

Jesse Vuorinen

BEAR MEETS DRAGON
COOPERATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN THE COMPANIES FROM NORTHERN SATAKUNTA
AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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KARHU KOHTAA LOHIKÄÄRMEEN – YRITYSYHTEISTYÖ JA VIESTINTÄKULTTUURI POHJOIS-SATAKUNNAN YRITYSTEN JA KIINAN KANSANTASAVALLAN VÄLILLÄ

Vuorinen, Jesse
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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on tutkia kulttuurien välistä viestintää ja yhteistyötä pohjoissatakuntalaisten yritysten ja kiinalaisten yhteistyökumppaneiden välillä. Kokemus ja vinkit kootaan yhteen, jotta toistuvilta virheilta voitaisiin välttyä ja kootusta tiedosta tulisi hyödyllinen apupaketti toimijoille, jotka suunnittelevat, aloittavat tai jo toimivat yhteistyössä kiinalaisten osapuolien kanssa.

Monilla satakuntalaisyrityksillä on yhteistyötä kiinalaisten toimijoiden kanssa. Mm. Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoululla on yhteistyösopimus Changzhoun kaupungin kanssa. Tavoitteena on syventää osaamista ja mahdollisuuksia osapuolien välillä. Ottaen huomioon länsimaalaisten ja suomalaisten yritysten kiina-operaatioiden paljouden, kokemukseen perustuvaa, tarkkaa ja yleispätevää tietoa ei ole kerätty helpottamaan uusien yritysten ja yksilöiden Kiinan kohtaamista.

Opinnäytetyö on osa Bear meets Dragon – projektia. Projekti on perusajatukseltaan sama kuin opinnäytetyö, ja siinä pyritään keskittymään kulttuurien väliseen viestintään ja sen parantamiseen. Tietoa ja kokemuksia kerätään koko Satakunnan alueelta. Projekti koostuu neljästä opinnäytetyöstä, joista tämä keskittyy Pohjois-Satakuntaan. Muihin opinnäytetöihin on koottu materiaalia Etelä-Satakunnan, Porin seudun yritysten ja Satakunnan eriasteisten koulujen ja organisaatioiden yhteistyöstä ja kokemuksista kiinalaisten osapuolien kanssa.

Pääpaino on viestinnässä ja yleisissä, vältettävissä ongelmissa, joita kansainvälisissä suhteissa esiintyy. Kun kaksi kaukaista ja hyvin erilaista kulttuuria kommunikoivat erilaisissa tilanteissa, on selvää, että eteen tulee uusia ja outoja yhteentörmäyksiä. Tässä opinnäytetyössä on haastateltu kaksi eri suomalaista yritysedustajaa Pohjois-Satakunnasta ja kiinalaista, Satakunnan yritysten asioita Kiinassa hoitavaa henkilöä. Tutkimusalueen suppeuden ja operaatioiden puuttumisen vuoksi, on opinnäytetyössä myös omakohtaisia kokemuksia ja teoriaa tukemassa kokemuksia ja vinkkejä.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että yleisimmät stereotypiat ja ongelmat vaikuttavat edelleen. Erilainen verbaalinen ja fyysinen kommunikointi tuottaa vaikeuksia länsimaalaisille, mutta suomalaisten käytöksessä on myös kiinalaista miellyttävää rauhallisuutta ja askeettisuutta. Silti suomalaisten tavat johtaa ja toimia ryhmässä ovat joskus lähes shokeeraavia kiinalaisten ajatusmaailmaan sopiviksi. Myös kiinalaiset osaavat yllättää suomalaiset monin tavoin. Suomalaisten kertomukset ja syyt erilaisiin käytösmalleihin on analysoitu opinnäytetyön lopussa.

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Vuorinen, Jesse
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The purpose of this thesis is to research the cross-cultural communication and co-operation between Northern Satakunta’s organizations/companies and Chinese factors. By collecting experiences and hints together as a manual about China, the partners operating between China and Finnish companies could avoid frequent mistakes. The collected information could be useful manual for those who are planning, starting or already operating in co-operation with Chinese. Many companies and organizations from Satakunta region have co-operation with Chinese. Among other things Satakunta region and Satakunta University of applied sciences have done co-operation agreement with the city of Changzhou and the University of Changzhou. The objective is to deepen know-how and opportunities between the sides. When considering the great amount of Finnish operations in China, there is no data bank for accurate and universal knowledge based on experiences. This kind of data bank would help new companies or individuals to enter Chinese markets and to confront the Chinese culture.

The thesis is a part of Bear meets Dragon project. The project has the same basic idea than the thesis and main focus is on cross-cultural communication and how to improve it. The information and experiences are collected from whole Satakunta region. The project consists of four different theses where this thesis is one of them focusing on Northern Satakunta. The rest of the theses are focusing on Southern Satakunta region, the area of the city of Pori and different organizations and schools/universities from Satakunta region. The main focus is on communication and common, avoidable problems happening in cross-cultural relationships. When two distant and very different cultures are communicating between each other it is clear that there will be new and odd cultural impacts. Two different Finnish representatives from companies located in Northern Satakunta, a Chinese who takes care of Northern Satakunta companies’ issues referring China in Finland and China were interviewed for this thesis. There are also personal experiences from living and studying in China. Thesis also includes theories to support experiences, hints and research results. As an outcome in this thesis was that the most common stereotypes and problems are still living strongly. Verbal and physical communication is causing problems for the Westerners all the time but still, there is something in Finnish behaviour that pleases a Chinese mind, calmness and ascetic. Still a Finnish style to lead and work in group may sometimes be nearly shocking to fit the Chinese world view. The experiences of Finnish interviewees and reasons for different manners are analyzed in the end of this thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

China is a millennia year old country. It has become an embodiment for everything distant or strange. Sometimes it feels that the country has always existed and it will always exist. It has overcome many colourful historical events, has been conquered and been ruled by foreign rulers. Still, it has kept its mysteries and very unique culture and now The Middle Kingdom is rising. People all over the world are travelling to China to study, to work, to research etc. The cultures if compared to Finland are so different that it is inevitable the cultures collide.

In this thesis the purpose is to clarify the problems when two different cultures collide. Finnish companies are co-operating more and more with Chinese and two totally different cultures have to learn to communicate with each other. Problems in cross-cultural communication are widely known but still very common. This thesis is meant to research how those problems could be solved or avoided. The thesis contains theory, experiences and hints for co-operation with Chinese. The thesis is not meant to introduce China or Finland in general. There is basic information about the countries but the main focus is on cross-cultural communication and business customs. To meet the purpose the thesis is searching answers for questions; what is the problem? What is causing the problem? How to solve or avoid the problems? The research purpose is met if the material in this thesis helps to avoid or solve the problems in cross-cultural communication.

Qualitative method and narrative approach such as interviews are used in this thesis. Since the purpose is to collect problems and conclusions, these methods became the best option. The material is collected from different professionals' interviews, theory books, own experiences and news papers. The second chapter is about China and culture. In third chapter "customs and etiquette" is the main theory part of the thesis. The chapter offers explanations for why Chinese are acting like they do. Fourth chapter is about research methods. Fifth chapter introduces the results and answers for the research questions.

2 CHINA

When thinking about China and Finland and their business opportunities one should always remember that the countries are like a night and day. It is not an obstacle but richness. Knowing your opponent may lead you to learn something about yourself also. China is old, huge and a beautiful country, Zhongguo, Middle kingdom is more like a continent than a country. From the western border, Middle-Asia to the east, Pacific Ocean is 5000 kilometres and it has 13 neighbours. Wide area contains a massive amount of natural resources. China is the third biggest country in the world, only Russia and Canada are bigger. When comparing to Finland, China is 30 times bigger and has 1.3 billion inhabitants. There are two great deserts in China, Gobi desert, the more famous one, in the north and Taklimakan in the west. In the south, there is Himalayas. The two biggest rivers are the Yellow river, Huanghe, and the Yangtze River, Changjiang. These rivers have been very important routes during thousands of years. The Chinese civilization was born in the north and since that it has spread via the Yellow river. Also nowadays more than 400 million inhabitants are living along the Yangtze River. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 9-10)

The whole Chinese history is more than colourful. Chinese history is 5000 years old and Chinese politics, military tactics and philosophy, architecture, art, science, even chopsticks have spread and affected many countries. Despite that a business point of view the last 60 years may be the most important piece in this thesis. The Republic lost the Civil War in 1949 and socialistic China was born. After that a unique socialistic vision of the communistic party has led Chinese people along political and economic rollercoaster. Socialism evolved during the 50's. When entering the 70' socialistic China was in very bad trouble. The great leader Mao Zedong dies 1976 and new leaders take command. At the time China is becoming progressively more under-developed economically and culturally thanks to the State control of the economy and social regimentation enforced by Mao and his heirs. Actions take places in the late 1970s and several changes were done. Among the other things farmers got permission to work for themselves and foreign investment was encouraged in Special Economic Zones. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 9-10)

