

From Boundary Spanning to Creolization: Cross-cultural Strategies from Offshore Providers' Perspective

Invited lecture of Dr Pamela Abbott

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Brunel University, West London**

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P302, Poole House, Talbot Campus, 4pm–5pm

In achieving success in global sourcing arrangements, the role of a cultural liaison, boundary spanner or transnational intermediary is frequently highlighted as being critical. In this paper, we argue that concepts like "boundary spanning" have been limited in theorizing the complexities of cross-cultural collaborations in offshore outsourcing processes. This paper presents an alternative framework of "creolization" that combines and further extends theoretical understandings of these processes. We investigated 13 companies through 26 in-depth, semi-structured interviews in Xi'an Software Park, an emerging Chinese software and services outsourcing hub. A grounded analysis of the data revealed four conceptual groupings for the practices undertaken at these companies, labeled as boundary spanning, mixed identity, network expansion and cultural hybridity. We posit that the process of creolization supports these practices and furthermore provides a unique basis for strategies positioning cross-cultural work from a supplier's perspective.

Dr Pamela Abbott

Dr. Pamela Abbott is a lecturer and researcher in the area of Information Systems Management within the Department of Information Systems and Computing, Brunel University, West London. Her PhD was obtained at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, UK, on the basis of research done on nearshore and other proximity models of offshore software outsourcing. In the last 8 years, she has been actively publishing in both journal and conference outlets on topics including the suitability of specific locations for software and services outsourcing, strategies for software and services export in developing countries, the role that distance plays in managing offshore working arrangements and the relationship between context (cultural, socio-political) and the development of client-supplier relationships. One of her major articles is published in the prestigious management journal, Communications of the ACM, and looks at the phenomenon of nearshoring. She has both international research and teaching experience, having worked as an academic in the Irish Republic at the University College Dublin Business School and developed a curriculum based on offshore outsourcing. She also gave invited talks on this topic at the European Research Centre for Information Systems (ERCIS), University of Muenster, Germany, both to practitioner and academic audiences. Within the last 3 years she has been working on an international collaborative research project with UK and China based researchers investigating the strategies employed by Chinese service provider firms who operate in this highly competitive environment. Prior to her academic career she worked as a software quality analyst with an offshoring service provider in the Caribbean, her native home.

**For more information about lectures please contact: Kate Musial
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