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Why the cultural briefing is also necessary among Spanish-speaking countries? Non-verbal cross-cultural differences under scrutiny

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A widespread fallacy in the business world of Spanish-speaking countries is that speaking or sharing a common language minimizes cultural differences and, consequently, it is not necessary to make effort to learn about these possible differences through expert advice tools such as “cultural briefing” before a negotiation. However, as countless examples have shown, many promising deals have not come to a “happy end” because of ignorance of these differences. Accordingly, the rigorous study of the variations and differences in non-verbal communication that manifest themselves in business behavior among Spanish-speaking countries is of utmost importance and, consequently, both native Spanish speakers and students of Spanish for Business should become familiar with them to improve their cultural competence. This perspective is practically absent in the teaching materials published to date in Spanish for Business, with notable exceptions (Brenes and Lauterborn 2002; Cahill and De los Ríos, 2002; Felices, Iriarte, Núñez and Calderón 2010; Scott and Fryer 2019) even if their approach tends to be superficial. Therefore, a systematization of these variations is a pending task and may prove a useful tool for the future design of didactic resources. The well-known cultural dimensions provided by Edward Hall or Geert Hofstede are a good starting point to initiate this approach. The selection of textual examples offered in our presentation will serve to contrast the cultural differences that go unnoticed by many authors of current business etiquette guides.

Biographical note(s) of the author(s)

Ángel Felices Lago is Full Professor and works at the University of Granada, Spain, since 1984. He teaches English and Spanish for business and tourism. His main areas of research interest go from lexicology, discourse analysis and axiological linguistics to NLP applied to LSP. He has co-authored or co-edited 10 books and has published over 90 scholarly articles and reviews in specialized journals and volumes. He has also taken part in various national and international academic projects.

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Recommendation (for student section)

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