Deng Xiaoping starts to reform Chinese economy. Finally as a result from that, China is opened as we understand it 1992-1996. Major implications because of the actions were reducing the State's direct involvement in the economy, bringing back the stock market, joining the World Trade Organization, privatising housing and making institutions conform to international standards. It is said that Chinese culture made possible the economic miracle to happen. Because foreigners challenged, defeated and humiliated China, most Chinese believe that China was the only civilisation. It is not rare that people still believe China to be surrounded by enemies. Their culture, colourful history with many great invents and communistic era has shaped public opinion and picture about the world. The future shows is it a bad thing if a super power with a modern Chinese identity see itself as a victim. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 9-10)

2.1 Elements of culture

A word culture has many definitions. Culture has been compared to an iceberg floating in the sea. There is actually very small part of it we actually can see which applies to culture as well. In addition to tangible, material, features such as language, food, clothing, and other concrete differences, there are intangible features such as attitudes, values, and beliefs which we only can understand by learning the culture. Everything we see, feel, hear, and taste is just a top of the iceberg and in order to discover the hidden part of it, we need to dive deeper. There are many different definitions about the elements of culture and as many different views about what is the most relevant for purpose of explaining culture. (Gore 2007, 38-39)

“Culture is a set of learned core values, beliefs, knowledge, standards, laws, morals and behaviors shared by individuals and societies. Culture determines the acts, feelings and views of individuals. A society's culture is passed from generation to generation.” (Mitchell 1999, 4)

Adapting to circumstances and transmitting skills and knowledge is the mission of the peoples to continue their cultures. Culture affects to people and determines who

they are. Culture is the driving force behind the human behavior. (Moran, Harris, & Moran 2007, 6)

Chinese culture is very old. Cultures change in every country and China is not an exception. The civilization is about 5000 years old and China was born 2000 years ago. Still the culture there is changing rapidly. The basic culture is rich and will be introduced better in following chapters. It is still good to remember that communistic era and huge economic growth after that is affecting very effectively and it is a bit shame to see clear western influence. Despite influences and growth, ancient history and present stereotypes China is not a homogenous country. It seems to be one massive country with own habits and past as every country has. For a foreigner, especially a westerner, it is just China. Chinese government has done marvellous job not only in permitting regional identity to flourish but also in keeping the country united. A word culture may be divided into elements, which are language, aesthetics, education, religion, attitudes/values, social organizations, political life and material culture. (Terpstra & Sarathy 1991, 97)

2.2 Chinese language

Chinese language is very fascinating, special and unbelievable difficult. For a westerner the language is so far from our languages that sometimes one does not want to even know about it. The language sounds and looks very difficult and so unfamiliar that starting the studying may feel too heavy work load. Still more than one billion individuals are speaking it. The language sounds the same everywhere but there are eight main languages or dialects in China. Dialects inside Chinese can be as different as Portuguese, Italian or Spanish are from each other. The biggest language is mandarin Chinese, Putonghua, “common language”. For instance national radio and television channels are using it. Chinese language is a tonal language. If one does not understand tones it may lead to uncomfortable situations. It is not enough if you know the word, you must know how to say it. There are four tones and a word may have 4 totally different meaning depending on pronunciation. Learning the language starts with learning the tones and after that comes the most difficult part if language feels quite easy so far. As everybody knows the written language is just signs. One

sign is one byte. Extraordinary language is a uniting factor. A sign indicates the meaning but not pronunciation. So people are able to read each other's words even they are not capable to understand spoken language because of dialect or language itself. Young Chinese pupils start and use a lot of time to learn the signs during their first school years. To gain a proper literacy requires knowing 3000 signs. There is also a pinyin-system. The system is only for Standard Mandarin, but not for other Chinese languages. The system is now used in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, parts of Taiwan and internationally to teach Mandarin as a second language. It is also often used to spell Chinese names in foreign publications. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 11-12)

2.3 Chinese religions, philosophies and aesthetics

Chinese religions and philosophies are rich. Religions, aesthetics and values are almost the same thing. Everything affects everything. A communistic country is usually atheistic but in China there are three official major religions. Those are often involved to each other. Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism have affected not only family life and social relationships but also the whole culture. A person visiting China better get ready to see skyscraper with holes in those or a manager to see local workers collecting spirits from an old factories when moving to a new one. Chinese culture and habits may surprise a foreigner, especially a westerner. More of these habits can be read in third chapter Cross-cultural relationship.

Taoism, is considered to be the original religion. The basic belief is that there are always two sides in everything. Good and bad, high and low, light and dark etc. Confucianism is more like a way of life than religion. It is aesthetic ideology, which have affected to philosophy, politics and relationships in every level. Its meaning is still strong because it highlights moral and correct behaviour in all situations. Buddhism is also very old religion in China. Its doctrine was far from positive Chinese thinking. Despite thinking, that life is just misery and pain and an individual should have no fortune Chinese took the religion as their own. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 13-14)

2.4 Chinese medical science

Chinese medical science is a wide system, which considers a body, a spirit and a soul as wholeness. It is mainly, based on Taoism. Chinese medical science includes many of Taoism ideas such as yin/yang and Qi, a life power. If Qi is unbalanced, a person may get ill. Peace of mind, balance and regular life habits are a good base for a healthy life. To get a good health there are several techniques to use; herbs, acupuncture, diet, deep breathing and physical exercises. Everyone has a certain amount of Qi when born. One maintains it during the whole life by eating and breathing. On the other hand Qi maintains a person. If something goes wrong Chinese medical science is able to fix the situation. It is more than clear for Chinese that one should take care of Qi and be well balanced. (Morejohn, Ingrid Booz, 2006, 13-14)

2.5 Social organizations and values

Family life in China is different than in Finland. In Finland it is normal that a young person moves out to study or a new own house to start his/her own life as an individual adult. If married, it does not mean that one has to get married with both families. For instance in China, marriage is more than a romantic coupling. It is more like family business which brings two groups together to share networks and resources, to bring about the continuation of the spirit of the older generation, which gives purpose to life. It is said that the marriage is like an enterprise. Still the culture is changing when the world is getting more global and ideas spread faster but still divorce rate is low if compared to Western world for example. It may sound impossible in Finland but in China an ideal family contains many generations living together in harmony. Courtyard homes connecting young and old family members working for the common good is usual.

Nowadays there is One-child policy in China. The Chinese government refers to it under the official translation of family planning policy. It officially restricts the number of children married urban couples can have to one, although it allows exemptions for several cases, including rural couples, ethnic minorities, and parents without any siblings themselves. The policy does not apply to the Special Administrative Regions

of Hong Kong and Macau, or Tibet. The policy was introduced in 1978 and first applied to children born in 1979. It was created by the Chinese government to alleviate social, economic, and environmental problems in China, and authorities claim that the policy has prevented more than 250 million births from its implementation to 2000. Like said before the family life culture has been changed as what it has been. Before the economic growth as we know it the communistic government and policy took a tight hold on family culture and an individual became loyal to the State more than family. Now the State has loosened its hold on family life but it has just been replaced with the competing influences of the market economy. Also the lack of traditional restraints on behaviour, the cynicism which the revolution brought about, the crass materialism that has replaced it, seem to have given rise to some predatory and callous individuals. Nevertheless, the idea of family life is still powerful, as are traditional ideas of reciprocity and responsibility to the old and to children. (de Burgh, Hugo, 2006, 119-122)

2.6 Education

Education in China is rising on every level. Studying and education is free although it may vary what we think about school system. Depending on province there are probably still pupils going to a school riding with an ox and after school they study by the light of the glow-worm. Schools in cities can be very well equipped. Meanwhile schools in the rural China have nothing. Facilities for studying may vary greatly and the same situation is also for teachers. Nevertheless, there are several ways to success. Like in western world, one does not have to have a certificate to be succeeding. Still the status of scholarship is highly valued. Despite communistic era delayed the education level as we know it, the Chinese universities and research centres are soon challenging the best in the world. Not only in the quality of their research but also in their attractions for foreign students. The basis of attitudes and behaviour in the school system has made it possible to challenge the rest of the world so quickly.

