



## ICOPROMO

Intercultural competence for professional mobility  
*Compétence interculturelle pour le développement  
de la mobilité professionnelle*



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| <h3>“Languaging” through e-mail</h3>   | <b>Relationship building</b>   |
| <p><b>Rationale</b></p> <p>When communicating via e-mail, particularly across different cultures, different communication goals and styles must be taken into account.</p> <p><b>Learning Outcome</b></p> <p>Participants are expected to become critically aware of language use and learn to accommodate to different styles without compromising their own.</p> <p><b>Competences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Relationship building</li><li>Mutual accommodation</li><li>Sense-making</li><li>Perspective-taking</li></ul> |  |
| <p><b>Time</b></p> <p>90 minutes</p><br><p><b>Materials required</b></p> <p>Handout</p>  | <p><b>Participants</b></p> <p>Up to 25</p> <p>This activity is suitable for both a monocultural and a multicultural context.</p> |

## **Procedure**

1. Question 1 is very straightforward. The group read the quote and answer the question. Trainees share their selected e-mails with the rest of the group to better explain their conclusions. The findings are discussed.
2. Question 2 is similar to question 1. The facilitator should make the cultural factor evident from the start, so trainees are aware of this focus. Question 3 develops this issue further.
3. Question 4 is meant to encourage the exchange of experiences. It would be of added value if trainees could show some of their own e-mails.
4. Question 5 should be done individually, or possibly in pairs if the group is very big. After writing the e-mails, trainees can exchange them with one another and comment on each other's writings. This will make it clear whether the intended focus of the text actually comes across.

## **Guidelines**

Depending on the emphasis the trainer wants to give to the discussion of personal experience, it may be of added value to encourage trainees to bring some of their own e-mails to be discussed.

## **References**

Phipps, A. and Gonzalez, M. (2004). *Modern Languages: Learning and teaching in an intercultural field*. London: Sage

Scollon, R. and Scollon, S. W. (2001) *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 151



## **“Languaging” through e-mail**

### **A. Discussion**

**. . . when we communicate with others we simultaneously communicate some amount of information and indicate our current expectations about the relationship between or among participants.**

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. W. (2001) *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, p. 151

1. Select some professional e-mail messages, as an example, and analyse which of the functions mentioned above – communicating information and indicating expectations - is minimised and which one is maximised.

### **B. There are, however, cultural variables to be taken into account**

**From an intercultural point of view, we can see that cultures often are different from each other in how much importance they give to one function of language over the other.**

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. W. (2001) *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, p. 151

2. Choose a set of professional e-mail messages exchanged between two individuals from different cultures. In terms of the importance given to the two functions of language mentioned above, how different are the approaches of these two individuals?
3. What elements do you suspect account for such differences (culture, personality, social class, gender, age, language proficiency, job ranking, etc.) and why?

### **C. As well as different types of communication**

**International business culture, especially since the introduction of nearly instant global computer communications, places a very high value on the communication of information and very little value on the communication of relationship.**

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. W. (2001) *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 151 f.

4. In your group, discuss whether you agree or disagree with this statement, based on your individual professional experience of intercultural exchange of e-mail messages.
5. Imagine that, due to a delay in getting the permits, your department was not able to send on schedule the medical supplies that are urgently needed in the Dili main hospital. However, you have already managed to sort out the problem and the supplies are leaving on the next plane. You now have to inform your Australian colleague in East Timor of this.
  - 5.1 Write an e-mail message where the communication of information is your main goal;
  - 5.2 Rewrite the same e-mail message where both functions are balanced;
  - 5.3 Rewrite the e-mail message again but with a strong focus on relationship building;
  - 5.4 Reply to your last e-mail message, trying to put the focus back on the exchange of information while at the same time trying not to be unpleasant and to accommodate your colleague's style.