

## ***Intercultural Business Communication: Theoretical Issues and Methods for Classroom Training***

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### **Biodata:**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays, communication in English is more than ever emphasized by the language teachers. Socializing accurately and effectively in a foreign language is considered a great advantage in obtaining a job. Also, writing a correct application letter, a CV, a memo in English or passing an interview at an international company are the main goals of the present student. But what is the link between culture and communication?

In fact, the structures and contents of communication are given by culture, the main argument for teaching culture in ESP as well as in ESL classes is not only a linguistic one: “in order to understand language fully and use it fluently, learners need not only linguistic, pragmatic discourse and strategic competence but also socio-cultural and world knowledge”. Thus, adjusting our teaching practices and materials to the changing needs of the communication environment and engaging in *Intercultural Business Communication* research proves to be the best way of keeping our teaching updated. In this regard, this paper summarizes the most relevant issues related to the concept of IBC focusing notably on incorporating Inter-Cultural Awareness in the Teaching of Business English and suggesting some methods for IBC classroom training.

### **1. Introduction**

International business is the outgrowth of globalization which is driven primarily by economic interdependency and advances in technology, but the success in global business ventures will be affected by the inability of international managers to understand appropriate business etiquette, customs, and values needed to conduct business among nations of the world. Moreover, facing the current situations of the probable entry into WTO and the trend from globalization, Algerian government felt the need of establishing one-world educational setting through the implementation of

the LMD system in our universities in order to achieve a cross-cultural understanding among our students and teachers.

However, and despite the great importance of business English in today's globalised world, ESP teaching in Algeria remains a weak point in the sense that no educational reforms are made with regard to the provision of teacher's training either pre- or in service in ESP methodology at the tertiary level. Moreover, the majority of ESP courses offered at university focuses on developing the students' linguistic competence without taking into account their learning and target needs to learn English as a means of Intercultural Business Communication and hence neglecting the development of their Intercultural Competence, i.e. the language and skills needed for typical business communication with a special emphasis on cultural diversity in order to prepare students for the real-life challenges and fit their needs of a complex, globalized working environment that they will encounter in the target situation.

On the other hand, there are some problems that are involved in teaching culture to EBP students. In this respect, they are summed up as follows:

1. EBP students are learning English while living in Algeria and therefore they do not have a direct access to the cultures of English-speaking countries. Therefore, they are not accustomed to it.
2. Teachers feel afraid to teach culture to EBP students because they fear that they do not know enough about it. Furthermore, they may not have been adequately trained to teach neither ESP nor the cultural aspects related to the specialism of their students and therefore, they do not have strategies, clear goals that help them to introduce intercultural business awareness in their teaching of the target language and this is related to their lack of awareness of it.
3. When cultural phenomena differ from what they expect, students often react negatively, characterizing the target culture as "strange". In this case, teachers find it better not to teach culture because of students' negative attitudes.
4. It is very difficult for teachers to measure cross- cultural awareness and change in attitudes so that they can see whether the students have profited or not.
5. There are some other problems that prevent the teachers from incorporating culture in the teaching of the target language is that students' limited proficiency level in English as well as time constraints.

Under the economic globalization today, the ultimate goal of business English teaching is to develop students' intercultural business communication skills. In other words, all the efforts should be geared to the motive of helping the students attain intercultural business communication competence. In fact, the acquisition of these competitive global skills and competences and the devotion of adequate time to learn, understand, and appreciate the different ethical and cultural habits and appropriate etiquette for conducting business transactions and managing cultural differences properly can be a key factor in getting things done effectively on a global scale will not only assist EBP students to bridge the communication gap between their own culture and the others culture but also avert communication dislocations in the multicultural business environment. However, *how could it be possible for an ESP*

## ***teacher to incorporate intercultural awareness in teaching business communication?***

### **2. Culture and Communication**

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictate who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, or interpreted ... Culture is the foundation of communication (Samovar, Porter & Jain, 1981). In this regard, it is useful to give a brief definition of culture before tackling the issue of Intercultural Business Communication.

