Training The Trainers: Parlate Italiano?
An Experiential Exercise
In International Human Resources

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ABSTRACT

This exercise was developed to teach students in an international management or human resource class the importance of international training. The students choose and learn some basic vocabulary in a foreign language and then develop and present an effective training module for those language skills. An example of one such module is described.

Keywords: International Training; International Experiential Exercises; International Human Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

*T*he increasing emphasis on a global business environment means that firms need to prepare their employees for both short- and long-term international assignments. The costs associated with placing home country employees, or expatriates, in these international posts have been projected at three to five times the base salary (Bennettt, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000). Unfortunately, there is an estimated U.S. expatriate failure rate in the 30%-85% range (Shen & Edwards, 2004). The National Foreign Trade Council in 1994 estimated the cost of a poor international staffing decision to range from $200,000 to $1.2 million (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Swaak, 1995). Significantly, a failed expatriate is expensive not only because of the recruitment, selection, and placement costs, but more importantly in terms of the potential loss of face and trust within the host country. Studies have shown that all countries experience expatriate failures (Forster, 1997; Fukuda & Chu, 1994; Stening & Hammer, 1992; Tung, 1988).

Importance Of Training International Managers.

A major reason for expatriate failure is the inability of the international assignees and their families to adjust to the foreign environment (Global Relocation Services, 2005). Other causes of failure include inadequate cultural and language preparation, a lack of motivation, mistakes made in the selection process, personality difficulties, the inability to cope, and dissatisfaction with the quality of life in the foreign assignment (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004; Lee, 2007; McCaughey & Bruning, 2005).

One way to improve the success rate of expatriate placements is to provide extensive training prior to the international assignment and continued training within the host country (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Forster, 2000; McCaughey & Bruning, 2005; Trevin, 2003; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). It has been shown that pre-departure training can reduce expatriate failure rates dramatically. For example, Shell employees who were sent to Saudi Arabia without prior training experienced a 60% early return rate. However, with just three days of pre-departure training, that figure dropped to 5%, and a six-day program dropped the early return rate to just 1.5% (Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). Further, literature reviews of cross-cultural training find that the training is effective in facilitating success in expatriate assignments (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006).

Training for international assignments increases cultural sensitivity; reduces culture shock; fosters greater cross-cultural understanding; is seen as a cornerstone to successful international assignments; creates awareness of

cultural differences and the influence of culture on behavior; increases managerial effectiveness; and improves the international assignee's competence as an intercultural communicator (Bennett et al, 2000; Jain & Agrawal, 2005; Littrell, & Salas, 2005; Stewart, 2002). Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) suggest various approaches to intercultural training, such as expatriate briefings, awareness training, and learning the local language. Harris and Moran (1999) emphasize the importance of covering topics that will facilitate the adjustment process, such as intercultural business skills; culture shock management; lifestyle adjustment; host-country daily living issues; local customs; and etiquette. In addition, they suggest language-learning strategies for pre- and post-arrival training. Language study not only facilitates an expatriate's ability to meet daily needs, it also opens the door to a deeper cultural understanding by demonstrating thought and behavioral patterns. Further, though language training is often crucial for intercultural adjustment, it is not necessary for the individual to become fluent. Rather, providing expatriates with the ability to exchange common courtesies will be appreciated as a demonstration of interest in the host nationals and their culture (Littrell & Salas, 2005). Consequently, it is important to introduce students in international management classes to the experience of learning at least the rudiments of a new language.

Importance Of Training The Trainers

Using effective trainers is also an important ingredient in a successful program (Bennett, et al, 2000). To succeed as a multinational enterprise, human resource managers need to be prepared to develop and deliver training programs that will help their organizations achieve a competitive advantage in their global operations (Mendenhall, Jensen, Black, Gergersen, 2003). Students in international human resource or international management classes, therefore, must learn ways to become more effective trainers, especially for their international assignees. Yet, many students in international classes have no experience in developing any training programs, let alone more complex ones, such as those necessary in the international arena.

