DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES WHEN TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Abstract

In this globalized world, where many people work in international environments, higher education institutions are focusing more and more on fostering intercultural competences. The development of these competences is particularly important when teaching Business English communication skills, as learners should have the chance to understand the tangible and non-tangible cultural aspects that deeply influence people's linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour in business contexts. The purpose of the present article is to explore some of the ways in which students may be developed into English speakers who are able to comprehend and make use of interculturality.

Keywords: intercultural competence, communication, cultural dimensions, models, business English

1. Introduction

In the context of international business, English has become the main language of communication, a lingua franca used by the variety of countries, organizations and alliances that participate or aspire to participate in global transactions. However, communicating efficiently in such a challenging and complex environment implies more than English proficiency. Even if a message is precisely and clearly expressed, two individuals coming from different cultural contexts may attach different meanings to it. For example, while Japanese, Chinese and other Asian people say "maybe" when they mean to refuse a business proposal, their American counterparts might interpret this kind of answer as a promise of acceptance. Thus, the knowledge of cultural conventions is paramount for a successful exchange of information.

2. Communication and culture

Communication is inseparable from culture. Talking about the complexity of the concept of culture, Zofia Chlopek distinguishes between the big-C culture and the small-c culture:

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"The big-C part of a given culture is usually easy to study, as it constitutes factual knowledge about the fine arts such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theatre, and film. Small-c culture, on the other hand, comprises a wide variety of aspects, many of which are interconnected, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language. Needless to say, language is also part of what we call culture, and it also reflects and interprets culture. Some of the small-c cultural aspects are directly observable, and hence easy to grasp and learn (e.g., celebrations and rituals). However, many dimensions of a given culture are hidden from the eye. Here belong the small-c cultural aspects that, being imparted to us from birth, are deeply internalized and subconscious and are often noticed only in contrast with another culture. It is mainly these non-tangible cultural aspects that have an enormous influence on people's way of thinking and their linguistic/non-linguistic behaviour and that, importantly, determine the expectations and interpretations of other people's linguistic/non-linguistic behaviour. A person who encounters an unfamiliar culture will lack knowledge of such behaviours, which may lead to amusing situations, and even conflict, caused by miscommunication." (Chlopek, 2008:11)

Some of the easily observable cultural aspects belong to the category of business etiquette and protocol. These behavioural expectations are apparent when we take into consideration such aspects as eye contact, body language, proximity, degree of formality, gift-giving, etc. But these surface aspects rest on a deeper layer of beliefs concerning the place of the individual in the scheme of things, the importance of relationships in a society, a culture's perception of time or attitude towards ambiguity, etc.

3. Developing the intercultural communicative competence

The understanding of these patterns of thought and behaviour may help us become competent in intercultural communication[2]. As Chen has noticed, the intercultural communicative competence comprises three aspects: intercultural awareness (cognitive), intercultural sensitivity (affective), and intercultural competence (behavioural). Intercultural awareness implies the noticing and learning of the similarities and differences between cultural contexts. It refers to self-awareness and cultural awareness. This process of becoming aware of the world's variety is enhanced by intercultural sensitivity, perceived as an ability to develop positive emotions towards difference, to appreciate and accept otherness. Interculturally sensitive persons must possess such qualities as self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, social interaction involvement and non-judgment.[3] The intercultural competence refers to the capacity of attaining communication goals by speaking properly and by behaving appropriately in intercultural interactions. (Chen 1997:8-9)

According to Deardorff, students need to develop an intercultural competence, which can be defined as an ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes which are visible in behaviour and that are effective and appropriate when dealing with other cultures (Deardorff, 2006: 241-266). The targeted knowledge implies cultural self- awareness, a grasp of the global issues and trends, but also the capacity to analyse information about other cultures and to acquire basic local language skills. The development of intercultural skills refers to observing and listening to specific clues, to seeking out linkages between various cultural

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[2]According to Gudykunst, intercultural communication is a type of communication that takes place between individuals from various national cultures. (Gudykunst, 2002:179).
[3] For further details, please see Chen, 1997:7-9.

aspects and to interpreting the world from other cultures' perspective. The intercultural attitudes refer to the respect, openness, curiosity and willingness to discover shown to the cultures with which the individual comes into contact.

