Full Length Research Paper

Local factors on global people: The effects of cultural differences and similarities on South Korean expatriate managers' relationships with their home and host countries

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The increasing globalization of firms has given rise to an increase in the number of international assignments of human resources. The effect of cultural factors on the relationships of expatriate managers with the cultures of their home and host countries will be explored in this paper. The subjects of this study are the relationships of South Korean expatriate managers with their home and host countries who are assigned to work in Turkey and the USA. The analysis uses the matrix, which was proposed by Black and Gregersen in 1992 and modified by Richardson and McKenna in 2006. The research participants were reached by the trace method and data analyses were done by QSR Nvivo software with thematic analyses. The results indicate that the relationship of participants with their home country depends strongly on the cultural similarities and differences between their home and host countries. The profiles of the participating expatriate managers were located in "hearts at home" and "dual citizens" and no participants were found in the "go native" and "free agents" typologies. As a result, the South Korean managers who live in Turkey and the USA have a very strong relationship with their home country and their relationship with host countries change on the basis of cultural similarities and differences.

Key words: Expatriate managers, Black and Gregersen' matrix, cultural differences and similarities.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of culture has been investigated from the point of multiple disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, education and business. It is notable that the importance and number of cultural studies are increasing as globalization continues. The concept of culture, which is one of the main subjects of social studies, also shows the importance of local dynamics. The other main dimension of this study is how expatriates relate to cultures. An expatriate is definedas a person who moved to another country to live and work there for a temporary period. Expatriates have existed from the beginning of international commercial activities. Expatriates are active employees who are out of their home countries for a considerable amount of time. The interaction between culture and expatriates is the main subject of this research. The expatriate managers' relationships with their home and host countries in the context of cultural variations were investigated to explore local factors on global people.

Conceptual framework

As a result of the global economy, people often live and work away from the place which they consider as home. In a variety of these experiences are translated into management practices. A growing body of management

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literature revolves around the interests and requirements of expatriates, their partners and their families (Glanz and Hoeksema, 2001).

The interaction of expatriation and management theories has become a significant research area, and much of the literature focuses on expatriate corporate executives (Richardson and Mckenna, 2002). An expatriate is a human resource who is assigned out of the country for a certain period time for a job or project. They generally are employed in the countries where they are not citizens. Their main characteristics are working and living in a local operation and being sent abroad by a parent firm for a determined period. The control and coordination of operations are the main roles attributed to these assignments (Bonache and Brewster, 2001).

From the view of international human resource management, expatriate assignments must be managed effectively (Anderson, 2001). Expatriate managers have a considerable role as interpreters and implementers of human resources and business strategies. They move for a while and work in a variety of ways to manage worldwide operations (Harris and Holden, 2001).

Local managers speak the language and understand the culture, which can eliminate expatriates' problems with adaptation. But when there is a cultural risk, like having a great cultural distance between the centre and the subsidiary, companies can choose to send an expatriate who will help the central organization understand local conditions and control subsidiary operations (Bonache et al., 2001). There are four aspects of international assignments that contribute to expatriate success: selection, preparation, management and repatriation (Anderson, 2001).

Many researchers agree on the importance of culture for expatriates and people who work overseas. Hofstede (1980) formulates the concept of culture as "the collective programming of the mind" defining the customs, values and attitudes of the members of any given society. From that point of view, culture has a great effect on expected behaviours of people. Particularly with internationalization, it is possible to defyor sustain different cultural viewpoints. In this context, culture greatly influences the organizational and managerial practices in different regions and countries (Flytzani and Nijkamp, 2008).

