

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE (ICC) THROUGH CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

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Abstract. The article researches the authentic conflict incidents of intercultural communication as a basis for designing specialized Case studies. The authors emphasize the significance of Case method as a new strategy for influencing students' mindset, ensuring their preparedness to get out of difficult conflict situations of intercultural communication. A set of issues necessary for purposeful analysis is listed. The spectrum of spheres of intercultural interaction characterized by great potential of conflict arising and complexity for dialogue is determined. The explication of functions, components, characteristics of Cases on intercultural communication competence is given, confirmed with examples of small-format Cases.

Key words: intercultural conflict, ICC skills, Case method, Case study.

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Introduction

The world is like a jigsaw puzzle, representing incredibly perfect picture. Each piece of mosaic is unique and represents one of different cultures. Only being connected, the interlocking and tessellating components produce magnificent integrity of global culture, they cannot exist separately. The cultures represent themselves in the form of relatively static unity with clearly defined boundaries. The diversity of cultures makes for the wealth of human civilization, especially in the era of globalization. At the same time, differences in terms of cultural identity often become the causes of crises and conflict situations. Therefore, the dialogue between cultures, fruitful discussions and debates become one of the most important requirements of the 21st century. Intercultural communication implies a mutual willingness of interlocutors to acquire knowledge about each other through socializing. Intercultural and cross-cultural issues and awareness are at the constantly growing focus in our world today (*Cushner, Brislin, 2005*).

The main features of intercultural communications are as follows: it is carried out, if the correspondent and the recipient of the message belong to different cultures; if the participants of the communication realize the cultural differences of each other (*Hofstede, 2001*). In fact, intercultural communication is a field of study that looks at how people with different cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures. It is always interpersonal communication between representatives of diverse cultures through which different members'

values and patterns of thinking, communication and behavior are often revealed as contrasting ones. Since inter-cultural communication involves literacy in fields such as anthropology, cultural studies, psychology and communication, it requires an interdisciplinary approach and applies three methodological approaches such as functional, explanatory and critical ones.

Approaches to studying the cultural communication

A functional approach developed in the 1980s is based on sociological and psychological methods. According to this approach, the culture of any people can be described using various methods. Any changes in culture can be measured and described. Culture determines the behavior and communication mode of a person, and therefore they can be described and predicted. The main objective is to show the specifics of cultural influence on communication. The result of the functional approach was the theory of communication adaptation, which states that in situations of intercultural communication, people often change models of their communicative behavior, adapting to partners models of communication. The functional approach provides opportunity to study the modes of communication in different cultures.

An explanatory (interpretive) approach was disseminated in the late 1980s (*Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 2007*). Its main objective is to understand and describe, but not to predict human behavior. Culture is seen as a habitat of a person, created and altered through communication. The methods of anthropology and linguistics are principally used in this approach, such as role-playing games, observation etc. The focus is on the understanding of communication models within a separate cultural group.

A critical approach involves many aspects of the explanatory one, but the emphasis is on researching the environmental conditions of situations and historical context of communication. Proponents believe that it is power which determines relationships in communication. Culture is a battlefield, a place where numerous explanations and interpretations of cultural phenomena are taken together and where there is always a dominant power which determines cultural differences and the nature of communication. The purpose of the cross cultural communication is to explain human behavior and change the lives of people through it. The study and description of the force dominating in cultural situations should teach people to oppose it and arrange their communication with other people and cultures in more effective way. One of the main methods in critical approach is the analysis of mass media sources: (TV programs, YouTube video materials, publications in press), which make a major contribution to the formation of modern culture. Researchers do not come into direct contact with communicants but explore typical situations of intercultural interactions.

Out of all the methods of interactive simulation and critical thinking which are aimed at conscious reproduction of regularly occurring different individual and group situations of intercultural communication, the case study method takes number one position due to the fact that a simplified world of interactive models allows participants to learn and explore the ways and types of relationships in intercultural contacts preparing them for real life conflicts. The case study method allows in-depth, multi-faceted detailed explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings. It is an effective means of neutralizing intercultural conflicts. Under the conditions of the modern information society, the case study method, being a relatively new method of teaching/learning is gaining increasing recognition in higher education. This is primarily due to the change in educational paradigm aimed not so much at the transferring and acquisition of specific knowledge, but at the development of students' professional

competence, analytical abilities, structured thinking skills, the development of a personality (*Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 2007*). Besides, educational paradigm is transformed due to a significant increase and sometimes a drastic change in quality requirements to training a specialist who must be able to choose optimal behavior in various situations, including solving problems and conflicts. The values of the method are as follows: 1) facilitates the beginning of the learning process, as it creates a more natural environment for the acquaintance of students; 2) co-operates and organizes the participants for joint activities; 3) creates conditions for the development of more frank and open attitudes of the participants to each other; 4) makes reference to the past experience of participants, therefore, assessing the practical situations of communication in the present.

