Intercultural Communication Competence: A Study of the Practices of Coffee Business Managers from Nicaragua affiliated to the Central America Trading Office

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the practices that lead Nicaraguan coffee business managers to manage a successful intercultural communication. For this investigation, a qualitative method approach was chosen. This study used interviews as a data collection method. The results indicate that most of the Nicaraguan coffee business managers found ways of achieving intercultural communication competence, all of which be suitable to use by their peers and not only by researchers.

Key Words: culture, intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence
1. Introduction

With the globalization and the demographic changes of businesses in the labor market around the world, the cultural communication competence area of Human Resources has become more and more important. A variety of factors show us the differences when we refer to the word culture. A large amount of businesses is incrementing their efforts to successfully manage the cultural communication between employees, considering the fact that researchers found obstacles as well benefits of these differences on the business outcomes (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Some examples of benefits are found in the study conducted by Williams & O’Reilly (1998) that suggest that a diverse cultural interaction can increase the knowledge, ideas and perspectives that can influence the creative process and also decision-making. The communication accommodation theory proposed by Giles in posits that people adjust their speech, vocal patterns and gestures which suggest some obstacles such as cohesiveness condescend and over-accommodation. The high and low context theory by Hall proposes a message with an implicit meaning in some parts of the communication from one part while a message with a clear meaning from the other.

As global markets emerge, intercultural communication is becoming a business necessity in the goal of expanding a company around the world. Employees reap tangible and intangible benefits from these interactions, not the least of which include respect from other workers and business gains. Top organizations all over the world communicate with a significant group of ethnic and culturally diverse employees. They are realizing the importance of intercultural communication competence in a multicultural environment.

The management practices on intercultural communication can help managers to work in advance on a successful succession plan or business strategy anticipating possible scenarios or situations before it happens. The research is focused on the Nicaraguan coffee businesses in Central America Trading Office due to the strong diplomatic relationship between all of the countries in Central America except Costa Rica, and the interaction between trade, investment, tourism, cultural promotion and work programs that are being implement between all the countries that are part of the trade agreement of CATO. Taiwan has offered loans totaling US$60 million as financial support for the development of small and midsize enterprises in Central America. In terms of coffee, Taiwan is the 6th country in Nicaraguan coffee destinations, generating 8.3 million dollars during 2015-2016 period. Taiwan businessmen, as well, anticipate benefits from the closer Central American ties. Currently, Taiwan is negotiating the signing of agreements that will cut to zero the import duties on Taiwan products shipped into these countries.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication has been part of the human interaction due to the fact of the different languages that exist in the world but the studies and investigations about this topic is relatively modern
originated from the development of international trading activities. As part of globalization, the creation of different ways to develop communication such as the internet, cellphones and such technology, people from different cultural backgrounds have become closer and can be informed about other news in real time that happen all around the world (Jandt, 2010).

A definition of intercultural communication explains that the participants in the communication perceive themselves different in aspects such as language and cultural background. The definition places intercultural communication next to other concepts such as interethnic, interracial, and intergroup communication (Kim, 2007). Different type of variables can be pointed out like sign systems and cultural behaviors, playing an important role in human interaction, that make us realize that intercultural communication cannot be limited to geographical differences or verbal interaction Fall et al. (2013).

Edward T. Hall introduced the concept of intercultural communication on his book The Silent Language back in 1959, as the first reference of this type of reciprocal action. As a result, he is considered the founder of intercultural communication. The definition published in his book basically infers that culture is communication (Neuliep, 2014).

Intercultural communication is the outcome of the diverse world on where we live nowadays and the interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds comes in hand to develop successful communities, international business cooperation and reduce difficulties. Unity is impossible without communication and only when culturally diverse people interact they can create harmony. At this point, intercultural communication is a necessity (Neuliep, 2014).

