

Gioia **DUFAU**

N° étudiant 38014872

Master 1 LEA M2i - Management International et Interculturel

**MANAGING MULTICULTURAL TEAMS IN THE AIRLINE  
INDUSTRY: A CHALLENGING TAKE-OFF.**

*"How do airline companies deal with cultural barriers through  
corporate communication?"*



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Sous la direction de Mme ROSSETTE

Université Paris Nanterre

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## INTRODUCTION

The journey through an airport might seem linear. We arrive, check-in, go through the customs, board the plane, listen to the commander, observe the cabin crew securing the flight, then after the landing we collect our luggage and go through a security check. Yet, as simple as it might seem, there are hundreds of people preparing each procedure at different levels of the airline industry.

The airline industry can be defined as a global chain ensuring the air transportation of freight and passengers, ranging from the creation and maintenance of the aircrafts to the ground and air control and customer services, without excluding the conception and the marketing of the services on offer.

The British writer D.E Williams said that "*all human life can be found in an airport*".<sup>1</sup> This quote could be perfectly extended to the whole airline industry, as behind each flight there are multiple organizations with different corporate cultures, organizations made up of hundreds of employees coming from all walks of life.

If we are now able to see a journey through an airport as a linear, simple, and daily activity, it is because all the backstage work is done in a coordinated way, despite the different languages, beliefs, educations, personalities and the numerous cultural differences.

In 2017, the airline industry provided not less than 62.7 million jobs all around the world. Those opportunities are directly generated within the airlines, the air navigation services providers and the airport operators, but also via the supply chain of goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/8191723/Interview-David-Walliams-and-Matt-Lucas.html>

<sup>2</sup> Industry High-Level Group, *Aviation Benefits*, 2017, p.9

At this point, we are almost in front of a paradox: how can multiculturalism not be a barrier to effective communication in such a complex environment? How is it possible to manage multicultural teams in the airline industry?

To answer this question, I will divide my work into three parts, in which we shall explore each step of this journey through a multicultural point of view. We shall also examine the managing and communicative patterns of these professional and human relations.

In a first part, I will give some examples of safety issues due to communication barriers and discuss the extent to which cultural differences between employees can create or worsen a crisis. This will include a definition and typology of culture.

Then, I will focus on the importance of securing a strong corporate language, culture and identity. I will first examine Airspeak and give an insight into CRM studies. Then I will study the role of corporate communication and corporate events in uniting and unifying employees in a more suitable environment.

Finally, I will illustrate and debate on these various aspects in a comparative case study. I will analyze the management strategies of British Airways and Emirates Airlines and list their differences.

## PART I : ISSUES DUE TO CULTURAL BARRIERS

The aim of this part is to study the link between culture and communication in the working environment of the airline industry.

I will define in a first chapter what "culture" means and in a second chapter I will consider Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Finally, I will show that the cultural distance in those teams is significant enough to impact communication. I will illustrate this part by analyzing some air accidents that have really occurred.

### CHAPTER 1 : A DEFINITION AND TYPOLOGY OF CULTURE

The word "culture", derived from the Latin verb *colere*, was originally used to refer to the idea of working the land. As the first primitive human tribes evolved into more civilised societies, this term was then extended to the religious meaning of worship.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays and in the large sense of the term, culture represents what is learnt through education as opposed to nature.

The British anthropologist Edward B. Taylor was, in 1871, the first person to define culture in its modern meaning. He defined it as a "*complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*"<sup>4</sup>

Even though this definition is commonly shared, there are different ways to perceive the notion of culture. For example, while many cultures look at culture as the result of the Enlightenment, German people have a romantic approach of *kultur* that they define as the spirit of a group.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>

<sup>4</sup> Edward TAYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, John Murray, London, 1871, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> [https://crdp.ac-amiens.fr/historial/soldat/thema\\_allem\\_idee.html](https://crdp.ac-amiens.fr/historial/soldat/thema_allem_idee.html)

Whether it is seen as a complex of knowledge and customs or seen as a spirit, culture can be studied on several levels.<sup>6</sup> This includes:

- **National level.** Still standing to Taylor's definition, it is a set of knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, morals and customs shared by a group of people living in a specific geographical area defined and unified by a specific political entity. When the area is wide, it can even be divided into regional cultures.
- **Gender level.** This difference is recognized within the same national culture and highly depends on it. It is illustrated by the way men and women differ in reacting and responding to the symbols used in society.<sup>7</sup>
- **Occupational level.** This culture is based on a common ground between people sharing a specific profession, leisure or passion.
- **Organizational level.** This corresponds to the culture present in a specific workplace and shared by its employees. Here again, this culture might go beyond the national level. Yet, organizational cultures differ from one company to another, even if they are based in the same country.

Those four levels represent altogether a huge part of the psychology of an individual. Yet, they have few in common when taken individually. For example, national cultures belong to anthropology while organizational cultures belong to sociology.<sup>8</sup> There is another major difference between the two first levels (national and gender) and the other levels (occupational and organisational). This difference lies in the way the culture is transmitted.

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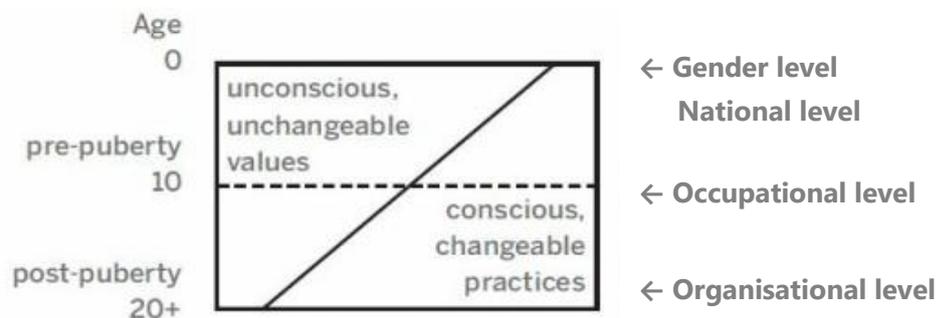
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.culturalorientations.com/Our-Approach/Six-Levels-of-Culture/55/>

<sup>7</sup> Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects whose meaning is understood in the same way by those who share the same culture.

