

University of Jyväskylä

**CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS OF FINNISH -
MEXICAN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
IN THE BUSINESS CONTEXT**

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<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>Tutkielma kuvaa suomalais-meksikolaista interpersonaalista viestintää liike-elämän kontekstissa. Aihetta lähestytään seuraavin kysymyksiin: Miten suomalaiset ja meksikolaiset tulkitsevat toistensa viestintää liike-elämän kontekstissa? Voiko tulkintoja selittää tietyillä, joillekin ryhmille yhteisillä arvoilla? Minkälaiset viestinnälliset piirteet koetaan vahvuuksina, minkälaiset heikkouksina? Näin määritellään kriittiset menestystekijät. Aineisto koostuu pääasiassa parihaastatteluin toteutetuista 9 teemahaastattelusta sekä osallistuvan havainnoinnin päiväkirjasta. Analyysi tehtiin suomalaisesta näkökulmasta. Haastattelut pidettiin Meksikossa heinä-marraskuussa vuonna 1999. Kaikki 15 haastateltavaa, 7 meksikolaista ja 8 suomalaista, ovat Meksikoon sijoittuneista suomalaisten johtamista yrityksistä. Osallistuva havainnointi toteutettiin puolen vuoden harjoittelujakson aikana (1.4-30.9.1999) suomalais-meksikolaisessa liike-elämässä.</p> <p>Tutkielman keskeiset löydöt määrittelevät kriittiset menestystekijät seuraavalla tavalla. Yleisellä tasolla kiinnitetään huomiota kolmeen tekijään:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positiivinen asenne meksikolaista kulttuuria ja meksikolaisia kohtaan samoin kuin niitä muutoksia kohtaan, jotka tapahtuvat itsessä ja omassa viestinnässä. 2. Tieto niin olemassaolevista eroavaisuuksista mm. ihmisten taustoissa, koulutuksessa, taloudellisessa asemassa kuin odotuksista, joita nämä eri vuorovaikutustilanteisiin tuovat. 3. Herkkyys huomata nämä erot ja taito muokata omaa viestintäänsä tilanteen ja ihmisen mukaan. <p>Kulttuurispesifillä tasolla kriittiset menestystekijät liittyvät taitoon välittää tiettyjä arvoja viestinnässä. Meksikolaisten kannalta tärkeää näytti olevan se, että heidän kulttuurinsa kolme keskeistä arvoa tulee ilmi viestinnässä, nimittäin <i>simpatia</i>, <i>respeto</i> ja <i>confianza</i>. Suomalaiset puolestaan arvostivat rehellisyyden, sisun ja yksityisyyden kunnioituksen välittämistä. Niinpä menestyvässä suomalais-meksikolaisessa viestinnässä pitäisi löytää tasapaino mm. sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen ja tehtäväkeskeisyyden välillä, samoin kuin suoran ja epäsuoran viestinnän välillä. Myös hierarkian rooli ja vastuukysymykset sekä sellaisten käsitteiden merkitykset kuin totuus, aika ja yksityisyys vaativat yhteistä määrittelyä.</p> <p>Tutkielman tulokset antavat kulttuurispesifiä tietoa suomalaisten ja meksikolaisten interpersonaalista viestinnästä liike-elämässä. Ne tarjoavat suomalaisille ja meksikolaisille strategisia välineitä luoda, kehittää ja ylläpitää menestyksellisiä vuorovaikutussuhteita. Tulokset tukevat tutkimuksia, joissa korostuu sopivaa ja tarkoituksenmukaista viestintää määrittävien taustatekijöiden kirjo.</p>	
Asiasanat Suomalainen viestintä, meksikolainen viestintä, interpersonaalinen viestintä, arvot, kriittiset menestystekijät, kauppa, kulttuurienväläinen viestintä	
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<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>This study aims to describe Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication in business context. It examines the experiences and interpretations Finns and Mexicans have of each other's communication. The data is analysed from a Finnish perspective. Through profiling the value orientations of both cultures, this study discusses strengths and weaknesses, which in peoples' experiences affect most critically the success of interpersonal communication. Critical success factors are thus defined. The data consists of 9 focused interviews, mainly conducted in pairs, and the participant-observation diary. The interviews were carried out in Mexico between July-November 1999. All 15 participants, 7 Mexicans and 8 Finns, are from Finnish-led companies located in Mexico. Participant observation was realised during a half-year internship (1.4-30.9.1999) in a Mexican-Finnish business environment.</p> <p>Findings suggest that critical success factors could be defined as follows. At a culture-general level, one could draw attention to three factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A positive attitude both towards Mexican culture and people, and towards changes in oneself and in one's communication. 2. The knowledge of existing differences in peoples' background, education, economical situation etc. as well as the knowledge of communication that is expected in different situations. 3. The sensitivity to notice differences, and the skills to change how one communicates according to person and situation. <p>At a culture-specific level, critical success factors could be seen as the ability to convey specific values in communication. For Mexicans, the most important factor seems to be relating to others three key concepts of their culture: <i>simpatia</i>, <i>respeto</i> and <i>confianza</i>. Finnish, in turn, conveyed in communication such key concepts as honesty, <i>sisu</i> and respect for privacy. Therefore, for successful communication the balance should be found between social interaction and task-completion, direct and indirect communication, and the way of working independently and in groups. Also, the role of hierarchy, the concept of truth, time, and privacy and the use of different face-saving strategies should be considered.</p> <p>The findings give culture-specific information on Finnish and Mexican communication culture in business. It gives strategic tools to develop and maintain successful interpersonal communication between people of these two cultures. It also supports the research that emphasises the complexity of factors affecting the expectations of what is considered appropriate communication in different situations with different people.</p>	
Asiasanat Finnish communication, Mexican communication, interpersonal communication, value orientation, critical success factor, business, intercultural communication	
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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	3
2.1. Culture and Interpersonal Communication	3
2.1.1. Culture as Multiple Frames of Reference	3
2.1.2. Culture as Knowledge	9
2.1.3. Culture as a Process of Individuals	12
2.2. Features of Mexican Interpersonal Communication	16
2.2.1. Connectedness Preferred	18
2.2.2. Relationships Have a Hierarchy	26
2.2.3. <i>Respeto</i> and <i>Simpatía</i> - Keys to Harmonious Relationship	30
2.2.4. Non-verbal Behaviour as an Outcome of the Values Expressed	35
2.2.5. Is Everything Relative? - Considerations of Truth and Time	38
2.3. Features of Finnish Interpersonal Communication	41
2.3.1. The Silent Finn and High Value of Privacy	43
2.3.2. Finnish Small Talk and Social Silence	49
2.3.3. Orientation towards Work, Word and Watch	52
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	56
3.1. Research Questions	57
3.2. Participant-as-an-observer Method	57
3.3. Focused Interviews	62
3.3.1. Choosing the Participants	63
3.3.2. Course of the Interview	67
3.4. Analysis and Code System	71

4. RESULTS	76
4.1. Successful Communication is Relative.....	77
4.2. Basic Implicit Assumptions	83
4.2.1. Hierarchy and Equality; Ambiguity and Conformity in a Society	83
4.2.2. People-orientation and Task-orientation	90
4.3. Mexican Value Orientation	100
4.3.1. <i>Confianza</i> as a Process of Making Friends.....	101
4.3.2. <i>Simpatía</i> Aims to Establish Personal Rapport.....	103
4.3.3. <i>Respeto</i> as Politeness Strategies	110
4.3.4. The Relationship between the Three Main Concepts.....	121
4.4. Finnish Value Orientation	124
4.4.1. Honesty as a Principal Value.....	124
4.4.2. <i>Sisu</i> - Finnish Independent Strategy	138
4.4.3. Privacy - What It Means for Finns and for Mexicans	146
4.5. Conclusion: Critical Success Factors	151
5. DISCUSSION	154
5.1. Different Viewpoints to <i>Confianza</i>	154
5.2. The Importance of the Political, Historical and Social Context.....	157
5.3. Evaluation	161
5.4. Validity of Results	164
5.5. Future Research Possibilities	165
References:	168

FIGURES:

FIGURE 1. Cultural pyramid by Hofstede (1991:5-7).....	6
FIGURE 2. Model of culture with layers by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997:22).....	10
FIGURE 3. The model of public and private spheres of the individual... presented by Fant (1992: 50).....	20
FIGURE 4. Mexican value orientation.....	121
FIGURE 5. The model of public and private spheres of the individual in Mexican business context.....	150

TABLES:

TABLE 1. Company profiles.....	64
TABLE 2. SWOT of <i>simpatía</i> in Mexican business context.....	110
TABLE 3. SWOT of " <i>respeto</i> as a politeness strategy to mark distance" in Mexican business context.....	116
TABLE 4. SWOT of " <i>respeto</i> as other-oriented face-saving strategy" in Mexican business context.....	121
TABLE 5. SWOT of <i>confianza</i> in Mexican business context.....	123
TABLE 6. SWOT of honesty in Mexican business context.....	138
TABLE 7. SWOT of " <i>sisu</i> as an independent strategy" in Mexican business context.....	146
TABLE 8. SWOT of privacy in Mexican business context.....	151

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1. Letter sent before the Interview	
APPENDIX 2. Interview Questions	
APPENDIX 3. Key Informant Profiles	
APPENDIX 4. Participant Profile	

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to provide strategic tools for Finns to develop and maintain successful interpersonal communication with Mexicans in business context. The natural question for business people is how to succeed. In this study the critical success factors are sought, which here are understood as the factors that most critically affect building successful communication. Success is always the result of various factors. When researching intercultural effectiveness, interaction was found to be one of the three key requirements for success (Kealey 1990: 9). Interaction was defined to include knowledge, understanding and communication. It referred both to interpersonal skills such as relationship building, listening skills and sensitivity to culture, and to intercultural interaction such as knowing the local language and non-verbal communication, willingness to interact with local people and knowledge about the country (Kealey 1990: 23). As can be noted in these definitions, interpersonal communication plays an important role in success.

Interpersonal communication is also the main aim of this study, which aims to describe Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication in the business context and define the critical success factors concerning it. The question is stated thus: How do Finns and Mexicans experience and interpret each other's interpersonal communication occurring in the business context? On the base of these interpretations, one can conclude which kind of behaviour is experienced as weakness and which as strength in interaction. Furthermore, in order to understand the national aspects affecting the experiences, common values are sought in and between the groups researched. As values play an important part in this study, in the theoretical background research conducted earlier on Finnish or Mexican communication is connected with the viewpoint of values in mind. However, first the general theoretical framework will be defined: how the culture is understood in this study; how it relates with the earlier research perspectives and how these choices guide the results received in this study.

The methods of the study reflect the aim of exploring the experiences, expectations and interpretations of interpersonal communication. Focused interviews were held with Finns and Mexicans working together in a Mexican business context. Mainly the interviews were conducted in pairs, and during these nine interviews fifteen interviewees were heard in the area of Mexico City and the surroundings. In addition, participant observation was realised in Mexican business context for half a year, producing the communication diary as part of the data gathered.

From the Finnish viewpoint, there are many studies conducted in the international field but the new emerging business area, Latin America, has been addressed only in one research work from the aspect of interpersonal communication (Vaahterikko 2001). The majority of the research done in the field is connected to the mainstream business culture of the USA. In many cases, the research was carried out in the USA and therefore the viewpoint differs in many ways from other business and cultural areas. Thus, the results cannot be adopted as such into the Finnish culture, for example. Nevertheless, the countries of Latin America are growing in the world market and Finnish companies are increasingly investing there. In particular, the free trade agreement made between the European Union and Mexico will increase business done in Mexico (Helsingin Sanomat 21.11.98).

The lack of relevant information in the field of interpersonal communication in international business has also been noticed at the educational level. This study is partly designed according to the needs of the Language Centre of one University of Technology in Finland. They wanted to offer courses to their business students with more profound information on interpersonal communication and not just mere language skills. And besides, what does the knowledge of a language help if one does not know how and when to use it in the context? Their interest was to connect Spanish with knowledge of some Latin American country and as Mexico is one of the biggest business partners of Finland from Latin America, it was chosen as the country of focus. On the basis of the results received in this study, it was proposed that a CD-ROM would be designed that would serve as an

independent course for marketing students. To get material for this CD-ROM, interviews were also videotaped. At this point, the manuscript for the CD-ROM is ready and a prototype is available, which comprises one part of the planned entity.

The main focus group of the knowledge given by this research is Finnish business people going to work or working in Mexico. However, the results also give relevant information to Mexicans on how their communication is perceived and what kind of expectations Finns might have of their communication.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Culture and Interpersonal Communication

There are hundreds of definitions of culture presented in hundreds of books written about culture. In this short theoretical discussion the connection between culture and interpersonal communication is reflected within today's global environment. The theoretical background of culture for the present research will be pointed out with the help of three perspectives: culture as multiple frames of reference, culture as knowledge, and culture as a process of adaptation.

2.1.1. Culture as Multiple Frames of Reference

Due to the globalisation and increased mobility, the concept of culture is in a process of change. Functionalist research has had the strongest and longest tradition in intercultural communication research. Based on national cultures, it has aimed to predict what kind of affect culture will have on communication that makes it different from other cultures and, in addition, the differences are seen as a barrier to efficient communication. (Jensen 2002: 3.) It is argued also that the definitions of culture tend to be focused on differences and boundaries between labelled groups and furthermore, these differences are perceived to cause conflicts and difficulties when interacting with one another (e.g. Blommaert 1995: 17). A good example of such a definition of culture is one most often referred to of Geert Hofstede (1991: 5) "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which

distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". In other words, culture in this approach is seen something that distinguishes, not something that brings together.

Jan Blommaert (1995: 17) continues: similarities between people, on the other hand, are seen as "culture-free" and non-problematic sources of agreement between people. As well Nigel Holden (2001) argues: often the concept of culture focuses on differences and culture shock. He adds also that these concepts refer to cultures as if they were internally homogeneous and consistent in assumptions, values and norms. Hence, culture is taken as a relatively stable state. At least taking the management point of view such concepts are out of touch with the modern global economy.

One can criticise further: Too often the starting point in examining the communication between two cultures is to use pre-defined dimensions of intercultural communication – such as "we are individualistic", meaning that one is mainly responsible of oneself, and "they are collectivistic", indicating that the group takes care of the individual and the individual also gives up something for the group welfare (Hofstede 1991). To give another example, some people in high-context cultures tend to read and give messages both verbally and non-verbally, while others in low-context cultures tend to convey all necessary information via verbal communication (Hall 1976). Consequently the task is to "place" each culture into its own category between the two extremes. The dimensions of these kinds of intercultural communication theories certainly are useful to raise consciousness in the initial phase. However, when working in intercultural reality, more detailed information is needed as discussed later in this report.

One problem of these concepts and dimensions is that they are made in the "Western cultures" - whatever that is supposed to mean - and hence many times reflect a certain "Western way" versus another way of thinking. However, why take the "Western culture" as a starting point in examining another culture? It

seems that Nancy Adler (1997: 78) was right when pointing out that, "I use my meanings to make sense of your reality." There is much discussion about cultural differences but still these cultural differences are researched in the same way across cultures. When talking about the individual, this kind of attitude would be called ethnocentrism. The same ethnocentrism sometimes seems to be included in cultural research. As Harry Triandis (1994: 3) comments: the majority of researchers are trained in the "West" and therefore it is difficult even for them to find suitable methods of researching and analysing other cultures than the one in which they are trained. But, as he continues, in the last decades, attempts have been made to create tools that would not be so culture-bound with the "West". That is because the features of communication are explained how they look to "representatives of Western culture" rather than from the point of view of what they mean to the people who use it. This naturally leads to focus on the differences. The problem discussed above of culture being focused on differences is derived from this antithesis.

This is not the first time that traditional concepts are challenged. However, is there anything to replace them? These considerations raise many questions: How should we then define "culture"? What is the intercultural communication that actually should be researched? What is worth learning or, in other words, what information is really needed in real life encounters?

With the remark above on ethnocentrism it can be seen that the choice of the viewpoint is one essential choice to make when researching intercultural communication. Constructivist theory of communication has already changed the essence of intercultural questioning. The main question is not so much "how we should do it then with Belgians" but one examines the interpretations of actors. The central question is, "How do individual differences affect the social perception process?" (Applegate & Sypher 1988: 42-44.) In this research perspective, the personal interpretation i.e. the individual's perspective is considered important. As Jan Blommaert (1995: 10-11) states: "We should not only worry about intercultural communication per se, but also about the way in

which it is perceived, interpreted, construed, by all kinds of people, including ourselves." When researching the communication between two cultures, it is not enough that the characteristics of both communication cultures are examined; rather, more important are the interpretations that they make about each other according to their own cultural frame of reference.

In this connection one could use the cultural pyramid introduced by Geert Hofstede (1991: 5-7) (Figure 1). It can be seen as profiling the culture of an individual, which is divided into three different levels. The base is a universal level, which is inherited and shared by the majority of people. It includes, for example, emotions everybody is able to feel such as anger, joy, and fear. It also includes common needs, such as the need to be loved, the need to communicate and

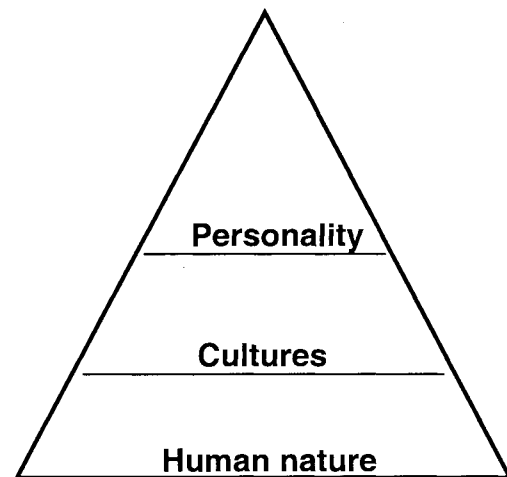


FIGURE 1. Cultural pyramid by Hofstede (1991: 5-7)

to be part of a group. The collective cultural level in the middle of the pyramid consists of learnt behaviour in a certain group to which the individual belongs. Many times this is taken incorrectly to refer to the national cultures such as "Finns", "Mexicans", "Chinese" etc. Instead, it refers to a group of people, who are connected by the same socialisation process and who understand each other's behaviour. The collective group modifies, for example, the way the common needs mentioned above are allowed to be expressed and shown. At the top of the pyramid, the individual level refers to the idea that despite the universal and cultural features, every individual has still his/her own way to communicate and behave that is unique to him/her. This is an important point and will be examined in more detail later on.

Scollon and Scollon (2001) deepen the understanding of the collective level. They introduce the term "discourse system" which emphasises the community that has

certain common features or aims which form the way the members of the group communicate, which affects e.g. what words they use, whether they show when they are angry and how they show it, etc. The group can be bound together to a greater or lesser degree: the common feature can be playing golf, having the same faith or working in the same corporation. They found their own term “discourse system” more practical than the broad term “culture” because - as they argue - there are many discourse systems one belongs to at the same time. In addition to being a member of a general culture, one is also the member of a certain professional discourse system like that of engineer, as well as part of women's discourse system or the Baby-Boom generation discourse system. (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 5.) These groups influence the way one thinks, behaves and communicates. This discourse approach states that a discourse system based on the national culture is just one among others. Therefore, features of national culture are not the only way to explain differences - nor are they the only source of differences. For example, corporate discourse can connect some business people more than their national culture. In this research, the common discourse system of the participants is international corporate culture. Other discourse systems vary, as does the national culture, when there are participants from both Mexico and Finland. One interesting question concerns the extent to which the different discourse systems are felt common. Here one can note the shift of the viewpoint: instead of looking at differences, one looks at common discourse systems.

This means that in a communication situation there are many frames of reference that could be traced. Constructivists talk about cultural identity that is a form of social identity constructed in relation to other people in a given period of time. In complex societies a person has multiple social identities, which all have a bearing on communication situations. (Jensen 2002: 9-10.) Furthermore, cultural identities also have different characteristics: some are broader categories and apply to a large number of people whereas the others are narrower and might concern only one person (Collier & Thomas 1988: 133). This topic is large but as it is not the central point of this research it is only shortly illustrated by taking

Mexican Americans as an example. When Padilla (1985: 60-83) researched the ethnic identity of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago, he found that the common Latin identity of Spanish-speaking groups depends on the situation and only emerges when these groups encounter common structural problems like injustice or inequality at the workplace. In such a case solidarity to whole Latin group and common interests is notable. However, in many other occasions they define themselves as Mexican Americans and might even make a clear distinction between them and other Spanish-speaking groups. Common Latin identity is understood only as a political phenomenon. One interesting notion shown by Padilla's systematic analysis of the communication process is that during the communication process, this new common Latin identity was created. This comes close to the definition of a discourse system discussed above.

At a personal level this means the following: as Tanno (1997: 32-33) notes, her cultural identity can be seen loaded with four different labels or "names": Spanish, Mexican American, *Latina* and *Chicana*. Together they reveal her complex cultural identity. Each "name" is activated in different situations according to the nature of the situation and the people present and therefore, might affect on the way one communicates in the situation. Sometimes these "names" can connect the people present by being *Latina* when wanting to emphasise the cultural and historical connectedness with Spanish-speaking groups, and other times they can make a separation by being *Chicana* with a sense of showing national pride. These multiple names for her ethnicity are compared with multiple labels of mother, wife, sister and daughter which all reflect the complexity of being female. As one can see in this example, there are many frames of reference that can be activated in communication situation and which, in turn, can affect to the communication situation in various ways. One can also realise that cultural identity is personal and should also be interpreted in that way. Thus, the communication considered as intercultural from a functionalistic viewpoint turns out to be interpersonal communication when looking at it from a constructivist perspective.

2.1.2. Culture as Knowledge

What, then, is the necessary cultural knowledge? What is the essence that this research is seeking? At a general level, intercultural research can be divided into two different segments: one looking for universal concepts, ideas, behaviour etc. applicable to a certain extent to all cultures. This is called the *etic* cultural element. In turn, the *emic* cultural elements would be culture-specific and therefore true only within a certain cultural environment. (Triandis 1994: 68). Bennett (1998: 9) uses terms culture-general for *etic* and culture-specific for *emic*, which, again, refers to the knowledge that is not connected to any specific one or two cultures but that have wider adaptability in the intercultural environment as such. *Emic* concepts are seen inside the culture and are sometimes concretised with certain words that conveys very complex meanings like the word *mamihlapinatapei* used in Tierra del Fuego which means "looking at each other hoping that either one will offer to do something that both desire but are unwilling to be the first to do". Cultures develop ways to express efficiently i.e. with one word the matters that they hold important (Triandis 1994: 12, 67). Many times these two perspectives are parallel: a certain phenomenon is *etic* but it is practised differently in different cultures. For example, all cultures have a certain norm which they tend to follow in their communication (*etic*), however, this norm is different, such as *simpatía* for Latinos (Marín & Marín 1991: 12) or respect for privacy for Finns (*emic*). Both these aspects are needed when examining intercultural communication. (Triandis 1994: 68.)

More practically, the circle model of culture introduced by Fons Trompenaars (1997: 22-24) distinguishes three different layers of culture (Figure 2). The closer the layer is to the surface, the more explicit the products of culture are and the more conscious people are of them. At the core of the circle model are so-called basic assumptions, which are implicit and mainly unconscious but as such affect other more explicit products of culture. These basic assumptions can be traced with the history of the culture and society: how people have survived with nature and how they have lived together. They serve also as a base for the norms and

values that are placed on the next layer. This layer is not easy to see, nor is it easy to explain because it is taken for granted as the "the normal way" to think. However, they might differ greatly from the values and norms of another culture. The outer layer reflects these values and norms explicitly. They are manifested as language, etiquette, dressing, architecture, arts etc. One important point here to note

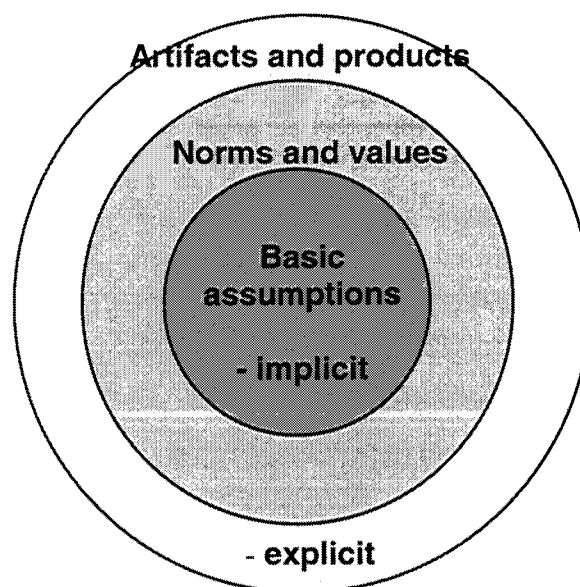


FIGURE 2. Model of culture with layers by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997: 22)

when looking from the centre of the circle is that the culture is not separate from society, or from history or the country. Intercultural communication always takes place in a certain context, never outside the society, and all the societal structures and ideologies have an affect on communicative encounters (Blommaert 1995: 25). According to the model one could assume that these kind of contextual structures form the second layer of culture, which in turn means that in order to understand overt layers of culture, one should be aware of what is hidden in the core.

Nigel Holden (2001; 2002) also examines the question of the nature of cultural knowledge. He introduces three different types of cultural knowledge. His point of view is that of the user: what is the intensity and the involvement that each type of cultural knowledge requires?

- First, there is general cultural knowledge that is mainly passive and freely available for anyone to explore from different sources such as the World Wide Web, publications, newspapers, etc.
- Second, there is specific cultural knowledge that is also passive but less easily available. It is task-focused knowledge, which many times complements the

general cultural knowledge in situations such as creating a marketing plan or evaluating technical information. This kind of knowledge is not easily adaptable in other situations due to its context-dependence, for example, on company values and objectives.

Third, there is cross-cultural know-how that is considered as the core competence. It is no longer mere knowledge but has an active component and therefore also includes the skills of implementing the knowledge into action. It is often experimental and subjective, having high tacit content. However, as it is not any more focused in certain specific tasks, it can be applied broadly in cross-cultural interactions. One important characteristic of cross-cultural know-how is that the potential is coming from both (or more) cultures simultaneously and this is what makes it efficient. In order to capture this kind of knowledge, one needs strong personal involvement. (Holden 2002: 254-257.)

However, this kind of specific cultural knowledge or know-how on interpersonal communication across cultures is often lacking. One example of intercultural training demonstrates this: When Jan Blommaert (1995: 9-26) examines the intercultural communication training content, he points out a great lack of real information on actual contact situations. There is much more material on Japanese-Belgian negotiation styles—situation not very probable for ordinary Belgian—than Belgians buying and selling at the multicultural market of Brussels. The same notion was one of the assumptions that Applegate & Sypher (1988: 44) indicated when outlining the constructivist approach to intercultural communication: Dense and detailed accounts of everyday interactions of cultural participants are needed. Lacking this everyday information, training seems to be based on abstract schemata of contrastive prototypical features such as "Belgian" as representative of *I*-culture or "Muslim Arab" as representative of *We*-culture (Blommaert 1995: 13) where *I*-culture apparently refers to individualistic cultures and *We*-culture refers to collectivistic cultures. However, as shown above, in real life encounters people are not just representatives of their national culture but they also have other frames of reference as discussed above: professional culture, gender and family roles etc. Also location, time, participants and their relation to

one another affect the communication. Hence, the training as such, as well as training materials, should include more detailed and specific information in order to give enough relevant information to predict the communication.

As discussed earlier, the focus on differences and problems that different cultures bring is also seen in the results that have been sought through research. However, in this study the keys to success in interpersonal communication are sought. The concept of "critical success factor", which is often used in a business context is applied here. It is defined as: "the strengths and weaknesses that most critically affect an organisation's success. These are measured relative to competition" (Kotler 1999: 95). Here success is not defined numerically as statistics or in any other quantitatively measured way. In the interviews, successful communication is discussed and every interviewee made her/his own interpretation of it. This is also the focus of interest: what kind of communication is considered successful and experienced to be so.

2.1.3. Culture as a Process of Individuals

Earlier the definition of culture as a stable state was criticised. How should culture be conceptualised then? One answer is that one should include adaptation and learning in the concept of culture. To illustrate this: according, for example, to Hofstede's definition of culture as a representative of individualistic culture, a person would remain a representative of individualistic culture whether he lives in Japan for ten years or stays in Finland for one's whole life. However, in real life people learn new things and through learning they adapt to new situations. In other words, a person's "programming of the mind" changes and probably is no longer "collective" because of personal experience(s) that others do not share and that have changed his way of thinking and behaving (Hofstede 1991; Blommaert 1995). Certainly he has not lost his culture but it has changed and it is actually under a constant process of change. This is supported by the amount of research that addresses the shock of coming back to one's own homeland after a longer

period of time (e.g. Salo-Lee & Malmberg & Halinoja 1998: 122; Kealey 1990: 50).

When talking about culture and communication, what could adaptation mean and what kind of role does it play? Milton Bennett (1993) describes adaptation as a process which moves from a denial stage towards an integration stage. In the beginning of the process, a person is viewing people from other cultures from his own ethnocentric perspective, but as the adaptation progresses his perspective becomes ethnorelative. Ethnorelativism refers to the attitude that cultures can only be understood as relative to each other and, furthermore, that specific behaviour can only be comprehended when examining it within a cultural context (Bennett 1993: 46). Actually the process includes mainly working with one's own attitudes. During the process a person starts to question his attitudes, norms and even values familiar to him. However, as a prerequisite one has to understand first his own culture and then he will be able to understand another culture better. In this way he can learn and recognise cultural differences. (Trompenaars 1997: 2.) As the process proceeds the person learns new ways of thinking, new communication skills and also the sensitivity to what kind of communication is appropriate when in different intercultural situations.

Adaptation has been proved to be essential to successful communication. When Daniel J. Kealey (1990: 9) examined the overseas effectiveness, he found out that in order to be effective and achieve results when working overseas, adaptation to the new environment is one of the three key requirements for success. The other two key requirements are interaction skills and the expertise in the field in question. Adaptation is seen to include acceptance, participation and satisfaction. Acceptance is important because in intercultural environment one encounters a lot of unfamiliarity and therefore it is very important to have the ability to accept the situation as such, cope with the insecurity and frustration and still be able to concentrate on work. Participation was another key issue in adaptation. A person working efficiently overseas seems to be sensitive to cultural matters, have good skills in relationship building and shows respect and empathy towards the locals.

It resulted that those who reported to be very satisfied with cultural interaction were also rated as highly effective. They were involved with the local people and tried to learn the language and the local culture. (Kealey 1990: 41.) However, people rated to be effective overseas were also likely to have strong culture shock when adapting to new environment (Kealey 1990: 37). This result points out that success or effectiveness overseas includes processing one's own knowledge, attitudes and emotions. The study revealed also that when a person has too much previous experience abroad, he is no longer so ready to complete this process over again. Rather, he becomes complacent and settled, which in turn hinders relationship building with the locals and therefore also diminishes the possibility of being effective. (Kealey 1990: 34.) This shows how important personal characteristics and interpersonal skills are in the successful overseas period. As one can see in the previous results, the possibilities of being effective might change also for the same person at different times.

To connect the concept of culture discussed above with these considerations, it could be stressed that there are no "facts" which apply to the each member of a group. Even though Finnish people tend not to touch each other very easily, there are Finns who touch frequently. This may be the result of different cultural learning at home (i.e. family as a discourse system) or because of his/her experiences abroad in cultures where touching is more usual, or it may just be his/her own preference. Nevertheless, there might be tendencies that a certain culture has certain ways to react and holds certain values to be important in their interaction.

Examining the situation becomes even more complicated due to the fact that in the communication situation there are always at least two people who are both communicating and adapting and learning. Additionally both these participants bring their value orientations and behavioural norms to the communication situations and each one has something to give to the common communication style. It is a common learning process. Maybe this is what Nigel Holden (2001) meant in saying: "culture is waiting in these processes"; that culture is formed in

interaction between people, and therefore varies from one relation to another. This concept of culture is flexible and its content—assumptions, norms, values, etc.—is reflecting the ever-changing personal reality. Also it would see participants of interaction having an active role in this change. This methodological thinking allows for the possibility that something new is emerging, not only that one of the two participants is adapting to the other. Adler (1997: 112-117) defines five different adaptation strategies to use in multicultural organisations. Of these, the one of cultural synergy emphasises that differences are also beneficial. This strategy could be called a creative option where new solutions are sought. It implies finding a solution, which is based on neither of the cultures of the participants but still takes advantage of the diversity which culture brings to communication.

On the basis of the discussion above, one could suggest two perspectives to take account when defining culture. First, that adaptation and learning should be seen as an essential part of the concept of culture and also taken into consideration when intercultural communication is researched. Secondly, that intercultural communication could be seen as interpersonal communication in which, in addition to e.g. family and gender roles, there are also complex cultural identities that are reflected in communication. It is a continuing dynamic process where the rules of the communication and roles of the participants are negotiated all the time. In such a continuous process, the relationship history will also affect how the other is seen and interpreted: what one has learnt of the other participant in earlier discussions or what kind of information s/he has got that has formed the image of the other, etc. (Galvin & Cooper 2000: 5, 35). Actually, “discourse system” might even be a more expressive concept than culture if defined as suggested above. The name “discourse system” already reveals that the common ground is created by discourse, by interaction.

Having said all this, the guidelines of this research are defined as follows. First, culture is understood as created in a relationship and is characterised as a process. Therefore, interpersonal communication is examined from the developmental approach, which considers only communication in lasting, reciprocal relationships

as interpersonal communication (Trenholm & Jensen 1996: 28). In the context of this research, relationships in the working place would fall into this category. Secondly, as discussed above, having multiple identities means that the identity emphasised varies depending on the situation e.g. in a meeting the person is defined primarily as a boss and in a free discussion with countrymen afterwards the same person is defined primarily as a Finn. National identity might be strong in short encounters with unknown foreigners. These different situations and negotiated identities have an affect on communication. Therefore, the situational approach to interpersonal communication is also taken into account. It includes all dyadic communication and also communication that occurs between people that do not have an earlier relationship history between them and who will not have one in the future either (Trenholm & Jensen 1996: 26).

Thirdly, since culture is understood to be created in relations with others, personal interpretations play an important role when defining the "culture". They are also the main focus in this research. Fourthly, required knowledge is defined as cross-cultural know-how that goes beyond the explicit cultural layers. The interpretations are seen as expressions of certain values and norms that might not always be explicitly mentioned because they are not necessarily conscious. Values and norms, in turn, can be an essential part of the cross-cultural know-how that is not connected with specific tasks or situations.

2.2. Features of Mexican Interpersonal Communication

In this study Mexicans are researched. However, most of the references are to studies concerning Mexican Americans or Latinos in general. In the literature three general terms are used. The two most common are *Latino*, Latin and *Hispano*, Hispanic. The third concept used in the literature is *Chicano*. These terms have slightly different meanings. Chicano refers mainly to Mexicans living in the USA. (Kikoski & Kikoski 1996: 137.) Originally this term meant a radical group of Mexican-Americans and other minorities who plead for independence for themselves within the USA (Delgado 1995: 448).

The term “Hispano”/“Hispanic” is perhaps the most used. Originally it was a term used by the U.S. government for people who were born or have family roots in a Spanish-speaking country (Kikoski & Kikoski 1996: 135-136). The fact that this term is the most used also indicates that the majority of the research is done in the USA. Kikoski & Kikoski (1996: 137) define that both Hispanics and Latinos live in the USA but a Hispanic has adapted better to the culture of USA than Latinos, while Lustig and Koester (1996: 23) consider “Latino” to be originated from the language, thereby covering Spanish speakers in general. Here, the term that appears in cited research is generally used; otherwise the term “Latino” will be used when referring to Spanish speaking cultures in general.

Often the target group of the research was Spanish speakers in the USA and their level of adaptation to the majority of the population. Meanwhile, there were also studies on business between USA and Spanish-speaking countries conducted in the country in question. However, references hardly were to be found in Spanish. The extent to which these research results are valid with Mexicans, then, will be reflected in the results of this study and examined in more detail in the discussion chapter.

From a Finnish perspective there are two studies done that compare communication between Finns and people from Ibero-American area. Liisa Hänninen (1998) and Päivi Vaahterikko (1997) have examined Finnish communication with Spaniards. Also, Päivi Vaahterikko-Mejía (2001) has examined Finnish communication with Colombians, and this study also has a general Latin American aspect. Both examine communication in a business context and therefore possibly give reference to this research. The results of studies on Spanish-Finnish interpersonal communication are used here because Spain and Mexico share the same language, religion and partially also culture. However, it should be noted that the historical background and economical and political situations in these two countries differ. In addition, the Mexican indigenous background creates differences.

Although both researches use interviews as in this study, research results with Spaniards are based on answers to open-ended questions whereas results with Colombians/Latin Americans are based on participants' choices from the predefined characteristic list. Even though the characteristics are collected during earlier interviews, it seems that the quantitative approach does not offer very clear keys to analysing the data. Some conclusions seem to be based only on the answer of one respondent. However, several interesting notions will be mentioned.

2.2.1. Connectedness Preferred

Latin cultures are considered to be collectivistic by a number of researchers. The most frequently mentioned is Hofstede (1991: 51), whose research placed all Latin cultures as clearly collectivistic in his collectivistic - individualistic dimension. Collectivistic society emphasises the importance of a person's reference group. There the needs and objectives of an in-group determine social behaviour, whereas in individualistic culture one does it personally. In collectivistic society it is important to be perceived as an insider by other cultural group members. Thus, Mexicans, for example, are supposed to place high value on group inclusion and association, so if one is not perceived as an insider it possibly has affects on effectiveness in communication. As an insider one is accepted and recognised by the other members. (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 218.)

Although Mexico is defined as a highly collectivistic culture according to the terms defined by Hofstede (1991:51), it could be seen in another way too. Condon (1997: 19) talks about individuality in connection with Mexicans. While the concept of individualism stresses that a person is free to make his own choices and is primarily responsible only for himself, it also suggests that everybody is judged by the achievements and merits that he has gained. The concept of individuality concerning Mexican communication, however, suggests that a person is valued because of his inner quality. Gangotena (1994: 76) speaks about the concept of personhood where *la persona* is seen to have dignity as such and

whose heart is considered sacred. This is seen also in words used: For Mexicans (i.e. in Spanish) it is natural to talk about *alma* (soul) or *espíritu* (spirit) of the person. Condon (1997: 19) comments that for an individualistic North American this is unfamiliar, too vague or too personal. In North America and also in Finland, words such as soul or spirit are used almost solely in a spiritual or religious context. In Mexico use of such words might be part of their expressive communication style. They could refer also to the their individual self: soul or spirit is something, which really belongs only to oneself, and therefore for example, instead of saying, "I am sad", one hears "*mi alma está triste*"; "my soul is sad".

When talking of *la persona* everybody has right to keep his ideas and emotions private, even though among friends and the family it is acceptable and even expected to share them. (Gangotena 1994: 76.) This could be called the "private space" of a Latino, the inner self: ideas, emotions, thoughts, etc., are his own, and he can share them if he wants but nobody can press him to do so, or at least it can lead to the reaction of "defence against intrusion". The conversational rule that Collier (1988: 141) found among Mexican Americans with whites reflects this value: "Be socially polite and friendly, as well as showing concern for the individual."

In his research with Swedes and Spaniards, Fant (1992: 150) presents a model of *confianza* sphere that should be interpreted not literally as trust but as being a sphere of public intimacy (Figure 3). When comparing public intimacy between Swedes and Spaniards, there are certain notions that deserve attention here. First, the Swedish intimate sphere seems to be smaller and include only nuclear family members and close friends. The division line between public and private is right after this group whereas for Spanish the "*confianza*" sphere includes the *familia* in a broader meaning and this sphere tends to extend towards the other people one is operating with. In Swedish society in addition to the intimate sphere there is a co-operation sphere, which is the extending sphere. In other words this means that Swedish hold the intimate sphere only to small group of people and it tends to be

relatively stable when for Spanish, in turn, this *confianza* sphere is open to take new people in.

When Mexican American, Black American and White American conversations

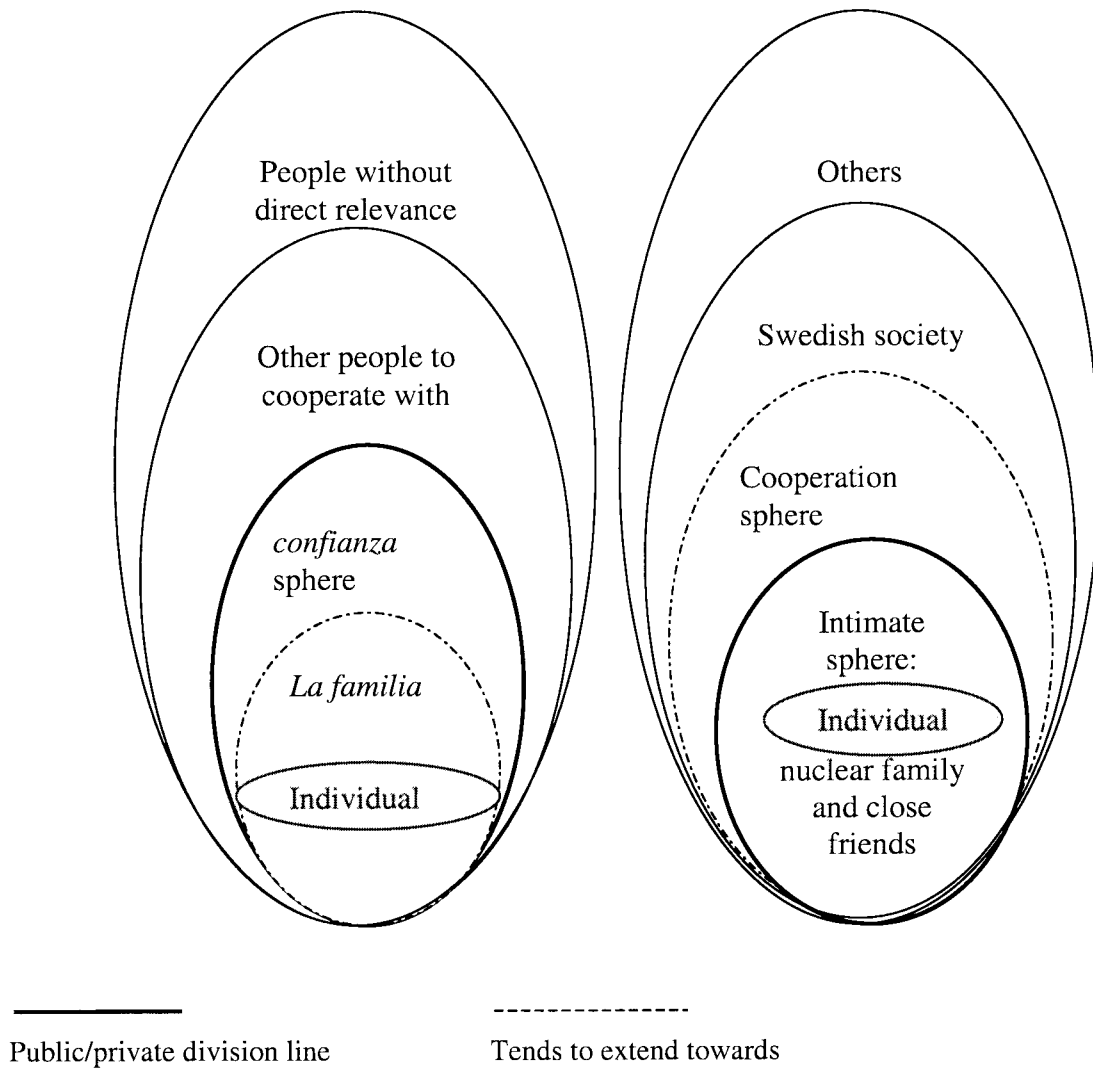


FIGURE 3. The model of public and private spheres of the individual in Spanish modern society (left) and in the Swedish modern society (right) presented by Fant (1992: 150)

were compared it was noted that Mexican Americans more frequently emphasised the relational climate than other groups researched. They drew attention to the relationships whereas the others considered goal accomplishment as the most important. Mexican Americans also stressed more relational validation: they wanted to feel satisfied with the relations and see that relationships are developing

toward more intimacy. This reflects the model of Fant that shows the extended sphere of public intimacy. Mexican Americans seemed to have same roles in both intracultural and intercultural conversations. (Collier 1988: 139-140.)

Relationships are also important to Mexicans in business. In negotiations, for example, they seem to place more value on the target satisfaction and interpersonal attraction than on the profits gained. Mexican negotiators clearly showed deference to the need of buyers. Attractiveness and satisfaction seem to walk hand in hand: attractive sources achieved higher levels of targets' satisfaction. The reason for such a preference is that they aim to build long-term commercial relationships, not just to have one good deal. (Adler, Graham & Gehrke 1987: 424-425.) When establishing credibility within a community in Mexico such "connections" and position are important (Condon 1997: 27). Similar results are also drawn in research of Latin Americans and Finns. Latin Americans look for the relationship with the partner and therefore have the need to talk about other topics beside business before getting to the actual task (Vaahterikko 2001: 138). Efficiency in Colombian business includes principally personal characteristics: creativity, flexibility, good manners and a good sense of humour whereas in Finnish business culture efficiency mainly includes managerial aspects: seriousness, organisation skills, punctuality and foreign language dominance (Vaahterikko 2001: 156).

