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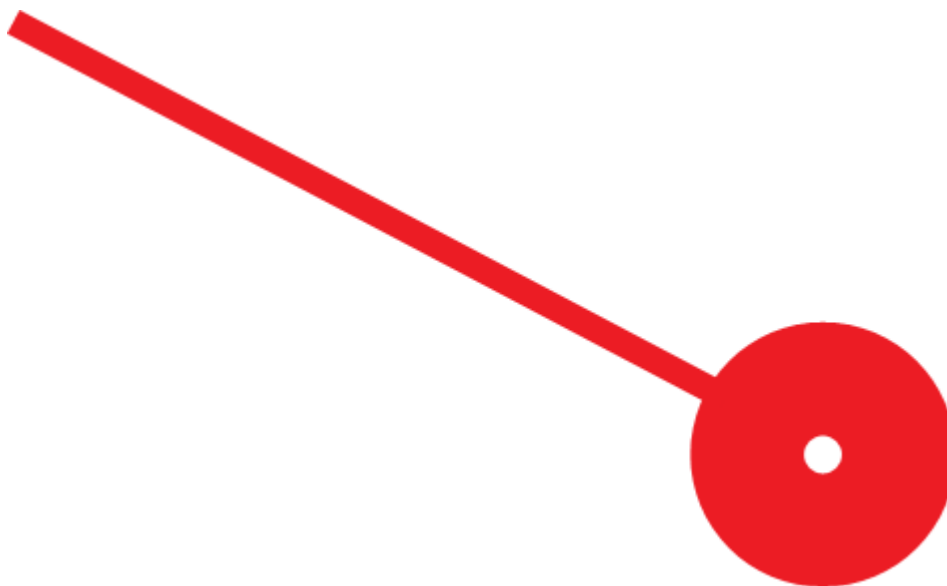E ADMINISTRAÇÃO
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M MASTER

Intercultural Studies for Business

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT: THE EXPERIENCE AT TRANSPERFECT

Nicole Fuccio
06/2021

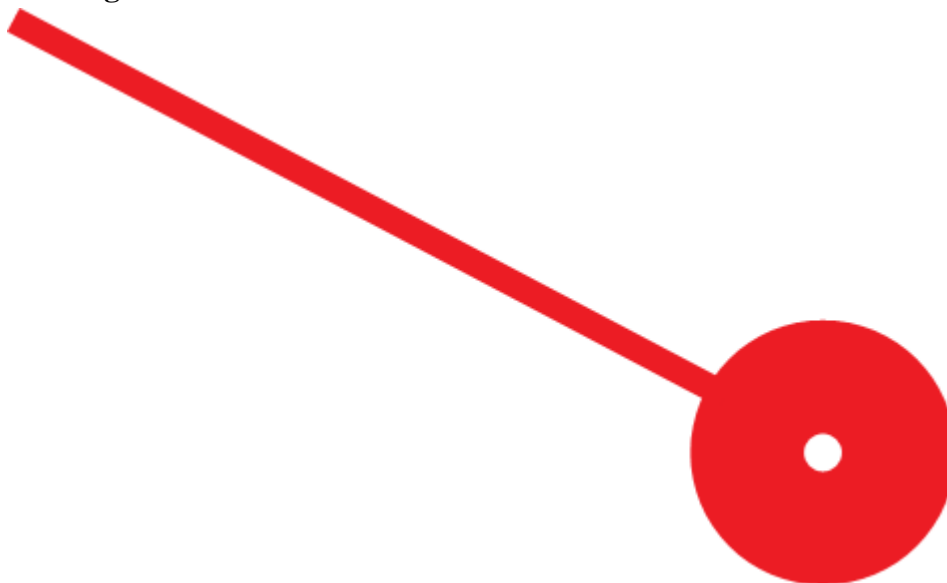# M MASTER

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Internship report presented to Porto's Accounting and Business School, to obtain the degree of Master in Intercultural Studies for Business, under the guidance of Professor Marco Lamas

To new beginnings,

and to Everyone who stands by me wherever I go.

ABSTRACT

The following report is carried out as the final work of the master's degree in Intercultural Studies for Business at the Porto Accounting and Business School (ISCAP), part of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto. It aims to present a detailed reflection and analysis of my 6-month curricular internship which took place in the Netherlands between January 11th and June 30th 2021 at *TransPerfect*, an international family of companies offering a wide variety of language services and technology solutions to help global businesses operate worldwide marketplace. As pillars of this company, intercultural communication, and cross-cultural management, as well as their relevance and impact in today's business world, are outlined. The report's focus will then shift to an overview of the language service industry and an elaborate characterization of the host company. From this perspective, I analysed my role as an intern in a digital project management team that allowed me to confirm the theoretical framework of my research: intercultural competence and an efficient cross-cultural management are the key for the success of an international business, especially in the language service industry.

Keywords: Cross-cultural Management, Digital Project Management, Intercultural Communication, Language Services.

RESUMO

O relatório seguinte é realizado como trabalho final do Mestrado em Estudos Interculturais para Negócios no Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Negócios do Porto (ISCAP), parte do Instituto Politécnico do Porto. O seu objetivo é apresentar uma reflexão e análise detalhada do meu estágio curricular de 6 meses que teve lugar na Holanda entre janeiro e julho de 2021 na TransPerfect, uma família internacional de empresas que oferece uma grande variedade de serviços linguísticos e soluções tecnológicas para ajudar empresas globais a operar no mercado mundial. Como pilares desta empresa, a comunicação intercultural e a gestão transcultural, bem como a sua relevância e impacto no mundo empresarial de hoje, são delineados. O foco do relatório passará então para uma visão geral da indústria de serviços linguísticos e uma caracterização elaborada da empresa anfitriã. Nesta perspetiva, analisei o meu papel como estagiária numa equipa de gestão de projetos digitais que me permitiu confirmar o quadro teórico da minha investigação de que a competência intercultural e uma gestão transcultural eficiente são a chave para o sucesso de um negócio internacional, especialmente na indústria dos serviços linguísticos.

Palavras-Chave: Gestão Intercultural, Gestão de Projetos Digitais, Comunicação Intercultural, Serviços Linguísticos.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCM	Cross-Cultural Management
DE	German
DK	Danish
DTP	Desktop Publishing
EN	English
FE	Final Eye
FR	French
IT	Italian
iSP	International Software Product
LQA	Localization Quality Assurance
LSP	Language Service Providers
NL	Dutch
NO	Norwegian
PA	Project Accounting
PD	Project Director
PL	Polish
PM	Project Manager
PMQA	Project Management Quality Assurance
PO	Project Order
PT	Portuguese
PV	Project Vendor
QA	Quality Assurance
QM	Quality Manager
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SV	Swedish
TCS	TransPerfect Creative Services
ZH	Chinese (Mandarin)

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INTRODUCTION

An internship is a significant experience both for our academic journey as for one's self-development, since it gives a chance to gain exposure and experience by preparing young adults for life, career and future job opportunities. Accordingly, it is essential to find a stimulating and dynamic internship that helps to develop professional aptitude, improve soft skills and learn new hard skills, tools and techniques without sacrificing our own happiness and ambitions. Premising how difficult it has been to get accepted for an internship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my experience as a Digital Project Management Intern for the North American firm *TransPerfect*, at the Amsterdam's office in 2021, between January 11th and June 30th, with a workload of 40h/week. In spite of lockdown, curfew and other measures adopted in the Netherlands to reduce contagions, I had the opportunity to work both from home and from the office, which is not to be taken for granted considering that there were employees who could not go to the workplace for months.

In these six months, I was part of the TransPerfect Creative Services' Department (TCS), and more precisely, a member of the TCS'Digital Team, where I was mainly in charge of managing both translation and social media projects for two clients, namely *Body & Fit* and S*ecretos del Agua*. Overall, the management consisted of prior analysis of the client's briefing, accurate supervision of the whole translation process, not only from a linguistic point of view, but also in terms of design, quality check and final eye in order to ensure the achievement of the clients' objectives for each market using specific platforms and software. In addition to tasks related to these two accounts, I also helped, to a less extent, other Project Managers with search engine optimization (SEO), keyword research and mapping for international brands to improve their digital marketing strategy and thus reach a wider number of potential customers. Further tasks also included resourcing, i.e., the search for qualified linguists for certain projects, or reviewing advertising and website texts in Italian related to the beauty and fashion industry.

The following report, divided into four sections, describes my experience at TransPerfect: from the concept of intercultural communication in a multicultural company to the cross-cultural and digital project management within TransPerfect, one of the largest language services and technology solutions provider. In the light of the above, some key points of my internship, such as main responsibilities of my role, obstacles faced and competences

acquired, will be described to create an overall framework that reflects the experience I have faced in recent months.

The first chapter explains what the culture in the corporate environment is, with special focus on the role of intercultural communication that characterizes multicultural companies such as TransPerfect. Then, through a cross-cultural perspective, we will be moving to a more detailed portrait of the digital project management across cultures and its relevance, in the second chapter. The third part examines the host entity's world and industry first, including its history, key milestones and corporate structure from a general point of view. Then follows an analysis of the internal organization, mission, and market volume of the Amsterdam office and its creative department. The last chapter, instead clarifies my role inside TransPerfect, where the topics of both social media and translation project management are carried out, denoting software and tools used to accomplish daily tasks. Finally, personal and professional achievements are described as well as difficulties encountered and skills learned in such multicultural and stimulating workplace, where I decided to continue working as project coordinator.

CHAPTER 1 – INTERNATIONAL BUSINESSES: FROM A CULTURAL TO AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

We could learn a lot from crayons; some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, while others bright, some have weird names, but they all have learned to live together in the same box.

― Robert Fulghum

The following chapter addresses the three correlated key concepts of culture, communication and interculturality. Due to the increasingly interconnected world we are living in, the importance of these elements is highlighted. The success or failure of any type of business aimed at going global can depend on these three elements and the relations between them. It is from this concern that the concept of intercultural communication derives, a significant notion to understand, being the cornerstone to succeed in today's global workplace.

1.1 Culture in international business

1.1.1 What is culture?

Over the years, the topic of culture has been addressed by various disciplines of study, from humanities to sociology and even economics, especially management studies. Although many authors have dealt with the subject and provided their own interpretation, there is still no universal and common definition (Cogo, 2015).

In the etymological sense of the word, the term culture derives from the Latin *colĕre*, whose meaning is to cultivate (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019). In the beginning, it was used to indicate the land cultivation and the livestock breeding but, in the course of time, the term has taken on a different meaning raising to the inner cultivation of the person and of the mind of the individuals.

Despite the challenge of providing a precise definition to the idea of culture, nowadays it is essential to study and comprehend this issue, particularly for those involved in the international business world. The inability to understand and respect the cultures of other people can prompt serious problems at a managerial level, such as complications in closing agreements or projects between businesspersons of different nationalities, and threatening environment that negatively influences work performance by creating real conflicts both inside and outside the company.

Given the controversial nature of the concept, cultural diversity can be viewed from two different points of view. The first one considers it as a positive phenomenon insofar it prompts the sharing of the wealth protected in each culture on a global scale, and consequently allows for enrichment through ties based on exchange and dialogue. While the other one takes the opposite approach, whereby cultural differences would lead to the loss of the sense of our common identity and would therefore be a source of numerous conflicts (Cogo, 2015).

One of the first definitions of the term "culture" appears at the end of the 19th century, when the British anthropologist E.B. Tylor defines it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871, as cited in Cogo, 2015 p. 12). With this interpretation, Tylor argues that culture comes from a consistent and complex interaction between individuals who, throughout the years, form routines and tend towards homogenization. Although this thesis dates back to 1871, it is still supported and revised by contemporary authors, such as the management consultant D. Genelot, who stresses on the idea that men are the product of their own culture, shaped by the context where they live and are educated: "their representations, their visions of what is good and what is wrong, their behaviour in work, their concepts of organisations are the fruit of the representations carried by their ancestors" (Genelot, 1998, as cited in Browaeys & Baets, 2005, para. 20).

Due to the complexity of describing culture, where one can never utilize the word without avoiding the multiple definition related to it, an effective first step is becoming aware of its several level, including the ones unnoticeable to the human eye. To have a better understanding of this concept, we can resort to the cultural iceberg model, suggested in 1976 by E.T. Tall in his *Beyond Culture*. According to the analogy, if we think of culture as a massive block of ice, there are two parts involved: the visible portion above the water, and the hidden one under the surface. The first contains the "external culture", that is the part of culture explicitly learned such as language, way of dressing, rituals and beliefs of various peoples, while the concealed part, which is the largest and the subconscious one, includes the "internal culture" made of beliefs, values ways of thinking, etc. The aim of this metaphor is to teach how culture should be studied and understood on all levels in order to avoid clashes between different icebergs and, especially, reveal the values and thought patterns that underlie the behaviour of a given society (Hall, 1976).

