

## The Effects of Cross-Cultural Training on Expatriate Assignments

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### Abstract

The demands of market globalization find many business managers operating in countries other than their own. These expatriate managers face many challenges which they can only meet successfully if they are properly prepared through sound cross-cultural training (CCT). The literature dealing with CCT expounds on the various methods being used, including the cognitive, the affective, the experiential approach, and the language training. This study follows the qualitative in-depth interview approach with a specific protocol that looks into the effectiveness of CCT in terms of language training and post-arrival cross-cultural training. It also puts forth specific recommendations regarding CCT programs, their impact upon cross-cultural competence, upon the skills needed for effective cross-cultural communication, and for the best possible performance on the job.

**Keywords:** expatriate management, cross-cultural training, cross-cultural competence, language training, job performance, qualitative methodology

### Introduction

Increasing economic globalization has spurred the expansion of multinational corporations (MNCs) and has multiplied the numbers of the human capital moving across the globe. In order to maintain and enhance their global competitiveness, the MNCs rely on finding the right people who can effectively manage and operate their overseas businesses (Dowling & Welch, 2005). However, expatriate assignments are not always successful, and failure ranges from 16% to 40% (Tung, 1981; Black, 1988; Employee Benefit Plan Review, 2001). Although Dowling and Welch (2005) suggest that expatriate failure is declining and some alternate research argues that it might not be as high as the literature indicates (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009; Forster, 1997; Harzing & Christensen, 2004), studies conducted by Black and Gregerson (2007) confirm that nearly one-third of the expatriates who complete their overseas assignments did not perform up to the expectations of their superiors. Moreover, the financial cost of expatriate failure and their underperformance are usually very high (Scullion, 2005; Harzing & Christensen, 2004). All of these factors point to the fact that expatriate failure is a serious matter for the MNCs (Black & Gregerson, 2007; Tung, 1981), one that requires them to find effective ways to deal with it.

Working in a culturally different environment is always a challenge, so it is not surprising that the lack of cultural knowledge and language ability, as well as a difficulty to adjust to the local culture, are major factors contributing to expatriate failure (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Dowling & Welch, 2005). Consequently, learning about cultures, becoming aware of cultural differences, and having competence in cross-cultural communication are a must for expatriate

managers so that they can adjust to a new cultural environment and carry out a successful overseas assignment. However, these competencies are not acquired overnight. Aware of these realities, an increasing number of MNCs endeavor to equip their expatriates with competencies necessary for effectively working overseas through cross-cultural training (Ashamalla, 1998; Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Burgi, 2001) in spite of the fact that the effectiveness of cross-cultural training on overseas assignments is not strongly asserted in the literature (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Litrell & Salas, 2005; Selmer, 2005).

Our contemporary world is one of cultural diversity and the MNCs normally operate within diverse cultural environments. For the expatriates, then, cultural issues of all sorts, whether at home or in the host country, become basic concerns. Culture is what makes us what we are and our cultural backgrounds influence everything we do at all times and in all places (Boakari, 2004). We learn about and live our local cultures through the processes of socialization and acculturation that begin in childhood. Now, in order to be functional in a different culture, we need to appreciate its values, norms, beliefs, and behavior patterns and learn to adjust to them as much as possible. Proficiency in the language of the host country goes a long way to provide someone with the tools of cultural competence. The more the expatriate knows about the host culture (including speaking the local language), about its values and expectations, and the more proficient he/she is in the local language, the greater his/her chances of a successful job performance. All of this adds to a cross-cultural learning that will greatly facilitate his/her professional life while managing the business of the organization within the parameters of a different culture.

To respond to the calls for context-specific research in MNCs (Luo & Shenkar, 2006) and for using qualitative research method in the effectiveness of CCT learning (Oman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009), thus, this study contributes to expatriate management literature on the knowledge, usefulness, understanding, and effectiveness of CCT through adopting a qualitative in-depth interview approach designed to gauge the impact of CCT upon expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment and job-related performance with participants of Taiwanese expatriates relocated in the United States.

We begin the review of the literature with a brief discussion of the objectives of cross-cultural training. Next, we review the cross-cultural training methods. Finally, we look into the effectiveness of CCT in relation to expatriate assignments.

