men have ever imagined. On the contrary, femininity is rooted in Finnish culture, but people prefer to call it equality since men and women have similar roles in business communication and both of them have the right and responsibility.

4.1.4 Conservative versus open attitude towards knowledge sharing

The last cultural difference is the attitude towards knowledge sharing; this sub-section compares Finnish and Chinese partners again. The Chinese interviewee C describes knowledge sharing in Finnish and Chinese communication as follows:

Finns share information in and out of group whereas trust is only within a small group of Chinese people holding the same goal.

She means that Chinese hold a conservative attitude towards any useful information or know-how; they prefer to 'keep it in one's own mind' and see it as their own advantage which others will never know and cannot take usage of it. This kind of thinking also reflects Chinese suspicion about others all the time, and they are now and then easily jealous. However, she argued another exception that, if a small group of Chinese want to reach one same goal, they will join together and will not be that selfish in sharing anything with others. The only thing they need to take care of is how efficiently they can finish the task, and how fast they can gain more and at the same time keep competitors away from the shortcut with the same goal. Another Chinese interviewee A added an example: before a significant auction or bid in China, each merchant should keep it secret from others, and any advanced technology of product will be sealed as highly confidential source. Oppositely, Finns recommend that high quality knowledge in

the same industry should be shared in order to make the entire progress to satisfy customers to largest extent. Although Finns also agreed of keeping knowledge which is also the business confidential far away from competitors, most of time, they get used to sharing knowledge or information in and out of the corporation or a group.

Interviewee C also sets an example to explain how she feels about the Chinese way of sharing knowledge. Chinese people, especially girls, are likely to be so careful that they cannot show their deep feelings to others without one hundred percent trust. The example says that in high school this phenomenon is even worse. Before one important examination, girls are afraid that others will know more details about the contents which textbooks did not tell them. So if someone has access to previous exam papers or gets in touch with students from higher grades, they pretend to know nothing when others inquire them. This example shows that Chinese people are not that open, and they feel pleased if they can master more materials and more secrets which others will never know. According to this phenomenon among teenagers or even students in universities, Chinese interviewee A feels worried about the development of interpersonal communication that the young generation of China gets used to putting a shelter between oneself and others. It damages the premise of any communication: the trust. Hesitate or reluctance of knowledge sharing will become a barrier in interpersonal communication; from his point of view:

In working life, knowledge needs to be freely transmitted.

Furthermore, Finnish interviewee D and Finnish respondent B see such behaviour to 'hide' knowledge or information within one group or even one department as unnecessary. They argued that the entire success is more important for Finns to take care of. If sharing knowledge can help others, why not just speak it out? They believe that if information flows smoothly in Finnish companies, employees work as partners and can make progress more rapidly and improve task efficiency than any other conservative cultures. They agreed with the theory that Finnish culture is short-term orientation, and

task-oriented as well. Knowledge sharing is the booster of achieving objectives in the working place, they will not reject that way of communication. In a word, Finns cannot see any flaws in the open attitude of knowledge sharing.

In sum, the attitudes towards any kind knowledge or information in the working place are not the same from Finnish and Chinese perspectives. The Finns advocate an environment where everyone is fair and justice respected. Any kind of know-how in the field of doing business should be spread, and useful information about advertising products, attracting customers or developing the technology should be shared to the public. On the contrary, Chinese are more conservative than Finns in keeping knowledge as private because they see it as an advantage in competing with others. They prefer to protect the information rather than finding out new skills to settle the problems. The conservative attitude towards knowledge sharing also reflects Chinese suspicion or oversensitivity. Being reluctant to share knowledge with others is another sign that they usually do not trust others. This difference may cause different opinions in the meetings joined by Finns and Chinese as partners to share ideas.

4.2 Key points of the Kone cross-cultural training program

In this section, four sub-sections will present as the answers to the second research question of what are considered the key points of a cross-cultural training program of Kone Corporation in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners. Sub-section 4.2.1 presents that the first key point is attracting more employees involved in international operations to participate. Sub-section 4.2.2 introduces the second key point is speeding up employees' adaptation to a new culture. Sub-section 4.2.3 describes the third key point is using the tailored coaching method and theories. Sub-section 4.2.4 introduces the last key point is providing a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback about the usefulness of the program.

4.2.1 Attract employees involved in international operations to participate

One of the key points of a cross-cultural training program is that it must be fascinating to attract more participants and help more employees who have potential needs to learn cultural issues; especially those employees who are working in international business environment. From interviewee E's point of view, there are plenty of training programs which ran by Kone Corporation, such as 'competence development training' and 'global technical training', but obviously the target groups are not as the same as cross-cultural training program. She emphasized the importance of launching a cross-cultural training program by saying:

The cross-cultural training program of Kone was launched from 2006, there are more and more employees in Kone choose this cross-cultural training as a compulsory experience.

The other training programs are aiming at senior managers in specific areas or new employees who have been enrolled into the company for the first time. Whether there is necessity to launch these kinds of training programs is rather important to make sure. Interviewee E is the organizer of cross-cultural training program of Kone that she asked most of the participants of this cross-cultural training program, and then got a summary of the answers:

Explore interpersonal communication from cultural perspective and learn professional suggestions to communicate with other cultures are the reasons why this program is prevailing among employees.

She also recognized from this answer that more and more Finnish employees in Kone feel that they have the requirements to learn other cultures since they are working in an international communication environment. Furthermore, employees insist on being trained professionally instead of only exchanging experiences with colleagues, or

participating in a short meeting talking with foreign partners. Respondent D continues saying:

This kind of training related to varied cultures can offer professional skills to supervise and lead employees to know better interpersonal communication. Technical tricks can be learned from the lessons and we can share ready-made experience with each other in those workshops.

Furthermore, one of the important questions listed in the email interview was asking: ‘what do you see the biggest difference between cross-cultural training and normal training?’ A normal training here is to introduce business culture of the corporation, trainees’ own task and how the working environment looks like, etc. One interesting answer about the fascinating characteristics a cross-cultural training program has stated by respondent A is as follows:

In cross-cultural training there were no clearly stated or measured objectives.

