

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

International Business/International Trade

Sun Rong

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS BETWEEN CHINA AND ARABIC
COUNTRIES CASE COMPANY: ZHEJIANG LIANMEI INDUSTRIAL CO., LTD.

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ABSTRACT

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

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Sun Rong	Intercultural communication in business between China and Arabic countries.
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Intercultural communication plays a very important role in international commercial intercourse. China and Arabic countries both have a long history and unique culture. With the process of globalization, the contact between China and Arabic countries become more and more frequent, especially in business intercourses. In that case, business meetings the between two parties are inevitable.

The main purpose of this thesis was to give theoretical cultural knowledge and practical case information to avoid the obstacles during the business interactions and build long-term good business relationships between China and Arabic countries.

The research was made by using qualitative method, including three in-depth interviews with representatives from China and Saudi Arabia. The data was collected from the questionnaire and personal interviews and mainly emphasis on the business experience with the other culture and the understanding of it.

Doing business with people from another culture is not an easy thing. It is vital to know about the culture before starting the business intercourses. Understanding and respecting the customs will help a lot for the achievements. The prospect of business between China and Arabic countries is full of opportunities. The research of culture will be encouraged by more and more businessmen.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

International communication is largely being impacted by the Internationalizations and uniting of nations with different cultural, economical and political background. Doing business is relevant to these ideas and an important part of process of expanding businesses is the means of communication. Many businessmen go to multicultural environment to develop business, which demands different attitude from the local knowledge. That kind of knowledge could affect the survival of a business or developing a new company.

Business activities between China and Arabic countries have rapidly increased by the influence of globalization. Both of the two parties hope to continue the good relationship established so far and develop the further cooperation opportunities. There is a solid foundation of friendship and cooperation between China Arabic countries, both of them admire the great potential and broad prospects cooperating in various fields with long-term interest. More and more small and medium enterprises in China start to develop their potential clients in Arabic countries by the encouragement of government. (Sina Finance 2012.)

As the frequent interactions go deeper, both China and Arabic countries realize that culture plays an important role in the international communication in business. A plenty of companies lost a lot of potential clients because of misunderstanding of culture behaviors and disrespecting of culture. Studying and researching culture of counterpart is urgently required. (Sina Finance 2012.)

1.2 Purpose for the study

This thesis discusses the differences between Arabic culture and Chinese culture, especially the impact in the business intercourse. How the culture influence the business meeting. With the thesis I present the most typical culture practices in Arabic countries that will have a big effect on the business intercourse. The emphasis is on avoiding the intercultural barriers and by learning the culture the success rate of business can increase.

The first part of the thesis presents general information of international communication, Chinese and Arabic culture as well as the import and export business activities to give a whole picture what is the situation now between China and Arabic countries. The second part will put the typical Arabic customs combine with the cases searched from the companies. The different ways of solving the problems before and after knowing the culture make the differences.

As a student studying abroad in international business, I am involved in the multicultural environment, combining with the experience of working in an export company in China in 2009. The objective of the thesis is to highlight the essential expectancy from each other of China and Arab, building bridges of the culture awareness and avoiding the false ideas during the meetings.

1.3 Presentation of the company

Zhejiang Lianmei Industrial Co., Ltd is a company exporting drinking ware, like mugs, stainless steel Bottle and stainless steel vacuum flasks for more than ten years. There are over 400 employees in the company and annual output of the products is over 8 million. There are ten series of products as follows: sport bottle, vacuum flask series, tourist bottle series, coffee pot series, travel mug

series, coffee mug series, ceramic mug series, gift mug set series, office mug series and auto mug.

The company's clients are from different countries, mostly in America and European countries. Because of the financial crisis, devaluation and fierce competition, the company is trying to find new clients in the Arabic countries. Some Arab countries are very rich. They founded a new sales team concentrate on the Arabic area. The team found several clients and tried their best to set up business relationship with them; however, the process seemed not so smooth. Although they still keep contact with each other, the Arabic clients are not willing to order. The company would like to send several representatives to Arabic countries to meet their new clients face to face, expecting to set up good business relationship with the potential clients.

1.4 Methodology

The data is collected using qualitative research method through in-depth interviewing on two Chinese and one Saudi Arabian. The representative from Saudi Arabia has agreed to take part in the research anonymously. So the name used for interview has been changed.

One of the representatives from China Lv Fengquan is 65 years old. He had been working in Arab countries as a construction engineer for 15 years. He is the pioneer going to Arab in 1970s. At that moment, he worked side by side with Arabians and learned the Arabic language. The first time I met him was in 2007 when he was an external teacher hired by Jinhua College. He taught me Arabic language and culture and encouraged the classmates to know about Arabic. He is happy to know I am writing the thesis about Arab and willing to share the information with me.

The contact person Zhang Jun from Zhejiang Lianmei Industrial Co., Ltd is the other Chinese representative who has six-year experience doing business with foreigners. She used to be my supplier during my work in an exporting company and became my friend later on. She is willing to tell me about her experience of interacting with Arabians as well.

The Saudi Arabian (Mohammed) is a 35 years old business man. He has been doing business in China for 4 years, purchasing commodities in low price in China and sell in Saudi Arabia in higher price, making profit from the price spread. He is a member of Alibaba and sometimes purchasing the goods through this platform. He has a rich experience of negotiating with Chinese.

The interviews were conducted through Internet by using the web camera, web phone and Trademanager. The questionnaire (apex.1) is designed to collect the information from the representatives.

2 TRADE BETWEEN CHINA AND ARABIC COUNTRIES

Since the 1980s, mutually beneficial trade relationship between China and Arabic countries has developed rapidly, especially from 2001. Volume of trade between China and Arabic nations increased 21.9 times, from 5.795 billion US dollar in 1996 to 132.8 billion US dollar in 2008. The annual average rate of growth is 29.8%. The main products exported to Arabic is textile and clothing, light industrial products, arts and crafts products, metals and mechanical products (transportation); China has become one of the largest textiles source in Arabic countries. Despite the financial crisis, bilateral trade between China and Arabic countries still over 100 billion US dollar in 2009. Royal bank of Scotland (RBS 2008 sited in England 2010), China surpassed the US to become the biggest exporter in the Middle East. By the end of 2009, goods

coming into the region valued at about \$60 billion, far higher than the \$4.6 billion at the turn of the century. (England 2010.)