Intercultural communication implicates interaction between individuals with different cultural backgrounds and attitudes, enough to change the communication characteristics. It involves two or more people from notably different cultures (Samovar and Porter, 2004). Intercultural communication compromise individuals working towards a successful channel of communication inadvertent of their inequality. Also, people preserve characteristics of their own culture when it happens (Lustig and Koester, 1999).

A model designed by Carley Dodd explains that when there is an interaction between two people from different cultural backgrounds, their own personalities and interpersonal relationship styles, a third culture can be created, leaving their on cultures intact but only until these two people can overcome the differences between them and are willing and motivated to adapt the way they communicate. In some other cases individuals just lead their intentions on learning and adjusting to a new culture (Dodd, 1998). To reach a new social adaptation, meaningful experiences of intercultural communication are extremely important for a person with an original cultural identity (Kim, 2007).

The first step to develop and achieve a successful communication within different cultural backgrounds is the appropriation of a source of knowledge about other cultures to increase cultural awareness. It is imperative to learn about fundamental characteristics of the other individual whom we are interacting with, such as basic aspects that could include history, religion, political system, common
values and manners (Samovar et al., 2013). Failing to follow this step will probably lead to frustrations, anger and difficulties in establishing a successful relationship (Dodd, 1998).

The final objective of intercultural practices is to obtain a true intercultural communication, every individual is able to share a common interest with another, where one is ambitious to give and the other to take in equivalent manner (Kim, 2007). This balanced state of intercultural communication can only be achieved by establishing a multicultural awareness with universal values (Baraldi, 2006).

2.2 Intercultural Communication Competence

The interaction between different cultures and the influence that this interaction has on communication bring forward the question on how to manage these differences. The solution to the question and the success of this interaction relies on the concept known as intercultural competence. One of the key research subjects in the intercultural communication research is intercultural competence. All data gathered, analyzed, processed and published, however, come with some irregularities (Chen & Starosta, 1998).

There is a large amount of studies since intercultural competence has been the subject of study of different disciplines but the results of them are not comparable due to the absence of common nomenclature. At first, the intercultural competence research was conducted to analyses problems such as overseas foreign bankruptcy, prediction on foreign success, choosing the suitable employees and developing a successful intercultural training. This practical research enriches the knowledge about intercultural experience but was not really focused on theory development. Later on, and with the use of different approaches, methods and conceptualizations to study intercultural communication competence conduct to the diffusion of the research tradition (Lustin & Koester, 2006).

The research of a same subject through a variety of perspectives and within different disciplines led to a diversity of concepts of intercultural communication competence. The denomination competence was gathered from sociolinguistics from whom it was taken over as an approved theoretical concept by intercultural communication scholars. These days, the concept of competence is more frequently used because it encloses the relevance of both effectiveness and appropriateness for the successful results in intercultural cooperation (Bradford et al., 2000).

Nowadays, two key dimensions of intercultural communication competence are appropriateness and effectiveness (Bradford et al., 2000). The definitions of intercultural communication competence usually are based on these two factors. One of the most common definitions of intercultural communication competence cites that is the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors to obtain a desired result in a specific environment (Chen & Starosta, 1998).

Effectiveness refer to the ability to obtain a positive result between an intercultural interaction. Is related with the individual satisfaction of an individual achieving a goal in specific. Appropriateness is related to doing it respecting the contextual factors. It is reached by being polite by trying to evade the violation of any norm of interaction. The nature of the relationship between the parts involved in the
communication behavior is absolutely important to determine what is considered appropriate and what is not (Imahori and Lanigan, 2001).

Although both of them are significant to understand intercultural communication competence, the point of view from the researchers can change towards effectiveness and appropriateness. For instance, recognize outcome-focused approach from message-focused approach. The first one is related to the cultural adaptation with a priority on effectiveness dimension. On the second approach, the perception of effectiveness as competent makes it unnecessary. The skills in the communication process is the only relevant factor for it (Imahori & Lanigan 2001).

