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Intercultural Conflicts Between New Zealanders and Japanese under Business Conditions

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity includes many different values and behaviours. This frequently causes intercultural conflicts and communication break-downs. If people do not know these differences, they cannot know the reasons for these communication failures. People who communicate with others from different cultural groups, therefore, have to be aware of the different cultural values and communication rules these target cultural groups have.

When New Zealanders work with the Japanese people, what are the factors to prevent communication? This dissertation aims to answer this question. An interview survey was held in order to analyse successful cases and unsuccessful cases of intercultural communication between New Zealanders and Japanese under work conditions. The Japanese managers and employees were interviewed to investigate what intercultural aspects these New Zealanders have to be aware of. The research results show that ; (1) different styles of work, (2) senses of responsibility - individual responsibility / group responsibility -, and (3) different ways of apologising frequently cause problems. All of these three aspects are related to the individualism-collectivism dimension of culture. These results indicate that this conceptual difference, individualism-collectivism, is the biggest cultural dimension which causes intercultural conflicts as a number of researchers argue. This aspect, therefore, has to be taught in Japanese language courses or job training courses to avoid these frequent conflicts and failures of intercultural communication between New Zealanders and Japanese.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

CONTENTS iv

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1. FEATURES OF JAPANESE CULTURE 5

1.1 Hofstede's research 9

1.2 Masculinity - Strong sex roles 10

1.3 Power distance between superiors and subordinates - Hierarchical structure of groups 11

1.4 Uncertainty avoidance - Japanese management 15

1.5 Collectivism 16

1.5.1 Strong solidarity and loyalty 18

1.5.2 Inter-dependence and homogeneity 20

1.5.3 Restriction of self-expressions 21

1.5.4 Conflict avoidance tendency 24

1.5.5 Group responsibility 26

1.5.6 Apologies 28

1.6 Work ethics 31

1.7 An example of intercultural conflict 32

1.8 Contemporary Japanese society 34

1.9 Summary 36

CHAPTER 2. FEATURES OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION 40

2.1 Language barrier 40

2.2 Inter-language / language reduction 41

2.3 Cultural shock 43

2.4 Three stages of the adjustment process to a different culture 43

2.5 Host - newcomer relationship 45

2.6 Stereotypes and prejudices 46

2.7 Summary 49

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH RESULTS 53
3.1 Nature of research 53
3.1.1 Objective 53
3.1.2 Method and participants 53
3.2 Reports from interviewees 54
3.2.1 Power distance - Superior / subordinate relationship 54
3.2.2 Uncertainty avoidance - Japanese management 57
3.2.3 Collectivism 59
3.2.3.1 Style of work 59
3.2.3.2 Expressing oneself 60
3.2.3.3 Group responsibility 64
3.2.3.4 Apologies 66
3.2.4 Work ethics 67
3.2.5 Language barrier 72
3.2.6 Three different stages of the adjustment process 73
3.2.7 Prejudice 75
3.2.8 Others 77

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION 82
4.1 Research findings 82
4.2 Perspective of further research 83
4.3 Competence to succeed in intercultural communication 84

REFERENCES 88