

**Cross-Cultural Business Communication Between Finns and Indonesians: Finnish Perspective**

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<p>As cooperation between Finnish and Indonesian businesses is increasing, effective cross-cultural business communication between two countries is needed to foster cooperation. The aim of this research is to find out the ways for Finns to communicate effectively in cross-cultural business-to-business (B2B) context with Indonesians. To answer this question, cultural differences and communication behaviors between the two countries are first identified. Then, challenges faced by Finns are mapped and at the end, recommendations are presented to overcome the challenges.</p> <p>The theoretical frameworks used in the research are related to cross-cultural and communication studies. Some of the relevant theories such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's time and context, verbal and non-verbal communication and electronic communication are used heavily to analyze and organize the findings.</p> <p>Combination of qualitative interviews and literature reviews were the chosen approach to gather primary data. Six interviews were conducted from five interviewees. Interviewees were chosen based on their experience in cross-cultural communication in business-to-business context between Finns and Indonesians. Data from the interviews were analyzed individually and cross-analysis were conducted based on theoretical frameworks to identify challenges from the Finnish perspective. Based on the challenges, the recommendation was presented based on analysis from interviews and theoretical background.</p> <p>The thesis found that there are significant differences in Finnish and Indonesian culture and communication behaviors. From the differences, six areas are found to be challenges for the Finns are identified and discussed in the thesis. Finns are encouraged to maintain harmony, focus on relationship building, be more flexible &amp; patience, sensitive to gesture, active in confirming, avoid being too direct, ask politely when it is not clear and think about context.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b>	
Cross-cultural communication, business-to-business communication, Indonesia, Finland.	

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# 1 Introduction

The world is becoming more interrelated (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 16). In today's world, effective globalization is the key to successful business (Ting-Toomey 1999, 4). Hence, businesses are required to cooperate internationally in order to stay competitive in the increasingly globalized world (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 16). As globalization constructs diversity in workplace, it creates both opportunities and challenges to individual and organization (Ting-Toomey 1999, 4). The demand to adapt for different culture has become big topic of concern in general management, marketing and human resource management (Guirdham 2005, 7). In order to cooperate successfully, individual and organization need to be able to communicate effectively with employees, clients and partners from different cultures.

However, communicating across different cultures is not as simple as it seems. Cultural values may conflict. People misunderstand one another and react as such that could stain partnership that was judged as promising. Most of the time people are not realizing that it is culture in action. People may not aware that their cultural values and assumption are not the same from other party. (DuPraw & Axner 1997.) Nothing is obvious to everybody, especially when taking into account a person's culture on interpreting or preventing information acceptance (Fuld 2012). Thus, understanding of fundamental concepts and skills in intercultural communication is needed for effective communication (Ting-Toomey 1999, 5).

This research deals mainly with the cross-cultural business communication between Finns and Indonesians. The topic was chosen because the author sees the need in effective cross-cultural business communication between two countries as cooperation is increasing. Besides this need, the author also interested in the subject. The aim of the research is to understand what it takes for Finnish companies to succeed in cross-cultural communication in business-to-business interaction with Indonesian. To achieve this, first cultural and communication characteristics of both countries is identified. The challenges in cross-cultural communication perceived by Finns during business communication with Indonesians are identified next. At the end, recommendations are offered in the research to answer the main research question.

## **1.1 Background**

Indonesia is Finland's largest export destination in South-East Asia. In 2017, Finnish export to Indonesia has increased 63% with trade volume surpassing 400 million Euros. On the other hand, imports from Indonesia rose 33% in 2017. (Finnish Government 2018.) With population exceeding 260 million people (World Bank 2019), Indonesia also offers diverse opportunities for Finnish business and investment.

As cooperation between two countries is increasing, effective cross-cultural communication between Finnish and Indonesian is needed to foster the cooperation. There are risks that culture clash and miscommunication happen in the cooperation. This research is designed act as a tool to lessen the cross-cultural communication gap between Finnish and Indonesian.

## **1.2 Research question**

The research aims to understand what it takes for Finnish companies to succeed in cross-cultural communication in business related interaction with Indonesian. The research question (RQ) of the thesis could be formulated as "How could Finns communicate effectively in cross-cultural business to business (B2B) context with Indonesians?" In order to achieve the research objective, the research question is divided into investigative questions (IQ) as following:

1. What are the cultural and communication characteristics of Finns and Indonesians?
2. What are the main challenges in cross-cultural communication faced by Finns when dealing with Indonesian organization in B2B context?
3. What need to be taken into account to overcome the main cross-cultural communication challenges faced by Finns in the interaction with Indonesian organization in B2B context?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

<b>Investigative Questions</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>Methods</b>
IQ 1. What are the cultural and communication characteristics of Finns and Indonesians?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, Hall's Time Concept Verbal and Non Verbal Communication.</li> </ul>	Literature review & Qualitative Interview.
IQ 2. What are the main challenges in cross-cultural communication faced by Finns when dealing with Indonesian organization in B2B context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, Hall's Time Concept, Hall's Context, Verbal, Nonverbal and Electronic Communication.</li> </ul>	Primary data collection with qualitative interview guide approach.
IQ 3. What need to be taken into account to overcome the main cross-cultural communication challenges faced by Finns in the interaction with Indonesian organization in B2B context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, Hall's Time Concept, Hall's Context, Verbal Communication, and Electronic Communication.</li> </ul>	Analysis based on IQ1 and IQ 2 result, theories, document analysis, and qualitative interviews result.

### 1.3 Demarcation

The study main focus is in understanding mainly in Finnish perspective in the cross-cultural business communication with Indonesians. The research identifies challenges in cross-cultural communication with Indonesian only from Finnish standpoint. In the recommendations, Indonesians and Finnish viewpoints are taken into consideration to answer the challenges. The cross-cultural communication context is in interpersonal communication (De Mooij 2014, 6) between Finns and Indonesians in B2B settings. In this thesis B2B is described as transaction that conducted between business organizations instead of companies and individual consumers (Investopedia 2019).

In this research, the interviews are gathered from Finns who have been dealing with Indonesian in Indonesia and cross-cultural consultant who has experience in cross-cultural communication between Finns and Indonesians.

#### **1.4 International aspects**

The topic surrounding cross-cultural communication that is chosen by the author is international in nature. The author tries to examine the challenges that are faced by Finnish perspective and try to find possible answer to further develop better understanding in cross-cultural communication between Finns and Indonesians in business-to-business context.

#### **1.5 Key concepts**

The central phenomenon of the study gravitates around the area of culture and communication. Thus, key concepts from the field of culture and communication are used in this study. Examples of key concepts in the culture area including, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall's time concept. Communication related key concepts that are adopted in the study including Hall's context, Hurn & Tomalin elements of differences in English verbal communication, Ferraro & Briody's non-verbal communication elements, and electronic communication. These key concepts are used heavily throughout the research to analyze and organize the empirical findings.



## 2 Theoretical frameworks

### 2.1 Defining culture

The term culture could refer to various ideas and concepts. Hurn & Tomalin (2013, 5) argues that most of western languages commonly use the term culture to mean 'civilization', 'education', and 'art'. In popular non-scientific usage, culture refers to personal refinements such as classical music, the fine arts, world philosophy, and gourmet cuisine. A person is cultured if one listens to classical music instead of rap music (Ferraro & Andrea 2010, 20). These examples gave a view of the term culture in the narrow sense. As it is described by De Mooij (2014,19) that the reference to manifestations, expressions, or artifacts of culture, actual behavior, art, and symbols are the usage of the term in narrower sense.

The term culture can also be seen in broader way. De Mooij suggests that culture is commonality that is shared by group members. Glue can be taken as metaphor for culture, since it sticks group together. It also defines a human community, its individual and social organizations. (De Mooij 2014, 176.) Hall (1959,42) proposes other definition of culture, he argues

Culture stood for the way of life of people, for sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitude and material things.

In cultural anthropology book by Ferraro & Andrea (2010, 28), Downs' definition of culture is presented as

A mental map that guide us in our relations to our surrounding and other people.

Downs' definition is close with Hofstede's who sees culture as people's "mental software" or "mental programming", patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. The program is acquired through learning from his or her surrounding. Culture is not individual phenomenon, as it is shared with those in the same social environment. It is the similarities in mental programming that differentiate one group to another. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 4-5.) Culture is everything that people have, think, and do as members of society (Ferraro & Andrea 2010, 28).

## 2.2 Elements of culture

According to Ferraro & Andrea (2010,29), elements of culture can be categorized into three components. Those elements are material objects; ideas, values and attitudes; normative or expected, pattern of behavior that are intimately connected. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 27.)

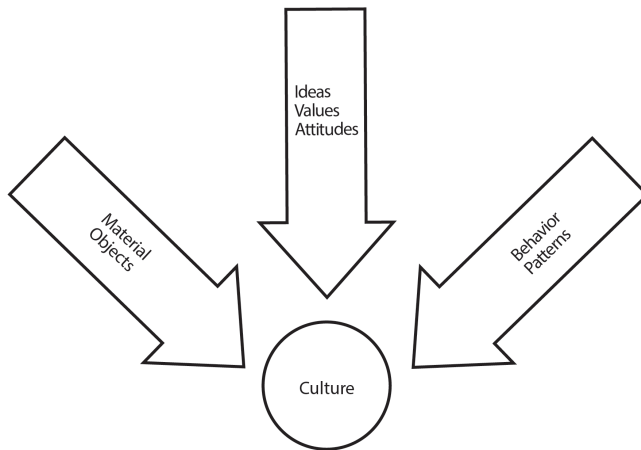


Figure 1. Three components of culture. Adapted Ferraro & Andrea 2010, 29.

Hofstede (2010, 7-9) suggests four elements of culture in his cultural. These elements are namely symbols, heroes, rituals and values.

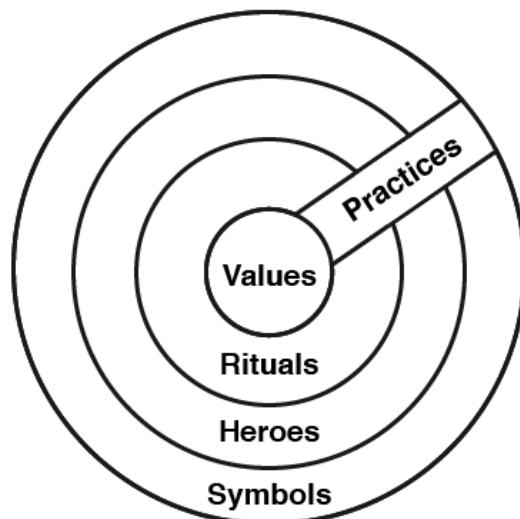


Figure 2. Hofstede's culture onion. Adapted from Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 8.

In Hofstede's (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 7-9) culture onion model, symbols are the most outer part element of culture. Words, gestures, pictures or objects are part of symbols and the meaning is recognized to members of people who shared same culture. Old symbols are easily be replaced by the new ones. It is also common that different cultural groups copy symbols from one another. Heroes can be described as imaginative or real person, living or dead, with characteristics that are extolled in a culture and serve a model of behavior. Rituals can be described as collective activities that could be considered as unnecessary to reach desired ends but considered as important socially within a culture. It can be described as wide inclinations of certain states of affairs compared to the others. Values are the core of the culture. Unlike symbols, heroes, and rituals, values are not expression of cultures and thus, invisible to outside observer (De Mooij 2014, 173). Practices are the manifestation of these four elements and visible from the observers point of view (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 9).

### **2.3 Homogenous and heterogeneous culture within nations**

Hofstede's cultural study in Brazil found noticeable degree of value differences within a nation (Hofstede, Adriana, de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, Vinken 2010). Although in general differences between nations are substantially bigger than internal differences, the internal variety worth to be recognized especially in large nations. Large nations such as China, India, Indonesia, and United States of America could theoretically divided into different regions depending on the geographical, climatic, economic, linguistic, and or ethnic. (De Mooij 2014, 179.)