Theoretical background

An expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment to the host country affects the success of the assignment (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). Assignment performance is positively related with cross-cultural adjustment (Black, 1988; Caligiuri, 1997). There are many factors that influence the expatriate's individual or organizational adjustment processes. Aycan (1997) emphasizes the three dimensions of adjustment process which are psychological, social-cultural and organizational. Adaptation to the host culture

is one of the dynamics that influences expatriation (Kim and Slocum, 2008). According to Black and Gregersen (1992), a manager who takes an assignment in a foreign country has the immense task of adapting to the new culture and business practices. In this way, thousands of expatriate managers find themselves in a relationship between a parent firm in the home country and a local operation in the host country.

If the cultural side of the host country is very strong and different, it causes individuals to stumble and experience frequent shocks (Torbiörn, 1982). According to Walton (1990), the expatriation process in a host country starts with excitement, continues with disappointment and turns into culture shock. Banai and Reisel (1993) underlined that even remaining between home and host countries is a source of conflict. Schroath and Korth (1989) found that similarities in the socio-cultural environments of the host country have a great influence on expatriation. Elango (2003) defines being similar and different in the context of the cultural dimensions (individualism, collectivism, masculinity, femininity, power distance and uncertainty avoidance) proposed by Hofstede (1980). If there is a large variety in the social norms between two cultures, this indicates that they have cultural differences. But if there is a small variety in the social norms between two cultures, it indicates that they have similar culture.

Black and Gregersen, (1999) focus their attention on the relation between globalization and increasing level of expatriates and expatriate managers. In addition, Richardson and McKenna (2006) focused on academics who expatriated and live abroad. Black and Gregersen's (1992) matrix was modified by Richardson and McKenna (2006) for academic expatriates in order to explore relationships of academics with home and host countries. Some of contributions of Richardson and McKenna (2006) study are investigation of self-directed expatriates, exploration of academics as a growing number of mobile knowledge workers and a suggestion of a matrix on relationship with home and host country. The suggestion on the last version of the matrix enables this research to focus on relationships with home and host countries from the viewpoint of cultural factors. On another note, no academics or self-initiated expatriates, only expatriate managers have been investigated in this research. Also, Hofstede's (1980) national culture perspective supported the design of the study based on home and host countries.

The reason for selecting expatriate managers is their strategic importance for companies. The role of the expatriate managers is to be the hand of the parent firm in the local operation. Black and Gregersen (1999) underline that 45% of international organizations increase the number of expatriate managersyear by year. If the manager, sent by the parent firm, is successful in the local operation, it means the parent firm is also successful. The cost of sending an expatriate manager to a host country is high for companies, but in the long term

their financial contribution pays off (Webb and Wright, 1996). For all mentioned reasons, it is meaningful to explore cultural factors' effects on expatriate managers.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this research is the effect of cultural factors on mobile actors of business. Specifically, the effects of cultures on expatriate managers' relationships with their home and host countries were investigated. The main aim is to explore managers' relationships with their home and host countries in the context of cultural similarities and differences. Doing so provides significant discussions which can cause worthwhile contributions to international business and cross-cultural studies. In addition, this study is both behavioural and cultural, and as such can be described as multi-disciplinary. Even in light of globalization, local factors are still influential and significant. With this study, it is possible to observe local factors' effects on global people.

The sample group of the research is comprised of managers from South Korea who work and live in Turkey and the USA. South Korea is one of the countries increasing its expatriates all over the world. For that reason, South Korea has been given attention by researchers who study international business. Until 1995, South Korea was a developing country, but now it is one of the most developed economies in the world. South Korea's international companies employ expatriates and expatriate managers all over the world. The condition of the Korean government taking a very active role in business development and Korean firms' efforts to seek out opportunities in new markets overseas (Lee at al., 2003) is one of the reasons to investigate South Korean expatriates and South Korea as a home country. This research only investigates 10 managers since South Korean expatriate managers are few in Turkey. For that reason, the number of the participants from the USA was determined to be 10 because of being a comparative study.

