

**CRITERIA FOR A SOUTH AFRICAN COURSE IN INTERCULTURAL  
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION:  
THE CASE OF ISCOR IN JAPAN**

by

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## **SUMMARY**

This study identifies the need for intercultural business communication competence and contends that a course in this field is of particular relevance to South African organisations. The aim of this study is to identify, through needs analysis, the specific intercultural business communication requirements of Iscor managers with regard to Japan. The requirements are identified in such a way that they may be used as the criteria for an intercultural business communication course.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the study. The results of the research indicate that managers generally lack knowledge of various communication aspects relating to Japan. Participants also indicated a high degree of culture shock in terms of specific intercultural factors.

The findings of the study form the content topics around which a course in intercultural business communication may be developed. The relative value of the topics to specific managers is also identified.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Intercultural business communication is becoming increasingly important as the international business economy expands. Markets are becoming more global and businesspeople are increasingly compelled to think and act within an international context. It has become a cliché to say the world is shrinking or becoming a *global village*. Rapid technological developments in transportation and communication in recent decades have brought the nations of the world closer together in a physical sense.

According to Herbig and Kramer (1991:19), "globalisation has led to the growth of multinational business. The increasing interdependence of economies, the tremendous quantities of technological transfer, the worldwide communication capabilities and frequent international exchanges have created the need for improved understanding and interaction with people from foreign cultures".

Rhinesmith (1993:5) holds that "diversity - both domestic and international - will be the engine that drives the creative energy of the corporation of the 21st century". Successful global managers will be those who are able to manage this diversity for the innovative and competitive edge of their corporations.

Waisfisz (1994:24) affirms this: "Increasing globalisation is leading to an appreciation of the fact that cultural difference is an essential factor in 'getting things done.' By knowing how to do business in Germany, Great Britain, Japan and the USA, to mention just a few countries, cultural differences can be made to work for the visitor. Too frequently, however, cultural differences are perceived as hindrances to success. They are rarely considered an asset in creating synergy."

Business globalisation is the ability of a corporation to take a product and market it anywhere in the world. Most companies are international in that they are involved in either sourcing, producing or exporting. As many products are

partially or completely manufactured somewhere other than South Africa, South Africans have to face the fact that they are not economically self-sufficient or capable of commercial isolation. International commerce is vital to South African prosperity. South Africa needs major multinational companies to invest heavily in this country.

If South African businessmen are to meet the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world, they will need to develop a better understanding of how cultural variables influence international business enterprises. The managers of an organisation the size of Iscor must have a global mindset in order for the company to succeed in the international steel market.

The global marketplace has become highly competitive and globalisation has given a new meaning to doing international business. This, however, brings with it a new kind of concern. Moran and Richard (1991:17) maintain that the individuals who are involved in this globalisation will fall short in some of the critical communication skills required to succeed. De Wilde (1991:42) describes these skills as: "intercultural sensitivity and a global value system, requiring a complicated reach in terms of ethics and interpersonal skills."

Harris and Moran (1987:88) in discussing the success of the global manager define intercultural communication as a concept that involves differences in understanding between the cultural conditioning of the manager and the foreign person he meets. They found that managers spend 75 percent of their work time communicating. Ruch (1989:4-5) emphasises the importance of this communication and argues that the ability to acculturate and explain one's own culture to people of another culture is more important for success abroad than having product, price, or quality advantages.

Changes in South Africa's political and economic environment have had a marked effect on the nature and scope of business. South Africa has gained international acceptance again - evidenced by the country rejoining the Organisation for Africa Unity (OAU), the Commonwealth and the United Nations. South Africans are again welcome in most countries around the world.

The worldwide opening of doors to South Africans has led to a dramatic increase in interaction with foreign businessmen, government officials, administrators and politicians. Laburn (1994:20) summarises it as follows: "If we need proof that we've become part of the global family once again, just take a walk through cosmopolitan downtown Johannesburg - there's a hive of activity, an air of excitement. The world has come to us."

The country's status is changing almost daily. Political changes resulted in the lifting of sanctions against South Africa and a "plethora of inward and outward investments as South Africa shed its pariah status" (Perlstein 1996:7). South African businesses have to become internationally competitive or be forced out of business.

The challenge facing every company in South Africa is to bridge the gap between the country and its rivals. This gap is bigger for South Africa than for other countries that became aware of the realities of globalisation and its implications for business much sooner. For approximately 40 years, South African companies were protected from the reality of international business. There was no pressure to be competitive. Now the country's borders have been opened and South African businesses have to compete with companies that had the advantage of continuous growth precipitated by the pressure of international competition.

The ensuing re-establishment of trade relations and forging of new business links with a host of countries - including Japan, the Republic of China, the People's Republic of China, Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong, have changed the playing fields for large South African organisations such as Iscor. This has created a radical shift in markets for the country in general and an even more radical shift for Iscor, where steel markets are concerned. Although the lifting of exchange controls generated many new opportunities, companies like Iscor are losing market share because of the simultaneous lifting of import tax and government subsidies. Customers can now import cheaper than formerly and foreign firms are invading South Africa's domestic market. Apart from improving price and quality, South African companies will

have to do something phenomenal to distinguish themselves and to build or even maintain their market share in the world.

To capitalise on the globalisation of commerce, South African managers will have to start thinking beyond the borders of this country. Managers need to focus on the realities of doing business in the global marketplace to succeed in the highly competitive international environment.

The changes in the world economic "atmosphere" as Martin (1991:1) labels it, calls for South African businessmen "to become as accomplished at communication as their competitors, customers, and suppliers. If a (South African) company is earning profits overseas, that company must be able to communicate effectively with people of the cultures involved". In order to accomplish this, Iscor managers will have to acquire a global mindset.

The different communication skills that managers in South African organisations will have to acquire to competently and effectively conduct business overseas are significant. Since all international business activity involves communication, knowledge of intercultural communication and international business communication is important to prepare managers to succeed in the international marketplace.

The concern is that individuals, representing these companies entering the global marketplace, lack some of the crucial skills required to survive and succeed in an environment that is culturally totally different to their own. Waisfisz (1994: 22) refers to this problem specifically: "In this new international context, one important consideration must be how well the representatives of the new South Africa, in both the public and private sectors, are prepared to deal with cultural differences in work situations abroad. South African businessmen in particular have less experience working in and with foreign cultures than their competitors and counterparts from other countries. A key issue will be how to avoid the costly 'culture' errors which so many other countries have committed in the global arena."

This study investigates the need for training in intercultural business communication and argues that intercultural communication and a course in this field is of particular relevance to Iscor managers. Attention is given to skills relevant to, and perceived as essential for, effective intercultural business communication.

The study focuses on intercultural communication and provides a number of theoretical approaches to understanding intercultural business communication. In order to rationalise the focus of this study, the relationship between South Africa and Japan in general and Iscor and Japanese companies in particular, is explored. The relevance of mostly non-South African studies, and current literature on the state of the art regarding existing courses in intercultural business communication are also discussed.

The needs analysis conducted to determine the intercultural business communication skills required by Iscor managers and the topics they consider important for a course in intercultural business communication are described. Finally, the results of the survey, the insights gained during the investigation, the conclusions and recommendations are discussed.

## 1.1 The importance of intercultural training

Intercultural training may be defined as “any procedure intended to increase an individual’s ability to cope and work in a foreign environment” (Tung 1981:5).

With the increasing internationalisation of the economy, intercultural business communication continues to become more important. Managers need knowledge of intercultural business communication to prepare them for upward mobility and promotion in the culturally diverse domestic and international environments of the future. The importance of training, in preparing an individual for intercultural work assignments has become increasingly apparent (Baker 1984; Lee 1983; Tung 1981). Much attention has been devoted to the issues of managerial training and development, and in a lesser sense to training South African managers to contend with difficulties in the local

intercultural environment. Less research has, however, specifically focused on preparing these managers for international intercultural encounters.

A study by Henry (1965:17-25) documented the need for companies to prepare operatives assigned to work in a different culture. Lee and Larwood (1984:657-665) suggest that individuals could avoid some role conflict through anticipatory socialisation, in which they obtained advance information about a new culture and adopt their anticipated roles. Anecdotal evidence presented by Baker (1984:68-72) also illustrates the need for intercultural training.

A main objective of intercultural training is to help people cope with unexpected events in a new culture, as an individual overwhelmed by a new culture will be unable to perform required duties effectively. According to Earley (1987:686), an ill-prepared individual may inadvertently offend or alienate a foreign host and jeopardise existing long-term relationships with a host country, while Steyn (1994:36) maintains that: "An understanding of another's culture, particularly of the values of the culture, is known to enhance empathy and can be augmented through sound training." Consequently, an objective of training is to reduce conflict arising from unexpected situations and actions.

Harris and Moran (1987:88-89) refer to 'cultural' shock, which they define as "the generalised trauma people experience in new and different cultures because they must learn to cope with a vast array of new cultural cues and expectations". It is generally thought that culture shock reduces the ability to function in a cultural setting because of a perceived discrepancy between an individual's expectations of how events should proceed and how they actually occur. The level of culture shock an individual experiences, is positively related to the individual's perceived need to adjust to a new culture. The cumulative effect of such discordant events is a state of stress resulting in culture shock (Spradley & Phillips 1972:518-529). There are a variety of training techniques available to train people for intercultural work assignments and thereby reduce the level of culture shock they will experience.

### 1.1.1 The need for greater awareness of the cultural environment

Trend watchers predict a worldwide revival of cultural assertiveness. In the early 1980s Naisbitt (1982:76) stated that "the Swedes will become more Swedish, the Chinese more Chinese. And the French, God help us, more French." The message is clear: Study and be prepared to adjust to a foreign culture or stay out of international business.

Research has shown that failures in the overseas business setting most frequently result from the inability to understand and adapt to foreign ways of thinking and acting rather than from technical or professional incompetence. Insensitivity to the cultural realities can produce disastrous results. Literature on international business is filled with examples of business blunders. By knowing something about Asian business culture and protocol, South African businessmen can obtain advantages for themselves and their companies. South African executives can increase their competitiveness in Asia by sharpening their intercultural communication skills and learning the rules of Asian social and business etiquette.

Simple lists of cultural do's and don'ts are hopelessly inadequate. As Waisfisz (1994:23-24) affirms: "Managing in an intercultural environment is a complicated and subtle issue requiring much more knowledge and preparation than a list of do's and don'ts. Instead sophisticated training programs must provide accurate and relevant information that is drawn from cultural anthropology, speech communication, socio-linguistics, and comparative organisational development."

Traditionally, in the few instances where there has been preparation of staff for cross-cultural assignments, it has generally taken the form of briefings on the history, institutions, climate and social customs of the countries to be visited. According to Waisfisz (1994:24), "such briefings, although dealing primarily with the more superficial manifestations of a national culture, are not without value and can certainly help the visiting businessman to develop local contacts more quickly and prevent elementary social errors". He further believes that

advice on how to mind one's manners in a foreign country may be useful, but, "unless it is connected to and put into context of the deeply rooted belief and value systems which are the core of every national culture, it is of limited use to managers who have to grapple with intercultural issues and differences".

Many South African companies place very little priority on cultural values, negotiating behaviour and business protocol of their customers and suppliers in the Asian market, when planning their global corporate strategies. These companies tend to do little to train representatives who must cross into Asian cultures. They seem inclined to skip this step, because market research requires them to learn more about what they perceive as *exotic* cultures and languages - which they consider difficult. To make matters worse, their competitors ensure that their representatives enter Asian markets familiarised with Asian idiosyncrasies and taboos.

Various factors contribute to this lack of comprehensive cross-cultural training. Robinson (1973:277) lists five factors, which contribute to the lack of comprehensive cross-cultural training programmes:

- The temporary nature of many such assignments.
- Lack of time caused by the immediacy of the need for the manager overseas.
- The trend towards employment of local nationals.
- Scepticism about the need for such specialised training.
- Misgivings about the effectiveness of existing training programmes.

Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou (1987:334-335) reviewed relevant literature written during 1971 to 1985, and produced a list of six reasons for multinational corporations not focusing efforts and resources on the cross-cultural training of managers assigned overseas:

- The belief that cross-cultural training programmes are not effective.
- Trainee dissatisfaction with the training programmes.
- The lack of time between selection and relocation, which prohibits in-depth cross-cultural training because there is not enough time to expose the manager to 'quality training'.



- The perception that because the overseas assignment is relatively short it does not warrant expenditure on training.
- The shift towards employing local nationals in management.
- The lack of perception by top management that there is a need for such programmes.

Li (1992:24) argues that the above-mentioned factors, which contribute to the lack of cross-cultural training and of 'comprehensive' programmes, are "all seemingly produced by the isolation of the human resource function, including training and development, from strategic planning processes of the multinational corporations."

#### 1.1.2 The cost of international business

"Good manners are cost effective" according to Baldrige (1985:87). She maintains that they "increase the quality of life in the workplace, contribute to optimum employee morale, embellish the company image, and hence play a major role in generating profit".

If good manners at home are 'cost effective' how much more cost effective is proper etiquette in the international arena. Axtell (1990:89) estimates that "the cost effectiveness of proper protocol is elevated to the second or even third power, because there is so much more room for error."

Kohls (1984:6) says that without international training, only about 20 percent of those sent abroad can be expected to do well, and 40 to 60 percent will leave the assignment early or function far below their potential.

Although well meaning, the honest and pleasant South African executive often offends his more reserved and face-conscious Asian counterpart. He tends to enter Asia without the slightest notion of its history, values, or style of communication. Once in Asia, South Africans commit blunders ranging from the excusable - like gestures - to the more profound but subtle errors in intercultural communication. An example of a typical failure is not to recognise important non-verbal Asian cues like the lack of eye contact, laughter and most significant of all, the use of silence. These cultural signs might still be neglected without effect when one is the buyer, but a seller who ignores them does so at his peril.

South African companies involved in international trade lose thousands of rands per year in the direct cost of failure. There are, however, no figures available for cost of lost business and damaged company reputation caused by business travellers involved in international business, but inadequately prepared for international encounters. Between 1987 and 1999 South Africans visited Japan an average of 1449 times per annum (Table 1). Between 1994 and 1999, the majority of visits (61%) to Japan were for business reasons (Table 2).

**TABLE 1: THE NUMBER OF TRIPS UNDERTAKEN BY SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENTS TO JAPAN FROM 1987 TO 1999**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of trips per annum</b>
1987	1594
1988	931
1989	1352
1990	1112
1991	1088
1992	1066
1993	244
1994	1895
1995	2070
1996	2026
1997	2085
1998	1926
1999*	518

\*Note: Only figures for first six months (Jan. – Jun) were available.

(SA Statistics 2000)

**TABLE 2: THE PURPOSE OF TRIPS UNDERTAKEN BY SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENTS TO JAPAN FROM 1994 TO 1999\***

Year	Total number of trips per annum	Business	Holiday	Study
1994	1895	1150	663	76
1995	2070	1236	765	69
1996	2026	1267	676	83
1997	2085	1291	704	90
1998	1926	1162	686	78
1999				

\*Note: The purpose of visit was only available from 1994  
(SA Statistics 2000)

Most companies are unwilling to reveal details regarding their travel expenditure. Continuously increasing travel costs contribute to a significant portion of companies' annual expenditure. Transportation, accommodation and daily allowances paid by companies make the financial investment in international travel no small matter.

Notwithstanding high costs and high risks, frequent travel is a minimum requirement for success in the international marketplace. Heads of international operations are increasingly becoming aware of the recklessness of sending ineffective people - unskilled and incompetent in terms of intercultural communication proficiency - abroad. The cost of training is inconsequential compared to the risk of losing future markets by involving people who do not have the required skills and sensitivity.

### 1.1.3 Meeting the international challenge

According to Engholm (1991), meeting the international challenge is not simply a matter of improving products. The ability to make it in the world economic environment will depend on the competence of the managers who are sent to the forefront of international business. Business competence must now be defined in terms of cultural adeptness as well as business skills. The success of a company abroad depends on how effectively its employees can exercise and adapt their intercultural communication skills in the new environment.

Engholm (1991:12) says: "Asians will usually reciprocate what you bring to the table in *form* with the equivalent in *substance*. No simple *quid pro quo* holds true in all negotiations, but playing by Asian customers' rules of business practice and protocol offers a comparative advantage over competitors who ignore them".

Developing good communication skills is a complex task. It is difficult enough to understand and interact with people of the same culture. South Africans should know how much more difficult it is to avoid misunderstanding people with complex cultural and communication differences. "The best response to the intercultural challenge is training that unites intercultural scholarship and experience with the skills of the professional training designer" (Cyr 1990:85).

South African success abroad is hindered by failure to understand how cultures differ. Failure overseas rarely results from technical or professional incompetence. Companies take their international business seriously and typically send abroad high achievers who have proven skills and expertise. However, their success is usually in South Africa, where their skills, style and attitude may be exactly the opposite of what will work overseas. Once overseas, many South African managers approach their customers with an ignorance that would be unthinkable and inexcusable at home. They are willing to do business with foreigners without understanding who they are, how they view the world and how their corporations work. Sensitivity to national pride, values, and even taste in food is, however, imperative.

#### 1.1.4 The global manager

A global manager needs to focus on the concrete realities of doing business in the global marketplace. According to Ruch (1989:10), today's global manager is "cosmopolitan, effective as an intercultural communicator and negotiator, creates cultural synergy, and leads cultural change, especially at work, in organizations and project teams."

Borden (1991:210-213) lists seven characteristics that individuals must possess to succeed interculturally: He believes the degree to which intercultural communication can be understood depends upon the degree to which the individual:

- is aware that his intent to communicate, either as communicator or communicatee, may result in only expressive behaviour or information gathering respectively.
- self-concept in one culture can operate independently of the self-concept in the other culture.
- is competent in the language of each culture.
- is able to work within the constraints (personal, situational, and cultural) of the human communication system established by the communication from other cultures.
- is culturally literate in his own and the other's culture.
- knows the position of his culture on the four universal value dimensions and their interaction with the cultural orientation model.
- knows the cultural orientation of his own culture as well as that of the other's culture.

The emphasis is consequently on the different skills that global managers need to succeed interculturally.

When managers have the range of skills required to successfully negotiate with cultures in the Asian-Pacific region they acquire, what Engholm (1991:10) labels "etiquette edge". This etiquette edge refers to more than learning the customs and manners of a foreign business environment. A company with the ability to traverse cultures, communicate with people in foreign regions and negotiate long-range overseas partnerships based on reciprocal trust, will have the edge over its competition.

Business in Asia involves a high degree of ritual and reciprocity. Acceptance into Asia's diverse business cultures and strong relationships with businesspeople there, are factors that outweigh many of the traditional competitive advantages. To attain an "etiquette edge", one must master a

series of intercultural communication competencies. Among them are the following desirable skills:

- Resolving conflicts and impasses while safeguarding a counterpart's (reputation).
- Communicating ideas, humour and individuality through an interpreter.
- Perceiving and comprehending nonverbal facial expressions and body language (called "body language" in Japan).
- Exchanging technical knowledge with Asians, without giving up classified information.

No one is born with these skills. Most executives visiting Asia for the first time are unaware of their shortcomings. Reading guidebooks helps; experience helps even more.

Following Asian rules of business practice and protocol offers a comparative advantage over competitors who ignore them. Participation means, among other aspects, being a culturally sensitive guest, becoming familiar with traditional greeting rituals, Asian communication patterns, negotiation tactics, dining and drinking etiquette, gift giving and ceremonial events.

The first step to understanding a culture, is understanding one's own. The South African way of doing business is quite distinct from the way business is done in most other countries. It is made up of all the habitual ways South Africans behave at work and how they do their jobs. It is shaped by common attitudes and assumptions about work, the workplace and markets. It is supported by common ways of thinking about life and other values more or less directly related to work. When South Africans look through their cultural frame of reference at home, they generally know how to interpret and evaluate what they see. When they look at foreign situations through their own frame of reference, however, they may come to the wrong conclusions. When going abroad frame of reference and value system can and should not be left behind. To really understand what is going on and to be effective in foreign situations, South Africans need to understand their own assumptions and know how different they are from those of the rest of the world.

### 1.1.5 The value of etiquette in the corporate world

When conducting business with someone from another culture, knowledge of certain rules of business and social etiquette is important. According to Chaney and Martin (1995:2), etiquette is "manners and behaviour considered acceptable in social and business situations." It is expedient to remember that the world is a global village and as result of the extent to which people travel around it these days, cultures will touch. Consequently, etiquette changes on a daily basis. Wherever you may be and whomever you meet during your business travels it is worth remembering that a little business decorum goes a long way in forging good relations. Proper social behaviour includes learning cultural variations in making introductions, greeting others, exchanging business cards, recognising and acknowledging position and status, observing cultural customs and protocol, dining practices, tipping customs and giving gifts.

Chaney and Martin (1995:114) are of the opinion that first impressions are made only once but are remembered for a long time. They argue that, "Diplomacy isn't only for diplomats. How you behave in other people's countries reflects on more than you alone. It also brightens - or dims - the image of where you come from and whom you work for".

Being sensitive to cultural variations will ensure that your first encounter and every following encounter with a person from another country and culture will leave a positive impression, not only of you but also of your country and your culture.

Referring to the various opinions contained in Beasley's guide to business etiquette (1994:15-19), the following four main notions need to be taken into consideration in business development:

- Respect and consideration.
- Diplomacy.
- Attention to detail.
- Standard of conduct.

#### 1.1.5.1 Respect and consideration

Danie du Toit (Beasley 1994:15) of Telkom SA Ltd is of the opinion that the business environment is "currently in a state of flux". The old established ways of doing things are changing, new doors are opening and new opportunities are arising. He reasons that the Southern African businessman will in future have to deal increasingly with a whole new range of local and international people.

In a world of cultural diversity, cultural differences will come into play. The businessman who wishes to enhance the professional image of his organisation will have to consider these differences. According to Du Toit (Beasley 1994:16), etiquette goes beyond knowing which spoon to use. He considers it "more as a tool which can be used to bridge cultural gaps, thereby augmenting the communication process and promoting an atmosphere of mutual understanding - something which is of crucial importance in South Africa today".

The responsible businessman will have to do his homework. When meeting a person with a different cultural background to his own, he should attempt at least to familiarise himself with the most important aspects of that person's values, beliefs, traditions and customs. It is often these finer nuances that make the difference.

#### 1.1.5.2 Diplomacy

"Representing your company abroad makes you an ambassador of sorts - we represent our companies, and, of course, we represent ourselves" (Beasley 1994:17).

Lilian Boyle (Beasley 1994:17) of Rennie's Travel, believes that no matter what business one is in, success is not determined by what one does but by how one does it. To her that means how the businessman interacts with others, because life in business is all about managing relationships. She says: "In this



turbulent world in which we live today there is no substitute for good communication, good manners, good behaviour. Remember - there's always a right way, a wrong way, and a nice way!"

#### 1.1.5.3 Attention to detail

Dr John Maree (Beasley 1994:17) of Eskom, maintains that "businesses are often judged by the people whom they encounter, in terms of the small things that they do or neglect to do... These little things have made ordinary people truly great." It is therefore important for the reputation of the organisation that the requirements of good manners and good etiquette are honoured.

