

Intercultural competences and cultural intelligence in professional English language teaching

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Key words: intercultural competences, cultural intelligence, professional English, intercultural communication, evaluation

Introduction

As a result of globalization and the rise of the Internet and mass media, present-day communication seems to be easier. On the other hand, it can be also considered more complicated as the result of intercultural differences. These paradoxical aspects of communication can be seen in an international business sphere. As a result of intercultural differences, a manager has to be educated to adapt to any possible culture-based situations. The faculties of economic types have to take into account the requirements of the present-day multicultural business markets. Students of management should enter the work environment fully prepared to succeed in business in any national culture. It also concerns the language skills which means that the teaching of foreign languages is not limited to grammar and vocabulary but involves also intercultural competences.

The paper analyses the philosophy of professional English language teaching and learning from the point of view of the first-year master's level students of the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov in Prešov. The teaching of foreign languages, as performed at the Faculty, incorporates the elements of cultural knowledge and it is based on the belief that students can be taught to react properly in different cultural environments by improving the cultural intelligence. The aim of the paper is to find out whether the students accept that there is a relationship between cultural knowledge and communicative language skills by questionnaire survey.

Intercultural communication and cultural intelligence

It is universally agreed that a successful businessman or manager has to be able to communicate appropriately. Managerial communicative competences involve not only the command of foreign language but also complex verbal or non-verbal aspects. Pokorný (2009, p. 303) defines communicative competence as the ability of socially and culturally appropriate use and interpretation of language. Each social situation, which involves also speech events, is regulated by specific norms that should be known and properly applied by its participants. In this context, Johnstone (2002) speaks about communicative-ideological pressure on discourse resulting in a fixed discourse form connected to certain situations or purposes. Lawless (1996, p. 9) points out that we use analytical models to explain or describe the surrounding reality. These models are defined as filters or imitations of our views or perceptions of any situation. This filter is then used to transform our view of reality. Thus, culture can be defined as a human way of living and different cultures as mirroring specific ways of life of any social group (Lawless, 1996, p. 39). DeVito (2008, p. 128) adds that cultural competence is acquired by education, especially in communication.

The author agrees that to reach the communicative aim, the preferred form of communication should be appropriately applied with respect to a given cultural environment or

situation. Průcha (2009, p. 13, 46–47) claims that without language there is no communication and without the knowledge of foreign languages there is no intercultural communication and respecting the cultural specifics of others is a basis of intercultural competence. Průcha (2009, p. 13) talks about three meanings of intercultural communication: 1. process of verbal and non-verbal communication in various social situations, 2. scientific theory and research, and 3. educational and supporting activities aimed at practice and based on the theory and research. Novinger (2001, p. 3–9) underlines the importance of the study of intercultural differences for intercultural communication competence improvement.

Cultural intelligence is a recent concept in this field and can be defined as an ability to effectively and appropriately react to various cultural stimuli (Ang – Van Dyne, 2008, p. 3). It can be understood as an ability or competence of an individual and as such, it is an important concept in pedagogy. It has gained popularity in the education of future managers in the field of international business and intercultural management (Eisenberg et al., 2013, p. 603). The concept was introduced by Earley and Ang (Ang et al., 2007, p. 336) in 2003 who connected it with the realities of globalization and studied it in intercultural settings. It was further developed by Ang et al. (2007, p. 337–339) who identified four dimensions of cultural intelligence:

- metacognitive (control of cognition – how people understand and acquire knowledge),
- cognitive (knowledge of norms, systems, cultural differences acquired by personal experience or education),
- motivational (ability to focus on and continue in a specific activity),
- behavioural (manifestation of what people do).

The first three are mental dimensions, the last one being connected with our behaviour. These dimensions decide how an individual is able to function in an intercultural setting. Ang et al. (2007) argue that cultural intelligence is different from personality, other kinds of intelligences and intercultural competences. The authors studied the relationships between cultural intelligence and intercultural effectiveness: cultural judgement and decision making, cultural adjustment and well-being, and task performance as cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes, respectively. They found out that there was a positive relation between metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligence and cultural judgement and decision making effectiveness, and between motivational and behavioural cultural intelligence and cultural adaptation. They also proved that metacognitive and behavioural cultural intelligence predicted task performance, while cognitive and motivational cultural intelligence did not relate to it. In this context, Eisenberg et al. (2013, p. 615–618) add that while cognitive and metacognitive cultural intelligence can be influenced especially by academic courses, motivational and behavioural dimensions are influenced especially by individual experience.