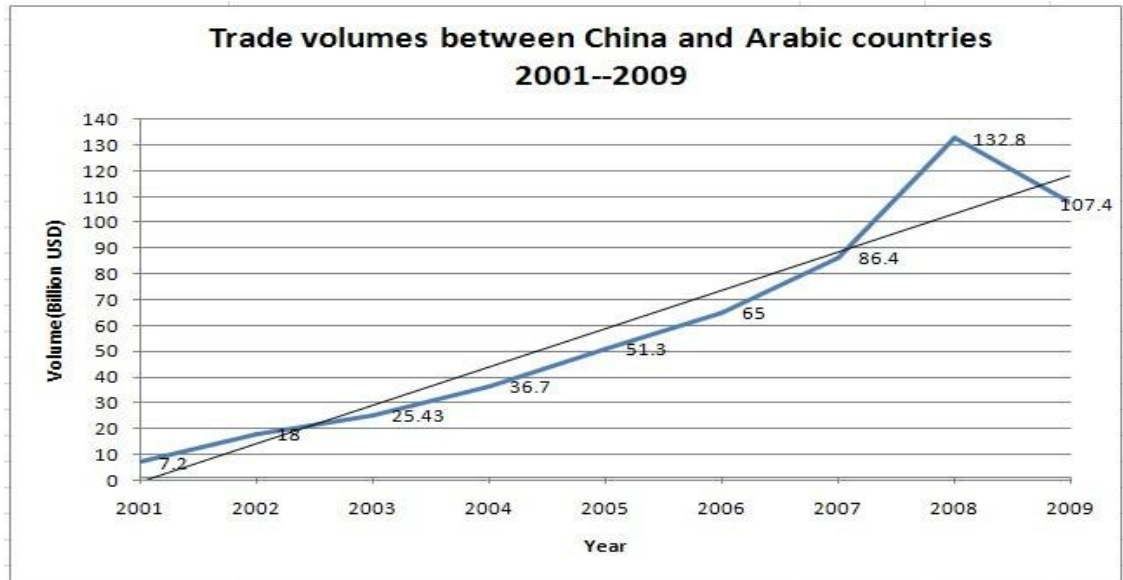


Figure 1: Trade volumes between China and Arabic countries 2001—2009 (England 2010)

Trade volumes between China and Arab countries from 2001 to 2008 were increasing year by year. However there is a small drop in 2009 because of the financial crisis all over the world, it will not influence the whole trend. According to the Xinhua News Agency, in the first half of 2010, trade volume between China and Arabic was 69.1 billion US dollars. “China and Arabic countries will try their best to make the trade volume reach or over 200 billion USD in 3—5 years”, Chinese Minister of Commerce Minde said in the first China-Arab Economic Forum (Ling 2010).

3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 Intercultural interface

There was a case from Zhejiang Lianmei Industrial Co. As mentioned before the Company has a strong desire to enter the Saudi Arabic market; therefore a salesman was dispatched to the capital of Saudi Arabic Riyadh to open up the market. He got there on Monday, found a hotel to live and then began to call the target clients. Surprisingly, no one would like to meet him. He spent three days in shame and irritability, time flew to Thursday. He found another truth that the local people do not open the business on Thursday and Friday. He had to wait without alternatives and hoping good luck on the next week. Time passed, he finally found a few merchants who were willing to talk business with him. However, every meeting with merchants made him feel frustrated, there always came up with off-ending waiting, noisy environment and endless coffee. What made him unbearable was that Arabs are always avoiding the normal topic, rambling and discussing the things which are no coherent with the theme at all. Although he did his best to promote their company's good reputation and products, nobody was interested in his work. The salesman was so confused until he met a friend who told him the right way to do business with Arabian. (Zhang 2011, Personal interview.)

In this case, this salesman did the things that offend Arabic culture repeatedly. For instance, the impatience he presented during the conversation, refusing to drink the coffee, exaggerated marketing methods, submitting a file with the left hand, sitting on the floor and exposing the soles when negotiating with the clients, even talking about other people's wives, etc. All of these are the taboo of Arabs. Aware of these circumstances, his travel fee has been over 8 000 U.S. dollars, and he left a rude, arrogant, untrustworthy image in Arab merchants' mind. It was totally a failure.

The reasons of this result are ignoring of Arabic culture and lack of preparation beforehand. Communicating with people with another culture background is not as easy as imagined. After realizing his mistakes, the salesman immediately changed his attitude and did a lot of research of Arab customs, he finally developed a client in the later few months.

3.2 Definition

People cannot live without communication. The range of communication is so wide, not only presents on the way people talking and writing, but also on the body language, facial expression and basic behavior.

Intercultural communication is more complex than communicate between people from the same culture. It is the outcome of social development and national interactions. The development of transport and communication tools promoted intercultural communication as well. It is not easy for a person born in the certain culture to totally understand the other cultures; therefore the difference in culture will be the basic and essential obstacle in intercultural communication. (Novinger 2001, p. 19.)

Intercultural communication is how people from different cultures find ways to communicate with each other. It is also about understanding people with different opinions, viewpoints and values. It includes sharing exotic cultural experience and to achieve better communication by understanding other people's lifestyles. Its goal is to understand the cultural identity in order to create a harmonious work and live environment. (Novinger 2001, p. 28.)

In face of cultural differences, intercultural communication helps to get rid of prejudices and to understand the different cultural practices. Nowadays, with the globalization and new information technology, people from different cultures can communicate smoothly; India and Germany can work together in

the United States, Mexicans and Russians can work together in China, etc. However, it is not always easy for efficient communication, because even speak the same language, cultural differences still exist, thus, it is vital to understand the bilateral cultures. (Thomas 2009, p. 89.)

In the fact, people are often engaged in intercultural communication; however, people usually are not conscious about it. Salesmen from import and export company doing business with foreigners are having intercultural communication; local people interact with foreign travelers and foreign students are doing intercultural communication as well. Even without direct contact with foreigners, people may still be engaged in intercultural communication. For instance, reading foreign novels, watching foreign films and television programs are also the process of intercultural communication. (Hu 1999, p. 1.)

3.3 Importance

It could be easily seen from the case above that how important respecting other cultures is. In the process of communication, commits a taboo without attention could lead to misunderstanding of communication, confrontation and even hostile, it would result in different levels of communicative disorders or even communication failures. Effective communication helps to eliminate intercultural international business, such as language barriers and stereotypes of communication barriers. Through the study of other cultures by reflective listening and open communication strategy can achieve effective global communications. (Hu 1999, p. 7.)

