VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Jean Frederik Rasmussen

**BUSINESS COMMUNICATION STUDY**

**Case Study: Product Company Wärtsilä Finland & Wärtsilä Network Companies Located in Middle East & South Asia**

Business Economics and Tourism

2010

FOREWORD

I would like to give thanks to Mr. Matti Timo Manager of Spare Parts Coordination Team in Finland for allowing the opportunity to conduct this research and also for all the help, tips and advice discussed during the research process. I would also like to give my warmest thanks to my tutor teacher Ms. Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela for her time, help and great guidance given to produce this research. Also I would like to thank Ms. Rayna Sbirkova Supervisor for Wärtsilä Finland Spare Parts Coordination Team located in Turku for the help in collecting research data.


Jean Frederik Rasmussen                    Date: 03 March 2010

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## ABSTRACT

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| Author | Jean Frederik Rasmussen |
| Title | Business Communication Study |
| | (Case Study: Product Company Wärtsilä |
| | Finland & Wärtsilä Network Companies |
| | Located in Middle-East & South-Asia) |
| Year | 2010 |
| Language | English |
| Pages | 106 |
| Name of Supervisor | Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela |

Understanding problem areas in business communications and trying to take improvement proceedings are vitally important in order to maintain and create successful business operations. This was discussed with the supervisor of Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordination team and it was agreed to conduct this study as an initial step in this process.

To understand all the elements involved it introduces theory of why companies operate internationally, what is the role of culture, what is business culture like in case company regions of Finland, Middle-East and South Asia and the main focus of this study introduces what is intercultural business communication, what intercultural and non-intercultural business communication barriers exist and what methods to improve business communication from intercultural and non-intercultural perspectives exist. These are also the research questions.

A quantitative and qualitative research was conducted. A quantitative questionnaire was designed to measure the level of intercultural business communication barriers from high to low between Wärtsilä spare parts coordination team in Finland and Wärtsilä spare sales teams located in the Middle East & South Asia region. The qualitative part in questionnaire revealed other business communication barriers existing. It shows these barriers from the view point of Wärtsilä Finland Spare Parts Coordination team.

Intercultural barriers are found to be stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice and ethnocentricity. It was found that the barriers occur on low and very low levels indicating good results. The highest intercultural barrier levels are found to be prejudice and stereotyping. It suggests that these barrier levels can be lowered best by shared knowledge of other cultures and way of working. This knowledge is argued to be implemented best by shared experiences such as job rotations. A qualitative research found out other business communication problems via channels of email, telephone and instant messaging tool. A variety of other problems were found such as language barriers and other barriers related to misunderstandings. It is suggested that these problems can be improved by taking the initial step of bringing attention to them and in some cases further investigation is suggested as part of improvement process.

Keywords: Intercultural Business Communication, Culture, Barriers to Business Communication

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**TIIVISTELMÄ**

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| Tekijä | Jean Frederik Rasmussen |
| Opinnäytetyön nimi | Business Communication Study (Case Study: Product Company Wärtsilä Finland & Wärtsilä Network Companies Located in Middle-East & South-Asia) |
| Vuosi | 2010 |
| Kieli | Englanti |
| Sivumäärä | 106 |
| Ohjaaja | Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela |

Ongelma alueiden tiedostaminen, sekä parannus käytäntöjen toimeenpano yritysviestinnässä ovat ehdottoman tärkeitä, jotta voitaisiin ylläpitää, sekä luoda menestyviä yritystoimintoja. Näistä asioista keskusteltiin Wärtsilä Suomen varaosakoordinaattoreiden esimiehen kanssa, sekä sovittiin, että tämä tutkimus pantaisiin toimeen alustavana toimenpiteenä tässä prosessissa.

Jotta kaikista osa-alueista liittyen tähän tutkimukseen luotaisiin ymmärrys teoria esittää seuraavia aiheita, mikä on kulttuurin rooli? Millainen on yrityskulttuuri tutkimuksen kohde-alueilla Suomessa, Lähi Idässä ja Etelä Aasiassa, sekä ydin-teoria esittää, mitä on kulttuurienvälinen yritysviestintä? Mitä kulttuurienvälisiä, sekä kulttuurin ulkopuolisia yritysviestinnän estoja on olemassa? Mitä keinoja on olemassa yritysviestinnän parantamiseen kulttuurienvälisen, sekä kulttuurien ulkopuolisesta näkökulmasta. Nämä kysymykset ovat myös tämän opinnäytetyön tutkimuskysymykset.

Laadullinen ja määrällinen tutkimus suoritettiin. Määrällinen kysely mittasi kulttuurienvälisen yritysviestinnän estoja alhaisista korkeisiin arvoihin Wärtsilä Suomen varaosakoordinaattoreiden, sekä Wärtsilä myyntiryhmien välillä, jotka sijaitsevat Lähi Idässä sekä Etelä Aasiassa. Laadullinen osuus kyselyssä selvitti, mitä muita yritysviestinnän estoja oli olemassa. Tutkimus suoritettiin Wärtsilä Suomen varaosakoordinaattoreiden näkökannasta.

Kulttuurien välisiä yritysviestinnän estoja ovat vahvat stereotypiat, ennakko-luulot, etnosentrisyys sekä syrjintä. Tutkimus osoitti, että näitä estoja esiintyy matalalla ja erittäin matalilla tasoilla viitaten hyviin tuloksiin. Korkeimmat arvot saatiin kulttuurienvälisessä viestinnässä ennakkoluuloista, sekä stereotypiasta. Tutkimus ehdottaa, että näitä estoja voidaan alentaa kulttuurien välisen yksilötason tiedon jakamisella kuten työrotaatioiden suorittamisella kohdemaiden kesken. Laadullinen tutkimus paljasti muita estoja liike-elämän viestinnässä, jotka esiintyvät sähköpostissa, puheluissa sekä sähköisissä pikaviesti työkaluissa. Useita estoja löydetään, jotka liittyvät kieli ongelmiin sekä muihin yhteis-ymmärrys ongelmiin. Tutkimus ehdottaa, että näitä estoja saadaan ehkäistyä ottamalla ongelmat tarkkailuun, keskusteltavaksi osapuolten kesken sekä joihinkin ongelmiin ehdotetaan jatko tutkimuksia.

Foreword

Abstract

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter introduces the background of the study, aim of the study, research questions, limitations and general outline. The main purpose of this study is to make a contribution to all parties interested and involved and to enhance business communication between the study subjects.

## 1.1 Background of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand issues related to business communication and to identify problem areas in internal business communication and co-operation between spare part sales teams in an international environment. Understanding the problem areas in business communications and fixing them is vitally important in order to maintain a healthy and enjoyable working environment. When you understand the strengths and weaknesses between business communications and cooperation you are able to plan and implement future improvements that will make working together easier, more effective and fun. This is a win-win situation for all parties involved.

Communicating in an international environment is always challenging. Throughout time misunderstandings and other difficulties in communication has led to serious consequences, even loss of profit.

Most of the time the lack of understanding of each other has less serious consequences and mainly lead to extra consumption of time and effort. However, serious or less serious communication problems should be minimized as much as possible. It goes without saying that loss of profit because of communication difficulties is never a good thing and getting rid of poor communication in general makes the working environment more enjoyable and effective. Improvements

must be made and this research offers a perfect opportunity for finding out what the problems are and what can be remedied.

Taylor in 2005 also describes the benefits of effective communication as per below:

- Stronger decision making and problem solving

- Upturn in productivity

- Convincing and compelling corporate materials

- Clearer, more streamlined workflow

- Enhanced professional image

- Sound business relationships

- Successful response ensured

(Taylor, S, 2005, p.4)

The focus to do the research between spare sales team in Finland and network companies located in Middle East & Southeast Asia came after discussion with spare part coordination team supervisor. Whenever a communication problem occurred it seemed mostly to happen towards the Middle East & Southeast Asia region. By observing coffee break discussions by members of the spare parts coordination team in Finland it was also clear that improvements between these regions were needed. The focus area of the study was settled.

The motivation to study, research and make improvement within this field has now been established. The outcome remains to be revealed in later chapters.

**1.2 Aim of the study and research questions**

The aim of this study is to identify and understand key factors related to international business communication trough existing theory and to identify which issues related to business communication are considered as problematic from the view point of Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordination team. The focus will be on investigating the business communications between Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordination team and Wärtsilä spare sales teams located in the Middle East & South Asia region. The study also intends to introduce reason for international business, definitions of culture and business culture in case companies in order to give the reader enhanced understanding to backgrounds for why a company like Wärtsilä operates internationally, what is culture and what differences in business culture are there between case companies. Improvement discussion will also be carried out for factors considered problematic in business communication by Wärtsilä Finland according to existing theory, findings and results. Research questions and key issues this study intends to find out are listed below.

- Why do companies operate internationally? What is culture? What is case companies' business culture like?
- What are the key issues related to intercultural and other business communications?
- What intercultural and other business communication barriers exist?
- What intercultural and other communication issues are considered problematic from viewpoint of Wärtsilä spare parts coordination team in Finland towards Wärtsilä spare sales teams located in Middle East & South Asia region through selected communication channels?
- What proceedings for improving business communication between study subjects can be done?

### 1.3 Limitations

As mentioned earlier, this study will only be measured from the view point of Wärtsilä spare parts coordination team located in Finland. To gather all the data from all the network companies located in Middle East & South Asia region would be a too enormous task for this study. The time and effort to do this would exceed requirements of this study. Focusing on one viewpoint also makes analysing more simple and by this we can rule out any mix-ups. Analysing view point of several countries may also lead to overlooking information and missing out important issues.

It is also important to point out that this study tries to find out what communication barriers exist from an intercultural communication perspective and also tries to find out what other business communication barriers may exist through the communication channels chosen to be observed in this study. The key issue of the study is to enhance awareness of problems areas in communication and then introduce well know theories that help to understand and deal with problem areas in business communication from intercultural perspective and other subjects that are revealed to be difficult or problematic. These are only investigated and studied from the viewpoint of Wärtsilä Finland spare part coordinators.

This study is also limited to study only the communication channels used between the spare sales teams. The communication channels used are defined below.

- E-mail
- Telephone
- Office communicator – Instant messaging tool

**1.4 Outline of the study**

To understand the general outline the below mind map is created to illustrate how different elements combined will form the general structure of the study. All these elements should eventually lead to the outcome and form a clear idea what this study is all about.
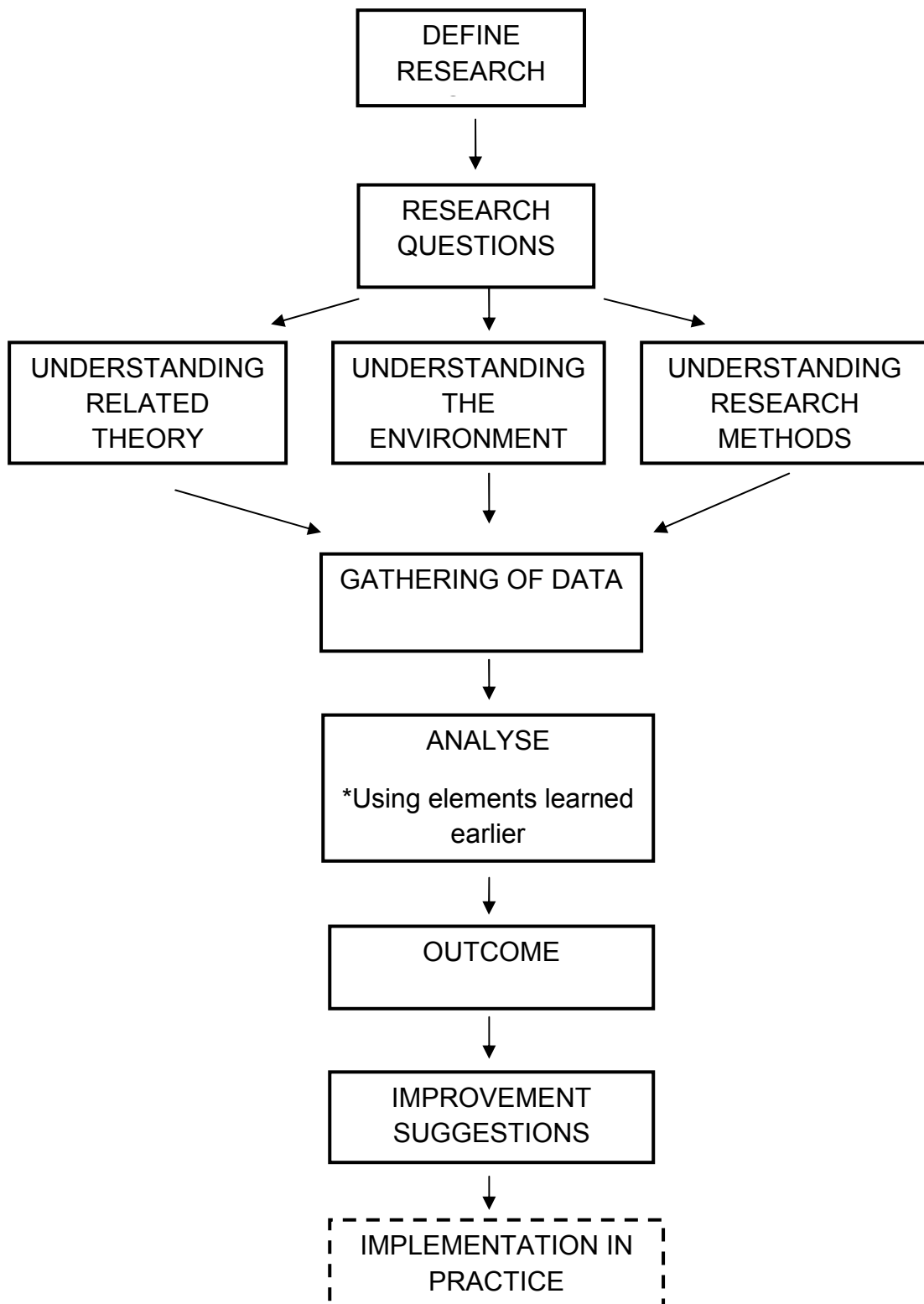
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                    │    RESEARCH     │
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**Figure 1:** The author's illustration for the outline of study.

# 2. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The aim of this chapter is to examine theory related to this study. The topics introduced in this chapter should give a good overall understanding of all the elements involved and by this construct the knowledge that will eventually answer the research questions. Some theory introduced may, however, have indirect relevance when answering the research questions but will offer a basic understanding of the elements involved and can be considered as relevant educational knowledge to this study. The flow of the theory can be illustrated by the below picture and the theory tries to answer the questions below in order to give the reader a good overall understanding of all the issues involved.
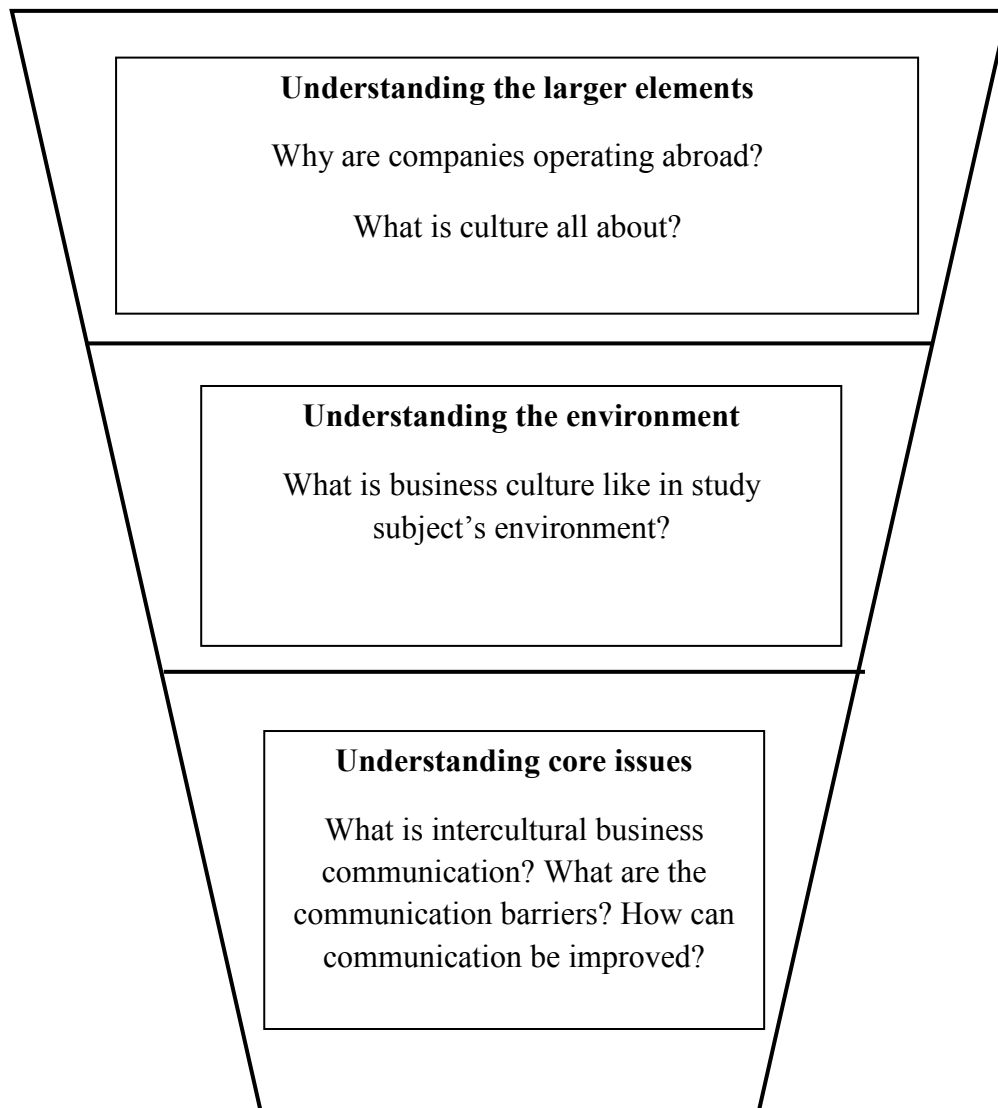
**Understanding the larger elements**

Why are companies operating abroad?

What is culture all about?

**Understanding the environment**

What is business culture like in study subject's environment?

**Understanding core issues**

What is intercultural business communication? What are the communication barriers? How can communication be improved?

