The intercultural component in Business English textbooks

M. Carmen Lario de Oñate and María Vázquez Amador
Universidad de Cádiz (Spain)
carmen.lario@uca.es & maria.vazquez@uca.es

Abstract

The relationship between culture and business is crucial; therefore, in an international business context Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is essential for effectively dealing with other cultures. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* highlights the relevance of intercultural language education in developing effective communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Council of Europe, 2001). Thus, in recent years, whereas there has been an increasing interest in Intercultural Business Communication (IBC), relatively little attention has been paid to the study of the intercultural component in texts used for the teaching of English for Business, despite the fact that textbooks are a key resource for language instructors. This paper aims to examine the role that the intercultural component has played in Business English textbooks since the 1960s. It explores whether and to what extent those textbooks have promoted the acquisition of ICC, at the same time it reviews the development of ICC as a concept and the ways in which it has been taught over the years. A selection of 67 general Business English textbooks published between 1963 and 2009 are analysed.

Keywords: interculturality, textbooks, course books, Business English, international communicative competence.

Resumen

El componente intercultural en los manuales de inglés para los negocios

La relación entre lengua y cultura es crucial, consecuentemente la competencia comunicativa intercultural (CCI) en contextos de negocios a nivel internacional es esencial para poder relacionarse de manera eficaz. El *Marco Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas* destaca la importancia del componente intercultural en la enseñanza de lenguas para poder desarrollar una comunicación efectiva que ayude a superar las barreras lingüísticas y culturales (Council of Europe, 2001).

Por ello, en los últimos años ha aumentado el interés en la comunicación intercultural en el mundo de los negocios. No obstante, no se ha prestado demasiada atención al estudio del componente intercultural en los textos utilizados para el aprendizaje del inglés de los negocios, a pesar de que los libros de texto son el principal recurso para los profesores de lenguas. El objetivo de este trabajo es examinar el papel que tiene el componente intercultural en los manuales de inglés de los negocios desde los años 60. Se analizará si estos libros han promovido la adquisición de la competencia comunicativa intercultural, también se revisará el desarrollo del concepto y la manera en la que se ha enseñado a lo largo de los años. Para determinar el potencial de los libros, se ha seleccionado una muestra de 67 manuales de inglés aplicado a los negocios publicados entre los años 1967 y 2009.

Palabras clave: interculturalidad, manuales, libros de texto, inglés de los negocios, competencia comunicativa intercultural.

Introduction

Many authors agree that learning a foreign language implies learning about its culture (Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1997; Risager, 1998; Moran, 2001; Frendo 2005; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). In the words of Kramsch (1998: 127) culture "is a membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and action". Kilickaya (2004) describes culture as "the sense of whatever a person must have in order to function and live in a particular society. This includes also socio-cultural factors in the language teaching materials". For Brown (2000: 17) language and culture are interwoven and cannot be separated without losing "the significance of either language or culture". Bargiela-Chiappini (2007: 35) states, "language is the interpretative lens for social and cultural phenomena". Undoubtedly, in the context of globalization, the intercultural component has become part of learning a second language.

In the field of language teaching there has long been a general consensus (Myron & Koester, 1993; Gudykunst, 2003; Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007) that intercultural communicative aspects refer to communication between people of different cultures and the way culturally-different groups come together, interact and communicate; whereas cross-cultural communicative aspects are those which involve the comparison of communication across culture and the contrast between two or more cultural

groups. In the words of Gudykunst (2003: 1), "Crosscultural involves comparisons of communication across cultures (…) Intercultural communication involves communication between people of different cultures". Interculturality is nonetheless the awareness of differences and similarities required when interacting in other cultures. By contrast cross-cultural communication/competence is awareness of the differences and similarities between one's own culture and that of others. As Gudykunst (2003: vii) suggests, "Understanding cross-cultural communication is a prerequisite to understanding intercultural communication".

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is defined by Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002: 10) as the "ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality". Byram (1997) outlines the features of ICC as: "knowledge", "skills", "attitudes" and "cultural awareness". Those components are also part of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. ICC has not always been a part of the content taught in Business English courses despite being important for learners working, or hoping to work, in a business setting. Nowadays both linguistic and cultural knowledge are considered basic requirements when doing business internationally. Thus, Business English materials have come to reflect the importance of being able to communicate and interact successfully with people in such situations. As St. John (1996: 8) claims, "being an effective business communicator depends not only on verbal language proficiency but also on personal and interpersonal skills". Hinner (2002) believes that business students need to be instructed in interculturality because communication and culture are essential parts of their language instruction. As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 72) pointed out, "language and culture cannot be separated".