I myself have studied there at Shanghai University in 2008 and in my opinion their education atmosphere is very competitive and disciplined. Students are "fighting"

for their success because education is free, there is a huge mass of potential competitors and families are waiting nothing but best. It was common sight that Chinese students were studying also during nights in classrooms with lights on. Like we have, also the Chinese education system is compulsory for nine years. Students are six years in Primary (ages 6– 12) and three years in Junior Middle School (JMS, ages 13– 15). In China almost 90 per cent receives primary schooling and 65 per cent middle schooling. I once spoke with a Chinese taxi driver in a taxi. He was very excited about me and very proud that he was able to speak with me. That meant few words in English. At the end he said that he has been in a Junior Middle School. (Author's own experience)

The schooling system in a nutshell would be,

“Comprehensive schooling is essentially academic, though these schools may, particularly in cities, have specialities. The subjects emphasised at Primary are arithmetic and Chinese with Romanisation (i.e. children learn how to use the western alphabet applied to their own language), and those at JMS are arithmetic, Chinese, English, Physics and Chemistry. At the end of JMS there is an examination called Zhongkao, which decides whether you can move on to Senior Middle School (SMS) or whether your formal school education ends. Those who fail to move on will either choose a vocational school or start work with the possibility of participating in adult education later. Graduation from SMS may mean, for the most competent at academic examinations, university, depending upon performance in the national exam, Gaokao. It may also mean transferring across to one of the other channels for further or higher study. The system is flexible in that it is quite possible to transfer between the comprehensive and the other channels: Vocational, Technical, Rural Vocational, Adult (usually older people) and Normal (teacher training).” (de Burgh, Hugo, 2006, 201-208)

Despite the schooling is free now the non-compulsory elements such as kindergarten or SMS after are not free anymore but there are different levels contribution. For the schools it is illegal to charge, but it is common nowadays that the schools are demanding contributions. To prevent poor families not to send their talented children to school various charitable foundations run by the government and foreign founda-

tions, are helping those families and students. It is doubted that free schooling may end comparatively soon. (de Burgh, Hugo, 2006, 201-208)

2.7 Political life

China is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. Political life in China since the 1949 revolution has been characterized by an almost relentless struggle to legitimize its monopoly on political power. Chinese communism is a blend of Marxist and nationalist ideology. During the Mao era, the political life was focused on mass participation in political affairs and the charismatic authority of Mao Zedong. Since the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and its dramatic failure the post-Mao leadership was forced to discard these discredited paradigms of legitimacy and move towards an almost exclusively performance based concept founded on market economic reform. The reforms during the 1980s caused a great number of side effects such as official corruption, high unemployment and significant socio-economic inequality. All the consequences caused by the reforms culminated in the 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. This notorious and well known event led Chinese army to break down the demonstrations violently. Since Tiananmen, the party has sought to diversify the basis of its legitimacy by adhering more closely to constitutional procedures in decision making and, to a certain extent, by reinventing itself as a conservative nationalist party. This probing study of post-communist revolution Chinese politics sets out to discover if there is a plausible alternative to the electoral mode or if legitimacy is the exclusive domain of the multi-party system. (Weatherley, Robert, 2006)

2.8 Chinese middle class

When speaking about culture people always think writing, habits and language, maybe some food. Everyone knows Chinese food with rice and noodles but when thinking nowadays China and the economic miracle one part of changing culture must be pointed out. When writing a thesis about companies in China this part of culture is important. This is material culture. Let us think a basic Chinese consumer, ba-

sic Chinese new middle class and leave out special areas such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. (Doctoroff, Tom, 2005, 29)

A word middle class is a little bit difficult to describe. It means people who have enough income to buy more or something else than the necessities. There are words in Chinese that are used to describe that. Cai means food to please and a word Fan means food to fill. Growing Chinese middle class means home ownerships and a long-term savings plan, maybe a car some day. A word middle class describes a normal citizen seen on the streets in Finland and more and more in China too. This is how financial world would see the middle class. Middle class is also a state of mind. The word is after all rich, full of nuances and challenging. The middle class is the backbone of a nation. Around 90 percent of the United States' populace considers itself to be middle class. China has recently liberated from the shackles of inefficient state planning and force-fed egalitarianism, so the Chinese middle class is probably no more than 10 percent of the nation's population. It sound quite small figure but when taking into account the population of China, Chinese middle class is already 130 million individuals and this seems to be just the beginning. (Doctoroff, Tom, 2005, 29)

The new middle class of China is typically marked by contradictions. The history, its unity of spirits and a remarkable and passionate will to elevate the nation's role in the world are factors that create a great modern nation. China's millennia-old dynastic and unique culture has to be differently approached than our familiar western culture. Marketers need to carefully consider how to manage their functions in order to avoid conflicts resulting to lose on the markets. Despite there have been such a long time since China opened the markets to the world, the time is comparatively short in totally changing a culture. An original, conservative and hierarchical social structure may easily collide with a new, aggressive hunger for social and financial advancement in personal life. Their psyche is pretty torn between their polarities of ambition and caution. In the western, capitalistic world the usual vision is that the citizens are individuals. Cultures and actions are more or less based on that. Japan is well known and powerful nation. Japanese in their well built society are safety seekers. China is something between these two. Nowadays a Chinese desires both, to project individual status and protect family welfare. Chinese are getting used to a dynamic and im-

pulsive “now” orientation but there is also focus in the future. Balancing between a reality of consumptive lifestyle with all the opportunities economic growth may offer and a reality of low incomes, hierarchical society, rich history with growing national identity may be difficult. That is the point what smart marketers must help the consumers to solve. (Doctoroff, Tom, 2005, 28)

Because of a huge nation and increasing purchasing power the business world is investing a massive amount of money and technology to China. Fast growing middle class consumes daily and the government develops the country all the time. Despite the eastern coast and its primary cities were the first ones to develop and opened to market economy, the prosperity is spreading to the western China comparatively rapidly. Although China looks a big promised land it is good to remember that still there are 800 million rural dwellers living on less than three dollars a day.

3 CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION – STEREOTYPES, CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE

The only time when true suffering occurs is when two cultures collide. — Hermann Hesse

Cross-cultural communication is a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavour to communicate across cultures. (<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/>)

All the organizations and companies in the world have searched entry modes and business opportunities in China for so long time. Knowing the entry modes and having a lot of money is not enough if one does not know anything about business culture or customs. There are several stories about unsuccessful tries to negotiate or do business. It is quite common habit that westerners think every nation to have the same habits than we have. And if they do not have, better get used to ours. At first I did the same mistake when I lived in China. I said no, they did not like it, I was too strict. I was loud, they did not like it, I did not know how to behave and I was disre-

spectful. In my opinion there was just a case to solve, persons were not fighting. Because more and more companies are moving to China, it is a time for us to learn something. The Chinese, are proud of their long history and great culture, and expect foreigners to respect these things. It is good to remember that patterns of western thinking have been more exposed to the Chinese than theirs to us but still we are not keen on them but financially. Then how do you do business across cultures? What is cross-cultural relationship? As much as there are cultures, there are ways to handle the cases. What might be the right one, when habits and cultures confronts.

Since the late 1970s, Chinese leaders have encouraged foreign investment in China. There is a massive amount of potential customers and attracting low-cost labour force in China. With these facts China gains foreign capital for development, which has kept and will keep the country's present overall growing possible. For a country size of China, the need for foreign capital is huge. There are lots of possibilities but also a terrible need for investments if they are willing to keep the growing on. So far, foreign investors have been impressed by China's rapid economic growth, which the country has achieved since the beginning. The potentials are so wide that investors are investing ambitiously to get a share of the market. There have been many multinational companies and international joint ventures aiming the market shares and after joining in the World Trade Organization (WTO) more are expected. Despite the wide interest towards the Chinese market not nearly all the joints have confronted many conflicts caused by interpersonal interaction. In many the cases foreigners and Chinese have been unable to resolve conflicts satisfactorily.

(Chan, K, 2006, 241-274)

Even though business operations and the world have become smaller and standardized, many traditions, attitudes and stereotypes are remaining. Following is a good description of a collision of the two worlds.

“Public praise, for example, is much enjoyed by its recipient in the U.S. and Europe, but is a source of embarrassment and discomfort for an individual in Asia. This is because Western cultures value individual thought and action, while Eastern cultures prize modesty and group consensus. In Asia, “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” While the primary focus of people in one culture might be to quickly get

down to business, another culture concentrates first on developing personal relationships. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 6)

The main objectives may be the same for the both sides but the cultures are using different ways to achieve them. Despite mistakes and conflicts, the Finns in this case, should not think the losses and giving up the plan, but what caused the collision and try to fix the problem in the future.

