



**Rhetoric and Communications, Issue 7, January 2013**

**Adriana Carina Duban**

**Ph. D. student, “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia**

## **The Turkish culture, business, and communication seen by a Romanian tourist**

**Abstract:** The present paper aims to offer an analysis of the Turkish life, culture, business, and communication as seen by a Romanian tourist. It is the result of a personal experience lived in Kusadasi, Istanbul, and Antalya, as tourist in Turkey. The work represents a short description of a part of the world that can be considered neither a Western, nor an Eastern society, but a mixture between tradition and innovation, old and new, intellectual and emotion, progressive and reactionary, Europe and Asia. We undertake through the present study to partially decipher the Turkish hospitality, art of negotiation, and power of engaging in intercultural communication, etc. In the end, the tourist/traveller will be fascinated by the Turkish beauty.

**Key words:** Turkish, negotiation, communication, hospitality, intercultural

“If my business is good, it's not because of the weather, the time of year or the economy. It's because of me. I'm doing something right. If my business is bad, it's not because of the weather, the time of the year or the economy. It's because of me” [1]. Generally, success in business is determined by some specific characteristics businessmen are endowed with. It is commonly accepted that, in general, successful business persons live in a perpetual competition with the others and themselves, do not feel comfortable if they waste time, and feel great if they overcome their previous results. Successful business persons are men of actions, and also men of words, as negotiations play a major part in business, and “many leaders have dared to lay out ambitious programs” [2]. They are endowed with leadership abilities, risk-taking is their wonderful trait (the entrepreneurial spirit), and are capable of bringing their work team to success. They are reliable, act in a responsible way, and enjoy a feeling of personal integrity. It is not something about money, and nothing else but the money: business is their life. Most of us agree that these are qualities that separate the best in their business from the mediocre, and reflect the business persons’ “commitment to cultural awareness and understanding” [3].

Each country has its own successful business persons provided by fate, luck, environment or education, etc. endowed with these qualities. They are people who have the power to change the business world and to offer a new, different, and daring perspective upon the world itself. America has Donald Trump, a true leader, a self confident and extravagant person, and Bill Gates in a continuous state of inspiration, Russians gave Roman Abramovici, Romania gave Țiriac, George Beccali, Silviu Prigoană or Copos, etc. Each country may offer certain names in this respect. Nevertheless, in Turkey,

mention should be made about a particular situation in this respect. In Istanbul, Kusadasi or Antalya, streets are full of beautiful small/big shops and pubs, and almost everybody has a little business in Turkey.

Almost everyone who owns a shop in Turkey may be considered a special case of 'business person'. Business is seen as "effort of individuals to produce and sell, for a profit, the goods and services that satisfy society's needs" [4]. The Romanian tourists should admit that, in general, they do not know who is Vehbi Koc who owes 80 companies and employed 40,000 people, or Serdar Bilgili, famous for his business career in textiles, building, or hospitality (he is famous only because he was president of the Besiktas football club between 2000 and 2004). Yet, those who travelled from Romania to Turkey generally became aware of the Turkish business, cultural and social spirit. The present work is inspired by a holiday spent in Kusadasi, Istanbul, and Antalya, where I came into contact with the Turkish business, social spirit, the role of culture, religion, and traditions in the daily Turkish business practices.

As far as business communication is concerned, the greatest quality a Turkish person has in this respect is called hospitality. Turks know how to make a deal with the client, to dominate him/her up to the moment when the transaction is done. A client can hardly leave a Turkish shop without buying something because of the splendid Turkish charm. Turkish people know how to communicate with the tourists who come from abroad with a view to improving the small business they have. One may find a Turkish person in the front of shops and pubs, inviting people to join them, and buy something, anything, from what they offer. The Turkish men are full of ambition, and search for material success. Each little thing they sell has its value in their 'businesses'. Men are generally those who go out of their houses and have to deal with the world of business (one can notice that women are not usually employed in bars and restaurants; the restaurant staff in Turkey is generally made up of men).

Turks are individualists only at the first sight. When foreign tourists meet them in front of their shops, they may be tempted to believe that the Turks know where their advantage lie and act only to their own behoof. Appearances deceive. As a matter of fact, Turks are a big and wonderful family. Their spirit of competition is overwhelmed by the need for harmony and understanding. The relationships between the Turks are more important than their own business. They all seem to belong to a specific network that links them in a wonderful and special way. This idea is connected with a not so high (but also not so low) power distance ranking. There is a feeling of endeavor for equality and opportunity for everyone there, as the Turkish society seems to be in a transitory phase or continuous change. It is not a Western society, but it is not Eastern either, or is it both, if it is to take into account the fact that Istanbul is a city established both in Asia and Europe.

