

## CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH ESP CONTENT

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***Motto:***

*“It is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes”*  
Gloria Ladson-Billings<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract**

*Academic training in business English is a must for the professionals to meet the growing international cultural pressure. The article defines cultural intelligence and develops a pedagogical paradigm to assist the non-native English speakers to adapt to the native English speaking business world by improving their cultural training based on applied English education.*

*The vision on the matter includes the progress from cultural awareness and content knowledge of the Anglo-American philosophy of economics and principles of effectiveness to cultural intelligence through the channel of experiential language learning that add up towards cultural mindfulness. The neutral capacity to analyze interactions from one's self behavior point of view and the counterpart reaction will make content knowledge contribute properly to the students' appropriate behavior and face new business culture situations.*

*The pedagogical interpretation of the business English class goes along with the historical account of the Anglo-American business culture model as a learning source for the effectiveness of the linguistic and communication behavior.*

*The research aims to add meaning and conceptual depth to cultural intelligence development through ESP culture pedagogy with reference to self and business efficiency.*

**Keywords:** *ESP (English for Special Purposes), cultural intelligence, content selection and processing, European cultural paradigms, education commitment*

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## 1. Background

The present day globalization process has drastically changed the world. The multinational corporations, the technological revolution, the free movement of human resources lead inevitably to new approaches to business and international relations. We are now aware of the impact that the national and ethnic cultures, the various cultural values have on social and professional communication.

The practical purpose of acquiring effective operational business English is the development of international career outcome that makes academic language training a meaningful curriculum subject. The language instrument providing the needed professional capacity to make information operational with a minimum risk of misunderstanding is grounded on its cultural specificity.

We suggest contributions to the selection of the business English contents and their didactic processing aiming language learning and cultural training effectiveness of the students in business. The current dynamics of their professional interaction corresponds to the conceptual relationship that David Thomas sees between knowledge, mindfulness and behavior (2016:31-78) and takes into consideration the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) that has been introduced into the international business literature. (Early and Ang, 2006) Our research answers to the development of the cross-cultural facet of intelligence and to the predictability of international business settings through language and culture training bringing knowledge of culture and of the fundamental principles of cross-culture interaction and behavior. The article recommends some guidelines for the development of the language curricular materials as a result of small-scale exploratory pedagogical research. Concepts and their definitions add meaning and depth to the cross culture pedagogy for the applied language learning with reference to self-efficiency vs. counterpart business efficiency.

## 2. Cultural intelligence

The concept of *cultural intelligence* was defined by Schmidt and Hunter (3-14) as the ability to function and manage effectively in a different cultural environment from the native one. (2000) It implies understanding and appropriate behavior in culturally diversified contexts. The growing interest of science in the global culture development has identified social intelligence (Thorndike and Stein, 1937: 275-85), emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1993:433-42) practical intelligence (Sternberg 1997:475-493). Cross-disciplinary research produced various views on intelligence and its complementary concepts:

- metacognition – knowledge and control of knowledge
- cognition - individual process to acquire and understand knowledge
- motivation – knowledge development interest
- behavior – the effective action to take to the accomplishment of individual objectives

Appropriate behavior in culturally diversified contexts calls for verbal and non-verbal actions in case of interaction with people from different cultures. Behavior is a critical component of cultural intelligence as it is the most salient feature of social interaction and professional settings. Behavior varies with cultural values in

- cultural environment specificity
  - circumstances rule of non-verbal expression: preference, permission, prohibition,
  - interpretations/meanings of particular non-verbal behavior
- flexible understanding and behavior can appropriate interaction in specific cross-culture professional settings.

Our study aims to develop a pedagogical strategy to enable selection and processing of ESP contents in terms of cultural intelligence.

## 3. Language pedagogy considerations

Pedagogical experience and practice bring forward the need to scrutinize critically the Anglo-American corporate cultural values when planning the academic English class for the non-natives to help them diminish their own cultural pressure on the professional relationship with the natives and develop their

cultural intelligence. The contrasting behavioral patterns in a work place produced by cultural interferences arise from the distinctiveness of the cultural background. The different culture values, catering the corporate rules on power and rewards distribution, procedures, types and levels of formal and informal communication will produce unproductive frustrations and tensions if they are not instructionally leveled off. The work place is particularly the spot where cross cultural communities can develop misunderstandings and misinterpretations derived from small-scale differences in meanings attached to language or behavior. Craig Storti (1999) depicts the way understatement can be interpreted differently depending on cultural background.

