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# THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES IN BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL SOCIETY

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## ABSTRACT

This text is an attempt at the analysis of selected cultural codes in the context of their use in the process of communication between individuals who are members of different cultures. The level of effective communication determines the efficiency of processes going on in many areas, including management and building a varied society, where multiculturalism is becoming more and more common. As a result of current events and circumstances, many countries where the issue of multiculturalism seemed a challenge of quite a distant future must now face new problems - fast-paced globalisation that requires negotiation competences in different cultures or increasing numbers of migrants, also as employees. Analysing the issue of intercultural competences the authors concentrate on showing cultural differences as barriers in communication between individuals and on emphasising their sources for the understanding of these differences. Thus authors hope that this text will contribute to understanding the essence of communication competences in a global multicultural society, also for its sustained development. Moreover, the article shows perspectives for the application of communication processes in solving intercultural conflicts and in creating new types of intercultural relations in a global society.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication, high-context culture, low-context culture, communication styles, cultural competences.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to analyse selected cultural codes that influence the effectiveness of the process of communication as a result of different interpretations. This influence is becoming particularly important at the current stage of development of civilisation shaped on the basis of different cultural trends. Due to deepening globalisation processes and because of the issue of multiculturalism, the problem of effective mutual interactions between the representatives of different cultures acquires vital importance (Asante, Miike, Yin, 2013). The development of modern technologies influences techniques and means of communication that are used in the area of remote management of teams, particularly international ones. Thus it is necessary to analyse the variables of the process of virtual management connected with cultural, linguistic and even religious differences. However, the ambition of this text is first of all the attempt at showing perspectives of using communication processes for solving intercultural conflicts and creating new types of intercultural relations in a global society.

## 2. CULTURAL CONDITIONING

Culture and communication are two processes that accompany a person from the very first moments of their biological life. This thesis might seem highly dubious, particularly in the context of effective communication and its basic element common for both parties



involved in interaction - the communication code (Carbaugh, 2013). However, taking into account e.g. the choice of place where a child will spend most of their time at home straight after birth - with or without parents - the actions of parents in this respect influence the interdependence of the child and solving future problems by them (Reynolds, Valentine, 2009: 30). According to the researchers quoted above, in this way self-perception of an individual in the context of individualistic or collectivistic cultures is determined, i.e. taking actions aimed at obtaining a tangible result for oneself or one's own social/professional/cultural group. In the above example we are thus dealing with the process of socialization: "learning and internalising culturally conditioned rules and patterns of behaviour" (Matsumoto, Juang, 2004: 170). However, the behaviour of parents is the product of enculturation and the result of the influence of the theory of involvement. Their behaviour becomes at the same time the reason for involvement (d'Almeida, 2005: 61) in low or high order culture, respectively. It should first of all be pointed out here that communication in the parent-child relationship is asymmetric and that emotions are the dominating factor in it. Emotions are thus one of the basic tools of mutual interaction between the parties. Implementing the process of socialisation and enculturation in bringing up children, parents use emotions to influence their children to behave in the expected way. With the progress of the above processes, the character of the communication process evolves (Wlodkowski, Ginsberg, 1996: 19-26). This asymmetric relation becomes symmetric, mainly because the child actively learns manipulation techniques. This phenomenon is perfectly shown in the interpretation of a Latin expression *communicare* proposed by J. Bolten, which is explained by this researcher not only as "transferring", but also as "doing something together" (Bolten, 2006: 38). However, important observations are made by Matsumoto and Juang in this respect, who perceive the individual not merely as a passive recipient of culture, being influenced by the interactions between the subjects of socialisation from many sides. U. Bronfenbrenner quoted by them enumerates here direct environment (peer group, school, parents), connections between its constituting elements, environment with its indirect impact and finally global influence (culture, religion, society) (Matsumoto, Juang, 2004: 171). To sum up the above considerations it should be stated after Bolten that without communication there would be no cultures. This means that cultures are a product of communication processes that are characterised by a specific communication style present in all communication products without international standards (Bolten, 2006: 73). We thus cannot speak about attributing values to certain cultures and their descriptive character, as Bolten rightly suggests, may concern certain communication products, because the basic characteristics of stratification of cultures is the inclination to create stereotypes. Another stage of the process understood in this way is cultural hegemony which defines intercultural/international communication in categories of leading culture or ethnocentrism or even tribalism (more in Wierzbicki, 2010: 9-44).