Turkey as a host country is a developing eastern country with social homogeny, whereas the USA is a developed western country with social heterogeneity (high diversity). The reason for choosing these two countries is to make a significant investigation on different and similar cultures: Turkish culture is more similar to South Korean culture, while American culture is more different in the respect of Hofstede's (2011) national scores and Elango (2003) definitions on being similar and different. According to the research problem, selecting one similar and one different national culture to the home country's national culture allows the researcher to make a significant investigation. As shown in Table 1, South Korean culture is similar to Turkish culture but different from American culture with respect to cultural dimensions (Figure 1).

The sample group includes 20 South Korean expatriate managers. Half of them are working in the USA and the others are working in Turkey. They all have been assigned for a determined period by their home organization to work in Turkey and the USA. All of the managers are male, married and college graduates. They have been living in their host countries for fewer than 9 years but more than 6 months. The ages of the participants are between 36 and 49. The participants from Turkey and the USA were identified with T# and A# during data analysis to identify and separate them according to their host countries.

Participants were reached through purposeful sampling (Seidman, 1998) and the trace method (Hornby and Simon, 1994). For data collection, interviews (Seidman, 1998) were conducted. Qualitative research interviews were used as a data collection method (Stewart and Cash, 1985). This type of research is in-depth and includes open-ended questions (Patton, 1987). Electronic interviews, which need to use electronic communication facilities to access and communicate with participants, were conducted to obtain data from the expatriate managers (Morgan and Symon, 2006). The first e-mail opened the communication with an open-ended question. The participants could reply and answered it easily. The researcher then followed up with asking the next questions to the participants who replied to the first e-mail. Some participants did not reply the initial e-mail so some reminding e-mails were sent. Ambiguous questions were cleared up and explained in detail by the researcher to the participants. Before the electronic interviews, the researcher had a meeting and a face to face conversation with some of the participants for giving more information about the aim and benefits of the research.

The reason for using this method is that the managers' busy schedules made it difficult to reach them. This method allowed them to use deep thinking while answering questions and find spare time in their schedules, and it allowed the researcher to reach them quickly and easily. The some questions of the interviews were adapted from Richardson and McKenna's study (2006) and describe relationships. The other questions were created in regard to this study's research problem and explore the effects of cultural similarities and differences on relationships.

For data analysing, the QSR Nvivo software program was used. It allows researchers to analyse qualitative data systematically, making models, tables, figures and matrixes in a practical way. As a data analysing method, thematic analysis was used. As a set of techniques, rather than a distinct methodology (King, 2006), template (thematic analysis) method was used. After coding and applying parallel coding, an initial template was created. During each step of the analysis, the template was revised and developed. As a result, the final structure of the template served as the basis for the interpretation of the results.

FINDINGS

The data from interviews were coded and investigated in detail. After that, from the view of mutual codes, thematic analyses were applied. The mentioned codes were categorized and marked thematically. With the help of these themes, each participant's approach and thoughts were determined. In other words, the themes created from the expressions of participants allowed the researcher to evaluate each participant's opinion.

The participants were located on the relationship matrix with the help of these steps. Participants' high and low relationships with their home and host countries were decided according to these themes. The matrix proposed by Black and Gregersen (1992) and modified by Richardson and McKenna (2006) for academic expatriates was used for this research's analyses. But in this study, only assigned expatriate managers in different and similar host cultures were investigated, rather than self-initiated assignments and academic expatriates. The matrix includes four quarters, which describe the relationships of the expatriates with their home and host countries. "Free Agents" have a low relationship with their home and host countries, and "Go Native" expatriates have a low relationship with their home country but a high relationship with their host countries. "Hearts at Home" expatriates have a high relationship with their home country but a low relationship with their host country. "Dual Citizen" expatriates have high relationships with their home and host countries.

Table 1. Cultural similarities and differences.

