



**London  
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# I TRIED TO REACH YOU BY PHONE

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*Ali is an academic at Galatasaray University. Galatasaray University was first established in 1481 by Sultan Beyazıt II as an “Enderun School” (Imperial School) and was called the “Galata Sarayı” (‘Galata Palace’). This historical francophone education institution was a boarding school where freedom of conscience always prevailed.*

I have been working as an academician at Galatasaray University for five years. We met Charles, who is a senior French professor, at a symposium I attended recently. The language of instruction of the University I graduated from was French, and my speaking was fluent. I had the opportunity to further the conversation with Charles, as I am generally a friendly and pleasant person to talk to. He had an interest in Turkey. He asked me detailed questions on many subjects such as cultural dishes, country politics, politics, health, and the education system in Turkey and listened to the answers with interest. We had co-working spaces, and I felt like he liked me. I took this opportunity to get his contact information and asked for permission to contact him again. He gladly accepted.

When I returned to the country, I wanted to finalize the EU project draft that I worked on and revised for a while and complete my application. My project was well-structured, substantial in theory, and never done before, but it lacked networking, and revision was requested. For this reason, I was looking for a reliable partner who would add value to the project. At that moment, I thought of Charles, whom I had just met and whose contact information I had received. What would I lose? I wrote an email and explained the project in detail, and sent the documents. I invited him to the project as a partner. When I checked my mail after lunch, I was surprised. I got a quick email from Charles accepting my project proposal. But of course, he had many questions listed at the end of the mail.

### **1 year later**

My EU project, which was accepted last year, received university-wide praise. We had progressed a lot in the project. Thanks to Charles' network, two more partners from France were involved in the project, and we were planning our project meeting to be held in Turkey to discuss the first step results of the project. Since I am both a host and a junior from other partners, I wanted to undertake all the organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc. They accepted me at first, but when I started the reservation business and needed personal information (passport number, date of birth, etc.), the situation changed slightly. They didn't want to share this information; moreover, the emails got cold. I have taken it personally. Didn't they find me trustworthy? Still, I was trying to convince myself that it wasn't about me. As a result, everyone made the flight tickets and hotel reservations themselves, and I only suggested a hotel and an airline company.

Finally, the day of the meeting came. Three partners arrived together on the same flight and arrived at Istanbul airport very early (05.00 am). I had planned everything, including the meeting agenda, places to eat, and a city tour after the meeting.



I wanted to meet them at the airport in the morning, but they said it was too early and there was no need for this, and they would go directly to the hotel by taxi. We were to meet at the University at 09:00.

### **On the morning of the meeting, 08.00 am**

I left my house to go to the University. University from my house took about 20 minutes. However, taking into account the traffic on the Bosphorus Bridge in the morning, I set off quite early from the time we would meet. When I came to the Bosphorus bridge crossing, I noticed that the road was much slower than its normal flow. After a while, traffic came to a complete stop. For 10 minutes, the traffic did not move at all. I got out of the car and walked a little further to see what was going on. My heart jumped. A recent accident had occurred, a vehicle rolled over, and the injured were waiting for the ambulance on the ground. The morning bridge traffic, plus the accident, would take me no less than 2.5 hours to cross the bridge. My heart started beating fast. I went back to my car.

I wanted to call Charles quickly to let him know I would be late, but I didn't have his phone number. Why hadn't he given his phone number? I wrote a quick email but I was not sure if he would see it. I was guessing he wouldn't have access to emails until he was in a place with wifi. I waited desperately in traffic for about 2 hours. I wanted to at least leave a message by calling the university security, but no one picked up the phone in the morning. However, at 11:00, I was able to reach the gate of the University where we had agreed to meet at the door. There was no one around. I checked the emails but my mail was showing as unread. Oh, where were they? And why didn't they give me their phone numbers?

### **Questions**

- ✓ *What is the main problem in the case?*
- ✓ *Do you think this is a cultural issue?*
- ✓ *Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?*
- ✓ *Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their personal information and phone numbers with Ali?*
- ✓ *Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*
- ✓ *Do you think that knowing what it is appropriate in a specific culture is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

### **Recommended Reading**

Ochieng, E. G. & Price, A. D. F. (2010). Managing cross-cultural communication in multicultural construction project teams: The case of Kenya and UK, *International Journal of Project Management*, 28(5), 449-460.



Suthakaran, V. (2011). Using Analogies to Enhance Self-Awareness and Cultural Empathy: Implications for Supervision. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 39(1), 206-217.

Szkudlarek, B., Osland J. B., Nardon, L. & Zander, L. (2020). Communication and culture in international business – Moving the field forward, *Journal of World Business*, 55(1), 1-9.

Tombleson, B. & Wolf, K. (2017). Rethinking the circuit of culture: How participatory culture has transformed cross-cultural communication, *Public Relations Review*, 43(1), 14-25

Zhu, Y, Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2013). Balancing Emic and Etic: Situated Learning and Ethnography of Communication in Cross-Cultural Management Education, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(3), 66-81.