### 3. COMMUNICATION STYLES

In Steven Spielberg's film "Munich" of 2005 there is a scene where two groups of terrorists meet in the same apartment, placed there by an enterprising member of the underworld. One group consists of activists of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the other of people in pursuit of the perpetrators of the massacre during the summer Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, where a group of Palestinian terrorists kidnapped and murdered eleven Israeli athletes. PLO activists do not know the true identity of their flatmates who pass themselves off as activists of other organisations using terror in political struggle. At one point there is conflict between the members of these two groups about the music played on the radio. A representative of PLO is trying to adjust the radio to a frequency where typical Arabic music is played. The representative of the Israeli group is trying to make himself more credible and changing the frequency to the radio station playing Iberian music. A consensus turns out to be popular, English-language music. This brief story which was probably only made up by scriptwriters for the purposes of a blockbuster is an obvious allegory of intercultural communication. After Bolten, intercultural communication should be understood as a meeting of representatives of different cultures and interpreted not as syntheses but rather as synergic potentials. This therefore determines the style of communication which, to ensure its successful results, should be characterised by empathy, tolerance and the ability to adjust to new conditions, i.e. intelligence of its participants (Bolten, 2006: 42). However, the ability to sympathise with the situation of the interlocutor or subjects of intercultural relations requires knowledge concerning a given cultural *Universum*. It will thus be, among other things, a set of behaviours (e.g. showing emotions - author's remark) and gestures but, first of all, language competence. This last variable is particularly important, especially as regards ambiguity of some phrases and their use in a given context. The specific character of a language makes it possible to learn how representatives of a culture using this language perceive the reality and how it influences them. That is why some commercials contain a large number of synonyms present in some languages and advertising messages are shaped taking into account numerous descriptors characteristic of Slavic or Arabic languages. S. Reynolds and D. Valentine warn against the trap of a literal translation. A very illustrative example showing the power and significance of words is the Japanese expression *mokusatsu*, which depending on the context of a sentence may mean ignoring or refraining from a comment. Ultimate appeal to the Japanese to surrender in 1945 was answered with "this time no comments". The Japanese probably wanted more time to discuss the answers. An incorrect translation of the allied press agencies about ignoring the call for capitulation led to catastrophic consequences, i.e. dropping two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Coughlin, 1953: 31-39). The above example thus leads us to ascertain that even using the same linguistic *universum* does not guarantee effective communication – decoding information in accordance with the communicative intention of the



sender by the recipient. The condition for the occurrence of such a process is thus taking into consideration a certain style of cultural communication. Using J. Bolten's term, it should be defined for the purposes of this study as a set of variables characteristic of the process of communication, embedded in a certain cultural context. For this purpose S. Reynolds and D. Valentine use Edward Hall's terms: "low context" and "high context" regarding certain cultural schemas (Reynolds, Valentine, 2009: 20). Variables characterising the style of communication in low-context cultures and in high-context cultures are mainly communication schemas and preferences of behaviour in a given type of culture: individualism, collectivism, linear/nonlinear/cyclic time interpretation, gestures and mimics, emotional expression, way of argumentation, domination of non-verbal or verbal communication, vertical or horizontal attitude to authority or finally attitude to legal norms in the strict sense or in the broad sense (Banks&Banks, 2007: 9-10). It is only the knowledge concerning the use of these variables in a given culture that significantly eliminates interference in the proper course of communication processes, whose overriding objective is recipient's interpretation in line with the communicative intention of the sender.

