

## LINGUISTIC COMPETENCY, CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING and BUSINESS EDUCATION in UKRAINE

Lyudmila BORDYUK  
Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine

### “Ukraine is not Russia”

This is a frequent phrase Ukrainians have to remind foreigners. Besides, Russian and Ukrainian, though akin, are different Slavic languages. Most people outside Ukraine erroneously believe that Ukraine is a part of Russia. The history of the two nations is inextricably interwoven as both trace their roots back to the great state of Kyivan Rus that emerged in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. An understanding of Ukrainian’s history of colonization by Russia, Austria-Hungary, Poland, the Soviets, the deliberate famine engineered by Stalin to destroy the nation (Conquest 1987), may help comprehend the national peculiarities of Ukrainians.

Ukraine is well-known as the breadbasket of the former Soviet Union and the site of the world’s most horrible nuclear accident – Chernobyl. Unfortunately, the latter’s negative image is internationally so strong that the Euro Disney Resort complex in France was metaphorically dubbed “a cultural Chernobyl” implying the controversy of American and French cultural patterns (Euro Disney, p.2).

Dalton (2000, p.11), an expert in the Soviet Union and Ukraine, reasonably claims that “the paucity of information available on Ukraine is striking and most often Ukraine is relegated to the back sections of books on Russia”. There are some references to Russia: Gesteland 1999; Mole 1991; materials of annual CIBER (Center for International Business Education and Research) conferences on Language, Culture and Global Management and others. There is a tendency to increasing titles. The primary sources of information on doing business in Ukraine or with Ukrainians are very few : the Internet ([www.the post.kiev.ua](http://www.the.post.kiev.ua)), the US-Ukraine Foundation materials and scarce publications in international periodicals (The Economist, The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal). Books are very difficult to find. Those available are : Jolly,A. & Kettanch,N. *Doing Business in Ukraine* (1998); Dalton M. *Culture Shock! Ukraine* (2000). Dalton addresses her book to all those who accept the challenge of living and working in Ukraine and dedicates it to a better Ukraine and a better

life for Ukrainians. Dalton's perception of Ukraine through her expertise in the Soviet Union and Ukraine is of special interest as her heritage includes no Slavic blood and she represents a different, western culture.

Ukraine today is the biggest country in Europe, with the population of 47,6 million (that has a grave tendency for declining due to the low birth-rate and massive work immigration to Italy, Spain, Portugal, the U.S. and Russia ). To the east and northeast of Ukraine is Russia. To the west are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Ukraine's strategic geographical position in ancient periods as well as nowadays has made it a cross-road between the East and West of Europe.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991. Like other members of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine is in a period of painful and staggering transition. Recently, the hypothesis has been developed that the radical changes from communism (communist/socialist values) to capitalism (western values) cause a collective cultural shock within a society which is similar to the individual culture shock but lasts for much longer (Fink 2000, p.2). The complicated process of Ukraine's integration into European and world institutions strongly supports the above hypothesis.

### **Current challenges of teaching and learning Business English in Ukrainian schools of business**

Political changes in the world, and within Europe, mean that people, while still retaining their national identities, are getting involved into the globalization process. Broadening an international understanding is critical for Ukraine. Under new political and economic conditions, today's Ukrainian university graduates may have a chance for international job opportunities. Higher education should respond to the changes in the needs of the society of which it is a part. To better equip students to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, university education should emphasize international aspects, language and culture competence, the development of social and communicative skills and give an entrepreneurial orientation. Nowadays, there is a great demand for economic and business professions in Ukraine. Besides, a growing number of students majoring in applied linguistics seek future employment outside of educational system as translators/interpreters or office managers with international companies and joint ventures. The multinational companies (Coca- Cola, Pepsi, Kodak, Procter & Gamble, and McDonald's) have arrived in Ukraine. In major Ukrainian cities there is a network of business people engaged in the US-Ukraine business relationship (Peace Corps business consultants, Business incubator, Consortium for Enhancement of

Ukrainian Management Education /CEUME/ and others). The globalization process has a strong impact on a conceptual and pragmatic framework of Business English and Business Communication curricula in countries with transition economies.

The ways of bringing an international and, thus, intercultural perspective into business language education in Ukraine will be discussed in this paper. My experience of an English lecturer at School of Economics & Management and the Department of Applied Linguistics at Lviv Polytechnic National University, West Ukraine, a higher school with a good reputation in research and training students, as well as my intercultural experience in American and European exchange programs and joint projects, may be relevant.

