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CQ EXPLORATION IN THE US WITH FOCUS IN BUSINESS

Martin Veselý

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University of West Bohemia

Faculty of Education

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Jméno a příjmení: Martin VESELÝ
Osobní číslo: P16B0384P
Adresa: Rooseveltova 10, Plzeň – Vnitřní Město, 30100 Plzeň 1, Česká republika
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                      Katedra anglického jazyka

Zásady pro vypracování:

1. Pravidelné konzultace s vedoucím bakalářské práce.
2. Shromáždění a prostudování odborné literatury týkající se tématu.
3. Příprava podkladů pro výzkum.
4. Provedení výzkumu.
5. Shromáždění dat a jejich analýza.
6. Vyvození závěrů výzkumu a jejich využití v praxi.
7. Sepsání diplomové práce při dodržení formálních aspektů.

Seznam doporučené literatury:

LIVERMORE, David A. Customs of the world: using cultural intelligence to adapt, wherever you are. Chantilly, VA: Teaching Co., [2013]. Great courses (Compact disc). ISBN 9781598039771.

MEYER, Erin. The culture map: breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business. New York: Public Affairs, [2014]. ISBN 978-1-61039-250-1.

LIVERMORE, David A. Leading with cultural intelligence: the new secret to success. New York: American Management Association, c2010. ISBN 0814414877.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

V Plzni dne 22. dubna 2019   ……………………….

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Abstract

This thesis is based on my personal cultural exploration in the United States of America and works by David Livermore and Erin Meyer. It examines the notion of culture with its characteristics and measuring tools, cultural intelligence and a guide how to develop and improve it, subsequently it also pays special attention to cultural characteristics of the US and compares local culture to the Czech one.

The main purpose of this thesis is to provide the readers with a guide that includes information applicable when working in the United States of America and give general advice how to adapt one's behaviour according to the country they are visiting and become more successful and efficient in intercultural interactions, supported by techniques developed by David Livermore. While the main focus of this thesis is exploring cultural intelligence in the United States, I believe the information provided may very well serve as a more free and independent source of knowledge that can be applied in a more general manner as well.

CQ Exploration in the United States with Focus in Business

Introduction

In recent years, travelling has become immensely popular. From the huge number of travel agencies with their wide range of offers for exotics trips, affordable airline tickets to exchange student programs, internships or voluntary work, almost everyone who is interested has a chance to cross the borders of his or her own country and experience the world. The reasons why we decide to travel are myriad and it is up to our personal preference which ones motivate us the most, be it sightseeing, foreign cuisine or just relaxing on sunny beaches, happily separated from everyday problems. For me, the most interesting part of travelling is diving deep into the local culture and understanding why the locals do things the way they do, what their motivations are and how they live their lives in general.

When it comes to the USA, opinions of other people are more different than possibly on any other country on this planet. From strictly saying that Americans with all their hamburgers and tasteless beer do not have the slightest idea how to live their lives to considering the US a country where everyone has a chance to make his dreams come true, I felt that if one does not actually visit the United States on his own, it is close to impossible for him to make up a relevant and valuable opinion on it. That being said, I came to a conclusion that if I ever wanted to understand the American way of thinking without any distortion or bias from media and other people, the only way was to travel there and try to obtain as much personal experience as I possibly could. The US has always been very appealing to me because it currently represents a country with such a controversial reputation that I simply had to see it for myself. That is why I decided to embark on a journey to the United States of America to finally understand what all the fuss was about.

These days, it is not so easy to gain a working visa in the country, since the current US immigration policy is rather restrictive and the country is not as open as it once was so more or less the only remaining way to enter the US with the intention to work there is through Work and Travel programme. This programme matches US host employers with English-speaking international students for short-term, seasonal jobs across the United States and it allows them to spend up to four months working in the country and use the earned money for travelling. It enables international students not only to gain valuable working experience abroad but also to increase their knowledge of American culture with all its diversity. Substantial part of this diploma work will be based on personal observations and experiences made by me and students coming from other European countries as well. I will pick countries with similar cultural specifics to the Czech ones so the whole body of the thesis remains relatable for Czech readers. These observations will root from service sector in which most of the international students in Work and Travel programme work.

The main aim of this work is to provide the reader with valuable information about cultural intelligence, the US culture and its characteristics and relate them to the Czech one through analysis of real-life situations. The general terminology and methodology will be explained in the first chapter of the thesis which is mostly theoretical and will serve as a solid ground for further analysis in the second part which is mostly practical with references to the first one. Firstly, we will focus on what cultural intelligence is and how to develop and use it. As mentioned before, the second part then contains descriptions of real-life situations that will be followed by analysis using the theory provided in the first chapter. After the analysis is finished, I will provide the reader with hypothetical alterations and advice that will possibly generate more positive outcomes in future intercultural interactions. In the final part of the thesis, we will

review these hypothetical alterations and present a simple yet useful guide to avoid making misinterpretations and mistakes while working in the United States.

Major part of this thesis is based on books by American authors David Livermore and Erin Meyer who belong to the pioneers of cultural sciences. Their works are mostly based on the theory of cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede from which they derive to a large extent. The theory is meant to serve as framework for cross-cultural communication.

When it comes to the cultural intelligence methodology, we need to be aware of the fact that it represents a particular set of universal skills rather than a step-by-step guide how to win every single intercultural interaction. While there certainly are personality factors involved, cultural differences play a major role in intercultural communication and therefore there is an increasing need for culturally aware people. According to Livermore (2010), "it is not possible to master all the norms and values of each culture, but in order to be effective some adaptation in approach and strategy is needed." Considering the number of cultures with all their complexity, we have to realise that obtaining an extensive knowledge of all cultures would be an inefficient way to go. It is much wiser to dedicate our endeavour to the particular culture we are encountering using techniques universally applicable to any intercultural interactions.

All in all, the main points of this thesis can be summarised to 2 major issues:
- What is the CQ and how do we develop it?
- What are the effective ways to improve our intercultural communication in the business environment of the USA?

CQ Characteristics and Components

In short, the abbreviation CQ stands for *cultural intelligence*. Even though intelligence itself has been defined in many ways, we are going to work with definition taken from AllWords Dictionary (2006) which goes as follows:

"Intelligence is the ability to use memory, knowledge, experience, understanding, reasoning, imagination and judgement in order to solve problems and adapt to new situations."
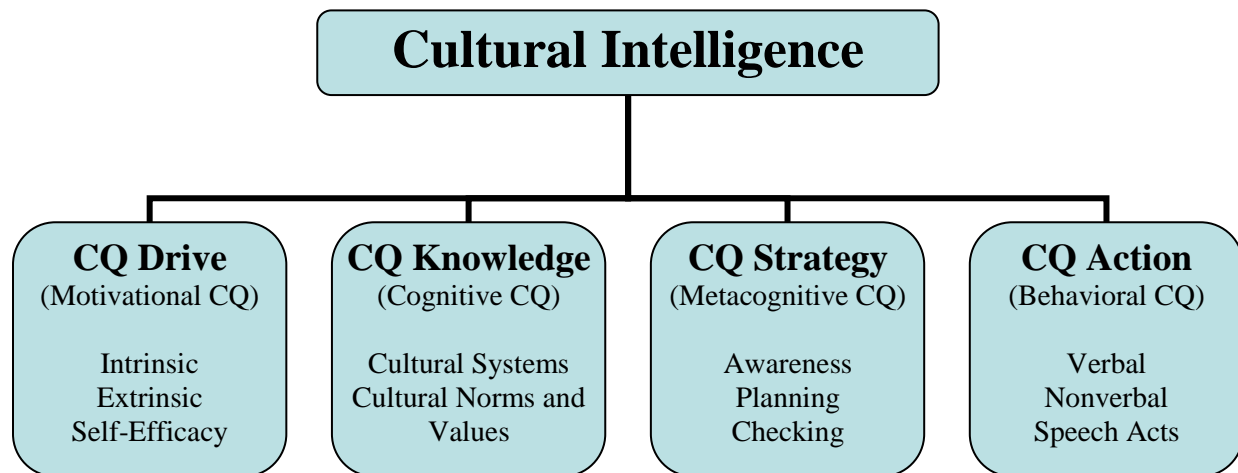
"Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the capability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse situations," (https://culturalq.com/what-is-cq/). In other words, it represents our ability to adapt in an environment that is not culturally close or familiar to ours. Unlike well-known IQ that is considered to be rather constant and unchanging, CQ is highly flexible and therefore can be developed in any stage in life. In this part of the thesis, we are going to focus on theoretical approach, what the methodology of CQ is and how to further develop it.