#### **2.1 Definition of Culture**

Culture is defined by Bovee, Thill & Schatzman (2003) as:

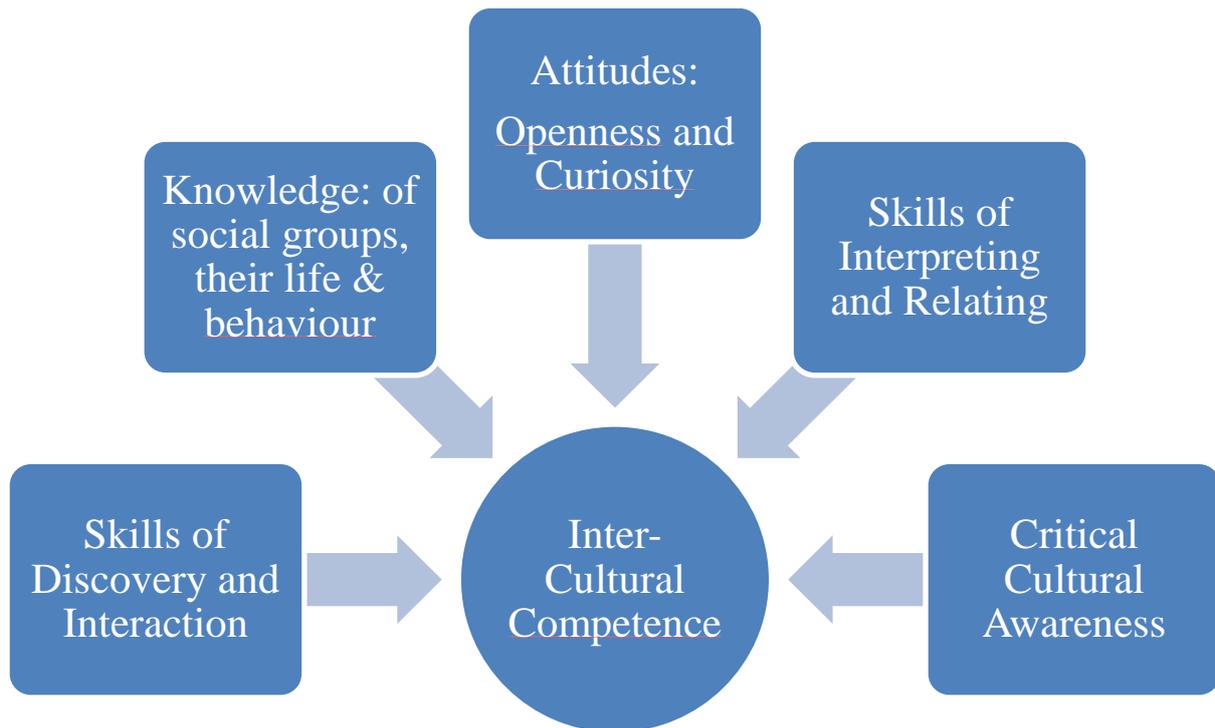
**a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behaviour.**

It is useful to take note of a few points about the above definition:

- ❑ Culture is not something that we are born with, but rather it is ***learned***, imparted to us through our upbringing and exposure to the practices and rules of conduct of the culture of which we are a part.
- ❑ Culture is ***shared*** by a society and members of a society agree about the meanings of things and why.
- ❑ Culture teaches values and priorities, which in turn shape ***attitudes***.
- ❑ Culture ***prescribes behaviour*** and members of a society usually behave in ways that they think are appropriate or acceptable in their culture. However, what may be acceptable or appropriate in one culture may be unacceptable in another culture.

#### **2.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The most known definition of intercultural communicative competence is the one provided by Byram (1998) in which he defines it as **“the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes”**



**Figure.1: Intercultural Communicative Competence**

A number of interrelated skills compound the competence of the proficient intercultural speaker. According to (Byram, 1998: 96), the aspects of the intercultural competence are the following:

**1. Intercultural attitudes (savoir être)**

It includes curiosity and openness and, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

**2. Knowledge (Savoirs)**

It includes knowledge of social groups, their life and behaviour, that is, Knowledge of self and other and awareness of relationship of individual to society.