Many authors (Putranto et al., 2015; Eisenberg et al., 2013; Saffarian et al., 2015; Benčíková, 2013) discussed the importance of cultural intelligence and the effect of including intercultural communication and management education into economic schools' curricula. Eisenberg et al. (2013, p. 605) claim, based on the previous research, that cultural intelligence is connected with but different from personal characteristics. Cultural intelligence can explain why there are differences in intercultural competency. Similarly, Triandis (2008, p. xii) argues that cultural intelligence can be learnt by working in an international environment together with respective foreign language knowledge and long-term stay in the given country. The same applies to the shorter study stays at the countries with a different culture. The author also points out that when encountering an unknown culture with insufficient knowledge of intercultural differences, we can react inflexible and with prejudices.

In the Slovak academic community, cultural intelligence is studied by Benčíková (2013) who also believes in the importance of cultural knowledge and intercultural competence of managers and recommends managerial education in this field. Benčíková (2013, p. 7–10) presents the results of the research of the cultural quotient of the Slovak managers of SMEs and

offers suggestions that can be incorporated into the future managers' education to be successful at an international level. The managers of Slovak enterprises filled in a questionnaire created by the American Cultural Intelligence Center in Michigan called the Four Factor Cultural Intelligence Scale. The results of the research showed the level of four dimensions of cultural intelligence according to Ang et al. (2007). It compared two groups of Slovak managers: one working in enterprises doing business with international partners and the other one with predominately Slovak business partners and found out that an international environment contributes to the improvement of the intercultural competency of a manager. Nevertheless, both groups exhibited lower levels of the cognitive dimension of cultural intelligence which underlines the importance of education in the area of cultural specifics knowledge (Benčíková, 2013, p. 10–11).

In the context of cultural intelligence education, Putranto et al. (2015) studied the effect of various teaching methods and found out that a lecture is the least effective to improve cultural intelligence while a field trip is the most relevant method of intercultural management course. Similarly, Snow (2015) examined the use of “the encounter exercise” method within the teaching of English with the focus on intercultural differences and found out that such exercises helped to improve students' intercultural competences as they exercised critical encounters within an intercultural setting which equipped them with suitable strategies how to deal with them.

Intercultural competence in professional English language teaching at the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov

The author agrees with Průcha (2009, p. 107) who considers the knowledge of foreign languages to be a prerequisite to being an interculturally competent person. At the Faculty of Management, the teaching of foreign languages is an integral part of the education of future managers. The Department of Intercultural Communication runs courses integrating the teaching of professional foreign languages and intercultural competences. Students of all three study programs – Management, Environmental Management and Management of Tourism, Hotel, and Spas – at both levels (bachelor, master) can choose among three languages: English, German and Russian (Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2020). Most of them choose to study English. The paper deals with the pragmatic specifics of the teaching of Applied foreign language for managers 1 (English) which can be taken by the students in the first year of master's level of studies. It is a 45-minute course integrating the professional English language and intercultural communication skills. The teaching of professional English language, which is understood to be a part of English for Specific (Occupational) Purposes, tries to equip the students with cultural specifics necessary to use English with regards to cultural settings. It is the cognitive dimension of cultural intelligence which is dominant here.

Research Methodology and Results

At the master's level of studies at the Faculty of Management, the Applied foreign language for managers (English) 1, 2, and 3 are taught in three terms (13 weeks), 45 minutes per week. In the summer term of 2019/2020, the first course was taken by 153 students. The whole course was run by one teacher who carried out research concerning students' own evaluation of English and intercultural skills as a part of needs analysis which belongs to the useful tools of English for Specific Purposes teaching (Day – Krzanowski, 2011, p. 9–10). Self-evaluation as a measure of self-report is a source of relevant information about students' personal confidence in English and understanding of the interconnectedness of language and intercultural skills (Lavrakas, 2008).