The essential characteristics of CQ

According to Livermore (2008) these are:

- A four-dimensional model

- A four-step cycle

- Different from emotional intelligence

A four-dimensional model. CQ model consists of four parts which, when put together, form the basis of cultural intelligence (Livermore, 2008). There are also subdivisions added to every field as described by Linn Van Dyne and Soon Ang (2008).

Cultural Intelligence

CQ Drive (Motivational CQ)	CQ Knowledge (Cognitive CQ)	CQ Strategy (Metacognitive CQ)	CQ Action (Behavioral CQ)
Intrinsic Extrinsic Self-Efficacy	Cultural Systems Cultural Norms and Values	Awareness Planning Checking	Verbal Nonverbal Speech Acts

Individual CQ components will be described in detail later in the thesis but for now let me substitute each dimension with a wh question:

- What motivates you to learn?

- What do you need to know about the culture you are visiting?

- What do you plan to do?

- What alterations to your behaviour do you adopt?

A four-step cycle. Livermore (2008) states that "acquiring CQ is a step-by-step process starting with CQ Drive, which is the motivation to learn, and finishing with CQ Action, which is the final adjustment of an individual's behaviour according to circumstances in a particular cultural situation." What this means is basically a transition from theoretical approach in the beginning of the process into practical one at its end. When the process is finished, we are to

gather as much feedback as we possibly can, either positive or negative, utilize it to make

necessary adjustments to our behaviour and then the entire cycle can be repeated. By doing this

we ensure constant improvements in our CQ.

Difference between CQ and EQ. We all know that IQ is a measurement of one's

intellectual capabilities. Nevertheless, it describes mainly reasoning ability and is measured

through problem-solving tests. According to Colman and Andrew (2008), "emotional

intelligence is the capability of individuals to recognize their own emotions and those of others,

discern between different feeling and label them appropriately, use emotional information to

guide thinking and behaviour, and adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one's

goals." In short, EQ is our capability to understand the emotions of individuals and it does not

take cultural backgrounds into consideration.

On the other hand, Livermore (2008) states that "cultural intelligence picks up where

emotional intelligence leaves off. Cultural intelligence helps us learn how to work effectively

with people who come from different cultural orientations. It helps ensure effectiveness across

cultural borders." The bottom line is that while EQ enables us to better understand emotions, it

may not work as effectively in intercultural communication where the lack of information may

lead to misunderstanding on both the side of speaker and recipient. It is CQ that extends beyond

the border of pure emotion and takes even cultural aspects into consideration to make

communication as efficient as possible.

Review

  As indicated previously, CQ is a learned ability which is represented by a four-dimensional model that collects our contemporary practical and theoretical knowledge based on cultural studies and utilizes it in real-life situations. As with any other type of intelligence, the individual CQ level varies from person to person but thanks to its rather flexible nature it also can be developed and further improved. Individual dimensions of CQ will be examined in detail in the next part of this chapter.
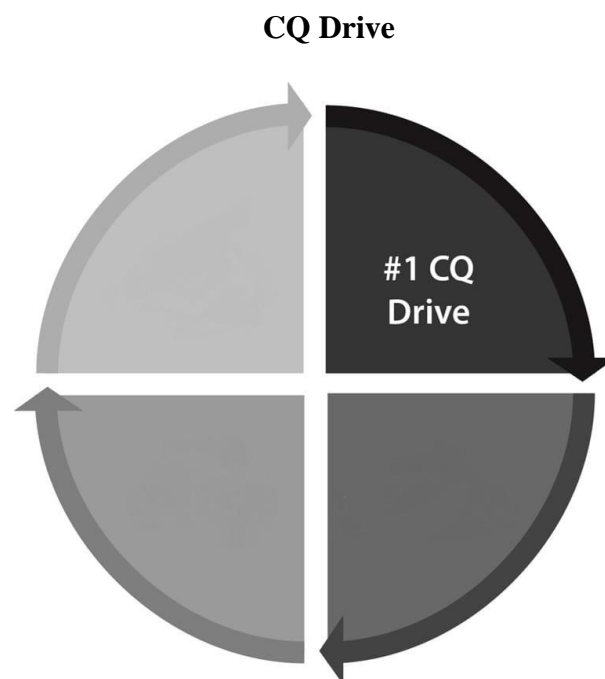
CQ Drive

  Any efficient CQ exploration begins with the first component of the four-dimensional model which is called CQ Drive. It represents the first step in the process of acquiring CQ and incorporates personal interest, motivation and confidence in functioning efficiently across culturally diverse settings (Livermore, 2008). CQ Drive is further divided into 3 subdivisions. These subdivisions were first introduced in research by Ang Soon and Linn Van Dyne (2008)

and then further developed by Livermore (2008). "Motivational CQ is a critical CQ component because it triggers effort and energy directed toward functioning in novel cultural settings" (Ang Soon and Linn Van Dyne, 2008).

<div align="center">CQ Drive wh question: *"What motivates me to learn?"*</div>

How to develop CQ Drive

There is a number of ways helping you along the way to a successful CQ Drive development. Many of them may seem only natural and that is perfectly fine, since our aim is not to create complicated definitions and structures but rather to simplify the theory for practical use.

The main focus in developing CQ drive is the following strategies (Livermore, 2008):

- Honest approach.

- Examining our confidence level.

- Eating and socializing.

Honest approach. Honestly assessing our level of interest in a cross-cultural assignment is an integral part of becoming more culturally intelligent and it is a wise first step in developing CQ Drive. Even though we all have biases or prejudice, it is necessary that we do not act upon them. Whether we enjoy cross-cultural interactions or rather avoid them, we should primarily admit our current attitudes towards intercultural communication, be it positive or negative. For me, being honest with myself was the primary motivation that led to me leaving for the US. I genuinely

wanted to obtain first-hand experience in a country that had been so widely discussed in

sometimes very contradicting manner.

Examining our confidence level. This strategy examines our confidence level when we interact

in a cross-cultural environment. It represents our "perception of the ability that we can influence

events that affect our control over the way these events are experienced," (Bandura, 1994).

It means that in order to develop a healthy CQ Drive we need to believe that we have what it

takes to reach our goal no matter how hard it can sometimes appear.