In the context of international interaction, English is the main language of communication in most social, cultural and professional areas, and, unquestionably, in business. Consequently, the teaching/learning of Business English has expanded since the early 1990s throughout Europe. Since then, there has been a growing trend towards intercultural language learning in order not to impose a specific culture but to raise students' awareness of their own culture.

It is not only the English language and nor its related cultures that have to be taught, students need also to learn about the different cultures of the

people they are going to be doing business with through the English language; they need both intercultural and linguistic competence to learn how to interact with other international professionals. As a result, students will be able to understand people from other cultures and ensure appropriate behaviour. Knowledge of the host culture and a respectful attitude toward it and its members are essential to ensure effective communication across cultures.

The teacher plays an important role in order to accomplish the development of the skills, attitudes and awareness of values by facilitating students' access to information about countries and cultures (Ciolăneanu, 2007). To achieve this intercultural communicative competence the teacher needs to provide students with activities that encourage them to compare their own cultures and languages with those of others. Although there are many types of resources for teaching, a principal tool is the textbook because it is a stimulus to learning and good materials encourage learners' to learn (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Various authors have proposed checklists to evaluate cultural content in textbooks (Hatoss, 2004; Kilickaya, 2004; Saluveer, 2004) with guidelines that encourage teachers to take into consideration certain factors dealing with socio-cultural information, learners' needs, stereotypes, generalizations and intercultural communication before using textbooks.

The study

The aim of this paper is to explore the role that the intercultural component has played in Business English textbooks and track its development over the last fifty years through the analysis of a selection of 67 general Business English textbooks published between 1963 and 2009. The books used in this research do not focus on any particular business field or skill, nor are they devoted to the preparation of any business language exam. Appendix 1 contains the whole list of textbooks for a detailed reference.

There are several aspects which will be studied: firstly, the presence of the concept in the selected textbooks; secondly, the level of importance given to this topic in terms of whole units, individual sections or activities; and thirdly, how the subject is taught within the units, if the topic is included in either activities dealing with verbal communication (such as greeting and addressing people), or with non verbal communication (such as gestures, personal space, etc.). In addition, the choice of cultural aspects such as

greetings, topics on small talk, gift giving, etc. dealt with in the books during these years will be discussed. Business contexts in which interculturality appears will also be studied – that is, negotiations, business meetings, socializing, travelling, etc. Finally, special attention will be given to which cultures are mentioned and to whether national stereotypes are employed.

As already stated, the sample of this study consists of 67 Business English textbooks published between 1963 and 2009. Seven of these books were published before the 1980s; the remainder books were selected at a sample rate of 20 per decade (1980s, 1990s, and 2000s). All of them are general Business English textbooks designed to improve the student's communication skills in a business environment. The books cater for different levels of English ranging from beginner to upper intermediate. Seven books were designed for elementary, post elementary, beginner and false beginner students; nine books were targeted at lower and pre-intermediate students; the majority of the books (38) aimed at an intermediate level, and the others (12) at an upper intermediate level.

Results and discussion

Of the 67 books included in the study, 26 of them, that is 39%, do not contain any activity related to the intercultural component. The level of the majority of these books is intermediate level, one is elementary, another one is pre-intermediate and three of them are upper-intermediate. Most of them include topics such as receiving visitors from different countries, visiting clients abroad, working for multinational companies, or attending meetings with foreign clients. There is interaction with people from other nationalities but from a monocultural point of view; that is, without any reference to the intercultural component, dealing with foreign customers the same way they would deal with national ones.

Figure 1 shows the increasing trend towards the inclusion of intercultural components from the 1980s onwards.

In the books examined for the 1960s and 1970s, there are no activities dealing with interculturality. However, in the 1980s almost half of the textbooks studied demonstrate awareness of it. From the 1990s onwards the number of books containing interculturality has been increasing steadily.
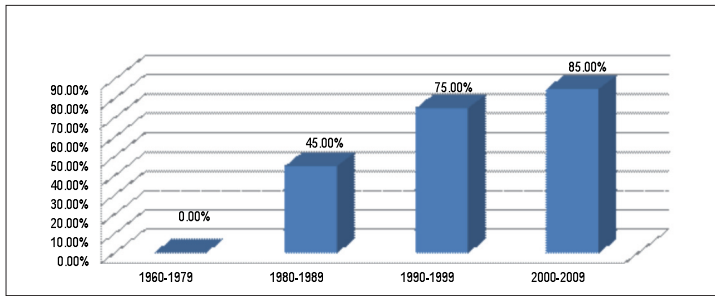
Figure 1. Textbooks with intercultural component.