The principles for appropriate and effective communication behavior are obtain from the cultural backgrounds of the people involved, becoming two extensive categories to describe intercultural communication competence and this is the reason why an intercultural communication is more challenging. The parameters of appropriateness and effectiveness differ in a multicultural environment. Consequently, being a person with intercultural appropriate and effective skills requires different alternatives of operation and accommodation of communication behavior (Lustig and Koester, 2006).

Apart from appropriateness and effectiveness, another key factors that can be mentioned in the topic of intercultural communication competence are knowledge, skills and attitudes. The correct attitude, effective and operational knowledge and required skillset can lead to competence (Bennett & Bennett 2004).

The ability of a person to understand a message when there is a communication in an unusual environment is a cognitive component. The emotional capacity to face the challenges of this unusual environment in the communication is an affective component. The combination of the two previously mentioned components trough behavior is called operational component. These three components interact so that comprehensive knowledge leads to the proper attitude which together increment the possibility of skilled performance (Kim, 2001).

Cultural and communicational patterns are different and depend on the type of culture, as well as the construction of competence. What might be considered competent in one culture does not significantly point out the same results in a different culture. It has been proved that intercultural communication scholars have a better capacity to recognize the important of context than interpersonal communication researchers (Lustig & Koester, 2003). What might be perceived as competent communication in Taiwan cannot be applied to some situations in Nicaragua, for example. Situational factors cannot be ignored in the communication. Interaction models between person and situation are suggested to avoid a criticized international communication competence because of omitting the situational context. The importance of situational context proposes also that intercultural communication skills cannot be applied in one context and into a different one because the evaluation of these skills depend on the task and the interaction of the cultures of the participants (Salo-Lee, 2003).

Situational context has received more attention recently by intercultural communication competence
scholars, considering that the competence not only reside in an individual or culture but also on the actual context of the communication. The judgment of competence depends on context, following the tendency to understand it as an evaluative but also depends on the objectives of the interaction, the verbal and non-verbal messages used to accomplish these objectives or goals and the relationship between the individuals (Lustig and Koester, 2006).

Normally, the receiver is in charge of evaluating the performance according to his own criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness. This approach considers intercultural communication competence as a social judgment, an evaluation of another individual performance. Therefore, the same performance may be perceived competent or incompetent depending on the evaluation of the person and his perception. The criteria for being considered culturally competent are proportional to the diversity of the patterns of communication (Lustig & Koester, 2006).

There are three stages of the research on intercultural communication competence. The early research, that assumed competence as a set of skills that an individual display, focused on cultural adaptation issues. Later on, scholars noticed some other factors such as motivation, skills and knowledge that could affect the judgment of a competent communicator. Nowadays, usually an expert on the field judges the communication behavior and concludes if is competent or not, using his on criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness. Due to this approach, intercultural communication competence is considered as a social judgment, evaluating and individual performance. The criteria for being considered competent or incompetent is driven by culture due to the patterns of communication being culturally diverse depending on the people involved. Lastly, competence can be interpreted as residing within interaction and is a result of the relationship between individuals. This suggest that competence is evaluated during the communication interaction depending on appropriateness criteria and not at the very end of the communication in terms of effective outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Question

What are the practices of Coffee Business managers from Nicaragua affiliated to CATO to manage a successful intercultural communication?

3.2 Research Approach

For this study, a qualitative method approach was chosen. The study used interviews as a data collection method. A skype interview of a set of standard questions created to identify as many practices as possible with different managers that are directly involved with the subject of the study. The individual interviews enable interviewers to explore deeply into social and personal matters. Interviews are one of the most well know strategies used for data collection in qualitative research (Dicicco & Crabtree, 2006).
3.3 Participants

The study was focused on the coffee businesses from Nicaragua that are affiliated to the Central America Trading Office which serves to facilitate mutual interaction of trade and economy, strategic alliances and international investment between Taiwan and Central America. Taiwan has signed free trade agreements with Central American countries and has benefited from duty-free treatment. Taiwan signs Free Trade Agreement with Central America countries to advance the liberalization of international trade. The Agreement first entered into force between Taiwan and Panama on January 1, 2004, followed by Nicaragua on Jan 1, 2008; Guatemala on July 1, 2006; El Salvador on March 1, 2008; Honduras on July 15, 2008.