<sup>8</sup> Geert HOFSTEDE, "National Cultures, Organizational Cultures, And The Role Of Management", in *Values and Ethics for the 21st Century (F. González's edition)*, BBVA, Madrid, 2011.

In the first case, we have a *society* → *individual* transfer: the common basis of the culture is taught to the individual during his childhood by his relatives and social institutions. In the second case, we have an *individual* → *society* transfer: the individual has to learn the rules of the society, how to integrate it and to socialize.

This scheme adapted from the work of the Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede shows the way and the age at which an individual can acquire and assimilate the mental patterns linked to those different levels of culture: <sup>9</sup>



All the elements we have just seen highlight the fact that the national culture, rooted unconsciously in the mind of an individual from his youngest age and shared by an entire nation or region is hard to change. On the other hand, organisational cultures, also known as corporate cultures are learnt in a conscious way by the individual when he has reached intellectual maturity.<sup>10</sup> This culture can be changed and shaped by professionals. Yet managers will never be able to change a national culture. They can only understand it and use it.

But what are the unconscious values of the national culture that threaten effective interactions in a community united by a same passion, profession or company?

<sup>9</sup> Geert HOFSTEDE, "National Cultures, Organizational Cultures And The Role Of Management", op. cit., p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Linda FERREL, John FRAEDRICH et al., *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*, South Western C-engage Learning, Mason, 2013.

## CHAPTER 2 : HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

In this chapter, I would like to describe Hofstede's work and approach of the complexity of the national cultures. As a former IBM employee, he started an innovative cross-cultural research with more than 100,000 surveys collected in IBM subsidiaries in 50 countries. In 1984, he came up with four different factors, called *dimensions*. They are underlined in the following figure.<sup>11</sup>



This figure also integrates two concepts emphasised by the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall : the spatio-temporal and the context *dimension*.

- **Relation to power**, also called "power distance" refers to the way power is distributed. At a national level, it is visible in the respect for elders, in redistribution policies and rebellion towards the government. At an organisational level, it is visible in the flexibility or rigidity of the hierarchy.
- **Relation to structure**, also known as "individualism versus collectivism". It is related to the integration of individuals into already existing groups and the way individuals offer their help or time to others. For example, individualism is visible in national culture in faster walking or weaker family ties while collectivism in organisational culture is visible in strong bonds between employees, open space offices or common facilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Geert HOFSTEDE, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2001.

- **Relation to uncertainty**, relating to the level of apprehension individuals can feel when they must face a problem or an unknown future. Both at national and organisational level, a good relation to uncertainty is visible in initiatives, risk-taking and competitiveness.
- **Masculinity vs femininity**, not to be confused with the gender level. Here, masculinity represents ambition and differentiated gender roles, while femininity stands for a caring and relationship-oriented society in which social gender roles overlap.

Those dimensions start developing in the mindsets of the individuals from its childhood and are considered as unconscious and unchangeable as soon as the individual reaches pre-puberty. Those dimensions are hard to change from a generation to another, since they are closely linked to History. For example, the Frontier Spirit, the American Dream and the myth of the self-made-man secured in the United States a strong individualist dimension.<sup>12</sup> On the other side of the globe, the Indians have a strong sense of collectivism and masculinity but also a strong respect of hierarchy because of the traces left by the Caste system.

In addition to those four dimensions, it is necessary to take into account the way time and space are seen by the individuals to define their culture. This was the main goal pursued by Edward T. Hall in his work "The hidden dimension".<sup>13</sup>

- **Relation to space**, also called *proxemics*. In 1963, Hall highlighted that every culture made a distinction between public space and private space, yet that this perception of space differed among the cultures. Regarding the Anglo-Saxon culture, Hall came up with the following pattern:

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<sup>12</sup> Frontier Spirit : sense of freedom and infinite opportunities due to the 19<sup>th</sup> century gold rush.

<sup>13</sup> Edward HALL, *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor books, Boston, 1966.

- Intimate distance (embracing or touching) → Less than 45 cm.
- Personal distance (for relatives or friends) → From 46cm to 1.2m.
- Social distance (for acquaintances) → From 1.2m to 3.5m.
- Public distance (public speaking) → Beyond 4m.

In Latin American and African national cultures, those distances tend to be reduced, while in Northern European and Japanese cultures those distances are increased. In an intercultural interaction in which the interactors are not aware of the space perception of the others, if an intimate or personal zone is crossed it might cause discomfort or be seen as a sign of disrespect.

- **Relation to time.** Hall noticed that cultures differed both in their time orientation and in their time focus. The orientation can be towards the past, the present or the future. Past-focused cultures value past traditions and seek short-term gain. Future-focused cultures value risk-taking and seek long-term gain. The time focus can either be monochronic or polychronic.

Those two concepts were further developed in 1993 by the Dutch organizational theorist Fons Trompenaars. He illustrates the timeline vision of the different countries using three circles, representing respectively past, present and future. In this figure we can distinguish sequential and synchronous cultures.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Figure adapted from Fons TROMPENAARS, Charles HAMPDEN-TURNER, *Riding The Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, McGraw-Hill Education, London, 2012.

We can see a clear difference between for example France and Malaysia. In a sequential (or monochronic) culture such as the French one, people tend to see time as a linear and inflexible sequence of events and attach different importance to the past, present and future. That is why punctuality and planning are valued. Their vision of time also results in a focus on tasks rather than people.

In synchronous (or polychronic) cultures such as Malaysia, the past, present and future are interrelated periods. Time is seen as a flexible set. That is why working on several projects at once or last-minute planning are not seen as confused operations. In this case, the focus is set on people rather than on tasks.

- **Relation to context.** Even though Hofstede did not integrate it to his first *dimensions*, the relation to context has a major importance in his other works. Context refers to the surrounding circumstances, environment and information in which an intercultural interaction occurs. He made a distinction between low-context cultures and high-context cultures.

In low-context cultures, interactions rely on what is explicitly displayed and do not require people to seek any further implicit information. Whether it is oral or written communication is direct and easy. In case of ambiguous situations, people will ask for help. The American and Western cultures are typical examples.

In high-context cultures, communication relies a lot on the context. People are expected to seek further information relying on implied meanings and common knowledge. Therefore, digital communication is difficult. This culture is more likely to be found in the Asian part of the world.