This kind of society needs stability. Turks' enthusiasm for life, foreigners and family do not let them forget about their need for certainty. They need rules to guide them, and strong personalities to

illuminate their condition. Atatürk's reforms represent a proof in this respect. Turkey became a modern society with Atatürk's reforms, though changes were not easy to be made in a country that shelters today more than 68 millions of souls [5]. Atatürk's figure seems to be everywhere in Turkey: there are a lot of photos, paintings, statues, photographs, and souvenirs with Atatürk in most shops, pubs, and even restaurants. This kind of attitude is linked with the Turkish way of interpreting concepts such as respect and patriotism.

Turkish shops and bazaars are wonderful, and they offer to the Turks the possibility to enhance their main qualities: hospitality and art of communication. For the Turks, communication is, first of all, "talking to one another" [6], and bargaining. Negotiation is part of the Turkish daily life. The Turkish persons expect people to bargain before purchasing most of the goods. One may bargain even in shops, in the restaurants, and even with the taxi drivers (eg: the waiter in a restaurant in Kusadasi presented the offer for two persons, and he said that it costs 30 Turkish liras; then he brought the food, but also tea, Turkish coffee, yoghurt and salads that were not ordered; in the end, he mentioned that the meal costs 28 Turkish liras).

Turks are masters in communication. They start conversations with the customers about the shop, the goods they offer, their native place, and prices, etc. Once the clients enter their shop they are asked a lot of "fair questions" [7]. They are also tempted with bon-bons, various small gifts, or tea. The style of communication, "like the clothes, is chosen with care to make the optimal impression" [8].

Communication skills are essential, and Turks know how to employ them, and to sell their things. They are well prepared for foreigners: they learn some particular words and expressions specific for shopping, and business, in general, in many languages, and know how to 'touch' the client's heart. They are aware of the fact that "the addressees and the context affect our choice of code or variety, whether language, dialect or style" [9].

"There is nothing more expensive than what is bought cheaply and there is nothing cheaper than what is bought expensive" ([www.turkishodyssey.com](http://www.turkishodyssey.com)). The saying is easily applied in the Turkish shops. Many small souvenirs that are bought from the Turkish shops are endowed with a high spiritual and cultural value. Foreign tourists generally do not leave Turkey without the most important amulet of the Turkish culture: the amulet against the evil eye (Nazar Boncuğu). The amulets are considered means of protection against the others' envy eyes. Turkish people believe that there are many envy/jealous people, and bad luck can also be transmitted without intention. The amulet is made up of a blue glass with an eye design. In general, Turks do not have blue eyes. This is the reason why this colour is generally related to foreigners ([www.nirvanainternational.com](http://www.nirvanainternational.com)). The amulet is used on doors, bags, and even built into the sidewalks, foundation, and walls of modern office buildings. It may be turned into jewelry, bracelets, earrings, etc. A Turkish man or woman needs the amulet against the evil

eye not only when he/she buys a new car, house or other valuable thing, but also if he/she wants to have/maintain his/her success in the business life.

Gold and coffee are also part of the Turkish culture. Imagine one single street full of gold! The Grand Bazaar of Istanbul represents a total of 65 streets with gold, employing more than 20.000 people. The Turkish coffee and tea also seem to be 'made of gold' since they have special taste. Mehmet Efendi Kurukahveci is considered one of the best coffees in Turkey since 1871 when Kuruhkaveci approached coffee production as an art form ([www.myethnicworld.com](http://www.myethnicworld.com)). It is highly recommended as old and good Turkish coffee brand. Foreigners generally do not need tea spoons for the Turkish coffee, as sugar is not usually added after it is served, but they definitely need the coffee grounds if they want a fortune reading from the coffee remains in the cup. The Turkish coffee and the Turkish tea are important parts of the Turkish culture. Turkish people serve tea in the morning, during and after breakfast, in the evening, and whenever the tourist wants to drink during the day. It seems that, in Turkey, tea is a more occasional drink than coffee. There are special wonderful tea pots and Turkish tea glasses to serve it. In Turkey, tea is therefore not served in ordinary Romanian cups (porcelain cups or mugs). The Turkish coffee and tea shops play a wonderful role in society. They still represent a meeting place for both the cultured citizen and the foreign tourist. Istanbul offers a wide range of café-restaurants where friends and family meet to discuss the most important issues of the day and serve a small cup of strong Turkish coffee or very good tea, rich in flavor and tradition.