The total amounts of Nicaraguan companies that are part of the CATO are 41. From these companies, the study is focused on the coffee business related companies for the total amount of 10. The participants were the managers involved directly into the intercultural communication process with their Taiwanese partners. A number of 10 interviews were conducted for this study.

3.4 Instrument

The interview questions were designed based on the research purpose and literature review of the study. The questions were primarily developed in Spanish language, since the nationality of the target participants is from a native Spanish speaking country. Before conducting the interviews, expert advice and consultation was used to obtain guidance from the advisor professor and subject matter experts for its development.

3.5 Data Collection

For this study, interview questions were developed based on the desire research objective. Experts advise was seek in order to meet the desire data.

For the interview process, which was a formal interview process, the questionnaire was uploaded to a google document 3 days prior to the interview, after setting up the time and date with available candidates. The time frame for the interview was between 30 to 45 minutes. The interview included open questions on what are the practices Nicaraguan coffee business managers follow to overcome and avoid possible difficulties in terms of intercultural communication. The interview was conducted and recorded using a voice recorder program from a mobile device, listened carefully by the researcher and translated in order to write the data transcripts and upload them to ATLAS.ti, computer software. The ATLAS.ti software has been used in many qualitative studies to support the coding process because it allows the researchers to code the data (Yang & Wildemuth, 2009).
### Interview Information List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym of Interviewees</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration of the interview</th>
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<td>32 minutes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>04/11/2018</td>
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<td>37 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>06/07/2018</td>
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<tr>
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<td>06/12/2018</td>
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<td>33 minutes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>04/10/2018</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>36 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>06/15/2018</td>
<td>9:45 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>06/27/2018</td>
<td>10:45 a.m.</td>
<td>29 minutes</td>
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### 3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data depends on the purpose of the researcher. For this study, interviews are the data collection method. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) suggest that the first step to a successful data analysis process is to get familiar with the data. After, the data should be categorized by research question or topic, time period or event, which leaded to have a solid understanding of the similarities or differences of the responses. The last step is an interpretation of all the findings within the process.

The researcher listened to the digital recording many times and transcript the data into a document, that was sent to the interviewees for validation. The online software automatically generated a database with all the answers. Once the data was validated and entered into this software, was organized into categories using codes depending of the similarities. These similarities depend on the research questions and supported by the literature review. The coding of this data started with the examination of the transcripts to detect similarities and differences, and then assign names to different parts of the data collected (Mertens, 2005). A total of 14 codes were given and organized into 7 categories.
4. Results and Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>What are the practices of Coffee Business managers from Nicaragua affiliated to CATO to manage a successful intercultural communication?</td>
<td>4.1 Effective message exchange</td>
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<td>4.2 Reaching mutual understanding</td>
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<td>4.4 Frequency of communication</td>
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4.1 Effective Message Exchange

Communication cannot be thought of in the absence of exchange of ideas. The first step of a message exchange is the ability to transmit the message in the proper way. Nicaraguan coffee business managers are aware of the importance of transmitting a message effectively. A good practice followed by managers is to express a message using clear ideas when transmitting it to their Taiwanese counterpart. It is very important for them to make sure that the information or message they are transmitting is correct and objective. First, they compose the message in their mind, based on past experience explained on the first research findings. Next, they organize it in a logical order so their counterpart will understand it immediately and do not get confused by the message. Before this process, however, they make an estimate of the knowledge their Taiwanese counterpart has of the content of the message so that they can choose the proper terms that are most understandable to them. A systematic way of ordering ideas is a good suggestion when delivering a message. One of them said:

First, you have to be very clear while transmitting the message. I am always very clear and try to order my ideas before sharing them, thinking carefully on the words I am going to use for communication. Think first what you want to say before saying it. I try to be concise with the message and speak only the necessary. The right message should not be too long because the other person might lose focus.