#### 1.1.5.4 Standard of conduct

According to Ali Mokoka (Beasley 1994:19) of First National Bank's Small Business Unit, South Africans have to encourage integrity, loyalty, commitment and impeccable standards in their personal working environments to become accepted as a nation of integrity, loyalty, commitment and impeccable standards. He argues: "Even allowing for the huge variety of cultures in our land, there is a commonality of civilised mores to which we all subscribe. While communities have unwritten codes of behaviour, respect for the individual and integrity seem to be the cornerstone. The ability to accept differing cultures and behaviour, the acceptance that our way is not the only way, and the acknowledgement that a different method of conducting a meeting, of signing a contract, even of saying good morning, is not an insult to our preferred method, but rather a step towards gaining the respect and reputation that we need and desire in the rest of the world".

### 1.2 Importance of the study

This study argues that, in addition to professional and technical knowledge and training, the ability to get along with people and establish sound interpersonal relationships on an international level is becoming of increasing importance in the business world. An understanding of international business communication

has become imperative for businessmen to succeed in the international marketplace.

It may be argued that because of the cultural diversity in this country most South Africans are skilled in intercultural communication. The opposite is however, true. Until as recently as 1990, the apartheid system made it difficult for most South Africans of different races to meet socially. Consequently, ineffectual communication took place between people of different racial groups. Very few people had the opportunity to learn other cultures and communication behaviour (Steinberg 1993:3).

The concern is that South African managers will not be able to succeed in building international business relationships if they cannot succeed in building intercultural relationships within their own country.

South Africa is of course also faced with the challenge of dealing with - and finding means of dealing with - cultural differences at home. While the importance of this internal challenge is not questioned, it is becoming increasingly important to also focus on the external challenge, that is those situations in which South Africans will have to work and do business, either here or abroad. It could be argued that a course in intercultural business communication could, apart from improving international business relationships, also contribute to building improving intercultural relationships within the country by creating intercultural sensitivity.

The initial literature study revealed that an adequate measure of attention has been paid to the development of intercultural communication skills between the different racial groups in South Africa. Conversely, not much has been done to meet specific South African requirements in terms of research or the development of training programmes in intercultural business communication and etiquette.

### 1.3 Rationale

The specific aim of this study is to determine the intercultural communication skills that Iscor managers require and perceive as important. This, and adapted measures may be used to develop training courses that will satisfy the intercultural communication skills requirements of all South African managers.

Against this background, it can be said that the nature of this problem is related to changes in global business and the difficulties businesspeople experience in communicating within the global business setting consisting of differing cultures. While there is a need to develop a course in intercultural business communication it is necessary to determine the content of such a course first. The content of the course will depend on the intercultural business communication skills required by Iscor managers.

This study therefore determines the content of a course in intercultural business communication in which the primary focus will be placed on skills acquisition. Such a course would suit the needs of managers who wish to improve their intercultural business communication skills. For this reason the managers' perception of what a course in intercultural business communication should include will largely determine the approach adopted in developing the course. It is suggested that the proposed course be presented by Iscor's Organisation Development Department as part of the Leadership Works Programme for managers.

### 1.4 Statement of the problem

The problem of this study is to determine the appropriate content of a course in intercultural business communication for South African businesspeople.

#### **1.4.1 Aim**

The aim of this study is to identify the specific intercultural business communication needs of Iscor managers with regard to Japan. The needs are identified in such a way that they may be used as the criteria for an intercultural business communication course.

**1.4.1.1.** The primary aim of the research is to determine which content aspects Iscor managers consider important, paying specific attention to the skills and etiquette required for doing business in Japan.

**1.4.1.2** Although the specific aim of this study is to determine the intercultural communication skills that Iscor managers require to conduct business overseas in a competent and effective manner, the ultimate objective is to develop a course that will meet the intercultural communication skills requirements of these managers. Insight gained in investigating research questions posed at the beginning of the study will provide guidelines with regard to the content of a course in intercultural business communication suitable for South African managers.

#### **1.4.2 Methodological approach and composition of the study**

The research method used in this study is a descriptive survey, which according to Wimmer and Dominick (1991:107) "attempts to picture or document current conditions or attitudes, that is to describe what exists at the moment".

Personal interviews, focus groups and self-administered mailed questionnaires were used in the study.

## 1.5 Definition of terms

### 1.5.1 Intercultural communication

Hall (1971) first defined intercultural communication as *communication between persons of different cultures.*

Webster's Dictionary (1980:596) defines *intercultural communication* as referring to an "exchange between individuals from different cultural backgrounds."

Samovar and Porter (1991:1) hold that "Whenever the parties of a communication act bring with them *different experiential backgrounds that reflect a long-standing deposit of group experience, knowledge and values*, we have intercultural communication."

According to Dodd (1995:5), "Intercultural communication involves *building commonality in a world of cultural diversity.*"

Tubbs and Moss (1983:12-13) describe intercultural communication as "*communication between members of different cultures (whether defined in terms of racial, ethnic, or socio-economic differences, or a combination of these differences.)*"

Kim (1984:16) defines intercultural communication "as the communication phenomenon in which participants, different in cultural background, come into contact, be it direct or indirect."

The terms intercultural and cross-cultural are used interchangeably. According to Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Wiseman (1991:284), cross-cultural communication refers to *comparisons* of communication in different cultures while Lewis (1997:106) refers to cross-cultural issues that "arise when peoples holding different world views begin to interact with each other." He holds that each society believes that its citizens behave in a normal manner and that the

corollary of this is that other societies are, to some degree, abnormal. Cross-culturalists attempt to explain to people involved in international relations that differences in cultural attitudes are frequently reconcilable and that commonalities exist between most cultures.

As this study investigates communication between Japanese and South African managers the definition used in for the study is that of Gudykunst et al (1991:284) that describes intercultural communication as "communication between people from different cultural groups (for example communication between a Japanese and a Canadian)".

### 1.5.2 Intercultural business communication

Intercultural business communication is a relatively new term in the business world. In this study the term refers to Chaney and Martin's (1995:2) definition namely: "communication within and between businesses that involves people from more than one culture." An intercultural businessperson is therefore "an individual who has a business relationship with individuals in other countries or cultures" (Martin 1991:7).

### 1.5.3 Intercultural training

In general, intercultural training may be defined as: "any procedure intended to increase an individual's ability to cope and work in a foreign environment" (Tung 1981:5).

A major objective of intercultural training is to help people cope with unexpected events in a new culture.

As coping with the environment entails communication Brislin (1989:441) takes this a step further and defines *intercultural communication training* as "planned efforts to assist adjustments when people are to live and work in cultures other than their own ... or when they are to interact extensively with members of

different cultures within their own nation.” Brislin’s definition is used in this study.

#### 1.5.4 Culture

The word “*culture*” has literally dozens of definitions. For the purpose of this study, Steyn’s definition (1994:17), which discerns a correlation between culture and communication, is used. She is of the opinion that culture essentially concerns “the way in which people who share a history - and, often a language - make sense of the world. It evolves and shifts through *communication* networks which link people both within and without the culture”.

Chaney and Martin (1995:2) adopted a similar definition of culture as “the structure through which communication is formulated and interpreted.”

#### 1.6 Research questions

The ultimate objective of this study is to develop a training course that will satisfy the intercultural communication skills requirements of all South African managers, based on an analysis of the intercultural communication skills that Iscor managers require and perceive as important. The purpose of such a course will be to improve the manager’s business competence by promoting knowledge of communication, cultural diversity and intercultural business communication skills while increasing the manager’s aptitude to apply this knowledge.

The following research questions are tested in this study:

1. What is intercultural business communication?
2. What is the relationship between South Africa and Japan in general and Iscor and Japanese companies in particular?
3. What intercultural business communication skills do international businesspeople require?

4. Are South African managers significantly different from managers in other countries?
5. Are the intercultural business communication skills that South African managers require significantly different from those that managers in other countries require?
6. What intercultural business communication skills do South African managers - in this case represented by Iscor managers - require?
7. What intercultural business communication skills do South African managers - in this case represented by Iscor managers - lack?
8. What topics should be included in a course in intercultural business communication for Iscor?

## 1.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the need for training in intercultural business communication. It is argued that intercultural communication and a course in intercultural business communication is of particular relevance to South African businessmen, because of the current globalisation of business and the fact that the international marketplace is often the context in which people from different countries and cultures meet.

The context in which intercultural business communication skills are seen is provided in Chapter 2 by drawing on the literature on intercultural business communication to provide a variety of theoretical approaches to understanding intercultural business communication. Attention is paid to defining intercultural communication. Attention is given to skills relevant to and perceived as essential for effective intercultural business communication. The purpose is to identify and describe the most important communication skills required by businessmen and not to give a critical evaluation of these skills.

In order to justify the focus of this study on Japan and provide background for this study Chapter 3 pays attention to the relationship which exists between South Africa and Japan in general, and between Iscor and Japanese companies in particular.



A discussion of the literature on the state of the art regarding existing courses in intercultural business communication is provided in Chapter 4. The relevance of these mostly non-South African studies is also discussed and a concise overview of the skills that international businesspeople require and which skills they lack (research question 3) is provided. Particular attention is paid to:

- Previous studies in this field.
- Results of the studies.
- Skills identified and found important by other researchers specifically in terms of Japan.

Chapter 5 discusses the needs analysis conducted to determine what intercultural business communication skills Iscor managers require, which skills they lack and the topics they consider important for a course in intercultural business communication (Research questions 6, 7 and 8).

The results of the survey are reported in Chapter 6 while the insights gained during the investigation, the conclusions and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 2

### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

It is argued in Chapter 1 that intercultural communication is of particular relevance to South African businessmen, because of the current globalisation of business and the fact that the international marketplace is often the terrain where people from different countries and cultures meet.

In this chapter, the context in which intercultural business communication skills are seen is provided by drawing on the literature to provide a variety of theoretical approaches to understanding intercultural business communication. Attention is paid to defining intercultural communication. The communication barriers that hamper effective communication and the effect they have on communication are identified and discussed with the view to later identifying skills that may be necessary to overcome these barriers. Attention is given to skills relevant to and perceived as essential for effective intercultural business communication. The purpose is to identify and describe the most important communication skills required by businessmen and not to give a critical evaluation of these skills.

In recent years, long-distance communication and travel have become more accessible to the general public. Today, many people regularly travel long distances to negotiate business agreements. However, as intercultural communication and travel have become more common, most travellers have realised that people of different cultures *speak different languages* in many ways.

Intercultural communication is not generally discussed as a discrete skill in the literature on international business. The main focus of intercultural communication is not the cultural similarities or differences between participants, but the process of communication between groups and or individuals. The most commonly expressed view about intercultural

communication is, however, that it is no different to any other interpersonal communication (Gudykunst et al 1991:273).

According to Tubbs and Moss (1983:365), "The dramatic improvements in the technological means of communication have in many instances outstripped our abilities to communicate effectively with people who have different languages, different beliefs and values, and different expectations of relationships."

Steyn (1994:15) explains this aspect as follows: "A degree of anxiety tends to accompany intercultural communication. Outcomes of interactions seem unsure and responses of other interactants somewhat unpredictable. One must be able to tolerate a certain measure of discomfort to fare well in such interactions."

The more diverse two cultures are, the wider the division between their people and the less the understanding of one another will be. People learn more about another culture in individual, personal relationships. The division between cultural groups who have little contact is therefore likely to be greater and even more difficult to reconcile. "Because unconscious 'scripts' interfere with how well we understand each other, culture is an important variable in all communication and one which we cannot ignore" (Steyn 1994:17).

Learning these different aspects of a given culture will, however, not allow understanding of that culture in the same way you understand your own. As much as a person of South African heritage may study Japanese culture, for example, he can never really understand what it is to be raised in that culture. Culture as Hall (1976:2) describes it, "can be understood only by painstaking or detailed analysis."

Understanding intercultural communication can, however, pave the way to mutual understanding and respect. As Steyn (1994:35) observes, "intercultural communication skills are essentially those of any good communication."

## 2.1 Communication barriers

The problems that arise with intercultural communication are not cultural as such, but more related to barriers due to the misunderstanding of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of others, that create errors in perception. Tubbs and Moss (1983:12-13) describe intercultural communication as "communication between members of different cultures (whether defined in terms of racial, ethnic, or socio-economic differences, or a combination of these differences.)" The focus here is consequently on differences.

Chaney and Martin (1995:11) define communication barriers as "obstacles to effective communication." Communication barriers occur because of the many differences existing between various cultures. These barriers lead to a breakdown in effective communication. One of the most important intercultural skills that an international traveller needs is the ability to identify and eliminate communication barriers. An example of such a barrier is the cultural disparity of the head nod, which indicates agreement in most Western cultures but in Japan means only that the person is listening.

Bell (1992:11) identifies the following barriers to communication:

- Physical - time, environment, comfort and needs, and physical medium of communication (e.g. telephone, letter).
- Cultural - ethnic, religious, and social differences.
- Perceptual - viewing what is said from your own mindset.
- Motivational - include the listener's mental passivity.
- Experiential - lack of similar life happenings.
- Emotional - personal feelings of the listener.
- Linguistic - different languages spoken by the speaker and listener or use of a vocabulary beyond the comprehension of the listener.
- Non-verbal - caused by how something is said and non-word messages.
- Competition - the listener's desire to do other things rather than listen to the communication.

If we add to this list the following cultural obstacles or barriers to intercultural communication described by Tubbs and Moss (1983:365), it becomes obvious why there are so many more misunderstandings than understanding between different cultures:

### 2.1.1 Verbal messages

Successful intercultural business encounters depend to a large extent on effective verbal communication.

#### 2.1.1.1 Language differences

The first barrier to verbal communication is language differences. Each language is suited to describing and dealing with the social realities peculiar to its culture.

Whorf (1956:129) declares that "the world is perceived differently by members of different linguistic communities" and that "this perception is transmitted and sustained by language."

As Chaney and Martin (1995:107) summarise it: "A language is a complex system, intricately related to culture where culture and language both affect each other. The use of language in creating political, social, economic, and education processes is a consequence of favouring certain ideals over others."

Not many travellers have had the opportunity to master more than one or two foreign languages. Understanding the culture without understanding the language is difficult, as successful communication with someone from another culture involves understanding of a common language. Without this shared language, communication problems may occur when a third party, the translator or interpreter, attempts to convey both the verbal and non-verbal intent of the message (Chaney & Martin 1995:138).

Today English is distinguishing itself as this commonly shared language in international business.

Guy and Mattock (1993:132) determined that:

- 300 million people speak English as their mother tongue.
- 800 million more use it daily.
- 75 percent of the world's mail is in English; as are
- 80 percent of the data stored on the world's computers, and
- 45 percent of the world's scientific publications.

Consequently, to speak English is to speak to the world. The person doing business in the international market today expects his foreign host to speak at least some English in most intercultural business encounters. For businessmen, the good news is that international counterparts will very likely understand some English. The bad news is that they may not use the same English Messages are often misunderstood because so many variations of the English language exist. Differences in accents, dialects and other regional peculiarities may present barriers to effective communication. Speakers of English also often use slang, colloquialisms, idioms, jargon, buzzwords, lingo, officialese, acronyms and metaphors.

Steyn (1994:17) identifies another language related barrier. She believes that although most people are more conscious of the language barriers that inhibit their understanding cross-culturally, major barriers are caused by the attitudes and stereotypes that people attach to different languages.

#### 2.1.1.2 Appropriateness of the verbal message

Another barrier affecting verbal communication is produced by the difference in the manner a message is interpreted. When two cultures vary widely, differences in the way a message is evaluated are likely to affect interaction between individuals from the dissimilar cultures.

### 2.1.2 Non-verbal messages

Although much communication in the global business arena is verbal, non-verbal aspects can contribute significantly to understanding and interpreting verbal communication.

Chaney and Martin (1995:56) define non-verbal communication as "nonword messages, such as gestures, facial expressions, interpersonal distance, touch, eye contact, smell and silence".

Non-verbal communication systems vary from culture to culture just as verbal systems do. The symbolic nature of non-verbal systems is often overlooked. Different cultures have different views of factors such as the use of time and space. Non-verbal systems are used to get information about the meaning to be assigned to a verbal message. Because these non-verbal messages are often interpreted unconsciously, the message received is often very different from the one the speaker intended. The Japanese, for example, use non-verbal cues when they feel direct speech might give offence. For them signs of disagreement could include rubbing of the head, a sharp inhalation of breath, or an awkward smile (Cyr 1993:6).

### 2.1.3 Relationships: norms and roles

Norms and roles are unwritten guidelines people within a cultural group follow. Cultures vary in the contexts in which verbal and non-verbal systems are used. Working relationships are not the same and do not develop the same way in every culture. People from different cultures have different expectations regarding behaviour in a relationship. According to Chaney and Martin (1995:10), norms, rules, roles and networks are situational factors that "influence encoding and decoding of both verbal and non-verbal messages within a culture."

### 2.1.3.1 Norms

According to Tubbs and Moss (1983:368), norms are “established rules of what is accepted and appropriate behaviour.” These norms are culturally developed and transmitted.

Chaney and Martin (1995:10) describe norms as “culturally ingrained principles of correct and incorrect behaviors, which, if broken, carry a form of overt or covert penalty.”

### 2.1.3.2 Roles

Tubbs and Moss (1983:369) define roles as “sets of norms that apply to specific groups of people in a society.” These roles vary widely between cultures.

Chaney and Martin (1995:10) state that a role “includes the behavioral expectations of a position within a culture and is affected by norms and rules” Rules that they say, “are formed to clarify cloudy areas in our norms.”

### 2.1.4 Networking

Chaney and Martin (1995:10) added another situational factor, which could be considered an obstacle in communication between cultures. They call this phenomenon “networking”.

They believe that networks are formed with personal ties and involve an exchange of assistance. These networks and the need to belong are the bases of friendships and subgroups. The failure to develop networks in intercultural situations can create barriers to effective communication in a foreign environment.

In some cultures, such as the Japanese, networking is essential since the Japanese prefer to conduct business with people they know or with associates of people they know (Gudykunst et al 1988).



### 2.1.5 Beliefs and values

More than other aspects of culture, values seem to be universal absolutes. Steyn (1994:36) is of the opinion that understanding of another's culture, particularly of the values of the culture, enhances empathy. It is much more difficult to understand and accept the values of another culture when they differ from your own. Our values determine what we think is right, good, important or beautiful. It may be difficult to accept that these values are relative to culture and to adjust to values that may often contradict those taught us from birth. Misunderstandings and barriers to effective communication arise when people are unaware of these cultural differences.

### 2.1.6 Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is another barrier to effective communication by creating prejudice between people from different cultures. Samovar and Porter (1991:6) believe that, because culture is unconscious it may be inevitable that we regard "our own groups, our own country, our own culture as the best, as the most moral."

Tubbs and Moss (1983:372) see ethnocentrism as "the tendency to judge the values, customs, behaviors, or other aspects of another culture using our own groups and our own customs as the standards for all judgements."

Chaney and Martin (1995:241) refer to ethnocentrism as "the belief that your own cultural background, including ways of analyzing problems, language and verbal and non-verbal communication, is correct."

It is easy to believe that only one's own culture teaches the correct way to eat, or manage family life or pray. Steyn (1994:36) advises that a crucial aspect of effective intercultural competence is awareness of these cultural assumptions. She says: "A sense of relativity of culture prevents the ethnocentric trap of evaluating all cultures by the norms of one's home culture, in the belief that it offers what is 'right' and 'proper' and 'true'."

### 2.1.7 Mass effect

Another aspect that can seriously obstruct effective communication occurs when dealing with large groups of people. Escarpit (1977:44) describes this inability to know or understand a large number of people with whom we have to deal as *mass effect*. This phenomenon seems to arise when an observer's channels of communication are inadequate for the number of people with whom he has to deal." An example of this is when we talk about *the blacks*, *the Japanese*, or *the Asians* as if all of the people in these groups are alike.

Mass effect is also associated with stereotyping.

### 2.1.8 Stereotypes

Preconceptions about groups of people can also produce barriers to effective communication. Chaney and Martin (1995:247) describe stereotypes as "perceptions about certain groups of people or nationalities."

Tubbs and Moss (1983:62) give a wider definition, describing a stereotype as "a generalization about a class of people, objects, or events that is widely held by a given culture."

As Axtell (1985:26) puts it: "In a world of cultural behaviour, the only true safe generalization is: do not generalize." These stereotypes that we tend to impose on groups of people limit our communication with those groups. It is almost impossible not to stereotype a group of people with whom you have no contact. Whilst it is almost impossible to get rid of acquired stereotypes without at least some personal contact.

According to Cyr (1990:83), 'inscrutable Oriental' cultural stereotypes were never representative, and now they are proving to be business liabilities.

Stereotypes are, however, not likely to be dispelled by visiting countries. Cherry (1978:170) argues that tourism often enhances stereotypes as people who

travel usually seek out what they consider to be “characteristic” of that country. Tourists focus on what is different to their own country and culture. If you visit Japan, you will probably seek out pagodas and Mount Fuji, not supermarkets, department stores and office buildings.

#### 2.1.9 Labelling

Steyn (1994:17) identifies another barrier to intercultural understanding, namely labelling. Labelling is the use of names people choose for themselves or others. Every culture has a large vocabulary of disparaging terms to use for ‘outgroups’. Although she is of the opinion that some labelling is inevitable, even necessary, if it is used with discretion Steyn maintains that labelling, like stereotyping creates a barrier by biasing the observer.

#### 2.1.10 Culture shock

Culture shock contributes to the failure of effective communication and is experienced when “a person is placed in a situation in which the cultural signs and cues are different from the signs and cues of his own culture” (Mesbache 1986:7).

Jack London, in his story “In a Far Country” published in 1900 stresses that a visitor to another country should be prepared to acquire new customs and abandon old ideals. He suggests travellers find pleasure in the unfamiliar. London’s advice is still sound almost a hundred years later (Lewis & Jungman 1986). Nevertheless, entering an unfamiliar culture is psychologically and physically stressful.

Shelley (1992:183) substantiates this saying “the stress and anxiety that occur when your physical surroundings and the people around you change. You have to expend a certain amount of nervous energy to cope with change and this causes stress.”

Chaney and Martin (1995:154) substantiate this. They refer to “cultural shock” as “the trauma a person experiences when he moves into a culture different from his home culture, a communication problem that involves the frustrations that accompany a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and value systems.”

Culture shock has received increased attention from researchers in the past two decades. Chaney and Martin (1995:161) mention various aspects of culture shock. This includes cultural stress, social alienation, social class and poverty-wealth extremes, financial matters, acculturation problems, relationship and family considerations.

Engholm (1991:12) describes a special kind of culture shock that is experienced by Americans in Asia. He labels it *AsiaShock* and identifies five progressive stages:

- Frustration with the culture, which includes the language, the food, and an irritation with local customs.
- Unwillingness to understand the local ways of doing things.
- Ethnocentricity.
- Racism.
- Avoidance of the culture.

Culture shock can be costly to a company, since it often results in the premature return of the person working overseas. Ferraro (1990) quotes research that shows that employees sent to work in foreign countries fail because of their inability to understand and adapt to another culture's way of life and not because they lack technical or professional competence. This early return rate can be decreased by conducting training programmes prior to overseas visits to prevent culture shock.

The degree and type of culture shock experienced by people who travel to another country for a short stay or those who stay for an extended period is similar. The methods for coping with culture shock during the short-term visit differ.

## 2.2 Summary

This chapter reviews intercultural communication as a specialisation area in the field of general communication. Specific reference is made to communication barriers and the effect they have on communication, with the view to identifying skills that are necessary to overcome these barriers.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND JAPAN**

To sell products and services in Asia, one must be familiar with the customer and the environment in which the customer makes decisions. This can be a daunting challenge for anyone doing business in Asia for the first time.

