


<i>Intercultural Business Communication</i>			
Author:	Robert Gibson (2002)		
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Are you a good businessperson? Can you manage the stressful situations that often take part in international trade? How would you deal with Japanese customers? How would you behave when invited to dinner by a Moroccan customer? Is there any kind of basic "international business behaviour"? Would you be able to work for a German company? What about the American way of dealing with the working force? Any businessperson should have an answer for each one of these questions. Daily practice often shows professionals that working abroad or in an international setting is harder than expected beforehand and that academic contents do not seem basic in some specific situations, as in some of those expressed above. *Intercultural Business Communication* tries to offer some clues on how to deal with those difficult moments that many business people often have when working in an international setting. It aims at providing a simple introduction to the art of communicating effectively for business purposes.

Business English courses have become a very popular activity among EFL teachers all over the planet, due to the use of this language as a lingua franca to carry out commercial transactions. However, and despite the appropriate use of English that can be achieved after taking some of these courses, business professionals often discover that there is something that has not been comprehended, some fine nuances that seem to be missing and which can jeopardise their task. In fact, many professionals often state that they are afraid of suffering any communication breakdown when carrying out their daily activities in other countries different to theirs. *Intercultural Business Communication*, the book written by Robert Gibson, pays attention to those aspects that can help any business professional to enhance his or her chances to clinch a deal in the international market.

Gibson analyses the needs of many business professionals, who often require specific courses on intercultural business communication to complete their training. The turn of the century saw a burgeoning of research based on the actual needs of those people who have to travel abroad in order to commercialise products or services (Hofstede, 1991; Storti, 1994; Ansari & Jackson, 1995; Cushner & Brislin, 1996; Adler, 1997; Mead, 1998; Marx, 1999). Based on those studies, Gibson's volume becomes a must for those

interested in the teaching of those aspects to both current and future business professionals, as it offers a full review of the importance of intercultural communication in the business world, offering clues for trainers. By doing so, the author offers a deeply needed account of the actual situation of business communication nowadays, the only way to succeed in the global village.

Regarding its general structure, we can say that its format is thought-provoking, as the author has opted for starting each section with what he calls a "critical incident," offering a problem or situation that needs a solution. These topics are often discussed in the classroom, where the students can offer their views and, when dealing with professionals, they can also bring their experience. After paying attention to those comments, and discussing the prompt offered by the author, the handbook offers different ideas based on the topic that is being discussed, in a fairly simple and useful way. This way of working does help students to think about the different concepts both before and after these are introduced.

The book is divided in five different sections. Chapter One pays attention to the definition of Intercultural Communication, observing some of the features that are implicit within this concept, paving the way for the rest of the sections. This initial chapter analyses some of the typical barriers of communication when dealing with people coming from different cultures, such as attitude, stereotypes or misinterpretations, helping the students to overcome these difficulties and being able to deal with differences in an appropriate way. Based on those problems, Chapter Two analyses the cultural dimensions implied by the study of Intercultural Communication, paying attention to the most relevant studies already published on the topic, and observing the importance of some factors (time, space, styles and non-verbal communication). This last aspect (non-verbal communication) acquires particular relevance among non-native speakers of English, as kinetics, haptics or proxemics seems to play an important role in order to create a global image of the person who is trading with us. Being aware of their relevance, Gibson offers good examples of misunderstandings that have taken place when dealing with international trade.

Chapter Three analyses the different activities that are often implied by business communication, such as managing people, negotiating, socialising or offering presentations to an audience. All these concepts are analysed in a fairly stimulating way, offering great importance to daily practice, something that can also be said from the following section. In fact, Chapter Four pays attention to the needs of comparing one's own culture with that of the other people involved in a business transaction in order to overcome any problem, giving special emphasis to some countries of relevant interest for the business community.

Unfortunately, and due to the specific nature of the book, Chapter Five offers some few clues on how to train people to develop intercultural skills. It is, by far, the weakest section of the handbook, falling short of what could have been a thorough examination of those aspects which could enhance our teaching practice. Both bibliography and glossary of key terms are included. In any case, the book offers much information on what *Intercultural Business Communication* is and how it could benefit the commercial abilities of any businessman. Considering its nature and purpose, we can recommend the text as an easy-to-read initial approach to the topic, interesting enough to compel students to think about the importance of cultural diversity in the business world.

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