In the marketplace of today's business world strong linguistic skills and communicative competence – covering grammatical, discourse and strategic aspects (Canale & Swain 1980)- are crucial factors for advanced professional performance. A sociolinguistic perspective on language as a powerful means of communication may be found in Lemke (1995, p.1): “When we think of power in the social world, we imagine power to do things: to buy and sell, to command obedience, to reward and punish, to do good to others or do them harm, both physically and emotionally. In all of these, language can and often does play a critical role”.

All business activities – leading, motivating, decision making, dealing with colleagues, customers and suppliers – involve communication in the variety of its forms : verbal, non-verbal, internal/external, operational and personal (Adler 1977; Lesikar 1996; Locker 1995). Managers are professional communicators by definition. Communication is a major part of their work.

Foreign language/s proficiency is a valuable asset for those searching competitive international job opportunities. Today, English is the most powerful member of “language ecology” (McArthur 2002). American English is internationally accepted as the language of business and technology. But business communication requires more than the standard vocabulary and trade jargon. The goal of language education is not to learn the target language code only but to develop cross-cultural perception of similarities and differences and to arrive at a shared meaning. Cultural strategies are an integral part of business communication and business transactions. Foreign learners acquire various aspects of American culture via the target language – English. Ron Scollon (1995, p.4), an expert in intercultural communication, claims that “many aspects of western culture, especially western patterns of discourse are carried within English”.

### **Intercorporating culture into the Business English curriculum in Ukraine**

. Culture, in a broad sense, is viewed as a process, that is a way of perceiving, interpreting, feeling and being in the world (Robinson 1991). Nimgade (1989, p.299) maintains that “for all its faults and weaknesses... American business still forms a key model for much of the world” and “an important force in disseminating the American style of management is the role of the U.S. as the world’s largest manufacturer of contemporary culture”. Numerous studies on what makes America American (Adler 1999, Hofstede 1994, Thiederman 1991, Trompenaars 1993) emphasize the most valued traits in American culture: individualism, success-orientation, pragmatism, progress, efficient use of time, action, assertiveness, perseverance, mobility, hope, optimism and opportunity. Thiederman (1991) claims that American culture is almost unique in its belief that change is always equated with growth, improvement and progress.

It is central for intercultural education that cultural issues of values, beliefs and attitudes are the most difficult to teach (Allwood 1990).

The U.S. as a low context culture, that is an individualistic, pragmatic society (Victor 1992) and Ukraine, as a used-to-be to collective, closer to a high context, Slavic society, employ different linguistic codes and culturally predetermined strategies to achieve their communicative goals. They use different “conceptual filters” (Gudykunst, Kim 1984) in the process of perceiving and interpreting reality. They, naturally, have different assumptions, expectations and employ different patterns of social behaviour. Ukrainian and American businesses develop and operate in different cultural frameworks. Dalton (2000) dubbed them “contacts, not contracts”. Wierzbicka (1999) claims that representatives of different cultures are different people not only because they speak different languages but because they think differently, feel differently and relate differently to other people.

The general tendency typical of Ukraine and other post-Soviet states is that there has never been a systematic study of culture in the framework of language courses. The teachers’ own experience of western cultures was rather limited. Like other professional groups of Soviet people they used to live and work in an isolated society, separated from the rest of the world by an iron curtain. Thus, cultural instructions covered some sporadic facts on monuments, cities, festivals, traditions, literary characters and national heroes but the focus on patterns of western values, beliefs and attitudes was few and between. Such a conventional approach has been strongly criticized by Kramsch (1991, p.221): “Culture is commonly seen as making the study of a foreign language more attractive and as providing a welcome relief from grammar and vocabulary exercises. Learning about a foreign culture is not expected to

require any intellectual effort since it is generally conceived only as the tourist's view of the foreign ways of life".

Bridging the gap between language and culture is very important for those who plan to be engaged in global competitive activities. Cross-cultural competence implies an awareness of one's own cultural heritage and understanding of the culture of another language in addition to knowledge of the language.

The Business English course thoroughly elaborated and designed by the Ukrainian Academy of Banking (IATEFL-UKRAINE 2003) lays emphasis on developing general language knowledge as well as oral and written professional communication skills. It is sketched (one sentence only), but not specified, in the course description that "cultural awareness is also developed throughout the course" (p.22). In the English Business Communication course description developed at the Thunderbird School of Management (Uber Grosse 1999), promoting cross-cultural understanding and developing cross-cultural communication skills are central.