3.1 Stereotypes

A stereotype is a popular belief about specific social groups or types of individuals. The concepts of "stereotype" and "prejudice" are often confused with many other different meanings. Stereotypes are standardized and simplified conceptions of groups based on some prior assumptions. (<http://www.understandingprejudice.org/>)

In order to be a successful businessman or company, cross cultural knowledge and relationship should be evolved. For most of us, China is a distant country the Finns have heard from jokes and stories. Almost everyone has an opinion about that one of the largest countries in the world. Commonly we have used to speak about China as little brother or something not so important. Somehow that is weird, many of their cities are bigger than our country and their history starts 5000 years ago. For instance, do you know how many inhabitants there are in Greater-Shanghai? 7 million one would say, another person would say even 10million and third says that he has heard something about the city. There are 18 million inhabitants in Greater-Shanghai there is also the fastest train in the world, the tallest TV-station, the tallest hotel and so on. China thinks big. In Finland we have 5 million inhabitants and we are upset if someone abroad does not know that we won ice hockey world championship in 1995. These are just tiny examples about what an average Finn usually does not know. Despite that, we have stereotypes about Chinese and China. Stereotypes are okay and even essential part when a person meets something new. Racist or limited thinking is wrong. Stereotypes based on personal experience or valid research will probably help you but outdated or inaccurate information will only create barriers. So

be an open minded, especially when doing business with or within China. In the following chapters are few common stereotypes and explanations for those.

3.2 A communist country

Usually public opinion defines China to be a hard-line dictatorship and all the people live in poverty. It is true that China has been communistic country and it is still officially communistic. It has its roots in Russian communism but China's system is claimed to be unique by the government. It can not be said that communism conquered China but it has been quite natural system for the country. As mentioned earlier, strong historical and cultural factors have mixed with communist philosophy to form the Chinese world view. As an example, in communistic system ideal society would be classless. Despite China's communistic government supported the notion of a classless society, the old Confucian system of hierarchies have survived nearly unchanged. So the communism did not overtake Chinese mind and totally changed them to be something they would like to be as we usually believe and see communism. In Chinese culture an average citizen is more interested in harmony than in democracy and freedom. The same happening in western world and philosophies would be hard to believe. After the Cultural Revolution and still growing western influence in China, there has been remarkable yearning for peace and stability among the citizens. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 21-22)

3.3 Worker bees

Worker Bees; The Chinese dedicate their lives to work and have little interest in leisure. There is a popular saying in China; "where the tiller is tireless, the land is fertile". It must be remembered that China's industrialization is still very poor in most areas. Usually those areas are highly crowded and hard working is the key for surviving. In Confucian, diligence is highly admired and that has, of course, its effect to working culture. Present days when competition is very intense and values are changing because of the market oriented economy, Chinese are more and more able to gain financial prosperity for their work. The younger, educated generation is willing to work hard as the working culture has always encouraged but for foreign-

owned corporations. This generation is expecting to get higher income and benefits for their services. With western influence and working culture, shorter weeks and holidays have come to Chinese work life. Nowadays Chinese work hard but are increasingly asking for their “rights” in return. As a result domestic tourism is flourishing. There are special holiday packages to see China all around and even holidays abroad are more famous and affordable than not so long time ago. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 22)

In my opinion it is good if Chinese are waking up with their wishes. On my last trip to China I was having a dinner with my colleagues. We were invited by a raw material supplier. This Chinese factory owner told us that he is paying 150 Euros a worker per month. The employees are working twelve hours a day, six days a week. If Chinese are working like that, who would say they have not earned a short holiday despite of any culture or religion?

3.4 Not creative

The Chinese haven't invented anything since gunpowder. They can figure out the most complex scientific puzzles, but they never originate new technologies. At first should be mentioned that Chinese invented gunpowder for fireworks and westerners refined to warfare. China has invented few things more than just gunpowder.

“Paper, silk (the technique of making thread from cocoons was their exclusive secret for 3,000 years), the first printed book (long before Gutenberg), cast iron (1,800 years before Europe figured out the process), acupuncture and smallpox inoculation, the seismograph (for detecting earthquakes), porcelain (“china”), the armillary sphere (by 350 B.C. , Chinese were predicting eclipses and comets and had charted 284 constellations) and a variety of marvellous foods, including the humble noodle (introduced to Italy by Marco Polo and his uncles). It has also had a rich, 4,000-year literary history and been the birthplace of Confucianism and Taoism.” (Li, Jenny, 2001, 23)

Otherwise than in the West, China has always focused on group efforts, rather than individual one. People have gained their satisfaction and reward out of group work. This culture does prefer manufacturing and service industries over research and development. It can not be said if this is a problem it is more like culture question. If wanting to handle the issue as a problem, we have to admit that they can see our pattern also very strange. However, Chinese “not creative – problem”, has as much to do with organizations as ideas. After living collective society last few thousand years, it is quite difficult to change corporation style to decentralization. Constructive criticism by employees is considered inappropriate. After all, because of increasing competition, slow management patterns are giving in to innovative style. Future Chinese leaders are educated in the West and they are returning home with high graduations and modern ideas. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 23)

3.5 Kowtowing

Chinese obey tradition and authority without question. This part of culture is based on Confucianism. The relationships and behaving between individuals and groups are seen differently than in the West. Despite obedience is living strongly in Chinese culture, the relationship between subordinates and superiors is changing. New, educated business and corporation leaders, some of them in the West, are gaining more and more management positions. They are bringing new ideas and culture in to the Chinese business culture. Nowadays the blind obedience is widely challenged. Although atmosphere of public opinion is getting free, the Communist party is still very powerful. The party prevents too radical ideas. For this reason, a westerner should not expect too free discussion and opinions. Most of the Chinese associates may keep their opinions on their own and for private life only. Usually Chinese are quite expressionless, unemotional and almost impossible to “read”. In China, expressing one’s feelings is considered to be undignified. Men are traditionally valued to be the head of the family and in leading positions. It is expected that they are not allowed to expose their feelings in their position. Chinese are, however, humans. They have feelings as everybody else but they are taught to mask them.

In 1956 Mao Zedong decided that China's strength is in their people and the nation could only grow if population increases. At that time the population was 500 million. By the late 1970s, the policy had gained results and there was one-fifth percent of the world's population in China. The amount was leading to starvation for many. The government took actions and that resulted to the One child policy. The policy has been quite successful in the cities. That tells a lot about Chinese obedience. However, the "bad" thing the policy is that 70 percent of China's population is living outside the cities. Nowadays many Chinese cities are filled with children who are doted on by their parents in ways that previous generations could not have imagined. There is a problem to solve how the family structure can be dictated by policy.

(Li, Jenny, 2001, 24)

When one have got rid of stereotypes and are getting ready to enter the markets as a true businessman respecting your business partner it should be better to get to know the habits and etiquette. As mentioned above, the Chinese do not like to do business with strangers. Where contracts are important for us, they are negotiating about relationship. In their communal culture it is normal but for us as westerners communal and time consuming behaving with small talk and meeting may be too much sometimes. That is often the reason for negotiations to break and solid connections leave undone. Foreigners simply do not know or want to improve friendly and personal relationship.

3.6 Good to know when having a meeting with Chinese

A Finnish expert of Asian markets, Jukka Lahtinen from Avaintulos Oy tells his tips to a businessman keen on China.

"There are three things to remember when dealing with Chinese. Patience, patience, patience. Everything takes more time." As an example he tells a story about when he was organising a concert tour of a famous Finnish pop singer called Danny in year 1998. For a permission to perform 30 stamps were needed from administration. The last stamp was admitted by the minister of culture of China. The society of stamps have got quicker because of western corporation culture and special market zones have accelerated the working and decision making methods.

Along patience it is very important to get good contacts and good relationships. A way to action is very communal and hierarchical. “An individual does not take personal risks but the status is always checked first. Losing one’s face is more serious than death.” A businessman should not expect quick benefits. According an anecdote first ten meeting business partners are just getting to know each other and on the eleventh time one is able to tell about selling something” says Lahtinen. He sees that there are three phases in the China phenomenon. In a first phase western companies enter China, in a second phase Chinese comes here. In a third phase Chinese service companies will expand to abroad. He thinks the second phase is now going on. Most of the companies entering China are from high tech countries. “That is the reason why Chinese quality has risen dramatically. They are already manufacturing global quality” says Jukka Lahtinen. (Tori, Tampereen kaupunkilehti 16/2010. 21.4.2010 s.8)

Now when an era of globalisation is familiar for most of us, understanding the basics of etiquette and habits in formal and informal situations is an important skill. If one is not keen on personally about opponents’ opinion about himself, one should be a worried about putting the company’s image at risk. Offering a bad image or seeming disrespectful is not a recommended way to international success. In other case well knowing and respectful behaviour may be more than advantage. There are differences between regions in China just as we have in Finland. Leaving out regional specialities and getting to know the basic business cultural factors is a good start. Doing homework and showing that you are really willing to understand your opponent is always a good way of approaching every situation in life in general. The following paragraphs describe the basic etiquette and habits when meeting a Chinese colleague.