The business sector will be the most affected field with the issue of intercultural communication. Today with globalization and information explosion, it is unlikely to do business without communication cross culturally. Global organizations and import and export companies will increasingly emphasis on

the critical value of intercultural communication process. People who are willing to work in the intercultural environment will be acquired the knowledge and understanding of cultural elements such as value, beliefs, behaviors and attitude. In that case, the more people learn the intercultural knowledge, the fewer obstacles can prevent the efficiency. (Hu 1999, p. 152.)

Culture shock is commonly happening to the people who live or work in another culture. The behavior and life style of local people is so strange to the foreigners, sometimes make them feel unbelievable. Hence, the communication can make a difference. If the foreigners just feel uncomfortable and refuse to open their mind will make the shock even worse. Actively integrating into the lives of local people can lower the affection of culture shock. (Hu 1999, p. 187.)

4 CULTURE CONCEPTS

4.1 Definitions and elements

Everybody is involved in a certain culture, because of it; people have the uniqueness, which makes them behavior in a different way. There exit many similar definitions. Edward Taylor has given one of the oldest definitions of culture.

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Rumina and Kishwar 2010, p. 3).

Culture includes all aspects of human activities, like rules, technologies, plans, designs and polities for living.

Culture provides the person a sense of identity and belongingness, by telling you who you are and which particular group, society the person belongs to. Culture also gives people a sense of pride. Culture is not born with; it is learnt step by step through observation and imitation. Culture is symbolic, there are a plenty of symbols to represent the concepts. Example: people wear cross to show the faith in God. Culture also has the ability to create. Example: music, computer and modern transportations etc.

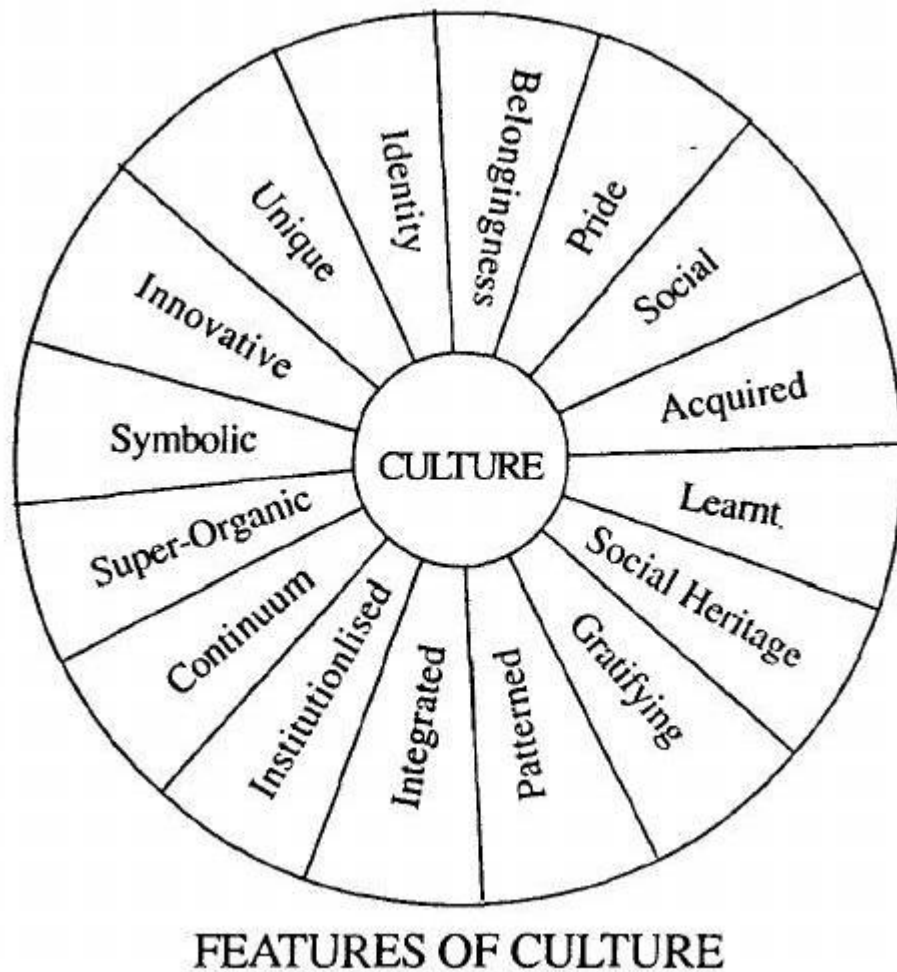


Figure 2: Features of culture (Ruminai & Kishwar 2010, p. 10)

There are seven elements that all cultures have in common:

Element	Definition	Example
Social organization	When culture organize its members into small groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Families ● Friends ● Religious groups ● Occupation
Customs and traditions	Rules of behaviour (written and unwritten)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shake hands ● Bow ● Bisous
Language	Important for communication and passing on traditions and beliefs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English ● Finnish ● Chinese ● Arabic ● French
Arts and literature	Teach about a culture's values, promote culture pride and unity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monalisa Smile ● Venus de Milo ● Chinese antique
Religion	Believe in one god; believe in more than one god.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Judaism ● Christianity ● Islam ● Hinduism ● Buddhism
Forms of government	People form government to provide for their common needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Democracy ● Republic ● dictatorship
Economic system	An organized way analysing of causes and consequences of economies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traditional ● Market ● Command ● Mixed

Table 1: culture elements (Ruminai & Kishwar 2010, p. 65-66)

This thesis is emphasis on the aspects of social organization, customs and traditions and religion. These three elements are the most important aspects during the business intercultural communication between Arabic and China.

There are the biggest differences in these elements between the two parties as well. According to the elements, such as time concept, hospitality, manners, the greeting ways will all be introduced in the following text.

4.1.1 A brief introduction of Chinese culture

China has a long history and tradition; it will be too difficult to define all aspects of Chinese culture. Therefore, the highlight will be focused on the communication sector and religion. Chinese culture was strongly influenced by the Confucian psychology, which is deeply rooted in Chinese collective consciousness. Lu (2002, p. 3) implies that Confucianism was mainstream consciousness developed in the ancient time, which has a long history of 5000 years. It was already deeply in the Chinese culture and guiding principles for people's behaviors and socialization. The significant economic success in China reflects that some core values of Confucianism have contributed to the modern enterprise management system and human resource management.