## **Literature Review**

### **Objectives of Cross-cultural Training**

Caligiuri, Lazarova, and Tarique (2005) point out that cross-cultural training aims at helping employees feel comfortable living and working in a host country, thus enhancing their cross-cultural adjustment and strengthening their ability to understand and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives.

Given the concerns about the high ratio of expatriate failure, the high cost of these failures, and how they impact upon the MNCs, Bennett, Aston, and Colquhoun (2000) put forth specific recommendations designed to enhance the success of expatriate assignments and minimize

failure. They contend that cross-cultural training programs should be crafted in such a way that objectives will help assignees do three things: (1) manage change in terms of personal and professional transition; (2) manage cultural differences; and (3) manage their responsibilities within a different cultural environment.

### **The Methodology of Cross-cultural Training**

Many researchers have outlined a number of CCT methodologies. Major studies were made by Tung (1981, 1982), Brislin, Landis, and Brandt (1983), Mendenhall, Dunbar, and Oddou (1987), and Black and Mendenhall (1989). They note that skills and abilities required of the expatriates are, indeed, highly demanding, and these authors use different approaches to integrate them into training programs, which are briefly discussed in this section: the cognitive, the affective, the experiential, and the language-learning approach.

#### **The Cognitive Approach.**

The cognitive or information-acquiring approach deals with “the learning of information or skills from a lecture-type orientation” (Mendenhall et al., 1987, p. 339). Its basic assumption is that “knowledge will increase empathy, and empathy will modify behavior in such a way as to improve intercultural relationships” (Campbell, 1969, p. 3). Tung’s Area Studies and Brislin, Landis, and Brandt’s (1983) fact-orientation training fit into this category.

The fact-orientation, advocated by Brislin et al. (1983), resembles Tung’s Area Studies (1981, 1982) in that it includes environmental briefing and culture-orientation programs designed to provide trainees with information regarding the history, the geography, the religion, the people, the economy, and the way of life of the target culture.

Although the cognitive method was the most popular in CCT during the 1960s, and it remains popular (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000), Harrison and Hopkins (1967) found that the information-acquiring approach was not very effective. They recommend the experiential method as better, and this led to the multiplication of experiential exercises and cultural assimilators (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000).

#### **The Affective Approach.**

“The learning of information or skills via techniques that raise affective responses on the part of the trainee, which results in cultural insights,” defines the affective approach (Mendenhall et al., 1987, p. 339). Tung’s (1981) cultural assimilation and sensitivity training as well as Brislin et al.’s (1983) attribution training and cultural awareness are also grouped together with the affective approach in CCT.

While cultural assimilation training assists members of one culture to interact and adjust successfully with members of another culture (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis, 1971), attribution training enables trainees to make isomorphic attribution and to handle discomfort expectation as well as possible, in order to internalize the values and standards of the host country (Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001; Littrell & Salas, 2005). Overseas assignments require

that the expatriates establish extensive contact with the nationals of the host country (Tung, 1981), which suggests that cultural assimilation training should be supplemented by language, sensitivity, and field training.

Moreover, while cultural awareness training is “the study of the trainee’s home culture and its effect on his/her behavior to enable the trainee to understand the nature of cultural differences” (Eschbach et al., 2001), sensitivity training leads the trainees to understand their own values and culture and to be aware of cultural differences by demonstrating a behavior that may be completely different from that of their own culture (Tung, 1981). The strength of cultural awareness training comes from the fact that the trainees learn to appreciate cultural differences and to apply whatever they learn to enhance the effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions (Bennett, 1986; Brandl & Neyer, 2009). On the other hand, cultural awareness training “does not necessarily help the trainees learn anything specific about the host culture in which they will be interacting” (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000, p. 170). That is why Ronen (1986) argues that sensitivity training may be more appropriate when the trainee is expected to have extensive contact with the locals during his/her overseas assignment. Rubin (1967) also contends that sensitivity training may be a powerful technique in the reduction of ethnic prejudice.

### **The Experiential Approach.**

As mentioned above, this method evolved as a reaction to the information-acquiring approach, which was criticized as inadequate to cross-cultural training. Experiential, or immersion, refers to “techniques that provide realistic simulations or scenarios to the trainee, such as assessment centers, field simulations, etc.” (Mendenhall et al., 1987, p. 339). Brislin et al.’s, experiential learning (1983) and Tung’s interaction learning or field experience (1981) are classified under the experiential approach.

