

Intercultural Training and the Language Factor

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Challenges and Chances
Pitfalls and Learnability
Hard Facts and Soft Skills

Introduction

It is a well known fact that the globalization of economy and the internationalization of business have accelerated over the past decade with the need to increase competitiveness within the global marketplace. This has further created new necessities for effective communication across language and culture barriers.

Consequently, increasing efforts have been made to develop intercultural skills, which has led to large-scale research into how to cope with this problem, as well as into how to work on designing strategies to meet these needs and overcome the barriers.

Several research projects have been conducted. These projects focused on the requirements of business in general and those of companies in particular in key areas such as international recruitment and foreign assignment. A great number of surveys with an increasing amount of data and knowledge have indicated that the appropriate use of customers' language and awareness of local culture are critical factors in determining export performance on foreign markets.

Responding to these challenges, work has been done on preparing staff members and students for their roles on the global stage by adopting training structures, curricula and methodologies, including specific language learning materials combined with intercultural training.

It has been recognized that there is an inter-relationship between the language factor and export performance due to increasing cross-cultural contact and a growing need for cross-cultural communication.