Everything is "foreign", the languages, the customs, the value systems, and the business practices.

Detailed knowledge of - and sensitivity to - these broad and specific market conditions is one of the keys to business success in Asia, which every South African company will have to learn at the outset.

In this chapter the focus is on the relationship between South Africa and Japan in general and Iscor and Japanese companies in particular in order to provide background for the decision to base the study on these countries. The situation after the Asian crisis and the argument that Asia still has much to offer the West, and South Africa in particular is discussed.

#### **3.1 South Africa and Asia**

##### **3.1.1 Historical background**

In the decades after World War II, East Asia emerged as an economic powerhouse. As a trade block, the Asia-Pacific region is the world's largest market, a vast region of consumers and industrial end-users with seemingly limitless financial capability to purchase goods from the West. According to Engholm (1991:3), three hundred billion dollars in trade - 70 percent of the world's total - crossed the Pacific annually by 1991.

In the early 1990s, Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990:28) predicted that Asia would have 80 million new consumers by the year 2000 and will remain the world's main source of business capital into the next millennium.

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the world's most dynamic growth points, having effectively eliminated unemployment through dynamic partnerships between government and business. The region's highly skilled, low cost work force is achieving a sustained economic growth rate of 7 percent per annum. "Given the imperatives of South Africa today, emerging into the highly competitive global markets after years of isolation, we must look, listen and learn - for these are not only potential role models, but the real competitors for South African Enterprises" (Pickett 1995:1).

### 3.1.2 The effect of the Asian crisis

The financial crisis that struck many Asian countries in late 1997 did so with an unexpected severity. The East Asian countries at the centre of the crisis were for years admired as some of the most successful emerging market economies. Owing to their rapid growth and the striking gains in their populations' living standards, they were widely seen as models for many other countries (International Monetary Fund 1998:1).

The global steel industry was severely affected by the Asian currency crisis. Reduced growth in the region as a result of the acceptance of the International Monetary Fund aid packages, led to a sharp decline in demand. Total consumption in the Asian markets (including China) represented approximately 42 percent of total world consumption. With commodity prices declining to levels that would not be economically sustainable for significant sections of these industries 1998 was an extremely difficult year for mineral and metal producing companies.

### 3.2 South Africa and Japan

Since a comprehensive examination of all Asian countries is not possible and since it is impossible for any individual to master every fact about every culture, this study focuses on one culture in order to illustrate the need for cultural sensitivity. This study therefore focused on Japan and the information that would be useful when doing business in Japan.

### 3.2.1 The business relationship between Japan and South Africa

While Japan's trade relationship with South Africa is minor in a global context, representing less than one percent of its combined exports and imports, according to the Japan Economic Institute (1992), the relationship has much more significance in the sense that the partnership dominates Japan's trade relations with Africa. In 1991 Japan-South African trade, which totalled \$3,5 billion represented 35 percent of Japan's trade with the African continent. Exports to Africa amounted to \$6.0 billion, of which South Africa bought 27 percent. Imports from the continent amounted to \$3.9 billion, of which shipments from South Africa came to 47 percent. Moreover, Japan's purchase of almost 7 percent of South Africa's exports in 1990 made it the country's second-largest customer. Steel, non-ferrous metals, non-ferrous metal scrap, coal, iron ore and non-metallic mineral ores, lead Japan's imports from South Africa (Table 3).

**TABLE 3: JAPAN'S IMPORTS FROM SOUTH AFRICA 1987-1991**  
(in millions of dollars; cost, insurance, freight value basis)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Food	\$271.5	\$181.5	\$299.4	\$295.7	\$209.0
Sugar	68.1	85.4	86.8	76.6	90.2
Textile Materials	68.1	68.4	54.3	39.2	44.9
Metal Ores and Scrap	249.5	274.7	299.2	345.6	355.7
Iron Ore	136.2	116.3	121.2	127.8	146.0
Non-ferrous Metal Scrap	107.3	155.9	174.9	215.8	207.4
Mineral Fuels	315.4	271.6	264.5	256.2	269.4
Coal	311.9	266.6	260.5	248.9	264.5
Other Raw Materials	135.7	179.8	200.3	195.3	187.3
Non-metallic Mineral Ores	72.8	112.3	123.2	128.5	124.7
Chemicals	38.9	64.4	95.7	65.5	60.3
Machinery and Transport Equipment	17.7	15.7	13.9	18.7	12.4
Other	1.162.4	877.3	807.5	626.9	680.2
Steel	216.5	286.3	337.5	222.3	254.9
Non-ferrous Metals	636.2	450.9	278.6	293.8	299.6
Total Imports	2.259.2	1.933.2	2.034.8	1.843.0	1.819.3

(Japan Tariff Association 1992a:3)



### 3.2.1.1 Historical background

As Japan's international presence expanded an absence of historical and geographical ties hampered close economic and political relations with Africa. The African region's severe economic problems have also been a factor. While the Japanese economy relies heavily on industrial and agricultural contributions found in less developed nations, a relatively small share of Japan's growing trade and investment efforts have been devoted to Africa over the last 40 years or so. According to the Japan Economic Institute (1992), only 1,6 percent of Japan's total imports came from Africa in 1991. In contrast, 44 percent originated in Asia and 27 percent were sourced from North America. Moreover, only 1,9 percent of Japanese foreign investment in this period was channelled to Africa compared with 43,8 percent to North America and 15,3 percent to Asia.

Japan's political and economic relations with South Africa have long been subject to certain restrictions. Official contacts between the two nations were limited to the consular level from the end of World War II until January 1992 (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

In 1961, South Africa designated Japanese citizens "honorary whites." Although the Japanese government did not officially accept this status, Japanese citizens taking advantage of freedom generally denied to Asians in South Africa were open to charges that they, in effect, accepted a system of institutionalised discrimination.

During the 1970s many Japanese companies established branch offices in South Africa or arranged with locally owned firms to assemble and/or distribute their products. Several Japanese automotive manufacturers, tyre companies and producers of electronics products and appliances established a presence in South Africa during this period. Early in the decade, Japanese steel mills entered into long-term contracts to import iron ore and coking coal from South Africa. Japan's large power companies similarly turned to South Africa to meet

their increased uranium needs. Japanese trading companies eventually became involved in infrastructure improvements needed for mining in South Africa.

As anti-apartheid sentiment grew, the Japanese government followed the United States and European nations in 1985 in imposing further constraints on transactions with South Africa. In 1986, Japan joined the United States and other nations in another round of sanctions against South Africa. Japan announced that it would ban all steel purchases (with the exception of imports already under contract) suspend tourist visas to South African citizens and discourage Japanese tourism to the country. In 1987, international criticism of Japan further intensified when reports of its two-way trade with South Africa listed it as the country's number-one trading partner (Table 4). In late 1988 when the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a ban on trade with South Africa, delegates singled out Japan and denounced it for being South Africa's top trade partner. However, since early 1988, trade declined in dollar terms. Officials cited this as proof of Japan's determination to decrease economic ties with South Africa (Table 5). In response to the increasing criticism, Japanese companies were asked earlier that year to keep two-way trade with South Africa at or below the 1987 level in dollar terms.

As President de Klerk began to work toward dismantling South Africa's system of apartheid, the Japanese government responded with steps to restore economic and diplomatic ties with the country. A Japanese government spokesperson described President de Klerk's 1992 visit to Japan as opening "a new page in our bilateral relations" and said that the event would provide a major impetus for stepping up relations with South Africa.

In June 1991, Japan removed certain restrictions on personnel exchanges between the two countries (Japan Economic Institute 1992). At the same time, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry announced an easing of the 1988 guideline concerning trade with South Africa.

In October 1991, the Japanese government, announced that it considered the reform process in South Africa "irreversible," and lifted most of its remaining sanctions and early in 1992, the Japanese government took another step toward solidifying relations by announcing the immediate establishment of full diplomatic relations with South Africa (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

**TABLE 4: SOUTH AFRICA'S MAJOR TRADING PARTNERS 1986-1990\***  
(in millions of dollars; exports free on board, imports cost, insurance, freight)

Trading Partner	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
<b>West Germany</b>					
Exports	\$1.941	\$2.548	\$3.332	\$3.263	\$3.044
Imports	1.376	1.248	1.727	1.553	1.822
Total Trade	3.317	3.796	5.059	4.816	4.866
<b>Great Britain</b>					
Exports	1.247	1.557	1.912	1.699	1.983
Imports	1.218	1.073	1.425	1.447	1.915
Total Trade	2.465	2.630	3.337	3.146	3.898
<b>United States</b>					
Exports	1.158	1.281	1.691	1.659	1.732
Imports	2.476	1.399	1.575	1.586	1.752
Total Trade	3.634	2.680	3.266	3.245	3.484
<b>Japan</b>					
Exports	1.249	1.882	2.047	1.737	1.491
Imports	2.266	2.436	1.955	2.047	1.858
Total Trade	3.515	4.318	4.002	3.784	3.349
<b>Italy</b>					
Exports	352	456	501	637	694
Imports	1.916	1.788	2.163	2.621	2.546
Total Trade	2.268	2.244	2.664	3.258	3.240
<b>France</b>					
Exports	405	467	581	563	509
Imports	486	583	708	755	750
Total Trade	891	1.050	1.289	1.318	1.259

\*Note: Ranked in terms of total 1990 trade. \*Based on trading partners, data as reported by the International Monetary Fund. Therefore, West Germany's exports to South Africa are a proxy for South Africa's imports from West Germany, while West German imports from South Africa are a proxy for South African exports to West Germany.

(International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 1992:5)

**TABLE 5: JAPAN'S TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA 1986-1991**  
(in millions of dollars; exports free on board, imports cost,  
insurance, freight)

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Exports	\$1355.2	\$1863.3	\$2046.8	\$1717.3	\$1477.0	\$1634
Imports	2228.7	2259.2	1933.2	2034.8	1843.0	1819.3
Total Trade	3583.9	4122.5	3980.0	3752.1	3320.0	3454.0

(Japan Tariff Association 1992b:5)

In the early 1990s, a number of Japanese companies acquired a stake in South Africa. In its 1990 survey the Investor Responsibility Research Centre (IRRC) identified three Japanese firms with direct investment (defined as controlling at least 10 percent of the equity in an active company) in South Africa and a further 20 with employees in the country.

In 1991 the Investor Responsibility Research Center cited 43 Japanese firms with non-equity ties to South Africa. Companies with contracts or licensing, distribution, franchising, technological or trademark agreements with firms in South Africa were included in this second category. In addition, the products of three Japanese companies were distributed in South Africa, although they had no investment or formal non-equity links with the country, according to IRRC.

In June 1992 the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industries in South Africa was formed with, according to the organisation's president, Shuji Okita (Japan Economic Institute 1992:6), the intention of coping with the normalisation of bilateral relations. In 1992 the Chamber represented more than 30 companies or organisations in the Southern African region. The fact that a large contingent from Japan's mining and steel industries participated in the May 1992 Keidanren mission, indicated one area in which prospects were considered good for increased Japan-South Africa trade. Masamichi Fujimori, who led the business group, specifically commented on the potential for Japan to boost imports of non-ferrous ores and metals, including copper and nickel, and to export more mining technology to South Africa. With political instability in the former Soviet Union threatening that important source of precious metals, Japan's automotive industry in particular was drawn to South Africa. (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

Japanese trading companies set up affiliated firms as they bid to expand their transactions with South Africa. By 1992, Mitsui & Co. Ltd. a major player in Japan-South Africa trade, is said to have set up 55 new affiliates in the Southern African region with the aim of expanding coal, iron ore and precious metal imports and venturing into new sectors. The largest Japanese trading company in South Africa, Nissho Iwai Corp expanded exports to South Africa by 20 to 30 percent by 1994. (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

As business interests around the world begin to compete for the opportunities offered by changes in South Africa, certain companies from Japan present significant advantages. Observers point out that many South Africans appreciate Japan as a model of economic success while lauding this country for its support of racial equity in the region. At the same time, growing globalisation implies that those seeking new ties with South Africa will need to address the expectations of an increasingly international audience as well as a more inclusive South Africa. (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

In 1994 the Japanese steel industry accounted for 5,2 percent of the total value of Japan's manufactured goods shipments and employed over 188 000 people. In terms of end-use, the Japanese construction industry remains the largest steel consuming sector and in fiscal 1992 accounted for 50,5 percent of ordinary steel consumption. (Japan Economic Institute 1992).

### 3.2.1.2 The effect of the Asian crisis on Japan

Amid the worldwide economic turmoil, Japan's economy remained deeply depressed throughout 1998 due to the financial instability. The Japanese economy was in upheaval. "Only the fittest enterprises that have succeeded in achieving greater competitiveness through aggressive renovation can survive" (Chihaya 1999:1).

According to Krugman (1998a:1), "Japan's economic malaise is first and foremost a problem for Japan itself. But it also poses problems for others: for troubled Asian economies desperately in need of a locomotive."

However, Japan is not a country on the edge of chaos. Professor Anatole Goshi from the National Productivity Institute, reports that the economic situation in Japan is improving, and believes that all that is required, is confidence in the financial market. He believes that people have been a bit cautious, but are gradually regaining confidence (Krugman 1998b).

### 3.3 Iscor and Japan

#### 3.3.1 Iscor

No one can deny the dominance of Japan as the leading steel producing force in terms of technology and quality. Japan's steel industry has been called the 'engine' that has powered the country's economic development since the end of World War II. Some of the world's largest steel companies are located in Japan (Tables 6 and 7). In 1994 Japan boasted 124 steel works (Toda 1994:31).

**TABLE 6: PRODUCTION AND FINANCIAL RETURN OF JAPAN'S 'BIG FIVE' 1992 –1993**  
(in million metric tons of crude-steel output figures, year to January)

Company	Output	
	1992	1993
Nippon Steel	25.4	26.5
NKK	12.0	11.9
Kawasaki	10.5	10.7
Sumitomo	10.0	10.5
Kobe	6.5	6.9

(International Iron and Steel Institute 1994:27)

Many former South African state-owned corporations and utilities, like Iscor, have been sold into the private sector and forced on to a commercial footing as they find themselves exposed to new competition. Iscor was privatised in 1989 and overhauled in 1993 with the arrival of new Managing Director, Hans Smith. The corporation has undergone - and is still undergoing - radical changes as state subsidies, price controls, production quotas and a single balance sheet have been wiped away.

Exchange rates since 1995 have worked in favour of South Africa's steel makers. The constant slipping of the rand against the dollar has boosted exports. The South African steel industry is no longer an outsider to the international business community and the competition and influences, which this implies.

**TABLE 7: THE TOP TEN STEEL PRODUCERS IN THE WORLD 1994**  
(in million metric tons of crude-steel output)

	Company	Country	Output 1994
1.	Nippon Steel	Japan	26.2
2.	Posco	Korea	22.1
3.	Usinor Sacilor	France	18.5
4.	British Steel	UK	12.9
5.	Arbed	Luxembourg	11.9
6.	NKK	Japan	11.6
7.	US Steel	U.S.A	11.5
8.	Thyssen	Germany	10.7
9.	Kawasaki	Japan)	10.6
10.	Sumitomo	Japan	10.4

(International Iron and Steel Institute 1995:21)

The industry and resources are in place, and if managed well, may prove highly competitive as it enters the new millennium. In 1993 Iscor exported 50 percent of its products and 44,2 percent in 1994. In 1995 exports were even lower, mainly because of local demand. Because of the distance of its plants from the coast, Iscor has to look at increasing value-added products to attain the necessary profit margins on export sales. Iscor has further rationalised its low value products by replacing them with imports sourced by its Macsteel International venture, which started trading in 1996.

According to Iscor Chairman and Managing Director, Hans Smith (Witherall 1995:39), the company has "always exported a large proportion of its steel output - even under the sanctions scenario. For certain countries, certificates of origin were fabricated but we sold the steel through routes that were not very efficient and though we were able to sell, it cost us money. We became lean and mean by replacing an engineering view of running the business with a genuine financial and commercial function."

The changes that have taken place give Iscor a better export margin on its exports for the simple reason that it is costing the company less in terms of charges incurred by having to hide the origin of its steel. The question is, however, whether this is enough. Technology is only half the battle. A company can have the best equipment in the world but if it does not have skilled people dedicated to effective communication and competent customer and supplier care the company will never be able to compete successfully in the global market. It is essential to establish a relationship of trust and respect with potential suppliers and especially customers overseas. All efforts need to be focused on enhancing the company's prospects in the export market (Withérrall 1995:39).

In October and November 1993, eighteen South African businessmen, including Martin Petrick, the then Senior Technical Advisor for the Iscor Group, undertook a study mission to Japan and Singapore led by the National Productivity Institute (NPI). They spent ten days in Japan and two in Singapore visiting 14 companies, including Nippon Steel Corporation in Japan and three in Singapore (Table 8). (Lange 1993).

Professor Anatole Goshi (Lange 1993:2), from the National Productivity Institute who was the tour leader, succinctly summarised Japan's progression. "In the 1950's their exports were measured in tens of thousands of tons (ships and tankers), in the 1960's in thousands of kilograms (cars), in the 1970's in kilograms (electronic appliances), in the 1980's in grams (semi-conductors). In the future Japan's exports will be weightless (knowledge, technology, patents)."

#### 3.3.1.1 The effect of the Asian crisis on Iscor

The steel industry cannot remain insulated from negative trends. The Asian crisis led to a drastic fall in domestic demand and the deteriorating export environment caused national crude steel production for the year to decline by more than 10 million tons and reaching the lowest level in 27 years.

This cyclical downswing in the South African economy, which became apparent in the second half of 1996, intensified by sustained high levels of real interest



rates, record levels of personal debt, low commodity prices, reduced growth in exports from the manufacturing sector as a result of the Asian crisis, and the speculative onslaught on the rand. The domestic steel industry was further affected by strong pressure from cheap imports of both primary and secondary steel products from Asia and former Soviet Union countries (SA furnaces stoked ... 1998).

**TABLE 8: COMPANIES VISITED BY THE NPI STUDY MISSION IN 1993**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Country</b>
Japan Productivity Centre	Japan
NKK Steel Keihin Plant	Japan
Sakura Bank	Japan
Nippon Steel Corporation (NSC)	Japan
Nissan Murayama Plant	Near Japan
Fuji City Council	Japan
Combustible waste Disposal Plant (Fuyi City)	Japan
Beyonz Auto Component Manufacturers (Fuyi City)	Japan
Fuyi City Chamber of Commerce	Japan
Yoshihara Junior High Public School	Japan
Konya Paper Co (Fuyi City)	Japan
Toshiba Air Conditioning Manufacture (Fuyi City)	Japan
Nishijin Textile Centre (Kyoto)	Japan
Horiba Chemical Analysers (Kyoto)	Japan
Chemitreat Pte	Singapore
Service Quality training Centre (Singapore)	Singapore
National Productivity Board	Singapore

(Lange 1993)

In 1998 Iscor Steel MD Louis van Niekerk (SA furnaces stoked ... 1998) predicted that the Asian crisis was likely to continue having a negative influence on world steel markets for the next 12 months, and that the Far Eastern markets in particular, would be affected. He argued that although Asia would remain an importer of steel in the short term, it would be at a reduced rate and pointed out that certain Asian countries that used to be net importers had become net exporters. This crisis had a negative impact on dollar selling prices to Asian countries.

Iscor met the challenge by embarking on an extensive re-engineering process. "It is vital for the South African steel industry to become globally competitive. As a primary steel producer, Iscor holds the key to the long-term survival of certain

steel-related industries. It is critical that Iscor's cost of production and service levels become globally competitive. If we cannot achieve this, it will be fatal for the South African steel industry" (SA furnaces stoked ... 1998:2).

At the beginning of 1999, most internationally traded commodity prices, as measured through the Economist All Metal \$ Price Index, remained depressed. The stagnant economic conditions in Japan and the weak demand for commodities in the Far East persisted as the Far East tried to overcome excess production as well as instability of the financial system. Demand in Asian steel markets appeared to be bottoming out.

During the second and third quarters of 1999, most Southeast Asian economies experienced a revival in economic activity following improvements in manufacturing output. The economies in this region began to show positive balances on their current accounts, suggesting a recovery in their export performance. Demand in Asian steel markets stabilised and conditions in these steel markets appeared to be improving. Falling interest rates, firming stock markets, currency stability and rising exports helped to lay the foundation for this turnaround.

International commodity prices showed a significant recovery in the second quarter of 1999, rising by 7,6 percent from the first quarter of 1999. As a result of the economic recovery in the Far East, commodity prices continued improving. At the end of the first quarter of 1999, the economic decline in Japan seemed to have bottomed out and industrial output recorded positive growth for the first time since mid-1997.

The recovering East Asian economies were given a boost by the turnaround for the better in the fortunes of the Japanese economy because of the high levels of inter-country trade in the region. Demand in Asian steel markets increased during the fourth quarter of 1999. Recovery in the emerging economies of Southeast Asia was generally strong.

### 3.3.2 Nippon Steel Corporation

During the period 1980 to 1998, various managers from Iscor visited Nippon Steel Corporation in Japan as part of a know-how agreement<sup>1</sup>.

Nippon Steel, Japan's flagship and until recently the world's largest steel producer is still one of the world's largest producers of raw (crude) steel. The company embodies the proud spirit of its nation and is in itself a source of national pride (Berry 1995:20).

Nippon Steel Corporation consists of ten plants, nine of which are integrated works. Together these produced 26,5 million tons in 1993 at a productivity level of 981 tons per man-year and 26,2 million tons in 1994 (Toda 1994:30).

According to Hirosho Saito of Nippon Steel, labour and management in Japan shared a sense of urgency to co-operate in reconstructing the national economy after World War II destroyed Japanese industry almost totally. He says, "Labour-management relations in Japan are underpinned by harmonious ties, by collaboration and cooperation" (Berry 1995:20).

### 3.3.3 NKK

Iscor has also had a long-standing relationship with NKK since the early 1980s. NKK was established in 1912 and is Japan's second largest steel producer.

NKK has over 11 500 employees and consists of five works, namely Keihin, Fukuyama, Tsurumi, Tsu and Shimizu (NKK Corporate Data 2000:1).

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<sup>1</sup> A know-how agreement. is an agreement between two or more parties whereby one party agrees to provide the technical assistance and expertise for the manufacture of certain products for a certain amount of fee or royalty.

### 3.3.4 The know-how agreement

During the past 20 years, Iscor has signed various know-how agreements with steel manufacturers. These agreements included a number of exchange visits to the following companies in Japan:

- Nippon Steel Corporation (NSC): Yawata Works, Kimitsu, Nagoya, Hirohata, Nisshin, and Oita.
- Kawasaki Steel Corporation (KSC): Chiba Works, Mizushima Works.
- Nisshin Steel Corporation: Hanshin Works, Ichikawa Works, Japan Head Office.
- MHI: Hiroshima Machinery Works.
- NKK: Fukuyama Works, Ohgishima, Keihin.
- Sumitome Metal Industry: Kashima Works.
- Hitachi, Omika Works.
- Nissan Factory in Zama.
- Nihon Parkerising Co Ltd.
- Azuma Kogyo.
- Nichinan Metal Industries.
- Marubeni Corporation.
- Wazai, Maruichi.

### 3.4 Japanese - South African prospects

The success of Japan's industry since the war is legendary, but it has largely been brought about by the need to overcome disadvantage. In the past, the Japanese steel industry has overcome several hardships including two oil crises and continual appreciation of the yen. In spite of the Asian crisis, Asia still has much to offer the West and South Africa in particular. It remains an excellent source of venture capital and more importantly leading edge technological expertise.

