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The Anglo-Germanic and Latin concepts of politeness and time in cross-atlantic business communication: from cultural misunderstanding to management success

Abstract

Bond and Hofstede (1989) have demonstrated that culture has a large impact on international business success. In Western cultures it would relate to individualism and in Oriental cultures to Confucian dynamism. Their conception of politeness as a leading principle in human relations and their use of time seems unlike that of Western cultures. Within the Western hemisphere, however, Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures do not share the same concepts of politeness and time. Spanish business letters seem to be overpolite compared to American ones. Whereas Dutch people stick to one topic at the same time in their negotiations, Italians tend to interrupt to tackle as many issues as possible. Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures seem to differ in their means of expression of politeness in negotiating and writing. The main source seems to be the striking difference in power distance between Anglo-Germanic and Latin management cultures, a phenonomenon which was observed in Hofstede's first study with IBM (1980). Irrespective of its origin, politeness or the presumed lack of it could easily lead to intercultural misunderstanding.

Hofstede's work can be used as a framework to analyse some of the potential sources of misunderstanding caused by such differences. The purpose of this paper is to summarize some data to illustrate the importance of the above cultures on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, to evidence some politeness markers including the time concept, such as pausing and silencing in oral communication and courteous beginnings and endings of Latin business letters, and to retrace the perception of such behaviour by a person from the other culture. How can cultures respect each other and how can politeness be interpreted in a proper way without insulting the other party?

How can cultures respect each other, learn from each other and cooperate effectively, for instance, in business and technology? What could be the consequences for the international practice of business management and communication in the Anglo-

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Germanic and Latin cultures of some EU and NAFTA countries? On the basis of those research findings we will present some guidelines for successful intercultural cooperation in the EU keeping an eye on new trade possibilities on the other side of the Atlantic.

The new internal market of the European Union (EU), enforced by the Maastricht treaty of Dec. 1992 will intensify the encounter of the cultures from the North and the South which might be characterized as Anglo-Germanic and Latin. Other cultures are involved within the countries, such as France, Germany, Britain, The Netherlands, etc. because of migrant workers from Turkey, Morocco, etc. who are going to stay with their families in the EU area. An efficient and fruitful cooperation will be needed to achieve economic and technical goals. Knowledge of Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures and insight-based skills to handle them in business management and communication might be a strong support in the trade with the American continent where the same cultures are dominant. Immigration from, in particular, Latin American countries in the US and Canada and the recently concluded North American Free Treaty Agreement (NAFTA) which includes Canada, Mexico and the US certainly will further these contacts between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures. How do these cultures react to each other on the international and domestic work floor?

In this article Hofstede's work is used as a framework to analyse some of the potential sources of misunderstanding between the above cultures: politeness and time conception. Since people have a lot in common and they have just their character irrespective of their cultural background, we will define culture here as a *collective mental programming* embedded in general human nature and the personality of the individual (Hofstede, 1991). For the sake of simplicity, we deliberately ignore here differences in national, professional, and organizational cultures which might have an impact on, for instance, international negotiations as pinpointed by Hofstede (1989).

Bond and Hofstede (1989) have demonstrated that culture has a large impact on international business success. This is obvious in the case of Oriental cultures (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore) which are of increasing importance on the global markets.

Their GNP (between 1965 and 1984) correlated for 0.70 with the cultural dimension of Confucian dynamism, whereas Western economic growth had a correlation coefficient for 0.82 with individualism.

Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures seem to differ in their means of expression of politeness in negotiating and writing. Irrespective of its origin, politeness or the presumed lack of it could easily lead to intercultural misunderstanding. What could be the consequences for the international and in company practice of business management in EU and NAFTA countries? In this article we will try to answer this question on the basis of empirical evidence in the general field of management (1) and with a focus on communication both in oral (negotiation) (2.1) and written (business letters) (2.2) modes. Monolingual speakers of English or French might not be aware of the advantages and disadvantages a non-native speaker has in using their native language in business encounters. Therefore both 2.1 and 2.2 sections will address the effect of using a foreign language on business communication. Finally a conclusion and implications for management training will be presented: How to foster intercultural cooperation to the benefit of the company (3)?

1.   Culture and Management: The importance of culture in the EU and NAFTA areas: Anglo-Germanic vs. Latin

Above two hofstedian dimensions of culture were mentioned: The Oriental Confucian dynamism and the Western individualism. Hall, Hofstede, and Kaplan can provide us with some definitions of the relevant factors to characterize Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures in a general way.