Before we start the presentation and the analysis of styles of cultural communication of high and low context, it is worth to consider the issue of primacy of goals with regard to transnational corporations that not only function in the international external environment but also, in order to implement their corporate mission, introduce a uniform corporate culture (Casmir, 2013). Corporate identity functioning according to the elaborated guidelines is obligatory for all employees, regardless of their ethnic and cultural origin (Neuliep, 2014). There is a problem if this collective identity of global corporations is a synthesis in Bolten's understanding or is it the result of synergy potentials? To solve the problem formulated in this way it is necessary to draw a parallel to the diplomatic protocol - one of the issues of foreign policy which, when defined through goals, is nothing else than international communication and in the broader sense also intercultural communication. It is a secondary and purposeful method of implementation of the communication process, like corporate identity. However, it should be emphasised that corporate identity and diplomatic protocol constitute meta-communication and not conforming to their requirements results in a risk of experiencing ostracism or exclusion from the corporate community or international political isolation. The goal of the process is the measure of effectiveness of communication defined in this way. Naturally, it will generally be reached in the conditions of negotiation compromises, which in spite of all things is characterised by persuasiveness of messages. In these considerations we are not concentrated on the analysis of political and economic indicators of international position, but on the use of the concept of B.R.C Kelln and J.H. Ellard, striving for equality in interpersonal relationships (Doliński, 2005: 190). Therefore, the discussed issues correspond to the basic principles of diplomatic protocol - equality of the settling parties and the alternat principle, which is its emanation. An exception is the separate diplomatic protocol and ceremonial of the Holy See and regal courts and the order of precedence that takes into account the diplomatic tenure and not the diplomat's age (Ikanowicz, Piekarski, 2009: 15-16). Only that the diplomatic protocol or corporate identity, as has already been emphasised, are artificial constructs. In accordance with the theory of equality in interpersonal relationships, most people, as D. Doliński writes, prefer situations where their relationships with others have a balanced character. But in the context of cultural communication styles this striving for equality is relative. In low-context cultures, that are individualistic, the reciprocity principle is very important. On the other hand, in high-context cultures (Asian, Mediterranean, Arab) collectivism and natural hierarchy based on age seniority dominate. The style of international public communication is first of all connected with the issue of semantics of language used in the process of communication. In a narrower sense this issue may be considered on the example of using modern communication technologies and the resulting specific netiquette. In a wider sense, however, the problem may be interpreted through the prism of the so-called political correctness, i.e. avoiding expressions discriminating ethnic, national, religious or sexual minorities or because of the social background.

### 3.1 Low-context communication style

A low-context culture is individualistic. It thus prefers all actions that are aimed at the achievement of goals of the individual as the subject of communication. The determinants of social communication also include climatic and geographical conditions, which influence all aspects of social life in accordance with the layer model of environmental influences of E. Dülfer (after: Bolten, 2006: 70). This means that the most economically developed industrial centres are located in the northern moderate zone and they are at the same time the centres of modernisation processes. Religious factors are also important here, particularly protestant ethics and attitudes helpful in building the ethos of business people: individualism or creativity. Synthesising the impact of both these variables: climatic and geographical conditions and religious systems, we may put forward a socially controversial thesis, although it finds evidence in hard economic indicators, about the dichotomous division taking into consideration the wealth of the Protestant "north" and a low level of economic development of the Catholic "south" (Harrison, Huntington, 2000). We may thus assume that the subject of low-context cultures is a precisely defined goal which is characterised by easily calculated parameters. These objective criteria emphasise the role of cause-effect action within a specific time frame, so reasoning in such a culture will be linear. Therefore, the effectiveness of communication will depend on the precision of verbal messages and not their context (Reynolds, Valentine, 2009: 51). Restrained gestures and emotions are behaviour reserved for official relations that are clearly distinct from private relationships. This in