Eating and socializing. Although this may seem as an obvious one, it is an essential one, too. In

many cultures, eating not only means grabbing something to eat but is also regarded as a kind of

ritual in which people gather together, build trust and friendships. "Eating together gives us a

potential to find common ground and expand our understanding of the culture we encounter,"

(Livermore, 2008). In short, it can serve as a great opportunity to establish a connection with the

natives so never miss out on a tasty meal!

Review

Anytime you visit a new country, try to look for things that you find intriguing or at least

interesting and always look on the bright side of your experience, what are the benefits and how

you can make use of it in the future. Do not focus your energy and attention to thing you do not

like. For instance, I went to the USA with a clear intention to socialize as much as possible even

to the level that I would never reach back home. I had my goals set and I wanted to achieve them

no matter what even when it meant spending long days working myself close to total exhaustion.

If you find yourself struggling, CQ drive provides you with the basic techniques for self-motivation, self-reflection, socializing and connects it with potential outcomes we may benefit from afterwards.
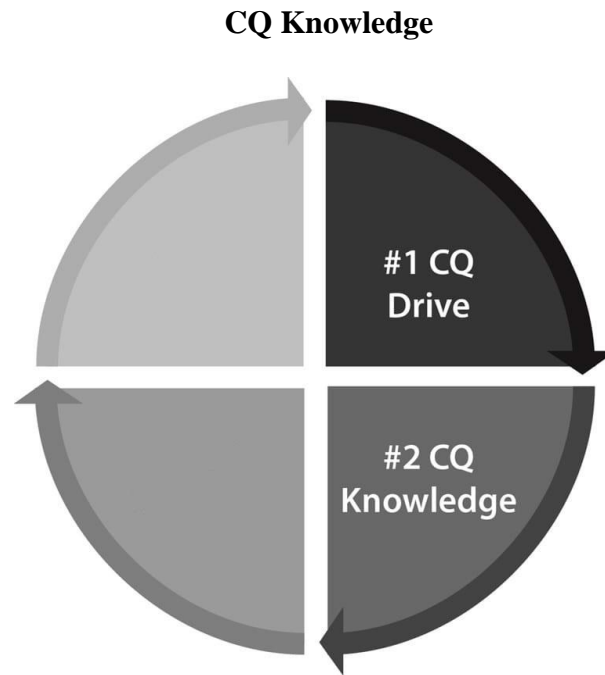
CQ Knowledge

CQ Knowledge is a second step in the four-dimensional cycle. It emphasizes the fact that cross-cultural understanding does not come merely intuitively and highlights the importance of deliberate effort to collect information in order to grow our CQ competence. CQ Knowledge challenges ethnocentrism – that is, seeing and evaluating other people and their culture only through our own cultural standards – and aims for "a more transparent, culturally unbiased view on others" (Livermore, 2008). The subdimensions of CQ Knowledge include knowledge about cultural systems, norms and values (Ang Soon and Linn Van Dyne, 2008).

CQ Knowledge wh question: "*What do I need to know about the culture you are visiting?"*
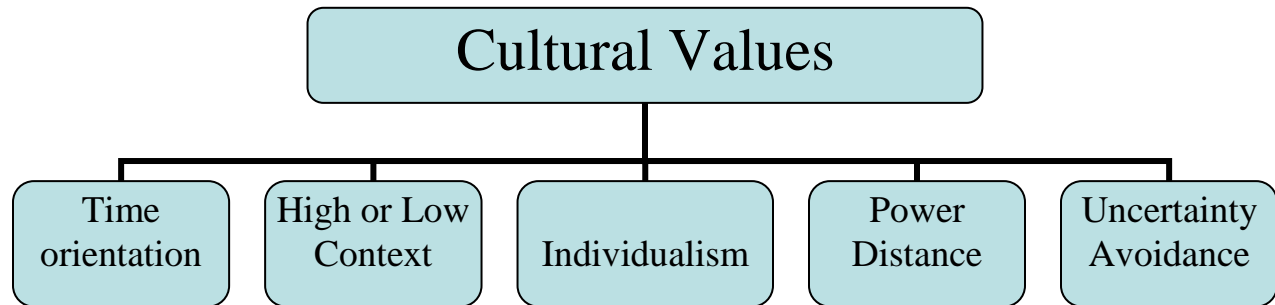
How to develop CQ Knowledge

In order to be able to work on our CQ knowledge effectively, here is a selection of basic techniques for its successful development:

- See culture's role in yourself and others.

- Learn the core cultural values.

See culture's role in yourself and others. According to Livermore (2008), a way to begin growing CQ knowledge is "to see the way culture shapes the way we see, how we think, and what we do. He states that a successful CQ knowledge requires a certain amount of self-reflection and observation of others, highlighting cultural impact in the process. CQ knowledge involves understanding the rules and body language with which members of a particular culture express their ideas, feelings and attitudes." We need to be aware of to what extent our culture shapes our behaviour. The purpose is to become able to decode these expressions and learn how to react accordingly.

Learn the core cultural values. Cultural values are "what get emphasized most when teaching people about intercultural communication" (Livermore, 2008, p. 90). Even though cultural values may only be one of the factors, they are essential in understanding the differences among cultures. Cultural values are measured in up to eight scales, which will be further discussed later in the thesis using real-life scenarios. For now, let me just present you with a short overview of the five scales that are going to form the basics of the second part of this paper based on work of Erin Meyer (2014) and David Livermore (2008). It is important to mention that the total number of scales differs depending on the author. I decided to reduce the number of scales to five that are

generally accepted and used by both authors. In case there are more scales necessary for analysis of real-life scenarios, they will be additionally explained later in the thesis in the practical part.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Cultural Values     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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┌────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌─────────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐
│  Time  │ │High or Low│ │Individualism│ │  Power   │ │Uncertainty │
│orientation│ │ Context │ │             │ │ Distance │ │ Avoidance  │
└────────┘ └──────────┘ └─────────────┘ └──────────┘ └────────────┘
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Time orientation. Explains how different cultures perceive the concept of time. Cultures that were heavily influenced by industrialization tend to be more punctual that culture that do not share the same historical development. "The Western cultures in particular represent very punctual attitude oriented toward productivity and are called **clock oriented**. On the other hand, there are cultures prioritising social relationships and view time punctuality as rather flexible are called **event oriented**," (Livermore, 2008, p. 92). Luckily for us, both Czech and American cultures are more on the clock oriented side, so there should not be any trouble when it comes to scheduling.

time oriented x event oriented

High context and low context. Culture to which we refer to as *low context* ones are those where clear signage are everywhere. Only little is left for assumption and majority of signage is explicit. "High context culture is a culture in which its members share same history

and traditions and a lot of understanding is only implied. Members of these cultures share deeply

rooted models for behaviour and mutual understanding," (Livermore, 2008, p. 93).

high context x low context

Individualism and collectivism. "Members of individualistic cultures are accustomed

to make decisions for themselves. They are committed to it as long as it does not violate the

rights of other individuals. On the other hand, members of collectivist countries emphasize

dedication to the social group, be it in professional, religious or personal one, and expect support

from the group in return," (Meyer, 2014).

individualism x collectivism

Low and high power distance. As Livermore (2008, p. 100) states, "power distance

refers to how far apart leaders and followers feel from each other in social hierarchy." There are

two types of power distance according to Meyer (2014), "in low power distance countries the

subordinates may freely question their managers and are expected to have an impact on decision-

making. In high power distance cultures, power holders are entitled to privileges, the decision-

making process is significantly dependent on them and their views are expected to be followed."

