

Perception and Reality in Cross-cultural Business Communication :

A Study of Corporate Communication Management (II)

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Perception and Reality in International Business

The most difficult part of international business probably lies in the difference of perceptions between peoples from different cultures as we have so far observed in the Part One of this article. In the field of international trade practice, therefore, there have been various agreements and rules fixed and revised in the past hundred years which have helped avoid this perception gap or misunderstanding between sellers and buyers. However, in the field of international business negotiations not as much attention has been paid yet as in the case of international rules for the interpretation of trade terms. In the field of natural science, too, there has been an established and shared agreement as to the meanings of the

words used by scientists in the world, which helps the scientists in carrying out their research and exchanging their views with their international colleagues. The Halls write in their *Hidden Differences*, "A constant obstacle on the road to understanding, in any culture, as well as between cultures, is the shifting meanings of words. This is due in part to the contextual content of a message. If the shared contextual part is reasonably congruent then the problems are not so great. One of the strengths of modern science is a shared agreement as to the meanings of the words and symbols used by scientists. If this were not so, unified science would not be possible."¹

For many people their own perception is reality, not the facts reported themselves. It is well known that the images on maps often do not reflect the actual shapes and relative sizes of continents and seas. One is surprised to know, when he or she is told, that "Greenland is exaggerated 16 times and appears to be bigger than South America, even though it is only about the size of Mexico. The National Geographic's Van der Grinten projection, which has been used for the past 66 years, shows Alaska blown up to five times its real size, making it appear the rough equivalent of Brazil, which is actually six times as large. Acknowledges Garver (the National Geographic Society's chief cartographer, John Garver Jr.): "The only accurate map is a globe."² I think international business people must try to see a globe, not a map artificially drawn for the cartographer's

1 Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Hidden Differences*, Tokyo, Bungei Shunjuh Co., 1987, p. 27.

2 Bruce Van Voorst, "The New Shape of the World," *Time*, November 1988, p. 57.

sake, when they are requested for a report on a certain fact such as a market condition.

Glen Fisher writes, "To be realistic, then, one must pursue 'reality' in international activities very cautiously. It is fundamental that people, including those on one's own side or an issue, do not ordinarily react to an event or issue on the basis of the facts as might be empirically determined, but on the basis of their images of the facts, on what they think or believe to have happened or to have been at stake. Thus, international relations revolve around an interplay of images."³

Suppose that here is a glass containing water filling one half of it. If this glass is simply observed, it is either a half filled glass or a half emptied glass. Whether it looks filled or emptied a half is quite arbitrary and subjective. When asked to describe what it is, one will state the fact according to images he or she first forms in his or her mind—as Fisher says "on their images of the facts"—describing it as a half filled glass or as a half emptied glass.⁴

From this image formation or observation of the fact, we can draw the following four possible judgments:

Positive:

1. We already have filled one half of the glass. There is only

³ Glen Fisher, *Mindsets: The Role of Culture and Perception in International Relations*, Yarmouth, ME, Intercultural Press, 1988, p. 4.

⁴ Naoki Kameda "Facts, Images and Judgments in Cross-cultural Business Communication." Paper presented at the 50th national convention of the Japan Business English Association, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka, October 28, 1990.

another half left. Let us work harder to fill it up as early as possible.

2. Although we have consumed one half a glass of water, we still have another half left. We believe we can manage with it.

Negative:

3. Although we have worked hard, we have filled the glass only a half. We still have a long way to go before we fill it up.
4. We already have consumed one half a glass of water. There is only another half left. We feel helpless with it.