4. Activities concerning international business etiquette

In order to help students develop these communication competences, the teacher needs to provide them with activities that engage them actively and personally: role plays, drama activities, simulation games, case studies, discussions, etc. Thus, students are provided with the opportunity to see how intercultural interactions take place by experiencing intellectually and emotionally the challenges, the pitfalls or the rewards of intercultural interaction. Regarding international business etiquette, activities dealing with verbal communication include topics such as greeting and addressing people, the use names and/or titles, small talk, agreeing and disagreeing, expressing thanks, attitudes to silence, humour. Activities dealing with the understanding of non-verbal communication include eye contact, body language (postures, movements and gestures) and personal space. Activities concerning intercultural business interactions take into consideration topics such as managerial styles in different countries, how to do business with people from other cultures, receiving foreign visitors or visiting clients abroad, exchanging business cards, working for multinational companies, patterns of working hours, timetables, habits and rules in the workplace, meetings, coffee breaks, suitable gifts and clothes, meals and eating habits, the lifestyle of business people, travelling and social life. Through these activities, students may find out, for example, that the Chinese go to business meetings only in groups, that Americans like quick negotiations, that the Japanese business cards should be treated with the greatest respect, or that the Arabs' greetings are very effusive. However, in order to comprehend the roots of national behaviours and of communication patterns, the students need to have access to the deeper layers of the various cultures and to explore their values and beliefs. This access may be provided to them by the use of the models of cultural dimensions.

5. Models of cultural dimensions

 When trying to explain the similarities and differences between particular cultural groups that are present in international markets, the students may be presented with one of these models. The students need to understand that these frameworks are important because they allow business people to predict how the members of a certain society will act in a certain context or how they will react to various situations and problems. At present, there are a few models of cultural dimensions that are widely utilized. The following is only a brief summary of these frameworks.

An early classification of cultural dimensions belongs to the sociologists Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, who thought that there are five basic pattern variables that determine all human action, five dichotomies which represent contrasting values that influence people in their social interaction. These pairs of alternatives are: a) affectivity (immediate gratification) vs. affective-neutrality (restraint of impulses in favor of moral interests); b) self-orientation (private interest) vs. collectivity orientation (collective interest); c) universalism (applying general standards) vs. particularism (considering particular relationships); d) ascription (judging others by their qualities) vs. achievement (judging others by their actions); e) specificity (limiting relations to other people to certain spheres) vs. diffuseness (not limiting relations to other people to a specific sphere) (Parsons & Shils, 1962: 80-85).

Another early model was formulated by the anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, who believed that cultures shape and influence individuals. Considering that there are a limited number of values which are common to all societies, they identified five dimensions of culture that take into consideration the beliefs about human nature, the nature of man's relationship to the surrounding environment, the types of relationships among people, the nature of human activities and people's attitude towards time. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, people are believed to be inherently good, inherently evil or a mixture of good and evil. Man's relationship to the surrounding environment may be one of domination, subjugation or harmony. Relationships among people can be individualistic, when the individual person is responsible for one's self and immediate family, collateral, in relationships between relatively equal groups of individuals, or linear, in the case of social groups organized in a rigid hierarchy. As for the nature of human activities and the attitude towards time, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck discovered that people are oriented toward being or living in the present, toward becoming an integrated whole or toward achieving goals, envisaging the past, the present or the future (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961).

The most widely used model of cultural dimensions belongs to Geert Hofstede, who attempted to gain insight into the effects of national cultures on international business. The psychologist's original framework contained four dimensions: individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance and masculinity vs. femininity. Hofstede added a fifth dimension, long-term vs. short-term orientation, in the 1980s, and a sixth dimension, indulgence vs. self-restraint, in 2010. The power distance variable quantifies the degree of inequality accepted by the less powerful members of a society. When the power distance is small, it means that power is well dispersed and individuals perceive themselves as equals (Austria, Denmark, Ireland, etc.). In societies where the power distance is large, hierarchies are strong and people working in organizations and institutions accept an unequal distribution of power (Saudi Arabia, Mexico, etc.). The uncertainty avoidance dichotomy deals with the degree of ambiguity that a society tolerates when faced with new, surprising situations. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance prefer predictability and stability. They feel anxious in unknown, unfamiliar contexts and try to avoid them by laws, rules and order, by disapproval of difference (Japan, France, Portugal, etc.)