Table 1: Some characterizations of Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures

	(Anglo)-Germanic	Latin
context (Hall)	low	high
individualism	high	low/high
power distance (or hierarchy)	low	high
uncertainty avoidance (all Hofstede's)	low	high
time (Hall)	monochronic	polychronic
writing/ speaking style (Kaplan/Ulijn)	linear/ direct or digressive	indirect digressive

In Table 1 some factors are listed which might explain differences in management styles and communication across different cultures. Every culture falls somewhere on a continuum from low to high for each dimension. Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures are deliberately lumped together, so overgeneralization should be cautioned against. According to Hall (Hall and Hall, 1990), people from a high context have extensive networks established with family, friends, and colleagues. Information flows quickly and messages are implicit. Consequently, high context individuals require little additional information to understand a message. Individuals in low context cultures do not have these extensive networks, they tend to compartmentalize their personal relationships, work, and other aspects of their life. As a result, information flows more slowly. Therefore, low context individuals need more information to comprehend a message.

Hofstede extensively interviewed IBM-personnel in 40 countries (1980, 1991) about their management styles. His dimension of individualism seems related to context: The place assigned to an individual in the community depends on the context he lives in. In Anglo-Germanic cultures and some "Latin" cultures, such as Italy, France, and Spain (high context) individualism would be rather high, in Latin American countries, including Mexico and Brazil the group

orientation would be higher. This might have an impact on the expression of politeness in negotiating and writing. Monolingual speakers/-writers of English or French might not be aware of the advantages and disadvantages a non native speaker has in using their native language in business encounters. Kaplan (1966) already evidenced that using a second/foreign language (English) does not mean that people will use the Anglo-culture.

The compositions, written on the same subject he analysed, had paragraph structures which diverged in a systematic way from the English paragraph structure and thus reflect a different line of thought. Kaplan then correlated these different text structures with the historical typology of language families, such as Romance, Germanic, and Slavic. The *English* line of thought (US and UK) is linear, focussed, and direct without digressions and it is monochronic, handling only one thing at a time. It is hypothesized that the Dutch think that they are similar to this. The *Romance* approach (Latin: French, Spanish, Italian, etc.) allows for digressions. The "side-paths" are clear and fit into a rational line of argument which is polychronic, discussing several things at the same time. In the *Slavic* culture, the rather long digressions seem to be irrelevant to the central topic but they often pertain to a hidden strategy of the negotiator. *German* discourse is a combination of the Romance and Slavic approaches and accepts both functional and non-functional "Exkurse" (digressions), but they are marked as such in written German, where a whole section or chapter may have the title *Exkurs*. By contrast, consider the example of *Oriental* culture (Japan, China, Korea, etc.), which has an indirect approach moving in a circular pattern, turning around the subject. There is never a direct *no* given because that would mean loss of face. These patterns were verified for written texts which follow some general standards. However, since spontaneous oral discourse might differ from written discourse, these differences are only presented as hypotheses.

For this dimension Latin (French, Italian, Spanish) cultures tend to be digressive, whereas English would be linear/directive. Germanic languages, such as German and Dutch might have other (digressive?) writing styles. Hence, the monochronic/polychronic distinction which is originally Hall's cannot only be applied to speaking where time is critical, but also to writing. On the other hand, the linear/digressive distinction seems to have some validity for speaking, too.

Hofstede's dimension of power distance appeared to have an impact on the relation between supervisor behavior and worker satisfaction within and across the cultures. Page and Wiseman (1993) surveyed 399 university employees in 3 countries: the US, Spain, and Mexico. They found similarity between the US and Spain (a weak relation between supervisor behavior and worker satisfaction) and a strong one in Mexico (probably because of the strong family relations which have an impact on the daily work). Hence one cannot generalize over the Latin cultures: Mexican power distance has an effect, Spanish power distance seem to have less effect, because of a lower group orientation. Do these relationships apply interculturally, that is, what happens if the immediate supervisor is of a different cultural identity? Can a US manager apply a supportive style of organizational influence in Spain or Mexico and generate worker satisfaction? What happens when a Mexican superior has to relate to Anglo-American workers in a US-based company? Even in the Anglo-Germanic "camp" there might be differences in this respect, at least according to informal reports to the author of this article in The Netherlands. Dutch employees of an American and a Dutch copier manufacturer (they are competitors located ten miles from each other!) experience differences in job satisfaction related to supervisor's behavior.

Power distance might also affect the macro-conception of time as it is defined in the monochronic/polychronic differences in culture by Hall. The monochronic American CEO's (Chief Executive Officers) no longer work on short-term management, but have to map out long-term goals that must be achieved two to five years down the road. "Leadership time" advances on different levels and at unique speeds. Slogans, such as: *The effective use of power depends on how one sets the pace. A leader's best insurance policy against wasting time on the wrong things is having a clear plan to invest it productively.* And: *It is obvious that top-management duties are not those of lower-ranking subordinates. It is far less apparent that these functions have different time parameters.* seem to apply to any culture to allow businesses to be competitive (See the American direct plan approach described by Victor, 1992). Do they really? Power seems to be no longer given beforehand from family or other relations in a high context setting, but has to be shown by delegating power and tasks in an effective use of time on a macro-level every day. The Latin concept *mañana* (*Don't*

hurry! What we cannot finish today, we will finish to morrow or later) becomes a precious factor not to delay things, but to plan them. Do Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures differ here? Is the power distance in Anglo-Germanic business life really so small? Should Hofstede's dimension be redefined in the sense of refining it?