Incidence and relevance of the concept

Of the seven books published in the 1960s and 1970s and used for this review, just two of them address the problems of trading with other countries. They stress the potential difficulties of language barriers and foreign regulations; however, interaction between cultures is not considered. Over those decades, course books have a clear monocultural focus, which is an Anglo-centered one. Culture is regarded simply as background information, and even this is implicitly included and not explicitly taught.

Regarding the textbooks used in the study for the 1980s, 45% include some activity dealing with interculturality. The first book which deals with the topic is *International Business Topics*. In its introduction, the author points out:

> Taken as a whole, the texts give the student a great deal of information about what is really happening in the business world – the significant trends, the important new ideas – and they encourage the reader to examine critically business practices and institutions in his or her own country. (Cotton, 1980: 2)

The textbook has a whole unit named "National stereotypes" dealing with generalizing and categorizing people. The same author published two other textbooks in this decade: *World of Business* (1984) and *Keys to Management* (1988). In the former he explains that one of the aims of the course is "to ensure that the contexts within which the language is practised are drawn from a number of different countries or areas of the world" (Cotton, 1984: v). Thus, each unit deals with a business topic centred in a given country, such as American unions, the Chinese textile industry or Spanish cooperatives among others. However, in these units Cotton focuses on the business problem; no cultural element of the country involved is considered.

There is a unit called "Multinationals and the Third World" in which problems and benefits of setting up subsidiaries in developing countries are considered but not from a cultural point of view. However, the unit entitled "The Japanese worker" introduces certain aspects of Japanese business culture such as lifelong employment and consensus decision-making, and compares the Japanese and British business contexts. In *Keys to Management,* the unit "Management in multinationals" is devoted to business relations between different cultures and deals with situations related to the character, working hours and managerial styles of the nationals. No other book among the ones analysed from the 1980s has a whole unit dedicated to the topic. In the textbook *Business Information* (1985), cross-cultural problems relating to trade fairs in different countries are briefly dealt with.

In the 20 textbooks of the 1990s studied, 15 of them (75%), include aspects of interculturality. Therefore, it is evident that intercultural communication was at that time becoming more and more relevant in Business English textbooks. In *New International Business English* (Jones & Alexander, 1996: 10) there is an interesting text in Unit 1 that states, "But the more you know the culture of the country you are dealing with, the less likely you are to get into difficulties". In this decade there are five books which include a whole unit dealing with differences when communicating with people from other cultures variously entitled: "Cross cultural communication", "Corporate culture", "Management styles, Japan and the business world", "Cultural awareness" and "Culture and entertainment". In the book *Business Review* (Bruce, Parrish & Wood, 1992: 4), its authors remark, "In order to reflect the nature of business today, the course content is international (…). The book also deals with other elements, such as body language and cultural factors". Other books in this decade mention "cultural awareness", "cultural differences", "cross-cultural communication", and "cultural diversity" in different sections. In *English for Business Communication* (Sweeney, 1997) the module "Cultural diversity and socializing" consists of two units: "Building a relationship" and "Culture and entertainment".

Among the textbooks published between 2000 and 2009, 17 of them (85%), deal with interculturality. They include activities or a whole unit dealing with the topic. Five of these textbooks devote a unit to the topic with titles such as: "Management attitudes", "Cultures", "International Business Styles" and "Around the world". *Market Leader*, by Cotton, Falvey and Kent (2000), introduces the concept of cultural awareness, defined by Laopongharn & Sercombe (2009: 68) as, "one of the components of the notion of ICC is

cultural awareness, which involves not only some understanding of cultural features associated with the language being studied but also of learners' own cultures". The other twelve books include sections or activities which deal with the intercultural component, though many of them spread it over sections of different units.

Sections of the textbooks in which the intercultural component is studied are organized as follows: introduction or warm up, reading, writing, listening, discussions, role-plays and case studies. As can be seen in Figure 2, most activities are put into practice in discussions and when practising reading skills. For further details see Appendix 2.
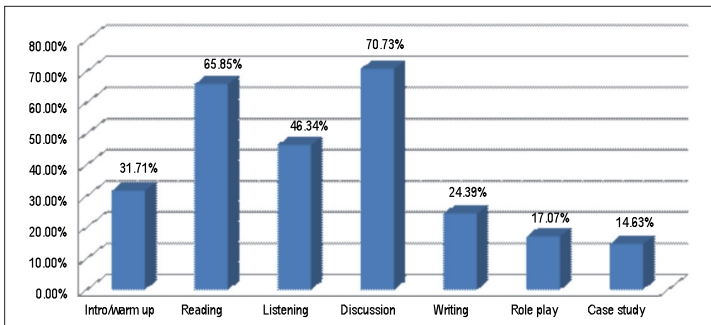

Figure 2. Intercultural component in sections.