Now that the concept of culture has been clarified, it is important to establish its role in international companies since in the process of globalization, businesses can face challenges in harmonizing corporate culture. The generally held thought is, in fact, that besides lessen costs, a solid corporate culture fortifies the organization's image and identity, especially when cross-cultural management is required. Consequently, in today's highly dynamic and globalized environment, the development of a strong corporate culture and the sharing of this culture by all those involved is the first step towards an effective competitive strategy. What is then business culture?

1.1.2 Culture in the corporate environment

As there is no unambiguous definition of corporate culture, we can define it as the set of beliefs and behaviours that determine how a company's employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. (Tarver, 2021). In particular, all these convictions, business principles, operating models and thought patterns, as well as the working environment and the behaviours established inside the organization are a significant part of the corporate culture, which is unique and exclusive for each one of them. Every company has a sort of "corporate genetic code" representing an important aspect since it directly or indirectly guides its actions, influences business approaches and plays a decisive role in achieving the "mission" and, therefore, the company's success.

This conception led the psychologist E. Schein of the Sloan School of Management to elaborate a model capable of facilitating the comprehension and analysis of organizational culture. His method aimed at explaining not only the concept of culture but also its repercussions on businesses. First, he noticed that culture is acquired through external adaptation and internal integration during a constant process of evolution, where transition affects all facets of human activity. Then, he observed that culture is expressed as an interconnected, patterned collection of fundamental concepts that address ultimate problems such as the essence of life, interpersonal interactions, as well as time and space (DTU, 2016).

Moreover, according to Schein, culture assumes a different relevance according to organizational maturity (Schein, 2009). By this logic, young organization with little or no management are often under the full supervision of the founder-entrepreneur, who transmits his principles and ideas by creating the corporate ideology at will. On the other hand, in more mature and established companies, culture, emerges from a series of modifications and

adaptations made by administrators over time. A drastic shift in culture is difficult in these businesses, and it risks limited growth. For this reason, managers must be able to make different cultural adjustments while preserving those keystones, i.e., the cultural core. Aging companies that struggle to change by reshaping their ideas and philosophies, and that continue to focus exclusively on the principles that have empower them to succeed over time, run the risk of getting "burned" (Cogo, 2015).

Having the ability to create a solid and strong business culture adds value to the organisation although it is not a simple task. Companies with a strong culture are defined by forward-looking and charismatic leaders who create and establish norms, beliefs and values, as well as a dispassionate and lasting engagement and interest in the accomplishment of business objectives, leadership consistency, workforce stability, and a sense of community and fellowship among company members (Missaglia, 2019). Conversely, businesses with a weak culture, besides lacking in regular reaffirmation of laws and ideals, are characterized by employees who do not share values and expectations but consider the company only as a working environment. Therefore, the vulnerability often derives from the presence of subcultures within roles or work groups, which obstruct the emergence of a common working climate around the organization (Cogo, 2015).

As a result, it is critical for every corporation to have a consistent communication with its corporate culture and to ensure that it does not stay isolated to the company's management but is "metabolized" at all levels of the organisation. It is also important to provide a marketing strategy that extends beyond the business in order to communicate effectively to all stakeholders the values behind the company.

Cultural sensitivity is hence essential especially nowadays that, faced with global economic transformations begun in the middle of the twentieth century, companies are broadening their operations and management by introducing a foreign component. Increased national economic transparency and trade liberalization followed this, resulting in the proliferation of foreign companies on several domestic markets that led most of businesses to operating in an international world, where the cultural element plays (Adamczyk, 2017).

Consequently, the attempt of numerous multinational organisations to recreate and transfer their corporate culture is becoming part of market strategy, across state boundaries in order to give rise to a homogeneous culture across their different subsidiaries.

This approach, however, has significant shortcomings because organizational culture is logically influenced by the geographical and, in this case, national contexts. In fact, it has

been pointed out that the strong and implicit effect of national culture on the corporate one is bound to its impact on the essence and characteristics of human engagement, the needs to be fulfilled, the relevant management principles, the leadership style, and, as result, the achievement of competitive advantage (Davenport, 1998, as cited in Cogo, 2015, p. 16). Given this circumstance, separating corporate culture from national culture is an error that must be avoided. On the contrary, it should be the first factor to comprehend in order to allow the best use of all resources and establish a solid corporate strategy.

The cultural element plays, therefore, a significant role in the performance of transactions and the preservation of successful relationships between counterparties or workers with various cultural backgrounds working for the same company. For this reason, it is necessary to keep in mind that what is considerate an appropriate professional practice in one country may differ significantly from the approach taken by overseas companies, especially since culture influences many areas of international business from business affairs and agreements to marketing communication techniques, brand choices, and customer behaviour (Adamczyk, 2017). In other words, recognising the impact of culture on foreign trade is an efficient way to prevent misunderstanding between employees and customers, and also puts firms in a good light as regards to their intention to open up to new markets.

In Ashworth's words:

> A company's culture is the only truly unique identifier. It is like a fingerprint, it may be similar to others, but is uniquely distinct to your business. Everything else (products, strategies, marketing, even innovations) can be replicated, but the only truly unique identifiers are the values and norms of the organization – its culture, or personality. A positive culture in business today is unfortunately the exception rather than the norm, but a strong organizational culture can clearly differentiate a business from its competitors in the mind of its stakeholders (Ashworth, 2015).

In short, what is the key element that enables companies to understand the culture of foreign markets in order to flourish in a new market? The answer lies in an effective communication, and more precisely in the intercultural communication, which represents the decisive factor able to make all the difference between succeeding or failing in an international environment.

1.2 The relationship between culture and communication

The critical role that communication plays in this context is unquestionable, especially given the fact that companies are created, developed, and controlled through communication, whose purpose is to exchange information, negotiate, as well as build and preserve relationships and partnerships with clients or other organizations. At the interpersonal, community and corporate levels, efficient communication is progressively recognized as a vital element in the operations of multinational businesses (Twose, 2019).

Considering its centrality, when assessing the efficiency of a business's communication at a cross-border level, there are several factors to consider, including when communication is implicit and thus focuses on vocal tones, gestures, eye contact etc.

The first thing to remember in this context is that ineffective communication has consequences related to the risk of losing the sense of the message, particularly during the translation process since language barriers may obstruct communication between the company and their foreign target market. However, this goes beyond the words themselves due to the increased importance of the way in which messages are conveyed, regardless of the native language of the interlocutors (Twose, 2019).

When exchanging ideas with colleagues from southern Europe, such as Italy or Portugal, for example, it is common to speak simultaneously, use hand gestures, personal contacts, and the conversations tend to start formally and then gradually arrive at a more casual tone. On the other hand, in north-western countries like the Netherlands, there is a higher degree of formality and directness in the way people communicate, and avoiding physical contact and gestures are fundamental to keep the conversation exclusively on a business and professional level.

All this demonstrates that not only implicit communication is essential, but also that cultural factors like body language, simple customs and mannerisms are also important considerations for businesses wishing to expand globally. Behaviours that are normal in one culture may be unusual or even insulting to a customer or colleague in another. Every country has its culture and, inevitably, its distinct habits, whether while communicating, negotiating or in another business contexts, as well as particular values to reference.

Communication is, indeed, at the heart of the efficiency in which trade operations are coordinated and good relationships are built, resulting in enhanced performance and successful inter-organizational interactions. The neglect of the fact that communication

presupposes the existence of a cultural context, in which translation is required in order to maintain the true purpose of the communication, can lead to irreversible damages that can jeopardize relationship's long-term effectiveness. The underlying cultural discrepancies in communication patterns can give rise to barriers that hinder the creation and development of successful multinational business partnerships when stakeholders come from diverse national and organizational cultures (Griffith, 2002).

Therefore, culture and communication are inextricably related. Besides guiding the conversation itself among speakers by affecting also how and what they communicate, it influences the way people encode messages, the meanings they assign to them and the situations and circumstances under which different messages can or may not be received, heard, or understood. In short, communication is founded on culture and, for this reason, it can be challenging. We cannot understand others' needs and desires if we do not have the ability to grasp their thoughts and intentions. Culture is a pivotal human tool capable of developing societies, providing various perspectives and determining interpersonal relations (Kuo & Lai, 2006).

Consequently, when doing business across borders, intercultural communication comes into play, where understanding and accepting the importance of cultural differences is crucial to communicate or exchange information with people from distinct backgrounds and mentalities. In this context, addressing cultural nuances with empathy, transparency and interest can lead to successful corporate relationships, cooperation and results.

1.3 Intercultural communication in multicultural organizations

The increasingly globalised world we are living in, with its economies in constant expansion, overlapping and mergers, is the result of both the socio-political hyper-dynamism and the demographic and cultural diversity that characterizes countries worldwide in the last decades. Such interconnection between individuals and communities was also influenced by technological advancements and modern forms of communication that led to a growing importance of human mobility on the local and international level.

Consequently, the requirements of dealing with people from different countries and removing cultural barriers are becoming the key elements not only for a harmonized society where differences are recognized, accepted and respected, but also for international businesses considering that these two factors can rule their success or failure.

For this reason, considering the impact of culture on the perception of the world is important for global enterprises to build durable and trustful relationships with international clients by transcending cultural boundaries through an effective intercultural communication.

1.3.1 Defining intercultural communication

"Intercultural communication" is becoming one of the many buzzwords of our day. The key terms 'inter' and 'cultural' denote a multidisciplinary field comprising individuals with differing ways of thinking and acting who may come from diverse geographical areas and speak a number of languages (Ibad, 2020), i.e., it takes place when people with different cultural backgrounds interact and communicate among themselves. Despite the complexity of providing a single definition:

> The term intercultural communication involves a wide range of communication issues that inevitably arise within an organization composed of individuals from a variety of religious, social, ethnic and technical backgrounds. Each of these individuals brings a unique set of experiences and values to the workplace, many of which can be traced to the culture in which they grew up and now operate (SBE 2002, as cited in Ibad, 2020 p.1).

Further analysis of the multidisciplinary function reveals that behind the various research and studies about this type of communication, the main scope is to better understand how people from various countries and cultures interact, connect, and interpret their surroundings by fostering cultural synergy, without which intercultural communication would not occur. In fact, the concept of synergy is closely related to that of interculturality since it involves a sort of cooperation that may arise when diverse groups of individuals, each with their own perspectives, collaborate to enhance effectiveness through the sharing of different viewpoints, perceptions and knowledge (Schmidt *et al.*, 2007).

The power of synergy is indeed essential in any context regardless of who or which entity is involved, whether people of different nationalities or international businesses, giving rise to an intercultural dialogue and a deep understanding of the big picture in terms of social solidarity. This is the only approach that can lead to thinking out of the box without falling into generalisation, stereotypes or ethnocentric assumptions that can slow down or even impede the development of intercultural dynamics or, economically speaking, the achievement of certain goals for multinational corporations. Bearing this in mind, the fact that we are communicating with people from different cultures - people who are considered

as "different from us" – becomes the keystone that distinguishes intercultural communication from other forms of dialogue.

Being founded on the grasp that the communicative needs of culturally diverse others are determined by their culture-specific standards for expressing themselves, and therefore are likely to differ from one's own, intercultural communication happens when a meaning produced in one culture is received and understood in another one. However, this perceived cultural variability and diversity is not limited to different ways of communicating, but it includes a wide range of social and cultural norms that influences their worldview, expectations and, accordingly, their reciprocal relations (Schmidt *et al.*, 2007).

For this reason, employing a non-judgemental and, more specifically, a cultural relativism perspective, which is not only the attitude of rejection of ethnocentrism but also the acceptance of the plurality of cultures, is crucial to manage intercultural misunderstanding and conflicts, especially in the corporate world. Consequently, the blending of cultural identities and professional perspectives has become a fact. Globalization is no longer a simple concept, rather a reality where competent communicators capable of bridging culture differences and attaining international objectives can make the difference (Schmidt *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, given the interface between culture and communication, clearly indivisible, it becomes fundamental to go beyond appearances by considering diversity as an enrichment in order to have a complete vision of the world itself, and thus of the international business arena.