Although one should not overgeneralize, the above discussion suggests that the distinction between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures has some validity. How important are they then, when it comes to numbers of people in both the EU and NAFTA trade areas?

Table 2: Size of the EC and NAFTA markets according to Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultural descent

> The twelve countries of the European Union (345 million) include 185 million people of Latin culture (South-Western part) and 160 of Anglo-Germanic culture (North-Western part).
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> The area of The North American Trade Agreement (345 million) includes:
>
> 25 million Canadians of whom 6 are French-speaking
>
> 250 million Americans of whom 27 are Latinos (growing to 40 million in the next century)
>
> 70 million Mexicans, growing to 100 million in the next century
>
> In the EU more than the half (52,9%) of the market represents costumers of Latin culture, in North America almost one third (30,5%) (105 to 145) is or will be of Latin cultural background

Looking at the 12 EU and the 3 NAFTA-countries, two major cultures seem to be at stake: Anglo-Germanic and Latin (or Romance). Table 2 shows that the twelve countries of the European Union (345 million) include 185 million people of Latin culture (South-Western part) and 160 of Germanic culture (North-Western part). The NAFTA area with a population of 345 million including 25 million Canadians of which 6 are French-speaking, 250 million Americans of whom 27 are Latinos (according to recent census data), growing to 40 million in the next

century, and 70 million Mexicans, growing to 100 million in the next century. In the EU more than half (52.9%) of the market represents customers of Latin culture, in North America almost one third (30.5%) (105 to 145 million) is or will be of Latin cultural background (See Table 2). In the EU there is a considerable trade surplus to the advantage of North-Western Europe because the Southern Greco-Latin countries (France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece) import more than they export (Ulijn and Strother, 1995). They are important customers of North-Western Europe (United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, and The Netherlands)*. Belgium and Luxembourg account for half of each part because of the mixed Germanic/Romance cultural and linguistic situations there. To keep that comfortable position, knowledge of the customer's cultural background might be an asset.

The trade deficit of the US towards Japan is a very well known fact ($54 billion towards Japan in 1991). Less known might be that the US has also such deficit towards the EU ($12 billion in 1991). US managers could use their knowledge of Latin culture not only in dealing with French Canadians, Latin Americans and Latino customers in their own country, but also with the Latin market of the EU.

If cultures matter, what will be their effect then on oral and written communication in the business context? Differences in politeness strategies between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures and the intercultural misunderstanding which result from those, seem to be a leading principle in this. Therefore general effects of the above factors on politeness will be examined in the next sections.

2. Culture and Communication: Anglo-Germanic vs. Latin notions of politeness.

The notions of context, group orientation, hierarchy, and writing style might explain why different cultures have different views on politeness and use different verbal and non-verbal means to achieve them. Thanks to several studies by Van der Wijst, we have some evidence on the Dutch-French connection, Dutch being a representative of Anglo-Germanic culture and French of Latin culture. On the basis of their survey among 44 experienced Dutch negotiators, Ulijn and Gorter

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*   Recent admissions, such as Sweden and Austria, are not yet included. Only the Swedish speaking part of Finland would belong to the Anglo-Germanic part of Europe.

(1989) postulate that a possible difference in directness between Dutch and French cultural behavior might account for misunderstandings in negotiations: Dutch would follow a straight line of thought (different from the written style as hypothesized above), French would tend to make rationalized digressions, exploring asides, but directed towards one final target, nevertheless. This would imply that in Dutch-French business encounters, the French would consider the Dutch impolite, because even their indirect requests are often too direct for French standards (Merk, 1987).

Van der Wijst uses the analysis framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to classify politeness strategies in formulating 40 oral requests in 3 Dutch-French business negotiations. One might assume that the facekeeping principle related to politeness is different. In low-context cultures with a low hierarchical ranking and uncertainty avoidance, such as the Dutch business context there are more positive facekeeping needs to be fulfilled by solidarity politeness strategies, such as expressing interest, approval, sympathy, agreement, asserting common ground, etc. Everybody is more or less equal and why not help each other? In high context cultures, such as French, external power relations make that the face of the communicators is more threatened by imposition or invasion into the personal territory. There are negative face needs which require careful manoeuvering by deference politeness strategies, such as indirectness, hedging, stating the rule of face threatening, being pessimistic, minimizing the imposition, apologizing, impersonalizing, nominalizing, etc. to keep the other party on a distance, because there is a bigger difference in power or hierarchy in such cultures, etc (See Van der Wijst and Ulijn, in press, for examples and a detailed description). Politeness has other aspects as well, such as pausing, silencing, speech overlap, interruptions and the way to express negation. In 2.1 evidence will be reviewed in the context of Dutch/ French/German/Italian negotiations (including formulating requests). In 2.2 similar effects will be examined in the area of reading and writing business and technical documents. Are French and Spanish business letters really more polite than Dutch and American ones? Is politeness an issue at all in technical documents, such as industrial proposals and manuals?