connection with the promotion and recognition of personalities and experts creates a favourable atmosphere for the acceptance of selfish attitudes, on the condition that they are not contrary to fundamental ethical principles but first of all the binding legal regulations. Communication code thus becomes really important in the communication style in low-context cultures. Language may be perceived as the product or the expression of culture. A two-way relationship between language and culture, influencing each other on the basis of feedback makes D. Matsumoto and L. Juang propose a thesis about mutual dependence between knowing the language and understanding culture and the other way round (Matsumoto, Juang, 2007: 325). Here, the researchers use the example of a multitude of subjective and personal pronouns in Japanese as compared to their limited number in English. This relationship results from the character of culture, with the language being one of its carriers. In a low-context culture social hierarchy does not exclude direct communicative interaction between people on its different levels. And in high-context cultures it effectively limits them and makes them dependent on meeting certain requirements concerning e.g. the form of such a contact. A two way relationship between knowing the language and culture could however lead to an erroneous conclusion about high level of efficiency of communication between representatives of the same cultural and linguistic areas. However, the semantics of the very communication code is an obstacle, determined - as has been stated above - among other things by geographical conditions or social and religious diversity. Similar objections could be raised against cultural codes within the same language area. Bulgaria or Russia use identical alphabet, the so-called Cyrillic script and they function within one religious system, they also have similar Slavic ethnic origin, but in the course of acculturation processes the gesture of nodding one's head, which is common for the rest of Europe and treated as acceptance, in Bulgaria and Albania is interpreted otherwise. This happens under the influence of the remnants after periodical cultural domination of the Ottoman Empire, what leads to different mutual perceptions of communities functioning within the same culture. Besides the extreme example of both Korean states, it is particularly distinctly shown in the case of the reunited Germany. In the East and West of Germany there are for example significant differences in the interpretation of the ways to greet people. Residents of the former German Democratic Republic (Ossies - author's remark) treat a handshake as a normal greeting whereas their neighbours from the former Federal Republic of Germany (Wessies - author's remark), reserve a handshake for formal occasions (Ossie&Wessie are considered to be rude - author's remark). Germans from the Western lands think that everyday mutual contacts do not require exchanging handshakes, what they regard as the evidence of openness and cordiality. However, some important cultural differences result from this. Because of this handshake used as a greeting Wessie regard themselves as open and friendly and the Ossis as old-fashioned formalists. On the other hand, the latter do not have a high opinion about Germans from the old lands. According to M. Zawilska-Florczuk and A. Ciechanowicz they explain these differences as arrogance. Also the preferred subject of small talk differs between both parts of the united Germany. According to the Western Germans the willingness of the residents of the new lands to criticize the reality around them and to bring up personal topics is taken as discontent. On the other hand, Ossies regard the Wessies, who in such situations talk about light, easy and pleasant subjects as insincere and shallow (Zawilska-Florczak, Ciechanowicz, 2011: 20-21). The issue of habits concerning the perception of others are also emphasised in the selected examples of standardising the message. One of them concerns a global courier service whose employees deliver parcels wearing standardised (in accordance with corporate identity) uniforms comprising e.g. a brown shirt. The lack of conscious connotations of this colour with the German historical context led to an image crisis of this courier service in Germany. Standardising the visual identification of products may also bring measurable economic loss. The Henkel company tried to sell the same fabric softener in Germany, Austria and Hungary in packaging of the same colour – blue, whereas in the latter two countries the colours that are associated with cleanliness and freshness are the hues of orange and yellow (Bolten, 2006: 74). Therefore, it seems proper to explain differences in perceiving the blue colour with the cultural impact of a political community which both countries (Hungary and Austria) shared in the years 1867-1918. A similar interpretation could be used in the case of a cultural difference between both parts of the German society and the feature typical for high-context cultures, i.e. building relationships and assigning meaning to interpersonal relationships in the workplace, avoiding conflicts and defining professional success in terms of harmony. Germans from former FRG treat these relationships in an impersonal way and assess success based on quantifiable parameters. By no means should any conclusions be drawn from this about the high context of a given culture shaped in the conditions of East German ideological system. In this case it would be more proper to analyse the historically shaped cultural community through the dominating political factor. Such a difference can only be explained with the cultural impact of political ideology which, through its totality, determined public interpersonal relations and left a small margin of privacy.

The above draft concerning the conditions of communication in the environment of a low-context culture leads to the conclusion that practical knowledge of issues concerning political history is required for effective intercultural communicative interaction. It is worth to mention here the post-war example of the Polish solution to the problem of license plates in the former Silesian-Dabrowa Voivodeship. Under the influence of traumatic experiences of II World War they resigned from marking the vehicles registered in Sosnowiec with the registration numbers beginning with two letters "s" because they were associated with the criminal Nazi organization that used a double Scandinavian Sowilo rune symbolising the sun.