“Learn by doing” (Littrell & Salas, 2005, p. 312) best spells out the nature of experiential learning. Look-see visits, role-playing, intercultural workshops, and simulations are major techniques used in experiential learning (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Littrell & Salas, 2005; Morris & Robie, 2001). The main advantages of experiential training come from the fact that it helps trainees develop the skills necessary for effective performance, for positive interaction with the locals, and for cognitive skills to make correct attributions (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Littrell & Salas, 2005; Morris & Robie, 2001). However, it has not yet been backed up by empirical research (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000).

Interaction learning wants “trainees to feel more comfortable with the host nationals and to learn details about life in the host country” (Eschbach et al., 2001, p. 272). The advantage of experiential training is that it gets the host nationals and the “old hands” involved in providing more information than a trainer could ever provide (Brislin et al., 1983). However, it also has not yet received adequate analyses and appropriate discussion in the available literature (Brislin et al., 1983).

Field experience means sending the candidate to the assigned country or to micro-cultures nearby so that he/she can experience the emotional stress of living and working within different cultures (Tung, 1981). There is no consensus on how long the candidate should be exposed to the host country. Nevertheless, Tung (1981) proposes a full week of living and working with

members of micro-cultures so that the candidate can experience the emotional stress of living and working within different cultures.

### **The Language Training.**

Ashamalla (1998) argues that CCT should be accompanied by foreign language training because knowledge of the language of the host country is vital to successfully living and working in that country. After all, a language always carries an enormous amount of the culture it represents. Expatriation involves working and living in the host country with not only co-workers, but also with the country's nationals. If expatriates are proficient in the local language, the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation is greatly reduced. As a result, the period of adjustment to living and working conditions will be shortened and made easier. Dowling and Welch (2005) contend that language fluency is key to expatriate adjustment and that it improves effectiveness and negotiating ability.

### **Cross-Cultural Training Effectiveness and Expatriate Assignment**

CCT has long been regarded as a vital means with which to facilitate the development and to refine the competencies that expatriate managers need to successfully work in a foreign country (Tung, 1981; Brislin, 1981; Scullion & Collins, 2006). Its effectiveness has been corroborated by the pertinent literature (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 1997; Eschbach et al., 2001; Kealey & Prothro, 1996). While a great number of studies assert that cross-cultural training is critical to cross-cultural interaction (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Litrell & Salas, 2005), some researchers point out that CCT specifically enhances cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Earley, 1987; Lee & Liu, 2006; Eschbach et al., 2001; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009; Selmer, 2005), quickens the development of cross-cultural competence in a foreign country (Harris & Moran, 1979; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Tung, 1981; Scullion & Collings, 2006), and adds to the overall performance (Earley, 1987; Morris & Robie, 2001). Again, however, the evidence of its effectiveness upon expatriate assignment is still inconclusive (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Litrell & Salas, 2005; Selmer, 2005) because it lacks adequate empirical support.

Furthermore, research devoted to investigating cross-cultural training effectiveness has been primarily conducted through the quantitative research approach and from the experiences of Western expatriates. Therefore, there is a need to engage in a qualitative research approach that looks into the insights and the knowledge of its effectiveness as provided by non-Western expatriates who have undergone CCT (Ayoko, Hartel, Fisher, & Fujimoto, 2004; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009).

### **Methodology**

The qualitative in-depth interview approach was chosen as the method of data collection for the present study for two main reasons. First, it allows participants to describe their experiences of cross-cultural interactions as much as possible. Second, it facilitates the researchers' obtaining

of the information needed to make this study as rich and detailed as possible. Rossman and Rallis (1998) note that an in-depth interview enables researchers to conduct a “guided conversation with a goal of eliciting from the interviewee rich, detailed materials” (p. 18).

## **The Participants**

Three major selection criteria were adopted to make the collected data richer and more holistic and detailed, thus contributing to a more in-depth exploration and understanding of the issues discussed in this study:

1. The participants must be former expatriate managers working for MNCs.
2. The participants must have received CCT either in the pre-departure or the post-arrival stage.
3. The participants must have at least 3 years of experience in overseas assignments.