Successful culturally trained professionals are able to interact effectively with cultural divides within organizations and build cooperative bridges between different cultural groups. Cultural competency will involve people in building such a cultural environment that allows each culture to contribute its values, perspectives and behaviors constructively to enrich professional activity outcomes.

Understanding and appreciating intercultural differences ultimately promotes clearer communication, breaks down barriers, build trust, strengthens relationship, opens horizons and yields tangible results in terms of business success.

The need for specific language pedagogy to approach corporate business English imply complex theoretical and application research to:

1. define and make the meaning of cross-cultural concepts operational in business
2. define major characteristics and find appropriate sources of British-American model of business culture
3. select the intercultural goals and their corresponding content of the ESP course
4. opt for appropriate intercultural pedagogical strategies, techniques and instruments

The cultural competences that enable effective cross-cultural work are included in the corporate values and principles. Cultural skills are needed to progress from *cultural difference awareness* (Goode, 2001, revised 2006) to *knowledge* development to the third stage of the model supported by Moynihan et al (2006) of *cultural intelligence* and *cultural mindfulness*.

*Cultural awareness* contributes critically to the acknowledgement of the ways culture shapes perceptions and raises sensitiveness to language forms and meanings and helps trained professionals to take advantage of the corporate cross culture opportunities and challenges.

Our reference to *cultural intelligence* takes into consideration the cultural dimensions given to the concept by Geert Hofstede (1980), Edward T. Hall (1955) and Fons Trompenaars (1993) that encompass the ability of business people to face intercultural settings by considering practical tips and tricks such as *dos and don'ts* of a specific culture which does not necessarily mean understanding in terms of cultural values. A culturally aware leader is able to use his *cultural intelligence* to adapt to non-native corporate culture by gathering, interpreting and acting upon radically different cues to function effectively across cultural settings or in a multicultural situation. His/her cultural skill makes him/her able to find adjusted, adapted, re-invented strategies in dealing with new situations or cultures.

The concept of *mindfulness* originating in Buddhism (Thich, 1999) was recently adopted by the *cross-cultural communication* domain (Ting-Toomey, 1999) defining a key active process which links understanding and knowledge to action deriving from enhanced attention to current experience or present reality. (Thomas, 2006) It has been also perceived as a particular active approach to the cognitive process which can produce new knowledge categories perceived from different perspectives. (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000: 1-9) Our approach on *mindfulness* focuses on controlled cognitive processing and responding accordingly (Logan, 1989: 52-74) by

- a) bringing relevant knowledge into attention

- b) choosing not to respond automatically
- c) inhibiting undesirable responses
- d) editing responses to be consistent with motives and goals

*Mindfulness* operates consideration of behavioral options based on content knowledge that develops into organizing frameworks to process information about ourselves in terms of otherness. The following diagram that we propose adds value to the definition of cultural intelligence (CQ) developed by David Thomas through applied language learning. (2006)

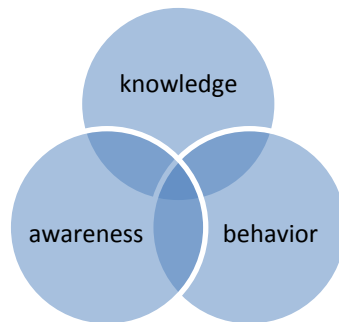


Figure 1. Components of cultural intelligence (David Thomson, 2006)

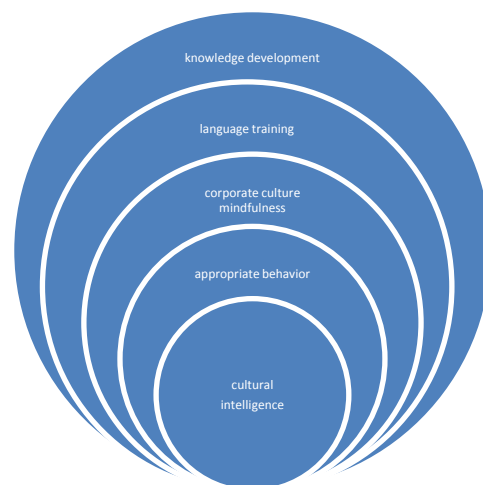


Figure 2. The productive relationship of the principles guiding the language pedagogy approaching culture competence

#### 4. The Anglo-American corporate culture paradigm as a source for content selection and processing

The process of developing intercultural communication skills of the Romanian professionals is based on the research of philosophy of economics, the history of principles and cultural resources that make the structure of the English speaking macro and micro economic model.