Training students in international human resources means helping them learn how to be effective trainers themselves. To facilitate an understanding of the role and importance of the cross-cultural trainer, we have developed an experiential exercise for students in an International Human Resource or an International Management course. As previously referenced, language skills have been identified as a success factor for expatriates. Therefore, in this exercise the students learn 100 words or phrases in a foreign language of their choice, and then develop a training module to train others in this language. Students learn basic vocabulary in a new language, but more importantly, they develop ways to engage their classmates in effective training methods.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross cultural training (CCT) is the educative processes used to improve intercultural learning via the development of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies needed for successful interactions in diverse cultures (Landis & Brislin, 1996; Littrell et al, 2006; Morris & Robie, 2001). CCT programs should provide expatriates with the knowledge and skills needed for (a) cross-cultural adjustment, (b) effective business performance, and (c) cross-cultural interactions (Littrell et al, 2006). Language training, one type of CCT, may help in all three of these important areas.

A successful CCT should take into account three key elements: needs of the expatriate, the customization of the content and design methodologies, and the program quality (Littrell et al, 2006). First, a needs analysis should be conducted to identify the pre-training strengths and weakness of the expatriate in relation to the desired behaviors. In the exercise presented, the instructor models doing a needs analysis by identifying which languages the students have familiarity with and what level of language learning experience each has. Optionally, the instructor may administer a pre-test quiz of the vocabulary words to determine their knowledge and to foster their understanding of the pretest-posttest training design.

For the customization of the content and design methodologies, training should be tailored to each expatriate's situation, and to meet the skill development needs. In the exercise described in this paper, customization is modeled by the choice of basic words; the involvement of students; the repetition and reinforcement of learning; and the experiential aspect of having students use their knowledge to train others (a learning-transfer measure).

For program quality, in this exercise measures of training success are modeled by incorporating quizzes and a post-test. The post-test can be compared to the pre-test, so that students can verify that learning has occurred. Additionally, students can give their reactions to the learning of the words and to each training session as it is presented.

THE EXERCISE: TRAINING THE TRAINERS

The exercise includes three parts: 1. Students learn vocabulary in a foreign language. 2. Students learn how to design and develop a training module. 3. Students present their completed training module to the class. The exercise is generally accomplished in phases over the semester, to assure that students have enough time to learn the language and the training topics, and to present their modules.

Part 1. Vocabulary

This part starts toward the beginning of the course over one or two class periods, depending on how much in-class time the instructor can provide the students to work on their languages. Optionally, the instructor may wish to demonstrate a pre-test/post-test training design by having the students complete a pre-test of a selection of vocabulary words. See Appendix A for a sample key.

In the first class, students identify a language they would like to learn and teach, preferably one that they have never learned before. The instructor should tell the students to be mindful when they choose a language because they will have to learn to read, write, and speak in that language. Some groups may initially choose an exotic one, such as Japanese or Chinese, but then find that the resources are limited or the language is difficult to learn. Students will usually switch to a more accessible language when this occurs. The students are then formed into groups of about five to seven based on their chosen new language and the class size. Alternatively, the instructor may wish to form the groups and assign each group a different language. This approach may simplify the task for the instructor and limit the languages to a select few.

During this same class, the instructor provides a beginning list of key words and phrases, such as basic greetings, for interaction in another country. See Appendix B for a sample format for this list. The instructor may find that offering at least 50 initial words is helpful to the students. The class as a whole is then allowed to add words or phrases that they think are important. Many take these additions from phrase books in their languages, e.g. *Eyewitness Travel Guides* (2003). Involving the students in choosing the words helps with commitment and allows them to include words that might be more common or important to their generations. A total of 100 words and short phrases are chosen. These may be words that are used singularly, such as "Hello"; or they may be part of a phrase or sentence, such as "Where is the bathroom?" The focus in this exercise is on learning basic words rather than correct grammar. Since words are the building blocks of language, knowing more vocabulary, even if one's grammar is incorrect, will be helpful in international experience. However, phrases include some verb forms and basic sentence structure. If an instructor prefers more correct grammar, then sample sentences can be used instead, and the number of words reduced if desired, e.g., the exercise could be "50 sentences in a new language."

