In an increasingly connected and interdependent world effective communication not only becomes more important but also much more difficult. It is often not dissimilar languages that cause the greatest problems but rather much more mundane and harder to detect cultural differences. One of them relates to high-context and low-context cultures. These cultures vary in business spheres such as negotiations, business cards designing, business correspondence and phone calls. The aim of our research is to analyze linguistic tools used by low-context and high-context cultures in the business negotiation process.

The notion of high and low-context cultures was first discussed by an anthropologist Edward T. Hall in his book titled «Beyond Culture» in 1976. According to this book high-context cultures are those in which the rules of communication are primarily transmitted through the use of contextual elements (i.e., body language, a person’s status, and tone of voice) and are not explicitly stated. This is in direct contrast to low-context cultures, in which information is communicated primarily through language and rules are explicitly spelled out. It is important to note that no culture is completely high-context or low-context, since all societies contain at least some elements that are both high and low. High context cultures predominate in Japanese, Arabs and French. Anglos, Germanics and Scandinavians basically relate to low-context cultures.

The USA partners, for example, are mainly low-context: business meetings may involve brief introductions and handshakes, but, in general, they tend to be relatively free-form, with participants not always adhering to strict rules about who speaks and when. In Japan, on the other hand, participants in business meetings tend to follow much stricter procedures in greetings, exchanges of business cards, and structures for introducing topics.

In the course of research we’ve listened negotiation dialogues and analyzed the linguistic tools used. The first dialogue is represented by Americans and Mexicans, the second is between Brazilians and Japanese and the last one is between Americans and Brazilians. We took into account the following criteria: parenthesis, modal verbs, formal cohesion indefinite words, subjunctive mood, direct answers, firm and uncertain statements used by these two cultures. Each country represented in these dialogues has their own unique way of applying these tools.

From those dialogues we found out that regardless of the cultural context the country belongs to, they behave differently in certain situations. As a rule firm statements are used by high-context cultures because they are certain about what
they are going to suggest while low-context cultures usually use uncertain statements, namely «not really», «actually», «I don’t think so», «I would say», etc.

Judging by the first dialogue we can say that the USA partners as representatives of low-context cultures, used firm statements twice as often as Mexican partners did, a high-context culture. This example is in conformity with the theory. Besides, the negotiations took place in the USA where the Americans were more confident and the Mexicans felt less comfortable. From the second dialogue we found out that the Brazilians, on whose territory the meeting was hold, applied more certain statements that the Japanese did. The Brazilians used 6 firm statements and Japanese 7 uncertain statements, and both are high-context cultures. The third dialogue is an exception from the theory we’ve marked above. In this negotiation the USA as a receiving country behaved aggressively and assertively by using firm statements. As Brazilians relate to a high context-culture they are used to avoiding conflicts, they choose uncertain statements in order to settle contentious issues.

Major cultural differences between high and low-context cultures are obvious in dialogues. Still, they have a high prospective for mutually beneficial communication as assertiveness of a low-context partner tends to impact a high-context partner making the dialogue more direct in concrete situations.

Литература


Stereotyp językowy kobiety w przysłowiach polskich i białoruskich

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Stereotyp jest rozumiany jako «psychologiczny, socjalny, funkcjonujący w świadomości społecznej, skrótowy, uproszczony, zabarwiony wartościującego, obraz rzeczywistości, odnoszący się do rzeczy, osób, grup społecznych, często oparty na niepełnej lub fałszywej wiedzy o świecie, utrwalony jednak przez tradycje i nieulegający zmianom» [1, с. 712]. Obraz kobiety w świadomości współczesnego Polaka i Białorusina, jej pozycję i rolę w kulturze kształtuje dziś zarówno doświadczenie indywidualne, jak też wielowiekowe doświadczenie zbiorowe,