He means in cross-cultural training program courses, it is a more flexible and relaxed atmosphere without demanding goal to achieve than a normal training. Respondent A felt no heavy burden on the shoulders to fulfil when he took this program, because there is no demand of achieving high scores after those lectures and presentations. The only thing in his mind is, to enjoy the cases simulations. However, it does not mean that he only participates in the program for fun; he has a clear goal to develop interpersonal skills across culture boundaries.

Similarly, respondent B says:

The cross-cultural training was more interesting and useful than trainings I normally attended.

He indicates that the program must be interesting enough. Obviously, training program covers cultural issues attract more interests than training only talks about how business is operated within the company, or what is the process of a product promotion, etc. From his point of view, cross-cultural training program makes participants accumulate interpersonal relationship with people from other cultures while they enjoy the time chatting together. They feel regretted how time flies when the program ends. This program is accordance with the purpose of learning cultural differences in order to improve communication skills, so it can give direct and useful help to those employees.

Another fascinating characteristic of this cross-cultural training program said by respondent E is:

This training is very people interactive and the topics in the class are discussing.

He remembers that this cross-cultural training program lets participants to compare more with their culture to the focus culture, both cultures are respected. They can position their roles in such multicultural circumstances while learning other cultures at the same time. They learn to analyze their own cultural behaviours and interact with people from other cultures as well. He heard about one Chinese idiom which verifies this strategy, 'to know your enemy, you must become your enemy'. He continues saying:

This training program is like a big class which is full of interactions, so that participants can practice more with different cultures under different simulated circumstances.

Moreover, he argued, sometimes people persist in their traditional perspective of treating others, so when the trainer as a transmitter in class raises new opinions to assess focus culture, it might cause opposite feedbacks from the participants as receivers that makes such topics discussing or even controversial as a noise in interpersonal

communication between trainer and participants. However, always new but useful idea comes up from fierce discussions. The trainer and organizer encourage such fierce discussion in order to collect more cases in files for accumulating more materials of future training.

In a word, in such international environment of Kone where the respondents are working in or ever worked in, a cross-cultural training program is fascinating enough to arouse interest of the participants, then to attract more employees who are working in international operations to participate, and then to be useful in leading participants to be more interactive. As a useful cross-cultural training program, it helps employees identify their own roles in the teams, and see how well they act and respond in interpersonal communication, and what are the feedbacks their partners give. This program is like a game which makes employees feel relaxed but find themselves when they are 'playing' and 'chatting' with others. Sometimes, the topic raised in group discussion is rigid and controversial; however, it helps participants have a double check of their behaviours in communication and become sincere thinking and proper acting.

4.2.2 Speed up employees' adaptation to a new culture

The second key point of cross-cultural training program is speeding up employees' adaptation to a new culture. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners has to face the same situation as other cross-cultural communications related to cultural adaptation. Pick 'adaptation' from the four phases of 'U-curve' (see 2.3.1), how soon and how well a new comer adapt to a new culture are depending on how capable and how eager he or she can get involved in it, otherwise uncomfortable and unpleased feelings will occur. As a consequence, in a cultural adaptation phase, more attentions will be paid on the timing of overcoming culture shock in order to avoid misunderstanding of other culture. The Chinese interviewee A, who has ever trained both Finns and Chinese, his experience tells the truth:

For the first time one Chinese arrives in a western country, culture shock was unavoidable.

From his experience, the Finnish culture is westernized with open minds while Chinese culture has a long history and slow development without big change. Finland is not being familiar by Chinese, except its largest business of Nokia or some other production lines in southern part of China. However, gradually growing cooperation between Finland and China increases interactions, culture shock may emerge at the very beginning for Finns first meet Chinese culture or vice versa.

In spite of inevitable troubles with culture shock, working in Finland, interviewee A recognizes that similarities between Finns and Chinese will overwhelm differences after he practiced a so-called cross-cultural training program towards Finns. He employed Finnish managers or workers in his agency as soon as he arrived in Finland, instead of bringing Chinese staff from China. In Finland, all because he quickly understood the personality of Finns, the training took shorter to be accepted comparing to other countries he worked in. From his point of view:

The best time to adapt to Finnish culture is the first three months or at longest half a year.

During that time, he goes fishing, tries sauna, and does sports such as skiing; in a word, acts as what normal Finns do, it is the trick to successful adapt to Finnish culture. He suggests that in a good cross-cultural training, one key point is:

The trainer should really be familiar with focus culture, so that he or she can tell when the best timing is to adapt to a new culture and what actions should be done during that time.

Furthermore, interviewee A has other two tricks in training Finns to seize the proper

time of overcoming cultural shock towards Chinese culture. If the training can extend the honeymoon time after stepping into Chinese society, the culture adaptation period will be shortened. First trick is *'let it go'*, it might sound ridiculous, but the truth tells the efficiency. He only trained Finnish workers to remember the basic internal policies of parent company located in China and let them remember: the most important thing is, you can do what your colleagues do as well, and it's your turn to take responsibility of other's job at any time. In his part, the most important ability is:

As long as you are qualified of a personal test to a new cultural environment, you have extra time to react to different culture properly (cultural adaptation), and then go closer to be localized behaving.

Second trick is *perfectly understanding and using 'guanxi'*. He commented that 'guanxi' is about the connections among people, and the more you help others, the more you will get. In other words, the key here is to build an effective group with effective group work. Finns must be used to working in group-oriented situation. Finns are open and glad to share information, no 'secret tactics' in working environment, knowledge flows smoothly. The 'guanxi' is strengthening when Finns and Chinese work together without interrupts caused by different understanding of people relationship. He says:

A cross-cultural training program must adjust its measures to local conditions in time to guide practitioners to adjust to different culture.