The case study teaching method is a highly adaptable style of teaching that involves problem-based learning and promotes the development of analytical skills (*Kambutu, Naganga, 2008*). By presenting content in the format of a narrative accompanied by questions and activities that promote group discussion and solving complex problems, case studies facilitate development of the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning; moving beyond recall of knowledge to analysis, evaluation, and application (*Flynn, Klein, 2001; Herfst, Van Oudenhoven, Pieter, Timmerman, 2008; Wolter, Lundeberg, Kang, Herreid, 2011*). Similarly, case studies facilitate interdisciplinary learning and can be used to highlight connections between specific academic topics and real-world societal issues and applications (*Guo, Cockburn-Wootten, Munshi, 2014; Wolter, Lundeberg, Kang, Herreid, 2011*). It has been reported to increase student motivation to participate in class activities, which promotes learning and increases performance on assessments (*Kambutu, Naganga, 2008; Orunnisola, Ramasubramanian, Chris, 2003; Yadav and oth., 2007*). For these reasons, case-based teaching has been widely used in business and international economics education for many years (*Guo, Cockburn-Wootten, Munshi, 2014; Kambutu, Naganga, 2008; Yadav and oth., 2007*). Following years of widespread use in business and economic education, the case study teaching method is becoming an increasingly common teaching strategy. The case studies are more effective than classroom discussions and textbook reading at promoting learning of key cross-cultural concepts, development of written and oral communication skills, and comprehension of the relevance of cross-cultural concepts to everyday life. The advantages of the case study teaching method over other simulative methods can be summarized as follows: case studies are more flexible than many other types of research and allow the researcher to discover and explore two or more cultures, focusing upon both the general difficulties of the communication process and the particular cases of intercultural communication; case studies emphasize in-depth content, as the researcher is able to delve deep and use a variety of data sources to get a complete picture, the data is collected in a natural setting and context, the obtained solutions often lead to the creation of new hypotheses that can be tested later; case studies often shed new light on an established theory that results in further exploration; students are able to study and analyze genuine communicative situations, events and behaviors.

Types of Case Studies

There are several types of case study methods. The selected method depends upon the nature of the question being asked and the goals of the researcher. Following is a list of the different types of case studies:

- illustrative method, used to “illustrate” or describe an authentic event or situation based on critical incidents in such a way that people can become more familiar with the topic in question and become acquainted with the terminology associated with the topic;
- exploratory method, which is a condensed case study aimed at gathering basic, initial data that could be used to identify a particular question for a larger study. This study is not designed to produce detailed data from which any conclusions could be drawn;
- cumulative method, designed to pull information from several events/situations together and aggregate it for more extensive generalization;
- critical incidents method, used to examine situations of unique interest or to challenge a universal or generalized belief. Such studies serve to build the skills of the IC for future work for international companies. Preliminary tasks for such cases consist of background context and issues which students must consider and solve, applying appropriate theoretical knowledge.

The authors provide some samples of case study which exemplify typical problems occurring when companies or representatives of one culture, attempt to arrange communication with carriers of another culture. The examples are communication specific, hence, they serve to provide students with a better understanding of certain cultural elements which should encourage their effective communication, comprehension of peculiarities of selling products or services in overseas market, conducting fruitful intercultural negotiations.

In addition, analyzing a collection of experiences which have been gathered through interactions with a number of different people in numerous situations over a period of time the students acquire a more realistic overview of the difficulties which can occur if one is not “tuned in” to intercultural business expectations. It is problematic to use a single experience as a yardstick, and indeed difficult to judge if such an experience provides an authentic reflection of reality. By taking a broader view, however, students can understand what the “critical incidents” of intercultural communication really are.

The results obtained during the survey of International Economic Relations students gave opportunity to identify a range of problems of intercultural communication which are extremely difficult to be solved without specialized work with case-methods. A list of communication areas and situations (circumstances) is given below together with relating Cases promoting students’ intercultural communication skills. Problematic situations of intercultural communication are as follows:

1. Educational sphere: schedule of educational program, the emphasis on self-property and responsibility, educational discipline, following the rules of study; the relationship with the subjects of the educational Process: Students, Teachers, Managers; educational values (priorities in teaching, education, self-development).