**Figure 2:** The author's illustration for how the flow of theory is introduced.

## 2.0 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND ROLE OF CULTURE

This section of theory intends to introduce reasons for why companies operate internationally and also introduces roles of culture. This theory is introduced in order to give the reader good overall understanding of the larger elements involved. It is seen beneficiary to know these aspects as the case company operates in an international business environment and culture is highly relevant topic in intercultural business communication.

### 2.0.1 Introduction to international business environment

Before one can start understanding the concepts of international business communication it is also important to form an idea why companies and firms operate in different cultures and countries in the first place.

There are several reasons why companies or businesses move or expand their operations abroad. To understand why Wärtsilä work in a global environment it is also important to know what methods to go international exist. The methods to expand operations abroad can be categorized into three methods.

- Export-based methods
- Non-Equity methods
- Equity methods

(Wall & Rees, 2001, p.20)

*Export based-method* is the most common method which a firm uses to go international. This method is categorised as having productions in your domestic market but you have a proportion of your products exported abroad. This method can further be broken down into *indirect exporting* and *direct exporting*. When we talk about indirect exporting it means when intermediaries are used for exporting your goods. This basically means the actual export is not done by your own company. For example, an export house buys your product domestically but then

exports into a foreign market. Direct exporting then again means your own direct involvement in the export aspects. Selling and distribution to foreign market is done by your own choice. (Wall & Rees, 2001, p.20)

Non-equity method is a form of internationalisation when you sell something, for example, technology or know-how under some form of a contract which may involve patents, trademarks and copyrights. This method of internationalisation has become increasingly common and they usually take form in licensing, franchising or some other contractual agreements. Licensing can be generalised as a permission given by owner of the product, technology or know-how to the foreign concern to engage in the related action contractually agreed. Franchising can be generalised as a right for "the purchaser" of the right to use the "sellers" name and trademark. Other contractual modes of internationalisation may be activities such as management contracting. In this case the supplier provides a client in another country management services or functions which may otherwise be the clients own responsibility. (Wall & Rees, 2001, p.22)

Using equity methods can be referred to the use of foreign direct investment as a way to compete in the international economy. Different approaches are used to foreign direct investment and the most common method is acquiring an existing firm by joint venture, starting new operation from scratch or creating various associations or societies also known as consortia's. (Wall & Rees, 2001, p.24)

As mentioned earlier we need to understand why companies like Wärtsilä operate in an international environment outside its own country borders. Several classifications for the reasons to operate abroad have been done in theory. Stuart Wall and Brownen Rees (2001) categorises the investment reasons to invest abroad as per below:

- Supply factors
  - o Production costs
  - o Distribution costs
  - o Availability of natural resources
  - o Access to key technology

- Demand factors
  - Marketing advantages
  - Preservation of brand names and trademarks
  - Customer mobility
- Political factors
  - Avoidance of trade barriers
  - Economic development incentives
- Other factors

(Wall & Rees, 2001, p.32-36)

## 2.0.2 Role of culture

Before we start introducing various elements involved to intercultural business communication it is essential to understand what is really meant by culture and what type of different issues help us to form an idea what all of it is about.

Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture to be the means by which people "communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action".

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.20)

Besides understanding what is meant by culture we also need to understand other related terms that require definition to put a perspective to culture in international business. Terms used referred to culture are *nation, ethnicity, race, subculture, counterculture, enculturation, acculturation and popular culture*.

- *Nation* refers to the formal government and legal apparatus that binds geographic areas together and regulates how leaders are selected, how diplomatic relations are conducted and what other issues are considered to be done to serve greater community.

- *Ethnic group* refers to a group whom might share language, history, religion or other cultural issues.

- *Race* refers to biological similarities. However commonly used in politics to justify economic and social distinctions.

- *Subcultures* are groups of people existing within a larger culture; however subcultures posse's identities that distinguishes them from the larger society and culture.

- *Counter culture* are groups that distinguish themselves in opposition to the dominant culture. They reject values of the larger culture. Criminal organisations are an example of such groups.

- *Enculturation* is the socialization process we go trough to adapt to our larger society.

- *Acculturation* is the process of adjusting or adapting a new different culture.

- *Popular culture* refers to systems or artefacts most people share or know about. Much related to television and music. Much of this is produced in the United States. We may however choose to consume or resist the messages of popular culture.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.21)

Much of our awareness to culture lies beneath the surface. We only see and respond to a small part of it. Culture is often compared to an iceberg. Much of it lies beneath the surface but we only see the top. In terms of comparison to an iceberg:

- When speaking of *technical level* it is the clear and visible portion of the iceberg and includes the artistic, technological and materialistic components of culture as well as institutional systems. Fewest intercultural misunderstandings or problems occur in this level.

- The *formal level* rest partially above and slightly below the sea level of an iceberg. It includes the norms, rules, roles, traditions, rituals, customs and communication patterns of a group.

- The *informal level* extends below sea level of our iceberg and includes cultural history and core beliefs. These shape cultures world view and influence cultural identity.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.23)

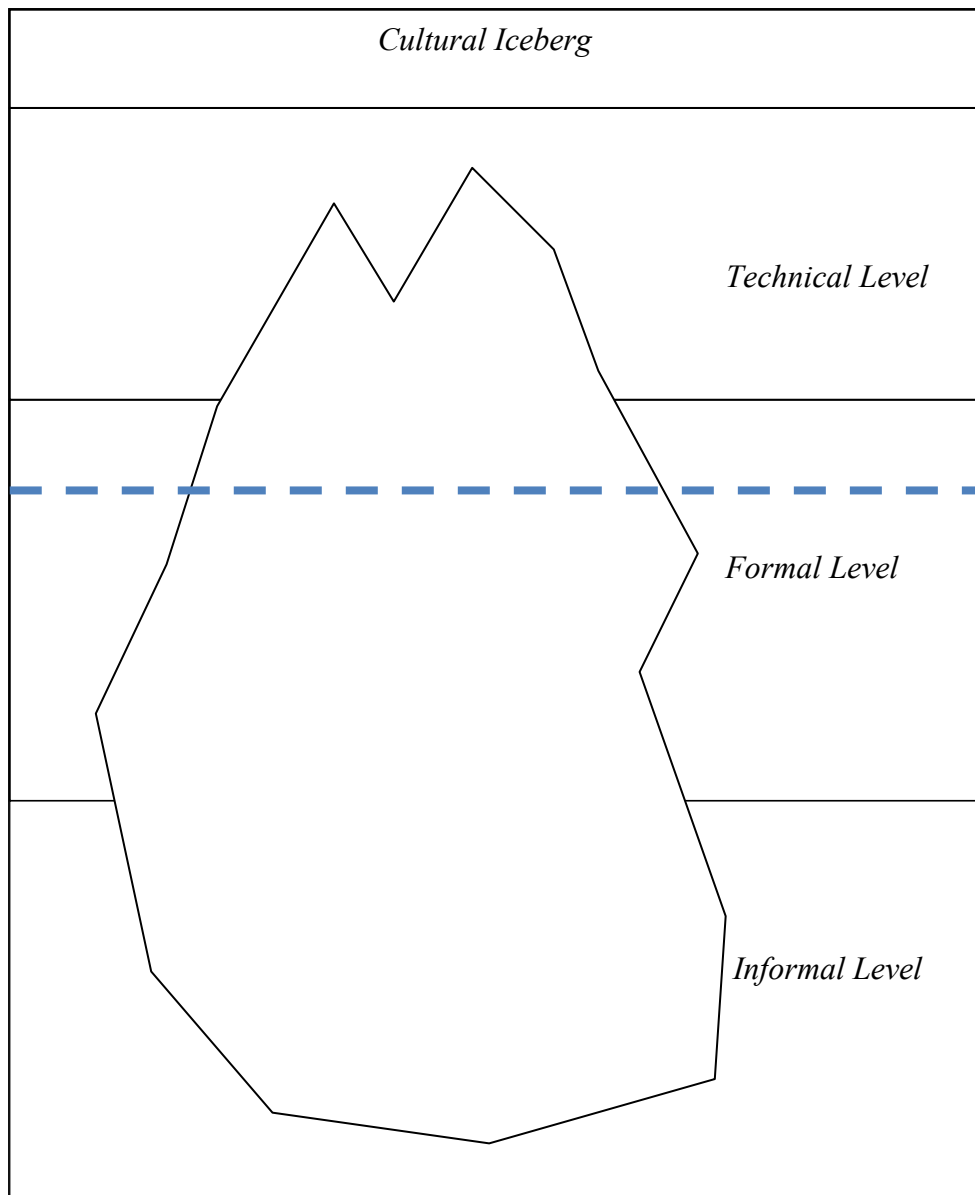Below is an illustration of the iceberg in comparions to the levels of culture we see.



*Cultural Iceberg*

*Technical Level*

*Formal Level*

*Informal Level*

**Figure 3:** Cultural iceberg. Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.23

Knowledge of the cultural levels helps us to identify principal elements and coordinating systems composing a culture and understanding the levels assist us to determine the culture.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.23)

To improve our intercultural awareness and competence certain approaches to culture have been developed to understand and gather culture specific knowledge. These approaches can be used to gather information in various levels in specific culture related ways which can form us a frame of reference that may answer us in specific issues related to culture.

Hall in 1976 approaches to culture by defining that cultures differ from ranges of *high* and *low context*. In basic terms the high and low context refers to the amount of information that is shared in communication. He also states that low context cultures use a direct style of communication and high context cultures uses an indirect style of communication.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.25)

Mister Geert Hofstede defined a cultural approach with 5 cultural dimensions which are nowadays commonly used when measuring and understanding cultural differences in the business world. These five dimensions are listed in short below.

- Power distance index (PDI)
- Individualism (IDV)
- Masculinity (MAS)
- Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)
- Long-term orientation (LTO)

*Power distance index* measures how power is divided, accepted and used between individuals in an organisation. It measures how more or less power is used

between members of an organisation. For example, to put it more simply it may measure how friendly or formal you are between a manager and sub-ordinate.

*Individualism* measures against the opposite which is collectivism. Simply put an individualist is a person that has high focus on looking after him or her and immediate family. A collectivist has high focus on larger groups than him or herself and immediate family. In some cultures social ties are very strong to large group of people and in other they are weak for larger groups. *Individualism* index measures this.

*Masculinity* measures against the opposite which is femininity. Most of us have observed during their lives that men and women often have different values. Hofstede categorise the gender difference masculinity as assertive and competitive values. Feminine values he categorize as modest and caring. So basically this measures the values between gender views.

*Uncertainty avoidance index* basically measures the comfort zone when dealing with the unknown, surprising, unstructured or different from usual situations. Cultures that are happier to deal with the uncertain are more tolerant for unusual opinions and they try not to have many rules. Cultures that are not so happy to deal with uncertainty try their best to avoid these situations. They follow laws and rules strictly and are not open for new unusual things. Uncertainty avoidance measures this difference.

*Long-term orientation* measures against the short-term orientation. Long-term values are categorized as thrift and perseverance. Short-term values are seen as respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and keeping up your "appearance" as to not lose your "face".

(Hofstede, Geert 2001. Web publication - www.geert-hofstede.com)

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck in 1961 develop an approach called *value orientation*. This in short is on how people hold their beliefs in what way the world should be. People orientate their values through below points.

- What do members of society assume about nature of people, that is, are people good, bad or a combination?

- What do members of society assume about the relationship between a person and nature, that is, should we live in harmony with or subjugate nature?

- What do members of society assume about the relationship between people, should a person act in an individual manner or consider the group before taking action?

- What is the primary mode of activity in a given society? Is it "being" or accepting status quo, enjoying the current situation and going with the flow of things: or "doing" or changing things to make them better, setting goals, accomplishing them with schedules and such.

- What is the conception of space in given society, is it considered private in that meetings are held private, people do not get too close to one another physically, having people to participate in meetings and decision making, are emotions allowed to be expressed publicly?

- What is society's dominant time orientation: past, present or future?

(Gore, K, 2007, p.40)

**2.1 CASE COMPANIES BUSINESS CULTURE**

This section of theory intends to introduce case companies' business culture. This study concerns sales personnel located in Middle East, South Asia and Finland. Therefore these regional areas business culture is introduced. It is seen beneficiary for the reader to get an understanding for what the business culture is like in the case companies. This helps to give good overall understanding to why differences and problems may occur between business communications between study subjects.

**2.1.1 Introduction to business culture in Middle East**

The Middle East is a vast region with many own variations in culture. The differences and variations could be introduced by writing hundreds of pages of material. Although unique differences exist in this region the Middle Eastern countries do share similarities. The focus in this chapter is to introduce the similarities in countries residing in this region to form a general idea of the local business culture. However, one must be careful to not generalise too much and keep in mind variations do exist.

Firstly it is important to know what countries are included in the Middle East area geographically. These countries are: Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel. The countries divided up in Wärtsilä Finland services organisation Middle East area includes mostly the same countries with a very few exceptions. So introducing the cultures in this geographic area is relevant and comprehensive enough in comparison to Wärtsilä Finland services country responsibility.

Traditional Middle Eastern offices may be open or closed at any time of the day. Many people may be coming and going continuously. Things are handled in accordance to importance and not according to the clock. The hierarchy level is strictly observed. Higher rankings are usually not casual towards lower rankings.

Many countries are highly religious in Middle East and Islam is the major religion. It is common to have prayer breaks in offices during the day. Management style is very hierarchy oriented as earlier mentioned. Decisions made by superiors are not questioned. Opinions between higher and lower rankings are rarely shared. When a decision is made actions can be followed quickly and having good individual contacts in business life is essential for successful progress. Decision making always moves from top to bottom. Responsibilities are on key individuals in high ranking positions and responsibility for lower rankings workers is to follow instructions from the top. If no instructions are given it is common for lower rankings to do nothing.

(Foster, D, 2002, p. 34)

Meetings and presentations are usually held in a comfortable area. It can either be in an international hotel meeting room or another equivalent meeting room. Your Middle Eastern counterpart will be hosting the event greatly. Tea and coffee is usually served in porcelain, glass or silver tea sets. Several people may be involved in the meeting and all may not be introduced. The other individuals can be close friends of your counterparts and may not have a direct relevance to yourself but their presence and contributions to the meetings are considered important. If speaking with the decision making authority the discussion will be direct and forthright.  If not, expect to speak with many different individuals and introduce the same issues over and over again. Do not expect any immediate decision at meetings, they will follow later. Presentations must be well prepared and simple. Details must be left in back up material after the meetings; material should be both in English and their own native tongue. Bargaining is loved and commonly done. They find this process as a way to get to know you. Changing mind about offer prices is common – in fact if this does not happen it is considered suspicious. Final agreements and contracts are kept short and simple and are not as detailed in western countries. When deals are sealed celebratory meals are held. Even after deals are closed it is expected to continue to have close communication and open discussion. Follow up is required. Often nothing happens unless your matters are checked up on a regular basis. Written

correspondence should be very formal and respectful to rank and hierarchies. All details should be written precise and important issues simply and clearly expressed.

(Foster, D, 2002, p. 35-36)

As earlier discussed in this study Hofstede's cultural dimension including power *distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance* and *long term orientation* are often used to measure cultural differences. Studies have been made to measure cultural difference in this view point in several countries in the Middle East region, however Mr. Geert Hofstede made a study including many of the Arab world countries which include: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This table shows in a great similarity amount the cultural values of the Middle East. The points of a 100 are representing highest and 0 representing lowest. The long term orientation has been excluded from below chart for reason to represent uniform charts in this study. All countries and regions do not have this measurement done.

- PDI – Represent power distance index
- IDV – Represent individualism index
- MAS – Represent masculinity index
- UAI – Represent uncertainty avoidance index

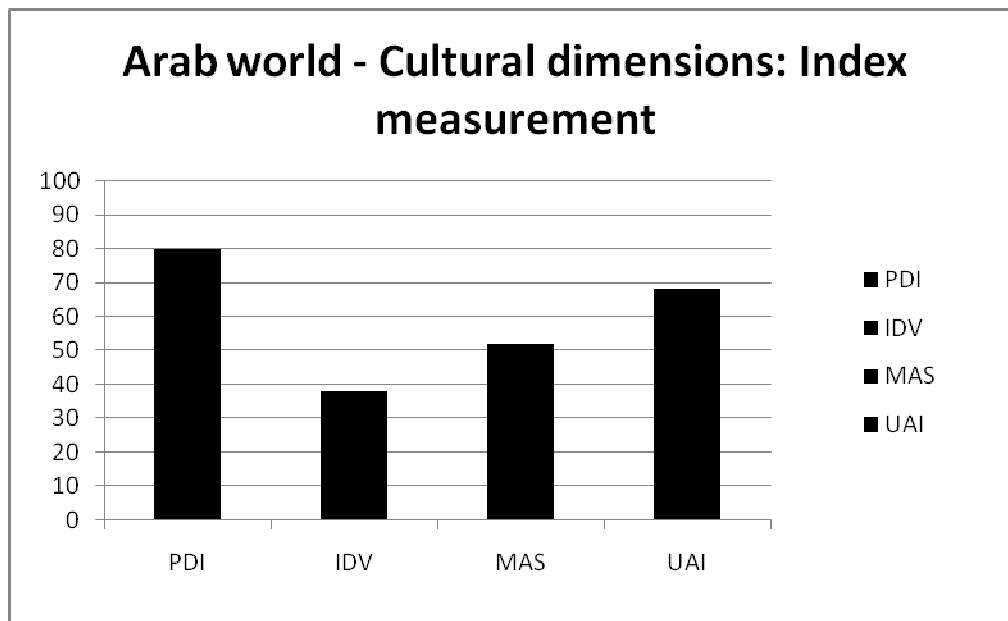(Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com)

**Figure 4:** Cultural dimensions index measurement. Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com

### 2.1.2 Introduction to business culture in South Asia – India

South Asia is a huge region and also contains cultural differences within the region. This chapter will introduce one of the cultures with highest presence in the region and has one of the most relevance in business cooperation with Wärtsilä Finland services. The country being introduced is India which is estimated to populate over 1 billion people. This is a considerate portion of the world's population and directly indicates their amount of presence in the region and also amount of business conduct between Wärtsilä Finland.

Geographically South Asia includes the following countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Himalayan Kingdom's, Nepal and Bhutan. The country responsibility in Wärtsilä Finland services is divided to include the same countries but one of the biggest business conducts happening in this region for Wärtsilä is between India. Therefore this chapter will only introduce the business culture of India in South Asia.