In the same class day, or a subsequent one, students begin to translate the words and phrases and find the proper pronunciations. The instructor may bring a selection of foreign language phrase books or dictionaries to class so the students will be able to start the assignment. Alternatively, students may go to the library to work on this part of the assignment, or they may use an Internet translator (e.g., http://babelfish.altavista.com/). If classrooms have wireless connections, this last avenue would be particularly convenient. If time is a constraint, the instructor may elect to allow the students to begin translation in class and complete it on their own. Learning the pronunciation is generally done on the students' time; audiotapes are readily available at libraries and some phrase books contain pronunciation.

After the students have completed translating the English words into their chosen language, the instructor should get a copy of the list from each group to verify that the words are correct and consistent; and then modify the list if necessary. This allows the instructor to make corrections when synonyms are used, or to prevent errors due to

the words being taken out of context. The instructor may wish to use the students' lists to develop test questions. (See Appendix A)

Though language learning is difficult for many English-speaking students in the U.S., those who are interested in international management are often motivated to do so. Furthermore, international students, whose second-language is English, often take these classes and can be a resource for other students. As an option, the instructor may encourage students to practice their foreign words in class by having the students say the word and its translation whenever the English word comes up in class. This reinforces their learning. (Since all students have the same word list, the instructor may purposely include the words in the lecture; pause to hear their replies; and then give a Hershey's Kiss for a correct word. This is another fun way to facilitate and reward their learning.) Another motivational tip is to have weekly quizzes on ten words from the list.

Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), instructors should model the effective training development and presentations skills they want students to learn. Instructors should point out the behavior or technique they are modeling (perhaps the needs analysis), incorporate trainee involvement, pace the sessions, have the students practice their learning, and reward them for performance.

Part 2. Design The Training Module

After the students have had some chance to learn their languages, the training portion begins. The exercise now focuses on the design, activities, and format of the students' training module. Students are told that each group will have 30 minutes to train the rest of the class in its foreign language. They may decide to train all at once or divide it over two class days to allow students time to study the presented language between the two classes. The instructor should find out which option each group prefers and schedule the training sessions accordingly. The presentations are generally done toward the end of the semester.

In international management and human resource courses, there is generally a topic on training issues. Most textbooks used in these courses cover how to design, develop, and present basic training modules. To have students practice the actual task of designing training modules, and to get them to experience immediate feedback on their outcomes, the instructor should use "developing a language-facilitation module" as part of the training and development lecture. This will start them on the right path for their group presentation. If too little information is given in the text, or if this exercise is used in classes where training is not major topic, the instructor may wish to give a more detailed lecture.

Also, in this part students are given the training module assignment, e.g.: "*Develop and present a Training Module to train the rest of the class on your chosen foreign language. Use information and guidance on training programs as presented in your text. In 30 minutes present an interesting, enjoyable, informative session where your classmates will develop familiarity with the new language.*" Instructors should be careful to include in the lecture, handout, or assignment, the aspects of developing and presenting a training module on which the students will be graded.

Part 3. Present The Training Module

A particularly enjoyable and effective language module that a student group (trainers) presented is described next. The trainers, who were teaching Italian, chose to divide the presentation over two class days.   On the first day, the trainers handed out flash cards with the 100 Italian words or phrases on one side and the English translation on the other. Then the trainers went over each word, pronouncing it and having the students repeat the words after them. They asked the students to study the words before the next class period using the take-home flash cards and a translation handout.

On the second day, the trainers distributed Italian Word Bingo sheets with a 5x5 grid. Each sheet had a different selection of Italian words. In this modified Bingo game, the trainers drew out one word or phrase at a time from a bag with the 100 English words, and called each out. Students had to translate the word into Italian in order

to find and mark the Italian word on the Bingo sheet. For markers, the trainers provided red, white and green jelly beans, representing the colors of the Italian flag. The first person to get Bingo won a prize of Italian chocolates (lots of calories in this course!)