After defining interpersonal communication, the question becomes: what is its significance and value in international companies that are, at their heart, multicultural?

1.3.2 Relevance and Importance of Intercultural Communication in the business world

At this point, it is important to note that professionals inside international organisations must be culturally conscious and qualified in cross-cultural cooperation in order to achieve cultural synergy in today's global economy, especially now that cultural and technological influences are reshaping our environment.

In fact, forces such as economic convergence and technological advancements have torn down geographical barriers, not only affecting politics, history, and market conditions, but also making the globe more all-inclusive and movable than ever before (Ibad, 2020).

In such a situation, the mere knowledge of foreign languages is no longer enough although it represents one of the hardest cultural barriers to break down. Having a look around, it goes without saying that our cultural value trends, such as individualistic or collectivistic, shape and result in our beliefs, desires, and actions (Universal Class, 2019). In this context, the true priority becomes being familiar with those features at the basis of culture such as traditions, symbols, communication patterns and body language on which depend the outcome of an effective intercultural communication in the business world (Adamczyk, 2017).

To re-emphasize its relevance, the primary goal of intercultural communication is to gain a better understanding of interaction and message development between individuals or groups of people from different cultures. As a result, multicultural organizations focus on finding highly skilled individuals with that emotional intelligence and tactfulness that can determine their success outside their national field. In this perspective, more and more markets have merged into one world economy, leading to an inevitable interaction of people who speak different languages, have different social patterns, have different views, and have different interpretations of what life should be in an international environment (Ibad, 2020).

This is exactly why intercultural communication has become crucial, and it will continue to increase in importance as globalization is connected by modern technologies, as shown by the current health situation, where most of international business meetings, negotiations and agreements take place through digital telecommunication applications or electronic media. However, in this field, success is determined not only by technical experience and the ability to 'interpret' movements, body language, and actions in order to respond appropriately, but also by the primary goal of every business, which is certainly the production of revenues.

The first step of a company aimed at expanding its activities overseas is, in fact, to strike a balance between the potential for growth and the challenge of investing in new markets (Ibad, 2020). Consequently, as I. Torres claims "to do so, in a space that makes room for exchange, communication must serve as a tool to promote both integration and innovation" (Torres, 2021, p.2), and therefore, "people with a well-developed sensitivity in communicating with foreigners definitely have a big advantage and will probably succeed in business life". (Young, 2005, as cited in Ibad, 2020, p. 4).

In a world where geographical barriers are being removed through digitalization, and thus, greater interconnections, companies need to regard internationalisation as one of the most critical factors in their growth (Torres, 2021). In this precisely context, along with the immense importance that interculturality is obtaining, the ability of building successful cross-cultural relations means gaining a comparative advantage given that it allows companies to dedicate more time and motivation to conduct business rather than dealing with internal and external communication issues (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012).

If on the one hand the key for an international success in the business world is the appreciation and respect of cultural differences to develop a better understanding of why people act in certain ways, and act accordingly, on the other, the most common factors contributing to failure is the miscommunication and non-adaptation to foreign ways of thinking and behaviours (Washington *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, since participation in the global marketplace flourishes, it is important for employees to do more in order to deal with different cultures to prevent misunderstandings and become an interculturally effective person, i.e., "someone who is able to "live contentedly and work successfully in another culture." (Vulpe *et al.*, 2001, p. 5).

1.3.3 Effective Intercultural Communication: Determinants and Obstacles

As intercultural communication examines how individuals interact both verbally and nonverbally, handle work, collaborate, negotiate, and form relationships, these matters are becoming increasingly important. Firstly, for companies that deal with a blend of different cultures, and secondly, for firms whose objective is trade effectively internationally. In this context, if professionals do not know how to get along with each other and to carry out their business, there is the only outcome of poor results and missed deals.

Necessarily, "greater understanding of intercultural communication differences, manners and etiquette, protocol and communication styles certainly lead to a much higher probability of achieving business goals." (Ibad, 2020, p. 5).

This means that, besides the fact that the current economy is more and more globalized, trade has been considerably liberalized, and businesses not only compete in local and global markets, but also maintain many connections with companies from other nations, thus why it is crucial to analyse the concept of "stranger". In this regard, Ibad points out that

strangeness, along with the concept of familiarity that occurs in any form of communication with a variable degree, constitutes a continuum:

> The term 'stranger' is used to refer to those people at the most unfamiliar end of the continuum. Thus, anyone could be considered a stranger, given a sufficiently foreign context. A stranger has limited knowledge of his/her new environment-of its norms and values. And in turn, the locals have little knowledge of the stranger-of his beliefs, interests, and habits. (Ibad, 2020, p. 5).

In this sense, the effect of cultural disparities on multinational business is often neglected during the management process, leading to some obstacles at some point or time during intercultural communication, in terms of listening, language, and cultural environment (Alriyami, 2015). Consequently, in a nutshell, these impediments are at the root of an ineffective communication resulting in the lack of some crucial components, such as the loss of the main message and the desired feedback, that leads to misinterpretation, difficulty to adapt to new situations and, therefore to the loss of the importance of the entire dialogue.

For this reason, the three attributes that define an interculturally effective person make the difference and ensure the success of intercultural communication. In fact, international organizations as well as people working abroad and dealing with a diverse cultural environment need to have the capacity of interacting with individuals from other cultures not only to gain their respect and confidence, but also to create a cooperating and fruitful workplace that favours the realization of its tasks and objectives.

Moreover, the ability to accommodate their professional competence, in the area of the management and technical knowledge, to local circumstances, and the personal willingness to adapt in such a way that one is satisfied and comfortable in the host community, are the other two elements that promote a successful intercultural communication (Vulpe *et al.*, 2001). In other words, the cornerstone within this framework is "to be able to convey their thoughts, opinions, and expectations in a way that is understandable yet culturally sensitive" (Vulpe *et al.*, 2001, p. 47).

To sum up, cultural awareness and understanding underpin the current international market setting, characterized by a new and more flexible and open corporate culture that takes care of cultural differences and turns them into a strength through an efficient intercultural communication. It is only in this way that we can move forward, onto the next topic closely related to interculturality: cross-cultural management.

CHAPTER 2 - THE MEETING BETWEEN CROSS CULTURAL MANAGEMENT AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

One of the difficulties that globalization has brought, and which professionals must confront, is managing a growing diversity of international business.

The amount of interaction between people of various cultural backgrounds has grown exponentially, especially in the workplace. Consequently, it is essential to know how to deal with heterogeneous groups, including in the field of the project management where, besides the importance of digitalisation, the management of cross-cultural becomes the key to lead successfully an international project from beginning to end. This chapter, in fact, focuses on the role of digital project management when cultural diversity is involved, from the relevance of harmonious cross-cultural management to the challenges faced when the presence of multicultural teams characterizes a company.

2.1 The cross-cultural perspective

The collision of cultures is unavoidable in a world where economies are widening and diversifying, where money and resources are increasingly moving abroad, and where collaboration between companies from different countries is growing. As an inevitable result of these processes, cross-cultural management research has emerged.

Cross-cultural management (CCM) can be defined as a young and interdisciplinary research area that tends to experience thematic and methodological changes due to a large number of methods, challenges, scholars, and disciplines (Barmeyer *et al.*, 2019). It has its roots on the enormous interconnection of many different areas of social science, all of which have different empirical traditions. Starting from this point, studies on this subject were essentially sociological and anthropological, but the approach to this concept has changed after the 1970s, when the subject started to be addressed from an economic-managerial point of view, with the aim of supporting the process of internationalisation of enterprises (Cogo, 2015).

This is mainly because, in the past, cultural diversity did not represent a great challenge as it is now, for the general idea that it could not influence the outcome of an international negotiation. However, nowadays the situation has totally flipped, with the realization that acknowledging cultural diversity is the first step towards a successful cross-cultural management.

Consequently, since also researches on this type of management took another direction, shifting the focus from a human and cultural perspective, the most accurate description of cross-cultural management is the one given by Adler and Gunderson, two of the leading researchers in this area, according to whom:

> Cross Cultural Management studies the behaviour of people in organizations around the world and trains people to work in organizations with employees and client populations from several cultures. It describes organizational behaviour within countries and cultures; compares organizational behaviour across countries and cultures; and, perhaps most importantly, seeks to understand and improve the interaction of co-workers, clients, suppliers, and alliance partners from different countries and cultures (Adler and Gunderson, 2008, as cited in Barmeyer *et al.*, 2019, para. 7).

The importance of cross-cultural management is, therefore, evident in a world where all types of collaboration between companies are increasing, whether it is partnership, strategic alliances or collaborations. All of them need to be analysed in cultural terms since every company involved in internationalisation processes and interested in adopting a "cross-cultural" perspective must, first, be aware of diversity and learn to manage it in a flexible and intelligent way. In fact, every intercultural contact can be the cause of conflicts and misunderstandings, as each culture differs from the others not only in language but also in beliefs, values, and different ways of dealing with situations and problems. In such a situation, adopting an intercultural dialogue is the solution to prevent or transcend the inevitable contrasts that arise by eliminating unintended clashes caused by cultural gaps, and stimulating an open-mindedness aimed at curiosity and appreciation for alternatives that are different from the norm (Eriksson & Hägg, 2016).

In other words, it is necessary to cultivate communication, mutual esteem and respect, in order to achieve harmony in the workplace and consolidate the relationship within the teams, as well as keep the employees' motivation high. From this perspective, using Hofstede's methodical framework for evaluating and differentiating cultures may be beneficial. Pioneer in cross-cultural research, the Dutch sociologist developed the cultural dimensions' theory to analyse how culture influences values and they apply to the differences in behaviour and attitudes of individuals (Eriksson & Hägg, 2016).

In his *Cultures Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (1984), Hofstede created his cultural typology from 116,000 survey questionnaires collected in 53

countries and, from this cross-cultural research, he elaborated different dimensions of national culture, also known as the 6-D model based on: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede Insights, 2017).

The first dimension, Power Distance, refers to the degree to which acceptance and expectation of power inequalities are accepted in society. Its index (PDI) besides measuring the core problem, expresses how much differential delegated authority is tolerated. Societies with a high-power distance have embraced a certain social hierarchy and the inequalities that come with it, while people in a society with a low power distance are actively attempting to equalize power sharing, especially among those with less power. Moreover, institutions in high-power-distance societies are more likely to have autocratic leadership and centralized control. The chasm between the various levels of the company is wide, and top management makes all of the decisions. In societies with a low power gap, on the other hand, there is a strong degree of interdependence between top management and lower levels (Idler, 2013).

The Individualism/Collectivism dimension explains how much a group's members focus on themselves and the group as a whole. Whether people refer to themselves as "I" or "we" reflects a society's position on this dimension (Idler, 2013). Individualist communities favour a loose social network where everyone is responsible for themselves and their immediate family. On the other hand, people in a collectivist society think almost as much, if not more, about others than they do about themselves and others look for them in return (Eriksson & Hägg, 2016).

The third-dimension deals with the separation of tasks between genders and describes the effectiveness of cultures. Masculinity is characterized as a high regard for assertiveness, accomplishments, earnings, incentives, strength, and individual performance, where men work to help the family financially and women stay at home to provide for the home. On the other hand, countries toward femininity have higher gender equality, roles between men and women are not so separate, and are more concerned with intimate relationships and the consistency of work life (Eriksson & Hägg, 2016).

The degree to which members of a group are concerned with confusion and complexity is expressed by the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. The central question here is the way society faces the future and its unpredictability, if it is about monitoring it or just letting it happen. The uncertainty avoidance is strong in countries that uphold strict standards of

opinion and behaviour and are intolerant of unconventional behaviour and concepts. Countries with a low uncertainty avoidance index, instead, have a more relaxed approach toward uncertainty, where experience takes precedence over values, complexity is tolerated, and the need for laws to constrain uncertainty is limited (ThemeGrill, 2017).

The fifth dimension refers to time orientation, meaning that it describes some links that societies have with their own history when dealing with current or future issues. Low-scoring countries, for example, tend to uphold long-standing customs and values while approaching social transition with scepticism. Countries with high scores on this dimension, on the other hand, have a more realistic approach: they are forward-oriented and promote frugality and investment in new schooling as a means of preparing for the future (ThemeGrill, 2017).