In sum, the second finding of the key points of a good cross-cultural training program is speeding up employees' adaptation to a new culture. The trainer should take into consideration that the sooner, the better. When a new comer faces a new culture, at the very beginning may experience a honeymoon phase since everything is interesting in his or her eyes. However, culture shock and misunderstandings in interpersonal communication between two cultures are difficult to avoid. The role of a cross-cultural training program is teaching the tricks to help participants quickly get involved in a new

culture.

4.2.3 Use tailored coaching methods and practices

The third key point of a good cross-cultural training program is using the tailored coaching methods and practices. In other words, the trainer of the case company uses proper coaching methods and then leads participants to practice theories in and out workshop. As the trainer, interviewee F said:

The cross-cultural training program of Kone consists of vivid case study, group discussion and personal simulation of Chinese culture.

Interviewees D and E praised this program by saying that:

Because of those methods the trainer used, all the participants showed great willingness to talk directly about differences between these two cultures during lecturing and group work.

They do mean that these methods are appropriate in teaching, supervising and leading participants to express their opinions, to show their motivation to better understand other culture, and as a result to push interpersonal communication forward.

Due to the views shared and flew successfully during the training courses, respondents A and D manifest:

This training program helps build trust, facilitates decision-making and points out the way to overcome cultural challenges.

All the five respondents were very active in responding to the email interviews since they are still calling the cross-cultural training to mind and pondering on it. The varied

methods used by the trainer is not only drawing a picture of how focus culture looks like, but also encouraging Finnish participants to experience, simulate and give response to other cultures. Respondent D is quite satisfied with the program, she has the needs to improve her skills in decision-making, and she is eager to improving the ability to tackle with more challenges than before. Because of the trust built in the class, she feels confident in herself, and then the interesting stories or simulations enlarged her horizon.

The proper methods in guiding the participants were also suggested by respondent B:

A good training related to culture should be interactive, involving exchanges of impressions, experiences, and problems amongst learners.

He emphasizes the psychological aspect to design a cross-cultural training program. The sensitive feeling of the participants needs the program to get all of them involved in interactions, so that they can express their suggestions, understandings, and criticisms. In other words, the tone and attitude of the trainer to treat participants are important, because any reluctance of guiding or lack of proficiency will weaken the trustworthiness of him or her. Respondent E said:

Since we participants are from different generations, I'm over 48 years old, there are other young friends who are around 25 years old, it is not the same way for the trainer to speak to me and to them, and even we ourselves should be careful in communicating with each other.

According to this situation, Interviewee B feels:

It is hard to transmit knowledge in the class although it is a common sense that cross-cultural training workshop is a place for everybody to interact, express, and respond.

In particular, she points out that Finnish are learning a totally new culture such as Chinese culture, when they do simulation of Chinese culture; it is difficult for the trainer to manage psychological situations of all the trainees, since problems might take place caused by personality difference.

Moreover, besides coaching style in the class, interviewee F recommends a practical working experience accumulated in between:

A good cross-cultural training program should leave some time for the participants to digest what they have learned, to put the theories into practice, to find out their disadvantages in interpersonal communication towards other cultures, and come back to the course to exchange ideas and listen to solution plans.

The training of case company normally lasts for less than a week, but might be divided into two periods, for instance, two days to be coached, the other two days of discussions after sending the participants back to work. Interviewee F said:

This kind of arrangement will make participants feel ease and leave spare time for both the trainer and participants to experience the process of fresh ideas coming out.

This is why the case program of Kone is launched once in spring time, and then continues the other two days in autumn. Interviewee E as the organizer is satisfied with this arrangement since it saves time and money, what are the benefits of a training program should normally bring to the company.

To sum up, well-tailored coaching methods and useful practice in and out workshop are the third key point of a cross-cultural training program. The proper coaching methods from case company include vivid case study of previous real experiences from other international companies, group discussion about cultures comparison to accumulate helpful skills in interpersonal communication, and personal simulation by assuming

oneself from another cultural background which is called transposed consideration. The attention should also be paid on the mood, the feeling, the feedback of participants all the time. Moreover, the useful practice out of workshop means the trainer should permit a leave for participants to go back to work in between of two periods of the program, because the theories need to be practiced in daily working life and have the chance to be made progress by self-leadership. Exchanging ideas after going back to the class is another kind of feedback given to the trainer and other participants in interpersonal communication, but only focus on cultural issues.

4.2.4 Provide a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback

The last key point of a cross-cultural training program is providing a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback about the usefulness of the program. Interviewee D says:

Feedback is an important step afterwards of launching a cross-cultural training program.

From her point of view, this step should include doing advertising the strengths of the program to other employees who have never been taken part in, and use anonymous feedback sheet to get self-assessment from participants to evaluate their performance, and how well they think the organizers did. Interviewee F agreed with saying:

A positive way of collecting feedback of the program will encourage the trainer, the organizer then the participants.

She as one of the organizer of the program stated that the afterwards feedback is definitely important, but feedback should also be collected during the training. However, as all the feedbacks normally did before, it is only a one-way process of transmitting message from the participants to the trainer or organizer. She recommends a frequent

two-way transmitting of messages, since the feedback from the trainer to the participants is important as well.

As a good example of requiring and analyzing feedback, pick one question from the email interview: 'did this cross-cultural training help you adjust to different business cultures when you go back to work?' Respondent C gave the answer with writing down following response:

This training helps dealing especially with the Chinese. The Chinese culture is very different from the western ones and dealing with the Chinese poses challenges.

According to his answer, it seems that Chinese culture attracts more interest due to its unique nature and the ever-ascending feeling of challenges when facing Chinese culture. If this kind of feeling can be delivered to the organizer of this training, maybe personal needs will be noticed, or the trainer may know what kind of cultural area he has taught is excellent. At least if collecting this response officially by documenting feedback sheets from participants, it gives the chance to participants to speak out their motivation and expectation in specific area studying. As the answer to the same question, respondent A wrote down:

I now better understand some answers and habits of Chinese colleagues.

He expresses the same phenomenon that Chinese culture was more talked about during the training courses, which affects more in getting ideas of how Chinese as an Asian culture to be understood by Finnish culture.