Student Reactions

Students are enthusiastic about this experiential exercise/assignment. They responded positively to each phase: learning the languages, designing an effective training program, and teaching a foreign language. They found the language learning section difficult but fun, even though the words and phrases were basic. This underscores the value of teaching basic phrases. In addition, students said that having to train the class in the foreign language helped motivate them to learn their language, and caused them to study the words more seriously. Further, the students said that they enjoyed both designing creative training exercises and participating in the training modules developed by the other groups.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this exercise is an enjoyable, effective method to teach students the importance of cross-cultural training and the steps involved in the design and delivery of effective training programs. They begin to understand the importance of pre-training in the international assignment. Because the class is divided into groups, students have the opportunity to develop a language-training module and then practice their trainer skills with the other groups. In addition, they get to experience the learning process when they become the trainees of another group. By experiencing both sides of a training program, students are able to get and to give immediate feedback on the effectiveness of various training techniques. This experiential exercise allows the instructor to teach the students some basics of a foreign language; to model the presentation of a training module; to provide a venue where they can demonstrate their understanding of how to develop international training programs; and to help them gain the experience of delivering a training module for prospective expatriates.

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Appendix A—Sample Key

#	English	Spanish	Italian	French	German
1	Hello	Hola	Ciao/Salve!	Bonjour/Salut	Hallo
2	Good morning	Buenos dias	Buon giorno	Bonjour	Guten Morgen
3	Good day	Buenas tardes	Buon giorno	Bonjour	Guten Tag
4	Good evening	Buenas noches	buona sera	Bonsoir	Guten Abend
5	Good night	Buonas noches	buona notte	Bonne nuit	Gute Nacht
6	Goodbye	Adios	Arrivederci	Au revoir	Auf Wiedersehen
7	Yes	Si	Si	Oui	Ja
8	No	No	No	Non	Nein
9	Please	Por favor	Per piaceri/ prego	S'il vous plait	Bitte
10	Thank you	Gracias	grazie	merci	Danke
11	OK	Vale	OK	D'accord	OK
12	That's/ it's	Esta	E	C'est…	Das ist…
13	That's fine.	Esta bien	Va bene	C'est bien	In Ordnung
14	How do you do, pleased to meet you. (idiomatic)	¿Que tal?, mucho gusto	Piacere di conoscerla	Enchante (de faire votre connaissance)	Guten Tag, freut mich.

