Overcoming intercultural communication barriers: Organisational Culture and Organisational Learning within a Swedish Textile Company

Final thesis project in Textile Management to acquire the academic degree Master of Science

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2014-06-08
Acknowledgement
Foremost, we would like to express our gratitude to our supervisor Dr. Rudrajeet Pal for his advice, commitment and continuous support throughout the entire process of this master thesis. Furthermore we would like to thank the company and their employee for their willingness to participate. And finally our special thanks go to our families and friends for supporting us throughout our studies and for always encouraging us in all aspects of our life.

Declaration
We hereby declare that we have completed the present thesis by ourselves and without the use of any aids other than those listed. All passages that were taken either directly or mutatis mutandis from published and non-published sources have been marked as such. All empirical data received from the participating company and its employee has been approved to be shared within this paper.

The thesis has never been submitted to a different examination authority in the same or a similar form.

Jennifer Elze and Pauline A. Podlesny

Borås, 08 June 2014
Abstract

“We don't want to be all the same, but we want to respect each other and understand each other”
- Sheikha Al Mayassa, 2010

Globalisation progressively enables enterprises to employ personnel with different cultural backgrounds, which increases cultural diversity and may lead to intercultural communication errors when not managed properly. Hence the need for a better approach to accustom all different cultures within the organisational culture is essential. A previous study by the authors initiated the idea for this thesis by revealing different types of intercultural communication problems when different cultures conduct business together. Language barriers and preconceptions were the main problems discovered within the previous study. Accordingly, this thesis attempts to discover what actions are necessary to mitigate these problems within textile companies. Theories on organisational culture, organisational learning, and international management, were addressed in relation to intercultural communication. Using an exemplifying case of one single person within Eton AB, a case study research design was conducted. The data was collected through a qualitative research strategy and method, using self-completion/self-administrative questionnaires, and analysed using grounded theory. The general result of the thesis indicates that few communication errors between Eton AB and the participant exist. Therefore this interrelation can be seen as a positive example of intercultural communication within a textile company. In this context, it was the authors’ intention to identify the influence organisational culture and organisational learning have on intercultural communication. Certain aspects within an organisational culture are of importance to create a better integration of employees, hence influence intercultural relations positively. Organisational learning, likewise, has a positive impact, since it contributes to the creation of a better environment for integration. This thesis concludes with generalised measures which can be seen as a guideline and as first steps for textile companies in order to reduce intercultural communication errors.

Keywords: intercultural communication, language barriers, preconception, organisational culture, international management, organisational learning
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Table of abbreviations
AB          Aktiebolag: Swedish term for ‘limited company’,
            ‘corporation’
CEO         Chief Executive Officer
cf.         Confer, compare
et al.      Et alii, and others
e.g.        Exempli gratia, for example
etc.         Et cetera, and so forth
p.          Page
pers. comm. Personal communication
1 Introduction

The following chapter introduces the subject intercultural communication barriers, and the way these influence textile companies and the textile value chain. It delivers a brief background to the topics and shows that solutions need to be found in order to mitigate these errors. The introduction further includes the problem description and the purpose of this master thesis.

1.1 Preface

Ever since a growing number of textile companies employ international personnel and carry out business operations globally, intercultural communication has become an essential fragment of day to day business (Tagreed, 2012). Therefore problems in a global structure within the organisation need to be addressed and solved (Chitakornkijsil, 2010). This thesis focuses on alleviating the problems regarding language barriers and preconceptions which influence intercultural communication within textile companies, by analysing an exemplifying case of intercultural interrelation of one international employee working at Eton AB. Furthermore organisational learning and organisational culture, and their influence on intercultural communication, will be analysed. The authors have chosen the topic due to a previously conducted study, which focused on finding problems that arise when individuals with different cultural backgrounds interact on a global level within a textile company. Language barriers and preconceptions were discovered as the main barriers regarding intercultural communication and will be used as an initiation for this master thesis.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Problems of intercultural communication

A previous study by the authors focused on finding the main problems and errors of intercultural communication. By conducting interviews with participants with a background in textile education and experience in working globally, problems regarding language (verbal and non-verbal communication), and preconceptions against other cultures were exposed as the main barriers addressed by the participants. Cultural diversity within a company can be problematic when presumptions arise due to different values, norms, and beliefs, together with errors in common communication and shared language. These preconceptions can cause miscommunication and lead to problems in the communication and work flow. This study displayed the need for further research, since companies need to find ways to integrate cultural diversity accordingly among their employees, in order to lessen cultural miscommunication.
1.2.2 Globalisation

In order to understand culture and communication and its link to the textile industry one must first identify what impacted it. This important link that helped to increase an international working environment is globalisation (Tagreed, 2012). According to the Oxford Dictionaries (Oxford University Press, 2014) globalisation is the procedure by which organisations and businesses start their operations on a global level, hence allow interconnection and interdependence of companies across national borders. Therefore globalisation made it possible for the textile industry to internationally trade textile goods, and outsource certain operations in order to be able to manufacture products and offer services with lower labour and facility costs. Especially, the operation of outsourcing is rewarding for textile companies, since it allows companies to transfer certain activities (production or services) to subcontractors and suppliers, mostly within countries with lower production costs (Oxford University Press, 2014). Besides intercultural interrelations to business partners within the global textile value chain, companies increasingly employ personnel with diverse national and cultural background. Hence employees with different backgrounds and cultures work together adding diversity to the daily work routine (Tagreed, 2012).

1.3 Problem description

The complexity of communication is far greater than generally believed especially between cultures. To date there is plenty of research when it comes to the question of what to expect when contacting business partners in other countries and with a different cultural background. According to Conejo (2002) different cultures get mixed together when working in the same company but just coexist next to each other, striving to keep their own culture. Furthermore he (Conejo 2002, p. 23) states that “different cultures gather and interpret information differently”. Seeing the work environment encompassing a higher cultural diversity, problems regarding intercultural miscommunication can arouse more frequently (Tagreed, 2012). Language barriers most companies face in their day to day business can lead to problems in the information flow, which can cause inaccuracies and delays (Chitakornkijsil, 2010). It is important to eliminate these risks which can influence the communication and work flow within textile companies which do not only affect the company itself, but all members of the value chain (Tagreed, 2012). Additionally the next main problem that needs to be addressed is the preconceptions all cultures have towards each other. Prejudgments and stereotyping within a certain working environment can lead to errors and miscommunication, especially when interpreted and perceived wrongly, which needs to be avoided in order to ensure a good working environment (Adler, 1983). It is
crucial to find solutions to these problems as early as possible in order to minimise their impact within a global textile company and in the entire global textile value chain.

1.4 Research questions

(1) How is a Swedish textile company influenced by intercultural communication errors, language barriers and preconceptions in particular?

(2) How are organisational culture and organisational learning related to intercultural communication within a Swedish textile company?

(3) Which measures are necessary for textile companies to successfully mitigate intercultural communication errors?

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to find out what has to be done in order to lessen intercultural communication problems. The authors’ ambition is to analyse an example of intercultural interrelations within a Swedish textile company and its relation to language barriers and preconceptions. Thereby it is of interest to comprehend if an interrelation between organisational culture and organisational learning, and intercultural communication occurs. Additionally it is the authors’ intention to expose general measures, as an outline for other textile companies, which can help to reduce intercultural communication errors.

1.6 The research gap

The authors understand that there is plenty of research around intercultural communication, but often such research papers are generalised and focus too much on national stereotypes, which often influence their analysis negatively. However national cultures in a multicultural working environment play an important role for the global textile value chain. Conflicts due to language barriers or preconceptions do not only occur along the value chain when negotiating with foreign business partners, they happen daily within textile organisations and influence their information flow and task fulfilment. Therefore the authors intend to discover if and to what extend a Swedish textile company and its employee have to deal with intercultural communication problems, and how both handle these problems in relation to organisational learning within their organisational culture.
2 Theoretical framework

The following chapter delivers theory regarding the history of Eton AB, intercultural communication problems and international management. Furthermore organisational culture, which can be found within textile companies, is explained followed by organisational learning and its different types. The theory marks a significant segment within the thesis, from which the analysis will be drawn.

2.1 History of Eton AB

Eton AB is a family owned business founded in 1928 by David and Annie Pettersson. During the first years of existence the company was known under the Swedish name ‘Syfabriken Special’, focusing on the production of men shirts with attention to quality, details and craftsmanship, which led to the great reputation Eton AB has worldwide today. The company still operates from the same place it originated in, Gånghester, a village outside of Borås, Sweden. David and Annie Pettersson knew from the beginning that treating their employees nice, automatically guarantees motivation and good working results. Therefore the company dedicated and still dedicates itself to social cohesion and wellbeing of employees. To mention some examples, the founders organised activities for the whole company like fishing or hunting. Additionally, in the late 1940s the company offered language courses in English to employees. The name of the company was changed into ‘Skjortfabriken Special’ when the company’s production prioritised on making shirts. Inspired by the famous college Eton, Rune and Arne Davidson, (the founders’ sons), got the idea to rename ‘Skjortfabriken Special’s’ product ‘The Eton Shirt’ when travelling to find new suppliers. Influenced by the product name, the final company name of 'Eton AB' was introduced with the launch of shirts in Great Britain in the 1950s, because it was too difficult for international customers to pronounce. Around the same time the company changed the strategy and focused on direct relations to their business partners. From the 1950s the company was following the motto of the founders, to never send out a shirt if one is not completely satisfied with it. With the growth of the company a new and bigger facility was needed which led to the building of a new and modern factory. The company extended its business with innovative clothing technology, founding Eton systems during the 1950s. Among other things Eton systems introduced an automated transportation system to transport parts of a shirt from and to every production stage. During the 1980s Eton AB bought high quality fabrics from factories in Switzerland, Italy and France and started business with most exclusive boutiques around the globe, choosing countries where craftsmanship and detail is most appreciated. In 1989 Hans Davidson, current CEO, took over the company. In the beginning of the 1990s the
manufacturing was moved from Gånghester and Portugal, to Borås and Estonia. Closer production facilities enabled Eton AB to establish a more effective cooperation and quality control. At the end of the 20th century the company started to focus on department stores. Starting in 2010 Eton AB had a flagship store in New York, Stockholm and in the centre of London which according to the CEO secures Eton AB’s international position. The company is currently cooperating with the best European spinning and weaving factories to ensure highest quality at all production stages. Their newest collection, called ‘DnA’, reminds and shows Eton AB’s vision to produce shirts with a unique design, love for details and finest materials. (retrieved from Eton AB, 2014)

2.2 Intercultural communication barriers

Chitakornkijsil (2010, p.7) states that “culture strongly affects values, beliefs, world views, nonverbal behavior, language, and how to have relationship with others”. The authors’ previous study revealed that working with people with foreign languages, cultural values and beliefs can complicate the process of communication and may lead to issues in the working environment.