**3. Skills of interpreting and relating**

It encompasses interpreting things from other cultures, comparing and relating them to own culture and developing new perspectives through comparison and contrast.

**4. Skills of discovery and interaction (Savoir apprendre/ savoir faire)**

It is defined as the ability to acquire and operate new knowledge of a culture in real time communication) such as developing ethnographic and research skills and exploring cultures.

## **5. Critical cultural awareness**

It is defined as the ability to critically evaluate some document or event from another culture.

## **3. Intercultural Business Communication**

As it has already been mentioned, to communicate successfully in an international context, one must be aware of the cultural aspects and assumptions underlying communicative interactions. The global business environment requires an extensive intercultural training since one needs to work with people who have different values, beliefs, behavioural norms, and ways of apprehending reality. The growth of Intercultural Business Communication (IBC) is directly related to the increasing globalization of our century.

### **3.1 Levels of Culture affecting Business Communication**

Doing business in the global market depends on the ability to successfully communicate in an intercultural context. Due to the complexity of human beings, our cultural values are transferred to the communicative process; in other words, in cross-cultural encounters, each business partner filters the message through some layers of culture. Consequently, this circumstance determines the success of the business endeavour.

In business settings there are layers that have a great impact on the communication process, such as organizational culture. Culture does matter, but depending on the nature of the communication process, some layers are more salient than others.

According to Targowski and Metwalli (2003: 53), there are seven levels of culture affecting the communication process:

#### **1. Global Culture**

The first level describes the new layer issuing from globalization. People from different cultures use the same rules and behaviours to make the communication process successful in business contexts. This cultural construct, in which the participants try to adapt to the intercultural situation setting aside their own cultural behaviours, is similar to the notion of transactional culture or transactional discourse.

#### **2. National Culture**

The national culture hints at the traditions, behaviours, feelings, values, etc., that are common to a nation.

#### **3. Regional Culture**

The regional culture embodies the variable values that individuals share within a region.

#### **4. Business culture**

It represents norms, values and beliefs that pertain to all aspects of doing business in a culture. Business cultures tell people the correct, acceptable ways to conduct business in a society. Business cultures are not separate from the broader national culture. The national culture constraints and guides the development of business culture in a society

Business culture affects all aspects of work and organizational life: how managers select and promote employees, how they lead and motivate their subordinates, structure their organizations, select and formulate their strategies, and negotiate.

### **5. Organizational Culture**

The organizational culture is related to corporate culture since it is a management means to control organizational performance. Corporate Culture is the culture adopted, developed and disseminated in an organization.

Corporate culture can deviate from national norms, but that depends upon the strength of culture and the values and practices tied to it.

### **6. Group Culture**

Group culture, in contrast, refers to a group of people «united by a common relationship (work, profession or family) (Targowski and Metwalli, 2003: 55).

### **7. Personal Culture**

The personal layer represents an individual understanding of time, space and reality.

### **8. Biological Culture**

The biological culture is responsible for universal reactions to physical needs.

## **3.2. Defining Intercultural Business Communication**

We understand IBC as “**communication within and between businesses that involves people from more than one culture**” (Chaney and Martin, 2007:2) [4].In this concern, business communication types can be spoken or written such as:

- Making presentations.**
- Negotiating.**
- Taking part in meetings.**
- Small talks.**
- Socializing.**
- Correspondence.**
- Memo, Report writing.**
- Business letter writing.**

In business environment, individuals who speak different languages and illustrate diverse cultural realities interact in international networks. As the clash of civilizations has an effect on the costs of doing business in international contexts, IBC has attracted more and more interest as an academic domain.

The teaching/ learning of IBC nowadays is “**a recognition of the cultural factors influencing behaviour in business encounters around the globe**” (Planken et. al., 2004: 308).