Confucianism and ancient rhetoric determine Chinese have a different way of communication compare to other countries. This involves the Chinese language, which is a mean of communication and related to human behavior (Lu 2002, p. 65). Chinese people don't like to say a thing directly, they prefer euphemism. For example, when a Chinese person is praised by others, the man usually says the key to success is luck. This is not means the person really think he rely on luck, but a modest. He will be thought arrogant if admitting the success. This custom is utility in business field.

When presenting the rejection, Chinese will not say "NO" directly; they usually say some reasons to show that they have other more important things to deal with without other ways. They try to make other people understand them and won't be blamed. At this time, the person asking for help know he is refused and usually say it is ok.

There are two major religions in China, Taoism and Buddhism, which both have long history in formation and publicity. However, China is an officially atheist country and the secular force is usually driven by the government, the majority of Chinese people do not have a strong religious tendency. They say they are Buddhists, but they have never read the sutras. When encounter the disasters or bad things, people will make decisions all by themselves or seek to family and friends rather than rely on prayer. (Feuchtwang 2010, p. 32.)

There are eight traditional festivals celebrated in China. They are Spring Festival, Winter Solstice Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Double Seventh Festival, Ching Ming Festival, Lantern festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Chung Yeung Festival. Among these festivals, only Spring Festival is related to the religious, others are all from legends or ancient stories. The main purpose celebration of Spring Festival is to hunt the evil in the ancient time; nowadays during the Spring Festival, people usually go to temples to ritual worship and pray for families for the New Year. People have vacations during the festivals, especially Spring Festival, which has the longest holiday. At that time, everybody will go home to celebrate the New Year; therefore it is not the good time to do business with Chinese. (Li 2001, p. 11.)

Chinese culture is mysterious to other nations, even though there are plenty of books describe Chinese culture and scholars are trying to reveal the essence of Chinese business culture. It is still difficult for the businessmen to glimpse the secret. The best way to learn the culture is to get interact with the local people. When fully connect with Chinese, the mystery could be unlocked. It will take a long time to set up business relation in China; these relations are the key to success.

4.1.2 A brief introduction of Arabic culture

Arabic culture is one of the most significant impacts on human civilization, which closely links with Islamic thought and Islamic system. Arab-Islamic culture is not only limited among the Arabic countries but the achievements from Muslims worldwide. Arabic culture has a long history as well, the content is profound, not only adhere to the concept of purity, pursuit of lofty ideals, but also full of tolerance and reflecting the open mind. Contemporary radical Islam does not represent the Arabic Islamic civilization. (Yang 2011.)

Arabians are good at absorbing other cultures as well as make progresses based on their own research, for instance, they made great achievements in the field of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, physics, chemistry, architecture, literature and geography. Arabians preserved and disseminated the Western classical culture and became a bridge between East and West cultural communication. (Yang 2011.)

Islam is the soul of Arabic culture; the formation of Arab-Islamic culture is accompanied by the formation of Islam. The early spread of Islam to the world is closely linked to the conquest of Arab Empire, since the 10th century, the Islam spread in Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia as well as the Islamic change process were usually through the merchant's trade, cultural exchange and missionary activities. Islam is a comprehensive peace religion, which can be seen from green advocating, Muslims want peace. Islam wants unity, calling for "Muslims Brotherhood." Islam advocating science; as taught by the Prophet, "Learning is the duty of every Muslim women and men". (Emerick 2001, p. 4.)

Ramadan is the ninth month of Islamic calendar, the name of this month means "Forbidden". Ramadan means that Muslim fasting after sunrise till sunset. During Ramadan, the Muslims are prohibited all diet, smoking and sexual activities. Usually, people eat "suhour" before sunrise and eat food or drink

when sunset, called “iftar”. Ramadan is one of the ceremonies that Muslims must follow for one month, except the patients, the elders, young babies and those who work outside, others are all required to do Ramadan fast. In this period, beside fast, Muslims will go to Mosque to pray and study the Holy Quran as well. In the Muslim view, Ramadan is the most auspicious and noblest month of the year. Islam believes that fast can purify people's mind, makes the person high-soul and kind-hearted, and also make the rich experience poor starving. (Embassy of the people’s Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2011.)

Lv (2011) said that during Ramadan, Arabic countries generally adjust the working hours. Government agencies working efficiency become low; the businessmen also reduce corresponding activities. Business activities usually go at night; shops usually open at six or seven o'clock in the evening and close at two or three o'clock in the morning. The food sales in Ramadan are extremely large. Food, clothing and home appliances become the most popular commodities. The sales of various holiday products will rapidly increase in the market, which is the peak season for sales.

For the businessmen who go to Arabic countries during Ramadan should obey the certain customs. Drinking, smoking and eating in the public are forbidden; otherwise they will be seen not respecting Islam religion and even be caught by the police. Since the low efficiency and lack of certain staffs, it is not the best time for businessmen visit Arabic countries. (Price 1999, p. 1.)

5 BUSINESS MEETING BETWEEN CHINA AND ARABIC COUNTRIES

Meeting plays a very important role in business. It is in meeting businessmen make the key decisions. With the globalization, it will be quite normal holding meeting with people from other culture especially when seeking the new customers or business partners. Cross-culture negotiation is involved as well.

What should be remembered in mind is attempting to understand and take account of the other party's culture background. On the other hand, the only result will be receiving insult. The best way to manage a successful cross-culture meeting is by living in the other culture or by finding a partner. If these are not possible, careful planning and attention are required. It is vital to investigate the differences beforehand to avoid the awkward may caused by unintended rudeness or little impoliteness. However, it's better to have a limitation in enthusiastic in adopting the local customs, because it may make local citizens suspect people are imitating them. (Journal papers 2007.)

There were three biggest Conferences held by the government that about "Entrepreneurs" between China and Arabic countries so far. They were held firstly in Beijing in 2005, secondly in the capital of Jordan Amman in 2007 and then in the Hangzhou, Zhejiang province in 2009. These meetings' contents are all about the communications and exchanges in business area. The entrepreneurs from two sides had corresponding negotiations, reached broad cooperative intentions and signed many contacts. These three conferences got high attention and support from both Chinese and Arabic governments. (China-Arab State Cooperation Forum, 2010.)

5.1 Time of meeting

Time, in theory, could have a lot to be explained. Here I am emphasis on the arrangement of time for the meeting. The different appointment rules vary in the world, for instance, do European turn up on time; do Chinese like before time or a little after time in Africa? How time is used, rigidly or flexibly? Does an hour appointment mean exactly sixty minutes or up to more? Does meeting start at nine o'clock really means on time or usually half an hour later? These different time concepts will make a big effect on the business.