2.2.1 Language and communication

Communication is defined as the successful transmission or distribution of thoughts and feelings in form of language or another medium (Oxford University Press, 2014). Hence, intercultural communication is the interaction between people with different cultural backgrounds (Chitakornkijsil, 2010). Edward T. Hall (1973; 1976, cited in Kittler, Rygl and Mackinnon, 2011) suggested a concept of high- and low-context communication based on the assumption that different communication styles in cultures exist to create a meaning out of communication processes. Thereby the level of non-verbal context used in communication is said to determine culture (Kittler, et al., 2011). According to Hall (2000, cited in Kittler, et al., 2011) two key terms describe behaviours and communication styles regarding non-verbal communication, namely high-context cultures and low-context cultures. The main difference between the two key term definitions is that high-context cultures prefer non-verbal communication as a main information provider over verbal communication, while low-context cultures do the opposite (Kittler, et al., 2011). Low-context cultures are said to focus on explicit information given verbally, putting less attention to gestures and interpretations of provided information (Kittler, et al., 2011). However it is emphasised that no extreme of either high- or low-context culture, meaning to focus on just context or just information, exists. The two definitions are to be understood as opposites that allow nearly all possible combinations of context and
information (Kittler, et al., 2011). According to Chitakornkijsil (2010) it remains a challenge to avoid misinterpretation, the more dissimilar the receiver’s and the communicator’s cultures are. For that reason a difference between two cultures resulting in communication barriers can cause miscommunication (Tagreed, 2012).

2.2.2 Preconceptions
National cultures differ at the level of unconscious principles, which are established at an early age and cannot be changed. These cultures are considered stable since principles that are established later on can be adjusted but the underlying principles, created early on, are not affected by change (Tagreed, 2012). Preconception, also known as prejudgement, is defined by the Oxford Dictionaries (Oxford University Press, 2014) as a prematurely made judgement on a subject or individual without sufficient facts. Adler (1983) states that people automatically follow an ethnocentric belief and associate cultural dissimilarities with problems. This belief states that other cultures are weighed according to preconceptions shaped in the values of the own culture (Oxford University Press, 2014), and therefore people perceive the values of other cultures to be lesser (Adler, 1983). This standpoint prevents any benefit to the enterprise from its own potential diversity (Adler, 1983). A theory by Bennet (1998 cited in Codreanu, 2012), underlines that less intercultural communication errors develop when intercultural competences are present. Accordingly, intercultural competences are the ability to understand both one’s own and others’ subjective (language, behavioural patterns, and values within a given group) and objective culture (in the form of established artefacts, e.g. economic or political) (Bennet, 1998 cited in Codreanu, 2012).

2.3 International Management
A clear and overall accepted definition of the term international management is not established. However definitions of international management exist that characterise it as the management of all processes of a company that are performed across national boundaries (Boddewyn, 1999). According to Collin (2004) international management has three different meanings. The first sees it as the management of all production and market interests an organisation has in domestic countries, done by local or ‘expatriate’ (emigrated) staff (Collin, 2004). This is extended with the formulation of international management as the supervision of a multicultural business which was made up of formerly independent organisations. The third meaning of international management is used to describe a particular type of skills, knowledge and understanding that are needed when managers are in charge of business actions involving people with a different national and cultural background (Collin, 2004).
Phillips (1993) has developed skills which are considered to be vital to successful international management regarding intercultural relations:

• **Technical skills and experience**  
  Suitable knowledge and competence are required in order to be able to perform in the position of an international manager. To accept, adjust or add technical skills that extend or differ from domestic managerial skills and experience is considered important.

• **Interpersonal skills**  
  The ability to emotionally connect and communicate with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds (also referred to as cultural empathy) in order to understand their needs and expression of needs is essential. It encompasses the ability to build and motivate international teams and understand the dynamics within such.

• **Intellectual skills**  
  Logical and rational thinking are necessary to develop workable solutions and imagination to cope with uncertainty. Furthermore a holistic view and creativity in problem solving and overall performance are abilities that are important for an international manager.

• **Emotional maturity**  
  International managers need to be able to adapt to and operate independently and creatively in unfamiliar situations. Intuition and sensitivity in regard to needs of others and problems that can be derived from the national culture and the culture of the organisation are vital. Moreover self-awareness, personal integrity and a non-judgmental attitude should help an international manager to perform appropriately. Flexibility in managing and handling of situations and conflicts is required which include changes in personal, professional and social demands in a multicultural setting, without prior experience.

• **Motivation**  
  This skill encompasses the personal drive to see things through to completion and energy to realise goals of a project when coping with changes to themselves and their environment.

  (Phillips, 1993)

International Management considers all influencing factors of the surrounding world, in order to successfully coordinate the company’s activities across borders and comprises of branches, such as cross-cultural management (Engelhard, 2014). According to the definition determined by Adler (2008 cited in Tagreed, 2012, p. 107) the term cross-
cultural management deals with “the behaviour of people in organisations around the world and shows people how to work in organisations with employees and client populations from many different cultures.” It is known to be part of international management where it addresses the coordination of the company with the main focus on culture instead of considering all influencing parameters from the surrounding world. The term cross-cultural management is also known as intercultural management with the stated goal to successfully deal and overcome weaknesses in management when cultural conflicts and intercultural miscommunication occur (Engelhard, 2014).

2.4 Organisational Culture

Apart from the national level of culture (national culture), a culture can be present at an organisational level. The organisational culture differs at the level of practices of an enterprise, not at the level of unconscious values (national culture). It can be described as rather superficial and is to some degree controllable and manageable. Within the same country, organisational cultures can differ from one enterprise to another (Tagreed, 2012). Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, and Sanders (1990) argue that organisational culture is as important within an organisation as structure, strategy, and control and should be consistent in the theory and practice of the organisations’ management. According to Alvesson (2002) the way people in a company interact is guided by a cultural nature; it is embedded in groups and cannot exist unless it is owned by one. A given group is a set of people who have been together long enough to have shared significant problems, opportunities to solve those and observe their effects, and who have taken in new members. Accordingly culture within an organisation consists of the beliefs, norms, and values a certain group of people share and can be seen as a challenge to internationally functioning businesses (Schein, 1984). As stated by Schein (1990) different levels of culture exist at which it is established; observable artefacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions. Observable artefacts include all that can be observed or felt by new members, e.g. its physical layout, dress code, products or annual reports. Although they are tangible or palpable, one can see and feel the way a company is, it is hard to interpret them correctly. (Martin and Meyerson, 1988 cited in Schein, 1990) Further, Martin and Meyerson (1988 cited in Schein, 1990) state that the values, norms, and philosophies adopted by an enterprise cannot be seen directly as such but have to be found out through deeper analysis of the company (interviews, questionnaires, or surveys). This analysis displays the relevance of certain dimensions within the company and why certain manifestations occur the way they do. Through more intensive observations, questionnaires and more motivated members, one can
decode the underlying assumptions “that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings, and behaviour” (Schein, 1990, p. 112). It is easier to determine the meaning of behaviour and artefacts of culture, when the assumptions are understood (Schein, 1990). Apart from the established levels, culture can also be affected by the relations with several players outside the organisation’s culture (e.g. suppliers, customers, authorities and others), which counteracts with the own cultural understandings of an organisation (Alvesson, 2002). In addition an organisational culture can be affected by members within the organisational culture, such as leaders, which according to Schein (1990) can have a dominant effect on emerging culture through embedding their own views. Alvesson (2002) defines leaders as not necessarily indicators for radical alterations of culture but as an influence and a part of culture. Nevertheless leadership can go beyond fragments of the given cultural patterns and even contribute to the formation of culture (Alvesson, 2002). Therefore Alvesson (2002) states, that leaders and managers are more influential on the ongoing reproduction and revisions of cultural values and meanings than other members. According to Schein (1984) the strength of a culture can be defined in terms of the equality and stability of all members and the length and amount of shared experiences within the group. Therefore a strong culture is the result of a stable group with a long and strong past. On the other hand a group culture is considered weak when members are ever-changing and the group members have solely been together for a short period of time (Schein, 1984). Alvesson (2002) states that new members need to become accustomed to the norms of the group, hence the organisational culture, since individual characteristics are not the focus of a cultural understanding; moreover the focus lies on the shared norms within an organisation. Accordingly it is important that these do not bring new ideas and change into the culture, since the present culture can be seen as a stabiliser of the internal and external environment for the organisation, and constant change of its values would cause a loss of its function (Alvesson, 2002). Nevertheless organisational culture derives from a dynamic model of learning and group dynamics and is always in the process of development and change (Schein, 1984). According to Schein (1990) the inclusion of members can have three different outcomes, a custodial orientation, creative individualism, and rebellion. Within a custodial orientation a total conformity to all norms and complete learning of assumptions takes place, whereas in the creative individualism outcome, the new member learns all fundamental and essential assumptions but all outer ones are excluded (Schein, 1990). Within this outcome, the individual can be creative both with regard to the organisations responsibilities and the performance of them. Finally, the rebellion outcome is the full dismissal of all assumptions. If the rebellious
individual is detained from leaving the enterprise (external circumstances), he or she will overthrow, disrupt, and cause rebellion (Schein, 1990).

2.4.1 Problems of external adaptation and internal integration

As stated by Schein (1984) organisational culture can be defined as a pattern of basic norms that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group in order to handle its problems of external adaption and internal integration. These norms have worked sufficiently well for this group that they are considered effective and serve as a guideline to be taught to new members as the correct manner to perceive, think, and feel in relation to the problems (Schein, 1984). Alternatively Schein (1984) argues that culture can be a solution to problems a group is faced with and therefore defines two natures of difficulties, ‘external adaptation problems’ and ‘internal integration problems’. Although both sets of problems are diverse they are still highly connected with each other. The external adaptation problems are difficulties which determine the survival of the group in the environment, hence the external surroundings of the group (Schein, 1984). There are certain environmental aspects which cannot be controlled by the group, such as the climate, natural conditions, economic and political disruptions. When problems occur the group can use the problem-solving circle (see Table 1, adapted from Schein, 1984) in order to find solutions which will help the group to survive. For each stage there is a solution characteristic of the groups own former experiences or ways of doing things based on learned assumptions, and these make up a major portion of that group’s culture. The different agreements within each stage can be modified by the group depending on the duration of their existence and their goals along the way (Schein, 1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Agreement upon the primary task, core mission and latent function of the group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Agreement on goals, which are the precise reflection of the core mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Means of accomplishing goals</em></td>
<td>Agreement upon means to be used in order to accomplishing goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring performance</td>
<td>Agreement on how to measure how well the group is doing beside its goals and targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Agreement on corrective strategies in the case when the group does not accomplishing its goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Problems of external adaptation and survival (adapted from Schein, 1984, p.9)
Apart from the external difficulties, problems of internal integration can occur within certain parts of the culture which have to be addressed and managed for an organisation to survive (Table 2, adapted from Schein, 1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Common language and conceptual categories, since communication and understanding are vital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>Group boundaries and principles for inclusion and exclusion, since membership needs to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and status</td>
<td>Order and rules for how one comes to, maintains, and loses power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Rules of co-worker relationships, relationships between the sexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards and punishment</td>
<td>Agreement upon good and bad behaviour, what should be rewarded and what gets disciplined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Give meaning to unexplainable events, to avoid concern of dealing with the unexplainable and uncontrollable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Problems of internal integration (adapted from Schein, 1984, p. 11)

These dimensions need to be agreed upon within the culture to be effective and assure a functioning organisational structure (Schein, 1984).