Relating case study: Adapting to the French Culture.

Keywords: Cultural dimensions, cultural values, culture shock, Erasmus, Finland, France, integration, proximity, studying abroad, time orientation.

Background: Ingward Savollainen got his intercultural experience being an exchange student abroad. During his previous studies he spend 6 months studying business and communications at a university in France, Lyon. Before this experience, Ingward had no idea how big the change would be moving from Scandinavia, Finland to France. Of course, he had travelled a lot and studied in an intercultural environment in class, but moving to a new country and trying to adapt to a different culture was a huge challenge. It was a bug intercultural experience for him. Main reasons why Ingward experienced difficulties were found from the normal daily life. He was born and raised in Finland, in a country of

democracy, peace, harmony, and space everywhere. It was a slight shock to start living inside French culture with high respect to their own French culture and country, the social system working complexes ways completely, the rhythm of life being speed and all in all the whole French way of life was something Ingward had never experienced before. The most topics which he wanted to share about this intercultural experience were the ways of studying and working, different values of life and equality. During the exchange time in France Ingward found out how different cultures could vary a lot, but at the same time, many objects of life are the same, only in different form.

The first issue about Ingward's intercultural experience was the ways of working/studying. He was always used to study in Finland where the education is considered to be high-level, and he had the image in his head that French were very hard working and made special efforts on studying, especially their language and history. When Ingward entered the university, he realized how the students were competitive, pushing their limits, stressed about the results and also they were used to read a lot and studying mainly theory. Besides, Ingward was shocked because he was used to group and team works, supporting co-students by studying together, using theory as a method of practice and the biggest difference was that he was not used to students competing about the grades. The career and studies are respected a lot in Finland, and higher education is very important, but the value of family, friends, and home are never forgotten. Ingward felt in France that the studying was the only thing important for the university students and that it was not appropriate to use a lot of teamwork or help the other because it might decline your results or decrease the time to study. Also, scheduling is very strict, and people are punctual in Ingward's own culture and in France he would say that time is "fluent," it's not punctual. Among various cultural differences inequality was something Ingward hadn't expected. Even though France is a very equal country he felt that a woman was not in the completely same level that man in the hierarchy. Ingward felt that men and women were not equal enough because he was used to it in Finland. With equality, he also meant students, because everyone didn't have the same opportunities at the university. The people with more money were privileged and treated better, and not everyone was able to study what they wanted if they didn't have enough money. This was a shock for Ingward because in his culture equality is a big issue and everyone is at the same level. Everyone is able to study to be a doctor or study anything they want, and money is not related to that. The equality question was something which was one of the hardest things to adapt even despite France is also a country of rights and freedom, but Ingward felt that it was nothing compared to what he was used to in his culture.

Task: depict the main differences existing between the French and Finnish cultures and the underline values they entail. Explain the intercultural experience and analyze by using Edward T Halls theories and also Geert Hofstede's dimensions of culture.

The case brief analysis: the students are supposed to research the main differences existing between the French and Finnish cultures and underline values they entail, using Edward T Halls theories and Geert Hofstede's dimensions of culture. The next step is the analysis of the way how people from different cultures perceive, interpret, and understand the world around them when moving from their native culture to a new one. The phenomena of cultural shock and cultural awareness must be taken into consideration. To sum up, the problems, obstacles and new habits to learn before adaptation to the new culture are to be determined and systematized.

2. Professional sphere: career growth, working conditions (labor discipline, corporate norms, ethics of staff relationships, business etiquette); subordination and hierarchy (relations

employer-employee, employee-employee, employee-customer) salary, various forms of incentives.

Relating case study: A Finnish – Italian Collaboration.

Keywords: cultural dimensions, cultural values, Finland, international collaboration, Italy, miscommunication, task vs social orientation, time orientation.