The questionnaire survey was executed during the first week of the summer term (from February 10th till February 17th, 2020) within ten classes. Out of 153 students enrolled, 106

filled in the questionnaire. The average age was 23, there were 34 male (32%) and 72 (68%) female students which had been learning English for 13.4 years on average. Apart from identification questions, there were three questions concerning students' own evaluation of their skills in general English, professional English, and intercultural competence while another part of the questionnaire examined the students' understanding of intercultural communication and cultural intelligence and its relationship to English language learning. The evaluation scale was that of Slovak primary and secondary schools as students are best used to this scale – 1 being the best and 5 being the worst. The result of the evaluation is as follows:

- general English: average mark 3 (43%)
- professional English: average mark 3 (45%)
- intercultural communication: average mark 3 (54%).

Subjective evaluation shows the tendency of students to feel not being good nor bad in general and professional English and intercultural communication. Generally speaking, students do not feel confident and it can influence their motivation. It is in accordance with a frequent argument of the students of management that they do not choose to study languages but management. It also shows that they do not understand the relationship between the foreign language skills and intercultural competences.

The findings have their relevance in a more complex way. It is expected that the number of years of foreign language learning influences one's own evaluation of her or his communicative skills. This presupposition is based on the general assumption that the longer you learn something, the better you are. The author studied the relationship among the number of years of learning English, as a dependant variable, and three independent variables: own evaluation of general English knowledge, own evaluation of professional English skills, and own evaluation of intercultural competence. A multiple linear regression model was created with the use of the program Stagraphics Centurion XV. The following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: The number of years of the learning English language influences one's own evaluation of her or his skills in general English, professional English, and intercultural competence, respectively.

		<i>Standard</i>	<i>T</i>	
<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
CONSTANT	11.6188	1.67785	6.92481	0.0000
own evaluation of intercultural competence	-0.199057	0.448971	-0.443363	0.6584
own evaluation of professional English	1.2339	0.5181	2.38158	0.0191
own evaluation of general English	-0.647498	0.470404	-1.37647	0.1717

Table 1 Multiple Regression: Years of Study and evaluation¹

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F-Ratio</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Model	61.2968	3	20.4323	1.96	0.1250
Residual	1064.44	102	10.4357		
Total (Corr.)	1125.74	105			

Table 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)²

¹ Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

² Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

Since the P-value as shown in Table 2 is greater than 0.05, there is not a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the 95% or higher confidence level. Consequently, the hypothesis is refused.

The author was also interested in the relationships of the three evaluations: general English and professional English and intercultural competences among themselves. Three hypotheses were formulated and the correlation analyses in the program Stagraphics Centurion XV were performed (Tables 3, 4, 5):

H2: One's own evaluation of general English skills influences the evaluation of professional English skills.

H3: One's own evaluation of general English skills influences the evaluation of intercultural competence.

H4: One's own evaluation of professional English skills influences the evaluation of intercultural competence.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Between groups	19.9893	4	4.99732	13.30	0.0000
Within groups	37.9447	101	0.37569		
Total (Corr.)	57.934	105			

Table 3 ANOVA: H2 – own evaluation of general English and professional English skills³

P-value in Table 3 (H2) is less than 0.05 which means that there is a statistically significant difference between the professional English evaluation and levels of general English evaluation (at 95% confidence level). The hypothesis H2 was proved.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Between groups	10.0084	4	2.50211	5.11	0.0009
Within groups	49.4255	101	0.489362		
Total (Corr.)	59.434	105			

Table 4 ANOVA: H3 – own evaluation of general English and intercultural competence skills⁴
Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

P-value in Table 4 (H3) is less than 0.05 which means that there is a statistically significant difference between the evaluation of intercultural competence skills and levels of general English evaluation (at 95% confidence level). The hypothesis H3 was accepted.

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Between groups	3.25896	3	1.08632	1.97	0.1228
Within groups	56.175	102	0.550735		
Total (Corr.)	59.434	105			

Table 5 ANOVA: H4 – own evaluation of professional English skills and intercultural competence⁵

P-value in Table 5 (H4) is greater than 0.05 which means that there is not a statistically significant difference between the evaluation of intercultural competence and the levels of own evaluation of professional English (at 95% confidence level). This is not the result which was expected and would be in accordance with the belief that intercultural communication skills belong to the area of professional English learning. It could be caused by a misunderstanding

³ Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

⁴ Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

⁵ Source: own processing (in Stagraphics Centurion XV).

of the content of intercultural competence. Further research would give a more precise explanation.