To make Ukrainian business students successful and effective in their future careers an insight into the culture of the target language should be emphasized in the re-designed model of Business English curriculum. Cross-cultural training provides a necessary framework for understanding the ways of doing business in another culture and an international milieu. The socio-economic content of Business English classes gives a plenty of possibilities and is an extremely beneficial area for linguistic and cross-cultural guided exploration and discoveries. An up-dated Ukrainian interdisciplinary Business English curriculum should integrate the target language (English), an international perspective and cross-cultural professional content. To accomplish this task it is necessary to: 1) elaborate an efficient strategy for integrating language study and cultural instruction; 2) select an appropriate cultural content; 3) apply effective methods and techniques of bringing the real business world into the classroom.

The strategy of cross-cultural instruction is to make business students linguistically and culturally competent. To comprehend culture-specific differences in English and Ukrainian business contexts a comparative-contrastive analysis is efficient along with the following methods and techniques : a balanced integration of cognitive and communicative approaches, a content-based approach with the focus on acquiring the target information via a foreign language, discourse patterns analysis, role-play, brainstorming and case studies.

### **Acquiring culture via language**

Ability to speak a foreign language is often mistaken for

ability to function in a speech community, but speaking ability can be a mechanical skill devoid of cultural competence (Richard Swiderski)

## Lexicon

Culture can be effectively taught when practicing new vocabulary, grammar and discourse patterns. It should be emphasized that the interlocutors should know not only about a lexical equivalent of a certain semantic formula but also be aware of its functional and contextual appropriateness. So, when a Ukrainian speaker says “May I take your pen?” he/she means “May I borrow your pen?”, meanwhile *take* and *borrow* are not synonyms.

A group of business words of Latin origin (*affair, execute, execution*) are used in Ukrainian with a strong negative connotation, meaning, correspondingly, *fraud* and *a lawful killing as a punishment*. *Executive board, executive director, exec* are words frequently used in Business English discourse. Another word of English business lexicon *manufacture/ manufacturer* pertains its Latin transliteration in Ukrainian but is regarded archaic (it was in use in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries).

Similarly, semantic, pragmatic and culture-specific functions of the attribute *aggressive* in American and Ukrainian discourse is a dramatic example of language and culture interaction. In Ukrainian, the adjective *aggressive* and everything related to it is viewed in various negative ways as “belligerent” (Latin origin “*aggressio*”). A somewhat different situation is characteristic of an American socio-linguistic context which reflects the peculiarities of the national spirit and culture. In the above list of American national traits (Thiederman 1991) a special emphasis is laid on *assertiveness*. Considerable illustrative data have been accumulated to argue that the adjective *aggressive* can function as a synonym of the adjective *assertive* in business-related and general contexts gaining a positive connotation. E.g. : “IBM: Is this an ethical issue or just *good, aggressive* accounting? (Pearce 1994, p.515). *Aggressive candidates* in an American interpretation mean *self-starters* (Nimgade 1989), i.e. ambitious and initiative people. “The Oxford Dictionary for the Business World” (1993) defines *aggressive* not only as *hostile, forceful* but also as *self-assertive*. “Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture” (1998) defines the adjective *aggressive* 1) in a derogatory way as always ready to quarrel or attack, *belligerent : an aggressive manner* 2) appreciatively as *not afraid of opposition; determined and forceful, assertive : an aggressive marketing campaign*.

Analyzing an intercultural aspect of assertiveness Dodd (1995, p.259) maintains that in western low-context, direct culture, “assertiveness is defined as the ability to state clearly

what you expect or want and to work toward achieving that goal”. In his insightful observation of the American character, Nimgade (1989, p.298) concludes that sometimes “there may be more bark than bite to American aggressiveness”.

Numerous business terms and concepts contain an attribute *aggressive* as a component of their semantic structure, e.g.: *aggressive bank management*; *aggressive dividend policy*; *aggressive investment policy*; *aggressively trained managers* etc. Most of these terms in a transliterated Ukrainian version are currently registered in Ukrainian professional business discourse as well. But in different patterns of general Ukrainian discourse the adjective *aggressive* is used with a strong negative connotation only.

Frequently used concepts of *aggressive management* and *aggressive marketing* denote *dramatic publicity*, *successful encouragement*, *extensive self-promotion* and are central strategies of the Walt Disney company :

*Nothing was left to chance at Disney theme parks. Standards of service, park design and operating details, and human resource policies and practices were integrated to ensure the Disney “play” would be flawlessly performed every day in and out at each location. Known for its aggressive management of operational details, Disney’s stated goal was to exceed its customers’ expectations every day (Euro Disney, p.4)*

*At the same time Disney aggressively cross-trained managers and supervisors to ensure service quality. Prior to opening, 270 managers were crossed-trained in the Disney methods at the company’s other parks to work at Euro Disney (Euro Disney, p.12).*

