

## **The Role of Languages and Culture in Intercultural Business Communication**

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### **Abstract**

Language is a means, a medium to understand any message but not the only one. However, willingness to adapt to the other culture and understand the other is quintessential. Developing trust and sharing a common goal aids in effective communication. Cultural literacy is indispensable to be aware of the language being used. Having a common goal is important to aid future communication. Thus, intercultural knowledge and a good comprehension of some languages is the need of the hour to transact business, develop relationships and minimise mis-interpretations. This paper would throw light on Communication intricacies, variations, needs and aspects pertaining to the development of inter-cultural competence for smooth execution of intercultural business. Awareness regarding various facets such as multilingualism, cultural sensitization, difference between high vs low context cultures, variations in correspondence rules, collocations will be brought out in this review; so as to mould the perception towards the role language plays and its marriage to cultural bonding; with respect to effective intercultural business communication.

**Key words:** Communication, Language, Cultural literacy, intercultural business, multilingualism, cultural sensitization

### **Introduction**

To fare well in today's scenario of globalization inter-cultural understanding is crucial (Hanauer, 2001). Every time a person is communicating, he or she is making cultural choices. Cultural choices are all about working on varied dimensions simultaneously like eradicating language barriers (Fabian, 2016), specifically minimizing the usage of jargons and ambiguous words as well as phrases. Thereby, enhancing and improving intercultural relationships to facilitate hassle free transmission of messages. Conducting intercultural business requires a new forte of inter-cultural understanding. Communication needs to take into consideration the language and knowledge of the other culture (Castillo, 2018). Take the Japanese business culture for example: formality is an important aspect for the Japanese (Boiarsky, 1995; Ito, 2019). They like to venture into any business at a slow pace and build a more personal relationship.

Intercultural competence can be developed by working on three areas such as understand the place, cultural norms and taboos. Secondly, focus on improving the skill-set like language and negotiation skills, flexibility, and receptivity. Lastly, sow an attitude of empathy, self-efficacy and tolerating ambiguity to be effective at communication.

Kramsch (1998) stated that "language expresses, embodies, and symbolizes cultural reality". Cultural individuality is shaped by language which is made up of signs. These signs have

meanings only in their respective culture. Messages are perceived better in the cultural context. Language makes human interaction and cooperation possible and thus plays a role in the genesis of a society (Watson, 2010) and also remains an intricate part of the “cultural fabric” (Duranti, 2009; Soroka, 2016).

Culture is a very strong concept (Delaney & Kaspin, 2017) which is nothing but a shared set of values and concepts. It spans across countries or can be circumscribed to a company or office. Today, modern workforce is diverse; so with due reverence gaps can be bridged. Sensitization in religion, culture and politics will definitely go a long way in promoting good inter-cultural relationships when conducting business globally (Piasecka, 2011). An effort should be made while working with people for whom English may not be the first language.

Cultural diversity is never uniform so it is important to understand that some cultures may be more relaxed, friendly while others may be formal and traditional. A company's shared culture shapes an employee's attitudes, effectiveness in performance and team spirit. The communication strategies adopted by the top management decides the fate in moulding the culture of the company (Westrup et al., 2018). Customer bases should be studied before entering their market. Communication strategies have to match with demographics to meet the varied tastes of the market. Reaching a common understanding and cooperation is important. Presentations merging with the business culture should be prepared.

Language is a means, a medium to understand any message but not the only one (Bonvillain, 2019). However, willingness to adapt to the other culture and understand the other is quintessential. Developing trust and sharing a common goal aids in effective communication. Cultural literacy is indispensable to be aware of the language being used. Language is not just about grammatical usage but every time we choose words, to form sentences, we also make cultural choices. (Trosborg, 2010) There are chances where one can send wrong signals if unaware of the cultural implications. Having a common goal is important to aid future communication.

Multilingualism and bilingualism are the twenty first century's norms (García & Lin, 2017). Globalization, colonization, mass migration due to disasters and conquests paved the pathway for multilingualism. Multilinguals communicate better in comparison to bilinguals as they look and understand things from varied perspectives; not only that but they are better learners.