Due to such differences, organisations, for example, are viewed differently. In Mexico they are taken as a family where everybody has value as such, and nobody is easy to replace. North Americans see organisation and its functions first and then come the people whose primary role is to support the organisation. Hence, they are easily replaced by somebody else. (Condon 1997: 21.) A similar attitude is noted in Finnish-Spanish negotiations: many Spaniards underline the importance of relationships. They should continuously be maintained and strengthened especially in sales. If the negotiating person changes, one has to start the relation from the beginning, which slows down the progress. If the Finnish bosses in Spain are changed too often, the motivation of the staff easily decreases: why work for a relationship if the person will not be there long enough to be

tested. How fast and efficient the objectives of the company will be achieved seems to be highly dependent on how long the same Finnish boss stays in Spain. This feature could be also connected with the culture of strong uncertainty avoidance as Hofstede (1991) defines Spain to be (Hänninen 1998: 40-41.) Strong uncertainty avoidance could be defined as a tendency to create and maintain routines and systems that are stable and therefore offer security (Hofstede 1991).

On the other hand, the importance of relationship could also have negative aspects. One could suspect that corruption is based on such a net of favourable relationships in which everyone helps each other—and also protects each other from discovery and negative publicity. Still, news of revelations of corruption in Latin American policy makers is not a rarity even in Finnish newspapers. A Spanish and Finnish negotiator noted, however, that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish if something is a present or a bribe. It seems that in Spain people are in generally used to giving more expensive presents than in Finland and therefore also in business somebody might receive, for example, a trip to Finland as a gesture of thanks for procuring a good deal and this is not seen as anything special. (Hänninen 1998: 51) One could also think that giving presents might serve as one part of building and maintaining the relationship.

The Importance of la Familia

La familia is the first group to refer to. "A person depends upon relatives or close friends to help arrange things" (Condon 1997: 26). *La familia* is not the nuclear family understood in Western cultures, but it is the system of a large relational playground that includes relatives on the sides of both parents generationally as well as laterally. Grandparents and grandchildren naturally belong to the family unit but often also e.g. second cousins, daughters-in-law, nephews and nieces are considered as family members. (Gangotena 1994: 74.)

La familia seems to have many different functions for Latinos. According to Gangotena (1994: 71) there are three main reasons why the vision of *la familia* is so strong among Mexican-Americans. First, it supports life and gives a safe

context to human communication. Family belonging does not neglect the individual, but is based on self-identity, which was discussed above. It provides a circle of people in whom others can trust but also who support them when they are down or in difficulties. Second, *la familia* has also pragmatic functions such as to ensure food and shelter, good contact for jobs, referral to community and government services and education, etc. (Gangotena 1994: 74). The question can be raised, though, of how much this is due to Mexican governmental system, which does not provide social security. However, as Gangotena mentioned (1994: 74-75), public services in the United States as well have proved to be ineffective for Latin immigrants. The main reason for that seems to be that the presence of the family is discouraged or there is no possibility to have close relatives nearby. In this aspect, Gangotena (1994) suggests that a better understanding of the values behind the Mexican-American family system could provide a model for the Western individualistic society to develop the sense of community, solidarity, respect and discipline.

Thirdly, in addition to practical and emotional support, family is also an important relational unit. Conversations tend to be highly valued and thus, it is considered important to share time, thoughts and affection in the family. Communication between family members emphasises the continued interdependence across generations. As a member of *la familia*, one can feel comfort and be safely emotionally moved and also understand the covert meanings of actions and discussions. (Gangotena 1994: 69-70.) There are many family celebrations and *la familia* spends lot of time together otherwise as well. As Willis (1997: 35) noticed when researching Latino night in Ohio, USA, the majority of the people there was also related to each other. New people were introduced to each other using phrases such as “this is Jaime’s brother, Gil,” and in this way people could place each other into the right *familia*. Thus, it seems that this familiar networking and using the family as a main reference is a relatively permanent characteristic of Latin communication, which is maintained even though mainstream U.S. culture does not support it.

One important task of *la familia* is to give person a good upbringing, *educación*. It includes both courtesy and good manners, which are highly present in everyday occasions. One is expected to greet people cordially, offer a chair to a guest, take time to talk with people and let older people lead the conversation. If one raises his voice in public at somebody or does not greet, he is easily taken as *malcriado* or *sin crianza* (poorly trained at home by parents) (Gangotena 1994: 72-76.) The members of *la familia* serve as a behavioural and attitudinal referents (Marín & Marín 1991: 14). As Condon (1997: 27) puts it, whereas in New York it is important to keep up with the Joneses, in Mexico City it would be to keep up with one's brother-in-law.

Traditionally, the members of the family are responsible for everybody's wellbeing in his or her family. Most Mexican-Americans also have a strong feeling of allegiance towards their family (Condon 1997: 25). A "good" person is the one who fulfils the family obligations and does not bring shame to the family, thereby defending "the honour of the family". Solidarity with *la familia* also means sacrifices, in that sometimes one has to give up rights, interests and desires for the welfare of the family. (Gangotena 1994: 70-78.) Here one could ask how much being immigrants in another country affects to the feeling of familiar unity. On the one hand one could imagine that living in another cultural environment is apt to separate people from their former cultural form of thinking when surrounded by new thoughts, ideologies and people. On the other hand, the company of other Latinos might strengthen the close familiar circle in the new environment. When examining the tasks of *la familia* presented above and knowing that many countries in Latin America have a low economical level, the pragmatic functions of *la familia* would seem especially necessary.

La familia is not the only place where the solidarity is shown. The sense of community is often also created in *barrio*, which means the groups of houses around one's home. This carries out the same characteristics that are seen throughout the Latin communication: relationships are important. When living close to each other, it is important to create good atmosphere and good relations.

Having a social network around can also make urban survival easier. In addition, the community of the *barrio* could be considered a provider of "defence against intrusion" and have control over the stranger who might come to intrude in the neighbourhood. (Gangotena 1994: 78.)

Trust is a Sign of Good Relation

For Latinos *la familia* is the unit in which to trust primarily. One does not rely just on oneself, but on *la familia*. Neither does a Mexican American easily trust strangers. If one wants to trust a friend or a business partner, he at first must be somehow connected to the family. He can be given fictive kinship status, which is shown in expressions such as "*eres como hermana/hermano*", you are like a sister/brother. (Gangotena 1994: 74.) Another possibility of being included in the family is the system of *compadrazgo*, co-parents. The basis of this system is the same as the baptismal godfather and godmother, but it includes much more involvement in the life of the person and his family. It is as a family extension and the relationship is nurtured by both parents and *compadres*. (Gangotena 1994: 74; Marín & Marín 1991: 14; Condon 1997: 27.) Building trust can be a time-consuming process. Latinos, just like any other people, need time and common experiences upon which to build trust. There are some research studies arguing that Latinos think changing acquaintance to friendship takes at least a year whereas Europeans tend to think it will be accomplished in a matter of months (Lustig & Koester 1996: 246). However, such assumptions seems to fall more into prototypical findings when thinking how large both the compared groups are and how many factors, such as the frequency and nature of the meetings, affect friendship creation.

In business relations as well it is essential to have time reserved for trust building. A Latino wants to know the person with whom he is negotiating and doing business. For them long-term relations are more essential than striking one good deal. There is an underlying assumption that relationships continue. As Ting-Toomey (1988) states it is the "eventual reciprocity" of collectivistic cultures they want to create. If one as a manager has given them good suggestions or

information, "they owe you"—one can expect the favour to be reciprocated. (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 215.) This way interdependency is created and this, in turn, is a better guarantee that the information you received is true.

Both Hänninen (1998: 39, 53) and Vaahterikko (2001: 153) emphasise the importance of trust. Vaahterikko (2001: 122) calls the phenomena "the mistrust culture" according to one interviewee who mentioned "*la cultural de la desconfianza*", where the person is trusted only after s/he has proved to be trustworthy. In other words everyone is a potential robber before s/he turns out to be honest. In Spain it seem to be the same: people do not trust right away but one has to get to know the other in order to see if trust and co-operation are possible on a personal level. Until then, a stranger can principally be considered a cheat. (Hänninen 1998: 53.) It was mentioned that this differs from Finnish system, which works with completely opposite logic: Finns tend to trust the others automatically until something happens that shows s/he is not trustworthy (Vaahterikko 2001: 122). Therefore Spaniards apparently consider Finns to be sometimes too trustful (Hänninen 1998: 53).

2.2.2. Relationships Have a Hierarchy

Despite the claimed Mexican individuality where everybody is valued because he is a unique person there is hierarchy to be seen in Latino societies. Here, when talking about hierarchy the importance of two factors, namely gender and status, is examined.

Gender

Hofstede's (1991) dimension of masculinity and femininity are widely used to conceptualise the gender roles and values of different cultures and this dimension is also applied to Latino culture. By masculine culture one refers to a society in which the roles of women and men are clearly separated whereas in feminine cultures they are overlapping. Also, masculine culture refers to so-called hard values in the society, such as money, success, etc. while feminine society

emphasises soft values such as guidance, love, friendship and caring. According to the research of Hofstede (1991), Latino cultures form two different groups, one being feminine, another masculine. He suggests that this is because machismo is stronger in the Caribbean area but not so much in South America. However, Costa Rica makes an exception to this assumption: according to Hofstede's suggestion above, it should be a masculine culture but in the results it is ranked as the most feminine of Latino countries. One could think that this would depend on the level of development of the country but this does not seem to be so: Costa Rica and Chile, which in the results are the most feminine cultures, are also two of the most developed countries in Latin America. Mexico is also one of the most developed countries, but it is ranked to be masculine. Hence, the level of development is not a relevant variable either.

The problem here could be the conceptualisation: on the one hand one talks about the roles of men and women in the society and on the other hand about the values of the society. These might coincide in "Western" societies but not necessarily anywhere else. The values of masculinity do not include any so-called "soft values"; these are included in feminism. However, as discussed later, machismo as a definition of what is expected of Latino man also includes soft values such as romanticism or sensitivity. Therefore, in masculine cultures - where the roles of men and women are separate - the expectation that the values of the society are masculine "hard values" is lost. Hence, in this connection the terms *machismo* and *marianismo* are used because they give better tools to consider Latin culture from their own perspective.

In Latino societies the role expectations of women and men are separated from each other more than in North American culture, for example (Condon 1997: 31). According to the stereotype, Mexican American women are submissive. The word *marianismo* is used to express this submissive and helpful attitude. This is also connected to the common image of the Latino women being housewives and, at least from the Western point of view, being there to serve the man and children. Already in 1988 it was claimed that roles are changing among Mexican

Americans (Collier 1988: 139). Later on, Condon (1997: 35) reassures that the attitudes toward gender roles and what is proper behaviour for each has been changing in Mexico as well, especially in urban areas. This could lead us to assume that roles in Mexican urban areas might be closer to roles expressed in the urban areas of the USA than to those of the rural parts of Mexico.

Roles are probably changing but there is also another point of view on role expectations in Latino society. Gangotena (1994: 77) claims that the idea of submissive women has been just a stereotype and she offers the rhetorical vision of *la familia* where women are never considered weak or passive: "Women are important because they are women". They have a very important role in *la familia* as one Spanish proverb says: "*la mujer es el centro de hogar*"; a woman is the centre of the home. In Mexican American families, women tend to be the one holding the family together and taking care of the *educación* of the children by transmitting values, assumptions and beliefs and also teaching them practical skills like cooking and cleaning. Women also have an important role in maintaining relationships and social networks. Research shows also that men and women share e.g. disciplining the children. (Gangotena 1994: 77.)

An important part of the *educación* of men is to teach them respect and honour towards women, which is shown by taking care of them. Many times this is understood as a sign of the submissive role of women. Instead, from a Latino perspective this does not imply as such an assumption that women are inferior to men but it simply means that they deserve special attention because they are women. (Gangotena 1994: 77.) This could be compared to the concept of individualism: a person has value as such; a woman has special meaning as such.

Still, in *la familia* there is only one leader: the man. His role is to give direction to the family and preserve order and discipline. Although men and women consult each other in decisions and so on, the responsibility of the decisions made is men's responsibility. (Gangotena 1994: 78.) *Machismo* often refers to authoritarianism but it also includes many other characteristics that are expected

to be realised by men, such as courage, self-defence, honour, defence of *la familia* and the defence of women's honour (Condon 1997: 33). Emotions that can be thought of as showing weakness (such as crying or showing fear), which are controlled in public, can even be expected to be shown among family and friends. Even though such characteristics as "strong" and "powerful" are expected, they do not exclude the expressions of romantic love, reciting poetry, giving serenades to their fiancées, writing ballads, enthusiasm and so on, which are frequently practised by Latin men. "*Todo un hombre*" (total man) is expected to play these both sides - rational and emotional - as well. He understands that rationality without emotions is damaging to relationships because it negates the people's inner worth. (Gangotena 1994: 74.)

As shown, the expectations for the behaviour of men and women differ. The following example illustrates how these two parts play together. Latin women pay special attention to their personal appearance. They consider clothing, make-up, hairstyle, etc. very important. They also expect men to notice them, (Condon 1997: 34.), and so the game is ready. Men are expected to engage in direct and explicit forms of public flirting and indeed they have the prerogative to do so. (Lozano 1994: 143.)

Status

Another factor that defines the role of the person in Latino society is status. Hofstede (1991: 23-28) talks about countries with high and low power distance. With power distance he does not refer only to the distribution of power but also money, education, etc. (Marín & Marín 1991: 15). In other words one could describe the concepts as measuring the tolerance for inequality in the society. Excepting Costa Rica, all Latin American countries proved to have a high power distance that would indicate that inequality in the society is widely accepted and considered a normal state of the society (Hofstede 1991: 23). Differences in such conventions as status are regarded important. One could say that all the cultures have some differences between people and therefore also different registers to address people who are not in the same level. However, in some cultures such as

Mexico, there is a tendency to maximise the differences of age, sex and status in the relationship whereas in the United States, for example, they are minimised. In Mexico, communication titles are an important part of conversations as words such as *maestro, don, licenciado, señor, Usted* are used with frequency. Such words could be seen as a courtesy but also as a marker of the high power distance. (Condon 1997: 38.) High power distance can be seen also among *la familia*. Children address their parents with the formal *Usted*, which is to show respect. Greetings are warm and caring with hugs and kisses but one can also see the ritualistic character in them that is to keep distance between the generations. (Gangotena 1994: 69.)

This dimension includes the thought that demands also differ for people having a different status in the hierarchy. In Finnish-Spanish research, both participants agreed upon that typical Spanish organisations are more hierarchical than those that Finns are used to. In Spanish organisation boss-subordinate relations and tasks of each are defined clearly and these limits tend not to be easily broken. For example, a subordinate does not take responsibility for the tasks considered belong to the boss. (Hänninen 1998: 76-78.) This was not supported in the research made of *maquiladoras*, an industrial area on the Mexican-US border. In that research the same norms were found at all status levels. It might be due to the trend that in all the plants the aim was to "flatten" the hierarchies. Also the closeness of the USA and management personnel from the USA might have had an affect. However, this could also be seen as a broader phenomenon showing that the organisational culture in the Mexican companies might be changing in general. (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 216.)

2.2.3. *Respeto* and *Simpatía* - Keys to Harmonious Relationship

Maintaining harmonious and pleasant relationships is one of the key characters in Mexican-American and, more broadly, in Latin communication (Gangotena 1994: 73; Marín & Marín 1991: 12). The ideal characteristics of a person are that he values relationships, gets well along with others and keeps the relationships in a

way that no compromising situations are needed. These ideals can be traced to two cultural concepts, namely *respeto* and *símpatia*.

Respeto

Different meanings are associated with the word *respeto* and its English translation “respect”. Respect is understood as fair play, democratic spirit or values of equality without any emotional overtones whereas *respeto* is an emotionally charged word connected with pressures of power, possible threat and often love-hate relationship. It is not a system of principals which one takes voluntarily but arises from powerful relationships like father and son, *patrón*; boss and *peón*; employee under the control of the boss. (Condon 1997: 22.) Therefore it is often the character of the culture with high power distance where the *respeto* shown allows a person to feel his personal power (Marín & Marín 1991: 15).

The term *respeto* is similar to the term “face” introduced by Brown and Lewinson (1978: 64) based on the theory of face by Goffman (1967), which includes elements of honour and dignity that are modified into the form important to Mexican culture. This so-called universal system of politeness strategies claims that people in all cultures have the sense of “face”, which is “something that is emotionally invested and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction.” Interaction is based on the assumption that participants want to maintain each other's face. However, the forms of that depend on such cultural phenomena as the limits of personal territories. (Brown and Lewinson 1978: 66.) Furthermore, face is defined as “a claimed sense of favourable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of him or her”, a public image he wants to maintain (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998; Scollon & Scollon 2001). Mexican *respeto* also implies perceived relational status. Its importance can be illustrated with everyday use of the word. The acts are performed *por* (for) *respeto* or if they are not performed, it is called *falta de* (lack of) *respeto*. The things that *respeto* demands a person to do, and the reasons for them, easily remain unknown to a foreigner. (Garcia 1996: 138, 145.) In Latin cultures there is high respect for hierarchy, age and gender. Generally, age is seen

as more important criterion than gender. This is often seen also in communication, for example, young person can show respect to the older for example by not looking straight to his eyes. Direct eye contact is easily considered as challenging authority. (Gangotena 1994: 77.)

Communication is seen as a relational game, where players have to know their hierarchical position in a relationship. In this game, to know how and to whom to show *respeto* is an important building block for interpersonal transactions. (Garcia 1996: 138, 146.) Any act of communication is a threat to face and therefore in communication one has to take into consideration what his act means to his own face and to the face of others. Since in communication situations there are always more than one participant present, it becomes a face-negotiation process where participants try to find a balance between their face-wants so that communication would go smoothly for both. Face-negotiation theory assumes that representatives of all cultures want to maintain and protect their face in all communication situations. This is also known as “facework”, which refers to a set of communicative behaviours that people use to regulate their social dignity and to support or challenge the other’s social dignity” (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998). Communication needs mutual *respeto*, to use the Mexican equivalent.

An important part of Mexican cultural identity is that they are “wearing a mask” in face-threatening situations (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996; Paz 1985). The tendency is to avoid conflict at any costs. When a conflict situation arises, one tries to avoid by compromising. Another possibility is to use silence. Silence together with introvert behaviour is preferred to disharmony. The avoidance of conflicts can be seen also as the way to respect the “the intrinsic honour of the person”. However, if all other channels have failed when defending against injustice, also assertiveness and aggressiveness are accepted (Gangotena 1994: 73).

Conflict avoidance affects communication in that one prefers to express things indirectly. For example direct negative feedback in a meeting could be taken as a

personal insult. Mexican way to give it would be more polite: feedback is modified into a suggestion and given privately but not in a confronting manner. Many times the change of scene and participants diminishes the threat, as does the indirectness with which one gives the feedback. For a Mexicans it can be difficult to understand how people can go and play golf together after they have had a direct confrontation, for example, at work. "You know, we Mexicans are different, if we don't like someone, we don't tell them this to their face, we are still polite." (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 208.)

Simpatía

Simpatía is said to be a cultural script for Latinos. On the one hand it emphasises the smooth and pleasant communication in social relationships, and on the other hand it avoids negative communication behaviours and the issues and manners that might lead to the conflict. (Triandis, Marín, Lisansky & Betancourt 1984.)

Simpatico as an adjective could be translated as kindness, cuteness or mild-manneredness. When using the word *simpatico* in a relational context it also includes the component of immediacy. *La persona simpatica* is considered approachable and personable.

As a script, *simpatía* encourages a person to a certain level of conformity and empathy for the feelings of the people (Marín & Marín 1991:12). Latinos seem to give more importance than Non-Latinos to approachability behaviours such as smiling, laughing and pleasant facial expressions. However, Latinos consider it especially important in an intracultural task context and in an intercultural social context, whereas for non-Latinos approachability behaviour is more important when working with someone from another culture and socialising with someone from the same culture (Martin & Hammer & Bradford 1994: 172). Different expectations towards work and social contexts might explain these differences.

As stated above, relations are considered more important than task completion for Latinos in the workplace as well. For them, it seems to be important to establish personal rapport with their co-workers. Positive social rapport leads to a good

working atmosphere and therefore it could be part of the behavioural expectations for competent communication in a task context. Non-Hispanics make strong distinctions between work and social relationships. Behaviours communicating affection, such as laughing and smiling belong to pleasant social situations, but it is not necessary to like a person with whom you work so it is not expected as such in task situations. This can easily lead to misunderstandings between these two groups. (Martin et al. 1994: 173.) Initial interaction poise behaviours are relatively important in intercultural task situations for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Although it might not be important to laugh or smile, it is important to have a nice appearance, appropriate posture and distance. These all help create *simpatía* needed in task situations. It is interesting that distance is important in initial interactions for Hispanics also. (Martin et al. 1994: 174.)

One important ingredient in creating positive social rapport is humour. One can see the role of joking in Latin culture as negotiation of the role of the participants in interaction. The more joking that occurs, the closer the persons involved are to each other. (Willis 1997: 351.) The social rapport has a goal of creating the feeling of being a group and having something in common. Therefore it is also important that one participates in the group's discussions and activities. A Latino night event could serve as an example. Despite the wide variety of dances, everybody was participating: dancing the familiar ones and learning new dances as well. By sharing the experience Latinos' sense of community was increased. Also, "outsiders" i.e. non-Latinos were welcome if they participated. (Willis 1997: 346.)

An example was told of the Mexican woman who worked in one *maquiladoras* factory. She complained that the machine she worked at was broken. Although the manager knew it was not, he supported the woman in her diagnosis. He sent her to have a pause while they "fixed" it. (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 208.) This could be an example of the "other positive face" which is defined as "the use of certain communication strategies to defend and support the other person's need for inclusion and association" (Ting-Toomey 1988: 219). It is strongly linked to

the Mexican cultural norms and often violated by North American communication style (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 208). It includes the question of respecting the feeling and opinion of the worker as a form of showing *simpatía*: giving support and empathy for her.

2.2.4. Non-verbal Behaviour as an Outcome of the Values Expressed

Latin cultures are classified as high context cultures (Hall 1976; Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 207). In high context cultures the context where the communication occurs is important. Non-verbal communication reveals a lot of meanings that must be noticed and interpreted in the right way. For example, in high context cultures, “workers do not say if they do not like the job, they just quit”. It is the responsibility of the manager to notice from the “brilliance” of their eyes, if they are satisfied or not. His essential skill is to see “true” or “real” attitudes in behaviour. (Lindsley & Braithwaite 1996: 210.) Non-verbal expressions of good manners and courtesy are expected (Gangotena 1994). Non-verbal communication is also an important tool used to convey feelings of *respeto* and *simpatía*.

Proxemics means the use of space. Here, the use of space is considered in terms of how public and private space is experienced. These concepts are considered differently in “Latin” cultures and in “Western” cultures. In public places, for example, Anglo-Americans have a guaranteed right to be left alone. One is alone in a crowd. However, in the same situation, a Latino is with the crowd and there is a strong sense of interaction among the people. A Latino is concerned about relationships even in public places. One goes there to meet new people, have a nice talk and walk. Anyone can address anyone and it is considered as normal. This difference is illustrated with a picture of mall where Anglo-Americans go to shop and Latinos to *paseo*, to visit the outdoor spaces of the city, to see and be seen. (Lozano 1994: 142)

A different definition of public and private also affects what kind of behaviour is considered polite. Lozano (1994: 144) noted that the gaze of Latino in a public is round, inquisitive and wandering and it is aimed to create a sense of interaction. Politeness requires that a Latino notices and replies to looks, gestures and movements. When people are sharing the same space, it is always a demand for attention and participation. Whatever happens in public, one must react: it is what good manners require.

One's own body is considered "public" in a sense that it does not belong to oneself or to anyone else either. This is strongly controversial to the Western understanding that one's body belongs to oneself and is connected with the self. Logically this leads to differences in touching behaviour. Accidental touching in a crowd is normal among Latinos, it is not something for which one has to apologise or show concern. Touching and addressing are regulated by the contextual rules of interaction, and in the public places this means that oneself and one's body is by no means neutral but expressive and accessible and also open to criticism and praise by passers-by. This is easily noticed e.g. in the streets of Latin America. Public forms of flirting are expected and welcomed. It is a way for a man to show his gallantry towards woman and also show that her appearance has caught and pleased his eye. Public flirting is carried out e.g. with *piropos*, courtly phrases like "*adiós mamita*"; bye mama or "*si cocina como camina, me como hasta el pegado*"; if you cook like you walk, I'll eat the leftovers. As mentioned above, to a certain extent this kind of behaviour is expected, but there is a wavy boundary, beyond which the behaviour can be defined as harassment or aggression. (Lozano 1994: 143.)

Latin culture is a contact culture where physical closeness is felt to be comfortable (Marín & Marín 1991: 15). As discussed above, accidental touch is considered natural even by strangers in public places. Also, in normal discussions the physical distance is considerably smaller in Latin cultures than, for example, in the United States. Pats on backs, hugs and other physical contacts are a natural part of communication in everyday situations. There is also a lot of physical

contact between members of the same sex. Men can give *abrazos*, embraces to each other, and women exchange kisses. (Condon 1997: 59-60.) In Mexico, for example, touch can also be interpreted as a sign of trust (Hendon & Hendon & Herbig 1996: 64). Different interpretations to touch and physical closeness can easily cause misunderstandings. For a Latino, withdrawing from the normal conversational distance can be a sign of emotional and relational distance whereas a Finn may interpret being close as an intrusion on his/her privacy.

In the family touch is also used to show interdependence and care between family members. Greeting rituals when coming home and leaving home are important and they include hugging and kissing. In normal interaction and discussion touch is also frequently used. (Gangotena 1994: 69) In the light of this, an interesting result was obtained on how Hispanics and non-Hispanics view touch in an initial interaction scenario: There seem to be no significant differences between them (Martin et al. 1994: 172). The Mexican interpretation mentioned earlier could explain this similarity: touch is a sign of trust and at an initial interaction, trust is not yet established. The mistrust culture discussed above is worth mentioning here: people are not trusted before they can be proved to be trustworthy, and therefore they are not touched either. Hence, one could conclude that in an interpersonal communication situation touching seems to be considered personal and used as a sign of the quality of the relationship.

The concept of public and private is also seen in the topics that are appropriate for discussion. The reflections of individualism and collectivism can be seen when one's family is the topic of discussion. In an individualistic culture it is seen as too private: "I do not know that person at all! How can I tell him about my family?" On the other hand, as a collectivistic culture, Mexican can easily claim: How can I really get to know the person if I do not know his family? (Condon 1997: 108.)

At the Latino night, it was observed that the borderline between public and private disappeared. Everyone could go to the DJ booth to see what is going to be played

and to make suggestions. This sharing enhanced the feeling of community. (Willis 1998: 351.)

2.2.5. Is Everything Relative? - Considerations of Truth and Time

Condon (1997: 44) names Mexico as a "land where *simpatía* counts far more than objectivity". The aspiration for good relationships and positive social rapport affect how the world is seen and interpreted to others. One does not look at the world objectively as it is, but through the lenses of what this reality would mean to the participants of the discussion.

Truth

Reality can be seen differently. Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero (according to Condon 1997: 41) has defined two kinds of existing realities: objective and interpersonal reality. In Mexico reality is constructed in terms of interpersonal relations. This is a case for example when a tourist's question is met with an answer that proves to be totally wrong. The Mexican just wanted to make the tourist happy and spend a moment with him in a good spirit. Many difficulties which e.g. North Americans have with Mexicans are due to the different use of matching words, deeds and intentions. The possible range of using these is much narrower for North Americans than it is for Mexicans. (Condon 1991: 110.)

These different realities are reflected in the concepts of universalism and particularism introduced by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997: 29). Universalist behaviour emphasises equality in a sense that the same rules apply for everybody. Exceptions are not easily accepted because they are thought to weaken the rule and therefore increase the possibility of illegalities or otherwise incorrect activities. Particularists, in turn, do not communicate with an objective person but with their friend, brother, acquaintance or strange person. In other words, how the rule should be applied depends on the persons in question. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997: 31.) Therefore, there is no objective truth to be found or defined but truth is relative. Furthermore, as Trompenaars and

Hampden-Turner (1997: 35-37) present, particularism also depends on the matter in question. For example, French and Italian were particularists when the question was to testify for the lawyer that her/his friend drove at a lower speed before an accident than he actually did. However, French and Italian were universalists when the question was to give information on a restaurant to the newspaper. Even if the restaurant had belonged to their friends, they still would not have considered it right to give it better marks than it actually deserved. In the same comparisons Mexicans did have some differences too but not as many as the two mentioned. Again, one could point out that in reality this is not a matter of two extremes but rather that there are many changing factors that affect the result.

One reason for different interpretations is the different styles of talking. Assertiveness behaviours such as using impressive words, talking a lot and agreeing with the other person are relatively more important to Hispanics than non-Hispanics (Martin et al. 1994: 174). Hispanics have a strong tradition of verbal fluency and intricate word plays whereas non-Hispanics Americans tend to have less verbal and more direct action-oriented behaviour. There are two contrasting styles: fancy and plain and they cause different interpretations of the personality and character of the other as a result. (Condon 1997: 48-49.) The same difference is also noted with Finns: both Spanish and Latin American negotiators pointed out that the main weakness of Finns is not having good verbal expression. Also, the interpretation that Finns are not aggressive—regarded as a weakness—could be connected to the same plain communication style. Latinos would expect more verbalising and socialising. (Vaaherikko 2001: 149.) As will be examined later in further detail, Finns might interpret words more literally than they are intended and this can cause misunderstandings in communication.

Time

Perhaps the most famous label for Latin cultures is the concept of *mañana*. By *mañana* one often intends to imply that Latinos want to have fun and do not hurry to accomplish given tasks but prefer to put them off until tomorrow. Because of this, they are sometimes thought of as lazy people. However, this might be too

stereotyped a picture and originate from different concepts of time in Western and Latin societies. There are many ways to look at and define time as was noted as early as 1959 by Hall (6-19). Later on, Hall (1984: 44-58) defines two concepts of time quoted frequently nowadays, namely polychronic and monochronic time. In cultures with monochronic time concept, time can be described linearly, in a sense that the events follow each other, whereas in cultures with polychronic time concept time can be described as a circle where many things can be done at the same time. Dahl (1995: 202) adds the concept of event-related time, which he actually draws parallel to the polychronic time concept. Action and happening are important, conscious planning is not done as such. But as Dahl (1995: 204) points out all these time concepts exist in all cultures, but one of them is usually prevalent.

Time can be viewed in the same way as truth: it is different depending who is looking at it. It can be seen objectively as one hour after another but also subjectively as events special or important to the one experiencing them. "I met my uncle on the way, and therefore I could not come earlier" would be a good reason to be late in cultures with an event-related time concept. Personal relationships are given priority over the fixed time. It is understandable also in a way that because meetings are not planned ahead the event—meeting an uncle—is experienced fully when it occurs. This time concept can be drawn as a conclusion or concretisation of the values spoken above. Relations are important, just as it is important to have a nice *simpatico* talk for a moment. Time is a slave to these values. (Dahl 1995: 202-203.)

The results gained in the studies reflect these considerations. The majority of Spaniards do not plan very much beforehand and if they do plan, it is only for about two weeks at the time and then also they leave enough time every day for surprises and improvising. It is suggested that it is not even possible to plan strict timetables because one might stay longer with one customer because of his involvement with another customer or some other important matter. Also he might want to talk about something besides working matters. (Hänninen 1998: 65, 67.)

These results verify the definitions explained: timetables as such are not considered important or necessary to the efficiency but there should also be time reserved for unexpected visits and talks. However, it is commented that timetables are nowadays stricter than earlier and it is considered polite to inform if one comes even 10-15 minutes late to a meeting (Hänninen 1998: 68).

Colombian negotiators are defined as not being punctual and not planning their actions. In addition to the reasons already mentioned, this is explained by the state-of-war in their country which does not allow planning as in politically stable countries. On the other hand, Colombians are regarded as creative and one could imagine that these two characteristics work well hand in hand. (Vaahterikko 2001: 151-152.) Another aspect of Colombian planning is what Vaahterikko (2001: 156) calls follow-up culture. It means that people need to be reminded of the tasks they should be doing in order to be committed to them and able to complete them. This is said to be connected with the polychronic time concept and people orientation. Employees with such orientation tend to work for their directors rather than for the task itself.

Another aspect of this time concept is that "one takes action when something happens, not before, even if one is aware of the damage on the roof". It is difficult to say when the happening starts because it starts when everything is done. A meeting starts when a majority of participants has arrived and the bus leaves when it is full. It is *la hora mexicana*: everything happens "late" according to Western monochronic standards. These examples also show the orientation towards the present whereas monochronic planning stresses the future. (Dahl 1995: 204; Condon 1997: 66) After all: is it actually the Western countries that are "lands of *mañana*"?

2.3. Features of Finnish Interpersonal Communication

It seems that research conducted on Finnish communication culture generally takes a different perspective than that of Mexican culture. Whereas Mexican communication culture seems to be researched in a certain context or through

certain communication situations, much of the research on Finnish communication culture examines the image that Finns have of themselves or that others have of Finns and of their communication. Different needs guide these research perspectives: in research done among Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, the need is to understand the communication in relatively concrete situations in order to be able work and live together in USA, where most the research is conducted, or in US companies functioning in Mexico. One reason for Finnish research perspective could be that Finns tend to be concerned about what is thought about them and how they are seen abroad, as was discussed in several articles (Alho, Lehtonen, Raunio & Virtanen 1996: 40; Lehtonen 1993: 15-22). Therefore there is a lot of interest in and need for such research. Many of these results confirm the old phrase "the beauty is in the eye of the beholder" as the same characteristic is experienced differently according to what cultural frame it examined in. This shows the importance of being conscious of the characteristics of one's communication and its possible interpretation.

The studies made on Finnish communication culture do not offer a very coherent picture of a Finn as a communicator (Isotalus 1995: 72). The range of time over which the studies were carried out is pretty long, so it is also good to ask to what extent they are still valid. As Lehtonen (1994a: 96) already then noted, Finnish culture is moving towards the Anglo-American norms of talking. Increasing intercultural mobility as well as a slowly increasing number of people from other cultures in Finland certainly have an effect on both the individual and the communication culture as whole. Finnish people interviewed in this research are all ones who have travelled and worked in other countries than Finland and therefore their communication culture has changed. Nonetheless, they have experienced differences in communication. These differences tend to be interpreted negatively by Finns, as an indicator of something that they must change in their own behaviour, although a common communication culture does not exist. (Lehtonen 1994b: 5) No study has indicated that Finns are weaker in communication skills than "others", Finns have traditionally learnt to consider themselves poor communicators and public speakers. Still, it is more a question of attitude. To take another point of view, it seems that modesty and underestimation

are norms that guide what and how Finns tell others about themselves. (Sallinen-Kuparinen 1994: 80-81.) This is good to keep in mind when examining research where Finns tell about themselves.

Many studies come up with certain list of adjectives or statements that are perceived to describe Finns from the point of view of other cultures. The result could show, for example, that French consider Finns honest, but not e.g. what it really means, how it affects communication, how it was seen in different situations, if it was taken as positive or negative, etc. Even though they are not coherent, these results are still very valid when researching the image of Finns. However, as this study aims to find deeper explanations of the communication differences and thereby critical success factors in communication, they are not used as such, but here the attempt is made to find some common denominators of those results that could give a good foundation for analysis.

In the following chapters characteristics of Finnish interpersonal communication are examined from three different perspectives. By far the most researched topic seems to be the phenomena of the silent Finn. It will be examined first in the light of the concept of privacy and the politeness connected to it. Second, the Finnish balance between small talk and silence is discussed. Third, the discussion turns to Finnish *www*-orientation, which refers to the orientation towards work, word and watch where such concepts as time and honesty are concerned.

2.3.1. The Silent Finn and High Value of Privacy

One of the most common stereotypes of Finns is "the silent Finn". One humorous picture presents "the ideal European" as a person that has a trait from each European nationality in which the nationality is typically thought to be lacking, e.g. as good a cook as an Englishman, as economic as an Italian and as talkative as a Finn. Many research results that have been presented of the Finnish image deal with this topic. In the research with Colombian businessman, more than half of the interviewees mentioned Finnish silence; one even commented, "this silence is mortal to Latinos" (Vaahterikko 2001: 117). When Hänninen (1998: 11)

interviewed Spanish businessman in her study, more than half of them thought that Finns, at least in the beginning of the relation, were reserved, distant, and uncommunicative. Some of them added, however, that Finns living in Spain are more open and more communicative. In other words this could mean that when people get to know each other better, they also learn to interpret more correctly each other's way of communicating and/or adapt to the same communication style.

Similar results were obtained when five other European groups (Danish, Germans, French, British and Italians) were interviewed. Their negative comments dealt with difficulties in making contacts and starting discussion with Finns and on their distant and uncommunicative behaviour. The explanation was that Finns tend to be mainly concentrated on business matters and even that is conducted in a formal and serious manner. Invitations to sauna were mentioned as the only attempt by Finns and the only possibility for foreign partners to have a relatively informal encounter. Especially in the Latin countries—in this case France and Italy—the experiences of a lack of informal situations were emphasised. As the authors conclude, this lack it can hinder rapid and positive development of business relations. (Törnroos, Berg & Bergman 1991: 131-132.) One could assume that the difference was not so much in the number of informal situations but in the expectations that French and Italians had.

Lack of participation and passive behaviour were also obvious characteristics of intercultural Finns in a research project in which Finns were examined by their European and North American co-workers in intercultural working places in Paris. They seldom speak at meetings, they do not initiate conversation and they make suggestions and present their opinions more seldom than the others (Rusanen 1993). Despite that, however, other nationalities (but not Finns themselves) considered Finns social in the working place. This result is rather surprising in the light of the other findings presented above. Rusanen (1993: 71) suggests that the impression that Finns are social at work can be conveyed through the following characteristics also appeared by her research: Finns are seen as capable of co-operation, to be neither critical nor selfish and Finns have good

listening skills. In other words sociality should not be equated only with being verbal. Another reason mentioned could be that Finns are more apt to negotiate than to debate. Here it could be added that, as in the Spanish case above, time can help participants understand the other's communication better. Whatever the case may be, it seems that in this aspect there is something in Finnish communication that differs from that of the other groups researched. What is it? How do Finns themselves interpret it?

Finnish silence has been investigated by number of researchers. The concepts of the research have reflected the confusion in the attitudes towards Finnish silence. In the research tradition of the USA, concepts such as "tolerance of silence" and "communication reticence" are often used. However, as Lehtonen (1994b: 6) points out, the term "tolerance of silence" clearly reflects the viewpoint of a culture whose members have learnt to fill social silence with talk. The underlying thought is that silence is something that should be tolerated and not enjoyed. In Finland, however, silence has many possible meanings: it certainly can be taken as uncertainty, protest, or critique, but also as satisfaction, politeness, respect and sometimes also mutual understanding (Salo-Lee 1997: 34). Generally speaking, in the Finnish opinion, silence is harmony: one can relax when it is silent. Hence, the concept "tolerance of silence" lacks validity in Finnish culture because the meaning that Finns give to talking and being silent are so different from the culture where the concepts originated. As Lehtonen (1994b: 7) suggests, a concept such as "tolerance of talk" would better reflect Finnish expectations. In another connection, Lehtonen (1994a: 94-96) presents two concepts: one where the speaker plays a central role and another where the listener plays a central role. Finland would have the listener in a central role; therefore, silence is one way to communicate and has many meanings, as presented above. By being silent, one can also show wisdom and mental strength.

Here two types of silence are examined: social silence and conversational silence. They are defined as follows: social silence means the tendency to withdraw, not to participate and not to react verbally, whereas conversational silence refers to

longer pauses during conversation or even the complete lack of talking (Vasco, Kjisik & Salo-Lee 1998: 102). However, in these definitions the same attitude as in the example above is present: something is lacking, which is communication or, more specifically, talk. But one can also change the point of view to examine what exists, instead of what is lacking. Lehtonen (1994: 94) explains two concepts describing different aspects of cultures: solidarity and respect for privacy. The former shows solidarity in interaction situation towards the other by participating and being active, and the latter shows respect to the privacy of the other by not interfering in his or her personal matters. The latter could coincide with the meaning that the "lack of talk" is thought to convey.

Similar concepts are introduced by Brown and Lewinson (1978) as politeness strategies. They use the terms "positive and negative politeness" (1978: 64), but here the terms "involvement and independence politeness strategies" are used in the same way that Scollon & Scollon (2001: 46-47) use them with the remark that "positive" and "negative" are too easily replaced with "good" or "bad" even though the concepts do not have such a value. Face theory suggests that both these strategies are present in any communication situation, but the manner in which each is present and which one is emphasised depends, for example, on the culture. According to what is written above, one could assume that at least in formal contexts Finns seem to use more independent strategies. One concrete example concerns the concept of space: A Finn and a German are living together in a student apartment. For a Finn such a living format does not necessarily mean that they would have something in common i.e. that they would chat or spend time together. When the German woman, according to her culture, used involvement politeness strategy and invited the Finn to eat with her, borrowed a cup, or cleaned the room many times in a row, she noticed a strong reaction from her Finnish roommate. The Finn might have experienced that the German had invaded her private area. (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 94-95) Perhaps these concepts as an undertone could better explain the overt communication.

One thing what can cause the person from another culture to label a Finn as silent is the strategies Finns tend to use in getting to know people or trying to gather information in general. Whereas in some cultures an interactive strategy (“the more I talk about myself, the more the other talks about himself or herself”) or an active strategy (questions from the third party) are used, Finns tend to use passive information strategies. These emphasise listening and observing the situation more than taking part in it verbally. It is considered polite to wait while others introduce or talk about themselves and also to let them voluntarily say what they consider necessary. (Salo-Lee 1997: 34-35.) This can be seen as respect of the other's privacy. The same happens in the opposite situation: While a German shows her interest in a person by asking him or her questions, Finns tend to interpret it as an invasion of their privacy. Finns seemed to want to tell about themselves at their own pace and when they feel confident with it, which takes some time. (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 101)

The mechanisms of how a person is integrated into the group are also different. For example, Germans seem to choose the topics in such a manner that a newcomer can fully participate and in that way become a part of the group. Finns, on the other hand, let a newcomer observe the situation in peace before forcing him or her to talk. Comments, opinions, and questions can easily be considered too personal in a conversation. A Finn would prefer argumentation based on facts, not wanting to be involved so personally. (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 99-100.) These findings also apply to the business context, as noted earlier: an international Finn speaks seldom at meetings, does not start a conversation, and suggests or expresses his opinion more seldom than the other nationalities in the group investigated. The inference from this could be that offering one's opinion implies that one is involved too personally. The extent to which personal feelings can be revealed in business discussions or situations connected to it can also be examined through the concept of affective and neutral cultures introduced by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997: 69). Affective cultures encourage and expect feelings to be shown, whereas neutral cultures keep them carefully controlled. There are also differences in the extent to which feelings and emotions

are considered as facts, which therefore should be taken into consideration (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997: 69-73). Based on the examples above, one could conclude that from Finnish perspective personal feelings should be controlled. However, one should note that the examples mentioned are from contexts where people do not know each other very well personally and in which a personal relationship is not expected to be achieved.

However, Finns are considered good listeners. Laine-Sveby (1987: 46) defines that unlike Swedish silence, Finnish silence is characterised by a strong presence. The result was confirmed later: a Finn is present although he is quiet. Finns' ability to listen and concentrate on listening was determined to be the best out of a group of fourteen nationalities that participated to the study of European businessman. (Rusanen 1993: 58.) This seems not to have changed over time, because Colombian business partners also mentioned the same thing: Finnish negotiators are good listeners. This was considered a very positive quality. (Vaahterikko 2001: 135.) How do Finns then listen?

In Finnish culture conversation is a situation where one talks and others listen. Giving verbal feedback and using lot of back-channelling when others are talking is not considered polite and can even be taken as intrusive. However, Finns give feedback non-verbally. (Lehtonen 1994a: 97.) Intensive listening is indicated in the Finnish communication style by strict eye contact, the intensity of which might differ from the that which is considered normal in some other cultures (Salo-Lee 1997: 35). Interrupting is not considered polite. Finnish tolerance for silence is notably higher than in the USA, Central Europe, or even Sweden. This is naturally seen also in conversation: Finns have a slower tempo. One permits pauses and also takes long pauses between the speaking terms and between the questions and answers during interaction. (Lehtonen 1994a: 95-96.) Even though many positive results on Finns as listeners were presented above, it is only one side of the truth. This kind of conversational silence can also lead to the idea that Finns are indifferent, as the Spaniards came to believe (Hänninen 1998: 28). Why do they not see the "strong presence" of Finn that was mentioned above? There

can be many reasons: their culture might expect extensive verbal feedback to show participation, they might not be used to observing such discreet non-verbal feedback, and if they could observe it, they might get the wrong interpretation. In addition, people do not yet know each other or the other's culture well enough to know the meaning. At least the Spanish commented that silence did not disturb them any more once know each other. (Hänninen 1998: 28.)

2.3.2. Finnish Small Talk and Social Silence

In practice, social silence often means that one is not active in a discussion; one does not participate in small talk. Lehtonen and Sajavaara (1997) have specified the following three reasons why small talk tends to be difficult for Finnish people:

- because of strict rules of talking
- because the content is not considered important or necessary
- because it is not considered essential in relational meaning either

In other words, small talk is not seen as necessary in terms of content and in terms of the relational objective. These reasons are elaborated further by Carbaugh (1995: 55), more thoroughly examined Finnish talk and defined the following rules:

- 1) Don't state the obvious
- 2) If speaking, say something worthy of everyone's attention
- 3) Don't invoke topics or themes that are contentious or conflictual (or more positively, keep present relations on harmonious ground)
- 4) Be personally committed to or invested in what you say
- 5) What you say properly - the unobvious, socially worthwhile, noncontentious, personally involving themes - forms a basis for subsequent interactions.