In the context of Indonesia and Finland, the degree of cultural variation in the country is expected in Indonesia, while on the contrary, Finnish culture could be considered as much more homogenous. It is argued by Hofstede (2010, 158) that national culture score for Indonesia may be misleading, as the country is multiethnic. Perdhana (2014) and Arda (n.d.) found that there are values differences between ethnic groups even within Java Island in Indonesia. On the other hand, European Social Survey that measures the degree of coherence in 19 European countries indicates that Finland is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most coherent country in Europe after Norway (De Mooij 2014, 179). These facts will be bear in mind during the study.

## **2.4 Understanding cultural differences**

There are four lenses offered by Ferraro & Briody (2016, 49-50) for understanding culture and cultural differences in global business settings. Understanding the value assumptions is essential in order successful communication and understanding between parties with different culture. These lenses namely contrasting values, context, metaphors and change. In this thesis, contrasting values and context approach will be used to understand cultural differences. Hofstede's dimension of national culture and Hall's view of micro time are used in contrasting values while Hall's approach of high and low context communication is used for context.

### **2.4.1 Hofstede's dimensions of national culture**

A dimension is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to another cultures (Hofstede 2010, 31). Hofstede's dimension of national culture was the first model of national dimension developed in starting from 1973 (De Mooij 2014, 188) and it is one of the most influential dimensions in cross-cultural comparison (Cardon cited in Perdhana 2014). Initially, Hofstede came out with four cultural dimensions based on his IBM study in more than 50 countries. These dimensions are power distance, individualism / collectivism, masculinity / femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. In 1980, another dimension labeled long-term versus short-term orientation was added based on the study from Chinese Value Survey. Indulgence/restraint was also added as new dimension based on Minkov world value survey study. (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov 2010.) In this thesis the original four of Hofstede's dimensions from IBM study and long-term orientation dimensions are used for analysis.

Hofstede (2010) describe power distance as

The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

In large power distance culture, superiors and subordinates consider each other as unequal. Power in organization is commonly centralized in few hands and subordinates expect to be told what to do by the superiors. On the other hand, small power distance culture, subordinates and superiors see each other as equal. Organization is decentralized and organization structure is flat with few numbers of supervisors. Superiors are fairly approachable by subordinates and subordinates expect the superior to be consulted on decision that affects his or her while at the same time accepting the boss will make the final decision. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 61- 75).

Individualism / Collectivism dimension could be defined as:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 92.)

In collectivistic society, group interest prevails over individual interest. Group membership predetermines one's opinion. Personal relationship is essentially important and should be established first before business. Preferential treatment to friends is ethical and a normal business practice since the difference between our group and other groups is at the essence of people's consciousness. The opposite is true in the individualistic cultures. Individual interest prevails over group interest and preferential treatment is considered unethical and bad business. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 92-130.)

In Masculine / Feminine dimension, society can be called masculine or feminine according to the point of emotional gender role differences. In masculine society, men are expected to be tough, assertive and focused on material success, whereas modesty, tenderness and concern with quality of life are qualities that supposed to be in women. In feminine society however, both men and women are expected to be modest, tender and concerned with quality of life (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov 2010, 140.) In masculine culture, conflicts are resolved by allowing the strongest win while in feminine society, compromised and negotiations are more preferred. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 170.)

In uncertainty avoidance dimension, it can be described as:

The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. High uncertainty avoidance culture people crave for certainty and desire more rules (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov 2010, 191.)

In countries with high uncertainty avoidance culture, truth is absolute whereas in low uncertainty avoidance truth is seen as relative. (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov 2010, 247.)

Lastly, long-term / short term orientation dimension could be described as

The fostering virtues oriented toward future rewards in particular perseverance and thrift. On the opposite pole, short-term orientation stand for the fostering of virtues

related to the past and present – in particular respect for tradition, preservation of face and fulfilling social obligation (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 239).

#### **2.4.2 Monochronic and polychronic time**

Edward T. Hall (1983, 13-26) argues that the western worldview of viewing time as single entity is flawed. At microlevel analysis, there are many different kinds of time such as biological time, personal time, physical time, metaphysical time, micro time, sync time, sacred time, profane time and meta time. In this thesis, Edward's T. Hall's concept of micro time of monochronic and polychronic will be used. It is important to understand the differences of micro time as different time expectation may cause two people from different time cultures to offend each other (De Mooij 2014, 191). Micro time is described as system of time that is harmonious with and a product of primary level culture. It is the core foundation of culture and it is culture specific. Micro time can be monochronic or polychronic. (Hall 1983, 13-26.)

Cultures that are monochronic see time as a straight dotted line with regular spacing (Ferraro & Briody, 68). Time is perceived and treated as something that is tangible. It is something that could be saved, spent, wasted, lost, made up, crawling, killed, and running out. The orientation of monochronic cultures is into task, schedules and procedures. Priorities are set in the schedule. Important things are prioritized and occupy most time whereas unimportant things is left for last or neglected if one runs out of time. (Hall 1983, 45.) Monochronic time is apparent in most of Nordic cultures and countries (Hall 1983, 24). It is important for people in monochronic culture to be on time whether in deadlines or meetings. They also normally emphasized getting contracts signed and move on to pursue the new one (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 72).

On the other spectrum, polychronic cultures see and treat time as vast ocean that is endless and extend to every direction. (De Mooij 2014, 191.) Time is seen as less tangible. It is not something that can be wasted (Hall 1983, 43). People in this culture do many activities at once (Hall 1976, 17). Cultures that are polychronic orient towards people, one does not cut people off because of schedule (Hall 1983, 47). Tight scheduling is often difficult or impossible in this culture (Hall 1983, 46). Matters in polychronic cultures are in constant fluidity. Nothing is solid and plan for the future regardless the importance may be changed in a matter of minutes before it happens. (Hall 1983, 44.) There is a concept of rubber time, which is an Indonesian joke that refers to easygoing attitude to appointment and deadlines (De Mooij 2014, 192), which indicate polychronic view of time in Indonesia.

## 2.5 Definition of Communication

Human communication is difficult to be summarized, as it has no body on its own. Disciplines that are related with human society and behavior are concern with communication (Schramm 1955, 5-6). It is even more difficult to define communication as the border between public and private communication is unclear because of development in communication technology (de Mooij 2014, 4). Thus, there are many definitions and views about communication. For instance, Oxford Dictionary (2018) defines communication as

The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

While Schramm (1955, 13) defined communication as

The sharing of an orientation toward a set of informational signs.

The view of communication is also not culture free. Communication as process is commonly found in Western communication theory (De Mooij 2014, 4). The aim of communication is to persuade with information as the base. In the other hand, general Eastern view of communication is relationship oriented. It is more about interaction or exchange rather than just exchange of information. (De Mooij 2014, 5.)

## 2.6 Cross-cultural communication and context

### 2.6.1 Cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication as a field of study is a relatively young with only couple of decades of age (Neuliep 2018, 19). In International business, cross-cultural communication competences is stressed as people from different culture would need to work hand in hand, participate in meetings, negotiate, corresponds, use the Internet, etc. In cross-cultural communication, comparison of communication across culture is included, since failure to understand different communication styles could cause misunderstanding to both party. (De Mooij 2014, 32.)

Many cross cultural relationship fail due to the communication failure. Both language differences and different understanding of communication itself affect communication breakdown (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 1). Thus, it is vital to recognize the elements that play parts in cross-cultural communication. Neuliep (2018, 20) introduced a contextual approach in cross-cultural communication. In his view, cross-cultural communication happens inside

and in the middle of various contexts that are interconnected. The approach include elements such as cultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, sociorelational context.

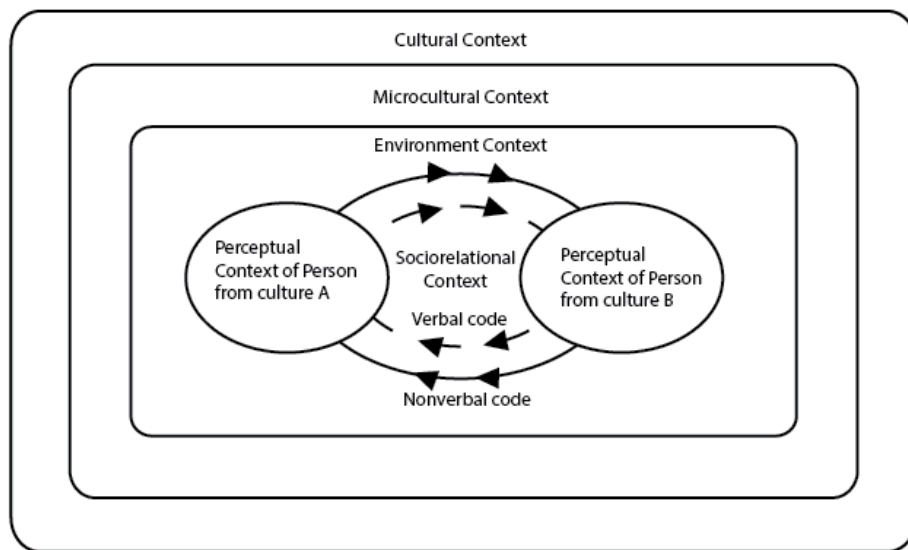


Figure 3. Contextual approach of cross-cultural communication. Adapted from Neuliep, 2018.

## 2.6.2 Low and high context

The term context could be described as the quantity of information surrounding an event. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 21.) Context is communication behavior based dimensions that could be used to get insights into cultures (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 74). Halls (1976) presented two different polar of communication styles as low context (LC) and high context (HC). De Mooij (2014, 230) argued that low context culture is related with individualism while high context culture is related with collectivism.

Low context communication relies on explicit message in transmitting the information (Hall 1976, 91). Vagueness in low context culture is disliked, thus the message in low context communication is clear, direct and detailed (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 22). Written communication is considered important for low context communicator, it is normal for agreement and contracts to be made in writing and the signed contract by all parties are considered as final. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 22.)

High context communication is the contrary of low context communication. It is indirect, vague and understated (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 74). Small amount of information in the transmitted message is explicit and preprogrammed information that is in the receiver and in the settings is featured (Hall 1976, 91). System of symbols, body language, intonation



of speech, and hidden culturally based meanings are substantial part of high context communication (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 21). The forms that are used in communicating are important and incorrect usage of the forms is also regarded as an act of communication (Hall 1976, 113). In high context culture, it is receiver's responsibility to decipher the meaning of communicator's message as Hall (1976, 113) put it:

When talking about something that they have on their minds, high context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what's bothering him, so he doesn't have to be specific. He will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one.

The differences between two polar could trigger misunderstanding when two of different style communicators are together. For instance, low context people often see high context people as untrustworthy while high context people tend to judge low context people as arrogant and rude due to the directness.

## **2.7 Verbal communication**

### **2.7.1 Usage of language in verbal communication**

Yano (2006) pointed out that English is currently the most widely used language in the world. As the language widely adopted, English was adapted to various local languages and cultures and has transformed to many variations around the world (Yano 2006). The usage of English in the world could then be categorized by three concentric circles namely the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle (Kachru 1991).

Inner circle refer to the users of English in countries such as Britain, North America and Australia where the language is the users' mother tongue. Outer circle users are non-native speakers who use the language in official settings such as in India, Philippines, Singapore, Nigeria, etc. (Yano 2016). In this circle, the standards that are used are increasingly moving away from Anglo-American standards to their own standards. Inside extending circle are those who are not native speakers and do not use the language as second language. (Yano 2016.)