Societies with low uncertainty avoidance are comfortable with ambiguity, have fewer rules, accept change and are more informal. (Singapore, Denmark, Sweden, UK, etc.) The individualism vs. collectivism dimension scrutinizes the extent to which individuals are organised into groups. In individualistic cultures, everyone looks after one's self and immediate family. There is a clear distinction between work and personal life and the task is considered more important than the relationship. (US, Netherlands, Italy, UK, etc.) In collectivistic cultures, people are integrated into groups, usually extended families that protect them in exchange for their loyalty. The interest of the group prevails. (Korea, Japan, Latin America, etc.) The masculinity vs. femininity dichotomy analyses the extent to which a culture respects traditional male and female roles. Masculine societies are assertive and competitive, task-oriented and materialistic (Japan, Austria, Switzerland, etc.), while feminine societies are passive, valuing harmonious relations and striving for a good quality of life. (Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, etc.) The long-term vs. short-term orientation dimension considers a society's perspective on work, life, and relationships. Cultures with a short-term orientation value the past and the present, traditions and social obligations, personal steadiness and stability. (Pakistan, Russia, etc.) Countries with long-term orientation look towards the future, valuing dedication, persistence and thrift. (China, Japan, Korea, etc.) The last dimension, indulgence vs. self-restraint, refers to a culture's fulfilment or control of basic, natural human needs. Restrained cultures believe that the gratification of such desires needs to

be regulated by strict norms (Eastern Europe, Japan, China, etc.), while indulgent cultures place higher importance on enjoyment, well-being and individual happiness (Sweden Netherlands, Austria, etc.).[4]

Another researcher who had a major influence on the development of intercultural communication was the anthropologist Edward Twitchell Hall, Jr. One of the most important concepts he introduced is that of context, which refers to the way in which cultures communicate. In high context cultures, communication is mainly implicit, much of the meaning of the message being conveyed indirectly through nonverbal coding. Bonds between people are strong and relationships are more important than tasks (Japan, China, Russia, Italy, etc.). In low context cultures, communication is direct, messages are explicit and details are verbalized. Bonds are fragile and tasks are more important than relationships (US, Germany, Switzerland, etc.). Hall's classification of high context and low context cultures has many things in common with Hofstede's dimensions of individualism and collectivism: high context societies are more collectivistic, while low context societies tend to be more individualistic.

Noticing that people coming from different cultures had contradictory conceptions of time, Hall differentiated between monochronic and polychronic cultures. Monochronic cultures focus on one goal at a time, adhere to schedules and separate work from personal life (US, Germany, etc.) Polychronic societies concentrate on multiple goals at once, are more concerned with building long-standing relationships and have a relative concept of time (Spain, Arab States, etc.). Hall also classified cultures by the amount of space they need in order to feel comfortable and to function properly. Thus, high territorial cultures require a clearly delineated personal space, they have a great need for ownership and they mark up the areas in their possession in order to secure them. (US, etc.) In low territorial cultures, people are less concerned with ownership and boundaries, sharing space more readily with others. (Arab States, etc.) (Hall:1976; Hall:1990)

Analysing national cultural differences in the international business environment, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner created, in their turn, a model which contains seven dimensions, expressed as couples of opposing attitudes. The first dimension, universalism vs. particularism, deals with a society's compliance with norms. According to Trompenaars, in universalistic cultures, people adhere to laws, rules and policies that are applied equally to everybody and take precedence over any relationship. (Canada, the US, the U.K, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, etc.) In particularistic cultures, rules are dictated by the circumstances and by the people who are involved in a situation. Personal relationships and obligations always come before laws, rules and policies. (Latin America, Russia, China, Venezuela, Indonesia, Korea, India). The individualism vs. communitarianism dimension refers to the importance attached to an individual's desire or to the interests of the group. Individualistic cultures value personal freedom and individual accomplishment, the person being more important than the group. (the US, Canada, the U.K, Switzerland, Nigeria, Mexico, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, etc.) In communitarian cultures, the group's achievement and welfare comes before the individual's, for it provides its members with safety and support. (Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Latin America, Africa). The third dichotomy, specific vs. diffuse, analyses the connection between the private and the professional spheres. In specific oriented societies, work and personal life are clearly separated, relationships not having much of an influence on the professional life. (the U.S.A., the UK, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands). In diffusely oriented societies, people believe that good relationships are paramount in order to