*Euro Disney was aggressively marketed by Disney as well as other firms. Disney successfully encouraged dozens of articles on the complex in magazines throughout Europe. Prior to the opening it sent a model of the Sleeping Beauty Castle around Europe to the opening celebration, which was broadcasted live across Europe. In addition, Swiss food giant Nestle sponsored extensive cross-promotions of Euro Disney at its own expense (p.12).*

Another vivid example of positive semantic modification and culture-specific functioning of the adjective *aggressive* is a letter of sympathy from a U.S. colleague, professor of economics as a response to the terrible air-crash at the military air-field Sknyliv-Lviv, Western Ukraine, which took away and destroyed lives of over 200 people during a military air-show on July 27, 2002. It read: “...so many reasons to cry – we must search *more aggressively* for more reasons to smile and protect our families and friends”.

Cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness may equip students with an appropriate understanding and interpreting of “American aggressiveness” in professional and general contexts. Dodd (1995, p.3) argues that “beyond using language, the study of intercultural communication recognizes how culture pervades what we are, how we act, how we think...”.

Idiomatic expressions (similes, metaphors, proverbs, sayings, jargon, slang and phrasal verbs) are notoriously untranslatable. They should be treated with a special care in order to

transact business effectively. The author of “Biz Talk I”(Burke 1993, p.vii) argues that “without an understanding of this type of lingo, any non-native speaker conducting business in America is at a grave disadvantage, especially during important meetings and negotiations where it is common to hear expressions like : “to have the floor, to stone-wall, to brainstorm, to table a discussion”.

## Grammar

Culture-specific differences between English and Ukrainian speakers in their inborn attitude to privacy, private property and quality service can be grammatically traced in the following examples:

English usage :	Ukrainian usage
<i>The manager's office</i> (a possessive attribute is in preposition)	<i>The office of the manager</i> (the owner is not emphasized)
<i>He changed his mind</i> (a possessive pronoun is peculiar)	<i>He changed mind</i> ( a possessive pronoun is never emphasized)
<i>I want my car repaired</i> (the passive role of a customer is explicit)	<i>I want to repair my car</i> (the passive role of a customer is semantically implicit)
<i>Every student may use the Internet at <u>his/her</u> convenience</i> (a gender aspect is explicit)	<i>Every student may use the Internet at <u>his</u> convenience</i> (a gender aspect has been always neglected)

## Discourse patterns

Clyne (1994) maintains that variation in discourse and pragmatics results from differences in pragmatic formulae and ways of structuring information. Culture-specific patterns of business discourse, both written and oral, can be effectively analyzed in various genres: presentations, meetings, negotiations, getting through an interview, business letters, resume writing etc. A resume genre may serve a vivid illustration of specific cultural assumptions. There is little research available on how resumes function across cultures. Semenova (2000) compares North American, Japanese and Russian samples of resumes and concludes that they differ in the choice of layout, content and language.

The samples of Ukrainian resumes submitted by MBA students at Lviv Management Institute (Ukraine) in 2000 are less persuasive and promotional as compared to the American ones which is registered in content and language: superlative forms of adjectives are rare; the range of dynamic words (provide, increase, improve, implement, design, promote, develop etc) is much broader in American than in Ukrainian samples. The pragmatic goal of the resume genre to promote, “to sell oneself” is much less explicit in Ukrainian than in English which reflects Ukrainians’ national peculiarities and attitudes. It is worth mentioning that the genre of cover letter has never been employed in Ukraine.

### **Sources of cultural content**

The criteria for selecting authentic texts for cross-cultural analysis depend on the pragmatic goal of learning. Allens(1990) maintains that linguistic communication is always carried on in a context which is in large parts culturally constituted. An appropriate cultural content may be found in prominent business publications (Trompenaars 1993; Adler 1997; Hofstede 1991; Locker 1995 which have become available in Ukraine partly due to donations from the Sabre Foundation /the U.S./), business periodicals (Harvard Business Review, The Wall Street Journal, Business Week, The Economist etc), mass media, and practical business classes providing s wide range of issues: money and banking, corporate culture, brand management, interview skills etc. The three fundamental business skills-based activities – presentations, meetings and negotiations- are specifically designed to instruct students to act and react properly in realistic situations. They are “the finest American blend” of business matter, language and specific cultural behaviour and promote the ability to speak fluently and accurately which is often the secret of success.

The process of teaching Business English at top business schools of Ukraine has become much more effective in the recent years due to communicative methods of teaching and using up-dated authentic materials : *Business English Class* (Cotton D. & Robbins S. Thomas & Sons Ltd. 1998); *Effective Socializing* (Comfort J. Oxford University Press. 2002); *New Insights into Business* (Tullis G.& Trappe T. Pearson Education Ltd. 2000); *Longman Business English Usage* (Strutt P. Longman House. 1995); *Business Across Cultures: Effective Communication strategies* (English M .& Lynn S. Longman 1995) and excellent comprehensive dictionaries on business, finances and commerce.