He finds them to be fairly strict and comments that it is no wonder that it requires some thought before speaking. He takes the comment: "what a beautiful day" as an example. In the light of these rules, it is really a matter that everybody can see. On the other hand, when Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen (1995: 99) present the topics of Finnish small talk, weather and different weather conditions

are the most common topics. Compared to other cultures, Finns discussed the weather even longer and more ardently. These conclusions seem little bit contradictory. Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen (1995: 93, 99, 101, 102) see the close agrarian past as an explanation for many aspects of Finnish communication culture. Here, one could point out that generally Finns live close to nature and the four seasons offer a lot of changes throughout the year, but the weather can also vary widely within a small area. Hence, nature really affects everyday life and the people who are discussing it might have experienced it differently. In this way it might not be taken as topic with no significance. On the other hand, maybe this is the reason why talking about the weather is considered a bit ridiculous: even though Finns know that it is "obvious", something everybody already sees, they still talk about it.

It is necessary to point out, that in any culture - including Finland, despite what has been discussed above - talking has two different objectives: on one hand it transmits information, on the other it aims to create and maintain contacts between people. This latter objective is carried out by small talk of certain kinds. (Salo-Lee, Malmberg & Halinoja 1998: 45.) Hence, Finns do also have small talk but it has its own characteristic. Settings are not the same as in some other cultures such as e.g. in Germany, where small talk is expected at the bus stop or in the working place more than in the Finnish context. Also, people with whom it is necessary to have small talk vary. In Finland, small talk is not expected with neighbours in a block of flats or when coming to a small place such as a sauna or small shop. Small talk topics also vary. In addition to the weather, common small talk topics in Finland include activities connected to the seasons (skiing, picking berries, etc.) or communication situations (the prices in the shop, ticket checking in train, etc.). These are certainly common elsewhere, but Finnish small talk does not touch on personal matters or income. Names tend not to be used, nor are direct questions asked. Directness is avoided by using passive form such as in the following example: "*Mites meni viikonloppu?*" "*kiirettä oli, piti lukea tenttiin*"; "How was the weekend - "It was rushed, an exam had to be studied for". (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 98.) When addressing a question or comment to

somebody, it is formed in an indirect, non-personated way e.g. "*Mistäs kaukaa sitä ollaan?*"; from how far is one coming? The passive form is practical to use - it refers to a person but not directly to anyone, although the actor can be deduced from the situation. Calling somebody by name separates him from others and it is considered impolite. (Huuskonen 1988.)

Here one could draw attention to one interesting notion: Finns are categorised in Hofstede's (1991) individualistic-collectivistic dimension as an individualistic culture which as a concept means that everybody takes care primarily of himself or herself, one's identity is based on individual achievements etc. All this sounds applicable to Finnish culture. However, there is also a collective element in Finnish communication culture that is verbalised often as "*ei saa erottua joukosta*", one should not stick out from the crowd. Having "no name" gives protection and safety in the group (e.g. Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 93). Maybe this could be compared to the concepts of "individualism" and "individuality" which are examined in connection with Mexican communication. In that context "individualism" refers to a person taking care of himself or herself and basing his or her identity on individual merits while "individuality" emphasises the value of the individual as such and is not dependent on who the individual is or on what he has done. In the same way "collectivism" refers to an individual belonging primarily to a certain group whereas one could use the term "collectivity" to describe the value of a group for an individual, no matter how permanent or how important the group is for the individual. This could describe the feature of Finnish culture that one should not stick out from the group, regardless of whether the group is unique mixture of people in a train or a group of students that gather in the same lecture every week.

Collectivity is actually connected with privacy: if you do not stick out, you can reserve your own personal opinions, feelings and background to yourself. In this way the group protects the individual. In Finnish culture it seems to be very important to respect the privacy of others. Actually many examples of Finnish silence described above can be explained by the respect of privacy. It is noted that

the passive form in language and indirect talk were most likely taken into use when hunting changed to farming and people start to see each other more often. This is due to the fact that when people began farming, it become more important to maintain their own privacy, to have their own territory. (Huuskonen 1988.)

2.3.3. Orientation towards Work, Word and Watch

Since this research is concentrating on interpersonal communication at work, it is important to examine how people experience work and what kinds of orientations seem to be connected with it. Kirra (1999) brings three different aspects into consideration: work, word and watch. On some occasions these are humorously referred to as Finnish www-orientation.

Work

Hänninen (1998: 10) noted that Spaniards consider Finns very work-oriented people: precise and conscientious people who do everything as well as possible. However, one interviewee points out that it is "exactness, I would not say that efficiency" which could be taken as a comment on different demands on being efficient in a different cultural context. Other research shows that Finns take work seriously and thinking the opposite way tends to be taken as a negative aspect (Kirra, 1999: 284). According to Colombians, Finns concentrate on their task and therefore make good progress on it (Vaahterikko 2001: 123).

However, representatives of other cultures may view such task-orientation as neglecting personal relations. The Chinese mentioned that there was little room for creating positive contacts when working with Finns. Almost all the Chinese interviewees commented on the lack of verbal motivation and encouragement to workers. Also, the lack of non-verbal signals, such as eye contact, smile and words showing friendliness was experienced as a problem. Finns seemed to make contacts with others only in the office, and it appeared that they did not have the sensitivity to distinguish when it would be correct to meet elsewhere. It also seemed that presents given in Chinese culture were not considered a part of

creating the social relationship. (Salo-Lee 1994: 106-107.) Also Germans tend to think that the Finnish content-based style of talking indicates that they are not interested in getting to know others. (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 97-102).

Word

As briefly mentioned in earlier chapters, Hall (1976) introduces two concepts that define how much importance words have and how they should be interpreted in a certain culture. Low-context cultures are cultures where verbal communication and the content revealed through words are essential and sufficient for understanding the message correctly. Non-verbal communication is usually not in conflict with verbal communication. In high-context cultures, however, non-verbal communication is of utter importance. Only part of the message is conveyed by words and the rest has to be read from the context. It is often characterised with an indirect communication style and aims to maintain harmony among the communication participants. Many times cultures are placed into one of these categories but as Salo-Lee et al (1998: 60) note, no culture is clearly high-context or low-context but has aspects of both. This is also true of Finnish culture.

Often Finns seem to be categorised as low-context culture as the communication relies a lot on words and not on non-verbal expressions. When comparing Finns with French or people from the USA, Finns are scarce in gestures and facial expressions (Rusanen 1993: 72). In contrast to the restrained communication style of the Finns, the French spontaneous and colourful communication style, for example, can lead Finns to think that they do not tolerate different opinions very well (Rusanen 1993: 71). Finns use a direct communication style. This came out e.g. in the research on the Finnish image in Europe: the Finnish way of communicating was felt to be very different and "direct to the point" in practice (Törnroos et al. 1991:131). Sometimes directness is face-threatening as told in an example by a Chinese person in which a Finnish businessman declined an offer by saying "*en syö makeaa*", "I do not eat sweets". The Chinese commented "I am vegetarian, but I'll even eat a whole cow if it is the customer who offers it". On the

other hand, direct comments made at work such as "This is not right," and "I do not agree," etc., were considered good. This shows the ambiguity of directness. The Chinese advice is that Finns should follow the hints given non-verbally, consider the context, and not concentrate only on the content. (Salo-Lee 1994: 109.)

On the other hand, the majority of Spanish respondents complain that Finns are very inexact in their communication. Especially when something negative has to be said, it is said so indirectly that it is hard to discern, but on the other hand they comment that indiscreetly presented critique will offend (Hänninen 1998: 23). This could be categorised as a high-context feature. How can these seemingly contradictory comments be explained? As was previously discussed, indirectness stems from the Finnish language, e.g. passive forms, group references or generalisations are used instead of pronouns (Huuskonen 1988). This habit may shift to another language too—in this case to Spanish—which would make it difficult to understand. Another reason could be that often opinions, thanks, emotions, etc., are only expressed non-verbally (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 103). According to what is explained above, this kind of indirectness is used in order to avoid personal input and therefore maintain one's privacy. In collectivistic cultures, however, silent critique is a question of face-saving and therefore public feedback is mainly positive. Finns seem to find that this interferes with working efficiently. (Salo-Lee 1997: 34.)

One explanation for preferring directness in certain situations could be the Finnish concept of honesty. This can be illustrated with the Finnish relation to words. As Kirra (2000) presents in the results of her study of the critical incidents that included a Finn as one participant, Finns seem to take words too seriously. Words are used as a well-meaning gesture as in many cultures, but Finns may take them literally, as a promise. The same was reported to happen with Spaniards: because they consider atmosphere important, they might say something positive without meaning anything concrete by it, which should be interpreted as a form of

politeness. However, Finns tend to understand it literally. When Spaniards really mean something, it will be repeated various times. (Hänninen 1998: 52.)

For a Finn, saying only what one means tends to be interpreted as the sign of honesty. In general, Finnish honesty is highly valued among other cultures. It is seen in many investigations e.g. the Chinese appreciate Finnish sincerity and honesty (Salo-Lee 1994: 110). All nationalities interviewed (Danes, Germans, Frenchmen, British and Italians) mentioned and valued the honesty and reliability of the Finn even though it was commented that sometimes it came close to naivety (Törnroos et al. 1991: 131). The Spanish also consider Finns peaceful, honest occasionally too trustful (Hänninen 1998: 11). One concrete example of reliability is that Finns tend to be independent in their work and therefore they also take personal responsibility for it (Kirra 1999: 284). This can be seen in relation to the rules as well: Finns follow them a lot better than Spaniards, for example. (Hänninen 1998: 56).

Watch

Time is also taken more literally than in some other cultures. Finns are often categorised into monochronical time orientation along with other Scandinavian cultures (Hall 1984: 46). This might be true, but there is still variation to be seen in how representatives of different cultures experience the Finnish concept of time. In Germany, spontaneous meetings or invitations rarely succeed. From their point of view Finns might agree on meetings early, but they can also cancel them at the last minute. A Finn can also present an invitation totally spontaneously. (Salo-Lee & Winter-Tarvainen 1995: 96). The same has been noted with Swedes: Finns improvise easier than Swedes and therefore tend to be pretty flexible in their ways (Laine-Sveby 1987: 24).

The situation changes when comparing Finns to the Spanish: from the Spanish point of view, Finns tend to plan almost everything beforehand, while Spanish themselves are used to leaving room in their calendars for surprises such as sudden guests or important phone calls, as explained earlier. Also, some Finns

commented that in Spain they do not use a calendar very much; instead, they just call half an hour before their visit, which shows that Finns are flexible to change when necessary. (Hänninen 1998: 65.) Colombian negotiators also noted that Finns plan long-term whereas for them it is not usual. However, Finnish punctuality is appreciated a lot: it was regarded as one of the Finnish strengths in negotiations in Latin America. (Vaahterikko 2001: 119, 137.)

Qualities such as punctuality, efficiency and fulfilment of commitments were connected with seriousness, which was mentioned most frequently as the most positive characteristic of Finns by Latin American interviewees. All these traits included in those managerial aspects of communication that were regarded as Finnish strengths. (Vaahterikko 2001: 150, 156.) As Vaahterikko notes (2001: 150), the positive evaluation could be considered quite surprising because results gained earlier (Vaahterikko 1997) would indicate that Finns themselves were afraid that it would be taken negatively. This can be due to the Finnish tendency to think negatively of one's own cultural characteristic, as discussed above, but it can also be due to the consciousness that it is neither a Spanish nor a Latin American characteristic. All these aspects could be taken as part of the work-orientation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both Mexican and Finnish communication characteristics are described above according to the perspective of this research. Sometimes the communication is examined as such, but mainly it is examined in relation to the communication with other cultural characteristics. Research of Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication as such does not exist, let alone that there would be research focusing on the business context. Still, as presented above, there is a lot of research on communication between some "Western" and some "Latin" cultures. Some of them have focus on the business context, but not all of them; one could suppose that the same characteristics can also be seen in different contexts even though the manifestations might differ. However, as there is not research as such on Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication, the main focus of this study is

to examine and describe how it exists in a business context. Based on this description, critical success factors are defined. Methodology used is qualitative. Emphasis was placed on choosing research methods that were useful in examining personal experiences. In this case focused interviews and participant observation were the chosen methods. In addition to the interviews, other empirical material was also gathered.

3.1. Research Questions

The main research question is stated as follows:

- What are the critical success factors of Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication in business context?

However, in order to receive answers to this question, three other research questions are stated:

- How do Finns and Mexicans experience and interpret each other's interpersonal communication occurring in the business context?
- Is it possible to explain the interpretations by certain common values? If so, what are the values? To whom are they common?
- What characteristics of Finnish communication do Mexicans experience as strengths or as weaknesses, and vice versa?

3.2. Participant-as-an-observer Method

It is claimed that “when one’s concern is the experience of the people, the way that they think, feel and act, the most truthful, reliable, complete and simple way of getting that information is to share their experience” (Douglas 1976: 112). In this study personal feelings and experiences are discussed. On the one hand, in interviews people are asked about their own experiences, as explained later in more detail. However, it has been noted in similar research about Finnish and Chinese business communication that using the interview as the only data-

gathering method is not sufficient. People are not always conscious themselves of actually happens in communication and therefore in real communication there probably occurs things that is not discussed in interviews (Salo-Lee 1994: 111). Thus, the observation method is likely to diminish this kind of information gap and therefore it is chosen as one method in this study.

For this study the participant observation was carried out during a half-year internship 5.4-30.9.1999 in the city of Puebla, Central Mexico, about 120 kilometres from *Ciudad de México D.F*, the capital of Mexico. The internship site was in the marketing department of an international Finnish-led telecommunications company where I was a member of the marketing team. My tasks consisted of various marketing projects, which included co-operation inside the company, frequent contacts with subcontractors and also straight contacts with customers. Two projects were my responsibility. The company was growing rapidly and during that half a year the number of employees in the office changed from about 50 to 120 people. I was one of three Finnish people working there full-time; in addition to us there was one Finnish part-time worker. However, many employees, especially at the management level, had a lot of co-operation with Finns working in other offices.

In the discussion about culture above, it was mentioned how important it is to use culturally appropriate research instruments. When Marin & Marin (1991: 71) examine the possibilities to do so with Hispanic populations, the three most useful suggestions by a number of researchers were cultural immersion, consultation with experts or key informants, and the subjective culture approach. Immersion in a culture implies getting to know the normal everyday practices of the cultural group one is going to investigate. In this study, the participant observation served this purpose. There I had the possibility on one hand to see how interpersonal communication between Finns and Mexicans functions and on the other hand I was also able to experience it myself. In addition to this, as the subjective culture approach suggests, I made an effort to get to know as much as possible about Mexico: its history, music, food, arts, etc. As Marin & Marin (1991: 71) note, one

important canal is to immerse oneself in the culture, and this helps also in analysing the data gathered. Consultation with experts, or key informants as they are called in this study, was used especially when analysing the results and will be explained further in this study.

There are four possible research identities to use when conducting participant observation, depending on how much actual participation the observation includes (Burgess 1984). In this study, the identity of participant-as-observer was chosen. As a participant-as-observer, the researcher is like any other worker in the organisation and participates fully in the activities, and yet her observation is no secret. Also, the researcher is free to talk about feelings and ask questions and make interpretations about the different situations, as she does not have to hide her intention to observe. In this way the researcher can learn to know the everyday reality of the people s/he researches. (Waddington 1994: 117.) At my internship site, I was working the whole time with Mexicans. I also had the opportunity to observe other Finns and Mexicans working together and discuss that with them.

During the internship, a reflective diary was written of the communicative situations encountered at work and in work-connected situations. The aim was to make diary entries when something occurs that could be connected with Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication. At the beginning there are notes every day and after that at least a couple of times each week. Roughly speaking, there are three different kinds of observations written in the diary. One consists of my own experiences in communication situations in which I noticed that something should be expressed or done differently to make communication work. It is an attempt to make my own learning process conscious. The following questions were posed: What actually happened in the communication situation? How did I interpret it? How would the other participant have interpreted it? What could I have done in order to make the communication successful? Sometimes the question was: what did I do differently in order to succeed? Some of these issues are discussed repeatedly. The second kind of observation concerns communication between Finns and Mexicans. The main question was as follows: What do they do that

makes their communication successful? If it was not successful, what were the reasons for it? What should they do in order to make their communication work better? The third kind of observation consists of other peoples' experiences of Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication that were told to me. These also have the explanation or interpretation of the person in question, which is followed by thoughts on how the same item would have been interpreted by the other participant(s). As can be seen above, many questions on the reasons for successful communication or unsuccessful communication are posed and reflected on in the diary. It was not always appropriate or possible to discuss the interpretation with the participants of the communication and hence, especially in such cases two key informants were used (Marín & Marín 1991: 72). These key informants had the necessary knowledge and sensibility to help me in translating words and in interpreting my observations. Both were Mexicans; one was familiar with international business context and the other with "Western" communication.

The key informants' role was to comment on my interpretations or to help find interpretations for different encounters. Most commonly, our working method was such that the two key informants and I met and discussed the issues at hand. Sometimes the discussions also took place with only one key informant. The people in question—a colleague from a subcontracting company and one acquaintance—assumed the role of key informant over the course of the development of our friendship. Their profiles are included in appendix 3. This method was also encouraged by Tanno (2001). She called for the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that the results really reflect reality as participants see it and also bring the results back to the field where they were gathered. In this way research would be more participative and common learning would take place. The diary also included a general evaluation of communication that was written after the internship period was over.

The role of the researcher is important when doing participant observation. First, s/he has to create and maintain a positive, non-threatening self-image so that people easily tell her their thoughts and take her into the society. Good

interpersonal skills are essential for a researcher, especially in this initial stage. (Waddington 1994: 109.) This might be especially important when working with Mexicans as with all the other Hispanic populations. As was discussed above about the importance of first creating a good relationship, one would not be trusted before being tested. The outcomes of the cultural script of *simpatía* are essential tools in doing so. (Marin & Marin 1991: 13.) Secondly, the researcher has to have good observation skills in order to see what occurs. In this research, one assumption is that people are not aware of the differences in communication. It is one reason to choose participant observation as a method, but it also demands that a researcher will be able to estimate what factors in communication are caused by differences in communication culture and not due, for example, to personal differences.

This kind of participant observation is often criticised in that the presence of the researcher starts to affect on the reality she is researching. However, the longer the period of observation is, the less the presence of the researcher affects the situation. When one is part of the organisation for a long period of time, one can hear and see opinions and experiences at different time and different moods. (Waddington 1994: 117.) In the beginning it is recommended to have a period of acclimatisation in order to get used to the environment and create the relational network needed. After that, it is time to start with note-taking and self-reflection. In this case, however, I started to write a diary from the beginning, assuming that many new things will be noted most clearly in the first weeks and also because I received many interesting comments and pieces of advice during the acclimatisation period. The boss of the marketing department encouraged acclimatisation also; his task for me the first week was to get to know my co-workers, their work history, and present situation and position at work. Further on, the length of the observation and note taking period depends on the researcher. If the same things come up repeatedly, one could conclude that the theoretical saturation point is reached and observation could therefore be ended earlier. (Waddington 1994: 109-111) In this case, the time period of 6 months was still

relatively short so the saturation point was not reached. Hence, participant observation with diary reflection lasted until the internship ended.

3.3. Focused Interviews

The interview was chosen as one method for this research because the main interests are the interpretations and meanings that people give to different communicative situations and acts. In the interview the person is an active participant and is free to talk, to create and to give different meanings to the topics researched. The researcher is not giving the explanations for the communication or behaviour, but rather the interviewees themselves are asked to do so. The interview also gives the interviewer the possibility to ask the interviewee to clarify and deepen the answers given, which is not possible in surveys, for example. This is important, especially with the topics that one knows to be complex and that produce a lot of references to various directions. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 35). The business context includes many communication situations and in each situation, each participant might have different expectations depending on their status, tasks, role, etc. In addition, participants can interpret all these expectations and their derivations differently. Hence, the interview suits well to the purpose of researching this experience.

There are many kinds of interviews that can be realised to research purposes. The focused interview was chosen to be most appropriate for this study for the following reasons. The term “focused interview” was introduced by Merton, Fiske & Knedall (1956). It was characterised with following aspects:

- 1) All the interviewees have experienced a certain common situation.
- 2) Some important structures, processes and concepts are known regarding the topic on the basis of which the content and situation analysis is done.
- 3) According to this analysis, one can outline the themes of the interview.
- 4) The research interest is the subjective experience of each interviewee.

(Merton et al. 1956: 3-4.)

The fourth characteristic is the same that has been brought up with the choice of the interview method. The second and third characteristics refer to the knowledge and theories that are available before this research. The first characteristic defined is the common experience. In this study, the common experience for Finns is that they all have worked with Mexicans in Mexico for a certain period of time and for Mexicans that they all have worked with Finns in Mexico for certain period of time. Merton et al. (1956), however, refer to common experience caused experimentally. Finnish researchers Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000: 47) have broadened the concept of focused interview in a sense that it does not require common experience caused experimentally but with this method one can research all experiences, thoughts, feelings and beliefs. They introduced the Finnish term *teemahaastattelu*, which indicates that it is an interview that is grouped around different themes concerning the common experience.

3.3.1. Choosing the Participants

Several Finnish companies operating in Central Mexico were examined and five (5) of them were chosen based on following conditions. It should be a company where there are Finns and Mexicans working together. Some Finnish companies have representative office with only one Finnish representative and some Mexican office workers who were not in direct communication with other Finns except for their Finnish boss. The chosen companies had more than one Finn working with Mexicans in the office except one case with only one Finn, but the Mexican chosen had regular contacts with Finnish people in other offices and over longer period of time. Actually the sample covered all the companies that met these conditions in Central Mexico. The selected group consisted of four international companies and one family company from four different fields of activities such as paper industry, food industry, consultancy and telecommunication. Company profiles are presented separately with the number of interviewees from each company that participated in the study (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Company profiles

Companies in the order interviewed	Field of activities	The amount and nationality of participants	Date(s) of the interview(s)
Company 1	Finnish international paper industry company	Two interviewees: one Finn, one Mexican	1st and 2nd: 26.8.1999
Company 2	Finnish international telecommunication company	Four interviewees: two Finns, two Mexicans	3rd and 4th: 7.9.1999
Company 3	Finnish-led family food industry company in the food industry operating only in Mexico	Four interviewees: two Finns, two Mexicans	5th and 6th: 8.9.1999
Company 4	Finnish international consultancy company	One interviewee: one Finn	7th interview: 15.9.1999
Company 5	Finnish international telecommunication company	Four interviewees: two Finns, two Mexicans	8th: 29.9.1999, continued 30.9. 9th: 12.11.1999

As seen above, in three cases four (4) people were chosen from each company for the interviews: two (2) Finns and two (2) Mexicans, in one case one (1) Mexican and one (1) Finn and one case only one (1) Finn. In the latter case there was only one interviewee from the company because he had many contacts with both Finnish and Mexican companies in Mexico due to the characteristics of consultancy. Therefore one could suppose that his experience actually reflects experiences of all of these companies. Mainly the representatives of both Finnish and Mexican cultures from each participating company were chosen because it gave the possibility to hear the communication situations in respective company from both viewpoints. This enabled the formation of a more complete picture of the communication culture in that company and therefore allowed drawing deeper conclusions than would have been possible only knowing one person's experience.

I decided to conduct the interviews in pairs of two (2) Mexicans and two (2) Finns separately. Since not all companies had two participants of the same cultural background, I interviewed some of them separately, which made nine (9) interviews all together. There were many reasons for interviewing two people at

the same time when it only was possible. First, interviewees were always from the same working place so they already knew each other and might have been present at the same situations discussed in the interview or at least knew the other person mentioned. Hence, they were able to confirm or refute the comments and experiences that the other person made, which leads to more valid results. This is seen in the following excerpt:

- Työpaikalla suuttumisesta ei ole kenellekään mitään hyötyä
- Suuttumisesta ei, vaan se, että oot tyytymätön johonkin.
- Tottakai mielipiteen saa aina ilmasta ja näin, mutta malttinsa menettäminen ei oo työpaikalla sopivaa käytöstä ja piste
- Ei se minusta oo missään
- No, jos sää meet Chryslerille ja ne ei korjaa sun autoa, niin siellä saa suuttua
- Siellä saa, mutta ei missään työpaikalla
- Työpaikalla ei oo. Työpaikalla ei oo. Eli siis asiasta voidaan tietysti keskustella järkevästi ja muuta. (F2 & F3_15)

- It does not benefit anyone to get angry at work
- Not to get angry, but if you are unsatisfied with something
- Of course one can express one's opinion but to lose one's temper at work is not appropriate behaviour and that's that
- I don't think it is anywhere
- Well, if you go to Chrysler and they won't repair your car, there you can get angry
- There it is ok, but not at work
- No, not at work, Not at work. Of course you can discuss the matter sensibly and so on.

Second, they can encourage each other to talk and tell different situations: when one remembers something, the other might remember it also, or remembers something similar or opposite and can continue. Furthermore, in the interview people do not only tell what kind of meanings they have personally constructed about the matters but also common and even new meanings are created in interaction. Hence, meanings are co-constructed during the interview meanings as well (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 49). Third, I wanted to make the interview feel like a conversation and in that way to create a nice and somewhat confidential atmosphere so that participants would feel free to talk.

Interviewees were chosen based on information given on the telephone and from some informants of the company where I was doing my internship. The balance between the nationalities, sexes and experience with working with foreigners and/or experience working with Finns/Mexicans was taken into consideration as much as possible. The latter reflects the idea that there be people in different

stages in adaptation to Mexican environment or international business environment in general. Even though the adaptation process also has personal features, time is one general indicator of what stage people are in (Kealey 1990: 50). Most of the interviewees (12/15) were consciously chosen from the management, because that is the position where Finns most probably are. Also the Mexicans in management position are most likely to have a lot of contact with Finns. Beside demographic features, also personal experience and character were taken into consideration. I had the possibility to get to know many of the workers beforehand or at least talk to some people that knew them. Therefore, in some cases I could choose people who I knew are conscious of communication, culture and the issues connected with them. Because the interviews were realised in pairs, their co-operation was also taken into consideration when it was possible. Finally, the participants were divided as follows: there were seven (7) Mexicans and eight (8) Finns; five (5) of them were females and ten (10) males; they were between 26-46 years old and they had between 1-22 years experience with "foreigners" (somebody from a different national cultural background than oneself). Refer to Appendix 4 for more precise participant profiles.

After the participants were chosen I was able to meet and converse with eight (8) of the fifteen (15) participants face to face before the interview. I had phone conversations with five (5) others, asking if they want to participate and settling a time and place. Two (2) of the participants got the invitation to the interview from their boss. In these discussions I asked for permission to record and videotape the interview with the participants. Recording was necessary so that I could concentrate on discussion and not on taking notes whereas videotaping was going to serve as material for the CD-ROM mentioned in the introduction. When the time and place was set, I sent all the participants a personal letter in which I thanked them for agreeing to participate. In the letter I included the definition of communication I am interested in as well as some topics to think about before coming to the interview (Appendix 1).

3.3.2. Course of the Interview

The interviews were held in Central Mexico, in Mexico City or in Puebla, between 26 August and 12 November (Table 1). The interviews were on the premises of the company in question or in some cases on more centrally located premises of the participating company. A peaceful office room was reserved for the purpose. The interviews took 1-3 hours each. The structure of the interviews is explained step by step in the following paragraphs.

The beginning of the interview was considered to have vital importance for success in the interview. I made an effort to give a good impression by being punctual, having a nice appearance, being well organised, creating a comfortable situation and having a good working technique. However, more importantly, I drew attention to the fact that when starting the conversation, there was time reserved for some small talk about how they are doing, about their work, etc. On my part, I also contributed to the discussion by talking about my background, my present occupation and myself. Likewise, the participants shared some information of themselves with me. I asked questions of the interviewees about their background if they did not share it otherwise. The questions concerned their marital status, age, education, working position and working history.

Special effort was given to show *simpatía*, which seemed to be important with Mexicans according to the literature (Marín & Marín 1991: 13). Throughout the interview I tried to maintain a positive atmosphere, which included smiling and laughter and sometimes also telling jokes. In addition to that, I attempted to maintain the conversational and non-threatening communication style. This decreased the possibility that because of the fear of losing face, some negative things or difficult experiences might be left unsaid (Marín & Marín 1991: 103). It was interesting to note that it seemed that Mexican interviewees I did not know very well earlier were the most open, if openness is measured by the fact that they told of occasions that had been difficult or of matters that are lacking from relationships with Finns. In general, it is argued that Hispanics tend to give

socially desirably responses. This is explained by the high importance of creating a good atmosphere. (Marin & Marin 1991: 105.) One can ask what would be the socially desirably answer in this case: the one who gave a good image of Finns in the workplace or the other that describes not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of Finnish communication. After all, my interest was to see both sides.

At some point the permission of taping was confirmed and the interviewees signed a paper giving permission to use the material and, excepting one participant, also to videotape the interview. One interviewee did not like the idea of being videotaped or that video footage of him would be used as material in any product. However, he was not bothered by being recorded on cassette or by the fact that it would be used. Videotaping could affect somehow how freely participants felt they could speak; however, this was diminished by locating the video camera in as unnoticeable a place as possible and by not paying any attention to it during the interview. Only two participants mentioned the videos during the interview, as in the following:

- “no ei viitti kameroille sanoa mistä se on...”
- “well, I do not want to say on camera what it is...” (F1_7)

Both comments referred to the choice of a word and as a result, a swear word was left unspoken.

In the interviews, the funnel-technique (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1988: 85) was used: the first question was always an open, general question such as: “How it is to work as a Finn with Mexicans?” or vice versa. Then the interviewee could handle the subject from the point of view that was easiest, most important or closest to him or her. Probable themes were estimated beforehand according to literature and experiences and some clarifying questions were prepared (Appendix 2). However, the leading thought was to let the interviewees lead the conversation and topics they brought up were taken into more detailed discussion. In that way they gave names and definitions to the topics discussed. Sometimes I used different stereotypes or claims that Finns or Mexicans are described to have about

each other to start the conversations or to give another point of view to the comments already stated.

During the interview the most common questions were ones clarifying the experience: Why did you think that way? What would you have expected? When the person was talking about some differences it was asked: How is this seen in everyday life? How have you adapted to that? Generally, descriptions of real life situations were requested as much as possible. The objective of these was to map out what works. On the one hand communication was observed through the features of communication, on the other hand through different communication situations in the business context such as decision-making, teamwork, boss-subordinate relationship, etc. This might have helped somebody to find examples of communication. The third important aspect was learning and adapting, i.e. how the environment, oneself or the others have changed over the years. One would imagine that the things to which people have adapted are at least somehow important to success.

At some point in the interview I always explicitly mentioned the topic of success stories. "In what kind of situation you have had a feeling of success in communication?" Many times the same topics had already been talked but in broader context. Questions like this served well as grassroots examples of successful communication.

The last questions were also the same for everybody. I asked them to imagine the situation in which a Finn would come to work for their company. What kind of advice about communication would they give to him or her: what is important when working with Mexicans? If a Mexican came, what kind of advice about communication would they give to him or her: what is important when working with Finns? After discussing the topic in much detail, they had to review it and put the information in order and state explicitly the most important point(s) according to their experience.

As one can see, the common structure of the interview was very loose. There were no specific questions common to everybody and therefore, there were no topics that would automatically be discussed in every interview. This was how it was meant to be; however, at the same time one has to admit that it is not easy or wise to draw broad generalisations from the answers. The fact that one does not mention something does not necessarily mean that one does not consider it important or necessary as is to some extent assumed here. This is when the importance of having two interviewees at the same time becomes evident: each one looks at communication from their own viewpoint, which in turn might complement each other.

The interview ended by thanking the interviewees for their participation and by asking if I can contact them later on for clarification. Later on, I have informed the participants of the progress of study. When visiting Mexico lately, I contacted them and showed the ones that answered the prototype of the CD-ROM and explained the results. I got some interesting remarks that I took into consideration in presenting results. In this connection I should emphasise that the interviews were taken more as a process than as a single event. As described earlier, some of the interviewees were met before the actual interview, and some discussions on those meetings are written in the diary. The trip to Mexico offered other possibilities to continuity. Also for me, the interviews were a process: I learnt many matters from the first interviews that I could take account in the following interviews, for example that some focusing questions in the beginning were not so relevant. Also in the first interview, formal addressing on my part was lacking, and as the interviewee brought it up during the discussion as an important sign of *respeto*, I certainly did not forget to use it in the following interviews. This did not seem to affect, however, the openness of that interview when reviewing the topics discussed. However, apparently it was due to the earlier experiences the interviewee had had with Finns; it was not the first time when he had met such an informal Finn.

3.4. Analysis and Code System

Qualitative analysis was done on both the interviews and reflective diary. First, all the interviews were transcribed, including notation of pausing, intonation, tone- and intensity of voice, emphasising, and non-verbal gestures (such as knocking) which seemed to give extra meaning to the content. As for example:

“Kun taas mun mielestä toistepäin, että kysyy (amerikkalainen): mistä sää oot: Suomesta. Ai sitten, se käänsi pään ja taas: ai niin, mistä sää olitkaan? Ei ne siis niinku yhtään (nouseva intonaatio ja painotus) ei ne kysy, ei ne edes tiedä, että onko se Philadelphia tai Philippiinit tai vastaava. Mutta näille on hirviän tarkkaa se, että mitä, varsinkin se mitä siellä syödään siellä, se on niin kaukana...” (F4_16)

Where as I think it is the other way around that they (Americans) ask: where do you come from: from Finland. Then they turn around and ask again: Oh, where did say you werefrom? They do not listen one bit (rising intonation and emphasising) they do not ask, they do not even know if it is Philadelphia or Philippines or what. But here it is very important, especially what people eat there, it is so far away...

Interviews and diary citations are marked differently: for the citation of interviews there is always the letter M or F used in participant profiles "M" referring to Mexican and "F" referring to Finn and after that the number of the interviewee. All interviewees are described in the participant profiles (Appendix 3). Diary citations, in turn, are marked with “dia”. The number after the line shows the page of the interview or the date of the diary entry. The original comment is written in the original language i.e. either in Finnish or Spanish, and an English translation of it follows.

The first phase in analysing was the categorisation of the experiences and their interpretations. This aimed to find an answer to the first research question defined as: How do Finns and Mexicans experience and interpret each other's interpersonal communication occurring in the business context? There were several methods how this structuring was done:

- 1) The concept as such was used in the comment or the content was clearly referring to it or describing it.

"Creo que para mi son un poco reservados. Todavía no tengo la suficiente confianza -- de entrar una comunicación en esta manera." (M4_4)

I think that for me they are little bit reserved. I do not have enough *confianza* yet -- to have this kind of communication.

2) The way the matter was brought up. There were several reasons for this. First, Mexicans tend to use an indirect and subtle manner to express matters that can be experienced negatively. Therefore, it was important to try to look beyond the surface: why was it said in this way and what was the message it was really conveying? On the other hand, the interview situation revealed a lot about how they actually behave and if it is the way that they say we do or how the others say they do. For example:

- "Paciencia para que?
- Para escucharte o sea lo que pasa es que lo que tal vez esperan lo que vas a decir cuando están hablando de negocios o sea directo, no, muy directo. En cambio este bueno, nosotros siempre empezamos en una forma...
- Como calentar el agua
- Con una introducción, hola como estas, como te ha ido, oye, que piensas de esto y que piensas de aquello y después oye bueno, vamos a ver esto: que te parece. ¿Me explico?
- Si.
- Te dan la paciencia para darte tiempo para (una pausa corta) eso. “ (M2 & M3_2)

- Patience for what?
- To listen to you or what really happens is that they might be waiting for what you are going to say when they are talking about business, they expect it to be direct, no, very direct. But well. We always start in a way...
- Like warming up the waters
- With an introduction, hi, how are you, how have you been, wait, what do you think of that and after, Well, let's see, what do you think. Did I explain it?
- Yes.
- They give you patience, they give you time to do (short pause) so.

Here one can note that the fact that Finns are more direct in their communication at work is brought up in very positive way, that despite of their own directness, Finns have the patience to listen to the Mexicans when they have the “need” to give an introduction or get to the point in more subtle way. In this way the message got through in a positive way: it is important to give time to the Mexican and be part of a conversation that might seem like “*paljo turhaa asiaa, siis puuta heinä*”(F8_12); “a lot of unnecessary things, trivial stuff” to a Finn.

3) The attitude to the behaviour or act might be seen also in different words used. For example the following:

“Ja sitä kautta niin hänet saa sitte **kiikutettua** sitten lounaalle tai johonki muuhun tällaseen sosiaaliseen aktiviteettiin ja sitte kun se on tosiaan pari kertaa tehny tuon niin sitten ollaankin jo oikein hyviä kavereita” (F1_5)

And in that way you **drag him off** to lunch or some other social activity and when you have done that a couple of times then you are already really good friends.

The Finnish word implies that the speaker feels that taking the client or partner to lunch is active work on his part, something that must be done here, and maybe not very meaningful. Words like these, which give a certain positive/negative perspective to the matters in question, are also taken into account.

- 4) There were two ways to check what each one considered important in communication between Finns and Mexicans. First, the order in which things were brought up was taken into account: one would imagine that the matters discussed first could be the most important or the most common. Second, the answer to the last question: what would you like to give as a hint or advice to a Finnish worker coming here to work with Mexicans or to a Mexican worker coming to work with Finns? There the interviewees could summarise the thoughts brought up during the interview and choose the most important ones as advice. As was said by the one who had the relationship of *confianza* as a leading topic:

"En ese caso yo creo que empezaría por decirle más o menos la forma que nuestros clientes les gusta como se trate.-- en esta manera ya le diría: con este cliente ya tenemos bastante confianza, lo podemos tratar así en esta manera, pero con este cliente tenemos que ser más cuidadosos porque no existe una confianza buena con ellos. Digamos, que explicarle como es cada cliente y como se trata de cada cliente." (M1_12)

In this case I think I would start by telling him more or less the way that our clients like to be treated. -- I would tell him in this way: with this client we already have a lot of *confianza*, we can treat him like this, but with this client we have to be more careful because we do not have good *confianza* with them. In other words, to explain what every client is like and how to treat each one.

The most obvious of culturally appropriate instruments is the use of language. People were interviewed in pairs according their nationality. Interviews with Finns were held in Finnish and with Mexicans in Spanish, so that everybody was able to use his or her mother tongue. However, as a Finn, I should be aware that it is not always easy for me to notice these nuances discussed above. Even though my Spanish is fairly good after studying it at the university level and using it

intensively for almost a year at the university and at work in Mexico, nonetheless some words or the way they were used were left unclear to me. As Marin & Marin (1991: 84) comment, Spanish have many different regional variations. The aforementioned key informants helped me with this also.

After reading through the material several times, labels for different categories were chosen and the comments were sorted according to them. There were three kinds of labels:

- A label which described the communicational feature they talked about (such as directness)
- A label which is the concept they gave (such as privacy)
- A label according to the situation they were talking about (such as greeting)

When reading the content again and again, new labels were taken into use and the ones already in use were redefined. Here, the culture-specific approach was put into practice: each culture was described primarily with concepts or labels that were used by its members to explain it. However, sometimes the representative of the other culture explained more explicitly the covert reasons of the behaviour and this was naturally taken into account. It seemed that in viewing the other from a foreigner's standpoint, many people interviewed naturally tended to find reasons and logic in the other's behaviour. At any rate, the main concepts used are chosen from the collected empirical and written data, borrowing from the literature of the field as help when necessary. For many of them, the English version is not a satisfactory equivalent, so the concepts used were taken from the original language, e.g. *respeto* in Spanish or *sisu* in Finnish. These are explained in English below. This is a typical feature of *emic* concepts: one word frequently used inside the culture turns out to need a complex explanation in another language (Triandis 1994: 67). Once the final concepts and categorisation were defined, the reflective diary entries were grouped according to these concepts, and from this point on they were treated as the interviews.

The second phase was to examine the relations between the concepts and search for the answer to the second research question(s): Is it possible to explain the interpretations by certain common values? If so, what are the values? To whom

are they common? The interpretations under the same label were examined. Did they have something in common? At the same time learnt behaviour was considered and compared with the other respondents and with the cultural background(s) of each. In this way the common values of each group were grouped. The structure of three different labelled groups was examined. The value concepts seemed to explain the communication features as these were seen in different situations. In this phase the model of culture with layers (the so-called “onion-model”) served as a tool to create the structure of the value system, the result of which is seen in Figure 4.

In some cases there was conflict between certain comments from different interviews. They were seemingly saying opposite things. In such cases, the following background information was considered when seeking an explanation for these conflicting observations:

- Are they the same nationality? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Do they have the same position in their companies? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Do they have the same kind of education? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Are they equally experienced in working with Finns/Mexicans/foreigners? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Are they of the same age? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Are they both of the same sex? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Do they have same position in the social hierarchy? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Do they seem to be as well adapted to the new working/living environment? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?
- Are they equally aware of the cultural differences in communication? If not, could that be the reason for the difference?

These questions helped a lot to understand the comments and build the structure of the value system. Apparently all these factors mentioned above affect how the communication is seen and interpreted.

The third phase in analysis consisted of considering the third research question: What characteristics of Finnish communication do Mexicans experience as strengths or as weaknesses? And vice versa? In this phase the labels defined above are marked as positive, negative or neutral. The results are illustrated in a form of SWOT analysis. SWOT includes four squares (Kotler 1999):

- Strengths: those communication actions that are strengths in light of the value in question
- Opportunities: a list of opportunities that the strengths will create in the future
- Weaknesses those communication actions that are weaknesses in light of the value in question
- Threats: a list of threats that the presence of weaknesses causes

Each of the most important, aforementioned values have their own SWOT-squares in which one can see in compact form the communication features and perhaps also the situations connected to them. This can be seen also as a summary of the results gained by so far.

Finally, the critical success factors were sought, as was an answer to the main research question: what are the critical success factors of Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication in business context? The answer lies in the results already gained. Which of these factors are critical for success?

4. RESULTS

The results are presented starting with the actual success factor that is noted in this research and that could be taken as the main research result of the data: successful communication is relative to or depends a lot on the relationship the two participants have created between them. The kinds of knowledge and practical behaviour it could or should include are considered in the following chapters,

which attempt to provide a structure for characteristics of Mexican interpersonal communication and thereafter, characteristics of Finnish interpersonal communication.

As noted above, the structures are created based on the onion model of culture defined by Trompenaars (1997: 22). First, features of the basic cultural assumptions are suggested. They are seen as important differences that will be noticed throughout the process of examining Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication from the implicit to explicit layer of the culture. Second, the layer of values and norms is examined as Trompenaars (1997: 21-22) defines it. Here, the concept of value orientation is used in order to demonstrate that these values orientate and define what kinds of features and acts are considered appropriate in practise. The practical outcomes—communication acts—which tend to reflect certain value in communication situations, are presented with each value. Mexican and Finnish value orientations are examined separately, but all the while there is reflection on the interpersonal communication between them, how the different acts are interpreted and what kinds of reactions there are to be seen.

It has to be emphasised also that the whole design of the results—as well as this research as a whole—focuses on Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication in the Mexican business context. Taking results out of this context might invalidate the results; people with a cultural background other than Mexican might experience other features of Finnish communication as a strength or weakness, and vice versa. Also, for example, a free time context or the Finnish business context could yield other important features to consider even though it still would be Mexican-Finnish interpersonal communication. Some suggestions of this kind are presented in these results.

4.1 Successful Communication is Relative

One of the main results was that there are very few, if any, strict rules for communication situations. Some people have found one way of behaving and expressing things to be useful; others successfully implement another way of

doing things. This shows the same that is discussed in the theoretical part: it is not the act that is important, it is how it is interpreted. One example illustrates what this means in reality. The general norm is that in certain levels of society, and also in a business context, for example, women are kissed on the cheek. It is the way to show *respeto* and *simpatía* for the woman (terms to be explained later in more detail). However, other aspects of communication may give a different meaning to the encounter: the voice sounds indifferent, eye contact is avoided, other forms of touch are avoided, etc. These in turn give the impression of indifference and not noticing, even dislike. In this case the mode of behaviour is correct, but still the cultural expectations are not fulfilled. On the other hand, cultural expectations can be transmitted even though the form is not the usual one. As one interviewee related:

"En mäa välttämättä pussaa naisia poskelle vaikka pitäs. Ja ihan hyvin ne tilanteet on menny... Mää kättelen ja sanon vaikka, että mäa oon nyt tällanen junttisuomalainen, joka ei puhu eikä pussaa. Sitte naureskelen päälle, että ehkä viidennellä kerralla. Enkä mäa oo huomannu mitään ongelmia." (F6_19)

I do not necessarily kiss the women even though I should. And the situations have been ok... I just shake hands and say something to the effect that I am such a backwoods Finn who neither speaks nor kisses. And then I laugh that maybe on the fifth time. And I haven't noticed any problems.

He shows knowledge of the expected form of greeting and explains why he does not do as he should, thus making it clear that it is not the fault of the women but his incapability. He refers to future encounters ("maybe on the fifth time"). He also uses humour, which keeps the situation pleasant. Actually, of these two examples, the latter was the one that fulfilled the cultural expectations.