Now, I would like to explain and put those dimensions and concepts in context using the examples of accidents that have really occurred in the airline industry.

### CHAPTER 3 : EXAMPLES OF ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Over the past century, safety has been the highest priority for the airline industry. Incredible improvements in technology, science and training have resulted in making airplanes the safest mean of transportation.<sup>15</sup> As less crashes are due to technical issues, improvement researchers now focus on the role of human errors.

Tony Kern says in his book "*Flight discipline*" that the simplest categorisation of human error would be to split them into errors of omission or commission.<sup>16</sup>

Omissions occur when actions are not executed during an operation. If omissions are not *violations* (actions consciously made) and are the consequence of a distraction, they are called *lapses*. Commissions occur when crew members do something that is not required or carry out a task incorrectly because of a misinterpretation. Commissions can be *slips* (the result of a set of minor errors of execution) or *mistakes* (actions conform to an inadequate plan). Commissions and omissions often happen because of cultural barriers among the crew members.

I would like to begin with the example of the Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 which disappeared in 1997 while approaching the island of Guam. Even though he was less tired than his American commander who had negotiated a bad approach, the Korean co-pilot committed an omission (a *violation*) : his relation to power made him feel uncomfortable with the idea of correcting the *mistake* of his commander.<sup>17</sup> In high-power societies such as the Korean one, offending the supreme authority of the "captain" (even though he was only two years his elder)

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<sup>15</sup> According to the Civil Aviation Authority, the fatality rate per billion kilometres travelled by plane is 0.003 compared to 0.27 by rail and 2.57 by car.

<sup>16</sup> Tony KERN, *Flight discipline*, McGraw-Hill companies, San Francisco, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, please see the summary of Hofstede's work page 7.

would be inappropriate and an injury to hierarchy. The co-pilot just suggested that the captain should control again the landing aid system. The commander, used to the US low-context culture and unfamiliar with high-power cultures, understood it as a simple suggestion and not as an implicit order. As a result, the South Korean jumbo came to smash a mountain, killing 228 people.

On the other hand, if an air controller from a low-power culture says to a pilot: "traffic at 2 o'clock, 3 miles, level at 6.000, to pass under you" it is obvious for him that this sentence is not a direct order.<sup>18</sup> For him, the phrase "level at 6.000" only referred to the traffic, without any implied message. Yet the Greek pilot, coming from a high uncertainty avoidance country, had always been used to respecting rigid procedures and being given orders.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, he interpreted this directive sentence as an imperative one and levelled off the engine at 6,000 feet. This minor commission (mistake) did not cause any victims but it shows the extent to which cultural differences can be a barrier in communication.

Cultural differences can also create tensions between employees. In the cockpit, the use of automation systems is often questioned. Pilots from individualistic and masculine cultures would rather fly the aircraft manually. First because challenges, individual acting and risk-taking are highly valued, also because the work performed by machines is distrusted. Alternatively, pilots from collectivist nations would rather rely on them, because they trust the system more than themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Thanks to those examples, we can already conclude that cultural factors may account for team errors and communication breakdowns, all the more so since they work in a very confined space and high-stress environment.

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<sup>18</sup> Judith ORASANU, *Cross-Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication in Aviation*, Sage, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, please see the summary of Hofstede's work page 8.

<sup>20</sup> For more information, please see the summary of Hofstede's work page 7.

→ Let us now sum up this first part of my research.

In this first chapter, I have given an outlook on “culture” and the four levels of culture (gender level, national level, occupational level, organisational level). If gender level is becoming less relevant in a world where men and women share the same roles, the different cultures rise against standardisation by giving more importance to their national, occupational and organizational cultures.

In the airline industry, there is a multiplicity of nationalities and professions (pilots, flight attendants, air controllers, ground controllers, flight dispatchers....) This means that a huge number of people of different national cultures and occupational cultures have to learn how to work efficiently together.

Even if the national culture is a complex and unchangeable set of *dimensions* and factors, as highlighted in the second chapter, Hofstede’s work show that the occupational and organisational cultures are changeable and manageable.

The accidents, misinterpretations and tensions I mentioned in the third chapter show how important it is to reduce cultural barriers in the airline industry. All the elements evidenced in this first part show that it was high time organisational culture was used as a communication and management tool.

## **PART II : THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING A STRONG CORPORATE CULTURE**

The aim of this chapter is to study how national and organizational cultures can be used by the management teams as a way to overcome cultural barriers among the employees. This implies several applications of culture.

I will debate on the most important ones in the next three chapters. In the first one, I will give an outlook on crew resource management training. In a second chapter, I will deal with corporate language and the use of Airspeak, and in a third chapter I will study the role of corporate communication and corporate events.

### **CHAPTER 1 : THE RISE OF CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STUDIES**

In the first part of my research, we saw that organizational culture was acquired consciously by an individual performing an *individual* → *society* transfer, where he has to learn how to integrate.<sup>21</sup> This integration represents the first approach of the employee to his future job, and the organizational culture of his company.

Of course, this transfer is a more complex interaction than a simple one-way transfer. The structure in which the employee tries to integrate also has a role to play in ensuring the transfer is smooth, hence the importance of communicating a lot about the corporate culture and offering a proper training.

As researchers realized the extend of cultural barriers, and as the use of multi-national crews was increasing in most international airlines, the need for universal intercultural training programs emerged as soon as 1970. 1979 represents a turning point as the NASA organized a workshop on this issue.

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<sup>21</sup> For more information, please see the figure on the mental acquisition of culture page 6.

At the end of the meeting, CRM was officially born. In 1984, Dr. John Lauber defined CRM as "*using all available resources - Information, Equipment, and People to achieve safe and efficient flight operations.*"<sup>22</sup>

At that time, pilots were considered the central figure and the training was designed for them. In fact, the acronym CRM stood for "Cockpit Resource Management". This discipline was then promoted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, a United Nation agency specialized in aviation safety, and all the members countries adopted CRM.