Hurn & Tomalin (2013, 79) listed differences that should to be taken into consideration in English communication across culture as it may affect the communication negatively in English verbal communication across cultures. These differences are in speed, accent, volume, timing, silence, and choice of words. One should take speed into consideration,

as people from different cultures speak in different speed in their native language. The speed in speakers' native language may affect their speed when communicating in English. People who are not used to the different speed would not be able to comprehend the conversation. Stress is another feature that differ across culture. Stress in word or sentence is where the most important emphasis is placed. English native speakers stress the most important word in the sentence while French stress at the end of the sentence.

The rise and falls of voice in a sentence is labeled as intonation. Intonation and volume gives different association to different people. English native speakers tend to associate strong intonation with high emotion intensity while high volume is associated with high dominance and arrogance both in personal or national level. Silence is an element that also may cause misunderstanding, as some cultures are more comfortable with silence than the others. Fast response that is considered normal in most of Western culture could make some cultures feel uncomfortable. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 79 - 80.) For American, German, French, Southern European, and Arab executives, silent response to a business proposal is interpreted as negative. On the contrary, East Asians and Finns would not see that anything is wrong in similar occasion. It is part of social interaction that means one is listening and learning. Talking too much is seen as expressing cleverness, even arrogance and egoism. In Finland and Japan, it is considered rude to force opinions to others. (Lewis 2006, 7.) Timing to response is another considerable element. In cultures that adopt strict turn taking in conversation, conversation overlap is not considered as polite. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 79 - 80.) Another major element that may cause frequent misunderstanding in oral English communication is accent. However, it is also an element that could not be easily neutralized. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 79 - 80.) Choice of words may also be considered as source of misunderstanding especially in the usage of swear words. In many countries with strong religious believe swearing is considered highly inappropriate. In some countries however, the use of bad language is considered as the use of emphatic language (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 80).

### **2.7.2 Verbal communication styles**

In cross-cultural context, there are four verbal communication styles elaborated by Gudykunst and Toomey (cited in Neuliep 2018, 236). These styles are namely direct-indirect, elaborate-succinct, personal-contextual and instrumental-affective. Direct-indirect style could be described as the degree of disclosure of communicator intent through the use of frank and precise verbal communication (Neuliep 2018, 236). In direct communication style, communicator use explicit message to express their intention (Salo-Lee 2006). Direct style is normally found in low-context, and individualistic cultures (Neuliep 2018,

236). In indirect communication style, speakers will normally speak their intention by giving hints or modifiers such as perhaps and maybe (Salo-Lee 2006). Indirect style is normally found in high context, collectivistic cultures (Neuliep 2018, 236).

Elaborate, exacting and succinct styles are related to the volume of verbal communication in various cultures. Elaborate style is characterized with verbose and flashy language in communicating (Neuliep 2018, 238). It is commonly used in high-context culture with moderate to strong uncertainty avoidance such as Arab culture avoidance (De Mooij, 2014, 231). In succinct style, concise statement, understatement and silence are the commonly used. Cultures with high context and medium to weak uncertainty avoidance such as China and Japan are normally found with this style (De Mooij 2014, 232). In exacting style, communicator normally says only exactly what is needed (Neuliep 2018, 238). This style is common in low context and weak uncertainty avoidance cultures such as United States (De Mooij 2014, 232). Personal and contextual communication styles are about personhood in contrary to situation or status (De Mooij 2014, 232). Personal style is communication style when communicator emphasis his or her individuality, informality and egalitarian relationship in verbal communication (Neuliep 2018, 240). The style is related with low power distance and individualism / low context (De Mooij 2014, 231). In contextual style, communicator often emphasizes information about his or her role, status (Neuliep 2018, 240), formality and asymmetrical power relationship (Salo-Lee 2006). This style is linked with high context (collectivism) and high power distance cultures (De Mooij 2014, 231).

Instrumental-affective styles are related to the concern of the communication in the communication. Instrumental style speaker uses communication in order to attain goal. Communication ends after the goal and outcomes are acquired. On the other spectrum, affective style orientation is to process and the receiver. Thus the concern is more about the process rather the outcome. (Neuliep 2018, 242.) Instrumental style is linked with low context culture (individualism) while affective style is linked with high context culture (collectivistic). Salo-Lee (2016) indicated that instrumental style is increasingly adopted as style in international business and other professional situations, especially in Western world.

## **2.8 Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal cues are as important as language in human communication as it allow vast amount of messages are sent and received without speaking a word (Hall & Hall 1971 cited in Ferraro 2016, 27). While verbal communication represents the literal content of the message, non-verbal cues could complement, accent, substitute, repeat, contradict

verbal communication and regulates and manage the conversations (Neuliep 2018, 257).

In international business situation especially when language skill for communication in certain context is deficient, non-verbal cues take significant role (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 89). However, non-verbal communication is mostly very subtle, subconscious and deeply rooted within person cultural background. There are various modes of non-verbal communication and details of non-verbal communication are highly relative throughout cultures. The usage of non-verbal communication is also vary, some culture stress non-verbal communication more than verbal communication compared to other cultures. (Hall & Hall cited in Ferraro 2016, 29.) The wider the differences between cultures, the harder it is to read the meaning of non-verbal cues (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 89). It is worth to be noted that variation in non-verbal cues within cultures also exist depending on variables such as gender, class, education, occupation, and religion (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 91).

Neuliep (2018, 259) classified non-verbal communication into nine channels such as kinesics, oculusics, paralanguage, proxemics, haptics, olfactics, physical appearance and dress, and chronemics. While Hurn & Tomalin (2013, 90) categorized non-verbal communication into gestures, postures, oculusics, eye contact, appearance, use of colors (chromatics), timing (chronemics), proxemics, haptics, body movement (kinesics), pattern of speech and silence, use of smells (olfactics). Ferraro & Briody (2016, 97) stated several topics are commonly found in the literature such as: facial expression (oculusics), hand gestures, walking, body posture, proxemics (use of space), touching, gaze, olfaction (smell), color symbolism, artifacts (business cards, etc.), dress, hairstyles, cosmetics, time symbolism, graphic symbols, new technologies and visual media, and silence. However, in interpersonal communication in global business, body posture, gaze, facial expression, hand gestures, dress, proxemics and new technology and visuals are the important domain of focus (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 89-97) and is used in this thesis.

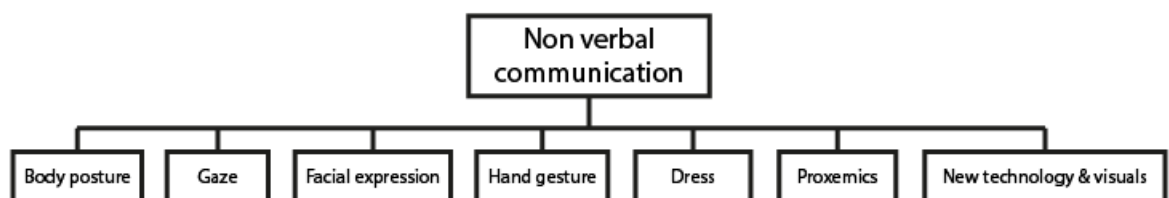


Figure 4. Non-verbal communication. Adapted from Ferraro & Briody 2016, 89-97

Body posture may communicate various information such as social status, religious practice, feeling of submissiveness, desire to maintain social distance, sexual intentions, etc.

In cross-cultural environment, differences are clearly observable in variety of body postures and the meaning that they convey. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 98.) For instance, a person who “stands up straight and walks tall” is seen as self-respectful and confident in the western world, but the same body posture may be perceived as arrogant and lack of respect in the East (Hurn & Tomalin 2016, 92).

Eye contact is one of the most important and noticeable forms of nonverbal communications (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 100). We communicate when we maintain eye contact as much as when we avoid eye contact (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 99). Hall & Hall (1971) argued that there are at least three ways that the eyes are used to communicate such as dominance versus submission, involvement versus detachment and positive versus negative attitude. Some of aspects of eye communication are physiological but most of the meanings attached to eye communication are cultural (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 99). For instance, direct gaze could be interpreted as hostility and threat while for some culture it is a sign of respect and attentiveness. Arabs and Latin American practice the highest level of gaze while Indians and Northern Europeans are found to be the lowest. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 100-101.) In various Asian cultures such as South Korea, Vietnam, China and Japan direct eye contact with people with different status is prohibited. In South Korea, a culture with high power distance, direct eye contact with a person with higher status will be seen as challenge or conflict. In Germany, Italy, France and Spain, avoiding eye contact will result one being perceived as untruthful. (Neuliep 2018, 268.)

Face could communicate emotion, attitude and factual information in very short time (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 106). It allows one to communicate personality, open and close communication channels, complement other nonverbal behaviors and communicate emotional states (Neuliep 2018, 262). It has been widely debated if facial expression is culture bounded or universal. Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972 cited in Ferraro & Briody 2016, 106) argued that facial expression is not attained through learning process, as children who were born blind and deaf are still able to show facial expression. Ekman (cited in Neuliep 2018, 264) studies support this argument and pointed out evidence that facial expressions of primary emotions seem to be universal but cultural influences also take part in emotional expression. In collectivistic society, people are not comfortable in expressing negative emotions compared in individualistic society. De Mooij (2011, 498) argued that Chinese or Indonesians are often seen smiling or laughing to hide their embarrassment. People in high uncertainty avoidance culture are also to be found to recognize fear and sadness less accurately compared to those in low uncertainty culture. Thus, it should also be noted that face is a channel that can be controlled the most and could be also purposefully misleading. (Hurn & Tomalin 2016, 91.)

Various cultures use fingers, hands and arms differently for communication purposes (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 105). Neuliep (2018, 259) classified hand gestures to emblems and illustrators. Emblems could be defined as hand gestures that could be directly translated into verbal communication such as thumbs up that can be translated into "OK". However, although this gesture is recognized as OK in many parts of the world, it could also be translated differently. For instance, the same gesture could mean one in Germany or five in Japan. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 105.) Illustrator gesture on the other hand is a meta-communication function. It is message about the message that allows one to interpret verbal communication message. Shaking one's fist to others in addition to expressing anger is one example. (Neuliep 2018, 259.) The intensity of gesture usage is also varying from culture to culture. Italian is notable for using their hands extensively in communicating while American and Northern European are on the middle position and more reserved in their use of gesture. For Americans and Northern Europeans, excessive use of hand gesture could be considered as emotional, non-rational, and socially unsophisticated. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 105.) Although people from various cultures use emblems and illustrators gesture differently, most of cultures use them during greetings, and departures, to insult or to express vulgarities, to indicate fight or flight and designate friendly or romantic relationships (Neuliep 2018, 260).

Clothing and accessories are important cultural symbols. They signal one's belonging to certain group such as, occupation, gender, age, socio economic status, club or association (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 109). It also communicates one's sex, sense of self-esteem, and general character (Hurn & Tomalin 2016, 93). Most cultures, implement strict rules to the members on how they should present themselves (Neuliep 2018, 281). For instance, in countries with Islamic law and convention, Muslim women are expected to cover her ankles, forearms, and hair. In Saudi Arabia, even foreign women would also be required to wear outfit that cover ankle, and arms (Hurn & Tomalin 2016, 93). Violating the appearance frameworks may result negative consequences (Neuliep 2018, 281).