# I TRIED TO REACH YOU BY PHONE – TEACHING GUIDE

## 1. Synopsis

Ali has been an academician at Galatasaray University for ten years. He is conducting a European project with the French professor Charles and his colleagues, whom he met during a symposium. It has been a year since the start of the project, and the partners will meet in Istanbul to discuss the first step results of the project. Ali wanted to undertake all organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc. When he started the reservation business, he needed the personal information (passport number, date of birth, etc.) of guests; however, the group preferred not to share their personal information. Ali was disturbed by this situation and began to think that his colleagues did not trust him. On the first day of the meeting in Istanbul, Ali was extremely late due to a traffic accident on the Bosphorus Bridge. During this time, he desperately needed a phone call to Charles, but it was not possible.

## 2. Teaching Strategy and Teaching Objectives

Students /learners will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the effects of cultural differences on communication styles.
- ✓ Understand the importance of cultural sensitivity

## 3. Target Audience

- ✓ Undergraduate students in all business-related disciplines
- ✓ Postgraduate students in all business-related disciplines

## 4. Questions & Answers for Case Analysis and Teaching

- ✓ **Open the discussion**  
*What is the main problem in the case?*  
*Do you think this is a cultural issue?*

- ✓ **Advance the discussion**

*Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?*

*Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their private information and phone numbers with Ali?*

- ✓ **Close the discussion**



*How would you feel if you were Ali? How would you cope with negative emotions?*

*Do you think that knowing what is appropriate in a specific culture is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

*Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

## **5. Recommended Reading**

Ochieng, E. G. & Price, A. D. F. (2010). Managing cross-cultural communication in multicultural construction project teams: The case of Kenya and UK, *International Journal of Project Management*, 28(5), 449-460.

Suthakaran, V. (2011). Using Analogies to Enhance Self-Awareness and Cultural Empathy: Implications for Supervision. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 39(1), 206-217.

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## I TRIED TO REACH YOU BY PHONE – TEACHING NOTES

### 1. Summary of case study

Ali has been an academician at Galatasaray University for ten years. He is conducting a European project with the French professor Charles and his colleagues, whom he met during a symposium. It has been a year since the start of the project, and the partners will meet in Istanbul to discuss the first step results of the project. Ali wanted to undertake all organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc. When he started the reservation business, he needed the personal information (passport number, date of birth, etc.) of guests; however, the group preferred not to share their personal information. Ali was disturbed by this situation and began to think that his colleagues did not trust him. On the first day of the meeting in Istanbul, Ali was extremely late due to a traffic accident on the Bosphorus Bridge. During this time, he desperately needed a phone call to Charles, but it was not possible

### 2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

- ✓ **Before the discussion**, some warm-up questions may prepare students for the discussion (Assignment questions before the case)

- *What is the main problem in the case?*

- *Do you like the topic?*

- ✓ **Open the discussion (15 min)**

The discussion can be started with following questions.

- *Do you think this is a cultural issue?*

- *Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?*

With the help of these questions, students can realize that the value attributed to hosting a meeting can vary by culture. This helps them understand the importance of cultural sensitivity.

- ✓ **Advance the discussion (45 min)**

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

- *Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their private information and phone numbers with Ali?*

- *How would you feel if you were Ali? How would you cope with negative emotions?*



With the help of these questions, students can understand the effects of cultural differences on communication styles. In addition, they understand the effect of taking a broader perspective on understanding the cause of the problems they encounter in coping with negative emotions.

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to reflect on themselves. How well do they have the skill of accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill?

*-Do you think that knowing what is appropriate in a specific culture is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

*-Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

### **3. Possible answers**

*What is the main problem in the case? Do you think this is a cultural issue?*

The main problem is the difficulties caused by the difference between cultures in communication. Ali wants to welcome all guests with the hospitality coming from his own culture during their visit to Istanbul and not to give them any trouble. However, this well-intentioned approach was not accepted as the French guests thought that it would create an extra workload for the host and they did not want to share their personal information in addition. Ali took this situation personally. Although this situation seems like an individual problem for Ali, it is actually a problem arising from cultural differences.

*Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?*

In Turkish culture, hosting guests and showing respect to elders are very important points. Ali expressed this situation in his own way and wanted to take all the responsibility on himself. *“Since I am both a host and a junior from other partners, I wanted to undertake all the organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc.”*

*Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their private information and phone numbers with Ali?*

It's not a personal issue. In many cultures, people avoid revealing personal information to new acquaintances. Although this may seem like a request to help to make things run faster, people may not be willing to share their knowledge. This situation can be seen as a requirement of hospitality in Ali's own culture. It should be noted that this is a bona fide request to help. When rejecting such a request, stating that the reason is not individual can avoid misunderstandings.





How would you feel if you were Ali? How would you cope with negative emotions?

First of all, he should understand that this situation is not a special behaviour against him. Knowing that the attitude of colleagues will be the same even if it is someone else instead of Ali, will help the person cope with negative emotions. Understanding that the willingness or unwillingness to share personal information with colleagues may vary according to cultures, may be another factor that will enable Ali to cope with negative emotions.

Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?

Being open to different ways of communication and adapting when necessary is an important competence for intercultural communication. Being open to innovation and recognizing that there may be different communication channels in different cultures can help develop this ability.