Multilingualism leads to more tolerance, social bonding, intercultural communication, and effective conflict resolution and at the same time lessens racism and xenophobia (Van Der Wildt et al., 2017). Arabic and English are spoken in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; wherein the cultural orientation of each language is different. There is high uncertainty avoidance in Arabic culture, which stresses on values like modesty, humility, community spirit. Whereas the English culture focuses on low uncertainty avoidance and advocates values such as assertiveness, independence and individual achievements (Chumbow, B.S., 2018).

## **1. English as the Global Business Language**

English is the current mandate in performing business (Kumar, 2016; Suresh, 2017). The career graph of an individual goes up if the employee is proficient and eloquent in communication skills; incorporating English as the chosen medium (Shivakumar & Sharma, 2017). Also people with good command over English are recruited; especially if they have to deal with national and international clients. With the advent of World Wide Web the importance of English has increased manifold. Having good command over the English language also improves relationships as well promotes success at work place.

### **1.1. Cultural Bonding with Language**

Culture is transmitted and internalized via language; they share a symbiotic relationship and can-not be separated. Language and culture are intertwined, they influence and mould each other (Thanasoulas, 2001; Genc & Bada, 2005; Baker, 2012). Awareness regarding the cultural implications goes a long way in making it effective.

Words have two kinds of meanings: lexical and contextual. Though lexical meaning is generally taken into consideration but actual meaning is derived from the context. This signifies that words are meaningless according to some linguists. English enjoys the luxury of being used as the global language to interact with varied cultures as well as transact business (Rao, 2019). For instance American says "How are you?" other Americans will receive the phrase as Hello, the equivalent of guten tag, bonjour, or Ohayo Gozayimasu in place of literal meaning. A visitor in the United States, having some familiarity with English but lacks knowledge of culture and usage of English, may impute a very different sense to the phrase and elucidate it much more literally. This phrase can be interpreted in various ways: it can be considered personal or literal meaning can be attached to it or it can even be considered that the speaker is disinterested in the answer.

Languages comprise of social questions and information questions. A social question, even though it comes in question form, does not ask for information. It basically helps in proceeding with the conversation. In American English, the question "How are you?" is a social question. Whereas in Russia, Poland and Germany, "How are you?" is an information question. The speaker actually wants an answer to the question.

### **1.2. Language and its dual role**

Language plays a dual role as sometimes it acts as a boon and at times as bane. Language facilitates good inter-cultural communication but in certain circumstances it can pose itself as a barrier. For example, English is the second language in Israel, so sometimes inter-cultural communication barriers are created although Israeli's are fluent in it. English is used to transact international business and is considered as the global language at workplace. Meanings get lost in translation when a wrong expression is used which conveys the wrong impression. In Israel, "don't care" means that it would not make a big difference and no need to bother but for an American such a response would not be appreciated and would take it offensively. Even though either culture knows how to communicate in English,

communication gaps take place; when the language is used in the cultural context leading to mistrust and disrupted productivity.

### **Case study #1**

In Japan, the question “Where are you going?” is a social question. The same question is an information question in American English. An American may feel that the Japanese question is invasive and may not know what to answer. However, no answer is expected. A simple “Over there” will do. Correspondingly, in Korea characteristic social questions when people first meet are “Did you sleep well last night?” or “Have you had a meal?”

To take another example, a person from Indonesia who stayed in the United States for a long period of time feels that he or she is losing touch with his or her native culture. Increasingly, when he or she talks with other people from Indonesia the person may get criticised for being too blunt, direct and rushed in his or her communication. While communicating with Indonesians, he or she would have to consciously place herself or himself into an Indonesian mind-set. Gradually this adjustment becomes more complex.

### **Case study # 2**

People organize their world and look at it from culturally coated glasses. Americans give less emphasis to their social milieu; on the contrary Chinese people consider interpersonal relationships extremely significant and attach high value to it (Fung, 1983; Hedden et al., 2000; Hsu, 1981; Ji, Schwarz, & Nisbett, 2000). These values are instilled since childhood by Chinese at home and at educational institutes and are carried ahead even in adult life. Emancipation is valuable for Americans and is ingrained in their blood. Let us see the difference in the way mothers interact with their children with respect to their culture. When an American mother is playing with her child, she focuses on the toy and its attributes whereas a Chinese mother is concerned about social routines and relationships as found by Bornstein and colleagues (1990) and Fernald and Morikawa (1993). For instance- American mother would say, “It’s a truck. See, it’s got nice wheels.” Whereas a Chinese mother says, “See, it’s a vroomvroom. I give it to you. You give it to me. Yes! Thank You.”