Proxemics can be described as a study that concern about how people use space as nonverbal communication in their interaction with others. It is important in cross-cultural communication but often overlooked as a form of nonverbal communication (Ferraro & Briody 115) as understanding of the usage of space could give understanding how people express intimacy and power (Neuliep 2018, 257). Hall & Hall (1971 cited in Ferraro 2016, 30) argued that everyone has an invisible bubble of space that may change sizes depending on one's emotional state, activity that one's performing and one's cultural background. This invisible bubble is transparent mobile territory that protects one from intrusion. Differ-

ent cultures possess different set of rules and uses of space that acquired unconsciously. In general, Northern European, English, Swiss, German tend to maintain long contact distance while Italian, French, Spanish, Latin American, and Middle Eastern prefer close contact (Hall & Hall 1971 cited in Ferraro 2016, 30). For example, Most middle class American normally maintain approximately 50 cm space for normal conversation while, for Saudi Arabian culture the distance could only be 20 cm. American normal conversation distance could be interpreted by Saudi Arabian as American being unfriendly and feeling superior. On the contrary, American could interpret Saudi Arabian small conversation distance as him being aggressive or pushy. (Ferraro & Briody 2016, 115.)

Ferraro & Briody (2016, 116) stated that people use visual media to communicate non-verbally with each other. Examples of visual medias may include film, video, photograph, cartoons, paintings, drawings, power point slides, website, electronic drawings, charts, etc. These medias may have different function and meaning in communicating. For instance, one sends photographs to friend to communicate the importance of relationship. On the other hand, technical drawings may act as visual guidelines to achieve work objectives. Visual media may allow communication between two cultures that experience language barriers. For example, a Brazilian engineer reported to have successfully used technical drawings to work together with Japanese counterpart where the language barrier was strong.

## **2.9 Other forms of communication**

### **2.9.1 Written communication**

Style of written communication may vary across the world and it is affected by the degree of formality and informality. Writing communication most in western countries is concise and efficiency driven. On the other hand, in Latin American and Asian countries, the writing style is more lengthy, polite and personal. (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 81.)

### **2.9.2 Electronic / digital communication**

De Mooij (2014, 7) considers digital communication is a hybrid communication tools for that is used for writing, reading, speaking and dialogue. Similar to De Mooij's view, Hurn & Tomalin (2013, 81) stated that written communication, email, voice communication, and Skype (video call), and the new social media communication methods are included in the electronic / digital communication. Although digital / electronic communication is increasing rapidly in global scale and has made people across cultures closer (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 81), the rapid adoptions of digital communication have not altered communication

behavior. The behavior in digital communication merely reflects and reinforces the existing interpersonal communication style. (De Mooij 2013, 234-235.) For instance, high-context culture will generally prefer oral communication and oral agreements while low-context culture normally value written communication (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 82). As it has been discussed earlier, the digital communication is reinforcing the normal interpersonal communication pattern, thus selection of media or appropriate electronic media should be harmonious with the culture (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 82). Similar communication barrier due to cultural differences may also be expected in digital communication (De Mooij 2013, 235).



### **3 Research methodology**

This chapter discusses research method, research design, data collection and analysis method.

#### **3.1 Research method**

Research method is a systematic, focused and orderly collection of data for the purpose of obtaining information in order to answer particular research question (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 104).

There are two research methods, qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research concerns with data collection technique or data analysis procedures that produces or uses non-numerical data, whereas quantitative research generates and uses numerical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 165).

The emphasis of the methods is varied. Qualitative methods emphasize understanding (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 105) and allow study of phenomena in depth and detailed manner (Patton 2002, 14). It is associated with inductive approach to theory development and abductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 166). On the contrary, the emphasis of quantitative method is on testing and verification (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 105). It is associated with deductive approach where using data for the purpose of testing theory as a focus (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 166). Quantitative approach requires the usage of standardized measures and different experiences and perspectives are put into the predetermined answers (Patton 2002, 14).

The advantage between two approaches is also diverse. Qualitative method produce rich detailed information about small quantity of respondents and cases. Thus, it allows highly in depth understanding about the case or phenomenon. (Patton 2002, 14.) On the contrary, quantitative approach is able to measure the response of people in bigger quantity into limited number of questions. Hence, it allows comparison and statistical accumulation of data that provides a broad and generalizable set of results clearly and inexpensively (Patton 2002, 14).

As the thesis seeks to understand perceived challenges by Finns in cross-cultural business communication with Indonesians and explore possible solution for the challenges, qualitative approach is considered to be the most suitable method for the thesis as it could offer in depth understanding of the phenomenon.

### 3.2 Research design

There are three phases in the research. In the first phase, literature review and informal conversational interview are used to answer the first investigative question. Open-ended interview with interview guide is used to answer the second investigative question. Lastly, in the third phase, analysis from the answer of second phase and literature are done to answer the third investigative question.

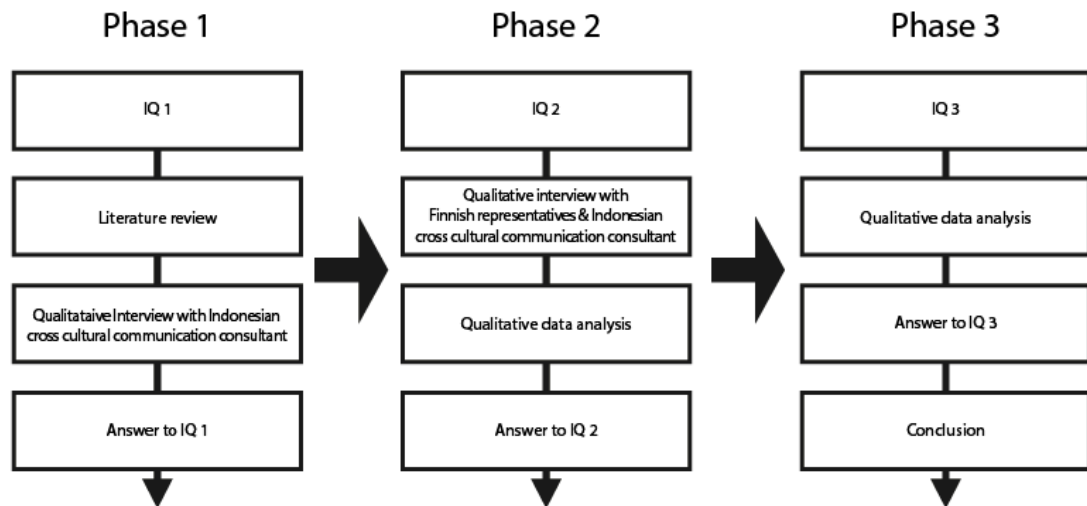


Figure 5. Research design flow. Figure made by the author.

Interviewees for the study are:

1. Cross-cultural communication consultant who have experience in Finnish-Indonesian business communication.
2. Finnish individuals who had experience working in B2B settings with Indonesian

### 3.3 Data collection method

Qualitative data can be obtained in three ways. These methods are namely in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents (Patton 2002, 4). In this research written documents and open-ended interview will be used to obtain the qualitative data. In written document analysis, studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passage from organizational, clinical or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports, personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys can be included for analysis (Patton 2002, 4). Written document analysis will be used as main method to answer first investigative question.

In Interviews, direct quotation about respondent's experience, opinions, feelings and knowledge are gathered (Patton 2002, 4). Interviews allows researcher to get into inter-

viewee's mind and gather stories that are not observable (Patton 2002, 340). According to Patton (2002, 342) there are three different open-ended interviews approaches to collect qualitative data. These approaches are informal conversational interview, general interview guide and standardized open-ended interview.

Informal conversational interview is used to collect primary data about Indonesian communication pattern as part of the first investigation question in addition to document analysis. Informal conversational interview is also known as unstructured interview. It allows interviewer to gain maximum flexibility to obtain information in any direction that is deemed appropriate. No predetermined questions are prepared since interviewer doesn't know what is going to happen. (Patton 2002, 342.)

General interview guide approach is used to collect primary data to answer second investigative question in this research. General interview guide approach is a list of questions or issues that would be explored during the interview. In general interview guide, interviewer has freedom to construct conversation of particular subject, spontaneously word questions and form conversation with predetermined focus areas. Hence, it allows interviewing different respondents in more systematic and comprehensive way. (Patton 202, 343.)

In total, six interviews are done in the research. Criteria for the interviewees are based on:

- Cross-cultural communication experience or knowledge at business-to-business level with Indonesian.
- Nationality of the interviewees.
- Willingness to be interviewed.

Table 2. Information about the interviewees and interviews

No	Name	Position	Nationality	Organization	Interview Date	Interview Place
1.	Interviewee 1: Evita Haapavaara	Co-founder, Diversity management consultant & Indonesian SME	Indonesian	Nordic-ASEAN Business Forum Ry	24 – 09 – 2018 & 03 – 05 – 2019	Espoo
2.	Interviewee 2: Anton Vaisman	Partnership Coordinator	Finnish	Duara Travels Oy	30 - 03 – 2019	Helsinki

3.	Interviewee 3: Kari Jussila	Mechanical and Technical Specialist	Finnish	Subcontractor for Valmet Oyj	27 – 04 – 2019	Varkaus
4.	Interviewee 4: Santeri Rantala	CEO & Founder	Finnish	Solcofin Pte Ltd	7 – 05 – 2019	Online (via Skype)
5.	Interviewee 5: Markus Veikkola	Senior Manager	Finnish	PT. Valmet	15 - 05 - 2019	Online (via Skype)

#### Interviewee 1

Evita Haapavara is the co-founder of Nordic-ASEAN Business Forum Ry and a diversity management consultant & Indonesian SME. She is an Indonesian who has been living in Finland for more than twenty years and speaks fluent Finnish. She often provides cross-cultural training for Finnish individuals who are going to work in Indonesia. Evita was interviewed two times. First interview was in relation to investigative question one. It was conducted to gain additional information about Indonesian communication pattern to complement the limited literature about the subject. The interview was conducted with informal conversational method. The first interview was not recorded but notes were made. Second interview was done in relation to second and third investigative question with interview guide approach. The interview questions were also adjusted in order to gain Indonesian perspective in Finnish Indonesian business interaction. The second interview questions were adjusted and the interview was recorded and transcribed. Indonesian language is used in the interviews. Both interviews were done face-to-face in Espoo, Finland.

#### Interviewee 2

Anton Vaisman is a hospitality student who had worked in travel company. He speaks Indonesian at beginners level. He was involved in partnership acquisition project for Duara Travels Oy in Indonesia for six months. The project mainly focuses on finding local sales partners who can reach potential customers who are already in Indonesia and sell Duara Travels' village experience in Bali and Lombok islands, Indonesia. During the project, Anton stayed in Bali, Indonesia for two and a half months and met some of the potential partners in person. Anton was interviewed in relation to investigative question two and three. Face-to-face interview with Anton was done in Helsinki using interview guide approach. Interview was recorded and transcribed.

#### Interviewee 3

Kari Jussila is mechanical and technical specialist in a subcontractor for Valmet Oyj. He has been working for Valmet in Indonesia in the technical side such as installation works including manufacturing. Besides working directly in the technical side, his work also includes finding and procuring the needed spare-parts or manpower from the local companies and individuals through his networks in Indonesia. Kari speaks Indonesian fluently and has experience working with Indonesian for twenty-two years. Interview with Kari was done in relation to investigative question two and three using interview guide approach. Face-to-face interview with Kari was conducted in Varkaus, Finland. Interview was recorded and transcribed.

#### Interviewee 4

Santeri Rantala is the CEO and founder of Solcofin Pte Ltd. He works in various projects in renewable energy sector including power plant building with Indonesia as main geographical focus. Santeri finds and works closely with Indonesian companies and partners for various projects across Indonesia. He has been working with Indonesian for eleven years and speaks basic Indonesian. Interview was done in relation to investigative question two and three using interview guide approach. Since Santeri is based in Singapore, interview was conducted via Skype. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

#### Interviewee 5:

Markus Veikkola is Senior Manager in Valmet office in Indonesia. He has been working in Indonesia for almost six years and speaks Indonesian at basic level. He is dealing with various subjects including sales, project and customer. Interview was done in relation with investigative question two and three using interview guide approach. The interview was done via Skype as he is stationed in Jakarta. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

### **3.4 Data analysis method**

Raw data that is gathered from interviews are recorded in two forms. In the first interview related to investigative question 1, interview was recorded in the form of notes. Interviews related with second investigative questions are recorded in audio form then transcribed into text.