2.4.2 Metaphors for culture

According to Alvesson (2002) the concept of organisational culture may be used as a metaphor for organisation, with a potential for developing new ideas and forms of understanding. By seeing organisations as such a better understanding can be created of the inside of organisations regarding the opinions, state of mind, principles and actions. Therefore he addresses eight metaphors for culture (summarised from Alvesson, 2002):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture as:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exchange-regulator</td>
<td>Agreements and rewards are controlled, assisted by shared value and reference system, and corporate memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compass</td>
<td>Give sense of direction and procedures for priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social glues</td>
<td>Shared ideas and values as sources of identification with the group/organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred-cow</td>
<td>Basic rules and values direct towards fundamentals of organisation which members are devoted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect-regulator</td>
<td>Offers guidelines for emotions and affections and the way they should be expressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorder</td>
<td>Uncertainty and disintegration as key aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinders</td>
<td>Un- or non-conscious parts of culture, taken-for-granted ideas lead to blind spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World closure</td>
<td>Ideas and meanings create stable world within which people adjust, unable to critically explore and transcend existing social constructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Metaphors for culture (own figure, summarised from Alvesson, 2002)

Alvesson (2002) further states five basic dimensions in which he compares his stated metaphors. The organisational culture, hence the metaphors, can be placed within these dimensions.

- **Functionalism versus Non-functionalism**
  Within the functionalism dimension, culture inspires efficiency of the organisation and welfare of the stakeholders; therefore the metaphors compass and exchange-regulator are present within it. The non-functionalism position is divided into three sections, the agnostic, sectional functionalist and dysfunctionalist position. Within the agnostic position, culture does not fulfil any positive function and can be seen as the affect-regulator and non-order metaphor. The sectional functionalist position is only functional for some members and culture is seen as the world-closure metaphor. Within the last position, dysfunctionalist, culture does not fulfil any function and is a blinders metaphor.

- **Objectivism versus Subjectivism**
  Culture within the objectivism dimension, is viewed as fixed in systems, structures, and other objective structures, and the metaphors within this dimension are the exchange-regulator, compass and social-glue metaphors. On the other hand, within the subjectivism dimension, the social reality is seen as fixed in the minds and consciousness of the members of society. The blinders metaphor is placed within this dimension.
• Cognition versus Emotion
The cognition dimension understands culture as relying on its practical purpose and self-interest as the only important drives and places it as an exchange-regulator metaphor. On the other hand the emotion dimension includes emotional aspects of culture and contains the metaphors sacred-cow, affect regulator and blinders.

• Free will versus Determinism
This dimension focuses on how culture is controlled by people, and how people are controlled by culture. Within the free will dimension culture is controlled by people, and the affect-regulator, blinder metaphors, world-closure, and social glue metaphor show people within the organisation as in charge of the culture. On the other hand, within the determinism dimension, culture states the active engagement of members as not given (people controlled by culture) and it therefore includes a compass and exchange-regulator metaphor.

• Pro-management versus Anti-management
Within the pro-management dimension, culture as an exchange-regulator, compass and social-glue metaphor is praising and accepting. On the other hand culture as world-closure is critical and therefore anti-management.

(Alvesson, 2002)

Besides the mentioned, the remaining metaphors are placed in between the different dimensions, for they do not hold one specific position (Alvesson, 2002).

2.4.3 Cultural diversity
In addition to Alvesson’s (2002) metaphors and dimensions for culture, Hofstede, et al. (1990) have defined organisational culture dimensions, which can help to identify the type of culture present in an organisation:

• Process-oriented versus Results-oriented
Process-oriented employees focus on the process (means) of a certain work which has to be carried out. On the other hand the results-oriented employee identifies with what has to be done to achieve a certain internal goal.

• Employee-oriented versus Job-oriented
The employee-oriented dimension includes the organisation’s responsibility for the wellbeing of its employees. The job-oriented organisation on the other hand is more focused on performing and finishing a task.
• Parochial versus Professional
The parochial employees identify with the organisation itself. Within the professional dimension, the employees' identity is solely determined by the type of their job.

• Open-systems versus Closed-systems
The open-systems dimension is open to insiders as well as to outsiders, and generates believe that the organisation can be made accessible to everybody. Oppositely the closed-systems dimension does not immediately welcome new employees, since it sometimes holds believe that no one fits in the organisation.

• Loose versus Tight-control
The main concern of this dimension is the amount of internal structuring, control and discipline among employees of an organisation. A loose organisation has an informal (easy-going) internal structure, little control and discipline, and a lack of predictability. On the other hand tight control organisations reveal the reverse, since the employees of this dimension are, for example, punctual and cost-conscious.

• Pragmatic versus Normative
This dimension deals with customer orientation. The pragmatic dimension is market-driven; hence it focuses on performing the organisation’s procedures without emphasising on its rules. The employees within the normative organisation see their task towards the consumer as the implementation of unbreakable rules. Hence the emphasis rests on the compliance with the organisations procedures (rules).

(Hofstede, et al., 1990)

The above mentioned dimensions refer to cultural diversity within an organisational structure and can be used to analyse and determine the type of culture within an organisation and the way they adapt to new employees and cultures. Hofstede, et al. (1990) specify that the particular sides of the dimensions should not be weight in terms of good or bad since the choice of the different dimensions can be strategic. Hence a cultural dimension which is an advantage for one company can be a disadvantage for another (Hofstede, et al., 1990).

2.5 Organisational learning
To be competitive or survive and thrive in a global changing economy requires an organisation to continually attempt to improve and transform
itself (Burgelman, 1990; Senge, 1990, cited in Levinthal and March, 1993). In order to guarantee this, Senge (1992 cited in Ions and Minton, 2012) proposes that organisations must enable individual, team and organisational learning by striving to become learning organisations. According to Pearn, et al. (1995 cited in Blackman, 2006) measures like reflection, innovation, continuous evaluation, quality improvement and timely responses to internal and external environments are important for a textile company when seeking to improve effectiveness and performance. In general, organisational learning is said to embody a change in organisational knowledge, involving either adding to, transforming or reducing organisational knowledge (Schulz, 2001). Furthermore the term describes the continuous process of how an organisation is formed by complex learning processes that involve the combination of current experiences and knowledge with those gained in the past (Schulz, 2001). Ivanovic and Collin (2006) characterised organisational learning as the purpose to generate acceptance of changes and improvements including actions to increase enthusiasm, energy and innovative ideas among employees. In addition, it encompasses activities within an organisation that train further and encourage personal development of employees (Ivanovic and Collin, 2006). The most important component of organisational learning is said to be the concept of ‘absorptive capacity’ (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). It is stated to capture organisational competences that comprise of the ability to make use of prior related knowledge. According to Cohen and Levinthal (1990) this type of knowledge can comprise of basic or expert skills, or else sharing a language. In order to recognise, understand, and make use of external knowledge for internal adaptation and development, prior related knowledge is needed (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). In addition an interdependency of an organisations’ absorptive capacity and its individual members was mentioned which presumes an important role of an individual’s absorptive capacity and the transfer of knowledge within and across subunits for the organisations’ competences (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). According to Schulz (2001) a lack of shared language, values, knowledge, and understanding negatively influences organisational learning. Therefore recommendations exist for both organisations and individuals to share mental models in order to enable common understandings, shared meaning and a development of knowledge (Blackman, 2006). In addition Grant (1996) emphasises that a higher level and sophistication of common knowledge among a group of people increases the integration and understanding. Experience is an important prerequisite for organisational learning. (Levinthal and March, 1993) According to Stalk, et al. (1992, cited in Levinthal and March, 1993), capabilities of learning that contribute to the success of organisations include responding to experience by changing their technologies, forms,
and practices. Different types of experience exist, which a company can draw from directly or indirectly (according to Schulz, 2001).

- **Performance feedback**
  This group of models is based on the idea that the experience of problems leads to the learning of organisations (Schulz, 2001). It encompasses learning steps an organisation goes through starting with the realisation of a problem; followed by the initiate search for possible solutions; the acceptance of solutions which solve the problem; and ending with the maintenance of good solutions for future use. Organisations adapt their behaviour when their performance falls short of aspirations (a problem occurs) followed by the adjustment of targets of organisations (and of individuals) according to achieved performance.

- **Rare experiences**
  Organisations can learn and react to rare events with the help of different strategies. These include attention to multiple observers and multiple interpretations, simulating experience, and learning from near-accidents.

- **Disrupted experience**
  Organisations can make use of stable routines to contribute to consistent organisational performance. However, a change in these core routines would cause disruption in terms of competency and links to the environment which cause a learning effect and actions to solve disruption.

- **Diversity**
  Different levels of diversity (multinational experience, products and environmental factors) can influence organisational learning positively or negatively. Moderate levels of diversity are stated being most conductive to learning (Schulz, 2001). On the other hand, low levels of diversity are said to provide too little stimuli. However, high levels of diversity might lead to sensory overload, for instance, it could exceed the information processing capabilities of management teams and cause a lack of understanding.

  (Schulz, 2001)

As stated by Senge (1990, cited in Levinthal and March 1993) executives should have the ability to examine and use their own experience in order to enable learning, and the exploitation of knowledge gained from experience of all members of the organisation. Following this, McGill, Slocum and Lei (1992) stressed the importance that managers consider...
their own values, background, and experiences equal to others in order to process the different levels of experience right. In this context an educated incapacity is mentioned. It results out of cultural-functional restriction and ethnocentricity and reduces the ability of organisations and managers to learn. Furthermore it is emphasised that the consideration of experience can be narrowed by the drive of control managers tend to have (McGill, et al. 1992). In addition, Schein (1990) explained that with the learning process being shared, the same applies to assumptions and experience of a group where outcomes will reflect a collective work considering all, the leader’s and the individuals’ assumptions. Furthermore Kim (1993) suggested that individual learning influences organisational learning by expressing and sharing of individual mental models which contribute to the shared meaning and competence in an organisation. According to Schulz (2001) organisational learning has further limitations. The study by March (1991 cited in Schulz, 2001) explores the self-limiting nature of organisational learning by studying the influence of two modes of adaptation. The first mode, exploration, incorporates experimentation, risk taking, and innovation, while the second mode, exploitation, describes the re-use of existing knowledge and gradual adjustment of knowledge (March 1991, cited in Schulz, 2001). March (1991 cited in Schulz, 2001) argues that companies either lack in exploitation or exploration, coming to the conclusion that exploitation drives out exploration as it provides decision makers with more certainty, speed and clarity of feedback. According to March (1991 cited in Schulz, 2001) exploration is less attractive because it is slow, too imprecise and lacks in clarity of feedback. An excess of either exploration or exploitation would lead to a corresponding failure or success trap (Levinthal and March, 1993). This can be solved with organisations cycling partly exploitation and partly exploration to create a balance between these two modes (Chiva, 2013). Other problems in organisational learning mentioned are the disregard of the big picture and the tendency to overlook failures or underestimate them (Levinthal and March, 1993). Most learning, according to Schulz (2001), happens in environments made up of other learners, hence creating learning communities (‘communities of practice’). Thereby analysis of the interrelationship of competing learners (e.g. weaker and dominant companies) revealed imbalances in learning with positive learning effects for weaker companies while dominant firms were at a disadvantage. At the same time multiple learners and common adaptation are argued to reduce intellectual capacity and increase unpredictability (Schulz, 2001). According to Senge (1990, cited in Frost, 2014) not success but failure is the main factor providing the highest learning experience in organisational learning. Senge (1990, cited in Frost, 2014) suggests that the profit of learning from mistakes must be understood and used more effectively. Levitt and March (1996 cited in Frost, 2014) argue that success is not the
best indicator for learning as it is highly depended on interpretation and aspirations. In addition they claim that both success and failure can create superstitious learning when being linked to wrong actions (Levitt and March 1996, cited in Frost, 2014). According to Levitt and March (1996 cited in Frost, 2014) real organisational learning is not the result from success or failure criteria but from the examination of information that has been generated from actions.