Yet there were still major communication problems within the aircrafts. In commercial airlines, airplanes are separated into two geographical and sociological areas, the cockpit and the cabin.<sup>23</sup> Each environment has its own system of values, goals and behaviors. Traditionally, there was also a cultural difference at gender level. Being a pilot, a male dominated profession where safety is stressed, meant an individual way of thinking a need to be taught how to act in teams. On the other hand, being flight attendant, a female dominated profession where passenger service is emphasized, meant a feminist and collectivist mindset.

Flight attendants were then included in CRM programs, until the NASA arranged another meeting in 1993 where they realized the training should include not only pilots and flight attendants, but also mechanics, dispatchers, air controllers, ground personnel and anyone else involved in the safe completion of a flight.

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<sup>22</sup> John LAUBER et al., *Resource Management On The Flightdeck: Proceedings of a NASA/Industry Workshop*, NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, CA, 1980, p.20.

<sup>23</sup> METSCHER Donald et al., "Multi-Cultural Factors in the Crew Resource Management Environment: Promoting Aviation Safety for Airline Operations", in *Journal of Aviation/Aerospace Education & Research*, Winter 2009, p.9.

Therefore, a new generation of CRM courses emerged and the name was changed to Crew Resource Management to include a large number of occupational and organizational cultures, both inside and outside the aircraft.

By the late 1990s CRM had become a global standard. This standard included cognitive processes and culture. Indeed, CRM is now a training program whose goal is to explain why the employees involved in previous accidents committed errors due to human and cultural factors. The employees are encouraged to take into account other factors than the technical ones.

Teachers from the CRM training school Bla Mediamentor summed up the core factors and the individual/team/situation link in the following figure.<sup>24</sup>



This figure shows the importance of a common CRM program among all the employees, because the six main components of air team (highlighted in grey) can ensure a good situational awareness, a good decision-making process and ultimately safety, only if they are fully understood by all.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.blaa.com/what-do-we-do/crew-resource-management-crm/>

## CHAPTER 2 : AIRSPEAK, A POWERFUL CORPORATE LANGUAGE

As soon as the airline sector became a globalized business, communication professionals studied the processes by which communicative intentions were produced then interpreted or misinterpreted. And of course, this starts with language. Steven Cushing is one of the many authors that tried to look into this issue. In his book "Fatal Words" he came to the following observation:

*While voice has a natural appeal as the preferred means of communication both among humans themselves and between humans and machines - as the form of communication that people find most convenient - the complexity and flexibility of natural language are problematic, because of the confusions and misunderstandings that can arise as a result of ambiguity, unclear reference, intonation peculiarities, implicit inference, and presupposition.<sup>25</sup>*

A frequent problem is for example the misinterpretation of the homophones "to" and "two". This situation resulted in the crash of the Flying Tiger flight FT66 when an air traffic controller asked the aircraft to descend "two four zero zero" but the pilot interpreted the number "two" as the preposition "to" and descended accordingly, engaging the aircraft in a highly dangerous position.<sup>26</sup>

Many other accidents of this kind led the IATA (International Air Transport Association) and the IFAPA (International Federation of Airline Pilots Association) to adopt a coded and standard aviation language, the so-called "Airspeak".

To do so, Standard English has been modified on many linguistic levels, including phonetics, syntax, morpho-syntax as well as semantics. Many new words, acronyms and abbreviations have also been artificially created for the flight

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<sup>25</sup> Steven CUSHING, Fatal Words : Communication Clashes and Aircraft Crashes, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> <https://aviation-safety.net/database/record.php?id=19890219-0&lang=fr>

attendants and other commercial ground staff so that they can communicate in front of the passengers without being understood by them.

If communication in the cockpit or between the flight attendants is less ambiguous because they can have face to face interactions, radio transmissions do not leave space for gesture, facial expressions and visual signs to help the sender convey the right message to the receiver. With more rigid rules and conventions, the communicative error between the Greek pilot and the air controller I exposed in the third chapter of my first part would surely have never happened, even though it is deeply linked to culture.<sup>27</sup>

Easily understandable beyond linguistic and cultural barriers, the use of Airspeak reduces the amount of human errors and misinterpretations, but it also unifies the employees and creates a sense of common national culture.

In the first chapter, we saw that culture is divided into four levels - national level, gender level, occupational level and organizational level. Each have their own language, to a different extent. In the national culture, language has a major role. When the employees are at work, the organizational and occupational language (in this case, Airspeak) is so important that it replaces the national language.

In such a multicultural environment where people speak many languages, creating a unique jargon filled with abbreviations and terminology that make sense only to the employees helps building a sense of belonging and identity.

Although this sense of common national culture seems fictive for some employees, this process strengthens the relation between employees and creates an environment with more cohesion and less distrust.

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<sup>27</sup> For more information, please see the example given page 12, paragraph 2.

Speaking the same language between employees also creates stronger bonds. If Airspeak is clear, unambiguous, and free of idiomatic expressions, its speakers manage to use it as a source of puns and jokes to create friendly relationships during layovers or lunch breaks.<sup>28</sup>

Language standardization was already defended as soon as the 90s. Anthony Ferner, professor of international human resource management, said that:

*The adoption of a common company language, or so-called language standardization, has many advantages from a management perspective: [...] It assists in fostering a sense of belonging to a global 'family', which has been suggested as an important element in the multinational's use of soft control mechanisms such as corporate culture.*<sup>29</sup>

Last but not least, Airspeak is a powerful corporate language also because it fits individualist cultures as well as collectivist cultures.

By stressing personal choices and personal achievements, individualist cultures are said to promote an explicit, unambiguous, goal-directed and first-person oriented speech. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures are said to promote an elaborate and often indirect speech in accordance with the cultural emphasis on group harmony and group success.<sup>30</sup>

Airspeak, being a clear and very direct language and at the same time creating a real group harmony with a clear hierarchy, appears to be a good compromise.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.askthepilot.com/how-to-speak-airline/>

<sup>29</sup> Anthony FERNER et al., "Coming Unstuck? In Search of the "Corporate Glue" in an International Professional Service Firm", in *Human Resource Management*, Vol 34, 1995, p.343.

<sup>30</sup> Geert HOFSTEDE, National Cultures, Organizational Cultures And The Role Of Management op. cit.