2.1. Negotiation: How do cultural differences in verbal strategies and time conception affect politeness?

Verbal Politeness Strategies

The Dutch tend to make their (oral) requests in a direct less polite way than the French. Van der Wijst (1991) could evidence this in his analysis of 40 requests formulated by 2 French and 40 Dutch students in French and 20 Dutch students in Dutch. 20 of the Dutch students had an advanced and the other 20 had an intermediate knowledge of French. These requests had a clear negotiation character, such as: *you are going to have some days of vacation. Ask somebody to take care of your pets*. The French used definitely more expressions, such as *excuse, please*, and *conditional* than the Dutch, in particular in the case of high power-distance situations. The French seem to be more sensitive to the hierarchy difference in using more (deference) politeness markers in French than the Dutch in both Dutch and French. The better the Dutch master the French language the more they use these linguistic devices, but rarely to the same extent as the French (See for further details Van der Wijst, forthcoming). A cultural effect remains: the Dutch do not have the high context and power distance of the French culture, which has a negative-face need to respect each other's territories. The cultural concept of politeness needs linguistic means to express it.

In a study of 3 Dutch-French simulated negotiations about a financial claim related to a piece of equipment (a rather face threatening situation indeed) Van der Wijst and Ulijn (1991) report that experienced French and Dutch businessmen used remarkably similar deference and solidarity politeness strategies in comparable frequencies, which would support Brown and Levinson' hypothesis that politeness is a universal phenomenon. French/Dutch differences in directness do not seem to correspond with differences in politeness behavior, except in the closing part where the French tended to use more markers of solidarity politeness than the Dutch, in contrast with the above hypothesis that Anglo-Germanic cultures would use more of those devices. On the other hand solidarity politeness shows a sign of concern about the relation between the parties irrespective of their cultural background. When asked in questionnaires filled in after such negotiations, participants reported that they did not perceive each other as impolite during the session (de Jong, 1989).

Time Conception

The way people use time might also affect politeness. Speaking fast is OK with Americans, because you show them that your are not going to waste their time (monochronic). Japanese might be very upset by such impatience. Differences in listening behavior relate to a higher silence tolerance in Japanese.

Whereas Americans, Germans and Dutch consider interrupting a person as impolite, Latin cultures seem to enjoy it. Their polychronism seem to force them to deal with a lot in a short time which leads to constant interrupting each other and even simultaneous speech, such as in the case of the Italians. Is this polite?

Negotiations in different cultures differ in staging due to the above Hall distinction of polychronic (Latin and Oriental) and monochronic (Anglo-Germanic). The above culture and management section dealt with the macro-level: The Latin *mañana* (See above). There are meso- and micro-aspects which affect the culture and communication directly. The meso-level relates to pauses between speaking turns in a negotiation, ranging from silence (> 0.5 seconds) to successful interruption. The micro-level relates to the speech rate: Use of pauses within a turn as a sign of fluent or hesitant speech. Some data on the meso-level will be summarized from monocultural negotiations among 6 Japanese (Oriental), 6 Brazilian (Latin), and 6 Americans (Anglo-Germanic) (Graham, 1985) and between one Dutch and one German (both Anglo-Germanic), and one Dutch and one Italian (an Anglo-Germanic/Latin encounter) (Van der Meijden's data, 1993 analyzed and interpreted by Hendriks and Ulijn). All negotiations used the same simulation game (by Kelley). Stalpers (1993) reports some micro-temporal data from real life monocultural (3 French and 4 Dutch) and intercultural (4 between French and Dutch). The monocultural negotiations took all place in the relevant native languages, whereas the Dutch used English with the German and the Italian negotiators and French with the French who themselves could use their native language.

Graham's data confirm that the Japanese use the longest conversational gaps (> 10 seconds) per half hour (5.5), whereas Brazilians used none (both polychronic), Americans used 3.5. Brazilians use the most conversational overlaps (28.6), the Japanese and Americans are almost equal here (12.6 and 10.3).

How do Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures accommodate each other in this respect when they meet?

Table 3: How does an Italian, a German, or a Dutch negotiator take the floor? (number of turn switches expressed in % distributed over types of inter-turn pauses)

Nationality	Succesful Interruption	"Rest" <0.5	Silence >0.5 sec	Total
Italian and	30.6	68.1	1.3	100 %
Dutch	15.3	70.8	13.9	100 %
German and	5.3	83.0	11.7	100 %
Dutch	4.3	78.7	17.0	100 %

Data from Van der Meijden (1993)

Van der Meijden's data in Table 3 give an impression of how a Dutch and an Italian negotiator, and a Dutch and a German negotiator take the floor in their mutual interaction if one looks at the number of turn switches expressed in % distributed over types of intern-turn pauses: successful interruption, a "rest" (less than 0.5 sec.), or silence (more than 0.5 sec.). In the Anglo-Germanic encounter the Dutchman and the German both rarely used interruptions to switch speaking turns (4.3 and 5.3 %). When the Dutchman had to face the interrupting behavior of an Italian (30.6%), he used a lot more interruptions to take the floor (15.3%). The Dutchman and the German were a lot more silent in their interaction (11.7 vs. 17.0). The Italian used least silence as a means to get the floor: 1.3%. Hence the Dutchman adapts to the Italian by interrupting more, but also keeps his silence periods (13.9 in the Dutch-Italian encounter).