Japan today is an intensely globalised society. The population of Japan is about 75 percent urbanised. In 1993, the average Japanese income was approximately twenty-three thousand dollars annually. The Japanese enjoy one of the highest standards of living and probably the best health care in the world. "By any world standard the Japanese are a superior people. Their almost unbelievable success in turning a small chain of resource-poor islands into one of the greatest economic powers the world has ever seen *in less than three decades* is proof of that" (De Mente 1993a:vii).

If South African managers control their trade relationships competently, the economic and learning benefits to South African companies will be significant. The inference is that companies who are unwilling or unable to participate will discover increasing difficulty in obtaining fresh sources of breakthrough technology and leading edge manufacturing and management knowledge from Asia.

South African managers do not only need to learn to compete in this environment - more than anything else - they need to learn how to survive.

"One of the fundamental problems encountered by Western businessmen in their dealings with the Japanese is because of a fundamental difference in the way Westerners and traditional-minded Japanese view themselves in relation to others. Among the reasons why Japanese generally prefer to do business with other Japanese is because they take it for granted that foreign businesspeople are incapable of behaving in a selfless manner. They also want to avoid the friction that results when the two systems meet" (De Mente 1993b:131, 133). Few cultures seem more foreign, more exotic, or more different from ours than the Japanese. Engholm (1991:3) describes Japan as "a 'realm' of business practice and etiquette unto itself." Nonetheless, South African businesses are planning sales strategies for the Japanese market, trying to compete more effectively with the Japanese and looking to Japan for investment in their companies.

The information South African businessmen need about Japan today, is more complex than a decade ago. Contact with the Japanese is no longer limited to large corporations. Professionals in medium-sized and small companies are increasingly doing business directly with the Japanese.

Steel will remain an indispensable commodity. As a supplier of basic materials as well as knowledge to steel consumers and steel industries alike, the Japanese steel industry has much to contribute to the expansion of the world economy by developing high-quality steel products and state-of-the-art steel making technology. According to Toda (1994:27), the industry intends to respond to the problems of the global environment and energy conservation by "making the most of the existing knowledge and experience. In doing so, it is ready to co-operate in the growth of the steel industry around the world through collaboration and joint problem-solving on a global scale."

Steel in its various forms is a major contributor to South Africa's gross domestic product and one of the mainstays of the manufacturing sector. Driven by the need to become globally competitive in a depressed international market, which is aggravated by economic turmoil in Asia and a domestic slowdown at home, the South African steel industry faces a period of change during the new millennium.

Goshi (1998:1) argues that the crisis in the Japanese and other Asian economies opened an opportunity for South Africa. "Instead of just exporting raw materials, South Africa should go to the next stage ... and export semi-finished products to Japan. This will create more jobs." However, he also emphasises that South Africa has to make businesses in this country attractive to obtain Japanese investment. On the economic situation in Japan, he reports that the economy is improving, and believes that all that is necessary is confidence in the financial market.

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter focuses on the relationship between South Africa and Japan in general and Iscor and Japanese companies in particular. It provides background for the decision to base the study on these countries. It also looks at the situation after the Asian crisis and argues that Asia remains an excellent source of venture capital and more importantly leading edge technological know-how in spite of the Asian crisis.

South African managers need to learn how to survive and to effectively cross commercial borders in the Asia. This study argues that because of a fundamental cultural difference between South African managers and traditional-minded Japanese managers the competencies acquired from this study will be useful when doing business in Japan.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

Some individuals seem to adapt to another country more naturally than others. Some foreign cultures make it easier for South Africans to adjust to than others. In this chapter, the need for intercultural communication competence to facilitate rapid adjustment to a foreign culture is discussed.

Attention is paid to defining the different communication skills. The relevance of including each skill in a course in intercultural business communication is considered, based on comparison with existing studies. The relevance of these, mostly non-South African, studies is established.

Steyn (1994:17) is of the opinion that intercultural communication skills are essentially those of any good communication. She believes that "there are definitely attitudes, qualities and skills that are known to characterise good intercultural communicators and these can be developed." Some of the characteristics she identifies are:

- Awareness of one's own cultural assumptions.
- Cultural tolerance - a tolerance of different interaction styles.
- Wide conceptual margins - the way in which we categorise information into concepts.
- Cultural sensitivity - which includes an awareness of non-verbal behaviours.
- Awareness of communication barriers and the effect they have on cross-cultural understanding.
- Awareness that actions tend to have symbolic significance - interculturally, small acts can carry enormous consequences.
- Awareness of the importance of approaching each individual with an open mind.



In this chapter, attention is paid to the range of communication skills relevant to intercultural business communication. The literature on the state of the art regarding existing courses in intercultural business communication is discussed and a concise overview of the skills that international businessmen require and which skills they lack, is provided. The relevance of these mostly non-South African studies is also discussed.

#### 4.1 Skills

The following skills are the most important according to Kohls (1984): tolerance for ambiguity, low goal or task orientation, open-mindedness, non-judgementalness, empathy, communicativeness, flexibility or adaptability, curiosity, sense of humour, warmth in human relationships, motivation, self-reliance, strong sense of self, tolerance for differences, perceptiveness and the ability to handle failure.

Ruch (1989:4) maintains that the components of intercultural communication are the capacity to be flexible, to be non-judgemental, to communicate respect, to personalise one's knowledge and perceptions display empathy, to take turns, and to tolerate ambiguity.

Harris and Moran (1991) consider the following concepts necessary for a manager to succeed in a foreign assignment:

- Sensitivity to cultural differences and role shock.
- Ability to create synergy between cultures.
- Realisation that professional criteria, business principles and procedures differ.
- Potential for acculturation training and education.
- Realisation that management and/or organisational influences differ between cultures.
- Realisation that work ethics including timetables, project tasks and objectives may differ.
- Ability to manage within the work culture of the country

- Ability to create a common work culture.
- Understanding of the relationship of verbal and non-verbal language, values, expectations and behaviours.
- Realisation that a world culture based on common needs is forming.

Axtell (1990:12) lists seven skills (previously identified by Ruben) that are similar to the above, and characterise an effective multicultural manager. They are: respect, tolerance, ambiguity, relating to people, being non-judgemental, personalising one's observations, empathy and persistence.

## 4.2 Intercultural training methods

Tung (1981) provides a classification that is useful in distinguishing among intercultural training methods:

- Area studies or documentary programmes that expose participants to a new culture through written materials on the country's sociological history and geography.
- Economics and cultural institutions.
- Culture assimilator that involves a programmed instruction method that exposes participants to specific incidents critical to interaction with a target culture.
- Language preparation.
- Sensitivity training in which participants' self-awareness is increased.
- Field experiences that expose participants to mini-cultures within their own country during short field exercises.

Tung (1981:70) suggests that these methods should be considered complementary and part of a scale, ranging from low to high levels of "rigor," with area studies at the low end and sensitivity training at the high end. Rigor indicates the level of participants' affective involvement in the training method. Certo (1976:113-116) concluded that experiential learning is often more effective than more passive forms of learning like traditional classroom work.

Participants receive written materials that compare South Africa and the target country, Japan in terms of general aspects like politics, economics, religion and history as well as specific aspects like food, relationships between men and women, and culturally defined gestures.

In this sense, training consists of general information concerning the target area (area studies) as well as specific comparative information important for daily functioning in the target culture (critical incidents).

The interpersonal approach consists of several role-playing and experiential exercises designed to increase self-awareness, awareness of other cultures and openness to accept unfamiliar modes of behaviour and value systems (Kolb & Fry 1975; Tung 1981).

#### **4.3 Existing courses in intercultural business communication**

##### **4.3.1 Course titles, course descriptions and teaching methodologies**

In the literature on the subject, course titles, course descriptions and teaching methodologies tend to vary. Victor (1991) uses the title "International Business Communication." Chaney and Martin (1995) and Martin (1991) discuss an "Intercultural Business Communication course" while Brislin and Pedersen (1986) call the course "Cross-cultural Training". All of these courses are taught from a cultural general dimension; all are concerned with how social, cultural and personal backgrounds affect communication within the organisation; and all these courses attempt to help the participants to change their perspectives (Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Victor 1991; Zimpfer 1989).

Brislin and Pedersen (1986) use a culture assimilator and a bilingual program to assist cross-cultural adjustment while Victor (1991) uses the LESCANT Model to facilitate training. LESCANT is an acronym for language, environment and technology, social organisation, contexting, authority conception, non-verbal communication and behaviour and time conception.

These seven factors in LESCANT are the variables in a multitude of cultures. Victor (1991) mentioned the lack of a suitable textbook designed for intercultural business communication.

Globalisation of markets and global interdependence are viewed as important due to the differences in managerial styles and cultural diversity (Chaney & Martin 1995; Ferraro 1990; Herbig & Kramer 1991; Moran & Richard 1991; Samovar & Porter 1991). The global corporation is one that 'defines the world as a single marketplace' and national boundaries are only marks of cultural differences (Harris & Moran 1991).

Ruch (1989) characterises the global modern manager as "cosmopolitan, effective as an intercultural communicator and negotiator, creates cultural synergy, and leads cultural change, especially at work, in organisations and on project teams".

Harris and Moran (1991) in discussing the success of the global manager define intercultural communication as a concept that involves differences in understanding between the cultural conditioning of the manager and the foreign person he comes into contact with. According to De Wilde (1991:42-43), the key skills that define the excellent global manager are:

- Intercultural negotiation skills.
- Ability to read different markets in different cultural contexts.
- Ability to understand comparative politics.

In ethnocentric, multinational corporations, the home country's style prevails. Ethnocentrism includes one culture's reasons for feeling superior to other cultures (Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Chaney & Martin 1995; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Ferraro 1990; Hofstede 1980; Samovar & Porter 1991; Steyn 1994; Terpstra & David 1991). In polycentric multinational corporations foreign locations are distinctly separate with the host country's style prevailing. In geocentric multinational corporations, management is chosen from the worldwide available pool of people, and no one style of management prevails.

Communication problems often arise when the participants in an encounter have different cultural backgrounds. Individuals' views of life and of the world, as well as their patterns of behaviour, are shaped by their cultural backgrounds. Differences in this regard can significantly influence communication taking place across cultural boundaries. These cultural boundaries, according to Du Plessis (1991), refer not only to ethnic origin and race, but also to differences such as class and language, within relatively homogeneous groups.

Individuals can change, accept and integrate other cultures (Baldrige 1993; Brake 1997; Ferraro 1990; Samovar & Porter 1991; Steyn 1994).

Triandis and Brislin (1984:16) list six categories that need to be taken into account when intercultural training takes place:

- **Information or fact-orientated training:** Participants are presented with facts about the other culture through lectures, videotapes and reading materials.
- **Attribution training:** This training uses programmed learning called culture assimilators, designed to teach a person to look at social behaviour from the point of view of members of another culture.
- **Culture awareness:** Participants focus on the values of their own culture as a means of becoming sensitive to cultural differences and absorbing information from other cultures.
- **Cognitive-behaviour modifications:** The well-documented principles of learning are used to shape the participants to extract more reinforcement from other cultures and to avoid punishments.
- **Experiential learning.** Active experiencing of the other culture (for example, field trips) or simulations of life in the culture are used.
- **The interaction approach.** Participants interact with members of another culture. It is an aspect of experiential learning, but without the elaborate simulations and hence a less expensive form of experiential learning.

#### 4.3.2 Criteria to be considered when preparing a programme for managers who represent their companies overseas

The following are characteristics of the "ideal" course according to literature (Baker 1984; Brake 1997; Henry 1965; Lee 1983; Lee and Larwood 1984; Tung 1981):

- a. The most effective cross-cultural training has a precise target and set of business objectives that correspond with the specific needs of each organisation. Brake (1997) believes that cross-cultural training that is introduced solely because it is 'politically correct' or the 'nice' thing to do can have at least two negative results: The first is that participants may feel it is inherently interesting, but largely irrelevant to their needs. The second is that participants may feel manipulated and resentful and resist any future contact with the topic. Brake (1997:102) says, "When a company understands its core global strategies, it is in a position to identify those specific competencies needed by its people to transform strategic concepts into business realities".
- b. Participation should be a mandatory part of preparation for travelling overseas and candidates should be chosen for the assignment on the basis of past performance records and recommendation by their current first level supervisors.

According to Waisfisz (1994:25), the following categories of managers are prime candidates for such training:

- Those who are expected to undertake expatriate assignments and be responsible for achieving results in a foreign environment with local personnel.
- Those who are required to work co-operatively in multinational teams.
- Those whose success depend on dealing effectively with foreign clients (or customers as the case may be).
- Those responsible for co-ordinating and directing the activities of

subsidiaries abroad, for example, Human Resources managers responsible for the selection and preparation of employees for expatriate assignments and for assigning Human Resources policies for implementation in multicultural environments.

c. Brake (1997:103) divides the cross-cultural competencies that support strategies need, into three major 'clusters' namely *feelings*, *thoughts* and *behaviours* which he then further divides into focus - *self focus* and *other focus*

(Table 9).

**TABLE 9: BRAKE'S CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCY CLUSTERS**

	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>	<b>Behaviours</b>
<b>Self Focus</b>	Management of personal emotions generated in cross-cultural encounters to minimise irrational responses	Raising to conscious awareness the key characteristics of one's own cultural groups - national, organisational, professional	Recognising one's own dominant verbal and non-verbal behaviours and how they can be perceived by others
<b>Other Focus</b>	Bonding with others by maximising empathy and emotional connections	Understanding and respecting the dominant cultural characteristics of one's foreign counterparts	Recognising and respecting the verbal and non-verbal styles of others and making appropriate adaptations

(Brake 1997:103)

d. Brake (1997) indicates that there are a number of myths that prevail, particularly among the internationally inexperienced, that the trainer will have to deal with regardless of participant level and need:

*Myth 1: Things will work out if I can just be myself*

The most difficult participants to train are those without any international working experience. A refusal to learn does not communicate respect.

*Myth 2: If economics are right, culture doesn't matter.*

A joint venture may look as if it is made in heaven, but if the work to bring the cultures together is neglected it may blow up in your face.

*Myth 3: Common sense will see me through.*

Brake (1997) maintains that individuals from three different cultures namely, British, Japanese and Saudi Arabian interpret the term *common sense* in three different ways and provides the example of the different views between Western and Eastern cultures of what characterises a trustworthy person. *Someone who sticks to the letter of a contract (West) or someone who will keep reworking the contract to take account of changing circumstances (East).*

*Myth 4: We are rapidly becoming one world culture.*

With the increased globalisation of the economy and interaction of different cultures, the concept of a *world culture* has emerged.

Brake (1997) advises trainers to resist the temptation to provide participants with easy answers to managing cross-cultural differences. He argues that too many programmes rely on statistical analyses of national cultural differences and prescribe specific behavioural adaptations (do's and taboos) for relating to different cultures. While he believes that it is useful to have a foundation of cultural knowledge, avoiding at the same time the tendency to reinforce stereotypes, he also cautions that the complexity of cultural differences is such that a reliance on such generalisations and prescribed behaviours can be highly misleading. He says: "It is much more important that participants learn how to 'read' specific cultural situations and to adapt quickly to those individuals encountered. No one does business with a culture *per se*, only with individuals from within a culture" (Brake 1997:104).

Steyn (1994:36) affirms this. "We must also raise people's awareness about the importance of approaching each person with an open mind. Individuals



are never identical to their cultures; there are always personal as well as cultural dimensions in every interaction and both are significant.”

- e. Brake (1997) advises companies to be careful of communicating an imperialist message by only holding training programmes in their corporate headquarters. Subsidiaries in the regions might need to feel that they are an integral part of the company and are not relegated to the fringe. In joint ventures, it might sometimes be necessary to conduct training in a 'neutral' place, where participants can spend time developing an understanding of themselves and their foreign colleagues in an environment that is free from the pressures and tensions of everyday business activity and where power differences are minimised.
- f. One strategy, suggested by Brake (1997), for helping to minimise cultural imperialist tendencies, is to use people from around the world to develop the programmes or at least to provide significant input. Such programmes may take longer to develop, but the field will have a sense of ownership in the final product.
- g. The specific content of a programme depends to a large extent on the business need to be addressed and the organisational level of the participants. It is, however, important that there should be some common elements in the programmes. For example, the model of culture used in the programmes should be consistent. Whether the model used is Hofstede's, Trompenaar's or Brake's Culture Prism, it should provide people in the company with a *common vocabulary* for talking about cultural differences and similarities. There is no one way in which cross-cultural training should be delivered. Multimedia technology and other self-study methods integrating informational modules, self awareness exercises and video and/or case study *vignettes* will play an increasingly large part as those individuals with training needs are scattered around the globe and it becomes prohibitively expensive to bring them together. Brake (1997) believes that many cross-cultural training programmes mistakenly focus on

the knowledge level and contends that real cross-cultural learning takes place beyond the level of words, flip charts and overhead projectors.

- h. Timing is always an issue, regardless of the type of training. The timing of cross-cultural training will depend to a large extent on who is being trained and for what reason. While it is important to be proactive training will, ideally, coincide with the need.
- i. Programme length varies depending on the individuals selected and the time available. Content covers cultural differences, travel problems, language, political and economic systems, history and foreign country practices (Baker 1984; Henry 1965; Lee 1983; Lee & Larwood 1984; Tung 1981).

A search of the literature yielded an abundant variety of topics for possible inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication:

According to Zimpfer (1989), the aim of the course should be to develop the following areas:

- Understanding personal cultural background (based on the premise that one must first understand oneself before you understand others).
- Understanding different cultural backgrounds.
- Openness to new learning concerning the culture of others.
- Tolerance of cultural differences.
- Empathy for the specific needs of a person from a culture that is different from ours.
- Global awareness.
- Ability to cope in stressful cultural situations.
- Ability to function in multicultural environments.

#### 4.3.3 Universal systems

While there are few universal systems, it is normal for an individual to project his belief system (mindset) onto other people (Samovar & Porter 1991).

Certain systems are universal to all cultural groups. These systems include:

- a. economic and political systems that include the type of government and the ability of the economy to generate work (Baldrige 1993; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Terpstra & David 1991).
- b. education systems, which include informal and formal learning (Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Terpstra & David 1991).
- c. marriage and family systems, which include the continuation of the race and responsibilities (Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991), and
- d. social systems, which include the proper way to interact with other individuals (Baldrige 1993; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Terpstra & David 1991).

#### 4.3.4 Cultural aspects

According to Storti (1989:14), "Culture as a system of beliefs and values shared by a particular group of people, is an abstraction which can be appreciated intellectually, but it is behaviour, the principal manifestation and most significant consequence of culture, that we actually experience".

Steyn (1994:36) is of the opinion that understanding of another's culture, particularly of the values of the culture, enhances empathy. It is much more difficult to understand and accept the values of another culture when they differ from your own. Values determine what an individual thinks is right, good, important or beautiful. It may be difficult to accept that these values are relative to culture and to adjust to values that may often contradict those learnt from birth. Misunderstandings and barriers to effective communication arise when

individuals are unaware of these cultural differences.

Ruch (1989:4-5) emphasises the importance of communication. He argues that the ability to acculturate and explain one's own culture to people of another culture is more important for international success than product, price, or quality advantages.

Ferraro (1990:11) is of the same opinion. He says "the crucial factor in determining who makes the sale is not so much the intrinsic superiority of the product but rather the skill of the seller in understanding the dynamics of the transaction between himself or herself and the customer".

The following aspects are considered important:

- Categorisation, classification, or semantic differences vary for different cultures and present a barrier to learning a new culture (Brislin 1989; Du Plessis 1991; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989).
- Attribution, or the ability to look at social behaviour from another culture's view, can be difficult for certain individuals because only known experiences can be used in explaining unknown behaviours (Brislin 1989; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989).
- Perception or learned meaning of sensory images, may mean learning a new reaction to an old learned stimulus (Copeland & Griggs 1985; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989; Victor 1991).
- Gender differences between cultures can be very important to the success or failure of an individual working in certain cultures (Baldrige 1993; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Terpstra & David 1991). According to Oyama (1989), the Japanese place a great deal of importance on the level held in the company, age and gender.
- Differences in work attitudes and the ability of individuals to adjust are important to a company's success or failure (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1986;

Copeland & Griggs 1985; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Terpstra & David 1991).

- Ethics differences, in other words, what is perceived to be correct or incorrect behaviour, are important (Baldrige 1993; Chaney & Martin 1995; Copeland 1985; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).
- Religious influences affect when and how business is conducted (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1989; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1993; Terpstra & David 1991).
- Individualism or collectivism, as a personal characteristic, important in terms of the management style that is used (Baldrige 1993; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

#### 4.3.5 Communication patterns

Verbal and non-verbal communication patterns are important in intercultural communication (Baldrige 1993; Borden 1991; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Chaney & Martin 1995; Chen 1990; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Engholm 1991; Ferraro 1990; Hall & Hall 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Steyn 1994).

Although much communication in the global business arena is verbal, the non-verbal aspects can contribute significantly to understanding and interpreting verbal communication.

Chaney and Martin (1995:56) define non-verbal communication as "nonword messages, such as gestures, facial expressions, interpersonal distance, touch, eye contact, smell and silence".

Non-verbal communication systems vary from culture to culture just as verbal systems do. The symbolic nature of non-verbal systems is often overlooked. Different cultures have different views of factors such as the use of time and space. Non-verbal systems are used to obtain information about the meaning

to be assigned to a verbal message. The message received is often very different from the one the speaker intended because these non-verbal messages are often interpreted unconsciously. The Japanese, for example, use non-verbal cues when they feel that direct speech might give offence. For them signs of disagreement could include rubbing the head, a sharp inhalation of breath, or an awkward smile (Cyr 1993:6).

Chaney and Martin (1995:56) believe that costly intercultural business blunders are often the result of a lack of knowledge of another culture's verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. They say: "A knowledge of these aspects of intercultural communication is essential for conducting business in the international marketplace."

Non-verbal patterns include thought patterns, paralanguage, chronemics, proxemics, oculosics, olfactics, haptics, kinesics and silence (Baldrige 1993; Cyr 1993; Ferraro 1990; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989).

Temporal, chronemics, or time cues and learning what they are, is important in a new culture (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1989; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989).

Proxemics, or use of space, is an important intercultural communication variable because different cultures have varying preference in terms of the space between individuals when they are conversing (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1989; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989).

Paralanguage or meta-communication is an important intercultural communication variable because when non-verbal and verbal communication messages are inconsistent the non-verbal message is believed (Ferraro 1990; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

Kinesics or body language is an important intercultural communication variable in many cultures (Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

Oculesics, gaze or eye contact is an important intercultural communication variable with wide differences in the amount and kind of eye contact that is permissible within different cultures (Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

Ferraro (1990), Samovar and Porter (1991) and Ruch (1989) stressed the importance of olfactics or smell.

Haptics or touching is an important intercultural communication variable (Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

#### 4.3.6 Language

Studying a culture's language is helpful for learning how individuals of another culture think (Ruch 1989).

Interaction of language on thought, perception, worldview, ideas and reality is described by the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis (Tubbs & Moss 1983). Whorf (1956:129) maintains that the world "is perceived differently by members of different linguistic communities". He also believes that this perception "is transmitted and sustained by language". The Whorf-Sapir hypothesis regards language more than a method of communication (Ferraro 1990; Samovar & Porter 1991).

As Chaney and Martin (1995:107) summarise it: "A language is a complex system, intricately related to culture where culture and language both affect each other. The use of language and culture in creating political, social, economic, and education processes is a consequence of favouring certain ideals over others."