### 3.2 High-context communication style

The previous paragraph outlined the issues connected with the impact of the geographical environment and climatic conditions on the process of shaping social life, mentioning the interaction between the factors of natural environment and the process of communication. This connection is particularly visible in high-context cultures where natural conditions influence all aspects of social activity. The collective character of this cultural type results mainly from this fact. The sense of community and the hierarchical nature of groups which is its function, determine the processes of socialisation and enculturation. The most important factor become ties within groups and in the emotional aspect - family ties. The utilitarian factor dominates here as well as the primacy of group interest over individual interest. Therefore, communication concentrating on emphasising the qualities of an individual will be interpreted as highly inappropriate. The vertical group structure will thus be an immanent feature of high context cultures. Confucianism, one of the dominating philosophical systems in Asia, defines social order as a vertical and bi-directional educational movement which is the counterpart of fatherly love and filial respect (Eliade, Couliano, 1990: 207). Paternalism of this ideology makes respect towards one's family/superior/homeland the most important principle. The two-way asymmetrical relationship also means the personalisation of the employment relationship between the employer and employee. On the one hand this guarantees the employee stability of employment but also obliges them to be loyal towards the company treated in this case as a hierarchical social structure. Naturally, this positively influences work efficiency, but also shapes the leisure behaviour pattern, subordinating such actions to interpersonal relations. However, retaining harmonious relationships with the group requires time, so using the results of research by S. Reynolds and D. Valentine we may reflect upon the non-linear interpretation of time, treated unlike in low-context cultures as a measurable value in accordance with the popular principle - "time is money". In other words, each member of the community in a high-context culture is aware of their place and meaning within a group and their personal interest is secondary to the collective interest. On the other hand, the individual who is subordinated to their superior has the right to expect responsibility for the fate of subordinates from them. This trust in mutual contacts is the determinant of communication interactions in high-context cultures. This can be seen on the example of the recruitment process in one of the factories of a big automotive company in Southern Poland. The company originating from a country of a high-context culture prefers to employ people who can be vouched for by relatives already working for them. This does not at all exclude the competence factor while taking the decision about starting the employment relationship but it is one of the elements of competitive advantage. This phenomenon takes grotesque forms in the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union and in Southern Caucasus. W. Górecki gives the example of domination of tribalism over competence in the ethnic society of Azerbaijani politics (Górecki, 2010: 107). However, Reynolds and Valentine emphasise that people socialised in a high-context culture treat non-verbal communication as more reliable. Thus they appreciate the value of non-verbal messages and in the enculturation process they learn the skill of filtering messages for hidden meanings. The researchers give a significant example of a difference in the interpretation of the expression "to put a stamp on something" depending on the cultural context. In the USA this will mean the final conclusion of an agreement, whereas in a Japanese document it is possible to put a stamp in such a way as to show if the contract requires further negotiations or it is final. Acceptance without changes requires precision in putting the stamp, without deviations in any direction. The deviation to the right or to the left may signal the necessity of introducing changes in the future, due to the occurrence of circumstances that could not have been foreseen (Reynolds, Valentine, 2009: 42). Therefore, in high-context cultures we deal with quite a flexible attitude towards rigid provisions of legal contracts. It is the emotional context of the whole relationship that gains primacy over other variables. Trust and interpersonal bonds built during communication interactions influence taking up binding business decisions, often even of significant financial value. The confirmation of the concluded transaction is often a handshake and drinking tea together, for example in Arabic countries. But if the specific character of functioning in an international environment requires formalised cooperation, this does not significantly change the character of the relationship, or is only a supplement to it and only as the consequence of sealing the agreement with a handshake. This can be seen particularly clearly in the context of economic cooperation with the authoritarian regime in Turkmenistan. A foreign company could not count on the support of the local President if it did not effect the publication of pseudo-literary works of Saparmurat Niyazov or the present leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow in their national language, what according to the Turkmen propaganda was the proof of recognition for the alleged literary and scientific talent of political leaders.

High-context cultures are hierarchical cultures, what, as has been emphasised above, ensures the sense of stability and security for the members of one's group and also makes it possible to gain respect. For this reason self-image threats to personal dignity of an individual are interpolated on the whole group. One of the authors of this article experienced this kind of cultural complications organising the stay of a Chinese delegation in one of the cities of southern Poland as part of his business duties. A group of entrepreneurs and local government representatives from China presented a clear hierarchy typical for their culture. The mayor of the Polish city delegated one of his deputies to host the visit. This was met with a discreet but unambiguous and non-verbally expressed disapproval from the Chinese. Their quite condescending attitude towards the programme of the visit changed completely when the main representative of the Polish party appeared and handed in presents. This helped minimise cultural discomfort of the Chinese delegation and eliminated it completely after the necessary explanations and properly uttered apologies. Using the metaphor