The other simple answers from respondents B and C from the same question are:

- *I am more aware of possible issues in communication styles.*
- *I can now be acting more correctly.*

Both of them imply a general phenomenon after being trained that Finnish participants are more aware of possible issues in communication style with other cultures, and they can use learned skills to perform better in multicultural circumstance than before. If those answers from respondents could be part of feedbacks handed in to the trainer, he will be aware of where and how effective the contents are of the program. At the same time, the interviewee F also as the trainer feels satisfied with the contents of his workshop such as illustrating multiple of cases of interpersonal communication, introducing 'do and don't' principles, making participants forget his/her nationality and all the habits of communication when doing group work. According to interviewee D:

If there is always a forum provided for collecting, exchanging and analyzing feedback, a two-way communication emerges.

From her point of view, the trainer can give his response to his students by marking the feedback and keeping in touch with the participants. Interpersonal communication is a two-way and an on-going process with exchanging the meanings of information. To identify the role of a cross-cultural training program, feedback is a good point to link the intention of both trainer and participants, which will improve interpersonal communication.

To sum up, the last key point of cross-cultural training program focus on having a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback. Moreover, there are at least two steps of feedback collection. First is the feedback sheet with pre-designed questions which will be handed out during the training course; then the other feedback will continue to listen to the evaluation and advises given by participants after the program finishes. The importance of feedback is stressing the benefits of its roles in motivating participants to be active all the time and concentrating on the practice. Feedback can also bring benefits to the organizer and trainer to see what the drawbacks of the program are, and then they can develop the theory of teaching and the style of organizing.

4.3 Recommendations in organizing cross-cultural training processes in Kone

This section is aiming at generally giving two recommendations in order to better organize cross-cultural training processes. Sub-section 4.3.1 introduces a recommendation to develop diversity of the contents of the program. For example, the contents of the program can be designed more versatile with the purpose of developing training program itself and satisfy as more needs as the employees have. Sub-section 4.3.2 recommends that group the participants by using different criteria (not only nationality). It means the suggestions about how the trainer can build an energetic learning atmosphere in the class; about the method to accelerate learning skills of interpersonal communication among participants to push forward the study; and about enhance the people relationship between the trainer and participants in order to make training process goes smoothly.

4.3.1 Develop the diversity of the contents of the program

The first suggestion coming from the research is that the diversity of contents for a cross-cultural training program should be enlarged. Respondent D in the email interview pointed out:

For a cross-cultural training program, some items of focus culture should be taught in details besides existed contents, such as national culture values, business culture or introduction of economy and politics.

She recommends the versatile contents should be developed beyond basic instruction of focus culture if the participants really demand to know more. According to one of questions of the email interview: how much you have learned about following knowledge (Language, food, art, sport, geography) of focus cultures? All the five respondents answered with 'low knowledge' about those unfamiliar parts of focus culture because nobody gives them specific instruction. Take Chinese culture for

example, respondent C heard about Chinese culture when he was young, and he has traveled to China; however, his knowledge after being trained is still low about Chinese geography, language and arts. Since Chinese culture is one the four focus cultures of cross-cultural training program of Kone, Finnish employees who have to frequent interact with Chinese partners should have known more than other Finns who only need to deal with domestic market. Interviewee B says that one of the reasons to explain this embarrassment of low knowledge is:

Geography or national languages are kind of people's own interest to learn more, and normally a new foreign language is hard to keep making progress.

Interviewee F as the trainer argues:

In a short period of training, it can only meet the need of employees to get familiar with the basic ideas of focus culture. Experiences can be generated day by day, there is unnecessary to inculcate in details during the training.

However, Chinese interviewee C takes specific situation into consideration that some employees have the possibility to be assigned to work in the focus culture for a season or even one year or more, so they are thirst for more knowledge about the focus culture before they leave. She pointed out:

Working in the Chinese society, it is not an easy task for foreigners coming from western cultures who know surface knowledge of Chinese culture.

According to interviewee C, Finnish culture is reviewed pretty different from Chinese culture, if a Finn wants to adapt to Chinese culture in a short period, the more knowledge learned beforehand, the easier to communicate with Chinese partners. But interviewee E held different opinion:

It is a dilemma to enlarge the contents of the program, organizers have the wish to help employees more in interpersonal communication, but it is difficult to cater for all tastes.

To sum up, the contents of a cross-cultural training program nowadays in a multinational company need to be enlarged to cover more aspects in detail, in order to satisfy personal needs. It was both agreed by the interviewees and respondents that training mainly about cultural issues should have its unique characteristic in flexible teaching structure. From the data analysis of this thesis, there exists the need for Finns to learn more about Chinese culture besides the structured contents of cross-cultural training program. Although difficulties may come from time-consuming from the organizer's point of view if only focusing on one culture, because this will cause partial to side with Chinese culture, most of the interviewees and respondents insist on it is a useful suggestion to make the cross-cultural training varied in its contents development.

4.3.2 Group participants by using different criteria

The second recommendation for a good cross-cultural training program is dividing the participants for any group work according to different criteria besides nationality, in order to get effective results. Nowadays, there are plenty of nationalities in one multinational company; a good cross-cultural training program should attract employees from different cultural backgrounds. But since the case company is Finland-based, most of the participants are Finns towards different focus cultures. Interviewee F observed the behaviours Finnish participants did, he said:

Finns are shy and are not initiating to find new partners, they get used to working with partners who have same or similar backgrounds.

From his experience of coaching, normally, the employees who are interested in taking culture study will form discussion groups up to their willingness. If he just gives freedom to participants to make groups themselves, the presentations they gave or

papers they hand in after being trained cannot be quite useful in getting new ideas of the topic.

Finnish respondent A explains this phenomenon:

To find familiar people in doing group work is a common phenomenon in international study seminar which is difficult to avoid, although we know any interpersonal communication concerning culture diversity should not only improve localized relationship but also help people from different cultures.