## **Cultural and historical dimensions of American business practices and values through literature in the Business English class in Ukraine**

"What is it you Americans want out of life?  
Well, I suppose you might say we want success  
in the North of all events"  
(John Galsworthy, *The Silver Spoon*)

Wood (1998) argues that as useful as professional business materials are it is important to provide a broad cultural and historical dimension of business practices as part of identity of a nation. The vocational nature of the Business English course can be given a new perspective by adding appropriate literary texts to the core program. Cognitive and aesthetic benefits of the compatibility of business and literature in the educational process result in contextualization and reinforcement of business lexicon, engagement of students' cultural background and broadening their outlook. Literature contextualizes patterns of social behavior. When reading and analyzing authentic literary texts students explore, diachronically and synchronically, various business issues and practices and gain cultural insights. Carter and Long (1991) argue that students will be better motivated to read a literary text if they can relate it to their own ideas, feelings, opinions and perception. Unlike professional materials literature provides the texts that have something to do with us and our problems. "As G.K.Chesterton once pointed out, we can learn a good deal about entomology without being insects, but if we want to understand humanity, we have to be human ourselves and project our understanding from inside" ( cited from Hunt 1991, p.2).

Business students are not to be experts in literature but they are to be knowledgeable about the world, various cultures, interpersonal relations and human experience. There is no point in educating a businessman who is nothing but businessman. From my personal observations (figures will be given below), nowadays, students read less than a decade or two ago. Interweaving literature in the business language course might enrich the learning process. There are numerous examples when business people, in a creative way, employ their knowledge of literature, vivid literary characters, metaphors and quotations to cross the boundaries of shoptalk, when necessary, to treat professional issues from a fresh perspective. Describing the American style of management, as viewed by international professionals, Nimgade (1989, p.298), vice president of Genesis technology Group, Cambridge, Mass, and a research associate at Harvard Business School, opens his analytical paper quoting Robert Burns, then uses Gustave Flaubert's observation on man's nature for support of his ideas and, finally, cites Oscar Wilde's comments on the materialistic and utilitarian bent of the American Man .

When analyzing the concepts of the brand image and brand management outlined in an "The Economist" article, 24 out of 25 business students and 65 out of 93 applied linguistics students at Lviv

Polytechnic National University "did not hear" the paraphrase of the memorable Shakespeare's verses from "Romeo and Juliet" :

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet*

in the following sentences : "Brands add value by making customers loyal and, often willing to pay more for the things branded. *Roses by another name might smell as sweet* but they would no longer fetch \$30 a dozen". It is essential to mention that there are excellent Russian and Ukrainian translations of major Shakespeare's works which are part of a high school world literature syllabus.

### **Compiling an American Literature Supplement to the Business English course for schools of business in Ukraine**

This books can do-  
Not only this alone: they give  
New views to life, and  
Teach us how to live (George Grabbe)

To diversify the vocational nature of the Business English class an American Literature Supplement to the Business English course is being compiled and introduced at the Department of Applied Linguistics at Lviv National Polytechnic University (Ukraine). The goal of this project is to introduce an interdisciplinary program in language and culture for business. The use of the Supplement is intended to demonstrate through American literature of different chronological periods how American cultural values have been embodied in business practices.

Galloway (1998, p.140) argues that "the culture of a people cannot be boxed, exported or delivered in a class-room. The real-life story on intricate connections, integrating perspectives and internal sense-making cannot be told. It must be entered and experienced with respect for its own validity and regard for its own integrity". In case with Ukrainian students, there is much more communication through printed and audio-visual materials and very limited possibilities for live communication with native speakers. Galloway (1998, p.134) maintains that "a visit to an authentic text is much like a visit to the country itself".

The functional theory of language is based on the assumption that all language use is textual and, thus is realized in real-life contexts. The Supplement under design offers a thrilling journey to the world of American business to serious explorers, not tourists.

### **Selection of appropriate literary passages**

The American Literature Supplement to the Business English course is designed as a misselaneous collection of passages from novels, short stories and essays which are to appeal to readers and involve them emotionally. Krashen (1993, p.84) argues that "when second

language acquirers read for pleasure they develop the competence they need to move from the beginning “ordinary conversational” level to a level where they can use the second language for a more demanding purpose, such as the serious study of literature, business, so on”.