Discussion activities are widely used in order to introduce the intercultural component. More than 70% of the books include an intercultural discussion activity and those are mainly books published from the 1990s onwards. The topics discussed are varied, ranging from stereotypes, managerial and working habits, travelling, business communication and conversational topics. Most of them have a single feature in common: asking for the student's views on their own culture. This seems crucial in grasping an understanding of other cultures.

Reading activities deal with a variety of topics but most refer either to business related issues such as managerial styles and communication with clients or with more general cultural considerations such as eye contact, personal space or touching. *New Insights into Business* (2000) includes a "dos and don'ts" section in the text, dos dealing with respect and sensitivity to

other cultures, don'ts highlighting differences between British and American use of English. In *Business Goals 1* (2004) there is also a "dos and don'ts" shortlist including advice on making small-talk. *Market Leader* (2000) includes a series of tips for business travellers visiting Japan. An example of such is "be prepared for important cultural and language difficulties. This may seem obvious but some people try to get by in Japan without a good interpreter who can also explain Japanese traditions and customs" (Cotton, Falvey & Kent, 2000: 104). In general, the texts include information about cultural differences offering the students some advice in order to adapt themselves to other cultures.

Listening activities are also used to acquire ICC. They are used in 46.34% of the course books analysed. In these listening exercises, topics related to business and the workplace are raised such as work timetables, formal meetings, and business and culture. Thirteen of the 41 books (31.71%), start the unit with an introduction or warm up activity. This section was first introduced in the 1980s "to encourage students to think about the topic, to generate some preliminary discussion and familiarize themselves with new terms" (Lario de Oñate, 2007: 15). Only ten of the books contain a writing activity related to the intercultural component. These activities are usually aimed at writing about one's own culture, usually giving advice to foreign travellers coming to the country, as found in *Market Leader* (2000), *Working in English* (2001), *Business Vision* (2002) and *English for Business Studies* (2003). Their intention seems to be that students reflect on the rules and behaviour of their own culture in order to raise their awareness – that is, to reach cultural awareness.

In Company (2002) includes a cross-cultural quiz about table manners, in which the student has to identify the correct option in sentences such as "In Greece / Finland people frequently stop for lunch at 11.30 in the morning". Afterwards there is a listening activity about business people from different countries chatting over lunch. Notably, only seven of the books include a role-play activity in which students take turns to play someone from a different culture. In the textbook *Executive Skills* (1994) there is a very interesting role play in which students imagine they are taking part in a weekend training session to prepare personnel for an overseas assignment. One of the students plays the role of instructor and the other students play the role of the staff. Cultural differences are listed and students explain the potential problems that may be encountered. Six books from this decade contain a case-study with the purpose of presenting aspects of real-life

business scenarios so that students can integrate knowledge, skills, theory and experience (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Case-studies encourage discussion, something crucial for language teaching. *Market Leader* (2000) includes a case-study about visitors from China in which some background information is provided about Chinese culture in general as well as the prospective clients. The students need to perform several tasks such as making dining arrangements, selecting conversation topics, and deciding whether to give gifts or not. Their choices need, in part, to be based on the information provided about Chinese culture.

Verbal and non verbal interactions

In order to find out if any special emphasis is placed on the use of language regarding the intercultural component, the following functions were reviewed in the textbooks: greeting, addressing, formality, agreeing and disagreeing. The manner of addressing and greeting people from different cultures was mainly referenced in the course books in the percentages shown in Figure 3.
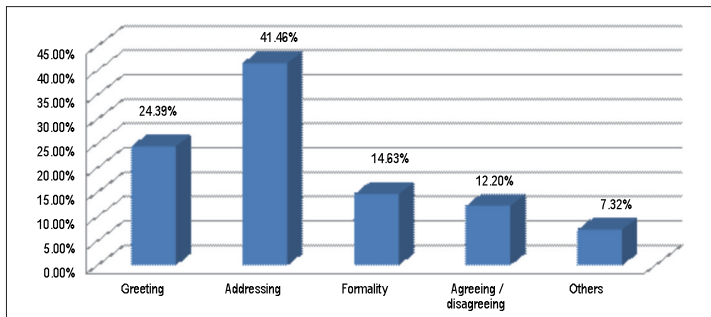

Figure 3. Verbal communication.