		Personnel characteristics	Social characteristics	Work culture	Social relations	Communication
South Korea-Turkey	Similarity	Easy and composed attitudes. Gentle and smooth attitude. Compose of people Kindness warm heart.	Collectivism. Historical background. Role as group	Job and work oriented mind Behaviours in workplace	Neighbourhood Helping and guiding Royalty towards family, company, society Being benevolent	Understanding each other.
	Difference		Food culture. Driving culture*. Individualism*. Religion based mind**.	Time management*. Time oriented mind*. Competition*. Working style.		Language*. Perceptions*
South Korea-USA	Similarity		Family oriented mind	Teamwork. Cooperation		
	Difference	Pragmatic lines of thoughts. Self-responsibility. Self-rationalization. Personal systematic. Thinking in positive ways. Assertive*	Diversity. Individual oriented mind*. Focusing own life. Distraction of thinking.	Time management* Determined boundaries by a few leaders* Race and rival sense* Labour structure	Admit personal characteristics. Accepting personalities. Harmony between upper and lower.	Sharing idea without hesitate. Language*

*Cultural differences influenced negatively. **Cultural differences influenced both negatively and positively.

With respect to these findings, South Korean expatriate managers' relationship with their home country is high, and none of them is located in "Free Agents" and "Go Native". For that reason, all of them were located in "Hearts at Home" or "Dual Citizens" (Figure 2).

Expatriate managers were asked about their relationships with their home and host countries during the interviews. A sub-question asked about the cultural factors that affected them positively and negatively. The effects of these cultural factors and their power in forming relationships were specified. The cultural factors that affected relationships with host countries positively or negatively were defined as being similar or different cultural concepts, respectively.

Some participants found cultural differences both strange and interesting. Because of these differences, some participants' relationships could be classified as low and others as high. In addition, some participants' feelings of missing their home countries were increasing while some participants' wishes to stay in the host country were increasing. These different cultural factors could be considered either a rich opportunity for integration or a strange situation to which it is not easy to adapt.

As a summary, the steps mentioned previously about analysing data are reading and reviewing data texts, coding, creating themes and initial template, designing final themes and templates. At the end of analyses, five cultural themes were obtained and named; personal characteristics, social characteristics, working culture, social relationships and communication. The classification of the cultural factors named themes, were done by the researcher with the consideration on being relevant, involved or different. On the other hand, cultural themes' quality check was done by some other academicians to control classification accuracy of the themes.

The quality of this research was checked based
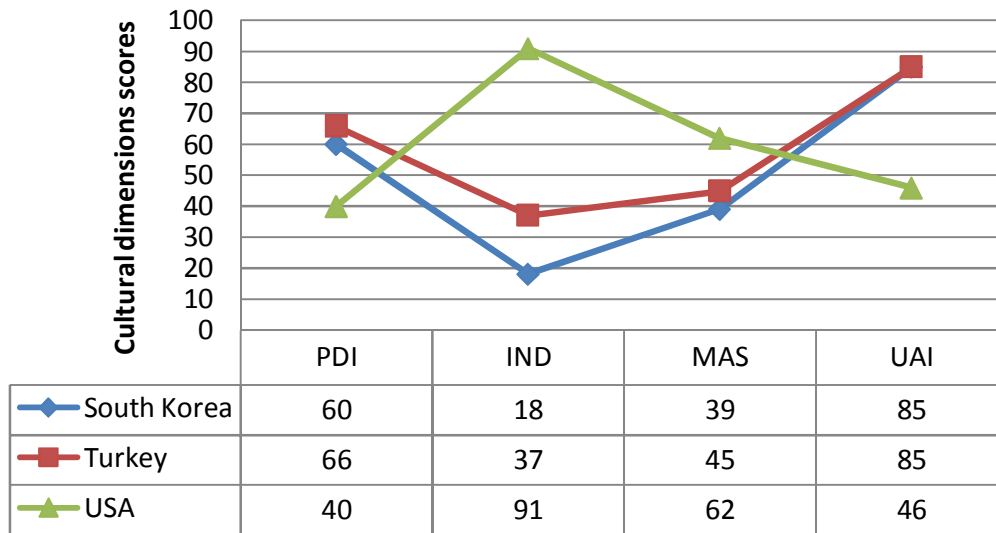
Turkish, American and South Korean Cultures