All in all, power distance is a scale that shows to what extent we emphasise social hierarchy,

how we treat people who are socially on higher or lower position than us.

low power distance x high power distance

Low and high uncertainty avoidance. This is the last of the factors that we are going to be using in our analysis of different aspects between the Czech Republic and USA culture. Uncertainty avoidance refers to "the extent to which most people in a culture are at easy with the unknown" (Livermore, 2008, p. 102). It means that in cultures scoring high on uncertainty avoidance scale people have little tolerance for ambiguity and unknown. People coming from these cultures primarily focus on reducing the uncertainty and creating structures that ensure at least some degree of predictability. They usually insist on clear instructions, plans and schedules. On the contrary, people from cultures scoring lower on uncertainty avoidance are comfortable with looser rules, more open-ended expectations and not so firm deadlines.

low uncertainty avoidance x high uncertainty avoidance

Review

CQ knowledge enables us to dive deeper into the characteristics of individual cultures and helps us understand their motivation, mentality etc. It reaches beyond statements such as "they are just different" and puts emphasis on deeper understanding. CQ knowledge utilizes various scales that describe culture's inclinations toward certain behavioural patterns or a way of thinking. The scales enable us to identify culture's characteristics or attitudes of its members and provide us with precious information in our own planning and decision-making process. It is important to acknowledge that not every action of an individual can be attributed to one's culture and that personality also plays a major role in intercultural interactions. We do want to avoid overgeneralisation at this point.

CQ Strategy

CQ Strategy refers to higher-level thinking skills used to manage diversity. Individuals with high CQ Strategy are able to identify, explain and plan for dealing with differences. This also involves "planning ahead and checking to verify our expectations and assumptions during the cross-cultural experience We refine our mental maps and consider potential strategies to improve the interaction," ("Improve your CQ Strategy," 2015, 10th September). After the experience with difference and diversity, we think about and reflect on it. In summary, a high CQ strategy is the degree you are mindful, aware, and able to plan for multicultural experiences.

CQ Strategy wh question: "*What do I plan to do?*"

How to develop CQ Strategy

There are three methods that help us to develop an efficient CQ strategy. These methods are applicable to numerous situations:

- Becoming self-aware.

- Planning your cross-cultural interactions.

- Reflecting on the used plans and assumptions.

Becoming self-aware. As Livermore (2008, p. 118), becoming aware is "an active process of drawing on the cultural understanding derived from CQ knowledge to see culture's role in shaping a situation." It is recommended that we should temporarily slow down our semiautomatic impulses and focus our consciousness on our immediate surroundings. By doing that we will be able to read what is happening around ourselves.

Planning cross-cultural interactions. After gathering information from our awareness and combining it with acquired CQ knowledge, we are now able to create a plan by "focusing on the issues of cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and behavioral skills" (Han Yu, 2012).

Reflecting on the used plans and assumptions. Now all that remains is to combine the previous two methods and reflect on the outcomes. Individuals with high CQ strategy are able to analyse their assumptions and planning retrospectively. According to Livermore (2008, p. 12), "given the high number of cross-cultural encounters experienced by most of us, it is unrealistic to know precisely what is going on at the deepest level." We need to stress out here that we cannot expect to be always entirely accurate in our predictions and that is perfectly

normal. Considering all the factors given, it is not in our capability to predict all possible outcomes in intercultural interactions.

Review

CQ strategy is a particularly important dimension. Unlike CQ drive or CQ knowledge, CQ strategy appeals to our attentiveness and creativity in different contexts. It supports active thinking and reasoning when analysing intercultural environment and devising plans for the last dimension of CQ cycle – CQ Action.

CQ Action

CQ action is the outcome of all previous dimensions which it is based on. CQ action is our ability to flex verbal and non-verbal behaviour to the needs of culturally diverse situations. This helps us to "respond to diverse others in a way that conveys respect and builds trust and rapport and decreases the risk of miscommunication," (Understanding Cultural Intelligence:

What is CQ Action? 2015, September 10). Although there are practically endless possibilities to adapt our behaviour in cross-cultural interactions, it is necessary to emphasize three major sub-dimensions – *verbal behaviour, non-verbal behaviour* and *speech acts* (Ang, Soon, and Linn Van Dyne, 2008).

In verbal behaviour, cultural differences involve *language, paralanguage* and *speech acts*. *Paralanguage* refers to non-word vocalisations that carry meaning. These include pace, volume, inflexion, accent, tone and silence. *Speech acts* refer to messages with an intended social function such as apologies, gratitude and requests. Errors in paralanguage or speech acts may suggest disrespect or incompetence and these mistakes can have even more serious effect when the speaker is.

Non-verbal behaviour usually includes "variations in gestures, body language, greetings together with facial and emotional expressions," (Understanding Cultural Intelligence: What is CQ Action? 2015, September 10).

CQ action focuses on "specific strategies that equip the individual to retain personal and organizational values and contributions while adapting just enough to be respective and effective," (Cultural Intelligence 2.0: New Insights for Measuring and Improving CQ. n.d.).

How to develop CQ Action:

Methods how to develop CQ action are based on the sub-dimensions mentioned above:

- Adapting communication.

- Knowing when to flex and when not to.

Adapting communication. All the previous steps that we have covered so far should lead into this. With CQ drive we are determined to improve, we gathered as much cultural information as possible through CQ Knowledge and devised an appropriate strategy using skills learnt from CQ strategy. Now all that remains is to adapt our communication. Note that there are two main types of communication – *verbal* and *non-verbal.*

In *verbal* communication, it is critical that we think twice what topics we choose in cross-cultural situation. Personally, I do not recommend to bring up politics or religion in the USA, since this topic may lead to serious disputes in conversation. In contrast, in Iran religious discussion may very well be the very first topic the locals bring up. Word choice and delivery is also important, culturally intelligent people are aware of the fact that language fluency does not mean the same level of proficiency in understanding. The cultural differences in verbal behaviour are particularly critical when talking to people whose native language is different from the one used in intercultural interactions. According to Livermore (2008, p. 146), there are several points that make this type of communication easier:

- Slow down when talking.

- Clear and careful pronunciation.

- Avoid colloquial expressions.

- Repeat important points.

- Avoid too long sentences.

- Make pauses frequently.

Although it may seem as though verbal communication is vital, Mehrabian (1971) states that "vast majority of information is actually conveyed non-verbally". As mentioned earlier, non-

verbal communication usually includes variations in gestures, body language, greetings together with facial and emotional expressions. For example, some cultures value personal space while others perceive these limits more freely. In case you come from a country that considers having personal space important, try not to be offended if members of other cultures do not view appropriate distance the same. Creating a definite list of possible alterations would be very exhaustive so we should rather focus on staying observant and pay attention to little details on which further CQ action improvements can be based.

Knowing when to flex and when not to. Ironically, having extensive CQ knowledge combined with CQ strategy may lead to overextending CQ action. "Too much adaptation can generate suspicion and distrust and yet we have continually noted that inflexible behaviour is a sure death wish, too," (Livermore, 2008, p. 153). This is heavily dependent on our CQ knowledge and CQ strategy and how it enables us to anticipate reactions in cross-cultural environment. We must be aware of the fact that even if we have acquired enough CQ knowledge and CQ strategy it does not necessarily mean we are always going to act upon it. Sometimes it may be better not to react at all. For instance, we can ask ourselves: "If I am currently staying with a group of religious people who pray every morning, does that automatically mean I start praying, too?" The answer is self-evident, it probably does not. According to Livermore (2008, p.156), "we need to adapt based on the knowledge of the other culture and expectations of the people through cultural understanding."