The writers represented include classics: Margaret Mitchell (*Gone with the Wind*), Jack London (*Martin Eden*), Theodore Dreiser (*The Financier*, *Stoic*, *Titan*), Francis Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*), O.Henry (*The Selected Stories*) and contemporary authors : William Saroyan (*Short Stories*), Arthur Hailey (*Airport*, *Hotel*) Randall Jarrell (*A Sad Heart at the Supermarket*), Margaret Mead (*Sex and Achievement*), John Grisham (*The Firm*), Sidney Sheldon (*The Stars Shine Down*, *Master of the Game*), Barbara Bradford (*To Be the Best*) and others. The choice of the corpus of the texts can be explained by a number of objective reasons. Most works of classical literature are available at Ukrainian academic libraries, both in English and excellent Russian and (occasionally) Ukrainian translation. Besides, students got already familiar with some of them. 130 students at the Business English class have been questioned. It turned out that all of the students read Jack London, 63 (all female students) – Margaret Mitchell, 55 students – O.Henry, 16 students– Theodore Dreiser, 1 student – F.Scott Fitzgerald.

The students demonstrate a special interest in contemporary American literature as a means to learn more about the life in America today, the language people speak today (both formal and informal registers). Unfortunately, the choice of contemporary literature is limited. Usually they are brought by American visiting professors, Peace Corps volunteers and sometimes through the Sabre Foundation.

The selected passages, a few paragraphs or a page long, are arranged thematically and explore a relevant professional issue of the Business English course: Presentations, Negotiations, Meetings, Entrepreneurship, Brand Management, Corporate Culture, Advertizing, Intercultural Communication, Women in Business etc.

How can new knowledge be fitted into already overcrowded curriculum? It should be incorporated into Business English studies and become an integral part of learning **the target matter** (business) via **the target language** (English) and **the target culture** (American).

The Business English course in Ukrainian universities is usually taken during one or two semesters. It appears reasonable to conclude each topic of the Business English syllabus with the relevant unit from the American Literature Supplement.

### **Key features of the Supplement**

The business-oriented literary Supplement is activity-based and student-centered. It

- offers an insight into a wide range of business issues;
- reinforces business terms and concepts in contexts which provide a panorama of business and social life as well as cultural traditions of America of different historical periods;
- represents human experience and interpersonal relations;
- involves students in such activities as analytical thinking, discussion and generalization.

The Supplement is designed as a means to reinforce business lexicon in a literary context and to develop students' cross-cultural competence. It is essential, as Wood (1999, p.163) maintains in negotiating literature in the Business French Class, "to establish a constant and predictable pedagogical framework so that students have a clear set of expectations as they read and consider each work". Reading is one of the four basic communicative skills. Appropriate reading strategies may determine language acquisition. Knowing how to read is essential for a dynamic interplay between a reader and a text. Reading involves cognitive processing of language and discourse structure, text construction as well as social and cultural contexts.

A set of exercises ranging in their pragmatic objectives requires students to review the content of the passages to better understand and retain the plot and characters as well as some factual business-related issues. Along with vocabulary and grammar exercises, comprehension and discussion questions in a pre-reading section and post-reading activities enhance learners' analytical and critical thinking abilities.

An essential benefit of integrating business and literature in the Business English Class accounts for the fact that the passages under analysis can be considered **specific case studies** due to their realism, practicality and human experience. Pearce & Robinson (1994) maintain that case analysis is both a proven educational method that adds realism and excitement to the business course and an excellent opportunity to develop and refine analytical skills. Thus, in the case *Euro Disney: The First 100 Days* (1993, p.4) prepared by Harvard Business School, "little things like the attitude of different nationalities with respect to disposing of trash are noticeable". A vivid example of the early days when there were "no extended street cleaning service" in the U.S. and how garbage collecting turned into a very profitable business is described by Dreiser in "The Financier":

*One man in particular had grown strong in his estimation as having some subtle political connection not visible on the surface, and this was Edward Malia Butler. Butler was a contractor, undertaking the construction of sewers, water-mains, foundations for buildings, street-paving and the like. In the early days, long before Cowperwood had known him, he had been a garbage-contractor on his own account. The city at that time had no extended street-cleaning service, particularly in its outlying sections and some of the older, poorer regions. Edward Butler, then a poor young Irishman, had begun by collecting and hauling away the garbage free of charge, and feeding it to his pigs and cattle. Later he discovered that people were willing to pay a small charge for this service. Then a local political character, a councilman friend of his – they were both Catholics - saw a new point in the whole thing. Butler could be made official garbage collector. The*