Simple messages cause a bigger impact for Nicaraguan coffee business managers. As for the data gathered, they leave behind technical language and empty words. They have an effective use of words that could phrase their message with precision. Making their message genuine and avoiding contradictions will gain the credibility of their Taiwanese counterpart and ease the communication, focusing on elements that should be recalled in repetition. All the information makes sense since the language and choice of words they use, the tone of voice even their body language is central to the way their counterpart will interpret in the message.

4.2 Reaching Mutual Understanding

Most of the interviewees agreed that to ensure a message is understood, there are 3 primary factors that are important: be able to read a face reaction as a part of non-verbal communication, ask a question to make sure they understand and recap in case is needed.
The expressions that they can recognize in their Taiwanese counterpart employ a number of different cognitive processes. Nicaraguan coffee business managers had been trying to read facial expressions to have an insight about the understanding of their Taiwanese counterpart. The emotional expressions presented by the facial gestures are not only involuntary reflexes, but also have a communicative element. Context also plays an important role to understand the importance of body language. Managers are good at distinctly analyzing, recognizing and describing the emotions expressed by their Taiwanese counterpart. Most of the time, Nicaraguan coffee business managers look at expressions and body language as a whole rather than focusing on single actions. If the facial expressions are not clear or some of them are not able to detect any emotions or recognize anything, another method used by some Nicaraguan coffee business managers is to ask in a polite way if there is a mutual understanding. Follow-up questions are an important part of the face to face communication. Without these questions, Nicaraguan coffee business managers and their counterpart will end up engaging in the exchange of a variety of information without ever talking comprehensively about any particular aspect:

_Sometimes I study the face reaction of my counterpart, to make sure there is some type of signal of understanding. I try to read their facial expression after delivering a message to see if they look confused. The second most important thing for me is to ask if the other person understood the message clearly and if there is any question or concern related to it._

One manager pointed that he not only asks questions but also make a recap of the content as other way to reach a mutual understanding. These brief summary statement ensure the information stays fresh and also makes certain that they are aware of any information that has been exchange and understood. Also gives them more freedom on how they want to convey the exact same ideas, but in a way that suits their counterpart. Asking their counterpart to paraphrase what they said is an excellent way to look for inconsistencies of the message and barriers to a mutual understanding. He said:

_I ensure that the other person understands what I am saying by making a little summary of what we talked and also ensure that I answer any question according to what is expressed or following the line about the topic in discussion._

Although in the context of intercultural communication, reaching a mutual understanding also depends of the managers’ ability to listen carefully to their counterpart, the channel chosen and method to communicate, body language or facial expressions used and timing, all of these aspects contribute positively to a better opportunity to understand by their counterpart. The Nicaraguan coffee business managers cannot fully control their counterpart response. However, being respectful, clear and honest will more likely result in a more productive intercultural communication process.

### 4.3 Communication Etiquette

Nicaraguan coffee business managers agreed that communication etiquette is vital in any business settings and can go a long way towards working productively with individuals from different backgrounds. One of them pointed the importance of this. Respect and politeness are always factor that
Politeness and respect should be more apart of people today in society because that is what makes people kind. Politeness is when people show respect towards one another and that should be expressed more in our society. Just being polite can make a difference in someone’s attitude and reflect respect onto them and they will show respect back:

*Follow always the common rules of communication in terms of respect, politeness and etiquette. If you are very polite and respectful while communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, you can avoid some difficulties. Even if there is any disagreement during our negotiations, if you are respectful the communication will always be good. Let them talk without interruptions and then you expose your point of view about the matter. I think this can be applied to any communication process. It is a matter of respect.*

Business is about relationships. Good relationships can lead to greater trust and better partnerships. Overall, communication etiquette for Nicaraguan coffee business managers relies on the basic principle of accepting the responsibility to inform their counterpart what they think is important. A lack of professionalism in their conversation may affect the business relationship. While they are sending and receiving information more quickly and frequently, managers are not losing the art of clear and respectful communication. Therefore, Communication etiquette is an important step for Nicaraguan coffee business managers.