In 1976, Edward T. Hall an anthropologist introduced the concept of High context cultures and Low context cultures in his book *Beyond Culture*. Rules of communication and interpretations of messages and meanings are not directly stated in High context cultures due to variations in body language, a person’s status and paralanguage. Whereas in low context cultures meanings are clearly stated via the medium of language while sharing messages. High context cultures emphasize on kinesics and paralanguage but low context cultures rely explicitly on verbal communication. For example, in China which is a high context culture- silence is highly valued and considered golden, modest, and profound. In low context cultures silence has different connotations attached to it. In such cultures it indicates lack of confidence and leads to awkwardness.

The study of Chronemics has divided both the cultures into two categories- polychronic and monochronic (Tripathy, 2018). High context cultures will come under polychronic; whereas

low context cultures are regarded as monochronic. Low context cultures are future-time oriented and are very particular about agendas. Whereas high context cultures are malleable when it comes to handling time; they do several things at the same time. Outcome is more important for them rather than the route.

Awareness regarding high context and low context cultures is crucial to reduce misapprehensions which may arise when interacting in a cross cultural environment. Effective communication is based on effective strategy; know the world trend; understand and be understood. As per the research conducted by Nisbett and his colleagues, Chinese and East Asians are all-inclusive when it comes to reasoning but European Americans are analytical. Thus, it can be inferred that reasoning style and cognizance varies from culture to culture (Ji, L. J., Zhang, Z., & Nisbett, R. E., 2004).

### **Language and its Environmental Manifestation**

Environment influence the language (Fill and Muhlhausler, 2006). Not only does it cast its influence on the growth of the technology, products but also the vocabulary. For instance, people living in tropical region will not evolve heating systems and hence will not have any of the accompanying vocabulary, similarly people in cold area have no necessity for air-conditioning and its associated vocabulary. In the Amazon area, snow is not a part of the atmosphere; so people staying in that region don't have the word 'snow' as a part of their vocabulary. Vocabulary is highly influenced by the milieu of a place (Soroka T., 2016).

#### **2.1. Value based Character of the Language**

Any culture has its roots ingrained in values; which gives birth to the context from which springs the standards set by any society. For example, time doesn't exist in the dictionary of a Navajos; so they have no word for 'late'. (Hall, 1959) According to them, one cannot have control over time so they don't believe in designing schedules.

Cultural values are reflected through language (Ji et al., 2004). In dealing with people from other cultures, one of the problems that one comes across is that one tends to express concepts from a foreign language and culture with words that fit our priorities. The manana mentality of Spanish-speaking countries aggravate the business people in the United States: "They said tomorrow, but they did not mean it." Americans, consider tomorrow as midnight to midnight, a very exact time duration. On the contrary, for Mexicans, manana means in the future or soon. A Mexican businessman in conversation with an American may use the word tomorrow but unaware of, or not have the specific knowledge of the word in mind. This indistinct jargon is not defined enough for the American importance on competence. The technical issue over the word manana are at least as much an American problem as a Mexican problem.

#### **2.2. Terminology and its varied Connotations**

There is no analogous word in the Chinese language for privacy as they do not have a notion of privacy (Zhu, 1997; Chan, 2000; McDougall, 2004). Privacy can be translated as reclusiveness (Fabian, 2016; Soroka, 2016) but then it will have very diverse connotations in

English. They think of the privacy of their homes, the right to privacy, and the right to private property. In the U.S. context, a reclusive person is observed somewhat weird. The word reclusiveness, in contrast, indicates that a person withdraws from society, is a loner, or does not fit in.

Chinese culture doesn't have any place for the concept of privacy like Americans have. Despite this, an isolated person is looked at negatively in China (Moore, 1998). Reclusive is used in place of privacy in Chinese. The same word, 'reclusive' has a negative connotation in America and in Chinese much more negative connotation. Thus, connotations vary from culture to culture. A society's approach towards culture is shaped by the values. There is no word for the word 'communication' in the Chinese language with reference to business communication. Instead of word 'communication' words like letter exchange or transportation traffic are used.