### CHAPTER 3 : UNIFYING THE EMPLOYEES THROUGH CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Corporate culture, also called organizational culture, refers to the values, attitudes, standards, beliefs and language shared by the members of an organization and that can be used to define it and to differentiate it from the others. This culture is taught to the new members by the senior member of the organization. Through corporate culture and corporate communication, three main goals are pursued: <sup>31</sup>

- **Efficiency:** Internal communication is used primarily to spread information about corporate activities. In the case of the airline industry, internal communication is even more efficient as there is a single common language.
- **Satisfaction:** Internal communication is used to evaluate teamwork, to measure job satisfaction throughout the company and improve them.
- **Shared meaning:** Internal communication is used to build a shared understanding among employees about corporate goals, in order to make sure all the employees share the same objective and have a clear vision of it.

Pursuing those goals might be hard in some big international companies. In the airline industry, it is a real *challenge*. Cabin crew and pilots, who represent more than 36% of the employees in this sector, are rarely in the same place altogether at the same time.<sup>32</sup> So how is it possible to create and maintain strong bonds between management teams and employees that are always on the move?

According to Mark Chong, the company's vision, mission, identity and values are communicated to all employees at four different steps of their careers.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kathleen KRONE et al., "Communication Theory And Organizational Communication: Multiple Perspectives", Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA, 1987, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> According to <https://collegegrad.com/industries/air-transportation>

<sup>33</sup> Mark CHONG, Corporate Reputation Review, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007.

The first one occurs when they join the company or attend open days. It is the first time that managers and employees address the individual as a potential co-worker and deliver the core values of the company. The second one happens when the individual attends his first training programs. Here, the employee gets familiar with the occupational culture shared by his colleagues. The third one occurs when the individual attends corporate events and meets the employees from other departments. The fourth one occurs throughout the whole career of the individual, in the everyday corporate communication. This includes several channels such as print materials, websites, social medias, surveys, face-to-face meetings, and ultimately afterworks and bond-building extra-curricular activities.<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult for the crew members to embody a company's identity in case of discrepancy between the values of the corporation and the values of the employees. Organizations need to help employees internalize the organization's core values in their attitudes and behaviours through communication, training and the allocation of punishment and rewards.

Storytelling is one of the most effective ways to reward the employees and remind them of the company's values. Airlines promotes positive actions through a variety of awards programs. Every week or month, depending on the companies, the employees who have gone above and beyond to show great customer service are congratulated publicly in the company corporate magazine.

The performance of crew members is measured during each flight by the cabin crew manager. The final report is based on performance indicators on customer service, product knowledge, safety and security skills, as well as teamwork and work relationship. For Airlines, measuring performance means also finding mechanisms

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<sup>34</sup> Mark CHONG, Corporate Reputation Review, op. cit. p.21.

to engage staff in discussions. In addition to the report of the cabin crew manager, all the other crews must fill in a small report at the end of each flight where they are free to share their feelings and comment on the behavior of their colleagues.

Maintaining strong bonds with employees always on the move is not the only *challenge* management has to face. Flying teams (pilots and cabin crews) are never the same from a flight to another. So, how is it possible to create in a very short time a good atmosphere within the teams?

To cope with this situation, commercial airlines are used to resorting to pre-flight briefings. The briefings usually last between 40 minutes and an hour and a half and are conducted by the in-flight supervisor(s) and the cabin crew manager(s). In this meeting, the whole flying team - pilots, co-pilots, crew – can introduce and get to know each other. This process helps securing a positive and relaxed atmosphere.

To prevent the employees from cultural barriers, big international airlines offer many training courses and events to sensitize them to multiculturalism. For instance, Singapore Airlines offers classes on interpersonal and intercultural communication. This course has body language and proxemics as main topic. It enables employees to gain cultural awareness on the relation to space of the different cultures and to learn how to respect the intimate and personal distance of other crews.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to free classes on cultural issues, more and more airlines resort to corporate events that can make employees have fun but also develop their empathy and patience towards their colleagues. Mark Chong defines those events as *"live role-plays that get pilots to 'act' as ground staff, ground staff to 'act' as engineers, engineers to 'act' as cabin crew and cabin crew to 'act' as pilots."*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For more information, please see the pattern on the four kind of distances page .9.

<sup>36</sup> Mark CHONG, Corporate Reputation Review, op. cit. p.21.

→ Let us now sum up this second part of my research.

In the first chapter, I have given an outlook on CRM and the way it evolved with time to extend to the whole airline industry to help the various participants overcome cultural barriers due not only to national culture but also to occupational culture.

On the one hand, CRM and corporate events provide interpersonal skills and qualities such as empathy and cultural competence.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, we saw in the second and third chapter that corporate language and corporate communication do more than improving the exchange of information: they create a sense of belonging to a “big family” united by a unique organisational culture.

Yet this part of my research was only theoretical and not illustrated by practical examples. For this reason, I would like to dedicate the last part of my work to a case study that will involve airlines based in two different continents.

This case study will help me measure the effect of corporate events, culture, language and communication on airline employees and approve, or not, the conclusions reached so far.

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<sup>37</sup> Cultural competence: the aptitude to communicate successfully with people from other cultures.

### **PART III : COMPARING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD**

My aim in this part is to show that multiculturalism is a major stake that goes beyond working teams. Management teams are also multicultural and from one company to another, the management strategies can be different. Therefore, I would like to study how those strategies are used in the United Kingdom and in the Persian Gulf. I will focus on British Airways and Emirates.

In this case study, I will adopt the following methodology: I will start with an outlook on the national culture concerned, then I will present the company with the key figures and characteristics, and I will finally study and debate on the management strategies thanks to some testimonies given by employees.

#### **CHAPTER 1 : ANALYSIS OF AIRLINES' STRATEGIES IN THE U.K**

- Let's start with defining the Anglo-Saxon cultural model.