The traditional Indian office is open design. Few doors exist. Hierarchy is strictly observed and higher and lower ranking workers do not share same office space. India has large variety of different religions and the majorities are being Hinduism and Islam. In Muslim offices prayers are commonly done during the day and devoted Muslims will not work Fridays as this is their Sabbath day. However, work may be done on Saturdays or Sundays.

Management style is hierarchical, titles are important. Complementing, rewarding or criticizing employees in public is often done. But westerners should be careful to do this as employee's primary goal can be to protect one self and ones position. Decision making usually works from top to bottom and high ranking individuals are responsible for giving instructions to lower ranking ones. Making decisions is respected and if not done by high ranking ones leaders tend to lose respect, if instructions are not passed over from top to bottom nothing will be done.

(Foster, D, 2002, p. 228)

Meetings and presentations are held in a comfortable location. Several Indian colleagues may be attending and all do not have a direct relevance to you. Often close friends of your Indian counterpart may attend as their presence is considered important. If decision makers are present the communication can be frank and to the point, if not you may have to discuss same matter over and over again with a number of different people. This is not necessary bad but a sign of you matter advancing forward. When negotiating is in process decisions are not made immediately. Large amount of information are shared by your Indian colleagues. Presentations should be kept simple an easily pronounced. Detailed material of your presentation should be left to you Indian colleagues for later study. Indians also love to bargain and this is commonly done during negotiations. They know well contracts and contract laws so well executed documents are usually prepared to finalise agreements. Celebratory meals are also shared once agreements have been made. Keeping contact is still important to do even after issues are sealed. If no follow up is done things may be on a stand still. Written correspondence should be very formal and respectful. Using titles and giving notice to ranking is

important. Everything written should be in high detail and important issues are usually highlighted with bulletin points.

(Foster, D, 2002, p. 229-230)

As earlier discussed in this study Hofstede's cultural dimension including power *distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance* and *long term orientation* are often used to measure cultural differences. Studies have been made to measure cultural difference in this view point in several countries in South Asia region. However as India is the dominating presence in this region below is illustrated in a chart the cultural dimensions score for India only. The points of a 100 are representing highest and 0 representing lowest. The long term orientation has been excluded from below chart for reason to represent uniform charts in this study. All countries and regions do not have this measurement done.

- PDI – Represent power distance index
- IDV – Represent individualism index
- MAS – Represent masculinity index
- UAI – Represent uncertainty avoidance index

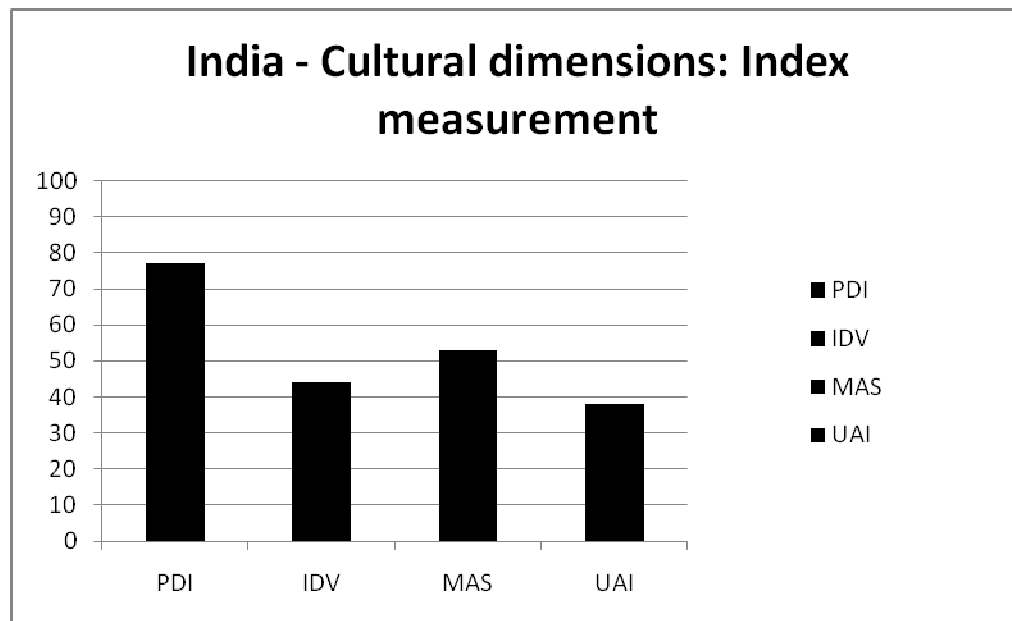(Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com)

**Figure 5:** Cultural dimensions index measurement. Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com

### 2.1.3 Introduction to Finnish business culture

Finnish business people are highly educated, able, professional and efficient. Even though they might not admit themselves, they have good language skills in comparison to other nationalities. They are hard working but do not boast about it. They keep strong work ethic and do not mix often private life with work. Keeping promises is taken seriously and they do not promise anything they will not keep.

The general atmosphere in a Finnish office is relaxed and informal. They dress up very casually and suits are only worn in important meetings.

Finns are considered introverts but as the world is becoming more international so are the Finns. They are naturally modest, often quiet, if asked for commenting they will carefully think before they answer. Silence lasting between conversations is normal and they are comfortable with it. It is also considered as bad manners in Finnish culture to interrupt when another one is speaking. They tend to distrust people who talk too much. Direct in the matter of fact approach to communication is preferred. As this being their way to approach things they are

not considered very diplomatic. Their way to communicate can be seen very blunt but this way to communicate is not intended to offend. In short they are reluctant communicators but this is slowly changing due to influence of a changing global world. Equality is strong between men and women in Finland. It is common to find women in leading positions in companies. They are sometimes more skilled communicators than men in business life and private life. Sometimes women in leading positions may have difficulties in negotiations particularly in the Far East were women do not hold leading positions or are not prominent in public life.

(Leney, T, 2005, p.134-142)

When Finns hold presentations they are well prepared and usually use latest electronic presentation tools. Their presentations usually contain a lot of factual information but their verbal outcome maybe very monotonous and do not contain much humour, if any; it is most of the time dry.

Finns are natural loners but teamwork is becoming more and more necessary for modern business. The older generation tend to have stronger attitudes towards team work but the younger generation have become more used to it and usually do not face bigger problems. It is nowadays very common to share open offices and arrange team building seminars in modern business life in Finland.

Decision making is usually a democratic process; quick decisions are followed by prompt actions.  When a decision is made to they do not wait long periods to do the actions required but they do the needed shortly on the basis of "get on with it" attitude. Human rights issues are majorly taken into consideration in decision making.

(Leney, T, 2005, p.142-144)

They are also known to be punctual and prompt. If a certain time has been agreed for a meeting they will follow this up by the minute. Of course exceptions occur but in general keeping anybody waiting is considered impolite.

Meetings and negotiations are agreed in good time before hand. Formal meetings tend to have a chairman and an agenda, surprise meetings are seldom to be

arranged. Informal meeting may also be arranged such as dinner events or the famous sauna get together where attendees are entertained by socialising and going to sauna. Consuming alcohol in such informal meetings is common.

When disagreements occur Finns can be very determined and hold strong opinions. If they think they have a just cause they will hold on to their opinion and stick to their cause. When disagreements occur they expect them to be negotiated in civilised manner, emotional outbursts rarely occur. However if properly reasoned they will try to see the viewpoint of others. They can be skilled negotiators and this also proven by the fact that many peace negotiators in world conflict areas are Finns.

Contracts and agreements that have been made with Finns can be considered as reliable as they can get. They are followed by the book and changes or dishonouring of contracts and agreements rarely occur. Solicitors that are used to help forming contracts are skilled and professional.

(Leney, T, 2005, p.145-147)

As earlier discussed in this study Hofstede's cultural dimension including power *distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance* and *long term orientation* are often used to measure cultural differences. A study to measure these differences has also been made for Finland with the exception that long term orientation has not been measured. In below chart you may see the score for Finland with points of 100 representing highest and 0 representing lowest.

- PDI – Represent power distance index
- IDV – Represent individualism index
- MAS – Represent masculinity index
- UAI – Represent uncertainty avoidance index

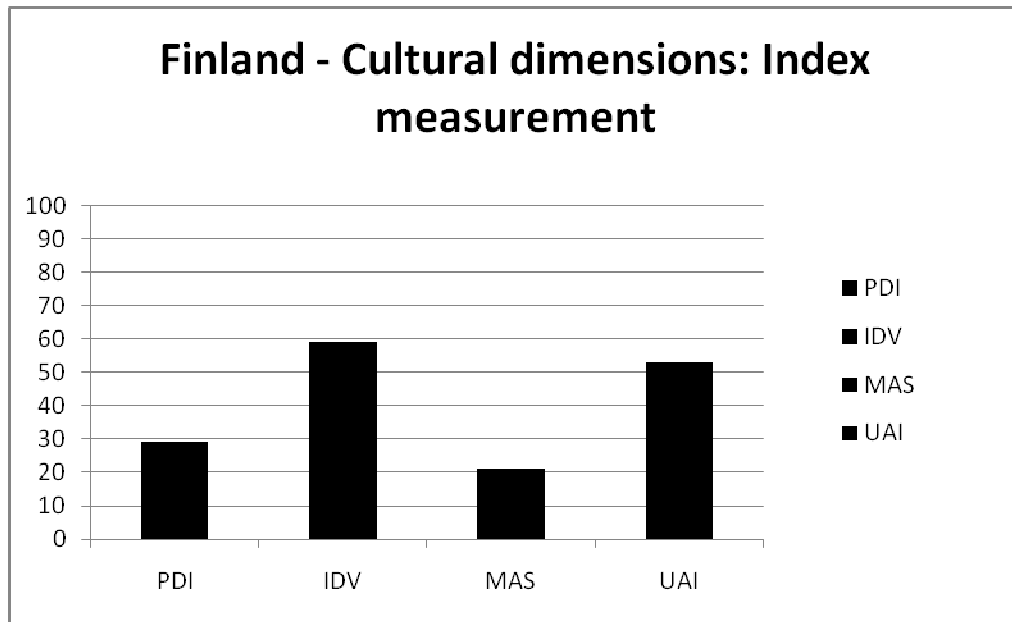(Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com)

**Figure 6:** Cultural dimensions index measurement. Hofstede, G, 2001, www.geert-hofstede.com

## 2.2. BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

This section of the theory intends to introduce core issues which directly help to answer to the research questions and will be used for discussion and analyzing of the data.

### 2.2.1 Intercultural business communication

Communication exists in all shapes and sizes. Therefore it is important to define and understand what really is meant by communication in international business and what related terms exist.

Edward T. Hall defined in 1959 *intercultural communication* as communication between persons of different culture. *Intercultural business communication* is relatively a new term and is defined as communication within and between businesses that involves people from more than one culture. (Chaney, L. & Martin, J. 1995, p. 2) It is however important to not mix this term with *international communication* as this has been defined as communication between nations and governments rather than individuals. (Chaney, L & Martin, J, 1995, p. 3) So with these definitions in mind communication happening in an international business environment between individuals can be considered as *intercultural business communication* as persons working in an international business environment are from different nations and therefore inherent different cultures.

Intercultural communication approaches issues on a micro-level. By this it is meant that issues are examined and explained on an individual level in specific situations. (Gore, K, 2007, p.11)

According to Gore, (2007, p.12) features of intercultural communication can be out lined as below:

- Intercultural communication emphasizes the application of cultural knowledge in specific situations.

- Intercultural communication focuses on improving communication between people of different national cultures and person to person differences.

- The foundations of intercultural communication are in anthropology and linguistics but have evolved to a speciality field in communication.

- Nonverbal communication is a crucial part of intercultural communication in terms of people's orientation to time and space.

- Experiential learning is a key component in intercultural communication. One must experience intercultural communication in order to understand it.

Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope define several terms commonly applied to intercultural communications. These also require definition to understand concepts spoken of later in this study.

- *Intracultural communication* refers to communication between and among members of the same culture.

- *Interethnic communication* is communication between people from different ethnic groups.

- *Interracial communication* is communication between people from different races.

- *Cross-cultural communication* implies a comparison of specific interpersonal variables between two or more cultures. Often used as synonym for intercultural communication.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.32)

It is also helpful to form a communication perspective that helps us situating how intercultural communication works. W. Barnett Pearce (1989) focuses on three terms: *coordination, coherence and mystery.*

- *Coordination* involves putting together messages and actions of another and exists when the message and actions seem logical and appropriate.

- *Coherence* is the process in which we attempt to interpret the world around us and our place in it.

- *Mystery* is what is beyond the immediate present moment. It implies to a sense that other stories and interpretations exist.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.33)

It is also important to understand how people interpret communication and act on the basis of this. Cronen, Pearce & Harris established a communication theory called *coordinated management of meaning* in 1982. This comprehensive theory states that people act and interpret communication on the basis of certain rules. *Constitutive rules* help us to understand and interpret an event or message. *Regulative rules* are rules of action that tell us when it is appropriate to do certain things and how to respond to certain interaction. When our constitutive and regulatory rules are understood between interacting parties' communication and co-operation tend to work well and run smoothly. Frictions and problems often occur when individuals operate according to different regulatory and constitutive rules. These rules are tied up to an overall hierarchy of meanings. Pearce and Cronen (1980) have developed a *nestled hierarchy* which defines which levels of contexts are embedded to one another and is a part of a larger scale. Many other levels may exist which we are not directly aware off.

- *The content level* represents the raw data. Direct words and also what we can see and hear.

- *Speech acts* communicate the intention of the speaker and relationship embedded to speech indicates how content should be taken.

- *Episodes* are recurring communication routines which have rules and boundaries. Different cultures may have different episodes.

- *Relationships* include expectations towards one another which are mutually scripted. Reflects how we interact with others.

- *Autobiographies* represent individual view of him or herself that is shaped by communication. These are constantly changing trough time due to ever changing variables in communication.

- *Cultural patterns* can be described as broad images of world order and personal relationship to that order. They are overriding cultural rules that coordinate our personal interpretations to others.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.34)

As different social groups develop distinct cultural patterns, communication between cultures often has misunderstandings, confusions and misinterpretations. Understanding the layout how they are viewed and formed helps us to battle against misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

## 2.2.2 Barriers to business communication

In order to effectively improve or create mutual understanding in intercultural communication, one must also recognise and understand what barriers exist. When we recognise what barriers we might have we can understand ourselves better and in this way try to lower our barriers which will help to improve our mutual understanding and communicate better in a more constructive way.

The following attributes can be barriers for intercultural communication:

- Stereotypes
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- Ethnocentrism

*Stereotypes* are our simplified mental perceptions of others. These perceptions are formed by extremely generalised information we have received about culture, race or ethnic groups. They are often inaccurate and do not work well with individuals who have lived or studied abroad as they have increased differences from their national cultures. When we stereotype we create expectations on how members of other groups should behave and we unconsciously try to confirm our expectations. This directly influences our communication with others and this can be harmful as we tend to communicate in a manner that reflects our expectations. However, our expectations can easily be wrong and this can create barriers to our mutual understanding and communication. A way to avoid generalised stereotyping is to mentally form subgroups and subtypes. By this you create more various and specific expectations and this helps to avoid bigger misunderstandings and generalisations.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.35)

*Prejudice* is an attitude or evaluation towards another group. It can be defined as either a positive or negative attitude towards groups or individuals. Mostly

however this is thought as a negative. Racism consists of prejudice as this is has negative attitudes towards a group that differs from your own. Prejudice can vary from low to high and it is believed that we are all prejudiced to some degree or another. It goes without saying that negative attitudes towards other groups form barriers towards intercultural communication.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.36)

*Discrimination* can be seen as prejudice "in action". When prejudice refers to an attitude, discrimination involves in actually behaving in a way that is disadvantageous to the other group. There are numerous behaviours that can be seen as discrimination. Such behaviours can be segregation of availability of housing, employment, education, legal protection and other recourses that may be more easier available for others not subject to discrimination. Discriminating actions obviously also harms intercultural communication.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.36)

*Ethnocentrism* defined by Ruhly (1982) is "the tendency to interpret or to judge all other groups, their environments, and their communication according to the categories and values of our own culture". Ethnocentrism is the belief that your own culture is the superior one and better than the "other ones". It is the belief that your own culture is the centre of the world is the only natural correct one. Vice versa ethnocentric thinking leads to the belief that other cultures doing things differently are wrong. Obviously this one-eyed way of seeing things harms any intercultural understanding and communication. To improve these aspects one should try to adapt the opposite way of viewing which is called *cultural relativism*. Cultural relativism involves trying to understand others behaviours in the context of the cultures or groups one is engaging with. This is absolutely necessary in order to have successful intercultural communication.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.36)

Taylor in 2005 also lists a variety of reason why communication may fail. The below topics may lead to have barriers in business communication.

- *Non-verbal signals* – Also known as body language. People may lack or have different physical expression that may lead to misinterpretation. Such as smiling and nodding the head.

- *Language* – Choice of words and other issues such as foreign accents and dialects affect our understanding.

- *Listening* – Listening is considered as a skill. Careful concentration is demanded for getting a message understood. The lack of this skill obviously creates a barrier to communication.

- *Pre-judgement* – What is understood is often influenced by our own opinion and previous experiences. We often hear what we want to hear and tend to distort what has been actually said. This creates a barrier for proper understanding.

- *Relationships* – People may have previous relationships between each other which may have been on a good or bad level. Bad experiences between communicating parties may lead to failure or complete breakdown of communication.

- *Emotional responses* – Communication cannot succeed if persons involved are highly emotional about topic concerned. Having emotions such as strong fear and anger will cause barrier for effective mutual understanding.

(Taylor, S, 2005, p. 12-13)

Taylor in 2005 also points out that the lack of cultural understanding and not having intercultural sensitivity creates barrier to intercultural communication. She mentions the belief of own cultural background to be superior to others known as *ethnocentrism* results in misunderstandings and failure in communication

(Taylor, S, 2005, p.18-19)

Bovee and Thill 2005 describe barriers to effective communication to be the below:

- *Distractions* – There are a number of distractions that may affect communication. They may be physical such as poor acoustics or perhaps emotional ones which affect the way a message is interpreted.

- *Information overload* – The huge volume and number of messages that people receive on the job can be distracting. The human mind can only process a certain amount of information at once. In today's world of emailing it is very common to receive too many messages and communication that interrupts and affects the quality of communication. Too much information flow interrupts and cause barriers for proper communication.