The time concept can be related to the long-term and short-term orientation. Hofstede (1991, p. 173) described the key differences between short-term and long-term orientation societies. Short-term Orientation generally presented in the societies that have strong respect for traditions, small trend for saving, little money for investment, require for the quick results, concern about “face” and emphasis on finding the truth. Long-term Orientation towards the adaptation of traditions to modern context, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, slow results and concern for the respecting the demands of Virtue. China is one of the typical long-term orientation countries.

5.1.1 Time concept of two parties

5.1.1.1 Time concept in China

Li (2001, p. 48) stated that Chinese do not have an ordinary time conception of a day; their idea of time is very ambiguous and tends to be polychronic. There are words to present the passage of time from top to bottom, like yesterday, now, tomorrow and so forth. However, these words are not in a strict, linear manner. Time is fluid for the Chinese, rather than be tense with the deadline and concentrate in every minute.

It's very normal to be late in the past. Neither government officials nor businessmen pay attention on the appointment, which was seen not practical nowadays. Now, however, with the wide spread conception of “Time is Money” from western, Chinese businessmen are beginning to realize the importance of time. They starting to know the appointment are not only related to the convenience but also the matter of respect. The pace of government and private businesses are different. Bureaucracies are still like to make people wait in the line to show their higher status while in businesses; the profit will be the main motivation, the staffs are friendly and eager to help. (Jia Bei 2007.)

In China, most bus stations and do not provide the timetables. It will take a lot of time go out by public transportation. For example, in Beijing, it will cost one hour and a half or even longer from Tiananmen Square to Peking University. For the foreigners, it is unimaginable. Generally speaking, Chinese people are used to early hours, because wake up early make the day will seem to be longer and many things could be done in advance. At noon, there will be two-hour resting time. Many foreigners cannot be used to the Chinese time concept and the pace of life; they feel many works cannot be finished and anxious about it. (Shan shan zhi zi 2002.)

With the update of information and broaden of information channels, more and more Chinese are changing their time concept. A survey entitled "Whether Chinese have the sense of time" in 2004 and has been published by Zhu Yanrong (2004) who is a journalist from China Youth Daily. Among the 3757 respondents, most people give a positive definition of the time: 77% of the respondents think that time is life, another 10% of them choose the time is money, 8% think that the time on behalf of joy. While there is only 5% holding "Time is nothing and presents sad". In addition, 75% of respondents believe that the saying "Chinese people do not have time concept" is right or has a grain of truth, which reflect people are concerned about this phenomenon.

Zhu (2004) also posted that with the increase of age and social affairs, more and more people feel the lack of available time resources: More than half (56%) of people think that time is not enough for a day. Time urgency has also led people pay attention to the value of time, 64% of people said they never late, and cannot accept people who are not punctual.

5.1.1.2 Time concept in Arabic countries

Arabic countries have their own typical time concept which basically relate to religion. After appearing of Islam, the time concept was gradually changed in

Arabic countries. Because, Islam think it is not time but Allah creating and dominating the world. It has an impact on Arabic time concept ranging from the development of calendar to determine the Boxing Day together with the rest day, the provisions of the specific religious rituals and homework time, and even influence the Muslim customs and daily life arrangements. (Fan 2007, p. 21.)

For Arabians, work is far less important than family, friends and religions; they are lack of time concept, thinking human being cannot control the time, time is controlled by Allah. They don't like Europeans as precise timetable and have something to do in every minute. They usually work by temperament decision, therefore, making a deal with Arabic companies takes time. (Fan 2007, p. 25.)

Most countries' working day is from Monday to Friday or from Monday to Saturday. However, due to religious reasons, Israel's days are Sunday to Friday, because Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath; most Arabic countries' working day is from Saturday to Thursday, because the rest of Muslims Day is Friday. Muslims have a more relaxed work schedule during Ramadan. It's better to make good time schedule do business in Ramadan or just avoid Ramadan. (People's Daily 2008.)

Arabians have the tendency of emphasis on present. They believe that people who want to know future are crazy; only Allah knows what the future is, it is too outrageous for mortals to talk about the future. Therefore, its better not to ask Egyptian farmers to forecast the output of next year, because he feels is regarded as a madman and offensive. (Fan 2007, p.

On the other hand, Arabians are often late. Zhang (2011) says the most difficult thing doing business with Arabians is about the time. If an Arabian asks you to wait for five minutes, then you have to prepare for waiting half an hour; when something have to be done with the local people, then the original plan usually

change. For example, when the commodities get to the port and all clearance formalities have been done, cargo promise to deliver on the next day at nine o'clock in the morning, this time you should not promise your clients to give him the goods in the afternoon. The reason is the freight company will never on time, usually they are just leaving the port at eleven o'clock. Zhang (2011) had several experience about this kind of issue.

Zhang (2011) also told me that efficiency of government department is very low, one time, she went to The Turkish Consulate to apply the visa, and she was told that she will receive the call whether the materials meet the requirements. However, she still had not received the call three days later. When I was an intern in an importing and exporting company, I helped the manager to apply the visa to Turkey, just the same situation. There was no response when I called one hour before off duty.

It is necessary for businessmen to adapt to the Arabic time concept when doing business with them; sometimes blindly pursuing efficiency could backfire. It is normal for Arabian to suddenly stop during meeting or negotiation; however it does not mean they do not respect the counterpart. Patience is an important element doing business in Arabic countries.

5.1.2 Difference and similarity

The biggest difference of time concept between China and Arabic countries is the attitude towards to time. For instance, Chinese like to plan for the future, after Reform and Opening in 1987, the government set up several Five-Year Plans for economic development. The plans were set step by step and were applied in different projects. In ordinary life, summarizing last semester or year and planning for the future is the basic thing. Company has the meeting about calculate the profit of last quarter and lay down the new project according the experience. At school, the teachers usually ask students to write

the plan for the new semester, like what kind of achievements the pupils are going to get. The plan exists in every organization. On the contrary, Arabians do not plan for the future, neither predicts.

Another difference is about the punctuality. As mentioned before, most Chinese businessmen realize that time is money, therefore, they usually keeping time during business and hope their clients and partners do the same way. However, it is normal in Arabic countries to be late. People will not blame or be blamed being late. It's necessary for Chinese businessmen to realize do not be angry or feel not be respected when encounter it.

Religion somehow determines the way how people think about time. Because the religion of China and Arabic countries is so different, there is no similarity in time concept. Nowadays some Arabic countries is used to Chinese time concept, when making an appointment, they will stress the time is "Chinese time", meaning to be punctual.