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[4] For further details, please see Hofstede 1980; Hofstede, 2001: 79-370; Hofstede et al, 2004: 53-300.

build a successful business. Personal and professional lives overlap and people meet with their colleagues and clients in their free time. (Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, Spain, Russia, India, China, Japan) The fourth dimension, neutral vs. emotional, shows the extent to which people displays their emotions. In neutral cultures, people's actions are influenced by reason rather than feelings. They refrain from expressing their emotions in public and hide their thoughts carefully. (ex.: the UK, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Japan, Singapore). In emotional cultures, feelings play an important part in the decision-making process. People are encouraged to show emotion even spontaneously at work and to use emotional means when doing business. (ex.: Italy, Poland, Spain, France, Brazil, Mexico). The achievement vs. ascription dichotomy scrutinizes how status is assigned in a society. In achievement oriented cultures, respect is accorded on the basis of people's performances and individuals derive their social and professional status from their accomplishments. (ex.: the U.S.A., Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Australia) In ascription cultures, where status is ascribed or inherited, people are respected for who they are and titles, position and power matter the most. (ex.: Japan, Korea, France, Italy, Hungary, Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia) The sixth dimension, sequential time vs. synchronic time, takes into consideration people's perception of time. In sequential time societies, people place a high value on the order of events, on punctuality and planning, attaching different degrees of importance to the past, the present and the future. (the U.S.A. Germany, the U.K.) In synchronic time cultures, these three periods of time appear as interwoven and people consider that time is malleable. Individuals often work on several projects simultaneously, while plans and schedules are flexible. (Japan, Mexico, Argentina) The last dimension, internal direction vs. outer direction, refers to the way people relate to their environment. In inner-directed cultures, people believe that they can control not only the natural environment, but also the organizational social context in order to meet their objectives. (Israel, Australia, New Zealand, the US, the UK) Outer-directed cultures try to live in harmony with their environment and to work together with it in order to achieve their goals. (China, Russia, India, Sweden, Egypt, Korea, Saudi Arabia). (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997: 31-155)

Another important model was formulated by Shalom H. Schwartz. By analysing the issues that every society faces and the way these issues are dealt with, Schwartz formulated seven cultural orientations that may be used for comparing cultural groups to one another. These value orientations were classified into three dimensions. The first one, autonomy vs. embeddedness, tries to establish the nature of the relation between the individual and the group. In autonomy cultures, people are seen as autonomous entities who are entitled to express their own preferences and to find meaning in their own way. Schwartz identifies two types of autonomy: Intellectual autonomy, which recognizes people's rights to pursue their own intellectual interests and ideas, and affective autonomy, which encourages individuals to enjoy their lives through positive experiences. In embeddedness cultures, people are perceived as entities that are integrated into groups, and individuals find meaning by identifying with a collectivity and by sharing its goals and its way of life. These societies strive to maintain group solidarity and the traditional order. The second dimension, hierarchy vs. egalitarianism, deals with the social fabric. In hierarchical societies, there is a social order with individuals in superior or inferior positions. People comply with their ascribed roles and the unequal distribution of power and resources is considered legitimate. In egalitarian cultures, individuals see one another as human beings who are morally equal and who have the same basic interests. People are expected to show concern for the well-being of the other members of the group and to cooperate for everyone's welfare. The third dimension, mastery vs. harmony, analyses how people treat the world around them in order to achieve their goals. In mastery cultures, people value self-assertion and try to change the natural and social

environment for their benefit, sometimes at the expense of others. In harmony societies, people seek to fit into the natural and social world as they see it and to protect it. (Schwartz, 1999: 23-47)