Qualitative data from qualitative study is voluminous and challenging to be comprehended. In order to make sense of the large data, the raw data needs to be reduced in volume by separating the essential from the frivolous. Significant pattern then is identified and

framework is developed to communicate the heart of what the data reveal. (Patton 2002, 432.)

In this research, relevant information related to investigative question one from the first interview is extracted from the notes and combined with the information that is gathered from literature review. Qualitative research often includes both individual case and cross case analysis (Patton 2002, 440). In interviews related to investigative questions 2 and 3, information from the transcript is analyzed individually. Essential information from individual interviews is separated from the noise based on the theoretical frameworks. The essential information from individual interviews then merged together and organized based on the theoretical frameworks for cross analysis to see the big picture.

## 4 Countries' culture and communication behaviors

### 4.1 Finnish cultural characteristic

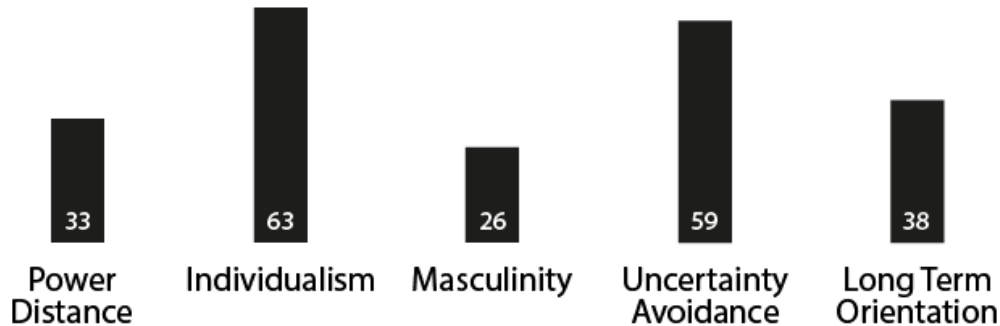


Figure 6. Finnish cultural dimensions score. Adapted from Hofstede Insight 2019.

Based on Hofstede's cultural dimension score, Finnish society could be characterized as low power distance, individualistic, feminine, high uncertainty avoidance, and normative (Hofstede Insight 2019). Low power distance characteristic of Finnish society means that differences in hierarchy is minimal and gender roles in traditional sense overlaps (Salo-Lee n.d.). Individualism is demonstrated with preference of independence and individual see him or herself as I rather than we. In Finland, the norm is to take care of themselves and their direct family (Hofstede Insight 2019). Like other Nordic societies, Finnish society is feminine. The feminine value could be seen manifested in modest self-presentation of the Finns (Salo-Lee n.d.), to show and boast one status is avoided in Finland (Infopankki 2018). Well-being is prioritized and conflicts are resolved through negotiation and compromised (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010).

Finnish society is normative as its low in long-term orientation dimension score. Normative society generally prefer to stick with tradition and suspicious in looking societal change. There is little tendency to save for the future and the focus of achievement is in short term result. (Hofstede Insight 2019.) Finnish society is also high in uncertainty avoidance. Thus, ambiguous situation could make people feel threatened and anxious (Hofstede Insight 2019.) To minimize it, rules and regulation is needed. People follow rules (Salo-Lee n.d.) and security is considered important element in individual motivation (Hofstede Insight 2019). There is big longing to work hard and to be busy. Precision and punctuality is also considered a norm, time is seen as money (Hofstede Insight 2019). The precision and punctuality in Finnish society also correlate with the Hall's monochronic time concept. Finnish society is considered as monochronic culture like in most of Nordic countries (Hall

1983, 24). The priority is in task, schedule, and procedures (Hall 1983, 45) over relationship with people (Salo-Lee n.d.). One should not waste time and is expected to come on time to appointment (Lewis 2006, 332).

## 4.2 Indonesian cultural characteristics

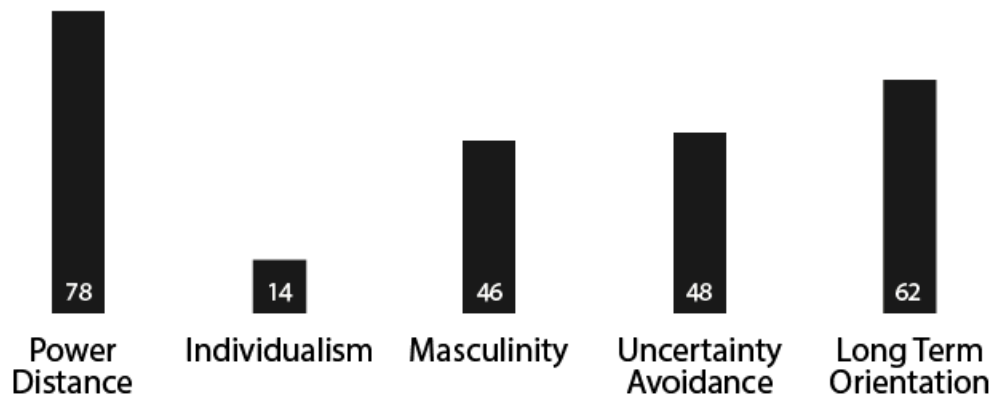


Figure 7. Indonesian cultural dimensions score. Adapted from Hofstede Insight 2019.

Hofstede described Indonesia society characteristics as high power distance, highly collectivistic, low-masculinity, low uncertainty avoidance and high long-term orientation (Hofstede Insight 2019). High power distance means that unequal distribution of power is accepted by less powerful individuals. Individual with high ranks are not easily accessible and leader are expected to be directive and take control (Hofstede Insight 2019). Low individualism score of Indonesia means that the society is highly collectivistic. People define themselves as part of a group instead of as an individual. Preference in conforming existing social frameworks of the group where they belong is high. On masculinity dimension, Indonesian society could be seen as low masculine (Hofstede Insight 2019). Low masculinity value can be seen in the tendency of show status and success symbol. But at the same time, boasting material success, performance and ego-motives behavior are disliked (Hofstede cited in Perdhana 2014, 63). “Gengsi” is a common concept that could be translated into outward appearance or honor and it needs to be maintained (Perdhana 2014). Indonesian society is seen to have low uncertainty avoidance. Thus, ambiguity is more accepted in Indonesian life. Familiar risk and unfamiliar risk are accepted and there is less feeling of urgency. (Hosftede, Hofstede, & Minkov 2010, 197-198.) Indonesian could be seen as pragmatic based on Hofstede’s national score in long-term orientation dimension (Hofstede Insight 2019). In country with high LTO score, people believe that truth is relative depending on context, situatuation and time. Behaviors such as perseverance in achieving result, thriftiness and saving for the future are also expected. (Hofstede



Insight 2019.) Investment in life long personal networks is normal and essential for success (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov 2010, 246, 251.)

However, as it had been discussed earlier, it should be noted that Indonesian society is not a homogenous society and shall not to be taken too literally. Perdhana (2014) argued that Hofstede used 20 respondents in 1982 and majority of the respondents are Javanese ethnic group who resides in Jakarta, the home of Betawi ethnic group (Perdhana 2014, 24). There are 1300 ethnic groups (Jakarta Globe 2016) and 707 languages spoken (Ethnologue 2019) in Indonesia. 95% of ethnic groups are native and 5% are considered as minority migrant groups such as Chinese, Arab, Indian. Six largest ethnic groups are Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Sulawesi, Madurese, and Betawi. It is common for Indonesian to identify oneself first with one's ethnic group background when asked about their origin (Yuniarni 2016.)

Different ethnic groups are found to have different Hofstede dimensions score. For instance Perdhana (2014) found differences between Chinese Indonesian, Javanese and Hofstede's cultural dimensions score. In addition, Arda (n.d.), also found in his research that there is score differences between Sundanese and Javanese.

Table 3. Hofstede's cultural dimensions score of different ethnic groups in Indonesia (Perdhana 2014, Arda n.d., Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010).

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indonesia National Score (Hofstede)</b>	<b>Chinese Indonesian Score (Perdhana, 2014)</b>	<b>Javanese Score (Perdhana, 2014)</b>	<b>Sundanese Score (Arda, no date.)</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	78	64.95	53.6	59.1
<b>Individualism</b>	14	36	48.95	32.85
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	48	29.8	31.1	27.2
<b>Masculinity</b>	46	63.3	46.83	64.7
<b>Long Term Orientation</b>	62	64.75	64.7	62.35

These differences between ethnic groups within the country will be kept in mind during the research.

### **4.3 Finnish communication**

While personal way of communication may vary, different studies related to Finnish communication have shown similarities at the general level. Kakaaranta & Lu (2013), described that Finnish communication in general could be characterized as direct, open, clear, and concise. While, Wilkins & Isotalous (2009, 3) described Finnish speech culture as implicit, complementary, respecting privacy and confidentiality, understanding and slow paced.

In verbal communication, it is often portrayed that Finns do not speak much and prefer to stay silent (Lewis 2006, 333). Silence is regarded is valued by the Finns (Wilkins & Isotalous 2009, 13) and play an important part in communication (Lewis 2006, 333) but often perceived by foreigner as not paying attention, indifference, sullen, and hostile (Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985 cited in Wilkins & Isotalus 2009, 4). In Finnish culture being together in silence is accepted and long pauses in conversation are normal (Wilkins & Isotalus 2009,4). It is also common that disagreement and protest also showed by silence rather than arguing directly (Salo-Lee 1997,34 cited in Kirra n.d.). When listening to other party, Finns also tend to stay quite (Wilkins & Isotalus 2009, 4).

In language usage, Finnish normally use very little modifiers when speaking English and this could be perceived as too direct or even impolite to native English speakers (Wilkins & Isotalus 2009, 5). It does not emphasize closeness and intimacy in interaction through explicit linguistic way and packed with information (Wilkins & Isotalus 2009, 6). In non-verbal area, like most of Northern Europeans, Finnish do not use their hands expressively like Arabs or Latin American (2006, 160). Facial expression is minimal and Finns might look unhappy even in a blissful emotional state (Lewis 2006, 158). In proxemics, Finnish need to have mental and physical space of 1.2 meters (Lewis 2006, 332).

### **4.4 Indonesian communication**

Indonesians are talkative but do not speak loudly. They are shy but paradoxically able to communicate expressively (Interviewee 1). They rarely interrupt others when other party is speaking and feel offended if they are interrupted when talking (Gesteland 2002, 155). Harmony is considered as very important (Lewis 2006, 456) and confrontation should be avoided (Gesteland 2002, 154). Communication behaviors that support harmony such as

modesty, soft-spokenness and indirectness are expected (Interviewee 1). For instance, “no” can be expressed in many ways without saying the word “no” (Gesteland 2002, 154). Saying “no” is considered as disappointing and upsetting to the other party.

Indonesian society is hierarchical and showing respect to people especially who are older or higher social status is very important. Using correct title to address people with higher status is considered as a sign of respect. People rarely talk with others without knowing their social status. Oral communication to people with higher status is kept minimal and is preferred to be formal and in a written form. (Interviewee 1.)

Moderate eye contact is the norm in non-verbal communication. Intense eye contact makes Indonesian uncomfortable (Gesteland 2002, 155) and interpreted as a sign of aggression (Interviewee 1). The need of personal space is small for Indonesian (Lewis 2006, 456). They touch each other more than East Asians (Lewis 2006, 458) but physical contact with people that is not well known is generally avoided (Gesteland 2002, 154). Indonesians also take one’s way of dressing as a communication message. It is considered as sign of one respect or disrespect towards another party. (Gesteland 2002, 154.) For instance, wearing sunglasses while talking to other person can be seen as a sign of disrespect (Gesteland 2002, 156).