3.7 Preparations

When planning a meeting there are several preparations to make. Meeting can be always challenging and if you are willing to success, it can be pretty stressful. A meeting with Chinese is not an exception. Business meetings with foreigners are occasions in China. Even the world has become smaller and globalization spreads, Chi-

nese still believe that the stress is on the foreigners' side because Chinese are offering their country and the foreigners are the ones coming to do business. For this reason the Chinese usually are poorly prepared in meetings. They do expect that the associate will do the preparations since being the one is going to get something out of Chinese. That should not be discouraging. To avoid tricky situations, it is crucial to have an agenda and stick to it. Before the meeting the western participant should send a list of participating team members. The important part is to highlight the order of seniority or importance including brief presentation of each. It is also good to request a similar list from the Chinese participant. If all the materials could be translated before sending, it would be the best as well. The availability of technical assistive devices may vary even in big cities. It is highly recommended to bring enough copies in the meeting. The same precaution should be done with audio, video and electricity equipment. The preparations can not be started too early. All the special requests should be made as early as possible. After all preparations, do remember a rule; assume that the requests can not be met.

(Li, Jenny, 2001, 50)

3.8 Scheduling

Scheduling should be done well, not only for you but also for the Chinese partners. After good preparations it is easier to meet. There can also be special requests. Get ready to disappoint, although all the preparations was done, there can be last-minute delays or cancellations, it is not unusual. The important part is not to show your disappointment. No matter what you feel, express your understanding and usually Chinese arrange special functions for you. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 51)

When it comes to time, Chinese have totally different idea about time than we have. This may cause irritation among the Finns but knowing and understanding the differences may often lead to a better solution than being fierce. Chinese does not have tenses. In Chinese, there are words to describe the passage of time such as tomorrow, now etc. The western effectiveness and usage of time is well known among Chinese in international business but they are resisting being constrained by deadlines. In the West everything is scheduled but in the East time is fluid. It can not be compartmen-

talized like we know it. This thinking concerns both their social and business lives. The job may get done in both ways. By approaching with delivery date and sometimes uncertain product quality or unveil a thoroughly tested prototype without caring time. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 48)

3.9 Chinese names

The Chinese names, as mentioned earlier Chinese language differs from Finnish a lot. That may not surprise anyone but a thing surprising a person is the names. So called foot in mouth disease means a newcomer to a foreign culture having a business contact and the first meeting starts with showing no proper respect and calling the opponent by the wrong name. It is a mistake which tells your opponent you have not done your homework properly. It is an avoidable mistake but still very common one. Naming system varies greatly depending on country.

(Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 49)

Chinese names are usually formed by two or three characters. A character represents a sound. Common habit in the Asian countries is to present surname first followed by other given names. When seeing a Chinese name, assume the first character to indicate surname and then comes other given names. Nowadays the Chinese realize that most Westerners do not understand their naming system. They try to give hints for the proper order on their names. Usually surname is indicated by using capital letters or underlining. Mistakes are not forbidden and impossible but it is good to get to know the associates' name. The best strategy is often to be aware that there are differences between cultures when it comes to naming system. It is always better to ask than guess. Also kind inquire about how the person prefers to be called is good way to approach. This may also proceed to a less formal level of address.

(Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 49)

3.10 Titles

Always remember to address your Chinese associates as Miss, Madam, Mr. or by job titles, followed by their family name. An exception is, of course, if you are good

friends or you have not agreed otherwise. The titles are important for Chinese and usually they have fancy titles for instance, on their cards. If possible you can address their names with titles, followed by the surname, for instance, Dr Wang. If you do not know how to call but you have a binding need to say something, do not call anyone “comrade,” unless you are a communist too. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 65)

3.11 Greeting

When meeting, it is polite, of course, to greet your opponent. For us, as Finns, greeting Chinese is comparatively easy. They are avoiding physical greetings. There are no kisses or hugs, usually just handshake as we do in Finland. Despite their humble greeting style don't interpret a soft handshake or lack of eye contact as a sign of weakness or lack of aggression. Chinese are avoiding an eye contact when greeting because they are respecting you. So, take it as positive sign. Good to remember is that they are not used to physical contact when greeting a stranger. This should be quite pleasure and easy remember for a Finn. (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 53)

3.12 Business card

Giving your business card may sound a quite simple and quick procedure. It is not but remembering few rules it will be a barrier breaker for both sides. When meeting a new business associate or a person in anywhere, the first impression is always important. It will determine you as a person and you do not want to give a wrong picture. Handing over a business card is one of the first impressions. Especially in Asia, the business card exchange is more than a casual informality where you throw your business card on to a table while speaking something else. In Asia it is a ritual. Nowadays in a global world it is almost necessity to have your card translated into the local language of a country you are visiting. If your card is two-sided, use your language printed on the other side and visiting destination's language on the other side. If your card is two-sided, check that the local language is face up. The most important part is how you give your card. If it is one-sided, always hand the card to your colleague with the printed side up. In China the card must be given by both hands. So, when handing it over, hold it with your both hands. Throwing your card

carelessly or hitting it on the table is considered extraordinarily rude. Also receive your opponent's business card with both hands. Chinese are very hierarchical people, so be sure that you give your card to the highest-ranking individual or leader of the delegation first. They may even refuse to receive it because the order was not followed. (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 54)

“Checklist for the Card Game,

- *It's not only polite to have your card translated into the local language it is now considered a must. Make it work for you.*
- *Always present your card with the printed side up or, in the case of bilingual cards, with the local-language side showing.*
- *Wait to be introduced before presenting your business card.*
- *Present the cards one at a time in the order of the hierarchy of the delegation.*
- *Content: include your name and business title. In some cultures it is common to include your academic degrees as well.*
- *Business titles can be confusing and often do not translate exactly. If your title is one that is not internationally common, such as Chief Learning Officer, consider using a translation that avoids the literal and rather portrays your status and job in words or concepts that may be more familiar to your host. Don't inflate job titles. Also make sure to check the translation. You don't want Vice President of Sales to come out as President of Vice Selling.*
- *Well-known or trademarked acronyms (such as IBM) need not be translated nor do words included in logos.*
- *Take plenty of cards. It can be highly embarrassing to run out of them and in some cultures it would be an insult.*
- *Many executives carry two sets of cards. One set is used purely for introductions and has no direct contact information. The other is used for more serious encounters and includes detailed contact information.”*
- *Always treat your colleagues' cards with respect. (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 55)*

3.13 Gift giving

When giving a gift to a Chinese, it is good to know that he/she usually accepts a gift, invitation or favour when it is first presented. Conversely they refuse politely few times. That is found to be modest and humble. Behaving otherwise could make a person look aggressive and greedy. The same picture is given if opening the gift in front of the river. Traditionally there has been a monetary value indicating the importance of a relationship. When co-operation has increased among cultures, the symbolic nature of gifts has taken root. If you are the one who receives the gift, it is important to remember to show your sincerity, appreciation and the fear of losing one's face. These are more important than whether or not you accept what is being offered. Like changing the visit cards, also in this it is important to remember to hand the gift with both hands.

The colours are differently valued in China than in the West. Red is lucky, pink and yellow represents happiness and prosperity; white, grey and black are funeral colours.

The following gifts should be avoided:

- White or yellow flowers (especially chrysanthemums), which are used for funerals.
- Pears. The word for "pear" in Chinese sounds the same as "separate" and is considered bad luck.
- Red ink for writing cards or letters. It symbolizes the end of a relationship.
- Clocks of any kind. The word "clock" in Chinese sounds like the expression "the end of life." (Li, Jenny, 2001, 71)

3.14 Small talk

Small talk and communication with Chinese is tricky but somehow quite familiar. Sometimes it feels that small talk is more than difficult for the Finns. Well known fact is that Finnish small talk skills could be better but our communication style and habits may be respected especially in Asian countries. Small talk can be also a problem for the rest of westerners making business with Chinese. Contrary to the Finns, many Westerners do speak too much in China. In many western cultures, silent mo-

ments are considered to be uncomfortable. It is tried to fill up with small talk and when it happens in a Chinese business meeting, the Westerners can not tolerate silence as well as Chinese associates. In the West so called brainstorming is usual habit in business meetings but unknown in China. As written earlier, in Chinese culture all said things need to be carefully considered. Chinese want to know if there are any effects on other and what might be the consequences of what is said. In China, saying all the things coming to one's mind is considered immature. Who could say what might be the right concept to work but business people travelling to China need to learn to listen, not just the words but silence also. Especially negative issues are not said. It does not mean there is nothing negative if your Chinese counterpart does not say it. What he/she did not say may be more important than the said words. Chinese communication is indirect and highly contextual. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 68)

When speaking and negotiating it is important to know how to speak. In high-context countries such as China and Japan, it is rude to say "no" directly. They are avoiding it at all cost. Reasons for that they are afraid to break the relationship, the harmony or being rude to opponent. When in China, Chinese use silence to indicate "no". Chinese may also say "Yanjiu yanjiu", meaning "we will do some research and discuss it later." When hearing a word "research", do not get too excited. It means they are not interested. When this happens, it is your responsibility as a good businessman to understand and read the situation and what is going on. Pay a close attention to facial expressions, gestures and overall body language. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 68)

In my opinion, Chinese know also how to be rude if they feel hurt. I was speaking with my Chinese teacher about final essays and topics. The discussion was friendly but I said directly that I am not interested in the topic he suggested. I knew the rules, habits and theory but still I made a mistake with my answer. He replied I can write about anything I want and left. I guess he wanted to show that he was my teacher and my superior. The situation felt awkward but I had used to negotiate with my Finnish teachers. After all, it went okay and I got a good result from the essay. Here are following some good examples if you want to say no but you are thinking how to do it. Do not worry they will understand you.