These possible judgments on the glass half filled or half emptied, either positive or negative, could be likened to, for example, the financial condition of a business or market situation for a certain product at a certain given time. For accurate observation of the company's financial standing or the market situation, the facts of the past, the present, and future expectations are equally important because everything changes with time.⁵

Here is a good example of different perspectives. In their extensive research study on attitudes towards information and perspectives regarding information acquisition, processing, and storage held by Japanese and American senior managers, Sullivan and Nonaka revealed Japanese seniors perceived their business environment to be more

5. Naoki Kameda, Facts, Images and Judgments in Cross-cultural Business Communication, *The Japan Business English Association Annual Studies*, Vol. 50, 1991, p. 87.

uncertain than American senior managers; while Japanese managers perceive their business environment as problems, American managers take a similar environment as opportunities.⁶

We human beings have a tendency to judge the whole by a part—to assume that the part is the whole. In order to report certain fact as accurately as possible one must know that facts are only some parts of an entity-process that exists in physical reality. Fact statements attempt to translate only some aspects of the physical world into a language. One cannot expect to translate all the aspects. Neither can we be perfectly objective when we translate into our language. Images formed and perceptions acquired through experience highly influence our statement of facts.

Once the company president of a New York-based shoe company sent a salesman to a country in West Africa to check if they could sell their shoes in that country. The salesman came back after he conducted extensive market research and reported to the president, in a somewhat discouraged manner, saying the country has no market for their shoes because no one wears shoes. Pondering if it was really so, the president sent a second salesman to that country again. This young and energetic man came back and said in excitement, "Mr. President, terrific! The country is really a fantastic market. We can sell millions of our shoes down there. It will be definitely our best market, because no one wears shoes."

This joke shows a good example of the values of observation and

6 Jeremiah J. Sullivan and Ikujiro Nonaka, The Application of Organizational Learning Theory to Japanese and American Management, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 17, 1986, pp. 127-148.

judgment and how arbitrary the relationship between observation and judgment is. There was an actual success story quite similar to this joke, which is rather a famous story. Akio Morita, Chairman of Sony Corporation, wrote in his *Made in Japan* as follows: "The introduction of this proud achievement was tinged with disappointment that our first transistorized radio was not very first one on the market. An American company called Regency, supported by Texas Instruments, and using TI transistors, put out a radio with the Regency brand name a few months before ours, but the company gave up without putting much effort into marketing it. As the first in the field, they might have capitalized on their position and created a tremendous market for their product, as we did. But they apparently judged mistakenly that there was no future in this business and gave it up.⁷" That "they apparently judged mistakenly..." is nothing but a misperception of a given market, just as the one illustrated in the joke on shoes for an African country.

Perceptual Consideration

For successful business communication across nations and cultures one must have perceptual consideration for other people. It is important for every international business person who deals with people from different cultures to have this type of consideration as a talent or ability.

7 Akio Morita, *Made in Japan*, Glasgow, William Collins Sons & Co., 1986, p. 71.

Nobuo Satoh writes in reference to viewing a coin that "You can say that 'consideration' is essential. But, it is not appropriate to think that 'consideration' is only emotional. What is required here is consideration more perceptual than emotional. That is to say consideration as an ability to visualize how things would look like if you put yourself into another's shoes and look at the things from another's point of view."⁸ He further continued that "The difference of viewpoints not only exists between individuals. People as a group look at things differently from one cultural sphere to another. There is a group gap of perception or ways of looking at things. Each individual, and each individual culture, too, is apt to look at things tacitly only from a viewpoint familiar to them, and is liable to think that its own viewpoint alone is standard."⁹

Being now familiar with the story of a hundred yen coin and its perspective, you may easily understand the following story of perceptual consideration, trying to see the world not from your own place but from your counterpart's place: "One day Taro and Jiro went to climb a mountain. Taro fell into a hole on their way. Jiro tried to help Taro, but he could do nothing alone. He went down to call for help. 'Help! Taro has fallen into a *high* hole.' A few hours later Taro was rescued. Jiro's mother said, 'Jiro, a hole is *deep*. No one would say *a high hole*.' 'No, mother,' Jiro said. 'It's a *high* hole because it was so high that Taro was unable to reach the top though he tried hard."¹⁰

8 Nobuo Satoh, *Retorikku No Kigou-ron* [Semiotics of Rhetoric], Tokyo, Kohdansha Co., 1993, p. 56.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), December 7, 1989, p. 7.