The content areas of language that are considered important include: diversity, slang, euphemisms, homonyms, conversation taboos, proverbs, verbal duelling, high level context and low level context, translations, linear and non-linear, interpreter use, host language and vocabulary equivalence (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1989; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Chaney & Martin 1995; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Ferraro 1990; Guy & Mattock 1995; Hall & Hall 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991; Storti 1989; Terpstra & David 1991; Victor 1991).

English is accepted as the commonly shared language in international business. The person doing business on the international market expects his foreign host to speak at least some English in most intercultural business encounters (Guy & Mattock 1995).

Baldrige (1993) provides suggestions on the style, format and tone of business letters while Harris and Moran (1991:45) list the following guidelines for internationalising English that was compiled by Riddle and Lanham:

- Use the most common 3,000 English words.
- Restrict words to their common meaning.
- Select action specific verbs rather than general action verbs.
- Select a word with few alternate meanings.
- Choose words with similar alternate meanings.
- Recognise that primary meanings of words are not common in all cultures.
- Be aware of alternate spellings.
- Avoid creating new words.
- Avoid two-word verbs.
- Use maximum punctuation.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Conform to grammar rules.
- Clarify meanings if dual meaning is plausible.
- Avoid words that draw menial pictures.
- Avoid sports terms.
- Use the formal tone.



- Try to adapt the tone to that used in the culture.
- Use a variety of value orientations if in doubt.
- Try to capture the culture in the written language.
- Adopt the cultural thought patterns of the reader (or listener) whenever possible.

Using an interpreter or the knowledge and use of the host language are considered very important when negotiating (Ferraro 1990; Samovar & Porter 1991). Understanding the culture without understanding the language is difficult as successful communication with someone from another culture involves understanding a common language. Without this shared language, communication problems may occur when a third party, the translator or interpreter, attempts to convey both the verbal and non-verbal intent of the message (Chaney & Martin 1995:138). Harris & Moran (1991) provide guidelines for using an interpreter and suggest that using a good interpreter during business negotiations is essential.

Steyn (1994) believes that though most individuals are more conscious of the language barriers that inhibit their understanding cross-culturally, major barriers are caused by the attitudes and stereotypes that people attach to different languages.

#### 4.3.7 Communication strategies

Understanding the differences between group-orientated and individual-oriented strategies is important in intercultural communication (Baldrige 1993; Brislin 1989; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Oyama 1989; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

Oyama (1989) describes similarities and differences between Japanese and US workers. The Japanese use group-oriented communication strategies, and the US use individual-oriented communication strategies. The Japanese do not display a public self, while the Americans do. The Japanese value ambiguous

communication, while Americans value direct and decisive communication.

Both the Japanese and Americans are ethnocentric.

Oyama suggests the following for trainers in a Japanese and US workforce:

- Use role-playing to make employees sensitive to social hierarchy.
- Use business English in training.
- Stress both group and individual-oriented communication.
- Teach employees when direct or indirect management strategies are appropriate.
- Teach employees the ability to recognise and choose the correct form of communication for the situation.

#### 4.3.8 Negotiation process

Copeland and Griggs (1985) stress the importance of negotiating interculturally. They suggest the following:

- Negotiation is possible.
- Winning can be defined.
- Know the facts.
- Know cultural strategy.
- Send the correct team.
- Allow plenty of time.
- Be careful concerning the language.
- Go behind the scenes.
- Give face (allow the other side room to avoid embarrassment), agreements should be signed.
- Know what the other country's contract means.
- Develop a relationship.

Adler and Graham (1989) studied intracultural behaviour in order to predict cross-cultural behaviour in negotiations. Their assumption was that people behave similarly in intracultural and cross-cultural negotiations. The culture groups used in the study were Americans, Japanese, French-Canadians and English-speaking Canadians. The variables measured included problem-

solving, interpersonal attraction, time, satisfaction, individual profits and joint profits. They found that the other three groups were significantly more adaptable than the Americans.

Berger (1987) interviewed experts in the area of intercultural communication. He found that a number of multinational firms had trained their personnel in how to listen, how to interrupt, how to praise and how to scold. The companies found that these four obstacles were more important than learning the language.

Harris and Moran (1991:61) list Weiss and Stripp's 12 variables of negotiation namely, "basic conception of negotiation process, negotiator selection criteria-significance of type of issue, concern with protocol, complexity of communicative context, nature of persuasive arguments, role of individual's aspirations, bases of trust, risk-taking propensity, value of time, decision-making system and form of satisfactory agreement"

#### 4.3.9 Business etiquette

Chaney and Martin (1995:2) describe etiquette as "manners or behaviour considered acceptable in social and business situations."

Business etiquette, including introduction and greetings, business card exchange, position and status, protocol and customs is important in intercultural communication (Axtell 1990; Baldrige 1993; Beasley 1994; Berger 1987; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Chaney & Martin 1995; Engholm 1991; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Hofstede 1980; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

Engholm (1991:10) refers to the range of skills that businessmen require to successfully traverse cultures "etiquette edge". He maintains that these skills require more than learning the customs and manners of a foreign business environment and believes that a company with the ability to cross cultures,

communicate with people in foreign regions and negotiate long-range overseas partnerships based on reciprocal trust, will have the edge over its competition.

Business in Asia involves a high degree of ritual and reciprocity. Acceptance into Asia's diverse business cultures and strong relationships with businessmen there, are factors that outweigh many of the traditional considerations in a firm's competitive advantages. According to Engholm (1991), a series of international communicating competencies have to be mastered, to attain an "etiquette edge". Among them are the following skills:

- Resolving conflicts and impasses while preserving a counterpart's face (reputation).
- Communicating ideas, humour and individuality through an interpreter.
- Perceiving and comprehending nonverbal facial expressions and body language (called "belly language" in Japan).
- Exchanging technical knowledge, without giving up classified information.

Baldrige (1993) is of opinion that one should acquaint oneself with sources of business, customs, protocol and company information before travelling to another culture.

#### 4.3.10 Country-specific information

Country-specific information may include dress, demeanour or behaviour, basic geography, selected history, notable personalities, language; major businesses, current events, holidays, tastes in food and consumption taboos, introductions or greetings, business card exchange, position and status, protocol and customs (Baldrige 1993; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Ruch 1989; Samovar & Porter 1991).

The Thunderbird program at the American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona (Thunderbird is the original international

business education program which began in 1946) incorporates country-specific orientation. Participants choose a specific country or region and then study the language and environment of the country (Axtell 1985; 1990).

#### 4.3.11 Laws

Harris and Moran (1991) consider knowledge of non-written laws, such as the taking of bribes, necessary negotiation knowledge. While Samovar and Porter (1991) believe that understanding home laws, host country laws, international laws and non-written laws is crucial.

#### 4.3.12 Culture shock

The generalised trauma individuals experience in new and different cultures because they have to learn and cope with a vast array of new cultural cues and expectations, is referred to as cultural shock (Harris & Moran 1991:88-89). It is generally thought that culture shock reduces the ability to function in a cultural setting because of perceived discrepancy between an individual's expectations of how events should proceed and how they actually occur. The level of shock an individual experiences is directly related to the individual's perceived need to adjust to a new culture. The accumulative effect of such discordant events is a stress state resulting in culture shock (Spradley & Phillips 1972:518-529).

Culture shock contributes to the failure of effective communication and is experienced when a person is placed in a situation in which the cultural signs and cues are different from the signs and cues of his own culture (Mesbache 1986)

Shelley (1994:183) says culture shock is "the stress and anxiety that occur when your physical surroundings and the people around you change. You have to expend a certain amount of nervous energy to cope with change and this causes stress."

Entering an unfamiliar culture is psychologically and physically stressful. Chaney and Martin (1995:154) refer to "cultural shock", as "the *trauma* a person experiences when he moves into a culture different from his home culture, a communication problem that involves the frustrations that accompany a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and value systems."

Chaney and Martin (1995:154) emphasise the degree of discomfort that an individual experiences. They refer to 'cultural shock', as "the *trauma* a person experiences when he moves into a culture different from his home culture, a communication problem that involves the frustrations that accompany a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and value systems."

Culture shock has received increased attention by researchers over the last 20 years. Chaney and Martin (1995:161) mention various aspects of culture shock, which include cultural stress, social alienation, social class and poverty-wealth extremes, financial matters, relationships and family considerations, acculturation problems.

Culture shock, including adaptation, social alienation, lifestyle, conformity, relationships, emotional responses, empathy, ambiguity, open-mindedness, stress, private images, public images, misunderstandings, financial matters, re-entry shock qualifications, training, laws, poverty-wealth extremes, family considerations, and drug, alcohol and/or substance abuse, is important to intercultural communication (Baldrige 1993; Brislin & Pedersen 1986; Chaney & Martin 1995; Chen 1990; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Engholm 1991; Ferraro 1990; Harris & Moran 1991; Samovar & Porter 1991; Terpstra & David 1991; Victor 1991).

Copeland and Griggs (1985) found that 50 percent of employees given foreign assignments returned home prematurely. (For developing countries, the employee early return rate was as high as 70 percent).

Businesses, however, indicate that the early return rate drops to almost zero when training programs are instituted. The major reason provided for overseas failure is the lack of understanding of cultural differences. The Business Council for International Understanding supports this fact. Their figures show that the failure rate is 33 to 66 percent without acculturation training and less than two percent with training (Harris & Moran 1991).

Chen's (1990) study of the scope of intercultural communication resulted in a five dimensional model of intercultural communication competencies. The dimensions include the following factors:

- Social Adjustment: social anxiety, communication adaptability, communication responsiveness and social situations.
- Self-Consciousness: private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness.
- Communication Competence: intercultural communication competence and communication competence.
- Self-Disclosure: depth of disclosure and amount of disclosure.
- Interaction involvement: communication attentiveness and communication perceptiveness.

#### 4.4 The need for a course in intercultural business communication

A major objective of intercultural training is to help individuals cope with unexpected events in a new culture. An individual overwhelmed by a new culture will be unable to perform his work duties effectively. Additionally, an ill-prepared individual may inadvertently offend or alienate a foreign host and jeopardise existing long-term relationships with a host country (Earley 1987:686).

The importance of training in preparing an individual for intercultural work assignments has become increasingly apparent (Baker 1984; Lee 1983; Tung 1981). A major objective of intercultural training is to help people cope with unexpected events in a new culture and to reduce conflict arising from

unexpected situations and actions. A study by Henry (1965:17-25) documented the need for companies to prepare operatives assigned to work in a different culture. Lee and Larwood (1984:657-665) suggest that individuals could avoid some role conflict through anticipatory socialisation, in which they obtained advance information about a new culture and adopt their anticipated roles. Anecdotal evidence presented by Baker (1984:68-72) also illustrates the need for intercultural training.

Steyn (1994:36) holds that "An understanding of another's culture, particularly of the values of the culture, is known to enhance empathy and can be augmented through sound training." Therefore, an objective of training is to reduce conflict arising from unexpected situations and actions.

Currently, business education has to deal with the fact that it is not educating individuals about to enter the international arena. Businesspeople need to be as adept at understanding other cultures as the other cultures have become adept at understanding them. Ferraro (1990:15) provides an example of how US businesses have dealt with cultural differences. "If you have a joint venture with a Japanese company, they'll send 24 people here to learn everything you know, and you'll send one person there to tell them everything you know ..."

Harris and Moran (1991:85) define the type of employees companies need as "cosmopolitan people or a multinational-multicultural people who are sensitive, innovative, participative and perceptive."

A general course in intercultural business communication would provide participants with the basic intercultural skills they need before dealing with another culture. A more comprehensive course would provide participants with the knowledge of the types of information they need and an idea of where to find the information.

Employees must communicate with each other, customers, suppliers and host government officials (Ferraro 1990). Businesspeople need to be aware of their



lack of intercultural awareness and what to do to eliminate that "blind spot" to be able to cope in the international business arena. The implication is that international business courses will have to be extended to include training in the development of tolerance for cultural differences and the ability to function in other cultures (Ferraro 1990).

#### 4.5 Relevance of non-South African studies

Due to the extent of intercultural business communication, a comprehensive examination of many countries is not possible in this study. Since it would be impossible for any individual to master every fact about every culture, this study focuses on one culture in order to illustrate the need for cultural sensitivity. The primary focus is on communication skills that Iscor managers need to do business in a foreign culture, based on the fundamental cultural difference between South African managers and traditional-minded Japanese managers.

Considering the long-standing relationship which has grown between Iscor and various Japanese companies for example: Nippon Steel Corporation and NKK, the study focuses primarily on communication skills that Iscor managers need to do business in Japan.

##### 4.5.1 The universality of communication skills

It is extremely difficult to draw comparisons between nations, as in order to compare two populations successfully it is required that the populations be similar. The relevance of the mostly non-South African studies in the literature has to be determined by establishing whether South African managers are significantly different from managers in other countries (Research question 4) and whether the intercultural business communication skills that Iscor managers require are significantly different from those that managers in other countries require? (Research question 5).

A review of the literature on intercultural studies suggests that these studies generally have a common understanding of the concepts of intercultural communication skills. Cross-national research has shown that that nation's institutions, values, culture and politics determine the skills that businesspersons in each nation possess. Although much of the research reviewed and the skills that are identified as essential mostly applied to Americans, it is argued that skills are universal and therefore apply to all businesspersons.

Hofstede (1980:16) poses the question whether nations are suitable units for comparison. He argues that the comparisons of values and attitudes across nations is in some way a comparison of apples and oranges. He reaches the conclusion that "comparing values across nations does not need to be based on representative samples of the countries' population, as long as one compares matched samples of individuals from one nation to the next".

In an age of cultural diversity, it is important to recognise the inevitable impact of a world culture on business communication - particularly in terms of the absorption of business communication into a universal cultural milieu. The blossoming of a new world- wide culture - based not on a blend of East and West, but on the dominance of Western socio-economic institutions and, by extension, the communication principles that accompany that orientation - has become the norm.

De Wilde (1991:42) describes the skills required to survive in this milieu as: "intercultural sensitivity and a global value system, requiring a complicated reach in terms of ethics and interpersonal skills." Sensitivity to national pride, values, and even taste in food, is imperative.

Because South Africa is such a heterogeneous country, a great deal of cultural diversity exists. Communication in this country is often between individuals of different cultural backgrounds and most South Africans can be said to communicate interculturally on almost a daily basis. This however, does not

mean that the majority of South Africans are experts at intercultural communication. In fact, there seems to be a major deficit in our skills in this regard which seems to be universal.

#### 4.6 Summary

Accepting that there is a need to improve the intercultural communication skills of South African managers, attention is paid to the range of communication skills relevant to intercultural business communication.

The literature on the state of the art regarding existing courses in intercultural business communication is discussed. A concise overview of the skills that international businessmen require and which skills they lack, is provided. As no attempt is made to identify the most appropriate skills for individual organisations and specific occupations, the skills under discussion are not critically evaluated. Instead, attention is paid to defining each communication skill and indicating its relevance for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication. The relevance of these mostly non-South African studies is also affirmed.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used in conducting the research project. Quantitative (self-administered mailed questionnaires) as well as qualitative research methods (personal interviews and focus groups) were used.

A descriptive survey was used to attempt to “picture or document current conditions or attitudes, that is, to describe what exists at the moment” (Wimmer and Dominick 1991:107). A pilot survey was conducted in order to pretest the questionnaire for the survey.

#### **5.1 Research methods**

Personal interviews, focus groups and self-administered mailed questionnaires were used in the study.

Individual interviews were used to obtain participant’s “attitudes, beliefs and feelings” (Gibbs 1997:2). This method was chosen for the preliminary stage of the investigation as participants in the pilot group were readily accessible to the researcher and could easily be encouraged to participate in discussions regarding the research topic.

The focus group method was used in two cases to “reconstruct reality from the situational world of the subject” (Ferreira 1988:137).

In the first case, the focus group was used to refine the questionnaire and to obtain background information in the preliminary stage of the research process of investigation.

In the second case, at the concluding stage of the research process of investigation, that is, after the final questionnaires were completed, a focus group was used to verify and supplement information from the final questionnaires.

Focus groups were used to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way which, according to Gibbs (1997:2), would not be feasible using other methods. "These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails."

The focus groups enabled the researcher to gain additional information in a shorter period and provided a multiplicity of views on the study itself and the subject of the study in particular.

According to Morgan and Kreuger (1993:13), focus groups "are particularly useful when there are power differences between the participants and decision-makers or professionals, when the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest, and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic".

Self-administered mailed questionnaires were selected as most suitable method of obtaining information from the respondents in the final study. The reason for this was that although relatively small in number, the groups were not easily accessible due to work and time factors. Other factors considered were that questionnaires are inexpensive, wide-ranging, self-administering and anonymous.

## 5.2 Pilot survey

A pilot survey was initially conducted to gain background for the study and to identify and test the concepts that were to be included in the final questionnaire. Personal interviews and a focus group were used in the preliminary part of the study.

### 5.2.1 Interviews for pilot survey (N=26)

The group used in the pilot survey consisted of 26 managers from Iscor's Vanderbijlpark Works who were about to visit Nippon Steel Corporation (NSC) in Japan as part of a know-how agreement. The information obtained from these interviews was used as a guideline for the development of the questionnaire.

The survey addressed demographics and knowledge of communication aspects of Japan. These questions were investigated by means of structured interviews based on a questionnaire (Appendix A).

The pilot survey was conducted in the following manner: Appointments were made with each of the 26 respondents by telephone. During the telephone conversation, respondents were told the purpose of the interview and asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed. Once they had agreed to the interview, they were asked to study the concept questionnaire before the interview to familiarise themselves with the nature of the study. It was explained that the questionnaire contained a number of items that could possibly be included in a more comprehensive questionnaire on intercultural business communication skills. A questionnaire (Appendix A) and a covering letter (Appendix B) confirming the time and date of the interview was then hand-delivered to each of the managers two days before the scheduled interview. Each respondent was interviewed individually.

### 5.2.2 Questionnaire for the pilot survey

Section 1 of the questionnaire made provision for demographic and general information about the respondents. A selection of questions was used to gather details such as name, designation, section, experience or field of knowledge, the reason(s) for the visit(s) to Japan, the number of previous visits to Japan and the number of previous overseas visits. At the start of the interview, each respondent was also asked a number of open-ended questions regarding his opinion concerning the nature of the study being undertaken. These open questions were included to test the validity of such questions in the questionnaire.

Closed questions were used to determine whether respondents:

- Required a course in intercultural business communication.
- Considered pre-departure training in intercultural business communication necessary for managers before a visit to a foreign country - in this case Japan.

These questions were included in order to test the relevance of a course in intercultural business communication and thus the relevance of the study. Respondents were also asked whether they would, on returning from Japan, be willing to be interviewed about their communication experiences or to complete a more comprehensive questionnaire on intercultural business communication skills.

Section 2 of the questionnaire contained an inventory of fourteen aspects related to intercultural business communication. Respondents were asked to indicate which of these aspects they considered important for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication. Aspects were selected based on studies done by Martin and Chaney (1992:270-273) and Frankenstein and Hosseini (1988:40-43) and were included to identify and test the concepts that were to be incorporated in the questionnaire.

Finally, the concept questionnaire was discussed with the respondents. Each respondent was asked to offer comments or suggestions about content, the clarity of questions, descriptions of items and the general layout of the existing questionnaire. During the interview, the researcher registered comments and impressions. These comments were analysed and incorporated in the final questionnaire that was mailed to the final survey group consisting of 147 managers.

The outcome of the pilot survey is discussed in three parts. These are: responses to the open-ended questions asked during the interview, responses to the items in the questionnaire and responses to the questionnaire as such.

The general opinion concerning the nature of the study being undertaken was positive in that almost all the respondents confirmed the need for a course in intercultural business communication. The majority indicated that they considered pre-departure training in intercultural business communication essential. Only two respondents indicated that they did not consider communication training essential. One of these respondents mentioned that he did not think that pre-departure training was relevant "as our purpose is to communicate about technical matters and therefore such training would not be advantageous." (This was the respondent's first visit to Japan and on his return, he indicated that he had been "in error" and that there is "much to be learnt about the Japanese way of doing things".)

All the respondents indicated that they would be interested in attending a course in intercultural business communication and commented on various aspects they considered important for inclusion in such a course.

All the respondents also indicated that they would be willing to be interviewed about their communication experiences in Japan and to complete a more comprehensive questionnaire on intercultural business communication skills on their return from Japan.



Some of the specific comments made by the respondents are briefly summarised below:

- Although attention has been paid to the development of intercultural communication skills between the different racial groups in Iscor, nothing has been done to meet requirements in terms of the development of a training programme in intercultural business communication for managers who are required to work with overseas counterparts.
- There seems to be a lack of pre-departure training for managers who are sent on assignments abroad.
- Personal preparation for overseas visits has mainly focused on technical aspects, a little background reading and discussions with colleagues who have been on similar assignments.
- While effective intercultural business communication skills are essential and the ability to communicate and negotiate with foreign counterparts is of importance, the organisation is run as a "businesses" resulting in time and cost constraints in terms of preparation.
- The volume of subject material makes it difficult for individuals to cover all the intercultural business communication skills required.
- Managers will recommend a course such as the one being developed to their colleagues.
- The need for managers to acquire effective interpersonal communication skills for successful relationships with overseas counterparts was emphasised.
- Almost every manager interviewed had a negative anecdote to tell about other South Africans. "I felt embarrassed to be from the same country." In the literature, mention is made of the "ugly American" (Supported by Kohls 1984). What seems to have evolved now is the "ugly South African". There is no figure for cost of lost business and damaged company reputation caused by these "business travellers" involved in international business, but inadequately prepared for international encounters.
- One respondent commented that he considers intercultural business communication skills as important as technical knowledge for managers working overseas. He remarked that he considered the lack of these skills

the “main cause of embarrassment overseas”.

- One respondent found poor language and negotiation skills among managers a reason for concern. A poor (English) language comprehension makes understanding the message (relayed from Japanese) a problem and “devaluates” the negotiation process.
- The lack of awareness of the needs of different cultures in the global business environment is reason for concern as lack of knowledge can create stereotypes and prejudice.
- Three respondents recounted separate incidents where a colleague's lack of social decorum in a foreign country had been cause for embarrassment to themselves and South African counterparts. These involved incidents relating to general lack of etiquette, inappropriate hilarity during a ceremonial event and failure to recognise and/or acknowledge position and status.

In reply to item 21 (additional skills required), the respondents suggested the following topics that were consequently incorporated in the final questionnaire:

- Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan.
- Japanese work habits and practices.
- Japanese attitudes towards time.
- Japanese values and ethical standards.
- Japanese food and diet.
- Japanese economy.
- Japanese culture.
- Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs.
- Japanese standards of cleanliness.
- Japanese clothing and business dress.
- Japanese distribution and marketing system.
- General intercultural training.
- Japanese attitude towards physical contact.
- Japanese attitudes towards women.

Comments relating to the clarity of questions and items and the general layout of the existing questionnaire included:

- "Instructions are confusing. It is not clear how you want the choices marked."
- "My English is not good. Please translate the questionnaire into Afrikaans."
- "The (7-point) scale is too complicated."
- "I would prefer yes/no questions" (closed-ended questions).