Finally, the Indulgence dimension, which is a relatively recent addition, describes the degree to which individuals attempt to control their emotions and impulses as a result of their upbringing. Since indulgence refers to a lack of control, whereas restraint refers to strong control, cultures may be classified as either Indulgent or Restrained. As a result, if in indulgent societies there is a higher index of free satisfaction of simple and inherent human desires such as enjoyment of life and amusement, restraint denotes a culture that suppresses and governs the gratification of needs by strict social rules (ThemeGrill, 2017).

To give a practical example, through this model it is possible to have an overview of the deep drivers of the Dutch culture compared to the Portuguese one, thanks to the cultural tool developed by Hofstede Insights.

Figure 1. Comparison with the values of the cultural dimensions between the Netherlands and Portugal
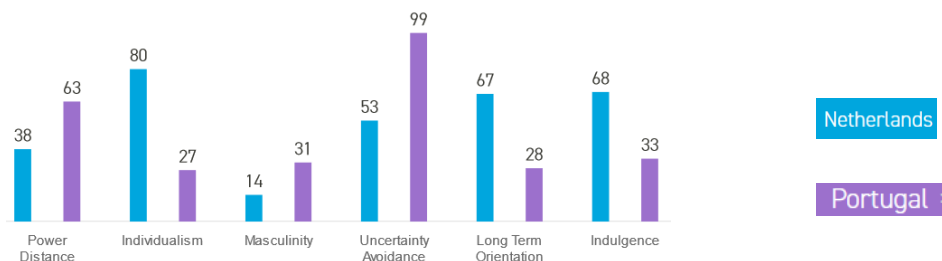
(Hofstede Insights, 2017)

According to the first index, it appears that, in comparison to Portugal, the Netherlands scores low on this dimension, meaning that its culture is characterized by a decentralized power, independence, hierarchy only for practical purpose, equal rights, direct and

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participative communication, where managers are informal and they can trust in the experience of their team members.

What emerges is also the Individualist nature of Dutch culture whose 80% proves that, compared to the Portuguese's Collectivist one, where besides fostering strong relationships among its members, loyalty takes precedence over most other social laws and regulations, it is more detached, and individuals are only supposed to look after themselves and closest relatives.

Regarding the third dimension, there is a clear difference between the two countries since the Netherlands, due to its 31% of Masculinity, is considered a Feminine country, where keeping the balance between life and work is important for employees' well-being, managers are constantly supportive to them and ensure that all are included. As a Feminine society, Dutch people, who are known for their lengthy discussions before a solution is found, resolve their conflicts through compromise and negotiation. Portugal, instead, is a country where consensus is the keyword given that polarization or unfair competition are not well considered.

However, the real substantial convergence concerns the fourth dimension as shown by the very high preference (99%) on the part of Portugal for avoiding uncertainty compared to the slight preference of the Dutch culture (53%), resulting in not giving too much importance to accuracy and punctuality, and a minor inner need to occupy their time and work hard.

The penultimate dimension related to the connection with the past, shows another discrepancy between the two European countries as demonstrated by the Dutch pragmatism (67%) and the Portuguese preference for normative thinking (28%). Consequently, while the Netherlands is dominated by a realistic culture, in which people assume that the reality is highly dependent on the circumstances and time, people in Portugal have a normative behaviour, i.e., they evaluate or make judgment about behaviour or results based on a standard, and besides having a high respect for tradition, they have a poor tendency to invest for the future as well as a deep desire to achieve immediate results.

Finally, the Indulgence index indicates, once again that the two countries also differ in this respect since the Netherlands is clearly an Indulgent society, meaning that not only Dutch people are prone to realize their own instincts and desires in order to enjoy life and have fun, but they also have an optimistic outlook and a proclivity for hope. On the other hand, the

quite low score of 33% shows that Portugal has a Restraint culture that leads them towards cynicism and pessimism, and to the tendency of not emphasizing leisure time but rather of controlling the satisfaction of their desires (Hofstede Insights, 2017).

Overall, the 6-D model proves that heterogeneity is a universal truth, and homogeneity is becoming day-by-day an illusion because gone are the days when corporate operations, transactions, and administration were carried out by a group of individuals who were all the same. "Cultural diversity" is the real word that defines the current world, especially the business one since more and people with different geography, education, and demographics are merging to achieve together a shared purpose.

Since its importance cannot be overstated, now the question arises, what are the advantages and disadvantages of an organization characterized by cultural diversity, where cross-cultural management and international teams are a daily occurrence?

2.2 The impact of cultural diversity on the workplace

Cultural plurality is now regarded as a fundamental reality that has been recognized by the business world. Many organisations are already adopting the idea of "diversely united" as a result of cultural differences (Siddiqui, 2020). In fact, this increased awareness led to an intensification of the amount of research devoted to unified collaboration between managers and other employees of organizations, individuals from various backgrounds, and the challenges to recognize the parallels and disparities between them. The major drivers of such a growth are related mainly to expanding multicultural societies worldwide, to the integration of markets through globalisation, and to the prominence of international firms (Siddiqui, 2020). It is in this context that understanding Hofstede's cultural dimensions becomes helpful to deal with important cross-cultural challenges and collaborate with workers from other cultures.

Firstly, cultural diversity can be defined as "identities such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and other dimension of differences derived from membership in groups socio-culturally distinct, that is, they collectively share norms, values or traditions that are different from those of other groups." (Cox, 1994, as cited in Siddiqui, 2020, p. 3). Moreover, nowadays since the topical subject in every cultural scenario is workforce diversity and its management, it has been stated that:

Cultural diversity can affect the workplace in numerous ways. Negative effects can include miscommunication, creation of barriers, and dysfunctional adaptation behaviours. Positive effects can include building a sound knowledge base with in-house talent, which can make for smoother integration of the organization into foreign cultures (Martin, 2014, p. 89).

However, it is important to remember that everyone is different and has their own ideas, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions that will influence the way to deal with diversification. On that note, cultural interaction is a two-way street, where the vision of the majority group may have a significant impact on the efficacy of diversity initiatives adopted within the organisation (Hofhuis *et al.*, 2015).

A good starting point for an efficient cross-cultural synergy is to recognize some of its observable characteristics in the business community. For example, within a company, cultural diversity is used as a double-edged sword, meaning that if used wisely, it may provide the greatest results for it, yet if used incorrectly, it will jeopardize the company's lifetime (Siddiqui, 2020). Consequently, due to its dynamic and enduring process, a strong culturally responsible leadership is the answer to avoid the threats associated with cultural diversity. In fact, an effective leader, able to move in various multicultural context, can accelerate a business to encompass heterogeneity by ensuring that all workers are respected and appreciated regardless of their age, nationality, gender or colour.

Naturally, given that all of this implies the need to be receptive to the thoughts and views of others, leaders must cultivate cultural intelligence in order to deal with the demands of global diversity. Cultural intelligence means the personal ability to understand unknown gestures and circumstances and formulate effective attitudinal responses by using logic and observation skills (Rahman, 2019). In other words, a successful global leader must have faith in his or her abilities to comprehend various cultures in order to build international teams, particularly in today's global world where homogeneity represents the past as workplaces grow more ethnic and firms begin to develop internationally.

In this regard, since the majority of the businesses work on international projects with multi-cultural teams from many nations, Project Managers from a variety of countries handle international projects, acting as a bridge between cultural diversity and the accomplishment of a company's objectives (TechnoFunc, 2013). Cross-cultural leadership is, therefore, "the

ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" (GLOBE, 2004, as cited in TechnoFunc, 2013).

That is to say that through participatory leadership, global perspective, and obviously, intercultural communication, not only a good leadership is built, but also good multicultural teams are created. From this perspective, optimism, caring, encouragement and cooperation are the necessary elements to build strong bonds among international team's members, who both empower and inspire each other to achieve personal and corporate goals (Rahman, 2019).

In short, it is difficult for an organization to evolve without considering the growing number of multicultural societies and employees that are more and more united, versatile and adaptable at the same time. In these circumstances, an international workplace tends to create a harmonious and pleasant working atmosphere, from which workers can benefit since diversity is advantageous for a number of reasons, such as fostering creativity and innovation, prompting a competitive advantage in the international business climate, managing set of issues in different ways, leading to enhanced problem-solving skills (Rahman, 2019). Organizations also see cultural diversity as a way of projecting a positive message to the outside world. By displaying the diversity of its employees, a company conveys that it is a socially conscious organization aimed at providing equal opportunities to all ethnic backgrounds and striving to eliminate discrimination (Hofhuis *et al.*, 2015).

It is therefore important to provide a cultural mix in the workforce such that one's shortcomings are offset by the strengths of others. However, just like any controversial topics, where there are advantages there are also drawbacks, and the biggest threat is the interpersonal conflicts that may arise precisely because of different ways of thinking, opinions, and values as well as historical backgrounds, languages, and culture itself. In the face of racism or stereotypical cultural expectations, integrating ethnic teams may be challenging and detrimental effects can include miscommunication, formation of barriers, and inability to both adapt and accept a different culture. Whatever the cause, interpersonal tension leads to a loss of productivity and the creation of negative feelings among workers, all of which can be harmful to the company (Hofhuis *et al.*, 2015).

For these reasons, it is clear that for the most part, the results of cultural diversity in the workplace are determined by how effectively corporate leaders handle it. An efficient cross-

cultural management can improve the positive impact of cultural diversity in the workplace while reducing the adverse effects with good strategic planning and achieving the common business goal. Above all, firms that embrace and value the opportunities and difficulties that come with a diverse workforce can make the difference in the economic environment, always keeping in mind that multiculturalism is the catalyst for creativity, and thus fundamental for international project management, whether it is traditional or digital.

2.3 From cross-cultural management to project management

Since the role of cross-cultural management and international teams have already been discussed by underlying their importance in the current business context, it is challenging for a global organization and its employees to achieve their respective goals without developing faith, relationships, and above all cooperation among participants from various cultural backgrounds.

Nowadays, besides the features cited above, companies are looking to project management to reliably achieve business outcomes as a way to remain ahead of the pack in today's dynamic and lively world economy. As can be deduced from the term itself, project management refers to the management of projects, which implies teamwork, coordination, planning and supervision. More businesses are seeing the benefits of spending time, effort, and capital in developing corporate project management expertise: reduced costs, increased efficiencies, better client and stakeholder loyalty, and a strategic edge (Project Management Institute, 2010). Leading companies in all industries and geographies have been increasingly using project management as a means of controlling budgets and improving project outcomes (Project Management Institute, 2010).

Furthermore, as the world has moved online, it is the digital project management the necessary tool to achieve goals in the digital world. Since we are living in an increasingly hyper-connected world, almost every enterprise now has an online presence that they want to improve and curate. Many of them are beginning to realize that a web presence is no less important than a physical presence such as a branch office or the corporate office itself. From this point of view, a successful digital project management is the solution to ensure not only a company's uniqueness, but also its effective operation online, guaranteeing the delivery of high-quality contents to the client without compromising its own capabilities with the

abundance of helpful software and apps at our disposal. But what happens when cross-cultural management and project management meet?

2.3.1 Dealing with cross-cultural project management challenges

Why should project managers be concerned with cultural differences? In this respect, many people used to say that in order to prevent intolerance, prejudice and discrimination, all team members should be treated the same, regardless of their ethnic heritage, and that a project manager who has worked on mono-cultural projects would be similarly successful on a multi-cultural project (Van Lieshout & Steurenthaler, 2007). This, however, means that team members from various backgrounds share the same motivations, operating practices, communication methods, preparation methods, but that is not what happens in reality, so in this context, the project manager must consider the cultural nuances within the team in order to maximize the team's ability.

It is well known that creativity is the connecting dot between cross-cultural management and project management, even so challenges are always just around the corner, and while the Digital Age has aided in the eradication of national borders, it has also potentially thrown cultural boundaries into greater focus, as individuals can now communicate more openly and effortlessly. Consequently, this presents additional defiance for project management since cross-cultural collaboration is a core additional factor that needs to be managed in the conventional linear project management paradigm of creation, specification and preparation, initiation, output, and monitoring, and completion (Richardson, 2017). Strong multi-cultural teams are therefore important because the variations in viewpoints and approaches between cultures often result in fresh and creative ideas. Nevertheless, if not properly handled, they may also lead to disappointment and annoyance as well as misunderstanding and miscommunication.

In fact, the first challenge is deciding the default language for communicating throughout the project. English is usually the language adopted in the international business field, but its proficiency level can differ according to educational backgrounds and experiences, so it is necessary to evaluate team members for their ability in order to balance it and better interact among themselves. This would lead to be aware of the situation and treat one another with respect, particularly when one team member is a native or fluent speaker of the project language.