Stalpers' findings seem to confirm this time conception difference between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures on the micro-level. She found the amount of pausing time of the total conversation time within

speaking turns being the highest in the French-Dutch setting (15.9%), compared to the native Dutch and native French settings (12.4% and 6.8%), but this effect could be attributed to the fact that the Dutch negotiators who had an intermediate knowledge of French spoke a foreign language. Since the pauses in the mixed conversations were more or less equally divided between the Dutch and the French, the French seem to accommodate their Dutch partners in pausing. Among each other, however, the Dutch pause a lot more and longer in their speech than the French do. 23 instances of pauses longer than 2.1 seconds were observed in Dutch speech, against only one French instance. Note that 1 second of pausing within a sentence already might provoke impatience on the part of the listener in a monolingual setting.

There is certainly an effect of having to speak a foreign language on time aspects of oral communication, of which monolingual speakers are often unaware. Speaking a foreign language gives you more time and may be an excuse to ask more time to think about your strategy. The above results suggest that an Anglo-Germanic monochronic culture using a linear, direct speaking style allows for more and longer pauses and silences than the Latin polychronic approach which needs even interruptions and simultaneous speech to allow for a digressive, expanding speaking style. Japanese polychronism requires simply less language and more time: *Important is what is not being said.*

The Dutch or American manager who has to deal with Japanese and Italian counterparts might be confused. When he is negotiating in Japan, he has the impression that he has to talk all the time, and in Italy, that he does not get a chance to talk at all. A comparison of native speaker behavior shows that the Japanese conceptualize nonverbally before they formulate and that Italians fill their thinking stages in speech with speech, even if they talk in English. Our Anglo-Germanic negotiators would be more successful if they were to be silent in Japan and interrupt in Italy. Within one culture long silences might be polite, whereas in another culture interrupting and speech overlap seems not impolite, but shows eagerness and enthusiasm to make a deal. Politeness which results from careful mutual perception will not lead to intercultural misunderstanding.

In conclusion, politeness appears to be affected by different verbal strategies and temporal constraints in Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures. A safe piece of advice might be *listen carefully, also "between*

the lines" to discover hidden messages. Open directness and confrontation is not always the best way to reach your objective. Latin interrupting is not always impolite and Anglo-Germanic directness not always rude.

2.2. Reading and writing business and technical documents: The effect of politeness on Anglo-Germanic (Dutch, German, American) and Latin (French, Spanish) cultures

Successful management communication in international business and technology does not work without written documents, such as business letters, technical manuals, and industrial proposals. There again Anglo-Germanic and Latin differences might cause intercultural misunderstanding. A direct writing style might insult a Latin or Oriental reader. Boiarsky (1992) reports a very interesting miscommunication between an American sales director of an agricultural equipment company and a technical representative from China who attended a convention for agricultural products in the US. A short directly written typically American business letter sent to several Chinese firms did not get any response. Once it was rewritten in a Chinese way, by personalizing the salutation, beginning and ending with a personal note, providing more details in an indirect way using politeness as a deference to hierarchy, the letter received some positive responses.

The status of written documents may also differ across cultures. Whereas after a negotiation in the US only the written contract counts, in Europe an oral agreement has also legal value. A Japanese marriage has not even to be protected by a legal document. Business letters written to Oriental and Latin people should refer to earlier oral contacts to personalize the relationship.

So far some anecdotal evidence and practical suggestions. Elsewhere detailed studies are reported of cultural effects on business letters and technical manuals. We can just summarize their results here. A linguistic analysis of the structure of such documents is also needed to make the correct predictions about cultural effects (See for further details: Ulijn, forthcoming). Is it is possible to retrace the effects of context, hierarchy and monochronism/polychronism in Anglo-Germanic and Latin business letters?

Politeness

Are French and Spanish business letters really more polite than Dutch and American ones? On the basis of Limaye and Cherry (1987)'s data using speech act theory to analyze politeness of business letters according to the analysis framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and others, some business communication textbooks, such as Driskell *et al.* (1992) and Wolford and Vanneman (1993) recommend to adapt "plain" and directly written American business letters to the expectations of an international audience, at least in translation. Mexican business letters, for instance, would stress the relationship between seller and buyer by making personal, courteous, and gracious beginnings and endings. A similar difference can be signalled between Dutch and French business letters. Van Diggelen and Mulder (1992) prepared different versions of a French business letter, one literally translated from Dutch keeping the original Dutch direct structure without polite beginning and ending, and a typical French letter. 20 French-men ranging from business students to university professors and other people in different professional fields (Mittnacht and Vaney, 1993) preferred significantly (60%) the latter, but 40% gave preference to the French letter with the Dutch structure which might be due to the fact that those French people had been living in the US for a long time and, hence, were used to the Anglo-Germanic (Dutch/American) direct approach, which includes the technical aspects of the deal in the core of the letter. 20 Dutch and 20 German students (Van Diggelen and Mulder), however, would also prefer the original French letter as being more attractive. Is this a matter of quality rather than cultural difference?