When addressing and greeting people from other cultures the focus is on whether to use names and/or titles when you first meet someone depending on the country mentioned. In some of the books, no specific information is provided, just advice on culturally specific ways of addressing and greeting people. Other aspects of verbal communication addressed in the textbooks are the formality of language when interacting with business people from different cultures, how to express agreement and disagreement in business situations, expressing thanks and the use of humour.

Non-verbal communication, defined by Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2009: 247) as "those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source [speaker] and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver [listener]", is a key consideration for Business English textbooks, as *Business Review* shows:

> When doing business in another culture, it can be almost as important to understand the non-verbal messages – eye contact, distance between people, physical gestures, etc. – as it is to understand the language. Body language of this sort can give us important information about how the other person feels or think. (Bruce, Parrish & Wood, 1992: 49)

The most significant non-verbal issues included in the textbooks are shaking hands, body language, and personal space, as shown in Figure 4.
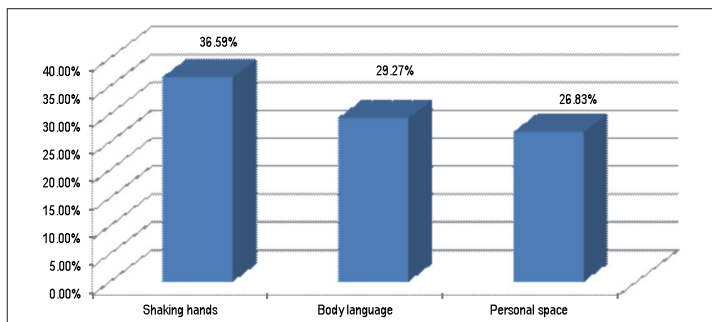

Figure 4: Non verbal communication issues

Ways of greeting people from different cultures is a common topic especially dealing with the use of the handshake in other countries. For instance, in the book *Working in English* (2001) there is a reference to the strength of the handshake with examples given of the differences between Germany and UK. Interpreting body language can be crucial in certain situations and students need to be aware that postures, movements and gestures can vary enormously depending on the culture. The subject of body language and the appropriate use of gestures are mentioned in almost 30% of the books, with eye contact making up almost 20% of that figure. *English for Business Communication* (1997) includes a text giving information about eye contact in

different countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Personal space varies depending on culture and context, and the issue of cultural variation regarding personal space is covered in 11 textbooks (26.83%); some of them emphasizing the differences between Mediterranean countries and the rest of the world. It stands out that more than half of these books have been published in the last decade: *New Insights into Business* (2000), *Working in English* (2001) and *Business Goals* (2004).

Business context

Adams and Dovadel (2001: vii) in the preface of *Global Links* point out that the book "provides interesting, relevant information about doing business internationally and interacting with business people from around the world". The principal topics concerning such interactions are: working hours, behaviour in the workplace, how to do business, appropriate gifts and clothes, meetings, exchanging business cards and other topics such as the lifestyle of businessmen, along with issues related to work and social life. The results obtained from the analysis of the different topics are presented in Figure 5.
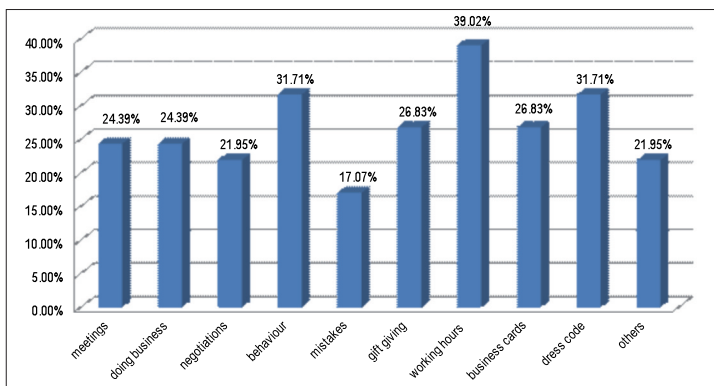

Figure 5. Topics in interaction at work.

Different patterns of working hours of people in other cultures are provided in 16 books (39.02%) and the importance of understanding and adapting to different timetables is stressed in some of them. For instance, *Working in English* (2001) mentions the relaxed attitude to time of Spanish people

compared to Anglophone cultures (USA or UK). In *Business Goals* (2004) there are different activities (reading, listening, discussion) dealing with this topic and in relation to countries such as Ireland, USA, UK, Germany and Spain. Fourteen books (31.71%) deal with the behaviour of business people, and several include a section describing managerial styles in different cultures. As Tullis and Trappe (2000: 44) specify in *New Insights into Business*, "The characteristics of management often vary according to national culture, which can determine how managers are trained, how they lead people and how they approach their jobs".