If you hear your opponent saying a phrase as follows, you should understand the situation and know how to act. In other words these means usually no.

- *“I have to think about it.*
- *Yes, it sounds interesting but there may be some difficulties.*
- *I need to check with my superiors.*
- *I will do my best, but I cannot promise.*
- *This may take time.*
- *I am excited but it sounds complicated.”* (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 71)

3.15 Clothing

Like the whole life in China and even partly the Chinese culture, clothing styles in China are changing rapidly. Old unisex Mao jackets have almost disappeared in big cities. Nowadays, a consumer has to pay one or two months' salary to get Chinese fashion. In business life, fashion in China reminds the western style. Men wear suits with ties. Both sexes may wear jeans in informal meetings. Loud colours and too showy jewels should be avoided in both, business meeting and entertainment. Women should also avoid low necklines, mini skirts, and solid red or white dresses. Li, Jenny, 2001, 76.

If you assume that a dark conservative suit has the least chance to offend, you are probably right but danger lurks in the fashion accessories that men and woman can choose. The most clear and present danger is in the actual colour of the accessory—the tie or the scarf you choose. Cultures attribute different characteristics to different colours. (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 59)

3.16 Women in business and their status

For centuries, China's patriarchal society defined women as “accessories of a man.” Women could be traded as commodities and a man could “own” several wives. An old Chinese proverb advises, “A woman's virtue is that she has no talent.” Education for most women was limited to learning how to cook and sew. Upper-class women

learned to sing, play chess, read and draw so they could better serve upper-class men. A man could divorce his spouse for being talkative, for only bearing daughters, or for being jealous (that is, for being reluctant to accept her husband's concubines). For women, however, divorce was impossible. Although in recent history, many women have made significant contributions to (and even sacrificed their lives for) social change, women were almost nonexistent in civil service and business until the 1950s. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 39)

As Mao Zedong declared once, "Women hold up half of the sky." The social status of women has risen and nowadays they may expect to be paid as well as men or have an equal status of holding the same job. Even women are holding executive positions in factories, companies and government offices this is still just official view. A full equality is far behind and it is not unusual to see women play a purely decorative role in a company. Even though Chinese women may encounter resistance to their leadership in their companies, Chinese business men and women are aware of Western women status and their positions in different organizations. They know that Western women may hold positions at the highest levels and that is a reason they are trying to adjust their behaviour toward foreign women. Western women do not encounter usually discrimination and they may be even highly admired and respected because they are trusted to handle overseas assignment. Respecting few rules may make the trip more successful. Women rights as a topic must be avoided. Also speaking about sexual orientation will draw unwelcome attention and troubles. As mentioned above, men are not expected to tell about sexual topics and the same behaviour is wanted from women. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 39-40)

Before the overseas assignment, the home company should prepare her and send an introduction letter that indicates the female leader's position, her credentials and accomplishments to China in advance. Also her title and a clear sign that she has decision making power in her company, could be good to print on her business card. While in a meeting her team members should not disagree with her if there is the opposite team hearing. She should be the one to answer the questions requests and if she decides, her colleagues may answer. That requires that a leading woman allows it. (Li, Jenny, 2001, 41)

Despite women have gained more power and reliability in business life among different cultures, the cold fact is that the world of international business is still mostly run by men. The network once created by males is still in dominant position in world business and solid system is hard to fall down. Even there may be major differences between cultures men are usually the main authority figures. One of the biggest reasons for that is that men feel comfortable with men. Basically, men can talk with other men with few inhibitions. This does not mean that women would be a weaker sex and they are rising. Women may not yet run the show when it comes to international business, but their impact is being increasingly felt across virtually all cultures. (Mitchell, Charles, 2000, 110)

Now when an era of globalisation is familiar for most of us, understanding the basics of etiquette and habits in formal and informal situations is an important skill. If one is not keen on personally about opponents' opinion about himself, one should be a worried about putting the company's image at risk. Offering a bad image or seeming disrespectful is not a recommended way to international success. In other case well knowing and respectful behaviour may be more than advantage.

3.17 Chinese Business culture in a nut shell

The negotiating and meeting does not include only small talk. Remember that you may be under surveillance all the time. In China it does not matter too much what you say but what you do not say. Basic conversation with Chinese may include topics such as your age, salary, marital status, or the price of your clothing, watch camera etc. So they topics differ from our topics. Some of the topics they are willing to speak are unsuitable in Finland or if not unsuitable, not so commons at least. Remember they do not want to speak about sexual matters, which may be comparatively easy topic for the westerners. Also avoid politics, religion, race and negative history. These are not too difficult to understand and usually a Finn has the same opinion what is suitable to speak. If you still are thinking good topics here are some for you; sports, family, food and travel. Whatever you are speaking about, do not interrupt. It is impolite and rude.

It should not be a surprise to hear that a businessperson communicates through what he/she is wearing, one's hairstyle, shoes, even fingernails. The first impression is very important and may define how the business goes ever since. Even it is critical to know what to wear and how, usually a basic knowledge and respect towards the opponent and situation is enough. Wearing unsuitable clothes in a specific situation do not mean that you are under dressed but you may be over dressed as well. It is okay to show that you are stylish but being too flamboyant or cutting-edge may actually be a distraction. Clothes should serve as a gentle backdrop to your personality and mission. Outlandish hairstyles, excessive makeup, mountains of jewellery or a strong scent of perfume or cologne may cloud your image as a professional and send the wrong signal to your foreign colleague. Usually visitors are wanted to wear stylish and moderate clothes as it indicates respect and good taste.

Females in mainly male dominated business world may expect their authority and status to be tested. The confident professional businesswoman will invariably pass the test if she demonstrates early on that intimidation will not work. To avoid any misunderstandings and later challenges it is important to highlight her rank and authority early in a relationship. It requires some actions from woman leader but at least nowadays, she still has to show her rank. Especially in Asian cultures the leader is wanted to behave like a leader. For instance, during a dinner or negotiation, the leader is expected to sit on a specific place. If not, one's status and authority are called into question. To avoid most of the problems, doing homework is essential. Preparing you and the team for the assignment before entering a new culture is nothing but a good idea. Studying the culture makes you feel more comfortable and self-confident. You also know how the culture sees women's status or how the delegation leader should behave. It will also help you to understand surrounding behaviour. In many cultures men are not equal. So do not expect you to be with your opponent, at least on first meeting. Often, women must work exceptionally hard at winning the same respect as male colleagues. The same behaving is seen between age differences. Maintaining your sense of humour is vital. Travelling the globe is stressful anyway so do not use your time for thinking too much or trying to save your gender. You would be surprised how these factors and sudden shifts in treatment can throw you off balance or off guard. Losing concentration could lead to a poor business deal.

4 RESEARCH METHODS

This thesis is a part of a bigger research. The idea is to collect information from Satakunta region. This thesis processes the companies and factors in Northern Satakunta region. The collected information is about China and Finland and the cooperation between cultural confrontations. The thesis contains material from theory books, interviews and experiences.

Doing business between Finnish and Chinese companies is not a new thing. The point is how to do business between these factors without any obstacles in the future. That may be called a new thing. The purpose has been to collect as much data as possible and bring them into a bigger research. All interviews and expert comments are from year 2010. In this thesis there is a lot of theory for help and to learn for a rookie or even a veteran. In this thesis the main focus is on cross-cultural communication.