	PDI	IND	MAS	UAI
South Korea	60	18	39	85
Turkey	66	37	45	85
USA	40	91	62	46

Figure 1. Turkish, American and South Korean Cultures. Source: Hofstede (2011) and http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html.
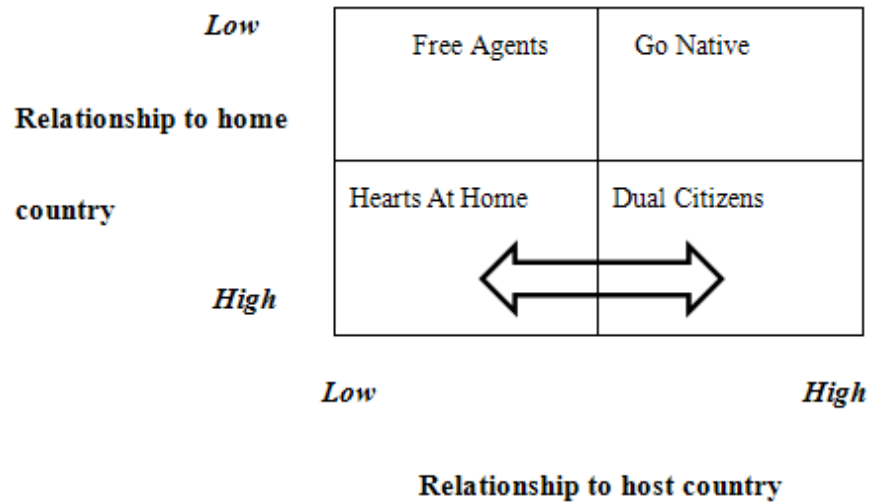

Figure 2. South Korean expatriate managers' locations.

on the proposal of King (2006) and the applications of Richardson (2008). Two academicians who study social sciences were randomly selected to check four data sets from 20 interviews' worth of data. They coded the sets in respect to the research problem and compared them with the coding determined by the researcher. The results were similar and verified the reliability of the analysis. As a second step, some results of the analysis were sent to four participants from both host countries to check. Because of their busy schedules, only four results were chosen to be checked. Their positive feedback proved the validity of the research. The quotes were transferred

to the paper with their originality in fact (Table 1):

Personal characteristics: Six participants from Turkey and five participants from the USA were influenced by personal characteristics. The participants from Turkey were located in the "Dual Citizens" quadrant. From the USA, four participants were in "Dual Citizens" and one participant was in "Hearts at Home". The participants from Turkey underlined the positive effects of gentle, smooth, easy and composed attitudes; diligence; and effort as personal characteristics. The mentioned characteristics allow the participants from Turkey to have

strong relationships with the host country. On the other hand, the participants from the USA underlined the positive effects of a pragmatic line of thought, thinking in positive ways, doing work systematically and self-responsibility. These characteristics allow them to have strong relationships with the host country. In this context, South Korean expatriate managers from Turkey were affected by similar cultural factors and the managers from USA were affected by different cultural factors that allow them all to have strong relationships.

T_1-Turkey: "*An easy and composed attitude of Turkish affected me positively. Also I can learn gentle and smooth attitude from them*".
A9-USA: "*Seems to me like people here is likely to think in a positive way rather than see in a negative way*".

Social characteristics: As a second cultural theme, six participants from Turkey and three participants from the USA were influenced by social characteristics. Five of them were located in "Hearts at Home" and only 1 of them was located in "Dual Citizens". Two participants from the USA were located in "Dual Citizens" and only one participant was located in "Hearts at Home". According to this cultural theme, the participants from Turkey were affected negatively by the driving culture, individualism and a sense of competition. Also, because some of the participants were Christian and the others were atheist, some participants felt uncomfortable with the society's approach to religion. One participant had a good impression of Islamic practices.