Words like Director and Manager have different meanings attached to them in myriad cultures. In America, Director is considered as a person who has power and importance but in Japan a Di-rector doesn't enjoy the same status or the level of authority. Japanese have borrowed the word 'Director' from English but the meaning may be slightly altered. The same phrase may have uni-dentical connotations in cross-cultural organizational structures. The business processes also vary from culture to culture. Documents are notarized in United States of America and is a very simple process. Whereas in Germany the word notarized is translated as notarielle Beglaubigung which has a different interpretation. Force majeure is a phrase which literally means superior or irresistible force; is used commonly by both the Americans and the French. In U.S. it refers to war or forces of nature but in Europe it also has economic connotations along with forces of nature. The meanings of words change over time and sometimes the earlier meaning gets discontinued or even gets an additional meaning. For example the word hardware has changed its connotation with changing times. Earlier it meant tools used for repairing but the contemporary meaning has changed with time. Now, it means components or parts that can add on to a computer.

Words such as fireman, chairperson, salesman etc. are being replaced with words such as fireper-son, chairperson, salesperson with the importance being attached to non-discriminatory writing style; which is devoid of bias of any kind. Effective communication insists on avoiding words which hurt the sensitivities of people; to be precise words which isolate people on the basis of gender, race, nationality or disability of any kind. The current trend advocates the usage of gen-der neutral words.

Maintaining purity in any language is a mammoth task; which is being carried out by countries like France and Iceland. French is the official business language in France as per the Aca-demie Francaise policies (Ndille, 2016). Franglais is grimaced by the executives but still there are variations in the language being used. English is considered modish and caters with an appropri-ate word to be used at times. French Canadians do not follow the rules set by Academie Francaise and pronounce many English words in French way by accenting the last syllable. Language is ever evolving, growing and altering from place to place. Questions

are forever raised over the criteria and correctness of any language. For instance, 'Singlish' is used in Singapore which is a combination of Chinese dialects such as Malay, Hokkien and English.

Terminology changes across globe; which causes barriers as a foreigner is unaware whether a regional word will be used or a term from English. Germans use ticket in place of Fahrkarte; de-spite of promoting the use of their home language. Although many English words are incorpo-rated in the German language; but Vereindeutsch Sprache is advocating the use of German lan-guage and English words are losing their hold and getting replaced. Some cultures borrow for-eign words and modify them in their language like the Japanese have amended the word home-run and modified it to homurunu. The word stress has become a native word in German and is used routinely by everyone; even though it has German pronunciation. Today it is considered a part of the German language. Not just words but Acronyms also vary and can lead to ambiguity. Vereinte Nationen in German stands for United Nations in English (UN). So, awareness regard-ing acronyms also plays a noteworthy role in inter-cultural communication. As the same acronym can be construed in a different way in a different country.

Communication is a tricky affair and miscommunication can take place even among people speaking same language due to misperception. Resolving ambiguity is complex as identifying triggers is not an easy task and there is a dearth of this skill to overcome it. More than language it is the cultural subtleties and intonation patterns that creates difficulty in understanding the mes-sage.

### **2.3. Cultural Semasiology**

At times one can get humorous, annoying and get costly results depending on the circumstances because of words which are identical but have dissimilar meanings. An American university and its French partner explored the prospects of interlinkages for students, professors, and adminis-trators. Both sides mutually agreed that it would be a good idea. The French negotiator spoke pretty good English-at first glance, while the American spoke good French. During conversation, French and English both the languages were used for conversation. In both languages they used the identical word-administration-when they talked about exchanges between the administrations of the two institutions. For the American, administration in the university context meant depart-ment chair, dean, or provost whereas in French, administration meant upper-level clerical staff. What the American considered to be an administrator, the French considered faculty.

To take another case, force majeure word is used in both the languages French and American, but the phrase holds very varied interpretation. Literally, the term means higher or irresistible force. In U.S. legal language, it refers generally to forces of nature or possibly war. The implications are that the terms of a contract may be transformed because the risk was not allocated in either the articulated or the inferred terms of the contract.