As a result, encouraging a simple, clear and concise communication is a priority for a cross-cultural project management. Another important aspect is related to a positive communication, where simply asking about members' agreement or comprehension of any business matters is not enough, but rather encouraging exchange of views and ideas also through clarifying and multiple questions to prevent possible issues caused by miscommunication. From this perspective, prompting both the use of visuals where possible and a central project information repository with common glossaries can help to avoid misinterpretation and confusion inside the team (Richardson, 2017).

However, to break down these linguistic and communication barriers, creative solutions are needed, where creativity refers not only to the generation of new ideas, but also to the imaginative recombination and communication of existing ones. Here, creativity should be relevant to the challenge or potential posed in the realm of human activity, and it is the first crucial step toward long-term organizational success (Sohmen, 2001).

Therefore, an innovative strategy should begin with an understanding of what these cross-cultural communication hurdles are, as well as a practical set of countermeasures formulated to remove them. There is no single solution that will suffice; instead, an innovative mix of constructive policies and activities is necessary. Given this scenario, the most significant obstacles to cross-cultural project communication can include tensions between ethnic groups, a culturally unsympathetic leadership, ethnocentrism and culture shock, and a communication with a limited or multiple meanings (Sohmen, 2001).

Consequently, making communication as explicit as possible and recognising cultural complexity is essential since basic values, concepts and beliefs vary with each culture and can affect the *modus operandi* and expectations of the entire project. Overall, the willingness to rely on the talents of the team members is one of the most valuable abilities, tying in with the organizational competencies of solidarity and influence, as team members must support the project manager before they can fully be devoted to a common goal (Van Lieshout & Steurenthaler, 2007).

Fortunately, nowadays, international businesses are characterized by a growing need of interculturally effective managers to prevent incomprehension and encourage respect and tolerance among both employees and clients. Through this approach, they are turning this cultural diversity into a strength and, in the case of TransPerfect, the largest language services company, a true core value.

CHAPTER III – THE WORLD OF TRANSPERFECT

The inclination of companies to communicate with international clientele along with the trend of globalization has led certain industries to focus on a successful intercultural communication and cross-cultural management to make the difference in their field and stand out from the competition. In this respect, language service providers and, more specifically TransPerfect, emphasize cultural diversity to make sure not only that the company's goals are successfully achieved, but also that during the process the respect of people's customs, their backgrounds, and their way to do business become a powerful habit and their flagship.

3.1. The language services industry: an overview

When thinking about prospering industries, immediately images related to tech companies or the electric vehicle market come to mind. The concept of language service business is not conjured up, but on a second thought, it should be. In fact, considering how humans have moved around, travelled and settled down in different countries for trade, business or leisure throughout history, it is not surprising that they created multilingual communication contexts. This is where language service providers (LSP) operate since their aim is to help and facilitate intercultural communication breaking down all language and cultural barriers.

In a world where globalization and migration are the driving forces behind diversified and more interconnected and digital communities, providing complete and trusted language solutions along with cutting-edge linguistic tools and platforms is crucial for language service industry's growth and innovation (International Business and Technology, 2015). Whether it is a company or a private individual, LSPs offer a wide variety of services with the common root of enhancing clients need to communicate in their target consumer's language in respect of their cultural norms and customs. Assuming that commitment to quality is always provided, the main amenities include:

- Translation – the actual transfer of a written text from the source language into another one, provided by native translators, i.e. professionals who adapts written texts in a foreign language by using their mother tongue and deep understanding of their own culture in order to provide contents that sound natural to the target audience (Portela, 2018). It is a concept-per-concept process, involving knowledge of idioms and cultural sensitivity.

- Localization – the cultural adaptation of contents in the same language for a different target market (ex. Portuguese from Portugal to Brazil), usually adopted by any business endeavouring to reach international growth by considering the multi-cultural aspect of today's globalised world.

- Interpretation – the activity of simplifying oral communication between two or more users of different languages simultaneously (real-time interpreting, similar to paraphrasing) or consecutively (when the interpreter converts into the target language right after the speaker expresses a concept).

- Transcreation – a middle ground between conventional translation and copywriting, it is the translation of texts featuring creative wordplays and rhetorical figures used for original contents for taglines, marketing materials, newsletters etc.

- Copywriting – the creation of a completely new text from scratch without a source script suited for a specific market, where creativity is the key word.

- Copyediting – the stage where a text is being revised in order to get rid of any type of errors, from format issues to spelling and grammar punctuation.

- Proofreading – the final step of the writing process where proof-readers glance over the text before sharing it with an audience.

Since these services involve several steps and can come along with further non-linguistic processes, such as desktop publishing (DTP), used for the creation of digital contents or "print-ready" deliverables through the use of graphics program, it is evident that this industry is all about project management, usually in multiple languages. In this case, the use of certain specialized software and tools are fundamental to adapt designed contents into the target culture and make it as natural as possible in the target language.

TransPerfect, for example, counts on three different online platforms depending on the purpose. Two of them, Project Vendor (PV) and Project Accounting (PA) are exclusive to the company. While PV is a vendor database aimed at resourcing linguists through specific criteria, such as geographic location, areas of specialization or language combination, PA is an accounting and project management software that besides creating purchase orders (PO) for vendors, also assists in tracking the status and the budget of all existing jobs. The other important online tool accessible to both translators and TransPerfect is a user-friendly document management platform called Project Director (PD), which helps reducing critical steps for the workflow where Project Managers (PM) can upload the documents ready for

translations and proofreading by entering relevant information regarding the word count, guidelines provided by the client and the potential budget.

The cutting-edge solutions offered by LSPs turned them into key resources for the current global marketplace since a growing number of international businesses and e-commerce companies are making their services available through the Internet in order to reach a wider customer segmentation and respond to its needs. As a result, translations, text localization and cultural adaptation represent crucial trends focused on incorporating language solutions in a digital space, and the overcoming of the increasing engagements of local markets into businesses is a rising demand of these services.

Following this tendency, the global language service industry is expected to expand at high growth levels for the years 2021-2025, taking into consideration various factors that are forecasted to drive the market (Research and Markets, 2021). These include accelerating globalization, growing economic activities and e-commerce as well as pharmaceutical business, rapid online video content demand, and enhancing consumer confidence index. Although the boost of the market would also face certain challenges related to rigorous regulations and intense competition, it has been noted that throughout 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has created advantageous repercussion on the industry as the virtual language solutions offered through digital methods have been increased rapidly (Globo, 2021).

Furthermore, in this context, TransPerfect definitely stands out since it is the world' largest provider of language and technology solutions for global companies, both in terms of revenue and acquisitive and organic growth, as confirmed by Slator, the rating and index of the world's largest language service providers (Slator, 2020). In the year marked by the outbreak of a pandemic, TransPerfect has never paused during the health crisis and it actually achieved 21% growth in billed revenue for the first quarter of 2021. This increase of approximately $40 million was supported by its ability to invest firmly in technology research and development in 2020 through the elaboration of new products and services that improved its clients' remote working, and it expects to benefit from expanded customer acceptance of these new goods (TransPerfect, 2021a). On top of that, TransPerfect's commitment related to the translation and distribution of information about the pandemic in multiple languages had led the company to win the International Business Award for its COVID-19 initiatives communication campaign (TransPerfect, 2020).

3.2 TransPerfect in detail

Since TransPerfect has become the world leader in the language services and technology solutions industry, it is important to highlight its historical, economic, and organisational aspects in order to better understand how an international company has expanded to such an extent that it has headquarters and branches in every continent.

3.2.1 History

When thinking about corporations and conglomerates, we mainly focus on the company's growth, ignoring that there were clearly years of hardship and concerns that the enterprise would fail. From this perspective, TransPerfect's story is somewhat reminiscent of that of large companies such as Apple, Facebook or Amazon that started from nothing and have come to inspire businesses and entrepreneurs in every corner of the world.

Back in 1991, TransPerfect's co-founders, Phil Shawe and Elizabeth Elting, met at New York University's Stern School of Business. They felt there was a necessity for a service-oriented company that would handle complex projects quickly and accurately. To fill this gap, they founded TransPerfect the following year, in 1992 with no external funding.

Their mission was and still is to supply the very best quality language services to the foremost successful companies worldwide. In fact, from a little two-person operation based in a campus room, TransPerfect started to grow rapidly and to expand in more and more countries in 1998, thanks to the use of live translation services from multilingual people around the world, until becoming one of the world's most famous language services and technology solutions companies.

Over the years, the company, along with GlobalLink, its flagship technology suite, has received numerous awards and has been included within the list of America's 5,000 fastest growing companies, besides being recognised also for developing the industry standard for language certifications, the TransPerfect Linguist Certification (TLC) programme, aimed at verifying the language skills and industry's specialisms of linguists.

In 2018, Phil Shawe opened the doors to a replacement era, with a renewed focus on expansion and innovation by acquiring the complete capital of the firm. Here, the sale ensured TransPerfect's historical continuity in terms of profitable growth, job creation, expansion of the company's global presence and the pursuit of strategic mergers and

acquisitions, with a view to meeting the international needs of its prestigious and ever-growing customer base. Today, with quite 6,000 full-time employees, a network of over 5,000 certified linguists and industry experts, and over 90 offices worldwide, TransPerfect is the largest privately owned language services company within the world.

Furthermore, the company is globally certified to the ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 17100:2015 standards, ensuring the very best levels of quality and repair for all projects. While the first certification refers to the "Quality Management" Standard and can be applied to any type of business, its goal for TransPerfect is to outline requirements to provide consistent quality, enhance client satisfaction and ensure continual improvement processes exist. On the other hand, ISO 17100:2015 is the Quality Standard for translation service providers, with the purpose of delineating translation workflow requirements, including linguistic experience and capabilities, project management requirements, required translation steps and client interaction. Overall, the global group of companies completes over 300,000 projects annually, working with many of the world's most famed businesses.

3.2.2 The TransPerfect Global Group in the world

Figure 2. TransPerfect's office locations worldwide
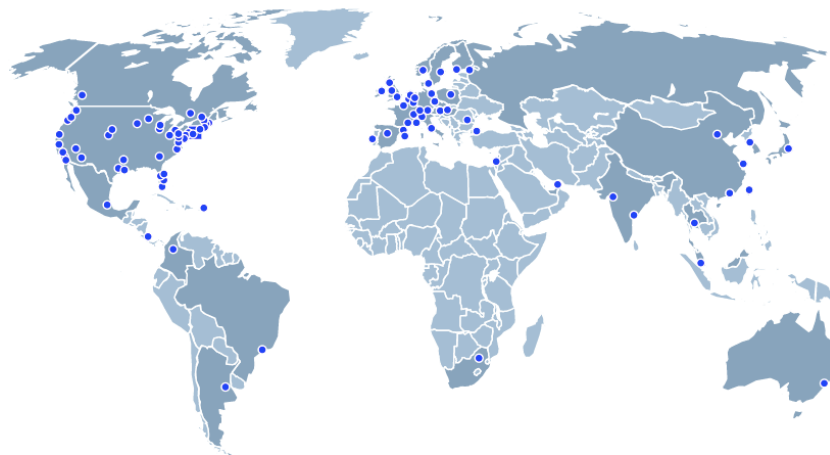
Source: TransPerfect (2021)

TransPerfect is a group of companies that offers global business services in more than 170 languages, with 3 headquarters - New York, London, and Hong Kong - and offices in nearly 90 cities.

In order to consider a company internationalised, it is necessary - first of all - that the company in question develops its activities abroad, in two or more countries. It is not

possible to implement an internationalisation approach by considering only the financial aspect, i.e., the fact of having shares in companies operating abroad.

Being "international" derives both from the existence of a considered and conscious strategic choice and from the importance that the international dimension of strategic choices has in creating competitive advantages. Therefore, the company is fully involved at an organisational level in its foreign operations, and this is a fundamental requirement for identifying its international dimension.

However, the TRANSPERFECT Group is aware that running its own business abroad implies the contact with realities different from those of its home country: new cultures, new political system, and new legislation to respect. In addition, it must also ensure a certain "coherence" in the pursuit of the various activities carried out, coherence that is then embodied in the coordination and control of the units located abroad.