- *Perceptual differences* – We all have individual perceptions of reality. People tend to interpret messages to fit their own vision and understanding of the world. We all use to some level selective perception which enhances the information received that fit into our own understanding and exclude information that does not fit into our understanding. Discarding messages that do not fit into our own perception of reality creates a barrier for communication.

- *Language differences* – People use language in different ways, there are numerous issues that may cause barrier to communication in this field. Other than the obvious as unclear spoken words there may also be misunderstanding in definitions of certain words such as the use of "as soon as possible". Does this mean 10 minutes? 10 hours? 10 days?

- *Restrictive environments* – Companies may structure their organisations in such a way that they may restrict proper communication flow. Not having proper access or tools to communicate to needed parties create a barrier to proper communication.

- *Deceptive tactics* – People simply may intentionally or un-intentionally give deceptive messages. Information can be presented in an exaggerated way or untruthfully informed due to a variety of reasons.

(Bovee, C & Thill, J, 2005, p.12-13)

Bovee and Thill 2005 also mention from an intercultural business communication perspective ***ethnocentrism*** and ***stereotyping*** as barriers. They mention in relation to ethnocentrism: *"businesspeople who take these views will not interpret messages from other cultures correctly, nor are they likely to send successful messages"*. They also mention the following: *"Distorted views of other cultures or groups result from stereotyping"*.

(Bovee, C & Thill, J, 2005, p.65)

As we also are trying to find out what communication problems may occur through specifically selected communication channels of *email, instant messaging (office communicator) and telephone* it is also good to go through known difficulties with these specific communication tools.

Taylor in 2005 lists the top 10 complaint about email use in practice that creates barrier for effective business communication.

- Vague subject line

- No greeting

- No sign-off

- Poor formatting

- Vague messages

- Not telling clearly what to do

- Unfriendly tone

- Using too many people in CC field

- Bad grammar, spelling and punctuation

- Plain sloppiness

(Taylor, S, 2005, p.153-155)

Bovee and Thill in 2005 describes problems with using instant messaging tools such as office communicator. The human behavioural side of using these tools will always cause some concern and problems to proper communication.

- Constant interruptions may occur

- Personal and business messages may easily be mixed up

- The risk of missing out important discussion by being absent from computer

- The potential waste of time

- Being on the mercy of other peoples typing abilities and moment of convenience

(Bovee, C, & Thill, J, 2005, p.46)

The use of telephone generally contains the same communication barriers as in any normal spoken communication. However, as it is not face to face it does have some issues that make it different from normal communication. Taylor in 2005 describes issues that make a telephone call effective. Naturally by acting in an opposite way towards this effective behaviour creates communication barriers and problems. Communication problems may occur when the telephone is used in following way:

- Not calling at the right time or good moment

- Not dialling correct number

- Not planning or being prepared for a phone call

- Interrupting during a call

- Not being courteous during a call

- Not taking notes if needed during a call

- Not following feedback or understanding message

- Not ending the phone call in courteous manner

(Taylor, S, 2005, p.38-39)

To conclude this chapter about existing business communication barriers it is good to summarise what has been introduced and how it relates to what this study intends to find out. It is safe to say according to above findings that from an intercultural business communication perspective the barriers are ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. These intercultural business communication barriers are mentioned from all researchers mentioned in this study; Schmidt, Conaway, Easton and Wardrope in 2007, Taylor in 2005, and Bovee and Thill 2005. So this study intends to find out how much these barriers exist for the spare part coordinators in Wärtsilä Finland. A carefully designed questionnaire will intend to find out if these intercultural barriers exist at any level. It also intends to find out if intercultural or other business communication barriers exist from the communication channels of email, office communicator and telephone. Therefore above have been introduced other communication barriers that may occur in business communication generally and through the channels selected for the study. As these are now introduced they may help to establish an understanding of what business communication barriers may be expected in this study. Identifying problems is the key and initial step for working on further improvements. The next chapter will introduce subjects that when recognised and followed will improve intercultural and other business communication. Creating awareness of these issues will help anyone struggling with intercultural and other business communication to change their way of communication in such a way that it is more beneficiary for all parties.

### 2.2.3 Methods to improve business communication from intercultural and other perspectives

Sharing and creating practical knowledge is the basis for successful intercultural communication. Miscommunication and the lack of sharing proper knowledge is often main reason for failure of a joint effort. Successful knowledge sharing in intercultural communication tries to answer these questions:

- How to get people to share their knowledge?
- How to transform knowledge that comes from different cultural sources into a format that everyone within and network or organisation can use?
- How to apply or implement this knowledge in useful ways?

(Gore, K. 2007, p. 141-142)

Ikujiro Nonaka (1991) created the concept that our knowledge creation is the transformation process of *tacit knowledge* to *explicit knowledge*. Tacit knowledge means the knowledge about our own culture that tends to be outside our awareness. Explicit knowledge being new cultural knowledge of ourselves we have become aware of trough the sharing of information and knowledge.

Successful knowledge creation and intercultural communication involves the four processes mentioned below:

- *Socialization*: Knowledge is passed onwards in a tacit manner. Not verbally articulated but by observation.
- *Combination*: Combining pieces of explicit knowledge and sharing them between individuals.
- *Articulation*: Converts tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge into a form that can be shared with a network.
- *Internalization*: Individuals broaden knowledge by converting explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge.

(Gore, K, 2007, p. 143)

Below figure illustrates how knowledge is transformed for the benefit of others. The figure is adapted from Nonaka 1991.
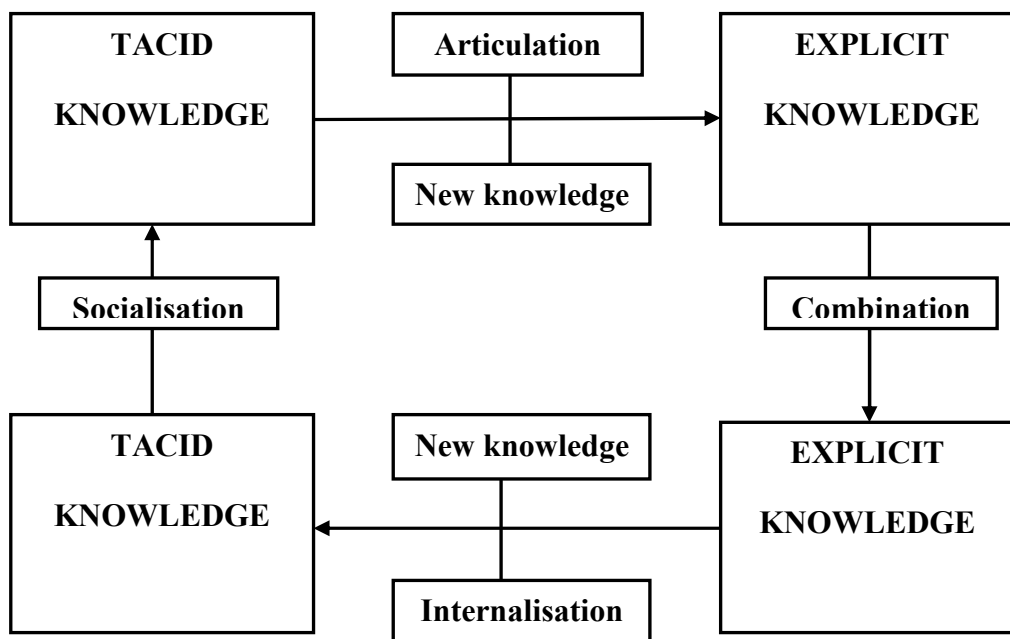


**Figure 7:** Process of successful knowledge creation. Gore, K, 2007, p. 144.

To have successful cooperation in intercultural communication, adaptation is required towards other cultures. This is more appropriately called *intercultural sensitivity*. By this we mean the degree of sensitivity we establish to ourselves with cultures of others and relate to our own culture. It is the process of gradual adaptation in attitude and behaviour towards another culture.

Mr. Milton Bennett (1986, 1993) created a useful framework to explain the relations of people to cultural differences and to asses ones level of cultural adaptation. This model helps to recognise ones orientations towards cultural differences and predicts ones behaviour and attitudes. By recognizing these factors education can be designed for further developments.

Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity has in total 6 stages to describe behaviour towards culture. The first 3 stages fall under *ethnocentric* behaviour which is described as your own culture experienced as the only real

true correct culture. The last 3 stages fall under *ethnorelative* behaviour where as one's own culture is experienced into context to other cultures. There has been established a sense of reality that other worldviews co-exist with your own.

The six stages are listed below:

- Ethnocentric
  - o *Denial*: One experience own culture as only real one. People intentionally isolate and separate themselves from different cultures to protect their own worldview.
  - o *Defense*: One experience own culture as only good one. Others cultures are experienced threatening and negative attitudes are felt towards other cultures.
  - o *Minimization*: One experience culture as universal. Superficial differences are recognised but a belief of all basically being the same exist.
- Ethnorelative
  - o *Acceptance*: One experiences culture existing in many forms. People understand the views of good or bad to be culture relative.
  - o *Adaptation*: One can understand culture trough different eyes. One is able to act appropriate in ways of other cultures.
  - o *Intergration*: Are people who do not belong to a particular culture. They are comfortable within several cultures but not wholly in any particular culture. They are a minority group and such individuals may be long term expatriates.

Below is illustrated development model for intercultural sensitivity.

(Gore, K, 2007, p.150-154)

| Ethnocentric | | | Ethnorelative | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Denial** | **Defense** | **Minimization** | **Acceptance** | **Adaptation** | **Integration** |

**Figure 8:** Development model. Gore, K, 2007, p.150-154.

Ideally all working in an international business environment should have cross-cultural competence. But what does it mean, "Cross cultural competence is broadly considered as behaviour perceived by others to be appropriate and effective in a given context." (Gudykunst 1991, Kim, 1991, Spitzberg, 1988, 2000) Simply put people that have cross cultural competence are individuals with extensive inter cultural experiences and knowledge and posses the ability to adjust their behaviour and thinking appropriately to another culture. Howell (1982) identifies four levels of cross cultural communication competence. These are listed below:

- *Unconscious incompetence* – This refers to individuals who are unaware of cultural differences and do not have the ability to adapt to different cultures.
- *Conscious incompetence* – This refers to individuals who are aware that their intercultural interaction does not go well but do not understand why.
- *Conscious competence* – This refers to individuals who have ability to understand outside their own culture and are able to learn to adjust in different cultural situations by thinking and analysing.
- *Unconscious competence* – This refers to individuals who smoothly interact between other cultures without bigger struggle or thought.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.73)

What type of competences or characteristics helps us to promote intercultural communication then? The below competences have been generally accepted as abilities one need to have for successful intercultural business communication.

- Being mindful for others.
- Ability to empathize.
- Active listening.
- Tolerance for change.
- Tolerance for ambiguity.

- Ability to flexibly adapt behaviour.
- Language skills.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.75)

One part of having successful intercultural business communication is to handle conflict appropriately. But what do we mean by intercultural conflict? Intercultural conflict refers to parties of different cultural backgrounds interacting with each other experiencing emotional frustration and incompatibility to reach common goals or objectives.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.103)

Borisoff and Victor in 1989 present a model that helps to constructively deal with intercultural conflict. The model includes 5 steps which are described below.

1. *Assessment* – One must carefully consider aspects of communication environment. These are also listed as 5 aspects: (1) Trait of participants and nature of environment. (2) Nature of cause and conflict. (3) Clarification of each member's personal goals and objectives. (4) Examination of communication climate. (5) Determination of good conflict handling style.
2. *Acknowledgement* – Accepting the other party's involvement and constructively deal with differences.
3. *Attitude* – Maintaining a positive attitude and having willingness to take responsibility and work towards solving the differences.
4. *Action* – To take actions to manage the conflict. Using previous steps to determine appropriate conflict handling techniques and using them. It has been determined that acting in below manners helps to achieve productive intercultural conflict management.
   o Display respect.
   o Use good orientation knowledge. Understand terms people use to explain themselves.
   o Show empathy.
   o Be skilful at regulating conversations.

- o Initiate group problems solving ideas.
- o Behave with interpersonal harmony.
- o Have little discomfort when adjusting to new situations.
- o Respond to others in non evaluative manner.

5. *Analysis* − Review and evaluate decisions made. This to consider future impacts.
   - o Consider if all parties concerns are met.
   - o Consider decisions can be implemented effectively.
   - o Consider if short and long-term effects of your solutions are possible.
   - o Consider if the relationship between conflict parties are modified productively.

(Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.112-114)

Taylor in 2005 offers a check list for communicating effectively across cultures. The following points should be followed:

- Show respect

- Show empathy

- Do not pre-judge

- Be open minded

- Avoid distractions

- Be patient

- Look for similarities

- Send clear messages

- Recognise your prejudices

- Treat people as individuals

(Taylor, S, 2005, p. 20)

Effective communication can also be achieved by having knowledge of the communication cycle and being aware of the barriers. Taylor 2005 introduces a seven step process for effective communication:

1. What and why? Consider objective of the message and why you need to communicate it. Are you trying to persuade, request or inform?

2. Select channel. Consider relationship between sender and recipient and choose appropriate means to communicate.

3. Select encoding technique. Choose the manner which you send the message. For example using courteous tone or using serious tone depending on importance or urgency of the message.

4. Consider barriers. Think of all barriers there may interfere and plan a way to communicate so that these barriers do not stop the hoped achievements.

5. Send message. Having considered previous points send the message.

6. Check understanding. Make sure the recipient have understood you message after sending it.

7. Obtain feedback from recipient. Find out from recipient if your communication has been effective. Is it properly understood and if not how can your communication be improved?

(Taylor, S, 2005, p.21-22)

Bovee and Thill in 2005 also mention ethnocentrism and stereotyping as barriers for intercultural business communication. They mention that in order to have successful intercultural business communication one most accept and practice *cultural pluralism*. This is the practice of accepting multiple cultures on their own terms. To avoid negativity of ethnocentrism and simplification of stereotyping one must follow a few simple habits. These are:

- Avoid assumptions – Do not assume people behave or think the same way as you do.

- Avoid judgements – Even though things may be done differently from your own perspectives do not conclude this is in error or your own culture is superior to the other.

- Acknowledge distinctions – Do not ignore any differences of other cultures with your own. Recognising the differences and acting accordingly towards the differences is a key element in successful communication.

(Bovee, C & Thill, J, 2005, p. 65)

Bovee and Thill also introduce the different components involved in successful intercultural business communication. The below mind map on the next page illustrates the link between different components and in what way they lead to effective communication across cultures.
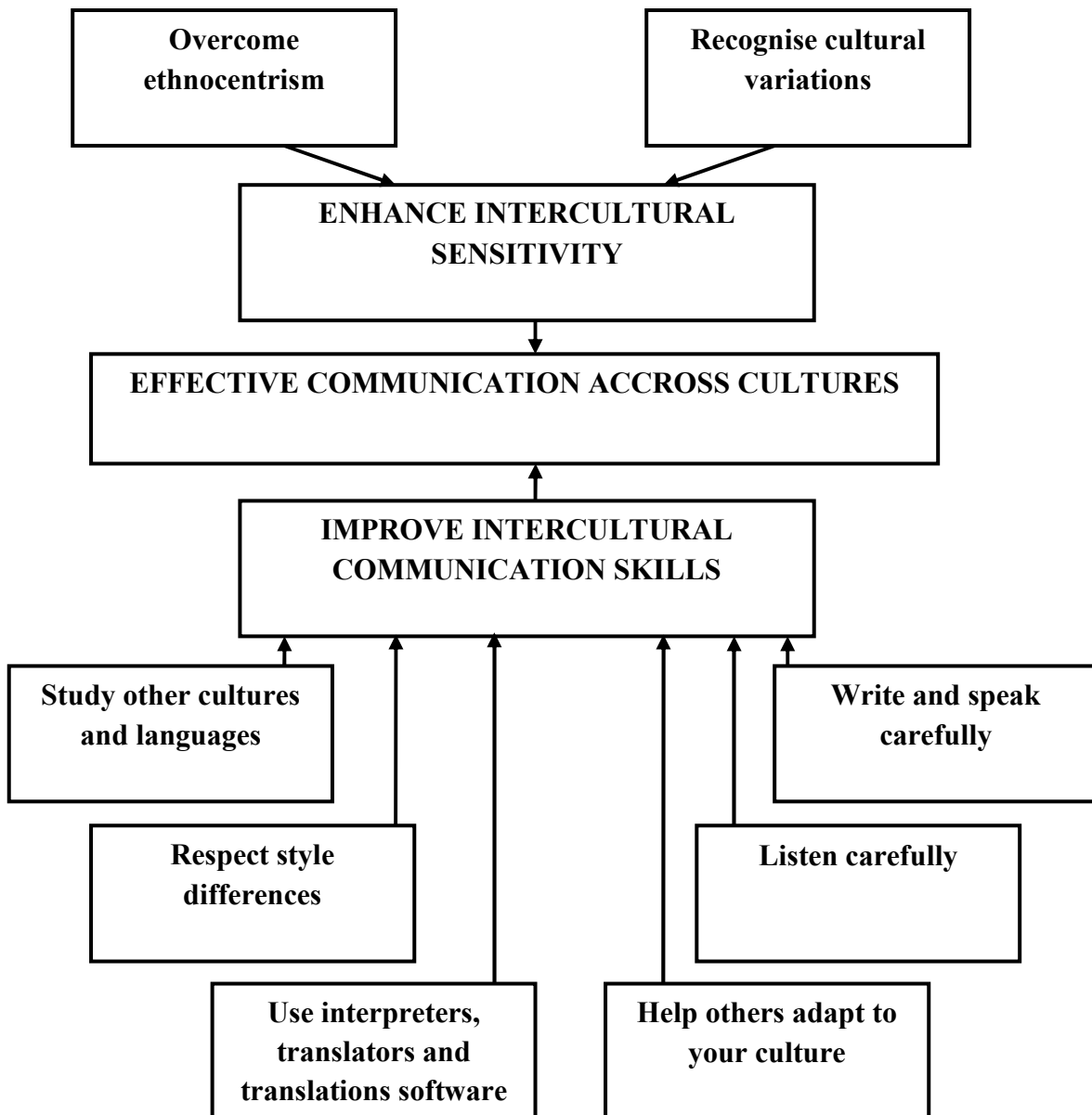
```
┌─────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────┐
│   Overcome      │              │ Recognise cultural│
│  ethnocentrism  │              │    variations    │
└─────────────────┘              └─────────────────┘
          ↘                          ↙
        ┌───────────────────────────────┐
        │   ENHANCE INTERCULTURAL       │
        │        SENSITIVITY            │
        └───────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   │ EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ACCROSS CULTURES     │
   └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↑
        ┌───────────────────────────────┐
        │   IMPROVE INTERCULTURAL       │
        │   COMMUNICATION SKILLS        │
        └───────────────────────────────┘
```

**Overcome ethnocentrism**

**Recognise cultural variations**

**ENHANCE INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ACCROSS CULTURES**

**IMPROVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**Study other cultures and languages**

**Write and speak carefully**

**Respect style differences**

**Listen carefully**

**Use interpreters, translators and translations software**

**Help others adapt to your culture**

**Figure 9:** Elements for successful intercultural business communication. Bovee, C & Thill, J, 2005, p. 73.

# 3. INTRODUCTION OF CASE COMPANIES

Wärtsilä was established in 1834 in the municipality of Tohmajärvi. It was originally built to be a saw mill. From those days until today the company has gone through several industrial changes and it has also expanded to new countries all over the world. It is no longer a small saw mill but it has built up to be a strong power solution provider in its own market. Wärtsilä offers a large variety of different power solutions but its main business is building engines for the marine industry, power industry and offering extensive services for maintaining their products, solutions and selling spare parts. They also offer a variety of products and services related to building power plants and powering marine installations.