In an international business environment, cultural intelligence (Triandis, 2006), that is, the ability to identify and conform to appropriate behaviours in diverse intercultural contexts, is seen more and more as a desirable attribute by employers. From the teaching angle, the serious challenge for Business English teachers is to be able to achieve all the goals:

- Facilitate language acquisition.
- Improve cross-cultural awareness.
- Encourage the students to start developing a professional identity as specialists who will need to perform in intercultural business settings.

IBC, then, has grown into a complex subject. The areas of communication and culture as contributing disciplines are rich enough and the business dimension adds to the complexity.

### **3.3. The Cultural Factors/Dimensions Affecting Business Communication**

The challenges that faces ESP teacher is to study and teach those aspects of culture which have direct bearing on business. Hence, the study should not be done through the lenses of a tourist who takes a front stage view of the culture, appreciating the exotic facets of culture with an inquisitive mind to comprehend a way of life totally different from his own. In lieu of taking this perspective, ESP teacher should study and ‘filter out’ those dimensions of culture which are likely to impact business.

Early literature on this topic identified different cultural components that affect the communication process. Hall (1959) established a distinction between high and low context cultures; following his ideas, many researchers used contextuality to contrast communication patterns among speakers from high and low- context cultures. On the other hand, the work of Hofstede (1980) was highly innovative since it pointed at a close relationship between culture and business. His research analyses how cultural dimensions influence management practices. His studies on national culture made possible the comparison of different cultural communication styles and methods. The following dimensions based on Harmer (2005) should be scanned by an ESP teacher in order to understand the cultural variables that influence business communication:

#### **1. Individualism versus Collectivism**

It is defined as the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. i.e. the Anglo-American world is considered to be more individualistic and competitive in the sense that the emphasis is placed on individuals (their rights, reward individuals' achievements). By contrast, if a candidate is planning to apply for a position in Japan which is more collectivist society, he should stress in his résumé his team performance rather than his individual accomplishments. In other words, the emphasis is placed on groups (team performance, group affiliations and loyalty).

## 2. Masculinity versus Femininity

It is the distribution of emotional roles between genders:

- In masculine cultures, achievement and competition is often measured in terms of power and wealth, and emphasis placed on work goals and assertiveness.
- Feminine cultures see personal goals, human contact and relationship building as more valuable.
- E.g.: masculinity is high in Japan, moderately high in Western countries and low in Nordic countries.

## 3. Power distance

This index is defined as the extent to which less powerful members of organizations accept that power is distributed unequally.

In a low-power distance culture such as the Anglo-American and Western world people find it easy:

- to approach their leaders, to discuss issues, and even to criticize them.
- Managers are likely to consult subordinates.
- Corruption rare, scandals end political careers.
- Hierarchy means inequality of roles.
- Income distribution rather even.
- The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat.
- Privileges and status are disapproved.

However, in a high-power distance culture such as Arab countries people find it hard:

- to approach their leaders, and there is little discussion.
- Subordinate expect to be told what to do or likely to do what they are told.
- Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up.
- Hierarchy means exercising inequality.
- Income distribution very uneven.
- The ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat
- Privileges and status are both expected and popular

## 4. Uncertainty avoidance (Low/ High UA)

It is the degree of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. In some English speaking, Nordic and Chinese countries, one may find people to be open to out of the box experimentation. Thus, the characteristics of low uncertainty avoidance cultures are as follows:

- Accept uncertainties
- enterprising, willing to take up new business challenges and thus take up risks
- Few rules
- Tolerate the unusual
- Dislike hierarchy

Whereas in Arab world, Japan and Latin countries, people tend to play safe, they are averse to taking up risks. If there is low tolerance of uncertainty, i.e. people value job security and clear rules and regulations. In this vein, the characteristics of high uncertainty avoidance cultures are as follows:

- Avoid uncertainties
- Value job security
- More clear rules and regulations
- Do not tolerate deviant ideas/behaviours
- Believe in absolute truths/ expertise

## 5. Monochronic versus Polychronic

Some cultures are monochronic like that of Germany where time is to be monitored religiously. As a result, punctuality, efficiency, promptness and the motto “*live to work*” are highly favoured. Some features of monochronic cultures are listed as follows:

- Schedules take precedence over interpersonal relation
- Accustomed to short-term relationships
- Concentrate on the job and do one thing at a time.