In European law, the expression has a broader denotation: It includes the changes in fiscal condi-tions or other state of affairs that were not expected when the contract was drawn up.

The implication is that when Americans make agreements with Europeans, consider unanticipated circumstances, and use the term *force majeure*, they need to elucidate what they mean and spell out what that word covers.

Language comes into existence, evolves and transforms over time. The meaning of the words changes over a period of time or they become obsolete. One needs to understand the context to understand the meaning as words take on additional meanings. Language is not important to some as a good manager is a good manager everywhere as is reflected from the arguments Americans use as legion. But, this does not undermine the importance of selecting the right language.

### **Linguistic Considerations**

There are around 6000 languages prevalent in the world (Aitchison, 2005; Majid & Burenhult, 2014; Ibbotson & Tomasello, 2016) out of which half would meet their doom over the next 100 years, which in turn will lead to a drastic fall in terms of cultural diversity (Wurm, 2001). No single language can claim that it is self-sufficient to articulate all human feelings and information. One needs to understand the difference between a language and a dialect (Lakoff, 1990; Craig et al., 2009). The Japanese consider their culture as homogeneous but still have dialects, especially if you compare Honshu and Kyushu (Kumagai, 2016). Tokyo is the economic, political and entertainment centre of Japan, where Honshu is in usage. So Kyushu has been looked down by Honshu speaking crowd. Even within Honshu there are different dialects. Sometimes people cannot fit in to a culture because of their rigid nature to avoid adapting their communication to a new dialect.

India is well known for its rich and diverse culture (Srinivas, 1997; Baird, 1981; Pollock, 2006) with about 600 languages (Mukherjee, 2010; Moseley, 2010), of which 14 languages are spoken by the majority of the Indian population. These 14 languages come from two language families, namely Dravidian for those belonging to the South (Kanthimathi et al., 2008; Steever, 2015, 2018) and Indo-European for those coming from the north (Forster & Toth 2003). For effective communication to take place in India, three languages were made official namely: Hindi, English and the local language (Sahgal, 1991; Jain et al., 2019). The status bestowed upon the English language cannot be underestimated as it is used to conduct business. Thus, many American companies have their call centres in India (Mirchandani, 2003). English is still spoken only by the educated upper middle class (Dickey, 2012). Access to internationalization has become easy because of the fluent speaking educated Indian class.

China too has a wide array of languages (Xu, 2008), Mandarin and Cantonese being the dominant ones (Liu et al., 2013). Mandarin is spoken in Beijing, (Pan, 2016) the political power centre by two-thirds of the Chinese population which is also the official language. People speaking Mandarin and Cantonese have issues communicating their thoughts and ideas barring written communication. Cantonese is used in the South and Hong Kong (Li, 2000). So speakers in Hong Kong and the South tend to think that they are superior in contrast to speakers speaking Mandarin and vice-versa (Ching, et al., (2020). Regional and



linguistic snobbery goes hand in hand which in turn affects cultural sensitivities (del Valle, 2020).

### **Business Considerations**

Business people emphasise their employee on learning the language of the customer (Holmqvist, et al, 2019). To sell one needs to adapt, learn and take interest in the language of the buyer (Da-rics & Koller, 2017). This view is situational and specific to circumstances. For example if one is the only manufacturer of a product which is in great demand, then language will not play a major role in selling and promoting it. Still, in the long run it is better to adapt oneself to the language of the customer.

If countries want to expand their international markets they need to adapt and learn the potential markets language. We find Japanese learning English and Koreans learning English (Matsuura, et al., 2017). No language is difficult to learn if the learner is determined. Japanese, Korean, Chi-nese languages are not hard to master if one is accommodative and a hard worker (Macaro et al., 2018). Today language learning initiative is taken up by schools and colleges to promote further intercultural collaboration and growth (Deardorff, & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). For instance 13 schools in Chicago (Wang & Ruan, 2016) offer Chinese language programmes (Moloney & Xu, 2016). Each language has a goal and purpose of its own.

