

# **As-Salamu 'Alaykum: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Business and Social Etiquette in the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na rozdíly společenské a obchodní etikety Spojených států amerických a Spojených arabských emirátů a zároveň také na úroveň znalosti etikety zmiňovaných států mezi českými studenty. Teoretická část této bakalářské práce se zabývá popisem základních principů v souvislosti se společenskou a obchodní etiketou. Popis společenské etikety je zaměřen především na každodenní jevy ve společnosti. Obchodní etiketa je rozebrána z pohledu základních znalostí pro manažery a byznysmeny. Třetí kapitola teoretické části je věnována základním principům neverbální komunikace. Praktická část této bakalářské práce je následně zaměřena na popis charakteristických rozdílů etikety Spojených států amerických a Spojených arabských emirátů a zároveň je zjišťována znalost těchto odlišností mezi českými studenty.

Klíčová slova: společenská etiketa, obchodní etiketa, neverbální komunikace, Spojené státy americké, Spojené arabské emiráty

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the differences of social and business etiquette in the United States of America and in the United Arab Emirates and on their knowledge level among Czech students. The theoretical part deals with basic principles of social and business etiquette in general. Social etiquette is described from the point of view of everyday manners whereas business etiquette is focused on basic etiquette principles for managers and businessmen. The third chapter of the theoretical part is dedicated to the basics of nonverbal communication. The practical part of this bachelor thesis deals with the main characteristic differences between the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates and with the knowledge of these distinctions among Czech students.

Keywords: social etiquette, business etiquette, nonverbal communication, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot”* – by Clarence Thomas.

The necessity of having cultural knowledge of foreign countries is essential for managers and businessmen who negotiate with business partners from countries with different cultural backgrounds. In my opinion, the quote by Clarence Thomas, which is written above, is very apposite. Even if you are a theoretical expert in your field, inappropriate behaviour could ruin the whole process of negotiation. A manager who is travelling abroad to a country with a completely different culture has to know at least the basics of social and business etiquette of this particular country. If not, his chances for successful negotiation will rapidly decrease. There are several principles of etiquette which are applicable in most cultures. However, it is impossible to say that rules of decent behaviour are relevant all over the world.

The theoretical part of my bachelor thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on a general description of social etiquette, which includes the basics of mutual social interaction and everyday tips for decent behaviour. The second chapter deals with the topic of business etiquette. This chapter covers the topics of exchanging business cards and their appropriate usage or preparation for successful meetings. Another topic of this chapter deals with the principles of written and electronic correspondence, and last but not least, this chapter describes the proper businessmen’s dress code. The third chapter of the theoretical part is dedicated to basic principles of nonverbal communication. The main purpose of the theoretical part is to provide readers with the principal rules of decent behaviour and its proper use in real life.

The practical part of this thesis has two main purposes which are the main goals of my bachelor thesis at the same time. Firstly, it describes the characteristic differences of etiquette in the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America and explains these distinctions via theoretical background. The other purpose is to find the knowledge level of etiquette of these two selected countries among Czech students and their potential success of interacting with people from these two states. I have chosen these two countries on purpose, because they trade mutually on a large scale although they have completely different cultural backgrounds.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ETIQUETTE

To simplify the meaning of the word “etiquette,” we can generally say that it is a summary of decent behaviour and polite rules in society. These established practices of politeness are not the same all around the world. Etiquette is not universal, but it is different in individual continents or even in particular countries. This is based on the fact that these rules of politeness and decent behaviour are influenced by individual societies, economics, cultures, religions or even by climatic differences.<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible to write a step-by-step guide about decent behaviour, because every situation in society is somehow unique and one and only. The only things which are repeatable are the principles and rules. On the basis of this proposition, it is required to have a theoretical knowledge of etiquette, but it is also required to use one’s feelings from current situations and combine the two together.<sup>2</sup>

The description of etiquette by Emily Post’s *Etiquette* book seems to be the simplest and also very relevant. According to her book, etiquette is timeless. This logically means that the etiquette rules were not relevant only in the past, but also nowadays. Of course, some manners may change during time, but principles remain the same. Another characteristic given by Emily Post’s book says that etiquette is not snobbish or pretentious. It simply means that acting in a polite way does not make you a conceited person. This characteristic is linked to another one – the fact that etiquette is not only for a limited group of people. According to this, etiquette is for people of every age and every social group. Last but not least, etiquette is not as strict as it may seem. In other words, etiquette is not made of strict rules, because as written above, etiquette manners change during time. Due to this we can say that etiquette is a kind of guidelines for decent behaviour, which should be followed and adapted in current situations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ladislav Špaček, *Nová Velká Kniha Etikety* (Prague: Mladá Fronta, 2008), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post’s Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 5.

## 1.1 Greetings and Introductions

Forms of greetings may differ in particular cultures, but greetings in general are considered the basic form of interaction. Form of greetings may also change due to aspect if you are greeting in a formal or informal way.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, ways of introduction may differ from culture to culture. It is important to have at least some basic information of the cultural background of the country which is going to be visited.