In the Arab world, or in India, however, the concept of time is polychronic – time is taken to be flexible, multi-tasking is done and deadlines and schedules are prone to be flexible or not widely regarded, and the motto “*work to live*” describes it quite adequately. Some features of polychronic cultures are listed as follows:

- Preset schedules are subordinate to interpersonal relations
- Tend to build lifetime relationships
- Are highly distractible and do many things at a time

## 6. Communication style (Direct versus Indirect)

Direct communication is when the true intentions are revealed in the verbal messages. In other words, direct speakers usually value the effectiveness and swiftness of short, direct answers that involve no further analysis. They expect and respect honesty and bluntness. In the United States direct communication is usually preferred, as it is in most western cultures. Many sayings or phrases reflect this, such as "Get to the point." Some of the direct communication styles cultures are listed below:

- Direct and straightforward and informal
- Impatient with delays
- Use words literally
- Use verbal-communication
- Decisions are made based on how it affects the task at hand and relationships are often not factored in.

On the other hand, indirect communication is when the true intentions are hidden. This type of communication is more passive and submissive. An indirect speaker will not make a direct statement or directly answer a question that could be perceived to cause tension, or an uncomfortable situation. They are more likely to say "maybe" or "possibly" when the true answer is no. It is thought by an indirect speaker that being polite is more important than giving a true response. This concept is connected to the idea of "Saving Face". Face is a sociological ideal that represents a person's honour, reputation, and self-esteem. This is why to an indirect speaker direct speech is considered harsh and even rude. Some of the indirect communication styles cultures are listed below:

- Flowery language, humbleness and elaborated apologies are common for high context communicators
- Expect the listener to read between lines
- Use of non-verbal communication:
- Words are not important as context (tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture and status).
- Relations are important and decisions are made based on how the relationship would be affected

### **7. Degree of formality (Formal/Informal)**

Norms of both formality and informality, assure members in their respective cultures that they are behaving correctly and not risking embarrassment but the assumptions about what constitutes comfortable behaviour are not universal and can cause discomfort to other cultures.

In the Anglo-American world, focus on form, may make business people uncomfortable and they are somewhat suspicious of it, given names rather than family names are used in business and casual dress may be acceptable, achievement is regarded more important than age. Moreover, men may remove their jackets, for example while working.

By contrast, Japanese never use given names in business but rather family names to show respect and age is treated with respect. Moreover, men rarely remove jackets while at work.

## **8. Status**

Cultures also differ in how status is accorded. In some cultures, status is accorded to people based more on their individual achievements while in others status is ascribed to people by virtue of their age, family background, profession, and so on. In the latter, organizations are usually more hierarchical and extensive use of titles especially for high ranking executives and officials is the norm. In the former, organizations are less hierarchical and titles are usually only used when they are relevant to the competence one brings to the task, for example, a medical doctor. Again, cultures can be placed on a continuum from less hierarchical to more hierarchical. Most Asian and Arab countries are more hierarchical compared to the US and most other European countries.

In most Asian societies, within an organisation, it is important to show the proper respect for individuals depending on their rank and position. When addressing people who are older or of higher status, people speak politely and formally. It is also considered inappropriate to interrupt authority figures when they are speaking and their opinions carry a lot of weight. This leads to the practice of never questioning what they say, especially in front of other people, as this will be viewed as a sign of disrespect and can also lead to a loss of face. This behaviour may however be interpreted as a lack of assertiveness on the part of the employee in cultures that are less hierarchical and where employees are free to interrupt their superiors and voice their own opinions.