When communicating across nations and cultures, therefore, we should assume the receiver of our message may have different images of the fact we report. And, if so, we should expand a message by giving additional information and give him or her what we think he or she should know, thereby making what we know what he or she also knows. The following two sentences cannot convey what the sender of the messages intended to tell the receiver of his or her messages:

1. He stands six feet three.
2. He earns US\$50,000 annually.

There is a possibility that the true meanings of these two messages, that he is tall and he earns a lot, cannot be conveyed to the receiver if he or she lives in a different cultural sphere where people have different measuring systems or monetary value. When converted into Yen by the prevailing exchange rate, US\$50,000 nearly equals ¥5,000,000, which now falls into mid-low annual income bracket in Japan.

When, therefore, you think that your counterpart does not have the same judgment criteria and necessary information as yours, (1) you should give sufficient additional information to him or her, or (2) add your own judgment and viewpoints to the original messages as follows:

- (1) The male's average height in this country is six feet.

This amount falls into the high income bracket in this area.

(2) He stands six feet three. He is tall in our society.

He earns US\$50,000 annually. He earns a lot for his age. 11

Here is a good passage telling us the importance of learning a foreign culture for ideal communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. "I recall the story of Mama Mouse, who was introducing her offspring to the ways of the world when they were confronted by a cat. Mama immediately began barking like a dog, and the cat turned tail and ran off. 'That shows the importance of learning a second language.' But just knowing dog language would not have saved Mama and baby Mouse. It was the cultural application of the language—that is, knowing that the cat would be intimidated by a dog—that saved the day. Good communication can not be ensured merely by the understanding of different languages, but must also incorporate knowledge of cultural values and norms to truly be interpreted in the correct context."¹²

When communicating with people from different cultures, one must try to consider perceptually that there must be some differences in perceiving reality and also try to look at things differently from his or her usual way of looking at things. If one would try, he or she will become able to write such a sentence full of empathy as "...the high school textbooks are scheduled to go into use next April, *when the school year begins.*" The writer of this article may or may not

11 Naoki Kameda and Yasutaka Yamamoto, *Saishin Bijinesu Eigo Wo Kaku Kotsu* [Techniques of Writing Business English], Tokyo, Kenkyusha Publishing Co., 1991, pp. 10-13.

12 F. Okuno, M. Kohga and D.S. Hirokawa, *Eigo Supiichi Manyuaru+CD* [A Guide to Effective Public Speaking], Tokyo, Asahi Press, 1990, p. 508.

know that April enrollment is practiced only in nine countries, including Japan, while a new school year begins in September in ninety-two centering countries on Western nations.¹³ At any rate, he put himself in the shoes of his readers from other countries in which the school year does not always start in April. Additional information or expansion of your message is thus important.

Communication Management through Perceptual Consideration

We tend to assume that if we send a message with our own ideas or data, the receiver will definitely understand it just as we intended. But, the matter is not so simple, particularly when sending the message across nations and cultures. One other example may suffice to drive home the importance of being perceptually considerate of others and trying to look at things differently from your own way when communicating across national and cultural boundaries. This example comes from my own experience as an international business executive a decade ago:

One day we received a letter from a German speaker manufacturer asking us for a visit of our export manager to their head office in

¹³ The editor of *Asahi Shimbun* in charge of its *Vox Populi Vox Dei* wrote in the column, "A new school year begins in September in the United States. Ninety-two countries centering on Western nations have the same system, according to statistics compiled by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Students are enrolled in October in 29 countries. April enrollment is practiced in nine countries, including Japan." *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), April 1, 1992, p. 1.

Obrigheim. Having no idea where the town is located, we sent them back a telex saying our export manager would come during his planned visit to Europe soon and asking where the nearest international airport to Obrigheim is and how to reach the place. We received a short simple reply the next day, which read "THE AIRPORT NEAR TO OUR TOWN IS FRANKFURT." It sounded like the sender was offended because we didn't know the name of their place.