  In terms of social characteristics, participants' relation-ships with the host country seemed weak. The participants from the USA were of the opinion that they did not feel they were foreigners, even though they lived in a host country, because diversity and the family and individual oriented mind of the individualist culture affec-ted them positively. In regard to the social characteristics theme, it was expected that Turkish and South Korean national cultures would be more similar and expatriate managers' relationships might be stronger with Turkey. But the actual findings were completely different from the expected results, and the participants felt that Turkish culture was individualist when they compared it with their home culture. The homogeneity of Turkish culture caused participants to find cultural factors very strange. But in American culture, there is a high level of diversity and the social structure is heterogenic. The participants from the USA did not feel as though they are different.

T2-Turkey: "*I think when Turkish people drive, they become sensitive and violent since some people do not care about other people and they don't want to give the road to other people. It can be one of the most important reasons of making accidents frequently*".
A6-USA: "*I think diversity in rule is positive things. I am a foreigner in this country but I cannot feel any feelings they consider me as foreigner*".

Working culture: The third cultural theme is working culture. Four participants from Turkey and five participants from the USA were influenced by this theme. Three participants from Turkey were located in "Hearts at Home" and only one participant was located in "Dual Citizens". Four participants from the USA were located in "Hearts at Home" and only one participant was located in "Dual Citizens". In respect to the working cultural theme, one participant was affected positively by the effect of the job and the work oriented mind-set of Turkish people. On the other hand, three participants were affected negatively by the effects of time management and being time oriented more than job oriented. On the other hand, the participants from the USA were affected negatively because of actions that were either too slow or too hurried, boundaries determined by a few leaders and a sense of rivalry. One participant had a good impression about the aspect of labour. According to this participant, the labour structure seemed more flexible and efficient than in South Korea.

T_5-Turkey: "*First of all, his passion and job-oriented mind made me feel positive. Those factors are essential for business success and also rival sense blocks harmony in an organization and it is the thing that I do not want to see in organization*".
A3-USA: "*Most people live in determined boundary by few leaders so innovative mind is insufficient and it is a kind of negative thing that has affected me*".

Social relationships: The fourth theme is social relationships. Three participants from Turkey and two participants from the USA were influenced by this cultural theme. All the participants were located in "Dual Citizens". According to this view, the participants from Turkey were affected positively because of benevolence, help, guidance and loyalty towards organizations (family, company, society). On the other hand, the participants from USA were affected positively because of accepting personalities, harmony between lower and higher people and not feeling like a foreigner in American culture. The collectivism of Turkish culture and the diversity and social richness of American culture made good impressions on these participants.

T_3-Turkey: "*Turkish people had a kindness for Korean. When I lost my way on the road in Turkey, Turkish people really want to help me. I had a good impression on Turkish people*".
A6-USA: "*I think accepting personality in rule are positive things. I am a foreigner in this country but I cannot feel any feelings they consider me as foreigner*".

Communication: Three participants from Turkey and two participants from the USA were influenced by this theme.

Two participants from Turkey were located in "Hearts at Home" and only one participant was located in "Dual Citizens". One participant from the USA was located in "Hearts at Home" and the other one was located in "Dual Citizens". According to the "Dual Citizens" participant from Turkey, different religious perceptions were the main reason for communication problems. On the other hand, for the other participants, similar cultural factors between Turkey and South Korea made communication easy. For that reason, people of these two cultures understood each other well and sometimes without any expressions it was possible to understand each other's intentions. According to one participant from the USA, it was very hard for him to speak the native language of the country. It created some difficulties in speaking the target language with native people. But in Turkey, it is not as difficult because both native and foreign people speak a target language. In addition, sharing ideas without any hesitation was a different attitude for participants, but they were affected positively by this cultural factor.