He holds the opinion that people know each other before feel relaxed in communication to each other, the discussion about the case during training can be easily started. The participants do not want to waste time in finding a new partner, because they anticipate the challenges of building a new people relationship. However, interviewee E stated one objective reason of dividing participants in the case company is:

The cross-cultural training is only facing ten to twenty people who are 90 percent Finns every year. No matter use which ways of dividing participants into small groups of studying, it makes no big difference with coming results.

This reason is also recognized by interviewee F, there was only one Austrian guy in the training program whose cultural background is westernized as well. It seems this suggestion can be realized only by enrolling more participants from different cultures.

Bring this difficulty to ask interviewee C, she admitted that for a small group of people in the training program, it has difficulties to group them efficiently. However, she points out that besides nationality difference, a cross-cultural training program can also be analyzed from different angles:

The participants can be grouped beforehand according to educational level, psychology background, or whether they have been worked in the environment of focus culture or not. Then the data are more easily to be found afterwards from these comparison groups, in order to collect useful feedback for the organizer or bring benefits to researchers who are interested in this training program to trace.

To sum up, from the case study, although the situation each cross-cultural training program has is different, the organization of participants in the class can be more efficient than before. In international business, cultural diversity needs to be developed by more and more interactions instead of letting employees only communicate with local culture in cross-cultural communication. To group participants according to different patterns, it has another way of doing simulation and providing more opportunities to get cultures mixed in interpersonal communication. Moreover, this suggestion also aims at giving convenience to organizer and trainer to analyze research data of teaching efficiency. Since this way of grouping makes the data is automatically divided into groups as well, if the division of participants can be seen as comparison groups.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, there are five sections to illustrate conclusions and discussion. Section 5.1 introduces a brief summary of the whole research project, which consists of the motivation of the study, main theories reviewed, and the method used for data collection in the case company. Section 5.2 summarizes the main findings of the study with comparison to previous literature. Section 5.3 discusses practical implications and suggestions for cross-cultural training. Section 5.4 presents the limitation of the study. In the final section 5.5, suggestions for further research are made.

5.1 Research summary

The research summary of this section consists of three parts: what was the motivation for conducting this study; what were the key theories that were reviewed; and what was the method and data of the case study. The motivation for this thesis stemmed from my studies of international business communication in Finland as a foreigner, and the interesting experiences of cultural issues in real life that I have experienced. According to Kimberley (2008), cross-cultural or intercultural communication has become a critical element required for all parties involved in international and global business. Also Rohmetra (2005) recognizes that globalization increases the need of professionally working in foreign cultural settings. How to generate more of these professionals becomes a starting point of this thesis. As a consequence, the topic of cross-cultural communication to build, maintain and improve interpersonal relationships between Finnish and Chinese people was chosen. Especially, the final motivation stemmed from the personal need to explore the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners. More specifically, the cultural differences, key points of cross-cultural training and some suggestions about enhancing the role of the program were the focus areas of the research work.

The theoretical framework had four parts. The first element was the reviewed literature of the comparison between Finnish and Chinese cultures. Hofstede's (1984) five cultural dimensions and Hall's (1976) high or low-context culture were the bases to find out the differences of Finnish and Chinese partners in working life. Vihakara's (2006) study of Finnish and Chinese managers in joint-venture corporations also helped in summarizing cultural differences in people relationship between Finns and Chinese. Second, the linear model of interpersonal communication to transmit messages was introduced by Harley (1999). In the theoretical framework, interpersonal communication was the biggest environment for studying cultural differences between Finns and Chinese. Third, a cross-cultural training element in this thesis added to help interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners. As Payne (2004)

pointed out, an efficient cross-cultural training program should benefit employees in motivating themselves, improving interpersonal negotiating skills, and developing listening skills. Fourth, with the purpose of finding out suggestions for better interpersonal communication after being trained, the concept of self-leadership management by Sydänmaanlakka (2004) was reviewed, in order to adapt to a new culture and to avoid culture shock.

To explore the role of a cross-cultural training program in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners, a case study from Kone Corporation, Finland was chosen. The Kone cross-cultural training program was run by the HR department with a trainer from outside consulting company. A qualitative research method was employed for data collection. It included six semi-structured and five email interviews. The interviewees are the Finnish organizers (D and E), the British trainer (F), a Chinese manager (A), a Chinese research fellow (C), and a Finnish HR specialist (B). A specific property of this thesis was studying a real cross-cultural training program of one case company. Combining cross-cultural training with interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners was interesting enough to compare Finnish and Chinese cultures. Furthermore, this provided an opportunity to explore the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication from new angles.

5.2 Main findings compared to previous research

In this section, the main findings of this thesis compared to previous literature have been summarized in two categories. First category 5.2.1 will present the main differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures based on this research, and then compare them to previous research, in order to see whether they are similar or contradictory. Second category 5.2.2 is based on both second and third research questions that deal with cross-cultural training program. The findings of key points and useful suggestions for a cross-cultural training program will be compared to previous research as well.

5.2.1 The differences between Finnish and Chinese business cultures

As a result of analyzing six semi-structured and five email interviews, there are four main findings of cultural differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures:

- (1) Finnish direct communication and Chinese indirect communication (face-saving).
- (2) Finns respect flat hierarchy and equality and Chinese respect high hierarchy and masculinity.
- (3) Finns have individualistic cultural dimension and Chinese have collectivism.
- (4) Finns hold open attitude towards knowledge sharing and Chinese hold conservative attitude.

In general, all the four findings are similar with the group work of Dodig, Kinnunen, Ren and Stearns (2007). Their report concludes that Finns are performance and achievement oriented; individualistic; prefer decentralized organizational structure; have silent coaching preference; and are direct and informal in communication. On the other hand, Chinese are interpersonal in relationships; have group orientation; consider hierarchy and authority significant; have silent coaching preference; and are indirect and formal in communication.

There is only one point which is not in accordance with previous research: the findings of this thesis did not find that both Finns and Chinese have a silent coaching preference, meaning that people from both two cultures respect traditions, are shy and reasonably considerate. All these four cultural differences can be broken into details. Table 4 will present two categories with headings 'Finns' and 'Chinese', and clarify the four differences according to the findings. Then they will be compared to previous research separately according to the differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures as well.