Background: The clothing company in Finland while doing business with Italian company and ordering cloths from Italy had several problems in communication and concepts. The Finnish Company ordered clothes from Italy in their strict deadlines, ordering dates and expectations that the goods will be delivered on time. The manager told to two of Finnish employees to make sure that the orders are done and delivered. The employees contacted the persons in Italy and agreed on the deadlines, due dates of the payments and delivery dates. Everything seemed to be well. But when the delivery date came, no goods were delivered or even sent from Italy yet, in spite of the fact that the Finnish had already promised the goods to be in the boutique for customers. The manager in Finland blamed the two employees for not doing their task well and contacted the people in Italy. The same chain of events happened often, the Italians weren't able to meet deadlines, on-line meetings were postponed, and if there was a meeting organized in Italy or Finland, it didn't go well. The Finnish manager wanted to go straight to business and talk about the orders when the Italians wanted to have a dinner and took the time for getting together first. The Finnish manager complained to his employees how rude the Italians were because they came physically very close at the meetings and didn't stick to the point, he was overwhelmed with Italian employees' wasting a lot of time at the meetings. The entire situation was chaotic and the cultural differences were too much for the Finnish manager. He had been used to do business only in Finland before and didn't have a clue how different the business between two different countries can be. This situation kept going on because the Finnish manager didn't want to change his habits and the Italians didn't even know that something was wrong.

Task: Analyze the cultural differences that cause misunderstanding and frustration when a Finnish company collaborated with an Italian one. Think of possible solution to regulate connections and communications between employees in Italy and Finland.

The case brief analysis: discussing theoretical background to the case the students should first dwell upon Edward T. Hall concepts of high/low context culture, polychronic time and meaning of space, and Prof. Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions, then research the two diagrams of Hofstede's dimensions, one from Finland (Feminine, Low Power distance, Average Uncertainty avoidance) and one from Italy (Masculine, High Power distance, High Uncertainty avoidance) and, finally, explain some important points identifying reasons for the problem and misunderstanding of concepts like time, space and even business etiquette. Intercultural training and flexibility in cultural differences for the whole company from employees to managers can be recommended as a possible solution.

3. The sphere of national cultural values and state national priorities in the fields of political and economic development, social security.

Relating case study: An Unintended Offence.

Keywords: cultural prejudice, generalization, national identity, national past, offence, stereotypes, Swiss banks, Switzerland, World War II.

Background: In summer 2017 Albert Beranger left Switzerland for three months with the aim to take a film course in New York. Even though he was used travelling with others, this time he went alone which gave the trip a somehow adventurous flair. Albert had organized himself a place to live before he left home. The East Village turned out to be a very

warm and friendly place where many international students were renting their rooms. Albert swiftly adapted his well-organized and tidy Swiss mentality to a totally different way of life and started to love a truly cross-cultural place immediately. A middle-aged actor out of engagement was living there, too. His name was Philippe, half Swiss half British, who had been living in New York for several years already. The actor, started to bring the discussion to Switzerland. Being half Swiss he was very interested in everything that concerned the country. At that time the big discussion in the media about Switzerland's behavior in the Second World War was an ongoing issue. Ed Fagan, an American reparations lawyer, had sued the Swiss banks on behalf of Holocaust victims. The Swiss banks settled the claims outside of the court, agreeing in a payout of 1,25 billion US-Dollars for the Jewish descendants. Since New York is known for having a big Jewish community and because of the numerous reports in the US-media, the issue was an ongoing discussion in the City. Philippe started the conversation with the focus on the dubious role of the Swiss banks. He argued that the banks were to blame for the destiny of many Jewish descendants who had to start a new life in the United States without any money. In his point of view, the banks had deliberately avoided any confrontation and had wanted to hog insurable values for themselves. Since at that time the discussion in Switzerland had already turned into an overflow, Albert was not very much interested in a profound conversation. However, he tried to explain his point of view and made the mistake not to admit immediately the guilt of the banks. He actually wanted to make clear that there were many other factors that led to this behavior. Of course, Philippe just wanted to make his point clear but he actually started to blame the whole Swiss society for being very greedy for money. Albert felt deeply offended by that and finally committed himself to the argument. But at this point a normal discussion was not possible any more. The two of them got really angry at each other. Albert tried to vindicate his country like a defense lawyer standing in front of a court.

Task: Discuss the potential offending and frustrating character of a conversation on the topic of the Swiss banks' role in the World War II.

The case brief analysis: the students should rely on key concept of intercultural competence that take into account individual identity, cultural configuration, process of communication as well as the social framework of each interlocutor. In addition, they are advised to integrate the basic model of the communication process that distinguishes between Sender, Message and Receiver. It is also important to look at the psychological factors closely since the differences of understanding are not obvious with two conversational partners both from a western background.

4. Entertainment and recreation sphere: holiday, tourism, travelling (infrastructure, customs, value preferences, norms of behavior); free pastime traditions; cultural priorities (spiritual and (or) tangible dominants, attitude towards arts, cultural values); sports (preferences in sports, amateur and professional sports, attitude towards fans).