5.2 Hospitality

It is necessary to give the clients or partners a hearty hospitality when they coming to visit the company or discuss the details. In some cultures, this part can play a very important role in building the relationship between the two parties, sometimes the attitude and details from the host can determines whether the business cooperation will succeed or not. Hospitality usually includes reception and entertainment of guests and visitors. In details, it can start before the guests arrive, make sure the timetables, book the hotel and restaurant beforehand, ensure all the staffs in their positions, pick up the guests, arrange all the schedules and deal with the emergency. Sometimes if the guests have sufficient time, then the hospitality also including tourism and leisure. (Tan 2007.)

Hospitality is not as simple as imaged. High quality hospitality requires the host to concern every detail to prevent the awkward situations, sustaining the relation. The host must remember all the guests, make them know the things clearly and enjoy themselves (McNulty 2006, p. 101). These are the simplest and most important part of the hospitality. The host need the ability of quick response to the unique guests and is able to deal with the uncertainty and ambiguity (Bowen 2004, p. 6). They cannot rely on the past experience; the unique methods are required to react immediately to the guests when facing with the different situation.

Hospitality is the fastest and the most direct way for the guests has the impression on host. It is the best way and time to present the sincerity and can determine whether the two parties can reach an agreement at last. Improper hospitality can cause serious consequences. On the other hand, hospitality is also a fastest way to know deeper to each other, both host and guest can get the first-hand information. (Tan 2007.)

5.2.1 Reception and entertainment style of two parties

5.2.1.1 Hospitality in China

Hospitality is the traditional Chinese custom. Chinese are happy to invite guests to their home or invite their friends to dinner. Here emphasis on the business reception. When inviting the foreign business guests, Chinese usually do a lot of preparation works to make sure everything will go through smoothly. Zhang (2011) told me the reception process from her company, which most of companies do nowadays. Step 1: Discuss the visiting schedule with the client and communicate with the PR sector to be ready, after everything is done, send e-mail or fax to confirm with the clients, at the same time ask the factory to be ready for the visiting as well. Make sure the flight number and time. Step 2: Prepare the English introduction of company and production process,

be ready to answer the related questions. Step 3: Learn more about the representatives; including age, education, hobbies, physical health status, position and performance in the company as well as the exciting points of investment projects. Religion is an important aspect need to be taken into consideration.

Step 4: normally, the Chinese company will go to the airport to pick up the business guests and send them to the hotel. Providing the files of factory information and visiting schedule to clients, finalize the visiting activities for the following days. However, sometimes the clients will choose to visit the factory directly before go to the hotel. The clients will usually be arranged to live in the hotel which is up to international standard, ranging from three to five stars and these kinds of hotels offer western cuisine, Karaoke bars, swimming pools, gym, banking and postal services. There are the business centers providing the Internet, fax and printing, etc. (Axiom Press Inc 2003, p. 14). The next day go to the hotel to pick up the clients on time, as clients from different culture have different time conceptions, the Chinese representatives generally waiting in the lobby ten minutes earlier. (Zhang 2011.)

Step 5: Catering arrangement. After the visiting and discussion, Chinese company usually invites the clients to have dinner. Experienced company will choose the restaurant which is medium size, clean, delicious and quiet rather than luxurious one. Western restaurant is the safest and best choice. At that time, representative from Chinese company will ask what kind of food the clients do not eat to avoid the health or religious problems. For example, Muslims do not eat pork, Indians do not eat beef, and many foreigners are allergic to some food. Chinese like to put fruit in the conference room until they found no clients will eat it, now they starting to put candy instead of fruit, mint sugar or small package of chocolate will be good choice. (Zhang 2011.)

Step 6: After the visiting, Chinese company will ask the staff to arrange some entertainment or shopping for the client according to their opinions. Most of the clients prefer to go to the bar or to take part in some activities which with Chinese characteristic, such as drinking tea, watch Chinese opera and visit local resorts. At the end of visiting, Chinese company usually will give some small gifts to the clients; these gifts are in typical Chinese style and have memorial significance. The gift giving custom will be detailed explained in the following text. (Zhang 2011.)

Step 7: When the clients going to leave, the company will send them to the airport. Chinese will present their warm hearted to the client, thank their coming and wish they can visit again in the future. After the clients left, the manager or project leader will send a letter of grateful for their coming and attach all the records of meetings and memos. (Zhang 2011.)

These steps are the generally ways of welcoming the clients in China. Everyday there are foreign clients coming and leaving, Chinese people are learning all the time, doing the business while respecting the other's cultures. Chinese people will not present be too close to the clients who visit in the first time. The attitude is to be polite, respectable and leave some space between each other.

5.2.1.2 Hospitality in Arabic countries

Arabians are famous for their hospitable to the friends. It is a big shame for someone is described as mean or inhospitable. Friendships start and develop very quickly, Arabians like to invite their friends and have the long conversation meanwhile having meals or continuous tea or coffee (Nydell 2005, p. 44). They will not hesitate in expressing their enthusiasm to the business guests as well. Establishing the contacts between each other is the principle of Arabic businessmen, exchanging business cards is just a courtesy or to establish

friendship when meeting in the first time. People will find that the personal contacts are much valued and quickly established in Arabic business relationship. Nydell (2005, p. 50) also noted that Arabians like to share food with people; at least they will ask to offer it, they place great value on hospitality. They are presenting their concerns to others about health, wedding, trips and graduation all the time. That's why Arabians like to have a little light conversation before start a business discussion.

If the foreign businessmen have already contact Arabians through email or know from the intermediaries, Arabians will classified them as friends or potential friends rather than strangers, because in the Arabic way of thinking, people are divided into friends and strangers, intermediaries are famous and trustable in the Arabic countries (Nydell 2005, p.53). The intermediaries will be involved in the communication between the Arabic company and foreign company.

When meeting the foreign business guests, the Arabians will shake hands with them and they only shake hands with the same gender. After they take the clients to office, the first thing is offering the tea and coffee, and then starts the conversation. Arabians are happy to see the guests holding the cup or glass with their right hand. The phrase Ahlan wa Sahlan or Marhaba is used to welcome the guests, and it will be repeated several time during the visit (Nydell 2005, p. 83). Usually the guests will get much attention than their expectations.