The new concepts produced by the Enlightenment philosophy of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century of *laissez-faire*, (used, for the first time by the French Prime minister, Colbert) which made the principle of the *neo-liberalism* in economics, *the invisible hand*, the *theory of labor* fully developed and promoted by Adam Smith, described

the macro structure of a *masculine* type of market economy which was typical for the British Isles and the newly born United State. It is the *self-sufficient* economic model that, by letting everyone to their own economic devices, the result would be a harmonious and more equal society of ever-increasing prosperity. *Private property, individual contracts and economic actions* of individuals largely based on *self-interest*, and *fair competition*, allow people to act without any restrictions and give *priority to the interests of shareholders, radical innovation cost, and quality competition*. The relatively *flexible labor markets* model allows rapid adjustments within the highly competitive global economy through a rigorous competitive selection of *highly qualified human resources*, and guarantees of the shareholders rights.

Capital markets tend to be more important than bank lending so that there is more *publicly available information* and *transparency* on issuers and borrowers. The tendency to curb the power of governments to intervene in the market has been accomplished through *lower tax rates, deregulation, and privatization*. In terms of results, the American and British economies seeks welfare state and provide incentives that support new job creation by encouraging and rewarding *entrepreneurial innovation*.

The Anglo-American model is presumed to be relatively immune to a certain *sense of humanity* in the name of *economic efficiency*, as it is not guided by *corruption, cronyism, discrimination and nepotism* of the bureaucrats and politicians. The neo-liberal economic philosophy, originally promoted by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, which takes an aggressively hostile approach toward *labor unions*, is characterized by a strong distrust of the government and an equally strong faith in the market rule, where herd behavior and systemic risks pose significant challenges. Although it enjoyed its heyday right after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the early 1990s, it widened its principles with the *shareholder model* concepts governed by profitability that arises from satisfying customers so that the mutual interests of hired managers and shareholders are also served. The shareholder model is also associated with increased *efficiency* in the use of capital. By operating in a competitive capital market, companies operating under the shareholder model are forced to measure *performance against profits*.

The Anglo-American corporate culture is the result of macroeconomic model. In the United States, a corporation is governed by a board of directors, with an elected executive officer on the top having broad power to manage the corporation on a daily basis: hiring his/her immediate subordinates, raising money, acquiring another company, major capital expansions, or other expensive projects. Other duties of the board may include policy setting, decision making, monitoring management's performance, or corporate control. The board of directors is nominally selected and responsible to the shareholders. The U.K. has pioneered a flexible model of corporate governance culture, known as the "comply or explain" code. This is a principle based code that lists a dozen of recommended practice. Publicly listed companies in the U.K. have to either apply those principles or, if they choose not to, explain in a designated part of their annual reports why they decided not to do so. The monitoring of those explanations is left to shareholders themselves. If they have good reasons to deviate from the sound rule, the top management should be able to convincingly explain those to their shareholders.

Both corporate culture models are mainly associated with market efficiency in the use of capital and performance against profits of stakeholders by transparent directing and controlling management activities with objectivity, accountability and integrity. A healthy board culture is reliant on market place and legislation commitment; it safeguards short term and long term policies of the company to meet strategic goals of shareholders, creditors, employees, customers and suppliers, and complying with the legal and regulatory requirements, apart from meeting environmental and local community needs. Key elements of liberal corporate cultural model include *honesty, trust and integrity, openness, performance orientation, responsibility and accountability, mutual respect, and commitment* to the organization, and excludes any racial, age, gender, religious, sexual orientation type of form of discrimination.

## **5. Conclusion**

The development of ESP pedagogy aims the cultural accommodation of the students in economics in European Union. The full successful integration of Romania, mainly in euro zone, should be the outcome

of the cultural match which has been recently taken into consideration. The two European business cultures, the North and central, and the Mediterranean one, make the business behavior different. The fulfillment of obligations, and personal responsibility are imperative in the first one, but not in the second. Economic growth is the result of structural reforms in Northern and Central European countries, but taxes and duties reduction make the motivation in the other one. Effectiveness makes competition fierce in the former one, while devaluation chains pays it back. Romania is obviously, part of the Mediterranean type of business culture which obstruct its full accessibility and integration.

The financial expert of the Romanian Central Bank, Valentin Lazea (2017) claims that this is the most demanding benchmark for Romania to comply with Euro zone. If the nominal, legal and real measures are completed, but not the cultural one, this will make it even harder. It is not the political engagement, but the education commitment that will be able to make the transition to a different business attitude and culture. Who is to do it? ESP teachers are called to do it.

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