It is possible to say that in the United States of America or in England an informal way of introducing is commonly used, which means that titles are not frequently used. On the other hand, titles are often used e.g. in Germany or in Italy. The purpose of this is to show one's educational or professional status.<sup>5</sup>

The basic rule of introducing is the principle that the younger person is introducing themselves to the older person. Following this model, the person on a professionally lower level should introduce themselves to the person with higher professional level and a man should introduce himself to a woman.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most frequent mistakes made during introducing or being introduced is, without a doubt, bad or even no eye-contact between the participating persons. Looking behind or next to the person to whom we are introducing ourselves is strongly impolite. The next thing which is happening quite often is interrupting someone during their conversation for the purpose of introducing another person. It is advised rather to wait for the correct moment than just to cut in on them. Additionally, some particular topics are not very appropriate to talk about with a person who one has known only for a while. For example if someone gets to know an unknown person, it is not very polite to start talking about their private life instantly.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 162.

<sup>6</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 194.

<sup>7</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 15.

### 1.1.1 Handshake or Bow?

A handshake is a common part of greeting or introducing in many countries. Because of the process of globalization, handshakes are becoming frequently used even in countries in which they were not used in the past.

The origins of the handshaking custom lead us back to Babylon and ancient Egypt. Of course, there is a possibility that this custom is even older, but the oldest records of handshaking come right from the era of ancient Egypt and Babylon. It is said that the main reason for handshaking was to show the other person that one's hands are empty and that nobody is wielding any weapon which could kill or injure the other person.<sup>8</sup>

To compare types of handshakes in selected countries, we can say that in the United States of America, handshakes are usually hard and powerful. Delicate handshakes are suitable in Asian countries, in which bows are still preferred. Moderate handshakes are common in the Middle East countries.<sup>9</sup>

In India, it is typical to use a combination of connected palms with a bow. A bow as a greeting is also used in Japan, where a deep-rooted rule says that a deeper bow shows higher respect to the other person. A hug connected with patting each other's back is a popular part of greeting e.g. in Ethiopia or in Somalia.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.1.2 Kissing and Hugging As Part of Greeting

Generally, kissing or hugging as a part of the greeting are quite commonly used mainly among family members or among very good friends. On the other hand, this fact also depends on particular cultures; we cannot state it as a common fact. To avoid any potential faux-pas, it is recommended to reduce the amount of physical touching with the person who you do not know to the bare minimum, which will not offend them – e.g. to limit the physical contact only to the standard handshake.<sup>11</sup>

Kissing may look like a very uncommon and distinctive part of greeting in some countries. In the Arab countries, it is very common to lightly kiss each other during handshaking – even between two men. On the other hand, this would have a bizarre effect

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<sup>8</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 184.

<sup>10</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 198.

<sup>11</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 9-10.

on people in the United States of America, who are not used to kissing or hugging unknown people.<sup>12</sup>

India is one of the countries where kissing while greeting means that you are offending the other person. However, a kiss while greeting a person is frequently used in Argentina – but only between good friends and family. The same rule as in Argentina applies to the most of Europe.<sup>13</sup>

## **1.2 Simple Tips for Everyday Use**

Every day, there are situations which demand our social participation and interaction. These situations may seem so trivial that we do not really think about them. But is our behaviour really correct in these situations?

### **1.2.1 Helping With the Door**

The knowledge of the fact connected with opening the door is commonly known – a man is supposed to help a woman by opening the door for her and the younger person should do the same for the older person. However, with the current modernized period, this situation is not as frequently seen in the real world as it used to be in the past. It may be because of the lifestyle changes during the time. Nowadays it is common that if someone wants to show respect to anybody by helping them with the door, the person may be surprised or even taken aback. To avoid this situation, it is advised to ask the person if they actually want this kind of help first; after that, it is possible to act according to their response, avoiding embarrassing situations. On the other hand, current etiquette rules are not very strict in these situations and it is also possible to act by the rule which says that the door is opened by the person who gets to it first.<sup>14</sup>

### **1.2.2 How to Act In Public Transport?**

While travelling by the public transport, everyone is facing a lot of unknown people. The fact that nobody knows each other should not discourage anyone from being polite. The basic rule, which should be familiar to everyone, is that some people should take

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<sup>12</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 184.

<sup>13</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 198.

<sup>14</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 18-19.

precedence for seats over others. These people are pregnant women and women in general, senior citizens and parents with small children. The most frequent undesirable phenomenon, which is able to be seen on public transport, is leaving one's backpacks or bags on empty seats. This may be tolerated till there are still some empty seats in the public vehicle. But while the vehicle is getting full, it becomes very rude. If someone is travelling jointly with another person and they want to talk to each other, they are supposed to do so in a quiet form to avoid bothering other passengers.<sup>15</sup>

While boarding a vehicle, if there are a lot of people who are also waiting, rushing or pushing forward through other passengers show the rusher's character and their impoliteness as this behaviour is considered very rude and impolite. Getting on board before all the passengers leave the vehicle is not appropriate either from the practical point of view or from the one of decent behaviour. Everyone should also take care of their backpacks. Poking or pressing someone by one's backpack on one's back is not comfortable for the other person at all.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 22-23.

<sup>16</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 23-24.