As an internationalised company, TransPerfect extends abroad as a suitable structure for carrying out the international strategy and, moreover, adequately controls and coordinates the various subsidiaries, leaving them with a high degree of autonomy. Moreover, encountering different realities has determined the success of the company at a global level and an opportunity for learning and exchange.

The TransPerfect Global group managed to develop the so-called "strategic capacity", understood as the ability to learn from the environment, to develop appropriate responses based on stimuli from the external environment and to use adequate resources to implement concretely those responses. It is through coordination that the company has transferred what it has learned in one context to the other units, so that the entire business system can benefit from it.

In other words, internationalisation is one of the main trajectories of the TransPerfect's growth and development since opening to new countries and markets, as well as the growing integration of economies, generated the need for TransPerfect to undergo a profound cultural change, intended for redefining business models, development processes and competitive movements. It is important, therefore, to have models for reading and interpreting these changes, for the benefit of both researchers and companies. Globalisation, in fact, involves systems and companies across the country, is expressed through the growth of integration and interrelationships, and is achieved by reducing obstacles to the free movement of goods, services, capital, people and knowledge.

Figure 3. Multinational groups within TransPerfect

Source: TransPerfect (2021)

The multinational group has an extensive network of 34 companies on all continents from Astoria On-Request, Adams Globalization, or TransCEND localized in the United States to the European groups such as Lylo, Marcomm Group or iSP. Nevertheless, what differentiates these cited groups from the others is their commitment to digital creative services although each of them has its personalised software according to its needs and purposes. The remaining 28 companies, on the other hand, deal with specific services such as medical device solutions, translation, interpreting, subtitling and dubbing, software development and multimedia services. The goal, however, is the shared one of guaranteeing the best technologic and linguistic services through successful intercultural teams and effective cross-cultural management.

3.2.3 Core values and corporate structure

TransPerfect's vision is to be the world's head supplier of worldwide language and business arrangements. They want to achieve this by applying commitment and enthusiasm to assist their customers with improving their organizations and accomplish their objectives on a worldwide scale. Bearing this in mind, the company's cornerstones are:

1. **Integrity**: the *Display the Utmost Integrity* motto is critical since, according to TransPerfect's vision, we unfailingly need to act morally and sincerely and focus on continually making the best decision, regardless of how troublesome that might be.

2. **Quality**: it is TRANSPERFECT duty to deliver services, which are free of defect, deficiency and significant variations brought by strict and consistent commitment to standards that satisfy client or user requirements.

3. **Service:** concerning support, TransPerfect's customers rely upon the company to be consultative and proactive.

4. **Own It**: trust is always strongly supported given that it enables each individual in the organization to settle on choices that can possibly affect the whole association. This implies their kin will ceaselessly develop and be at last responsible for the client's success.

5. **Urgency**: generally, TRANSPERFECT aims at working expediently accordingly an ideal opportunity to their customers and to one another, building up short and long-haul cut-off times and objectives to accomplish more.

6. **Respect**: it should be given before it tends to be procured, and it is profoundly infectious. The company invests in continually treating everybody with whom all the Group interfaces with a definitive degree of regard.

7. **Teamwork**: they primarily focus on the achievement and prosperity of the colleagues in the TRANSPERFECT scenario. Everybody works with each other collectively to achieve outstanding results, regardless of origin, language, and nationality.

8. **Diversity**: it is well known that the company stands out for its cultural diversity since significant advancement and achievements happen because of accepting novel thoughts and contrasting viewpoints. At TransPerfect, variety in foundations, variety in convictions, variety in idea, and variety in real life are seen as wellsprings of their solidarity.

9. **Financial responsibility**: all the teams in the TransPerfect family need to utilize their shrewdness, business astuteness, and monetary duty to accomplish more and deal with the organization's cash like their own. It is important for all the stakeholders to settle strategic and straightforward monetary choices to increase the Group business volume.

10. **Results:** all the employees focus on finding solutions and achieving results, rather than making excuses or placing blame. Excellent results and brilliant working methods enhance the company's credibility with customers.

Besides its core values, TransPerfect has also compiled company policies to lead the company towards an improvement in its results, in terms of product quality, organisational and economic results and market and logistical development, while respecting the principles of safeguarding and protecting health and safety at work, based on ethics, heterogeneity, modern slavery and equal opportunities:

1. **Ethics**: TransPerfect representatives see inherently that it is their commitment to direct business inside the rules of every single material law and guidelines. Notwithstanding, they additionally comprehend that relevant laws do not sufficiently administer all spaces of conduct. Further, as a worldwide corporate resident, the TRANSPERFECT perceives that laws and guideline shift a universally on an area by-region premise. Along these lines, TransPerfect has compiled its own Code of Ethical Business Conduct to govern its conduct around the world.

2. **Heterogeneity**: as already mentioned, one of the special characteristics of TRANSPERFECT is the cultural diversity in the workplace. These cultural differences are seen as an opportunity, as each individual has unique strengths, and only by valuing these factors is it possible to interpret change, overcome market challenges and achieve high performance. Diversity within the TransPerfect family is a value that generates innovation and customer approval.

3. **Modern Slavery**: Modern slavery is one of the most entrenched and covert forms of organised crime. It is a complex and widespread crime that crosses geographical boundaries, sectors and jurisdictions, resulting in serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. TransPerfect is committed to respecting the rights of its employees and has published a "Modern Slavery Statement" about it.

4. **Equal Opportunities**: TRANSPERFECT manages human resources in a development perspective, based solely on the stakeholder's skills, experience and professional potential. TransPerfect is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for all its employees globally, regardless of race, colour, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship status, disability, or any other protected status.

3.3 Domestic and international trade volume

As the world's biggest supplier of language and innovation answers for worldwide business, TransPerfect declared in 2020 yearly charged income of $852 million, i.e., 11% increment over the earlier year.

In this respect, TransPerfect President and Chief Phil Shawe declared, "Everyone at TransPerfect feels very fortunate that the company's business model proved resilient, was successfully adapted to a remote working environment, and allowed us to continue to deliver for our customers" (TransPerfect, 2021b, para2).

Despite the issues brought by the COVID-19 outbreak and the effects faced by its customers, Twenty-twenty has represented for the organization a huge achievement since its quarterly charging surpassed $250 million without precedent in its history, an increment of 15% over a similar three-month time frame in 2019. Throughout 2021, deals sped up as numerous organizations resumed and adjusted, as also confirmed during an interview with the CEO of the Amsterdam office Martijn Heertje, material witness of TRANSPERFECT's strength and solidity against any irreparable damage caused by the pandemic in other firms. TransPerfect, likewise progressed its magnanimous objectives in 2020 by supporting the accompanying associations and causes, among others:

- Given more than $250,000 in real money, just as huge in-kind administrations and innovation, to Girls Who Code, which centres on aiding limited the gender gap in technology careers.
- Coordinated organization coordinating with aid projects for the Australian bushfires and the earthquake in Puerto Rico.
- Delivered and dispersed in excess of 2,000 free Coronavirus counteraction and wellbeing tips recordings in 11 dialects.
- Given free virtual public accountant administrations to limit eye to eye communications needed for law offices and their customers.
- Donated $150,000 in interpretation administrations to help New York City's pandemic reaction.
- Made and delivered a free informational index to help artificial intelligence and engineers give precise Coronavirus data (TransPerfect, 2021b).

With regard to the domestic trade volume represented by iSP Amsterdam, information remains confidential due to internal competition. However, it is known that Amsterdam

office's luck is closely related to its strong internal strategy in managing the client portfolio. In fact, although they can boast of a number of brands on a global scale, such as Mercedes-Benz & Smart, Bacardi or Swatch, each one of these just covers the 5% of the income per year. In other words, in the event that the company were to lose a major client, it would be able to easily replace it with another since it would not affect the year-end balance.

3.4 iSP Amsterdam and its structure

For the purpose of this report, the International Software product, also known as the iSP group or simply the Amsterdam office, with its main features and functions played – within the limits of confidentiality - will be described, being the office where I performed the internship.

3.4.1 A brief synopsis of the Amsterdam office

The iSP Amsterdam was founded in 1989 by Yvonne Heertje as a family-run business specialized in translation and localization services for the Dutch market. Throughout the years, thanks to Yvonne and her brother Martijn, who joined the company as co-director in 1993, the company attracted the attention of the overseas company Translations.com, the website and software localization pioneer, so that they wanted to incorporate it at all costs. In fact, the success of the iSP group and the satisfaction of its customers inside and outside the Netherlands have not gone unnoticed and turned it into one of Europe's premier providers of localization services, until it completed the merger in 2007 and became part of the TransPerfect family of companies. Nowadays, it provides end-to-end software localization and testing services with operations in Europe and Asia, precisely in Amsterdam, Berlin, Pune and Singapore.

Therefore, iSP has grown from a small office with just 60 employees to a business with more than one hundred multicultural workers, led by the CEO Martijn Heertje, by now veteran in the localization field. It is currently one of the largest European division of the Global Group, standing out for its efficient corporate structure divided in two different department: Sales and Production, to which it belongs the Creative Services department (TCS).

3.4.2 Sales Department

The Sales department's activity consists primarily of sales planning. It analyses the customer portfolio and the service offered by TransPerfect, studies the market, competitors, and

industry trends to design a strategic business plan and identify sales, revenue and market share targets (on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis). The sales plan defines the available budget, the sales forecast, and the programming of sales activities.

In order to achieve the objectives, the Sales Department employees have to choose the most appropriate sales channels according to the target: for example, independent distribution, company branded stores, large-scale retail and mass merchandisers, e-commerce. Depending on the company's organization, the Sales Manager must then effectively manage and organize the sales force (salespeople, agents and representatives active in the territory, Account Managers, sales office employees, clerks and store managers), or deal independently with the acquisition, management and development of customers in the area of digital services, besides pre-sales and after-sales customer management.

In fact, thanks to its technical and commercial competence, the Sales department is in the front line of activities such as the care of relationships with key clients and the development of the customer portfolio, the management of complex commercial negotiations, the search for new business opportunities (business development), and the entry of the company in new foreign markets.

3.4.3 TCS – TransPerfect Creative Services

The iSP's Production Department corresponds to TransPerfect Creative Services (or TCS), Amsterdam's office workhorse, located, on a European level, only in Amsterdam, London and Barcelona. The goal of this department is to provide copywriting, translation and transcreation projects, as well as multimedia adaptation, digital and cultural-linguistic services in many fields, from beauty, fashion and retail to food and beverages, tourism and hospitality.

As a result, all this variety of services makes the department differ from the others in the sense that the contents that they are working with is highly creative and focused on style and fluency. The mission of TCS, well known among its clients for providing the highest-quality creative solutions thanks to its successful cross-cultural management, driving force of creativity, is to give importance to every single step intrinsic to the creation of multilingual contents in the creative industry.

Not surprisingly, the motto of TCS is *Content is everything*. Here, contents are considered as the glue that connects brands to clients, as the key that makes brands liven up and grow.

However, the real protagonists are the brains behind it, i.e., the numerous multicultural teams composed by people from different backgrounds, experiences, and worldviews. It is only in this way that the entire department of TCS succeeds in meeting its international customers' needs and expectations, characterized by specialists whose aim is to take the brand to the next level.

In fact, as a creative content marketing agency, TCS aids its customers to stay ahead of their competitors by giving them a voice in an international marketplace through contents creation, adaptation, and optimization. Finding and keeping creative resources is vital to the success of the department as they are responsible for creating these digital and non-digital contents. Besides copywriters and transcreators, TCS also provides some clients with Brand Ambassadors, who look at the copywriter's text from the client's perspective, checking whether the style and tone of voice matches the brand and their style guide.

The wide range of services offered by TransPerfect Creative Services shows that the definition of creativity must not, therefore, be limited to considering only the attributes of novelty and originality, but must also include other aspects such as feasibility, functionality, and cost-effectiveness of the creative idea. This is what TCS embodies at its most, and the reason why its client, whether they are large or small companies, local or world-renowned brands, are always satisfied.