The above-mentioned comments were taken into consideration and following changes were made to the questionnaire to accommodate these suggestions:

- All instructions necessary to complete the questionnaire were revised in the final questionnaire.
- Procedural instructions for respondents were highlighted by using a different font.
- The final questionnaire (Appendix C) and a covering letter (Appendix D) were translated into Afrikaans before it was mailed to the managers.
- The questions were revised.
- Scaling was changed to a four-point rating scale as this prevents respondents from consistently indicating the middle option.

After their respective interviews various respondents, all of whom indicated extensive knowledge of Japan, volunteered to further advise the researcher on the study. One of the respondents mentioned that he had lived in Japan for nine months. Another respondent had already visited Japan ten times while a third respondent indicated three previous visits to Japan. The other respondents all indicated multiple visits and/or extensive contact with Japanese counterparts in South Africa.

### 5.3 Focus group 1 (N=3)

The focus group was used to refine the questionnaire and to obtain background information from three of the participants who had indicated extensive knowledge of Japan in pilot survey.

Participants were telephonically notified of the focus group. After they had agreed to participate in the focus group the three participants were asked to pre-test the questionnaire and to comment on the concept questionnaire. The date, time and venue for the focus group were confirmed.

Focus group 1 was conducted in the following manner: The focus group discussion began with a short explanation of the study, the scope of the discussions and the topics to be covered. Each participant was also asked to discuss his general views about visiting Japan.

The discussions included the practices of tracking, pacing and balancing participation. The practice of tracking meant that the interviewer maintained focus of the conversation on the topics being investigated. Pacing ensured that a specific set of topics was covered within a fixed period. Balancing meant that the interviewer encouraged the less vocal participants to take part in the discussion (Ferreira 1988:176-177).

Participants in focus group 1 suggested the following eight topics that were subsequently incorporated in the final questionnaire:

- Reading Japanese script.
- International economics.
- Japanese domestic management practices.
- International politics.
- Japanese accounting and financial techniques.
- Japanese climate.
- Japanese family and marriage practices.
- Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan.

Based on the comment by one of the participants, a definition of culture shock was included in the final questionnaire to reduce differences in interpretations among respondents.

#### 5.4 Final questionnaires

After the concept questionnaire was tested by 26 participants through pilot survey, topics were revised and evaluated, after which three managers were asked to do further revisions, additions and deletions (Refer 5.2 and 5.3).

These suggestions were incorporated in a structured, standardised questionnaire to be completed by 147 first level supervisors and middle to top level managers from Iscor's Vanderbijlpark Works who had visited Nippon Steel Corporation (NSC) in Japan as part of a know-how agreement during the period 1980 to 1998.

The selection of this group was based on the assumption that having visited Japan during the past ten years, these managers would be capable to indicate which skills are required in their international work situation, and the extent to which these skills were present or absent.

Given the relatively small number of respondents who visited Japan during this period it was decided to include the entire group.

The group identified for the final study consisted of 147 respondents ranging from first level supervisors and managers to top management level. All respondents were employed by Iscor, Flat Steel Products' Vanderbijlpark Works and visited Japan during the period covered by the study.

The final, bilingual questionnaire (Appendix C) and a covering letter (Appendix D) were mailed to the 147 managers. To ensure a satisfactory response rate a persuasive introductory covering letter was sent out with the questionnaire. It was important to convince respondents that the survey was a legitimate

research project. As the number of managers who had visited Japan as part during the period of the study was relatively small it was emphasised that it was essential that as many as possible completed questionnaires were returned.

After four weeks, a follow-up memorandum (Appendix E) was sent out to encourage further response from the respondents whose completed questionnaires were still outstanding.

Eight weeks after the questionnaire was mailed to the participants 102 had been returned. One questionnaire had to be discarded as it was not fully completed. The remaining 101 represent the realised sample (a response rate of 68,7 percent).

The questionnaire was designed to be completed within 45 minutes and to fulfil the specific research objective. The questionnaire consists of three parts.

Section 1 makes provision for collection of demographic information regarding the respondents. A selection of closed and open questions is used to gather details that include designation, department, experience or length of employment, age and gender.

Section 2 explored previous visits abroad and to Japan in particular. A selection of closed and open-ended questions is used to gather information regarding previous visits abroad, number of visits to Japan, reasons for and duration of visits. Managers were also asked whether they considered training in intercultural business communication relevant.

Section 3 of the questionnaire consisted of three related questions that were selected to address respondents' knowledge of various aspects relating to Japan, the degree of culture shock they experienced in terms of various aspects on being exposed to Japanese culture and aspects they considered important for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication.

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinions regarding the following on a four-point scale:

- The extent of their present knowledge about intercultural communication topics in general and Japanese culture in particular ranging from *excellent* (4) or *good* (3) to *inadequate* (2) or *poor* (1).
- The types and degree of culture shock experienced when exposed to Japanese culture ranging from a *high* (4) or *moderate degree* (3) to *almost none* (2), or *none* (1). Space is also provided for respondents to add any aspects, that the researcher may have omitted, that may have given rise to a degree of culture shock. A definition of culture shock is provided to reduce differences in interpretations among respondents.
- Aspects important for inclusion in a course in intercultural communication for employees visiting Japan ranging from *very important* (4) or *moderately important* (3) to *not very important* (2) or *not important at all* (1). Provision is made for respondents to add any other skills that, the researcher may have omitted, that they consider important.

Question 3 of section 3 contains an inventory of 36 intercultural business communication skills that would be potentially useful to managers in most organisations. These skills were included after an extensive review of the literature on intercultural business communication as well as a pilot survey of 26 managers (Refer 5.2). The list of items is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to be representative of the type and range of intercultural business communication skills required.

It was considered that managers would be in a position to indicate not only which skills were required in their organisation, but also the extent to which they possessed or lacked these skills. The information obtained should make it possible to identify deficiencies in specific areas of knowledge and skills (research question 5) and could contribute relevant information for the development of the proposed course.

Although the majority of sources on the topics that should be included in a course in intercultural business communication originated in the United States of America, they provide a reliable basis for the selection of items as this study argues that there are similarities between the requirements of American and South African managers.

It was assumed that any topics in the list not considered important in South African organisations would be revealed in the analysis of the responses.

The results of the survey are reported in Chapter 6.

#### 5.4 Focus group 2 (N =9)

At the concluding stage of the research process, that is, after the final questionnaires were completed, a focus group was used to verify and supplement information from the final questionnaires.

The group surveyed in this stage of the study consisted of nine managers who were selected based on their extensive knowledge of Japan which they had indicated either during the pilot survey in the preliminary stage of the research process of investigation or after the final questionnaires were submitted. (Two managers telephoned the researcher to volunteer advice and further information regarding the study.)

As in the first focus group, participants were notified of the focus group telephonically. The date, time and venue for the focus group were confirmed.

Focus group 2 was conducted in the following manner: The focus group discussion began with a brief review of the study, the scope of the discussions and the topics to be covered. Each participant was asked to describe his or her visit, highlighting specific positive and negative experiences and observations made while visiting Japan. The respondents were also asked, where possible, to comment on or clarify a few answers that were provided by respondents in



the final questionnaire. During the interview, the researcher registered comments and impressions. Information obtained from these participants was used to verify and supplement information from the final questionnaires.

The respondents again confirmed the need for a course in intercultural business communication.

Comments by the respondents reflect a concern with communicating and operating in the Japanese cultural context. Personal preparation for overseas visits previously focused mainly on technical aspects. There is an urgent need for training for managers who are sent on assignments abroad, particularly with regard to effective interpersonal communication and the proper conduct in foreign countries, especially Japan.

The respondents described various incidents where a co-worker's lack of protocol had caused them embarrassment. These included incidents relating to inappropriate negotiation tactics, improper dining and drinking etiquette, unwise use of slang and poor time management.

The respondents supplied the following comments:

Courtesy and respect were very evident at all the facilities visited. On two occasions the South African flag, which, because of the infrequent contact between the two countries, must have been difficult to obtain, was displayed (Supported by Lange 1993).

- "The Japanese are very courteous people the same cannot be said for some of the managers who were involved in this visit."
- "Some managers will have to learn that when in Japan you have to do what the Japanese do. This, however, does not mean that you have to pretend to be Japanese."
- "Some managers need to improve their interpersonal skills as well as communication."
- "I was dismayed by the prejudice caused by obvious ignorance of cultural differences. Cultural awareness training that provides information about the

host country and particularly a comparison of values and behaviours of people in the home country and the host country is indispensable and will help to minimise culture shock.”

- “Only managers who have been evaluated and possess excellent performance records and interpersonal skills should be allowed to do overseas assignments” (Supported by Baker 1984; Brake 1997; Lee 1983; Lee & Larwood 1984; Tung 1981).
- “Pre-departure training should be a required part of preparation for travelling overseas. The ideal course duration would be a three-day, in-house training programme, designed for managers who travel to Japan to work on projects as well as managers who deal with Japanese visitors to South Africa.”
- “It is suggested that the proposed course be presented by Iscor’s Management Training Section as part of the Management Development Programme (MDP) for first level supervisors, and middle to top level managers. The programme could be conducted by Management Training Personnel who could invite different guest speakers to address participants.”
- “The information that one needs to understand another culture is too wide-ranging for an individual to deal with on his own. All managers preparing to visit Japan should, at least, participate in a three-day training programme a month before leaving. The important (training) task is to help managers to ‘read’ and interpret any intercultural situation in which they find themselves and to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviours to maximise communication and collaboration for the benefit of the company.”
- “Managers need to improve their (English) language skills and/or learn how to use interpreters.”

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter describes the methodology used in completing the research project including preparation for a needs analysis to determine the relevance of intercultural business communication training for South African businessmen, the range of communication skills considered important and the

existing deficiencies in these skills (Research questions 6, 7 and 8). These questions were investigated by means of a descriptive survey. Face-to-face interviews and self-administered postal questionnaires were used to collect opinions, needs, experiences and expectations of 147 first level supervisors and managers employed by Iscor, Vanderbijlpark Works, Flat Steel Products.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

In this chapter the results of the survey are reported and discussed to identify trends in the perceptions of the respondents about the importance of intercultural business communication skills, and the particular communication needs of the organisation.

#### **6.1 Realised sample (N = 101)**

The sample consisted of 147 respondents ranging from first level supervisors and managers to top management level. All respondents were employed by Iscor, Flat Steel Products Vanderbijlpark Works and visited Japan between 1987 and 1998.

A total of 101 respondents (100 male and one female) completed the questionnaires. This figure represents 68,3% of the total number of managers who visited Japan during the period covered by the study.

#### **6.2 Analysis of demographic information**

The respondents provided the following demographic details: designation, field of knowledge, number of years employed by Iscor, age, and gender.

Table 10 provides the statistics regarding respondents' demographic details namely, designation, field of knowledge, number of years employed by Iscor, age, and gender.

#### 6.2.1. Designation

Of the respondents 4% were from top management level (General Manager or General Works Manager), 68,3% from middle management (Works Manager, Divisional Manager or Manager), 5,9% were Engineers, 6,9% Technicians and 13,8% were in other positions on first line supervisor level. One respondent did not indicate his designation.

#### 6.2.2 Field of Knowledge (Department)

Professionally, the group represented a wide range of disciplines. The majority of respondents (78,2%) were from production divisions (48,5% from Rolling and 29,7% from Metallurgy). The rest were from Engineering (14,9%) and 5% were from the Services sections (which included Public Relations, Commercial, Human Resources and Finance). Two respondents did not indicate their departments.

#### 6.2.3. Experience (Number of years in this field)

Overall, the sample was drawn from a fairly experienced group. Most (88,2)% of the respondents had at least five years experience in the field with the majority (34,6%) sharing between 16 and 25 years experience, while another 31,7% had more than 25 years experience. Of the respondents 8,9% had between 11 and 15 years experience, 13,8% had between six and 10 years, 9,9% had between one and five years and one respondent had less than one year experience.

#### 6.2.4 Age

The majority of respondents (88,2%) fall within the 35 to 55 age groups while 12,9% of the respondents were aged between 25 and 34. Only 4,95% indicated their age as over 55. One respondent did not indicate his age.

## 6.2.5 Gender

The majority of the respondents (99%) were male. Only one female participated in the study.

**TABLE 10: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Number of respondents [N = 101]</b>
	General Manager	1
	General Works Manager	3
	Works Manager	11
	Divisional Manager	20
	Manager	38
	Engineer	6
	Technician	7
	Other (Please specify)	14
	Not indicated	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>Department</b>	
	Public Relations	0
	Commercial	3
	Human Resources	0
	Finance	1
	Environmental Management	1
	Engineering	15
	Operations: Rolling	49
	Operations: Metallurgical	30
	Not indicated	2
<b>3.</b>	<b>Experience (Number of years in this field)</b>	
	less than 1 year	1
	1-5 years	10
	6-10 years	14
	11-15 years	9
	16-20 years	21
	21-25 years	14
	more than 25 years	32
<b>4.</b>	<b>Age</b>	
	under 25	0
	25-34	13
	35-44	40
	45-55	42
	over 55	5
	Not indicated	1
<b>5.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	
	Male	100
	Female	1

### 6.3 Information about previous visits

The respondents provided the following information regarding previous visits to Japan: date(s) and duration of visit(s) as well as reason(s) for visit(s).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether it was their first visit to Japan and whether they considered pre-departure training in intercultural business communication necessary before a visit to a foreign country. The statistics for this information appear in Table 11.

#### 6.3.1 Previous overseas visits

For almost half the respondents (47,5%) this visit had been the first overseas experience, while 52,5% of the respondents indicated that they had travelled overseas before.

#### 6.3.2 Previous visits to Japan

All of the respondents visited Japan for business reasons at least once during the period 1987 to 1997. The majority (63,4%) had only visited Japan once, while 35,6% of the respondents indicated that they had undertaken between two and nine (two respondents) visits to this country. Of the respondents 15,8% visited Japan for the second time, 7,9% for the third time, 4% for the fourth time and 7,9% indicated that they had visited Japan five times or more.

#### 6.3.3 Reason(s) for visit(s) to Japan

The main reason for visiting Japan was given as "part of the training/know how/planned values system or technical co-operation agreement, while fact-finding was given as the second most frequent reason. Twenty-five respondents (24,7%) indicated the reason for the visit to be a combination of know how agreement and fact-finding. Other reasons included training (5,9%), commercial matters or customer complaints, customer liaison, tender

evaluation, participation in a project or service in the merchant navy (one respondent each).

Other reasons for visiting Japan included:

- Benchmarking regarding technology and quality. (For example, “to decide which electrolyte tinning process is most suitable for the conversion of the TFS line”, “to view, discuss and obtain information regarding coil coating production”, “to investigate quality control and plant maintenance as practised by Nisshin Steel” and “to investigate the latest development of tin plate continuous annealing lines and minimised spangle equipment for paint line substrate”).
- The compilation of various systems. (For example, “the compilation of the Product Manual order Acceptance System and Material Testing System”).
- To study the capabilities of tenderers (For example, “to study the capabilities of tenderers for the optimisation study into close coupled roughing on the 2050mm Hot Strip Mill and to determine the limitations of close coupled roughing”).
- Discussions regarding production, technology and maintenance related problems. (For example, “to discuss production, technology and maintenance related problems on the Continuous Process Annealing Line – CAPL.”)
- Goodwill (For example, “the visit to Nisshin Steel was accepted by them as goodwill as no know-how agreement exists between Iscor and Nisshin Steel on CAPL related aspects”).
- To gather information on the upgrading of plants (For example, “to collect information on the upgrading of pickling lines to increase the capacity of the Continuous pickling line No. 3” and “to improve quality of the product, to gather information on all aspects of coil coating production, quality control and plant maintenance practised by Nisshin Steel”).
- To undergo theoretical and practical training. (For example, “to undergo training at NSC, the manufacturer of the Continuous Annealing Line No. 2. This included training at various similar plants in Japan in operational techniques and procedures, product technology and quality assurance, processing and determination of mechanical characteristics of Iscor experimental coils, to undergo training in terms of all aspects regarding the



maintenance of the Continuous Annealing Line No. 2”).

- To discuss technical marketing aspects.
- To study and investigate various aspects in terms of the General Technical Co-operation Agreement (For example, “to study and investigate NKK’s Quality and Assurance and Inspection System”).
- To investigate customer complaints (Wazai/Maruichi).

#### 6.3.4 Duration of visit(s)

The length of the visits varied from four days (1 respondent) to nine months (2 respondents). The majority of the visits (144 out of a total of 183 visits or 78,6%) however, lasted between one and two weeks, while 14,7% of these visits were two to three weeks in length. Another 6% of the visits lasted more than three weeks.

#### 6.3.5 Pre-departure training

The majority 84,2% of the respondents felt that it was essential for managers to undergo training in intercultural business communication before a visit to a foreign country. The reasons given included:

- “Cultural differences.”
- “Difference in customs.”
- “Brochures and tour leaders are not sufficient and without them problems arise.”
- “Need to be better or more informed.”
- “Etiquette is very important in countries like Japan.”
- “It is important not to offend.” - “You don’t have to rely on the interpreter.”
- “It helps with protocol issues.”
- “It creates better attitudes.”
- “It makes the exchange of information easier.”
- “Better time management. - It saves time if you do not have to learn through mistakes.”
- “Better communication. Meaningful communication is essential.”

- "Creates respect and better understanding."
- "Promotes the image of your company and country."
- "Improves relationships."
- "Understanding makes differences more acceptable."
- "Inappropriate behaviour can harm the purpose of the visit, for example, negotiation."
- "It is common courtesy and professional."
- "Helps prevent unnecessary mistakes, misunderstanding and wrong perceptions."
- "You know what to expect and how to act."
- "You know what is expected of you."
- "Heightens the impact of interaction."
- "Preparation is important and shows respect."

Only 12,9% of the respondents felt that it was not important that managers undergo training in intercultural business communication before a visit to a foreign country.

The reasons given included:

- "... not necessary when visiting for on the job training or exchange of information."
- "Etiquette and customs are easily learnt."
- "I experienced no problems."
- "Interpreters are sufficient and available 24 hours per day."
- "Host companies are geared to receive guests and show them the ropes."
- "We were accompanied by representatives who know the customs."
- "A short discussion is enough exposure to the new culture - formal training is unnecessary."
- "I worked with Japanese for almost three years."

Three respondents did not answer the question on whether pre-departure training in intercultural business communication before a visit to a foreign country was necessary.

**TABLE 11: INFORMATION ABOUT PREVIOUS VISITS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Was this your first overseas visit?</b>				
	Yes				48
	No				53
<b>2.</b>	<b>Number of visits to Japan</b>				
	1				64
	2				16
	3				8
	4				4
	5				1
	More than 5 (Please specify)				7
	Not indicated				1
<b>3.</b>	<b>Reason(s) for visit(s) to Japan</b>	<b>Know how agreement</b>	<b>Fact finding</b>	<b>Vacation</b>	<b>Other (Please specify)</b>
	Visit 1	74	18	0	5
	Visit 2	18	14	1	1
	Visit 3	7	11	1	1
	Visit 4	6	5	0	0
	Visit 5	3	4	0	0
	Other	4	3	0	0
<b>4.</b>	<b>Duration of visit(s)</b>	<b>7-14 days</b>	<b>15 -21 days</b>	<b>More than 21 days (Please specify)</b>	
	Visit 1	77	14	8	
	Visit 2	28	6	2	
	Visit 3	16	3	1	
	Visit 4	10	2	0	
	Visit 5	7	1	0	
	Other	6	1	0	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Do you consider pre-departure training in intercultural business communication necessary before a visit to a foreign country?</b>				<b>Code</b>
	Yes				85
	No				13
	Not indicated				3

**6.4 Items concerning knowledge, deficiencies and needs**

**6.4.1 Present knowledge**

The first question related to respondent's present knowledge of various aspects regarding Japan.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had been mostly unprepared for the visit to Japan, indicating their knowledge of most aspects relating to Japan as *poor to inadequate*.

Table 12 provides the statistics regarding respondents' knowledge of various aspects relating to Japan. The responses were coded and interpreted by the researcher. Aspects were ranked according to the mean scores calculated for each (that is, from *poor* knowledge to *excellent* knowledge). The following discussion is based on this ranking. Note that scores in the discussion do not equal 100% as only the exceptional responses are referred to.

Most of the respondents (90,1%) had a poor knowledge of the Japanese language, 4,95% said their knowledge was inadequate, while only 1% felt his language was good and 4% were of the opinion that they had an excellent knowledge of the language. Other aspects with which respondents were mostly unfamiliar included:

- Japanese script: The majority (83,2%) of the respondents indicated that their knowledge was poor, while another 10,9% said it was inadequate.
- Japanese business legal system: As many as 60,4% of the respondents believed that their knowledge was poor, while 32,7% indicated it as being inadequate.
- Japanese accounting and financial techniques: More than half (56,4%) of the respondents considered their knowledge of this aspect poor, while another 32,7% felt it was inadequate.
- Japanese political structure and current role players: A large number (41,6%) of the respondents viewed their knowledge as poor, while 49,5% believed it was inadequate.

Respondents indicated that they mainly considered their knowledge in the following areas as inadequate.

- General intercultural training: As many as 42,6% of the respondents confirmed that their knowledge was poor, while 45,55% indicated it as inadequate.

- Japanese distribution and marketing system: 40,6% of the respondents established that their knowledge was poor, while 43,6% said it was inadequate.
- Japanese sources of pride (which include artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan): 34,6% of the respondents considered their knowledge poor, while 51,5% believed it was inadequate.
- Japanese education system: 35,6% of the respondents said their knowledge was poor, while 47,5% viewed their knowledge as inadequate.
- Japanese domestic management practices: 32,7% of the respondents believed that their knowledge was poor, while 51,5% recognised that it was inadequate.
- Japanese religion: 33,65% of the respondents indicated their knowledge as poor, while 47,5% said it was inadequate.
- Japanese family and marriage practices: 34,6% of the respondents viewed their knowledge as poor, while 45,5% confirmed it was inadequate.
- Organisation and sociology of Japanese business: 32,7% of the respondents considered their knowledge poor, while 48,5% believed it as inadequate.
- Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan: 30,7% of the respondents confirmed their knowledge was poor, while 48,50% indicated it was inadequate.
- Japanese attitude towards physical contact: 28,7% of the respondents established their knowledge was poor, while 51,5% said it was inadequate.
- Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan: 22,77% of the respondents considered their knowledge poor, while the majority (57,4%) believed it was inadequate.
- Japanese cultural values and priorities: 22,77% of the respondents viewed their knowledge as poor, while 56,4% recognised it was inadequate.
- Japanese history and folklore: 24,7% of the respondents confirmed their knowledge was poor, while 51,5% said it was inadequate.

Respondents felt slightly more positive regarding their knowledge of the following:

- Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs: Only 19,8% of the respondents felt that their knowledge was poor. However, 59,4% indicated that their knowledge was inadequate.
- Japanese current affairs, (including relations between Japan and South Africa): 18,8% of the respondents confirmed that their knowledge was poor, while 55,4% believed their knowledge was inadequate.
- Japanese culture: 18,8% of the respondents established that their knowledge was poor. Another 58,4% said their knowledge was inadequate.
- Social and business etiquette in Japan: As few as 16,8% of the respondents thought that their knowledge was poor, whereas 54,4% considered their knowledge inadequate.
- Japanese negotiation style: 17,8% of the respondents viewed their knowledge as poor, while 52,5% recognised that their knowledge was inadequate.
- International politics: 17,8% of the respondents felt that their knowledge was poor and 47,5% said their knowledge was inadequate.
- A slightly higher number of the respondents (20,78%) indicated that their knowledge of international economics was poor, while 42,6% thought that their knowledge was inadequate.
- Japanese values and ethical standards: 16,8% of the respondents confirmed that their knowledge was poor, while 52,5% considered their knowledge inadequate.
- Japanese standards of cleanliness: 13,9% of the respondents believed that their knowledge was poor, while 39,6% viewed their knowledge as inadequate.
- Japanese economy: 8,9% of the respondents established that their knowledge was poor, while 46,5% recognised that their knowledge was inadequate.
- Japanese clothing and business dress: 7,92% of the respondents felt that their knowledge was poor, while 42,6% indicated their knowledge was inadequate. Another 46,5%, however, confirmed that their knowledge was good.