2.5.1 Forms of organisational learning

Based on Chiva (2013) three main types of organisational learning exist zero learning, adaptive learning and generative learning.

Zero learning
Understood as a conditioned response to impulses, zero learning involves the response to stimuli which Bateson (1972 cited in Chiva, 2013) describes as not implying changes based on experience or information. Adapted from Tsakanikos (2006 cited in Chiva, 2013), the relation to associative learning is emphasised which is described as a process whereby an association between two stimuli or between behaviour and stimuli is learned. Two forms of associative learning exist, operant conditioning and classical conditioning (Bitterman, et al., 1983, cited in Chiva, 2013). Operant conditioning is driving for change of certain behaviour by reinforcing or punishing it until the probability of occurrence has altered (Skinner, 1938, cited in Chiva, 2013). In regard to organisational or individual work it describes the unconscious learning by accustoming, performing routines or complying with rules and norms (Chiva, 2013). In classical conditioning a neutral stimulus and an unconditioned stimulus are associated simultaneously (Skinner, 1938, cited in Chiva, 2013). Nonetheless zero learning might include imitative, social, observational or vicarious learning which is said to be the most characteristic learning process of a human being (Chiva, 2013). It encompasses observing, retaining and replicating a behaviour executed by others but not generating new knowledge (Chiva, 2013).

Adaptive learning
According to Chiva (2013) the second type of organisational learning is adaptive learning. Single loop or adaptive learning is considered as the ability to detect and correct errors or improve procedures by selecting from a given set of alternatives (Chiva, 2013). In addition it characterises the approach of adjusting, refining and improving existing competencies, technologies and paradigms while maintaining present policies, beliefs and assumptions (Chiva, 2013). Furthermore it is used to develop future strategies and to better existing products, services and processes
considering prior successes which serve as a basis for improvement (Ions and Minton, 2012). The components that are essential for the effectiveness of adaptive learning are memory, form of the search process, speed of learning and feedback (Lomi, Larsen and Ginsberg, 1997). According to Ions and Minton (2012) adaptive learning promotes stability and little risk while solving problems of an organisation. In addition McGill, et al. (1992) argue that adaptive organisations experience events only one level at a time which reveals its limitation. In addition the authors emphasise on an ongoing game of ‘catch-up’ with competitors that make use of the generative learning process.

**Generative learning**

The third type of organisational learning is described as a learning process that involves the modification of underlying norms, policies and objectives of an organisation and is referred to as double loop, reflective or generative learning (Chiva, 2013). Cochrane (2004 cited in Chiva, 2013) adds that this process challenges personal beliefs and assumptions. Senge (1990 cited in Chiva, 2013) argues that generative learning requires new ways of looking at the world and considers the concept of metanoia (Greek for fundamental change: meta= transcendence and noia= mind) to be a synonym for generative learning. Considered to be transformative this process questions how and why things are done and encourages continuous change of what already exists (Ions and Minton, 2012). It requires intelligence, creativity and intuition to generate something new (Senge 1990, cited in Chiva, 2013). Furthermore Chiva (2013) considers generative learning to involve a holistic understanding of anything and anyone one interacts with. According to Ions and Minton (2012) generative learning encourages continuous experimentation and risk. According to McGill, et al. (1992) five dimensions within management practices exist which are part of generative learning.

- **Systemic thinking**
  This dimension encompasses the ability to see holistically; considering interrelations of actions across and between the organisation and external forces. It allows the coexistence of relationships based on information, goods, service exchanges, and feelings with traditional line authority-based relationships. Sharing of accurate organisational information is important.

- **Personal efficacy**
  A clear vision paired with active learning intentions are features to describe personal commitment to participate in organisational development and personal growing.
• Openness
Management practices that promote openness are the termination of
the need for control; the availability of information to all members of the
company, and the commitment to cultural-functional diversity.

• Empathy
Describes the ability to empathise and handle different ethics in dealing
with employees and customers/clients. It involves the appreciation and
motivation of worker’s participation outside the workplace.

• Creativity
This dimension considers personal flexibility and a willingness to take
risks to be particularly important aspects for learning. These include
the ability to modify own behaviour, habits and routines according to
changes in current realities. Furthermore results from managerial
actions are used as feedback to learn from the past and increase
creative contributions of both managers and employees.

(McGill, et al., 1992)

Moreover McGill, et al. (1992) compare the two types of organisational
learning, adaptive and generative learning, which are visualised in the
following table (table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic characteristics</th>
<th>Adaptive learning</th>
<th>Generative learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core competence</td>
<td>Better sameness</td>
<td>Meaningful difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of strength</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>Market share</td>
<td>Market creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational perspective</td>
<td>Compartmentalisation (SBU)</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development dynamic</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Structural characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control systems</td>
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<td>Power bases</td>
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<td>Integrating mechanisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
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<td>Communications flow</td>
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<th>Human resources practices</th>
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<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal system</td>
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<td>Reward basis</td>
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</table>

Focus of rewards
Distribution of scarcity
Rank and title
Within division/function
Not rewarded

Status symbols
Making a difference
Rank and title
Across divisions/functions
Integral part of performance

Mobility patterns
Not rewarded

Monitoring
Not rewarded

26
The main seven contributions in the field of organisational learning are a collection of definitions which Easterby-Smith, Antonacopoulou, Simm and Lyles (2004) reflect upon:

**Single and double loop learning**
This contribution distinguished two levels of learning within organisational learning. These two levels are single loop learning and double loop learning, a concept developed by Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). It mainly discusses from what organisations learn best. Single loop learning involves learning from gradual changes and improvements while double loop learning considers challenging and radical adjustments of deep-rooted assumptions and norms of an organisation. Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) mentioned that both levels of learning are necessary, although organisations come across single loop learning more often. In case organisations face rapid market or technological changes double loop learning is required (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004).

**Espoused theory and theory-in-practice**
This contribution by Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) clarifies the barriers for double loop learning. It refers to psychoanalytic theory in terms of defence mechanisms of individuals to prevent them from unpleasant and threatening information. Besides, it indicates executives or organisations as subduers which hold back information that could bring incremental change to organisational values and routines (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). It discusses two types of theories of actions (Argyris, 1995). Espoused theory is defined as the theory that individuals adopted while maintaining own beliefs, attitudes and values (Argyris, 1995). Theory-in-use is the theory that individuals actually made use of. (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) According to Argyris (1995, p. 3) “the challenge is to help individuals transform their espoused theories into theories-in-use by learning a new set of skills and a new set
of governing values”, thus overcoming organisational defensive practices and encourage double-loop learning.

**Unlearning**

Unlearning refers to the concept of unlearning by Hedberg (1981 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) that connects organisational learning with destabilisation. It explains the potential contradiction between organisation and disorganisation and the related concept of organisational forgetting. Furthermore it suggests that organisations are incapable to forget, creating a major barrier to learning (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004).

**The Learning Organisation**

Based on the book of Peter Senge (1990 cited in Mason, 2014) this contribution describes the advantages the learning organisation has. Members of a learning organisation learn to learn collectively to improve the organisation as a whole. Employees learn to express own ideas to contribute to improve their work environment from the traditional authoritarian workplace philosophy to one that heralds human potential (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). Senge (1990 cited in Mason, 2014) defined five key disciplines that function as guidelines of how to develop a learning organisation:

- **Systems Thinking**
  Emphasises the holistic view and distinguishes patterns instead of conceptualising change as isolated events. It proclaims a shift from being unconnected to interconnect to the whole, and from blaming our problems on something external to the awareness that actions within an organisation can create problems as well.

- **Personal Mastery**
  Is stated to start with the commitment to lifelong learning, and builds up the base for a learning organisation. It includes being more realistic, striving for personal development to the highest level possible, and focusing on a sense of commitment and excitement to attain performance capability.

- **Mental Models**
  Existing deeply held assumptions and hierarchy thinking prevent new powerful insights and organisational practices from becoming realised. The process of managing mental models can be divided into several steps, starting with self-reflection; tracking down deeply held generalisations, followed by understanding, how such manifested beliefs dramatically influence the way we operate. Without the awareness and focus on openness, real change is stated to never take place.
• Building Shared Visions
  Features that visions cannot be dictated to others, as personal visions of individual employees may not agree with a leader's vision. The need for a genuine vision is itemised that encourages commitment at all times and has the power to bind an organisation together.

• Team Learning
  It points out the importance of teamwork and collective learning in modern organisations. It describes a process of developing the ability to create desired results and work together to attain the goals.
  
  (Senge, 1990 cited in Mason, 2014)

Socio-cultural perspective
This contribution is seen as a reaction to learning models obtained from cognitive psychology and management science, and to the claim that human contact within a social environment is significant and motivates organisational learning (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). Ethnographic and other research methods for determining organisational learning processes have been legitimised and accentuated. In addition this school has concerned practice, politics and situated learning (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004).

Learning across boundaries
This contribution is said to have resulted from economic developments in Asia and Eastern Europe. This research work has emphasised the significance of the creation and transfer of knowledge as a strategic necessity. Economic developments in Asia and Eastern Europe are said to have caused this contribution which incorporated several earlier developments around culture and knowledge transfer. It enhanced the awareness of how significant the learning perspective is among a growing community of management researchers in Asia (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004).

Knowledge, Learning and Competitiveness
This contribution examined the potential link between knowledge, learning and competitiveness. For instance, the ability to learn faster than competitors has been suggested the only sustainable competitive advantage (de Geus 1988, cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). Furthermore this contribution emphasised on important concepts of how flows of knowledge can contribute to the competitive advantage of a company (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004).
3 Methodological framework

The following chapter clarifies the research design, containing the study type and research strategy which reveals a case study type and a qualitative strategy. Furthermore the structure of the study and the qualitative data analysis are included which deliver a better understanding on how the authors have proceeded in the data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Study type

This thesis uses a case study research design with an exemplifying case of a single person within a textile organisation. Bryman (2008) describes an exemplifying case (representative, typical case) as a case which represents a broader category to which it belongs and its context is suitable to answer certain research questions. The data will be collected through theoretical research and through executing questionnaires with one specific employee of Eton AB. According to Bryman (2008) a case study tends to examine a certain situation and therefore analyse a specific case. Accordingly this thesis will examine the way a single employee is integrated into a Swedish textile company operating on an international level in regard to intercultural communication. The authors have chosen this study type, since the chosen employee represents a specific case of an international employee working in a Swedish company and therefore represents a broader category.

3.1.2 Research strategy and method

According to Bryman (2008) a case study research design can have either a quantitative or a qualitative research strategy but has the tendency to associate more with qualitative methods. This thesis will use a qualitative research strategy in order to uncover the experience one specific employee has made with intercultural interrelations within Eton AB. The authors have chosen a qualitative research strategy since the personal experience of one participant should be the focus of this study. Furthermore theoretical research will allude to literature available online as well as in the library of the University of Borås. This is necessary to find relevant data and theories, which are connected to each other regarding the aspect of intercultural communication, which serve as a basis for the questionnaires later on. For the data analysis, the authors decided to use self-completion/self-administrative questionnaires to manage their research, since no interviewer is present to affect the participant’s answers and perspectives (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore open questions are used within the questionnaires in order to avoid the limitation of answers and allow the participant to answer the stated questions without restrictions.
Although the authors are not present to aid with the questionnaire, the participant has the possibility to contact the authors if further questions emerge or if questions are not understood. This qualitative data collection is executed in order to uncover the experience one international employee makes with miscommunication and preconceptions within a Swedish textile company. The findings in the thesis will be held anonymous regarding name, age and workplace position in order to protect the individual’s opinions. The participant has been selected due to her experience in working in a Swedish textile company and having a different cultural background compared to the Swedish culture of the company.