From this perspective, the client base or portfolio is the most important asset that iSP Amsterdam, and TransPerfect in general, can be proud of. An appropriate customer segmentation is the first step for TRANSPERFECT to enhance the quality of the business or market where it operates. This is where Sales come into play through the analysis of the stratification of the client's turnover, especially if the subject in question is a large firm. This is due to the considerable importance that large-scale enterprises have for the company, and accordingly, it will be necessary to follow and monitor them, entrusting their management to qualified and experienced company personnel. The TRANSPERFECT Amsterdam office is able to provide a high rate of service to large customers, boosting their domestic trade volume further and, very importantly, they can consider having satisfied customers who have benefitted from the company's digital services, such as the following:

Figure 4. Some of TCS' clients
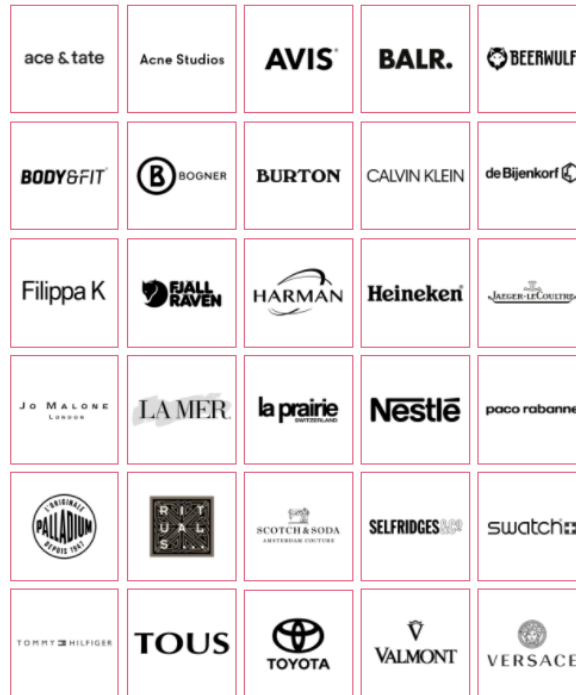
CHAPTER IV – THE INTERNSHIP

In this final chapter, it will be described in detail what my internship at TransPerfect consisted of, including daily tasks and responsibilities with a focus on social media and translation project management, as well as challenges and outcomes related to intercultural communication and cross-cultural management. It is important to note that, due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to meet the whole team in person, but the Digital Team Lead and my supervisor never stopped working to ensure that the distance did not affect either the experience itself or the establishment of a relationship beyond work with colleagues. This was achieved, from the very beginning, through weekly virtual meetings, where I had the chance to get to know better the rest of the colleagues that I could not meet personally at the Amsterdam office for various reasons. On top of this, in these six months "project management", topic on which my internship focused, has always been accompanied by three key words: communication, cooperation and cultural diversity, the three elements that I learnt to value in such a multicultural context.

Before moving on to the core of the chapter, a digital project management framework is needed, given that in the past months within TransPerfect I have always managed projects in digital forms throughout their entire lifecycle composed by initiation, planning, execution, and final approval. In fact, from January to the end of June, I had the opportunity to take care of this process for two different clients, namely *Body & Fit* and *Secretos del Agua*, both aimed at two different types of management, respectively Social Media Management and Translation Project Management, both analysed in this chapter.

4.1 Project Management in the digital world: a brief overview

Assuming that the digital project manager is a full-fledged project manager who helps companies to manage a digital project, his/her role is to support clients in developing web project management strategies and helps them achieve their goals by choosing the right channels and initiatives to engage their target, within the limits of available time and budget. The job description of a web project manager (PM) is in fact not very different from the job description of a project manager, except for the fact that the project a digital project manager deals with is a project closely linked to the world of digital marketing. Innovative digital projects can range from the creation of websites, blogs, Facebook or Instagram pages to the

definition of the entire web promotion strategy of a brand and search engine optimization (SEO) aimed at improving the quality and quantity of an internet site.

In other words, digital project managers ensure that all aspects of the project run smoothly throughout its lifespan, such as establishing and communicating a project plan, timeline, and budget, assigning tasks and deadlines, managing project scope, as well as QAing all project deliverables, contributing to client proposals and quotes, measuring, and evaluating project success (Lowe, 2018).

Furthermore, in the language service industry, as well be seen below, project management refers to the complete process of managing and monitoring a translation project from beginning to end, which can include also managing social media pages of an account in multiple languages, as it was in my case. However, as part of the Creative Services Department, the multilingual component was always complemented by creativity, the other cornerstone. Working on creative endeavours necessitates a shift of mindset, where collaboration and empathy are no longer simply buzzwords, but they represent guiding qualities for creative projects, where PMs have to execute these within their scope and budget as well as to balance customer expectations. Here, in fact, project managers, besides executing projects within their scope and budget, while meeting the expectations of customers.

4.2 Social media management

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, social media had an almost unprecedented influence. Social networks, blogs, web forums, and other similar technologies have infiltrated practically every aspect of life and have had a significant impact on our culture (Wyman, 2013). From this perspective, enterprises are betting on social media to increase the number of customers or approaching potential clients since being present on Instagram or Facebook is becoming a must to establish a presence digitally.

Consequently, businesses dedicate a large portion of their communication strategies to social media in order to show their product and service offers. For this reason, platforms like Facebook and Instagram have become a useful resource for potential customers due to the independence and timeliness of the thoughts expressed on them. Moreover, social networks allow to companies to gain a direct glimpse into their consumers' thoughts by disseminating perceptions, information, and experiences.

As a matter of fact, both small and large businesses, like the Dutch company *Body & Fit,* decide to become social to present the true essence of their products or services and the benefit they have on customers.

4.2.1 Case study: *Body & Fit*

Body & Fit is an Amsterdam based listed company. Since 1995, it has been the place for sports nutrition, nutritional supplements, diet products and a healthy lifestyle. Throughout these years, it has not only accumulated a wealth of experience, but also a vast range of quality products that it fully supports until becoming a market leader in fitness nutrition and joining Glanbia, the world's largest sports nutrition group with businesses in every major market and tens of thousands of employees all around the world. *Body & Fit* has been innovating and fine-tuning the way they do business for over 20 years and now cover services from products and logistics to customer support and an award-winning e-commerce site.

Its mission is to motivate individuals all around the world to live better and fitter lives and being fully devoted to this purpose means doing its utmost to support its global community and employees, such as remaining up to date on the newest innovations in performance nutrition and expanding product offerings by launching additional web shops throughout the world. To achieve this goal on an international level, *Body & Fit* aims at reaching as many people as possible through its social media pages, updated continuously by displaying new products and links to the main website, which shows not only its broad product range, but also healthy advice, recipes and workouts to bring together a community of fitness and health enthusiasts.

The company, in fact, decided to collaborate with TransPerfect to create contents in multiple languages, mainly Dutch (NL), English (EN), French (FR), German (DE) and Italian (IT) for its Facebook and Instagram accounts. Through these pages, *Body & Fit* succeeded in making its customers feel they are part of a big friendly family by adopting a real and conversational tone of voice. Here, TransPerfect's copywriters provided catchy, memorable and interesting texts coming straight to the point and highlighting the benefits of the products they were promoting.

In this scenario, I came into play by creating multilingual files with all translations designed to be posted on Facebook and Instagram.

4.2.2 From briefing to posting: all the steps

Managing social media accounts in multiple languages requires different steps where coordination and collaboration are the key for success. In fact, different departments and software are involved to ensure both good translations and graphics.

The first step is the briefing sent by the client designed to specify details about the post that will be published including date, scope, channels, languages, text, and possible tags. Communication between *Body & Fit* and TransPerfect took place on a digital platform called Asana, aimed at facilitating organization, tracking and management of the work. Once having controlled all these details, I used a tracker to write them down for planning and monitoring the workflow, as below:
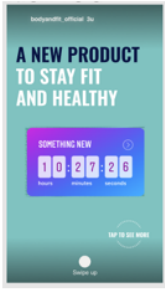
Figure 5. *Body & Fit*'s weekly tracker

Week 2 8-14th February				
DTP TICKETS				
	INFEED + FB Chris Curtis Video	https://app.asar	Instagram & Facebook	DE UK FR NL IT
DTP Friday	Stories: Short version of infeed v	https://app.asar	Instagram	DE UK FR NL IT
DTP Friday	IG Feed + FB: NUTRITION TIPS	https://app.asar	Instagram & Facebook	UK NL FR DE IT
DTP Monday	Stories: Supps Quiz & Swipe up	https://app.asar	Instagram & Facebook	UK DE NL FR IT
	INFEED: Recipe Muffins	https://app.asar	Instagram & Facebook	UK DE NL FR IT
DTP Monday	Story: More recipes	https://app.asar	Instagram & Facebook	UK NL DE FR IT
DTP Tuesday	IG Infeed: Multivitamins	https://app.asar	Instagram	DE NL FR UK IT
	FB link to article	https://app.asar	Facebook	DE NL FR UK IT
DTP Wednesday	Stories: Link to articles	https://app.asar	Instagram	DE NL FR UK IT

Reels / infeed copy for IG and Facebook (extra text and include UTM) / dropbox link missing / tag chris on the image in IG	Reels	Copy Adapt + Scheduling	Monday	8.02	12:00	In Progress
3 slides (2 need DTP) / slide1: poll slide 2: repost infeed including a background as delivered in figma / slide 3, not a quiz	Stories	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Monday	8.02	13:00	In Progress
IG: 4 slides (3 need DTP) / FB: 1 long image (need DTP) /	Infeed	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Wednesday	10.02	12:00	In Progress
5 slides (all need DTP) /SLIDE 1: tag and add a poll / slide 2: repost infeed including a background /	Stories	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Wednesday	10.02	13:00	In Progress
1 post for IG and FB (same copy but FB extra text) / links missing / copy for FB first comment	Infeed	Copy Adapt + Scheduling	Thursday	11.02	12:00	In Progress
3 slides (all need DTP) / SLIDE 1: POLL & ADD TAPPING GIF & ADD HASHTAG /	Stories	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Thursday	11.02	13:00	In Progress
4 slides (all need DTP- 1 missing) / tag	Infeed	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Friday	12.02	12:00	In Progress
post without photo (use blog preview as image, no additional image required / link missing)	Infeed	Copy Adapt + Scheduling	Friday	12.02	12:00	In Progress
4 stories (3 need DTP) / question sticker slide 4	Stories	Copy Adapt + DTP + Scheduling	Friday	12.02	13:00	In Progress

Source: Own elaboration (2021)

The following step involved the DTP, the graphic department taking care of non-linguistic processes by providing "print-ready" deliverables through the addition of the text in the images or simply formatting. Since the majority of photos or videos to publish presented text that needed to be translated in different languages, this step was fundamental for final posting. My task at this stage was to create a ticket via Jira, another project tracking software helpful for internal communication with DTP and engineering teams. Here, I had to book a place with the DTP team to ensure not only they had time to work on the design of the posts, but also that deadlines, contents, and translations were respected and met the client's expectations.

After giving priority to reserving this spot, I could finally create the English source file on Excel for both copywriters and quality managers (QMs), who have to check not only if translations are correct, without any type of error, but also if clients' instructions and requests had been met and coordinate them accordingly. It was basically a copy-and-paste step between the information on Asana, including post name, format, the English text, and the image reference.

Figure 6. *Body & Fit*'s source file

Once completed, the file was updated on FreeCommander, a simple-to-use alternative to Windows' default file manager, divided in different folders depending on the recipient, such as Client, DTP, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) specialists etc.

The following phase focused on kicking off the project on the above-mentioned PD, the flagship of the internal Globalization Management System (GMS), aimed at providing the workflow of a fully hosted solution, where any employee of TransPerfect can create, edit or delete submissions, including budget negotiations and vendors selection, before the final delivery to the client. At this stage, the source file needed to be updated on this platform, and a new submission needed to be created by specifying monthly job number – to recognize the client – deadlines, target languages, background, and instructions for the ongoing project.

Then, the submission needs to be analysed in order to have the total word count of the document concerned and provide a budget for vendors, accordingly. Before starting the submission, there is the possibility to select translators and QMers approved by the client that have to work on the project, whether internal, when part of TransPerfect, or external, i.e., freelancers. As soon as the submission is active on PD, vendors have access to it and can negotiate budget and deadline and even ask queries related to the batch or highlight mistakes or typo in the source file. Once the translation and QM deadlines have been met, I

had to run the Project Management Quality Assurance (PMQA), the final step on PD, with the purpose of checking the final work before completing the submission and downloading the deliverables.

Since the deliverables included the DE, FR, IT and NL translations, I created the multilingual Excel file which was nothing else than the implementation of these target languages to the source file, with its eventual hashtags, emoji, tags, or extra Instagram's features.

If the file included images, I had to send it to DTP that, at this point, could create the Instagram and/or Facebook image copies to be posted in the corresponding accounts, for then sending them back to copywriters to get rid of any typo or format errors. This is the so-called Localization Quality Assurance (LQA) phase, where linguists can comment the file, usually in the PDF format, and leave comments when needed and eventually provide the final eye (FE) step, the final review.