T_1-Turkey: "*Cultural similarities and differences are so important in my opinion because those are very helpful to understand each other's intentions. Sometimes, communication problem does not seems so serious one under same cultural background. Turkish manager in my Department quickly catch my purpose, my idea and my intention before finishing my explanation*".
A5-USA: "*I am trying to get extroversive but I feel that it is difficult because of the different language*".

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the research is to explain how expatriate managers' approaches change in the respect of home and host cultures and particularly how expatriate managers are influenced by local factors in the context of cultural similarities and differences. Hence, it is possible to say this research is explorative. It is designed on a comparative perspective in order to criticize differences on attitudes, behaves and thoughts of expatriates from different cultures. But it is not aimed to have an inductive reasoning, just interpreting the case of relations with home and host countries from the view of differences and similarities on cultures. From that perspective, it is suggested to focus on this research problem in the context of other countries, cultures and sub-cultures. In this way, it can be possible to evaluate expatriates' approaches who are mobile actors of the international business, from the perspective of micro factors such as cultures.

One of the main roles of organizations that send managers overseas is providing expatriates with professional support for cultural adjustment. Particularly, the success of the managers means the success of the organizations. The cultural support provided by organizations can help expatriate managers adapt to the new culture easily and prevent them from losing time on account of cultural shock and conflict. It makes it possible for them to focus on their assignment as soon as possible.

On the other hand, more studies on relationships of the expatriates with cultures can lead organizations and practitioners to think about it more. Taking their attention with more researches and discussions can cause them to consider overseas assignments again from the view of culture. Supporting cultural preparation and regarding possible reactions to cultural differences and similarities make expatriation more effective and result in less financial loss.

Conclusion

According to the results, the participant expatriate managers are located only in two patterns. The main characteristics of these patterns are having a high relationship with the home country while the relationship with the host country changes. These changes depend on many factors, but in this research, the cultural similarities and differences' effects have been explored. The results for South Korean expatriate managers are:

1. All of the participants have a high relationship with their home country and home culture;
2. They all have the same plan of being sure to return to their home country someday;
3. The all have strong relationships with South Korea.

Because of the previous results, none of them was located in either the "Free Agents" or "Go Native" patterns. They all were influenced by cultural themes positively and negatively in different ways and these themes named positive and negative in respect to their approach to them. Positive factors allow them to have strong relationships with host cultures but negative ones cause them to have weak relationships. In both the two national cultures of Turkey and the USA, managers' strong and weak relationships were changing according to the effects of cultural themes (Table 2).

As a result, the effects of each cultural factor in the expatriation process have importance. This situation seemed dynamic and changeable, making it impossible to make predictions based on culturally similar and different countries. On the other hand, as mentioned previously, cultural similarities are generally integrative for expatriates. For instance, personal characteristics such as gentle, smooth, easy composed attitude are all perceived as a similarity for both Turkish and South Korean national cultures and it allows expatriates to internalize the host country more. They cause them to feel like they are at home, and they do not miss their home country as much. But the effects of cultural differences change from person to person. For some

Table 2. Relationship with countries in the context of culture.

| Cultural themes | Relationships | | |
| | Home country | Host countries | |
	South Korea	Turkey	USA
Cultural similarities		Dual citizens	Dual Citizens
	Dual Citizens		
Cultural differences		Dual citizens Hearts at home	Dual citizens. Hearts at home

expatriate managers, it is a rich, new experience to be in a different culture, but for another, it is the main reason he wishes to return home. For example, diversity and individual-family oriented mind of host culture is a difference for South Korean managers but some of them are influenced by it in a positive way. At the same time, language differences and efforts to speak native language of host country cause some expatriate managers to feel depressed.

The difference about individualism and diversity make expatriates integrate into the host culture and have a strong relationship, but the difference on mother language causes expatriates to feel uncomfortable and experience cultural shock and conflict during the expatriation process.

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