This culture is generally characterized by a low power distance (according to Hofstede's dimensions) and by an individual behaviour. Hierarchy doesn't seem paramount to the people's eyes, yet there is a distinction between "losers" and "winners" due to the competitive spirit acquired throughout the course of History, with the geographical and theological spread of the British Empire.<sup>38</sup> Then the U.K benefited from massive immigration waves in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason, Anglo-Saxon societies - dubbed as "melting pots" - are tolerant, easy-going and opened-minded. Low structure distances and openness to the others go hand in hand with a quest for novelty and distinction, hence the low uncertainty avoidance distance: In this culture, mistakes are not considered a failure.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Martin EWITT, *The Victorian World*, Routledge, Oxon, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Even if there are numerous examples, I think of Winston S. Churchill, saying that "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

The Anglo-Saxon culture is characterized by a low-context way of communicating, that found its roots in the Protestant religion, which has dominated since the 16<sup>th</sup> century with a massive opposition to the decorum of the Catholic religion. Protestantism also finds its origin in a shared need of simplicity and a need to focus on what is essential – the holy message. This is still visible in communication, as it is direct and there is a preference for written and digital communication.

The entrepreneurial and individualistic Anglo-Saxon mindset and its directness were exposed as soon as 1605 by Francis Bacon, the father of the empirical scientific method. In “The Advancement of Learning” he wrote that knowledge could be reached only when staying focused on the subject and observing it.<sup>40</sup> Last but not least, protestantism combined with a pragmatic and entrepreneurial spirit led to a monochronic vision, where the focus is set on money and tasks.

- Let us now study the story and the values of British Airways.

With a fleet of 274 aircrafts, British Airways is the national company of the United Kingdom and is ranked the third company in Europe, after Air France-KLM and Lufthansa.<sup>41</sup> The company was created in 1974 and because of the unfavourable economic environment, the performance was considered as “disastrous” against almost every indicator and there was a record for unpunctuality.<sup>42</sup> But in a few years, the company went through an extraordinary transformation. Not only it had become the world’s most profitable carrier, it was also voted the place that most graduates would like to work for, then another survey declared it the second most admired company in Europe.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> [https://www.mindsettingonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id](https://www.mindsettingonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id)

<sup>41</sup> [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Airways](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Airways)

<sup>42</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1981/feb/16/british-airways-punctuality>

<sup>43</sup> Both surveys were published in the *Financial Times*, the first one on July 9 1997 and the second one on March 18 2000.

This incredible change is due to the privatisation launched in the 80s but also to a change in management resulting in an alignment between communicated and covenanted identities and in a shared belief in the brand among all stakeholders.

Then with the globalisation of the airline industry, *Britishness* was emphasised as the competitive advantage of the company. *Britishness* is a set of values that represent the company, listed in the corporate official website as: "*knowhow, creativity, energy, diversity and open-mindedness – and a sense of respect, responsibility, fair play and whose turn it is to make the tea.*"<sup>44</sup> Another important aspect of British Airways' corporate identity is that the employees can achieve great things and making it from failure to success thanks to hard work. This mindset is in fact the reflect of two things: the story of the company, the individualistic and entrepreneurial essence of the British culture.

- Let us now study the managing style of British Airways.

Before analysing the management strategies of the company, it is necessary to understand who they are addressed to. In other words, who are the employees of British Airways? British Airways recruiters are looking for talents that embody "*our country's creativity, diversity, style, wit and warmth are the same special qualities that make us who we are.*"<sup>45</sup>

The employees are usually based in England, either at Heathrow, Gatwick or London City Airports. Some of them live far from the capital as commuting from neighbour countries is easy with the use of free tickets. This allows employees to better balance private and professional life. British Airways highly values privacy, and the employees receive support when marrying and starting a family.

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<sup>44</sup> <https://careers.ba.com/working-with-us>

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

On the other hand, the employees are expected to embody Britishness during each minute of their working shift and around the workplace. Those values are internalized in the behaviour of the employees but also externalized in their permanent smile and physical appearance – elegance, uniform and grooming. If an employee sees another one disrespecting the externalisation or internalisation of the core values, reporting it to management is not the expected reaction. On the contrary, communication between colleagues is highly valued.

The company has two main tools to promote communication between employees. The first one lies in training sessions. Even though many employees must hold a specific degree acquired in a private school before joining the company, they are offered many CRM training sessions, workshops and classes.<sup>46</sup> Employees are not involved only in training but also in teaching. In a corporate interview, Jennifer, a certified mixed fleet cabin crew said: *"I remember my first day - it was a demanding flight to Rio de Janeiro. Now, 4 years later, I deliver New Entrants and First Training courses myself."*<sup>47</sup> This quote highlights another important aspect: it shows how soft and flexible the hierarchy is.

The second tool lies in bond-building activities. Employees are usually at least once in their contract offered a unique and unforgettable trip paid by the company. For example, in 2012, cabin crew and supervisors were offered to go ice skating on natural ice in the Netherlands for a few days, in a group of 149.<sup>48</sup>

The company offers other team-building activities in less exotic places, such as yoga classes and escape games at the top of the British Airways i360 Tower

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<sup>46</sup> Flight attendants have to obtain their CCA (Cabin Crew Attestation) in a private school before joining the company. There are numerous private schools all over the UK and in Europe. This process applies as well for any other European airline.

<sup>47</sup> <https://careers.ba.com/profile-jennifer>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.marjolijn.co.uk/skating-site/>

located in Brighton.<sup>49</sup> Offering corporate events in a panoramic tower 450ft high allows the employees to create links in a setting that resembles their workplace.

Yet, written and digital communication are still more developed than oral communication. In 2014, British Airways won an Internal Communication Award with the magazine "Cabin Crew News".<sup>50</sup> British Airways also innovates by being the first airline in the world to offer its employees access to a private corporate TV channel, called BATV. Thanks to this channel, employees can watch live or replay public and corporate events such as fairs, conferences and keynotes.

Direct and easy communication between employees and the management is also a point taken seriously into account by British Airways. A smartphone app dedicated to employees is used to facilitate communication. On *Indeed's* website the managing style of the company was rated 3.4/5 by 849 employees. A former customer relations representative wrote that: "*Management and workplace culture was one of caring and flexibility especially during times of extreme crisis.*"<sup>51</sup>

British Airways employs more than 45000 people.<sup>52</sup> Overall, the company respects the privacy and the individuality of each, but also secures a collectivist approach as there is a large emphasis on the group and on communication.

As far as the flying teams are concerned, management tends to create "small families" to dispatch the 16500 cabin crew and 3900 pilots into teams that work the same shift patterns on a specific period of time. This was pursued to encourage mutual support and as a result, reduce the communication barriers.