### 3.2 Research design criteria

Research design criteria are principles for measuring the quality of social research and include validity, reliability and replication. Validity, as defined by Bryman (2008, p.32) is “concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research”. Main types of validity are distinguished into internal validity and external validity (Bryman, 2008).

Since this thesis is a qualitative research project the definitions of the main terms of validity are the following. According to Bryman (2008) internal validity measures how well the researchers’ developed concepts, match their observations. In general, the internal validity within this study could be affected negatively by the authors due to drawing own conclusions and own interpretations from the empirical data and the gathering of theory that might be unreliable. The external validity applies if findings can be generalised. Bryman (2008) argues that external validity in qualitative research is reduced due to the use of case study design, but the authors use an exemplifying case study which is representative for a broader category. Secondly, Bryman (2008) defines reliability as whether the results of a study are repeatable, and whether the measures which are devised for concepts in the social sciences are dependable. Bryman (2008) distinguishes two forms, internal and external reliability. In regard to this study, internal reliability states that a higher number of observers would require that all members of the research team agree upon what has been observed visually and audibly, in order for the study to be replicable. Within this study, the authors see the internal reliability enhanced, since the different point of views can be merged and hence enrich the results. On the other hand external reliability, according to LeCompte and Goetz (1982, cited in Bryman, 2008), states that social settings and circumstances of an initial study cannot be kept at the same level which makes a study not replicable. Moreover conducting a case study research, according to Bryman (2008), reduces the external validity. Nevertheless it is stated that general assumptions of the findings from a single case to other cases is uncertain, but still possible, if the circumstances are similar.
(Bryman, 2008). Hence, only if a researcher adopts a similar social role to that of the original researcher a study is considered to be replicable and therefore have external reliability. Furthermore the authors want to emphasise that the previous study mentioned beforehand, merely initiated the idea for this thesis and the study itself and should not be considered as an essential part of it. Therefore this case study can be replicated with a similar setting without prior knowledge regarding the previously conducted study.

3.3 Structure of the study

According to Bryman (2008) a case study with qualitative research uses an inductive approach, which means that the theory derives from empirical data, hence theory is the outcome of the research. Therefore this thesis uses an inductive approach. The research questions are formulated in order to gather the needed theory. As a result the findings from the theoretical sampling are used as a basis for questionnaires which are conducted with a selected participant. As a final point the authors analyse the results from the questionnaires in order to answer stated research questions, generalise theories out of the findings, and provide a conclusion. In case the analysis of the data gives room for follow up question, the questionnaires are sent out to the participant once more in order to generate new data. The authors have developed the following figure (Figure 1) in order to summarise the outline of the study:
3.4 Qualitative data analysis method

The theoretical research will refer to literature available online as well as in the library of the University of Borås; this qualitative data collection will be examined together with the mentioned questionnaires. The collected data will be analysed through qualitative data analysis, merely using the approach of grounded theory. The analysis will be undertaken regarding the research questions and the given theory while analysing the information from the company Eton AB and the participant’s view on certain events and experience. It is important for the authors to display how both, theory and the results are linked and which theory can be generated from them (Bryman, 2008). Thereby, the authors repeatedly refer back and forth between analysis and the collected data, eventually conducting more questionnaires with the participant (Bryman, 2008). Further contact between the authors and the participant is necessary if more information is required from the participant or if the participant does not understand the intended questions.
4 Result

In the following chapter the findings from the self-completion/self-administrative questionnaires (appendix I and II) are presented. The original answers given by the participant were collected, reorganised and summarised in the following section.

4.1 General and Culture

Regarding this case study multiple questionnaires have been send out to an employee of Eton AB. The female participant originates from the Netherlands but has been living in Sweden since 1999 and working for Eton AB for four years (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). She can speak several languages including Swedish, English and Dutch (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The participant states that within Eton AB many cultures are present but the Swedish culture dominates, therefore the main spoken language is Swedish (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). As Eton AB is working internationally the English language is still very important and employees should be able to speak it fluently, since general information for all employees is sent out in English (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The participant described the integration into the organisation of employees with a different national and cultural background as smoothly without any issue that are known or official (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Although proud to be different, the participant sometimes feels like “the odd one out” within the company, due to her different cultural background, but she also feels that the group dynamic within the company is really good and that she felt included and accepted right away (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). The participant replied that there are no conflicts which can be related to intercultural miscommunication or something similar to cultural differences within the company, but certain misunderstandings (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The cause for such misunderstandings is stated to be the fact that not everybody working in the company speaks English as well as others (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). To the question of where such misunderstandings occur, specifically asking if it is between employer and employees, employee and employee or upper and lower management or externally when negotiating with suppliers and other international business partners, the participant revealed that this type of misunderstanding occurs among all mentioned situations (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Although misunderstandings occur within the group almost all members have been educated with a leadership course, many of the members speak the same ‘language’ and understand
that feedback (either positive or negative) is a very important part of it, as a person can grow from it (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The authors wanted to know of a specific example of a problem that was caused by intercultural miscommunication regarding language barriers or preconceptions towards other cultures and if these conflicts were solved. The participant answered that it is difficult to name a specific example or problem but being clear, asking many questions and writing in “easy” English are mentioned ideas that help avoiding or solving most of the misunderstandings that occur (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Information about how the participant personally prepares herself when meeting a foreign business partner in regard to language, non-verbal language and other, she replied that she does not prepare herself in a particular different way (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). She argues with the fact that she is Dutch and therefore is used to speaking different languages, this also helps her to adapt easily to changed situations and accept people the way they are (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Finally the participant states that working in the Netherlands compared to working in Sweden, regarding the business culture, is really quite similar. Nevertheless, she also states that discussions in the Netherlands would be more ‘out in the open’ and more direct, and decisions (good or bad) are taken faster in meetings (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March).

4.2 Organisation related

Following the authors wanted to know whether employees within Eton AB have preconceptions towards other cultures, if a situation exists when the participant could notice these prejudices and if prejudices changed or were confirmed. The participant stated that according to her Eton AB does not have any preconceptions towards other cultures (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). To the question if measures taken by the company involve training in international management and cross-cultural understanding she replied with a no, but extended her answer with the fact that most employees have attended leadership courses (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Such employees were defined as the ones in Sweden (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). According to her, all leadership courses have created a better understanding for each other, each other’s responsibilities and working environment within the company (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). According to her a leader is necessary to take processes to a higher level and a good leader lets employees grow (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). A good leader should be able to recognise situations
and react to them as such (situational leadership) (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). According to the participant Eton AB can be described as a company which gives their employees freedom with responsibility (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April) and that Eton AB is very open to discuss its challenges and goals and includes all employees in the company’s culture and company values during good meetings and information forums (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Furthermore the participant has noticed changes in business structure, which were made to enhance the performance of the organisation and did not follow a certain error, but she says that the company has solutions prepared if errors occur (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April).
5 Discussion

Previous chapters revealed the main aspects of the used theory, and the results of the empirical data collection; subsequently it is important to display how both, theory and the results are linked and which solutions can be drawn from them. In order to answer the research questions the empirical findings will be further analysed, in terms of intercultural communication, their culture and organisational learning, to find out what attributes to the positive findings.

5.1 Intercultural communication errors within Eton AB

5.1.1 Language barriers

Intercultural communication is defined as the communication between people with different cultural backgrounds. Chitakornkijjsil (2010) and Tagreed (2012) agree that it can cause miscommunication and communication barriers the more dissimilar the cultures of the receiver and the communicator are. The intercultural communication within Eton AB and with it the language barriers and preconceptions, is not as negatively present but nonetheless still given since the participant stated that certain misunderstandings occur due to different levels of the language (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). According to the problems of internal integration by Schein (1984) and Schulz’s (2001) view on organisational learning, the participant and the company both showed that they have adapted to this communication problem, by adapting to either the native language or the international business language, and showed how important it is to have a common language for communication and understanding. Furthermore both cultures, the Swedish for Eton AB and the Dutch for the participant, can be placed as low-context cultures and according to Hall (cited in Kittler, et al., 2011) low-context cultures focus merely on verbal information with less attention to non-verbal information. Hence this underlines the importance of a shared language within a company. Within Eton AB the main language is Swedish with the Swedish culture dominating but still several cultures are present (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). As the company is conducting business internationally English is important as part of the business language and employees are encouraged to speak it fluently moreover since general information for all employees is sent out in English (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The company did adapt to its international status by introducing the English language into the business operations and by providing English language courses to employees in the late 1940s. Moreover in the late 1950s the company eliminated language barriers, when its name ‘Skjortfabriken Special’ was changed to ‘Eton AB’ in order
to make it easier for international people to pronounce the company’s name (Eton AB, 2014). This name change and the providing of language courses shows that, according to Schein (1984), the company is willing to adapt to the environment in which it operates or wants to operate in order to survive within the surrounding. Furthermore the company shows that the approach to be more international is important for the company; it has shown early on that it was willing to work internationally and in order to do so change and adapt the company’s business culture (Eton AB, 2014). On the other hand the participant has been living in Sweden since 1999 and has learned Swedish in order to be able to communicate and get accustomed to the Swedish culture (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April), which Engelhard (2014) sees as a competence needed in order to establish a successful intercultural interrelation. Although the English language is required among employees, the participant replied that still certain misunderstandings occur, due to different levels of the language (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The participant tries to avoid or solve these by ‘being clear, asking many questions and writing in ‘easy’ English’ (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). The participant’s willingness to accustom to a certain culture and language without neglecting her own shows that she has developed intercultural competences and is able to function in a different culture. The participant has shown the ability to understand both the culture of the other and one’s own culture (subjective and objective) (Codreanu, 2012). Nevertheless this awakens the necessity for more educating in terms of language since a common language and no miscommunication are vital for the communication flow within a business culture (Schein, 1984).

5.1.2 Preconceptions

Most cultures (national and organisational) perceive the values of other cultures to be lesser, when different cultures converge (Adler, 1983); hence preconceptions emerge among members of the organisational culture. Preconceptions within Eton AB could not be detected in a large amount within this thesis. This can be due to the presence of the participant’s intercultural competences and the company’s way of integrating new members into the organisational culture. Intercultural competences are defined by Bennet (1998 cited in Codreanu, 2012) as the ability to understand both one’s own and others’ subjective and objective culture. The participant has shown this by understanding the language, behavioural patterns, and values within Eton AB (Subjective) and by instituting artefacts (objective) of the Swedish culture. In order to acquire intercultural competence and skills of cultural intelligence intercultural managers require the desire and ability to socialise and work
well with people of different nationalities (cf. Skills of an international manager by Phillips, 1993). In the context of preconceptions she mostly relates to interpersonal skills. Next to the willingness to learn the host language, the participant has shown that she is non-judgmental, since the participant has a desire and ability to socialise and work well with people of different nationalities (cultural empathy) (Phillips, 1993).