Indonesians normally also do not display emotions intensely (Lewis 2006, 456). Ability to hide negative emotions such as anger, embarrassment, fear, and sorrow in smile is considered as a sign of maturity (Interviewee 1). When nervous or embarrassed it is also common to laugh or giggle (Gesteland 2002, 155). Display of impatience, irritation or anger will cause one or other party to lose face and disturb the harmony (Gesteland 155, 2002).

It needs to be noted that most of the literature about Indonesian communication normally refer to Javanese communication (Interviewee 1), as they are the majority ethnic group in Indonesia. However, as Indonesia is a multicultural country, variations of communication pattern can be also expected. For instance, western educated Javanese and other ethnic groups such as Batak (Gesteland 2002, 155) of North Sumatra and Betawi that is native to Jakarta are known to be more direct in verbal communications.

## **5 Cross-cultural business communication with Indonesian: Finnish perspective**

In this chapter, findings and challenges from the interviews that are faced by Finns in cross-cultural business communication with Indonesian will be presented.

### **5.1 Cultural differences**

The interviews found that there are cultural differences that were perceived by Finns. One of the differences is identified in relation with the Hofstede's individualism / collectivism dimension. Interviewee 4 stated that Indonesian don't trust anybody before they have proven their trust. In Indonesia, you need to build the trust. This phenomenon is in contrary to in Finland where people can trust others in general before trust is broken (Interviewee 4).

The need to maintain harmony and face saving behavior related to Hofstede's collectivism and high power distance dimensions (Merkin 2015) are also found (Interviewee 4 and 5). It is argued by Interviewee 5 that Indonesians are seen to always try keeping some kind of harmony and calmness even in discussing negative issue. It is unpleasant for Indonesians to talk about difficult things (Interviewee 5). This need of harmony may also be seen in face saving behavior found by Interviewee 4. Interviewee 4 stated, one of the biggest things in Indonesia that you feel communicating in English and the person don't really understand. You ask that do you understand? They will say yes. But you can see from their eyes already that they have no clue what you've been talking.

Subsequently, in the Hall's monochronic / polychronic dimension, there are various situations in this dimension are found which reflect time concept difference between Finns and Indonesian (Interviewee 1,3, 4 and 5). Interviewee 4 said that in Indonesia everything is very very slow. Similar case also sometimes faced by Interviewee 3 that feels that the Indonesian are seems to be interested about the situation but postponed the action that is needed. He stated, so it is something like receive the information but postpone the activity.

There is also case where Indonesian polychronic nature that are seen as frustrating or offensive such as sudden changes and doing many things at once. Interviewee 5 found that there are many surprises when working in Indonesia. He thinks that things are not carefully planned and surprises may come as a result.

Finns may perceive this difference in negative light. Interviewee 4 faced this situation and described it as frustrating. He stated that surprises are coming from people side such as partners. He described the situation as so we agreed something, couple of days later everything is upside down like we have never even near discuss.

Interviewee 4 also expresses a behavior that is deemed as offensive in relation to polychronic people behavior that tends to do many activities at once. Indonesians are found to use mobile phones during meetings. He said, I believe that when you start doing with your phones and nonsense and they are in the meeting when people are actually there talking with you, that's very disrespectful. It's waste of my time and my time is also important and not only their time.

## **5.2 Differences between ethnic groups**

Different responses are attained when interviewees are asked about their view in differences between different ethnic backgrounds within Indonesia. In general level, majority of interviewees (Interviewee 1,2,3,5) see the ethnic groups variety in Indonesia.

Differences in behavior and communication pattern were identified in the interviews (Interviewee 1,2,3,5). Interviewee 1 stated that Javanese may be hesitant to give their opinion directly. Similar behavior may be seen in Sundanese people. In contrary, Batakese, Manadoese and Malukuese may be more straightforward in giving their opinions. Similarly, Interviewee 5 also see that Batak people to be more direct, strong and more opinionated compared to other Indonesians who are generally more soft and gentle. He interacts with people such as Batakese, Javanese, Chinese Indonesian. Interviewee 2 was interacting with Sulawesi, Balinese, and Jakartan in Bali. In general interviewee 2 perceived everyone has nice manners but perceived Jakartan as less polite in behavior. Interviewee 3 had interacted with different ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia including Sumatranese and Javanese. Interviewee 3 reported that different ethnic backgrounds have slightly different habits, traditions, routines and Indonesian language. On the other hand, interviewee 4 mainly interacts with Jakartans and Medanese. But he see them as merely Indonesian while at the same time stating that people from Medan are strong businessmen.

## **5.3 Language and verbal communication**

Most of the Finns (Interviewee 2,3, 4 and 5) use English as main language to communicate with the Indonesian. Interviewee 1 is the exception since she is native Indonesian and interviewee 3, 4, 5 also reported using Indonesian in addition to English sometimes. Indonesian's English skill is judged as good and adequate for communication (Interviewee 1,3,4,5). As Interviewee 3 describes, but nowadays quite, quite good English language indeed.

Nowadays not so bad anymore. Even older people they do speak quite nice English. Of course with beautiful hint of Indonesian intonation. Sometimes they mix as we do. However, Interviewee 2 sees Indonesians' English as not too good. There are many grammar mistakes but still perceives it as understandable.

However there are factors identified in which may contribute to miscommunication. These factors are namely speed and choice of words. Interviewee 3 stated that Indonesians speak like waves also when they speak English. He mentioned, first they do speak very quickly then it slows down then once again speeds up.

Choice of words was also identified as one factor that could lead to miscommunication. Indonesian was found to translate directly Indonesian concept to English. For instance, Interviewee 4 mistakenly interprets the word yesterday spoken by Indonesian literally as a day before today. As Interviewee 4 described, I think that the Indonesian language, you usually say kemaren. In Indonesia so that means as you know I mean yesterday, 2 days before and so on. And when you actually translate that to English and it's means yesterday.

Similar pattern also emerged and identified in communicating in Indonesian language (Interviewee 3). Challenges when communicating in Indonesian with Indonesian counterpart may also occur in speed and choice of words. As he describes the phenomenon, nowadays maybe the biggest problem is according the origin of the person. So whether Sumatra or West Java or Central Java or so on. It is totally different tempo Indonesian when they speaking. Some people speak very very rapidly. He also adds that people from different ethnic groups may use different words that he may not know depending on the ethnic background.

#### **5.4 Indirectness in communication**

High context nature of Indonesians found in the research and may be seen as a challenge by the Finns (Interviewee 2 and 5). Indonesians are found to be indirect and try to go around of the topic when communicating (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 5 considers it as a challenge as it is hard to be sure about things. Similarly, Interviewee 2 perceives the same situation as the biggest challenge and even offensive. He stated, some sentences might not mean directly what they are talking about. They say we are going to be in contact or that we are very interested but they are not really. That might be a bit offensive. Maybe it is like lying a bit.

Similarly, Interviewee 3 also reported the indirectness in communicating. But he argued that after working with Indonesian for long time, he already knows what is the meaning behind what actually was said.

## **5.5 Face-to-face meeting with Indonesian**

In face-to-face meeting is perceived as very effective and important way to communicate with Indonesian (Interviewee 2,3, and 5). It is also found that Indonesians normally want to meet face-to-face (Interviewee 4). The Finns reported to have good first impression towards Indonesian in general. Indonesians are reported to be friendly and smile a lot in the meeting. In terms of punctuality, although there are cases where Indonesians are not punctual, the majority of Indonesians are found not to be late for the meeting.

When asked about the differences between face-to-face meetings with Finns, It is mentioned that meetings with Finns are shorter, more straightforward (Interviewee 3 and 4) and direct (Interviewee 5). There is more small talk involved in the meetings and politeness is seen as very important (Interviewee 2). As Interviewee 2 describes Politeness is very important. Have to speak really elaborately in the beginning and not going directly into the topic but kind of speak something nice. Be very interested in respectful way. Just like very polite. Interviewee 1 mentioned that Indonesians do not like to rush into business discussion. Personal bonding is expected in forms of small talk exchanging personal information about each other especially at the beginning. Business is personal for Indonesian and normally Indonesians seek long-term relationship with partners.

The need in getting to know and build trust with the other person could leads to a challenge perceived by Interviewee 4. Interviewee 4 states that it is difficult to get something concrete out from the meeting. It may take two to four meetings just to see be perceived as okay by Indonesian. Only after that something tangible can be attained. Interviewee 4 also added that sometimes it is hard to get full picture about the discussed situation in the meeting and see it as not transparent.

### **5.5.1 Non verbal communication**

In non-verbal communication, Finnish respondents report different experiences in different questions related to non-verbal communication during face-to-face interaction. However, there is no noticeable challenge or negative perception in Indonesian non-verbal communication behavior seen by the Finns (Interviewee 2,3,4 and 5).

In the way of dressing for instance, Indonesian dress code is seen as casual, relax, simple and comfortable (interviewee 3, 4 and 5). The dress code can vary from casual to smart

casual. Interviewee 4 describes, Indonesia is very simple. Of course you need to have a pants on. But you can have polo shirt. You know that the batik is the one of the best clothing in Indonesia. However, Interviewee 2 felt underdressed as he wears shorts to the meetings and describe everyone wears fancy clothes.

In body posture, the Finns perception on Indonesians body posture during the meeting can be described as more or less neutral. Most of the respondents do not have particular impression on the body language of the Indonesians. Interviewee 1, explains that Indonesian in director level normally have good posture, they look eager whereas the lower level employees might look a little bit lazy. Interviewee 5 also argued that Indonesian normally avoid offensive body posture.

There is no problem acknowledged in the use of hand gesture by Indonesian. It is found that Indonesian may seldom use their hand in communicating (Interviewee 1 & 4). Most of the respondents do not see noticeable hand gesture and negative perception of the Indonesians during the meetings. In the contrary, interviewee 3 and 4 said that they normally use their hand often when talking.

Finnish respondents describe different distance of closeness in proxemics (physical distance). Interviewee 2 & 4 said that there are always table in between them and the Indonesian during the meeting. Closer discussion may occur when the Indonesian walks the Finns to the elevator (interviewee 4). Interviewee 3 describes the distance as No distance. No cold feelings, no hesitation, it's just like two person who already know each other even if this is the new person I know. It's very very close. But all of the Finns report that they are comfortable in physical distance (proxemics) with Indonesian.

In eye contact, there are different responses in question relating to eye contact by the Indonesian. In most cases, it is found that that Indonesian may not necessarily have eye contact while communicating face-to-face (Interviewee 1, 3 and 5). While Interviewee 4 states that the Indonesians that he met maintain good eye contact. Interviewee 1 mentioned that Indonesians are not used to use eye contact when communicating face-to-face. She added that there is possibility that the Finns may interpret Indonesians as insincere or not honest. However, all Finns (Interviewee 2,3,4,5) do not report negative perception or challenge caused by Indonesian's eye contact towards them.

When asked about facial expression, the interviewees are giving different views. But no negative perception or challenges are seen. In general, Indonesians are found to smile often in the meetings (Interviewee 1, 2 and 5). They are found to even smile when talking



about negative things (Interviewee 5). Indonesian facial expression can also emphasize and give a hint about the overall communication. Interviewee 3 said, Some of those guys they really can use, can we say they face together with speaking. Boosting up the words. Nicely. Expression of their face and then with speech. It's something like, okay I understood. Interviewee 4 argues that he can see quite fast from the facial expression of the Indonesians if the meeting is leading to anywhere.

Lastly, related to the usage of visual media, majority of the Interviewee do not use visual media and communicate with text. Interviewee 5 and 3 are the exception. Interviewee 3 reported that he uses photo to emphasize communication with Indonesian via Whatsapp or SMS. It is argued that visual media helps the communication clearer as he is normally communicating about technical matter. While Interviewee 5 uses picture only when he thinks if it is relevant to be shown.

