

## **Session Plan: Showing pro-activeness and cultural curiosity/awareness in commercial e-mail communication**

### **Learning outcomes**

Curiosity and pro-activeness in all forms of contact with other cultures

### **Stage (I, II, III)**

II, III

### **Preparation needed**

Draft mock “received e-mail” in English (see attached) or another language of choice. Discussion on theoretical concepts such as Essentialism, internalized culture, Hofstede’s cultural theory.

Practice different country combinations at <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html> and discussion of hierarchy, protocol, individualism/collectivism in different cultures.

### **Groups**

Individual/Pairs

### **Time (total suggested time)**

Lead-in and main: 45-50 minutes

Identification of protocols through examples

### Background for lecturer (bibliography, anticipated difficulties)

- Scollon, Ron and Scollon, Suzanne Wong, Intercultural Communication, Blackwell, Oxford 2001, ch3 and/or ch5.
- Edward T. Hall, Mildred Reed Hall, Understanding Cultural Differences, Intercultural Press, 1990
- For points 2 and 3 use concepts such as status, hierarchy, preferred communication styles (and how that relates to status), relationship with time etc. In guiding the discussion.
- For point 4, center the discussion on the students' emotional and evaluative reaction to the text and ask them to identify the origins of these (i.e. upbringing, life experience, education, media etc.)

### Activities

1. Read the received e-mail. What is your understanding of the e-mails general aim? (individual activity)
2. Place this e-mail in the communication chain. Discuss what type of message could have preceded and will probably follow the e-mail. In your discussion, reflect on the cultural characteristics of the sender (pairs, 5-10 min)
3. Discuss cultural protocols used in drafting the e-mail (how is information constructed? who is copied in? why? what register is the sender using? Is the register high/low? Is he/she using their first language or a lingua franca?) (pairs, 5-10 min). Link the discussion back to cultural concepts previously discussed. (pairs, 5-10 min)
4. Discuss what cultural concepts (aspects of your internalized culture) influenced your reading of the e-mail (pairs, 5-10 min)
5. Discuss if you would reply to this e-mail. If the answer is yes, decide on the purpose of your response. Make a list of factors that would influence your decision. (pairs, 5-10 min.)
6. Discuss whether you should mirror the style of the original e-mail or not. Give reasons for and against. (pairs, 5-10 min). *Note to teacher: activity can be linked with the concept of internalized culture.*
7. Make a list of other factors that would influence you in drafting your reply. (pairs, 5 min.)

### Follow-up: 35-40 minutes

1. Homework: For next session draft a short reply to the e-mail, taking into account relevant aspects on intercultural communication theory and the exercises done in class.

#### Sample communication e-mail

*You are a freelance translator. You receive this e-mail from a client that has approached you previously regarding the translation of a museum brochure. You have not worked for this particular client before.*

From: Dr. Fidel Djambo <[drfideldjambo@alsm.eu](mailto:drfideldjambo@alsm.eu)>  
To: Minja Frodo [translate@O2.com](mailto:translate@O2.com)

Dear Minja,

Trust you have received my previous e-mail. Under time pressure here. My boss wants an answer by tomorrow COP (bosses, you know!). You still interested in doing this job? The job on the new museum brochure is not too big, just a few sentences of written text... You don't translate the photos, do you?

Just reply to me, don't copy in my boss, it's simpler that way. I am here to help if you need more details. If you wanna talk, my mobile is +07767038399.

Were you happy with the suggested rate? Budget rather tight, we can negotiate a bit but not a lot of space there.

Talk soon,

Fidel

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