5.2 Organisational Culture within Eton AB

Apart from the national cultures present within Eton AB it is important to analyse the organisational culture in order to find out how intercultural communication influences it. According to Schein (1984) the strength of a culture can be defined in terms of the equality and stability of membership and the length and amount of shared experiences within the group. Viewing Eton AB as a group, which as a company was established in 1928, the shared experience of this group and the stability of it tend to lead to a strong culture within (Schein, 1984). The company ensured to have a stable and strong organisational culture by increasing group dynamics and focusing on sharing norms which is vital according to Alvesson (2002). Schein (1984) has stated aspects within culture which have to be addressed and managed in order for an organisation to survive. Regarding intercultural communication the most important aspects are ‘language’ and ‘boundaries’. Since language within Eton AB was already analysed in the previous chapter, ‘boundaries’ will be analysed in the following section. According to Schein (1984) an organisational culture needs to set group boundaries and principles for the inclusion or exclusion of new members. Eton AB shows that the inclusion of new members, by sharing the culture’s values and norms, can lead to fewer preconceptions towards other cultures. The participant confirmed that her integration into the company and the group was smooth and over a short period of time, therefore the culture of Eton AB was eager to include her as a new member (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Likewise Alvesson (2002) states that new members need to get accustomed to the values of the organisational culture. Subsequently individual characteristics are not emphasised. Respectively the participant has adjusted to the company’s values and has become a member of the company’s culture. The three different outcomes of including a new member (Schein, 1990) include a custodial orientation, creative individualism, and rebellion. Since the participant has become a member of Eton AB, including the adjustment to the company’s values, the participant can be placed in the custodial orientation since she has included the organisational culture’s assumptions completely. Additionally, Eton AB educates its employees with leadership courses to ensure the same level of values among the members of its culture and to minimise
misunderstandings and increase inclusion (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). According to the participant these courses have created a better understanding for each other, each other’s responsibilities and the overall working environment within the company (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). This emphasises the importance of cross-cultural management which is necessary to prevent or solve cultural conflicts and miscommunication in order to guarantee the sharing of language, knowledge and values and therefore organisational learning. In terms of definition it describes the coordination of the company with the main focus on cultural aspects (Engelhard, 2014).

5.2.1 Cultural Dimensions
In order to get a closer look at Eton AB, the authors have decided to place its organisational culture into relevant theoretical dimensions of organisational culture (developed by Alvesson, 2002 and Hofstede, et al., 1990). This helps with the analysis of Eton AB’s way of including and integrating employees with different cultural backgrounds. Eton AB’s culture can be placed as a metaphor for ‘social glue’ (Alvesson, 2002) since, as previously stated, the company gives their employees freedom with responsibility and is very open to discuss its challenges and goals. In addition Eton AB includes all employees regardless of cultural background in the company’s culture and company values, which agrees with Alvesson’s (2002) definition of a culture which shares its ideas and values as a source of identification with the organisation. The participant confirms this by feeling highly involved in the organisational culture instantaneously (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April) which can be due to Eton AB’s early attempts to include international and Swedish employees by for example providing English courses (Eton AB, 2014). With this the Swedish employees have a shared language with international employees and it makes the transition for new members outside the Swedish culture easier, hence the inclusion and adaptation of new employees is eased (Alvesson, 2002). Moreover Eton AB can include aspects from the metaphor ‘sacred-cow’, which states that basic rules and values direct towards fundamentals of organisation which members are devoted to (Alvesson, 2002). The founders of the company have established a good environment for their employees early on which guarantees motivation and good working results, and still dedicates itself to social interrelation and wellbeing of employees. Due to the metaphors ‘social-glue’ and ‘sacred-cow’ the dimensions which are mostly addressed with these metaphors, can be seen as dimensions which Eton AB is placed in. These dimensions can be seen as fitting, due to the results from
the empirical data which are summarised in Table 5 (adjusted from Alvesson, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Eton AB</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionalism versus Non-</td>
<td><em>Functionalism</em> culture inspires efficiency of the organisation</td>
<td>Eton AB can be placed most on the functionalism side, since certain aspects of the culture (the improved language spoken within it and the inclusion of employees with different cultural background) inspire efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>functionalism:</td>
<td><em>Non-functionalism</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Both metaphors are not</td>
<td>• agnostic position</td>
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<tr>
<td>specifically mentioned so it</td>
<td>• sectional functionalist position only functional for some members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be placed in between both</td>
<td>• dysfunctionalist position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>culture does not fulfil any function</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectivism</td>
<td>Culture is viewed as fixed in objective structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Includes emotional aspects of culture, not only focusing on practical</td>
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<td></td>
<td>purpose and self-interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The company focuses on the employees’ well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free will</td>
<td>Culture is controlled by people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active engagement of members in the organisation: giving employees freedom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>with responsibility when it comes to working within the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pro-management</td>
<td>Praising and accepting management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not critical towards the management as displayed by the participant when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stating leadership to be an important part of an organisation</td>
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Table 5: Dimensions of culture according to metaphors (own table, adjusted from Alvesson, 2002)

Hofstede, et al. (1990) has developed more dimensions which can be used to analyse the organisational culture and the way they adapt to new employees and cultures. The most important dimensions regarding this topic are ‘open-system versus closed-system’ and ‘employee-oriented versus job-oriented’ (Hofstede, et al., 1990). Among these the culture of
Eton AB can be placed in the ‘open system’ and ‘employee-oriented’ dimensions. The dimension of ‘open-system versus closed-system’ addresses the way an organisation can be accessed by new employees. The ‘open-system’, in which Eton AB’s culture can be placed, generates the belief that the organisation can be made accessible to everybody, according to Hofstede, et al. (1990). Since Eton AB, according to the participant, is eager to effortlessly integrate her into the company over a short period of time (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April), shows how open Eton AB is to include new members with a different cultural background. Within the second dimension ‘employee-oriented versus job-oriented’ Eton AB can be placed as ‘employee-oriented’, since it takes responsibility for the welfare of its employees, according to Hofstede, et al. (1990). This is expressed within Eton AB, as previously mentioned, the company is concerned about the employees wellbeing and social unity, which generates motivation and good work outcomes (Eton AB, 2014).

5.2.2 Interactions

The figure below (Figure 2) shows how Eton AB’s culture influences the interaction with surrounding groups and the way they influence its organisational culture.

![Figure 2: Interactions with culture (own figure)](image)

Cultural influences by present and new employees are minor, as Eton AB tries to establish a corporate culture acceptable to all employees. This is in line with Alvesson’s (2002) theory that new members need to become accustomed to the norms of the organisational culture, since constant change of its values, through influence by members, would cause a loss of its function. Nevertheless Eton AB was eager to include aspects of other
cultures into its own and might therefore be more open to include new members with a different cultural background (Eton AB, 2014). As stated by Alvesson (2002) organisational cultures are affected by the interaction with suppliers, customers, authorities and others which counteracts with the own given cultural understandings. Therefore organisational cultures need to find a way to cope with these differences in order to avoid errors (Alvesson, 2002). Since Eton AB has early on started to manufacture and distribute their products internationally, the company’s culture was influenced and altered by these interactions (Eton AB, 2014). These have led to an alteration of Eton AB’s own culture, hence the inclusion of an international business language, a new name and the overall appearance of the company. Although, constant change of an organisation’s values would cause a loss of its function (Alvesson, 2002), the change was needed in order for the company to survive on the global market and can hence be seen as a positive change. Nevertheless these alterations would not have taken place if the company’s founders and leaders would not have been willing to change certain aspects of the organisational culture. This underlines Alvesson’s (2002) theory that the most influential members within the organisational culture are leaders and managers. In conclusion Eton AB has a strong organisational culture, due to establishing equality and stability among all members and ensuring that all are included in the company’s culture and shared values. Likewise the company’s approach towards new members from another culture and the inclusion of such contributes towards a strong culture.

5.3 Organisational learning

The two concepts of organisational learning and a learning organisation are distinguished by most literature despite existing similarities (Ions and Minton, 2012). The authors came to the conclusion that similarities were too numerous to differentiate between organisational learning and the learning organisation, therefore both were merged.

5.3.1 Types of organisational learning

Organisational learning covers all activities within an organisation to train and encourage personal development of employees and involves actions to create improvements, acceptance for change and innovation among the employees of a textile company (Ivanovic and Collin, 2006). This activity could also be detected within Eton AB, where the company provides certain activities in order to enhance the employees’ development (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Accordingly three main types of organisational learning were mentioned that describe the reaction and response of a company to external and internal stimuli (Chiva, 2013) adaptive learning, generative learning and
zero learning. The third type, zero learning encompasses observing, retaining and replicating a behaviour executed by others but not generating new knowledge when responding to stimuli (Chiva, 2013), and is therefore irrelevant in this analysis. Apart from Chiva (2013) further theories can exist, that can form definitions for adaptive learning and generative learning. Figure 3 provides an overview of all relevant theories that form the two types of organisational learning.

March (1991 cited in Schulz, 2001) suggests that exploitation (the re-use of existing knowledge and gradual adjustment of knowledge) is preferred as it is easier to work with and gives clear feedback. This definition applies to the adaptive learning, also referred to as ‘single-loop learning’, which has the approach of adjusting, refining and improving existing competencies, technologies and paradigms while maintaining present policies, beliefs and assumptions (Chiva, 2013). As main components of adaptive learning memory, the form of the search process, speed of learning and feedback were mentioned (Lomi, et al., 1997). According to the participant, especially feedback is an important factor Eton AB considers in regard to the individual development of its employees and therefore also for the improvement of organisational performance (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). Senge (1990 cited in Chiva, 2013) states that generative learning, also called ‘double-loop learning’ is commanding new ways of looking at the world and connects it to the concept of metanoia (fundamental change involving the mind). This description can be associated with exploration, one of the two modes of adaptation by March (1991 cited in Schulz, 2001). Exploration stands for experimenting, risk taking and innovation. Besides, McGill, et al. (1992) stated five dimensions within management practices which are considered being part of generative learning. One dimension is creativity which emphasises on personal flexibility and a willingness to take risks. Moreover these risks include the ability to modify own behaviour, habits and routines according to changes in current realities. The results from these managerial actions are used as feedback to learn from the past and increase creative contributions of both managers and employees. In
connection to Eton AB the participant said that the importance of feedback (either positive or negative) for both employees and executives is understood (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). Considering both characterisations of adaptive and generative learning, it becomes clear that feedback is an important measure for both types. It reveals the possibility that both types are used by the company. Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) have mentioned that both levels of learning, adaptive and generative learning, are necessary for a company. McGill, et al. (1992) supports this statement by adding that generative learning alone would be an insufficient condition of corporate success. Considering the statement of the participant, Eton AB actively changes business structures to enhance performance and effectiveness without following a certain error while still being prepared when inaccuracies occur (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). In accordance with the aspect of reacting to rapid changes in the environment, the information reveals that the company is using a ‘generative type’ of organisational learning. Furthermore, McGill, et al. (1992) compares features of adaptive learning and generative learning and thus visualises the differences of the two types. Hence it becomes clear that adaptive and generative learning have many contrasts, especially in their strategic characteristics, structural characteristics and managers’ behaviours. As previously mentioned Eton AB uses ‘generative learning’ as the predominant type within organisational learning; nevertheless certain aspects of adaptive learning are given as well. Figure 4 visualises the two types of organisational learning in regard to what applies to Eton AB:

- Formal rules
- Ethnocentric
- Change
- Hierarchy
- Improvements following events
- Prior successes as bases for future strategies

- Values, self-control
- Empathetic
- Transformation
- Teams
- Independent of events
- Questioning existing norms and hierarchical structures
- Holistic/systemic thinking
- Openness
- Strong networks
- Lateral communication flow

Figure 4: Organisational learning at Eton AB (own figure)
The question remains which type Eton AB uses, but considering the theory, the authors presume that all types apply. This assumption can be supported with the statement of Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004) that both adaptive and generative learning are necessary. Besides, the presence of zero learning is imaginable. It can be emphasised that the generative learning approach predominates as the company has solutions prepared if errors occur (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April), meaning that they are able to see beyond the company’s current actions and influences from the environment. Furthermore openness changes involving improvements not following specific events, a holistic view and innovative thinking are measures that are present and therefore support the assumption that the focus is laid on generative learning.