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<sup>49</sup> <https://britishairwaysi360.com/event/yoga-in-the-sky/2019-05-04/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.ba-touchdown.com/2014/10/british-airways-wins-two-internal-communications-awards/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/British-Airways/reviews?id=15a87b528f57d332>

<sup>52</sup> <http://mediacentre.britishairways.com/factsheets/details/86/Factsheets-3/33>

## CHAPTER 2 : ANALYSIS OF AIRLINES' STRATEGIES IN THE PERSIAN GULF

- Let's start with defining the Islamic cultural model.

Unlike the previous model, populations in the Middle East are characterized by a high power distance and by a collective behaviour. Hierarchy is paramount, both in family and professional contexts. Social roles and status respected by all and clearly defined. Sulayman Khalaf defined the Emirati society in these words:

*Emirati society is divided into two categories: the nationals (Al-Muwateneen) and the foreign immigrants, referred to as the incomers (Al-Wafedeen). Citizens are subdivided into three main social classes: (1) the ruling sheikhly families, whose members hold the highest wealth, prestige and political positions, (2) the merchant class, traditionally pearling merchants who now sell international consumer goods, and (3) the new middle class, represented by citizens who have benefitted from free state education.*<sup>53</sup>

It is also to mention that immigration waves were recent in this area as they came after the establishment of the oil economy in the 1960s. Since then, big cities in the Persian Gulf became melting pots, but the national heritage is still strongly defended by the locals. That conservative spirit towards traditions goes hand in hand with a high uncertainty avoidance degree.<sup>54</sup> Individual risk-taking is seen as dangerous and taking important decisions implies referring to older members of the family or to line managers. But if the individual respects the hierarchy and the established rules, society will give him protection and loyalty in exchange.<sup>55</sup>

This is also a proof that collectivism is deeply rooted in the Islamic culture. Here again, individuals distinguish "losers" and "winners" not due to a fighting spirit but to strong religious values that entice people to behave in society in an exemplary way and to be loyal towards their fellow citizens in any circumstance.

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-Arab-Emirates.html>

<sup>54</sup> For more information, please see Hofstede's dimensions page 7.

<sup>55</sup> <http://ajbasweb.com/old/ajbas/2011/October-2011/727-735.pdf>

Last but not least, the Islamic culture is characterized by a high-context way of communicating. Communication is often indirect and there is a preference for oral communication. This preference can also find its origin in the Islamic polychronic vision of time, where the focus is shift on people.

- Let us now study the story and the values of Emirates Airlines.

It all started in 1985, when Dubai's royal family decided to answer the country's ambition to have its own very first international airline. The company was given a ten million dollars seed capital by the Sheikh and two aircrafts in leasing by Pakistan Airlines. Then, as Dubai became a trending holiday destination, the company soared and became the world's fastest growing airline: in only ten years, it had built a powerful network covering 37 destinations in 30 countries.<sup>56</sup> Emirates is very ambitious group which launched 50 other brands such as the fruitful Emirates Hotels & Resorts.<sup>57</sup> Now it is the largest airline in the Middle East.

Emirates is not seen as a model of success only for the quantity of the services provided by its 265 aircrafts, but also for the quality of the in-flight services. The company has indeed received more than 400 awards in the past twenty years.<sup>58</sup>

This success also lies in their visibility and proximity with people: it is the airline that sponsors the highest number of philanthropic, cultural and sport events. The loyalty program toward frequent flyers also makes a huge difference on the market. Somehow those two values – proximity and loyalty towards people – are the key factor of their success but also the core values of the corporate culture.

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<sup>56</sup> Data for 1995. Nowadays (2019) the company flies to more than 157 cities in 82 countries.

<sup>57</sup> <http://2014.buytourisonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/04-Emirates-Company-Profile-19-11-2014.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirates\\_\(airline\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirates_(airline))

Emirates kept the main trait of its national culture as a key value: the importance of empathy and human relations. Yet it decided to break with the “conservative and past-oriented” mindset the Islamic culture is attributed. Indeed, the main page of their website says that Emirates is looking forward to hiring “*professional, empathetic, progressive, visionary and cosmopolitan*” talents.<sup>59</sup> Last but not least, there is a culture of excellence, altruism and constant personal improvement due to national religious values that praise virtuous behaviours.

- Let us now study the managing style of Emirates Airlines.

First, who are the employees of this company? Emirates has more than 64700 employees and all of them live in Dubai. Yet, the native Emirati workers ratio is low compared to the ratio of expatriates. The reason is simple: expatriates are offered free housing in a district dedicated to them near Dubai’s airport, where they share their flats with colleagues from other nationalities. Accommodation includes common areas such as gyms, swimming pools and spas where the employees can socialize. The opportunity to live in Dubai free-of-charge attracts employees from all walks of life. In fact, Emirates represents 160 nationalities.<sup>60</sup>

Another facility included is the constant presence of occupational psychologists.<sup>61</sup> In their living space, employees experience every day cultural diversity and as soon as they feel uncomfortable with a cultural aspect they can discuss it and broaden their minds with a psychology professional expert in multiculturalism.

As far as the training is concerned, Emirates Airlines does not require any of the employees to have previously acquired a diploma in a private school before joining. For example, cabin crews can apply without CCA as they will receive six-

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.emiratesgroupcareers.com/working-with-us/>

<sup>60</sup> In fact, living in Dubai or being willing to relocate to Dubai is compulsory to join the company.

<sup>61</sup> Psychologists are offered a private flat in the buildings where the employees live.

month training in the company's university - Emirates Aviation College. The same process applies to pilots, that will obtain their flying licence at the Emirates Flight Training Academy and for engineers that will be provided with training at the Emirates Group Tech Centre. At the end of the training period, each employee obtains a diploma and officially joins the company after the graduation ceremony.

In short, the company provides not only a job but also education and housing. It is a clever strategy that benefits it the company in two different ways. The first goal is to ensure that employees receive the same high-standard training and are taught to think and act likewise to reduce human mistakes and to push them towards excellence. The second goal is to create a real unity within the company. It seems efficient: Kara Grand, author, teacher and former Emirates employee, said in her book that she worked and lived within a "*caring and protective family, where everyone is different and unique but shares a common sparkle*".<sup>62</sup>

In the first chapter, we saw that shaping the national culture was hard once post-puberty was reached.<sup>63</sup> Yet putting the employee in total immersion in his occupational culture, his corporate culture and a unique national culture (the Emirati one) seems a solution to ultimately minimize the cultural barriers.