#### **4.1 Influence of English language on Business Communication**

English has become the lingua franca of international business (Nickerson, 2005). It is now con-sidered a routine foreign language (Buttjes,1990). Language definitely plays a major role in the line of business (Song, 2018). In China, to get a bachelor degree it's a mandate to clear College English test, level 4(CET-4) (Li, 2017). Other aims of learning a new foreign language can be based on its political and economic importance in the world. Germany and Japan are very strong economically (Dobrzański, 2017) so one can learn these languages besides English. Spanish, French and Chinese has gained importance due to North American Free trade Agreement. Rus-sian and Arabic can be a good choice if one has interest in dealing with the oil industry. Being monolingual is not a good sign in today's business world. (Chumbow, 2018; Roberts et al., 2018)

Speaking a language carries a symbolic value (Eckert & McConnell 1992; Heise, 2019). To be fluent in the language one needs to think in the same. Linguistic fluency alone would not suffice but cultural fluency should also be stressed, cultural learning and language learning goes hand in hand (Kral & Renganathan, 2018). Exposure to a culture carries weight age. The emphasis in learning a new language is generally on grammar, spelling and vocabulary rather than culture. To know the way people think so that one is better at negotiating or to comprehend why people be-have and act the way they do, a greater degree of fluency is required. Appointing an interpreter helps but this step is accompanied with some limitations.

People fail to speak in a foreign language as they are intimidated; so they fail to try. They are conscious of the image they project and are worried that using incorrect verb forms and

tenses may mar it. Sometimes they over think and search for a word, and by the time they get one the conversation has moved on. The process of translating a word from the native tongue into the foreign tongue can be tedious and discouraging for the speakers (Rivers, 2018).

Men and women have a diverse speech pattern (Gelfer, et al., 2019) which casts a major influence on the discernment and accomplishment of communication. Men are straightforward and interrupt a speaker frequently whereas women are ambiguous in what they say (Aryani, 2017). Non-verbal communication is more noticeable in high-context cultures than in low-context cultures (Miehle et al., 2016). Comprehension of fluency is also influenced by non-verbal communication.

#### **4.2. Choosing a Company Language and Staffing**

As the international dealings increase in companies, the number of languages to be used also increases; thereby putting an additional responsibility on the shoulders of the employees. For example when a domestic Korean company establishes subsidiaries in Thailand and Taiwan, the company must deal in three linguistic markets: Korean, Mandarin, and Thai.

In ethnocentric kind of staffing almost all managers in all the subsidiaries are from the home country (Michailova et al., 2017). For instance if a Korean company uses ethnocentric staffing then they would fill all managerial positions with Korean personnel in all three locations (Singh et al., 2019). The communications between headquarters and among the managers from the three subsidiaries can be in Korean language. Hence the crossing point among the language of the home country and those of the host countries occurs somewhere in the subsidiaries. In such a case the Korean managers either must be trained in the local language or rely on interpreter to communicate with the local personnel. (Jintae et al., 2017).

In contemporary times many firms prefer to use polycentric staffing patterns (Lakshman et al., 2017) as ethnocentric staffing is considered insensate (Lazere, 2017), manipulative, and invalid. In polycentric staffing, the appointment of the managers in all subsidiaries are from the respective subsidiary country because local managers are effective to communicate in the specific atmosphere. This suggests that the Korean firm will hire only Taiwanese people for its subsidiary in Taiwan, and only Thais for its subsidiary in Thailand. At the same time this kind of staffing makes the communication more obscure. The linguistic boundary-the contact between the language of headquarters and the language of the subsidiary-occurs in the communication between headquarters and the subsidiary. In ethnocentric staffing, in contrast, this contact of different languages occurs within the subsidiary.

In geocentric staffing the communication problem is even more distinct (Farmanesh, 2016). Therefore the best person is chosen for a job regardless of linguistic, cultural, and national background. In the preceding situation, the corporation may have Taiwanese, Thais, and Koreans working at headquarters in Korea. Geocentric staffing brings persons from assorted linguistic and cultural backgrounds in to the same office where they must work side by side. (Fernando, 2018).