## 2 BASICS OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE FOR MANAGERS

Business etiquette should be known by every manager, who wants to be successful. The purpose of this chapter is to describe selected basics of business etiquette, which are necessary for every manager in my opinion. The opening part of this chapter is a description of business cards with respect to how they should be used, which information must be on them and which information is optional or even inappropriate. The next part focuses on how to arrange a successful business meeting. A passable knowledge of business communication will not be excluded either. And last but not least, a part of this chapter will be dedicated to the men's dress code.

### 2.1 Business Cards

Without a doubt, business cards serve as a necessary instrument to keep in touch with one's business partners. Every single manager should carry their own business cards all the time whenever they go.

Talking about the language in which business cards should be printed, it depends on if the manager and his business partners are from the same country. If the manager is from an English speaking country, he naturally has his business cards in English. And because of the fact that English is considered as lingua franca, he can also use his business cards with partners who are not from English speaking countries. On the other hand, if the manager does not live in any country whose language is considered as lingua franca, he is supposed to have two varieties of his business cards. One version should be written in his mother tongue and the other should be in English. Having double-paged business cards is a very practical idea too – one side printed in the manager's mother tongue and the other in an international language.<sup>17</sup>

Modern lifestyle also offers modern varieties of business cards accompanied by usage of various technologies for business correspondence etc. There are several types of electronic business cards. The most common type is called the vCard. These vCards have practically the same appearance as printed versions. This kind of business card

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<sup>17</sup> Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 30-31.

is used at the end of an email right under the signature of the sender. The most valued advantage of vCards is the fact that they may look like a common .jpeg attachment, but they are not. They are scripted, so the recipient of such an email is able to simply click on this electronic business card and thanks to this, all the contact information will be automatically saved to the recipient's contact list.<sup>18</sup>

The information which the manager would like to print on his business cards must be relevant. Nobody is interested in the manager's hobbies etc.

If the manager wants to have his business cards usable internationally, he is supposed to include his degree, profession and rank in his company apart from his name. Some particular countries, mainly in the Scandinavian area, are also highly interested in the company's history. Due to that, it might be useful to put the year of the company's establishment on one's business card too.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2 How to Arrange a Successful Business Meeting

In this subchapter, the principles of business meetings among colleagues from the same company will be described. The first thing which the manager should do is to plan his business meeting responsibly, effectively and to explain its purpose clearly.

The manager should bear in mind that meetings must be planned carefully and situations which might be difficult to solve later must be prevented. The meeting should be also prepared in a dynamic and well-structured way. If the planned meeting meets the principles mentioned above, the meeting time will be used effectively and the participants will make an effort to be more active and useful during the meeting. The participants will also enjoy this meeting and they will attend the manager's next meeting with no excuses. And from the point of the meeting organizer, he will discuss all necessary things which he wanted to mention during the meeting and he will also gain satisfying responses and feedback.<sup>20</sup>

Before the meeting starts, all the participants should familiarise themselves with rules which will be followed during the meeting. To avoid disturbances during the session, one of the rules should be the fact that only one person can speak at a time. The current speaker

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<sup>18</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 141.

<sup>19</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 163.

<sup>20</sup> Eli Mina, *The Business Meetings Sourcebook* (New York: AMACOM, 2002), 255-56.

should not be disturbed. To prevent this from happening, the next person who wants to speak should raise their hand and then this person can start giving out their opinion. Talking about side conversations, the manager who called the meeting should be able to forbid these conversations at the right time. If the side conversations are at least somehow connected with the meeting topic, they can be mentioned at the end of the meeting – if there is any time left.<sup>21</sup>

As written in the opening paragraph of this sub-chapter, precise time planning is essential for a successful meeting. After the meeting starts, the meeting arranger should lead the meeting in a befitting tempo. Too much information in a small amount of time or the other way round is not beneficial in any aspect. The meeting arranger can easily check that the meeting's tempo is just right. The easiest way to manage this is to follow the exact time and compare it with the agenda. After that, the person can freely decide whether to speed up or slow down.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.3 Printed and Electronic Business Communication**

A message's accuracy and appropriateness is considered the most essential feature. To keep the message clear and understandable, the writer should be careful about words which are used in it. It is highly recommended to use monolingual dictionaries and a Thesaurus database because of words' multiple meanings. A Thesaurus may also serve the writer to avoid frequent repetitions of words. Another feature, which also has to be taken into consideration, is the fact who the message is written to. Because of this, an appropriate language level should be used and it is recommended to avoid less frequently used words which might be confusing for the recipient. To make a positive impact on the recipient via one's correspondence, it is advisable to keep emphasizing positive expressions. If these words will be emphasized in a sufficient way, their meaning will become deeply rooted in the recipient's mind. Because of that, the final impact of one's message will be perceived more positively by the recipient.<sup>23</sup>

Another rule of writing appropriate correspondence is the usage of short and simple sentences. Long sentences make the message's understanding more difficult and as the

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<sup>21</sup> Eli Mina, *The Business Meetings Sourcebook* (New York: AMACOM, 2002), 229.

<sup>22</sup> Eli Mina, *The Business Meetings Sourcebook* (New York: AMACOM, 2002), 231-232.