Eight former expatriate managers were recruited, all Taiwanese males, ranging in age from 33 to 65, with 3 to 27 years of work in overseas assignments. Two of the eight participants had assignments lasting from three to five years, four of the eight had a 6-year assignment, and two of the eight had more than 10-year assignments. Two carried a Master’s degree, while six possessed a Bachelor’s degree. Their relocation was to the United States.

## **Instruments**

### **The Interview Protocol.**

In order to best elicit the experiences of the participants and to have them best answer the research questions, the interview focused primarily on the assessment of the success of the expatriates and its relation to their CCT. For this reason, the semi-structured interview questions related to three main criteria: (1) CCT, (2) assessment of the success of an overseas assignment, and (3) the impact of CCT upon their adjustment to the living and working environment. We asked questions about the duration and the methods used in their CCT, whether during the pre-departure or the post-arrival stage. In order to facilitate the interview protocol in terms of the assessment of the success of overseas assignments, the three main constructs suggested by Caligiuri (1997) were adopted, namely, premature termination, cross-cultural adjustment, and actual job performance. According to Caligiuri and Tung (1999), an expatriate who remains in the host country for the entire duration of his/her assignment, and thus is not hit by premature termination, is termed a success. From this perspective, all participants in this study were considered to have been successful. As for cross-cultural adjustment, the questions were directed at what the participants perceived as most stressful while engaged cross-culturally and how well, psychologically and behaviorally, they adjusted to working and living abroad (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). Questions were also asked about whether or not the CCT they received facilitated their living and working conditions.

### **Self-Evaluation of Performance.**

The participants were asked to self-evaluate their job-related performance based on two open-ended questions about overall performance and individual job performance in their relations with the host culture. Relational performance refers to the effectiveness in establishing relationships and communicating with the local co-workers, while individual job performance refers to the effectiveness in carrying out one's job responsibilities.

### **Demographic Information.**

Demographic information, including age, level of education, duration of overseas assignments, and years working in current industry, was collected in a brief written form at the beginning of the interview to be part of the data analysis.

### **Procedure**

#### **Data Collection.**

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, self-evaluation of performance, and documents relevant to CCT so as to elicit information that could assist the researcher to build "on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach" (Patton, 1990, p. 245). All interviews were semi-structured in an attempt to allow interviewees to describe, as much as possible, what they experienced and how they perceived, acted, behaved, and interacted cross-culturally. In addition, they were to follow the specific set of questions mentioned above in order to make sure that no important question was left out. Furthermore, we also took notes during the interviews in order to draw out further questions critical to this study and to help develop concepts and categories for the process of data analysis. Seven of the eight interviews took place in the meeting room of the organization's headquarters and one took place in its coffee shop. All interviews were completed within 2 hours and were audio-taped with the permission of the participants, then transcribed verbatim for data analysis. Then, a copy of the transcript was sent to each participant for corrections and verification.

#### **Data Analysis.**

Data was analyzed through the utilization of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the constant comparative method. We used open coding to discover, name, and develop concepts. Each form of data was coded individually through a line-by-line analysis in an attempt to organize them into discrete parts and thus facilitate comparisons and perceived similarities and differences. Concepts identified to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning were grouped into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We also applied the constant comparative method to systematically explore the similarities and differences within and between categories and to further facilitate integrating categories and their properties. The integration of categories and their properties led to the identification of the final set of themes that revealed the patterns



of findings, including CCT provisions, the impact of CCT upon the development of cross-cultural competences, upon the living environment, and upon job-related performance.

## **Results**

The data analysis yielded four main themes, each with their own categories and properties that account for the impact of CCT upon expatriate performance. The following themes emerged from this study: (1) CCT provisions, (2) the effect of CCT upon cross-cultural competence, (3) the effect of CCT upon cross-cultural adjustment, and (4) the effect of CCT upon job-related performance. Each of these themes and their corresponding categories and properties are briefly sketched below.

### **CCT Provisions**

All participants of this study indicated that they received language training, particularly English language training, before departure. Besides, seven of the eight participants were given post-arrival cross-cultural training, including a sexual harassment course and a course on local regulations.