Wärtsilä employs close to 19 000 professionals in 160 locations in 70 countries all over the world. Net sales in 2008 were 4612 million Euros. Sales by business and market area can be seen from below.

By business:

- Services 40%

- Ship power 33%

- Power plants 27%

By market area:

- Asia 39%

- Europe 37%

- The Americas 15%

- Other 9%

(Compass, Wärtsilä Corporation Internal Intranet 2009)

In Wärtsilä Finland services organizational chart the Middle East region has been divided up to include the following countries:

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Djibouti.

In Wärtsilä Finland services organizational chart the South Asia region has been divided up to include the following countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

Wärtsilä has several main Network Companies located in these countries which are responsible for offering services to end customers operating in the area. This study will focus on the business communication between these Network Companies' spare sales teams and Product Company Wärtsilä Finland's spare parts coordination team.

(Compass, Wärtsilä Corporation Internal Intranet 2009)

The below picture illustrates in a simple form the role between product company Wärtsilä Finland, Wärtsilä network companies and the end-customers in relation to spare parts sales and supply.

Supplying:    - - - - - - ▶

Ordering:     ──────▶

| Wärtsilä Product Company |
| --- |

| Wärtsilä Network Company | | Wärtsilä Network Company |
| --- | --- | --- |

| End – customer | End – customer | End – customer | End – customer |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
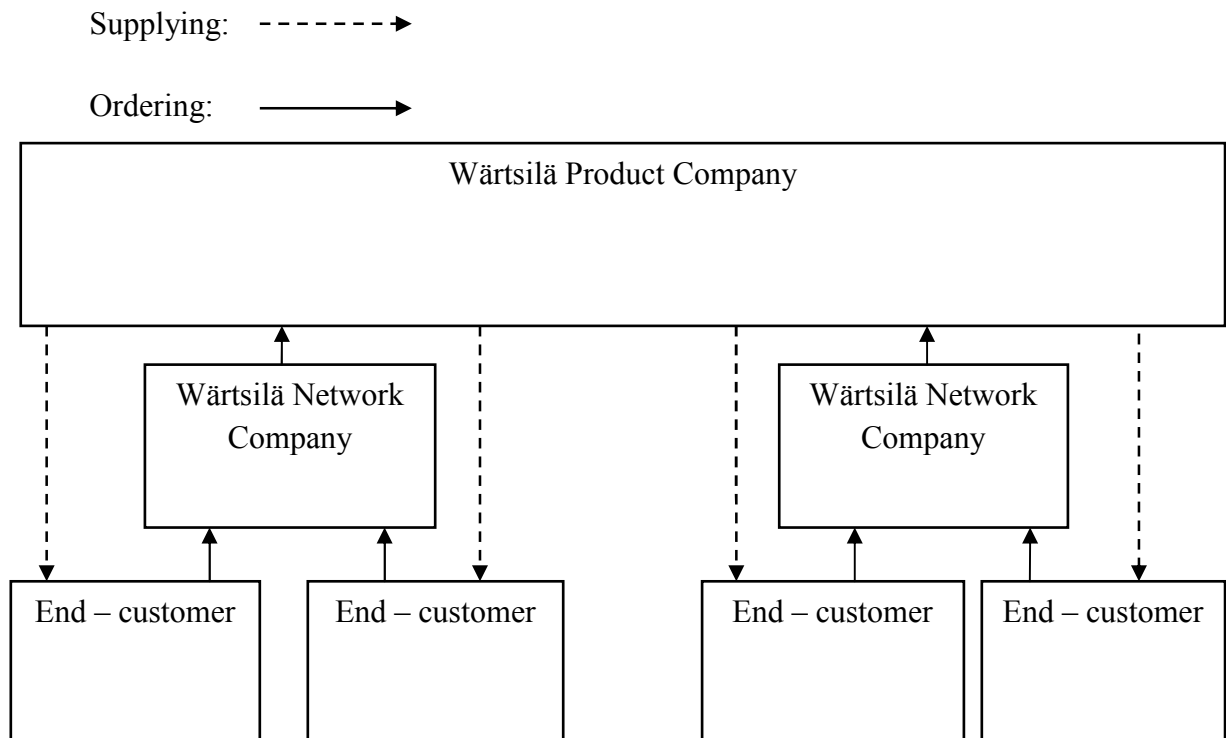
**Figure10:** Authors illustration for Wärtsilä Network Company and Product Company flow of supply.

# 4. INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce research methods related to this study and to and discuss elements involved to research. This chapter will also introduce the questionnaire used in the research.

## 3.1 Introduction to research method and design

This study will conduct a combined quantitative and qualitative research. These are two different types of research methods and to be able to understand the study one must understand what these methods stand for.

- *Quantitative research* – This is a research method that uses mathematical measurements and statistical techniques to determine relationships and differences among samples and target populations. They are highly structured and involve designing questions with choice of specific responses that can be measured and analyzed mathematically. Simply put it is research based on numbers or quantities. Example of a quantitative research is using numeric scales that measures certain carefully designed issues.

- *Qualitative research* – This is a research that is less formally structured. It uses small sample sizes. It is subjective and often not necessarily represents non-quantifiable data or target population. It is research of descriptions or distinctions based on some quality rather than numbers. Example of a qualitative research technique is depth interview.

In some cases it can be recommended to use both types of research methods to cover each other's weaknesses or gaps. They can complement each other and

quantitative data can substantiate qualitative findings. The findings may reinforce each other and even reveal new information.

(Web publication, Qualitative research methods overview, link listed in reference list)

As earlier explained in the study the aim is to find out what intercultural communication barriers exist and what intercultural communication issues are considered problematic between the study subjects. To find this out a qualitative and quantitative research approach has been developed. It has been generally accepted that barriers to intercultural communication are stereotyping, having prejudice, acting with discrimination or to have highly ethnocentric viewpoint. The first step is to find out if the study subjects have these barriers, but how to do this? A likert scale survey with numeric scores was designed to find this out. A highly considered stereotype, prejudice, discriminating and ethnocentric statement was created in relation to work environment. The study subjects would evaluate if they or their fellow colleagues agree or behave according to the statements. For example strongly agreeing towards a prejudice statement would directly indicate some of the study subject to have prejudice features and to posses' barriers in intercultural business communication. Below is illustrated the statements designed to find out if the study subjects may have barriers in intercultural business communication.

Example of a highly stereotypical statement:

NETWORK COMPANY EMPLOYEES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION BELONG TO SIMILAR SOCIAL GROUPS AND THEY ACT IN SIMILAR WAYS.

Example of highly prejudice statement:

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND HAVE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OR OPINIONS TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION AS AN ENTITY OF A GROUP.

Example of highly discriminating statement:

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND ACT IN A DISADVANTAGEOUS MANNER TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION

Example of highly ethnocentric statement:

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND BELIEVE THE VALUES OF OUR OWN CULTURE AND THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE IS THE ONLY CORRECT WAY TO INTERACT AND ANYTHING DONE DIFFERENTLY IN THIS CONTEXT BY NC COLLEAGUES IN MIDDLE EAST REGION IS INCORRECT.

To summarise, the above statements would be ranked from strongly agree to disagree hence indicating the level of intercultural barriers to exist from high to low. Study subjects would mark opinions with X in below boxes:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Strongly disagree | 2 Partly disagree | 3 I do not know | 4 Partly agree | 5 Strongly agree |

The data gathered will be illustrated by charts. Charts are great help to visually form an idea of how strongly different intercultural business communication barriers exist.

Second part of the study is qualitative and uses open-ended questions to determine difficulties or problems areas in intercultural business communication. Study

participants will be asked to freely type in their response to a question. Example of such a question below:

WHAT COMMUNICATION ISSUES DO YOU FIND MOST DIFFICULT WHEN INTERACTING WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION THROUGH BELOW CHANNELS?

Benefits of using open ended questions are that they may reveal information that pre-structured researches cannot do. The reason for using open ended questionnaire is to try to reveal the unknown.

The questionnaire is in Excel format and will be emailed to study participants. Respondents will be asked to fill in their responses to the template and return them to the researcher printed on paper into a sealed box. This way of returning the questionnaire ensures total anonymity and prevents answering some sensitive topics untruthfully. As some people may not dare to answer honestly to some sensitive subjects if the researcher would know personally who is behind the opinions. The main communication tool for study participants at work is email and a high rate of reach-ability is expected.

## 3.2 Discussion of analyzing data and sample size

As earlier informed the study consists of quantitative and qualitative research. The first part is quantitative and will display the evidence by bar charts. Two different types of charts will display the information. Average response rate will be displayed by a chart and one chart will break down more specifically number of responses. This is done to visually show maximal detailed information. This forms a good idea of the level of communication barriers that exist from high to low in the study subject group. The below simple calculation will be used to show average point from study subjects.

$$\frac{\text{The sum of all points}}{\text{The number of participants}} = \text{Average points of respondents}$$

Below is example on how the level of intercultural communication barriers will be displayed from the viewpoint of high to low:
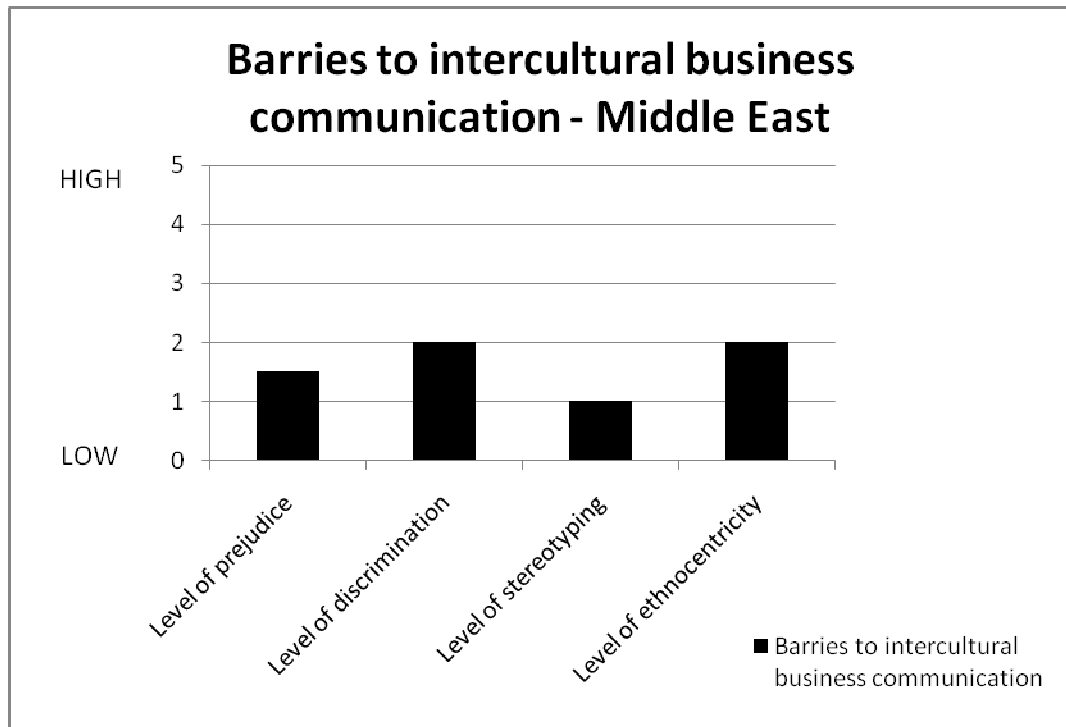
**Figure 11:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers.

Bar chart that breaks down number of responses is illustrated as per next page:
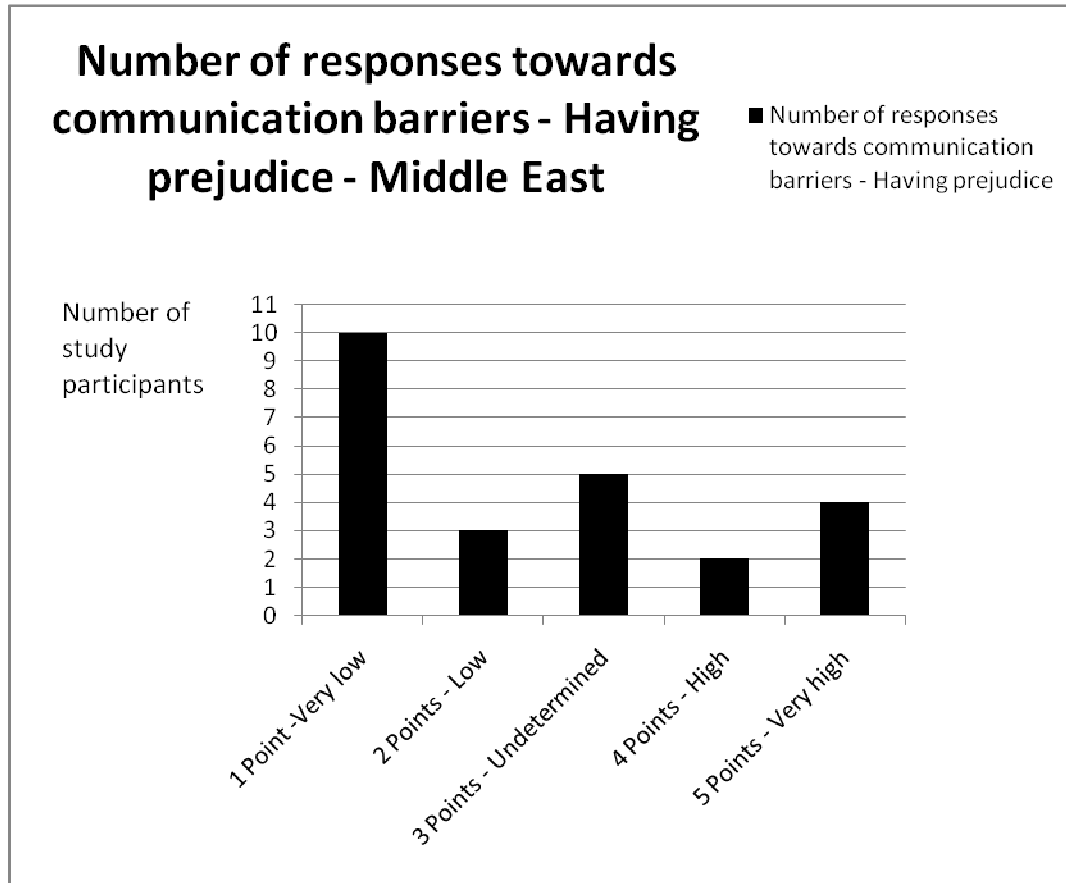


**Figure 12:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.

Second part of the research is qualitative. Study subjects are asked to answer questions by freely typing their response. The data gathered will be analyzed by a method called *coding*.

Coding is the process of drawing up all the usable information that is collected. It is basically identifying similar themes, dividing them into units and allocating them into themes of value in relation to the study subject. This method is subjective to the researcher.

(Fisher, C, 2007, p. 181)

The purpose is identifying the problem areas and to represent the valuable material in written form later in the study.

Regarding sample size it is important to mention the study group consists of 24 people. This is the number of spare part coordinators working in the Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordination team. This includes only full time workers. The team also consists of a few part time workers but they only work randomly at busy periods and are not easily reachable for this research. The study will be distributed to these employees and a high rate of return is expected. According to Fisher in 2007 a return rate of 70% may be expected in these cases. In this study the researcher hopes to receive 90% return rate as follow up work can be done. This would represent extremely well target population and give great material to achieve high validity and reliability of the study. The actual return rate achieved in this study is revealed in later chapters discussing validity and reliability.

# 5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will introduce the results received from the study subjects, analyze and discuss improvement suggestions according to findings that may seem problematic in intercultural and other business communication. The main idea, however, is to create awareness of the communication barriers found as the key element for further improvement proceedings is to find out these barriers.