Another strategy employed by Emirates to foster a sense of collectivism is the use of profit sharing. It entices the workers to put an emphasis on the group and to think that the happiness of the individual is dependant on the happiness of the group. Friendship and solidarity are really encouraged between employees, but on the other hand the respect of the hierarchy is vital and the employees live under strict rules.<sup>64</sup> When an employee sees another acting in a non-exemplary

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<sup>62</sup> Kara GRAND, *How To Become a Flight Attendant For Airlines In The Middle East*, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> For more information, please see the figure on the mental acquisition of culture page 6.

<sup>64</sup> For example, using foul language, smoking and drinking are prohibited in private life, as well as inviting a person of the opposite sex to stay overnight in the provided accommodation.

way, reporting it to management is necessary. In fact, it is seen as an act of honesty. On the other hand, the rewarding system is a powerful internal communication tool. Even though hierarchy is really clear and defined, top management is committed to involving as far as possible the employees in the success story of the company.

During corporate events such as fairs, conferences and reward ceremonies ground staff and cabin crew that went beyond and above their duty are invited as special guests and are entrusted with giving gifts and rewards on the behalf of the chairman. It also happens in events sponsored by Emirates. The air crew that performed a hilarious safety demonstration in Lisbon stadium in front of 65 500 football fans comes to mind.<sup>65</sup> The video went viral online. From an advertising approach, it is a marketing stroke of genius, and from a communication point of view we can see it as an amazing tribute given to the hard work of the employees.

Then, events are broadcast in storytelling on digital channels. Surprisingly, the use of social medias is quite impressive for a high-context company. The "live" function is popular as it creates an artificial sense of physical presence as the employees can see how many other persons are looking at it at the same time.

Even though oral communication is predominant, Emirates has a corporate magazine, "Safar". In each issue, workers share their stories, working days and achievements, in a diary style. This personal approach won a Ragan's Employee Communications Awards in 2011. The Ragan website explains that: *"Every two weeks, Emirates employees get the opportunity to meet other employees. It's great for developing camaraderie among people in a large organization."*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For more information, please watch : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAF2hZxdFRE>

→ Let us now weigh the pros and cons of the strategies used by those companies.

We saw that that the British and Emirati national cultures were different - one advocates an individual lifestyle while the other promotes a collectivist lifestyle. Yet Emirates and British Airways face the same issue: dealing with multiculturalism.

At British Airways, the employees are all familiar to some extent with the Anglo-Saxon culture and embody *Britishness*. The company offers events that allow the employees to spend time together on special occasions. In the everyday working life, they are assigned to small groups that are treated as "families". Climbing up the social ladder and balancing private and professional life is easy, but on the other hand, as employees are given great freedom, they often unite in popular movements and strikes that threaten the coherence and unity of the company.<sup>67</sup>

At Emirates, we cannot talk of small "families" but of a single "large family" driven by a strong culture. Employees all have different backgrounds and giving them the chance to live in the same "big house" and to obtain a degree in the same school is a way to secure a family setting. Here, communication actions to reduce cultural barriers are not occasional or special events as they occur in the everyday life. But this aspect bothers a lot of employees that see it as a lack of privacy.

Another problem is that those unifying strategies occur at the expense of the workers' national cultures, and by extension, of cultural diversity. In the book "Understanding Business: Organisations" the author mentions cultural brainwashing: "*The types of processes and procedures used by 'excellent' companies do have similarities with techniques of conditioning and even brainwashing [...].*"<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The Telegraph reports that in 2017 BA's staff was on strike for more than 60 days on the year: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/advice/flight-cancellations-your-rights/>

<sup>68</sup> Graeme SALAMAN, *Understanding Business: Organisations*, Routledge, London, 2001

## CONCLUSION

After a long journey of about six months of hard work, which began 34 pages ago, this research is expected to reach a conclusion and land smoothly. We have run into number o few little turbulences and we have flown over different and diverse areas such as aeronautics, sociology, corporate and cultural identity, anthropology, language, communication sciences and employee engagement.

In the first part of my work, we studied the complexity of what is referred to as "culture". We realised that it is in fact a mix of four levels which are all influenced by history, beliefs and education that transmit to each person different values and approach to power, group structures, space, time, uncertainty and context. We saw that, within multicultural teams, those discrepancies could lead to fatal mistakes.

In the second part, we saw that there were several solutions to bypass cultural miscommunications. The airline industry became a world on its own where diversity is hidden by Airspeak - the language of aviation, by corporate events that deliver cultural competence, and lastly by a CRM training that refocuses cultural variations so that employees view a given situation with similar levels of understanding.

We could so far answer the question "How do airline companies deal with cultural barriers through corporate communication?" simply by mentioning training, teaching, language, corporate communication, events and employee engagement. Yet answering such a wide-ranging question without studying the communication and management strategies of at least two airlines would be meaningless.

Throughout the third part, we saw that the national culture of the country in which is based the airline had a huge influence on the corporate culture and identity.

The British Airways case study showed that privacy and flat management were valued by the employees, but on the other hand there is a lack of confidence towards management and the structure as a whole, as shown by the various strikes. On the other hand, the Emirates case study raised the issue of cultural conformism.

Indeed, cultural factors are not a major issue in the airline industry anymore. Aviation contributed to making the world a smaller place, and it is also the case for the workplace: each airline, with its own management strategies, tries to erase cultural diversity and to replace workers' national cultures with corporate culture.

Thanks to this process, the concerns raised in the 1970s by the NASA on the threat of cultural barriers have faded. But now, another issue comes to light: "Instead of erasing them, what if airline companies really promoted cultural differences?"

Indeed, if cultural differences are handled properly, crew members can provide different interpretations of the same information and different approaches towards problem solving. The American writer and activist Robert Alan said that "*Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all of humanity.*"<sup>69</sup> By adopting such a point of view, air carriers could make diversity their main asset.

Maybe the time has come for the airline industry to face a new challenge.

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<sup>69</sup> <http://bonduniversity.tumblr.com/post/172328400811/diversity-brings-strength>

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