A recent study of cultural differences belongs to Robert J. House, who initiated Project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness). The study led to the discovery of nine dimensions of cultural variation. The first dimension, power distance, takes into consideration a community's manner of dealing with power and status. In high power distance cultures, there is a hierarchical ordering of society and the upward mobility is limited to only a few. Low power distance societies have a large middle class that perceives power as transient and sharable. Upward social mobility is high. The second cultural dimension, uncertainty avoidance, analyses the extent to which a group tries to reduce ambiguity by using rules and procedures. High uncertainty avoidance societies rely on order and on formalized policies and social interactions. They record everything meticulously, take calculated risks and resist change. Low uncertainty avoidance societies are less orderly and more informal in interactions and norms, they take risks easier and resist change only moderately. The third dimension, humane orientation, considers the way in which a culture relates to individuals who possess good qualities such as fairness, generosity, altruism or kindness. In high humane orientation societies, where people have a great need for belonging, individuals are encouraged to be kind, fair, altruistic and generous. Since people are concerned with the well-being of others, society faces fewer psychological problems.

In low human orientation societies, where people have a strong desire for power and material possessions, one's own self-interest is paramount. These societies have more psychological issues. The fourth dimension, institutional collectivism, deals with a society's collective distribution of resources and collective action. In high institutional collectivism cultures, where individuals are perceived as being interdependent with the community they belong to, societal goals are considered more important than individual goals. In low institutional collectivism cultures, people are independent of the group and they are responsible for themselves. Individual objectives often take precedence over societal objectives. The fifth dimension, in-group collectivism, scrutinizes the extent to which people show pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness within their familial and organizational environments. In high in-group collectivism cultures, the members of society consider that they are interdependent and social behaviour is regulated by duties and obligations to the group. Employees try to make significant contributions to the organization, while the organization assumes responsibility for its employees. In low in-group collectivism cultures, people feel that they are independent of the group and social behaviour is determined by personal needs and attitudes. People seek to stand out when contributing to organizational development and relationships between employer and employee are shorter. The sixth dimension, assertiveness, analyses how assertive, confrontational or aggressive people are in their relationships with others. High assertiveness cultures seek to control the environment and value competition and tough behaviour, favouring the strong. They communicate directly and encourage employees to take initiative. Low assertiveness cultures strive to live in harmony with the environment and prefer cooperation and warmth in relationships. They associate competition with punishment and feel sympathy for the weak. These societies expect employees to be loyal and seek to "save face" in communication and in action. The seventh dimension, gender egalitarianism, takes into consideration the manner in which a culture minimizes gender inequality. In high gender egalitarianism societies, women have the same level of education and the same status in society as men, while in low gender egalitarianism cultures women are less educated, they rarely work and they have little or no decision-making role in the community. The eighth

dimension, future orientation, investigates a collectivity's way of dealing with future-oriented behaviours such as planning, investing or delaying gratification. In high future orientation societies, organizations are adaptive and people work to achieve long-term success, saving now for the future. Material achievement and spiritual fulfilment are perceived as an integrated whole. In low future orientation cultures, organizations are inflexible, bureaucratic, and individuals tend to prefer instant gratification and to spend now. Material success and spiritual fulfilment are considered two separate things. The last dimension, performance orientation, analyses a culture's encouraging of innovation, performance improvement and excellence. High performance orientation societies believe that people can control their destiny. They prefer assertiveness, competitiveness, materialism and direct communication, considering that performance is more important than the individual. Low performance orientation societies emphasize harmony over control, valuing people over their work. In these cultures, individuals strive to maintain good relationships with the other members of society and communication is indirect and subtle (House et al., 2004).

Another important cultural model was formulated by Richard Gesteland. Convinced that cultural awareness is paramount when doing business in international context, Richard Gesteland developed four pattern variables that can be used when approaching different cultures: deal-focus vs. relationship-focus, informal vs. formal, rigid-time vs. fluid-time and emotionally expressive vs. emotionally reserved. Thus, deal-focused cultures are task-oriented, communicate easily with strangers, express themselves clearly and solve many problems by phone or email. In the case of relationship-focused societies, the emphasis is placed on building rapport with the potential business partners. People are uncomfortable with foreigners and they use an indirect style of communication. Formal cultures attach great importance to differences in position and status and people incline towards a respectful communication style, while informal cultures consider that these aspects are less important. For rigid-time societies, punctuality, time schedules and deadlines are vital, while for fluid-time societies interpersonal relations are more important than time. Finally, in expressive cultures, people communicate loudly, feel uncomfortable with silence, stand close to their business partners and look straight into their eyes. In reserved societies, individuals talk quietly, maintain some distance between themselves and their interlocutors and avoid continuous visual contact (Gesteland, 2002).