Review

CQ action is the outcome of the entire CQ process, therefore it is heavily dependent on how efficiently we managed the previous ones. It also represents behavioural part of CQ which is the one that will mean the different between a successful intercultural interaction and failure.

Cultural Exploration in the USA

In the first part of this thesis we have mostly focused on pure theory. All the phenomena explained in the first chapter are universal and can be applied to any cultural context. We are now going to use our newly acquired CQ awareness in real-life situations with special focus on the cultural values supported by visualisations based on Erin Meyer book The Culture Map and special measuring tools available on her website.

As was mentioned earlier in the thesis, cultures are often measured via using various scales. The scales represent culture's inclinations and tendencies towards certain behavioural patterns that generally include *communicating, evaluating, leadership style, scheduling, forming relationships, problem solving* and more. Based on them, we are going to explore various real-life situations in the USA, describe cultural inclinations and motivations hidden in them and provide alternate hypothetical scenarios that may ultimately generate more efficient cross-cultural communication. Even though there are not five but eight scales in total, the remaining three will be used as support material. Real-life scenarios will be primarily based on the five scales mentioned in the first chapter under CQ knowledge.

Please note that there is a nearly infinite number of factors that may affect interpersonal interactions and unfortunately even having very high CQ does not necessarily mean that every single interaction will go as planned. For example, there is a very thin, invisible border

separating CQ and EQ. Even if we applied all the CQ knowledge there is to develop a seemingly

bullet-proof CQ strategy, we may still fail due to individual emotional reactions, moods and

other personal factors.

The other point which we should consider important is closely connected to the

previous one. As no two people are the same, we need to avoid overgeneralization. Although

some degree of generalization is required in order to be even able to describe something as

diverse as the US culture or any other culture for that matter, we also do need to acknowledge

that every person is an individual with a genuine personality and should be regarded as such.

With that in mind, let me introduce you to the basic comparison of American and Czech

value system.

Cultural Clusters & Cultural scales for the USA and the Czech Republic

United States belongs to a culture group that largely originated from Europe,

particularly from contemporary United Kingdom. This group is referred to as "*anglo-american*

*cluster,*" (United States of America - Cultural Quotient, n.d.).
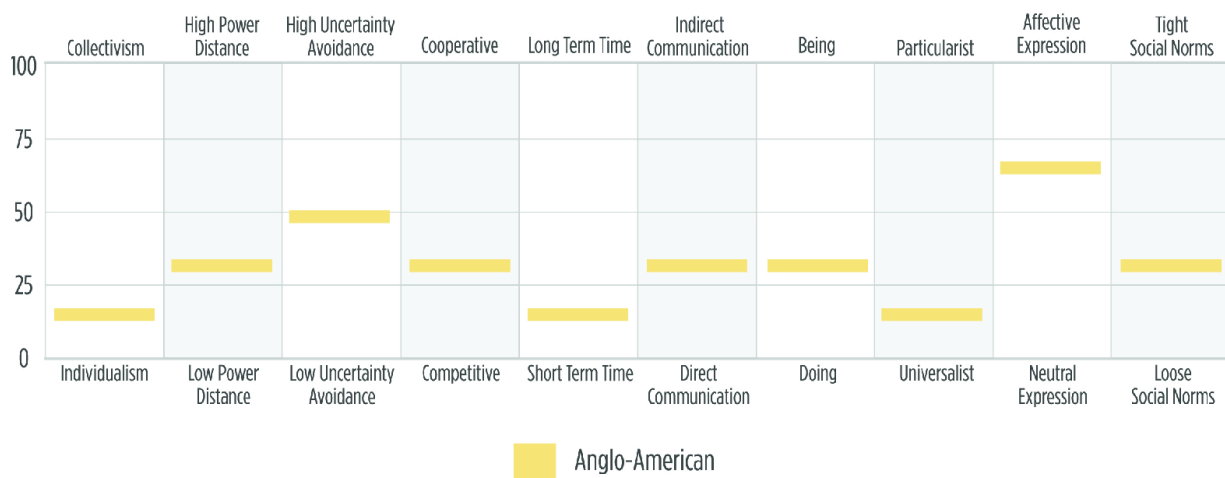
 Opposed to the anglo-american cluster, the Czech Republic belongs to "*euro central asian*

cluster," (United States of America - Cultural Quotient, n.d.).
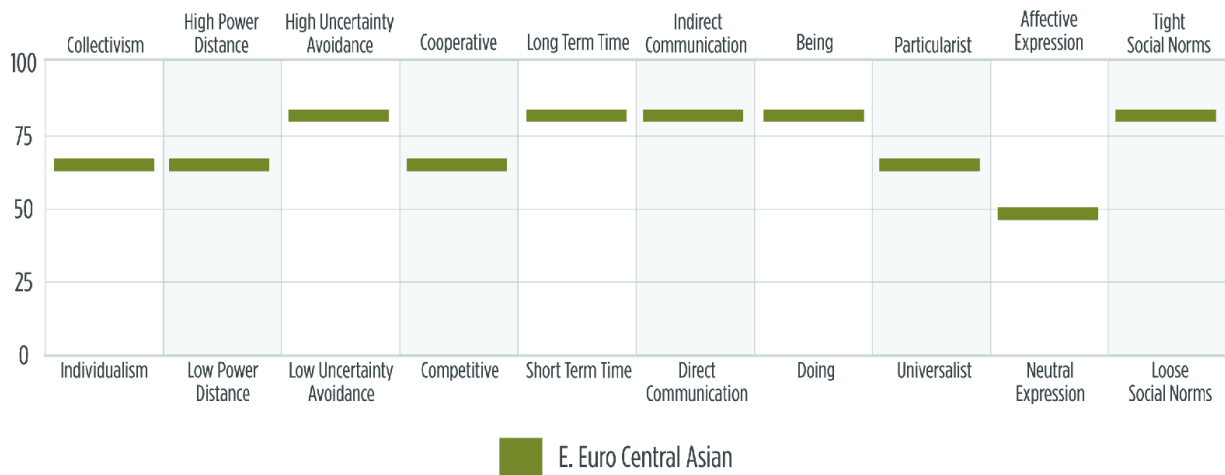
As can be clearly seen from the scales in the graphs, both clusters seem very different

from each other. Although these two provide very general information, they also give us an idea

of how different these two cultures may be. To obtain more culture-specific perspective, let me

present you with a more transparent visualisation of these two countries' cultures together

according to Meyer's Country Mapping Tool (https://www.erinmeyer.com/tools/culture-map-

premium/). This tool allows us to receive a cultural mapping of the selected countries and their

cultures. With this tool we can compare how two or more cultures build trust, give negative

feedback, and make decisions. The positions of the countries on this scale come from thousands

of interviews conducted with managers and executives from around the world.