*council could vote an annual appropriation for this service. Butler could employ more wagons than he did now – dozens of them, scores. Not only that, but no other garbage collector would be allowed. There were others, but the official contract awarded him would also, officially, be the end of the life of any and every disturbing rival. A certain amount of the profitable proceeds would have to be set aside to assuage the feelings of those who were not contractors. Funds would to be loaned at election time to certain individuals and organizations – but no matter. The amount would be small. So Butler and Patrick Gavin Comiskey, the councilman (the latter silently) entered into business relations. Butler gave up driving a wagon himself. He hired a young man, a smart Irish boy of his neighborhood, Jimmy Sheehan, to be his assistant, superintendent, stableman, bookkeeper, and what not. Since he soon began to make between four and five thousand a year, where before he made two thousand, he moved into a brick house in an outlying section of the south side, and sent his children to school. Mrs. Butler gave up making soap and feeding pigs. And since then times had been exceedingly good with Edward Butler. (Theodore Dreiser. *The Financier*. Foreign Language Publish House. Moscow. 1954, p.9-10).*

The professional, linguistic and cultural aspects of the topic “Women in Business” may be reinforced by passages and their analyses from a number of contemporary novels. However, “the hardness and endurance” as well as “the shrewd trading instinct” of Scarlett O’Hara (*Gone with the Wind*) who “had the aggressiveness and intended to use it”, who “was conducting her affairs in a masculine way”, who “ventured out into the rough world of men, competing with them, rubbing shoulders with them” (when the public opinion was that “a woman had no business even knowing what a mortgage was”) makes Scarlett O’Hara one of the most brilliant characters in the literary gallery of business ladies.

The pages of America’s world-known epic novel *Gone with Wind* may boast a collection of quotations which mirror the business world like:

*“Deaths and taxes and childbirth! There’s never any convenient time for any of them!”*

*“There’s just as much money to be made in the wreck of a civilization as in the upbuilding of one... There’s still plenty of money to be made by anyone who isn’t afraid to work – or to grab”.*

I was reproached by some American colleagues for employing classical literature as “out-dated material” to explore business matters. But classical literature is known for exposing its readers to common human values, problems and joys. It may sound relevant and adequate today. As an additional argument to support my approach in using fiction in the Business English class I would like to cite O’Henry’s humorous words every visitor can see in the Consular Section for American citizens at the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine which make sense today as well:

*“You can’t appreciate home ‘til you’ve left it, ... nor old glory ‘til you see it hanging on a broomstick on the shanty of a consul in a foreign town”.*

The parallel examples (found in business editions and fiction) are abundant. They may lead to a high level of personal involvement and response. As Rusterholz (1987, p.433) reasonably argues, "We can never prepare our students adequately for the variety of working situations in which they may eventually find themselves, but by teaching them to be skillful readers, we can give them the tools to continue to teach themselves".

### **Ukrainian students in an international context**

The most viable patterns of acquiring international professional and intercultural experience are through credit transfer practice, internships, university joint projects and exchange programs. Credit transfer across national boundaries is an established practice in many western countries while in Ukraine it is being under discussion.

For the young people from the countries of the former Soviet block, Ukraine among them, their involvement into the international educational community in the early 90-ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the collapse of the communist regime, was a dramatic change. It was through exchange programs that they could implement people-to-people democracy and enhance their academic competence.

The goal of student exchange programs is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among nations. It is not only a valuable educational experience but also an excellent opportunity for personal and professional development. Exchange programs provide students with the opportunity to become professionally competitive in a global context, shape or deepen awareness of shared human values and interests, to increase their sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities.

The term "*exchange student*" refers to students on a study program abroad, even if the student's natural family is not hosting a foreign student.

Student exchange programs relevant to Ukraine may be categorized as short-term (one-three months) and long-term (six-twelve months) and as those administered by governmental structures (e.g. Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program, Edmund Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program) and various foundations and private organizations (e.g. Central European- University Graduate and Undergraduate programs, International Renaissance Foundation, Canada-Ukraine Parliament Foundation in Toronto, European University Center for Peace Studies etc). The U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland are leaders among donating countries.

The latest statistical data processed by an American Councils office in Lviv, Western Ukraine, reflect a strong interest of Ukrainian students in academic exchange programs :

## **2001-2002**

### **Edmund Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program:**

Applicants - 1092                      Semi-finalists -323                      Finalists-120

### **Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program:**

Applicants -2300                      Semi-finalists-473                      Finalists - 128

## **2000-2001**

### **Edmund Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program**

Applicants - 1053                      Semi-finalists - 337                      Finalists - 106

### **Freedom Support Undergraduate Program**

Applicants – 1471                      Semi-finalists - 483                      Finalists - 128

All international programs are highly competitive by definition. The prospective exchange students are to demonstrate the following characteristics along with academic excellence : adaptability, leadership potential, high motivation, responsibility, interpersonal and communicative skills and proficiency in a foreign language (English in particular).