Lowrey (1993) had 18 Mexicans with a knowledge of English and 15 English/Spanish bilingual business and other students read Spanish business letters, one directly written in Spanish and one translated from English into Spanish. No significant preference was found. Exposure to American writing style might explain this, as in the case of the French letters. The same letter was then directly written in English and translated from Spanish. 19% of the above Mexican group preferred the American structure: a clear cultural effect. Only 66% of 16 mono-lingual American students and half of the above 15 English/Spanish bilinguals (minus one who did not answer the question), however, preferred the American structure. The English letter with the American

structure was preferred, because it was short, simple or concise, the English letter with the Spanish structure was preferred, because it was perceived as more professional, polite or formal. This makes the question again legitimate: Is this a matter of quality difference, personal taste or, as for the French business letter, a lack of real business experience of the participants in the experiment? Once people from both Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures see more options, they are not against a "foreign" structure. The Mexican students were not against an American structure in Spanish, whereas in English they would prefer a Spanish structure.

In all these cases knowledge of the other language and culture is an important factor. Maiers'(1992) found, for instance, that Asian students in the US tend to overgeneralize directness and informality in business letters (job applications!) due to a lack of good balance of that knowledge, which leads to a rejection by the American employer. Politeness is a subtle factor which is also present in American (and why not Dutch) business letters. The above and similar research on French and Dutch technical manuals where politeness was less of an issue (Ulijn *et al.*, 1992, Ulijn, 1993 and Ulijn, forthcoming) suggest that sometimes a cultural rewriting of a business or technical document can avoid misunderstandings. A mere translation from English into Spanish or from Dutch into French might lead to non-intended rudeness, insulting, and impoliteness.

The above general picture of differences in politeness and time conception between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures should be qualified for two reasons, to what extent may one generalize within Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures and to what extent are those communicative strategies rather a matter of personality than of culture?

What about differences between Anglo-Germanic cultures and between Latin cultures? How do they like and perceive each other?

Hagendoorn (1993) asked young people from 7 EU-countries how likeable - on a scale of 0 to 100 - they would perceive the 6 other countries. On the Anglo-Germanic side Danes and Dutch, and English and Dutch like each other to the same extent (67 and 60), but the Germans like the Dutch more (64) than the reverse (44) and the English

less (55) than the reverse (61). Between the Latin cultures the French like the Italians more (69) than the reverse (62). The Dutch and French appreciate the Belgians more (72 and 74) than the other way around (52 and 59). Do the Dutch perceive the Belgians as their closest Germanic (Flemish) friends, whereas the French consider them as their closest Latin (Walloon) friends? Renckstorf (1993) checked the feelings of 580 Dutch people of all ages towards Germans before and after a Germany-The Netherlands televised soccer match, a very culture-critical event indeed. They were slightly more positive after the game (did the Dutch team win?), but the Dutch viewed the Germans as ambitious, matter of fact, thorough (gründlich), materialistic and dominant (in this order), whereas the Dutch rated themselves as realistic, matter of fact, materialistic, creative and ambitious. Dutch youngsters seem to have a more negative image of Germans than older Dutch people who experienced the second world war. In a recent study by The Hague Institute for International Relations, *Clingendael* mentions as top 3 for the Germans: arrogant, dominant, and aggressive, qualifications which the Flemish seem to use also for the Dutch. Dutch top managers, however, seem to be less emotional and more realistic. When it comes the new trade opportunities in the internal market of the EU (30 % of the Dutch export has gone to Germany since long), they prefer Germany as the first European country to cooperate with in the business and technology area (See report by the European Union, 1988). What about Anglo-Germanic perceptions across the Atlantic? Dirven and Pütz (1993) mention research from 1977, where German youngsters qualify the Americans with the following top 5 adjectives: open-minded, friendly, democratic, materialistic, and enthusiastic.

In conclusion, the above results are not always comparable, since different questionnaires and different sets of adjectives are used and the mutual perception is not always measured (Renckstorf and Dirven and Pütz). There seems, however, no indication that Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures would differ considerably in politeness and conception of time among each other.

What should be attributed to the business manager's personality and what to his or her cultural background?