<sup>23</sup> A.C. Krizan et al., *Business Communication*, 7th ed. (Mason: Thomson South-Western, 2008), 83-89.

final result, the recipient might get lost in the text. Slang expressions are also considered inappropriate in business correspondence. The fact that these expressions are known by the writer does not mean that the same expressions are also known by the addressee. The next rule, which is hopefully considered a generally known fact, is the correct usage of grammar. Nothing makes you look worse in the receiver's eyes than writing business correspondence in the grammatically wrong way. Abbreviations are also considered improper elements. It is better to use the full phrasing instead of writing abbreviated word groups.<sup>24</sup>

Talking specifically about electronic correspondence or about electronic communication, it may include not only communication via e-mails, but also using the telephone. The impact which is given by the speaker via telephone is mainly made by their voice impression. Talking in figures, it is about 70%. The rest, which is only 30%, is made by the content of their speech. According to this fact, if a manager wants to be successful during his business phone calls, he has to keep improving his oral presentation. Correct telephone behaviour also includes clear and accurate caller's and called person's introduction. In other words, each person should provide their name and department to the other person. To describe the correct manners for electronically written correspondence, writers should avoid writing in capital letters. In the upshot, this style of writing might cause an effect of yelling or shouting at someone. Talking or writing in a sarcastic way is not convenient for business communication either.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.4 Businessmen's Dress Code

Without a doubt, suits in general make men look more professional. Professional appearance and decent behaviour are one of the key aspects of being successful in doing business. The colour of men's suits should be rather dark than bright, enriched with a long-sleeved shirt which should be of light pastel or white colour. Shirts with a thin pinstripe pattern are allowed as well.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 145.

<sup>25</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 165-166.

<sup>26</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 191.

Businessmen also have to pay attention to the harmony of colours. Nothing looks worse than unfitting colours of the tie, shirt and suit.<sup>27</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Casual Dress

This type of men's clothing is primarily used by employees who do not come into personal contact with business partners or with the customers. This dress consists of trousers and a coloured shirt which might also have various patterns. A tie is not strictly demanded in this case.<sup>28</sup>

Blazers and open-collar shirts are also suitable as part of casual dress.<sup>29</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Business Dress

Business dress is widely used by businessmen practically all around the world – except Arabian cultures. This style basically consists of a suit, shirt and tie. This style is considered conservative and it can be worn at any daytime. The colour of the suit should be of a dark shade, but it is also possible to wear a brighter coloured suit during the summer. The tie is supposed to be the men's main decoration. Although the tie is the smallest part of business dress, it shows the men's nature in the most significant way.<sup>30</sup>

#### 2.4.3 Differences between Black Tie and White Tie

Black tie and white tie are worn practically only for noble events. They are considered the top of men's elegant clothing.

The main difference between black tie and white tie is the fact that the main part of black tie is the tuxedo, whereas the main part of white tie is the tailcoat. Logically, black tie and white tie must be completed by matching trousers. Shirts which are used jointly with these clothing types should be white. Another difference is the colour of bow ties. While wearing black tie, you are supposed to wear a black coloured bow tie, whereas to complete white tie you are required to wear a white bow tie.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 190.

<sup>28</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 187.

<sup>29</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 49.

<sup>30</sup> Soňa Gullová, *Mezinárodní Obchodní a Diplomatický Protokol*, 2nd ed. (Prague: Grada, 2011), 187-188.

<sup>31</sup> Peggy Post, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 48.

### 3 ETIQUETTE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The meaning of non-verbal communication includes all types of interaction which is not done by one's voice. It includes one's body language in general, eye-contact and also the distance between persons or their odour.<sup>32</sup>

According to research, non-verbal communication is the most important part of communication. To express this statement in figures, about fifty per cent of the communication's effect is achieved by non-verbal communication. About forty-five per cent of the expression effect is procured by voice elements, which is e.g. the tone of voice. The rest – about five per cent – is done by the spoken word. As we can see from this comparison, non-verbal communication is a really important part of interaction with people.<sup>33</sup>

#### 3.1 Eye-contact – Showing Respect or Offending Others?

Generally speaking, it is possible to show one's respect to other people via making eye-contact, but there are also some countries in which you should try to avoid eye-contact or use it only on a minimal level.<sup>34</sup>

By eye-contact, we are able to send varied information to people without the necessity of saying anything. You can show that you are a patient listener and that you are interested in what the other person is saying. Skilled people are also able to find if their companion is telling the truth or not via eye-contact. Showing your confidence by correct eye-contact might be very benefiting for you as well.<sup>35</sup>

The countries in which you are expected to use straight and direct eye-contact are mainly Middle East countries, Latin American countries and as a European representative it is possible to mention France. The next group, which comprises the majority of European countries and Americans, commonly uses regular and common eye-contact. The countries

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<sup>32</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 117

<sup>33</sup> "Non-Verbal Definition," Non Verbal Communication: The Silent Language of Success, NonVerbal Communication, <http://nonverbal-communications.info/2011/04/13/non-verbal-definition/> (accessed March 13, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 122.