This confirms the research guideline that the required knowledge is cross-cultural know-how that goes beyond the explicit cultural layers: do's and don'ts are not enough, but rather the essence of the knowledge should be in the levels of values. Also norms and values seem to have different status. Using the same example, kissing could be defined as a norm and as explained above, it is necessary to know but it should not necessarily be followed. More essential knowledge is what the act of kissing is supposed to convey. Therefore, in the results the main focus is on values: what is the meaning that should be relayed.

The word “relative” also refers to the relationships. It is important to note, as is shown in the more detailed analysis below, that successful interpersonal communication seems to contain in the beginning some common features and acts, but when the relationship continues the common norms are defined in each intercultural relationship in a unique way. The importance to successful communication seems to be that these common norms are the same for both participants, i.e. that both will have a similar understanding of what is said and meant. Sometimes this might need even explicit agreements on the rules of communication.

The starting point for building the relationship can be very different because of huge differences between people’s attitudes both towards Mexico as a country, its’ culture and people and towards the change that could happen in oneself. In many interviews the importance of a positive attitude towards the other and his or her culture, language, etc. is emphasised. Many interviewees wanted to leave the following kind of message as a key to success: to come with an open and accepting mind and be ready to learn new ways.

"Se eka palikka on semmonen tietynlainen mun mielestä peruspalikka: hyväksymisen palikka. Siinä ei tarte tietää yhtään mitään, onko se Laos, Meksiko vai Burma, sillä ei oo mitään merkitystä. Vaan sellainen tietynlainen avoin mieli ja se, että hyväksyminen siitä, että jos sää lähet sinne, niin sun täytyy mieltää se, että sää oot kuiteski siellä Gastarbaitteri, jonka täytyy soveltua siihen ympäristöön ja niinku ihan oikeesti miettiä, miten sää sen teet, koska täällä on paljon asioita, jotka tuntuu järjenvastasilta ekaksi. [...] Suurin haaste on irrottautua siitä suomalaisesta maailmannäkemyksestä ja yrittää ymmärtää, miten ne näin tekee, koska aika monella asialla on kuitenkin jonkinasteinen selitys. Joko se selitys on looginen tai historiallinen tai jotain muuta [...] Eliikkä se on mun mielestä yksi sellanen fakta, josta ei pääse eroon, niinku, että Meksikoo ei voi muuttaa kuin meksikolaiset ja se muutos on hidasta. Ja toinen asia on sitten se, että varmaan on ulkomaalaisena oikein hyvä kysyä myös sitä, että kuinka oikeassa omien mielipiteidensä kanssa on." (F3_10,2)

The first block is like a basic block : the block of acceptance. One does not have to know anything, whether it is Laos, Mexico or Burma, it does not have any significance. Having a certain kind of open mind and acceptance of that fact that if you go there, you have to realise that it is you who is a guest worker, it is you who has to adapt. To really think, how you will do it, because here are many things that at first seem irrational [...] the biggest challenge is to step out of the Finnish way of thinking and try to understand why Mexicans do it, because many things have some kind of explanation. It can be logical or historical or something else [...] I think that the inevitable fact is that only the Mexicans can change Mexico and that change is slow. Another thing is then that as a foreigner it might be good to ask how right your opinions are.

One respondent advises that it might be good to try to forget what was before and look around with new eyes. This attitude also seems to play a crucial role in adaptation. In the interviews there was a lot of discussion about adaptation and feelings, attitudes and activities connected with it. Some examples illustrate this. Again, the kissing the women is taken as an example.

1. case is the one mentioned already above which could be called: "I do it in my way"

"En mä välttämättä pussaa naisia poskelle vaikka pitäs. Ja ihan hyvin ne tilanteet on menny... Mää kättelen ja sanon vaikka, että mä oon nyt tällanen junttisuomalainen, joka ei puhu eikä pussaa. Sitte naureskelen päälle, että ehkä viidennellä kerralla. Enkä mä oo huomannu mitään ongelmia." (F6_19)

I do not necessarily kiss the women even though I should. And the situations have been ok... I just shake hands and say something to the effect that I am such a backwoods Finn who neither speaks nor kisses. And then I laugh that maybe in the fifth time. And I haven't noticed any problems.

2. case: "I guess I have to learn because that is how it is done here."

"Ja sitte tietenkä nämä poskisuudelmat niinku naisilla jne. Se oli kans mulle vähän alussa sellanen, että ei oikein tahtonu onnistua, koska nää on sellasia kulttuurieroja. ei, ei niinku oikein tuntunu hyödyllisiltä." (F1_9)

And then of course this kissing women on the cheek bit, etc. At the beginning it was for me too something that felt quite difficult, because these are those culture differences, no, it just did not feel useful.

3. case: "I have to do it anyway - might as well like it!"

"Mun mielestä tää sosiaalinen puoli on erittäin hyvin rakennettu, tää on niinku kaikki nää päättämisrituaalit, kättelyt, kaikkien kättelyt ja muut ja nimellä kutsuminen ja muut, niin ne jollakin tavalla tukee sitä sosiaalisen struktuurin muodostumista. On niinku kaksi vaihtoehtoa: yrittää pistää hanttiin kaikin voimin tai sitten käyttäytyä niin kuin normaalit ihmiset käyttäytyy ja niinku se on itse asiassa helppoa sitä kautta. Jos sää meet johonkin kokkareille tai muualle, sää kättelet kaikki, esittelet itses kaikille, halaat ja suukotat kaikki naiset – mikäs sen parempaa!?"(F3_8)

I think this social part is very well structured, all these closing rituals, handshakes with everybody and so on and using people's names and so on, they all support the forming of the social structure. There are two possibilities: you try to oppose with all you can or you behave like a normal person would and actually it is easy that way. If you go to party or somewhere, you shake hands with everybody, introduce yourself to everybody, hug and kiss all the women - what could be better!

As presented earlier these examples do not reveal anything about how successful that person is in communication. The second one can be successful if the attitude is not seen in the behaviour or also might be that this is accepted if he is in a higher position than the other participant in communication, as discussed further on in this report. It also depends a lot on how much the other is willing or able to

adapt. Often one participant is more sensitive to the differences and hence, it might be easier for her or him to change communication styles, as in the following excerpt:

"Pero hay más que finlandeses hay media por personas. -- Por ejemplo hay una persona en la oficina que básicamente me tengo que quedar en la oficina, sentarme y decirle: esto; decídeme. Si me voy por las ramas, no funciona. Entonces, hay otra persona finlandesa que llego, platicamos de su relación con su novio y bla, bla, bla y oye, que piensas de esto? -- Es lo difícil de este tema o sea, no es nada mas que haya formas de ser finlandeses, entre los finlandeses hay formas de ser y entre los mexicanos hay formas de ser." (M3_4)

But more than Finnish there are differences among people. -- For example there is one person in the office that basically I have to stay in the office, sit down and say to him/her: look at this, decide for me. If I beat around the bush, it does not work, whereas there is another Finn that I come, we chat about her relation with her boyfriend and blah, blah, blah and how about this - what do you think about this? -- That's the difficult part of this topic, there is not only one way of being a Finn, among Finns there are many kinds of people and among Mexicans there are many kinds of people.

With this example, it is highlighted that nationality does not yet really reveal a lot on how relationships will develop. It might be that the first Finn mentioned has been in Mexico for only a short time and therefore might not know the indirect Mexican way. It might also be that she or he has been there for a longer time but has not had the sensitivity to notice the difference, let alone to adapt to it. However, it might also be that she or he has noticed it and could have adapted to it but does not have to. This may be due to the fact that she or he has noticed that the others adapt to his or her communication style and therefore communication is successful without him or her having to change in this aspect. It is also difficult to say if the second Finn mentioned has adapted to the Mexican way or if that is her personal style.

In order to show the reverse side of the attitudes and their importance in successful communication, some examples will be told that describe what can happen when an open and accepting attitude is missing.

"Yksi kirjanpitoukko Norjasta tuli meille töihin ensin Venetzuelaan ja sitten tänne Meksikoon. Se oli hyvässä asemassa, mut se niinku hikeenty ihan täysin siitä, että miksi täällä ei voi olla asiat niinku Norjassa hänellä kotona... sit sen perhe lähti Norjaan ja se jäi yksin tänne vatsatautejansa hoitelemaan... se oli tosi tämmönen kirjanpitotapaus, ei halunnut joustaa missään asiassa. Hänellä oli aina vaikeuksia ja aina ripuli. Ja sit se lähti, meni Norjaan takasi seki." (F5_24)

One clerk from Norway came to work for us first in Venezuela and then in Mexico. He was in a good position, but got totally angry that things here weren't like at home in Norway. ... Then his

family returned to Norway and he stayed alone to take care of his stomachache... he was really a clerk, never wanted to be flexible in anything. He always had difficulties and always diarrhoea. And then he left, went back to Norway as well.

This example was from the late 80s; so one could imagine that nowadays more attention is paid to the workers sent abroad. However, the following excerpt does not assure that. Here the situation is viewed from the point of view of the buyer-seller relationship.

"Sanotaan, että nyt semmonen näkövinkkeli, mikä on peruspahe Suomessa, että mulla on maailman paras tuote, jos et sä sitä ymmärrä, niin oo ymmärtämättä. Tai sitten aateltaisiin, että kyllä ne sitten tulee ostamaan, kun niillä on rahaa. Tai sitten tällanen, että me ei koyhien kans seurustella. - siis äärimmäisen harvoin se tarvitsee maailman parasta, se tarvitsee vain sellasta, mikä on sopiva tänne ja riittävän kilpailukykyinen, se täytyy esitellä silleen. Mutta jos lähtee asennoitumaan sillä tavalla, että täähän on aivan aataminaikuista - anna kun mää laitan sulle hommat kuntoon, niin sit rupee tapahtuun... Sitä sellasta jyrkkyyttä tai äärimmäisyyttä ei voi missään tapauksessa tuoda Meksikoon. Ja löytyy paljon vielä sellasia ihan isostakin firmasta sellasta, sanosko asennevammaa." (F6_9)

Let's say that this kind of viewpoint, which is a basic mistake of Finns, is that I have the best product in the world and if you do not understand it, then don't. Or one thinks that, well, they'll come buy it since they have money. Or this kind: we don't hang around with the poor. It is extremely rare that you need the best in the world, you only need something that is suitable to these conditions and competent enough, one has to present it this way. But if you have the attitude that this is so primitive- let me whip this into shape for you and then things will start happening... Such a radical or extreme view can never be brought to Mexico. And still this is to be found in many pretty big companies, this kind of, so to say, attitudinal handicap.

This excerpt shows the importance of "the block of acceptance". Attitudes are also closely linked with the concept of *simpatía*, which will be handled more thoroughly later on.

It seems that some features of both cultures are needed when establishing a successful relation. In some interviews this tendency is seen, as in this example:

"Son mucho más directos, me gustan muchísimo para trabajar, pero creo que hay momentos de interacción humana que necesitas toda la ceremonia mexicana toda la platica, los detalles, el color, todo eso. Y a veces le quitó un poco lo humano cuando es directo. Si hay que hacerlo con trabajo, prefiero mil veces la forma finlandesa que dar cincuenta mil veces vueltas a las cosas, es mucho más practica. Pero para ciertas cosas ya establecer el equipo de información, de un equipo de trabajo, de convivencia, de todo eso, creo que tiene más utilidad de parte mexicana que la parte finlandesa." (M3_3)

They are a lot more direct, I like it a lot when working, but I think that there are moments of human interaction when you need all the Mexican ceremony, all the small talk, the details, the colour, all this. And sometimes it lacks a little bit of human touch when they are direct. If it has something to do with work, I prefer a thousand times the Finnish form rather than going around the bush fifty times, it is much more practical. But for certain things like establishing the information network, the working team, a social gathering, I think that the Mexican way is more useful than the Finnish one.

In this example, the good and efficient option is chosen or suggested, depending on the context and the task, no matter which culture it originates from. If using the definitions introduced by Adler (1997: 112-117) as five different strategies to use in multicultural situations, this appears to be the strategy of cultural synergy. This option emphasises that differences are also beneficial. It could be called a creative option where new solutions are sought. This solution is based on neither of the cultures of the participants but still takes advantage the diversity which culture brings to the communication. When forming these kinds of creative options, it could be taken as a process of creating the culture. Some processes of this kind seem to be one essential element of successful communication, and they seem to start with the "right" attitudes.

4.2 Basic Implicit Assumptions

4.2.1. Hierarchy and Equality; Ambiguity and Conformity in a Society

Earlier it was discussed how intercultural communication knowledge is often perceived as abstract schemata with two-fold dimensions. In these results only one feature could be perceived to be one in which the two cultures' ideologies contradict each other. It seems that hierarchy is one extremely important feature of Mexican society, which affects on all interactions there. Almost in all interviews this aspect was discussed. Hierarchy was not only seen in the working community but also in the surrounding society. What role one has in the hierarchy, its implications, how one communicates with the people in different hierarchical levels and so on are all questions that exist in everyday reality in a Mexican environment. Meanwhile, in a Finnish environment the idea of equality is present in communication situations and the hierarchical structure tends to be flattened to the minimum.

Both Finnish and Mexican respondents stressed the importance of noticing the different levels that exist in Mexican culture and society. After becoming aware of

this, one tends to act differently with different people. One should know what kind of communication rules belong to which situation and context:

“Täällä on hirveen tarkkaa, minkätasoisten ihmisten kanssa on vastakkain, täällä on niin monta semmosta luokkaa. Että Suomessa tavallaan kaikkien kans voi olla samalla tavalla oma itsensä, mutta täällä on hirvittävän, hirvittävän erilaiset... meilläkin niinku kotona apulainen ja se puutarhuri ja kaikki pitää niinku siirtää, miten sitä sanotaan... (mieltii) kuinka erilaisten ihmisten kans on tekemisissä... niin, että jokaisen kans täytyy niinku tavallaan olla eri tavalla, ettei voi, jos on samalla tavalla niin nehän ajattelee, että... ihan hullua.” (F4_5)

Here you have to be very precise with what level of society the people you are communicating with are in, there are so many different classes. In Finland you can act the same toward everybody, but here it is terribly, terribly different... at home we have a servant and the gardener and you have to move... how do you put it... (thinks) how different the people you're with are... that one has to act differently with each one, one cannot, if one acts same way, they would think that... so strange.

To a Finn it sometimes seems to be a difficult lesson. In Finland uniformity of culture allows the context where people are used to communicating with people whose ideas, education, values, and way of communicating are familiar to each other and, moreover, even very similar to one's own. Furthermore, equality is highly valued in Finland: even though there were certain elements that differ and could cause differences in the hierarchical level, it seems to be preferred not to let them be seen. From a Mexican point of view, such a similarity feels very peculiar.

”Yo he estado en otros países de Europa y Finlandia se me hace muy particular en este aspecto ... pero yo cuento su gente de alta educación desde la gente que maneja el autobús de transporte local, probablemente puede hablar inglés inclusive, hasta los altos directivos que también mantienen un cierto nivel de sencillez por así decirlo” (M6_2)

I have been in other countries in Europe and Finland seemed to be very peculiar to me in this aspect ... but I noticed that the people had a high education from the people that drive local transport, they might even be able to talk English, to the high level bosses who also maintain a certain level of simplicity so to speak.

In Mexico such a situation does not exist. Moreover, instead of the tendency towards conformity and equality as in Finland, in Mexico the differences are bigger and they are also seen in various ways. These differences are like signs, which should be gathered and interpreted in order to know what kind of person one is dealing with. It seems that for a Finn it is difficult to think that at first one should look for the claves sociales, "social clues", as one Mexican puts it:

”Entonces, por medio en la Finlandia la gente tiene la misma acceso la educación y todo y aquí como que dices: es que importa mucho la escuela de la que viene, como que no la entienden. O mira, no habla muy bien español, o sea, concepto tal vez magno. O no se viste tanto o que a un mexicano le dan muchas claves para decir que tipo de persona es y que tanto tiene un nivel

educativo para darle este puesto. Y a un finlandés, son tan democráticos, son... todo es tan parejo que les cuesta mucho trabajo distinguir una persona de una clase social o un nivel cultural diferente. Creo que después de un tiempo lo captan pero les cuesta trabajo... para ciertas decisiones o para cuanto pudo confiar en esta gente o en situaciones de negocios: No crean cierta distancia con la gente que tienen que crear distancia. Hay muchos juegos de relación que los finlandeses no saben que existen, no caben en su mente que existen tan fuerte como realmente existen... a mí lo que me pasó con los finlandeses es que me da miedo que alguien les tome el pelo." (M3_19-20)

In general in Finland people have the same access to education and all and here you say: it is important what school the person comes from, in a way they do not understand. Or, look, she or he does not speak very well Spanish, magno concepts... Or they do not dress up. For a Mexican there are lot of signs to say what kind of person they are and what kind of educational level they have, if it is possible to give them this position. And for a Finn, they are so democratic... everything is so even that it is difficult for them to distinguish a person from one social class or a different cultural level. I think that after some time they get it, but it is difficult... For certain decisions or when I can trust people in the business situation. They do not create a certain distance with the people with whom they should create the distance. There are a lot of relational games that Finns do not know exist, they cannot understand that they exist as strong as they really do... As far as the Finns are concerned, I am afraid that someone will cheat them.

To some extend it is also important to show these kind of social keys to the others. Some very concrete examples were told, such as the following:

"Me río porque un día me dieron la descripción de que un finlandés, si, le va a traer un Roles porque le va a durar cincuenta años Y nunca - la broma era - si quieres molestar a un finlandés dale unos tenis que les digan fosforescente: "adidas", ponles marcas aquí, ponles marcas acá. Qué les choque! O sea, nunca van a tener "Tommy Hilfiger" en la chamarra por todos los lados. Entonces, eso es una característica, el mexicano es mucho más al lado a--marcas.--Tiene algo muy padre que no son tan show, que no les importa tanto la marca." (M3_16)

I laugh because one day one Finn was described to me, that he wears a Rolex because it will last 50 years. And - the joke was - if one wants to irritate a Finn, never give him tennis shoes that have fluorescent "Adidas" labels all over the place. What a shock! I mean, they will never have "Tommy Hilfiger" all over their shirt. This is one characteristic, Mexicans are much more fond of name brands. --It is somehow very nice that they are not so showy, that brands are not so important.

Since brand-name clothes are expensive, they are used in Mexico as a possibility to show off one's good economic position to others. However, in Finland showing off is not considered very well mannered.

In the interviews with both Mexicans and Finns it was emphasised that there are no "typical Mexicans" or that there are no rules which will fit all Mexicans in general. Many reasons for differences were found:

- 1) A person's education: some people cannot read, others have university level education. With "*educación*" one refers not only to formal education but also

to upbringing: politeness and good manners, which play an important role in relations.

" Aquí también un punto interesante sería que no me gustaría estar haciendo algo generalizando México. Aquí no podemos hablar por el nivel de cultura por que ni siquiera es económico. Dependiendo del nivel y no es la cultura sino la educación que tienen las personas es como reaccionan ante todo lo que estamos platicando: lenguaje corporativo, como se relacionan con los demás tienen mucho que ver con los niveles de educación. Realmente en Finlandia es mucho más estandarizado. Aquí tenemos todo tipo de niveles distribuidos por todos los lados. (M7_7)

Here one interesting point is that I would not like to do something like generalising Mexico. Here we cannot speak of the cultural level because it is not even economic. Depending on the level - and it is not cultural but the education that the people have - it is how the people react to all the things we have been talking about: body language, how they relate to others... they have a lot to do with the levels of education. In reality in Finland it is much more standardised. Here we have all the levels distributed all over.

2) The kind of organisation one works or one is in contact with:

"Onneksi (tauko) meillä ei oo organisaatiosta mitään velvollisuutta olla viranomaisten kans tekemisissä Meksikossa. Ne on niin aataminaikasia, elikkä virallinen Meksiko elää vielä sellasta aikaa, jota talouselämä ei Meksikossa enää omakseen tunne. Viranomaiset haluu kontrolloida... Elikkä on hirveen monta Meksikoo, se Meksiko, mitä noin niiku kaupan näkövinkkelistä katsoo, on käytännössä se venti-Meksiko ja siinä suhteessa ollaan varsin lähellä sitä, mitä voidaan normaali vaikkapa paneurooppalaisessa tai yleensä vain kansainvälisessä kaupassa, se on aika lähellä, että ei itse asiassa kauheesti tarvi ittiään muuttaa, että Meksikossa voi toimia." (F6_8-9)

Fortunately (pause) the organisation does not give us any responsibility to operate with authorities in Mexico. They are so antediluvian, in other words official Mexico lives in such times that business life in Mexico does not know it any more. The authorities want to control... There are so many Mexicos, that Mexico that one looks at from the business point of view, is practically speaking export-Mexico and in this respect it is pretty close to the normal, say, pan-European business or international business, it is pretty close. In fact one does not have to change oneself a lot to be able to work in Mexico.

3) The position one has in the organisation: In Mexican society, power must be noted in communication, for example in greetings, addressing and the use of time.

"Muchas veces los mexicanos cuando están en una posición de jefe, ponen ellos cierta barrera y no comparten esas experiencias que tuvieron en las vacaciones o en el fin de semana o simplemente para ir a comer.-- Muchos de los gerentes mexicanos les gusta tener área muy privada-- ellos prefieren estar separados--y si vas, tocar (toca la mesa)--Entonces, eso es una de las cosas de que este que quieren que uno se anuncie. Si quieres platicar con él, a ver, anúnciate." (M1_2-3)

Many times when the Mexicans have the position of the boss, they create a certain barrier and they do not share experiences such as what kind of vacation or weekend they had or simply going to eat. -- Many Mexican bosses like to have their private area -- they prefer to be separately -- and if you go there, you have to knock (knocks the table)--Therefore, this is one of the things that they want, that you'll announce yourself. If you want to talk with him, go ahead and announce yourself.

- 4) One's sex. It seems that in Mexican society the role of the women is defined more clearly than in Finnish society. There seem to be specific demands for women about her appearance but also about the role she can take and the way she can show professionalism.

"Varsinkin tää miesten ja naisten välinen ero tulee varsinkin näissä mun töissä esille vielä, todella paljon. Että nainen ei niinku puhu tärkeistä asioista miehen kans, että se on täällä niinku uutta. Yhdessä projektissa, kun oli suomalaisfirmojen sellasia edustuksia, mä jouduin muutamissa tilaisuuksissa mennä tärkeitten henkilöiden kanssa neuvottelemaan [...] Niin yks semmonen vanhempi jonkun johtokunnan puheenjohtaja, en muista minkä se oli, mutta johonkin teknisiin tietoihin se liittyi ja alettiin kattoon niitä papereita ja sitten se luki, että leveys ja pituus, ja sitte se mulle, että tiedänhän mä niinku mitä leveys tarkoittaa. Ja silloin mä aattelin, että se niinku selvästi tämä mies tunsi, että häntä oli loukattu sillä, että lähetetään tällänen nuori nainen puhumaan teknisistä asioista. (F4_12)

Especially the difference between men and women is still seen in my duties, very much. That a woman does not speak with men about important matters, that this is something new here. In one project where I was representing different Finnish companies, in some occasions I had to go negotiate with some important people [...] There was one elderly chairman of the board, I do not remember which board it was, but anyway it had to do with some technical stuff and we started to look at those papers and then he read that width and length and then he said to me that I assume you know what width means. And then I thought that this man clearly felt that he was offended by the fact that such a young women was sent to talk about technical matters.

- 5) Whether the communication occurs in working life or during free time: There were several examples e.g. in respect to the concept of time and truth that are used differently depending on if the context is at work or during free time.

"Sanotaan, että jos sää pidät jotku juhlat himassa. [...] Kun mä oon kutsunu suomalaisia ja sitte oon kutsunu paikallisia, niin sitte aina oon sanonu, että kahdeksalta, niin sitten kaikki suomalaiset kysyy, että onko se suomalaisittain kaheksalta vai paikallisittain kaheksalta. Koska jos se on paikallisittain kaheksalta, niin se tarkoittaa, että jengi alkaa pikkuhiljaa tulemaan siinä kymmenen aikaan [...] Liike-elämässä se ei ihan niin venyvää oo [...] jos on niinku yläpuolella, kyl se on tärkeempää, tärkeä olla paikalla, mutta kyllä sää joudut odottamaan siellä [...] mutta ajallaan siellä on niinku oltava." (F8_8-9)

Let's say that if you have party at home. [...] When I have invited Finns and then I have invited locals, I have always said that at eight o'clock. Then the Finns ask if it is at eight by the Finnish clock or at eight in local time. If it is local time, it means that the people start to trickle in around ten. [...] In business life it is not so flexible [...] if somebody is in the higher position, it is more important, it is important to be there, but you have to wait [...] but anyway you have to be there on time.

- 6) The part of the country one comes from: Communication style, way of life and attitudes towards time and money, for example, vary a lot in different parts of Mexico. For example in Northern Mexico the direct communication style is

generally preferred whereas in Central Mexico it tends to be considered rude and face threatening.

"...Eso funciona mucho en el norte de México. En Norte de México son mucho más directos que en el centro de México. [...] parte de mi familia vive allá. O sea es, lo haces (chasquea sus dedos) o sea, punto. Son mucho más directos." (M3_3)

...This works also in northern Mexico. In the north of Mexico they are much more direct than in central Mexico. [...] Part of my family lives there. It is like, you do it (snaps her fingers) and that's it. They are much more direct.

7) Whether one lives in the provinces or in Mexico City:

"Täällä on kaikki englanninkieliset tekstit ja niinku näkee sen kansainvälisen ja amerikkalaistuneen ilmapiirin mitä ihan selvästi Mexico Cityssä on...niin on ihan vaikea uskoa, että mun ei tarvi kuin vähän nukahtaa autossa niin oon ihan erityylisessä paikassa, ihmiset on vielä semmosissa tyypillisissä vaatteissaan ja taikauskosia ja uskonto on hirveen tärkeätä ja... puheissa niin aina nää taustal jollakin tavalla semmosen vanhat uskomukset ja tavat ja kaikki..." (F4_5)

Here there are all the texts in English and one sees the international and Americanised atmosphere that clearly exists in Mexico City... it is very difficult to believe that I just have to fall sleep in the car for a bit and I am in a totally different kind of place, people are still in their traditional clothes and superstitious and religion is very important and... when talking there are always the old beliefs and habits and all lurking in the background...

8) One's economical status:

"Suomessa joku puuseppä, putkimies, sil voi olla oma talo, kesämökki, oma auto. Tääl saman ammattikunnan kaveri ei voi kuvitella, sillä on joku pahvimaja tai semmonen niinku jonkunäkösistä tiilistä tehty savimaja voi olla, mutta ei oo autoa eikä kesämökkiä missään nimessä ja ne mitä on tosi köyhiä, niitä on hirveesti täällä, niillä ei oo yhtään mitään. Ja sitte on sellasia, millä on niinku sanotaan paljon rahaa niin niitä on aika paljon. Eli siitä välistä sitten löytyy kaikenlaista tasoa." (F5_8)

In Finland some carpenter or plumber, he can have his own house, a summer cottage, his own car. Here people with the same trades cannot even imagine, he has some cardboard shack or a mud house made of bricks maybe, but he does not have a car or a summer cottage in any case and those who are really poor, here are many of them, they do not have anything. And then here are those who have a lot of money, there are quite many of them also. And in between there are all kinds of levels.

9) Also the generation affects the communication: the majority of Finnish

interviewees noted that there is change to be seen in different generations e.g. how time and space are used; how much religion and superstitions affect actions.

"Mun mielestä se on muuttunut, että enemmän ja helpommin pääsee nähin sinunkauppoihin. Ja siihen on varmasti osittain syynä sekin, että silloin, kun mää tulin tänne niin aika moni vastapeluri eli asiakas, ne oli semmosta vanhaa herraa. On tapahtunut mun mielestä sellanen sukupolven vaihdos, että nyt on sitten enemmän paljon nuorempaa porukkaa, sanotaan nyt semmosta 30-40-50 on se, joka näitä hommia vetää. Ne vanhat herrat on jo sitten siirtyneet eläkkeelle. (F1_4)

I think it has changed that more often and more easily one gets to the informal addressing. And partly the reason for that is that at the time I came here, many clients were older gentlemen. I think

there has been a change of generation that now there are more a lot younger people, let's say something like 30-40-50 years old. They are doing the work now. The old gentlemen have already retired.

The data suggests that these general reasons are behind the differences in communication. However, the question remains: how can one know? It seems that in Mexico, people are used to looking for small clues in behaviour. They listen to the language used, they look at the way one speaks, how one is dressed, how much one knows on various topics, one's manners, etc. Sometimes the conclusions are made quickly, other times they require more time, but every time it is used in the beginning as an evaluation not only for the situation at hand but also for possible future encounters. Therefore the sensitivity has played a significant role in communication in Mexican culture: one has to be able to read the clues and then place the person into a certain level of the society – and find the suitable way to communicate together as the following excerpt advises:

- "Hay algo que tienes que preparar anteriormente refiriendo la comunicación?
- No tal vez en el principio, pero cuando conoces ya a la gente, cuando conoces cierta forma como debe de comportar, tienes que adaptarte inmediatamente [...] obviamente tengo que pensar en ciertas expresiones [...] tengo otro tipo de lenguaje con la gente de almacén por decir algo que con la gente que estoy viendo especialmente con gente de Finlandia y a la vez con la gente en Estados Unidos. Son tres diferentes métodos de comunicarte totalmente separados." (M7_8)
- Is there something in the communication that you have to prepare beforehand?
- Maybe not in the beginning, but once you know the people, once you know the certain ways how one has to behave, you have to adapt immediately [...] obviously I have to think of certain expressions [...] I use different language with the people in the warehouse than for example with the people from Finland and also with the people from the United States. These three different methods of communicating are totally separate from each other.

When searching for the common communicative ground, hierarchy is a very important factor to take into account. Who needs to adapt depends greatly on what the position of the people are in relation to each other. One could imagine that Finns have to adapt more to the Mexican culture because they are working in Mexico. It was not so: Finn is usually the boss and therefore s/he can define to a certain extent the working methods in the working place.

“Näistä kenen kanssa me nyt ollaan enemmän tekemisissä työasioissa, niin kun alussa oli sovittuja tapaamisia, niin nekin tuli kans milloin sattuun. Niin mää sanoin hyvin selvästi, että kuule, mää en oo meksikolainen ja mää kunnioitan vielä niitä mun omia tapoja näissä aikahommissa, et jos mää oon sopinut sun kans, että sää oot kahdeltatoista täällä, ja jos sää et oo silloin täällä, niin mää voin

lähtee muualle [...] en mää jää odottelemaan koko päivää [...] niin ne nyt on jo alkanu kunnioittaa sitä meidän kanssa." (F4_19)

The people with whom we are in contact in working matters, when in the beginning we had meetings, they came whenever they felt like it. Then I made it clear that you know, I am not Mexican and I still follow my own habits concerning time, that if I have agreed with you that you'll be here at twelve and you aren't here, then I can go somewhere else [...] I won't wait all day [...] then they have started to respect that with us.

Another question is then the customer-seller relations where the power position also plays a major role. The one in the selling position is expected to adapt as much as possible if he or she really wants to do business and have the best possible deal; the customer, in turn, can suppose that his message gets through also with less intercultural knowledge and adaptation. These considerations show that hierarchical structure and power are essential to take into account when examining the Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication in the Mexican business context.

4.2.2. People-orientation and Task-orientation

As reported in the theoretical background, researchers have described the Mexican tendency to emphasise the relationships and the Finnish strive for work and task-completion. This data supports these findings with certain adjustments. All the Mexican interviewees except one talked a lot about personal relationships and its importance. However, a minority of Mexicans talked about the importance of relationships on the values level as in the following excerpt.

"Yo creo que muchas veces el mexicano está más orientado, muy orientado a lo social y yo creo que es un gran valor, la familia, por ejemplo. Pero en ese tal vez... muchas veces se pierda, se llega a hacer un poco más importante el contexto social que inclusive los objetivos de la empresa." (M6_3)

I think that many times the Mexican is more oriented, very oriented to the social aspect and I believe that it is an important value, the family, for example. But this may be... many times one loses, the social context will become even more important even than the objectives of the company.

The majority consider relationship building and caring for relationships a leading issue of the interview. Different aspects of communication tended to be evaluated primarily by what it meant to the relationship, and secondarily, although often not expressed directly, by its connection to work.

“Es muy común en México en las oficinas de que llega alguien y hace un recorrido por todas las oficinas para saludar a la gente, conversar un pocito y después a trabajar. No es porque sea floja la persona sino porque se siente que es necesario a hacer eso. ... Porque después pide contacto con la gente, o sea, ... si no lo haces, llega un momento en que dices: Oye, tenía días que no te veía! Pues sí, por que? Por que estabas trabajando, verdad. Entonces, mejor háblale así que en la mañana en paz saluda la gente: hola que tal, como estas, da da da? Y después te pones a trabajar. Porque, lo contrario, pues, no lo voy a ver en el día.“ (M2_10)

In Mexico it is very common in offices that when somebody comes to work, he first goes to all the offices to greet the people, to talk a little and only then to work. It is not as if he were lazy but because he feels it is necessary to do so.... Because afterwards you'll contact people... if you do not do so, there comes a moments when you'll say: man, days have passed and I haven't seen you! That's true, why? Because you have been working, right. That's why it is better that in the morning you greet the people in peace: hello, how are you, da da da? And after that, you start working. If you do not do it, you won't see him all day.

This structure of circular explanations in which people-oriented behaviour is explained with people-oriented values is encountered frequently in interviews:

“One has to greet everybody in the morning because otherwise one might not see them all day”; or on a more general level: one has to take certain action because one has to show that one cares, one remembers or one has to show up and be an active part of the working community. The interviewee above is clearly aware of the idea that such greeting behaviour might be interpreted as laziness, but this is an idea that he wants to challenge. Actually there is the suggestion implied in the comment that this is what makes working more efficient: sooner or later one needs the contact for help, for co-operation, etc. Having greeted the others, for example, the contact is already there. One has the contacts open to ask for help, and knowing this, one can also concentrate more efficiently on one's work.

It is also seen in this excerpt that what is important is not what one says (cf. “da da da”), but rather the fact that one takes contact. This kind of small talk, *pláticas*, at the beginning of the day or the encounter is frequently emphasised: the important thing is how it is said and what kind of feeling it conveys, not so much the content. Even though one sees the others each day at the working place, every morning the relationship has to be renewed by greeting, by opening the communication for that day or opening the communication whenever the first contact is made after a pause. Finnish respondents had easily interpreted

communication in these kinds of situations first as unnecessary and waste of time.

Having only work objectives in mind, Finns tend to forego relational small talk.

"Suomalaiset, kun niillä on kiire ja ne haluaa hoitaa asian, että se hoidetaan nyt ja siinä ei turhia liirumlaarumeita tarvi sitten jutella. Mulla tuli niinku henkilökohtaista palautetta siinä, kun mää soitin toiseen yritykseen mun kaverille ja sen esimies vastas puhelimeen – se on semmonen pieni yritys – ja sitten mää kysyin, esittelin itseni niin kuin suomalaiseseen kulttuuriin kuuluu, että hei, täällä XX, onko siellä YY? Ja sitten tää hänen esimies oli sanonu, että onko se XX hänelle suuttunu tai onko se hänelle vihainen, vaan onko se vaan epäkohtelias, ku se ei kysyny häneltä, että mitä hänelle kuuluu. Niin se oli niinku semmonen, mikä pysäytti ja sitä vaan, että vaikka on kuin kiire niin täällä on oppinu, että on pakko kysyä, että hei, mitä kuuluu." (F7_11)

Finns, when they are in a hurry and they want to take care of the matter and get it over with now, then you do not need to chat about this, that, and the next thing. I got personal feedback when I called my friend at another company and her boss answered the phone – it was a small company – and then I asked, presented myself as is usual in Finnish culture that hello, this is XX, is YY there? And then her boss had asked her if I was upset at him or if I was just impolite because I did not ask how he is. That was a comment that made me pause to think, and it taught that even though you're in a hurry, you still have to ask: hello, how are you.

As this excerpt shows, even though the content does not really say a lot or is not important, the greeting with routine-like questions - or the lack of them - carries a strong indication of the present condition of the relationship.

The following shows a similar experience from another point of view. It is the experience of a newcomer with such ritual questions, or at least how this experience seemed to the Mexican counterpart:

"Había un fines la primera semana: Hola, que tal, como te fue el fin de semana? Y me pregunta: por que me preguntes eso? Yo le tenia que explicar, mira, lo que pasa es que nosotros hacemos este tipo de preguntas más que nada como para no sé, por cortesía, no sé como definirlo, pero pienso que mucho tiene que ver con la cortesía. Tal vez en sí no este muy interesado en tu fin de semana pero simplemente lo pregunto por mostrarte interés, por mostrarte amistad." (M2_2)

It was a Finn's first week: Hi, how are you, how was your weekend? And he asks me: why do you ask that? I had to explain to him, look, what happens is that we ask those kinds of questions for, I don't know, for courtesy, I don't know how to define it, but I think it has to do with courtesy. Maybe one is not so interested in your weekend but one asks it simply to show you interest, to show you friendship.

It might feel amazing that such a situation could occur because one could suppose that it is not so rare in Finnish to ask that question. However, he explained:

Afortunadamente ya sabía de esto, ya me habían comentado.

Fortunately I already knew about it, they had already told me about it.

This could be interpreted to mean that others had had similar experiences. Such questions are so natural that it is difficult for a Mexican to explain what they really mean. For a Finn, they might at first seem insignificant and even too personal.

Another important factor seems to be the continuity of the communication. In the working place it is not only the greeting that is expected but also discussions during the day and regular contact during the process of common projects. One Mexican's experience in Finland reflects the differences in the discussion mode:

“En Finlandia se ve la comunicación como en momento determinado del día, en México a través del día [...] Me tuve que quedar esperando una cita en Finlandia [...] están fácilmente unas diez personas trabajando, todo en silencio en sus computadoras, de repente un celular, dos palabras con alguien, se ponían a trabajar, se paraban al baño y todo. A la hora de la comida, platicaban lo mínimo para subirse rápido y a las cuatro de la tarde acabaron y salieron a irse y platican, platican, platican... pero el día siguiente les preguntas si habían tenido un buen día: sí! Es que hay momento para todo [...] El mexicano no es para esperar que sea a las cuatro en punto de la tarde, el mexicano después de llegar en la mañana pregunta: Cómo te fue? Y habla en el café y de todo si, para comer juntos...” (M3_10)

In Finland they place the communication as a certain moment of the day, in Mexico throughout the day [...] I had to wait for one meeting in Finland [...] there were easily about ten people working, all in silence at their computers, sometimes on the cellular, two words with somebody, again to work, they went to toilet and all that. At the lunch time, they talked the minimum in order to be fast and at four o'clock they stopped and started to leave and talked and talked and talked. But the next day, if you ask if they had a good day: yes! They have a set time for everything [...] a Mexican could not wait until four o'clock, the Mexican after coming in the morning asks: How are you? And talks at the café and goes to eat together...

Again, if one reads between the lines, the comment suggests that the limited *pláticas*, Mexican small talk, that was seen in Finnish communication would lead a Mexican to have “not so good a day”. Obviously, the lack of talk during the working day can be taken as a sign of emphasising task completion over the relationship. Below is an example of the opposite experience, a Finn in the Mexican working environment, written at the beginning of the internship period:

“(Meksikolainen) Pomoni oli lähdössä muutaman päivän työmatkalle. Kun kysyin häneltä, mitä mä voisin näitten päivien aikana tehdä tai lukea, tutustua, vastaus oli: “Sää voit jutella ihmisten kanssa: mitä ne tykkää olla täällä, mitä ne tekee jne ja sillä tavalla tutustua tähän yritykseen ja sen toimintaan.” Niinpä, minä taas niin tehtäväorientoituneena ihmisenä olin koko aamun lukenut esitteitä ja katsellut yrityksen esittelyromppua. En siis kuitenkaan vielä tajua noita orientoituneisuuden konkreettisia ilmentymiä ☺” (dia_0604)

My (Mexican) boss was going to leave for a few days on a working trip. When I asked him what could I do or read or familiarise myself with during these days, the answer was: “You can chat

with people, ask how they like being here, what do they do etc. and in this way get to know the company and its activities.” All right. As such a task-oriented person I had read the brochures all morning and looked at the CD-ROM of the company. I do not yet understand the concrete manifestations of being orientated.☺

The “natural way” to get to know the company was to read and check all the material I was given and then make a plan of how to proceed. Mexican advice was to talk with people. However, this is only one aspect to explain different expectations of what I was supposed to do. This issue is probably also connected with independence, which will be addressed later in this report.

The expectation of the continuity of communication is also seen in communication connected with work.

“Muchas veces como latino también esperas que la comunicación siempre sea muy fluida, verdad. Que me estas proviniendo información y en el caso del finlandés yo estimo que no es así. Es que te doy la información cuando se necesita, si no se necesita o no hay cambios, no te la doy.” (M6_4)

Many times as a Latino, one also expects that communication would always be fluent, right. That you keep giving me information and I have a feeling that in the case of Finn it is not in that way. It is such that I'll give you information when it is needed and if there are no changes, I won't give it to you.

It was often mentioned that the boss in particular expects to be updated regularly on the projects in process. This seems to cause misunderstanding on both parts: one Finnish boss noted that Mexican workers cannot decide anything for themselves but even in small matters they come to show it to him, thus impinging on his working time. On the other hand, Finnish workers had noticed that their independence with carrying out tasks could give the impression to a Mexican boss that he is neither heard nor respected as he should be.

"Tästä muuten mun pomo sanoi mulle sillan kerran alihankkijan luona. Mää olin esittänyt jo asiani alihankkijalle ja sitten kysyin pomolta, että vai mitä, haluaisitko sää lisätä jotakin. Pomo vain kohautti hartioitaan ja sanoi, että no kysythän sää minulta, että meksikolainen olisi ensimmäisenä kysynyt: no, mitä se pomo on mieltä... Mää olin vähän ihmeissäni, koska hän on aina korostanut sitä, että tää on mun projekti ja mää teen päätökset, aina sillan, kun oon vähän kuin menny hakemaan neuvoa tai tukea. "Tee niinkuin sinusta tuntuu parhaimmailta". Ja mää otin tuon tilaisuutena näyttää, että katso, mää oon tehny niitä itsenäisiä päätöksiä. Mutta oiskin pitänyt ensin kysyä häneltä. Se ois varmaan sanonut, että sinähän se sitä teet, mutta olisin kuitenkin näyttänyt, että minun paikkani tulee vasta sen jälkeen..." (dia_22.6)

My boss once commented on this to me that one time at the subcontractor's. I had already presented my case to him and then I asked the boss if he would like to add anything. He just shrugged his shoulders and said: well, so you asked me after all, a Mexican would have asked first what the boss thinks... I was surprised because he had always emphasised that this is my project

and I make the decisions, always when I have gone kind of to ask for advice or support. "Do as you feel is the best". And I took this as an opportunity to show that look: I have made independent decisions. But then I should have asked him first. He would have said that it is you who does it, but in that way I still would have shown that my place is beneath his...

It seems that the question could be, on the one hand, that the communication flow should be fluid all the time, and on the other hand that the hierarchy is shown and both positions are clear. This might be especially important when a third person is present. This seems to be connected as well to how voluntary individuals take responsibility for different matters; this subject is also examined later on more thoroughly.

According to the Finnish interviews one could conclude that mainly the Finns are conscious of the person-orientation of their Mexican counterparts. All Finnish interviews except one highlight the building and maintaining of relationships by keeping contacts and conversation. However, almost all Mexicans pointed out that mainly it is their responsibility to start such informal discussions.

"Pero generalmente que ellos platiquen... muchas veces hay que darles confianza o hacerles la plática como decimos aquí para que hablen." (M5_3)

But generally that they would talk... many times you have to give them *confianza* or do the talking for them as we say in order to get them to talk.

There is a certain inconsistency with these two experiences. Finns seem to understand the necessity of relationship building and the role of discussion in that, but nonetheless they do not seem to take the initiation to do so. Many explanations can be found for that. One explanation is that closer examination of the Finns' answers shows that they are talking about a different context than Mexicans: Finns are talking more about the relationship with customers and the Mexicans are talking about the relationships between work mates or between the boss and subordinate. In these interviews Mexicans mainly had relationships with Finns as working mates or in boss-subordinate relationships, but not in customer-seller relationships. Finns had both these kinds of relationships but it can be noted that the importance of good relationships is not attached to working community relationships, whereas Mexicans related the topic clearly to their working

community as well. It is also seen that Finns view relationship building through business purposes in the following way:

“Käytännössä se tarkoittaa sitä, että sää käyt paljon syömässä asiakkaan kanssa ja sen pitää vähän niinku vapaamielisempää olla sen kanssakäymisen, että sää tarvit semmosen kaverisuhteen sen asiakkaan kanssa, että hommat hoituu.” (F8_15)

In practise, it means that you go out a lot with the customer and the dealings with them have to be a bit more informal, since you need to establish a friendship with that customer, in order to take care of business.

This division is so clear that one could take it as another example of different orientations: Finns tend to understand and take care of the relationships only where it is useful and critically important to economical success: in customer relations. There the importance of continuous and fluent communication is emphasized by a majority of Finns.