of the colloquial language - the Chinese "saved face". Also age proved to be important. Leaders of both groups represented a similar generation but the Chinese guests treated with undisguised respect those members of the Polish delegation and people they met during the visit to the age of which - due to morphological features - there was no doubt. This happened despite the fact that in the professional hierarchy they took a lower place than the deputy mayor. The great importance of "saving face" in high-context cultures in a funny way is illustrated by the example from the so-called popular culture. In the Polish film comedy: "How I Unleashed World War II", the main character perfectly succeeds in the task of getting fresh food when stationed at the Syrian fort of the French Foreign Legion. The unwritten ban on commercial contacts with the representatives of the Vichy regime banned Arabian merchants to sell them their food. This limitation however did not concern gambling. Losing fruit and vegetables in a popular gambling game Arabs do not "lose face", because they do not violate the rule established for political reasons by community leaders.

#### 4. THE STYLE OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

In the introduction to these considerations universal communication channels have been mentioned – corporate identity and diplomatic protocol. The English language remains the communication code in both cases, with the objections concerning the so-called political correctness. Nevertheless, it is worth to consider factors that have made English become the lingua franca also in the public domain of international contacts. The universalism of Shakespeare's language is first of all manifested in the simplicity of its grammar and communicativeness, what makes it quite easy to learn, particularly due to the Latin origin of the alphabet. Economisation of language as well as the influence of modern technologies on the stage of civilisational development leads to the occurrence of endemic features specific to certain cultural areas. This mainly concerns the influence of inflection and syntax of local languages but also the impact of derivational processes. So there appear all kinds of abbreviations or acronyms, like NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard – author's remark) or DINKS (Double Income No Kids – author's remark). This means that a specific variety of English developed in international relations, i.e. global English (author's remark). An additional element in the context of which the global variety of English should be considered is the netiquette defining, among other things, the way of corresponding with the use of modern technologies, which for example reserves using capital letters only for extremely emotional messages (Mindess, 2014). Technological limitations in electronic communication determine the use of informal language using phonetic shortenings of popular expressions, among other things: How RU? (how are you – author's remark) or 4U (for you – author's remark). Although English is common in working contacts, international communication which is carried out through official diplomatic channels is carried out in national languages, mainly due to the principle of equality of the parties. In this situation cultural competences of interpreters become very important. It is not difficult to imagine political or diplomatic effects of interpreting which does not account for the cultural context or political history of the parties involved. This type of threat of the image crisis also concerns business contacts because they are usually carried out in the global variety of English (Ting-Toomey, Chung, 2011).

Ubiquitous multimedia and the process of globalisation of economy has influenced the way of organising intercultural contacts. Direct meetings are reserved for special and official celebrations, which require personal presence. Working contacts, due to differences between certain time zones but also for mercenary reasons, are dominated by tele- and videoconferences. With the technological development of these tools there developed a branch of management called virtual management, where transnational teams implement projects using the time difference between time zones in the world to ensure continuity of work. In order to shorten the whole creative process, dedicated internet platforms are used for on-line courses, conferences and information circulation but they may interfere with effective communication. We must therefore take into account, among other things, varying importance of direct eye contact in high and low context cultures a different position of non-verbal communication and hierarchical social structure. Keeping or not keeping eye contact may be the evidence of both deep respect for the interlocutor and lack of it, depending on the cultural context. Not being aware of the importance of different non-verbal communication elements may significantly influence the level of effectiveness of communication carried out on-line. For people functioning in high-context cultures it will be difficult to accept reaching an agreement or making final arrangements without previously building a personal relationship with the interlocutor. Different meanings are also put to gestures. In the course of cultural evolution and selection the meme concept developed. Typical memes include various slogans, catchphrases, melodies, icons, inventions and fashions that are created from "aggregates of co-evolving memes in a symbiotic relationship" (Wężowicz-Ziółkowska, 2009: 236-237). Language is an example of such a memplex. Referring this to the discussed example of universum of the English language, attention should be drawn to the gesture that replaces verbalisation of positive emotions. The English "OK" interpreted in a customary manner in Russia is read as an extremely offensive gesture identical with the unambiguously interpreted gesture of the extended middle finger in the Anglo-Saxon culture. The Roman sign of thumbs-up currently means a positive course of events whereas in the Middle East it has a completely opposite meaning, as making any gestures with the left hand, which has a negative connotation in the Islamic world, may be considered as rude. A similar situation concerns the smile which may signify embarrassment or friendly attitude or the gesture of nodding meaning the acceptance of the interlocutor's opinion, but also interest without understanding the message or simply politeness (Reynolds, Valentine, 2009: 97-107). In general, in high-context cultures emotions are expressed more effusively than in low-context cultures, where restraint in