As it is evident from this summary, cultural differences may be presented in many ways, and this diversity of perspectives is currently known as the culture theory jungle.[5] The fact that a teacher must choose between competing and sometimes overlapping frameworks of national culture constitutes a challenge in itself, for all of the classifications possess important aspects of societal beliefs, values and norms that may contribute to the students' understanding of cultural differences.

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[5] Many researchers have tried to seek convergence across these different classifications that emphasize various aspects of societal beliefs, norms and values. For example, regarding the frameworks proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, Schwartz, and House and his GLOBE associates, Luciara Nardon and Richard Steers present in their study, "The culture theory jungle: divergence and convergence in models of national culture", the core cultural dimensions contained in the existent frameworks that were identified by the majority of researchers: hierarchy vs. equality (the hierarchical or equal distribution of power and authority), individualism vs. collectivism (the emphasis on individuals or groups in organizations and society), mastery vs. harmony (people's relationship with the natural and social environment), monochromic vs. polychromic (perception and use of time), universalism vs. particularism (applying of rules and laws). (Nardon and Steers, 2009:7-10)

6. Questionnaire on cultural differences

Inspired by this variety of models in need of convergence and also taking into consideration some basic elements of business etiquette, I have designed a questionnaire containing some of the most important elements that must be taken into consideration when approaching a culture. The questionnaire is made of 23 pairs of dichotomous statements that correspond in some degree to the various cultural dimensions from the models presented above, and the students must choose between the two alternatives. The questionnaire considers the following aspects: style of communication, degree of expressiveness (expressive vs. reserved), use of emotions in business (emotionality vs. neutrality), degree of formality when addressing superiors or subordinates, evaluating people based on titles and position or on achievements, gender equality in society and in the workplace, relationship compartmentalization (business partners as potential friends or mere acquaintances), centrality of relationships or work interests, employee empowerment, workplace loyalty, labour exploitation, job satisfaction, attitude towards responsibility, quality of work (perfectionism vs. half-heartedness), orientation (long-term vs. short-term planning), perceptions and uses of time, reactions to change, compliance with rules and obligations, attitude toward wealth (modesty vs. showing off prosperity). Like the models, the questionnaire may be used in order to develop the students' ability to critically evaluate the perspectives and practices of other countries. However, before evaluating other societies, students have to focus first on their own. They need to look at their native cultural space that has been taken for granted from an objective point of view.

7. Survey on the Romanian business environment

In order to raise the students' awareness of their own culture, I gave them the questionnaire on cultural differences and asked them to apply it to the Romanian business environment. The 301 first and second year students who answered it in October 2018 are attending a course in English and Professional Communication while studying Economic Cybernetics, Statistics and Informatics and Management at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Their answers were as follows:

Pairs of statements	Percentage of students
A.1.People are evaluated based on what they do. 2. People are judged based on who they are.	51.5% 48.5%
B.1.Women have less authority and are less respected than men. 2. Women have the same level of authority and are shown the same respect as men.	35.5% 64.5%
C.1.People work for long-term success. 2. People work for quick results.	38.2% 61.8%
D.1.Individuals work on one project at a time, scaling a task down to successive stages and focusing sequentially on each stage. 2. People frequently work on several projects simultaneously, set approximate deadlines and often change priorities.	31.9% 68.1%
E.1.Individuals are reluctant to schedule changes and to breaks in the routine. 2. People are comfortable with last-minute changes and with unexpected circumstances.	68.1% 31.9%
F.1.Rules and laws may be broken when necessary.	55.1%