- Geography of Japan: 7,92% of the respondents believed that their knowledge was poor, while 44,5% established that their knowledge was inadequate. Another 44,5%, however, said their knowledge was good.
- Japanese attitudes towards women: 8,9% of the respondents thought that their knowledge was poor, while 37,6% considered their knowledge inadequate. Another 48,50%, however, viewed their knowledge as good.
- Japanese work habits and practices: 9,9% of the respondents indicated their knowledge as poor, while 41,6% indicated their knowledge as inadequate. Another 39,6%, however, indicated their knowledge was good.
- Japanese climate: 4,95% of the respondents recognised that their knowledge was poor, while 47,5% felt their knowledge was inadequate. Another 41,6%, however, indicated that their knowledge was good.
- Japanese food and diet: 7,92% of the respondents confirmed that their knowledge was poor, while 38,6% believed that their knowledge was inadequate. Another 46,5%, however, established that their knowledge was good.
- A small percentage (9,9%) of the respondents held that their knowledge of practical matters in Japan was poor, while 36,6% of the respondents said that their knowledge was inadequate. Another 45,5%, however, thought that their knowledge was good.
- Attitudes towards time: 6,9% of the respondents considered their knowledge poor, while 27,7% viewed their knowledge as inadequate. Another 54,4%, however, recognised that their knowledge was good.

#### 6.4.2 Degree of culture shock

Respondents were asked to indicate the types and degree of culture shock experienced when exposed to Japanese culture. To reduce differences in interpretations among respondents, culture shock was briefly defined in the questionnaire as *“the trauma a person experiences when he moves into a culture different from his own, a communication problem that involves the frustrations that accompany a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and value systems”*.

**TABLE 12: THE EXTENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF VARIOUS ASPECTS RELATING TO JAPAN**

(1 = poor, 2 = inadequate, 3 = good and 4 = excellent)

Ranking	No	Aspects	Mean score	Standard deviation	Number of respondents [N = 101]			
					1	2	3	4
1.	1	Japanese language	1.19	.64	91	5	1	4
2.	21	Reading Japanese script	1.25	.67	84	11	1	4
3.	19	Japanese business legal system	1.49	.73	61	33	2	4
4.	18	Japanese accounting and financial techniques	1.57	.78	57	33	6	4
5.	17	Japanese political structure and current role players	1.66	.62	42	50	8	0
6.	14	General intercultural training	1.70	.78	43	46	4	5
7.	13	Japanese distribution and marketing system	1.77	.78	41	44	12	3
8.	7	Japanese sources of pride (artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan)	1.81	.72	35	52	11	3
9.	5	Japanese education system	1.83	.77	36	48	13	3
10.	12	Japanese domestic management practices	1.84	.74	33	52	11	3
11.	8	Japanese religion	1.85	.73	34	48	17	1
12.	31	Japanese family and marriage practices	1.85	.76	35	46	16	2
13.	11	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business	1.87	.76	33	49	14	3
14.	33	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan	1.90	.75	31	49	17	2
15.	20	Japanese attitude towards physical contact	1.94	.76	29	52	17	3
16.	27	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan	1.98	.70	23	57	17	2
17.	4	Japanese cultural values and priorities	1.99	.66	20	63	15	2
18.	15	Japanese history and folklore	1.99	.72	25	52	22	1
19.	30	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs	2.01	.66	20	60	19	1
20.	16	Japanese current affairs (Relations between Japan and South Africa)	2.05	.66	19	56	24	0
21.	3	Japanese culture	2.05	.67	19	59	22	1
22.	2	Social and business etiquette in Japan	2.13	.71	17	55	26	2
23.	10	Japanese negotiation style	2.16	.76	18	53	26	4
24.	23	International politics	2.17	.74	17	53	25	5
25.	22	International economics	2.17	.78	18	48	31	2
26.	35	Japanese values and ethical standards	2.18	.77	17	53	25	5
27.	34	Japanese standards of cleanliness	2.37	.80	14	40	39	6
28.	9	Japanese economy	2.40	.72	21	43	34	2
29.	29	Japanese clothing and business dress	2.43	.67	9	47	39	5
30.	6	Geography of Japan	2.43	.68	8	45	45	3
31.	26	Japanese attitudes towards women	2.46	.70	9	38	49	3
32.	36	Japanese work habits and practices	2.46	.78	10	42	40	8
33.	28	Japanese climate	2.47	.67	5	48	42	5
34.	32	Japanese food and diet	2.51	.73	8	39	47	6
35.	24	Practical matters in Japan: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business, tipping)	2.51	.78	10	37	46	8
36.	25	Attitudes towards time	2.68	.75	7	28	55	10



Table 13 provides the statistics regarding the degree of culture shock respondents indicated as having experienced on being exposed to Japanese culture. The responses were coded and interpreted by the researcher. Aspects were ranked according to the mean scores calculated for each (that is, from *no* shock to a *high degree* of shock). The following discussion is based on this ranking. Note that scores in the discussion do not equal 100% as only the exceptional responses are referred to.

Most of the respondents who indicated that they had been mostly unprepared for the visit to Japan had found the simple mechanics of doing business in Japan extremely complex and seem to have experienced a higher degree culture shock.

Aspects indicated to have contributed least to culture shock include:

- Geography of Japan: A large number (41,6%) of the respondents indicated that they experienced no culture shock while 39,6% stated that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese climate: 30,69% of the respondents thought that they experienced no culture shock while 45,55% felt that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese history and folklore: 33,7% of the respondents said that they experienced no culture shock while 38,6% confirmed that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese current affairs (Relations between Japan and South Africa): 30,69% of the respondents believed that they experienced no culture shock while 45,5% claimed that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese clothing and business dress: 31,7% of the respondents maintained that they experienced no culture shock while 44,5% indicated that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese political structure and current role players: 31,7% of the respondents declared that they experienced no culture shock while 39,6% said that they experienced almost no shock.

The following aspects were specified as contributing more to discomfort:

- Japanese economy: 30% of the respondents indicated that they experienced no culture shock while 39,6% felt that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese attitude towards physical contact: 30,69% of the respondents stated that they experienced no culture shock while 31,7% said that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese business legal system: 30,7% of the respondents indicated that they experienced no culture shock with regard to this aspect and 30,7% indicated that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese accounting and financial techniques: 30,7% of the respondents thought that they experienced no culture shock while 32,7% confirmed that they experienced almost no shock.
- Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan: 24,7% of the respondents believed that they experienced no culture shock while 40,6% claimed that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese education system: 26,7% of the respondents maintained that they experienced no culture shock while 41,6% declared that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese values and ethical standards: 25,7% of the respondents indicated that they experienced no culture shock while 34,6% stated that they experienced almost no shock.
- Sources of pride: 22,77% of the respondents thought that they experienced no culture shock while 42,6% were of the opinion that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese domestic management practices: 23,8% of the respondents felt that they experienced no culture shock while 37,6% said that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese standards of cleanliness: 24,7% of the respondents confirmed that they experienced no culture shock while 37,6% believed that they experienced almost no shock.
- Japanese religion: 24,7% of the respondents claimed that they experienced no culture shock while 38,6% indicated that they experienced almost no shock.

- **Japanese distribution and marketing system:** 24,7% of the respondents maintained that they experienced no culture shock while 35,6% said that they experienced almost no shock.

**Aspects where respondents seem to have experienced a greater degree of culture shock include:**

- **Japanese values and ethical standards:** 31,7% said that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 5,9% confirmed a high degree of culture shock.
- **Japanese attitudes towards time:** 30,69% claimed that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 9,9% indicated a high degree of culture shock.
- **Japanese family and marriage practices:** 31,7% stated that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 9,9% that they reported a high degree of culture shock.
- **Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan:** 32,7% mentioned that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 10,9% reported a high degree of culture shock.
- **Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs:** 36,6% believed that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 9,9% confirmed a high degree of culture shock.
- **Japanese culture:** 34,6% maintained that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 8,9% were aware of a high degree of culture shock.
- **Japanese work habits and practices:** 38,6% confirmed that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 10,9% reported a high degree of culture shock.
- **Organisation and sociology of Japanese business:** 36,6% thought that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 7,92% endured a high degree of culture shock.
- **Social and business etiquette in Japan:** 39,6% said that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 46, 53% indicated a high degree of culture shock.

- Japanese cultural values and priorities: 31,7% claimed that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 12,9% confirmed a high degree of culture shock.
- Practical matters in Japan: 34,6% stated that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 13,9% reported a high degree of culture shock.
- Japanese attitudes towards women: 29,7% mentioned that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 16,8% indicated a high degree of culture shock.
- Japanese negotiation style: Only 8,9% of the respondents believed that they experienced no culture shock while 40,6%, were aware that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 11,9% mentioned a high degree of culture shock.

Aspects indicated to have contributed most to frustration include the Japanese language.

- 58,4% of the respondents experienced culture shock because of a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, 67,3% of the respondents found that reading Japanese script contributed to communication problems.
- Japanese language: 15,8% of the respondents maintained that they experienced no culture shock while 24,7% thought that they experienced almost no shock. Another 32,7%, however, felt that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 25,7% reported a high degree of culture shock.
- Japanese food and diet: 14,8% of the respondents said that they experienced no culture shock while 20,8% stated that they experienced almost no shock. Another 40,6%, however, indicated that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 22,8% confirmed a high degree of culture shock.
- Reading Japanese script: 15,8% of the respondents mentioned that they experienced no culture shock while another 15,8% believed that they experienced almost no shock. Conversely, 14,8% of the respondents

indicated that they experienced a moderate degree of culture shock and 52,5% were aware of a high degree of culture shock.

### 6.4.3 Importance of topics

Respondents were asked to indicate how important they considered the various aspects for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication for South African managers visiting Japan.

Table 14 provides the statistics regarding the aspects for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication ranked in order of importance. The responses were coded and interpreted by the researcher. Aspects were ranked according to the mean scores calculated for each (that is, from *not important at all* to *very important*). The following discussion is based on this ranking. Note that scores in the discussion do not equal 100% as only the exceptional responses are referred to.

Japanese business legal system emerged as the aspect considered least important on the training agenda with 36,6% of the respondents indicating that it was not important at all, another 36,6% considered it not very important.

Aspects that were considered slightly more important included:

- Japanese religion: 24,7% of the respondents considered this aspect not important at all, while 48,5% thought it not very important.
- Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan: 16,8% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was not important at all, while 55,4% said it was not very important.
- Japanese family and marriage practices: 16,8% of the respondents believed this aspect was not important at all, while 54,4% stated that it was not very important.
- Japanese education system: 16,8% of the respondents maintained this aspect was not important at all, while 53,5% felt it was not very important.

**TABLE 13: THE DEGREE OF CULTURE SHOCK EXPERIENCED REGARDING VARIOUS ASPECTS, ON BEING EXPOSED TO JAPANESE CULTURE**  
(1 = none, 2 = almost none, 3 = a moderate degree and 4 = a high degree)

Ranking	No	Aspects	Mean score	Standard deviation	Number of respondents [N = 101]			
					1	2	3	4
1.	6	Geography of Japan	1.75	.73	42	40	17	0
2.	25	Japanese climate	1.96	.82	31	46	19	4
3.	14	Japanese history and folklore	1.96	.84	34	39	24	3
4.	15	Japanese current affairs (Relations between Japan and South Africa)	1.97	.85	31	46	16	6
5.	26	Japanese clothing and business dress	1.98	.88	32	45	16	7
6.	16	Japanese political structure and current role players	1.99	.87	32	40	21	5
7.	9	Japanese economy	2.05	.87	30	40	25	5
8.	19	Japanese attitude towards physical contact	2.14	.95	31	32	29	8
9.	18	Japanese business legal system	2.14	.99	31	31	24	10
10.	17	Japanese accounting and financial techniques	2.15	1.02	31	33	20	13
11.	30	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan	2.16	.90	25	41	25	8
12.	5	Japanese education system	2.16	.98	27	42	17	13
13.	32	Japanese values and ethical standards	2.18	.90	26	35	32	6
14.	7	Sources of pride (artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan)	2.19	.88	23	43	26	8
15.	12	Japanese domestic management practices	2.19	.89	24	38	29	7
16.	31	Japanese standards of cleanliness	2.20	.93	25	38	27	9
17.	8	Japanese religion	2.22	.95	25	39	25	11
18.	13	Japanese distribution and marketing system	2.22	.95	25	36	27	10
19.	22	Japanese attitudes towards time	2.24	.97	27	32	31	10
20.	28	Japanese family and marriage practices	2.25	.97	27	30	32	10
21.	24	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan	2.33	.94	22	34	33	11
22.	27	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs	2.35	.94	22	31	37	10
23.	3	Japanese culture	2.39	.84	14	42	35	9
24.	33	Japanese work habits and practices	2.40	.94	21	29	39	11
25.	11	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business	2.41	.81	12	42	37	8
26.	2	Social and business etiquette in Japan	2.42	.80	12	40	40	47
27.	4	Japanese cultural values and priorities	2.45	.88	13	42	32	13
28.	21	Practical matters in Japan: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business, tipping)	2.45	.95	18	33	35	14
29.	23	Japanese attitudes towards women	2.48	.96	16	36	30	17
30.	10	Japanese negotiation style	2.57	.82	9	37	41	12
31.	34.	Other. (Indicate any other aspects, which gave rise to a degree of culture shock.)	2.57	1.27				
32.	1	Japanese language	2.69	1.03	16	25	33	26
33.	29	Japanese food and diet	2.72	.99	15	21	41	23
34.	20	Reading Japanese script	3.05	1.16	16	16	15	53
35.	24	Practical matters in Japan: (currency,	2.51	.78	10	37	46	8

- Japanese history and folklore: 16,8% of the respondents viewed this aspect as not important at all, while 45,5% considered it not very important. However, 32,7% of the respondents indicated that they believed it was moderately important.
- Japanese political structure and current role players: 13,87% of the respondents thought that this aspect was not important at all, while 47,5% claimed that it was not very important. However, 33,7% of the respondents viewed this aspect as moderately important.
- Japanese accounting and financial techniques: 10,9% of the respondents stated that this aspect was not important at all, while 40,6% maintained that it was not very important. However, another 40,6% of the respondents felt that it was moderately important.
- Geography of Japan: 5,9% of the respondents considered this aspect not important at all, while 47,53% thought it was not very important. However, 38,6% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was moderately important.
- Japanese climate: 4,96% of the respondents said that this aspect was not important at all, while 50,5% believed it was not very important. On the other hand, 35,6% of the respondents stated that it was moderately important.
- Japanese language: 14,8% of the respondents maintained that this aspect was not important at all, while 34,6% indicted that it was not very important. Conversely, 29,7% of the respondents felt that it was moderately important.
- Japanese attitude towards physical contact: 12,9% of the respondents viewed this aspect as not important at all, while 31,7% considered it not very important. Nevertheless, 38,6% of the respondents thought that this aspect was moderately important, while 15,8% claimed that it was very important.
- Sources of pride in Japan: 4,96% of the respondents said that this aspect was not important at all, while 33,7% believed it was not very important. As many as 51,5% of the respondents stated that it was moderately important, while 7,9% maintained it was very important.
- General intercultural training: 5,95% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was not important at all, while 34,6% felt that it was not very important. However, 47,5% of the respondents viewed it as moderately

important, while 10,9% considered it very important.

- Japanese attitudes towards women: 6,9% of the respondents viewed this aspect as not important at all, while 32,7% felt it was not very important. On the other hand, 44,56% of the respondents felt it was moderately important, while 15,8% thought it very important.
- International politics: 7,9% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was not important at all, while 29,7% indicated that it was not very important. However, 45,5% of the respondents said it was moderately important, while 15,8% believed it very important.
- Japanese clothing and business dress: 4,95% of the respondents considered this aspect not important at all, while 29,7% stated that it was not very important. Nevertheless, 50,5% of the respondents maintained that it was moderately important, while 12,74% thought it very important.
- International economics: 7,92% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was not important at all, while 23,8% said it was not very important. However, 53,5% of the respondents believed that it was moderately important, while 13,9% indicated that it was very important.
- Japanese domestic management practices: 7,92% of the respondents considered this aspect not important at all, while 28,7% felt it was not very important. On the other hand, 42,6% of the respondents indicated that they viewed this aspect as moderately important, while 19,8% said it was very important.
- Japanese distribution and marketing system: 4,95% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was not important at all, while 33,7% viewed it as not very important. Conversely, 40,6% of the respondents stated that it was moderately important, while 19,8% maintained it was very important.
- Reading Japanese script: 6,9% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was not important at all, while 21,8% considered it not very important. However, 49,5% of the respondents thought that it was moderately important, while 20,8% felt it was very important.
- Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs: 4,95% of the respondents believed this aspect was not important at all, while 20,8% said it was not very important. On the other hand, 56,4% of the respondents indicated that



this aspect was moderately important, while 16,8% viewed it as very important.

- Japanese standards of cleanliness: 4% of the respondents stated that this aspect was not important at all, while 22,77% said it was not very important. Conversely, 54,4% of the respondents considered it moderately important, while 17,8% thought it very important.
- Japanese culture: 4% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was not important at all, while 20,8% maintained that it was not very important. However, 57,4% of the respondents felt this aspect was moderately important, while 16,8% viewed it as it very important.
- Japanese cultural values and priorities: 4% of the respondents claimed that this aspect was not important at all, while 13,9% considered it not very important. On the other hand, 66,3% of the respondents maintained that it was moderately important, while 14,8% claimed it was important.
- Japanese economy: 5,9% of the respondents viewed this aspect as not important at all, while 15,85% felt it was not very important. Conversely, 55,4% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was moderately important, while 21,8% maintained it was very important.

In the next highest rankings, the following aspects were considered most important:

- Japanese food and diet: 57,4% of the respondents stated that this aspect was moderately important and 26,7% believed it was very important.
- Japanese current affairs: 58,4% of the respondents said that this aspect was moderately important and 21,8% claimed it was very important.
- Organisation and sociology of Japanese business: 46,5% of the respondents thought that this aspect was moderately important and 33,7% considered it very important.
- Japanese values and ethical standards: 52,5% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was moderately important, while 32,7% felt it was very important.

- Japanese attitudes towards time: 49,5% of the respondents viewed this aspect as moderately important and 35,6% maintained it was very important.
- Japanese work habits and practices: 47,5% of the respondents stated that this aspect was moderately important, and 38,6% believed it was very important.
- Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan: 46,5% of the respondents said this aspect was moderately important and 44,5% claimed that it was very important.
- Practical matters in Japan: 42,6% of the respondents considered this aspect moderately important and 52,5% viewed it as very important.
- Japanese negotiation style and Social and business etiquette emerged as the two most essential items on the training agenda with 96% of the respondents indicating that this aspect was moderately (55,4%) or very important (40,6%).
- Japanese negotiation style. Only 3% considered this aspect not very important while 24,7% of the respondents indicated that it was moderately important, while 71,3% considered it very important.
- Social and business etiquette in Japan. None of the respondents considered this aspect not important at all, while only 3% considered this aspect not very important. However, 40,6% of the respondents indicated this aspect was moderately important, while 55,4% considered it very important.

Only 48,5% of the respondents indicated that they considered knowledge of the Japanese language important. This is in contrast to the study done by Frankenstein and Hosseini (1988:41) where their respondents indicated that they considered Japanese language the most important training topic.

Only six of the respondents indicated having any knowledge of the Japanese language. The main reason why learning the language did not emerge as the most important aspect in this study is that most of the respondents had not stayed in Japan for longer than three weeks and made use of interpreters

during that time. However, both the rankings in questions 1 and 2 and the comments supplied by the respondents in focus groups 2 reflect a concern with communicating and operating in the Japanese cultural context.

Respondents listed cultural aspects (social and business etiquette in Japan, Japanese culture, and Japanese cultural values and priorities) as the most essential training topics.

## 6.5 Trends in perceptions

The results of Questions 1, 2 and 3 (Tables 12 to 14) were used to illustrate trends in the perceptions of the respondents about the importance of intercultural business communication skills, and the particular communication needs of the managers. These results indicate that managers generally perceive themselves as lacking knowledge of the majority of the communication aspects associated with Japan. Participants indicated a moderately low degree of knowledge of almost all topics. With the exception of three aspects namely, *practical matters*, *attitudes towards time* and *food and diet* most participants indicated a high degree of culture shock in terms of all topics. Participants considered most content topics essential (14 content topics) or important (14 content topics). Only eight of the content topics were not considered essential or important by all the participants.

## 6.6 Summary

In this chapter the results of the descriptive survey are reported and discussed to illustrate trends in the perceptions of the respondents regarding the importance of intercultural business communication skills, and the particular communication needs of participants.

**TABLE 14: ASPECTS FOR INCLUSION IN A COURSE IN INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE**  
(1 = not important at all, 2 = not very important, 3 = moderately important and 4 = very important)

Ranking	No.	Aspects	Mean score	Standard deviation	Number of respondents [N = 101]			
					1	2	3	4
1.	21	Japanese business legal system.	1.97	.94	37	37	18	8
2.	8	Japanese religion.	2.05	.80	25	49	22	4
3.	33	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan.	2.13	.72	17	56	24	3
4.	31	Japanese family and marriage practices.	2.15	.74	17	55	24	4
5.	5	Japanese education system.	2.15	.75	17	54	24	4
6.	15	Japanese history and folklore.	2.24	.78	17	46	33	4
7.	17	Japanese political structure and current role players.	2.30	.77	14	47	34	5
8.	18	Japanese accounting and financial techniques.	2.44	.78	11	41	41	7
9.	6	Geography of Japan.	2.47	.72	6	48	39	7
10.	28	Japanese climate.	2.47	.72	5	51	36	8
11.	1	Japanese language.	2.54	.97	15	35	30	19
12.	19	Japanese attitude towards physical contact	2.58	.91	13	32	39	16
13.	7	Sources of pride in Japan. (artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan).	2.64	.71	5	34	52	8
14.	14	General intercultural training.	2.64	.76	6	35	48	11
15.	26	Japanese attitudes towards women.	2.69	.83	7	33	44	16
16.	23	International politics.	2.70	.83	8	30	46	16
17.	29	Japanese clothing and business dress.	2.73	.75	5	30	51	13
18.	22	International economics.	2.74	.80	8	24	54	14
19.	12	Japanese domestic management practices.	2.75	.87	8	29	43	20
20.	13	Japanese distribution and marketing system.	2.76	.83	5	34	41	20
21.	20	Reading Japanese script	2.85	.83	7	22	50	21
22.	30	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs.	2.86	.75	5	21	57	17
23.	34	Japanese standards of cleanliness.	2.87	.75	4	23	55	18
24.	3	Japanese culture.	2.88	.73	4	21	58	17
25.	4	Japanese cultural values and priorities.	2.93	.67	4	14	67	15
26.	9	Japanese economy.	2.94	.79	6	16	56	22
27.	32	Japanese food and diet.	3.09	.73	4	10	58	27
28.	16	Japanese current affairs. (Relations between Japan and South Africa).	3.11	.68	2	12	59	27
29.	11	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business.	3.12	.80	4	14	47	34
30.	35	Japanese values and ethical standards.	3.16	.73	3	11	53	33
31.	25	Japanese attitudes towards time.	3.21	.70	1	13	50	36
32.	36	Japanese work habits and practices.	3.22	.77	4	9	48	39
33.	27	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan.	3.35	.69	2	6	47	45
34.	24	Practical matters in Japan: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business, tipping) .	3.49	.58	0	4	43	53
35.	2	Social and business etiquette in Japan.	3.53	.56	0	3	41	56
36.	10	Japanese negotiation style.	3.69	.53	0	3	25	72

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents a summary of the study. It also provides conclusions regarding the outcome of the study based on the findings with reference to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. In addition, the difficulties experienced with the study are discussed. This dissertation concludes with recommendations regarding the development and presentation of a course in intercultural business communication at Iscor.