Since this thesis is focused on the CQ exploration in the United States and Hispanic minority holds the first place as the largest ethnic minority in the country (Data Access and Dissemination Systems, 2010, October 05), I have decided to include the Mexican culture in the final version of the graph as well. Speaking from experience, there is also a high probability that if Czechs leave for the USA to work, Mexicans will form a significant portion of their teams.
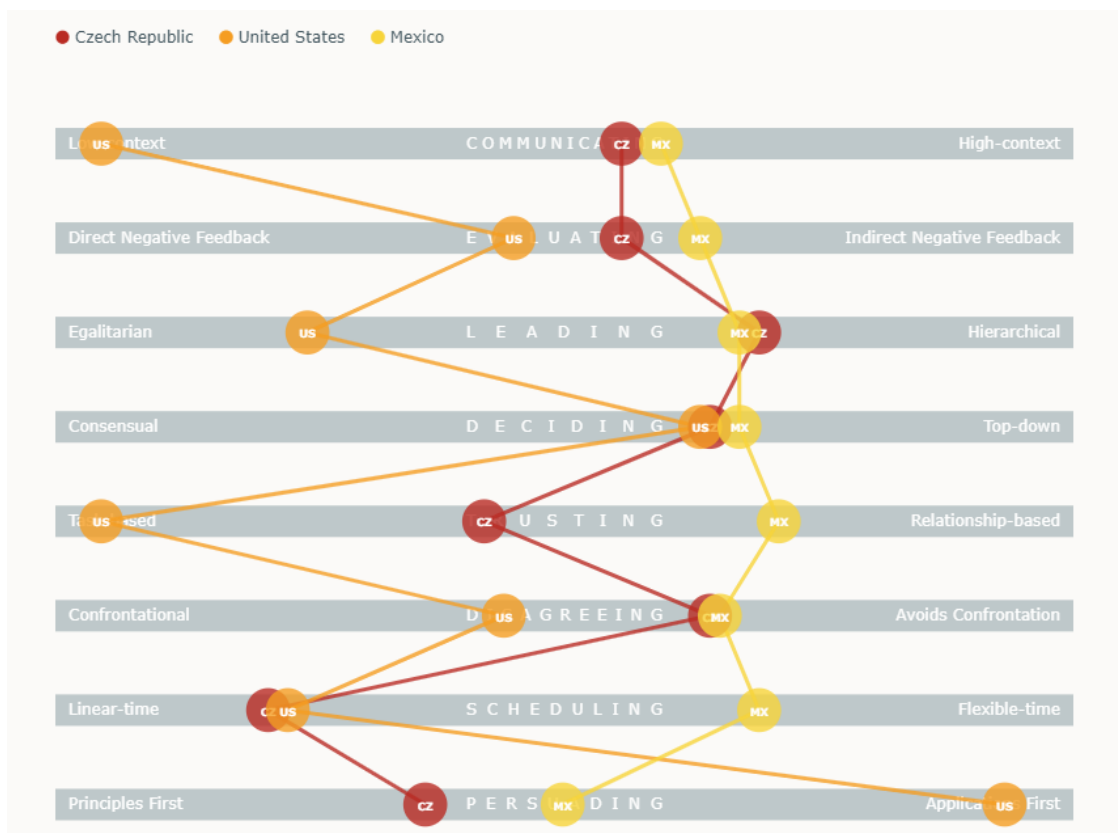
As visible in the graph's first line, the US finishes as a very low context culture and evidence for that can be found all over the country. From street signs, tipping policies explained in a restaurant's menu, guides how to use a crosswalk, an elevator or a toilet, the signs of low context culture are all there. Nevertheless, do not expect that merely being in a low context

country automatically means everything will be explicit and straightforward. We can very well

end up in situations in which we need to stay as vigilant as in any other high context cultures.

Now, let me present you with a couple of real life situations that demonstrate how culture plays a

major role in human interaction and also provide you with valuable advice how to work with it.

       Is US truly so low context? I once had an opportunity to work in an Italian restaurant

in Toms River, NJ. Lenny's was a large restaurant with usually around four or five chefs

working simultaneously, supported by another ten people doing preparation, deliveries, making

salads, washing the dishes and doing all sorts of things to keep the restaurant going. In short,

imagine fifteen people and servers working the fastest they can so that every single meal arrives

at the table still warm and fresh. Speaking of the team there, its members consisted of three

ethnicities with significantly different cultural backgrounds – American, Mexican and Czech.

We Czechs were a fresh addition to the team; most of us had zero experience with working in a

restaurant. It was clear from the day one that the American and Mexican work ethics would

differ from the Czech one. In kitchen, you could hear the Americans quickly shouting short

commands at one another, sentences most often starting with "I", i.e. "I need" or "I'm running

out of" etc., while the Mexicans seemed to remain silent for most of the time. Especially in the

early days, it seemed quite strange to me considering the place usually was not as noisy but still

all you could hear was either shouting or complete silence anyway.

       After the manager had shown us around, each of the Czech newbies was assigned to an

experienced employee who was supposed to teach him or her about their future position. I was

assigned to Roberto who was originally from Mexico. As someone who has had a few

experiences with working abroad, I knew I had better start asking as many questions as possible

to show my interest in the job. To my surprise though, when I asked about what to do and what

not to, all I was receiving from my Mexican colleague was weird looks or straight up silence. It

felt really uncomfortable, I knew I was bothering him in a way I was not aware of but I kept my

face anyway, ironically thinking he must have been afraid of me stealing his job or something.

That obviously was not the case as after the first shift had been over, me and the rest of my

Czech co-workers met up for a little discussion during which it turned out each one of us with

Mexican supervision had similar experience that day. Collectively, we came to a conclusion that

Mexicans simply hate us for no valid reason.

Those Czechs who had American supervisors had opposite impression. Their training

was really straightforward with instructions so clear that some of the Czechs, not used to

receiving instructions such as "wash your hands before you start and after you finish every

operation", even considered them a bit silly. In short, when they were asked to do even really

simple tasks like washing dirty pans or cutting bell peppers, they received a step-by-step guide

how to do it.

As the next couple of days went on in a similar manner, majority of the Czech workers

in training under Mexican management started to feel increasingly frustrated. One half of us kept

trying to become useful through the method of trial and error while the other was falling into

deeper and deeper desperation convinced nothing would ever change. On the contrary, the group

of Czech trainees under American supervision often felt the Americans, with all their guides and

procedures for everything, considered the Czechs way too stupid to let them do it alone.

It took approximately three weeks for everyone to learn the position he or she was first

assigned to. However, here comes the interesting part. Later on, when there was a Czech

teaching another Czech or a Mexican teaching another Mexican, the same process took two to

three days in total. That was up to ten times less than when the trainer and trainee came from these two cultural backgrounds.

The difference in training effectivity in cross-cultural interactions can be attributed to the difference between high and low context cultures, which was mentioned in the first part of the thesis. "The US inclines toward low context culture," (Meyer, 2014, p. 41), meaning that much of information when communicating is going to be delivered explicitly. Although this is generally accepted, due to cultural diversity in the USA we can also encounter situations in which we will not be able to rely on everything being merely explicit. There is also a possibility of cross-cultural interaction that is rather high context as in the one with Mexican training. In other words, try to observe as much subtle information as you possibly can even in the US. High context cultures tend to expect that you are able to read all the subtle nuances without speaking too much and since the US represents a large and culturally diverse country, expect that their inclination towards being a rather low context culture cannot be applied to all real life situations you may experience there.

Everyday communication. I was once standing at the bus stop in a quite remote town, waiting for my connection to New York City. There were three other people waiting there, a man in his twenties, a young lady of similar age and a man around fifty years old. It did not take long and all four of us were having spontaneous conversations. We talked not only until the bus arrived but also after we had boarded and went through several topics, where each of us was originally from, what we did for living, local activities etc. At that time, I was literally surprised by how enthusiastic and open the Americans seemed compared to the cultures I had visited before or the Czech one for that matter. I also admired the ease with which they enter social

situations. Even though they were not asking questions involving anything else than the US or them, the conversation continued smoothly and one might start to feel he had known them for longer than ten minutes. At first I thought that this must have been something accidental, that I was just lucky to meet these exceptionally friendly people but that was obviously not the case again.