2. Rules and laws should always be followed.	44.9%
G.1.People are convinced that hard work and attention to detail are paramount in order to achieve good results.	59.1%
2. Individuals believe that even if you don't do your best things will work out all right.	40.9%
H.1.Employees address their superiors and subordinates by using titles and surnames.	63.8%
2. Employees call their superiors and subordinates by their first name.	36.2%
I.1.Employees try to cooperate with their colleagues and perceive competition as punishment.	24.9%
2. Individuals compete with their co-workers in order to move to the next higher position in the company.	75.1%
J.1.If problems arise, employees usually try to shift the blame on their colleagues.	47.5%
2. If there are complications, employees take responsibility for their mistakes and attempt to participate in the problem-solving process.	52.5%
K.1.Subordinates follow their superiors' instructions and carry out their decisions.	84.1%
2. Employees are involved in the decision-making process and may reject their superiors' proposals.	15.9%
L.1.If there is an emergency at work, employees stay in the office after the end of the working day or come to work on Sundays.	31.9%
2. Employees may work on Sundays or after the end of the working day if they get paid for overtime hours.	68.1%
M.1.Getting the job done is more important than meeting the team members' needs.	62.5%
2. Maintaining a non-competitive and transparent work environment is more important than achieving a certain performance standard.	37.5%
N.1.Employees are loyal to the company and feel proud of belonging to it, while the company assumes responsibility for them.	44.5%
2. Employees separate their professional goals from the company's, while the company sees employees as disposable assets.	55.5%
O.1. Employees feel that they make a difference in the company and they find fulfilment in their work.	44.9%
2. Employees are unhappy with their jobs and consider a career change.	55.1%
P.1.Before making a deal, it is important to build harmonious relationships.	49.5%
2. There is no use wasting time on building relationships, the deal is all that matters.	50.5%
R.1.Business partners who are invited to an important meeting six months in advance may decline the invitation because they already have another commitment.	23.6%
2. Business counterparts who are invited to an important meeting one month in advance may accept the invitation.	76.4%
S.1.People feel awkward when their business partners invite them to go fishing or hunting.	27.9%
2. Individuals are happy when their business counterparts invite them to business meals at expensive restaurants because they can talk more openly and they can find out details about their partner's personal life.	72.1%
T.1.Business people buy expensive cars in order to project an image of wealth and importance.	71.8%
2. Business people usually possess a modest car because they prefer not to waste money.	28.2%

U.1.People talk a lot and convey their thoughts and feelings through facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures, looking straight into the eyes of their interlocutor.	56.5%
2. Individuals communicate quietly, slowly, and don't waste too much time on small talk, hiding their emotions and avoiding continuous eye contact.	43.5%
V.1.In negotiations, managers try to convince their counterparts with the help of rational arguments and figures.	63.5%
2. When negotiating with their business partners, managers appeal to emotions and subjective arguments.	36.5%
W.1.Business people avoid communicating negative information and use polite excuses, hints or modifiers (e.g.: "perhaps", "maybe").	54.5%
2. In business meetings, open and frank discussions take priority over personal sensitivities.	45.5%
Y.1.People maintain some distance while talking to their business partners.	59.8%
2. When making deals, individuals stand very close to their business counterparts.	40.2%

According to the students' perspective, Romanian culture is expressive, neutral in business and rather formal. Respect is mostly accorded based on people's performances, but titles and position matter greatly. Romanians like to show off their wealth and to project an image of success. When building relationships, people correlate private life and business life. Romanians appear to have a low future orientation, preferring instant gratification and quick results. While business people demonstrate a polychromic attitude, working on several projects simultaneously, they tend to have a high degree of uncertainty avoidance. The power distance is high. Decision-making is centralized, and the subordinates have no say in the process. Employees are task oriented, individualistic and highly competitive.

Conclusion

In the years to come, the development of intercultural competences will become paramount not only for business people working in international contexts, but for each individual that comes into contact on an interpersonal level with cultural differences. Universities have already started to offer students a wide range of pedagogically guided learning experiences that can help them acquire these competences at diverse levels. Thus, students have the chance to shift their perspective and to expand their horizon of understanding and behaving by becoming cognitively and emotionally familiar with various world views, values, norms and ways of life. This also implies a reflection upon one's own amazing culture.

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