#	English	Spanish	Italian	French	German
15	How are you? (idiomatic)	¿Como esta usted?	Come sta?	Comment allez-vous?	Wie geht es Ihnen?
16	I am	Estoy	Sono	Je suis	Ich bin
17	Very well/fine	Muy bien	Benissimo	Tres bien	Sehr gut
18	And you?	¿Y usted?	E voi?	Et vous?	Und Ihnen?
19	My name is/ I am called… (idiomatic)	Me llamo	Mi chiamo…	Je m'appelle…	Ich heiße …
20	What is your name? (idiomatic)	¿Como se llama usted?	Come si chiama?	Comment vous appelez-vous?	Wie heißen Sie?
21	This is… (man/woman)	Este/esta es	Questo e/questa e	Voici…	Das ist …
22	Excuse me!	Perdon!	Scusi!	Pardon!	Entschuldigung!
23	Can you? Could you?	¿Puede?	Potrebbe?	Pouvez-vous?	Konnen Sie? Konnten Sie?
24	To tell	Decir	Dire	Dire	Sagen
25	Can you tell me?	¿Puede decirme?	Potrebbe dirmi?	Pouvez-vous me dire?	Konnen Sie mir sagen?
26	Can you show me?	¿Puede usted demostrarme?	Potete mostrarmi?	Pouvez-vous me montrer?	Konnen Sie mir … zeigen?
27	Can you help me?	¿Puede ayudarme?	Puo aiutarmi?	Pouvez-vous m'aide?	Konnen Sie mir helfen?
28	Can I/May I?	¿Puedo?	Potrei?	Pourraise-je?	Kann ich?
29	May/Can I have…?	¿Puedo tiene…?	Potrei avere…?	Est-ce que je pourrais avoir…?	Kann ich … haben?
30	Do you have…?	¿Tienen…?	Avete…?	Avez-vous…?	Haben Sie…?
31	Would you like a …?	¿Quiere un/una…?	Vorrebbe un/una…?	Est-ce que vous voulez un/une…?	Mochten Sie einen/eine/ein …?
32	Would you like (to)…?	¿Le gustaria…?	Le piacerebbe…?	Est-ce que vous voulez…?	Mochten Sie…?
33	Is there…	¿Hay…?	C'e…?	Est-ce qu'il y a…?	Gibt es…?
34	Is there … here?	¿Hay…aqui	C'e…?	Est-ce qu'il y a …ici?	Gibt es … hier?
35	What	Que	Che	Qu'est-ce que	Was
36	What 's that?	¿Que es eso?	Che cos'e?	Qu'est-ce que c'est?	Was ist das?
37	How much is it?	¿Cuanto es?	Quanto costa?	Combien ca coute?	Was kostet das?
38	Where	donde	Dove	Ou	Wo
39	Where is the …	¿Donde esta el/la..?	Dov'e il/la…?	Ou est le/la…?	Wo ist der/die/das…?
40	I am from …	Soy de…	Sono di…	Je viens de…	Ich bin aus…
41	I understand.	Comprendo	Capisco	Je comprends	Ich verstehe
42	I don't understand.	No comprendo	Non capisco	Je ne comprends pas	Ich verstehe nicht
43	Do you speak …	¿Usted habla …?	Parlate …?	Parlez-vous ..,?	Sprechen Sie…
44	English	Inglese	Inglese	Anglais	Englisch
45	I speak …	Hablo	Parlo	Je parle	Ich spreche…
46	I can't speak …	No hablo …	Non parlo …	Je ne parle pas …	Ich spreche keine …
47	I don't know	No se	Non so	Je ne sais pas	Ich weiß nicht.
48	(the given language)	Espanol	Italiano	Francais	Deutch
49	Write down	Anote	Scriva	Notez	Notieren
50	It	Lo	Lo	Le/la	Es
51	Please write it down for me.	Anótelo por favor para mí.	Annotilo prego per me.	Veuillez l'écrire pour moi.	Notieren Sie es bitte für mich.
52	I like…	Me gusta…	Mi piace…	J'aime/j'adore…	Ich mochte … gern
53	I like music and concerts	Tengo gusto de música y de conciertos.	Gradisco la musica et i concerti.	J'aime la musique et les concerts.	Ich mag Musik und Konzerte.
54	Dancing	De bailar	Ballare	Danser	Tanzen
55	Sports	Los deportes	Sport	Sports	Sport
56	Theatre	del teatro	il teatro	le théâtre	Theater