"Americans engage in a kind of conversation they call "smalltalk." The most common topic of smalltalk is the weather. Another very common topic is what the speakers "do," meaning, normally, what jobs they have. They may discuss their current physical surroundings— the room or building they are in, the area where they are standing, or whatever is appropriate," (Althen, G. (1996). When observing everyday life in the US, it is not rare to watch even groups of people having a small chat before actually moving on to the topic they have meant to discuss in in the first place. "Americans are likely to engage in personal discussions with people they hardly know," (Meyer, 2014, p. 174). If we want to establish a connection with them, it is only wise that we follow an attitude similar to the American one. Try not to shy away from having a small chat here and there when you have a chance as in the US it may evoke the impression of being unfriendly.

However, there are also certain topics Americans are explicitly taught not to discuss. "Topics such as politics, religion or financial matters are those you probably want to leave until you are well acquainted with the person you intend to discuss it with or avoid them entirely," (Althen, G. (1996). Speaking from experience, also try to avoid talking for too long as Americans tend to be rather impatient with people who do that. They may have difficulties paying attention to long and complicated sentences. In short, when talking with them keep in mind that conciseness is a way to go.

This aspect of American culture is one of the first things newcomers notice in the US and sadly it is often the one most often misinterpreted. People from high context cultures such as the Czech one assume that you are building long-term relationships from these conversations. In the US, when someone starts a chat with you and shares personal experience, show you family photos or tells you about his plans for the future, ironically for us, it does not necessarily mean that person wishes to be friends with you. According to Meyer (2014), "Americans are sometimes perceived as superficial or even fake by members of other cultures." Do not consider Americans being superficial or fake for doing that, their inclination towards exaggeration and directness merely an aspect that makes their culture different from the Czech one. You will be much better off if you just accept this custom as nice and easy way to practise your English or make waiting for a bus a little bit shorter.

Building trust and American smile. While still in New Jersey I befriended a Russian student who was participating in the same programme as me. She worked in a clothes shop in the same town I was staying in. When I asked her what her job was like and if she liked it, she responded:

"I hate this job. I mean I do not hate the job itself, I am into fashion so I like working in this field and it was also the reason why I took this job in the first place. What I hate is the shop manager, he constantly makes me throw a fake smile at every customer entering the shop. I simply don't get why I should smile at everyone all the time. There is literally no reason to do it, I am just a helping hand there and he pushes me to fake my smile 24/7. He's such an idiot."

Smile in the US is deeply rooted in the culture and newcomers should understand that the purpose of smiling in the US may differ from the one in their home country. "It is easy to mistake certain social customs of Americans that might suggest strong personal connections where none are intended. Americans are more likely than those from many cultures to smile at people they hardly know," (Meyer, 2014, p. 174). American smile is a reflection of American value system, as one of my US born colleagues pointed out: "We smile so much because we value happiness and always try to look on the bright side. By smiling, we show our enthusiasm and friendliness." Since most of jobs that students do in the US are in hospitality or service sector, where interpersonal interactions are not rare, keep in mind that smiling can mean the difference between a successful interaction or a complete rejection of social interaction.

Direct negative feedback and American problem solving. Back in the pizza shop, I had a Czech colleague named Lenka, who was a petite, yet extraverted student of economy with a kind personality and good manners. She was one those people who could not say no to anyone. Her duties in the restaurant usually included minor tasks such as cutting vegetables, bringing ingredients from the fridge, bringing clean plates from the dish pit to the kitchen and things like that. Since the very beginning, it was apparent that Lenka preferred working with Mexicans rather than with Americans. She felt her Mexican colleagues treated her in a much nicer manner than Americans with all their "dos and don'ts" so when she had a chance she preferred to spend her time chatting with them. Nevertheless, thanks to her being able to speak Spanish, she had become one of the fastest learning and most productive members of the entire Czech group.

Working in hospitality can be a very challenging job, both mentally and physically, where much of the success depends on how well the team is able to cooperate in fast-paced

environment. At weekends, especially on Fridays and Saturdays the restaurant usually became incredibly busy but this Saturday felt like the whole town decided to eat at Lenny's. Considering we were in the beginning of the summer season and most of us still had not been fully accustomed to the fast-paced environment at that time, me and other newbies were quite surprised by all the unexpected chaos. When the shift was over, Phil, who was the owner and manager there, called us up for a meeting and said: "Great job everyone. Today was one of those days when we all have to push our limits and all of you showed pretty great effort to do so." Then he started to be more specific, addressing and evaluating each member of the team separately but with everyone still present. He then finally turned to Lenka:

"And you, Lenka, do not get me wrong but every time I was passing you today you were just holding a couple of plates in your hands and chatting with your co-workers, not doing anything. We never do that here, especially during peak hours, plus it is not fair to your colleagues. I hope you understand what I am telling you."

When the manager left, Lenka immediately started crying. She felt not only unjustly accused and offended but also enormously embarrassed in front of the whole group. This was the first of many similar cases when Czech students started to cry at Lenny's after receiving this kind of direct feedback in front of others. Over the course of time these students had grown a certain level of aversion toward our American manager, whom they considered unnecessarily blunt, rude, aggressive and stupid. Lenka and others resented him for his attitude for the rest of the summer.

"Americans generally consider themselves to be frank, open, and direct in their dealings with other people, they will often speak openly and directly to others about things they dislike, particularly in a work situation." (Althen, G. (1996). Luckily, I happened to end up on relatively good terms with our manager Phil who eventually promoted me into the kitchen crew to become a chef myself. Before my first shift on a new position started, Phil came up to me and said:

"All problems are rooted in miscommunication, whenever I come across something I don't like, I want to have a direct and clear conversation about it with all the people involved. I am not interested in playing games with anyone. I always want to make myself a hundred percent clear and keep on going."

According to Althen (1996), "Americans usually assume that conflicts or disagreements are best settled by means of forthright discussions among the people involved." Earlier in the thesis we talked about Americans being very direct in their communication. The same principle applies to problem solving as Americans end up being more confrontational compared to Czechs. If you ever end up in a conflict with Americans, do not talk extensively as they will think you are trying to talk your way out of it. You will do much better if you keep your arguments short, solid and constructive as Americans value their time a lot and can become upset if someone tries to waste it.

Individualism and work in American organizations. When I was promoted to the kitchen I was thrown into an environment completely unfamiliar to me. I ended up quite separated from the rest of the international students who remained in other parts of the restaurant,

supporting the kitchen. In the next couple of days during which I had been in training for my new position by both Mexican and American chefs, one morning Phil came up to me and said: "You are on your own now. Knock yourself out." Then he left.

I have to admit I was not so confident about my cooking skills at that time, needless to say that in the last few days I had been pushing my CQ understanding to the best of my ability. I also thought that with my new position I am a part of the team but as it soon turned out, I was just another individual and on the team. It was one the most distinctive aspects of working in the US. Even when your job requires you to cooperate and become one of the wheels in the clockwork, there is still strict line that separates your duties from those of others. In other words, do not expect that someone will do your job for you in the US when you start falling behind until the very last moment when your lack of productivity starts to affect the whole team. Nevertheless, I was still quite surprised by the conciseness and certainty with which Phil delivered the message not even was I sure what he meant by that. It felt really ambiguous to me since in the UK I learnt to read between the lines where short statements like this usually had some hidden, often ironic meaning. "Is this some kind of a test or does he just wants to show me how useless I am here?" I asked one of my colleagues to which he replied: "He just wants to see if you have what it takes to work on the line with the team." Back then, I considered this not only a great challenge but also an opportunity to improve my stress resistance and learn something new so I tried to the best of my ability. Well, they kept me there so it could not have been that bad after all.

