

Title	Cross-cultural communication in e- courses
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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN E- COURSES

The paper concentrates on the impact of cultural differences on the process of communication in international e-courses. There is ample research on face-to face cross-cultural communication. Though e-learning is a modern buzz word and area of study, more analysis of existing courses, i.e. case studies, comparing the communication behaviour of representatives of two and more cultures will provide reliable data necessary to help to make the most of e-courses.

The experience of a bi-cultural e-course carried out at the Department of English Language and Speech Communication of the Belarusian State University and K. Linnaeus University (Kalmar, Sweden) is analyzed from the theory of intercultural communication standpoint.

The course under discussion involved representatives of at least two cultures. Teachers from Belarus and teachers from Sweden took part in the preparation and in the delivery of the course. Originally, both Belarusian and Swedish students were supposed to be taking it. However, due to the time differences in the planning process it was only students from Belarus who were trained by the international teaching team.

The F. Kluckhohn and F. Stroedbeck Value Orientation Method provided a good starting point for the analysis. However, it appears that E. Hall's high- and low-context taxonomy would be a reasonable shortcut.

As expected, the online course reflected a number of characteristics of the cultures of both the students and the teachers.

The project was dedicated to sustainable development, so the participants agreed on the Man-to-Nature relationship. The attitudes to activity were equally leveled by the task to be carried out, i.e. the creation of a communicative product on the issue.

It was the Man-to-Man and Man-to-Time dimensions that had a major impact on the development of the project and on student- student, student- teacher and teacher- teacher communication.

Time perception played a considerable role in the preparation and delivery of the course on both inter-personal and institutional levels, practically banning the Swedish students from participating in the process.

Apart from time issues, collectivism and its salient feature hierarchy presented a great challenge for the Belarusian students in communication with the Swedish teachers.

The data from the case described in the report needs to be further supported by other cases for specialists to speak about solid intercultural regularities. Nevertheless the analysis has proven that to further the efficiency of e-learning, teachers would benefit from awareness training at least on high-context versus low-context communication.