Table 4. Cultural comparison between Finnish and Chinese partners

Finns	Chinese
<u>Direct communication and Flat-hierarchy</u>	<u>Indirect communication and high-hierarchy</u>
Linear logic thinking (straightforward)	Spiral logic thinking (face-saving)
Action-oriented (short-term)	Contemplative-oriented (long-term)
Temporary alliances	Stable relationship
<u>Individual and Equality</u>	<u>Collective and Masculinity</u>
Self goals setting and look after self	Group goals owning and loyalty to group
Strong competitive acts	Compromise in maintaining relationship
Individual definition	Social definition
Self interest respected	Social norms respected
Both sexes in equal charge	Look upon man's power
<u>Open attitude towards knowledge sharing</u>	<u>Conservative attitude</u>
Obey standards critically	Different standards for team building
Universalistic in judgment	Conservative and traditional in judgment

As Table 4 shows, the cultural differences were summarized into three categories. First, indirect communication of Chinese is similar to the experience of Kippo (2009): the spiral thinking and face-saving are intelligent and soften confrontation with imagination. Always straightforward communication, fulfilment of task-orientation, and temporary relationship of Finnish people are as same as Windmeyer (2008) stated: Finns have a very upfront and direct style of communication. The second finding lends support to the previous literature by Davito (2008). In the highly masculine culture of China, men are viewed as strong, assertive, and focused on being successful, whereas women are viewed as modest, tender, and focused on the quality of life. In the highly equality-based culture of Finland, men and women are viewed more similarly. A collectivist culture of China emphasizes the group and subordinates the individual's goals to those of the group. An individualist culture of Finland emphasizes the individual and subordinates the group's goals to those of the individual. The third

finding is defining Finnish's open attitude towards knowledge sharing whereas Chinese are conservative. Zhang (2007) is not totally in agreement with the findings, since she pointed out that reciprocity positively influences direct attitudes of Chinese adolescents toward information sharing as well as friendship, the interaction is so important in affecting teenagers' attitude towards knowledge.

5.2.2 Key points of and suggestions for the Kone cross-cultural training program

This sub-section will compare four key points of the cross-cultural training program and two suggestions about how to enhance its role in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners with previous literature. As Chapter 4 stated, a good cross-cultural training program should have the following requirements:

- (1) It should attract more employees involved in international operations to participate.
- (2) It should speed up employees' adaptation to a new culture.
- (3) It should use the tailored coaching method and theories.
- (4) It should provide a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing feedback about the usefulness of the program.

Briefly, the cross-cultural training program launched by Kone plays an important role in motivating employees, making future interpersonal communication easier between Finns and Chinese, and developing the effectiveness of self-leadership.

In general, these findings are in conformity with the benefits which cross-cultural training should bring to interpersonal communication raised by Millet (2006). Good cross-cultural training helps employees to be more effective in leadership roles and communicate better in multicultural teams. This is an effective way to minimize breakdowns in communication, costly misunderstandings and business blunders. The finding that a good cross-cultural training program can develop the self-leadership is in accordance with Zakaria's (2000) opinion that cross-cultural training is any intervention

aiming at increasing an individual's capability to cope with and work in a foreign environment.

According to the above requirements of good cross-cultural training, two suggestions as the answers of research question three emerged. The first one is *'developing the diversity of contents'*. This suggestion has proved the opinion that Pande and Krishnan (2005) raised. Cross-cultural training should be customized for each employee to a certain extent, because the respondents want to know details about the focus culture, they like to hear about up-to-date knowledge, and they are eager to experience the target culture in person. The aim is to motivate participants and enhance capacities of both the trainer and the participants. The other one is *'grouping the participants by using different criteria'*, which means the division of any group members to do a case study, simulation or presentation should be according to the characteristics of the participants, such as nationality, previous working experience, religion, age, sex or even blood type. Eschbach, Parker and Stoeberl (2001) hold a similar opinion that cross-cultural training is effective in reducing the time required to adjust and achieve cultural proficiency when developing interpersonal relationships. Because the more detailed breakdown of participants, better results come out.

In sum, the role of cross-cultural training can be seen as a booster in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese practitioners. Because a well-structured cross-cultural training program will help the employees to prepare for coping with the changes in working styles, beliefs and values.

5.3 Practical implications

In this section, three practical implications about introducing interpersonal communication and what should be included in a good cross-cultural training will be illustrated. This thesis starts from a new angle using a couple of combinations in doing research, namely finding the influence of cultural differences in interpersonal

communication and exploring the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication. The main findings of this study have practical implications.

The first practical implication is to use a new angle to introduce interpersonal communication. Previous literature always follows a pattern of defining interpersonal communication, such as a developed model of business communication of Wilson (2003), and the linear model or the propositions of Hartley (1999). However, one unique concept was mentioned by Peick (2005): communication as *dance*. She uses the analogy of a dance where partners have to coordinate their movements and arrive at a mutual understanding of where they are going. There are rules and skills but there are also flexibilities - dancers can inject their own style into the movements. In other words, communication cannot be done by one person, and there must be some regulations to make coherence and fluent 'talk'. However, the changing attitude and mood would lead participants in this 'dance' modify their conducts in order to communicate effectively. It can be suggested that this new concept could be better exploited in interpersonal communication, since interpersonal communication is a two-way and face-to-face communication as well. Moreover, during the dancing, the dancing partners will definitely chat with each other or exchange body gestures or eye-contact; and if they become partners, it is an on-going process of communication.

The second implication is explaining cultural difference more clearly than before, in a cross-cultural training program between Finnish and Chinese partners. Although a lot of organizers have done a good job in defining cross-cultural training, there are still efforts that could be tried between Finnish and Chinese culture. According to Hall (2009), unfortunately a lot of cross-cultural training still focuses on fascinating stories and lists of do's and taboos. He discusses a much more practical and embedded approach, because effective cross-cultural management requires more than cultural awareness training. Agreed with the differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures, he draws an abacus to simplify the contents focusing on training with Finnish and Chinese cultures.