One of the sources and inspirer has been the doctoral thesis of Anne Vihakara. In her doctoral thesis many difficulties, problems and solutions are presented properly. Despite the problems are old Finnish companies are sometimes doing the same mistakes. Cultural differences may cause obstacles and challenges between business partners. Starting from communicating styles, Finnish are usually very direct in their instructions and orders. They can also ask directly what seems to be the problem. Chinese are, opposite way, very indirect. They may approach the subject from different point of view than a Finn. They are avoiding say no in fear of losing their faces. In a nutshell it could be called discreet vs. efficiency. Disapproval was often due to the Finns acting aggressively in giving negative feedback or asking for explanations. The Finns who had behaved aggressively admitted that they were very straightforward and did not have the patience to accept explanations that appeared to irrational them. The culture and believes may collide causing some serious relationships damaging. For instance, *Feng Shui* the cosmic breath literally translated as wind and water. It is very important collection of good advices on how to improve the environment. If the environment is harmonious, life is also in harmony. According to *Feng Shui* principles, there is a living relationship between the cosmos and the earth. Every place or direction on earth has a positive or negative spirit influencing anything that

is located or built on that site. People living obeying these principles will definitely get to the impact course with efficiency orientated realists. (Vihakara 2005, 242, 94-95)

The purpose of the study is to increase understanding between the cultures and gain more results in co-operation. Despite the material has been collected from the Northern Satakunta region, all interested persons may find it useful. The focus has been on business life but there are also elements for people not making business. The researcher in this thesis has added his opinions as a former exchange student and present employee working with international business. Since the purpose is to serve people who want to learn more about doing business in China, persons related to China have been interviewed. The research and thesis are succeeded if a reader can have or learn something out of the contents. The future factors and Finnish employees in China may avoid many problems just being patience and willing, respectful behaving towards other culture. After all, they know a lot more about us than we do know about them and we are usually the ones who are going to expand our businesses in their country.

4.1 Research strategies and approaches

In order to create a successful research, it is important to choose the right strategy and the way to approach the topic. The right strategy has been found if it is able to answer the research questions and fulfil the objectives of the research. There are few more things that needed to consider when choosing the strategy such as existing knowledge, resources, literary, time for the research, electronic material, and finally the researcher's own knowledge and experiences. These factors determine the followed strategy. (Saunders et. al 2006, 135)

4.2 Qualitative method

Qualitative method was chosen to be used when preparing the research. According to Silverman (1993), theory is a collection of explanatory terms and is relevant when it is practical and helps in the research process. By means of hypotheses it is possible

to test the validity of the arguments. Methodology is common approach to survey the subject and is applicable when it serves research in practice whereas method is a special research technique and practical when it is able to combine all three concepts mentioned above. (Metsämuuronen, 2008, 9)

I wanted to use qualitative methods because there were theory and survey in the thesis. The purpose was to map experiences and hints for the future, qualitative method was suitable. Interviews were non-standardized questions. All the persons were asked questions where there was lots of space to answer. Reason for this was to get as wide experience sampling as possible without limit anything off by simple “yes-no” –questions. I was lucky to have good speakers who told a lot and let me do the listening.

Qualitative data is round subject and material may be collected in many ways depending on the researcher. Because qualitative data may be difficult to count or need to be critically considered, it is difficult to find the most relevant resources. There are written forms such as organization reports, documents, emails, and newspapers as well as non-written forms like audio- or video-recordings. (Saunders et al. 2006, 474)

4.3 Narrative approach

In narrative approach the interviewed persons are answering the question by telling freely their “stories” or experiences. There are still rules in narrative approach, for example the features of a story must have logical timelines. In narrative approach when interviewed person is describing for example a certain event, the storyline must have a beginning, middle, and end. According to a looser definition, as narratives can be understood all narrations of which analyzing need to be interpreted. Narrative material is not reasonable to express for example as a list. Narrativity can be benefitted in interviews as well when we talk about narrative interviews. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006)

Narration is seen as a part of humanity. That is why this approach is seen appropriate especially in studies where the meaning is to gather persons’ own stories and experiences. In these cases narrative approach is the best way to map experiences and the

answers are wider. It is very difficult for a person to be just objective. In narratives people easily criticize, defend and argue themselves as well as others. With right questions all these personal experiences, attitudes, goals and need are brought together.

4.4 Interviews and reliability

Doing this kind of research would be very difficult without interviews. Gathering up all the narrative interview answers and own experiences, I was able to have reliable data. Despite narrative approach, there are different techniques in how to interview; structured, semi-structured, and non-structured or open interviews. In this thesis semi-structured interviews were used. In semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of question to answer but those may vary between interviews. Semi-structured interview is a good technique in situations where the questions concern intimate or sensitive issues, such as values, ideals, or arguments. Also in interviews where experiences of interviewees vary a lot and sample is small. In this thesis the interviewed anonymous persons from different organizations told their experiences. Similar answers were not expected and those varied between the interviewees. (Metsämuuronen 2008, 37-41)

For me it was important to follow right techniques and methods to gain the best results from such a small sampling. All the interviewed persons were working for real organizations in Finland or China. They all were honest and open in their interviews. I was constantly able to follow the material that it serves the goals and objectives of the study.

5 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

After analyzing the interviews there were usually the same topics highlighted. A remarkable observation is that a Chinese thinks the same way about a Finn. Many of highlighted topics were related to the eight elements of culture. Those eight elements are explained earlier in this thesis.

5.1 Elements of the Culture

The most commonly mentioned thing was attitudes and values. All three representatives of major factors of Northern Satakunta mentioned many times about attitudes and values in one way or another. In other hand it is not surprising that the topic was mentioned because of the cultural differences but they did not mention for instance, the food or climate but attitudes.

In present China relationships and long-term partnership are highly valued. Those values are well known also in Finland but meaning is different. It seems that Chinese are developing the country and the future but the Finns are just making business. In Finland the spare time and the job is usually kept dissociated and people are not so close to each other but in China this can be a big obstacle for the business. When the Finns usually thinks that time is money and the sooner the better the deal has made, the chinese wants to improve the partnership and get to know their opponent.

The second common thing mentioned in the interviews is patience and behaving. The Finnish interviewees mentioned that they do believe the finnish behaving and our reputation in China. That might be true because of a Finnish character. A chinese mentioned that the Finns are highly appreciated as an opponent because of peaceful and humble behaving.

One major cultural factor came up after these two clear topics. It was social organization. A chinese mentioned that in their country it is okay to say an opinion if asked and be more loud than might be expected. He was surprised how silent Finnish people are and in his business negotiations the Finns just say what is needed to be said. However, he wanted to remind that he was talking about his equal colleagues. Remarkable point was, as he also mentioned that, in Finland the highest boss can talk with a janitor or opinions are heard in unequal group before decision making. That kind of behavior is not suitable in China. They have a tight hierarchy which indicates a individuals position in a group and his/her power. This does not count just business meeting but the whole country.

Surprisingly language was not mentioned as much as may be expected. Opposite languages are difficult for both sides and it was mentioned by Finns and a Chinese but not too often. Both parties mentioned off the record that it is good after all to have difficult language, it makes planning and quick negotiation with “team mates” possible but sometimes get things complicated because of a bad language skills of both sides. Usually there can be Chinese who does not speak English at all despite they are in a business meeting. An option is to use interpreter but nowadays it is quite ordinary that there are at least few Chinese who can speak English.

Material culture and technology was mentioned a few times. The Finnish technology is appreciated and wanted but also the Finnish interviewees mentioned the high quality of China. Especially environment technology is asked because of massive cities and population of China. One of the interviewees has a factory in China and they have been satisfied.

The religion, political life, education and aesthetics were not mentioned almost at all. Some of them are not good topics to talk about such as religion or politics. China is well known communist country with notorious and infamous history and international organizations are regularly blaming China about several topics. The topics are understood personal and the thesis was more about business. Chinese are not as religious as we understand it. Philosophies are more respected in China. Communistic system offers an education for everybody until a certain level. A big part of the Chinese families puts their talented children to school because education is considered as a guarantee of better life. The competition is huge and it is quite normal view to see a Chinese sitting in a glass room in the middle of the night reading for the school. Nowadays those who graduate are really good in their own field. There are pretty many women also in good positions because they are good in schools. Aesthetics was mentioned once when I was told to think carefully the colours and gifts for a Chinese.

5.2 Basic Information of the Companies and Operations in China

Three representatives were interviewed when this thesis was made. One of them has operations in China. The rest two of them were a Chinese man who takes care of Satakunta's companies' business and contacts in China, and another was a Finnish man who takes care of Northern Satakunta's companies business in Finland. More companies were asked to participate but they refused because of not having operations in China. The earlier mentioned cultural elements were highlighted in the interviews.

After all the three interviewees were good source of information. One of the representatives' companies has had operations in China a long time. He told that they are in contact every day but the factory is manned with Chinese and there are no Finnish employees. Nowadays email is the easiest way to communicate. Phone is also one option but when someone's spoken English is not so fluent, clear written version is easier and that means email. He told that despite a long-term partnership and experience of the country there are still difficulties sometimes. The difficulties are nothing serious but cultural differences may cause problems sometimes. They have solved the problem by trusting Chinese employees.