#### **7.1 Summary**

Changes in South Africa's political and economic environment have had a marked effect on the nature and scope of business. Based on the argument that globalisation has given a new meaning to doing international business this study holds that in addition to professional and technical knowledge and training, the ability to establish sound interpersonal relationships on an international level is becoming increasingly important in the business world. An understanding of international business communication has become imperative for the businessperson to succeed in the international marketplace. A further argument is that the training and development of managers for overseas assignments have rarely been carried out properly - if at all. A review of the relevant literature suggests that there is a considerable discrepancy between what should be done and what is actually being done. Existing courses in intercultural business communication do not necessarily meet the unique needs of South African managers representing their companies overseas.

In this study intercultural communication as a specialisation area in the field of general communication studies provides the context in which the specific needs that Iscor managers have with regard to Japan are identified with the objective of developing a course in intercultural business communication for these managers.

An understanding of intercultural business communication (Research question 1) is reached by investigating the concepts intercultural communication and intercultural business communication.

In order to justify the focus of this study on Japan (Research question 2) and to provide background to the study this dissertation concentrates on the relationship between South Africa and Japan in general and Iscor and Japanese companies in particular.

An extensive review of the literature on intercultural business communication was conducted to establish the relative value of a course in intercultural business communication (Research question 3).

This study also discusses the relevance of existing, mostly non-South African studies with specific attention to whether:

- South African managers are significantly different from managers in other countries? (Research question 4) and
- the intercultural business communication skills that South African managers require significantly differ from those that managers in other countries require? (Research question 5).

The need for a course in intercultural business communication is underlined by a review of the relevant literature. As the content of such a course would depend on the intercultural business communication skills required that Iscor managers require, a needs analysis was used to determine which of these skills Iscor managers lacked and which skills they considered important for doing effectively doing business in Japan. (Research questions 6 to 8)

## 7.2 Delimitations

Since the sample of respondents for the study was drawn from only one company dealing with one specific market, this study is not intended to be representative of South African society as a whole.

In view of the extent of intercultural business communication, the primary focus is on the communication skills that Iscor managers need to do business in a foreign culture, in this case, that of Japan. This study focuses on one culture in order to illustrate the need for cultural sensitivity when one is exposed to a foreign culture. The reasoning behind this was that a comprehensive examination of many countries would not be feasible and that it would be virtually impossible for any individual to master every fact about every culture. However, it is important to note that this focus on the Japanese market could act as an introduction to intercultural business communication in other foreign markets

Because of a fundamental cultural difference between South African managers and traditional-minded Japanese managers and because few cultures seem more foreign, more exotic, or more different from the South African culture than that of the Japanese, this study concentrates on Japan and the information that would be useful when doing business in that country. Another reason for focusing on Japan is the long-standing relationship that has grown between Iscor and various Japanese companies like Nippon Steel Corporation (NSC) and NKK. During the past two decades, Iscor has signed various know-how agreements with both companies. These agreements made provision for, amongst other things, a number of exchange visits to Japan.

Generalisation is used to aid understanding. As the sample population consisted of white - and except for one participant - male managers employed by Iscor, the businessperson described in this study is the traditional (white, male) businessperson. The reason for this is that at the time of the study only white first level supervisors or managers from the company had visited Japan. Other ethnic - and gender - groups are nonetheless represented in the study because, as international travellers, once leaving South Africa, all businesspeople from this country are considered South African. They will run into the same cultural barriers unless they take time to study and understand the culture.

For the sake of the study, generalisations about culture and cultural norms were used. It is, however, agreed that generalisations do not explain the individual and although every country has a national character, most nationalities are made up of diverse groups and individuals who conform to cultural norms to a varying degree. Not all individuals will fit the norm. For example while it could be said that the Japanese tend to be formal and correct and will refrain from arguing in business situations it would be wrong to assume that all Asians are formal and reserved.

### 7.3 Findings

The results of Questions 1, 2 and 3 (Tables 12 to 14) are used to illustrate trends in the perceptions of the respondents regarding the importance of intercultural business communication skills, and the particular communication needs of the participants.

These results indicate that managers generally perceive themselves to lack knowledge of various communication aspects relating to Japan. Participants indicated a moderately low degree of knowledge of almost all topics. Most participants indicated a high degree of culture shock in terms of all topics, with the exception of *practical matters*, *attitudes towards time*, and *food and diet*. Participants considered most content topics essential (14 content topics) or important (14 content topics). Only eight of the content topics were not considered essential or important by all the participants.

### 7.4 Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the research questions posed in Chapter 1 of this study:

Research question 1: What is intercultural business communication?

Intercultural communication is the communication between people from different cultural groups. Since all international business activity involves communication,



knowledge of intercultural communication and international business communication is important to prepare managers to succeed in the international marketplace.

Intercultural business communication is communication within and between businesses that involves people from more than one culture or between individuals who have business relationships with individuals in other countries or cultures.

Research question 2: What is the relationship between Japan and South Africa?

Business interests around the world are competing for the opportunities offered by changes in South Africa while many South Africans consider Japan a model of economic success even in spite of the Asian crisis. Although Japan's trade relationship with South Africa is minor in a global context, representing less than one percent of its combined exports and imports, the relationship has much more significance in the sense that the partnership dominates Japan's trade relations with Africa. Japan's main imports from South Africa are steel, non-ferrous metals, non-ferrous metal scrap, coal, iron ore and non-metallic mineral ores.

No one can deny the dominance of Japan as the leading steel producing force in terms of technology and quality. In spite of the Asian crisis, Japan still has much to offer the West and South Africa in particular. Japan remains an excellent source of venture capital and more importantly leading edge technological know-how. Some of the world's largest steel companies are located in Japan.

Steel will remain an indispensable commodity. As a supplier of basic materials as well as knowledge to steel consumers and steel industries alike, the Japanese steel industry intends to contribute to the expansion of the world economy by developing high-quality steel products and state-of-the-art steel making technology.

Steel in its various forms is a major contributor to South Africa's gross domestic product and one of the mainstays of the manufacturing sector. Driven by the need to become globally competitive in a depressed international market, which is

South African steel industry, and therefore Iscor, faces a period of change during the new millennium. The crisis in the Japanese economy has, however, opened an opportunity for South Africa. All that needs to be done is for the country to make it attractive for Japanese companies to conduct business with South Africa.

Research question 3: What intercultural business communication skills do international businesspeople require?

The literature search yielded the following main topics for possible inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication: universal systems, contrasting cultural values verbal and non-verbal patterns, language, communication strategies, negotiation process, business etiquette, country-specific information, laws, and culture shock. The relevance of each of these topics or skills is discussed extensively in chapter 4.

Research question 4: Are South African managers significantly different from managers in other countries?

This study argues that South African managers are not significantly different from managers in other countries in terms of their need to understand international business communication. It is as crucial for the South African businessperson to succeed in the international marketplace as it is for his counterparts in other countries. Since all international business activity involves communication, knowledge of intercultural communication and international business communication is important to prepare managers to succeed in the international marketplace. Of significance here, are the different communication skills that managers in South African organisations will have to acquire to do business overseas competently and effectively.

Research question 5: Are the intercultural business communication skills that South African managers require significantly different from those that managers in other countries require?

To answer this question it first had to be determined:

What intercultural business communication skills South African managers - in this case represented by Iscor managers - require (Research question 6) and What intercultural business communication skills South African managers- in this case represented by Iscor managers - lack (Research question 7).

The results of the investigation indicate a general correlation between the skills that Iscor managers perceive to lack and the skills that these managers require. Participants indicated a low degree of knowledge of all topics and a high degree of culture shock in terms of all topics.

When the intercultural business communication skills that Iscor managers indicated as essential are compared with those that studies in other countries found to be essential, it can be said that the intercultural business communication skills that Iscor managers require are not significantly different from those that managers in other countries require.

Research question 8: What topics should be included in a course in intercultural business communication?

Insight gained in investigating research questions posed at the beginning of the study provided guidelines to the content of a course in intercultural business communication for Iscor managers. Participants considered most content topics essential (14 content topics) or important (14 content topics). Only eight of the content topics were not considered essential or important by all the participants. It may therefore be concluded that in order to satisfy the intercultural communication skill requirements of Iscor managers all the content topics identified in this study should be included in a course in intercultural business communication, although it is evident that some topics will be of more value to some managers than they will be to others.

## 7.5 Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are based on the preceding conclusions:

1. It is recommended that a course in intercultural business communication be compiled, based on the findings of this study. The course should include all the content topics that were identified as essential by the study.
2. It is recommended that the course be presented by Iscor Flat Steel Product's Organisation Development Department as part of the Leadership Works Programme for managers.
3. It is also recommended that the findings of this study be incorporated in a textbook for intercultural business communication suited to the specific needs of Iscor managers as existing courses in intercultural business communication do not necessarily meet the unique needs of South African managers.
4. It is further recommended that the questionnaire be administered to a large group of South African businesspeople to further validate the current study and in order to develop a training course to that will satisfy the intercultural communication skill requirements of all South African managers.

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**QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION  
NEEDS OF ISCOR MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN**

**SECTION 1**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. Name:.....

2. Designation:.....

3. Section: .....

4. Field of knowledge:.....

5. Reason(s)for visit(s) to Japan .....

.....

.....

6. Is this your first visit to Japan?

**YES**

**NO**

7. Is this your first overseas visit?

**YES**

**NO**

If your answer is "NO", which other countries have you visited?

.....

.....

8. Do you consider pre-departure training in intercultural business communication for managers, necessary before a visit to a foreign country?

YES

NO

Please motivate your answer:

.....

.....

.....

9. Please indicate below if you would be willing to be interviewed about your communication experiences on returning from Japan

YES

NO

**SECTION 2**

**QUESTION 1**

*Instructions:* Please indicate with a cross (X) on the 7 point scale, how important you consider knowledge of the following communication aspects.

1 = not important at all

7 = extremely important

No.	Aspects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Social and business etiquette in Japan.							
2.	Japanese history and folklore.							
3.	Japanese current affairs. (Relations between Japan and South Africa)							
4.	Japanese cultural values and priorities.							
5.	Geography of Japan.							
6.	Sources of pride (artists, musicians, novelists, sports, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan).							
7.	Japanese religion.							
8.	Japanese political structure and current role players.							
9.	Practical matters: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business.							
10.	Japanese language.							
11.	Japanese negotiation style.							
12.	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business.							
13.	Japanese business legal system.							
14.	Japanese education system.							

**QUESTION 2**

*Instructions:* Please indicate with a cross (X) on the 7 point scale, what the extent of your knowledge of each of the following communication aspects is.

1 = no knowledge at all

7 = expert knowledge

No.	Aspects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Social and business etiquette in Japan.							
2.	Japanese history and folklore.							
3.	Japanese current affairs. (Relations between Japan and South Africa)							
4.	Japanese cultural values and priorities.							
5.	Geography of Japan.							
6.	Sources of pride (artists, musicians, novelists, sports, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan).							
7.	Japanese religion.							
8.	Japanese political structure and current role players.							
9.	Practical matters: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business.							
10.	Japanese language.							
11.	Japanese negotiation style.							
12.	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business.							
13.	Japanese business legal system.							
14.	Japanese education system.							

**Thank you for your co-operation.**

Enjoy your trip.

Elize Zywockiewicz  
Tel. (016) 889 4115  
Postal point 77001

To/Aan :

From/Van : Elize Zywo tkiewicz  
Postal point 77001

Tel No : (016) 889-4115

Date/Datum :

---

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF ISCOR MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN**

Thank you for making yourself available for an interview before your visit to Japan. As discussed telephonically I am currently completing my research on the communication skills that managers in South African organisations require to successfully conduct business overseas - particularly in Japan. "*The development of criteria for a course in intercultural business communication for South African Managers*" and your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated. All information received will be treated as confidential.

I hereby confirm the following arrangements regarding the interview:

Date:

Time:

Venue:

I would appreciate it if you could please study the attached questionnaire before the interview to familiarise yourself with the nature of the study. Please note that the questionnaire contains a number of items, which will possibly be included in a more comprehensive questionnaire on intercultural business communication skills.

Please contact me at x2-4115 if you need any further information.

---

Elize Zywo tkiewicz

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION  
NEEDS OF ISCOR MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN**

**SECTION 1****PERSONAL INFORMATION**

*Instructions:* Indicate your answers to the following with a cross (X) in the code column.

1. Designation		Code	
	General Manager	1	
	General Works Manager	2	
	Works Manager	3	
	Divisional Manager	4	
	Manager	5	
	Engineer	6	
	Technician	7	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (Please specify)	8	
2. Department		Code	
	Public Relations	1	
	Commercial	2	
	Human Resources	3	
	Finance	4	
	Environmental Management	5	
	Engineering	6	
	Operations: Rolling	7	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Operations: Metallurgical	8	
3. Experience (Number of years in this field)		Code	
	less than 1 year	1	
	1-5 years	2	
	6-10 years	3	
	11-15 years	4	
	16-20 years	5	
	21-25 years	6	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
	more than 25 years	7	
4. Age		Code	
	under 25	1	
	25-34	2	
	35-44	3	
	45-55	4	8 <input type="checkbox"/>
	over 55	5	
5. Gender		Code	
	Male	1	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	2	

For official use only
Record No. <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> 1 - 3
Card No. <input type="text"/>

**NOTE:** THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO PREVIOUS VISITS TO JAPAN DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS.



**SECTION 2**  
**INFORMATION ABOUT PREVIOUS VISITS**

*Instructions:* Indicate your answers to the following with a cross (X) in the code column.

						For official use only					
<b>1. Was this your first overseas visit?</b>						10 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Yes					1						
No					2						
If your answer is "NO", which other countries have you visited? .....											
<b>2. Number of visits to Japan</b>						11 <input type="checkbox"/>					
1					1						
2					2						
3					3						
4					4						
5					5						
More than 5 (Please specify)					6						
<b>3. Reason(s) for visit(s) to Japan</b>						12 <input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Know how agreement</b>		<b>Fact finding</b>		<b>Vacation</b>			<b>Other (Please specify)</b>				
Visit 1		1		2			3		4		13 <input type="checkbox"/>
Visit 2		1		2			3		4		
Visit 3		1		2			3		4		15 <input type="checkbox"/>
Visit 4		1		2			3		4		
Visit 5		1		2			3		4		17 <input type="checkbox"/>
Other		1		2		3		4			
<b>4. Duration of visit(s)</b>						18 <input type="checkbox"/>					
		<b>7-14 days</b>		<b>15 -21 days</b>			<b>More than 21 days(Please specify)</b>				
Visit 1		1		2			3		19 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Visit 2		1		2			3				
Visit 3		1		2			3		21 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Visit 4		1		2			3				
Visit 5		1		2			3		23 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Other		1		2		3					
<b>5. Do you consider pre-departure training in intercultural business communication necessary before a visit to a foreign country?</b>						24 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Yes					1						
No					2						
Please motivate or qualify your answer: .....											
.....											



No	Aspects	1	2	3	4	For official use only
25.	Attitudes towards time					49 <input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Japanese attitudes towards women					50 <input type="checkbox"/>
27.	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan					51 <input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Japanese climate					52 <input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Japanese clothing and business dress					53 <input type="checkbox"/>
30.	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs					54 <input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Japanese family and marriage practices					55 <input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Japanese food and diet					56 <input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan					57 <input type="checkbox"/>
34.	Japanese standards of cleanliness					58 <input type="checkbox"/>
35.	Japanese values and ethical standards					59 <input type="checkbox"/>
36.	Japanese work habits and practices					60 <input type="checkbox"/>

## QUESTION 2

Culture shock is the trauma a person experiences when he moves into a culture different from his home culture. He experiences a communication problem that arises from the frustrations that accompany a lack of understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and value systems.

*Instructions:* Indicate with a cross on the 4 point scale below the appropriate number to indicate the degree of culture shock (either positive or negative) you experienced regarding each of the following aspects, on being exposed to Japanese culture.

4 = high degree  
2 = almost none

3 = moderate degree  
4 = none

No	Aspects	1	2	3	4	For official use only
1.	Japanese language					61 <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Social and business etiquette in Japan					62 <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Japanese culture					63 <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Japanese cultural values and priorities					64 <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Japanese education system					65 <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Geography of Japan					66 <input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Sources of pride ( artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan)					67 <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Japanese religion					68 <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Japanese economy					69 <input type="checkbox"/>

						For official use only
No	Aspects	1	2	3	4	
10.	Japanese negotiation style					70 <input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business					71 <input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Japanese domestic management practices					72 <input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Japanese distribution and marketing system					73 <input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Japanese history and folklore					74 <input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Japanese current affairs (Relations between Japan and South Africa)					75 <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Japanese political structure and current role players					76 <input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Japanese accounting and financial techniques					77 <input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Japanese business legal system					78 <input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Japanese attitude towards physical contact					79 <input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Reading Japanese script					80 <input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Practical matters in Japan: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business, tipping)					81 <input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Japanese attitudes towards time					82 <input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Japanese attitudes towards women					83 <input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan					84 <input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Japanese climate					85 <input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Japanese clothing and business dress					86 <input type="checkbox"/>
27.	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs					87 <input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Japanese family and marriage practices					88 <input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Japanese food and diet					89 <input type="checkbox"/>
30.	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan					90 <input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Japanese standards of cleanliness					91 <input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Japanese values and ethical standards					92 <input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Japanese work habits and practices					93 <input type="checkbox"/>
34.	Other. (Indicate any other aspects which gave rise to a degree of culture shock.)					94 <input type="checkbox"/>
	.....					
	.....					
	.....					

**QUESTION 3**

*Instructions:* Which of the following aspects would you consider important for inclusion in a course in intercultural business communication for South African managers visiting Japan? Indicate with a cross (X) on the 4 point scale below how important you consider knowledge of each aspect.

4 = very important

2 = not very important

3 = moderately important

1 = not at all important

**For  
official  
use only**

No	Aspects	1	2	3	4	
1.	Japanese language.					95 <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Social and business etiquette in Japan.					96 <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Japanese culture.					97 <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Japanese cultural values and priorities.					98 <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Japanese education system.					99 <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Geography of Japan.					100 <input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Sources of pride in Japan. ( artists, musicians, novelists, sportsmen, great achievements, things to see and do in Japan).					101 <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Japanese religion.					102 <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Japanese economy.					103 <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Japanese negotiation style.					104 <input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Organisation and sociology of Japanese business.					105 <input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Japanese domestic management practices.					106 <input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Japanese distribution and marketing system.					107 <input type="checkbox"/>
14.	General intercultural training.					108 <input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Japanese history and folklore.					109 <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Japanese current affairs. (Relations between Japan and South Africa).					110 <input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Japanese political structure and current role players.					111 <input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Japanese accounting and financial techniques.					112 <input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Japanese attitude towards physical contact					113 <input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Reading Japanese script					114 <input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Japanese business legal system.					115 <input type="checkbox"/>
22.	International economics.					116 <input type="checkbox"/>
23.	International politics.					117 <input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Practical matters in Japan: (currency, transportation, time zones, hours of business, tipping) .					118 <input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Japanese attitudes towards time.					119 <input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Japanese attitudes towards women.					120 <input type="checkbox"/>

No	Aspects	1	2	3	4	For official use only
27.	Gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal messages in Japan.					121 <input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Japanese climate.					122 <input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Japanese clothing and business dress.					123 <input type="checkbox"/>
30.	Japanese customs, traditions and beliefs.					124 <input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Japanese family and marriage practices.					125 <input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Japanese food and diet.					126 <input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Social class and poverty-wealth extremes in Japan.					127 <input type="checkbox"/>
34.	Japanese standards of cleanliness.					128 <input type="checkbox"/>
35.	Japanese values and ethical standards.					129 <input type="checkbox"/>
36.	Japanese work habits and practices.					130 <input type="checkbox"/>
37.	Any other aspects important for inclusion. ..... ..... ..... .....					

**Thank you for your co-operation.**

To/Aan :

From/Van : Elize Zywo tkiewicz  
 PO Box / Posbus 10148  
 1906 STAAL  
 Tel No : (016) 889-2007  
 Date/Datum : 1997-10-23

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF ISCOR MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN □	VRAELYS OOR DIE INTERKULTURELE BESIGHEIDSKOMMUNIKASIEBEHOEFTE S VAN ISCOR BESTUURDERS WAT JAPAN BESOEK □
<p>I am currently completing my research on: "<i>The development of criteria for a course in intercultural business communication for South African Managers.</i>" I would appreciate it if you could complete the following questionnaire.</p> <p>As I am conducting my research at Iscor Vanderbijlpark Works only, it is essential that I receive as many as possible completed questionnaires back. Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated. All information received will be treated as confidential.</p> <p>Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to:  <b>Elize Zywo tkiewicz</b>  <b>PO Box 10148</b>  <b>STAAL</b>  <b>1906</b>                      before or on <b>31 October 1997.</b></p> <p>Thank you very much for your assistance.</p>	<p>Ek is tans besig met die voltooiing van my navorsing oor: "<i>Die ontwikkeling van kriteria vir 'n kursus in interkulturele besigheidskommunikasie vir Suid-Afrikaanse Bestuurders.</i>" Ek sal dit waardeer indien u die volgende vraelys sal voltooi.</p> <p>Aangesien ek slegs my navorsing by Iscor Vanderbijlparkwerke doen is dit noodsaaklik dat ek so veel moontlik voltooide vraelyste terugontvang. U hulp in die saak word hoog op prys gestel. Alle inligting sal as vertroulik hanteer word.</p> <p>Stuur asseblief hierdie vraelys voor of op <b>31 Oktober 1997</b> in die ingeslote koever t terug aan:  <b>Elize Zywo tkiewicz</b>  <b>Posbus 10148</b>  <b>STAAL</b>  <b>1906</b></p> <p>Baie dankie vir u hulp.</p>

Elize Zywo tkiewicz

**To/Aan** :

**From/Van** : Elize Zywotkiewicz  
Pp 10108

**Tel No** : 2-2007

**Date/Datum** : 1997-11-14

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**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NEEDS  
OF ISCOR MANAGERS VISITING JAPAN**

I recently sent you a questionnaire to complete. As I am conducting my research at Iscor Vanderbijlpark Works only, it is essential that I receive as many as possible completed questionnaires back. To date I have not received enough questionnaires to conclude my research.

I will appreciate it very much if you would please complete the questionnaire if you have not done so already.

All information received will be treated as confidential.

Please return this questionnaire to:

**Elize Zywotkiewicz at**

**Postal Point 10108**

**before or on 31 October 1997.**

Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.

---

Elize Zywotkiewicz