<sup>35</sup> Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 56.

in which you should try to avoid the eye-contact completely or make it as minimal as you can are e.g. South-East and East Asian countries.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2 Body Language

One's posture tells a lot about their character while the person may even know about it. One's ideas and opinions about incoming facts are shown practically instantly via one's posture and gestures. It is also possible to recognize the person's character and attributes even merely from the style of one's sitting or walking. Talking about the sitting style, everyone must be careful about it while conducting a meeting with a person from a country with Arabian culture. If someone puts one leg over the other, it might result into offending such a business partner.<sup>37</sup>

Expressions made by one's face are part of body language as well. People all around the world try to hide their emotions by not giving any facial expressions. But these attempts may not always be successful, because they require a lot of practising. One's good manners are also shown by facial expressions – e.g. if someone starts yawning while other person is speaking, they will not be considered a very polite person.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 122.

<sup>37</sup> Jeanette S. Martin and Lillian H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 59-60.

<sup>38</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 126.

## **II. ANALYSIS**



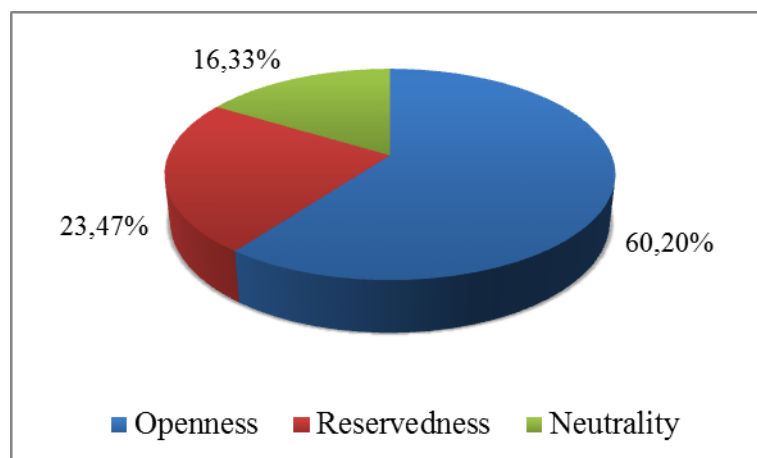
## 4 RESEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE OF ETIQUETTE IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AMONG CZECH STUDENTS

The analytical part of my bachelor thesis is made on a basis of a questionnaire which I have conducted. The questionnaire is divided into two parts; the first part with ten questions is focused on knowledge of etiquette in the United Arab Emirates and the latter contains ten questions about etiquette in the United States of America.

This analytical part also serves as a general guide of etiquette in both selected countries – the UAE and the USA – comparing general information background and real knowledge of etiquette of these two countries among Czech students. This analytical part of my bachelor thesis also provides the reader with the differences in etiquette in the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America.

The questionnaire was filled in by 113 respondents on the whole. After filtration, 98 respondents remained who checked the column that they were students at the time of filling in the questionnaire. Online service of the [www.vyplnto.cz](http://www.vyplnto.cz) website was used to promote the questionnaire. My questionnaire was originally in Czech for the purpose of attracting more potential respondents. This Czech version of the questionnaire can be found in the appendices part of this thesis.

### 4.1 Q1: Which of These Attitudes Do You Consider Characteristic Of an Encounter of Two Men in the United Arab Emirates?



*Graph 1: Q1: Which of These Attitudes Do You Consider Characteristic Of an Encounter of Two Men in the United Arab Emirates?*

The very first question of my questionnaire was focused on the attitude in an encounter of two men in the United Arab Emirates. As we can see from Graph 1, 60.20% of respondents decided for openness, which was the right option. The second most frequent option was reservedness which was selected by 23.47% of the respondents. The third option was a neutral attitude which was chosen by 16.33% of the respondents.

This question was intentionally focused on an encounter of two men, not on an encounter of mixed genders, because there is a huge difference. If a man meets a woman in the United Arab Emirates, they are expected to behave and communicate in a very reserved way. The only exception when a woman can ordinarily communicate with a man is when they are closely connected as family members. Women who are only visiting the UAE do not have to behave in such a reserved way.<sup>39</sup>

To compare this, an encounter of two men seems very open from the Westerners' point of view. It is more than common that you can see two men walking down the street hand in hand in the UAE. It might seem unusual for Westerners, because most people would automatically start to seek for any signs of homosexuality, but these two men are just proving their mutual friendship. Very frequent hugging or cheek kissing is also present among Arab men. But there is one recommendation for foreigners – it is better not to pretend anything and rather behave in your natural and innate way. Arabs are very good observers and if they notice any feign of your behaviour, they might be offended by it.<sup>40</sup>

The other characteristic feature is the Arabs' eye-contact. They are used to giving a very frequent and continual eye-contact among them.<sup>41</sup>

To sum up the answers of this question, I was honestly surprised that most of the respondents chose the right answer, which is openness. I was personally expecting that the majority of the respondents will choose the reserved attitude as their answer because of all the prejudices about the Arabs' reservedness. But as it has already been mentioned – and as most of the respondents obviously know – this is true only for an encounter of mixed genders.