As mentioned, the author also examined the students' understanding of intercultural communication and cultural intelligence and its relationship to English language learning. There were three questions:

Q1: In your opinion, is the knowledge of English-speaking countries' culture a part of English language learning?

Q2: Would you be able to define intercultural communication in your own words?

Q3: Would you be able to define cultural intelligence in your own words?

The first question was aimed at the understanding of the relationship between language learning and its cultural specifics. The possibilities were „yes“, „no“ and „I don't know“. Most of the students answered „yes“ – 75 out of 106 (70.75%), while „no“ was chosen by 20 students (18.87%). 10.38% of students were not able to answer.

The second question tried to find out whether the students understand what intercultural communication is by reviewing the ability to define it. The possible answers were „yes“ or „no“ and there was a space for the definition itself. Most of the students (81: 76.4%) were able to write down the definition. The third question dealt with the definition of cultural intelligence which was more complicated for students, 65 (61.3%) out of 106 were able to do it. Again, possible answers were „yes“ or „no“ with a space for definition.

Discussion

In the context of the theory introduced in the first part of the paper, the results of the questionnaire can be interpreted in various ways. As the author believes that there is a connection between the learning of a foreign language and knowing the culture of the country where that language is a mother tongue, the research results are interpreted in this context. Though the multiple regression model showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between one's own evaluation of his or her skills in general English, professional English, and intercultural competences on one hand, and the number of years of learning on the other, the correlation analysis showed that there were significant relationships between the evaluation of general English skills and professional English as well as intercultural competence. Nevertheless, the relationship was not proved between professional English and intercultural competence. This is a rather disappointing result as the focus of language-teaching at the Department of Intercultural Communication is on intercultural aspects of business communication. On the other hand, the results of the part of the questionnaire aimed at understanding the relationship between language learning and its cultural specifics showed that 70.75% of students thought that knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries was a part of English language learning while 18.87% of students disagreed. Therefore the mentioned disappointing result can be explained by these results as well as by a subjective evaluation by students themselves, and misunderstanding of the meaning of intercultural competence which would have to be proved by further research. Nevertheless, these results have valuable pragmatic consequences and show that especially mental (metacognitive, cognitive, and motivational) dimensions of cultural intelligence have to be taken into account when designing professional English courses for (future) managers.

Conclusion

At present, international business-making is aware of intercultural differences. Managers today have to be able to appropriately react to culturally-influenced differences in business behaviour. The faculties of economic types have to prepare their students to be able to succeed in a culturally diverse business world. It is also true about communicative competences which include professional foreign language skills. The paper examined the learning of professional

English of the first-year students at master's level of studies at the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov in Prešov from the point of view of the relationship between cultural knowledge and language skills by analysing self-evaluation data and answers to the three questions concerning various aspects of intercultural competence. The results showed that within the research sample group of students and from their point of view, the relationship between their evaluation of professional English skills and their intercultural competence was not proved. Nevertheless, more than 70% of them believe that the knowledge of English-speaking countries' culture is a part of English language learning. Therefore it is recommended that the mental dimension of cultural intelligence should be developed within professional foreign language education.

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Summary

Intercultural competences and cultural intelligence in professional English language teaching

As a result of intercultural differences, a manager has to be educated to adapt to any possible culture-based situations. The faculties of economic types have to take into account the requirements of the present-day multicultural business markets. The paper studied the learning of professional English of the first-year students at master's level of studies at the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov in Prešov from the point of view of the relationship between cultural knowledge and language skills by analysing self-evaluation data and answers to the three questions concerning various aspects of intercultural competence. The relationship between the students' evaluation of professional English skills and their intercultural competence was not proved. Nevertheless, more than 70% of them believe that the knowledge of English-speaking countries' culture is a part of English language learning.

This paper has been published as a part of GAMA/20/5 (Vybrané aspekty interkultúrneho manažmentu: kultúrna inteligencia a globalizácia).