Figure 10 is drawn as a ladder which presents the main focuses for a Finn to learn about Chinese culture in a cross-cultural training program.

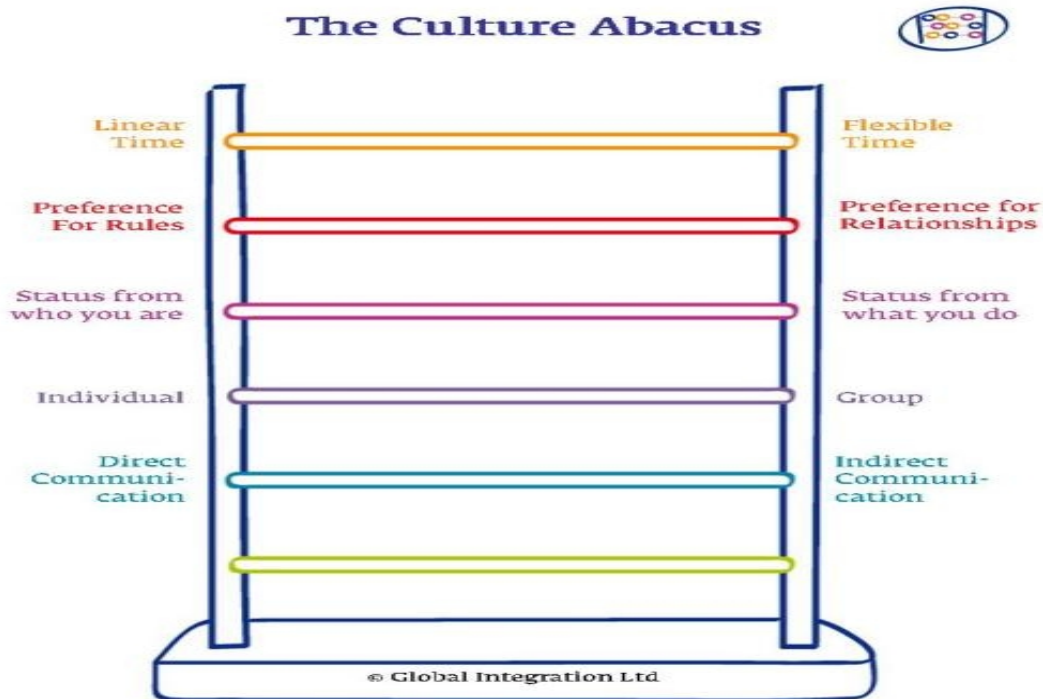


Figure 10. The culture abacus of cross-cultural training aiming at Finnish and Chinese cultures (Hall, 2009)

As Figure 10 shows, there are five elements listed on both sides as two opposite meanings to each other, although it does not mean Finns and Chinese always stand on one side. It covers most of the main cultural differences summarized in Chapter 4. From the bottom, there are the direct communication of Finnish way and indirect communication of Chinese. And secondly Figure 10 shows the individualism of Finns versus the nature of Chinese society: collectivism or group-oriented. The third element can be translated into ‘flat-hierarchy’ of Finnish culture while Chinese respect people’s background to judge everything. The fourth one is the preference of people relationship for Chinese rather than considering rules first by Finns. The top one indicates that

Chinese abide by a linear time schedule in finishing tasks whereas Finns are more flexible in diverting methods. To use this abacus can be clear in comparing Finnish and Chinese cultures in a cross-cultural training program. Furthermore, he suggests giving chances to participants to travel regularly and work under a Chinese boss to experience this in real life.

Besides different definition of interpersonal communication, it seems that Finns and Chinese have quite opposite ways of acting in Chapter four, which is consistent with the most of the previous research. However, at present, Finns are suggested to see the trend how Chinese are changing. With modernization and globalization, it is inevitable that the culture of a country is subject to external influences. The theory of western culture has exerted profound and extensive influence in China. China is a fast changing society of multiple cultural dimensions and layers. For instance, the same group of Chinese that Finns ever worked with may have different performance in next 2-3 years, because they are easily affected by the change of the society. Moreover, the young generation in China is more open to the world, since they have higher education than middle-aged or older generations. They absorb knowledge from the west, so they behave at will in communication. People who live in coastal areas such as Shanghai with developed businesses environment may have advantages in cultural adaptation, since they have daily business cooperation with foreign investments and get used to working with foreign colleagues.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The empirical research of this thesis using a case study, according to Hodkinson (2001), has two limitations. First, it cannot be generalized in the conventional sense. Because the sample of this research covers only six semi-structured and five email interviews, which is a small and idiosyncratic sample. Because this data is predominantly non-numerical, there is no way to establish the probability that the data is representative of some larger population. Since the data for the study was relatively small, the implications made

would be considered as suggestive only. Second, the conclusions of the research are strong when researcher expertise and intuition are maximized, but this raises doubts about the ‘objectivity’. As a researcher with a Chinese background and having lived in Finland for about three years, the experience of daily life, or the knowledge of Chinese culture previously is likely to lead subjectivity into the interpretation of the findings. Sometimes, the researcher’s intuition may have emerged when analyzing the data from the case company, since the experience of working there may have an impact either towards cultural differences or the cross-cultural training program itself.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The current study paves the way for further research into finding the success factors of cross-cultural training programs to find more phenomena between Finnish and Chinese cultures, and then bring more benefits to interpersonal communication. Based on the literature review and the analysis of the case company, there are three suggestions for further research.