## **5.6 Electronic communication**

The results on preference and purpose of usage in main electronic communication tools to communicate with Indonesian and differs according to each individuals. Most of the platforms are in use to complement each other. In general, WhatsApp and email (Interviewee 2,3,4,5) are the most used communication tools to communicate with Indonesians. Other platforms that are used to communicate with Indonesian are telephone & SMS and Skype. Findings on each communication platform such as usage, effectiveness and challenges will be discussed one by one.

### **5.6.1 Email**

Different individuals are found to use email differently to communicate with Indonesian counterpart. It is used to propose meeting (Interviewee 1, 2 and 5), submitting offers, having discussion and giving feedback (Interviewee 5), to confirm something, send documents or larger attachment (Interviewee 3 and 4), to communicate to many audiences at once (interviewee 4) and maintain relationship (Interviewee 1).

It is also found that email sent by Indonesian may be conflicting in terms of understandability. Language wise, Interviewee 3 states that it is easy to understand Indonesian email because they use simple English. However, Interviewee 5 argues argued that the email that is written may not be clear in his understanding. Subsequently when it comes to effectiveness in reaching Indonesian, email is found to be not too effective (Interviewee

1,2,3 and 4). It is argued that only big multinational companies are still use email to communicate (Interviewee 4). Many people may not response to email as Interviewee 2 had experienced. Interviewee 4 states In Indonesia nobody is willing to use email anymore.

### **5.6.2 WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is used for different purposes by Finns to communicate with Indonesian. It is used almost for everything to communicate in day-to-day basis with Indonesian. This includes following up current state of matter, checking what about to happen, agreeing meeting schedules (Interviewee 4) and communicating details (Interviewee 2), informing customers side to check something (Interviewee 3 and 5). It is found that nowadays WhatsApp is could be considered as the best way to reach and communicate with Indonesian especially to communicate with smaller Indonesian organization. Interviewee 1 argued that it may be difficult to reach Indonesian by email and telephone but the only way to reach is to WhatsApp directly to the person. Similarly, Interviewee 4 states, it's only Whatsapp these days.

However, it is found that WhatsApp has limitation in Indonesia. Interviewee 3 sometimes works in remote areas in Indonesia and the Internet may not work there. When it comes to communication challenge in WhatsApp, it is found that Indonesians type messages really shortly with many grammatical mistakes and this can be difficult to grasp (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 3 found similar phenomenon. He claimed that when Indonesian use WhatsApp for the first time, they like to type really long text, but after couple of months of use, the text becomes shorter and shorter almost like abbreviation.

### **5.6.3 Telephone (including WhatsApp call) & SMS**

Traditional telephone and SMS is found to be not popular to be used as main communication tools to communicate. Today, Interviewee 4 argues that call normally is done through WhatsApp and it is normally used to clarify misunderstanding that happens in the chat. Traditional telephone and SMS act as backup communication method when the Internet is not functioning. Interviewee 3 considers it as the most effective method to communicate considering he needs to work in remote areas in Indonesia with no Internet connection. It is found that it is hard to reach Indonesian through common office telephone number (Interviewee 1). The person may who answered it may not understand English and in some cases especially in government office, the telephone may not be even answered because the number in the website is outdated.

#### **5.6.4 Skype**

Interviewees are found not to use Skype as main communication tools with Indonesian. It is used for online meetings with people across the globe (Interviewee 3) and online trainings (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 3 considers it as more effective in some cases where picture is needed to support the technical explanation. As he describes, for example PI diagram. You don't remember maybe completely so he can show hey here is the diagram, and look it was this one. Much more easy. There is no communication related challenge identified in Skype usage. The only problem that may occur is considered technical issue.

## 6 Overcoming challenges in cross-cultural communication with Indonesian

In this chapter, things that are considered as main challenges are summarized and consideration that needs to be kept in mind during cross-cultural communication with Indonesian will be presented.

### 6.1 Challenges in cross-cultural communication with Indonesian: Finnish perspective

As it was discussed in the chapter 5, some of the matters that are perceived as challenges faced by Finns in cross-cultural communication with Indonesian can be summarized as following.

Table 4. Challenges in cross-cultural communication faced by Finns

Area	Challenges Identified
<b>Face Saving Behavior (Related to Collectivism &amp; High Power Distance Dimension)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saying yes despite not understanding</li> </ul>
<b>Polychronic nature of Indonesian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing what has been agreed</li> <li>• Using mobile phone during meeting seen as offensive</li> </ul>
<b>High Context nature of Indonesian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words might not mean directly as it is said</li> </ul>
<b>Verbal communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Choice of words</li> </ul>
<b>Face-to-Face Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not easy to get something tangible in the meeting</li> </ul>
<b>WhatsApp Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indonesian is found writing very short text and almost like abbreviation</li> </ul>

## **6.2 Things to be considered in cross-communication with Indonesian**

### **6.2.1 Face saving behavior**

The concept of face is related with harmony needs that commonly found in the collectivistic and high power distance society like Indonesia (Merkin 2015). On the other side of the polar, in individualistic and low power distance culture like Finland, the concept of face may be not easy to be grasp. Face can be described as one's dignity, pride and respect in relation to his or her social achievement and the exercise of it (Leung & Chen 2001 cited in Dong & Lee n.d.). It is related with one's image and status in social structure (Cardon & Scott 2003 cited in Dong & Lee n.d.).

As it has been discussed before, Interviewee 4 reports that Indonesians are found to say they understand even when they do not understand something. On the contrary, it is normal in Finland to say I do not understand when facing similar situation. While Finns may perceived this situation as being afraid to say I don't understand (Interviewee 4), this reported behavior of Indonesian could be seen as face saving behavior. When asked directly if they understand, Indonesians may perceive the scenario as face threatening. Hence, despite not understanding, he or she will say yes to avoid losing face and experience public embarrassment.

It needs to be taken into consideration that maintaining harmony during interaction with Indonesian is important to avoid face-losing situation. Behaviors that cause one's to lose face can be seen as offensive and possibly stain relationship. Interviewee 5 reported that his colleague told him not to be angry with the Indonesian. Raising voice or arguing during interaction may not be taken very well (Interviewee 5).

### **6.2.2 Polychronic nature of Indonesian**

There are some behaviors that were perceived as negative by Finns due to the differences in time concept between Finns and Indonesian. As it has been discussed in the theoretical frameworks, Finnish concept of time can be described as monochronic, while Indonesian concept of time is polychronic.

Interviewee 4 and 5 reported there is many surprises when working with the Indonesian and Interviewee 4 even see the situation as frustrating. Matters seem to be in constant flux and can change upside down in a short time. While this is frustrating for the Finn, the Indonesian may see this as ordinary. Interviewee 1 describes Indonesian as very flexible

and it is usual for Indonesian to make changes. It is common that people will say yes but may not keep their promise as saying no may be seen as disappointing to the other party. Cancellation, delay and postponement are seen as normal.

In addition to constant change, Indonesian's behavior in using mobile phone in meeting is seen as offensive and disrespectful by Finnish (Interviewee 4). This behavior can be also seen as typical polychronic people's behavior that tends to do many things at one time (Hall 1976, 17). Interviewee 4 sees that this behavior is not respectful because he sees his time, as important and Indonesian behavior seems to undermine that fact. From the Indonesian polychronic perspective, time is not tangible and cannot be wasted thus may not realize that their behavior is offensive towards the Finns who perceive time as tangible and important.

The contrary situation is also reported in the research. Interviewee 1 argued that Finns are found to rush and pushy towards Indonesian. One of the Finnish respondent said that he likes to be a bit pushy because matters are perceived as not moving forward as fast as it is expected. From the Indonesian polychronic view, this behavior can be perceived as rude and offensive. Indonesian may feel discouraged to respond the Finns when this situation occurs (Interviewee 1).

It should be taken into consideration that Indonesian and Finnish perceive time differently. This difference may lead to situation that may offend both sides thus making the relationship uneasy. Thus, Finns is encouraged to be slightly more flexible and patience considering the difference in time perception when dealing with the Indonesian.

### **6.2.3 High context nature of Indonesian**

Finnish and Indonesian operate in different context in communicating. Finns communication is low context whereas Indonesian communication is on high context dimension. The differences in context spectrum between Indonesian and Finnish are found to be one of challenge perceived by the Finns (Interviewee 2 and 5). It is even found that high context communication nature of Indonesian is seen as an act of lie that offends Finns (Interviewee 2).

Unlike Finnish who are low context communicator, Indonesian communicates in more indirect manner. This indirectness in communicating is inline with the needs of harmony and face saving that had been discussed in chapter 6.2.1. Although it could be perceived as unclear or even lying by Finnish standard, from Indonesian high context perspective,

this way of communication can be considered as a strategy to maintain harmony and avoid one to lose face as direct communication is considered as a risk that could jeopardize relationship (Merkin 2015).

Thus, in the business cooperation with Indonesian, it is important to be active in confirming the situation. For instance, Interviewee 1 stated that in the meeting, Indonesians might be seen to be very positive and agreeable in the eyes of Finns. But in order to understand if the agreeableness is genuine, additional effort is needed to clarify the opinion or intention of the Indonesians in additional communication after meeting. Finns should also be sensitive and try to read gestures. The answer sometimes also may not come directly in words but in combination of words and different gestures such as symbols, body language, and speech intonation (Hurn & Tomalin 2013, 21).

It is also worth to be noted that Indonesian may not take direct communication positively. As Interviewee 5 states, when you discuss with the customer that you are saying something a little bit too direct and customer may feel offended. Hence, it is recommended for the Finns to be not too direct in communicating with Indonesian especially when discussing difficult issues (Interviewee 5).

#### **6.2.4 Verbal communication**

Indonesians are found by the Finns to speak good English. Although there is no significant challenge reported in English communication between two parties, some minor challenges that may occur in verbal communication with the Indonesian. Interviewee 3 and 4 reported challenge such as speed and choice of words.

As it has been discussed in chapter 5, when speaking in Indonesian, Indonesians are found to speak in different tempo depending on their ethnic backgrounds (Interviewee 4). Some of the people from particular ethnic group may speak really fast and this pattern may be also noticeable when they speak English. This may cause difficulty for the Finns in understanding what is the Indonesian is saying.

These facts should be bear in mind when Finns enter verbal discussion with the Indonesian. When Indonesians speak rapidly, ask them to slow down politely. When it comes to choice of words, it should be noted that both parties are not native English speakers and may translate the words to their local language. Therefore, it is important to clarify specifically what other party meant when the choice of words that are used are not clear.

### **6.2.5 Relationship building**

In face-to-face meeting with the Indonesian, it is reported that it may be difficult to get something concrete in the meeting with the Indonesians at first several meetings (Interviewee 4). It is also added by Interviewee 4 that Indonesian does not trust anyone and it takes time to build trust. It is even gave perception to Finn that Indonesian are not transparent in doing business (Interviewee 4).

From Indonesian perspective, Interviewee 1 argues that Finns tend to rush into business before knowing each other. Finns are generally seen as too work oriented and are not perceived to put effort in getting to know the Indonesians and maintain relationship. This behavior may discourage Indonesian in giving full cooperation towards the Finns (Interviewee 1). In general, Indonesians want to know everything about the person that he or she is working with before getting into the business (Interviewee 1). Contrary behavior is also expected, it is important to show that one is interested in Indonesian as a person and not only the business. When personal chemistry is built, Indonesians will be comfortable to open up and give full cooperation (Interviewee 1).

This condition is a reflection of the collectivistic nature of Indonesian that was discussed in chapter 5.1. It should be noted that for collectivistic society, business is personal and importance is put in human relationship over task. Preferential treatment between in-group and out-group is common. Those who are considered in-group will be treated differently compared those who are seen as strangers (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010, 123).