#### **Language Training.**

Due to the fact that English is the predominant language of the global market and of the host country where they were assigned, all participants reported that their organization provided English language instruction before their departure. Participant 5 stated that job-related training and language learning were the main focus of his organization in their pre-departure training. He also emphasized that “instruction in the English language should be given as early as possible.” Participant 1 said that “in fact, the ‘Encourage Committee’ of the organization provides employees with an entertaining English class every year.” Participant 5 added: “Before I was assigned to the United States, I received funds to take an English language class one year before my assignment the United States.” The duration of language training depends on the ability of the expatriates to learn the language or to add to their fluency. The contents of language training focus primarily upon general conversation and business conversation skills.

#### **Post-Arrival CCT.**

Seven of the eight participants did not receive training about cross-cultural issues before departure, but seven of the eight were given different kinds of post-arrival CCT, including a course on sexual harassment and another on local laws and regulations. Participants in the study disclosed that their organizations paid their expenses to attend seminars or courses on cultural awareness. Said Participant 3, “I attended training on harassment while on assignment in the United States.” Participant 3 thus described the content of the training:



This training taught you to be very careful about the way you speak. Besides, it taught you how to make a correct judgment when someone on your staff comes to tell you that he/she was or felt harassed.

Participant 5 disclosed that he attended seminars on how to comply with local regulations and how to overcome work stress stemming from national differences in specific laws and regulations. Participant 6, a well-experienced expatriate manager, spent time on training courses about local regulations in order to be aware of things such as anti-trust and labor laws, for he felt that such courses were necessary to maintain the stability of the overseas personnel and to reduce possible trouble with the local laws.

### **The Effect of CCT upon Cross-Cultural Competence**

The participants of this study were asked to address the issue of how CCT assists or facilitates the performance of their overseas assignments. Since the majority of the participants were very professional in this area, they were all very open to sharing experiences and discussing them. Three important categories emerged from this discussion and experience-sharing, especially regarding how to develop and improve communication skills.

#### **The Development of Cultural Awareness.**

Those who attended post-arrival CCT (seven of eight participants) were asked how they developed and applied cultural awareness in daily work and living environments. Most participants displayed great ability in recognizing cultural differences, in understanding the need to acquire knowledge of the local culture, of its norms and regulations, and then developing appropriate behaviors for cross-cultural interaction. These skills, in turn, facilitated their cross-cultural adjustment and job-related performance. For example, Participant 1 took a one-day post-arrival CCT focused on a brief introduction to job-related responsibilities and on paying attention to local norms and value systems. He noted that he gradually became aware of the fact that cultural differences were a major factor in terms of the work behavior of people in his home country and in the host nation: "It was not appropriate to impose the headquarters' culture on a foreign subsidiary." Added Participant 3: "I think that probably because I was given this training [on sexual harassment], I really became very careful whenever I interacted with either females or males." Participant 5 confirmed that it was through attending seminars related to his profession and from the knowledge he gained of local norms that he acquired professional know-how which allowed him to compare the new culture with his home culture. This made him much more aware of the cultural differences he was facing in his new job.

#### **The Improvement of Communication Skills.**

As mentioned above, all participants received language training before departure, thus facilitating their communication skills while interacting with the local staff and local clients. All of them indicated that language fluency facilitated their communication skills, making

it possible for them to convey instructions clearly and accurately, improving their listening ability, and reducing misunderstandings. Participant 4 emphasized throughout the interview the imperative of language fluency to enhance communication:

My greatest strength is the ability to speak good English, and it was the main factor in allowing me to complete my overseas assignment. All around, English fluency was the key. It helped me communicate accurately and clearly in either the work or the living environment.... In particular, it helped me win a compliance suit filed in the United States on behalf of my organization.

Said Participant 6: "Fluency in English enabled me to handle myself and handle the cross-cultural encounters I faced." He also pointed out that his English language skills, particularly his listening skills, helped him build a bridge with his local subordinates: "In addition to respect, fluency in English is the most important skill, for it facilitates communication with your local staff; because you will feel pain and frustration if you cannot understand what the local staff is talking about." For Participant 1, "because of my fluency in English, there was no barrier preventing me from fully communicating with others."

Participant 8 recounted how much he suffered during the first few months of his assignment in the United States because of his insufficiency in English language fluency. However, his persistence in learning plus his willingness to blend into the local social life greatly improved his English language and sharpened his communication skills so much that the communication obstacles were removed and his local staff blended smoothly into the business at hand.