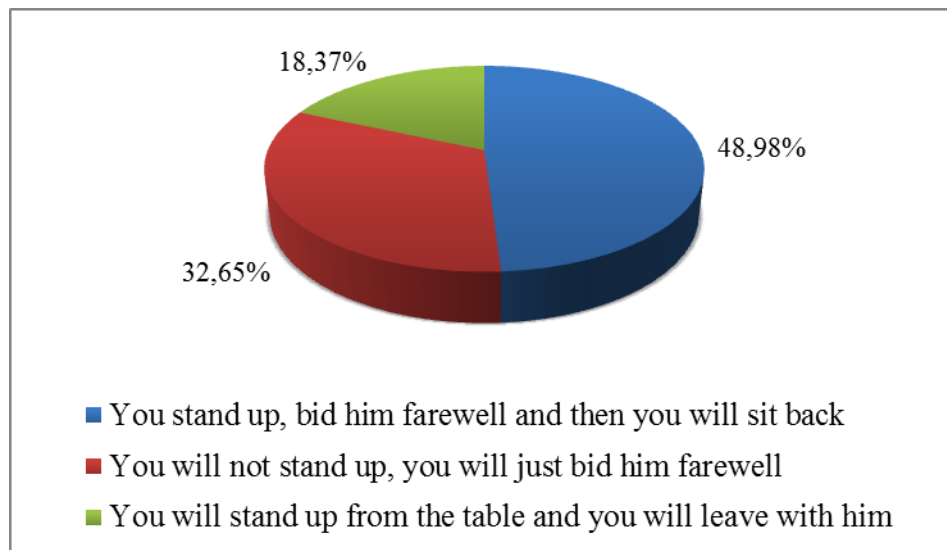
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<sup>39</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 134.

<sup>40</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

<sup>41</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 134.

#### 4.2 Q2: How Would You Act if the Most Respected Person Stands Up From the Table While Eating?



Graph 2 Q2: How would you act if the most respected person stands up from the table while eating?

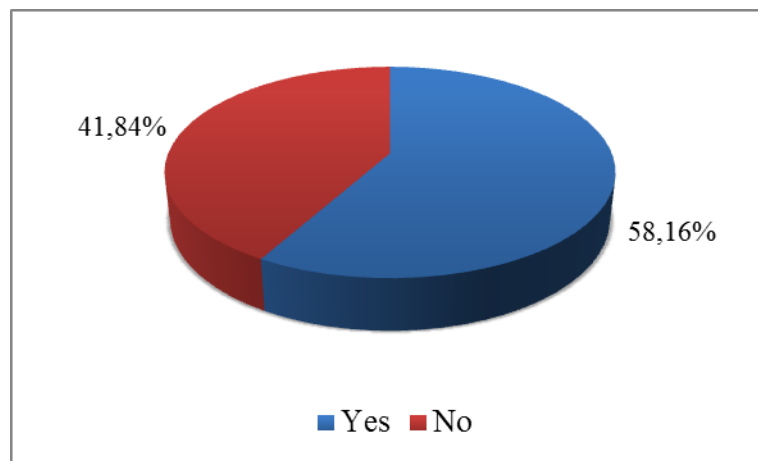
This question was focused to find out the knowledge of table manners in the United Arab Emirates. Paradoxically, the correct answer, which is the fact that you should stand up from the table and leave jointly with that person, was chosen by the least number of the respondents – 18.37%. In my opinion, the most frequent answer, which was marked by 48.98% of the respondents, was highly influenced by the respondents' expectations of good behaviour. Unfortunately, they have not realized the difference in Muslim culture in this point of view. The second most frequent answer, with 32.65% of the respondents, was the option of remaining sat down and just bidding farewell to the person.

The most respected person in the United Arab Emirates among a group of people is the oldest person or the person with the highest social class. The most honourable place at the table is on the most respected person's right side. In my point of view, these two facts are very similar – or practically the same – as in Western culture. But what could be different is the fact that all the people around the table are supposed to stand up and greet the person, while in our culture it is more common that the people surrounding the table just greet the person, but remain sat down. And the main difference, which also took part in my questionnaire, is the fact that while that most respected person stands up from the table, you are supposed to stand up too. But not only that, you are also supposed to leave the

room with this person. In other words, you are told that it is time to finish eating without the necessity of saying anything.<sup>42</sup>

To refer back to my questionnaire, this question was slightly tricky, but on purpose. In this question, there was a great opportunity to find out if the respondents have some kind of knowledge of UAE's etiquette, or if they are just answering only according to their feelings. And as you can see from Graph 2, a large amount of the respondents chose the wrong answers.

### 4.3 Q3: Is a Woman in the United Arab Emirates Allowed to Accept a Handshake From Another Woman?



*Graph 3 Q3: Is a woman in the United Arab Emirates allowed to accept a handshake from another woman?* This question is closely connected with Question 1, with the difference that now the question was asking about the behaviour of two women. Resulting from the connection with Q1, the respondents who thought that a woman is allowed to accept a handshake from another woman chose the right option. Talking in figures, the correct answer was marked by 58.16% whereas the wrong option was chosen by 41.84% of the respondents, which gives us very balanced answers to this question.