4.4 Frequency of Communication

Another good practice that Nicaraguan coffee business managers consider important, is a constant communication with their Taiwanese counterpart. They agreed that the more information they share on a daily bases can help to improve the overall communication and avoid difficulties. One of the managers pointed that the best time to do it is as soon as he gets into his office to check his personal mail, developing a pattern of waiting too long to reply to an email from your business partners may cause them to decide you don't have the speed it takes to excel in your business relationship. He mentioned:

*Try to maintain a constant communication, inform them as much as you can about your part of the deal, how is the progress of the business going and other relevant information they need to know. I reply a message received as soon as possible, I usually do it first thing in the morning after checking my email account.*

Constant communication has become a norm once social media became a possibility for Nicaraguan coffee business managers to talk to their Taiwanese counterpart. It can be very beneficial for managers. The frequency of communication that Nicaraguan coffee business managers have with their Taiwanese counterpart is very important. If the frequency of communication is low, they make sure to improve this factor immediately, increasing the level of communication and decreasing the time for response or reply. As perceived by managers, a prolonged waiting time by their Taiwanese counterpart can create lack of interest in continuing a business relationship. Constant communication allows Nicaraguan coffee business managers to maintain a strong and productive relationship with their Taiwanese counterparts.
coffee business managers to adapt and grow to continue meeting the standards and requirements as a successful intercultural communication practice.

4.5 Language Adaptation

Because of the innate complexity of language, Nicaraguan coffee business managers do not share language factors with Asian culture to facilitate open and clear communication frequently. Language adaptation is important for Nicaraguan coffee business managers to avoid any difficulties with their Taiwanese counterpart, most of them agreed on have a neutral use of words that can be understand by any audience. Different cultures develop their own adaptation to a different linguistic environment that fit the context of communication and social identity. Nicaraguan coffee business managers try also to avoid slangs or words that other people are not familiar. One manager mentioned:

I try not to use words that I am not familiar with and ensure that they understood everything before the communication ends. Also, avoid common phrases or expressions from the language used in the communication (slangs).

For one of them, their way of speaking is a factor in consideration while communicating. When engaging into a conversation, tone of voice is as important as the words they use. Communication style plays an important role and reveals certain aspects of their personality to their counterpart. If listened carefully, their counterpart can understand factors such as emotional state, their confidence level, the domain they have over the language chosen for communication and if possible geographical roots of the accent they have acquired. He pointed out:

I am always very clear when I am speaking, with a good tone of voice, avoiding slangs, good domain of the language spoken and listening to what others have to say.

Nicaraguan coffee business managers have been adapting their language based on the communication goal with their counterpart and the situation. Adaptation in this intercultural communication context occur on the repetition priming. In this context, managers permanently adjust their linguistic preferences, or they learn from their linguistic experiences with their counterpart.

4.6 Self-Awareness

To manage a successful communication, the individual behavior and personality influence positively, as for some of the Nicaraguan coffee business managers response, there are some factors related to this that have an impact Self-awareness is crucial for Nicaraguan coffee business managers, it allows them to analyze aspects they need to improve and identify factors they possess to make changes to the communication process. It is a unique and separate individual experience, it helps them to have a better understanding of themselves. A good personality and a positive attitude while communicating facilitates things, one of the managers mentioned:

Be aware that we are two different individuals and that there might be a lot of differences in the way we do things, including communication. Once you are aware then you know you have to pay special attention the way you talk and behave. I am always patient and try to follow a good communication
flow, letting me and my counterpart expose our ideas clearly, never speaking over each other. Furthermore, be open minded and accept new ideas and recommendations.