Applying to student exchange programs and, if chosen, participating in them can be exciting and challenging. It can also, at times, be disappointing or frustrating. The reasons for these are students' capabilities to fit into a foreign cultural environment . On entering a foreign cultural milieu students are more knowledgeable about its explicit, "surface" manifestations and less knowledgeable about its implicit, "deep", aspects. It is essential to emphasize that “intercultural education involves a way of thinking, including a philosophical perspective, a set of decision-making criteria and a specific value orientation” (Lasonen 2003, p.2). The process of adaptation to a new academic and cultural environment may be, and usually is, different for students from different countries. It is much easier for students from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium to adjust to American culture than for students from Ukraine. The matter is that the former countries are culturally more compatible with the U.S. as countries with low context culture (Victor 1992) unlike Ukraine, country with high context culture.

Chronologically, an exchange program covers the following stages : an application process and pre-departure orientation - entering a host cultural and academic community - living and studying abroad - returning home. An application process includes CV (or resume) and essay writing as well as an interview process. As was shown above a resume genre may serve as an illustration of specific cultural assumptions. Getting through an interview westerners present themselves with confidence maximizing their strengths and creating a

positive effect. Western candidates demonstrate their assertiveness (or "aggressiveness" in an American context) to prove that they are the right candidates. Such a direct approach is not characteristic of Ukrainian mentality oriented, or rather used to be oriented, toward collectivism.

Ukrainian and American applicants employ different cultural strategies in essay writing : the former prefer inductive discourse patterns while the latter lay emphasis on introducing the most essential information through deductive discourse patterns. Neglecting such culture-specific aspects may be a serious strategic drawback.

The significance of training students culturally for successful application process as well as for a pre-departure orientation increases dramatically in short-term programs : the period of experiential and cognitive learning about a new cultural environment is rather limited.

The concept of the interdependence of communicative skills, intercultural competence and professional performance has been successfully implemented in the new paradigm of foreign language education by the U.S. in interdisciplinary Foreign Language, Culture and Business Studies by Centers for International Business Education & Research /CIBERS/ (Voght 1999). This kind of educational innovation could be of great practical benefit for Ukrainian universities to internationalize the curricula, to make students competitive in a global context and to better equip them as new leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The significant feedback of student exchange programs for Ukraine is really dramatic. The results of new experiential and cognitive knowledge gained by exchange students is shared and spread in different social and economic national projects. On their return home, professionally trained, cross-culturally minded and globally going exchange students are really able to make a change in Ukrainian society.

International professional experience and intercultural competence of university graduates are highly valued by western employers and investors in Ukraine. Excellent job opportunities and competitive salaries are offered to young people with western experience in joint ventures, companies, non-governmental organizations etc.

### **Culture shock : before of after?**

Over recent years, the nature of culture shock in a Ukrainian interpretation has been changing. More and more exchange students claim that the culture shock they experience on entering a foreign country is less than that they experience on returning home. It is a serious

social phenomenon to be given a special consideration by Ukrainian politicians , economists and sociologists. One of the reasons , exchange students and researchers say, is the striking difference in patterns of attitudes, social life, accommodating cultural diversity, high standards of customer service. Non-service mentality typical of Ukrainian business and service circles hinders the market economy and may account for the process of painful transition of Ukraine.

### **Summary**

In this paper I have attempted to give an outline of some of the ways in which business language education in Ukraine could be reconsidered from an intercultural perspective. Current challenges of teaching and learning Business English in Ukrainian schools of business have been addressed since broadening an international understanding is critical for Ukraine. The shaping of intercultural competence as part of effective business practices has mostly been left out of university business language curricula. An up-dated interdisciplinary Business English curriculum in Ukrainian schools of business should integrate the target language (English), an international perspective and cross-cultural professional content. Some practical suggestions for acquiring culture via language (vocabulary, grammar and discourse patterns) have been made.

Sources of cultural content, appropriate from the point of view of effective business performance, were considered. Special emphasis has been laid upon diversifying the vocational nature of the Business English course and compiling an American Literature Supplement which mirror cultural and historical dimensions of American business practices and values through literature.

The benefits of involving Ukrainian university students into the international educational community through exchange programs were demonstrated. As a result, some suggestions concerning the transformation of the phenomenon of culture shock in a Ukrainian context need further political, economic and sociological consideration.

Implementing the principles of cross-cultural sensitivity in the foreign business languages education is sure to be beneficial for nurturing future Ukrainian business leaders capable to make a change in the process of staggering transition on the way to a better life in Ukraine.

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