Since I had a close friend in Frankfurt, a successful American businessman who owns a big company there, I sent a telex asking him where Obrigheim is and how our export manager could reach the town. This friend of mine, an experienced international businessman, replied to me immediately and wrote, "NICK, THERE ARE TWO TOWNS NAMED OBRIGHEIM. PLEASE GIVE ME THE POSTAL CODE OF THE TOWN YOU WANT. WHEN WE GET THE CODE, WE CAN GIVE YOU THE OTHER INFO YOU NEED." He sent me a very kind telex again after I informed him of the postal code. He listed the times required for driving, taking a train or a bus for all possible routes to the Obrigheim and recommended our manager drive a rent-a-car as the best transportation.

The first man from the German speaker maker must have presupposed that an ordinary Japanese had the same knowledge on German geography as he did; actually, however, we did not have the knowledge at all. We didn't know there are two Obrigheims nor that it is located 2 hours and a half by train or 1 hour and a quarter by car away from Frankfurt. There is no guarantee that the receiver of

your message knows the things communicated as you do. It is quite possible that he or she probably knows nearly nothing about what you intended to say. You should, therefore, avoid sending such a message to your overseas customer as "We wish to invite you to our new plant in Misawa after our meeting in Tokyo. Please schedule your Japan visit accordingly." This is a very unkind and egocentric message. There is no guarantee that your customer knows the location of Misawa, the direction and the distance from Tokyo, the time required for transportation, etc. Without such information given he cannot schedule his trip to Japan properly. The word Misawa has no meaning of its own for a person who doesn't know what and where Misawa is.

I have had similar experiences when I was invited to the factories or the subsidiaries in Thessaloniki in Greece or in Akure in Nigeria. As the receiver of this type of message, I was perplexed to know I had to stay overnight once I arrived in the places. Your own mileage calculation according to your own country's standard does not work at all. 500 kms. for Japan and its bullet train is not same as 500 kms. for Greece and Nigeria and their highways.

So again, we must presuppose that the receiver of our message may have no proper knowledge of the fact we intend to inform. We must give as much information as possible, or supporting facts, to have the receiver of our message get an accurate picture of the place or the fact to be reported so that we can make the saying "Message sent is the message received" come true.

It is true that a company operating its business in the international arena should establish an effective communication management system in line with the progress of the hard aspect of multi media networking systems all over the world. However, the company should realize that formal training in language and culture will be required prior to the establishment of the communication management system. If the company employees are provided sufficient language and cultural training, including how to be considerate of others perceptually and look at things differently from their own or the usual way, they will naturally pay attention to their message sending in order to avoid possible misperception or miscommunication.

After being given such training, the employees will easily understand why the following message is not permissible: "Please send me a photo and a brief biography. We need this very soon, as the printer is working on a deadline for the brochure." Instead, they will be able to write, "Please send me a 5"×7" glossy portrait and a fifty- to sixty-word biography by noon on Friday, April 5."¹⁴ Also, they will be able to give additional information to their messages if and when they think the given information alone is not sufficient for the receiver to comprehend the whole message. Such employees will stop to think if the JIS or Japan size indications are truly international when they are tempted to use the paper sizes such as A or B, both followed

14. The author, E. H. Rockey, introduced these two memos in his *Communicating in Organizations*, Cambridge, Winthrop Publishers, 1977, pp. 4-6. He wrote, "Probably the sender had a certain size and type of photo in mind, and a particular length for the biography and a specific date for the printer's deadline; however, I did not know any of those details after reading the memo.... After telephoning the author of the memo, I discovered that what he 'meant' was (then he gave the second memo)."

by numbers, which are available only in Japan. They will instead use figures which are internationally comprehensible. The message to be encoded by them will read something like "Printed on B4-size (26-by 36.5-centimeter) paper, the journal has 2 pages and is put out two times a month for the local employees." Some other employees will probably change the centimeter to the inch if the message is for their American readers.