#	English	Spanish	Italian	French	German
57	Nightlife	del nightlife.	il nightlife	Vie nocturne	Nachtleben
58	Skiing	de esquiar.	sciare	skier	Ski fahren.
59	I don't like…	No me gusta el/la…	Non mi piace…	Je n'aime pas…	Ich mag… nicht gern
60	Do you like …?	¿Le gusto…?	Le piace…?	Aimez-vous…?	Mochten Sie…?
61	What would you like?	¿Que quiere?	Cosa desidera?	Qu'est-ce que vous?	Was mochten Sie?
62	To drink	Beber	De bere	Boire?	Trinken
63	What would you like to eat	¿Qué usted tiene gusto de comer?	Che cosa gradite mangiare?	Que aimez-vous manger ?	Was wurden Sie mögen essen?
64	…To do	…de hacer	… fare	…faire	…Tun
65	…To see	…de ver	…vedere	…voir	…sehen
66	I would like…	Queria…	Vorrei…	Je voudrais …	Ich mochte…
67	Nothing, thanks	Nada, gracias	Niente, grazie	Rien, merci	Nichts, danke.
68	Cheers!	Salud!	Alla salute/ cin cin!	Sante!	Prost!
69	Where	Donde	Dove	Ou	Wo
70	Where would you like to go?	¿Donde usted tienen gusto de ir?	Dove voi gradiscono andare?	Où vous aiment aller?	Wo mochten Sie gehen?
71	I have…	Tengo	Ho	J'ai	Ich habe
72	I am thirsty	Tengo sed.	Sono assetato.	J'ai soif.	Ich habe dirst.
73	I am hungry	Tengo hambre.	Sono affamato.	J'ai faim.	Ich habe hunger.
74	(the) Breakfast	El desayuno	La colazione	Le petit dejeuner	(das) Fruhstuck
75	(the) Lunch	Almuerzo	Pranzo	Le dejeuner	(das) Mittagessen
76	(the) Dinner	La cena	La cena	Le diner	(das) Abendessen
77	(the) Check, please	La cuenta, por favor	Il conto, per favor	La note, s'il vous plait	Zahlen, bitte
78	Where do I pay?	¿Donde se paga?	Dove si paga?	Ou faut-il payer?	Wo ist die Kasse?
79	I'll pay	Pagare	Pago	Je payerai	Ich zahle
80	Credit card	Tarjeta (de credito)	Carta di credito	Carte de credit	Kreditkarte
81	I will pay by credit card	Pagare con tarjeta (de credito)	Pago con la carta di credito	Je payerai avec une carte de credit	Ich zahle mit Kreditkarte
82	Do you take credit cards?	¿Puedo pagar con tarjeta de credito?	Accette carte di credito?	Acceptez-vous les cartes de credit?	Akzeptieren Sie Kreditkarten?
83	I'll take it.	Me lo llevo.	Lo prendo	Je le prends	Ich nehme es.
84	Where do I find…?	¿Dónde encuentro …?	Dove trovo…?	Pouvez-vouz me dire ou se trouve…?	Wo finde ich…?
85	Where is…?	¿Donde esta	Dov'e…	Ou est…	Wo ist…?
86	(A) Taxi	(un) Taxi	(un) Taxi	(un) Taxi	(ein) Taxi
87	The restroom/toilet	Il servicio	La toilette	La toilette	Die toilette
88	The bus station	el término de autobuses	l'autostazione	la gare routière	den Busbahnhof
89	The train station	la estación de tren	la stazione di treno	la station de train	die Zugstation
90	The airport	el aeropuerto	l'aeroporto	l'aéroport	der Flughafen
91	The beach	la playa	la spiaggia	la plage	der Strand
92	A restaurant	el restaurante	il ristorante	Un restaurant	die Gaststätte
93	An internet cafe	un Internet café	Internet caffè	Internet café	Internet Kaffee
94	The department store	el almacén grande	il grande magazzino	grand magasin	der Abteilung Speicher
95	The Hotel	el hotel	L'albergo/l'hotel	L' hotel	Das Hotel
96	Do you have movies in English?	¿Usted tiene películas en inglés?	Avete film in inglese?	Avez-vous des films en anglais?	Haben Sie Filme in den englischen?
97	With English subtitles	Con subtitulos ingleses	Con i sottotitoli inglesi	Dan des sous-titres anglais	Mit englischen Untertiteln?
98	Do you have movies in English or with English subtitles?	¿Usted tiene películas en ingleses o con subtítulos ingleses?	Avete film in inglese o con i sottotitoli inglesi?	Avez-vous des films dans anglais ou avec sous-titres anglais?	Haben Sie Filme in den englischen oder mit englischen Untertiteln?
99	Beer	Una cerveza	La birra	De la biere	Bier
100	Another beer	Mas cerveza	Ancora birra	Plus de bierra	Noch ein Bier

Appendix B—Sample Word List Format

Language Skills (100 words and phrases in your chosen foreign language)

You must learn to speak, read, and write 100 words and phrases and be able to understand and respond to them in the language. In class we will modify the list to add words of your choice to the list and/or remove those that you do not want to learn, to make a total of 100. Here is an example in German:

#	Word/Phrase	Written Translation (Use polite forms)	Pronunciation
1	Hello	Hallo	hallo
2	Good morning	Guten Morgan	Gooten morgen
3	Good day	Guten Tag	Gooten tahk
4	Good evening	Guten Abend	Gooten ahbent
5	Good night (going to bed)	Gute Nacht	Gootuh naKHt
6	Goodbye	Auf Wiedersehen	Owf veeder-zayn
7	Yes	Ja	Ya
8	No	Nein	Nine
9	Please	Bitte	Bittuh
10	Thank you	Danke	Dankuh

<u>NOTES</u>

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