### **The Effect of CCT in Facilitating Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

The Participants were asked to describe what stressed them the most during the first few weeks and how they learned to adjust to the local culture. All of the eight participants stated that cultural differences in work attitudes/behavior, plus local norms and regulations, posed the main challenges to their overseas assignments while interacting with the locals and expanding the business interests in the host country. All of the eight participants emphasized that even though their English language skills were not strong enough, their knowledge of English still facilitated their adjustment to the local environment. Six of the eight participants revealed that attending post-arrival CCT made them understand the differences between them and the local staff and facilitated their acceptance of these differences in a way that they were gradually able to adjust to the local work environment. Noted Participant 1:

Your ability to resist stress is very important, for the difficulties will be many. For example, I did not know how to get fuel by myself when I just arrived in the United States. It was a stress factor for me at that time. But because I could read and follow the instructions on the screen, I managed to overcome the problem.

By contrast, Participant 5 related how attending a post-arrival CCT provided him with some clarity and enabled him to make some revisions in what he already knew:

I gained some enlightenment from these seminars [training on local regulations]. Although what they did would not completely fit my situation, I co-opted their strengths and made some revisions of my own. If you only stay home and close the door, how can you put together any good ideas?

### **The Effect of CCT upon Job-related Performance**

The participants of this study were asked to evaluate their job-related performance based on two dimensions: relational performance and personal job performance, all with the purpose of assessing the influence of cross-cultural training upon expatriate performance. Although all participants stated that the factors contributing to the successful completion of their overseas assignments are multidimensional, they emphasized the importance and necessity of CCT.

#### **Facilitating Relational Performance.**

As indicated in the above descriptions of “The improvement of communication skills” and “The development of cultural awareness,” six of the eight participants reported to have been very satisfied with their relational performance while the other two said there was still some room for improvement. Participant 1 thus spoke of his relational performance: “I felt that my task was successfully accomplished, at least from the perspective that the local co-workers liked me very much... This can be regarded as success at the local level.” Participants 6 and 8 evaluated their relational performance by describing how they “built an inner cohesion”, “led with heart,” and “understood the local culture” while managing a culturally diverse team and earning the “high respect of the local staff”. No surprise, then, that both Participants 6 and 8 reported “great satisfaction” with their relational performance. By contrast, Participant 3 evaluated his relational performance as “smooth, but not satisfactory,” further explaining that he had “no problem with communications related to the business, but found it difficult to establish friendships because of different backgrounds, the cultural gap, and differences in values.”

#### **Improving Individual Job Performance.**

As was mentioned above, local norms and regulations were one of the main challenges faced by the expatriates. It is not surprising, then, that attending post-arrival CCT that focused on local norms and regulations did facilitate their job performance. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 highlighted the importance of “being aware of local regulations” because “the violation of local codes and regulations can get you into a lot of trouble.” Participant 6 thus emphasized the importance of learning about local laws and regulations:

In the United States, the violation of certain laws and regulations results in heavy fines. It is very important to pay attention to them and learn about them, especially now. Both the British Airlines and the Korean Airlines were fined \$300 million dollars because they violated American fair-trade laws... I heard that two executives of these companies

are currently serving their sentences... Therefore, violating local regulations and laws can result in much trouble, harm, and large financial losses for an organization.

The effectiveness of attending CCT was also confirmed by the following statement from Participant: 6:

When I was with the New York subsidiary, I looked into early retirement very carefully. I consulted an attorney, who recommended I hire a professional labor attorney and suggested I attend seminars related to local norms and regulations. After conversations with this lawyer and after spending time attending these seminars, I found out that you were not allowed to lay off your employees just because you made a policy decision to do it. You must have a legal reason to do it... It was because I was aware of these regulations that I avoided potential damages.

All of the eight participants were very satisfied with their individual job performances. While some of them used the term “successful” to evaluate the effectiveness of their individual performance, others spoke in terms of percentages such as “over 90 out of a 100 points.” Participant 5 simply used the term “successful” to describe the performance of his overseas assignment. He was confident that he had successfully carried out the task assigned to him by the organization. On the other hand, Participant 3 described “95 percent successful” as an attainable goal and had this comment: “Routine activity can always be done without any problem. However, most of my local colleagues can only take care of the job assigned to them and are unable to create anything to facilitate their job.” Participant 2 acknowledged that he almost finished 100 percent of the task assigned to him by the organization: “I think my personal job performance can be regarded as successful.”