If this type of language and cultural training, particularly emphasizing the perceptual consideration, is well managed within a company, the probability of truly receiver-oriented messages will be increased. Employees with such a training background will not hastily send out such a fax to their customers in Europe as "We are sending you the requested samples this afternoon." Instead, they will wait for a few hours till the samples are picked up by DHL or any other international courier service agent. Then, they will send the following fax or e-mail: "DHL has just picked up the requested samples for their first flight to Hamburg this evening." There is 8 hours time difference between Japan and Europe. They know their customer in Hamburg is still sleeping while they wait and see to it that the samples are actually picked up. And, this information is expressed in the present perfect tense, which is the one the customer really wants, not the one which is still not reliable because of its progressive tense. One can call the situation of the present perfect tense "reality" with assurance because something has been already done, but cannot define that of progressive form "reality" because it is still subject to change. No one knows if something will happen which may block the sample

dispatch that afternoon.

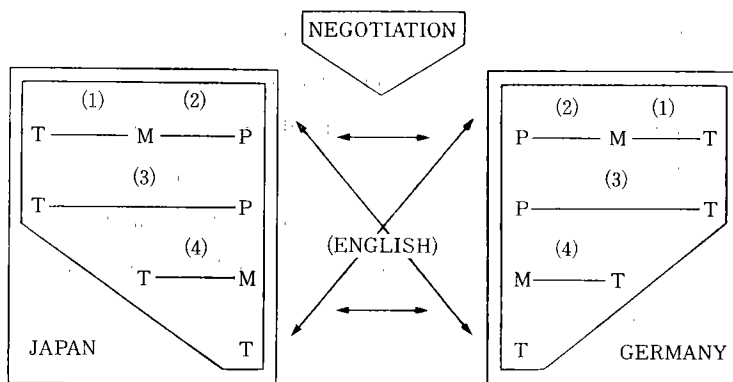
Corporate Communication Management and Its Control System

I believe the aforementioned language and cultural training for employees should be formed as a solid base for corporate communication management. In other words, corporate communication management cannot be maintained if employees are not provided adequate training not only in a foreign language but also in the rules for understanding peoples and cultures overseas. Good business communication can not be ensured merely by learning different languages, but must also incorporate knowledge of cultural values and norms.

Based on this frame of mind a company engaged in international business should pursue the establishment of a communication control system as one of the company's major in-house control systems. It will definitely enhance the company's power for negotiations in international business dealings. The following are some ideas which can be applied into such a control system:

1. Rules for reports and translations to increase meaning transmission, not just word transmission.
2. Definitions of key words used within group companies and with customers.
3. Expansion of defined terms and words in contracts and agreements.

When we carefully look into the types of international business negotiations, we can see the following channels of communication :



The above channel pattern could represent a form of business negotiation in general with its participants. Just for convenience's sake, I have made it for negotiation between a Japanese company and a German company using English for their communication. T stands for Top Management, M for Manager and P for Person in charge. Each figure suggests a line or a channel of communication (instructions and reports and vice versa). This pattern also shows various ways of possible contacts between the two companies. For example, the German company's president may thus talk to and negotiate with the person in charge of the Japanese company direct and vice versa.

1. Rules for reports and translations

In order to minimize any possible miscommunication in each channel, the ideal system is that the language for negotiation, i.e., English should be used for channels (1) through (4). These days many leading

companies in Japan have started introducing a system similar to this ideal pattern. If a translation of some part or all of the details is required, such a translation should be controlled at the translation department and not by business persons whose main duty is to do business and not to spend hours on translations work.

If a top management person can not speak or write English, though can read it perfectly as many Japanese executives do, the following system should be taken. To make the explanation simple, we will neglect the Japan side's M and his or her possible roles before and during the negotiation.

- (1) T instructs P in Japanese and they discuss in Japanese.
- (2) P paraphrases what he is supposed to say at the negotiating table into English and has T check if the terminology, content, tone, phrasing, etc. are acceptable to him. Correction, if any, should be made at this stage.
- (3) P negotiates with T, M, and P(s) from Germany in English.
- (4) P has the German company make out a minute and exchanges copies after the negotiation is over.
- (5) P submits a copy of the minute to T.

Making out a minute, or a memorandum of discussion or a confirmation of discussion, whatever it may be called, should be practiced as a routine even for a small meeting.

