**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** This paper aims at uncovering the hampering and facilitating factors in intercultural communication that professionals encounter in their business relationships.

**Methodology:** The data collection process involved conducting individual interviews and two rounds of focus groups with professionals who shared their experiences in working with another culture. The transcripts were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) with the assistance of
Atlas.ti 9.

**Findings:** The key challenges that emerged were differences in communication styles: too direct versus too indirect; misunderstandings and misconceptions when communicating in non-native languages; differences in business customs, such as separating business from private life versus blurred business and personal relationships; differences in decision-making and stereotyping.

**Value Added:** We offer a new perspective about existing models and theories of intercultural dimensions, highlighting the risks they entail when superficially generalized. Our paper contributes to professional practice by illustrating how language, differences in the communication style, business etiquette and stereotyping can prevent successful interactions. We show that business English may facilitate international communication but may easily become a source of misinterpretation.

**Recommendations:** Intercultural flexibility can play a fundamental role in contextualizing communication and providing true meaning to businesses exchanges. Adjusting language, focusing on building trustful relationships and creating alignment processes can all be instrumental for more effective and successful business communication. Future research with business professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds would enrich our understanding of intercultural business communication.

**Key words:** international business, intercultural communication, hampering factor, facilitating factor, business professional, cultural intelligence