### **4.3. Importance of official language for Geographical expansion**

Companies have elected an official language due to the geographic expansion and changes in staffing (Noe et al., 2017). A company that is headquartered in Japan and does business in the United States, France, Germany, Holland, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria may decide that the company language is Japanese. It is improbable that all workforces in the various subsidiaries speak Japanese. Speaking Japanese could hardly be made a clause of employment (Beauchamp, 2019). In this case, the company language refers to communication among managers from a certain level up. In the case of Japanese, given how few non-Japanese people actually speak Japanese, the company would need a good number of Japanese managers at each subsidiary who would communicate with headquarters.

A widely spoken language should be opted by a company and not the one of the home country where headquarters are located for its company language (Moeller et al., 2017). For instance, Philips, a Dutch company, has chosen English as its company language. Komatsu from Japan has just set the objective that all employees, even in the Japanese home office, will communicate in English. The company provides the suitable language lessons. Samsung from Korea also has started mandatory English language classes for all its employees (Komba & Mohamed, 2016). Thus, English holds a prestigious position in international business (Haigh, 2018). The conventional mind-set of having the language of the home country as the official language is shifting.

With a company language that applies to all managers, the edge between languages characteristically takes place between management and local employees below the managerial level (Peck, 2017). Translation becomes essential at times when the two languages come together. So a U.S. firm that uses English as the company language cannot expect that all its employees speak Spanish. (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017).

An official company language is designated these days due to new staffing ways and geographic expansion. So the company language is used to conduct all company related communication. Companies can choose a more widely spoken language. Samsung from Korea has declared English as the official company language (Paik, 2018). Even pilots and flight controllers around the world are supposed to communicate in English (Hazrati, 2015). Earlier, the official company language was the language of the home country.

Two firms from different countries may face a problem if the company language is different in either case. The aim behind appointing a company language is that everyone should understand everyone else; so the use of foreign language may be discouraged or kept limited. This aim sometimes leads a company into appointing not the best person for the job but someone with good English. Company language is not always clear for company communication; flexibility is the key in some circumstances. (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2018).

## **Communication with Non-Native Speakers**

Communicating with non-native speakers is a herculean task (Hao et al., 2018) which requires a great deal of experience and expertise. To conduct an effective communication with non-native speakers the following guidelines would help (Aneja, 2016). One must speak lucidly so that the words used are comprehensible; avoid contractions which may cause difficulty at times. A slow pace should be adopted so that the associate will be able to grasp the meaning rendering more flexibility and concern towards the collaborator; which in turn will reduce the hassles of repeat-ing words.

Slangs and colloquialisms should be avoided in such a case. Foreign language instruction encourages and recommends formal language usage rather than colloquialisms. Slangs convey dis-respect and can be considered offensive in some cultures.

Humour should be used with extreme caution (Gregory & Carroll ,2018). What is funny in one culture may be crude in the other. Cultural references should be shared between the listeners or speakers only then the jokes would be appreciated. Humour is based on word play and puns which become tedious when it has to be translated in the other language. Positive approach al-ways helps and is created with the aid of goodwill and sincerity. These two would help in foster-ing effectiveness and in reducing obstacles. To run business successfully, it is vital to know the other side of the culture (Okoro, 2012). Knowing the basics of social behaviour and etiquette goes a long way. The most imperative mantra is to laugh at one's gaffes and not be affronted by candid errors from the other side.

### **4.1. Effective Intercultural Written Communication among non-native speaker**

To have an error free written communication proofreading the message is must (Newbold et al.,1996); which states the importance of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. One has to be clear about one's intend which is not writing like the Chinese or the French but to be aware of the principle of format to facilitate conception. Plenty of white space should be used for com-ments and translations. Accuracy should be practised in titles and spellings of names. Another important point to be considered is to take the patterns of any organization into account. To communicate effectively noise has to be eliminated.

People from different cultures organize information in myriad ways. For instance Canadians like to have recommendations at the beginning of a report (Babington et al., 2016). A rationale and the required background provided by the rest of the report. Stress is there on the practical use of information. Germans on the other hand chose to present the information chronologically wherein the background comes first and recommendation comes at the end. The French take delight in the linguistically elegant depiction of the argument rather than the Germans and the Canadians. Another point of difference between the East Asian cultures and the Western ones is in the way the material is structured. The former ones' organize on the basis of relationships of elements rather than the linear sequence illustrative of western philosophy.