Eleven of the books (26.83%) mention gift giving in business, making reference to the type of presents that may be regarded as appropriate depending on the culture. Some books only raise questions about gift giving in the students' culture but others contain information about suitable gifts in other cultures, with Japan and other Asian countries most commonly discussed when dealing with this issue. The same number of textbooks deal with the subject of attire in different cultures while the matter of exchanging business cards and how to behave in meetings is also covered in 11 of the books under study (26.83%).

Ten of the books (24.39%) suggest different rules to follow when doing business. Special emphasis is put on differences between Western and Eastern cultures. This is clearly shown in a text from the book *New International Business English* (1996), in which a comparison is made between Japan and America regarding several examples of differences pertaining to clothing, coffee breaks, questions asked in meetings, behaviour and managerial styles.

Negotiations is a topic dealt with in almost 22% of the books and making mistakes is a target issue in 8 books (19.51%), usually misunderstandings due to cultural differences, some of them exemplified by publicity campaigns. For example *Keys to Management* (1988) shows several examples of campaigns which were very successful in some countries but did not work or were even considered offensive in others because of distinct cultural norms. Other matters which were mentioned in the Business English textbooks were the lifestyle of business people and issues related to work in general. *Business Objectives* (1991) provides a text comparing the lifestyle of business executives in different European countries including issues such as holidays and hobbies.

The social aspect of interaction in business connotes establishing or improving a good relationship. Within the social context of the business

environment, some sections have been considered: topics appropriate in conversation, meals and meal habits, small talk, gift giving, travelling, etiquette and timetables. The topic of meals and eating habits in different countries is mentioned in 34.15% of the textbooks analysed – for instance mealtimes, or explaining typical dishes from one particular country. *Business Start up 1* (2006) introduces a text and a listening activity concerning mealtimes in countries such as Spain, France, UK, Switzerland and Japan.

Small talk plays a vital part in Business English. It implies polite conversation about things that are not relevant, but it involves talking about a wide variety of topics like the weather, trips, family, etc. It is a subject in almost 32% of the books, usually explored through role-play. *In Company* (2002) devotes an entire unit to small talk, in which students can measure their culture awareness by means of a questionnaire. Which topics are appropriate (weather, sports, etc.) and which should be avoided (religion, politics, etc.) when socializing with clients from different cultures are common subjects for discussion.

Another topic is punctuality with several textbooks highlighting its importance in certain cultures. The oldest textbook in the study that explores this area is *Business Review* (1992), and the latest is *English 365* (2004). Attitudes to silence can also be found in several books like *Intelligent Business* (Trappe & Tullis, 2005: 107): "In some cultures, when a person stops speaking another will start straight away. In others it is a mark of respect to wait for silence until you start to speak. Whereas in other cultures, several people can all speak at the same time".

Countries and stereotypes

When dealing with the intercultural component, textbooks mention many different countries. From the mid 80s to the late 90s, the recurrent countries are the UK, the USA and Japan. Although China is present in some textbooks during those decades, it has a more marked presence from the year 2000 onwards. The USA is mentioned in 26 course books, the UK in 25, Japan in 17 and China in 9 textbooks. The topic "Your country" is included in 25 books, and here students are encouraged to think about their own culture and engage in the corresponding discussions.

Among the European countries, the most repeatedly quoted are: France (17), Germany (12), Italy (11) and Spain (9). The Arab countries are mentioned in 6 books and South American countries in 4, the same number as Canada and

Australia. Figure 6 shows the percentages of those countries referred to in the books studied.
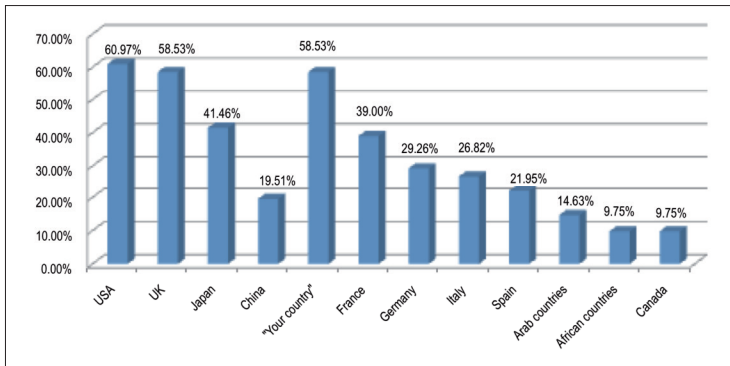

Figure 6. Countries mentioned in textbooks.