## **9. Decision making**

In the United States and Canada, businesspeople try to reach decisions as quickly and efficiently as possible. Main points are agreed upon first while the details are left to be worked out later. However, in some other cultures, like Greece for example, spending time on each little point is considered a mark of good faith and anyone who ignores the details is seen as being evasive and untrustworthy. Similarly, Latin Americans prefer to make their deals slowly, after much discussion and the Japanese and many of their Asian counterparts look for group consensus before making a decision. This is in part related to the collectivist nature of these cultures as well as concern for maintaining harmony. In such cultures, decisions in business negotiations are not made by delegates without consulting the organization. This contrasts with the practice in some other more individualist cultures where decisions can be made on the spot by representatives of the organization.

### **3.4. The Barriers of Intercultural Business Communication**

When encountering someone from another culture, communication barriers are often created when the behaviour of the other person differs from our own. Communication barriers are obstacles to effective communication. Certain erroneous tendencies which students should be apprised about are ethnocentrism and sophisticated stereotyping, business etiquette, slangs and idioms.

- **Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to regard one's own culture as superior to other cultures and hence leads to the erroneous scanning of others' behaviour through the lenses of one's native culture. In other words, it is the judging of another culture using own standards and beliefs. The following example demonstrates such a negative tendency:

“.....the description of Indians as people who like “clearly defined tasks” denies them the attribute of creativity that the West likes to keep for itself.

- **Sophisticated Stereotyping**

Stereotypes are generalizations which are often used to simplify and categorize other cultures and people in those cultures. The major problem here is that stereotypes do not allow for exceptions to the norm, which is the wrong approach.

Sophisticated Stereotyping has been found to have profound impact on global organizational learning – e.g. a Japanese manager may dismiss information coming from a Korean manager since he has a notion of cultural superiority over his Korean counterparts. Similarly, a Japanese's notion about American culture of individualism may lead him to discount the Americans' take on effective team functioning. Another example that can be taken in this regard is of an American dismissing a report by a French manager concerning dangerous moves by competitors in Europe as an overreaction by those “emotional French”. Many a time Japanese communication culture of reticence and formality with strangers has often led to a slowdown in attaining team goals when they are involved, say, with British members in meeting situations.

- **Business Etiquette**

Broadly speaking, etiquette includes a variety of behaviours, habits, and specific aspects of nonverbal communication that can impact the outcome of a manager's performance and overall success in a global workplace. In today's hectic and competitive society, etiquette might be taken for granted or seen as outdated concept, but it affects perceptions and decisions people make in the global context of management. It has never been over-emphasized that the ways a manager conducts himself/herself and interacts with colleagues have a profound effect on a company's goodwill or credibility.

An example that illustrates business etiquette is when conducting business with a person from China, the rules of business etiquette are controlled and determined by face giving and taking. For example, when giving introductions, remember that the surname comes first and the given name last. The introduction is accompanied by a bow which is uncommon in many other cultures (Chaney & Martin, 2011). It was noted that out of concern for their business partners; many times, a handshake is combined with a bow so that each culture shows the other proper respect.

- **Idioms and Slangs**

Idioms are fixed distinctive expressions whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its actual words whereas slangs are expressions, and usages

that are casual, vivid, racy, or playful replacements for standard ones, are often short-lived, and are usually considered unsuitable for formal contexts. These expressions can create a breakdown in communication when used in an intercultural context, especially one involving non-native speakers of English.

e.g.

To break a leg (To do well at some performance)

To hold one's tongue (To refrain from saying something unpleasant or nasty)

To rain cats and dogs (To rain very heavily)

More money down the drain (More money to spend)

Cultures may develop their own slang that may be foreign to other cultures using the same language, e.g. An advertisement by Electrolux worked very well in Europe but was unusable in the United States. The advertisement carries the slogan, "Nothing *sucks* like the Electrolux." The slogan will not go down well with an American audience because the slang expression "it sucks" has negative connotations in the US. In Europe, the word "sucks" has a literal meaning so the slogan is perfectly all right.