### **Discussions and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to draw out the insights of Taiwanese expatriates about their experiences so as to examine the effect of CCT on cross-cultural adjustment and job-related performance. The results indicate that pre-departure English language training facilitates the expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment and the development of their cross-cultural communication skills. These, in turn, impact positively upon their ability to build up a good relationship with the local staff, to reach the goals of their overseas assignments and, consequently, to enhance job-related performance. Despite the fact that the research sample is relatively small, it is important to point out that all participants unmistakably agreed that language ability or fluency is the most important skill for the success of an overseas assignment. This means that mastering the local language is a must for the expatriates, for it helps them better understand the local culture and have a more positive view of its characteristics. It is important to note that the literature on cross-cultural competence indicates that language instruction is either overlooked or quite limited (Peltokorpi, 2010) and not considered an important component of the cultural values needed for successful international management (Harzing & Feely, 2008; Peltokorpi, 2007). This study suggests, however, that future research should take language ability into consideration

in terms of the interrelationship of expatriate assignments, cross-cultural adjustment, and job performance. In addition, these findings may indicate that in order to facilitate the expatriates' adjustment and to attain success in their assignments, the selection criteria should consider language ability as a top priority, and language training programs should be incorporated into the training content of the local culture.

It should also be noted that this study provides empirical support for focusing on post-arrival cross-cultural training on the learning of the local norms and regulations, since it has a positive impact on the cross-cultural adjustment, the development of cross-cultural competence, and the job-related performance of the expatriates. Given the fact that all participants of this study were either middle management managers or CEOs of an overseas subsidiary, it is important to note that they viewed knowledge and understanding of the local business norms and regulations as critical to the successful handling of the business overseas. They also came to realize that violation of local laws may result in costly financial and non-financial losses for both the expatriates and their organizations.

The findings of this study also have a couple of implications for the MNCs: First, they indicate that post-arrival cross-cultural training focused on learning local norms and regulations should be a requirement worth the investment made by the MNCs. Second, in order to shorten the expatriates' period of cross-cultural adjustment and to maximize their productivity, the MNCs should include this kind of training in their pre-departure CCT programs. It would make the expatriates more aware of the issues they will be facing, will motivate them to learn and to acquire the necessary skills, and will familiarize them with what to expect, thus minimizing potential stress, shortening the adjustment time, and helping them develop cross-cultural competence as early as possible.

Finally, the results of this study confirm what the literature says about the effectiveness of CCT for overseas assignments in terms of cross-cultural interaction (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Litlrell & Salas, 2005), of cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Earley, 1987; Lee & Liu, 2006; Eschback et al., 2001; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009; Selmer, 2005), of the development of cross-cultural competence (Harris & Moran, 1979; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Tung, 1981; Scullion & Collings, 2006), and of overall job performance (Earley, 1987; Morris & Robie, 2001). The findings of the study favor either pre-departure CCT or post-arrival CCT as effective and worth the investment laid out by the MNCs.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

This study is not without limitations. First, it was based on the experiences of a small number of people from one cultural, thus, it cannot be generalized without further investigation across cultural differences. Second, this study was bounded by the industry or organization type. Third, data collected from the retrospection of the interviewees may result in oversight and gaps that could weaken some of conclusions of the study. Finally, self-reported performance might have led to some unwillingness to say it all.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research are suggested. First, future research may recruit expatriates from different cultural backgrounds

to identify and compare the similarities and differences with these findings. In addition, since pre-departure cross-cultural training programs were not given to interviewees in this study, future research may also recruit expatriates provided with pre-departure training to explore the effect of pre-departure training on expatriate assignments. Moreover, future research may also incorporate organizational culture or organization size since these will enrich information about the context or conditions influencing the effectiveness of cross-cultural training programs. Finally, although the results of this study confirmed the link between cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment and performance, the number of the participants is limited. Future study may test the findings of this study by using a quantitative research methodology.

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