Figure 7. Example of *Body & Fit*'s posts

Source: DTP (2021)

On the other hand, if I had to deal with simple texts without visuals, DTP was not needed, and I could directly schedule the post for each profile.

This was enabled through Iconosquare, the analytics, management, and scheduling tool for businesses and agencies trying to improve their social media presence by tracking the success of their contents as well as the growth of their channels. This platform helped me to verify the correctness of the posts, in terms of date, time, contents and the account itself (as managing all ten could be complicated) before their publication. However, in certain cases posting had to be manual, such as for stories, reposting, reels, or carousels.

Nevertheless, in my second part of the internship, I stopped taking care of social media management, and I dealt with another client, as *Body & Fit* decided to cut its costs by hiring an internal team of community managers, native to the languages they were interested in. As a result, in April I also became part of another team, more focused on classic project

management, where I was in charge of managing translation projects of a single account, *Secretos del Agua*, whose process was more or less the same as *Body and Fit*, but without the social media management aspect.

4.3 Translation Project Management

In translation and localization projects, project management include determining requirements, establishing a project plan, and then obtaining and managing human resources in order to finish and deliver the project effectively. From project to project, the degree of complexity and accompanying obstacles with these duties can vary, but what is common to every project of this type are the different phases of the project life cycle, that will be addressed below. This involves the quotation stage, as well as assigning the appropriate linguist, maintaining any terminology databases, budgeting, progress monitoring, query tracking, proofreading, and so on – just like *Body & Fit* process – until its closure which corresponds to the final delivery to the client.

It is important to emphasise that translation project management does not always imply the administration of the actual translation, given that in most cases, the translator or copywriter is responsible for the actual translation. The project manager's job is to manage multiple projects at the same time, each involving different languages and different topics. While this is a generalisation, it is fair to say that this is the prevalent model in the translation industry.

4.3.1 Case study: *Secretos del Agua*

Secretos del Agua is a Spanish beauty and cosmetics brand, founded in Pozuelo de Alarcón, in the Community of Madrid, in 2009 by ONA Investigación, a research laboratory committed to unravelling the enigmatic qualities of water. Centred on the latest scientific breakthroughs in biophysics, biochemistry, and quantum physics, one of their key areas of research is based on investigating the molecular structures of water and their interaction with cellular revitalisation processes. Since then, the brand began to expand outside the Iberian Peninsula into beauty salons, training professionals in the sector in a new culture of healthy beauty. Today, *Secretos del Agua* boasts not only a new website with e-commerce, but also over 800 salons and a position as Spain's leading organic brand in the sector.

In order to achieve more at the international level, the company decided only in March to rely on iSP Amsterdam for the translation of its content for website, catalogues, labels and

packaging or leaflets enclosed with the products in ten languages excluding Spanish (ES): Chinese (ZH), Danish (DK), English, French, German, Norwegian (NO), Polish (PL), Portuguese (PT), Swedish (SV), and the so-called Nordics mix which is the result of the mixture of Scandinavian languages.

Consequently, during these three months I made sure that the customer's wishes were met by delivering translations that ensured that *Secretos del Agua*'s mission reached its target audience, i.e., middle aged women interested in natural cosmetics products that respect the skin and the planet. Here, the main goal was to communicate that this is a Natural and Organic cosmetic brand based on the three core pillars of research, health and (raising) awareness.

4.3.2 Translation Project Management for *Secretos del Agua*

As already mentioned above, managing projects for this client was not that different from *Body & Fit*, but since the content is not aimed at social media, some steps were different.

The process started with the Sales Department, responsible for sending the project plan for each project depending on the client's requirements, containing an estimation of time, budget, and costs.

After its analysis, crucial to also determine deadlines and rates for linguists and DTP, when necessary, the following step included the detailed examination of the source material, usually in Spanish and, depending on the purpose of the content, the file format changed. If they were translations for labels, the file was a simple excel or word document that did not need to be modified.

On the other hand, when translations were aimed at catalogues or website, the files were two and comprised two different layouts and contents. The first was one was characterized by the complete text in Spanish to be used as a template, while the other one, called "Pseudo", had no details or images, and only showed with strange characters or English words to make it clear what had to be translated into the target languages and what had to remain in English:

Source: *Secretos del Agua* (2021)

The files were at this point ready to be kicked-off on the internal platform PD and thus create a new submission, going through the same process as *Body & Fit*, the only difference being that the linguists selected and approved by *Secretos del Agua* were freelancers and external to TransPerfect.

Additionally, the order of translations vary depending on the source language. Generally, the first step consisted of translating Spanish content into English, French, Portuguese and Chinese, after which, from the English translation the texts were translated into German, Danish, Norwegian, Polish and Swedish. Here, the Scandinavian languages gave rise to a unique language combination called Nordics, specifically requested by the client but commonly used in the Cosmetic industry to save space on the package label (The Sandberg team, 2018). In this case, the translation process was divided into two phases: the first consisted of translating the content into Danish, Swedish and Norwegian with native linguists, while in the second phase, a linguist capable of understanding the three languages assembles the three translations together into a Nordic mix by separating with slash "/" words unique to each language.

Once translations were provided and the submission was completed, the file could be sent to DTP, which had to implement the text of the target languages in the pseudo file sent by the client, giving rise to the final delivery. The LQA and FE phases prior to handing over the project to *Secretos del Agua* were, once again, essential to ensure that a high-quality project that met the client's expectations was delivered. When images were not included in the project plan, the final delivery's file was nothing more than a multilingual file with all the required languages.

However, the closing phase of the project is not always as simple as submitting a file through email to deliver a translation assignment. Sometimes, it is needed to perform a last check

before delivery, double-check that all instructions were followed, distribute the project using a different medium, rename the target files, distribute to persons other than the original requestor, and so on. Furthermore, the submission of the target files does not always imply that the project is complete because the customer may provide comments, remarks, some changes in product lines and products, or archiving may be required after a period of time. In addition, although I did not deal with it personally, this step includes, at the end of the month, invoicing, and profit calculation.

In other words, as a project manager, a translator, or any other project participant, each stage of a translation project must be properly handled to avoid risks and ensure success. A customer relationship, and in extreme situations, the entire business, might be jeopardized if one or more of those factors are overlooked.

4.4 Final considerations

As can be seen, there are a lot of steps and departments involved in the publication of content by an internationally renowned brand who invested in TransPerfect to reach as many people as possible all over the world through social and non-social networks. Regardless of the means, behind the final result, which is the publicly visible part, there is a lot of teamwork, coordination and collaboration between people of different origins and cultures.

During these months, in both of my teams, composed by six people for *Body & Fit* – since it included internal copywriters and project managers – and just one other person for *Secretos del Agua*, I always dealt with colleagues that, due to their different nationalities and native languages, led to a successful intercultural communication and cross-cultural management. From this perspective, it was interesting seeing that cultural diversity is a driver force for creativity since I have witnessed some episodes where these two elements merged.

To illustrate, when I was taking care of *Body & Fit* there were occasions where the source file presented some ambiguous part in English, open to multiple interpretations. To remove any doubt, the Dutch, French and German copywriters discussed possible meanings of the text, and they had different points of view to adapt them to their respective target languages. In this case, having and comparing more perspectives, helped them to provide clear and consistent translations reflecting the point of view not only of their respective culture, but also of the others implicated to reach as many customers and potential customers as possible both nationally and internationally in order to live up to customers' expectations.

This is a clear example of the importance of analysing eventual assumptions and rather questioning why we have certain ideas or views. This is the key for intercultural dialogue to actually succeed, especially in such contexts where it is inevitable. The first barrier to intercultural communication is removed by doing so, and even by openly discussing them with others.

Furthermore, communicating every day in English without it being the mother tongue of anyone in my team made us all feel like being part of the same whole, as if we all were on the same boat, regardless of the mastery of this language. From the outset, in fact, simple, clear and concise communication has always been promoted, so as not to make those who, like me or the other project managers, who are not language specialists, feel out of place. Workplaces like this can only be stimulating since intercultural competence, along with cross-cultural management, are encouraged and give the opportunity to build positive motivation, social skills and discourage herd mentality since everyone feels they can leave its mark through its diversity.

Not surprisingly, TransPerfect's initiatives to promote the importance of interculturality, and therefore equality in the workplace, include the recent designation of May as Diversity Month designed with the purpose of educating and celebrating cultural diversity and global cooperation in the workplace. As the President and CEO Phil Shawe declared:

> Cultural understanding and inclusiveness are the beating heart of our industry—and ensuring that all employees know they are embraced, are empowered, and have opportunities to grow within TransPerfect is critical to our business and to our identity as a corporation. TransPerfect Diversity Month promises educational and inspirational content from some of the world's foremost experts. We are grateful to both our external presenters and our internal team of organizers for their tireless efforts (TransPerfect, 2021c, para. 5).

Bearing this in mind, it is unavoidable to successfully manage projects across cultures, without empathy, essential for understanding and appreciating people from diverse cultures, whether they are colleagues or customers of the company. Perceiving or appreciating different points of view always promoted within the company, where people are able to put themselves in someone else's shoes, can lead to a positive and bias-free working environment. The Amsterdam office, in fact, promoter of these points, stands out for its

priority of involving anyone, regardless of their position, in tasks, and decision-making. This turned out to be not only a way of empowering and strengthening relationships, but also of bringing its employees on focusing on the fact that there is no different race, gender or language that divides us because the common goal of satisfying customers is shared by anyone and makes everyone involved feel part of something important.

CONCLUSION

This internship meant a lot to me because it was a rewarding and enriching experience that gave me the opportunity to test my limits, understand the environment I want to work in, explore and develop my professional skills, particularly my time-management, problem solving and organisational skills, essential to day-to-day life in the company.

Dealing with different projects increased my sense of responsibility and the feeling that I could really make the difference in such a multicultural and stimulating workplace. The Amsterdam office and its amazing international family helped me to foster team spirit, flexibility and adaptability.

In these months, the good of the company came first because its people believed and invested in me, especially Team Leaders and Project Managers who have devoted some of their valuable time to teach me and spur me on to improve when I doubted my own abilities.

It was not always sunshine and rainbows, sometimes it was tough living abroad with a national lockdown and all COVID-19 related restrictions, but TransPerfect became my shelter. Despite of the fact that the Dutch government stressed on working from home as much as possible, my company made sure that the situation did not affect the internship and its office life making the most of the experience. In addition to giving me the chance to go to the office and meet the rest of the teams, when working from home we organized catch-up calls every week so that our Team Lead could support us with any eventualities in both personal and professional life, and this is not an aspect to be taken for granted.

On the top of this, I can assert that there have been more outcomes than difficulties faced. In fact, the results of which I am most proud are related to the development of multitasking skills, cross-cultural management, spirit of initiative and autonomy, and intercultural communication. Moreover, the fact that, shortly after the beginning of the experience, I was already managing my own projects - always supervised by my supervisor or another more experienced colleague - and facing all the stages of the process without the need to constantly ask for advice or approval, was my greatest satisfaction.

However, sometimes managing different projects was stressful and time-consuming because it could happen to leave one task incomplete to jump into another with a higher priority, or not fully understanding project managers' requests during calls due to external noise or connection problems.

In terms of responsibilities, the tasks performed during the internship always included the ability of managing different projects cross-culturally and intercultural competence. Based on these fundamental characteristics, intrinsic to any well-known international businesses, especially in the language industry, the main duties included:

- carry out translation projects in both fitness and beauty domain;
- negotiate rates and deadlines with freelance translators and QMers;
- prepare project folders and documents for translation and DTP when needed;
- monitor and control project status on PD;
- ensure that deadlines are met;
- paying attention to all stages of the process;
- answer any queries the linguists may have;
- check and double-check that the end product meets the client's requirements.

Above all, it was an adventure and a challenge that I believe I measure up. There were difficult moments and times when I thought I would not be able to keep up with the pace, the overload of information and work I was dealing with. Hopefully, with a lot of dedication, commitment, willpower and the support of all the people around me, physically or from a distance, I immediately felt part of the teams and TransPerfect's big family, and a valued member of it.

Actually, the company decided to hire me and promote me to Project Coordinator. I have never been so proud of my capabilities, and myself. I cannot wait to start this new phase of my life and become a full member of the working world and the beautiful TransPerfect family.

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