Arabians are proud of their tradition of hospitality. Lv (2011) said there is a noble etiquette named "Incense", when the guests arrive, Arabians will lit sandalwood which is imported from India and very expensive, put it into incense burner and ask the guests to stand up, unlock the buttons at the bottom of their coats, Arabians bring the incense burner close to the guests' abdomen, blow a few sandalwood smoke by mouth to make the smell stay in the clothes and let guests be surrounded by the scent. Arabians will present

their high respect and warm welcome again by spray perfume to guests' chest and neck before they leave.

They will offer the traditional food for the guests, such as roasted whole lamb, steamed beef, baked pie and fried rice with sheep oil, etc. One of their customs is encouraging the guests to eat more by serving the second and third helping of food. Arabians are very happy to see the guests eat all of the served food and receive the admiration and gratitude for the meal. After the meal, tea or coffee will be offered one more time. (Lv 2011.)

5.2.2 Difference and similarity

Chinese and Arabians are all hospital and happy to help others. It is the best time to set up the business and personal relationship during the hospitality activities. Especially in Arabic countries, because Arabians only do business with "friends", their attitude to strangers is "zero". Both Chinese and Arabians value the relation during the business, they like to give favors to their friends or partners and expect they can get the same degree benefits in return; sometimes the affections from the favors are surprising.

According to the increasing business intercourses between China and Arabic countries, nowadays Chinese businessmen know a lot of Arabic customs and taboos, vice verse. Chinese will avoid such actions, for instance, shaking hands with Arabian women when meet at the first time, offering pork and alcohol to the Muslims, refusing the tea offered by Arabians, submitting the files on left hand, talking about religion and women, etc. There is one point similar in China that Arabians do not like to discuss about the political issues either, especially refer to Middle East.

Chinese like to invite friends at home, but for business normally dine outside; they are used to keep business lives separate with private lives (Axiom Press

Inc, 2003, p. 27). Arabians, on the other hand, are very happy to invite the business friends to home. According to the masculinity index (Max score) values for 50 countries and 3 regions (Hofstede 1991, p. 84), Arabic countries got the score of 53 and Hong Kong got the score of 57, which indicates that men still play a dominate role in the society. In Arabic society, there is a strong distinguish between gender roles, obviously, the role of women was limited to family. It is much better in China that women's value is not presented only in the family; more and more women are playing their important roles in every area in the society. However, when hosting the dinner, both Chinese and Arabians do not like the guests present the gifts to their wife, which will be thought the invasion of privacy.

According to the rich experience of Lv (2011), he said it is very rude in Arabic countries staring at the host's certain item, at that time Arabians must think the guests like it and will persist asking him to accept the thing. Giving gifts in the first time meeting will be regarded as bribery in Arabic countries and giving the old things to Arabians will make them angry. When getting familiar with Arabians, a bottle of perfume will be the best choice, rather than liquor and gifts with animal prints.

5.3 Negotiation

What is negotiation? It is the process we use to get a certain achievement when someone else have the favor and do not willing to give for free. Oliver (2010, p. 13) implies that negotiation is not as discount or selling as many people thought, it is the transaction in which both parties have the right to accept or not for the items. Business negotiation between companies, groups or individuals usually occurs when one has something the other want and is willing to get it through bargain (Maddux 1995, p. 7). The purpose of bargaining or discussing is to reach an agreement on the final.

There is no doubt that negotiation plays a vital role during the business intercourses. Negotiation is the highly efficient way to get best deals and best outcome. Business negotiation is not only concentrate on the price but also on value and service, price is not the only element which can determine the business agreement in the free market economy nowadays; it does not just relate to reach an agreement on buying or selling part, it can relate to the whole process of business transaction, such as logistic, insurance, payment, etc. (Oliver 2010, p. 14-15) In business negotiations, the negotiators pay more attention to the cost, efficiency and effectiveness of the technology, Therefore, people usually evaluate the success of a business negotiation by calculating the economic benefits. The best negotiation is getting the win-win situation, both parties think they won.

Business negotiation is the most effective and fastest way to increase the profit, because the every penny earned by negotiate is net profit. For instance, a product usually sells for \$10,000, if the sales negotiators raise the level of the price to \$11,000, the increase of \$1,000 is completely net profit; similarly, every penny saved from purchasing is net profit. Based on my experience of working in the export and import company in 2009, the rigor and accuracy of the items of contract is the important premise for protecting the various interests.

5.3.1 Negotiation style of two parties

5.3.1.1 Chinese style

According to the table of individualism index (IDV) values for 50 countries and 3 regions (Hofstede 1991, p. 53), the score of Hong Kong is 25, which means China is not an individualism society, collectivism is the mainstream. Most individuals will not make a decision alone because of the collectivism; they are group-oriented (National Centre for Language Training 2008, p. 65). Low-level employees do not have the power to make decisions; the senior managers are

almost always the decision makers in Chinese companies. Chinese businessmen usually use negotiation to develop a life-long relationship and treat it as a step for building trust for future cooperation (National Centre for Language Training 2008, p. 66), as Guanxi is so important for business in China.

Negotiations in China usually involve distinct stages as pre-negotiation, negotiation and post- negotiation. The Chinese prefers to know all the detailed background information of the counterpart before negotiation. This is the time getting to know about each other and start building relationship, which is the core of Chinese business. Pre-negotiation is also the process for Chinese companies to compare the price and technology with other suppliers (National Centre for Language Training 2008, p. 62).

Chinese prefer to have small talk before negotiation to build trust between participants. The leader of negotiation group will have a speech primarily. Somebody who interrupt during the speech will be thought disrespectful and give a bad impression. Negotiations commonly progress to the main points after the generally principles and common interests based on contract have been explained. "First principle, then detail" strategy is one of the most typical feature of Chinese negotiation style. The negotiations will focus on the price, quantity, technology, insurance, management control, guarantee and the contributions of each party. (National Centre for Language Training 2008, p. 65.)

Many foreigners will be confused with the nodding and the words of consent from Chinese when they presenting their thoughts, while these signs do not mean Chinese agree with the ideas. These motions only present that they are listening. Chinese rarely reject people directly because of saving face for each other, instead they will say "Maybe" or "We will think about it" to present the disagreement. The Chinese team will not make a decision immediately; they

will discuss all the details after meeting and present the outcomes on the next meeting, which is the reason that negotiations in Chinese usually last days or weeks. (Axiom Press Inc, 2003, p. 31) Chinese businessmen are famous of bargaining in the world.