Hendriks (1989) signals that international negotiators tend to assign their successes to their personality and blame their failures to the other

party's culture. Politeness in business letters might be a matter of the person's writing style. How does a reader perceive a negative message in a letter written by a person with another culture: a matter of personality or culture? Tannen (1986) demonstrates that people irrespective of culture use politeness to avoid to say what they really mean. She explains why we don't say what we mean. Because we would not like to hurt the other person, we would like to joke and to create a relief from a stressful situation, etc. We often can't say what we mean, because do we know the truth and if so what part of the truth is relevant to the other? When talking, we use politeness to monitor our relationships. Indirectness does not mean dishonesty, it might benefit our relationship with the other. For instance, instead of answering bluntly *Your price is too high!* one might prefer to say *How do you come to this price?* This is a less confronting way, indirect and more polite way in discussing the price of a product with probably a better outcome for both parties. Such a communication strategy is not culture, but personality based. Some people are just smarter communicators than others and use politeness to accommodate the listener's positive and negative face needs in any one culture, just because they have that personal character.

3. Conclusion and implications for management training : How to foster intercultural cooperation to the benefit of the company?

A lot more research is needed to single out some other factors which influences cross-cultural and intercultural politeness behavior on the Anglo-Germanic and Latin scene, such as stage of the relationship and the personal strategies people have to get their objectives achieved in oral and written business negotiation. Although we should not overgeneralize to avoid any prejudice, some general conclusion seems to be legitimate. Both Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures are polite, but have different ways to express it in both oral and written com-munication.

What kind of organization-wide measures can be taken to foster intercultural cooperation to the benefit of the company? There are 3 levels: the general management level (3.1), the manager on the individual and organizational level (both within and outside the

company) (3.2), and the training needs both at business schools and in-company (3.3).

3.1. Culture and Management

On the organizational level multinational corporations would largely profit from the harmonious cooperation between cultures. British and Dutch business cultures match very well (Shell, Unilever). This might be attributed to Hofstede's dimension: feminity (the Dutch) and masculinity (the British) in a complementary way as in a happy marriage. A recent counterexample is DAF-British Leyland, a joint venture which was not quite a success, because of other economic constraints. Culture is not the only factor at stake. On the other hand, Dutch and German "joint ventures" are generally not so easy: AKZO, Fokker-DASA, unless the Dutch realise that German-Dutch cooperation might largely benefit both parties. So far these are examples within the Anglo-Germanic camp. Multinational organizations including both Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures might be successful. General Motors Europe (Opel, Germany) seem to do well, because of the Spanish suppliers they use. GM in the US might think too much in terms of competition, instead of pursuing smart cooperation with small and medium-sized enterprises located elsewhere in the NAFTA area and South America to provide them with parts in a profitable way.

3.2. What should the individual manager know about languages and cultures other than his or her own?

There are differences between the US and Europe, but also within the EU. British business managers are the weakest in foreign language knowledge, Dutch are (still?) the strongest (European Businessman Readership Survey, 1984). By recognizing their own shortcomings and by learning more about other cultures and negotiation styles Euro- and American managers can enhance their changes for success. The managers of each company must decide on the best methods to use to identify cultural and linguistic deficiencies and to remedy them. One suggestion for meeting these language needs are is using the cultural and linguistic talents of company personnel. In addition, you may identify other resources to strengthen the company's overall communication and negotiation skills in order to facilitate the exchange of

both products and information internationally as well as nationally (See for other measures Ulijn and Strother, 1995 and below). What languages are needed?

On the basis of 35 surveys in business, technology and other sectors of society (Oud-de Glas *et al.* 1990, Ulijn and Strother, 1995) the following rank order of decreasing importance seem to apply: English, French, Spanish, German Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, and Dutch. Within the EU German competes in rank with French and Italian with Spanish. For the NAFTA-market Spanish is probably the most important after English and some Japanese and Chinese cultural and linguistic knowledge for export purposes. In English-speaking countries such as the UK and the US, the respect for another language or culture is generally low. Some elementary knowledge of Latin cultures and languages might be a sign of politeness towards Latin cultures which are proud of their cultural and linguistic heritage.

Both at home and abroad the manager is more and more considered as a negotiator (Lax and Sebenius, 1986). What kind of suggestions may be drawn from the above data to make him or her a skillful communicator not only in dealing with other cultures, but in general? Whatever the cultural source of differences may be: talking and listening to communicate the bare business minimum (low context: Anglo-Germanic) or talking and keeping the floor (high context: Latin) or being silent (Oriental) as a ritual to include also a personal relationship, a safe piece of advice seems to be: listen carefully, avoid too explicit directness and confrontation (such as frequent negation of what your partner says) to achieve a better understanding. Since the modern manager seems to be in essence a time manager, how to deal then with the monochronic/polychronic difference between Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures: one thing at once or several things at the same time? The monochronic person perceives the polychronic one as somebody who is always late, digressive, expanding and impolite, because he or she wastes your time. On the other hand, the polychronic person views the monochronic as rude, direct, steering, no care for personal relations and, hence, impolite. Whatever the origin of such behavior may be: culture (Anglo-Germanic, Latin, or Oriental) or just personality traits, The Anglo-Germanic might interpret the Latin fighting to get the floor as a sign of interest and eagerness to get a deal.