2. Definitions of words

Many multi-national companies, including even some Japanese com-

panies, have adopted an unwritten law that each subsidiary must use English for its communications with other subsidiaries and with headquarters. However, specifying a language for their inter- and intra-company communications is not sufficient for ideal communication management. As we have so far observed the invisible wall of communication barriers is rather high across nations and cultures, though unifying the language for business. Interpretations of figures and numbers, nouns, and adjectives and adverbs are all much influenced by cultures. These items, though at a glance they seem neutral and colorless or harmless, can be hurdles for cross-cultural communication.

I have already introduced some problems caused by different interpretations of figures and numbers regarding a man's height, the amount of one's annual income, and also nouns such as Indonesian "tomorrow." Therefore, I will briefly introduce here some cases of adjectives and adverbs causing communication breakdowns. Adjectives and adverbs are subjective, and are hurdles for cross-cultural business communication. When one refers to a spacious room, how spacious is the room actually? An apartment of 130 square meters may sound like a spacious flat for an ordinary Japanese. But, does that apartment seem or sound spacious to an American? What about an old company with a lot of employees? The meaning of the word "old" for Greek people with many thousands years of history as a nation state must be different from what American people with their two hundred years national history may perceive. "A small piece of paper," "brief description," "heavily advertising," etc. may all cause major confusion on the side of the message receiver. One should try to state a fact with

figures, and try to give additional information as much as possible when he or she is tempted to use adjectives and adverbs such as large, spacious, old, perfectly, heavily, etc.¹⁵

In the world of international trade practice, as I have mentioned earlier in this article, there have been many rules and customs for the interpretation of trade terms. In these rules and customs, too, adjectives and adverbs are to be avoided. One such rule and custom internationally well-known stipulates, "Expressions such as 'prompt,' 'immediately,' 'as soon as possible' and the like should not be used."¹⁶ I know, however, that some adjectives and adverbs can not be replaced by figures. But, you can at least have agreed with your counterpart to the definition, either qualitatively or quantitatively, which both of you refer to when you would use a certain adjective or adverb. If

15 Figures are less likely to be misunderstood, specifically avoiding vague terms. The given three samples could be modified to "a B5-size (18.25- by 25.75-centimeter) paper," "a brief (120 characters maximum) description," and "advertising on TV three times a week." Naoki Kameda, *Eibun Bijinesu Repohto No KaKikata* [How to Write Business Report in English], Tokyo, Nihon Keizai Shimbun Publishing, 1992, pp. 74-75.

16 *Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credits, 1993 Revision, ICC Publication No. 500.*, Paris, International Chamber of Commerce, 1993. The noted part is from the Article 46, Item b, and followed by a sentence which reads "If they are used, banks will disregard them." This is rather a big change from its previous 1983 Revision, reading "If they are used, banks will interpret them as a stipulation that shipment is to be made within thirty days from the date of issuance of the credit by the issuing bank." When these three expressions were first incorporated into its 1962 Revision, this time allowance was "within thirty days from the date on the advice of the credit to the beneficiary by the issuing bank or by an advising bank, as the case may be." This stipulation was left unchanged in its 1974 Revision. The interpretation of even trade terms changes with time. It should be changed from time to time in accordance with the development of trade, transportation, communications, etc. The meaning of words, too, has been changing with time.

this kind of agreement had existed, I could have avoided a bypassing problem at a restaurant in London years ago.

At the London Hilton's steak house one summer evening I ordered my favorite "medium rare" when a waiter asked me, "How would you like to have your steak cooked, sir?" The delicious looking sirloin came. I sunk a knife into it and found it was not "medium rare" but well-done. I called for the chef. He came and said with a smile on his face, "Well, sir, this is the way we cook as medium rare here." He had no ears for my complaint that it shouldn't be called or rated as medium rare from the Paris standard of juicy filet mignon or the Tokyo standard of super-top Kobe beef.