## 5.1 Results

In the below charts are the average results from all study subjects from the first section of the questionnaire and also a breakdown of the number of responses toward certain level is presented.
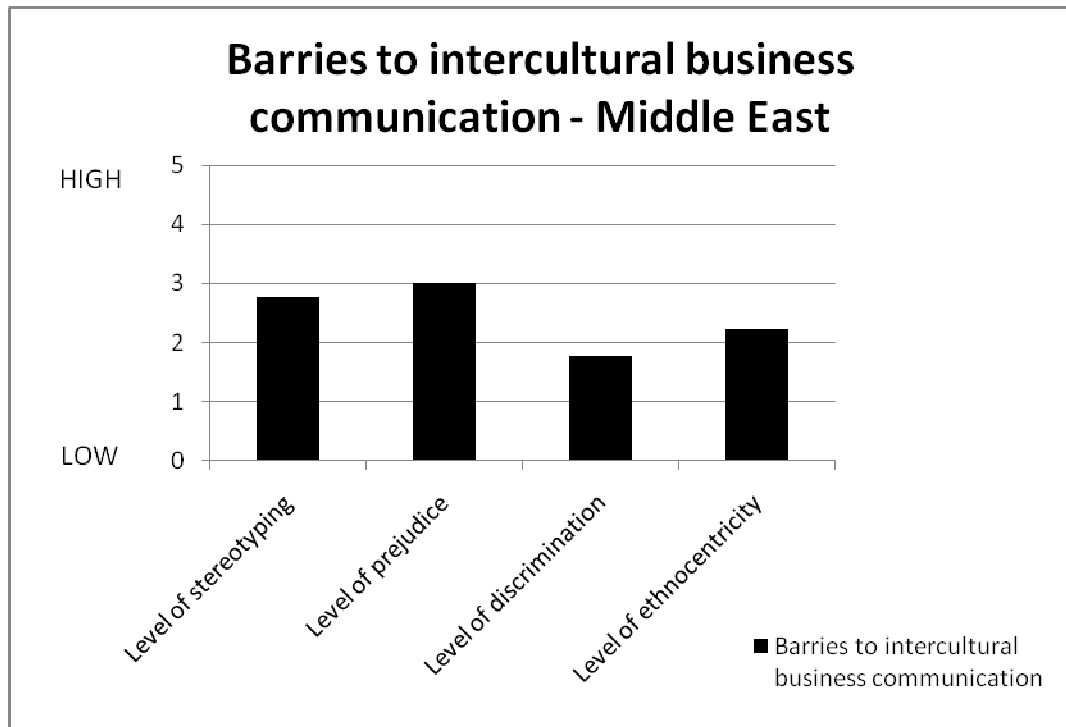
**Figure 13:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers.
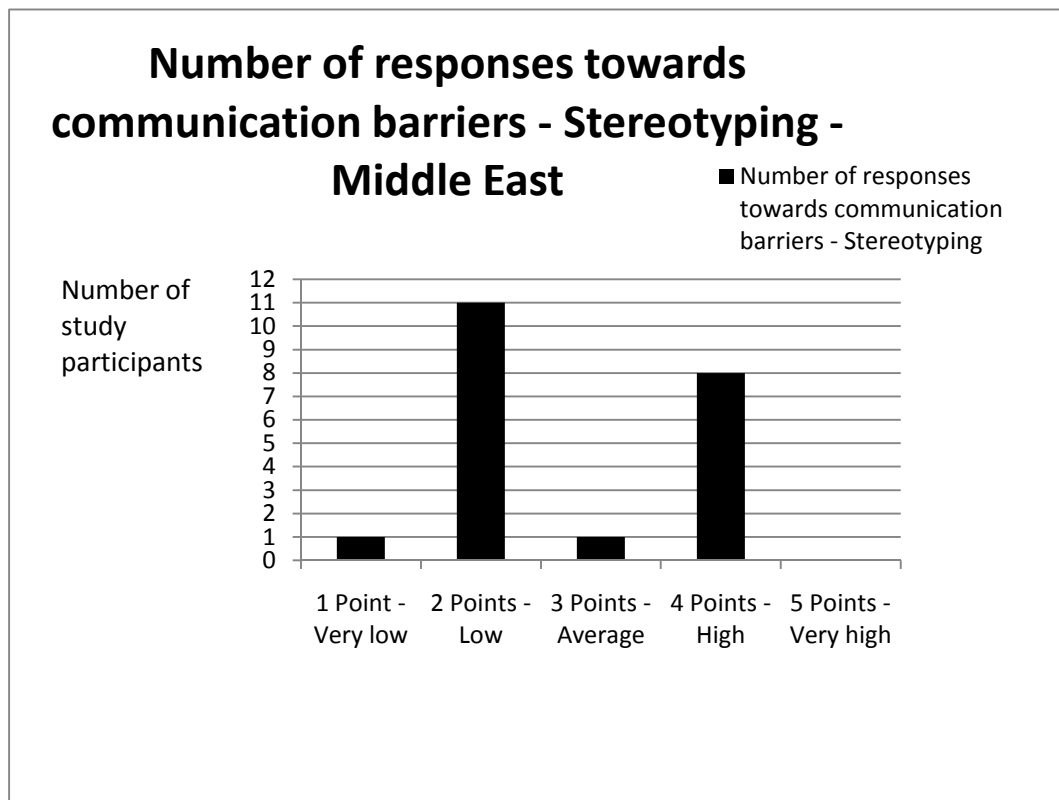
**Figure 14:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.
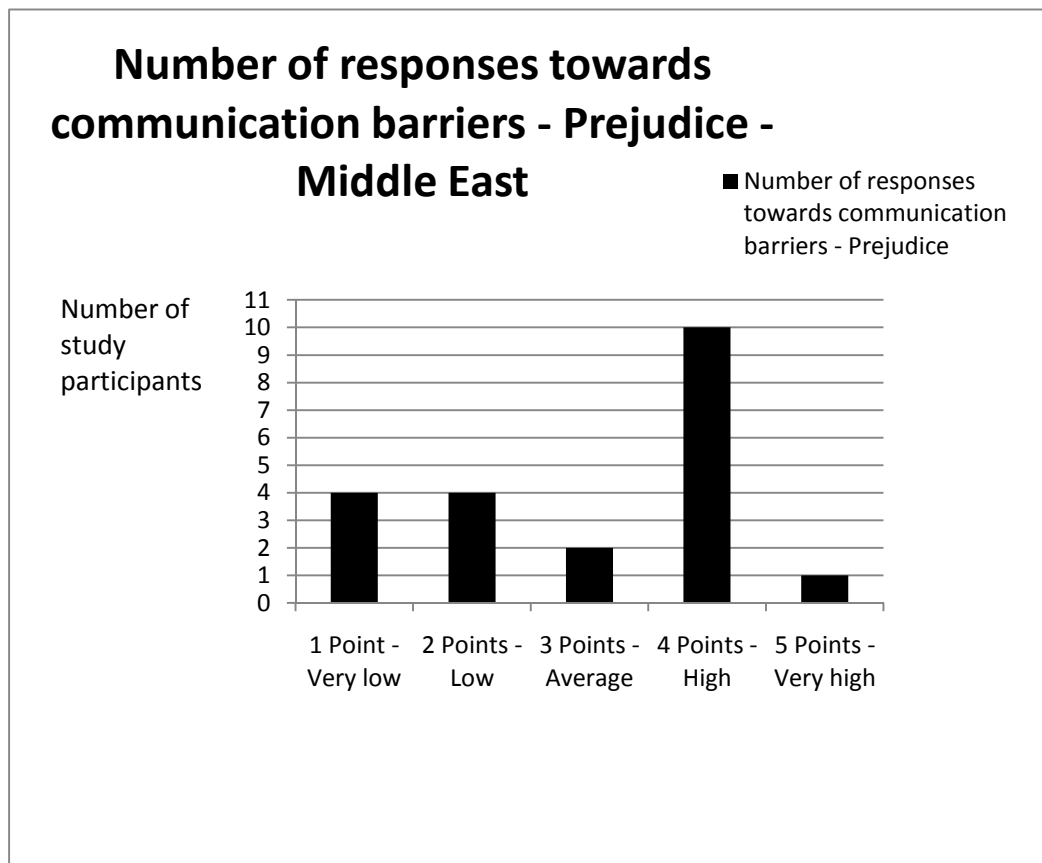
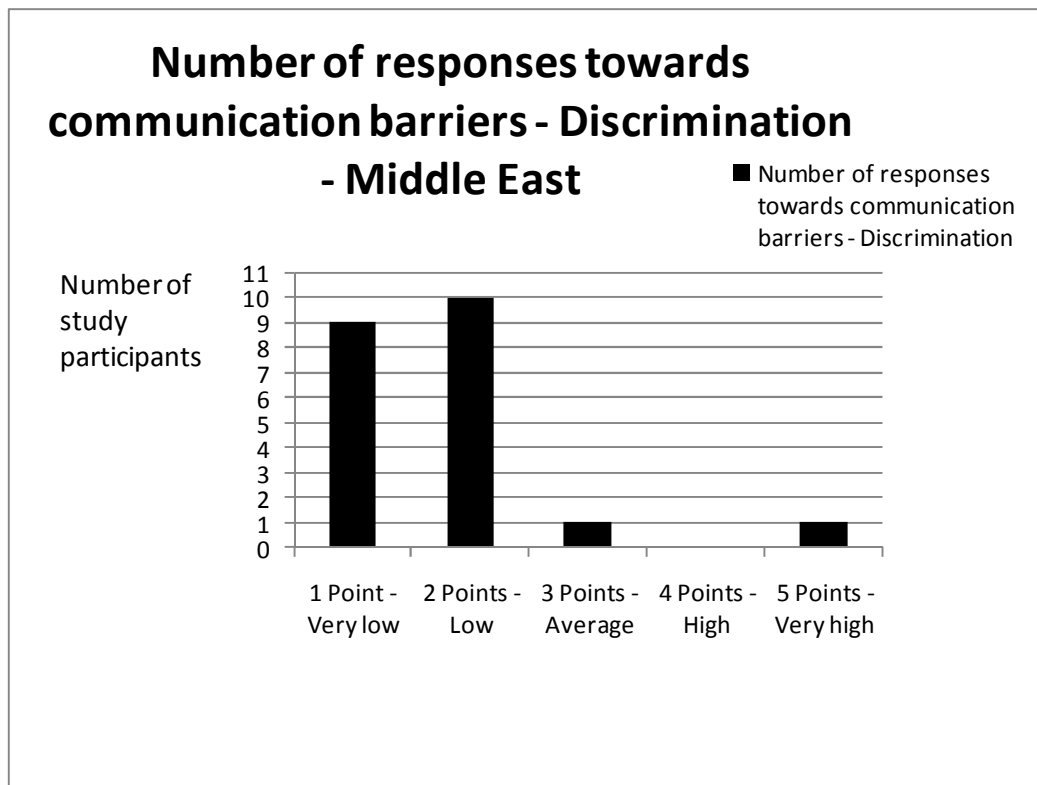**Number of responses towards communication barriers - Prejudice - Middle East**



**Figure 15:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.

**Figure 16:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.
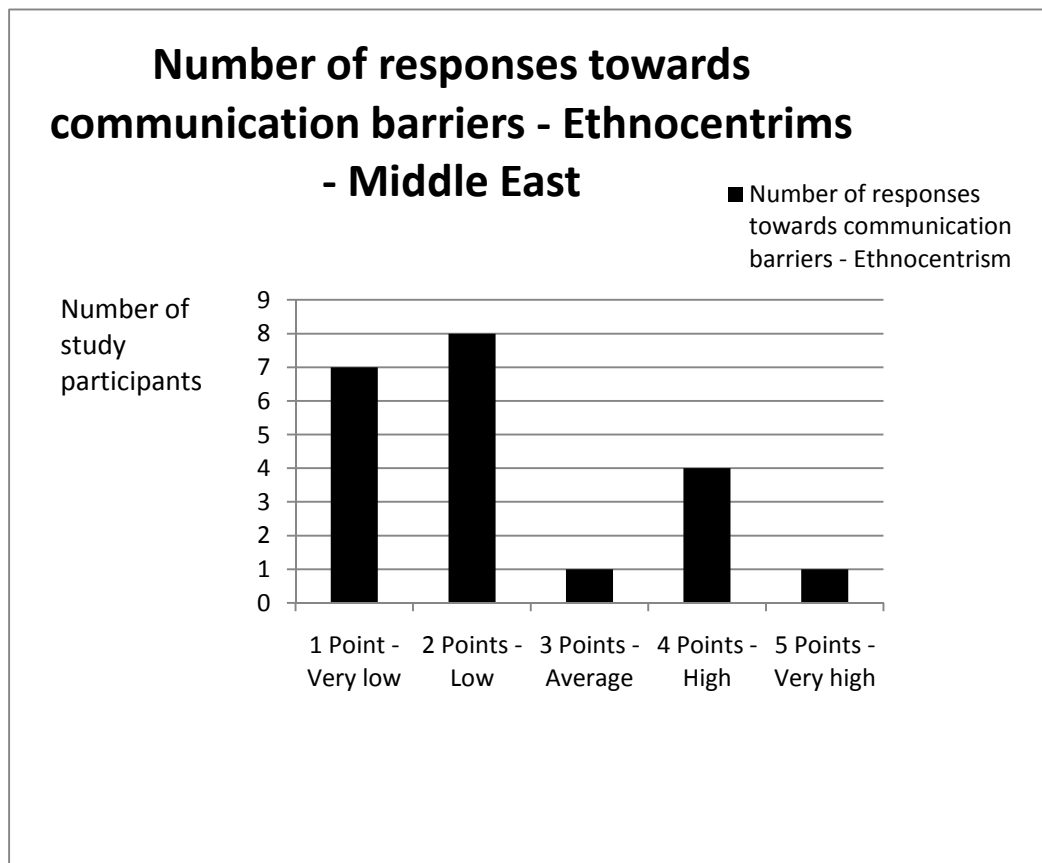
**Figure 17:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.
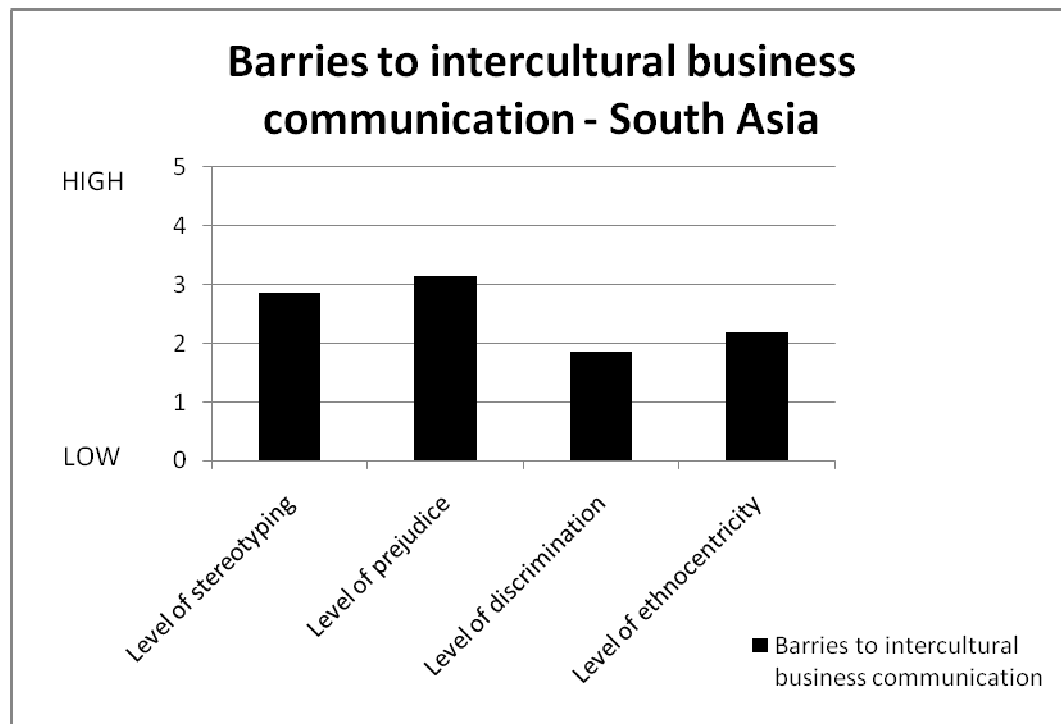
**Figure 18:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers.
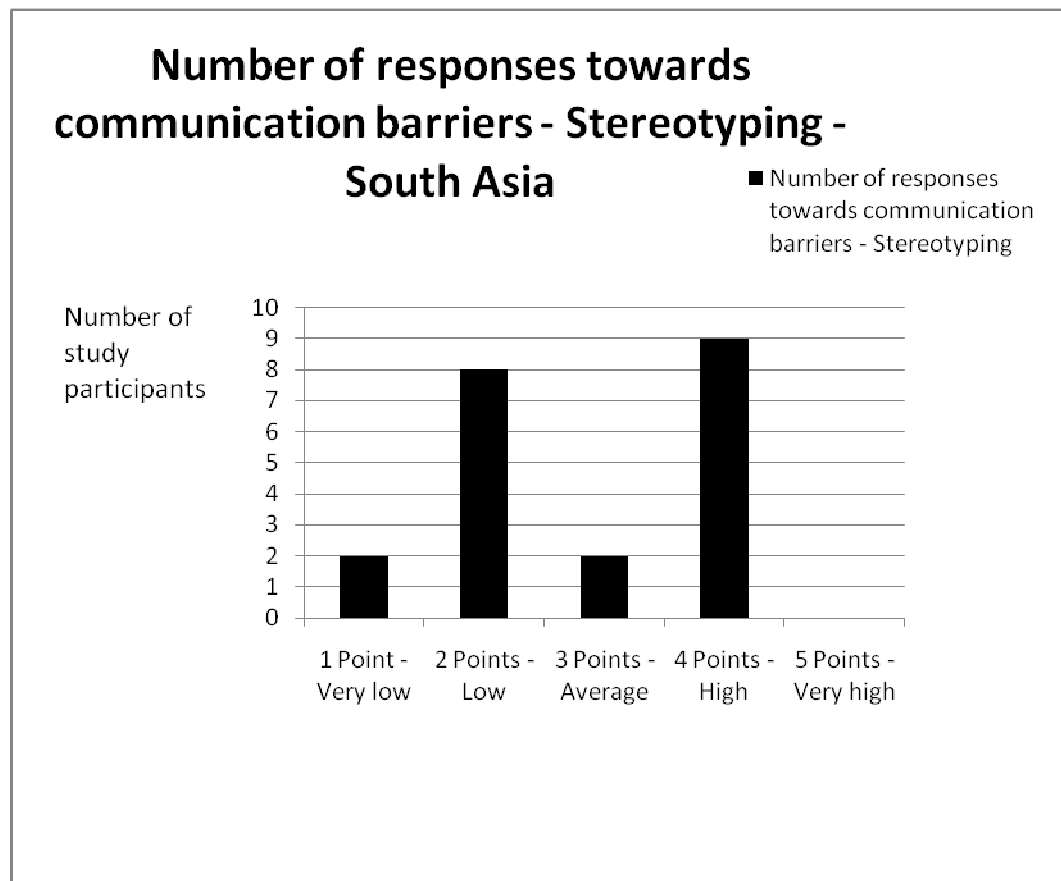
**Figure 19:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.
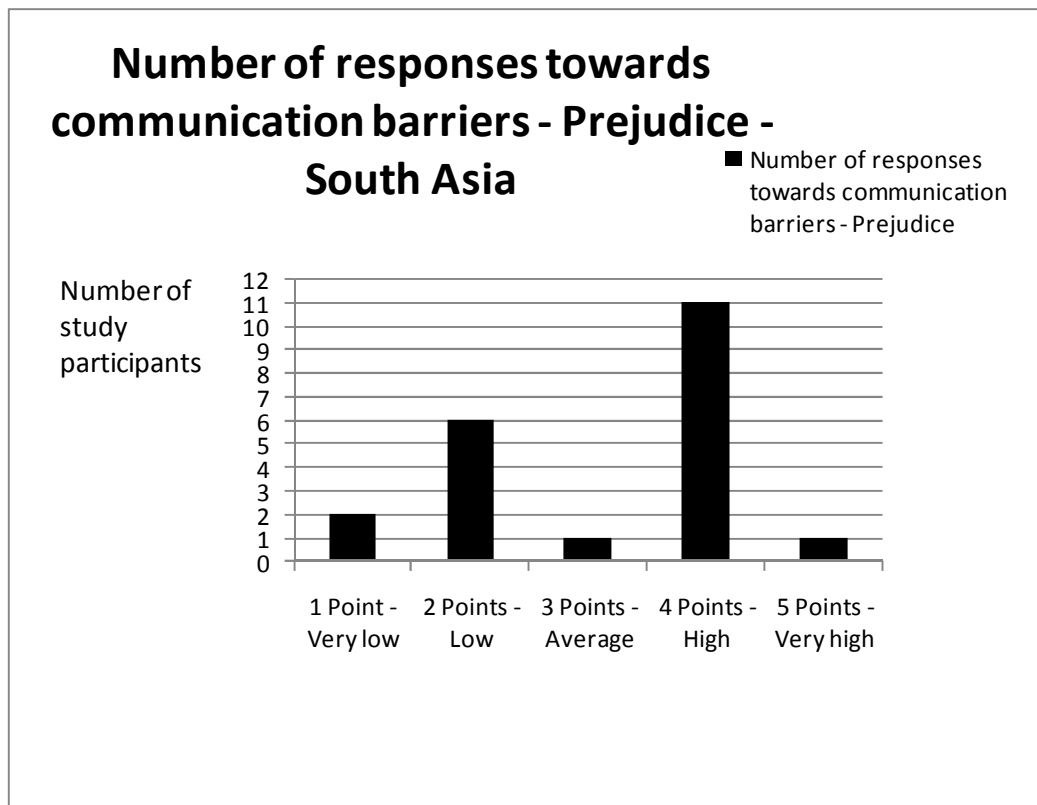
**Number of responses towards communication barriers - Prejudice - South Asia**