The topic of the character of the people from those countries is mainly dealt with through reading activities (in which different nationalities are stereotyped) and discussions. According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002: 28):

> Stereotyping involves labelling or categorising particular groups of people, usually in a negative way, according to preconceived ideas or broad generalisations about them – and then assuming that all members of that group will think and behave identically. Stereotypes can undermine our sense of who we are by suggesting that how we look or speak determines how we act.

One of Cotton's books, *International Business Topics* (1980), contains a whole unit on stereotypes. The unit includes an interesting text of a survey on what Europeans think of each other in general, and about business people in particular. They are asked to choose one European nationality that seems to be most suitable for each of the main positions in a company. What would have happened if other nationalities such as Japan, the USA, China or Russia had been included is also up for discussion, and practical examples of how national characteristics can affect business behaviour are given.

Stereotyping has been approached from very different points of view in each of the books. Texts with information about different countries have been found, as can be observed, for example in a text from the book *New Insights*

into English (2000) in which students are asked to label which country would match to an exact set of rules about managerial characteristics in Germany, Poland, Sweden, the UK and the USA. On the other hand, more open attitudes are also present in some of the books, as Jones (2001: 46) states in *Working in English*, "Above all, one should remember that people do not usually mind if their codes are broken by foreigners as long as they sense considerations and goodwill. This is much more important than a set of rules". Guest (2002: 158) states that, "A certain degree of generalization is acceptable within certain genres of large-scale cultural interaction. But problems occur when we apply these general interpretive pegs to immediate situations and personalized discourse".

In the last decade there has been a tendency not to use stereotypes, thus the textbooks published during the last decade (35%) do not mention any country, just "your country", thus avoiding narrowing their scope to a particular one. Culture is not viewed from an essentialist perspective establishing a culture as a social phenomenon with certain characteristics (Hofstede, 1991), but as a concept which can be used by different people at different times to suit purposes of identity, politics and science (Holiday, 1999). Nowadays, globalization has reshaped the working environment and a culturally diverse workforce improves corporate culture and builds effective global relationships.

Conclusions

Intercultural communication competence implies the ability to communicate interculturally, essentially being able to interact with sensitivity to cultural awareness and an understanding of cultural differences. An intercultural approach enables students to learn not only other languages, but to treat their interlocutors appropriately through knowledge of their cultures. It demands an attitude of respect and of willingness to identify, accept and value different behaviour and ideas. The need to communicate effectively with people from different cultures has increased over the last few years as a result of globalization, and this has also been reflected in Business English textbooks which are a fundamental educational tool as a source of information and guidance.

This paper has provided insight into the way the intercultural component has developed in such books since the 1980s. In the books published between

the 1960s and 1970s the problem of language and regulation barriers are mentioned while cultural aspects are largely ignored. Almost half of the books from the 1980s analysed include some kind of intercultural component, but only two of them have a whole unit dealing with it, and, curiously enough they are both by the same author, David Cotton. The remaining books have a variety of activities including reading, listening and discussions dealing with interculturality. No relevant topics are widely used in the books. Some focus on the use of language, whereas others place emphasis on non-verbal communication or are more directed towards specific business issues such as negotiations or meetings. The countries most commonly mentioned in the textbooks from the 1980s are Anglophone countries; the UK and the USA. Japan and Asia are also present along with other European countries. South America, Canada and Africa are seldom referred to.

In the 1990s there is a greater presence of the intercultural component in the textbooks and several books include whole units and/or sections with a cultural focus. The activities most extensively used are discussions, reading texts and listening activities in that order. In this decade, most of the books make reference to the use of language (especially forms of addressing), and non verbal communication: shaking hands and body language are frequently referred to. Business related issues are broached by all the books (how to behave in negotiations, gift giving and exchanging business cards amongst others). Socializing is also dealt with in most of the books, especially small talk and appropriate conversational topics. In this decade, most of the books mention English-speaking countries such as the UK and the USA, but Japan starts to play a prominent role. France, Italy and Spain are also mentioned and to a lesser extent, South American, Asian, Arab and African countries begin to appear.

But the real boom in the introduction of the intercultural component in Business English textbooks takes place in the 2000s, as only three books from this decade with no intercultural component have been found. Listening, reading and discussion activities are the most common means of introducing intercultural aspects, as was observed in the previous decades. Although activities focussing on the use of language are included in some of the books, they are less prominent than before. Non-verbal communication is present in several books from these years, especially shaking hands and respecting cultural variations in personal space. Business related issues are much more prominent in the textbooks, with working hours and business

and negotiations being the most commonly mentioned. Socializing is also quite common, especially eating habits and small talk. Although the UK and the USA are the main countries involved when dealing with the intercultural component, Germany becomes more prominent, as well as Japan and China. When mentioning Europe, other countries such as Poland, Sweden or Switzerland are included.