“Se nyt vaatii mitä nyt minkä tahansa suhteen hoitaminen, jatkuvaa yhteydenpitoa ja soittelee asiakkaille, että kyllä mä yritän soittaa riippuen tietenkin vähän asiakkaan tärkeydestä jne. Mutta ainakin vähintään kerran kuukaudessa soittaa sinne, että miten asiat menee ja mielellään, mitä tärkeämpi asiakas aina sen useammin ja sitten just tällasia, että viedä ne lounaalle tai syödä brekkaria niitten kanssa, tällaisia pikkujuttuja... Että ihan sellasta normaalia, että yritetään olla niitten kanssa mahdollisimman paljon tekemisissä ja tosiaan aina jutella mukavia. Kyllä mun mielestä nää lounastapaamiset on edelleen erittäin tärkeitä. Ne antaa hyvän mahdollisuuden sille asiakkaalle vähän rentoutua, kun se pääsee sieltä toimistosta pois. Ja ainakin mä oon ollu huomaavinani, että monesti asiakkaasta saa ongittua huomattavasti enemmän informaatiota mitä tulee kilpailijoihin ja niin edelleen, kun sää tosiaan raahaat sen sieltä toimistosta pois syömään jonnekin ja ne jotenkin avautuu sulle huomattavasti helpommin silloin.” (F1_5)

It requires the same sort of maintenance as any other relationship, continuous contact and calling to customers, I try to call depending on the importance of the customer and so on. At least once a month I call to see how are they doing and many times; the more important the customer the more often it occurs, that I take them to lunch or out for breakfast with them, little things like that... So just normal stuff like that that we try to keep in touch as much as possible and have a nice chat. I still consider meetings at lunch very important. They give the customer a good possibility to relax, once he gets out of the office. And I think I've sort of noticed that many times you can get more info out of the customer about competitors and so on when you drag him out of the office and go eat somewhere. They open up to you somehow much easier then.

One sees the obvious benefits of informal meetings and communication, but by the way things are said and through word choices, the speaker seems to show that he or she is not very involved personally. Also, the speaker seems to imply that this informal conversation is felt to be an inevitable necessity, and sometimes not even a very pleasant one. This is illustrated by the following examples:

- “*raahata*”; drag (in the above comment)
- calling small talk “*läpinä*”; blabbing (F2_6)

- "... vaikka ei sulle mitään kenenkään kakarat kuulu, mutta niistä täytyy olla kiinnostunu. (F8_15) "... although someone else's brats aren't your business, you still have to be interested in them.

The results reported in other chapters suggest that the important point is that the Mexican counterpart would not perceive this kind of attitude. It can even be seen on the attitudinal level that relation building is considered a task to be completed in order to get results.

However, in two excerpts Mexicans themselves commented directly on the benefits of such relationship building:

"Y yo digo, tenemos que platicar algo, conocerla mejor, porque ella en el momento dado nos va a dar soporte en el futuro para las necesidades de nosotros." (M1_9)

I say, we have to chat about something; we have to know her better, because at some time in the future she could support us in our needs.

"(Meksikolainen) Pomo kertoi, että kerran vuodessa mainos laitetaan myös erääseen valtion toimiston lehteen: on hyvä pitää suhteet kunnossa sinnepäin, ei sitä tiedä, milloin niitten apua tarvittaisiin... ymmärräthän, suhteet ovat tärkeitä!" (dia_2104)

The (Mexican) boss told me that once a year they place an advert in the magazine of one governmental office: you have to maintain good relations with them because you never know, when you'll need their help... relations are important, you see!

Here one could also conclude that networking of that sort is perhaps a feature of a competent communicator in business in general; that common business practise is to build good relations with people who might be able to help the business one day. However, the difference in Finnish behaviour with customers and inside the working community deserves closer examination. Despite the supposition that it is not seen as critical to success as good relations with customers, there seem to be other reasons behind the Mexicans' interpretation. It could be that Finns try their best in the relations of the working place also, but their way of doing so is interpreted differently by Mexicans than Finns thought.

One notable element is that the amount of talk Finns think is necessary or even "a lot" does not coincide with that of Mexicans. Two excerpts from the diary illustrate this point:

“Meksikolainen työkaveri tulee ja kysyy toiselta: Onko hiljaista? Tai jotain. Siihen toinen meksikolainen vastasi: silloin, kun Eila kirjoittaa, se ei puhu mitään...” (dia_1404)

One Mexican working mate comes and asks another: Is it quiet? Or something like that. Another Mexican answered: when Eila is writing, she does not speak at all...”

“Töitten jälkeen menin kampaajalle. Alussa siinä höpöttää kaikenlaista, mutta sitten olin hiljaa ja ajatuksissani ja kattelin, kun se leikkas. Siinä se sitten kysäs: oletko vihainen? Mihin mää vähän ihmeissäni, että miten niin. Kun sää olet niin hiljaa. Ja siinä sitten piti selitellä kaikenlaista.” (dia_1905)

After work I went to the hairdressers. In the beginning I was chattering about whatever, but then I was quiet in my thoughts and watched how he was cutting the hair. Then he asked, “are you angry?” I was surprised and asked, “how come.” “Because you are so quiet.” And then I had to start chatting about this and that.

These excerpts strengthen the idea suggested above that there is a difference between Finnish and Mexican environment when talk is necessary. Silence also tends to be interpreted negatively and somehow personally. This issue will be discussed in more detail when the concept of *simpatía* is examined. Another element seems to be the way that Finns express matters:

“Son mucho más directos (los finlandeses) y me gusta mucho para trabajar pero creo que hay momentos de interacción humana que necesita toda la ceremonia mexicana, toda la plática, los detalles, el color, todo eso. Y a veces le quita un poco lo humano cuando es directo.” (M3_3)

They are a lot more direct, I like it a lot when working, but I think that there are moments of human interaction when you need all the Mexican ceremony, all the small talk, the details, the colour, all this. And sometimes it lacks a little bit of human touch when they are direct.

Many Mexican comments like this suggest that a direct way of expressing oneself does not sufficiently take the relationship into consideration. Also, in the interviews there are many examples of the Mexicans way of expressing themselves in a subtle and indirect manner.

Interviewees tended to search for explanations for experienced differences. The most popular sources were the history and the political and social situation of the two countries in question.

“Jos me katotaan Latinalaisen Amerikan historiaa niin täällä on valta vaihtunut joka maassa aika monta kertaa tällä vuosisadalla [...] periaatteessa on niinku hyvin epästabiliia ja ollu vuosisatoja ihan samanlaista. Jos sillan ajatellaan sitä, että kun otetaan nyt Suomi, missä kaikki on lainkirjaimen mukaista ja sulla on valmiit formaatit, että näillä ostetaan ja näitä saadaan ja jos asia

ei toimi niin sää voit soittaa poliisille ja poliisi tulee ja järjestää asian sulle. Suomalaiset elää niinku erittäin tiukassa ja turvallisessa laatikossa. Täällä sitten, kun sää oot semmosessa tilanteess, ett niinku on paljon asioita, jotka voi tänään näyttää ihan selkeeltä ja huomenna ne on erilaisia. Niin se, mikä täällä tulee erittäin tärkeeksi on se, että sä tunnet ne ihmiset, joiden kanssa sää teet bisnestä. Koska saattaa hyvin olla, että tapahtuu jotain arvaamatonta tai ainakin tää on niinku historiallinen tosiasia, tapahtuu jotain, joka periaatteessa tuhoo sun tämmöset niinku paperilla tehdyt sopimukset tai sen pohjan, mistä sää oot tehny ja silloin se on kiinni siitä, että sun suhde on niin hyvä, että se kestää tai ei kestä sitä. [...] Siinä mielessä niinku puhutaan tämmöistä latinoista aika usein lähes halventavaan sävyyn, että se on korruptoitunutta ja kaikki toimii suhteilla, niin siinä mun mielestä tulee tämmönen historiallinen selitys sellasille, että ei se oo mitään suhdepeliä, likasta suhdepeliä [...] vaan se on enemmän sitä, että sun täytyy tuntea ne ihmiset, jotta sun turvallisuuden freimi on kunnossa." (F3_5)

If we look at the history of Latin America, power has changed hands in every country pretty many times this century [...] in principal it's very unsteady here and has been so for many centuries. If we then think that, let's take Finland, where everything goes according to the letter of the law and you have ready-made formats and, that you buy with these and you'll get these and if things do not work out in this way, you can call the police and they come and organise everything for you. Finns live like in a very strict and secure box. Here instead, when you are in the same kind of situation where there are many things that today might seem totally clear and tomorrow they're different. That's why it becomes very important that you know the people with whom you do business. Because it might be that something unexpected happens and as is historically the fact something happens that in principal destroys written agreements or the basis on which they're based, and then it depends on if the relationship is so good that it lasts or does not last [...] in this sense people talk about Latinos often in almost a contemptuous tone that they're so corrupted and everything works based on who you know, I think this is the historic explanation, that it is not a dirty game with relations [...] but more the fact that you have to know the people so that your frame of security is in shape.

It seems that all the explanations lead to the same answer: the need for security. In Mexico the people and good relationships bring security whereas in Finland the state has taken the role of caretaker. The legislation guarantees certain rights and responsibilities that must exist in all business and negotiations, for example. Therefore, the government and the legislation system have taken over the responsibility to produce and control security. In Mexico, relationships with *confianza* have taken this role. The political and economical situation in Mexico has taught Finns also to rely on trustful relations and take certain actions when the times are get insecure:

"Se on ihan fakta, että joka kuuden vuoden välein tulee jonkinlainen kriisi, isompi tai pienempi, mutta aina tulee semmonen kolahdus, kun pressa vaihtuu. Että siinäkin mielessä jälleen kerran tärkeätä... ei enää pidä niinku sanotaan nyt niinku puoliki vuotta ennen vaaleja hullun lailla myydä, myydä, myydä, että silloin niiku jäitä hattuun. Nyt, nyt ventataan ja katotaan. Myydään nyt näille, jotka me tunnetaan, tiedetään ja tunnetaan ja jotka maksaa hyvin ja niin edelleen ja pidetään heistä huolta, mutta sitte nämä uudet, otetaan niiku, katotaan nyt..." (F1_16)

It is a fact that every six years there comes a smaller or bigger crisis, but there's always a blow when the president changes. That in this aspect it is important once again... that you should let's say that half a year before the elections not just sell like a fool, sell and sell, that just keep your

cool and wait and see. Just sell to those that one knows and who pay well and so on and take care of them, but then the new ones... just take it like let's see... (int_2_16)

The political situation in Finland is totally stable compared to the situation in Mexico. This shows also how important it is to have knowledge of the political and historical framework of the country in order to find the hidden logic behind different modes of acting. Both the political framework and the hierarchical structure of Mexican society presented above clearly give logical framework to the Mexican people-orientation.

Many times task-orientation and people-orientation are taken as the opposites of the same continuum. According to this study, they should be seen more as a result of the environment where the people are working and as parts of the continuum where they follow each other; where one is the other's prerequisite. In such a heterogeneous country as Mexico, it is essential at first to get to know the people with whom one is working: what their positions are, education, personal history, ways of acting, etc. In rather homogenous Finland one already has this knowledge because the education is more or less the same for all, and in the same way, neither living conditions nor location makes any significant difference. Hence, the basis for the relationship is already there. Also, Finland has the regulations and laws that ensure a certain security to the worker. In Mexico the security is in the relationships, hence they have to first be built before it is possible to concentrate on task completion. This shows the need to pay more attention to the surrounding society and structures it gives to the inhabitants when researching the communication and—even more importantly—when analysing the results.

4.3. Mexican Value Orientation

According to the interviews and literature three main value concepts were chosen as the basis of the analysis: *respeto*, *simpatía* and *confianza*. The Spanish names are used because the English translation does not reveal the same meaning as the Spanish word used in Mexico. *Respeto* and *confianza* were mentioned as words by all Mexican interviewees and by some Finns as well and then discussed in

more detail. Some interviews concentrated only on the importance of what these words mean and how they are put into practise in different situations. These two words are also widely used in everyday discussions. *Simpatía* was not mentioned as such but in light of how it is defined in literature, it was also discussed in every interview.

4.3.1. *Confianza* as a Process of Making Friends

In the dictionary, *confianza* is translated as “trust” in English. In the interviews, however, the meaning Finns gave to trust (*luottamus*) and the meaning Mexicans gave to *confianza* were not equal. It seems that *confianza* is a much broader concept and used in different contexts than “trust”. The Finnish way to express it was “täytyy tulla kaveriksi”; one has to make friends.

Confianza was one of the main topics of all the interviews with Mexicans. This issue was also discussed in all the Finnish interviews except one. The concept as such was used in many different connections in all the interviews held in Spanish. Mexicans discussed the following concepts, among others:

- “*para crear confianza*”, in order to create *confianza*,
- “*si hay confianza*”, if there is *confianza*,
- “*con confianza*”, with *confianza*,
- “*una relacion más de confianza*”, a relation with more *confianza* etc.

As these different ways of expressing *confianza* show, Mexicans place the relation in different phases depending on how much *confianza* they feel the relation has. Thus, reaching *confianza* is seen as a process.

The way Finn describes the process and the importance of making friends is equal to Mexican description of the *confianza*:

“Se täytyy heittää siinä kertakaikkiaan koepalloja sinne asiakkaalle ja vähän niinku koittaa katsoa, mitkä on ne hänen soft spotit tai mitkä on ne asiat, jotka häntä todella kiinnostaa, ihan siis tottakai bisneksen ulkopuolella ja koittaa katsoa semmosii hyvii juttuja, mistä se niinku innostuu. Ja sitte sitä kautta tosiaan pääset enemmän tutuksi hänen kanssa ja se näkee, että sää oot hyvä jätkä. Ja sitä kautta niin hänet saa sitte kiikutettua sitte lounaalle tai johonki muuhun tällaseen sosiaaliseen

aktiviteettiin ja sitte kun se on tosiaan pari kertaa tehny tuon niin sitte ollaankin jo oikein hyviä kavereita. (naurahdus)” (F1_5)

You have to toss the ball into the customer's court and kind of try to see what his soft spots are or what things really interest him, of course outside of business and try to find good things that get him excited. And in this way you get more acquainted with him and he sees that you are a good guy. And later you take him to lunch or to some other such social activities and once you've done it couple of times then you're really good friends. (short burst of laughter)

This excerpt tells in a colloquial way some essential elements of creating *confianza* that came out in many interviews. A good strategy to start building *confianza* seems to contain following elements:

- 1) Showing interest in the counterpart
- 2) Getting to know the interests of the other by being together and talking a lot together
- 3) Showing that you are a person that is easy to be with
- 4) It takes place outside of the working place
- 5) Discussions consists of topics other than work-related issues

A Mexican tells an example that reflects the same elements. This was his answer when he was asked to relate some experiences of Finnish-Mexican communication where he felt he had succeeded. He had asked another Finn about the Finnish celebrations and used this knowledge as a starting point for a discussion that would not relate work.

“Cuanto en una ocasión había una celebración en Finlandia, hable con él [en el teléfono] y le mencioné eso y le dije: seguramente tu vas a hacer eso durante esta celebración: ah si! (sorprendido) y entonces, como que él también empezó a platicar más, entonces, buscar un ejemplo yo con los finlandeses, buscar temas o saber más de sus costumbres de su país porque muchas veces no se interesa demasiado por la lejanía. ... logramos platicar nosotros y después de eso, ya platicamos otras cosas. Y de otras cosas, no me refiero de trabajo sino otros temas brevemente.” (M1_9)

When once there was a celebration in Finland I talked with him [on the phone] and I mentioned this to him and said to him, certainly you'll do this during the celebration: oh, yes! (surprised) and then it was as if he also started to talk more, in other words, for example I with the Finns, search for topics and know more of his country because many times people aren't interested because it is so far away. ... We succeeded in talking and after this we also talked about other things. I am not referring to work but other topics briefly.

As this example shows, in order to facilitate the communication a Mexican also tends to try to find information on the issues that might interest his or her

counterpart. Somebody had noticed that her Finnish boss reads a lot of both books and newspapers and therefore she starts the discussion for example about recent news happening in the world. Another has found Formula 1 competitions to be his boss' soft spot and therefore he tries to keep himself informed on what happens in that field in order to be able to talk about it.

It seems that capability, readiness and openness to talk about different topics beside work is of crucial importance in creating *confianza*.

"No se puede ser tan callado. En esta manera nunca va a llegar a tener confianza." (M1_5)
You cannot be so silent. In that way you will never reach *confianza*.

As pointed out above, from Mexican point of view it also needs knowledge. One good piece of advice from the majority of both Mexican and Finn interviewees was to know a lot and be interested in Mexico.

"Le recomendaría que se interese por lo mexicano, por los mexicanos, por la cultura y demás porque así se gana muy facilmente la gente aquí, muuuy facilmente, o sea, así te ganas a la gente." (M3_20)

I would recommend that you be interested in Mexicans, Mexican culture and so on because that is the way to win the people over very easily here, veery easily, that's how you win the people.

This aspect is closely related to another concept widely used in Latin communication that was also frequently discussed in all the interviews, namely *simpatía*. It should be seen as an essential part of creating *confianza*, and of creating and maintaining lasting relationships in Mexico. It is mainly connected with the three first elements mentioned above, i.e. showing interest in the counterpart, getting to know the interests of the other by being together, and talking a lot together and showing that one is a person who is easy to be with.

4.3.2. *Simpatía* Aims to Establish Personal Rapport

In many sources (e.g. Marin & Marin 1991: 12) *simpatía* is presented as a cultural script of Latinos. The present data strongly supported the truth of this in a Mexican environment as well. As described in the theoretical part, *simpatía* could be defined as the ability to establish personal rapport with those one works with. It aims to create and maintain a positive atmosphere in the working place and, as an

important part of it, to create the feeling of connectedness: we have a lot in common. This is put into practice in many different ways. *Pláticas*, which is a word for small talk in Mexican Spanish, is an essential part of creating *simpatía*. By making small talk, one shows *simpatía*; interest in the person, in his opinions and experiences and in his culture. As was discussed earlier, one important characteristic of Mexican small talk is continuity. It happens in everyday situations such as the following:

“En las horas de la oficina muchas veces simplemente al estar, oír, a prepararse un café, comienza una plática y no solamente las experiencias que se ha tenido en el fin de semana sino en general como está la situación del país, la contaminación, temas generales que se tocan ellos.” (M1_2)

Many times in the office just being together, listening, having coffee--- starts the small talk and it is not just about what one has done during the weekend but more generally what is the situation of the country, contamination, such general topics that are discussed.

Mexicans commented that Finnish communication in the working place seems to be reserved only for certain parts of the day e.g. after the work is done, or talk is considered necessary only if there is new information to give.

What Mexicans had learnt about the Finnish culture reveals also their strategy to show *simpatía*: Two Mexicans had even learnt some Finnish and suddenly one said in Finnish:

“Terve, terve, en tiedä, mitä minulle tapahtui, yhtäkkiä puhun vain suomea...” (M6_4)
Hi, hi, I do not know what happened to me, suddenly I'm speaking only Finnish...

As a very important factor in *simpatía*, Finns mentioned the ability to use Spanish. Mexicans mentioned it too and one of them added that even though a Mexican might know English, the fact that somebody has not tried to learn Spanish at all might make the process of reaching *confianza* much slower. In addition to normal language use, the knowledge and use of phrases in Mexican Spanish like "*qué onda?*" (what's up?), "*es muy padre!*" (it's very nice!), etc., is appreciated.

The majority of Mexicans talked about the role of humour in creating and maintaining *simpatía*. Many interviewees shared the experience that humour is a good way to soften commands or advice and also feedback. It is also a valuable tool in keeping a positive atmosphere in the working place and relaxed relations

with workmates. In the Mexican context humour is the way to start building *confianza* and it seems to play a significant role in both short encounters and longer relationships. It is also important in initial contacts, as the following excerpt shows:

"Creo que hay algo esencial: saberse reír cuando tienes que reír. La gente de Finlandia es muy seria... pero he notado con la gente que tengo contacto, tenemos que reír sobre algo sin romper el esquema de relación de trabajo, nos reímos y es algo que ayuda mucho." (M7_6)

I think that there is something essential: to be able to laugh when one has to laugh. People from Finland are pretty serious... but I have noticed that, with the people I am in contact with, we have to laugh at something without breaking the atmosphere of work relations. We laugh and it is something that helps a lot.

However, humour is also culture-bound and therefore it might cause some misunderstandings. Two Finnish respondents commented that they had a feeling that Finnish sarcasm is not very well understood in Mexico. Sometimes it might be connected with the power issue, such as if the boss comes to the coffee room and says: "täällä sitä vain lorvitaan"; here you are just idling away your time (F3_16). It can be easily taken as an indirect complaint from the boss, no matter how companionable the relation is otherwise. The following comments address sarcasm concerning one's own country:

"Yks asia, minkä mä oon huomannut, että jossa pitää olla aika varovainen: oman maansa kritisointi pitää pitää aika tarkkaan kurissa. Jopa joskus on helpompaa kritisoida jotakin Meksikossa, niin harmitonta, niin isoa, josta kaikki tietävät, vaikkapa nyt rikollisuutta. - Meksikolainen on aivan ymmällään, jos menet haukkumaan, että meillä on sentään nynny presidentti, kun se saamari ei, ei edes osaa suoraan kävellä. Niin tai että meillä sentään poliitikot ei ymmärrä mistään mitään. (F6_18)

One thing that I have noticed that one has to be careful: one should not be criticising his/her own country. Sometimes it is even easier to criticise something in Mexico, something harmless, big, something that everybody knows about like crime – A Mexican is totally confused if you start to spout off that we have such a nerdy president that he cannot even walk straight or that our politicians do not understand anything.

This could be seen connected with face-saving also: why to voluntarily blame one's own country - or in general something which one is representing - especially if the other does not even have the possibility to verify how the matters mentioned are in the reality.

One interesting point was that when Mexicans were talking about the adaptation of the Finns, in addition to the willingness to learn the language and to get to know the country, they point out humour as in the following:

- "quieren que les cuento unos chistes español mexicanos", they want me to tell them Mexican jokes in Spanish. (M3_4).
- "No veo que tengan problemas a adaptarse a la oficina, o sea, que bromean, o sea muy distinto que en Finlandia que va uno y todo alla... Aqui bromean y todo"; I do not see that they have had problems in adaptation, they are joking, which is very different from Finland where everyone keeps to themselves... here they are joking and everything. (M2_4).

Humour is presented also as something particular to Mexicans:

"Siempre trataban de contarte bromas y chistes y cuando los entendían... de cierta manera rompe el hielo y se empieza a sentir mas confianza aunque sea el trato de corto tiempo. Pero es importante y creo que muchos mexicanos lo hacen y es algo particular de los mexicanos." (M1_8)

Always try to tell jokes and when they understand them... in some way it breaks the ice and one starts to have more *confianza* even though it would be just for a short time encounter. But it is important and I think that many Mexicans do it and that is something particularly Mexican.

It is not only words that convey the positive attitude towards another person but also non-verbal communication. Since Mexicans are used to reading a lot from the context, a serious face, absence of smile, etc., is easily noticed. Sometimes for a Finn the expectations of positive expressions feel almost like pretending or forcing oneself.

"Aamulla Julio kysyi multa: miksi sää oot niin vakava? On tää kyllä tällaista, koko ajan pitäisi olla nauru pinnassa tai ainakin hymy tai jokin vitsi valmiina..." (dia_1907)

This morning Julio asked me why I am so serious. Here it's always like this, you always have to be ready to laugh or at least smile or have some joke ready...

Positive non-verbal expressions such as a smile, laughter, or a pleasant tone of voice seem to be important in the working place. Two Mexicans had experienced the following:

"O sea, acá nosotros por ejemplo en general cuando nos preguntamos algo, nos decimos: "no te entendimos" o "no te escuché" o "que me dijiste" pero no levantamos la voz y "que! (con voz alta y fuerte) (rie). Entonces, uno queda así... es diferente decir: "No te escuche: puedes repetirmelo otra vez" sin levantar la voz." (M5_5)

Well, here for example, in general if we ask something, we'll say "we did not understand you" or "I did not hear you" or "what did you say to me" but we do not raise our voice and say, "what!" (with loud voice), (laugh). so one stays as.. it is different to say: "I did not hear you, could you please repeat what you said" without using louder voice.

In general, all kinds of courtesy, good manners and politeness are one important part of showing *simpatía* and care for the other. There are certain routine-like characteristics of the politeness that were called by one Mexican interviewee *la seremonía mexicana*; Mexican ceremony or by one Finnish interviewee as "rituals for forming the social structure". These rituals give the basic form for the continuity of the communication and include greetings, asking how you are, leave-taking etc. Opening the door, waiting until everybody is finished eating before leaving the table or giving enough time before leaving together e.g. to eat etc. are all signs of caring, noticing the other and therefore an important part of *simpatía*. Politeness also includes certain kinds of "peruskeskustelu" (F3_12), basic discussion, as one interviewee put it, that might touch topics such as how the family is doing:

"Jos tiedät, että jonkun mies tai vaimo on ollut kipee tai muuttamassa jonnekin tai muuta" (F3_12)

If you know that his wife or husband has been sick or moving somewhere or something like that.

If possible, the basic discussion also has some connection with the previous encounter:

"que pasó con tus hijos que conocí el otro día" (M3_2)

How are your children I got to know other day"

As one Mexican puts it:

"En México, es más común que te pregunten por la salud, como está y todo, pero si tus papas están divorciando, nadie se está metiendo." (M3_6)

In Mexico, it is more common that they ask you about healthiness, how are you and like that, but if your parents are divorcing, nobody interferes.

What is considered to be a private matter and what is not considered private in different stages of the relationship seems to vary between Finns and Mexicans. This topic will be addressed again when privacy is discussed further on.

For Mexicans, physical closeness is one sign of *simpatía*. Many respondents mentioned kissing the women on the cheek, men hugging each other, etc. It is suggested here that these kinds of details such as patting the back, touching the

hand, etc. are visible signs of *simpatía*. Also in business context the lack of them gives opposite effect as in following example:

"No podemos decir que este es la ley en todos los casos pero yo creo que el distanciamiento puede generar desconfianza. Es decir tal vez inclusive en subconsciente, verdad. Oye, pues, nunca te ríes, seguramente no te gusta. No me quieres dar un abrazo, seguramente no te gusta o no te caigo bien... no le gusta como soy, no le gusta como hablo... entonces, depende también mucho del mexicano, verdad. Que tenga esta educación que le permita a lo mejor pasar del otro lado y poder establecerlo." (M6_7)

We cannot say that one has to do so in all the cases but I think that distance could cause *desconfianza* (i.e. the friendship is not created). Sometimes it can even be unconscious, to be honest. Well, you never laugh, certainly you do not like me. You do not want to hug me, certainly you do not like me... you do not like me as I am, you do not like how I talk... it depends also a lot from the Mexican, right. If he has the knowledge that allows him to take another side and stabilise the relationship.

This comment also introduces the viewpoint that even if a Finnish participant did not know these expectations on the part of a Mexican, if the Mexican counterpart has sufficient knowledge of Finnish culture (i.e. knows that the lack of touch and physical closeness do not necessarily mean dislike), the relationship can still be established and nurtured further. Here it should also be pointed out that these results suggest that when physical closeness exists, it is a sign of *confianza*. It is not present in initial communication. This is the same result that Martin et al. (1994: 172) received: in initial interaction they did not find any significant differences in touching behaviour between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Also, in initial intercultural task-situations it is considered important to keep distance. Therefore, the stage of the relationship is an essential matter to consider when talking about the interpersonal communication.

However, when looking closer at some interviews one can conclude that e.g. kissing a woman on the cheek is actually only a feature of a certain social class and not a feature in general in Mexican communication culture (if such a thing exists). In one interview, Mexican women said that in their working place it is not used at all, and not in their context of free time either. The only exception would be birthdays or other celebrations when kisses are exchanged. Their background would explain the difference from other interviewees. They were the only ones working in the family company where many of the workers were doing manual

jobs. In the office there were only four people working and the others were in the factory or in transportation. All the other participant companies were international companies where the offices were large and the manual labour was done further away. Another Mexican interviewee commented:

"Aquí, por ejemplo, en ciertos niveles de la sociedad se acostumbra de saludar de beso. Por ejemplo, eso es un caso muy interesante. Entonces, generalmente a lo mejor en el primer encuentro no, pero si es de amigos, verdad, ya se habla en contexto de amigos, no tanto, no realmente de contexto de negocios." (M6_13)

Here, for example, in certain levels of the society one is used to greeting with a kiss. For example, this is very interesting case. In other words, in general maybe in the first encounter not but when it is between friends, now we are talking of the context of friends, not really about the business context.

One could suppose that the same difference might also be seen in other forms of touching. This shows again how important it is to see the context where communication occurs.

In general, the results support the ones obtained in earlier researches. Nonetheless, some special concerns could be seen in Finnish-Mexican relations, such as the use of silence and its interpretations and the opening of people's private space. The summary of the different aspects of *simpatía* is presented in the Table 2 in the form of SWOT-analysis.

TABLE 2: SWOT of *simpatía* in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Pláticas</i>, Mexican word for small talk: capability to discuss different issues - Ability to widen learned private space - Interest to learn and use Spanish language - Interest to learn and know about Mexico as a country, its culture, people, food etc. - Use of humour - Positive non-verbal communication: smile, laughter, pleasant tone of voice, etc. - Politeness and good manners: <i>la seremonía mexicana</i> - Touch used as a sign of trust (not in initial interactions) 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of silence as a sign of togetherness or conformity - Reserved behaviour - Concentration only on work-related issues - Lack of humour - Sarcasm - Negative non-verbal communication, such as a serious face and a lack of smile and laughter - Lack of politeness - Not enough importance given to social rituals used in Mexico - Avoidance of touch and therefore lack of physical closeness (not in initial interactions)
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Through participation one "builds" oneself into the working group ➤ One is more approachable for working mates, which in turn makes it easier to create <i>confianza</i> more quickly ➤ Easier to ask for and receive help ➤ Essential in order to create and establish a good work place atmosphere, which is necessary for successful work 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When not participating, one does not become part of the working group but stays as outsider, which in turn makes efficient and successful work difficult ➤ Silence understood as a way to express disharmony and disagreement ➤ Touch, hugs and kisses are used to show <i>confianza</i> and lack of them is easily interpreted as wanting to maintain distance

4.3.3. *Respeto* as Politeness Strategies

The third value, *respeto* and its English version *respect* are not equivalents. When we are talking about “respect”, we are talking about something that two people share; it implies the meaning of equality. In Mexico *respeto* could be seen to have two roles. The first is called *respeto* as a politeness strategy to mark distance and the second *respeto* as other-oriented face-saving strategy. These will be discussed in this chapter.

Respeto as a Politeness Strategy to Mark Distance

Respeto is clearly connected with the hierarchy in all its dimensions. *Respeto* is shown to the boss or other people in the working place whose position is higher than one's own. *Respeto* should also be shown to people from a higher class than one's own. *Respeto* is also shown to older people and from the by men towards women. *Respeto* is not reciprocal: the one in the higher position can do what he or she wants; he or she does not have to show *respeto* as the one in the lower position does. In Finland respect is more connected with the individual. It does not depend on the position but every person as such has the right to be respected. Here there is a clear difference, which again reflects the different hierarchical realities in Finland and Mexico. This is one aspect, which Mexicans said they learned from Finns.

"Para con los finlandeses... yo he aprendido o al menos creo que he aprendido que hay que tratar la gente con mucho más respeto de lo que usualmente se trata aquí en América Latina. Especialmente aquellos que no son de tu posición social... Al menos en México es muy común si vas a un restaurante, al mesero se le trata a veces al menos un poquito despectivamente, no. Este... y... yo, pues, nunca yo había hecho así pero este ahora se ha hecho notorio que es este tipo de actitudes no son correctas en absoluto." (M2_11)

With Finns I have learnt or at least I think I have learnt that one has to treat all the people with much more respect than one usually treats them in Latin America. Especially those who are not from the same economical or social position as you... at least in Mexico it is very common that if you go to the restaurant, the waiter is treated at least a little bit contemptuously, you know. ...I had never done that but now I have noticed that these kinds of attitudes are absolutely not correct.

In business context, *respeto* is extremely important in the initial contacts and meetings and on the part of the one who is in the selling position – again the one who has less power in the communication situation. The data also suggests that in the Mexican business environment, the relationships are mainly taken as command-obey relations and therefore the people are never on the same level. Hence, *respeto* is important to take into account also with the working mates. This hierarchy in the working place makes it difficult, for example, to do teamwork successfully in Mexico.

Respeto as a politeness strategy is seen in many practical issues. Greetings and addressing are formal with the people one does not know. Shaking hands and using the titles like *licenciado*, *arquitecto*, *señor Gonzalez* etc., are necessary as well as using the formal address *Usted* instead of the informal *tú*.

“Teitittely, kättely ollu hyvin tärkeitä, mutta ei enää niin tärkeää kuin ennen, mennään enemmän suoraan asiaan... jos tänäkin päivänä joku tulee uudenuutukaisena tänne Meksikoon niin tottakai se ensi esittäytyminen asiakkaalla pitää olla hyvin muodollinen ja tosiaan teititellä ja kätellä ja tosiaan herra licenciadoa jne. Ei siinä ruveta heti paikalla taputtelemaan selkään ja tuota halailemaan ja sinuttelemaan, se antaa erittäin huonon käsityksen. Mutta mun mielestä nykyään enemmän ja helpommin pääsee näihin sinun kauppoihin.” (F1_4)

Formal addressing, handshaking have been very important, but they are not as important any more as they were earlier, one goes straight to the point... but even today if somebody new comes to Mexico, certainly the first presentation has to be very formal and really address formally and shake hands and really “señor licenciado” etc. One cannot start clapping the other on the back right away and hugging and using informal manners, it gives a very bad impression. But I think nowadays one gets to speak informally more often and more easily.

In this way the formal politeness used shows which stage of the relationship is prevalent at any given time. On the other hand, this politeness also tends to serve as marking the borders of different social classes, as in the following example:

“Sinuttelu on selvästi sellaisen eriarvoisuuden merkki. Täällä toimistolla periaatteessa kaikki sinuttelevat toisiaan. Käytännössä siivoojia puhutellaan "doña Z" ja näimmä noita vartijoitakin teititellään, niin olen ollut ainakin kuulevani. -- Minusta se näyttää sellaiselta, että se on joko sitä, että toinen on arvoasteikossa ylempänä tai sitten se on sitä (mikä on oikeastaan sama asia), että halutaan pitää etäisyyttä, selkeä etäisyys itsen ja toisen välillä.” (dia_3004)

Informal addressing is clearly a mark of inequality. Here in the office in principle everybody addresses each other informally. In practice, though the cleaners are addressed formally "doña Z" and seems that the guards are address formally, too, as far as I have heard. -- It seems to me that it is either that one is higher in the hierarchy or it is because (which is actually the same thing), one wants to have distance, clear distance between oneself and the other.

Official policy in the office was that people call each other *tú*, informally.

However, in practice this concerned only white-collar workers in the office and not the others. This distinction seemed so natural for all the staff that nobody even thought that it should be explicitly explained. In one occasion, a Finnish boss made a division between the managers of the departments and the other white-collar workers and it was really taken as an offence. Thus, the division into out-group and in-group seems to be an important factor that affects communication. Formality is one method of demonstrating it in practise, and this is seen in many ways as the following examples show.

Formality especially in initial encounters is seen also in clothing.

“Bisneksessä käytetään pukua, sillä osoitetaan arvostusta, jos meet farkut jalassa asiakkaalle, niin se miitinki varmaan peruutetaan, et niinku asiakkaalla ei mitään merkitystä. Osoittaa arvostusta, että pukeudut siistinä... jos menisit ilman kravattia ja pikkutakkia asiakkaalle, se olis erittäin loukkaavaa käytöstä.” (F3_16)

In business you wear a suit, if you go to meet the customer in jeans, the meeting could even be cancelled: the customers then have no significance to you. It shows respect that you are formal... if you go without a tie and jacket to the customer it is very offensive behaviour.

This formal clothing was mentioned in nearly every interview in general and every Finn talked about it. Some Finns (4) commented that there are some places like the coast, the provinces or hot northern cities such as Monterrey where one could dress more informally and wearing a tie might even be considered stupid. However, it was also stated that it is still better that one comes with a tie because:

"Sun pitää myydä ittes ja se tuote, sit ehkä kun sulla on jo se hyvä ja pitkä suhde asiakkaan kanssa, niin ok, sitte sää voit mennä sinne miten vaan haluttaa, mut kyl se pitäs esittäytyä kravatti kaulassa" (F1_6)

You have to sell yourself and that product, then maybe when you have a long, good relationship with the customer, you can go how you want, but one has to present oneself with a tie on.

These examples also show the character of creating *confianza*: initially, the *respeto* that marks distance is very important, but as the relationship continues, it creates its own forms, which might change from one relation to another. However, in general it seems that the dress code in the working place is more formal than in Finland. From the Mexican point of view, Finns are seen as follows:

"Se arreglan menos, o sea, en este sentido. Algo que tienen muy preciosas que son muy limpias a comparación de otros europeos. Son muchísimo más limpias que el promedio de los europeos: Franceses, alemanes, italianos y demás. La gente es muy limpia pero no se maquillan mucho, no las ves comprando cincuenta mil cremas y eso, no." (M3_16)

They dress and make up less in this sense. Something that is very nice is that they are very clean in comparison to other Europeans. They are much cleaner than the average European: French, Germans, and Italians, etc. They are very clean but they do not use very much makeup and you do not see them buying fifty thousand creams and so on.

In the communication diary, it was noted that wearing different clothes every day is a rule to be followed. Women tend to dress quite femininely but also conservatively, with a two-piece costume and high-heeled shoes being normal. Finnish modesty or free style in clothing might be interpreted incorrectly:

"(Si vas) con un traje muy sencillo, le falta un poco de profesionalismo, por que va a trabajar y se tiene que arreglar porque va a trabajar. Depende también en México de lugar. En finlandés creo que su concepto de bello es más que sea sano. Y en México más que te veas bien." (M3_17)

(If you go) with very simple suit, you are lacking professionalism. Because if one is going to work, one has to dress up and make up if one goes to work. Depends also on the place in Mexico. For a

Finns I think the concept of beautiful is more like being healthy. And in Mexico that one looks good.

In addition to different concepts of beauty, the interpretation of professionalism also changes.

- Naisena täällä on semmonen seksuaalisuus vielä esillä, että miehet oottaa hirvittävän paljon, että naisen (etsii sopivia sanoja) täytyy niinku... että semmosta asiallista naista ne ei suvaitse ollenkaan, että pitäis olla mielummine sellanen niinku pikkasen flirttaileva, että puhutaan asian vierestä ensteks ja sitten vasta puhutaan asioita.
- ja hirveen tärkeää on, minkänäköinen on, että täällä pyntätään ja maalataan paljon enemmän kuin Suomessa (F4 & F5_13)
- As a women a certain sexuality is still present in a way that men really expect that a woman (searches for right words) should... that they do not accept such a businesslike woman, that one should rather be a bit of a flirt, that at first one talks about this and that and only then gets to the point.
- and a very important thing is how one looks, that here they dress up and make up (negative words) a lot more than in Finland.

As this excerpt shows, Finns talk about *arreglarse*, make up and dress up, with words having negative connotations and interpreting it as something that men require from women. However, as shown above, it seems that men are also required to take good care of their appearance. Furthermore, to talk about "this and that" in the beginning of the meeting does not concern only women but seems to be common business practice in Mexico. By having good appearance can be related to show *respeto* and in that way to give a good impression of oneself. This is supported by the comments that when the relation is already established, formal dressing and appearance are not so important anymore. Small talk, in turn, is related to building and maintaining *confianza*; taking care also of the personal relationship, not only concentrating on the task.

The traditional view on the Mexican concept of time is strongly challenged in business context. As one interviewee states:

"Se aikakäsitys, minkä suomalaiset tietää meksikolaisista on se, että se on *mañana* ja täällä ei ole mitään kiirettä. Ja jos sää meet asiakkaalle ja käyttäydyt sen *mañanan* mukaisesti, niin ei sulla kyllä ole mitään kiirettä!" (F3_10)

That concept of time that Finns know about Mexicans is that it is *mañana* and here is no hurry. And if you go to the customer and behave according to the *mañana*, then you really do not have any hurry!

In Mexico punctuality depends on the situation and the person you are dealing with. The majority of the interviewees advice that punctuality is obligatory especially when the person one is going to meet is higher in the hierarchy than oneself – it is showing *respeto* to the time of the other person, to the fact that he has taken time to meet you despite his busy schedule. It is the same situation if one is in the selling position. In Mexico time is used as a mark of power. The person in a higher position can let the other wait as much as half an hour but if one comes late, it can be taken as a challenge of the power and the importance. Again, the hierarchical position is the crucial factor to the communication form.

"Se riippuu vähän kenenkä kans, se menee niinku vähän siihen, että mitä korkeammalle tasolle sää meet hierarkiassa, sitä punktuaalisempia ollaan. Koska kaikilla on niinku hirveesti töitä, täällähän työpäivän niinku paikallisessa yrityksessä niin sehän on normaalia, että tullaan aamulla kaheksan aikaan ja tehdään kymmeneen asti illalla ja piste. Toisaalta taas siinä, että työpaikalta poistutaan vasta kun esimies poistuu." (F2_16)

It depends who you are meeting, it is like the higher you go in the hierarchy, the more punctual you are. Because everybody has so much work; here the normal work day in local company is that one comes at eight in the morning and works until ten at night and that's it. On the other hand, that one leaves the work place only after the boss has left.

Time concept differs also according to the context. The majority of Finns noted that in leisure time nobody means exactly the time agreed upon.

"Sehän on epäkohteliasta jos sut on kutsuttu kahdeksaksi jonnekin ja sää meet sinne silloin, niin ne on siellä papiljotit päässä, että mitä sää vielä tulit!" (F7_8)

It is impolite if you are invited at eight to somewhere and you go then, they are there with their hair in rollers: why did you come already!

One Mexican mentioned that even on wedding invitations this is taken into account and the starting time is marked to be half an hour before than the ceremony actually begins.

When discussing *respeto* as a politeness strategy and as a marker of distance is, it is important to add that this is supposed to be the situation in the beginning of the relationship. When the relationship gets more *confianza*, these marks of power and distance will gradually disappear as the example of greeting and addressing shows. This change is noted also in communication style. Many respondents have experienced that in the beginning indirect communication style is needed but with

time and *confianza* one can communicate more directly, and that it is easier to get valid information such as the prices the competitor offers, their weak point, honest feedback on one's own products, etc. The complexity of *respeto* as a politeness strategy and to mark distance is illustrated in Table 3.

TABLE 3: SWOT of "*respeto* as a politeness strategy to mark distance" in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness and knowledge of different hierarchical structures - Sensitivity to note social clues in others' behaviour and to communicate accordingly - Ability to work in unequal positions - A conscious distinction between the use of formal and informal behaviour - Ability to show the stage of the relationship in addressing, use of titles, communication style, clothing and appearance in general - Understanding time as a sign of power 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of the hierarchical structures of the society is lacking - Not much sensitivity to see the social clues in people's behaviour - Strong need for equality at work - Informal behaviour is taken for granted or as normal or favourable behaviour - Only one communication style in use - Time considered an objective measurement
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Showing <i>respeto</i> towards power, age and gender according to the Mexican cultural rules is the sign of a good education and is part of giving a good impression of the person ➤ The development of the relationship is explicitly seen in the communication behaviour, and with this development the use of this kind of <i>respeto</i> diminishes and interpersonal communication occurs on a more familiar basis. 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of politeness towards large power distance is taken as a sign of not being an educated person, which in turn affects the relation building in general ➤ Basis of security in the relationship is lacking if the common signs of hierarchy in society are not seen in communication

Respeto as Other-Oriented Face-Saving Strategy

The second role of *respeto* is its use as a face-saving strategy. The results of this study support the claims in previous literature that *respeto* is the Mexican equivalent for the concept of face, a term used by Ting-Toomey et al (1988). The face-saving methods can vary. Other-oriented face-saving strategy mainly refers to indirect talk. In the interviews this topic was referred to frequently from both a Finnish and a Mexican perspective. One Finn describes the indirect talk as follows:

"Jotkut haluaa mennä suorempaan asiaan, mutta ei kuitenkaan sellaista, mitä suomalaiset keskustele: tällaisesta ja tällaisesta ois kyse, vaan menee pikkusen sellasta kiertotietä: miten nyt vois tehdä, miten voitais aloittaa, miten voitais auttaa, minkälaista mahdollisesti te haluatte. Ei esitetä suoria kysymyksiä, vaan semmosia niinku sama kysymys, mutta kiertotietä, että näin: mitenkähän me voitais auttaa teitä... Ettei oo niinkuin sellasta, että heitetään pallo toiselta toiselle, vaan niinkö sitä pientä peliä. (F2_4)

Some people want to get to the point more directly but still it is not the same as a discussion between Finns, "it's a matter of this and this," but they go more roundabout, "how could this be done now, how should we start, how could this be helped, what might you wish?" They do not ask straight questions, but rather with like the same question but indirectly like this, "how could we help you..." It is not like one throws the ball to another but more like a small game.

In some answers Mexicans pointed out that they have adapted to the communication style of their Finnish boss in this aspect. A Mexican describes how he acts like a Finn at work:

"Portarte como fines? -- Las preguntas directas: "tenemos esta situación de venta, estas problemas, estas opciones... que es lo que quieres hacer". Y es muy directo, verdad. Y cuanto temas y informaciones también." (M6_4)

Behave like a Finn? -- The direct questions: "We have this situation of sales, these problems, these choices... what do you want we do" And this is very direct, that's so. And also in other topics and information.