A very simple rule of behaviour among different genders in the UAE says that they should behave in a reserved way, whereas people of the same gender are able to communicate and interact with each other in an open and hearty way. In other words, two women in the UAE are allowed to shake hands mutually or to touch each other gently and

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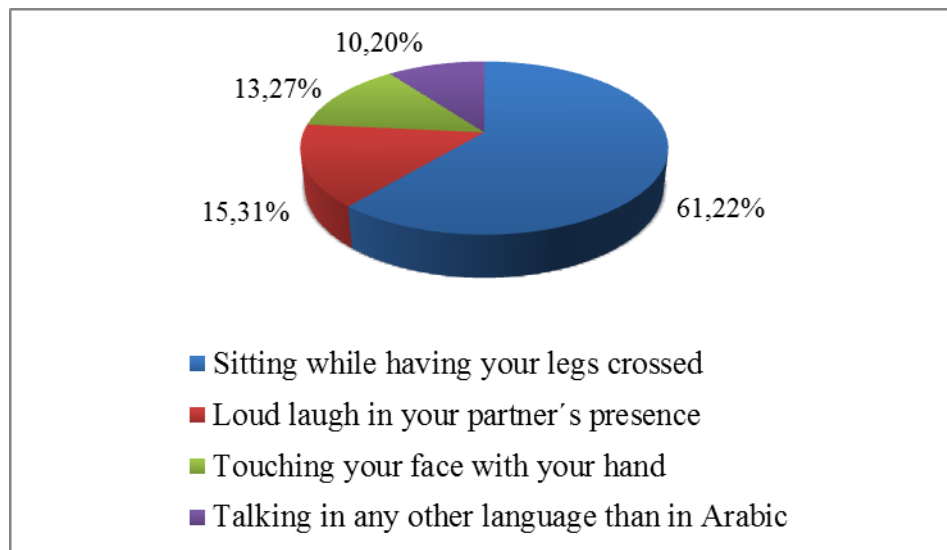
<sup>42</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

in a friendly way, but this cannot be applied to an encounter of two people of different gender.<sup>43</sup>

Talking about the development of women's social status in the UAE, it is gradually developing in all fields of society. This development is, of course, in motion in tune with Islamic principles. Namely, there is a significant progress e.g. in the percentage of women as workforce and in the women's access to better education.<sup>44</sup>

This question was also asked intentionally, because it is commonly known that the UAE are becoming less strict not only with women's position, but in general. In my opinion, the UAE are being more and more influenced by Western culture – mainly because of joint business cooperation between these cultures. Both answers were answered in an almost equal amount and due to that, we can expect that the respondents might get confused by other Arab countries.

#### 4.4 Q4: Which of These Things Could Be Offensive For Your Business Partner From the UAE?



Graph 4 Q4: Which of these things could be offensive for your business partner from the UAE?

The intention of this question was to find the level of the UAE's business etiquette knowledge among the respondents. On the other hand, the answer to this question is quite a common fact connected with Muslim culture, yet almost half of all respondents chose an

<sup>43</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

<sup>44</sup> "Society," UAE News and Information, <http://www.uaeinteract.com/english/society/> (accessed March 24, 2012).

incorrect answer. The proper choice for this question is the fact that managers – and not only them – from non-Muslim countries should be careful about having their legs crossed. This option was chosen by 61.22% of all respondents. The rest of the answers have almost an equal amount of the respondents, but they are all made-up and these three wrong answers are not offensive for Arab nationals.

An issue connected with having one's legs crossed is based on unintentional humiliation of your business partner from the UAE. Arabs may see this posture variation as an authoritative one. Other authoritative gestures, e.g. pointing a finger at someone, should be avoided as well. As a part of this question, there was one foxy option too, which was the fact that Arabs may be offended if you are not able to speak with them in their language. Naturally, one of the possible languages used for negotiating in the UAE is the Arabic language. But English is practically on the same level as Arabic. This feature is an outcome of rapidly growing and developing international business in the United Arab Emirates. However, it is still recommended to have an interpreter during business meetings.<sup>45</sup>

One's posture is highly valued for Arabs. As written above, you are supposed to sit suitably according to the Muslims' manners. If we move on to one's stance style, there are also some recommendations, which are good to be obeyed. Namely, hands in one's pockets during a dialog are very rude from your Arab partner's point of view.<sup>46</sup>

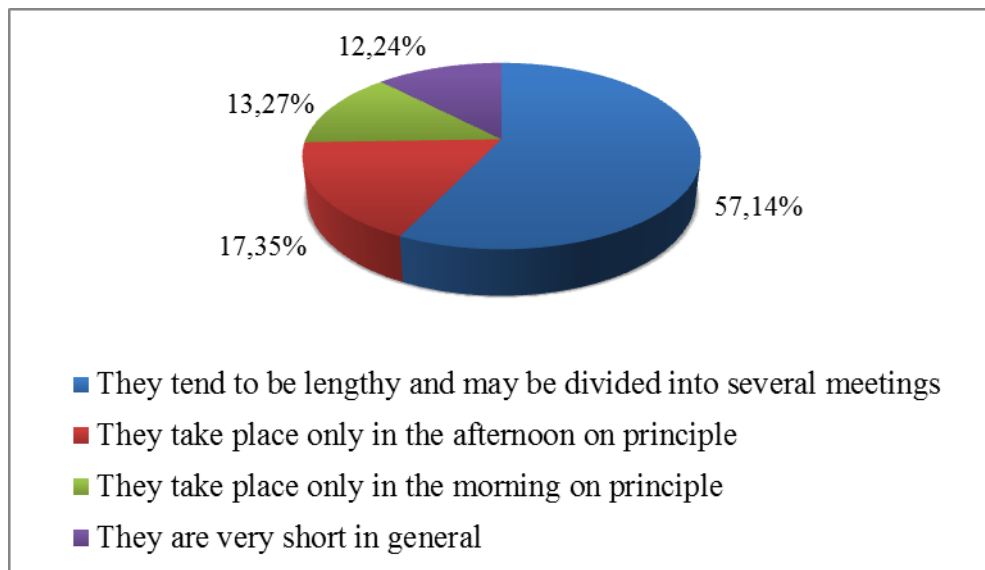
Choices made by the respondents in this answer correspond to my personal estimation of the results. This question was based on a generally known feature in the Arab culture which is the rudeness of having your legs crossed. The fact that more than 60% of the respondents have the background knowledge of some basic behaviour in the UAE is very positive.

