



**UWI**  
ST. AUGUSTINE  
CAMPUS



Trading with China:  
The Role of Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Awareness  
in Fostering Sustainable Development  
in the Caribbean

Avian Daly MA  
Centre for Language Learning  
The University of the West Indies  
St. Augustine Campus  
Trinidad and Tobago

# The Caribbean Context



CIC 2015 June 17 – 21, Mona, JA

"Dragons in the Archipelago - The Chinese-Caribbean Experience"

# Implications in a Global Market

 Global Top 10	
The Global Competitiveness Index 2014-2015	Global rank*
Switzerland	1
Singapore	2
United States	3
Finland	4
Germany	5
Japan	6
Hong Kong SAR	7
Netherlands	8
United Kingdom	9
Sweden	10

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015

Note: \* 2014-2015 rank out of 144 economies

CIC 2015 June 17 – 21, Mona, JA

*"Dragons in the Archipelago - The Chinese-Caribbean Experience"*

# Implications in a Global Market



# Implications in a Global Market

TRADING ACROSS BORDERS			
COUNTRY	ECONOMY	RANKING 2015	RANKING 2014
Dominican Republic	Upper middle income	24	39
Barbados	High income	38	36
Trinidad & Tobago	High income	76	75
Guyana	Lower middle income	82	82
Suriname	Upper middle income	106	102
Jamaica	Upper middle income	115	115
Haiti	Low income	142	147
Doing Business 2015 Report			

# Why Trade with China?

- In 2014, China overtook the US as the world's largest economy (IMF, 2014)
- China is one of the world's three largest outward investors
- Direct foreign investment from China to the Latin-American and Caribbean region has been averaging USD 10 billion since 2010 (ECLAC, 2013)
- A huge potential market; [1.4 billion Chinese nationals](#) (19% of the world's population)
- Reduce production costs (access to cheaper goods & services)

# Trading with China: SMEs in T&T

- Companies engaged in trade with China: N=42 (TTMA, 2014)
- The majority of companies import goods and services from China
- Sectors involved: manufacturing, retail, construction/engineering, energy, clothing & textile

# Trading with China: the challenges

- “In Zhangjiagang north of Shanghai, communications were hindered due to the language barrier between the principal factory owner/CEO and our English-speaking team. One member's level of Chinese was only at a basic level. This both pleased and amused the Chinese, but there was insufficient fluency and mastery of Mandarin to communicate at a technical and commercial level. This had to be in English with a translator who was Chinese.” - Anonymous
- Our Company has an “ongoing relationship with two purchasing/logistic agents: one is China, the other in Taiwan. Some language challenges [occur] regarding technical specifications, quality, and issue/conflict resolution. Also some cultural challenges. Contact is usually via email and skype video. All transactions are done in English.” - Anonymous



# Trading with China: the role of Linguistic and Socio-Cultural Awareness

- “It demonstrates to the Chinese business partner that there is sincere seriousness/commitment and at the same time respect on our part.
- Understanding Mandarin Chinese helps us to understand how to obtain a quality product or goods from our Chinese business partner by allowing us to ask questions about written (Hanzi) Chinese as well as spoken Chinese (even if the questions are in English). The questioning demonstrate our expectations and hence they cause or precipitate an ongoing expectation of quality and expected standards.
- Written Chinese is as important as spoken Chinese because even products that are marketed by the Chinese in English have details and specifications that are in Chinese. It is important that these details be recognized and understood on the English-speaking side.” - Anonymous
- “Speaking the language provides the ability to communicate with other companies in Chinese. They would take the speaker more seriously and it does well with future business conversations.” - Anonymous

# Recommendations

- Start thinking outside of the 'English-only' box
- Invest in high quality training opportunities (Chinese for Business Purposes courses)
- Become familiar with the Chinese culture and their society

# Chinese Business Etiquette (I: Presenting Tokens)



CIC 2015 June 17 – 21, Mona, JA  
*"Dragons in the Archipelago - The Chinese-  
Caribbean Experience"*

# Chinese Business Etiquette (I: Presenting Tokens)

- Select gifts of varying values.
- Identify the one taking the lead. The leader must receive the token of highest value.
- Determine the rank of the other individuals in the group. Tokens are distributed from highest to lowest value to the highest to lowest ranking individuals.
- Choose a suitable occasion in which to present tokens, e.g.: Spring Festival, New Year's Day, Mid-Autumn Festival, anniversaries, birthdays or meetings.
- Make a statement about the token highlighting its purpose, reason for selection, etc.
- Ensure that the gift is nicely wrapped and presented using both hands.

# Useful Expressions when Presenting Tokens

- Zhè shì wǒ men de yì diǎn xīn yì, qǐng shōu xià.

这是我们的一点心意，请收下。

This gift is a token of our appreciation.

- Zhè shì wǒ men tè dì wéi nín tiāo xuǎn de.

这是我们特地为您挑选的。

This gift is specially selected for you.

# Chinese Business Etiquette (II: Offering Toasts)



CIC 2015 June 17 – 21, Mona, JA  
*"Dragons in the Archipelago - The Chinese-  
Caribbean Experience"*

# Chinese Business Etiquette (II: Offering Toasts)

- The host offers the first toast along with a welcome speech.
  - To offer up a toast, stand up and use both hands as to offer a toast,
  - Hold the glass with the right hand, use the left hand to support the bottom of the glass,
  - Always hold the glass lower than those of the other guests to show respect.
- The main guest or the group leader returns the toast accompanied by a short speech.
- Only the host/group leader should direct his/her toast to many guests at the same time.
- Dinner guests can take turns in toasting to one person (e.g.: specially invited guest) or to each other at any time during the meal.
- Toasts should be offered to order of the highest to lowest ranking individual.
- To offer a toast to someone sitting across the table, hit the glass on the table saying 干杯! (Gan bei!)

# Useful Expressions when Offering Toasts

- Wèi wǒ men de hé zuò gān bēi.

为**我们**的合作干杯！

To our co-operation. Cheers!

- Wǒ men hěn gāo xìng hé nín hé zuò.

**我们**很高兴和您合作。

It is our pleasure to co-operate with you.



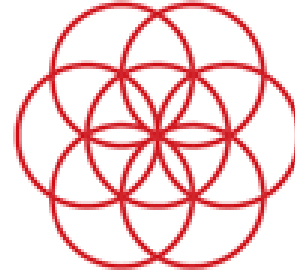
# References

- Corrigan, Gemma, Roberto Crotti et al. “Assessing Progress toward Sustainable Competitiveness.” in The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015. World Economic Forum, n.d. Web. 1 Jun. 2015.
- Orozco, Julio and Tevin Gall. The Importance of Language Learning to Regional Development and Tourism Competitiveness. ACS, n.d. Web. 1 Jun. 2015.
- The World Bank. Doing Business 2014 – Economy Profile: China. 2013. Web. 23 Apr. 2014
- The World Bank. Doing Business 2014 – Economy Profile: Trinidad and Tobago. 2013. Web. 23 Apr. 2014



**RDI**FUND

THE UWI-TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FUND



Xiè xiè!

谢谢！

Thank you!

CIC 2015 June 17 – 21, Mona, JA  
*"Dragons in the Archipelago - The Chinese-  
Caribbean Experience"*