On the other hand, in this aspect also one should be conscious of what context one is talking about. Some Mexicans and one Finn state that in this sense northern Mexico and certain business areas also use the direct style.

"Siis tää suomalainen suorasukaisuus ei siis ihan, ihan sellasenaan käy Meksikossa, mutta toisaalta yksityinen teollisuus ja varsinkin kansainvälinen teollisuus, itse asiassa ne arvostaa meitä siitä, että me ei osata käyttää subjunktiivä, että me ei osata käyttää konjuktiivia, eikä me haluta käyttää niitä, me ei puolta tuntia esitellä jotain asiaa preludina ja sitten sanota, että mitä se saatas se asia olla, mutta me yleensä ottaen mennään *al grano*, niinkuin Meksikossa puhutaan pohjoisessa elikkä tietyissä mielessä Meksikossa on jo löytynyt niitä, jotka eivät hirveästi sitä liturgiaa tai koreografiaa harrasta, mm. pohjonen on siinä suhteessa huomattavan paljo lähempänä." (F6_8)

This Finnish frankness doesn't really work in Mexico, but on the other hand private industries and especially international industry, in fact, respect us for the fact that that we cannot use the subjunctive, that we cannot use the conjunctive, that we do not like to use them, that we do not present something as a prelude and then say what the point could be, but we go *al grano* as they say in Northern Mexico. In other words, in some sense there are already people in Mexico who do not use that kind of liturgy or choreography e.g. the North is in this sense much closer.

Once again the essential knowledge is to notice different expectations for communication according to the context and situation.

One of the most important factors seems to be that one should never criticise anybody directly, let alone in public. Negative feedback or critique must be given indirectly, even in situations where it is obvious that a big mistake has been made. The question is raised in the Mexican counterpart – is it worth saying directly if the relationship is damaged or destroyed as a result?

"Si encuentras un error en el trabajo de otra persona, aquí en México... se toma mal, si lo dices en frente de los demás, entonces, tienes que decir a la persona: sabes que, ahorita platicamos, tengo algo que decirte y ya se lo dices en persona y a solas, verdad. Porque de lo contrario, si esta dañando la relación. Una cosa insignificante como esta, te puede traer consecuencias graves en lo futuro." (M2_11)

If you find an error in the other's work, here in Mexico... it is taken as an offence if you mention it in public. You have to say to the person, "How about if we have a little chat, I have something to say to you," and so you say it to him or her in person, just the two of you. If handled otherwise, the relation will be damaged. One insignificant thing like that can bring you serious consequences in the future.

This excerpt shows how to manage a sensitive topic even when just two people are present: not straight to the point but going softly. Maybe at first discuss something else and then get closer to the topic and ask for an opinion or for help and in this way get indirectly to the point. Even though the relation with *confianza* can facilitate direct talking on certain topics, this kind of *respeto* is supposed to be maintained in relation in order to maintain the relationship on good terms. This is how a Mexican advises it be done:

"Lo manejas mucho en relación, por ejemplo tal persona no te entrego paquete a tiempo. - lo manejas: "Oye, como me hiciste esto?" O: "no seas mala onda", o sea, no lo haces bajo de estándar o los objetivos como que: "Tu fecha de entregada es esta, porque no pudiste?" O sea, es diferente como hablar la gente así - que un finlandés: "Quiero mañana!" Y si no llega mañana: "Por que no entregaste? - el mexicano da vueltas para no regañar a alguien." (M3_11)

You manage the situation through the relationship. For example if a certain person did not deliver the package in time - you say: "well, why did you do this to me?" Or: "come on", I mean that you do not do it according to certain standards or objectives such as: "Your deadline is this, why didn't you do it?" It is different to talk to people like that - than a Finn: "I want it tomorrow". And if it does not come tomorrow: "Why didn't you deliver it?" - a Mexican goes around the bush not to blame somebody.

This same indirectness is seen also in situations where real difficulties are met e.g. when interests are contradictory or there is something that should be done but still cannot be done for some reason or the person who is supposed to do it does not want to do it.

"Jos todella tiedetään, että tästä tulee sota, niin kyllä silloin asiakas yleensä häviää. Ei ota enää sun soittoja vastaan, ei enää reagoi sun meileihin ja fakseihin, tapaamista et saa hänen kanssaan, että niinku ainoa tapa on sitten yrittää hoitaa asia sihteerin välityksellä tai sitten tosiaan kirjallisesti... kyllä mä sanosin, että jos se tosiaan välttelee sua tai ei halua puhua sun kans, että tässä on nyt suuri ongelma tämän asiakkaan kans tai että jostain syystä hän ei oo kiinnostunut." (F1_10)

If you know for sure that there is going to be a big dispute over something, then usually the client just disappears. He does not answer your calls, does not respond to your mail or faxes, you cannot get a meeting with him/her and then the only way is to try to take care of the matters through his secretary or in writing--- I would say that if he really avoids you or does not want to talk to you, there is a big problem with this client of that for some reason he is not interested.

It is very important to take non-verbal communication into account in these critical situations. This is emphasised quite strongly by some Mexican respondents.

"Si usas un tono de voz alto, medio agresivo y con gesticulaciones, pues el lo toma como una falta de respeto - también uso de ciertas palabras, groserías, maldiciones, verdad. Obviamente uno nunca va a usar. Hay gente que si cuando se explotan dice barbaridad y media, verdad. Allí inmediatamente se da cuenta que le perdió el respeto y menos va a llegar a tener confianza. Nunca va a lograr nada esta persona." (M1_5)

If you use a loud, kind of aggressive voice and are making gestures, then this can be seen as lacking *respeto* - also the use of certain words, swear words, that's so. It's clear that you never use them. There are people who say offensive things when they blow up, it's true. There one immediately notes that he loses *respeto* and is much less likely to reach *confianza*. That person will never achieve anything.

In the interviews, there were also some examples of how negative messages are relayed indirectly. The following example shows also how the worker saved his face by not showing up again in the work place.

"Ei se nyt niin luotettava ollutkaan kun luultiin ja sitten kun se ei saanut palkankorotusta - yks sunnuntai-ilta sen poika soitti, että sen isä on jossain kaukana kotoa, että sillä on jotain ongelmia, että se ei tuu huomenna töihin. Ei tullu huomenna, eikä sen jälkeen ollenkaan. Mutta että se keksi semmosen jutun, koska se näki, että toinen kuski sai korotuksen, mut hän ei saanu." (F5_4)

He was not as reliable as we thought and when he did not get a raise - one Sunday night his son called that his father is away from home because he has some problems and that he won't come to work the next day. He didn't come the next day, or any other day after that. But that he just made up the story, because he saw that another driver got a raise and he did not.

Giving indirect hints is a good way to avoid direct confrontations. For Finns there are two main challenges: firstly, how not to give such hints, which are not supposed to lead to such radical actions as explained above; secondly, how to note the discreet hints given and know how to make decisions accordingly.

Other ways to avoid confrontation would be to handle the problem in writing. This does not deliver a straight, public accusation, but rather the participants can handle the matter and think about any possible suggestions with time. If this is not possible, when one is in a meeting for example, one Finn advises to use silence. With silence one can show that one does not agree but the disagreement is not personalised, not directed to any certain person present.

As the results show, values with different interpretations form a complex entity. The summary of *respeto* as an other-oriented face-saving strategy is illustrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4: SWOT of "*respeto* as an other-oriented face-saving strategy" in the Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of indirect speech - Sensitivity to read between the lines and note the non-verbal signals - Ability to modify criticism and feedback into a form that is non-threatening for others' face: indirectness, suggestion, as asking for help, as taking the fault on oneself, in written form, etc. - Silence used as impersonalised criticism 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct talk as only option - Concentrate on orally expressed matters, i.e. words, and ignore content expressed indirectly between the lines and through non-verbal communication - The use of public negative feedback - Little or no negotiation or adaptation to communication styles
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoidance of face-threatening situations, which in turn give the other participant security that her/his face-concerns will be taken care of also in future encounters ➤ Practical sign of taking care of relationship and needed when building <i>confianza</i> 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unconscious involvement in many face-threatening situations, which in turn harm the relationship and diminish the feeling of security for the other participant ➤ Obstacle when trying to build <i>confianza</i>

4.3.4. The Relationship between the Three Main Concepts

As a conclusion one can say that one critical success factor in Mexican business context is the ability to reach *confianza* in a relationship. In order to do so, one actually needs the knowledge of both *simpatía* and *respeto*. Building *confianza* in a relationship is seen as a negotiation process, which aims in general to obtain a more equal and more trustful basis for the relationship. As illustrated in Figure 4, this relational playground could be described as a hierarchical triangle where in the beginning one has a large power

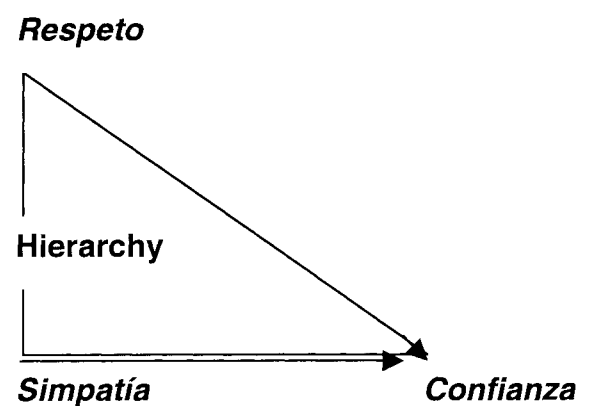


FIGURE 4. Mexican value orientation.

distance and therefore one uses both aspects of *respeto*: the politeness strategy of marking distance and the other-oriented face-saving strategy. In addition, from the start there is a need to show *simpatía* towards the other. With time, the power distance is diminished and the need to use *respeto* to mark the power distance diminishes correspondingly. During the process, the signs of showing *respeto* as power distance become fewer: addressing changes from *Usted* to *tú*, greeting changes from shaking hands to *abrazos*, hugs. In addition, the communication style changes: it allows more direct speaking and more open discussion in general, such as sharing information on the competitor more easily.

In addition, it is possible to define three specific objectives for building *confianza*. They are as follows:

- 1) To get to know more about the person than just work-related issues. For example, one knows another's history, experiences, interests, etc. This gives security and connectedness to the relationship (i.e. *simpatía*).
- 2) To get to know the each other's styles of communication through small talk and other conversation, and to create and establish common norms of communication where both are able to interpret the messages in the same way. One interviewee noted that with his Finnish boss they had even verbally defined the rules of their communication.
- 3) To create such a trust that both will take care of each other's face in interaction (i.e. *respeto* as a an other-oriented face-saving strategy).

Table 5 shows the aspects of *confianza* in the form of SWOT as explained in the analysis chapter.

TABLE 5: SWOT of *Confianza* in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding that reaching <i>confianza</i> in interpersonal relations is a requisite for efficient and successful work in Mexico - Seeing that reaching <i>confianza</i> is a process - Showing interest in learning and using Spanish and learning and knowing about Mexico as a country, its culture, people, food, music, etc. - Ability to learn what others' interests are - Neither topics nor places to meet restricted to the work place - Awareness of hierarchy and ability to show <i>respeto</i> accordingly - Ability and motivation to show acceptance and liking - Sensitivity to observe others' communication style and knowledge to interpret it - Ability to adapt to a certain extent to the communication of the other 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough attention, time or interest given to relationships - Assumption that written or oral agreements are enough for good and successful co-operation - Reserved behaviour - Concentration only on work-related issues - Lack of interest shown towards the others - Strong distinction between work and free time and free time not spent with people at work - Not conscious of one's own communication and how it can be interpreted by others, which can lead to e.g. involvement in face-threatening situations - Not enough tools to observe or interpret the communication of others
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Once having gained <i>confianza</i>, the formal marks of a large power distance can be forgotten ➤ With <i>confianza</i> one is considered as a friend and also treated as one ➤ With <i>confianza</i> one belongs to the in-group and therefore gets such things as important information, long-term deals (buyer-seller), and voluntary help (working mates) more easily. 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not reaching <i>confianza</i> might mean that the person will be not trusted and therefore co-operation is not easily established ➤ At work place one does not get help or necessary information easily because one is experienced as threatening ➤ Good business deals may be lost

4.4. Finnish Value Orientation

Looking at interpersonal communication between Finns and Mexicans, one could identify three concepts that seem to be important Finnish characteristics and have an affect on communication situations and interpretations that Finns and Mexican make on each other. These three key concepts are honesty, *sisu* and privacy. They will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.4.1. Honesty as a Principal Value

Finnish respondents agreed that the most important and the best quality of Finnish national character is honesty. It was discussed or at least mentioned in all Finnish interviews both in a specific Mexican context and at the general level, as in the following example:

"Suomi on pieni kansakunta siellä ja pirun rehellinen, kyllähän se on niinku yksi: rehellisyys ja luotettavuus on niitä vahvuuksia mitä meillä on, tärkeimpiä vahvuuksia mitä meillä on. Ja niillä pärjää niinku aika pitkälle kumminkin, vaikka ei oo sen ihmeellisempiä juttuja." (F2_18)

Finland is a small nation and damned honest, certainly it is the one...honesty and credibility are those strengths that we have, the most important strengths that we have. And one can get quite far with them, even though they aren't that out of the ordinary.

The majority of Mexicans also mentioned this. Hence, this research supported the results of earlier research that was presented in the theoretical part of this study. However, many times they also referred to some aspects of Finnish honesty in connection with a case in which it was perhaps not applicable as such to a Mexican environment. Also, some Finns themselves pondered the extent to which honesty should be considered a worthy trait.

"Niin, ja onko se etes hyvä se joku meikälainen perusrehellisyys, me ei olla vaan kerta kaikkiaan oltu, kansakuntana oltu sellasissa asioissa, jotta me voitaisiin sanoa, että onks tää meidän perusluterilainen rehellisyyskäsitös oikea, joka meidän pitäis viedä maailmalle. Mä luulen, että ei, ei kerta kaikkiaan, sitä me ei voida viedä." (F6_16)

Well, and is that basic honesty even such a good thing. We as a nation have never been in situations where we could say if our basic Lutheran concept of honesty as such is what we should export to the world. I think that we just cannot export it.

Therefore, the concept of honesty will be examined more thoroughly here: what kind of features does Finnish honesty seems to have? How it can be applied in a Mexican business environment?

Honesty is based on the concept of truth. The Finnish-English dictionary (2000) gives many meanings to the word *rehellinen*. In addition to “honest”, it can also be translated as sincere, straightforward, frank, or fair. Mainly these seem to have different connotation to Finns and Mexicans. For Finns, honesty seems to contain aspects such as being able to rely on what is said and taking responsibility for what is agreed upon, and it can also be characterised with a direct communication style. In short, when something is said, it is meant and put into practice. When doing so, one is considered a good worker and a good fellow from the Finnish point of view. As already discussed above, Mexicans, for their part, use words also as a well-meaning gesture, to show kindness and *simpatía*. Sometimes these complement each other well, sometimes it seems that they cause misinterpretation of the nature what has been said and meant.

Honesty and Reliability

The situation that was most frequently mentioned by both Mexicans and Finns concerned task-oriented discussions at work that the Finns interpreted as promises and the Mexicans considered introductory discussion. All the Finns except one who works as a consultant discuss how accomplishing anything lasts "kummallisen kauan" (F1_14); strangely long, and how as the work proceeds for some time it then needs to be kicked again, "potkaista" (F2_19). From a Mexican point of view, it is expressed as follows:

"Al mexicano a adaptarse a un finlandés es entender que cuando se dicen la primera vez, ya se dijeron... otra cosa, el sentido de responsabilidad que eso mismo carga." (M7_10)

For a Mexican to adapt to a Finn it means to understand that when you say something for the first time, you are already saying something else, the meaning of the responsibility that this conveys.

Common understanding of responsibility seems to be one of the key questions in successful and efficient communication. The majority of Finns and Mexicans commented that task completion needs to be monitored if one wants results on time. There was also some advice given on how to manage this different concept of responsibility in a way that would enable work to be successfully completed. One Mexican gives concrete examples of how this is going for him:

- Como recombinación, si pides algo para una fecha, sabes que no te van a entregar y eso nos conocemos aquí en México, entonces, tomas ciertas medidas para saber medir el tiempo en el que se va a dar este resultado... yo personalmente cuando trato con mexicanos, le doy un rango en las entregas en los objetivos que les pido. ... un plazo de tiempo más... yo presiono a una fecha sabiendo que lo van a entregar la otra aunque la verdadera fecha es en final.
- Entonces, tu das por ejemplo la mitad del mes aunque tu piensas que lo vas a tener al final del mes
- Así es. Esa es buena estrategia para empezar a educar la gente con la que se trata. Como primera vez. Después se puede platicar más y se podrá ajustar estos tiempos, pero eso es algo muy típico de la gente mexicana. (M7_11)
- As a summary: if you ask someone for a certain date, you know that they are not going to deliver it then and this is what we know in Mexico. Therefore, you use some methods in order to estimate the time needed to get results on time ... me personally when I work with Mexicans, I'll give them a range of deadlines on those objectives that I ask. ... a little bit more time, and then I am pressing them to a certain date knowing that they'll deliver it at a later date, even though the real deadline is in the end.
- In other words, you tell them for example the middle of month even though you think that you'll get it at the end of the month.
- Exactly. This is good strategy to start educating people with whom one works. As for the first time. After that one can talk more and adapt the times but this is something very typically Mexican.

In addition to how much value one gives to the words, there are other factors affecting the concept of responsibility, namely, what kind of power structures are seen in the organisation and hence, how independent one is able or is allowed to work. It seems that these kind factors are crucial when talking about working methods and their success. In a Mexican environment the boss is traditionally the one who is has responsibility and therefore he needs to be updated all the time on the completion of different tasks, which in turn, does not leave very much room for independence. Both these aspects are examined later in this report.

Reliability is also closely connected with the question of how much one can trust people. Both Finnish and Mexican interviewees mentioned occasions on which Finns seem to be too naive or trusted others too easily. Again, it seems difficult for Finns to realise that they should not blindly place trust in others, but rather that they should first look for *claves sociales*, "social clues", as one Mexican puts it:

"Entonces, por medio de que en Finlandia la gente tiene el mismo acceso a la educación y todo y aquí como que dices: es que importa mucho la escuela de la que viene, como que no lo entienden. O mira, no habla muy bien español, o sea, concepto tal vez magno. O no se viste tanto o que a un mexicano le dan muchas claves para decir que tipo de persona es y que tanto tiene a nivel educativo para darle este puesto. Y a un finlandés, son tan democráticos, son... todo es tan parejo que les cuesta mucho trabajo distinguir una persona de una clase social o un nivel cultural diferente. Creo que después de un tiempo lo captan pero les cuesta trabajo... para ciertas decisiones o para cuanto pudo confiar en esta gente o en situaciones de negocios: No crean cierta distancia

con la gente que tienen que crear distancia. Hay muchos juegos de relación que los finlandeses no saben que existen, no caben en su mente que existen tan fuerte como realmente existen... a mí lo que me pasó con los finlandeses es que me da miedo que alguien les tome el pelo." (M3_19-20)

In general in Finland people have the same opportunities for education and all and here you say: it is important what school a person comes from, in a way they do not understand. Or, look, s/he does not speak Spanish very well, magno concepts... Or s/he does not dress up. For a Mexican there are a lot of signs that tell what kind of person s/he is and what kind of educational level s/he has, if it is possible to give him or her this position. And for a Finn, they are so democratic... everything is so even that it is difficult for them to identify a person from a different social class or cultural level. I think then that after some time they get it, but it takes work... For certain decisions or when I can trust on people in a business situation. They do not create a certain distance with the people with whom they should create distance. There are a lot of relational games that Finns do not know exist, they cannot understand that they exist as strongly as they really do... Where the Finns are concerned, I am afraid that someone will cheat them.

In addition to an unfamiliar hierarchical structure and social clues, one explanation could be the Mexican tendency to try to impress others by telling stories about themselves, about their educational background, or about famous ancestors, etc.

"Este... Yo pienso que la gente aquí en la ciudad de México por la cuestión de que la ciudad es muy grande y se vuelve muy impersonal, entonces, en alguna forma en una forma la gente trata de sobresalir y a veces mucha gente dice cosas que no son ciertas que obviamente no son ciertas. Entonces, como que todo el mundo – no todo el mundo, perdón – pero mucha gente trata de exaltarse, o de exaltar su condición, sí. Y después ya te enteras que no ya... que no está la cosa." (M2_13)

I think that people here in Mexico City, because of the fact that the city is so huge and therefore very impersonal, for this reason, people want to stand out and sometimes many people say things that are not true, that are obviously not true. In this way everybody—not everybody, excuse me—but many people want to stand out. And afterwards it appears that it is not... not that way.

In other words, a Mexican might construct his/her reality anew by using these kinds of narratives. A Finn, then, without having enough tools to interpret what could be true or the ability to see other social clues in behaviour and in appearance, encounters difficulties in estimating what kind of person the Mexican really is. However, it seems that many Finnish interviewees had already noticed that they should take their time in finding out what a Mexican is really like. When Finns talk about this, they give another explanation of why these kind of narratives are used:

"Ylemmän tason ihmisissä on taas se, kun on ulkomaalaisten kans vastatusten, niin he yrittää tehdä hirveen hyvän vaikutuksen, kun heillä on kuitenkin se tietty alemmuudentunne siellä pohjalla. eli ne yrittää olla parempia kuin onkaan. Puhutaan, etä on tätä ja tätä ja on käyty näitä ja näitä kouluja -- ja sitten kuulee tuttavien kautta ihan eri version asioista. Tää on hirveen tyypillistä täällä, semmonen tietyn vaikutuksen tekeminen." (F4_6)

People from the higher class, when they are with foreigners, they try to give a good impression, because they have that certain underlying feeling of inferiority and therefore they try to appear better than they are. They say they have this and that and they've gone to this school and that one—and then you hear a totally different version from your friends. This is very typical here, to make a certain impression.

One aspect to think about is also how Finns and Mexicans use words.

"Tal vez en finlandés desde el punto de vista de recibir información del mexicano debe de tener cuidado, verdad. Porque, pues, el mexicano ser un poco... más abierto, digamos así o diferente en su comunicación, puede ser dado un poco más a exagerar a veces. Entonces, hay que tener cuidado. -- Entonces, cuando yo hablo en este caso con el director y le digo, esta es una situación grave, él sabe que es grave que no estoy jugando, verdad. Pero muchas veces llega gente que dicen: "ay, este es gravísimo" cuando realmente no es tan tan tan especial. Entonces, desde un punto de vista como finlandés debe de manejar ciertas reservas y pedir más información cuando el mexicano haga uso de los adjetivos. Pedir un poco más información: a ver, que significa esto?" (M6_12)

Maybe from this point of view Finn has to be cautious when receiving information from a Mexican. Because being more open, so to speak, or different in his communication, he can exaggerate a little bit sometimes. That's why one has to take care -- When I talk in this case with the director and I say this situation is serious, he knows that it is serious and I am not joking. But many times people say "oh, this is very, very serious" when in reality it is not so so so serious. From the Finnish point of view one has to have some reservation and ask for more information when a Mexican uses adjectives. Ask for more information: let's see, what does this mean?

A few Finns also mentioned that one has to take precautions of what is said in the news or in the newspapers. In Finland, people have learnt to believe that the information they receive through different communication media is actually true. However, in Mexico it is not so. A lot of background information is needed in order to put the information and news into the right context.

"Se on yks näitä ongelmia mitä on koko maassa, ihan tässä bisneselämässä ja politiikassa, että puhuu niistä asioita, mitkä on huonosti, niinkuin ne on. Se on niille niinku hirveen vaikea asia ja ne kaunistelee kaikki eikä ne mielellään niinku puhu niistä. Niinku työasioissakin vaikka kuinka joku asia olisi pielessä niin siitä ei puhuta, puhutaan vaan siitä, mikä on hyvin.... Tällöinen ongelma, mikä on monilla kansainvälisillä firmoilla on justinsa tää: tehä ennusteita. Sieltä se paistaa läpi, tää maan negatiivisen tilanteen aliarvioiminen. Puhutaan hirveästi siitä hyvästä ja korostetaan sitä hyvää, mutta ne huonot numerot, niitä ei ilmaista ollenkaan. Sillon moni tietysti, jos luottaa siihen eikä tunne sitä systeemiä, uskoo, että se kuva on vaan se, mikä annetaan siitä. Kun sen taustalla on se toinen puoli, mistä kokonaan ei puhuta tai sitten jos puhutaan niin hyvin pienillä teksteillä." (M4_21)

It is one of those nation-wide problems, in business life and in politics, that people have a problem with talking straight about negative issues. It is extremely difficult for them and they embellish everything and don't even want to talk about them. Even at work, no matter how poorly something is going, they don't mention it, they only talk about what is going well.... The problem that many international companies have is this: to make predictions. This really illustrates the underestimation of the negative situation in this country: one talks a lot of what is good and it is emphasised, but the bad numbers are not expressed. Then of course many people, if they believe the good talk and do not know the system, believe that this is the whole picture even though there is another side which is not talked about or if so, in very small letters.

Beside the news, background information is also essential when looking for services both for oneself and for work e.g. in the form of subcontracting. The fact that someone has a company specialising in something does not necessarily mean that he or she can really do it.

"Siihen törmää, jos on auto rikki tai tarvii jotakin huoltoapua niin joka nurkalla on *especialista* ja kaikki on niin *spesialistia* ja osaa hommansa ja siinä on sitte vaikea... Nyt kun mä muutin tänne, ja jos tarvii hakia jotain korjaamoapua, niin on tosi vaikea lähteä *ettimään* jos ei tiiä, eikä oo kettään keltä kysyä, että mihin uskaltaa viiä. Sitä on jotenkin Suomessa ja Euroopassa tottunu siihen, että jos on joku *especialista* niin se kans on ja sillä hoituu homma, mutta se ei onnistu täällä. (F7_6)

This is what you run in to if your car breaks down or if you need some service for your car, on every corner, there is an *especialista* and all are such specialists and know what they are doing and then it is difficult... Now when I've moved here, if I need something done at the repair shop, it's very difficult to start looking for it because you don't know where you dare to bring your car and you don't have anyone to ask. In Finland and Europe you're somehow used to assuming that if somebody is a specialist, he really is and he can get the job done but it does not apply here.

Similar experiences are reported many times in the diary: results are not at all what was originally agreed upon. One designer brings pants, shorts and skirts to try on that lack zippers so that they cannot even be tried on. In a camera repair shop, instead of repairing the camera, one functioning part is removed and maybe used elsewhere. This is very different from the Finnish point of view:

"Mun mielestä meillä on sellanen ominaisuus, kansallinen ominaisuus, jota ei etes riittävästi tiedosteta maailmalla: me tehdään hyvin harvoin sellaista, mistä asiakas voi todella kärsiä. Elikkä jos asiakas on ostamassa jotain, se ei tiedä, mitä ostaa, niin jos se menee italialaiselta kysymään, niin se lataa sinne kaikki, mitä se tietää, mitä sillä on repertuaarissa. Suomalaiselle on kohtalaisen hyvä jopa asiakkaan näkövinkkelistä tapahtuva itsekontrolli, että sille ei myydä sellasta, josta tiedetään, että se ei sitä tarvitse tai se kerta kaikkiaan ostaa liikaa tai jotain muuta. Sen viestiminen on hirvittävän vaikeeta, mutta mitä enemmän me ollaan tekemisissä täkäläisten kanssa, niin sen enemmän ne alkaa sen käytännön kautta havaita -- meidän luterilainen etiikka pakottaa meidät sellaseen vastuullisuuteen, joka ottaa myöskin asiakkaan huomioon vaikkei se asiakas etes tiedä sitä." (F6_11)

I think we have a national characteristic that is not sufficiently known abroad: we very seldom do anything that would truly make the customer suffer. In other words, if the customer is buying something and does not know what to buy, if s/he asks an Italian, he will tell everything he has. Finns have relatively good self-control even from the customer's perspective, that s/he is not sold something that you know s/he does not need or that s/he buys too much or something. This is extremely difficult to get across but the more we are with the locals, the more they notice it in practice -- our Lutheran ethic compels us to have a sense of responsibility that takes also the customer into account even though the customer does not realise it.

The question follows: when these two seemingly quite contradictory views come together in working life, how can one avoid the situations in which reliability, which was previously taken for granted, is entirely lacking?

"Opin, että paras tapa etsiä kontakteja on kääntyä jonkun samantyyppisen firman puoleen ja kysellä mitä alihankkijoita he käyttävät ja millaisia kokemuksia heillä mistäkin firmasta on. Ihmiset suosittelevat mielellään joitakin tuttujaan, mutta kokemuksen kautta opin sen, että tuttu ei takaa minkäänlaista laatua. Yksi mahdollisuus on kilpailuttaa useampia firmoja yhtä aikaa samalla tehtävällä. Tämän neuvon kuulin harjoittelun loppupuolella, mutta en ehtinyt toteuttaa sitä itse käytännössä. Tehtävän pitää olla tietysti tarpeeksi houkutteleva, jotta mahdollisimman moni osallistuu tosissaan. Kaikki kilpailuun osallistujat kutsutaan paikalle yhtä aikaa ja kaikille annetaan samat ohjeet. Aikataulu ongelma ohittuu kilpailulla: ne firmat, jotka tuovat työnsä ajoissa, pääsevät jatkoon." (dia_rap)

I learned that the best way to seek contacts was to ask a similar company what subcontractors they use for and what kinds of experiences they have with each one. People readily recommend their friends but experience taught me that being a friend does not guarantee any kind of quality. One possibility is to make companies compete in the same tasks simultaneously. I heard this advice at the end of my internship so I never had time to try it out in practice. The task should be interesting enough that as many subcontractors as possible participate seriously. The participants all come in at the same time and are given the same instructions. Scheduling problems are solved with the competition: only the companies that bring their proposal in time can continue.

Once a deal is made, one is advised as follows:

"Just mitä näitten työntekijöitten kans tulee, se on ollut se, että mm. tää tilintarkastaja ja yks lakimies sanoo ihan samaa, että teidän täytyy olla tiukempia, täytyy olla tiukkoja eikä luottaa ja pitää hirvee kontrolli... se on sitä raporttipohjaa, just kuskit ja myyjät, mitkä tekee työnsä tuolla ulkopuolella ja siitä päivittäin sitten tedään iltapäivällä raportti ja siitä pitää sitten ottaa niinkun vastaan ja tiukata ja kysyä." (F4_2-3)

As far as the workers are concerned the workers, it is like the auditor and one lawyer says the same that you have to be stricter and not to trust and have strict control... it is reporting, with the drivers and selling personnel in particular that work outside the office. Every day they write a report in the afternoon and that's what we have to take and check and ask about.

In general, it is recommended that all the tasks will be followed throughout the process. However, differences are also mentioned according to the relationship: once people have worked together for a longer period of time and have reached *confianza* - which in this research has been defined as including the common rules for communication - one does not have to be checking so often. Actually, many Mexicans mentioned they have learnt to like the Finnish commitment to work. However, it is important to note that by "commitment," the person also means commitment to the people with one works.

"Tienes que modificar cosas tuyas pero ellos tienen que modificar cosas tuyas pero finalmente el hecho la honestidad, lo directo, el compromiso que tienen con ... la mayoría porque también hay excepciones y hay muchas excepciones, pero la mayoría de la gente que... te compromete muchísimo con la empresa y con la gente que trabajas. Está bien y muy, muy padre en este sentido." (M3_17)

You have to modify your ideas and they have to modify theirs but finally the fact of honesty, the directness and the commitment that they have with... the majority because also there are exceptions and many exceptions but the majority of people are very committed to the company and to the people with whom they work. This is good and very, very nice in this sense.

Honesty and Directness

One factor of Finnish honesty seems to be the direct communication style. In the interviews, the following occasions were mentioned in which the communication style notably differs from the communication style used in Mexico: giving orders and feedback, taking care of conflicts and refusing tasks or meetings.

There are two examples about how to give orders: one written by a Mexican and one written by a Finn about what a Mexican commented:

1)

"Työkaverin mielestä suomalaiset on hyvin kärkeviä - täällä täytyy osata esittää asiat eri tavalla, erityisesti, kun kyseessä on nainen, joka "käskee" miehiä, on osattava aina muotoilla sanansa oikein: "Te pido un favor..." (pyydän sulta palvelusta...), "me puedes..."(voitko...) jne." (dia_11.4)

According to my workmate, Finns are very commanding - here you have to know how to present matters in a different way, specially, when it is a woman who "gives orders" to men, you have to be able to modify the words in a right way: "May I ask a favour...", "Could you..." etc.

2)

"Yo creo que tiene, o sea, es muy importante ser claro y directo, es bueno, y de la misma forma, yo creo, que el ser flexible como finlandés al ser claro y directo, hay que... tienen que cuidar la forma como lo hace. Eso es muy importante. No es lo mismo decir: te vengo a vender esto, ya firmamos aquí? Fírmale. Es decir: Oye, mira, vamos a... que te parece lo que ha estado pasando en tu familia, como está, de que he notado eso y hacemos una platica... Se tiene que ser flexible por decir: oye, échamela, ayúdame allí. No se note que me ayudes, pero ayúdame... necesito saber de veras si me podrías." (M6_14-15)

I think that it is very important to be clear and direct, it is good and in the same way, I think, that it's important to be flexible as it is to be clear and direct for Finns, one has to... one has to be aware of the way one does it. This is very important. It is not the same to say: I came to sell this to you, let's sign. Sign here. It is to say: Look, let's see, let's... what do you think about your family, how are they, I have noticed this...One has to be flexible to say: look, help me here. Nobody notices that you help me, but help me... I need to know if you really could...

The mere form of these two excerpts shows different level of directness. The first comment is straightforward: the situation is like this; another comment, however, may express the matter indirectly, but one can read the message between the lines: it is very important to be flexible in orders and otherwise also. How this message is modified is a good example of the method frequently used in the Mexican context according to the interviews: one gives recognition and value to the other point of view (like here: it is very important to be clear and direct...), and only

then presents his point of view, in this case, as complementing the other one. In this case, the interviewee took this topic into discussion various times with various examples of this kind. One could make a conclusion that he actually wants to make it clear that directness does not work except in explicitly defined situations. This is in accordance with the other interviews too.

The Finnish experience of this kind of indirectness could be the following:

"Tottakai tykkään siitä, että asiakas sanoo suoraan vasten naamaa, että mikä on homman nimi sen sijaan, että yritetään kierrellä ja kaarrella ja yrittää sieltä sitten keksiä, että mikäs tässä nyt sitten olikaan pielessä. .. turhauttavaa. Eli se on ehdottomasti epämiellyttävimpiä kokemuksia, mitä tulee tosiaan, että just tää... Se, että jos asiakas sanois kertakaikkiaan suoraan, että sun paperis ei kertakaikkiaan tähän homman kelpaa, mulla on parempi tarjous tuolta - okei, se on fair enough. Se on sillä selvä, tiedetään, että tällä kertaa ei sitte kauppa käy... jätetään se tonne, pannaan ö-mappiin ja alotetaan jotain muuta. Mutta se, että pitää niinku olla koko ajan ja yrittää hakea sitä ihmistä uudestaan ja uudestaan... se on erittäin turhauttavaa. Tuntuu, että tässä junnataan koko ajan paikallan eikä mihinkään päästä ja aikaa vaan kuluu ja tupakkia palaa." (F1_11)

Of course I like the fact that the customer says straight to my face what the name of the game is instead of trying to beat around the bush and then one has to try to figure out there, what was actually the problem... frustrating. This is certainly one of the most unpleasant experiences, this... If the customer would say straight away that your papers are not good enough for this, I have a better offer from elsewhere- ok, it is fair enough. It would be clear; one knows that this time we didn't strike a deal... let's set this aside and put it in the circular file and start something else. But that one has to be there all the time and try to look for this person again and again... it is very frustrating. One feels like they are getting nowhere and time keeps ticking away and one cigarette follows another.

Here, one could conclude that the Finn clearly did not understand the indirect message of the customer. However, it seems that sometimes such diligent follow-up will work out and result in a business deal, since he continues later that this kind of game seems to be one way to do business. It seems that Finnish *sisu* sometimes gives good results; this Finnish characteristic will be explored later in more detail.

On the other hand, some Mexicans noted that they have learnt to like the straightforwardness in certain cases such as defining or refusing tasks. One Mexican describes it as follows:

- Y con los fineses es tan directo a la conversación, vas a tener unas respuestas muy rápidamente entonces no tienes que cerrar la conversación. Esta parte me gusta: mira, no, si, (al mismo tiempo está tocando la mesa como especificando las cosas en la lista) déjame ver, entonces, algo que también me gusta mucho es la honestidad de que: no puedo, no quiero, también me han dicho en esta empresa, o sea: no puedo, no quiero, no... Por que, porque sabes a que tenerte, entonces, si yo ya sé que no voy a

- poder, creo que he aprendido a mejor le voy a decirle no desde el principio en vez de andármela complicando y saber que casi a noventa por ciento voy a fallar.
- Entonces, anteriormente ¿qué habrías dicho?
 - Déjame chequearlo, déjame intentarlo... uno por la relación, otro porque realmente lo vas a intentar pero aunque objetivamente sepas que está muy difícil que sale la cosa. Y ahorita es: sabes que... ahorita me trabajo con los folletos, hay una persona que se está retrasando, lleva mucho tiempo haciendo, viendo unas cosas, unas traducciones, le mando: “güey: Si tu no me las entregas para esta fecha, no voy a poder entregar” atentamente, y eso es algo mas finlandés. En vez de yo me le estar persiguiendo... ya pase la responsabilidad con quien la responsabilidad lo tiene. Que es algo muy finlandés y algo muy positivo. Yo ya cumplí! Ahora si no sales, es su responsabilidad.
 - ¿Y eso funciona también?
 - Si, a mí me está funcionando y a mí me están trabajando la gente latina. (M3_12)
 - With the Finns the discussion is so direct, you'll have answers so fast that you do not have to close the discussion. This part I like: look, no, yes, (at the same time knocks on the table as if specifying the matters in the list) let me see, in other words, something that I like a lot, it is the honesty to say: I cannot, I would not like to. This has been said to me in this company: I cannot, I do not want to, no... Why, because you know that you do not expect too much, if I already know that I cannot do it, I have learnt that it is better to say that in the beginning instead of complicating the matter knowing that I have almost a 90% chance of failing.
 - What would have you said earlier then?
 - Let me think, let me try. On the one hand for the relation, on the other hand because really I'll try even though I objectively know that it will be very difficult to succeed. And now it is: you know, now I am working with the brochures, there is one person who is late, it takes a lot of time making them, looking at some things, some translations, I'll send him: man, if you do not deliver them by this deadline, I cannot get them done". Attention! This is something more Finnish. Instead that I would be checking on him... I just passed the responsibility to one who really has it. Which is very Finnish and very positive. I did my part already! And if it does not work any more, it is his responsibility.
 - And this works?
 - Yes, it works for me and the people who work for me are Latinos.

In this connection one should note that this person had already been working with Finns for a longer time and in earlier jobs and in her personal life there have also been a lot of contacts with other non-Mexican nationalities. Hence, one should be conscious of the role of previous multicultural experience at the interpersonal level. Thus, it is essential to note that with time some Finnish characteristics might be successful in a Mexican business context as well.

Finnish honesty is seen also in the feedback they give. As the theoretical part shows, and as in general is confirmed in these results, public criticism seems not to be very appropriate in the Mexican business context because it might be experienced as face-threatening.

"Suomessahan voi sanoa kaverille hyvinkin suoraan: olipas typerästi tehty tms. Täälläkin voi, mutta ajaudut odottamattomiin lopputuloksiin: kohteliaisuus on kuitenkin aina tärkeätä." (F3_15)

In Finland you can tell your friend things pretty straight, "That was pretty dumb." Here you can too, but you will end up with unexpected results: politeness is always important.

It seems that in these cases there were several pieces of advice to a Mexican coming to work with Finns which contained the following idea:

"Si en algún momento dado le dice algo muy directamente que no lo tome mal." (M2_10)
If at a given moment they say something very directly, don't take it as something bad.

However, there were a few examples presented by both Finns and Mexicans when it was done successfully. Among these examples there were certain common features to be seen.

- Eli esim. kritiikissä on sellanen, jossa joutuu tosissaan miettimään. Itse asiassa mää oon siinäkin tehny sellasen päätöksen, että mää jopa silläkin riskillä, että tuota loukkaan, että kun mä tiedän asian, mä esitän sitä kritiikkiä. Mutta pitää olla äärettömän tarkka, että jos menee huitasemaan jotain. Siinä suhteet tää tällanen alemmuuden kompleksi tai jokin muu on, niin sitä ei hetkessä unohdeta.
- Millä tavalla sitä ei sitten ei huitasemalla tehdä?
- Siis esim. jos sanotaan, että hyvä esimerkki, mitä me ollaan pudottu puusta niin vähän aikaa sitten, että me tiedetään, mitä metsäteollisuus ja metsätalous on. Ja Meksikossa ei saada mitään muuta aikaseksi kuin että metsät häviää jatkuvasti. Ja kuitenkin he sanoo, että Suomi on ollut heitä täällä 20 vuotta auttamassa. Mää kysyin heiltä, että sanos, missä kohtaa me ollaan autettu. Että kaks minuuttia, joka jumalan minuutti kaks hehtaaria kuolee mettää eikä tuu ikäänä takasi, että sano mulle missä me ollaan autettu, me ei kerta kaikkiaan ole osattu teitä auttaa. Ja siitä tulee useimmiten, että olepas sinä veijari, jonka jälkeen voi sanoa, että kaikkein pahin, mitä me tehdään on, että me lähdetään tukemaan Meksikon järjestelmää, jossa ikään kuin 20 vuotta mitä me on oltu täällä niin suomalaiset auttaa lakasemaan sitä ongelmaa lattian alle, että hävettää olla sellanen suomalainen!
- Tavallaan sen ottaa sen ongelman itelle.
- Niin, mutta mää tiedän siitä niin paljon, että mää tosissaan tiedän, mistä mää puhun. Niin tällasella tasolla mun tuotemerkkini on, että minä en sitä piilota minnekään. Mutta noin yleensä ottaen täytyy olla huomattavan herkkä noin kritiikissä kaiken kaikkiaan. (F6_15)
- With critique, for example, you really have to think it through. Actually in that matter too I have made the decision that even with at the risk that I'll offend someone when I know the matter, I criticise. But one has to be extremely careful, that one is not just blurting out whatever. In this aspect they have such an inferiority complex or something similar that it will not be forgotten easily.
- How do you do it carefully?
- For example one good example would be, that we have fallen out of the tree so short time ago that we know what forest industry and forest economy are. And in Mexico we have not achieved anything else except that the forests are disappearing all the time. And still they say that Finland has been helping them here for 20 years. I ask them to point out where we have helped them. That every two seconds two hectares of forest dies and never won't ever come back, say me where we have helped you, we have not been able to help you. After that mainly comes, aren't you clever... after which I can say that the worst we can do is that we start to support Mexican system

where all the 20 years that we have been here, we have actually helped sweep problems under the carpet. I am ashamed to be such a Finn!

- In a way you take the problem on yourself.
- Yes, but I know so much about it, that I really know what I am talking about. In this level my trademark is that I do not hide my knowledge. But in general one has to be especially sensitive with critique.

This first example shows two of the common features. A very important one is that the person criticising really knows what he or she is talking about and can prove it with tables, numbers, product samples, etc. Another feature is that actually the person criticises himself or his fellow countrymen and by doing this he is criticising only indirectly his Mexican counterparts. Other examples of successfully giving direct and "honest" feedback were from situations where one is offering a service and another is receiving it:

"Mutta sitten tullaan aivan toiseen asiaan, että jos sää meet hotelliin ja sulle ei ole huonetta siellä (vaikka oot tilannut) jos et sä sitä kritisoi niin että talo tärisee, niin ei sulle sitä huonetta löydykään. - niillä ihmisiä on kuitenkin oma työnsä - että jos se asiakas rupee huutaan niin se tietyssä mielessä myös oikeuttaa heille myös niinku tämmösestä ohjekirjasta poikkeamisen tai sen, että ne menee tosiaan hakemaan pomon, että hei tuu äkkiä auttamaan ja ne pystyy sillä työntämään vastuun itseltään pois." (F3_14-15)

Then we come totally to another matter, that if you go to a hotel and they don't have a room for you (even though you have reserved one) if you do not complain till the house shakes, they won't find the room for you - all these people have their own work - that if the customer starts to shout in some sense it allows them to make an exception from the rules or they really go to search for the boss to come help and in this way they manage to give the responsibility to someone else.

Here it seems that the difference is that the other is a kind of faceless representative whose main task is to offer good service. "Face" in this case could be understood as the image of the hotel or some other company or organisation. This also shows the hierarchy and the expectation of who makes even the smallest decisions in the case of change.

In the situations described above and in other similar situations, the important question seems to be how to manage the situation without threatening either the face of the other person or one's own face. This is when the phenomena of so-called white lies comes into the picture. The following excerpt describes the two most commonly mentioned ways of face-saving, namely, white lies and the explanation "*lo que paso es que...*" ("what really happened...") mentioned in the

majority of Finnish interviews, and one common way to avoid explicit offence.

Interviewees also discussed the topic of how Finns could interpret this.