showing feelings is valued. Polish tourists in Armenia are surprised for example when they see sincere kisses of two men greeting each other or holding hands when walking, despite the lack of intimate relationship between them. Collective cultures accept violation of intimate space with gestures during direct interaction to a greater extent than those based on individualism. Touching is accepted in Arabic cultures e.g. during business negotiations but it is not allowed to touch women. In low-context cultures, like in Central and Northern Europe, touching is used as one of the techniques of social impact. A light tap on the shoulder or a two-handed handshake as a greeting at the same time is connected with a higher probability of complying with the request (Doliński, 2005: 158). It is a little easier to decode the basic emotions without interference. In accordance with the Universalist approach four emotions that are accompanied with inimitable facial expressions are understood very similarly regardless of cultural differences. This is probably the reason for the presence of emoticons, i.e. graphic signs describing emotions in popular instant messengers and social portals. On the other hand, the supporters of the functionalist approach suggest that happiness, fear, sadness and anger cannot be configured in the same way for all people due to cultural differences. The importance of factors evoking emotions is emphasised here. In different cultural contexts the same emotions may meet with different reactions (Matsumoto, Juang, 2007: 301-307). The example may be the interpretation of applause. It was really surprising for Poles to hear the ovation of people who gathered on St. Peter's Square in Rome in 2005 when they heard that Pope John Paul II was dead.

Jennifer Tan describes another phenomenon that so far has not been the subject of the above considerations and which is the effect of dual identity, i.e. the banana complex. It accompanies individuals whose cultural and race affiliation and the acquired set of competencies connected with socialisation are different. People burdened with such a complex are mainly the representatives of high-context cultures who were subject to socialisation in a low-context culture e.g. the Chinese raised in the countries of North America. Their race affiliation puts them in a high-context culture but their emotional affiliation (who they feel they are) in a low-context culture (Tan, 2007: 43-61). Individuals burdened with such a complex are usually culturally competent and they deftly move between the changing conditions of high and low context. They can thus be adept guides for building intercultural understanding in the realm of managing global structures.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up the above considerations it is worth to mention some challenges but also chances for the evolution of perception of multiculturalism - from showing threats to emphasising opportunities - connected mainly with diversity as the value in developing the competences of individuals that influence the increase of creativity in solving problems of teams comprised of members representing different cultural values (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, Roy, 2014). Emphasising the utilitarian aspect which is connected with using multiculturalism as a potential in managing teams, what translates to measurable financial effects for enterprises, requires redefinition of the educational process where multiculturalism will find its real place. Not exclusively as the area of shaping empathy and tolerance for the other but the space of learning about the other as the subject of effective communication (McCarthy, Dimitriadis, 2000: 70-83).

More and more often such processes of overcoming barriers in intercultural communication, also between the representatives of high and low context cultures happen with the use of new technologies, in particular using social websites (Piechota, 2014).

As the above considerations prove, the role of intercultural communication requires first of all the knowledge that will make it possible to overcome schemes and to start effective communication which is the source of potential cooperation (Landson-Billings, 2004: 50-63). The above mentioned cultural unification, also called americanisation or homogenisation of culture, is only one of the symptoms of globalisation. The increased importance of local cultures, particularly in the countries with high-context cultures (China, India, Russia) corresponds to the increasing importance of these markets in the context of global chances for development. It seems thus, what K. Koppelman emphasises, that we cannot think about effective development, not only in the area of globalisation, without fundamental agreement as to the role and importance of multiculturalism, understood as the protection of cultural differences and the promotion of pluralism (Koppelman, 2011: 161-166).

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