There are five different types of cooked beefsteak; rare, medium rare, medium, medium well-done, and well-done. But, as you can see from my poor experience, this classification is very subjective and arbitrary. Unfortunately, there is no such a rule for steak cooking as "International Rules for the Interpretation of Trade Terms," commonly called "INCOTERMS,"¹⁷ adopted by the International Chamber of Commerce. We usually just leave the matter to a chef whose sense is unknown to us. A chance customer is not allowed to say, "Cook it for two and a half minutes and turn it over and broil it

17 "Incoterms" is a set of international rules published by the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris, for deciding the exact meaning of the chief terms (expressions) used in foreign trade contracts, such as f.o.b. The object is to avoid disagreements caused by difference in trading practice in various countries by describing clearly the duties of the parties. Merchants using these rules need only state that their contracts are governed by the provisions of Incoterms." *Longman Dictionary of Business English*, s.v. "Incoterms." After it was first published in 1936, the "Incoterms" has been revised with additions in 1953, 1967, 1976, 1980 and the latest revision was published in 1990.

for another two minutes.” By the way, some later years after the incident in London I was fascinated to find this definition in a menu at a small rural Japanese restaurant. It said as follows:

Indicate how you like your steak:

Rare : Broiling the surface quickly, almost raw inside

Medium rare : The real charm of tasting beefsteak

Medium : Being cooked slightly enough inside

Well-done : Being done well enough inside

It also added that the usual way of tasting beefsteak is medium rare, which must be the personal taste of the owner and chef of the restaurant. This definition rule is interesting because while the three are objectively described (although rather vaguely), medium rare alone is explained with the owner's personal bias.

I suggest that a company should make and keep a file of definitions of words used for their internal as well as external communications and record in the file a word or an expression whenever a problem, even a small one, is caused by that word or expression. But, of course, the definitions to be given should not be the type of “medium rare” in the menu of the Japanese rural restaurant, charming but subjective and egocentric. They should be as objective as possible and acceptable for all relevant parties. When they start business with a new group company or a new customer in that region, they should first exchange the definitions of words which are apt to cause a communication problem.

3. Expansion of defined words in contracts

In many contract forms used for international business such as Sales Contract, Distributorship Agreement, etc. the first few articles or provisions are for interpretations of the terms such as Product, Exclusivity, Territory, etc.

I think a company should enlarge this part of the contract as much as possible and include some other terms and words both parties will use in their daily business communications. Because of the world wide tendency toward the deregulation of government control on international trade recently, those who have no or just a slight knowledge of international trade practice have started joining in international business. "Common sense" for international traders is not common sense for these new comers. A company may need to add some more interpretations into its contracts or agreements with its new customers, such as those for Delivery, Lead Times, D/A, D/P, etc. It may reduce miscommunication problem by stipulating the definitions of key terms which would be used in its trade correspondence with overseas subsidiary(ies) and/or customers. Serious problems could be resolved because of this type of definition of trade terms. When even the hint of misunderstanding exists, the company's communicator(s) should define terms for each other.

Also, an expression having totally different meanings though defined similarly in the dictionary (such as "more than") should be included in these interpretation articles for smoother business communication across national boundaries. When one of the co-authors of an article of mine published a few years ago was an MBA candidate at an

American university, he was penalized by an American professor over the "more than X" bypassing problem. The professor could not accept the fact that in Japan "more than X" very often includes X. My American co-author then wrote in the article, "He (the American professor) was a bit like the British philosopher in the middle ages who could not understand why the French persisted in saying *chien* when everyone knew the word was "dog."¹⁸

Conclusion

I have tried to introduce some ideas for the betterment of communication management in this series of articles. However, there are many other systems than those I proposed in the articles. I will continue my own study on this topic, which I believe is worthy of further research.

As we have so far observed, in many cases corporate communication of international companies seems not properly controlled. In order to improve the situation, we will need to enrich corporate communication with the introduction of in-house training of language and culture and the completion of communication control systems. Only a part of it has been introduced. Although Japan has become a leading economic giant, education has in this respect lagged behind. English ability is crucial in the office environment and for business communication when a company is in its internationalization process or has been already active in the international market. Companies'

18 Jerry Sullivan, Naoki Kameda, and Tatsuo Nobu, Bypassing in Managerial Communication, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1991, p. 72.

pursuit in this respect will surely lead to the evolution of the "soft" side of corporate business communication, which will in turn contribute to the companies' sound and vital management in this new world of a global economy.