As for the data analyzed, one of the goals of the self-awareness process for Nicaraguan coffee business managers is to create better self-knowledge. This being said, previous knowledge becomes a key factor for them. It helps them prepare in advance and have a general idea of the communication ahead, avoiding false expectations. There are several ways to research beforehand, one of them is to take advantage of the tools available, such as the internet, and research on successful practices that can be applied in a similar scenario. One manager said:

*Is an advantage to be aware and previously study the basic rules of how to behave while dealing with a person from other culture, I believe that our if you took your time to learn a little about verbal and non-verbal communication, other people can notice it, starting from the greeting, visual contact, posture to certain manners.*

Nicaraguan coffee business managers perceived that their Taiwanese counterpart see them as important and valuable partners, providing positive feedback and strengthening their business relationship, they see themselves correspondingly. Self-awareness suggests that this perception that managers have is more useful to change positively their behavior adaptability and self-appraisals into a common intercultural communication practice. Managers will make efforts to imitate the actions and character traits that they admire in the Asian society thus creating self-awareness of what they desire to be as an individual to achieve a mutual and beneficial business relationship.

**4.7 Third Party Involved**

Another practice implemented to solve difficulties in the communication process for Nicaraguan coffee business managers is the external assistance needed, in terms of face to face communication, they referred to an interpreter. The interpreter role during an intercultural communication encounter between the two parts involved is to facilitate the interaction. His responsibility is to make sure that the message being transmitted is communicate precisely. An interpreter in any case is responsible for the content of the message. He takes an important part during a face to face communication encounter. The selection of words that an interpreter makes has to be very careful. Usually, Nicaraguan coffee business managers have been working with specific interpreters facilitated by CATO. Managers believe that this can be helpful in most cases and they have experienced interpreters they seek for assistance:

*Sometimes an interpreter is required, someone we have been working previously that we know has been doing a good job, and use him to ensure the message is understood and that the communication is successful.*

Nicaraguan coffee business managers summarize the discussion and check whether their counterpart is ready to end the discussion and that there are no further questions. Face to face communication is not common in this context of intercultural communication and the use of an interpreter is not common but they represent the link between the managers and their Taiwanese counterpart, without whom the
meaning and the value of the message transmitted cannot be understood by any of them. Once communication is over, they allow the interpreter to leave separately with their counterpart.

5. Discussion

Chen & Starosta, (1998) defined intercultural communication competence as the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors to obtain a desired result in a specific environment. According to Lusting and Koester (2006) the judgment of competence depends on context, following the tendency to understand it as an evaluative but also depends on the goals or objectives of the interaction, the verbal and non-verbal messages used to achieve these objectives or goals and the relationship between the individuals. Most emphasize some practices to solve difficulties during the communication process and avoid them in future negotiations.

6. Conclusions

Nicaraguan coffee business managers had been successfully managing their communication with their Taiwanese counterpart for years, increasing the value of their relationship and bringing tangible benefits, not only monetary. Lusting and Koester (2006) also pointed that being a person with intercultural appropriate and effective skills requires alternative choices of actions and accommodation of communication behavior. Data analyzed from the interviewees backed up this statement and indicates that competence is evaluated during the communication interaction depending on appropriateness criteria and not at the very end of the communication in terms of effective outcome. Most of the Nicaraguan coffee business managers found ways of achieving intercultural communication competence, all of which be suitable to use by their peers and not only by researchers.

This study has only investigated the practices of Nicaraguan coffee business managers; it has not made an assessment on their Taiwanese counterpart. Further investigation on the Taiwanese counterpart can be assessed. Their response should be analyzed against the results of this investigation in order to establish the optimal practices for intercultural communication competence.

References