### 3.5. Methods for Intercultural Business Communication Classroom Training

There are some factors that teachers should consider when choosing methods for their sessions:

1. **The desired outcome** (acquisition of knowledge, developing skills or modifying attitudes)
2. **participants** (needs, preferences, culture)
3. **situation** (time)

Once we have examined and set these issues, we can turn to IBC training. In this vein, Fowler and Blohm (2004: 37-84) introduce the following typology regarding IBC methodology: cognitive and active methods.

#### 3.4.1 Cognitive methods

Cognitive methods focus on knowledge acquisition. Broadly speaking, these activities encourage learners to increase their knowledge of culture as a subject. Thus, if acquisition of knowledge is the most important goal, we can use the following methods for IBC training:

##### ❑ Lectures

It is a common and recurrent method. The trained person can present information, clarify ideas, introduce new topics, etc.

##### ❑ Computer-based Materials

Although they are frequently used to acquire conceptual information, we can also find materials that develop skills and /or modify attitudes. The training takes place by means of CDs, DVDs, online programs and web sites.

### **Case studies of companies**

Case studies pose a situation and students must work on assessing the problems entailed and finding possible solutions. Some cases are based on real-world dilemmas so the students get the opportunity to deal with concrete situations and specific cultural problems. Here is an example, which may be used in pair or group discussions work:

- Let students take up case studies of different multinational companies and analyse them in the light of business and culture in action (analysing concrete situations and specific cultural problems and dilemmas).

### **Skills and attitudes**

- Acquiring knowledge of different office cultures through recognizing and analysing different business etiquette, different management styles used in companies from different cultures which create cultural misunderstanding or problems. (Knowledge of self and others).
- Developing ethnographic, research skills, and exploring cultures.

### **Written material/Critical reading**

Authentic materials are commonly used in training sessions to transmit facts, ideas and concepts. These sessions involves students analyse a series of written business authentic material such as: advertisements, CVs, job advertisements, business emails... from different countries through raising the students' awareness of the cultural orientations suggested in these business documents.

### **Skills and attitudes**

- Comparing and contrasting the main cultural difference between the culture of origin and the target culture as well as critical cultural reading.

### **Critical incident**

They are shorter than case studies and refer to cross-cultural misunderstandings, problems and clashes. The incidents do not illustrate the cultural differences of the interacting parties; rather these are discovered as the activity is carried out. The use of critical incidents can bring about students' understanding of their own personal and cultural identity because they are not personally involved in the situation; they can usually discuss the issues objectively, and decide upon a course of action. Of course, sometimes learners do not find a solution, or find that there is no perfect solution, but this reflection of the real world rather than a failure of the method. Here are some examples, which may be used in pair or group discussions work:

Learners are required to analyse situations (cross-cultural misunderstandings, clashes...) and produce possible solutions that is personal involvement.

**Scenario 1:**

Harold Swanson has to take some product samples to another country. He has done the trip many times, but this time he is stopped at the border by a customs officer in a country of Latin America, who insists that he pays \$200 for permission to enter the country. In Harold's country (US) such a demand would be considered corrupt, but here it is quite normal for government employees to supplement their income in this way. However, this time Harold feels that \$200 is too much. What should he do?

**Scenario 2:**

Joe Williams is an engineer who is sent by his company to work in a subsidiary in an Arab country. There he finds that meetings are very different from what he is used to. Meetings in his new country (UK) seem to be used as a way for the department head to issue instructions and to explain what is to happen, rather than as a place to brainstorm and gather ideas as a team, which is what he is used to. Then Joe is promoted to head the department.

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- Look at both incidents and try to spot the cross-cultural misunderstandings and make notes of your ideas with explanations and give possible solutions.

**Skills and attitudes**

- Developing skills of interpreting and relating from other culture.