The results of this research support the idea that today's approaches to intercultural communication in Business English focus on a non essentialist approach which argues that individuals do not necessarily share characteristics of their specific national cultures, nor do they belong to a cohesive group of people with the same culture or as a result show certain fixed culture related characteristics. Culture is now seen as a variable concept and, as a consequence, in the most recent Business English textbooks it is not common to find advice for successful business communication within international contexts. The idea is to encourage students to be respectful and develop sensitivity when in contact with people from other cultures. Raising cultural awareness in students seems to be essential so as to foster a generally positive, sensitive and respectful attitude toward host cultures, thus achieving effective intercultural communication.

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M. Carmen Lario de Oñate is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Cadiz. Her main research interests include ESP teaching and learning in the field of Business and terminology. She has participated in various international conferences and published several papers on the pedagogy of ESP and on academic and professional English. She is the head of the only ESP research group at the Spanish University of Cádiz.

María Vázquez Amador is a full time Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Cádiz. She has been lecturing English for Specific Purposes in the fields of tourism, nursing, and business. Her main research areas include terminology as applied to those ESP branches.

Appendix 1: Materials used

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Appendix 2: Intercultural component in textbooks' sections

Year	Textbook (n=67)	Intro/warm up	Reading	Listening	Discussion	Writing	Role play	Case study
1963	*English for the Business Student*							
1964	*A Commercial Course for Foreign Students*							
1972	*The Language of Business*							
1973	*English for Business (Bellcrest)*							
1974	*Business World*							
1978	*The Language of International Trade in English*							
1979	*The Sadrina Project*							
1980	*Business in English*							
1980	*International Business Topics*	✓	✓		✓	✓		
1981	*Successful Communication in Business*							
1981	*English for International Trade*							
1981	*Manage with English*							
1982	*We Mean Business*							
1983	*Business World*							
1983	*Good for Business*							
1983	*Management Assignment*				✓			
1983	*We're in Business*							
1984	*English on Business*		✓		✓			
1984	*The Country bar Story 1*							
1984	*World of Business*		✓	✓		✓		
1985	*Bid for Power*							
1985	*Business Information*				✓			
1986	*Business Targets*		✓	✓				
1988	*Business Circles*						✓	
1988	*Keys to Management*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1989	*Assignments in Business Studies*							
1989	*Business Studies*			✓		✓		
1991	*Business Objectives*		✓		✓			
1991	*Starting English for Business*							
1992	*Business First*							
1992	*Business Review*	✓		✓				
1992	*Business Venture 1*				✓			
1993	*Business Class*		✓		✓		✓	✓
1993	*Developing Business Contacts*				✓			
1993	*Insights into Business*	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
1994	*Dive into English for Business and Economics*							
1994	*Executive Skills*	✓	✓		✓		✓	
1995	*Business Basics*							
1996	*Business Initiatives*			✓	✓	✓		
1996	*Business Matters*				✓			✓
1996	*New International Business English*		✓	✓	✓			
1997	*English for Business Communication*		✓	✓	✓			

		Sections						
Year	Textbook (n=67)	Intro/warm up	Reading	Listening	Discussion	Writing	Role play	Case study
1998	*Business Options*	✓	✓	✓	✓			
1998	*Further Ahead*	✓	✓	✓	✓			
1998	*Powerhouse*		✓		✓			
1998	*The Working Week*							
1999	*Commercially Speaking*		✓	✓	✓			
2000	*English for Overseas Trade*							
2000	*Head for Business*			✓	✓			
2000	*International Management*		✓					
2000	*Learning English to Trade*		✓					
2000	*Market Leader*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2000	*New Insights into Business*		✓		✓			
2001	*Global Links1 for International Business*		✓					
2001	*Working in English*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2002	*Business Vision*	✓			✓	✓		
2002	*English for Business Studies*	✓	✓		✓	✓		
2003	*In Company*			✓			✓	✓
2004	*Business Focus*		✓	✓	✓			
2004	*Business Goals 1*	✓			✓			
2004	*English 365*	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2004	*Profile 2*		✓					
2005	*Intelligent Business*				✓			
2006	*English Communication for International Business I*							
2006	*Startup 1*		✓	✓	✓			
2008	*English for Business Studies in Higher Education*							
2009	*English for Management Studies in Higher Education*		✓					
TOTAL		13	27	19	29	10	7	6