Speakers from Latin backgrounds should consider the Anglo-Germanic as business-like professionals as well who outside the negotiation table can be your best friends. Politeness is a matter of mutual perception. In written business communication, it is sometimes preferable to rewrite or translate a business or technical document "culturally" to avoid misunderstandings. Efficient intercultural communication within a company and in international trade calls for respect of each other's approach. One should refrain from prejudices or stereotyping.

Some of this cultural and linguistic knowledge might already be available within your country or your company. Its usage will empower this multicultural workforce, such as migrant workers in the EU, the US, and Canada to the benefit of the company. Moreover, NAFTA and, in particular the EU are becoming domestic markets, where multinational companies can tap on those human resources in a natural way.

Companies can establish cultural and linguistic requirements to hire new personnel from those human resources. Equal opportunity employers would not only comply with legal requirements, but turn the employment of minorities of other cultures into an asset. These people may already work for your company. Use their talents: e.g., Portuguese, Moroccan, and Turkish migrant workers in European firms, Spanish-, Japanese- and Chinese-speaking personnel in the US. Ulijn and Gorter (1989) refer to a study which reports that 52% of Dutch companies keep a standing record of their international business negotiations, but only 36% use it for cultural information. Why not check out this body of knowledge which is often available in your firm to prepare yourself carefully for an important business talk abroad. Expatriates' files can be another valuable database for the do's and the don'ts of a specific culture. From the other hand, Turkish migrant workers in The Netherlands and the Latino minorities in the US are consumers of technical products as well; they are customers!

3.3. How to train for a more harmonious cooperation between cultures in a business context?

As a result from a careful cost-benefit analysis companies may send staff to outside courses, provide firm internal training programs, or simply set the appropriate requirements for new employees. Business Schools in Europe and North America should integrate marketing,

intercultural and human resource management, communication, and negotiation in the preparation of Euro- and NAFTA managers in their regular academic curricula and their business executive training program. European examples are the postgraduate program *International Marketing and Sales* at Eindhoven University of Technology and the TEMPUS program called European Business Communication and Management this University is offering together with Duisburg University to students, business executives, and trainers in a number of Central and Eastern European countries. Such a holistic approach ultimately will benefit the corporate identity of companies and their competitive edge both in the EU- and NAFTA-trade areas. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises will gain, since they have less in-house cultural and linguistic resources than the large corporations.

Martin and Chaney (1992) could determine the content of such an intercultural communication course by three Delphi panels which included 41 international business people and 22 educators in the US. They list the following 10 top priority elements:

A. Introduction:
    Globalization of markets (3)
    Definitions (10)
B. Contrasting cultures:
    Attribution and perception (1)
    Ethics (6)
    Work attitudes (7)
C. Negotiation process:
    Guidelines (2)
    Conflict resolution (4)
D. Country specific information:
    Introductions/greetings (3)
    Customs (5)
    Protocol (8)
    Position and status (9)

And the following 12 top priority verbal and nonverbal elements:

A. Communication strategies:
    Group-oriented (1)
    Individual-oriented (2)
    Media versus face-to-face (3)

B.   Verbal and Nonverbal patterns:
    Silence (4)
    Body language (7)
    Written (format, tone, style) (11)
    Time (12)
    Thought patterns (10)
C.   Language:
    Translation problems (5)
    Diversity (6)
    Interaction of language and thought (8)
    Conversation taboos (9)

This list is clearly supported by the above presented empirical evidence. Hopefully, the communication, language, and culture data presented in this article have given sufficient information and suggestions to help you develop your company's strategy to conquer foreign markets and to increase your national and global effectiveness, in particular between the Anglo-Germanic and Latin cultures of EU and NAFTA and between these trade areas across the Atlantic. A final recommendation might be: *Pay attention to the cultural background of the customer to build a stronger economic relationship not only in EU/US towards Japan and China relationships, but also in the EU-NAFTA connection. This will fosteryour management success.*

Acknowledgements

Technology (Technology and Communication Program), The Netherlands: Conrad van der Meijden, Arianne van Diggelen and Gerke Mulder (all three MS graduates now), and from Duisburg University (Bettina Strud, MA in English Linguistics now). The participants in the different experiments on business letters and technical manuals came from Eindhoven University of Technology (The Netherlands), Valenciennes University (France), Duisburg University (Germany), the University of New Mexico, and the University of Southern California (both in the US). Doing research with American, French, Dutch, German and Austrian students is an intercultural venture on itself! This is also the place to acknowledge the advice and cooperation on some of this research received from Per van der Wijst (MA, Tilburg University) and Erwin Hendriks (MA, Tilburg and Eindhoven Universities) who sorrowfully died in the midst of his work in January, 1993. The Eindhoven/Tilburg "negotiation research" team will miss his professionalism and warm friendship. Finally I acknowledge the comments of Prof. René Dirven, Duisburg University on an earlier draft of this paper and his encouragement to work across the border with students and teachers.

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