- Videos shows**

Organise video shows on a specific country covering economy, business etiquette, and business relationships. Communicating, negotiating and management should be demonstrated in these video resources in action. Video should present a mixture of do's and don'ts, front stage culture, some cultural priorities, and business practices. After watching the video, students can be directed to author a paper identifying major cultural variables that influence business. They apply cultural concepts to business practices.

**3.4.2. Active Method**

Active methods engage learners in active learning where emotions and interpersonal skills are brought to play. These methods involve learners in active tasks to build up specific skills. That is, students learn by doing in that it makes learners more aware of culture. Here are some examples:

- Role-play/script analysis**

Role playing puts information and skills into practice in a safe context and can be focused on content. Participants have the opportunity to rehearse diverse roles in real-life situations for a specific purpose.

**Situation № 01:**

Tell the students to read about intercultural business communication (the cultural dimensions or factors that affect business communication or create a

breakdown in communication in business first before the exercise. After exhaustive classroom discussion go for the role play exercise with a script –for example a case in which the students can practice skills of international trade negotiations between businessmen i.e. between an American and Japanese businessmen. i.e. Japanese stereotype of the American communicator’s profile as brusque and ill-mannered. However, American businessmen are direct and straightforward and dislike formality.

### **Skills and attitudes**

- Recognizing and doing away with stereotypes and Ethnocentrism
- Openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures

### **Situation № 02:**

The second situation involves students playing role of friendly bosses/autocrat and paying close attention to the working relationships:

- Business problems, decision-making as well as responsibilities.
- Formal/informal? Personal/ professional? Who decides? Top-level executives only or with consultations with all employees?

### **Skills and attitudes**

- Understanding cultural diversity in business (manager/ subordinate relationships through analysing cultural value of power distance/ Comparing & relating one’s culture).

### **Situation № 03:**

The third situation involves a meeting between a Saudi and Singapore businessmen. When playing these roles, the students pay more attention on:

- Specific attitudes and patterns of behaviour (meeting: Saudi and Singapore businessmen).
- Recognizing specific attitudes and patterns of behaviour:
  - Greetings
  - body language: head movements, eye contact, physical space
  - Time orientation
  - Degree of formality

### **Skills and attitudes**

- Interacting with each other, adapting to cultural differences, norms and values of others.

### **Simulation games**

They are highly motivating and versatile. Educational and entertaining elements combine to build knowledge and develop skills. For instance, the game *Markhall* (Blohm, 1995) shows two companies based on two different corporate models, the American and the Japanese.

### **Intercultural exercises**

These activities usually combine two or more techniques (physical response, discussion, or written assignments) and involve learners in content while providing practice. Intercultural exercises are commonly used to raise awareness about cultural differences and develop strategies to adapt to diverse working environments. As an example of intercultural exercise, *The Cocktail Party* (Blohm, 1997) puts in action non-verbal behaviours unusual to North-American culture.

### Skills and attitudes

- ❑ Developing critical cultural thinking skills as well as comparing and contrasting the target culture with one's culture.

### 4. Conclusion

Since economy is the most visible aspect of globalization, the need to do business in an international context has increased the demand to learn Business English. Nevertheless, the development of intercultural communication has made clear that despite today's globalization, cultural differences persist. Speakers of different languages see the world differently since cultural values are usually transferred to the communicative process. Then, doing business in a global market depends on the ability to successfully communicate in an intercultural context. Therefore, the emergence of Intercultural Business Communication reflects the concern of global organizations with the cost of doing business. As a result, business students are expected to develop an awareness of the cultural aspects that influence business relations all over the world and to acquire the ability to behave appropriately in different cultural settings. Thus, by understanding inter-cultural communication in the business world and cultural differences (behaviours, business etiquette, verbal and non-verbal communication) we can break down barriers and pave the way for mutual understanding and respect.

In this concern, EBP courses should mirror these transformations, this means that business schools in Algeria need to be up to the challenge and prepare students for the present-day workplace. Teachers, then, must adjust their syllabuses and teaching methods to fit the needs of a complex, globalized and multidisciplinary working environment.

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