- Mun mielestä niinku rehellisyys meidän kannalta... ei ole mitään syytä lähteä muuttamaan niitä arvoja, joiden mukaan me toimitaan. Se mikä täytyy nyt tietysti muistaa, että niinku tällaiset valkoiset valheet, joilla pelastetaan ihmisten kasvoja ja muuta, toiselta puolelta ei ole mitenkään epätavallista. Niinkuin X justiin sanoi, että jos ei hommat oo korjaantunut, niin se on, että "lo que paso es que". Ja sen jälkeen niinku voidaan selittää ummet ja lammet siitä, että miten on. Ja minusta siihen puuttuminen on samaa kuin hakkais päätä seinään, ettei siihen kannata niinku kauheesti pillastua. Pitää olla jonkinlainen niinku talonpoikaisjärkifiltteri päässä, että kun kuulee näitä juttuja ja muuta. Ja hyvin yleistä on se, että sää yrität saada jotakin kiinni ja sihteeri sanoo hetkinen ja sitten hän ei olekaan paikalla. Tai jotain muuta, eli se kuuluu tapaan tietyissä mielessä, mutta niinku suomalainen on ylpeä rehellisyydestään ja suomalainen kattoo, että jukoliste, sehän valehteli mulle se sihteeri! Ja niinku ei täällä kukaan kiinnitä siihen mitään huomiota, kaikki tietää, mitä tapahtuu.
- Se on maassa maan tavalla, se on maan tapa toimia näin, että...
- Mun mielestä tämmostiä perin eparehellisiä ihmisiä, jotka valehtelee joka käänteessä ja joilla ei ole koskaan mitään aikomustakaan tehdä niin varmasti niitä löytyy joka maasta. Mun mielestä se ei ole mitenkään terveellinen stereotypia omaksua, että kaikki täällä vain valehtelee. Et täällä on erinäköisiä viestittämismuotoja ja osa niistä on sellaisia, jotka suomalainen tulkitsee epärehellisyydeksi.
- En oo etes kuullu sellaisesta stereotypiasta, että meksikolainen valehtelee. (naurua)
- Ei mutta siis, mun mielestä tää pointti, niinku tässä oli puhetta, että suomalainen voi tulkita sen, että se oli varmasti sillä tavalla, että se sihteeri valehteli mulle!
- Niin, mutta se ei ollut tarpeeksi tärkeä henkilö. Sehän menee vielä, että jos sihteeri sanoo, että hetkinen, sitte se tulee myöhemmin kysymään, että "a parte de quien" ja sitten kun sää sanot nimet, se sanoo hetkinen ja sitten se sanoo, että joo ei ole paikalla. Mutta että se on täällä maan tapa.
- Aivan oikein. Ja niinku siinähan nyt... sehän on vain kohteliaista: hehän antavat sinulle mahdollisuuden poistua siitä puhelimesta ilman, että tarvii sanoa, että ei hän halua keskustella teidän kanssanne. (F2 & F3_17)

- I think that the honesty from our point of view... there is no reason to start changing the values according to which we work. Still one has to remember that white lies, which are used to save the other's face and so on, are nothing uncommon on the part of Mexicans. As X just said, that if the work is not done, it is: "lo que paso es que" and after that one can talk about this, that, and the other thing about how it was. And to try and get a word in edgewise is like beating one's head against the wall, it is not worth getting upset about it. One has to have a certain kind of common sense filter when one hears these kinds of stories. It is very common that you try to get in touch with someone and the secretary says just a moment and then the person you were trying to reach is not there. Or something else, but anyhow it belongs to the normal etiquette here in someway, but a Finn who is so proud of his honesty and looks and says, darn, that secretary lied to me! And here nobody pays any attention to that, everybody knows what it means.
- That's the way that it works here, that...
- I think that completely dishonest people that lie every time they turn around and who do not have even the slightest intention of doing what they said, they are in every country. It is not a very healthy stereotype to have that here everybody just lies. Here there are just different communication methods and some of them are such that a Finn easily interprets them to be dishonest.
- I have never heard such a stereotype that Mexicans lie. (Laughs.)
- No, but the point is that in the example I mentioned, a Finn will think that that secretary totally lied to me!

- Well, but it wasn't an important enough person. Sometimes it even happens such that if the secretary says just a moment, comes back a bit later and asks who's calling, and then when you say your name, and the secretary says just a moment and then returns and says the person you are calling is not in. But this is just how it works here.
- Exactly. And in that case... it is only polite: they give you the possibility to leave the phone without having to say that s/he does not want to talk to you.

Some Mexican interviewees clearly pointed out that they have started to prefer the Finnish way of being "honest", i.e. direct explanations instead of excuses.

"Bueno, si tiene razón X en este aspecto. Definitivamente este pues, se vuelve uno más tajante en las cosas – okay, yo quiero esto. Excusas mejor no, mejor dime que se te le olvidó o que mañana lo vas a tener, pero no me digas una excusa que esto y que el otro que Juanito no me lo trajo [...] Y a la vez he aprendido a hacerlos cuando eh... me piden algo y no lo tengo al tiempo, okay, no saco excusas, simplemente les digo: sabes que no te lo tuve al tiempo, una disculpa, mañana está. Pero excusas, la verdad, no sirven, no sirven y eso es algo bueno. Im." (M2_12)

Well, X is right in this aspect. Definitely one has turned to be stricter with these things- ok, I want this. Better not give excuses, better that you say that you forgot it or that you'll bring it tomorrow but don't give me any excuses for one thing or the other and that Juanito did not bring it to me. [...] And sometimes I have learnt to do it when they ask me something and I do not have it on time, ok, I do not give excuses but rather I simply say to them: I am sorry, I did not have it in time but tomorrow they'll be. But excuses really do not serve any purpose and that is something good.

Another aspect of Finnish honesty according to these interviews is that a Finn is able to say, "It was my fault, I am sorry, but I did not do it or I could not do it." In a Mexican environment this seems to be appreciated.

As can be seen throughout this chapter, honesty is not very simple concept in this context. There are cases in which it is certainly appreciated, but on other occasions it might cause misunderstandings. Also, the interpretations that Finns make about Mexicans might be misleading when viewed only from the Finnish standpoint. Success in this regard could entail knowing the areas where Finnish honesty is considered a strength and also being aware of the differences that are caused by the necessity of face-saving and *simpatía*. This complexity is shown as a summary in Table 6. It is also important to note that working methods and communication can change when the relation develops further and that one can take an active role in creating the common rules.

TABLE 6: SWOT of honesty in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliability: what has been agreed will be realised - Understanding of the differences between the responsibility taken by Finns and that of Mexicans and therefore having the patience to monitor regularly the projects realised by Mexicans (at least in initial stages of the relationship) - Have enough knowledge of the society to be able to place people into their hierarchical level and to relate news and publications to the real situation - Understand the relative use of words and narratives - Honesty not expressed as directness when others' face is concerned - White-lies understood as relative truth 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Words by Mexicans taken as promise: the difference between word as a well-meaning gesture and as a promise is unclear - Trust people before testing them - Trust what is announced in news and publications because of the lack of relevant information on the society - Rely on literal meanings of words and narratives - Directness used in orders, feedback, conflict solution and refusals as the sign of honesty, also in long-term interpersonal relationship - Negative interpretation of white-lies and not being capable of seeing underlying meanings
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increases chances for success in personnel selection, task completion, goal definition and background evaluation for plans of action ➤ Serves as a good basis for building long-term relationships 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mexicans taken as lazy and “poor” i.e. irresponsible workers, which in turn needlessly impedes co-operation ➤ Poor choice of personnel ➤ Wrong conclusions made according to the information received ➤ Unconscious involvement in face-threatening situations

4.4.2. *Sisu* - Finnish Independent Strategy

Sisu is a characteristic that is traditionally used to describe Finns. The Finnish-English Dictionary (2000) interprets it as perseverance or stamina. This kind of strong commitment to what has been promised was seen in earlier examples concerning reliability. Finns seem to take responsibility quite easily and strive for task completion despite many obstacles that might arise during the process. Sometimes *sisu* can also be seen as stubbornness and not having much flexibility.

"La inflexibilidad es a veces que ni siquiera tienen tiempo para escuchar que tu tienes una necesidad porque ellos tienen una prioridad en su mente. Entonces, habrás si tenían un minuto pero no, la respuesta es no, en quince minutos, en veinte minutos, en treinta minutos. -- pero no llegar al punto a decir "no" con algo que tal vez te podría funcionar." (M3_15)

The inflexibility sometimes means that they do not even have time to listen to if you need something because they have a priority in their mind. Maybe you need only one minute, but no, the answer is no, in fifteen minutes, in twenty minutes, in thirty minutes. -- but not to end up saying "no" to something which might affect you.

This shows strong commitment and perseverance but also the ability to concentrate only on one thing at a time. One could point out that this kind of is necessary in Mexican working context. However, there were two examples mentioned of similar situations where this kind of stubbornness was considered a positive asset:

1)

"Se perusongelma on, että Meksikossa kukaan ei kerro mitään ennen kuin menee riittävän monen tahon ohitse. Ja kun joku kyselee multa, että mikä sun titteli on, niin mä sanon vain, että en mä tiedä, mä vain jyrään. Siis täällä on se järjestelmä, että pitää kymmenen sihteerin läpi mennä ennen kuin pääsee edes jonkun päällikön juttusille. Onko se hyvä vai huono, mut mun oppini on se, että välttämättä meidän ei kannata lähteä siihen leikkiin, jota meksikolaiset joutuu leikkimään. - - Meillä on sellanen etuoikeus, että kun me väännetään sitä tankerolla ja niin pois päin, niin kyllä se siitä sen verran pelästyy, että se saattaa laskeakin vahingossa sen päällikön juttusille, johonka se ei muuten laskisi. Siis täysin ristiriidassa oleva kokemus siihen, että pitäis ymmärtää viestinnällisiä keinoja silleen kuin mitä maassa toimitaan." (F6_10-11)

The basic problem is that in Mexico nobody tells you anything before you go through a sufficient numbers of levels. And when somebody asks me that what your title is, I just tell him or her that I don't know, I just throw my weight around. Here the system is like that you have to go through ten secretaries before you get to talk to a boss. I'm not sure whether it's good or bad, but my experience is that it is not necessary for us to begin playing the game that Mexicans have to play. - - We have such a privilege that when we butcher the language and so on, they will be frightened enough to let you talk to the boss on accident, even though normally they would not. This is totally contradictory experience with the condition that one has to understand the communication methods as they are used in the country.

2)

- Kyllä siinä on monta kertaa välikäsiä, mutta kyllä suoraankin voi ottaa yhteyttä. Ja kyllä mä olen niinku törmänny mun maanmiesten kanssa täällä semmoseen, että ei niiden puheille pääse. Mää sanon, että miksi sinne pääse ja mää soitin sinne kerran ja seuravana päivänä oli tapaaminen
- Mistä se johtu?
- Se johtu kai siitä, että ei mulla oo semmosta herranpelkoa. Jos mulla on jollekin asiaa, niin mää soitan sille ja pyydän tapaamisen, ei siinä oo sen kummempaa. (F8_15)

- Many times there are intermediators, but it is no problem to contact a person directly. And my compatriots and I have run into the attitude that you can't get a meeting with them. I say why can't you arrange a meeting, and then I call there one time and the next day I have a meeting.
- How did that come about?
- I guess it worked out because I'm not scared of the big guys. If I have someone to talk to, I just call and ask for an appointment, it's nothing that special.

According to comments like these it seems that in certain cases *sisu* can be put to use without harming relationships. In these examples one should note that the people towards whom perseverance was shown were not the ones with whom one needed to meet and create the relationship, but rather their secretaries, for example. This might explain the success of this stubbornness strategy.

However, this is only one small aspect of *sisu*. As a whole one could examine *sisu* as a Finnish independence strategy. In these interviews, this topic as such was discussed only in one interview but in almost every interview it was indirectly touched upon and examples were told concerning it. *Sisu* as a value tends to be very much connected with the topics of hierarchy and *simpatía*.

Sisu as an Independence Strategy at Work

In this context, *Sisu* seems to mean above all the ability and tendency to perform independent work. Being mainly in superior positions, Finns automatically tend to expect the same kind of behaviour of the other. However, in the Mexican work context, independence is traditionally not very much appreciated. This is commented on in various interviews and both Finns and Mexicans seek explanations for the differences from history. The Finnish viewpoint is as follows:

"Tää niinku työntekijätaso, tai sanotaan tää alhasemman... niin tuota... kun nää on täällä koko ajan kasvanu tiettyyn semmoseen niinku auktoriteetin pelkoon, että aina on ollut historiasta lähtien joku - niinku Suomessa on ollut tämmönen patruuna-aika - niin täällä se on jatkunut vielä. Niinku tää poliittinen tilanne, että tää PRI, tää puolueen hallinto, joka on kans pelolla hallinnut -- että hirveen paljon kansaa elää siinä uskomuksessa, että kaikki mikä on heidän niinku siitä kylän miljööstä ulkopuolella, just niinku ulkolaiset tai poliitikot tai tämmöset kaikki, niin ne on niinku yläpuolella. Ei siitä etes keskustellla, se on niin itsestäänselvä perusasia, että niitä täytyy kunnioittaa, haluat tai et, se on sun velvollisuus." (F4_7)

This workers level, or let's say the lower level... well... the whole time they have been brought up and taught a certain kind of fear of authority, that throughout their history there has been somebody - as in Finland the period when factory owners were almighty- it has continued here. As the political situation, this PRI, the government of the party, which has governed with fear - - that so much of the people live in the belief that everything that is outside of their village, like foreigners, politicians etc., they are above them. One does not even discuss it, it is such a self-evident fact that one has to respect it, whether you want to or not, it is your responsibility.

The Mexican viewpoint widens the picture even more:

"No es que no quiere aceptar ayuda, es que el debe poder sólo. Entonces, creo que los finlandeses por su clima, por su historia, por muchas otras cosas se creyeron total y absolutamente

autosuficientes. Por eso concepto de la familia, de amistad y de todo es muy diferente de nosotros, aún de pareja! Es muy diferente: cada uno es autosuficiente, no son, no es tanto que sean: yo dependo mucho de ti, tu dependes de mi sino somos autosuficientes. Entonces, creo que uno es que el mexicano tiene allá ser muy amable, yo té hecho la mano y no sé y el finlandés es que yo puedo sólo.” (M3_8)

It is not that he does not want to accept help; it is rather that he should be able to do it alone. Consequently, I think that Finns have grown totally and absolutely self-sufficient because of their climate, their history and many other things. That's why their concept of family, of friendship and all is so different, even their concept of what a couple is! It is very different: every one is self-sufficient, they are not, and it is not like: I depend on you, you depend on me but we are self-sufficient. I think, that the Mexican has to very friendly: I'll help you and I do not know, and the Finn is like I can do it alone.

Whatever one thinks about the correctness of this reasoning, it has apparently helped the interviewees understand the logic of the other and therefore made communication easier.

Hierarchy has already been discussed as societal structure; however, hierarchical structure is also very much present in business. Earlier the reliability at work was discussed. Here it will be discussed in connection with the hierarchical structure of Mexican business context in a sense of how much room it leaves for independence. First, the profile of the boss must be examined more closely.

Finnish comments on that were mostly as follows:

"Tässä mä oon ollu hyvin suomalainen, että mä en niinku tällaseen herranpelkoon usko ollenkaan, että yritän aina olla niinku hyvää kaveria siellä kaikkien kanssa: että me ollaan kaikki samassa tiimissä ja yhdessä tehdään tulosta jne. sillä että jos tässä kauheesti ruvetaan herrottelemaan, että herrajohtaja niin sillä ei nyt kauheesti tuloksia saavuteta." (F1_8)

In this I have been always very Finnish, that I do not believe at all in playing high and mighty, which means I always want to be like good friends with everyone: that we are on the same team and together we are getting results, etc. Because if you start to act like an overlord, all yes, Mr. Executive Director, then you won't get that great of results.

Teamwork and good, friendly relationships with workers were highlighted. In contrast, a Mexican boss was described thus:

"Meksikossahan kukaan muu ei ota vastuuta kuin päällikkö ja päällikkö ei välttämättä edes kuuntele sitä, joka varsinaisen asian tietää, vaan se päättää siitä huolimatta. Suomessa taas päällikkö on vähän aikaa päällikkö, jos se menee kävelemään expertinsä ohitte, silloin suomalaisella päälliköllä on veto-oikeus, meksikolaisella päälliköllä on jumalallinen oikeus olla viisaampi kuin muut. (F6_12)

In Mexico nobody else will take responsibility except a boss and a boss does not necessary even listen to the person who really know the matter but decides regardless. In Finland, a boss is only a boss for a short time if he walks over the opinion of the experts; then Finnish boss has the right of veto, Mexican boss has divine right to be wiser than the others.

This different division of responsibility was confirmed by Mexicans:

"El finlandés, si ya no te lo hizo esa persona, no te lo hizo, ya no tiene con quien hablar. Cada quien tiene su responsabilidad personal. Aquí todavía es: ya cuando no funciona, habla con su jefe. -- En Finlandia se me hace en vez de hablar con jefe de alguien, lo habla con la persona, lo resuelva con el mismo. Si porque no tengo respuesta, lo resuelvo, es mucho su actitud." (M3_11)

Finnish, if somebody did not do it personally, he did not do it, and you no longer have anybody with whom to talk it over. Everybody has his or her areas of personal responsibility. Here it is still: if it doesn't work, talk with his boss. -- In Finland, I feel it is like that instead of talking to boss, you talk to the person himself and solve the thing with him. Their attitude is more like: if I do not have the answer, I'll find it.

This is one key factor: in order to be able to act independently, one has to have the right to do so. In Mexican society it is not expected, let alone encouraged. This is seen also in how active a role the worker can take concerning his or her own working environment:

"Se oma-aloitteisuus siitä, että jos mulla ois tällöinen ohjelma tai tällöinen tietokone tai tällöinen printteri niin mä pystyisin tekeen tään homman paljon paremmin, siis tällöistä ei oo olemassa." (F8_16)

The initiative, that if I had this kind of programme or this kind of printer, I would be able to do this work much better, this does not exist.

The same lack of initiative is mentioned also when talking about teamwork.

"Tiimityöskentely on aika uus juttu täällä -- sen tiimin saaminen toimimaan kunnolla, se on, tasavertaisesti, niin siinä on paikallisilla vielä oppimista. -- Täällä ei olla toimittu näin flätissä organisaatiossa, että ei ollakaan käskysuhteessa: minä voin käskyttää noita ja ne tekee näin. Elikkä keskustellaan asioista ja hoidetaan ne hommat. -- Mää oon tottunut siihen, että ne hommat, mitkä mun pitää tehdä, ne on mun vastuulla ja mä teen ne. Että niinku käskyttämistä mä katson itse enemmän negatiivisena kuin positiivisena ja täällä taas tuolla käskyttämisessä ilmaistaan jotakin, että minä olen se päällikkö. -- Mutta jos ei ookaan mitään käskysuhdetta, ei voi sanoa näin, että hoidat sä tämän, vaan tuota miten tään nyt hoitais, kukahan tään vois hoitaa. Elikkä niinko heitetään palloja ilmaan, että ottakaa nyt joku kiinni." (F2_13)

Teamwork is a pretty new thing here -- in order to get a team working well, in other words, equally, locals still have lot to learn. -- Here they have not worked in such a flat organisation, where there isn't a command-obey -relation: I can order those people around and they do as I say; that we'll talk and take care of the matters. -- I am used to having certain tasks, it's up to me to do them and I do them. For me commanding is more negative than positive and here they order people around to show that I am the boss. -- But if there are no command-obey -relation, one cannot say that you'll take care of this but instead how should we take care of this, who could take care of this. It's like throwing balls into the air hoping that somebody will grab one.

Several Finns mentioned similar experiences with teamwork in Mexico. Some had come to the conclusion that they will take the time needed and set teamwork as an objective. They even used the ability to do teamwork as one recruiting principle. Others had opted for more "Mexican" working methods such as adapting their

own style to fit better to the hierarchical system. It comes out clearly that, compared to Mexicans, Finns show a great deal of independence when working in a hierarchical structure that leaves both the responsibility and the decisions to the boss. In some interviews this is clearly interpreted by Finns to be a national characteristic of Mexicans and it is easily perceived to be negative.

- Se on siis ihan jokapäiväinen kysymys, että ei niinku osata tehdä itsenäisesti päätöksiä --- X:n (suomalainen johtaja) työaika menee siinä aivan älyttömästi hukkaan, että siellä käydään kysymässä niinku aivan ihmeellisen pieniä asioita, mitä vois niinku järkevästi maalaisjärkeä käyttäen hoitaa ite. Että täällä toimistossa X:n työajasta menee varmaan ihan 70% - oonko väärässä - ihan niinku semmoseen paimentamiseen.
- Ihan paimentamiseen ja semmosten triviaalien asioiden hoitamiseen. (F7 & F8_4-5)
- It is totally an everyday occurrence, that people cannot make decisions themselves. – Tons of the (Finnish) boss' working time is wasted by people coming to ask amazingly small things, which they could take care of themselves if they only used common sense. That here in the office about 70% of the working time - am I wrong – goes into taking care of these things.
- Only to handholding and taking care of trivial matters.

Here, one can clearly note the interpretation made according to Finnish concept of responsibility and independence. In some interviews it is noted that in the long run this notion has led to an attitude of disdain towards Mexicans as careless and illogical workers. The level of independence was also one of the key issues of adaptation during the internship: when is independence necessary and when is it not? What does one have to ask and how?

"Meksikolaiset ovat X:n (meksikolainen työntekijä) mielestä vähemmän itsenäisiä, aina haluat esim. pitää pomoa ajan tasalla siitä, mitä ovat tekemässä ja mitä tapahtuu. Hän oli esimerkiksi huomannut, että jos hän kertoo jotain Y:lle (suomalainen pomo), Y sanoo vain, että päätä sinä miten hyväksi näet. Että meksikolaiset sanovat ja selittelevät tilannetta pomolle, vaikka heillä todennäköisesti on jo ratkaisu mielessä, mutta he haluavat pitää pomoa ajan tasalla. (Tämä ei siis välttämättä ole sitä, että ne pyytävät siltä neuvoa, ne siis tietävät kyllä jo ratkaisun, mutta he esittävät sen asian pomolle ikäänkuin kysymyksenä - se on ehkä kohteliaisuutta; sitä, että osoittaa, että tietää omaavansa vähemmän valtaa, että pomolla on kuitenkin valta päättää ja tehdä. Tästä muuten Z (meksikolainen pomo) sanoi mulle silloin kerran Å:lla (meksikolainen alihankkija). Mää olin jo esittänyt asiani Å:lle ja sitten kysyin Z:lta, että vai mitä, haluaisitko sinä lisätä jotain. Z vain kohautti harteitaan ja sanoi, että no kysythan sää minulta, että meksikolainen olisi ensimmäisenä kysynyt, no, mitä se pomo on mieltä. Mää olin vähän ihmeissäni, koska Z on aina korostanut sitä, että tää on mun projekti ja mä teen päätökset, aina silloin, kun oon vähän kuin mennyt hakemaan neuvoa tai tukea: "Tee niinkuin sinusta tuntuu parhaimmalta". Ja mä otin tuon tilaisuutena näyttää, että katso, mä oon nyt tehnyt niitä päätöksiä. Mutta oiskin pitänyt ensin kysyä Z:lta. Se ois varmaan sanonut, että sinähän se sitä teet, mutta olisin kuitenkin näyttänyt, että minun paikkani tulee vasta sen jälkeen.)" (dia_22.6)

According to X (Mexican employee), Mexicans are less independent, they always want, for example, to keep the boss up to date with what they are doing and what is happening. For instance she had noticed that if she tells something to Y (Finnish boss), Y only tells her to make the decision as she sees fit. That the Mexicans comment on and explain the situation to the boss even though they probably already have a solution in mind, but they want to keep the boss up to date.

(They are not necessarily asking for advice from her or him, they know the solution already but they are just showing they have less power, that the boss is the one who decides and gets things done. This was something that Z (my Mexican boss) reminded me about once at A (Mexican supplier). I had already presented my matter to A and then I asked Z, if he had anything to add. He only shrugged his shoulders and said, so you're asking me after all, that a Mexican would have first asked the boss' opinion. I was a bit amazed because Z had always emphasised that this is my project and I make the decisions, always when I have gone kind of looking for advice or support: "Do as you see fit". And I took the situation at A's as an opportunity to show that look: I have made those decisions. But then I should have asked Z first. He would have said that it's you who is doing it, but anyway I would have showed that my place comes only after him.)

Hence, one of the key issues for success could be to find a balance between how much one requires or allows independence and how much support and advice one gives during the decision-making process.

Sisu as an Independence Strategy in Relationships

There were also some examples of *sisu* in which being able to do everything alone and independently was taken as a sign of rejection in personal relationships. It seems that one important part of creating relationship is to be open to help and open to asking for help. In such situations it seems that Finnish perseverance plays a role.

- Me ha tocado en restaurantes por ejemplo, está leyendo la carta y absolutamente no entiende nada, acaba de llegar al país, no. - "Oye, te puedo ayudar?"; - "Por que?" (con tono de voz un poco enojado) Ahaa, bueno, no hay ningún problema verdad...
- Sí, o sea, el finlandés no le gusta verse necesitado
- Sí, exacto.
- En cambio, el latino es más de - aunque no lo necesites, te pide ayuda porque le gusta opiniones.
- Sí, y aparte cuando piensa uno ayuda aun cuando no lo necesites, ya acercaste la persona, ya rompiste el hielo y puedes hablar con esta persona de cualquier cosa.
- Entonces, es también una manera de relacionarse?
- Claro (la respuesta rápida) (M2 & M3_ 8-9)

- I have experienced in restaurants, for example, that he is reading the menu and absolutely does not understand anything because he has just arrived the country. - "Well, could I help you?" - "Why?" (With a rather irritated tone). Oh, well, there is no problem, right...
- In other words, a Finn does not like to feel that he needs somebody
- Yes, exactly.
- Whereas, a Latino is more like - even though he does not need, he asks for help because he likes opinions.
- Yes, and besides when you think to help someone even if they don't need it, you start growing closer to the person, the ice is broken, and you can talk to the person about everything
- In other words, it is one way to build relations?
- Of course (answering rapidly)

In this excerpt, offering and asking for help is supposed to show a willingness to build relationships; however, a Finn evidently does not interpret the situation in the same way and the message is lost. In the following incident, one Finn searches for an explanation to a similar situation:

"Kun mä en meen tehtaalle - niille on hirveen tärkeää, että mä käyn siellä -- jokainen tulee vuorotellen kertomaan surunsa ja probleemansa. Mää aina välillä mietin, että onkohan se sen takia, että ne haluaa kuulla näitä mun hölmöjä eurooppalaisia naisasianaisen neuvoja ja (naurua) onko ne niille niin huvittavia vai onko se tosiaan, että ne haluaa tehdä niinku mä sanon vai mikä siinä on, kun ne hirveen mielellään juttelee mun kans." (F4_11)

When I go to the factory - it is very important for them that I go - - everybody comes in turn to tell me their sorrows and problems. Every now and then I wonder if it is because they want to hear a European feminist's stupid advice (laugh), if they think the advice is so hilarious, and if it is really that they do as I say or why they come so willingly to talk with me.

Obviously there might be also other explanations but one probable reason is that the workers want to build a personal relationship with their boss in this way. By asking help they show that they appreciate both her knowledge and her as a person. This is confirmed with the comment in which a Mexican tells about how he feels when help is not requested, even though it is obviously necessary.

"No quiso mi ayuda porque no me quiere a mí, porque le caigo mal? No quiso mi ayuda porque si sabe pero está tomando tiempo? Ee, no cree que yo pueda dar la respuesta? (M3_9)

S/he did not want my help because s/he does not like me? S/he did not want my help because s/he knows that it will take time? Or, because s/he did not think I could give the answer?

Sisu is also shown when searching for information.

"Aquí (en la oficina con finlandeses) por ejemplo si llegas a pedir muchos consejos es... "pero como no lo sabes?" Pero no les da más sentido sino que se quedan así como sorprendidos porque a uno se le ocurrió buscar una respuesta en otra manera. A mí lo más fácil es ir y preguntar en vez de estar tres horas en el Internet si la persona tiene la respuesta. Pero ellos son capaces a pasarse tres horas en el Internet en vez de necesitar a alguien." (M3_9)

Here (in the office with Finns) for example, if you come to ask for lots of advice, it's: "but how come you do not know?" But it does not have any significance for them but they remain surprised at how it can occur to someone to search for the answer in other method. To me, the easiest way is to go and ask instead of spending three hours on the Internet if a person has the answer. But they are capable of spending three hours on the Internet in order not to have to depend on anyone else.

It is interesting that *sisu* as an independence strategy was mentioned so often in discussion. Maybe one explanation is that it is so clearly connected with the essential characteristics of Mexican society, hierarchy and the care of relationships. The expectations in the Mexican business context connected to *sisu* are summarised in the table 7.

TABLE 7: SWOT of "sisu as an independent strategy" in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong commitment with what has been promised - Works out through difficulties despite of obstacles - Ability to work independently - Knowledge how to adapt the independent strategy to hierarchical situation at hand - Asking help understood as a way to relate with others and show appreciation to their knowledge - Enough support given to Mexican workers in completing tasks 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of flexibility in planning and agreements - Expectation for independence from the part of other workers - Not understanding what kind of role hierarchy plays in relation to independent work - Asking help interpreted as laziness, weakness or lack of knowledge
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Task-completion is realised in co-operation and in the spirit of <i>simpatía</i> ➤ Explicit explanation of expected independence to Mexican workers may teach them to appreciate and apply independence at their own work 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Independent strategy turns out to mean completing tasks alone ➤ Disdained attitude towards Mexican workers ➤ From the part of Mexican boss one could be considered as not appreciating her/his position ➤ Too strong emphasise on work

4.4.3. Privacy - What It Means for Finns and for Mexicans

One surprising result was that about privacy. As discussed in the theoretical part, it was expected that the topics discussed in initial interaction in Mexico might at times be too personal for Finns. This view was strengthened in several interviews.

Here are two different viewpoints:

1)

"Se on hirveen niinku, ne haluu päästä sinne -- suomalaisittain ei niin ku hirveesti keskustella (perheestä), että tuntuu, kun sää joudut selittämään sitä koko ajan, sää selität niinku, okei, kerran, kaks, kolme, neljä mutta kun aina kun sää tapaavat uuden niin sitten taas, taas, taas. Ja sitten sää niinku kyllästyit selittämään ja niinku ei yksinkertaisesti jaksa ruveta selittämään, että se on vähän niinku tunkeileva tunne, että heti alussa ruvetaan kyselemään tälläisiä, mites tällain." (F2_12)

It is like they want to get to the core—among Finns one does not discuss (one's family) that much and it feels, when you have to explain that all the time, you explain, ok, once, twice, three times, four times but always when you meet a new person, you have to explain again and again and again. And then you kind of get bored with explaining and you simply do not feel like explaining, that it is kind of an intrusive feeling that right in the beginning they start to ask these questions."

2)

"X (meksikolainen) kyseli, milloin Y (suomalainen) menee naimisiin. F (toinen suomalainen) vastasi, ettei se taida mennäkään. Miksi, kysyi X. F oli selvästi vaivautunut ja kommentoi sitten mulle: nää on justiin tällaisia tunkeileviä: aina ne kysyy miksi, miksi, mitä se niille kuuluu?" (dia_11.4)

X (Mexican) asked when Y (Finn) is getting married. F (another Finn) answered that she might not get married at all. Why, Asked X. F was clearly uncomfortable and then commented to me: they are always so intrusive: they always ask why, why—what's it to them?

Clearly the questions Mexican pose to Finns surpass the Finnish private space. Family is something personal and private or simply does not belong to the context. The Mexican point of view could be shortly presented as in following lines:

"Hay gente que de plano no quieren que exista esta confianza. Yo soy yo, yo vivo en mi mundo y no te puedo dejar entrar, entonces se tiene que ser cuidadoso. Tratarlo con mucho respeto. (M1_4)

There are people that right away do not want this kind of *confianza* to exist. I am me, I live in my world and I cannot let you in, therefore you have to be cautious. Treat them with a lot of *respeto*.

All the Mexicans pointed out the same thing: it is important to share thoughts and opinions. The rejection by a Finn can easily be connected with the Finnish concept of privacy and the understanding of what are private matters and what are not. The surprising thing, however, was what occurred after the initial period:

"Eso si siempre como que salvo alguien quien ya considera mi amigo y todo, trato de hacer una cuestión más personal de tener un poco cuidado que no parezca que estoy metiendo sino que realmente parezca: hay, como estás? En vez de: como están tus hijos, que paso, o sea, trato de que no mete porque para ellos es como ya meter demasiado al menos que sean muy amigos. Aunque cuando ya son muy amigos, son mucho más... eh... se meten más en detalle... en cuestiones muy muy personales que el mexicano." (M3_5)

It is always like except for a person that I already consider my friend and all, I try to be more cautious with somewhat personal questions so that I would not give the impression that I'm interfering, but so it looks more like I'm just asking: oh, how are you? Instead of: How are your children, how is it going? In other words I try not to interfere because that is already interfering unless they are already good friends. Although when they already are good friends, they are much more...um... they interfere much more in details... in very, very personal questions than a Mexican does.

It turns out that after some time the roles change: the trespasser is a Finn who breaks the Mexican private circle. Many Finns confirmed this:

"Mutta toisaalta, meksikolaista päästä hirveen lähelle siviilielämässä, se on taas toinen juttu. He on niinku avoimia ja tällä lailla, mutta sitten taas myös heilläkin on tietty reviiri ja sille reviirillä pääseminen on sitten ihan eri juttu. Se on taas ihan eri juttu. Elikkä suomalaiselle se reviiri on heti tässä ja heillä se on siellä enemmän taustalla, mutta siellä on sitten se reviiri, se on sitten paljon

isompi. Että jos pääset siihen sisään, niin sillen se käsittää myös, että sää oot sisällä heidän äiti, isä, täti, kaikki, sää oot siinä isossa piirissä sisällä sitten." (F2_12)

On the other hand, it is totally another question to get close to a Mexican in their personal life. They are open like that but then they do also have a certain private area and it is totally another thing to get into that area, a totally different story. In other words, for a Finn the private area is here right away and they do have it more in the background, but there it is and then it is way bigger. That if you get into it, it includes also that you are in with their mama, dad, aunt, everything, you are in the big circle then.

As was previously mentioned this circle mainly includes the family in the broader sense. In one interview with Mexicans it was noted that it might also include others, such as long-time friends. Hence, in order to develop a very close relationship with a Mexican requires that you become, in effect, part of the family. Despite the fact that one's family could be discussed already in initial interactions, the topics are fairly limited. This is defined in one interview:

"Yo diría que las barreras son cuando tienes problemas en las relaciones de la familia o económicos muy fuertes podría ser.-- Son dos cosas que no se platica más que en el circulo de la familia porque se ve que es una cuestión de la familia, nadie mas tiene que entrar en este circulo porque es tan unido en muchas ocasiones. Lo que sí es, cuando alguien tuvo un accidente, entonces, todo el mundo te pregunta: "como esta" y "necesitas algo" y... no sé, son diferentes cosas, una es lo vulnerable que seas ante de las cosas de la vida y otra es lo vulnerable que seas como unidad familiar." (M3_6)

I would say that the limits are when you have problems within your family or if there were serious economical problems. -- They are two topics that you don't talk about outside the family circle because they are a family matter, nobody else needs to enter this circle because it is so united on many occasions. What is okay, though, is if someone had an accident, then everybody asks you: "how is s/he" and "do you need help" and... I don't know, they are different things, one is about how vulnerable you are to the vagaries of life and the other how vulnerable you are in terms of the unity of the family.

Thus, the family is discussed only as necessary background information or as a sign of having interest in the person. However, it does not mean that a lot of information is given or received. In addition to the topics concerning the family, there were also other topics mentioned that tend to belong to privacy as defined by Mexicans, such as religion and salaries. Mexican privacy is also space, but refers more to being sheltered for example from having one's bare back seen by a person one does not know too well. Personal belongings such as handbags are considered private whereas for Finns touch is private. Many Finns commented on how difficult it was to adapt to Mexican touching behaviour.

"Vaikka tämä kyseessä oleva henkilö ei tykkäisikään fyysisestä kosketuksesta, mut se on kuitenkin, se on niinku maan tapa, että se on pakko tehdä. -- Se-e oli vähän vaikeaa mulle kyllä, täytyy sanoa, ok, kättely, eihän siinä ole mitään, mutta se just nämä *abrazot* -- että siinä on vieläkin vähän jäykkä kyllä, että se ei ihan niin luonnistu kuin pitäis." (F1_9)

Even though the person in question doesn't like physical touch, anyway it's, it is the custom in this country, you have to do it.-- It was little bit difficult for me, yeah, I have to admit that, ok, shaking hands, that's nothing, but then these *abrazos*—I still go a bit stiff then, and they don't turn out like they're supposed to.

One Mexican considered this topic so important that she addressed also the final advice for both Finns and Mexicans considering the topic of privacy.

"Y le diría: no te ofendas porque el mexicano te va a detener cosas, temas que son tabúes y son las muy privadas aunque sea muy abierto. Hay temas que con el mexicano -- hay chistes que dicen que un mexicano: haga todo lo que quieras, pero no toques a la virgen de Guadalupe! Hay temas que siguen siendo muy tuyos, muy privados y que no, no es... que un finlandés aprenderá a respetarlo. Y a un mexicano, no te lo tomes personal." (M3_20)

I would say to him/her: do not get offended because the Mexican will preserve some things to him/herself, topics that are taboo and very private even though s/he is very open. There are topics that with a Mexican -- there are jokes that say that one Mexican says: do whatever you want but do not touch the Virgin of Guadalupe! There are topics that continue to be very much yours, very private and not, it is not... that a Finn would learn to respect it. And for a Mexican, do not take it personally.

This private space, i.e. family, is also preferably kept separate from working context as mentioned in many Finnish interviewees. Even though earlier it was emphasised that there should be communication in places other than at work, it seems to concern only the workmates and not the whole family. Free time spent with a Mexican family is rare.

"Mutta mää sanosin, että nää meksikolaiset ei nyt kuitenkaan sillä lailla halua tulla kaveriksi, että siinä tosiaan koko perheet vedettäis yhteen. Eli ei tule sitä, että lähetään sitten: mää kutsun sut nyt mökille tai mitä nyt ikinä yhdessä koko perheen kanssa, että hän kutsuu oman perheensä ja sää tuut oman pesueen kanssa, tämmöstä mää en oo kyllä nähny. -- Okei sää voit lähtee asiakkaan kanssa, kutsua asiakkaan vaikka pelaan golfia, jopa vaikka viikonloppuna tai jotain ja hän ehkä jopa ottaa vastaan sen kutsun. Mutta tosiaan, että koko perhe raahataan mukaan, niin, harvemmin, harvemmin tällasta. (F1_12)

But I'll say that these Mexicans do not want to become friends in such a way that both the families would get together. So there's none of: let's go then, I'll invite you and your family to the cottage or whatever, that he or she will bring his or her own family and you'll come with yours, I haven't seen any of that. -- Ok, you can go out with your customer; invite her or him for example to play golf, even on the weekend or something like that and she or he might even accept the invitation. But that they would drag the whole family along, that's really very rare.

The same kind of distinction between family and work is seen in how open the home is to guests. As a Finn explains:

"Sanotaan, että kotiinkutsuminen on sitten jo erittäin --pitkällisen suhteen merkki. Tai siis semmosen, että sitten ollaan niinku hyvissä väleissä, sanotaan näin." (F3_12)

Let's say that an invitation to someone's home is the sign of a very...long-term relation. Or let's say that it means that you are on like good terms with the Mexican.

Mexicans made similar comments. The considerations presented in this chapter show how the concept of privacy is understood differently by Finns and Mexican and this can cause misunderstandings. In Table 8 there is a summary of how to manage with the different aspects concerning privacy. If these results are compared with the ones Fant (1992: 150) received with Spaniards, it appears that the private space of Mexicans does not follow the same pattern as Spanish private space, but rather includes an additional circle in the middle, which represents only the family and possibly a few long-term friends. This Mexican space is illustrated in the Figure 5. Nonetheless, when these differences between Finns and Mexicans are overcome, similarities are found and successful and enduring relationships built.

"Suomalaisilla on samanlaista, että meksikolainen on kans vähän jäyhä, että se tarkkailee ihmistä ennen kuin hyväksyy. -- Jos ei nyt muuta, ku meksikolaiset ei tietenkään voi yleistää, mutta jos puhutaan tämmösestä meksikolaisesta kansanluonteesta niin se intiaaniluonne, se on justinsa tämmönen, että se niinku ottaa aikaansa ja sit kun se hyväksyy, sit se on niinku loppuiäkseen. -- Ja auttaa niinku meitäki, siis ei Suomessa semmosta avuliaisuutta ois saanu, mitä vaati tää firma -- Et niinku tämmönen silmitön luottamus tämmöseen ystävyYTEEN. Kun sen kerran oot saavuttanut, niin en mä tiedä, mitä pitäis tehdä, että sen menettäis." (F4_26)

It is kind of the same with Finns, that a Mexican is kind of stiff, that he observes a person before accepting them. -- If nothing else, when Mexicans - of course you can't generalise - but if you talk about the national

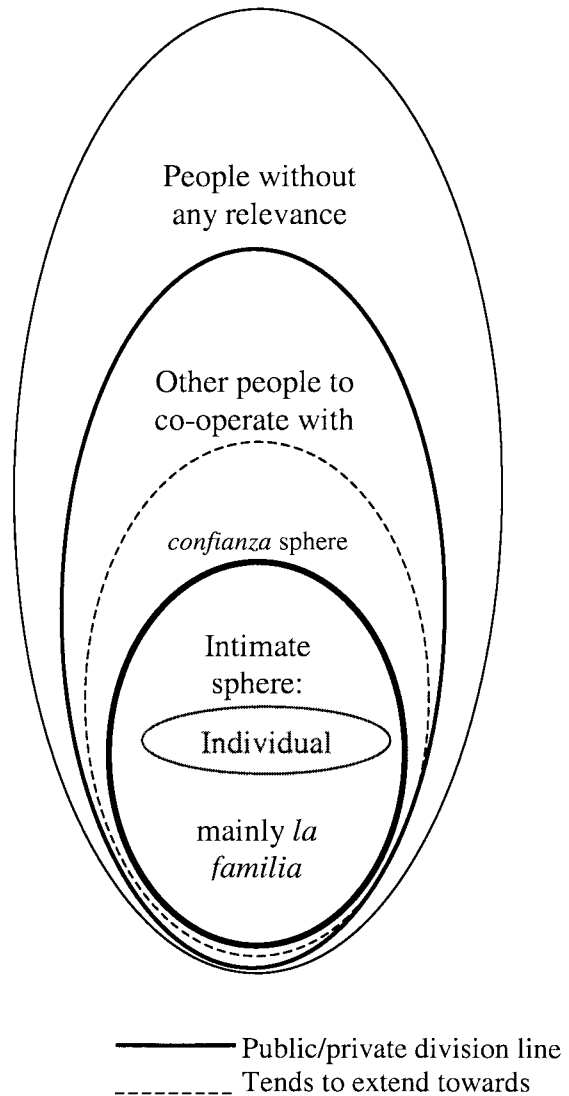


FIGURE 5. The model of public and private spheres of the individual in Mexican business context.

character of Mexicans, the Indian character, it is the kind that they take their time and then when they accept, it is for the rest of your life. -- And they help us, in Finland we would not have got the kind of helpfulness that this company required -- that it is like unconditional trust in friendship. Once you have obtained it, I don't even know what would have to do lose it.

TABLE 8: SWOT of privacy in Mexican business context.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to widen the learned Finnish private space, especially in initial interactions when asking about the family, hobbies, opinions etc. - To know the limits of Mexican privacy and not suppose that openness in one topic means openness in general - Respect Mexican workmates' unity and loyalty to the family 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining learned Finnish private space in initial interactions - Supposing that a Mexican friend's private space is the one in use between Finnish friends - Assuming that openness in certain matters implies the freedom to be open in all matters - Touching on sensitive topics such as religion, bullfights, salary, economical or relational matters of the family in discussion
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoidance of embarrassing and face-threatening situations ➤ Supporting the image of a person who takes care of the relationship 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unconscious involvement in face-threatening situations ➤ Decreases the <i>simpatía</i> needed in interpersonal encounters ➤ Gives the image of a non-educated person

4.5. Conclusion: Critical Success Factors

The results offer two types of critical success factors: culture-specific and culture-general (these terms are explained in the theoretical part). Culture-generally one could draw attention to three factors. First, it seems to be critically important to have both a positive attitude toward Mexican culture and people and also show this attitude in communication. It is also necessary to have a positive attitude towards changes in oneself and in one's communication. Secondly, it is essential to have the knowledge of existing differences in people's backgrounds, education, economical situation, etc., as well as the sensitivity to notice these differences. In addition, one also needs knowledge of what forms of communication are expected according to context and situations. Thirdly, knowledge itself does not ensure success in communication but rather one needs the skills to change the

communication according to person and situation. Successful communication is relative and includes few, if any, strict rules. The two latter critical success factors are especially important in a heterogeneous environment such as intercultural contexts.

