



# Quick E-Tips



INTERNATIONAL  
ADVANTAGE

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*WELCOME! Bienvenue! ¡Bienvenido!*  
*Enjoy some tips on **global business culture and language learning**...*

**Business Culture Tip: Social responsibility to accept SPAM?**

*Example comparing Mexico, France and the U.S.*

In Mexico, there is great value put on taking care of others – even strangers, especially when the person is in economic need. Pedestrians and taxi drivers alike, for example, perceive that it is important to accept paper advertisements and announcements from anyone who is distributing them on the street. It is poor manners to refuse the “service”, since the distributor should be acknowledged for trying to make a living. It is simply bad manners not to help this individual, who is likely getting paid to finish handing out each piece.

In France, while you may less often come across someone handing out leaflets, there would seem to be an opposing philosophy. There would be no obligation to help an individual to finish distributing their stack of advertisements. Unlike Mexico, the exchange would not be considered a personal one, so no offense would likely be taken upon refusing the advertisement.

The U.S. philosophy might fall somewhere between that of Mexico and France in this example. Like the French, an American would likely feel no social obligation to accept coupons and paper from marketers. Indeed, declining such an offer is generally not a sign of poor manners in the U.S. either. Where the French and Americans might differ, is the American tendency to smile broadly, while saying “no”, just in case they are offending.

**Tips:**

1. Sell yourself or your product with methods that reflect the cultural tendencies of the target market. Consider your:
  - a. Demeanor and style of sales executives. Could s/he name 10 differences in behavioral tendencies of the foreign buyer and what s/he has done to respond to each? Is s/he a natural fit to respond to the cultural tendencies?
  - b. Approach to the marketing process. What does the client value most in a business relationship? How many ways have you responded to those needs?
  - c. Conflict resolution philosophy. With any problem, would your counterpart tend to pick up the phone first or the contract first? What processes have you mutually put in place to make any future discrepancy easier?
  
2. Fully try on your counterpart's philosophy for a day in order to find out what it feels like. (You may even decide you prefer it!) This is easiest to do when you are in their environment, not your own.

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**Language Tip: Once Upon a Difficult Time**

A common conception exists that a good way to learn new vocabulary in a foreign language is through reading a children's book because the vocabulary and style are simple.

Consider that many children's books are filled with all kinds of words and expressions that to some extent are less useful for adults. The book may be more difficult to read because there will be words you have likely not heard before ("bewitch", "fairy", "spell", "magic", "castle", "once upon a time", etc.). Then, even if you do learn these words, they are of limited usefulness in other contexts.

For the same reasons, listening to the news in the target language can also be very difficult. Broadcasters also use vocabulary which is of limited use in daily conversation. ("bilateral", "delegate", "missile", "summit", etc.)

**Tips:**

1. Consider beginning to read with grade-school level books, that use more universal vocabulary, but that are not too stylistically complex.
2. Consider reading a book in your first language before reading it again in the second language. In this way you can focus on the language learning without losing the plot. I have read The Little Prince in French, Spanish, Russian and English because I enjoy the story and found I could easily learn from the simple writing style.
3. If books seem daunting, try subscribing to a magazine in the target language instead, since articles are short and there are plenty of pictures to provide contextual clues.
4. Watch a movie in its original language, with subtitles the first time. (You might subscribe to a movie service like Netflix, which has a great selection of foreign films.)

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*Lisa*

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**(623) 516-2482**

[www.intladvantage.com](http://www.intladvantage.com)

[liskoss@intladvantage.com](mailto:liskoss@intladvantage.com)