Since Americans are probably one of the most hard-working western countries, they usually in some way relate to personal qualities found in efficient and productive work. "The business world rewards the values and virtues Americans admire: hard work, achievement,

competitiveness, materialism, rationality, perseverance, and building toward the future," (Althen, 1996, p. 247). Simply said, if you show effort, enthusiasm and strong will, your performance will be positively reflected in the reactions of your working environment. Do not take yourself too seriously though. American emphasis on individualism together with low power distance makes their culture very informal and the same rule applies in business as well. It is very rare to use surnames in the US, almost everyone, be it your boss or a lady in a bank, will call you by your first name.

Another sign of informality and low power distance is humour. At work, it is usual to joke around with not only your co-workers and people of similar social status but also, unlike high power distance cultures, with higher-status employees. Considering "low power distance in the US" (Meyer, 2014), there is only little difference if any at all and for some cultures this aspect can be perceived as very unusual. "Rank-conscious foreigners often feel uneasy around the relatively relaxed and informal interactions they will see between lower and higher status employees," (Althen, 1996, p. 249). Do not be afraid of throwing a joke every once in a while as it not only shows your more relaxed and easy attitude that Americans admire but at the same time can lead to invitations to parties and other events that will allow you to dive deeper into the culture you are visiting. Even though you may feel a little awkward at first, when you obtain enough confidence and information, f. e. through CQ drive and knowledge techniques, you should be able to devise an appropriate strategy that matches the low power distance communication found in the United States.

Building trust in the US. Earlier in the thesis I described the American-Mexican and Czech team and their differences in communication, especially in training and giving feedback.

During my stay in the US, there was a point at which Czechs and Americans managed to find some common ground and relationships began to be built. We were chatting, joking around and all the Czechs started to feel a bit more accepted into what the Americans called "the Lenny's family". I cannot say the same about the Mexicans though as most of them still stayed very reserved with almost no interest in talking about anything else but topics closely related to work. Czech group found it very strange and felt like the Mexicans do not trust anyone but themselves, resenting both of their Czech and American colleagues in the restaurant.

One day when, when the shift was over and most of the restaurant staff had a day-off the next day, our American colleagues organised a party to which they invited everyone who worked in the restaurant and, to my surprise, even our Mexican co-workers. I did not expect they would come to the party anyway because at that time the aloofness I had felt from the Mexicans was so strong that I could not imagine how we were supposed to socialise. Even if they came I would expect the party to be very awkward. I still tried to remain optimistic and went to the party anyway.

When I arrived at the party, most of our Mexican colleagues had been already there and not only them. They also brought their relatives and other friends as well together with a ton of tasty Mexican beer and delicious food for everyone to share. All my expectations were soon to be proven wrong. That night, every one of them was a different person from what I had experienced back at work. Even those who had been the most reserved in the restaurant and who we felt resented us were now talking about their families and customs in Mexico, joking around and generally showing genuine interest in many topics. Later on, they even invited us for trips to New York and Philadelphia to which we of course said yes. We stayed up late that night and

when we saw one another at work again, everything changed for the better. Since that night, all the aloofness and coldness was just gone.

By this example, I wanted to point out how trust is built differently across cultures. Of course, trust plays a critical role in business in every country in the world, no matter where we are from, we have to trust our colleagues and business partners in order to be successful at dealing with them. The question is how do we build it? According to Meyer (2014), there is a distinction between two types of trust – cognitive and affective trust.

Cognitive trust is based on "the confidence we feel in another person's accomplishments, skills, and reliability and is often built through business interactions," (Meyer, 2014, p. 168). This is the type of trust you will find almost everywhere throughout the United States. Building trust in this country is heavily task-based. That means Americans will most often build trust with you through working together. In short, if you prove you are consistent, reliable and intelligent at work, they will trust you.

Affective trust, on the other hand, "arises from feelings of emotional closeness, empathy and friendship," (Meyer, 2014, p. 168). This type of trust is mainly built via spending free time together, laughing, relaxing and being connected on the personal level. The Mexican culture belongs to those cultures where trust is relationship-based.

This difference in the way various cultures build trust explains why the Czechs were able to build trust at work with their American colleagues only, whereas there had been an invisible and impenetrable wall between us and Mexicans until the party night during which we had an opportunity to see one another outside of work and therefore also a possibility to establish a connection on a personal level. When you find yourself in a multicultural environment, look for information about how particular culture builds trust and then try to set up the right

conditions for it. For example, if you know you are dealing with a culture that is relationship-based, invite them to your home for a dinner or ask them out for a drink or coffee. In short, meet them in a more relaxed and stress free environment. You might be surprised how fast the attitude of your colleagues and business partner can change.

Conclusion

In the theoretical part of the work we examined the phenomenon of cultural intelligence, what it means and its growing importance is in today's fast-paced world. We discussed CQ components with the four-step cycle that enables us not only to develop a sense for cultural diversity but also to efficiently utilize it in cross-cultural interactions, using the techniques provided. Explanations of value systems then provided us with information of how CQ is currently measured across countries. We showed that understanding CQ and using it proactively leads not only to more successful interactions across cultures but also, through comparison, serves as an "opportunity to learn about our own culture as well," (Meyer, 2014, p. 26). Comparisons found in the second chapter then presented essential characteristics of both the Czech and American cultures, explaining cultural differences between the two. We then moved from a rather theoretical approach to practical one through the real-life situations upon which we explained the reasons why Americans and Czech interact the way they do and presented potential alterations to improve our efficiency while living and working in the United States. All the real-life scenarios presented in this work illustrated the importance of understanding the cultural backgrounds in intercultural communication.

While the techniques provided by David Livermore and Erin Meyer's culture mapping definitely help us to better understand intercultural interactions, they are very general in their nature and it is advised not to rely on them entirely. We also have to take personal aspects into consideration as well and try to flex our own behaviour according to the situation we are currently facing. During my stay in the US, I soon realised that merely having some basic knowledge of the American culture is not sufficient enough to remain efficient in my interactions. Due to the American lifestyle which is heavily oriented towards high productivity

and effective time management, it was necessary for me to prove my value at work to them. Many of the Czech students inclined towards taking each and every little conflict too personally and at the beginning I tended to do the same. It took a couple of weeks for me to understand that this attitude would not have gotten me very far and that an alteration in how I perceive and react to various situations is required.

The other aspect of working in the United States that surprised me a lot was how culturally diverse the American work environment was. When working in the US we never know what culture we may ultimately encounter. It is close to impossible to prepare for that in advance since we never know what composition we will be facing. For this, I recommend you to wait until you obtain enough information about your team's make-up and base your assumptions and plans on the information you have collected.

One way or the other, I learnt there that having worked in the US was one of the most valuable experiences in working in cross-cultural environment that I could have possibly gained. It showed me not only how to navigate myself across very culturally diverse teams but also provided me with a mirror to my own Czech way of thinking and how my actions were perceived by members of other cultures.

The advice provided in the last chapter can best serve as a guide to Czechs who travel into the US with the intention to work there. Although there is literally endless stream of examples that demonstrate cultural differences between Czechs and Americans that could make up a whole book, I hope the main differences have been covered sufficiently in this paper.

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