Culture-specific critical success factors could be seen as the ability to convey specific values in communication. For Mexicans, the most important seems to be that the three key concepts of their culture, *simpatia*, *respeto* and *confianza*, will be perceived. The relationship between these three concepts are seen in Figure 4, and there are summaries of each in the form of SWOT presented in Tables 2-5. Finns, in turn, conveyed in communication such key concepts as honesty, *sisu* and respect for privacy. There are summaries of each in the form of SWOT presented in Tables 6-8. The critical factors for success in each value be defined as follows.

The ability to reach *confianza*, which could be described as the objective of the process of making friends, could be considered as the most important critical success factor in Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication. To understand the nature of *confianza*, one needs to understand the role of hierarchy in Mexican society. If a same-level communication dyad is in question, there might be a possibility for real negotiation: I got to know your practises and you got know mine; then we can try to find a solution that suits us both well. However, mainly the communication does not occur between peers: there might be a difference in the hierarchy, i.e. one has a higher position than the other or each has a different role, such as buyer and seller, where it is mainly the seller who must be more alert and able to compromise. It also depends on whose country they are in, the country of origin of the firm, and who has the capability or personality to adapt. Whatever the situation and positions, the power distance should be shortened by reaching *confianza*. For that, one needs knowledge and consciousness of both culture-patterned and personal-patterned behaviour. The first condition for success is to reach *confianza*. When that is attained, one enters to the in-group and only then can efficient work begin.

Hierarchy also has another aspect that affects successful communication between Finns and Mexicans in business context, namely its connection to independent work. One critical success factor is to find a common understanding of responsibility, which is affected by power structures in the organisation. The understanding of responsibility therefore defines how independently one is able or allowed to work.

Simpatía requires that one socialise with working mates and that this communication is continuous. One should be able to show interest towards the other and also give an approachable and positive image of oneself. This is seen in practice in, for example, balancing social interaction and task-completion. Especially in the beginning of the relationship the time spent together is critically important. Also further on it is essential to take care of the relationship alongside task accomplishment. Actually these two go hand in hand. *Simpatía* is seen also in regards to adjusting personal private space to the situations. In the initial stages of the relationship, the Finnish concept of privacy is threatened by showing respect for the privacy of Mexican, she or he could be taken to be not very approachable. But once the relationship is established, a Finn might be threatening the private space of the Mexican. As the private spaces differ so much, it is critically important that they be negotiated successfully.

Respeto in turn, demands the ability to show and maintain politeness for power distance through one's actions. This is seen, for instance, in the use of time, in addressing others and in one's dress. One should also be able to see when the relationship progresses and therefore refrain from using these marks of distance. When showing *respeto*, the critical success factor is to be able to use different face-saving strategies. Sometimes this tends to be in contrast with the most important Finnish value, which is honesty, because face-saving requires using relative truth instead of objective truth and indirect instead of direct communication. A critical success factor is to find the balance between these two that will hinder the negative interpretation of each other and therefore create possibility to co-operate successfully.

5. DISCUSSION

After having described the interpersonal communication between Finns and Mexican and having defined the critical success factors based on that, there are some issues that require further examination. In this discussion, the concept of *confianza* is compared with earlier research. Also, the importance of knowing the context where communication occurs is highlighted. Finally, this study, its applications, and possible further research are discussed.

5.1 Different Viewpoints to *Confianza*

Confianza turned out to be the key concept in successful communication in the Mexican business context. It was defined as the process of becoming friends, which aims at creating and establishing common norms of communication, trusting that both will take care of each other's face in interaction, and feeling connected to each other. These aspects can be deepened with some theoretical concepts introduced earlier in the field.

Confianza does not necessarily include unconditional trust in each other, as one interviewee commented:

"Siis tää bisnesetiikka ja henkilökohtainen tuttavuus ei välttämättä aina kulje samassa. Vaikkakin on itsestäänselvyys, että täällä tehdään kauppaa vain kavereiden kanssa, mutta ei se estä sitä etteikä kavereita silmään kustus." (F6_13)

This business ethic and personal relations do not necessarily always go hand in hand. Even though it is obvious that here one does business only with friends, it does not keep friends from cheating each other.

Nonetheless, trust and the concept of *confianza* have certain similarities depending on how they are defined. Trust can be roughly divided into three types: commitment trust, competence trust and companion trust. Commitment trust is institutional-based, where both parties benefit according to the agreement made. Competence trust, in turn, is based on the perceived knowledge of the person to carry out certain tasks. It can also be based only on the reputation of the institute

where the person works and therefore it can also be shifted to other person. However, it is relatively fragile: if the knowledge is not as good as was originally assumed, the trust will disappear. Companion trust is defined as resilient trust that is created through the process of getting to know people personally through continuous reciprocal exchange. This type of trust is characterised by a strong emotional component and assures that participants are open and honest to each other and do not harm each other. Also, they are relatively tolerant of the mistakes made by others. (Newell & Swan 2000: 1292-1295.)

Companion trust therefore comes close to the concept of *confianza* defined in this study as concerns the process-nature and personal as well as emotional involvement in the relationship. Also, patience with mistakes and not harming others could be seen as part of *confianza*. Mexican adjustments to trust in the concept of *confianza* are, first of all, that when being open and honest, one still takes care of the face-concerns of the participants i.e. uses *respeto* as an other-oriented face-saving strategy. Secondly, in Mexican context one should also include *simpatía*, the importance of creating positive atmosphere and maintaining positive communications. Thus, one could suggest that, in a Mexican intercultural business environment, commitment trust and competence trust are not enough because of the lack of personal input and therefore the lack of stability and security, which was mentioned a few times as a main reason for people-orientation. One should also note that, once established, the companion trust should be as well tended. Of these three types of trust, it causes the most severe consequences once broken.

Fant (2000: 150) interprets *confianza* as public intimacy in the Swedish-Spanish business context. As discussed in the theoretical part, he states that instead of having the intimate sphere including the nuclear family and close friends like Swedes, Spanish have a *confianza* sphere, which includes the family in a broader sense and tends to extend towards the people with whom one is co-operating. In this way the intimacy experienced by a Swede is a certain kind of public intimacy experienced by a Spaniard. Nonetheless, according to these results the Mexican

intimate sphere is even smaller than that of a Finn and is not very open to entrance by new people. However, the next sphere for Mexicans seems to be the *confianza* sphere referred to by Fant. It includes working mates, neighbours, etc., and tends to extend when necessary to building a relationship with someone. According to comments like the following, one could argue that there is also a sphere for people who could be open to indifference or disdain:

"Al menos creo que ha aprendido que hay que tratar la gente con mucho más respeto de lo que se usualmente trata aquí en América Latina. Especialmente aquellos que no son de tu posición económica o social. -- Para darte un ejemplo: al menos en México es muy común si vas a algún restaurante, el mesero se le trate a veces al menos un pocito despectivamente. Pues, nunca yo había hecho así pero ahora se me ha hecho notorio que en este tipo de actitudes no son correctas en absoluto." (M2_11)

At least I think I have learnt that one should treat all people with much more respect than one usually does in Mexico. Especially those who are not from the same economical and social position as you. -- To give one example: at least in Mexico it is very usual that if you go to some restaurant, the waiter is sometimes treated at least with a bit of disdain. Well, I have never done that but now I have noticed that these kinds of behaviours are absolutely not correct.

Apparently these people are from a certain social class and completing tasks that are not appreciated very much (Table 5). Anyway, the point is that Mexicans seem to have an intimate and closed sphere, which, according to Fant, the Spanish are lacking. It might be that the Spanish are different in this sense. The indigenous background could explain the differences, as one interviewee mentioned in other connection. However, as Finnish interviewees in Spain commented, it is difficult to get to know the Spanish really well (Hänninen 1998). Therefore one could suggest that there might be the same kind of intimate sphere to be found as the Mexicans seem to have.

In the theoretical part the concept of culture was discussed and it concluded with the definition that culture is like a process, formed in interaction, which includes learning and adapting and is therefore apt to change. When participants in a relationship have achieved the stage where they have agreed on the ways of communication and behaviour, i.e. when this process of forming the culture is complete, they have reached *confianza*.

5.2 The Importance of the Political, Historical and Social Context

According to these results hierarchy and power play an extremely important role in Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication. One could say that there are no interpersonal encounters where the power issue is not present. Questions such as who has the right to make suggestions, what kinds of topics may be discussed, and how one should dress oneself seem to be guided by the hierarchy. Power distance is often discussed in research as one characteristic of intercultural communication, introduced by Hofstede (1991), but there are not very many results as to what kind of practical applications it may have. Research that handles power more thoroughly seems to be scarce and therefore one could make an assumption that it is not considered an important topic.

This issue is largely absent when writing about the Mexican working environment (see e.g. Lindsley 1999). One could pose the question: is it because of the fact that the majority of studies is conducted in the USA that this aspect has not received the attention it deserves? It could be supposed that equality is the basic assumption in the USA as well as in Finland, and therefore, one prefers to explain the signs of hierarchy with other different cultural values or preferences. However, in this research, even in the international companies where people come from more or less the same social class and have a higher education, the hierarchy affects everyday communication. Some companies seem to try to make it more equal but even then it plays an important role in relations and thus also in interpersonal communication. As Blommaert (1995: 15) notes, the mere use of a certain language itself is an example of power sharing. People in power assume that others will adapt to their language or their way of using it and if the others fail to do so, they must face the consequences. He comments also that strangely enough, power is hardly ever touched upon in current training programmes or textbooks.

Issues that according to this study are clearly connected with power and hierarchy are explained otherwise. As an example, Vaahterikko (2001: 156) argues that

follow-up culture may be a reflection of polychronic time concept. According to the results at hand, this could be considered too simplified an answer and does not take the whole context into consideration. First, as discussed above, the concept of time is not so simple that it could be explained merely by placing it into one of the two optional extremes. The polychronic time concept might explain something, but for instance the need for punctuality is dependent on the position of the person one is meeting and also on the context, e.g. if the meeting occurs during free time or at work, etc. Second, as was also pointed out earlier, the follow-up culture seems not to be connected so much to the polychronic time concept as to hierarchical assumptions and a different sharing of responsibility. It seems that in a Mexican work context the worker is neither supposed to take responsibility nor is it given to her/him. Rather it is the boss who is responsible and therefore he or she is also the one who takes care of projects being completed on time. In other words, independence is not encouraged at work. In this respect one critical success factor is to find the common understanding of responsibility. This point seems to be lacking in the literature concerning the Mexican business context and Latin communication in general.

The importance of hierarchy explains many separate aspects of Mexican communication presented in earlier results and sets them up in a certain logical framework. This leads to another important result of this research: the results should be seen in the light of historical, social and political context. The main aim in this study is to examine not only the countries in question but also the smaller units, which could be called cultures or, according to Scollon & Scollon (2001), discourse systems. For example, the family company differed in some questions from the other participating companies. Hence, one could conclude that international business is a context as such and conveys a culture as such, which is formed through common discourse. Most probably this difference is drawn because the participating international companies mainly employ white-collar workers from a certain educational and cultural level, whereas in the family company there are also many blue-collar workers from the lower classes of

society. Due to the large differences between the classes, and therefore in communication, expectations for communication at work varies greatly.

When interviewees related their intercultural experiences, they frequently connected the different characteristics and behaviours with the historical, social or political framework that made evident the logic they had used to understand their experience. It seems that when researching communication, it is not enough to study the mere communication situation but one also has to pay attention to the surrounding society and to the structures it gives to its inhabitants. Results should also be reflected in the societal framework of the context and country researched. As Blommaert (1995: 25) argues, it should be realised that no communicative encounter proceeds outside of society and that societal structures and ideologies related to them always play a role in what happens in encounters. Also, when examining the connection between people-orientation and task-orientation in the light of the Mexican context, it appears that they should be seen more as parts of a continuum where they follow one another, where people-orientation would be a prerequisite for task-orientation. These orientations should be seen as a result of the environment where people are working: in multicultural societies with striking differences between the classes, people-orientation is needed to build *confianza* between the partners and thus lay the foundation of security for co-operation. In other words, one should get to know the people first and, after having established the relationship and the ways of communicating, then concentrate on accomplishing given tasks.

Successful building of *confianza* includes taking an active role in communication. There is nothing "ready" to get into, but one is supposed to create and maintain *confianza*, in other words, create and maintain good personal relationships with one's co-workers. This means that the working methods and communication can also change or—according to the results—should change in order to be successful as the relationship proceeds. After all, successful communication seems to be relative and during this process of building *confianza*, common forms of communication are created. However, it seems that in the beginning one should be

able to show acceptance, understanding and to a certain extent even adaptation to Mexican patterns of communication. Only later can Finnish communication characteristics be brought into the picture, accepted, applied and made to be successful.

One could reflect this process on the three-stage model of the dynamics of effective collaboration described by Kealey & Protheroe (1995: 100). During the first phase, the role of the expatriate will be that of a bystander whose main task is to build good relationships and trust with workmates and to observe and learn the local culture and language. The professional goals are in the background. After this is accomplished, the second phase starts, in which people working as partners, which is characterised by mutual openness that enables learning from one another. One can start to transfer one's own knowledge to the other and also learn the local knowledge. Although this process describes the transfer of knowledge, according to these results it could be applied to communication as well. At first one should act as a bystander in such a way that one is learning the forms of communication used in the local culture, showing acceptance and creating *confianza* in the relationships. Only after achieving this can one start to transfer one's own style of communication and—at the same time—be open to learn the local customs and modify the new common communication. There were many examples in the data that show the success of such a method. This is the juncture at which new customs are created and a new culture is emerging. This is also confirmed by the following example from Vasko et al. (1998: 86), in which they comment that in development work abroad most Finns considered hierarchy an obstacle to effective development co-operation. Instead they should first learn to work with existing structures rather than make changes, although in the long term there needs to be a fundamental change in the decision-making process.

5.3 Evaluation

Such a broad topic: to describe Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication in a business context and define the critical success factors offers a great challenge. To avoid this breadth, the topic could have been defined more exactly to focus on certain communication situations such as the decision-making process or management communication. Nonetheless, as research is so scarce in this area, the aim was to get a general picture of the research topic and thereafter it might be easier to concentrate on a certain business situation. However, during the research process it was clearly seen that the area of research could have been limited only to the business context in Mexico City and the surroundings because the issues in question will be notably different in other parts of the Mexico. The great differences between the geographical regions and social classes comprise one result and were not expected to be so strong when designing the study.

All the interviews were conducted as focused interviews. Interviewees shared a surprisingly large number of their experiences, both positive and negative, and it did not seem to have an affect that I was not very familiar to some of them beforehand. Actually, it seemed to be totally the opposite: some Mexican interviewees I did not know very well earlier were the most open, if openness is measured by the fact that they told of occasions that were difficult or instances in which their relationships with Finns were lacking. It seems that the most important reason for that was the positive attitude of the interviewees towards the study. It was seen in many ways. Despite the fact that many of them had busy schedules, almost all reserved the requested two hours or even more for the interview. In addition, they switched their phones off and reserved a separate room to avoid interruptions, etc. This allowed deep discussions and concentration on the topic. The only exceptions were the interviews carried out in the company where I was an intern, where it was the most difficult to arrange a time for the interview and also where telephone calls interrupted the discussions frequently. The reason could be that I was too familiar, but probably also my role in the company had a large effect: I was actually working there whereas in other places

my role was primarily that of a researcher. However, even in these interviews with my co-employees, the sharing of experiences was noteworthy. It was clear, however, that the Mexican interviewees avoided connecting any negative experiences with people I knew. Positive experiences were told by name as an example of successful communication, but negative ones were explained at a more general level, such as: one should be cautious with... In general, names tended to be avoided in Mexican interviews but it was of no consequence because they did not have any particular impact on the results.

Another factor affecting the openness of the interviews was the trust reached in the relationship. I attempted to create a positive and trusting atmosphere, but it is important to notice that *confianza* is not achieved in one short introduction, no matter how humorous and smiling the one keeping the introduction may be. Rather, it requires more time. Therefore, it is most probable - and natural - that some negative and/or very personal experiences were left untold. Also, since not all the interviewees were familiar to me, there was a possible problem of not assigning the same meaning to words or phrases used. This can cause misunderstandings even when speaking the same language, where gender, age, and experiences all affect the interpretations of words, let alone that half of the interviews were conducted in a language that is not my mother tongue.

The third factor to take into account is how conscious interviewees were of their own communication and how sensitive to the differences in communication they were. This could be seen in the level on which the communication was handled during the interview. Some interviews concentrated more on concrete matters such as habits, dressing, use of time, etc. (in response to the question "what") and others focused also on the background of these outcomes (in response to the question "why"). These two aspects supported each other in productive way. Since I did not have much experience as a research interviewer, the interview technique was sometimes lacking. At times I moved too rapidly from one topic to another and on some occasions I should have requested more details. I did not notice certain hints given by the interviewee and I asked too many questions at the

same time. It was a good idea to ask permission to contact the interviewees again to ask for clarifications. I did this with some people when I returned to visit Mexico to show the preliminary results and the prototype of the CD-ROM.

Participant observation was a challenging task and demanded a lot of self-evaluation. It mainly forced me to analyse my own role and my own communication in relation to the other Finns and to the Mexicans with whom I worked. My knowledge of earlier research helped, but at least in this study the discussions with key informants had a crucial role when trying to find meanings beyond the words. I would argue that without such interaction with key informants of local culture (or something of the kind), participant observation would have a strong tendency to lie on explanation patterns of earlier research or "Western" patterns, which might turn out to be meaningless in other cultural setting. This is very likely to occur in my data as well because I never went through it entirely with the key informants; however, many times the interpretations have been discussed with them. As a method, it gave me the possibility to put myself consciously in the place of processing my individual culture and also use these systematically collected experiences as research data.

In the reflective diary one essential concluding point was that a different cultural background does explain only some parts of the misunderstandings (*dia_rap*). As discussed in the theoretical part concerning culture, cultural identity is only one frame of reference among many. There are also many other matters such as personal attitudes, commitment, family situation, knowledge and expectation of each participant that affect the relationship. Furthermore, as Kealey & Protheroe (1995: 77-91) define, key factors for success are found in three different levels: environmental realities, immediate project or institutional context, and the collaborative relationship between individuals. This kind of broader context must be pointed out when looking at success in general.

Despite their weaknesses, both methods used served the purposes of the research questions well and produced a wealth of valuable qualitative data for analysis.

The interesting data I gathered would have offered material also for a deeper and wider analysis, however, as data for a Masters thesis, it should be limited. In the last chapter, topics of possible further data analysis and research will be presented.

5.4 Validity of Results

The findings mainly yield culture-specific information on Finnish and Mexican communication culture in business. They can be used as strategic tools to develop and maintain successful interpersonal communication between representatives of these two cultures. The analysis is mainly done with Finnish perspective in mind but the results also provides Mexicans with relevant information on how their communication is perceived and what kind of expectations Finns might have of communication with them. One should note, however, that due to the qualitative nature of this study, this does not claim to be an exact, profound analysis of all the factors concerning Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication in the business context. During the interview process it was affirmed that the results received would be relatively—or even dramatically—different had the data gathered included not only the companies operating in Mexico City and surroundings but also the ones operating in Northern Mexico. Therefore, the culture-specific results received are connected with the international business context in Mexico City and the surroundings and, within this context, among the white-collar workers. The results cannot be applied as such to other contexts such as governmental offices or to other social groups such as indigenous peoples.

One could ask how Finnish the Finnish participants are after living several years abroad. The experiences and adaptation of each one have naturally affected their communication skills as well as their interpretations. Nonetheless, despite these effects, they had the same kinds of interpretations and shared experiences, and so one could suppose that these might be relatively permanent features of Finnish interpersonal communication. In general, the role of adaptation and sensitivity was consciously taken into account by comparing different comments and interpretations with each other. Such discussion between the interviewees is seen in the results.

Thinking of interpersonal communication in a broader cultural context, one could draw a picture of Mexico as a hierarchical and multiethnic society where there is a huge variety of people with different ethnic, educational, economic, and social backgrounds. In Finland the number of foreign citizens is one of the lowest in Europe at less than 1.9 per cent of the population and immigration 3.7 per mille. Furthermore, Finns as a nation are such a homogeneous group with the same language (92.3 % speak Finnish as their mother tongue), religion (84.9 % are Lutherans) and educational background (tilastokeskus, väestötilastot 2001). When comparing these contexts, certain aspects of Finnish-Mexican interpersonal communication might be similar to communication that takes place in various firms during the process of internationalisation. The culture-general results will also provide tools for these processes. In addition, this study supports those research results that emphasise the complexity of factors affecting expectations regarding what is considered appropriate communication in different situations with different people. Results point out the importance of considering the context in which communication occurs. This knowledge is applicable in all intercultural situations.

5.5 Future Research Possibilities

In this framework it was not possible to include all the interesting topics that arose in the interviews. Hence, data gathered for this research could offer productive material for further research as well. One could take two viewpoints. First, examine communication, culture and interpretations through topics such as leadership, decision-making, teamwork and networks. Second, one could investigate the kinds of adaptation or learning strategies interviewees have used and how these tend to be connected with success in communication. To summarise in question format: what are the best practices in adaptation and learning? The results at hand touch on this topic also but there would be material for further, more detailed analysis.

Concentrating on a certain field of business communication such as leadership would also offer interesting information that could, in addition, have practical applications. On the basis of this material one could raise the question: What kind of leadership is to be desired in Mexico? Arguments presented by interviewees about a successful leadership style in Mexican business context differed from one another and even contradicted each other. It seems that within this topic, special attention should be given to workers or subordinates coming from different social classes and having different social status or position. The following questions could be posed: How to maintain *respeto* while still creating *simpatía*? How to reach *confianza*? To what extent are they necessary?

In this study the question of the role of women did not come up in particular. However, certain comments lead to a conclusion that the sex of the communication participant affects interpersonal communication in the communication styles or in choice of words or topics, etc. Therefore, this would be also interesting topic to research in more detail: a woman's role, how she is perceived, what is expected of her, and what does it mean when a woman is in power, etc. The question of equality could be examined from a cultural viewpoint: how does the equality discussed in the "West" fit into the Mexican business context? How do Mexicans feel about equality: what are its signs and how is the lack of it is seen at work?

Furthermore, this study could also be widened to other countries in Latin America. It seems that in the communication literature, Latin America tends to be seen as one homogeneous cultural area (see e.g. Marin & Marin 1991) that can be approached with the same methods and communication styles. Moreover, as this research shows, even in one country, in this case Mexico, there are many cultural groups and many communication styles are therefore needed. It would be of great interest to examine—in a fashion similar to that employed in this study—other Latin American countries as well, such as Chile, Argentina, Peru, and even Brazil. Then the results could be compared to the results received from Mexico: What is

the same? What is different? It would be wise to limit the context to intercultural business context.

At this moment, however, in intercultural business context the groups that consist only of two different nationalities tend to be decreasing. Instead, multicultural groups including a variety of national cultures and often also various professional cultures are used and many times they are created to accomplish a certain task in a project form in which the time is also often strictly limited. Hence, it is very important to find a successful form of communication. Multicultural groups should be researched with the focus on the kinds of communication they have found successful. What are critical success factors of interpersonal or small group communication working in multicultural groups? According to the results gained in this study of *confianza* and to research done on trust, one can conclude that trust building is an essential aspect of this. What kind of trust have they received: companion trust i.e. *confianza*, or something else? How have they built it? How does it affect their work together? One could imagine that national categories might not be the most important ones to define, maybe one should even change the point of view: if national culture were not taken as a reason for differences, would it naturally come out as a reason for differences? What is the role of professional cultures, the culture of surrounding society or the culture of country where the company originates? How do the power positions affect communication?

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APPENDIX 1. Letters sent before interview, first in Finnish and then in Spanish

Hei!

Kiitoksia, että lupauduite graduhaastatteluvakseni!

Meillä on kiinnostava aihe käsiteltävänä: mitä tarvitaan siihen, että suomalaisen ja meksikolaisen viestintä sujuu menestyksekkäästi liike-elämässä? Uskon, että kokemuksenne avulla voitte tuoda paljon mielenkiintoista tietoa ja syvyyttä aiheeseen ja siten auttaa tarkemmin hahmottamaan niitä tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat suomalais-meksikolaisen viestinnän onnistumiseen.

Tarkoitan viestinnällä hyvin arkipäiväisiä asioita, esimerkiksi sitä, miten toista ihmistä tervehditään, millä tavalla puhutellaan, millaista suhdetta arvostetaan, millaisia asioita sanotaan, millaisia mielellään ei, millaisia ilmeitä ja äänensävyjä käytetään, minkä verran puhutaan jne. Tarkastelemme viestintää erilaisissa tilanteissa kuten ongelmanratkaisu-, neuvottelu-, päätöksenteko-, ryhmätyö- tai konfliktitilanteissa. Kirjoitan tähän lyhyesti ja listanomaisesti asioita, joita voit miettiä ennen haastatteluun tulemistasi.

- Verbaalinen viestintä
 - suoruus/epäsuoruus
 - puheliaisuus/hiljaisuus
 - puhetyyli
 - sanavalinnat

- Nonverbaalinen viestintä
 - Aikakäsitys
 - Tilan käyttö; etäisyys/läheisyys
 - Kosketus
 - Ilmeet ja eleet
 - Ääni; sävy, voimakkuus
 - Ulkoinen olemus

- Arvot
 - Kohteliaisuus
 - Valta ja hierarkia
 - Itsenäisyys
 - Huumorin merkitys
 - Ystävällisyys
 - Yksityisyys
 - Luottamus
 - Rehellisyys
 - Tekemiseen suuntautuneisuus/puhumiseen suuntautuneisuus

Millä tavalla näitä asioita tulisi ottaa huomioon erilaisissa liike-elämän tilanteissa?

Näiden aiheiden on tarkoitus olla auttamassa, ei rajaamassa haastattelua. Voitte miettiä mitä nämä asiat merkitsevät teille suomalaisina, millaisia kokemuksia teillä on meksikolaisessa ympäristössä näiden asioiden tiimoilta, millä tavalla olette muuttaneet toimintatapojanne vai onko se ollut tarpeellista jne. Mitä muuta olette kokeneet tai huomanneet tarpeelliseksi osata? Kaikki huomiot ovat arvokkaita! Tällaisista aiheista tulemme siis juttelemaan.

Lisäksi mielelläni kuulisin vielä jonkin verran kokemuksianne ja tietouttanne siitä, mitä Meksikon järjestelmä vaatii ulkomaiselta yritykseltä, joka yrittää Meksikon markkinoille tai ulkomaiselta yritykseltä, joka täällä jo on. Millaisia haasteita, millaisia velvollisuuksia, millaisia etuja.

Sähköposti- ja puhelinkeskustelun perusteella haastattelu-aika on siis ... ja paikkana on ... Haastatteluun kannattaa varata aikaa pari tuntia.

Näkemisiin!

Eila Isotalus
Jyväskylän yliopiston opiskelija;
Nokia México

En Puebla x.x.xx

Estimado señor X,

¡Gracias por su disponibilidad para la entrevista!

Estamos tratando un tema muy interesante: ¿Qué se necesita para que la comunicación entre finlandeses y mexicanos en los negocios sea un éxito? Creo que con su experiencia, Usted, puede traer mucha información y también profundidades en este tema y de esta manera ayudar a esbozar las características que ayudan a dicho propósito.

Con comunicación nos referimos a situaciones habituales y cotidianas. Por ejemplo, como se saluda, en que manera se dirige a alguien, qué tipo de relación se aprecia, cuales cosas se dice y cuales no se debería decir, que tipo de expresiones o tono de voz se usa, cuanto se habla etc. Observamos la comunicación en distintas situaciones como en negociaciones, solucionando problemas, trabajando en equipo, decidiendo, en conflictos. Le presento brevemente una lista con algunas cosas, que Usted podría profundizar o reflejar con su experiencia antes de tener nuestra entrevista.

- Comunicación verbal
 - Directo / indirecto
 - Callado / parlachín
 - Estilo de habla

- Selección de palabras usadas
- Comunicación no-verbal
 - Uso del espacio; distancia / proximidad
 - Toques
 - Gestos y expresiones
 - Voz; tono, volumen...
 - Apariencia
 - Concepto del tiempo
- Valores
 - Educación / Cortesía
 - Poder y jerarquía
 - Independencia
 - Importancia de humor
 - Amabilidad
 - Privacidad
 - Confianza
 - Sinceridad / Honradez
 - Orientación para hacer y lograrlo / orientación para hablar y relacionarse

¿Cómo se considera estos factores ante diferentes situaciones?

Estos son solo algunos de los factores que serán abordados durante la entrevista. Usted puede reflexionar que significan estos factores como mexicano, que experiencias tiene de estos temas cuando se ha comunicado con finlandeses, si ha cambiado Usted su modo de actuar habitual etc. ¿Según su experiencia, qué mas es necesario para saber y tomar en cuenta? ¡Todo lo que ha notado Usted es importante! Estos son los temas sobre cuales hablaremos.

La entrevista se llevara a cabo el... en... La dirección es lo siguiente: ...

Quedo a sus ordenes para cualquier duda o aclaración.

Atentamente,

Eila Isotalus

APPENDIX 2

TAUSTAKYSYMYKSET

Tämän haastatteluosuuden aikana on tarkoitus paitsi saada tarvittavat taustatiedot, myös luoda hyvä tunnelma ja luottamuksellinen ilmapiiri. Erityisesti meksikolaisten kanssa kiinnitän huomiota siihen, että huumoria ja naurua on mukana koko ajan. Kerron myös itsestäni enemmän.

- Henkilötiedot: ikä, koulutus
- Työhistoria: kuinka kauan on ollut ulkomailla / Meksikossa töissa ja millaisissa tehtävissä, mikä asema nyt on
- Onko muuten työskennellyt kulttuurienvälisissä ryhmissä, millaisissa tehtävissä, kuinka kauan, minkä kansallisuuksien kanssa. Onko työskennellyt meksikolaisten kanssa muualla kuin täällä Meksikossa
- Onko naimisissa meksikolaisen kanssa

YLEISET ns. LÄMMITTELYKYSYMYKSET, jotka toimivat koko haastattelun lähtökohdana. Tartun asioihin, jotka tulevat vastauksessa esille ja esitän niihin liittyviä lisäkysymyksiä, jotka ovat myöhempänä.

- Aloitetaan konkreettisista esimerkeistä: voisitko kertoa, millaisissa tilanteissa työskentelet meksikolaisten kanssa? Kuinka paljon (ajassa)?
- Millaista on tehdä töitä suomalaisena latinoympäristössä?
- Jos vertaat suomalaista ja meksikolaista työyhteisöä ja heidän tapaansa työskennellä, millaisia eroja olet huomannut?
- Millaisia asioita on sinun kokemustesi perusteella otettava huomioon viestinnässäsi, kun toimit meksikolaisten kanssa?

(Tässä kysymyksessä ota esille erilaiset tilanteet tai viestinnän tavoitteet:

- Ryhmätyön tekeminen
- Asioiden esittäminen/ehdottaminen
- Palautteenanto (negatiivinen/positiivinen)
- Neuvottelu
- Ongelmanratkaisu
- Konflikti
- Päätöksenteko
- Tutustuminen liike-elämässä
- Luottamuksen synnyttäminen ja säilyttäminen liike-elämässä
- Liikesuhteen säilyttäminen)
- Vieraassa kulttuurissa tai toisesta kulttuurista olevan kanssa saattaa itse huomata viestinnässä joitakin omalle kulttuurilleen tyypillisiä piirteitä. Miten luonnehtisit tapaasi viestiä suomalaisena?
- Onko asioita, joissa sinun on pitänyt muuttaa totuttua tapaasi viestiä/ilmaista itseäsi? Millaisissa asioissa? Millaisissa tilanteissa? Miten? Onko se ollut helppoa? Miten se on onnistunut?
- Onko asioita, joissa et ole pystynyt/halunnut muuttua, vaikka tiedätkin, että se auttaisi yhteistyötä? Jos on, miksi et ole voinut muuttua?
- Mistä viestintätavoistasi tai viestinnän arvoista olet voinut pitää kiinni?

- Missä asioissa mikäkin tapa viestii on hyvä?
- (Tässä kysymyksessä voit uudelleen viitata noihin viestintätilanteisiin ja erilaisiin viestinnän tavoitteisiin.)
- Voisitko kertoa muutamia esimerkkejä tilanteista, joissa olet kokenut onnistuvasti viestinnän suhteen?
 - Mitä olet oppinut viestinnästä, kun olet työskennellyt meksikolaisten kanssa?
 - Mitä näistä opituista asioista olet voinut / voit siirtää muuhun kontekstiin, toiseen kulttuuriin?

Seuraavassa listassa on asioita, joita oletan tulevan esille. Ei ole tarkoitus, että kaikki käydään läpi, mutta esim. kun noihin liittyviä asioita tulee esille heidän vastauksissa, tartun niihin ja teen lisäkysymyksiä, jotka ovat tuon listan perässä. Erityisesti, jos tulee jotain muita asioita, joita vastaaja pitää tärkeänä, tartun niihin.

SYVENTÄVÄT KYSYMYKSET:

Nämä kysymykset voivat vaihdella paljonkin haastattelusta riippuen. Suomalaisten ja meksikolaisten arvot ovat erilaisia, joten todennäköisesti meksikolaisten haastattelussa nousevat tietyt asiat esille ja suomalaisten haastattelussa toiset. Olen tehnyt muutamia pienimuotoisia esihaastatteluja nähdäkseni, millaisia asioita tulee esille, joten voin vähän ennakoita, millaisia kysymyksiä voisi ottaa esille.

NONVERBAALINEN VIESTINTÄ

1. Proksemiikka & kinesiiikka
 - Millä tavalla meksikolaisessa liike-elämässä suhtaudutaan koskettamiseen ja läheisyyteen? Onko sinun suhtautuminen koskettamiseen ja läheisyyteen muuttunut Meksikossa olosuhteiden aikana? Jos on, niin miksi ja miten?
2. Ilmeet ja eleet
 - Stereotyyppien mukaan latinot elehtivät, heiluttelevat käsiään puhuessaan ja ilmeilevät huomattavasti enemmän kuin esim. suomalaiset. Oletko huomannut yrityskontekstissa ilmeiden tai eleiden käytössä tällaisia eroavaisuuksia? Millä tavalla kuvailisit näitä eroja? Miten olet oppinut ottamaan nämä erot huomioon omassa tavassasi viestiä?
3. Ääni
 - Oletko huomannut äänenkäytössä jotakin eroavaisuuksia? (voimakkuus, sävy...)
4. Artefaktat (pukeutuminen, korut, ylipäättään ulkoinen olemus)
 - Millaisia vaatimuksia meksikolainen liike-elämä asettaa ulkoiselle olemukselle? Millä tavalla se eroaa suomalaisesta? Miten siihen suhtaudut ja miten olet siihen sopeutunut?
5. Aikakäsitys
 - Sanotaan, että Meksiko on "land of mañana". Oletko samaa mieltä? Miksi tai miksi ei?
 - Mitä tarkoittaa täsmällisyys tai ajallaan tuleminen meksikolaiselle yrityselämässä? Mitä se sinulle tarkoittaa? Milloin meksikolainen myöhästyy? Miten siihen sinun kokemuksen mukaan pitäisi suhtautua?
 - Miten olet kokenut meksikolaisen ajankayton?

VERBAALINEN VIESTINTÄ

1. suoruus / epäsuoruus (tai kiertelevyys niinkuin joku oli määritellyt)
 - Sanotaan, että suomalaiset ovat hyvin suoria viestinnässään, kun taas meksikolainen mieluummin kertoo asiat vähän pehmeämmin ja peiteltyinä. Millaisia kokemuksia sinulla on tästä erilaisesta tavasta viestiä? Millä tavalla se vaikuttaa kaupankäyntiin? Onko sinun täytynyt tässä suhteessa oppia jotakin uutta?
2. hiljaisuus / puheliaisuus
 - Kaikista yleisin kommentti suomalaisista on, että me olemme niin hiljaisia. Oletko törmännyt tällaiseen toteamukseen? Miten siihen suhtaudut? Tuntuuko sinusta, että olet vaihtelias?
 - Toinen puoli asiasta on tietenkin se, että meksikolaiset puhuvat paljon. Oletko samaa mieltä? Millä tavalla sinä sen sitten tulkitset ja miten siihen suhtaudut?
3. Pelkistetty puhetyyli ja sanavalinnat / rönsyilevä puhetyyli ja runsas vaikuttavien sanojen käyttö

ARVOT

1. Työ/ihmissuhdeorientoituneisuus
 - Työilmasto / ihmissuhdeilmasto
 - Sanotaan, että ihmissuhteilla on meksikolaisessa ympäristössä erittäin suuri merkitys. Miten sinä olet huomannut tämän työpaikkasi ihmissuhteissa? Millä tavalla olet ottanut sitä omissa toimintatavoissasi huomioon?
 - Saavutetut tulokset / henkilökohtainen miellyttävyys
 - Ryhmään kuuluvuus / itsenäisyys
 - Tekemiseen suuntautunut "Tee äläkä puhu" / puhumiseen suuntautunut
2. *Respeto*
 - Miten näytetään kunnioitusta/arvostusta *respeto* toista kohtaan? Miksi jostakin suhteesta puuttuu kunnioitus/arvostus, mitä osapuolet ovat tehneet? Voiko kunnioitus/arvostus palata suhteeseen? Miten? Esimerkiksi tämä tulee mitä todennäköisimmin esille meksikolaisten kanssa.
 - *La dignidad*
 - Valta ja hierarkia
 - Miten valtaa osoitetaan meksikolaisessa yrityksessä? Millaista tässä suhteessa on ollut suomalaisena työskennellä täällä? Oletko muuttanut toimintatapojasi tässä suhteessa?
 - Sinuttelu / teitittely?
 - Tituleeraaminen?
 - Miehen / naisen asema liike-elämässä?
 - Yksityisyys suomalaisittain / meksikolaisittain
 - Mitkä täällä ovat "yksityisasiota", joita työkavereiden kanssa ei jaeta? Onko niissä eroja suomalaiseen systeemiin? Jos on, millä tavalla niihin sinun kokemustesi mukaan kannattaa suhtautua?
 - Rehellisyys
 - Luottamus ja sen synnyttäminen
 - Millainen toimintatapa osoittaa luottamusta? Mistä menettää luottamuksen? Voiko sen saada takaisin? Miten?

- "Ei niihin ole luottamista", on monen suomalaisen kommentti meksikolaisista. Mistä tuollainen päätelmä tulee? Mitä tuollaisessa epäluottamustilanteessa sinun kokemuksesi perusteella kannattaisi tehdä?
- Hyvä kasvat/kohteliaisuus
- Millaisia kohteliaisuusvaatimuksia meksikolainen liike-elämä asettaa? Oletko huomannut eroavaisuuksia suomalaisen liike-elämän asettamien vaatimusten kanssa? Millä tavalla olet nähnyt hyväksi sopeuttaa käyttäytymistäsi tähän ympäristöön? Miten se on vaikuttanut yhteistyöhön?

3. *Simpatia*

Huumorin merkitys

Platicas

Ystävällisyys

Kohteliaisuus

Kiva ulkonäkö

Nauraminen, hymy

Social rapport

- Miten suomalainen kohteliaisuus toimii meksikolaisten kanssa? (Miten meksikolainen kohteliaisuus toimii suomalaisten kanssa?) Oletko joutunut siinä suhteessa muuttamaan? Mitä erilaiset tilanteet vaativat?
- Olen kuullut suomalaisten sanovan, että meksikolaiset ovat ylikohteliaita – mistä tulee sellainen vaikutelma? Miten sinun kokemuksesi perusteella tuollaiseen "ylikohteliaisuuteen" pitäisi suhtautua?
- Usein kuulee meksikolaisen suusta, että suomalaiset ovat kylmiä. Mistä tulee sellainen vaikutelma? Miten sinun kokemustesi perusteella siihen tulee suhtautua? Millä tavalla tuota vaikutelmaa voisi muuttaa?
- Sanotaan, että ihmissuhteilla on meksikolaisessa ympäristössä erittäin suuri merkitys. Miten sinä olet huomannut tämän työpaikkasi ihmissuhteissa? Millä tavalla olet ottanut sitä omissa toimintatavoissasi huomioon?
- Huumori!!!

APPENDIX 3. Key informant profiles

Key informant 1

Mexican female who works for one of the companies subcontracts for the telecommunication company for which I was working. She holds a management position in marketing. For these reasons she is familiar with the context as well as the company I was working for. She is between 30-35 years old and has a university degree in marketing. Her role is mainly to assist in discussion of issues such as Mexican managerial aspects and Mexican business relations.

Key informant 2

Mexican male who is studying toward a university degree in business. He has had a lot of contact with "Western" people over a period of several years. He is between 25-30 years old. He plays a major role in discussion of interpersonal relationships and situations in which the "Western" counterpart could not understand a Mexican's reaction or did not get any reaction even though one was expected.

APPENDIX 4. Participant profiles

Participant M1

Mexican male who has worked with foreigners, including Finns, for over 10 years. He is between 30-35 years old and holds a management position. He has studied at university for two semesters, but has not finished the studies. In the interview he concentrates on *confianza*: what it means, how it can be attained, maintained and recovered if lost.

Participant M2

Mexican male who has worked with Finns for one year and 3 months. He is between 25-30 years and holds a management position. He has a bachelors' degree in Law (Licenciatura de derechos). He focused on relationships in the working place and many concrete examples were told of how Finnish behaviour could be seen. Finnish directness was also mentioned. Humour was mentioned frequently. Also the aspect of North of Mexico was brought into the picture.

Participant M3

Mexican female who has worked with foreigners 4 years and 4 months, of which the last four months with Finns. She is between 25-30 years and holds a management position. She has a bachelors' degree in communication (Licenciatura de comunicaciones). She focused on relationships in the working place and many concrete examples were told how the Finnish behaviour could be seen. Finnish independence, directness and differences in privacy were widely discussed.

Participant M4

Mexican female who has 15 years of experience working with foreigners, one year of which with Finns. She holds the position of secretary. In the interview she concentrated on practical everyday issues. She commented that she is not very talkative and therefore has not been very eager to build relationships.

Participant M5

Mexican female who has worked one year with Finns, which is her first experience working with foreigners. She holds an administrative position and has a bachelors' degree in administration (Contador público). In the interview she told many methods she has used to build a relationship with her boss. She also discussed topics of general folklore.

Participant M6

Mexican male who has worked 8 years with foreigners, of which 5 years with Finns. He is between 25-30 years and holds a management position. He has a bachelors' degree in accounting (Contador público). In the interview he talked a lot about relationships and emphasised (indirectly) the Mexican communication style and the adaptation to it. He told a lot of practical examples, some of which were seen also in his own communication style.

Participant M7

Mexican male who has worked 2 years and 5 months with foreigners, of which 8 months with Finns. He is between 25-30 years and holds a management position. He has an education in industrial engineering (ingeniero industrial). In the interview he placed strong emphasis on adaptation to the Finnish working values and how to educate Mexican people to use them. Beside task-completion, he highlighted the role of humour.

Participant F1

Finnish male who has worked in Mexico 11 years. Married to a Mexican. He is between 40-45 years old and holds a management position. He has a Masters' degree in marketing. The process of making friends was examined from many perspectives as well as the change that has occurred in Mexican business context during the years he has been there.

Participant F2

Finnish male who has worked with foreigners about 9 years, of which one year in Mexico. Married to a Peruvian. He is between 35-40 years and holds a management position. He is an electrical power engineer (sähkövoimatekniikan insinööri). In the interview he discussed the aspects of hierarchy and its affects e.g. on teamwork. In general the lack of responsibility and reasons for it were discussed.

Participant F3

Finnish male who has worked about 9 years with foreigners, of which one and a half years in Mexico. He is between 35-40 years and holds an upper management position. He has an MS in engineering (diplomi-insinööri). In the interview many concrete situations were discussed. He emphasised positive attitudes and the openness to see and learn new way of thinking. He has seemingly had negative experiences or otherwise had a negative attitude towards intercultural training.

Participant F4

Finnish female who has a management position in the small family business. She has worked abroad for 22 years in Latin America, of which 19 years in Mexico. She has a secretarial education from Helsingin sihteeriopisto. In the interview emphasises the big differences existing in Mexico. The problem of being a boss for such a diverse group of people was discussed. She also brought the role of women in Mexican business context into discussion.

Participant F5

Finnish male who has a management position in the small family business. He has worked abroad for 22 years in Latin America, of which 19 years in Mexico. He has an education as a mechanical technician (konepuolen teknikko). In the interview emphasise on big differences existing in Mexico. The problem of being a boss for such a diverse group of people was discussed. Reliability and the Finnish ability to estimate people were also important topics.

Participant F6

Finnish male who has worked 4 and a half years in Mexico and 10 years abroad altogether. He holds a management position and has a Masters' degree in classical philology (klassinen filologia). He did not want to reveal his age but it could be estimated to be between 40-45 years. He has a strong business orientation and many insightful views on the Mexican way of doing business and Finns' role in that. He has a personal style to express matters and also his communication as he described it followed the same style.

Participant F7

Finnish female who has worked 2 years and half with Mexicans, altogether having six years of work experience as a secretary. She is between 25-30 years and holds the position of secretary. She also had an education as a secretary (ylioppilaspuhjanen sihteerilinja). In the interviews she presented several examples on the difficulties of getting reliable information. Also, the adaptation to time-concept and politeness was discussed.

Participant F8

Finnish male who has worked in Mexico with for more than 17 years and before that several years in other locations with foreigners. He is between 45-50 years and holds an upper management position. In the interview, negative and even disdainful attitudes towards the Mexicans were seen. Many vivid examples from the working place were told exaggerating Mexican characteristics.