5.3.2 Learning organisation

All management practices as prerequisites (McGill, et al., 1992) or guidelines (Senge 1990, cited by Chiva, 2013) for an organisation to become a learning organisation are mentioned and compared in Table 6. The management practices explained by McGill, et al. (1992) are connected to generative learning, whereas the guidelines by Senge (1990, cited in Mason, 2014) are connected to learning organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems thinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Systemic thinking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holistic view; distinguishes patterns instead of conceptualising change as isolated events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Awareness that actions within and outside an organisation can create problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shift from being unconnected to interconnect to the whole</td>
<td>• Ability to see connections- holistic view; considering relationships based on information, goods and services exchanges, and feelings in addition to traditional, line authority-based relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interrelates actions across and between the organisation and external forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing of accurate organisational information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Removing the artificial distinction between line and staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal mastery</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal efficacy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Striving for personal development to the highest level possible</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus is on commitment and excitement to attain performance capability</td>
<td>• Clear vision; linking learning to action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrating what people do that makes a difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental models</strong></td>
<td><strong>Openness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing models and hierarchy thinking prevent realisation of new powerful insights and</td>
<td>• Suspend the need for control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
organisational practices
- Without openness, real change never takes place
- Includes processes: self-reflection; tracking down and understanding how manifested beliefs dramatically influence the way of operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building shared visions</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal visions of individual employees may not agree with a leader's vision</td>
<td>• Strong sense of ethics in dealing with employees and customers/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for a genuine vision that encourages commitment at all times and has the power to bind an organisation together.</td>
<td>• Recognition and encouragement of employee contributions outside the workplace</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Team learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Importance of teamwork and collective learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Process of developing the ability to create desired results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growth-oriented personal development; supportive ‘clan’ culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mobility across divisions and functions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Comparison of two concepts (based on Senge, 1990 and McGill, et al., 1992)

The comparison of both concepts should reveal the similarities they share. Thus similarities that have been determined lead to the conclusion that both concepts are based upon the same idea and intention that an organisation or management within an organisation act accordingly. Furthermore with the idea of both concepts being similar the authors presume a generative character for learning organisations defined by Senge (1990 cited in Mason, 2014). Considering these two concepts for establishing a learning organisation the authors analysed what guidelines can be fulfilled by Eton AB:

- **Systems Thinking** – the participant informed about the openness of Eton AB about challenges and goals of the company and that changes regarding business structure are done independent from certain errors (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). This information emphasises that Eton AB tries to achieve an interconnection and a holistic view of the company, employees, and external or internal actions.

- **Personal Mastery** – Commitment to lifelong learning is something Eton AB seems to aim for since the early days of existence, in regard to the offered language courses and leisure activities. The participant added
that employees attend leadership courses that support personal development and the training of colleagues (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). It includes the importance of feedback for personal development.

- **Mental Models** – The participant revealed that Eton AB is very open to discuss challenges and goals of the company which can be presumed a good base for organisational learning (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Furthermore the Swedish culture of the company leads to presumptions that hierarchy thinking is present but has a flat structure which enables a realisation of new insights quicker and more effective.

- **Building Shared Visions** – Eton AB has done a lot during the last century to bind the organisation together (Eton AB, 2014). With the entrance into international business this presumably became more difficult. The previously stated openness about challenges and goals of the company, as well equality as stability among all members and ensuring that all are included in the company’s culture and shared values by Eton AB is presumed to contribute to a shared vision and a close relationship within the organisation.

- **Team Learning** - In theory it was mentioned that learning groups exist and that feedback is of great importance to guarantee the learning success. Also for Eton AB feedback is a very important part within a group and organisation and is understood as being necessary for learning in a team (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April).

(based on Senge, 1990 cited in Mason, 2014 and ).

One aspect that has to be emphasised is openness. It encompasses the idea of reducing the need for control and including cultural-functional diversity. No openness would result into narrowness and ethnocentricity and in an incapacity that reduces the ability of organisations and managers to learn (McGill, et al., 1992). Openness is considered an important measure when striving for organisational improvement and change. Managers should not differentiate between own and others’ values, background, and experiences to overcome as well narrowness and ethnocentricity as preconceptions about other cultures. As previously mentioned Eton AB is eager to be open as it is an important factor when it comes to intercultural communication within a textile organisation. Thus, viewing Eton AB as a group, shared experiences and internal stability tend to lead to a strong culture within (Schein, 1984).
5.3.3 Collective learning

The importance of sharing information for collective learning becomes clear when different cultural backgrounds collide. It reveals the impact culture has on factors and preconditions that must be given to guarantee collective learning. As previously stated organisational learning is limited when language, values, knowledge and understanding cannot be shared (Schulz 2001). As previously discussed, Eton AB can be described as a company which gives their employees freedom with responsibility (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April) and is very open to discuss its challenges and goals and includes all employees in the company’s culture and company values during good meetings and information forums (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March). Although many different cultures exist within Eton AB the Swedish culture dominates (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix I, 24 March) which can be related to the location of the company, namely Gånghester, Sweden (Eton AB, 2014). The question that remains is whether subsidiary companies are following the Swedish culture or have established their own according to their location and independence from the parent company. According to Schulz (2001) there are different types of experience a company can adjust to and learn from. He mentioned performance feedback (the experience of problems leads to the learning of organisations), rare experience (available strategies that could be used to react to rare events), disrupted experience (change in core routines that can cause disruption, loss of competency and disrupted links to the environment) and diversity (moderate levels of diversity are most conductive to learning while high levels would lead to a sensory overload) (Schulz, 2001). However learning from a successful or failed experience does not guarantee learning in every case. Levitt and March (1996 cited in Frost, 2014) stated that only the information that has been generated from actions results into real organisational learning. Also Eton AB seems to draw from information that has been generated from actions, rather than experience from failure or success, since the participant mentioned that changes are performed without following a certain error (Participant, Eton AB, 2014, pers. comm., appendix II, 29 April). However it is not clear to what extent adaptive learning or zero learning are used as the authors could mainly find most measures that prove the existence of generative learning. Although the participant said that the changes at Eton AB are done without any stimuli it is strongly believed that the other two types are present as well, especially adaptive learning if one considers the statement of Argyris and Schön (1978 cited in Easterby-Smith, et al., 2004). The missing information from the participant is presumed to have supported more the assumptions of the authors. Briefly it is apparent, that Eton AB’s activities correlate to several mentioned theories, but the most
significant compliance is with Senge’s (1990 cited by Mason, 2014) learning organisation theory.

5.4 General outcome

The previous chapters show that the stated research questions can be answered within this thesis:

(1) How is a Swedish textile company influenced by intercultural communication errors, language barriers and preconceptions in particular?

The authors have found out that the chosen participant and Eton AB, have few intercultural communication errors and therefore Eton AB is only partially influenced by intercultural communication errors. Language barriers are minor since the company and the participant, have shown adaptation and understanding, and the necessity for an international business language within the company. Language courses were provided to the employees early on and nowadays the English language is a necessity within Eton AB. The resolution of the provision of language courses might seem like an obvious solution to the problem of language barriers. Nevertheless most companies lack an appreciation of the importance of a common language and understanding within their company and do not take enough actions towards avoiding this problem. Preconception, on the other hand, was not mentioned within the empirical findings. Both involved parties have shown a positive result, due to the inclusion and integration of the participant into the company. This can be due to the willingness of both to include new cultures by sharing norms and values, and the adaptation to such values. A company needs to provide their employees with more chances to share its values, and develop more skills to improve a successful intercultural interrelation. Additionally the employees must be willing to adjust their culture and adapt to the values stated by the company.

(2) How are organisational culture and organisational learning related to intercultural communication within a Swedish textile company?

Eton AB has a strong organisational culture which influences the intercultural communication positively. Certain values of the organisational culture within Eton AB lead to a better acceptance of newcomers, leading to less errors regarding intercultural communication. The thesis showed that a strong organisational culture within a company and the different values included in it, are an important part of reducing intercultural communication errors. Eton AB ensured to have a strong and durable organisational culture, by increasing group dynamics and focusing on
sharing norms and values. Moreover, the most interesting metaphors and dimensions when it comes to intercultural communication within Eton AB are the metaphors ‘social-glue’ and ‘sacred-cow’ (Alvesson, 2002), and ‘open-system’ and ‘employee-oriented’ (Hofstede, et al., 1990). Eton AB is eager to integrate employees with a different cultural background over a short period of time, and therefore the organisational culture is accessible to everybody. Moreover Eton AB shows responsibility for the welfare of its employees while giving their employees freedom with responsibility and sharing its challenges and goals. Additionally the findings show that organisational learning does influence intercultural communication but furthermore that organisational learning can be influenced by intercultural communication. Measures such as language or leadership courses for learning can influence intercultural communication positively. The previous sections examined the five guidelines by Senge (1990, cited in Mason, 2014) for a learning organisation in order to improve intercultural communication and integration. The discoveries show that Eton AB considers all of them. In regard to a successful acceptance and integration of an employee with a different cultural background these guidelines define measures that have to be fulfilled by the company. Building shared visions emphasises the approach to integrate and consider visions of all members of the company. Especially openness prevents companies from being too narrow and ethnocentric in regard to learning abilities. However errors of intercultural communication can influence organisational cultures and organisational learning negatively, since a good communication flow and understanding among employees is necessary in order to enable organisational learning and develop a strong organisational culture. This phenomenon could be observed in the previously conducted study where communication errors negatively influenced intercultural communication.

(3) Which measures are necessary for textile companies to successfully mitigate intercultural communication errors?