■ Number of responses towards communication barriers - Prejudice

Number of study participants



**Figure 20:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.

**Figure 21:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.
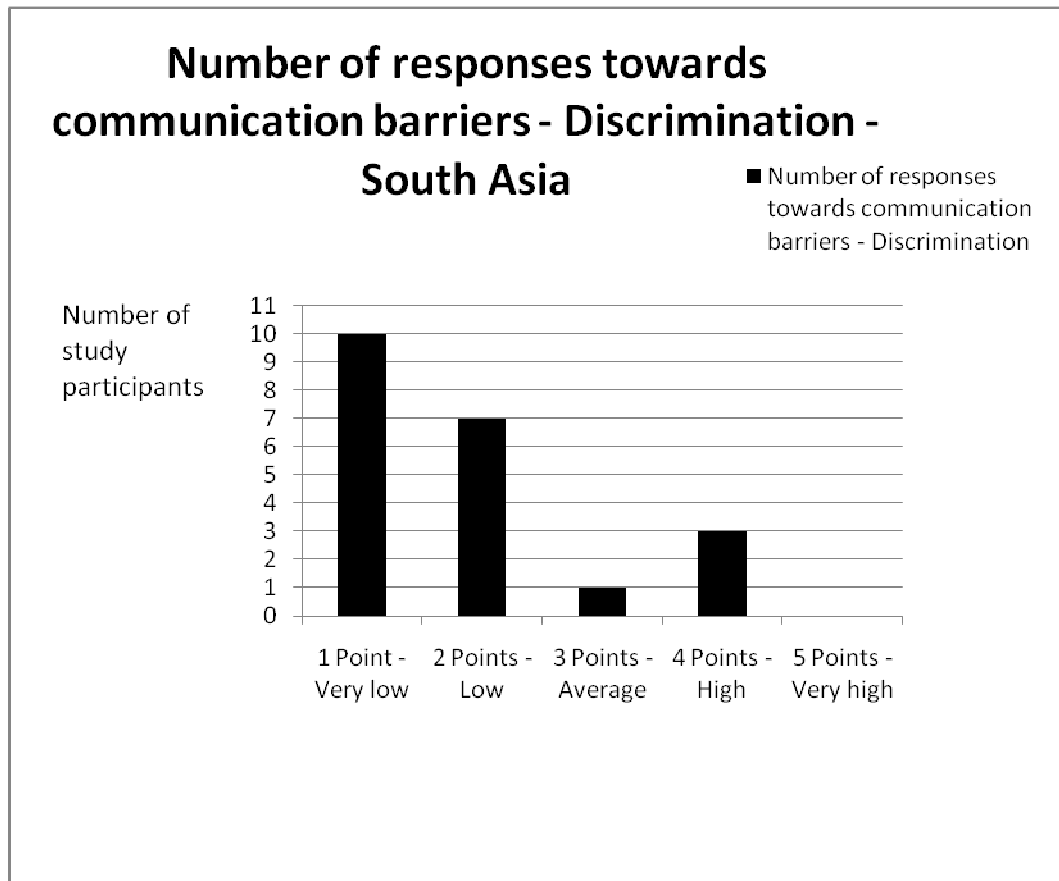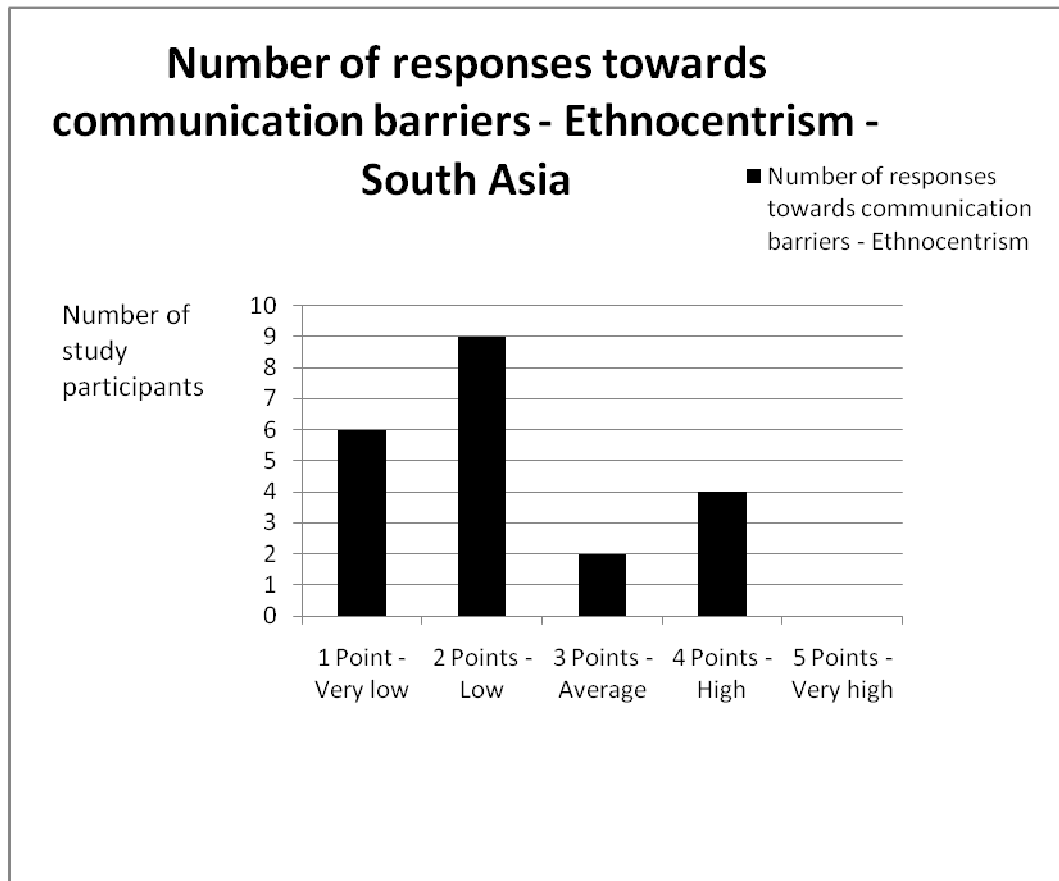
**Figure 22:** Authors illustration for level of intercultural business communication barriers per number of respondents.

The second qualitative part of the study revealed the following points to be problematic in business communication via email, office communicator and telephone from the viewpoint of spare part coordinators in Finland.

**Middle East Region**

**Email:**

- Too demanding, not being courteous
- Unwillingness to listen
- Lack of understanding
- Response time is long with complicated issues
- Not being patient, the lack of trust that issues are being looked after

- Using too complicated words, creates barrier to understanding
- Incorrect typing
- When several questions are asked they may not all be answered back, not properly reading response
- Not giving clear instructions, asking to do things in too tight schedule, asking for impossible favors
- Regarding giving country specific instructions, in some cases they are not communicated or informed properly, creates confusion and problems
- The quality of required information needed with technical communication is in some cases poor, it is not understood what type of information is needed and required from end customer, in some cases some people are not skilled enough for technical communication

**Office communicator:**

- Use it too much, disturbs work, used to remind too much
- They might ask you to do something via communicator but not be available themselves when responding
- Contacting several persons with the same issue, causes double work
- Using it to ask too small not important questions, the entire issue could have been sorted out via email
- Not understanding that some questions cannot be answered straight away, asking such things disturbs work and delays investigation of actual matter

**Telephone:**

- Too demanding, not being courteous, insisting behavior
- Language barrier, poor use of English, strong accent
- Interruptive behavior, do not allow you to speak and explain issue
- Using it too much, calling about same issue several times sometimes through several persons, interrupts the work at hand and wastes time
- Phone lines may be bad sometimes, technical difficulties

**South Asia Region**

**Email:**

- With sensitive subjects the matter is not pointed out clearly. Facts are not presented straight forward
- Lack of understanding, too high expectations
- Unwillingness to listen, explanations are not heard
- Urgency is pointed out too often, it is used on common basis and therefore distorts the real importance of the message
- The use of too many reminders, disturbs work
- Requires too detailed explanations
- Sometimes colleagues from South Asia can be offended by straight forward answers from Finns
- Incorrect typing
- They do not share documentation sent to them internally in some cases, sometimes you have to send same documentation several times to several persons within the same office
- When several questions are asked they may not all be answered back, not properly reading response
- If more than one person is involved several different instructions and advice for proceeding may occur, creates confusion
- The quality of required information needed with technical communication is in some cases poor, it is not understood what type of information is needed and required from end customer, in some cases some people are not skilled enough for technical communication

**Office communicator:**

- Sensitive subjects are avoided. Straight forward discussion cannot be done
- It is used too often, disturbs work and when used the same issue maybe brought up to several persons creating double work
- Even if busy status is used in communicator disturbances still occur
- Using it to ask too small not important questions, the entire issue could have been sorted out via email
- Many people may disturb you with the same issue

**Telephone:**

- Language barrier, poor use of English, strong accent
- Using the telephone too much, in urgent cases too many phone calls prevents you from doing the job at hand
- In some cases the telephone is not used enough, important issues are not brought up to proper attention
- In some cases aggressive behavior occur
- Too much irrelevant information is given, time is wasted
- Speaking too fast
- Phone lines may be bad sometimes, technical difficulties

**5.2 Analysis and discussion for possible improvement proceedings**

Based on above findings certain conclusion and findings can be drawn. From an intercultural business communication perspective the barriers occur at some level, however, none of these barriers received high scores, which is a good result. As a reminder, the level of barriers are represented in this study by 1 representing very low, 2 representing low, 3 representing average, 4 representing high and 5 representing very high. The highest average points received was 3, 14 as a measurement value towards level of barriers. This means that no intercultural business communication barriers exist within the Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordination team at an alerting or dangerously disturbing level. The highest value of 3, 14 can be considered as barriers existing to a slightly above average level but still not high enough to cause total break down or serious problems in business communication. Still, this does not mean that there isn't room for improvement as in an ideal world no intercultural communication barriers should exist. Intercultural barrier levels received the following average results towards the Middle East region starting from the highest value:

- Level of prejudice – value 3, average middle ground
- Level of stereotyping – value 2,76, Low, close to average
- Level of ethnocentrism – value 2, 26, Low
- Level of discrimination – value 1,76, Very low, close to low

Intercultural barrier levels received the following average results towards the South Asia region starting from the highest value:

- Level of prejudice – value 3, 14, slightly above average
- Level of stereotyping – value 2, 85, Low, close to average
- Level of ethnocentrism – value 2, 19, Low
- Level of discrimination – value 1, 85, Very Low, close to low

Based on above findings it can be concluded that the two biggest barriers for intercultural business communication for Wärtsilä Finland spare part coordinators towards both regions are having prejudice and stereotyping. They do not appear on alarmingly high levels but for achieving total cross cultural competence in intercultural business communication one can say these are barriers that could be lowered and some proceedings for lowering these barriers could be implemented. Ethnocentric and discriminating behavior appears on low and very low levels which cannot be considered as problem areas. The very low scores may also be non existing barriers as this study is based on evaluations not concrete facts or evidence. Regarding ethnocentrism and discrimination the results can be considered good and no further improvement proceedings are necessary, however it is important to keep in mind these barriers may occur and it is vital to continuously keep up with the current good level with having these barriers on low levels. However with stereotyping and having prejudice there are some improvement proceedings that could be implemented. However, this will not be an easy task. Having prejudice is normal to have and all people have it to some level according to Schmidt, W, Conaway, R, Easton, S & Wardrope, W, 2007, p.36. Stereotyping is also a normal human tendency and on psychological levels an automatic way to try to interpret and understand the world and our surroundings. But how does one try to lower these barriers? According to Gore, K. 2007, p. 141-14 sharing and creating practical knowledge is the basis for successful intercultural communication. The questions of how and what knowledge is needed will be discussed further on in this chapter. Ikujiro Nonaka's in 1991 mentions of knowledge creation as the transformation process of *tacit knowledge* to *explicit knowledge*. Tacit knowledge meaning the knowledge about our own culture that tends to be outside our awareness and explicit knowledge being new cultural knowledge of ourselves we have become aware of trough the sharing of information and knowledge. In regards of prejudice and negative stereotyping Maire Dugan and Heidi Burgess discuss the following points in articles written 2003 and 2004. *"Simply stated increased knowledge resulting from increased contact will reduce prejudice levels. Fear is a major cause of prejudice. We have "a fear of the unknown, a fear of the unfamiliar. Fear is the*

*father of prejudice, ignorance is its grandfather" (Stephan and Stephan). This is supported by research. Reducing prejudice and discrimination occurs most successfully when majority and minority individuals interact, have positive experiences, form personal relationships, engage in open and truthful discussions with each other, and develop a personal commitment to reducing prejudice and discrimination."*(Dugan, M, 2004, www.beyondintractability.org/essay/prejudice)

When speaking of reducing negative stereotyping Heidi Burgess discuss the following points in her article. *"The key to reversing negative stereotypes is to contradict them by direct interactions between people. Once people get to know a person from "the other side," they often will determine that the other is not nearly as bad as they originally had assumed, although this is not always the case. More often, however, people really are much more reasonable than their stereotypes would suggest. In that case, getting to know people personally helps to break down negative images. This is especially true when people determine that they actually have things in common with people from the other side. Such things can range from enjoying the same music, hobbies, or sports, to having the same worries about children or aging parents. Shared emotions make people seem human, while stereotypes typically "dehumanize" people. Likewise, shared emotions make empathy possible, which opens the door to new forms of interaction and trust building, at least among the individuals involved. Depending on the context and other interactions, the image of the group as a whole may become more positive as well. Learning that one person can deviate from a stereotype is a good start. The challenge then is to expand such transformative experiences beyond the individuals involved to larger groups."* (Burgess, H, 2003, www.beyondintractability.org/essay/stereotypes)

The above statements would indicate how the process of *tacit knowledge* would be transformed to *explicit* knowledge in regards of lowering negative stereotyping and prejudice. In the spirit of these findings the following proceedings are recommended in order to try to reduce negative stereotyping and prejudice for the spare parts coordinators in Finland.

- Knowledge should be created by getting to know each other better by doing job rotations both ways between case companies. Increased contact on a more personal level seems to lower barriers in most cases. This could be done on a yearly basis as much as possible depending on availability of resources. The individual's that has the least previous cultural experience should be chosen to participate.

- As it is not possible for all employees to go for job rotation, in order to share this knowledge for everyone it is also recommended that person with new cultural knowledge or even better persons from different culture participates in work groups formed by all employees where open discussion occurs about sharing information about each other's cultures and specifically also discussing openly topics of stereotyping and prejudice.

After the above proceedings are done it is very likely that these barriers are lowered to some degree. When these actions are implemented it is also easier to follow the simple guidelines introduced by Taylor 2005 on what points a great intercultural business communicator should follow, the points specifically related to lowering stereotyping and prejudice are **bolded**:

- Show respect

- Show empathy

- **Recognise your prejudices**

- **Do not pre-judge**

- Be open minded

- **Treat people as individuals**

- Avoid distractions

- Be patient

- **Look for similarities**

- Send clear messages

(Taylor, S, 2005, p. 20)

The above point will be presented to the spare part coordinator in Finland which hopefully give good tips to maintain great level in intercultural business communication and helps continuously to improve one's cross-cultural competences.

Regarding the other business communication barriers found in this study. They are a "tougher nut" to crack. Many different types of problem issues seem to exist; some are issues that cannot directly be influenced by the spare parts coordinators in Finland. However it is important to be aware of these problems existing in order to take further steps that might minimize the amount of cases that occur or on optimistic evaluations totally neutralise these problems areas. It is important to mention we can establish that these problems occur; however, this study does not determine how seriously they really affect the work of spare parts coordinators. For example how much time and attention do these problems actually take away from "proper work"? How much do these problem issues minimize the quality of work? However, some further proceedings can be recommended to do in order that proper actions can be implemented. These recommendations may not directly solve the problems but this study only tries to suggest initial steps towards making proper improvement actions. Below are presented again the issues that are considered problematic in business communication from the viewpoint of spare part coordinators in Finland. Behind these are shortly suggested what first initial proceedings could be done to improve possible problem area.