“When there are people who understand their habits and culture the operations goes smoother than Finnish employees were there to learn.” (a person working for Northern Satakunta Development centre Ltd.)

5.3 Communication

There are problems despite where people meet. In China the problems may get bigger. Communication between a Finn and a Chinese may cause some serious delay or misunderstanding in a factory. Even though communication is considered to be easy and natural in every day life, it does not contain speaking. Communication is much more, such as verbal and non-verbal. In the next chapters the most common communication problems are analyzed in order to avoid them in the future.

5.3.1 The Chinese never say No

All the interviewed persons highlighted the Chinese cultural factor not saying no. The Finns told that it may be very frustrating and requires a good knowledge about culture to understand. A Finnish person is used to say things straight, yes is yes and no is no. In China they might change the topic or say let see. It is important to remember that Chinese may say yes for every proposal and it does not have to mean anything. Promising too much may turn to be impossible to do and the one who promised is seen as liar.

5.3.2 Negotiations

Negotiations may vary from the Finnish ones. One of the interviewed persons said that he has confronted problems in negotiations with Chinese but there has been nothing serious. All interviewees and material about Chinese negotiations reminds about patience. To achieve good results one must remember to be patient and that it may need several meetings before the actual contracts. A successful business relationship may require frequent travelling for visits.

5.4 Copies of the Products

Information and knowledge is moving rapidly in China but nothing moves as fast as copies. There are plenty of examples still unpublished products which have been copied and sold before the original one. There are copyright laws in China but all the laws are not supervised properly. Copying does not limit only to basic products but also food, medicine and hair care for instance. When I lived in Shanghai, China, a Chinese student told me that sometimes foreign factories pays the wages with products so the Chinese workers can sell them as fakes and get the income. After all the line between a cheap, good copy and an expensive original one in home country may be hard to see and it does not matter when in China.

5.5 Prices and Money

Prices in China are low. Almost in everything, a Finnish student is a king or at least rich with a normal governmental support. Get ready to bargain when willing to buy something. Do not be surprised when a Chinese seller shows all his moves, means and sounds when bargaining. All what you have learnt about China may be forgotten when bargaining about a t-shirt with a Chinese in the alley. Sometimes it is like a lifestyle and a mean to spend time. Even if the prices are low, there is always time to bargain because they can afford it.

5.6 Contacts

“The first thing you should do when your company is entering China is to get contacts.” (A person working for a company from Northern Satakunta)

The Finnish companies do believe they can handle the business on their own. It is very surprising that there are companies who do not want to get involved with Chinese business when entering China. The best results may achieve if using local workers. They are ambitious and hard working professionals. So do not try to handle the situation and cultural collision by yourself but take contact to the locals.

5.7 Fear of losing one's face

When travelling in China or having something to do with a Chinese, there is always plenty of situations where a Finn/ foreigner should think how to behave or speak. One of the most scaring things for a Chinese would be losing one's own face. If the Finns say too straight things, especially negative things, the Chinese may not feel so comfortable and they might feel that they lose their faces. Saying no is almost an forbidden thing. Every interview and experience has taught that the Chinese should be read between the lines. Exaggerate by generalising would be said that every mistake, promise, behaving contains a risk of losing one's face. One of the interviewed persons said that he still has problems sometimes to read them and there are feelings to ask them to answer honestly.

I was buying shoes when I lived in Shanghai. There were a lot of shops and many willing persons to sell me anything I would dare to ask. My purpose was to buy shoes for myself and because my feet are bigger than a normal foot it takes some time to find what might interest me. Finally I found shoes and I was even a little surprised that I found shoes in China when knowing their sizes. They were pleased to serve me and told them that I want the shoes I saw. They said that it is not a problem. They gave me the biggest shoe of that model. It did not fit. I did a mistake and asked them if they have got bigger. One of them left to get a bigger shoe. I waited 15 minutes because I wanted the shoes. She did not come back. Other seller told me to fit a new model because the one I wanted would not be my style and they knew what would look perfect on me. Finally I left and they did not ask why. (Author's own experience)

Another story is about a sad taxi driver who tried to get rid of a punch of foreign students and the driver did not know the address. We were driving and driving while the driver stopped a few times to check the address. In some point we realised that he had no idea where the address might be and another student knew we should hop out, pay our taxi and say to the driver that decided to leave because there is a place we would definitely like to go and he was pleased. (Author's own experience)

5.8 A quick guide book for making business in China

All three of interviewed persons said that there is no other option but to continue Chinese operations. The future seemed to be bright and there are lots of opportunities ahead. There had been difficulties but after all, they were pleased for cooperation. Finnish and Chinese interests confront on the markets and somehow the Finns are good partners for Chinese and other way around. Despite our cultures may vary in many ways there is always a demand for a calm and humble business man from Finland. As always, the Finns can take into account the special habits of a foreigner. In this thesis the cultural differences are explained more clearly but the following tips in nutshells are good to take into account when planning any kind of operations with Chinese.

- Be patient. Chinese culture asks a lot from a westerner and especially business men from the US are not so highly appreciated if compared to Finnish ones. Try to understand them they are trying to understand you. It will take time but it might pay you back.
- Get yourself a network of contacts. Do not try to handle the country, the culture and your company at the same time. Give them a chance. FINPRO can help in many situations and they have a chargeable service of finding partners and possibilities for you.
- Chinese want to meet, see and get to know you. Go there and be a Finn, it will be okay. Remember to let them see if you are a high ranked. They love titles and hierarchy, and may be very offended if a boss is trying to be on a same level. That means losing their face because they think that you believe they are incapable to do their jobs.
- Stay open minded. You might learn something and achieve more than proposed.
- Even if they are your friends, do not let yourself be bluffed. They are testing you and may try to get your negotiation skills tested under a heavy alcohol influence. Gan bei!
- Remember to be patient. It can not be mentioned too many times. You have to specify what you want. They will do your product and they will do it with the price you did agree in negotiations. There is a true story of Finnish man who got the prices down for the mugs he ordered. When the products arrived in Finland, there were mugs without enamelling. He got the mugs and the price he wanted. The final product was a result of these requests.

With these hints, making business should be easier. Know your opponent and yourself. Knowing their names and habits the meetings will be easy for you. Respect the cultures and habits but remember that a normal Finnish behaviour is a good start. Be humble but do not submit. If you are a boss, then act like one.

Try to read the situations and do not force them to say something everybody would regret. Nowadays Chinese do know and understand western culture and habits so the way is getting smoother every year. Despite they are learning our cultures you do not

have to stop learning from them. Usually they have learnt English or your habits, so be polite and try to learn something in change.

6 CONCLUSIONS

There are plenty of important things as outcome from this thesis. The cultures vary significantly from each other. Finnish companies can not expect to enter Chinese markets as they do in Finland. Planning and finally going abroad is a long learning process for a company. It will take a long time to achieve a working and affordable business relationship with Chinese. Chinese know why western companies are coming to their country and they do expect respect. Anyhow, doing business with Chinese is not impossible. It must be accepted that entering any foreign market, there are always its own difficulties. In China the culture creates problems for a Finn but it happens also the reverse. Studying Chinese culture and understanding their millennia old history offer a better view for habits and manners. Finnish have some common cultural things with Chinese. People in Finland are usually very patience and respecting other is highly appreciated. With these a business person may get more partners and knowledge in China. Due to globalizing world and business culture, more and more Chinese are used to the Westerners. Many Chinese have studied and graduated in the West. In the future when this new generation operate in international business the business relations are easier to create.

There was an interview form prepared for the interviews. The idea was to get the key questions answered and guide the interviewees to the theme of the project. These questions were asked in every interview but all the conversations were mainly narrative and free. Despite the sampling was not big, the theory books, own experiences and all the answers by interviewees were quite the same. All this was considering and remembering the same topics. Consequently not only the concept of reliability fulfilled but also those topics were interesting to notice. The theory supports the results. It indicates that there is space for such a project and its research results. This hopefully results better studying at least from business persons operating in interna-

tional business. Nobody told any problem which could have been unrelated to cultural differences. In order to avoid these quite well known problems would be more deepen cultural knowledge and accepting that there are other cultures than one' own.

Despite many problems in cross-cultural relationship no one thought the co-operations should be discontinued. All the interviewees admitted that they also have a lot to learn and there have been situations they have behaved badly. Nowadays the cultures are evolving. The interviewed persons do believe in China. Chinese are found to be eager to learn more. They are very good customer servants and are always listening. English language is getting more and more familiar to them. Chinese are very proud of their country and they want to improve it and the international business is one way to do it. The future will show what is going to happen when China is strong enough and the whole nation has been recovered from all the punches the history has served to it. One day China will be really powerful nation with people speaking western languages and eastern languages, and they have harnessed the two major cultures to serve them. Will a Chinese write a thesis about how to do business in the West?

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