5. Sphere of confessional and religious values: attitude towards the church, poly-(monoconfessionalism).

6. Social and etiquette sphere: relation to gender and age differences, to the physically disabled and people with special needs.

7. Sphere of everyday communication: transport, cultural and leisure centers, shops, cafes, restaurants paying a private visit, field of finances (banking, cash, pocket money).

Developing students' Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)

All the Cases suggested for intercultural communication should be determined by the following parameters: based on the identified authentic conflict situations which actually occur in the practice of intercultural dialogue; contain proper intercultural reasons for communication, providing thorough analysis of another way of thinking coupled with rethinking (awareness) of their values; be practice-oriented, directed to overcoming the real conflict in intercultural interaction; propose controversial problems or conflict issues leading to the search for alternative decisions and discussion resulting in determining optimal solutions. Providing the compliance with these parameters, the Case can serve as a model of the investigated culture, become part of the overseas reality and reflect specifics of the foreign society in comparison with the native culture.

In the course of the pilot training with the Case-method application the results were obtained to prove significant statistical changes in the formation of students' readiness to overcome cultural shock and solve conflict situations of an intercultural community. The diagram (see fig.1) presents comparative monitoring of initial and final data assessing students' cognitive readiness to solve intercultural cases. The following assessment criteria were determined: depth of the problem analysis, spotting the problem, revealing of the problem causes, determining optimal solutions, argumentative speaking, intercultural balance, speech culture.

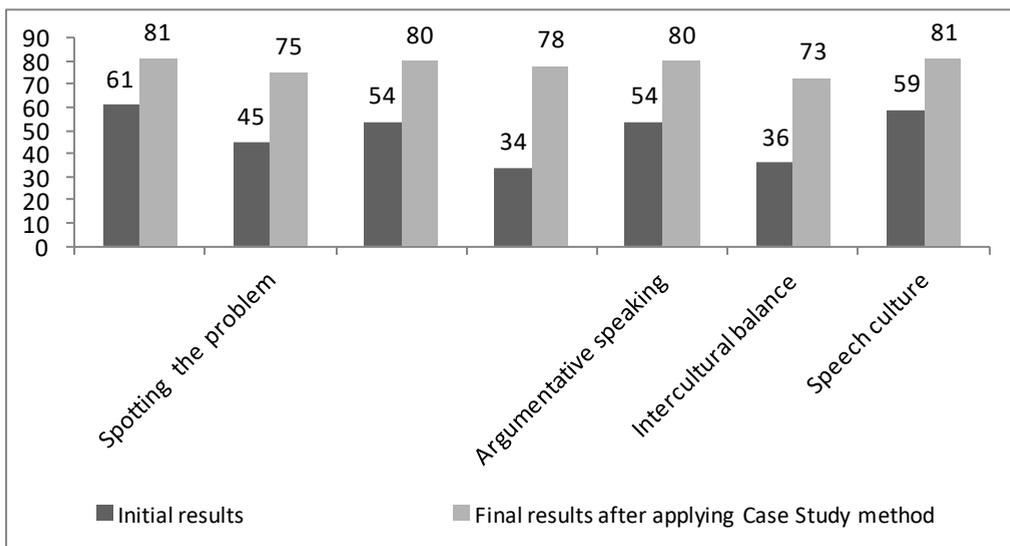


Fig.1 Comparative data of the initial and final diagnostics of the level of the students' cognitive readiness to work with

Conclusion

Achievement of positive results in acquiring intercultural communication competence is an extremely complex process, requiring the availability of special knowledge, skills, personal features of the participants in the dialogue of cultures. Training of individual

intercultural properties and abilities is, undoubtedly, a significant tasks of modern Ukrainian education, seeking and striving to prepare graduates of a new generation to be ready for life in the world full of conflicts, first and foremost, of intercultural nature. The aspiration to search new approaches, methods, techniques and to update the available means providing high quality training is a sign of modern educational space, where Case method obviously occupies the prominent position. In our truly dynamic, fast-paced society the textbooks are clearly lagging behind with providing content and technology for advanced intercultural communication aimed at deeper understanding and application of theoretical knowledge. A practice-oriented technology of Case method reflects maximally the actual conflict, fluctuating reality of modern intercultural relations. Properly designed case oriented on comprehension, analysis of the intercultural problem essence and the adoption of a personally conditioned version of its solving gives opportunity to get rid or at least reduce discomfort or uncertainty in intercultural relations and convey broadening empathy and respect. Changing attitude and pattern of behavior for esteem and regard results in liaising and fruitful contacts at all the levels of intercultural relations.

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