Headings are important when communicating with non-native speakers. Even the accuracy of the numbers should be checked; punctuation can become ambiguous at times. Like \$7,100.80 becomes \$ 7.100,80 in most European languages (Bailey, 2017). The comma and the decimal point are reversed, and often the punctuation to set off thousands is not used at all. (Van Horn, ,2019). If dates are mishandled then firms can disagree on contract conditions, delivery dates, and meeting dates leading to issues. To avoid confusion it is better to write the name of the month. For instance:

American usage: May 5,20xx or 5/5/20xx

German usage: 5. Mai 20xx or 5.5.20xx

International usage: 20xx May, 5 or 20xx, 05, 05

Abbreviations and acronyms are convenient for the writer but difficult for the reader; as it interrupts the flow of thought. For example a businessperson from Manila who speaks German may not know that the abbreviation *betr.* stands for *betrefts* and means subject. Studying the conventions of the counter culture is necessary (Kaynak & Tesar 2018). Different countries have different formats for writing letters; even within the same country there are variations in style and format. The letters from Iran (Naghdipour, 2016). and Hong Kong (Evans, 2016). do not provide an inside address. German letters provide the company's bank numbers (Sankrusme, 2017).

## **5.2. Awareness of intercultural Jargons**

Culture has an impact upon how business people communicate while conducting business (Ferraro & Briody, 2017). For example, business people from United States can come across as insistent and confrontational while dealing with cultures which are reserved (Morse, 2020); so they would tone down and take a more accommodating approach in their language. They also tend to use many phrases from the military and sports which are jargon to people from other cultures. Especially when the following terminology is used:

1. Touchdown
2. All the bases are covered
3. Face mask
4. We want a level playing field

These phrases are not about having good English but are about being familiar with American baseball and football.

While conducting business with non-native speakers one should at least learn the basic phrases for greeting, asking directions, showing appreciation and making an apology. Adaptability is an important step, being fluent is not a mandatory factor (Gass & Neu 2009). Many English words have a French, Latin or German root (Green, 2014). While communicating with a native speaker of any of these foreign languages one can consciously

choose to use English words having for-eign roots. For instance The French will find it easier to understand descend rather than going down, and ascend rather than going up. Whereas the German will understand going down better rather than descending; as the word is closer to German. A cautious approach should be employed when using words that appear to be similar but have different meanings.

Intercultural training should be provided to all employees at all hierarchies to ease the work towards a common end (Ascalon et al., 2006). This would enable the workforce to overcome hurdles related to work and may in turn smoothen the process (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

English has become lingua franca in executing business in today's globalized world (House, 2013). Having a robust command over Grammar and vocabulary won't suffice but one has to work towards enhancing one's cultural competence (Moore, 2016). Language and culture are inter-related and inseparable (Kasper and Omori, 2010). Listening between the lines is important so that one can adjust one's message as per the requirement at hand. The key is to increase awareness towards other culture as well as one's own culture by comprehending differences and similarities in terms of attitudes and the way English language is handled (Merkin, 2017). Negotiation and decision making are influenced by degree of formality, hierarchy and timing (Farrell & Héritier, 2004). While conducting business with different cultures one has to be patient as it is a slow, tedious process and there is a danger of being perceived as belligerent and intolerant (Beugelsdijk et al., 2020). Every business house members must be proficient in using you, we or impersonal attitude according to the need of the hour. Employing a proactive approach goes a long way where energy is spent on establishing trust and rapport before conducting business. A win-win situation should be targeted by either party. Prior preparation is crucial to be successful in executing business. One has to work towards enhancing one's awareness about the other party by being proactive. Observe how people communicate; are they formal, expressive, direct, aggressive, soft in their approach. Intercultural business communication is not just about language and culture but about Geography, History, Economics and major industries (Buckley & Ghauri 2004). Homogenizing as a global culture is significant (Mackay, 2000). International business relationships have to be handled delicately and at times one has to go beyond the comfort zone. Diversity adds flavour to any organization but at the same time possess numerous complications in front of it leading to loss in productivity. Shaping an apt communication climate is the responsibility on the shoulders of the leaders; so the language has to be chosen carefully. Circumspectly articulated language offers a rich prospect to codify and crystallize what a business house is about and where it desires to be..

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