Turkish food is very tasteful. Turks generally do not eat Pork, but some of them smoke or/and drink alcohol. Still, it is not advisable to eat Pork or drink alcohol in front of a Turkish person. It is nice to eat rice, chicken, 'çorba', Turkish delight or other sweets with pistachio, etc. to make them happy and/or to be appreciated for sharing their taste. You may never know what you eat in Turkey, but you eat well.

Turkish people do not celebrate Christmas. Turkey celebrates New Years Eve. This is the reason why many Turkish people do not know how to ornament an artificial Christmas tree, but they are happy like children when they see its lights and the Christmas bon-bons, and sometimes want to have such a Christmas tree as lamp in their homes in every season. Nevertheless, most restaurants in Western Turkey prepare the Christmas tree for foreign tourists in December.

The month of Ramadan is the most wonderful time of the year in Turkey. It is a month of peace and harmony. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, so Ramadan moves around the year. Ramadan is part of the Turkish culture. There is a sense of unity during this period of time in Turkey when Turks are anxious to pay visits to their relatives, and spend a nice time all together. One may note a strange sense of peace and happiness on the Turkish faces during the month of Ramadan. There are many other things that one may say about the Turkish culture, business, and communication. Many pages may be dedicated to the Turkish ceramic arts (it is highly recommended to pay a visit at

Topkapi Palace in Istanbul in this respect), the Turkish music (Tarkan and his wonderful rhythmic song *Kiss Kiss* from the album “Simarik” conquered the entire world, Sertab Erener gave to the world everything that she could in *Everyway that I can*, and won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003, in Riga, Latvia, and tears are falling down on Turkish cheeks, and crying becomes beautiful when Sezen Aksu performs her songs, etc.), Turkish tapestry, architecture (The Blue Mosque, Hagia Sofia, Topkapi Palace, and other magnificent structures preserved throughout the years), Turkish football, and Turkish love, etc. In the end, the tourist/traveller is fascinated by the Turkish beauty, culture, art of doing business and communication that make explicit the Turkish roots and the Muslim religion that enrich and strengthen the Turkish community day by day.

#### **Bibliographical references:**

[1] Raphel, M. (2003). What makes a successful business person? Business people who are tops in their field have a lot in common, and art professionals can learn a lot from their successes and strategies” in [Art Business News](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_mOHMU/is_9_30/ai_108785318/), September, 2003, <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_mOHMU/is\\_9\\_30/ai\\_108785318/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_mOHMU/is_9_30/ai_108785318/)>, Retrieved on 10.07.2012.

[2] Barton, B. (2004). “Christ as a Businessman” in *American Culture. An Anthology of Civilization Texts*, edited by Anders Breidlid, Fredrik Chr. Brøgger, Øyvind T. Gulliksen, Torbjorn Sirevag, London and New York: Routledge, p. 196.

[3] English, L. M. & Lynn, S. (1995). *Business across Culture. Effective Communication Stage*, Longman: New York, 1995, p. 147.

[4] Pride, W. M., Hughes, R. J. & Kapoor, Jack R. (1991). *Business*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 5.

[5] Dresser, N. (2005). *Multicultural Manners, Essential Rules of Etiquette for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., p. 255.

[6] Fiske, J. (1990). *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, London&New York: Routledge, p. 1.

[7] Auletta, K. (2003). *Backstory. Inside the Business of News*, New York: The Penguin Press, p. 170.

[8] Bülow-Møller, A. M. (1989). *The Textlinguistic Omnibus: A Survey of Methods for Analysis*, Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, p. 15.

[9] Holmes, J. (1992). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, London&New York, Longman.

Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 245.

#### **Online sources:**

<http://www.businessschools.com/articles/BUSINESS-TOP-10> - Retrieved on 10.06.2012.

<http://www.myethnicworld.com/p-3356-kurukahveci-mehmet-efendi-turkish-ground-coffee-250-gra> - Retrieved on 10.06.2012.

[http://www.nirvanainternational.com/lifestyle/the\\_evil\\_eye.php](http://www.nirvanainternational.com/lifestyle/the_evil_eye.php) - Retrieved on 10.06.2012.

<http://www.turkishodyssey.com/turkey/culture/people.htm> - Retrieved on 10.06.2012.