Here are several points that could get extra credits on contributing to the success of negotiation with Chinese. 1. Compliments: Rejecting the compliment is modesty in China although Chinese enjoy it. If the leader or person on certain position is praised in the public place, he will get a lot of face and be happy to build the long-term relation with the counterparts. 2. Be accurate: Chinese dislike the exaggerated description words, if the counterparts make the presentation of their company by using 'the best', 'number one', 'never', they will find their impression on Chinese is unreliable and lose the business chances. (National Centre for Language Training Press 2008, p. 70.)

5.3.1.2 Arabic style

The most important things need to be kept in the mind when negotiate with Arabians are respecting their culture and be patient. In Arabians' view, reputation is the most important thing; the first thing doing business with them is to win their trust and the premise of being trusted is to respect their religious beliefs, respect for Allah. Arabians' negotiations are at a slower pace, they do not like to do make an agreement by phone. When I worked in the import export company, contacting with the Arabians, they always invite our company to visit them, they prefer to talk face to face. One time negotiation with Arabian is only a small part of consultation, it will take a long time for them to make a final decision.

Arabians have a rich body language during negotiations. They like to present a thing more active and attractive. Another typical characteristic of Arabian is

bargaining. They respect the person who bargains without buying anything rather than the person who do not bargain and buy the goods immediately. Therefore, preparing the proposal of bargain is very necessary before negotiate with Arabians. If being the supplier, it is a good way to raise the price a little bit higher to leave the space for bargaining, because no matter what price is offered, the Arabians will bargain for it.

As mentioned before, local agent is very necessary when doing business with Arabians. When negotiation with Arabic companies, these agents are indispensable, they speaks pure Arabic language, has a broad network of social relations, familiar with the local customs. The participation of local agents will largely speed up the process and make the transactions smoother.

There is another point need to be concerned is that Arabians like to using Allah's will as the excuse to protect themselves. For example, when the counterpart already made the contract while something happened and Arabians want to cancel the contract, they will say it is Allah's will. If the counterpart takes the dominant during the negotiations, Arabians will shrug and say: let's talk about it tomorrow and all the things will start over again in the next day. These behaviors are so normal to Arabians while make the foreign businessmen confused. At that time, patience will play a very important role. Impatience and urging constantly will make the situation worse and worse until Arabians give up.

5.3.2 Difference and similarity

According to the statistic presented in the power distance index table (Hofstede 1991, p. 26), the Arabic countries are 80 and Hong Kong is 68. Both of them get the high degree in power distance, which can be seen from the titles, the decision making and the dependence relationship between employees and boss. Chinese people like to call and to be called with titles, for example

manager Li, CEO Li, these titles show their occupations and social status. The employees will definitely call their boss with the titles, otherwise they will be thought disrespectful. When having the negotiations, the titles will be very clear for each person, especially for leaders. As Arabic countries get the high score in power distance, this title aspect is the same in Arabic countries.

Countries with high score in power distance scale normally afraid of disagreeing with the boss. In Arabic countries, the hierarchy between upper and lower levels is very strict. Only the leadership group can make the final decisions. In China, the situation is similar; the employees normally will not contradict their boss directly. As mentioned before, counterpart who negotiating with Chinese or Arabians can never wish the representatives make the final decisions, only after they ask or discuss with their bosses. Both China and Arabic countries are collectivism culture, individualism actions are avoided during the negotiations and business transactions.

Arabic businessmen are very sensitive with the deadline and the conformity of samples and quality. Many Chinese companies have this kind of experience, if something wrong with the date or quality, the negotiation on the price reduction or claimant will be very hard. Only with the consideration of good relationship in long term could make the Arabians make a concession. That's why building good relationship with Arabians is so important.

Mohammed (2011) said that he enjoys negotiating with Chinese. It is very hard ask Chinese to make a concession even they are always very friendly to you. He found that Chinese businessmen are very smart, when they making the agreements, they will get the biggest benefits from the concessions. Negotiating with Chinese make Mohammed knows more about Chinese and gives him a sense of accomplishment when achieving the goals successfully.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The objective of this thesis was to give the theoretical and practical knowledge of business interactions between China and Arabic countries. How the culture influence the business behavior during the meetings. Try the best to avoid the awkward and make clients feel being taken seriously, leave the best impression to the clients as well as make profits, build long-term good business relationships.

Details determine the success or failure. The way people behavior can directly affect the outcome. People who act similar as the salesman from Zhejiang Lianmei Company in the case can never succeed. Researching the culture before communicate with the person is necessary. Speaking the local language to business partners is always a good way to present the friendliness. Do the Romans do is the shortcut to get familiar with clients.

Meeting is the most important part of business. The process includes reception, time confirmation of schedule and negotiation. The different behaviors and attitudes during these steps largely related to culture. Good preparation beforehand contributes a lot to higher the efficiency.

Chinese businessmen can enjoy a lot of advantages doing business with Arabians because the government encourages it. There are many preferential policies set up for the Chinese companies. Now it is the best time to cooperate with Arabians. The same situation happened in Arabic countries, they do a plenty of research about China, get the benefits from government at the same time.

The suggestion is that when having commercial intercourse with Arabians, the patience and carefulness can help a lot. The knowledge of customs, for instance, the cooler taboos, the power of religions, the forbidden of idols can

largely contribute to the success of business. Hiring the local interpreter is the best way to help the communication with Arabians and learn the culture quickly in the short time. Another effective way is to searching on Internet or books from Arabic countries, know how Arabians are thinking about Chinese, taking the opinions into consideration, learning from the feedbacks.

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Name

Age

Nationality

1. Do you often contact with foreigners? If yes, specify the nationalities.
2. Do you speak other language? If yes: How well in your opinion?
3. How do you think of communicating with people from China/Arabic countries?
 - 1) Very easy 2) easy 3) Neutral 4) difficult 5) Very difficult
4. In which field do you usually contact with Chinese/Arabians?
 - 1) Business 2) Academic exchange 3) Friendship
5. How do you think whether it is necessary to know Chinese/Arabic culture?
 - 1) Very necessary 2) necessary 3) Neutral 4) not necessary 5) not necessary at all
6. What is your idea about Chinese/ Arabians?
7. What is your attitude to time?
 - 1) Time is money 2) Always be punctual 3) Not care so much 4) Always late
8. How do you think about Chinese/ Arabian style reception?
9. How do you think about Chinese/ Arabian negotiation tactic?
10. Do you want to build long-term relationship with Chinese/ Arabian?
 - 1) Yes 2) No 3) Other opinion
11. What kind of behaviour from Chinese/ Arabian will make you feel uncomfortable?
12. What is the most difficult for you when doing business with Chinese/ Arabian?