**Middle East Region**

**Email:**

- *Too demanding, not being courteous*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement.

- *Unwillingness to listen*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement.

- *Lack of understanding*

Further study could be done to specify what issues are not understood and to what extent. How seriously does this affect quality of work?

- *Response time is long with complicated issues*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Also, one action to clarify complicated issues may be to use the telephone instead to clarify. Further study could be done to specify what issues have long response time.

- *Not being patient, the lack of trust that issues are being looked after*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Also, explanation to why some issues do not get immediate answers could be explained. Perhaps could build up trust.

- *Using too complicated words, creates barrier to understanding*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It would be good to request for using more "simple language".

- *Incorrect typing*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Perhaps more carefulness required or language training?

- *When several questions are asked they may not all be answered back, not properly reading response*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. More carefulness required when reading response.

- *Not giving clear instructions, asking to do things in too tight schedule, asking for impossible favors*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. More clarification and explanations for how things are done and how long things take to arrange could be instructed from Wärtsilä Finland.

- *Regarding giving country specific instructions, in some cases they are not communicated or informed properly, creates confusion and problems*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Also, it could be clarified to who in the organizations this information should be provided and when. In order to make sure that this information is shared to all concerned.

- *The quality of required information needed with technical communication is in some cases poor, it is not understood what type of information is needed and required from end customer, in some cases some people are not skilled enough for technical communication*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It could be clarified from Wärtsilä Finland what type of information is required for technical enquiries, also more technical training could be considered to be provided to network companies.

**Office communicator:**

- *Use it too much, disturbs work, used to remind too much*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Clear instructions should be provided to when this should be used, for example office communicator busy status should be respected.

- *They might ask you to do something via communicator but not be available themselves when responding*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Perhaps it could be instructed not to be used unless one is available to a certain time.

- *Contacting several persons with the same issue, causes double work*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be clearly instructed not to do this.

- *Using it to ask too small not important questions, the entire issue could have been sorted out via email*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be instructed to use with careful consideration.

- *Not understanding that some questions cannot be answered straight away, asking such things disturbs work and delays investigation of actual matter*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be made clear how long time certain things take to do. Clarification and instructions to way of working is required.

**Telephone:**

- *Too demanding, not being courteous, insisting behavior*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement.

- *Language barrier, poor use of English, strong accent*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Language training perhaps required.

- *Interruptive behavior, do not allow you to speak and explain issue*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Cultural sensitiveness required.

- *Using it too much, calling about the same issue several times sometimes through several persons, interrupts the work at hand and wastes time*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Clear instructions could be provided to when and what situations required a phone call.

- *Phone lines may be bad sometimes, technical difficulties*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies and Product Company Finland. Phone line experts need to look into this and try to fix.

**South Asia Region**

**Email:**

- *With sensitive subjects the matter is not pointed out clearly. Facts are not presented straight forward*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It can be pointed out that issues can be presented straight forward manner to Finns without penalty.

- *Lack of understanding, too high expectations*

Further study could be done to specify what issues are not understood and to what extent. How seriously does this affect quality of work? What types of expectations are considered too high?

- *Unwillingness to listen, explanations are not heard*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement.

- *Urgency is pointed out too often, it is used on common basis and therefore distorts the real importance of the message*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. For example, it should be explained why something is urgent, simply stating urgency is not enough to ensure proper attention to the matter as it is too commonly used.

- *The use of too many reminders, disturbs work*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. For example it can be instructed that if the matter is urgent telephone should be used instead of email reminder.

- *Requires too detailed explanations*

Further study could be done, what information can be considered too detailed, what guidelines can be setup for sufficient information to provide?

- *Sometimes colleagues from South Asia can be offended by straight forward answers from the Finns*

Cultural sensitiveness is required by Wärtsilä Finland spare parts coordinators. It should be advised not to be too straight forward in some situations. Further study could be done for which situations specifically.

- *Incorrect typing*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. More carefulness needed or language training.

- *They do not share documentation sent to them internally in some cases, sometimes you have to send same documentation several times to several persons within the same office*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Network companies should review how they internally share their documentation.

- *When several questions are asked they may not all be answered back, not properly reading response*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. More carefulness needed when reading responses.

- *If more than one person is involved several different instructions and advice for proceeding may occur, creates confusion*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Network companies should internally agree upon who is responsible for specific cases and giving instructions. Internal communication needed. Several persons cannot instruct without speaking to each other.

- *The quality of required information needed with technical communication is in some cases poor, it is not understood what type of information is needed and required from end customer, in some cases some people are not skilled enough for technical communication*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It could be instructed from Wärtsilä Finland more clearly what type of information is needed with technical enquiries. More technical training may also be needed for Network Company personnel.

**Office communicator:**

- *Sensitive subjects are avoided. Straight forward discussion cannot be done*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It can be pointed out that straight forward communication can be done with Finns without fear of insult or wrong doing.

- *It is used too often, disturbs work and when used the same issue maybe brought up to several persons creating double work, even if busy status is used in communicator disturbances still occur*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for

improvement. Clear guidelines to when this can be used should be instructed. Busy status should be respected.

- *Using it to ask too small not important questions, the entire issue could have been sorted out via email*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Careful consideration should be done when using the communicator.

- *Many people may disturb you with the same issue*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Network companies should internally agree upon who is responsible for specific cases and giving instructions. Internal communication needed. Several persons cannot instruct with same issue in different ways.

**Telephone**

- *Language barrier, poor use of English, strong accent*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. Language training needed.

- *Using the telephone too much, in urgent cases too many phone calls prevents you from doing the job at hand*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be clearly instructed from Finland when it is appropriate to make phone call and when not, further study could be done.

- *In some cases the telephone is not used enough, important issues are not brought up to proper attention*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be clearly instructed from Finland when it is appropriate to make phone call and when not, further study could be done.

- *In some cases aggressive behavior occur*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It should be clearly instructed from Finland when it is appropriate to make phone call and when not, further study could be done. Cultural sensitivity is required.

- *Too much irrelevant information is given, time is wasted*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. It could be further studied what is considered irrelevant and what not, based on findings clear instructions could be given on what information is needed case specifically.

- *Speaking too fast*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies. Creating awareness that in some cases the above is a barrier can allow initial steps to be taken for improvement. A kind request to speak slowly could perhaps be done.

- *Phone lines may be bad sometimes, technical difficulties*

The above issue should be brought up to Network Companies and Product Company Finland. Phone line experts need to look into this and try to fix.

To conclude, all above findings and recommendations are introduced in the spirit of making the initial steps towards improving business communication from intercultural viewpoint and other business communication issues found problematic. This study does not intend to have all the answers at once that will solve all existing problems. The key to any problem solving is to identify what are the problems, from there on, case specifically certain problem areas can be approached. Above are introduced issues that should be brought up for the consideration of management and any other stakeholders. However when reviewing the findings one should try to keep in mind it may have gaps and it is subjective from one side only. It is also important to mention in order to not get a distorted view of current business communication that these problem may not occur on a frequent level. In this study also positive feedback and outcome was

revealed in business communication. These findings are not introduced as they are not relevant to this research purpose. However one initial step is to find out more about seriousness for certain problem areas. This study does not reveal how frequently certain problems occur. Still, some certain conclusions can be made. These findings will with certainty guide in the process of improving business communication. Without them improvement process could not be initiated. With careful consideration, combinations of shared knowledge, keeping an open mind towards new experiences and changes and a good portion common sense success is guaranteed.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This chapter will introduce final considerations what should be done in relation to the study. It will discuss the validity, reliability and introduce what future study could be made to support findings or to complete gaps or questions that may still be unanswered.

### 6.1 Validity and reliability of results

To discuss the issues of validity and reliability one must establish an understanding for what is meant by validity and reliability. Remenyi, Williams, Money and Swartz introduce the following in 1998. Validity concerns weather the researcher has gained full access to knowledge and meanings of the respondents. They list four concerns regarding validity which should be considered when evaluating validity. These are quality of researcher as a sensing instrument, transparency of research process, quality of relationship with respondents and quality of argument and interpretation.

(Remenyi, D, Williams, B, Money, A & Swartz, E, 1998, p. 114-116)

So the first issue for discussion is how sensitively and effectively has the evidence been collected by researcher. Regarding effectiveness the following can be mentioned. Out of total target population of 24 there was received 21 responses. This gives a response rate of 87, 5%. This is a majority of the population. It is fairly safe to say that the results received cover majority of opinions. Some margin of error may of course occur. Colin Fisher in 2007 introduces a table introducing percentage for margin of errors in relation to responses received from target population. There it is introduced that out of target population of 50 and 44 responses received the margin of error is 5%. (Fisher, C, 2007, p. 190)

Those 44 responses are 88% of total population. In comparison to 88% and an 87, 5% response rate, it can be strongly argued that a 5% margin of error or very close to it is the margin of error in this study. The above findings give very good representation of target population in this study. Regarding sensitivity and getting honest and correct answers from study participants. The following can be mentioned. The study contained questions of delicate substance which may have prevented truthful answering. For example the question asking if a colleague acts intentionally in a harmful way to another indicating discrimination is something very delicate to ask. This may not be admitted directly due to general social un-acceptance. Therefore the following actions were done in the research to increase certainty of getting truthful answers.

- Research was conducted to evaluate others, not oneself as it is not easy to admit own "flaws"

- Research was conducted anonymously; researcher did not know who responded to which questions, the questionnaires were returned to a sealed carton box. This has prevented any social labeling.

It is believed the above actions minimized greatly the potential of getting untruthful answers. One thing must be said, as the research is partly done in regards of evaluations not concrete facts or evidence there is always a possibility of those results not representing the truth, however, it is believed the results are close to reality due to high credibility in target population. As the respondents are highly educated, professional are experienced in their work they can be considered as good interpreters and evaluators. It is not believed the truth to be far away from those estimations and evaluations. In regards of the business communication problems occurred in the qualitative part of the study, they are based on own experience which can be considered as facts.

Regarding transparency it can be said that all major issues related to the study are presented. Any parts that may have not been introduced are left out unintentionally and if such parts are discovered they are not considered substantial or relevant for this study. All aspects in the study are presented and open to

scrutiny. The way interpretations are done is explained and this should allow an understanding for what results can be used for when keeping in mind the limitations.

The relationship with the respondents has been kept sterile. All the outcomes are presented as the study participants have answered. Some comments made in questionnaires by the respondents have been interpreted and presented in a subjective manner from researcher to gain better linguistic clearness. Other than that outcome is presented as per respondents have written. The questionnaires and results will also be available for future scrutiny if needed.

Regarding of the quality for the arguments, they seem reasonable and plausible and other theory and findings support them. The research has been negotiated with those involved and fits the situations discussed and agreed. The findings can be used for a basis for actions. With these points considered the validity can be considered high.

Regarding reliability, Remenyi, Williams, Money and Swartzin 1998 explain the characteristics of reliability. These are that similar observations are made by researchers on different occasions. It also mentioned as for new studies this may not have occurred or be possible. In these cases reliability is believed to be achieved by leaving an audit trail which enables future investigation for any doubts that may occur.

(Remenyi, D, Williams, B, Money, A & Swartz, E, 1998, p. 114-116)

In this study both aspects are met regarding reliability. For any future doubts research material will remain available for scrutiny and investigation. Also, other studies and researches have made similar observations as this study. For example Bovee and Thill in 2005 describes problems with using instant messaging tools such as office communicator. They inform one of the problems which has been occurred and found out in other studies is that constant interruptions may occur. This study had similar findings and increases the reliability of the study. It will not be introduced for every single issue findings for other studies but it is argued

that reliability is reached to satisfactory level by leaving audit trail any future investigations if doubts should occur.

With all these considerations in mind, validity and reliability is argued to be on a good level in this study.

## 6.2 Future research

Last but not least it is good to discuss some elements for future research that might have occurred during the research process or might have been considered but not used for the study. Often in research new issues may occur that are not considered earlier or as the research progresses it may be discovered that there are gaps that can be filled in or that findings can be supported by new research. This research found a number of business communication issues that were considered problematic in the eyes of the respondents. Many of these findings were represented in a manner that could be investigated further for more clarity and also to find out how badly these influence work and in what type of ways. Shortly stated it can be said that this study gave an idea on what kind of levels of high to low intercultural business communication barriers occurred, but it did not find out in the qualitative research part on what kind of level these other business communication barriers occurred. For example, it was found out that interruptive behavior was a business communication problem when using instant messaging tools. It can be established that this problem occurs. But how often does this occur and how much time does this interruptive behavior effect on other work tasks? As an example this is something that can be carefully considered before further actions are taken. Therefore, further research is recommended on such topics. A number of such type issues were found out which gives plenty of new opportunities for research. One should also not make any too drastic actions towards some problem areas found without knowing the seriousness of communication problems. A common saying exists that "one should not make a bull out of a fly". Too much time and energy should not be wasted on something

that hardly is a problem. Therefore, for many of the problems found in the qualitative research the first step as improvement suggestion was made as further research before actions are taken. This being said, in fact all other business communication problems found in the qualitative findings can be taken up for further research in the spirit of establishing greater understanding. The following questions can be asked for each new business communication problem found in the qualitative part of this study.

- How often does the problem occur?

- How much time does the problem take from other work tasks?

- What other difficulties for job tasks does this problem create? For example, does it lower quality of other work? In what ways?

- Does these problems effect on company productivity and profitability?

In theory the list can go on and on, depending on what is the purpose for further investigation. This can be subjective from several points. The above points can be further investigated for the benefit of Wärtsilä Finland Spare Parts Coordination Team functionality. It can also be mentioned that the Network Companies located in Middle-East and South-Asia could make similar type of study from their viewpoint, for sure communication barriers would be found from their perspective also which would ensure not getting a too much one sided view. This would fill this gap and a total picture of all communication barriers occurring between these parties could be drawn. This was not done in this study due to limitations and large amount of research required. All in all, this study completed one piece in a very large puzzle. It has initiated a good start. Above suggested further study would help to complete the missing pieces. We are now one step closer to seeing to entire picture. Every step brings us closer to the finish line, eventually the final step will take us to the ultimate goal, as proven by the final step Neil Armstrong took to reach the ultimate goal of putting the man on the moon July 21st in 1969.

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# APPENDIXES

Dear study participant,

Please **carefully** read below statements and mark with X on a scale from 1 - 5 on how much you agree or disagree to the statements. 1 representing highly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out if intercultural barries exist and what are problem areas in intercultural business communication between WFI spare part coordinators and spare sales personnel located in Middle East and South Asia Network Companies.

**Please note your response is confidential and no name details will be published.**

NETWORK COMPANY EMPLOYEES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION BELONG TO SIMILAR SOCIAL GROUPS AND THEY ACT IN SIMILAR WAYS.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND HAVE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OR OPINIONS TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION AS AN ENTITY OF A GROUP.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND ACT IN A DISADVANTAGEOUS MANNER TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND BELIEVE THE VALUES OF OUR OWN CULTURE AND THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE IS THE ONLY CORRECT WAY TO INTERACT AND ANYTHING DONE DIFFERENTLY IN THIS CONTEXT BY NC COLLEAGUES IN MIDDLE EAST REGION IS INCORRECT.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

NETWORK COMPANY EMPLOYEES FROM SOUTH ASIA REGION BELONG TO SIMILAR SOCIAL GROUPS AND THAT THEY ACT IN SIMILAR WAYS.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND HAVE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OR OPINIONS TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM SOUT ASIA REGION AS AN ENTITY OF A GROUP.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND ACT IN A DISADVANTAGEOUS MANNER TOWARDS MY NC COLLEAGUES FROM SOUTH ASIA REGION

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

MY SPC COLLEAGUES IN FINLAND BELIEVE THE VALUES OF OUR OWN CULTURE AND THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE IS THE ONLY CORRECT WAY TO INTERACT AND ANYTHING DONE DIFFERENTLY IN THIS CONTEXT BY NC COLLEAGUES IN SOUTH ASIA REGION IS INCORRECT.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Strongly disagree | Partly disagree | I do not know | Partly agree | Strongly agree |

Dear study participant,

Please answer below question by freely typing in the text box your response. Write your answer down in relation to using the following 3 communication channels - **Email, Office Communicator and Telephone.**

**WHAT COMMUNICATION ISSUES DO YOU FIND MOST DIFFICULT WHEN INTERACTING WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES FROM MIDDLE EAST REGION THROUGH BELOW CHANNELS?**

**EMAIL**

Click on box and type here - or manually write you answer

**OFFICE COMMUNICATOR**

Click on box and type here - or manually write you answer

TELEPHONE

Click on box and type here – or manually write you answer

Dear study participant,

Please answer below question by freely typing in the text box your response. Write your answer down in relation to using the following 3 communication channels - **Email, Office Communicator and Telephone.**

**WHAT COMMUNICATION ISSUES DO YOU FIND MOST DIFFICULT WHEN INTERACTING WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES FROM SOUTH ASIA REGION THROUGH BELOW CHANNELS?**

EMAIL

Click on box and type here – or manually write you answer

OFFICE COMMUNICATOR

Click on box and type here – or manually write you answer

TELEPHONE

Click on box and type here - or manually write you answer

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE!!
THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!

**Content of email sent along with questionnaire to respondents:**

Dear colleagues,

I am currently writing a thesis about intercultural business communication.

The research is done between us spare part coordinators here in WFI and NC contacts located in Middle East and South Asia region. I intend to find out problem areas between our intercultural business communications and perhaps discuss improvement suggestions in my study.

I kindly ask you to open attached excel sheet (4 pages printed) → print it out → fill it in (or do the opposite) → return paper version to a box labelled *"business communication study – questionnaire return"* located as per below:

VAASA – On my desk

TURKU – On chair next to Rayna's desk

This way of returning the questionnaire ensures **total anonymity** for your responses! So it is safe to express any opinion you have – so fire away!

I assume 1 week response time is enough so **return the questionnaire latest Friday 22.01.2010!**

To refresh your memory, you are evaluating business communication for below regions:

**MIDDLE EAST** - Includes countries*:*
*Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Djibouti.*

**SOUTH ASIA -** Includes countries: *Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.*

I kindly ask to carefully read the questions through and take some time to answer, the more you have to say the better.

Thanks for participating, I expect 100%  response rate, if you dont participate there will be **serious consequences!!** ...Or maybe not so serious but I appreciate if you answer ☺