Since the outcome of the analysis revealed that Eton AB and its employee share minor intercultural communication errors, their situation can be seen as a good example for overcoming intercultural communication errors for other companies. Concluding from the findings and summarised from the theory, the authors have formed a general outline which includes beneficial measures for companies to mitigate intercultural communication errors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General measure</th>
<th>Parties involved</th>
<th>Specific aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce emerging intercultural communication errors</td>
<td><strong>Company and employees</strong></td>
<td>Equality and stability within the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong culture</td>
<td><strong>Company and employees</strong></td>
<td>Including communication within the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared language</td>
<td><strong>Company and employees</strong></td>
<td>Same values and information content in national culture preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same context cultures</td>
<td><strong>Company and employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overcome intercultural communication errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness regarding other cultures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to include new members, by sharing given norms and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage employees’ development/ personal growing (training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication competences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company and employees</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to new ways of performance and collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Adaptation of own culture                   |
| **Company**                                 |
| Willingness/ commitment to learn            |
| Providing language courses to ease adaptation for employees |
| **Employees**                               |
| Development of intercultural communication competences |
| **Company and Employees**                   |
| Willingness to adapt to the surrounding environment (in moderation) |
| Adaptation to new language                  |

Table 7: General outline (own figure)

This table is separated into two parts of ‘reducing and ‘overcoming’ intercultural communication errors. It includes the ‘general measures’, which can be further divided into ‘parties involved’ and ‘specific aspects’. ‘Parties involved’ represent who needs to fulfil the certain measures, whereas the ‘specific aspects’ includes the detailed aspects of the measures, the involved party needs to fulfil in order to either reduce or overcome intercultural miscommunication. The outline of possible measures summarizes the theories in connection with the empirical findings. These measures concluded can be merely seen as guidelines which provide a sufficient basis to overcome intercultural miscommunication within textile companies.
6 Conclusion

In order to answer the research questions sources of relevant literature of organisational culture and organisational learning were analysed in regard to intercultural communication within Eton AB. Furthermore self-completion/self-administrative questionnaires, with one participant from the company were conducted. All results from the questionnaires were analysed together with the provided theory and answers to the specified research questions:

(1) How is a Swedish textile company influenced by intercultural communication errors, language barriers and preconceptions in particular?

(2) How are organisational culture and organisational learning related to intercultural communication within a Swedish textile company?

(3) Which measures are necessary for textile companies to successfully mitigate intercultural communication errors?

The conclusion of the thesis is the existence of less intercultural communication errors between Eton AB and the participant. Furthermore the thesis has shown that a strong organisational culture ensures a stable work and information flow within the textile value chain and can lessen risks and errors regarding intercultural communication. This thesis revealed that a link between organisational culture, organisational learning and intercultural communication exists. Organisational learning contributes to a strong organisational culture and helps to detect and correct those errors threatening the company. Furthermore organisational learning enables competitiveness with other companies and increases the attractiveness for business partners in the textile value chain. The authors’ intention to find out general measures which can help to minimise intercultural communication errors within textile companies was met. For practical implication, this thesis provides an outline with measures that could give textile companies an idea of how to handle intercultural communication problems or of what has to be done in order to reduce their probable occurrence. However, also companies within other industries could make use and profit from this outline, since this topic applies to all industries acting globally. This thesis, in an academic aspect, marks a first step towards reducing intercultural communication errors within global textile companies in the textile value chain.
7 Limitations and Future research

This thesis marks just a start in finding solutions to intercultural communication errors. It did not confirm the problem of preconceptions which can be attributable to personal reasoning since the addressing of any kind of prejudices is viewed as a negative trait. Especially when being asked if there was any kind of preconceptions visible within the company, the participant might have had problems with saying something negative. Nonetheless, this thesis is considered to be relevant as the answers given by the participant to the self-administrative/self-completion questionnaires could not be influenced by the interviewers’ presence, and are handled in an anonymous manner. As only one person and one company are analysed, in order to acquire needed information for analysis, a case study approach is fitting to this thesis. However conducting a case study research can reduce the external validity since general assumptions of the findings from a single case to other cases and can be seen as unreliable. This research could have been conducted with a mixed method research since it would provide more empirical data for the analysis, hence increase the external validity. Furthermore an inclusion of a larger number of Swedish textile companies in the research would allow a deeper examination of intercultural communication problems in Sweden, and further extend the results. The internal validity within this study could be affected negatively by the authors own interpretations but the findings are still relevant due to the relevant theory and the obtained empirical data. Since the topic of this study has an international background, more diverse cultural backgrounds, especially a mixture between low- and high-context cultures, may have been more representative of the targeted population. This could be addressed in other studies where participants from the same or different companies are interviewed in a highly anonymous manner.

The thesis has shown that this topic is highly fixed in the professional practice, since companies still need to address intercultural communication errors, due to growing international business environments and an increase in global operations. On the side of the academic world this thesis provides a general outline for employees and companies, which can be used as a guideline in order to successfully avoid and overcome intercultural communication problems. The external validity, hence generalizability within this study can be regarded as low. Although the authors used an exemplifying case which represents a broader category, the overall study cannot be generalised to all textile companies within Sweden. Although the delivered measures (outline) provide a good basis, these should be tested within other companies to enhance external validity. These similar circumstances and settings can also increase the level of external reliability (replication) for the study. Moreover further research can be suggested especially in regard to the textile value chain.
The communication with consumers and suppliers can be examined apart from communication within a company while focusing on culture related marketing and product development when operating in different countries.
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Appendices

Appendix I: Questionnaire

The following are the questions and answers to the first questionnaire. They were received on 24th March 2014.

1. Which language is spoken within your company?

2. Does your company accept other languages than Swedish for internal everyday business actions?

3. How many different cultures are present in your company? Which culture dominates (national culture)?

4. How would you describe the integration of employees with a different national and cultural background into your company?

5. Can you remember any conflicts that happened or are present in your company that can be related to intercultural miscommunication or something similar related to cultural differences? If so, did they occur internal between employer and employees/employee and employee/upper and lower management or external when negotiating with suppliers or other international business partners?

6. Can you give us a specific example of a problem that was caused by intercultural miscommunication regarding language barriers or preconceptions towards other cultures? How were these conflicts solved?

7. Do you or employees of your company have preconceptions about other cultures? Does a situation exist when you noticed these prejudices? And did these prejudice change or were they confirmed?

8. How do you prepare yourself when meeting a foreign business partner (language, non-verbal language and other)?

9. Learning is the engine of growth for both individuals and organisations. What does your company do to guaranty continuous organisational learning and adaptation to changes affecting your business/organisational culture and values? Do these measures involve training in international management and cross-cultural understanding?
Answers

1. Which language is spoken within your company?

   Main language is Swedish, but obviously in an international environment the English language is very important. Mostly, general information which is meant for all employees is sent in English.

2. Does your company accept other languages than Swedish for internal everyday business actions?

   As everybody knows that English is so important, it is no problem to write/report in English.

3. How many different cultures or nationalities are present in your company?

   Many!

   Which culture dominates (national culture)?

   Swedish culture dominates.

4. How would you describe the integration of employees with a different national and cultural background into your company?

   Integration is smoothly, no issue (at least not a known issue).

5. Can you remember any conflicts that happened or are present in your company that can be related to intercultural miscommunication or something similar related to cultural differences?

   Not really conflicts, but more misunderstandings, which is caused by the fact that not everybody speaks English as well as others.

   If you do, did they occur internal between employer and employees/employee and employee/ upper and lower management or external when negotiating with suppliers or other international business partners?

   This type of misunderstandings occur in all mentioned above situations.

6. Can you give us a specific example of a problem that was caused by intercultural miscommunication regarding language barriers or preconceptions towards other cultures? How were these conflicts solved?
Difficult to name a specific example or problem. But being very clear, asking many questions and writing in ‘easy’ English helps to avoid or solve most misunderstandings.

7. Do you or employees of your company have preconceptions about other cultures? Does a situation exist when you noticed these prejudices? And did these prejudices change or were they confirmed?

I personally do not think so.

8. How do you prepare yourself when meeting a foreign business partner (language, non-verbal language and other)?

I do not prepare myself in a particular different way. As I am Dutch, I am used to speaking different languages, can adapt easily to changed situations and accept people as they are.

9. Learning is the engine of growth for both individuals and organisations. What does your company do to guaranty continuous organisational learning and adaptation to changes affecting your business/organisational culture and values?

In my opinion, the company is very open to discuss its challenges and goals. During good meetings and information forums we all are part of the culture and company values.

Do these measures involve training in international management and cross-cultural understanding?

No. However most employees (at least the ones in Sweden) have attended leadership courses, which has created a better understanding for each other, each other’s responsibilities and working environment.
Appendix II: Follow-up questionnaire

The following are the questions and answers to the second questionnaire. They were received on 29th April 2014.

1. How long have you been working at your company?

2. Do you as an employee ever recall noticing a change in business structure (specifically regarding the reorganisation of the business structure)?

3. How is the group dynamic within your company? Did you feel included right away, or did it take time for the group to accept you as a new member?

4. How does the group react when problems occur (positive or negative feedback; understanding or criticising)?

5. How important is power within your company, do you as an employee feel, that the leader is of higher importance? What qualities does a perfect leader have from your point of view (for example tolerance, commitment, personal integrity)?

6. Can the work discipline within your company be described as easy-going or strict?

7. “Organisational learning literature considers adaptive learning as a course of action which characterises the approach of adjusting, refining and improving existing competencies, technologies and paradigms without scanning and testing underlying beliefs and assumptions (Chiva, 2013)”

Would you say that your company follows this approach? Or does your company extend the adaptive learning approach by being innovative, modifying the organisation’s underlying norms, policies and objectives when an error has been detected and corrected?

8. If you compare working in Sweden with working in the Netherlands, what is the main difference (regarding leadership, work ethic and business culture)?
Follow-up questionnaire answers

1. How long have you been working at your company?

   *I have been working in this position at this company for 4 yrs now, but have been living and working in Sweden since 1999.*

2. Do you as an employee ever recall noticing a change in business structure (specifically regarding the reorganisation of the business structure)?

   *Of course, you can notice a change in business structure as an employee. I think I misunderstand your question?*

   You have answered this question sufficiently, but maybe you could specify if this change occurred following a certain error/event, or just to enhance the overall performance of the organisation?

   *The changes I referred to were made to enhance the performance of the organisation and not following a certain error.*

3. How is the group dynamic within your company? Did you feel included right away, or did it take time for the group to accept you as a new member?

   *The group dynamic within our company is really good. Yes I felt included right away and acceptance time was not long. However, due to different culture, I do feel sometimes like the odd one out. Even though I am also proud to be a bit different.*

4. How does the group react when problems occur (positive or negative feedback; understanding or criticising)?

   *Since almost everybody in the group has been educated with a leadership course, many of us speak the same ‘language’. Feedback is a very important part of this course, as we all understand that with good feedback (either positive or negative) you can grow.*
5. How important is power within your company, do you as an employee feel, that the leader is of higher importance? What qualities does a perfect leader have from your point of view (for example tolerance, commitment, personal integrity)?

Leaders are necessary to take processes to a higher level. A good leader in my opinion lets his/her employees grow. A good leader should be able to recognise situations and react to them as such (situational leadership).

6. Can the work discipline within your company be described as easy-going or strict?

Freedom with responsibility.

7. “Organisational learning literature considers adaptive learning as a course of action which characterises the approach of adjusting, refining and improving existing competencies, technologies and paradigms without scanning and testing underlying beliefs and assumptions (Chiva, 2013)”

Would you say that your company follows this approach? Or does your company extend the adaptive learning approach by being innovative, modifying the organisation’s underlying norms, policies and objectives when an error has been detected and corrected?

I do not understand your question, sorry.

This question is referring to organisational learning and asks if the company has solutions prepared if an error occurs (with errors we mean different stressors that can occur internal or external, influencing the daily business), or if it adjusts to performance gaps that become visible after an error has occurred.

I would say that the company has solutions prepared if errors occur.

8. If you compare working in Sweden with working in the Netherlands, what is the main difference (regarding leadership, work ethic and business culture)?

I would say that in the Netherlands discussions would be more ‘out in the open’ and more direct. In meetings decisions (either good or bad ones) are taken faster. Otherwise the business culture is really quite similar.