Thus, it is critical to establish and maintain personal relationship with Indonesian counterpart to have smooth cooperation. It is suggested by Interviewee 1 that Finns should take more personal approach and get more involved in informal communication with Indonesian. For instance get more involved in small talk and ask more personal questions such as his or her family. One can also ask what is new about the person once in a while. Informal activity outside work is such as dinning is also encouraged to get to know each other better.

### **6.2.6 WhatsApp communication**

When answering WhatsApp, Interviewee 2 and 3 reported that they received short almost abbreviation like message from the Indonesians. This situation is considered by Interviewee 2 as a challenge to understand the message when using WhatsApp. As it has been discussed earlier, Indonesian is high context communicator. In high context commu-



nication, communication may be understated and the communicator expects that the message receiver could understand what is in his or her mind (Hall 1976, 113).

Thus, to understand the message, it should be taken into consideration that sometimes one should try to think of the background or context about what the person is talking about. For Instance, Interviewee 3 stated that when he faced short messages that might be unclear in WhatsApp, he has to remember the background of the conversation such as where the person was last time, what he was doing and saying to him.

## 7 Conclusion, reflection and suggestion

### 7.1 Conclusion

As cooperation between Finnish and Indonesian are increasing, effective cross-cultural communication in business-to-business context is needed in order to smoothen the cooperation between two countries. The aim of the research is to understand how Finns could communicate effectively in cross-cultural business-to-business context with Indonesian. In the research combinations between literature reviews and qualitative interviews are seen as suitable method to gain primary findings of the research.

In order to answer the main research question, the research firstly identifies the cultural and communication characteristics of both counties through combination of literature review and interview findings. It is found that Finnish and Indonesian cultural characteristics are very different in all dimensions. Empirical findings suggest that Finns noticed cultural differences from behaviors that are manifested from Hofstede's collectivism / individualism, high power distance / low power distance dimensions, and Hall's time concept in the business interaction with Indonesians.

It is also found in the research that there are differences in cultural and communication behaviors in different ethnic groups within Indonesia. The data gathered in the research confirms the theoretical findings that there are differences. But the empirical data are not sufficient to identify and conclude the degree or specific differences according to the ethnic groups in Indonesia.

There are also noticeable differences in the communication behaviors between Finns and Indonesians. Fundamentally, literature study shows that Finns and Indonesians are in different polar in terms of context and interviews result confirmed the literature finding. The cultural and context differences are shown to cause variety in communication behaviors between two parties. It shows that the Finns noticed the difference that Indonesians are communicating in indirect manner. Other communication behavior differences are also found in various areas such as verbal communication and non-verbal communication in face-to-face interaction, electronic communication usage behavior.

Secondly, after the differences in cultural and communication behaviors are found, challenges that need to be overcome are identified based on interview results. The research concludes six areas that could be considered as challenges by Finns due to the cultural and communication behavior differences.

These areas are:

- Face saving behavior related to collectivism & high power distance Hofstede's dimensions
- Dealing with Indonesian polychronic characteristic
- Indirectness in communication (high context)
- Speed and choice of words in verbal communication
- Getting something tangible in face-to-face meeting
- Understanding short message in WhatsApp communication.

With cultural and communication behaviors from two countries and challenges that perceived by Finns identified, the main research question now can be answered. The results from interviews and literature analysis shows that there are things that Finns need to take into consideration to overcome the challenges.

#### **Maintain harmony**

In related with face saving behaviors related to collectivistic and high power distance nature of Indonesian, it is important for Finns to maintain harmony in communicating with Indonesian. Direct confrontation should be avoided since it could offend Indonesians and stain relationship.

#### **Be flexible and patience**

When dealing with polychronic nature of Indonesian, it needs to be taken into consideration that Indonesian and Finns perceived time differently. Finns are encouraged to be more flexible and patience in business interaction with Indonesian.

#### **Be sensitive, active and avoid being too direct**

When it comes to face indirectness of Indonesian, active confirmation is needed to understand true intention of the Indonesian. It is also encouraged for the Finns to be sensitive in reading gestures and avoid communicating too directly as it may offend Indonesian.

#### **Ask politely**

In verbal communication, Indonesian may speak English rapidly and may translate directly Indonesian concept to English. When these situations happen, ask politely to slow down and repeat. When the choice of words is not clear, ask and clarify specifically the meaning of the words.

### **Focus on building personal relationship**

In order to get something tangible in the meeting with the Indonesians, Finns is encouraged to focus in building personal relationship with Indonesians. Take more personal approach and get involved more in informal communication and do informal activities together outside work.

### **Think about the context**

Indonesian may write short messages in WhatsApp. When the message is too short to understand and the context is missing. Try to think about the background that other party is talking about. Try to remember previous conversation, what he was doing or where the person last time.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the Finns are aware that there are differences and challenges in communication behaviors in the business interaction. However, they may not necessarily understand why these differences and challenges happen from the Indonesians standpoint. Finnish and Indonesian cultures and communication behaviors are different. Thus in dealing with Indonesians, it is important for the Finns to adjust communication approach by taking the cultural and communication behavior differences into account.

The author hopes that the thesis findings could contribute to the cross-cultural business communication study between Finnish and Indonesian. During the research, it is obvious that the research and literature in cross-cultural business communication between two countries is lacking. Considering this gap, The Finns could use the findings as a guide in cross-cultural business communication interaction with the Indonesians. Hopefully the thesis could help in fostering effective business cooperation between two countries through effective cross-cultural communication.

## **7.2 Reflection of learning**

The research about cross-cultural business communication between Indonesian and Finnish had been a great learning opportunity. This thesis allowed me to explore an essential phenomenon that commonly faced in global business operation but sometimes overlooked.

Conducting theoretical study for the thesis was challenging as it includes learning about various theories from different fields of study. But it was monumental moment that changed my way of seeing the world. It made me enter the world of relativity where universality does not exist and nothing is obvious when it comes to human behavior and interaction in global level.

For instance, cultural and cross-cultural related theories allow me to see diverse characteristics of society based on their values and how it may impact their behavior in various settings including business life. It gave me a set of tool to understand that Indonesian and Finnish societies' characteristics are fundamentally different in values, time concept, context and behaviors. It also let me recognize that differences may occur within Indonesian multicultural society.

In addition to cultural and cross-cultural related theories, studying communication related theories gave me tools to recognize the elements where the differences in communication behavior between two countries exist and could be identified. Both cross-cultural communication and communication theories gave a foundation for data gathering and analysis stage for the study.

After the theoretical background research was conducted, I learned how to conduct qualitative research and create interview guide to gather the data. Creating the interview guide was slightly challenging. It needs to be taken consideration that the interviewees may not aware with the theoretical background. Thus, in order to gain maximum set of data for analysis, the questions were designed to be specific based on each element of the theories where differences and challenges may occur.

Data gathering stage taught me to find new sources, be patience and flexible. At the beginning, there are not many interviewees available that fit the criteria. Some potential sources were not responding and new potential interviewees need to be found. The sources that agreed for the interviews are mostly busy and thus it takes some time in order to get the interviews done.

In data analysis stage, I learned how identify the essence of the phenomena from the massive amount of data from the interviews using the theoretical frameworks. In total there are sixty-four pages worth of raw data extracted from the interviews. Essential data based on the theoretical frameworks was extracted from Individual interviews then organized based on theoretical frameworks in cross analysis.

At the end, the result taught me that cross-cultural communication challenges between Finnish and Indonesian exist in real business life. It allows me to understand how Finnish perceive the business interaction with the Indonesian. It also allows me to see how the Indonesian may perceives the situation in these areas based on the analysis for the recommendation.

The overall research has been quite challenging and rewarding at the same time. The process of the study has given me unforgettable learning experience. The thesis has its own challenges in every stage of the process. It teaches me not only about the topic but also how to overcome the challenges in the process.

### **7.3 Suggestion for further research**

During the study, limitations are found in the number of cross-cultural communication related literatures about Indonesian and Finnish. Firstly, Finnish and Indonesian communication behaviors are not easily found in literatures. For instance, the author found it really hard to gain literature reference about Indonesian communication behaviors and required to conduct an interview to gain better understanding about it with an Indonesian cultural diversity management consultant. Similarly, sources for Finnish communication behaviors are also not easily to be found. Further development is required in this area of study.

Secondly, literatures about Indonesian culture and communication normally refer to Javanese culture and communication. As differences in culture and communication behavior are identified within Indonesia, a new set of approach is needed in the research about Indonesian culture and communication by taking into consideration the cultural variety within the country. There are only several researches to be found that measured Hofstede's cultural dimensions on Javanese, Chinese Indonesian and Sundanese but no communication related research on the ethnic groups is yet to be found by the author.

Lastly, research about cross-cultural communication between Finnish and Indonesian are severely lacking. Considering that cooperation between Finnish and Indonesian are increasing, research related to cross-cultural communication in business context between two countries should be further developed with more specific perspective such as sales and management.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Interview Guide**

#### **Interview guide**

##### **Introduction**

Elaborate the purpose of the study

Ask permission to record the interview

##### **Interviewee Background**

1. Could you tell me about your background?
  - a. Professional background
  - b. How long have you been in contact with Indonesian representative
2. How did you end up being in contact with Indonesian organization?
3. What kind of cooperation did you have or seek with Indonesian organization?

##### **Indonesian representative background /**

##### **Differences in Indonesian Ethnic background**

4. Where was the Indonesian organization located?
5. What are the ethnic backgrounds of your Indonesian partner(s)?

##### **Cultural differences**

6. Compared with Finns what cultural differences did you notice in the interaction with the Indonesian representative?
7. Is there anything that you judge as disrespectful or offensive from the Indonesian representative behavior?
8. Did you do something that you feel disrespectful towards Indonesian representative?

##### **Language & Context**

9. In your opinion how did you judge Indonesian representative's English? (speed, accent, volume, timing, silence, and choice of words)
10. Have you had miscommunication with the Indonesian representative because of language barrier? Could you tell me the story?

##### **Communication platform specific**

11. Could you tell me in order what media or platforms did you use to during your contact with the Indonesian representative? Email, Skype, telephone, Whatsapp, face to face?
12. Which platform do you think most effective? Which one is most challenging to understand in terms of communication?

##### **Face-to-Face contact (if applicable)**

13. What is your first impression of the Indonesian representative?
14. Could you tell me your experience having face-to-face meeting with Indonesian representative? What is the difference with Finnish face to face?
15. How was the body posture of the Indonesian during the face-to-face meeting?
16. How was the Indonesian representative eye contact during the meeting?
17. How was the facial expression of the Indonesian representative during the meeting? What impression did you get?
18. How was the hand gesture of the Indonesian representative?
19. What was the dress code of the Indonesian representative? And what did you wear?
20. How close was the distance of the Indonesian representative during interaction? Does it make you uncomfortable?
21. How different the meeting was compared to F2F meeting with Finns?
22. What difficulties did you encounter during the meeting?

**Email (if applicable)**

23. What purpose do you use email in communicating with the Indonesian?
24. How effective do you think email platform for communicating with Indonesian representative?
25. What misunderstanding did you experience in communication by Email?

**Telephone (If applicable)**

26. What purpose do you use telephone in communicating with Indonesian?
27. Did you experience a problem understanding the Indonesian counterpart over the telephone?

**Whatsapp (If applicable)**

28. In what occasion do you use Whatsapp?
29. Do you use new media such as image or voice note to communicate with Indonesian representative?
30. What differences do you notice compared to Finns?

**Skype (if applicable)**

31. In what occasion do you use Skype to communicate with Indonesian representative?
32. How effective a Skype video call compared to normal telephone call?
33. Is there any difficulty to understand the Indonesian representative over Skype video call?