The first suggestion of future research is to divert from the traditional perspective of assessing behaviours of Finns and Chinese in the work place, and then to make a new design of a cross-cultural training program. According to Paton (2008), Finns are shown to be more comfortable entering into a business partnership with someone from the same linguistic and cultural background whereas linguistic and cultural sameness mattered less to the Chinese. This is an opposite opinion to the one that Chinese easily get familiar with someone from same cultural background, because the same public opinion affect them a lot to behave consciously in the same way. As a result, Jouhki (2009) argues that, it will probably have the interesting function to set up western stereotypes of studying Asian culture. The strategy of Jouhki is ‘reading you first, then to analyze others’. For example, using Finnish background to interpret communication with Chinese partners has a shared source for both sides and influence people’s observations. Basically, Chinese culture as a focus for Finns to study in the workshop of training makes a bias

that all the efforts should be put into understanding Chinese culture, instead of turning back to interpret Finnish culture.

Second, according to Uen, Wu and Huang (2009), there is little research about analyzing interpersonal communication of young managers focused on stress studies and related practices in the workplace. Because excessive stress may have negative influences on individuals' physical and mental conditions, it will affect the phase of 'U-curve' and 'self-leadership of ability regeneration'. As a consequence, the focus on young managers' interpersonal stress is a new concept of interpersonal communication, since their opinions might differ from those of their middle-aged fellow managers and senior subordinates. According to Pickard and Brewster (1994), cultural training is more effective for younger people. Then further research can expect that a good cross-cultural training may benefit young generations more than others, and the focal point can be turned into alleviating their stress.

Third, more research attention should be given to extensibility of a cross-cultural training program contents and forms. According to Rowney and Taras (2007), cultural values greatly affect communication style, perception of justice, and the preferences for conflict resolution mode and workplace behaviour. However, as Fowler and Mumford summarized in 1995, there are normally six cross-cultural training methods that fall into two categories: the interaction methods of role plays, cultural contrast, and simulation games, and the cognitive methods of critical incidents, cultural assimilators and case studies. They are still the leading methods in cross-cultural training programs, but maybe further research can aim at more interesting, more efficient, and more colorful design and thus develop the structure of the program.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Themes of semi-structured interviews

Part 1 Background information of interviewee (Name, Nationality, Position, Sex, Experiences working outside his/her own culture, intention of following this research).

Part 2 Perspectives towards cultural differences

1. Have you worked with people from other cultures? Do you enjoy with working with Chinese/Finnish partners?
2. In your opinion, does the cooperation between Finns and Chinese run smoothly in your department or company?
3. What do you think are the crucial differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures?
4. How much you understand 'cultural dimensions'?
5. Do you think all the above differences can be the reason for misunderstanding at work? What are they like?
6. Could you describe a situation or an example where cultural difference plays an important role?
7. How you position the effect of cultural difference, positive? Negative?

Part 3 Cultural adaptation in interpersonal communication

1. Have you faced any difficulties in adapting to work with Chinese/Finns?
2. How you feel culture shock when you first contact Chinese culture? Have you ever heard 'U-curve' process?
3. How long normally a cultural adaptation lasts? Is any failure case when you feel not welcome into this new group communication?
4. What do you think are typical Finnish & Chinese ways to communicate?
5. How you see people relationship in team work and individual work?
6. What are the changing behaviours you take after cultural adaptation?

Part 4 Cross-Cultural training in interpersonal communication

1. How you define ‘interpersonal communication’? What are the propositions of it in your point of view?
2. How big a role you think cross-cultural training plays in helping you to cope with cultural issues about Chinese culture?
3. What are the main benefits of cross-cultural training brings to interpersonal relationship building and consolidating?
4. What are your attitudes towards this program? Criticizing? Rewarding? Why?
5. What are your expectations for empirical development of cross-cultural training itself in an international company?
5. What you see self-leadership’s role comparing to someone supervise or teach you?

Part 5 Suggestions for on-going study

1. Are there any changes you would like to recommend for better helping interpersonal communication between Finns and Chinese?
2. Which theories updated you can keep in mind for Finnish and Chinese business communication?
3. What do you suppose to the trend of cross-cultural training in multinational companies in Finland?
4. How optimistic you see the relationship between Finns and Chinese in working place?

Appendix 2 Themes of email interviews

In order to get as much as opinions from respondents of email interview, there were plenty of questions asked during the process. The first email in 2008 with background information of my research was as follows:

‘My name is Jing Cai, now I am currently collecting data of my final research for master degree in international business communication. I work in Global Development Finance of KONE, Espoo for both last and this summer. As a foreigner (Chinese) working in multinational company based in Finland and study in rather international department of HSE, I am interested in how Finns adapt to other cultures in working life. Hence, I chose cross-cultural training program launched by global HR KONE as target case to support my thesis topic: the role of a cross-cultural training program in interpersonal communication between Finnish and Chinese partners.’

Then, I put several important questions according to my research questions with sending emails to five participants who have taken part in the case training before. It involves valuable information that assists me in finding the answers. The theme of email interview consists of three periods of collecting data, because it is like a discussion with exchanging ideas, and the questions and answers go details gradually.

First time:

- What are characteristics of cross-cultural training comparing to other trainings?
- How is this training program you have ever experienced organized?
- How satisfied you feel about it?
- What did you benefit from the courses?
- To what extent your perspectives changed after being trained?
- How you assess the specialty of this research which is combing cross-cultural training with interpersonal communication?
- How you understand interpersonal communication across cultural boundaries?

Second time:

- What have you learned are the main cultural differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures?
- What are the advantages of this program? Are you satisfied with the contents about Chinese culture?
- If this is a good training program, why is this compulsory to most of the employees working in KONE?
- How this program instructs you in dealing with Chinese partners? Is there any difference in practices comparing to what you have been taught in the class?
- How do you see the role of cross-cultural training in interpersonal communication?

Third time:

- Do you all agree with direct way of Finnish communication?
- How you understand or experience 'guanxi' and 'face' of Chinese culture?
- Have you ever heard the high-hierarchy in Chinese corporation? What do you think the reason is? Is there any connection with masculinity?
- How is the information flowing in your department? What is your attitude in knowledge sharing?
- What do you think are points should be added to the training in the future? Do you agree with the design of this program? Please give other suggestions about the development of the program.
- Do you agree with giving time for participants to go back to work during the training? Is necessary to assign participants to really work in focus culture?
- Is there any practical implication you come up with this topic?