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<sup>45</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

<sup>46</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 133.

#### 4.5 Q5: What Are the Characteristic Features of Business Meetings In the UAE?



Graph 5 Q5: What are the characteristic features of business meetings in the UAE?

As visible from the graph, the most selected characteristic feature of the business meetings in the UAE by the respondents was the answer which says that they tend to be very lengthy or even they can become fragmented into several meetings. This most chosen answer is at the same time the only correct one. In figures, 57.14% of the respondents have decided for this option. The rest of the answers are not characteristic for the UAE at all – these features may be viable, but they depend only on each particular person – not on the country in general.

The business meetings in the United Arab Emirates are quite lengthy because of the Arabs' nature. They require gaining mutual respect and trust among them and their business partners. Once is this done, the procedure of negotiating can begin.<sup>47</sup>

During the introductory meetings, Arabs are trying to find out some basic information about their business partner, e.g. his or her hobbies, interests or the partner's general state of health. The business meetings in general are characteristic as peaceful, amiable without any indications of pressure from the Arab partner's side. These characteristics are valid for the first introductory meetings as well as for negotiating and final meetings.<sup>48</sup>

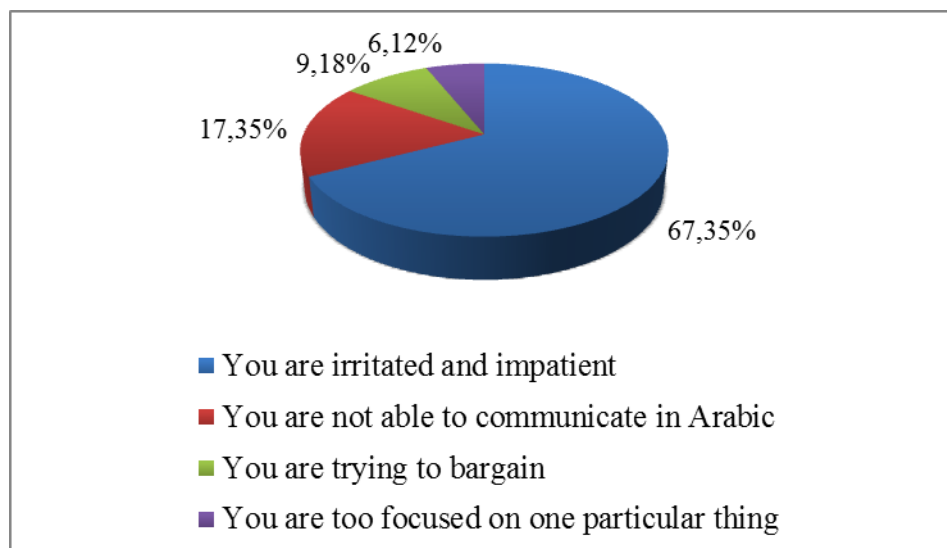
<sup>47</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

<sup>48</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 125.

An interesting and very common thing about the business meetings in the United Arab Emirates is the fact that there are more than one or two people from the Arab company who are attending this meeting. And in this case, there is one recommendation given by the foreign businessmen which is very valid. Basically, the person who is talking the most is the least important from the people attending this meeting. The most important person, who is probably the decision maker at the same time, is the inconspicuous observer.<sup>49</sup>

Summing up this question, it is not so surprising that most of the respondents marked the correct answer, because again – this is quite a common and generally known feature about the Arabian culture. But what was surprising in my opinion was the fact that the correct option was marked by over half of all the respondents, which is very positive.

#### 4.6 Q6: Which Behaviour Might Be Unwelcome by Your Partners From the UAE?



Graph 6 Q6: Which Behaviour Might Be Unwelcome by Your Partners From the UAE?

Referring to the graph connected with this question, more than half of all the respondents agreed on one option – 67.35%. This option, telling us that business partners from the United Arab Emirates may feel uncomfortable while their counterpart is showing signs of being irritated, disconcerted or impatient during the business negotiating. The second most frequent answer was the option which tells us that businessmen from other countries than

<sup>49</sup> “United Arab Emirates Business Etiquette,” Cyborlink - “The Web's leading resource for International Business Etiquette, Manners, & Culture,” <http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/uae.htm> (accessed March 25, 2012).



from the UAE might stir up a negative attitude of Arab partners due to the fact that they are not able to communicate in their mother tongue, which is Arabic. This option was chosen by 17.35% of the respondents; the rest of the options was chosen by a negligible amount of the respondents – in comparison with the most frequent answers.

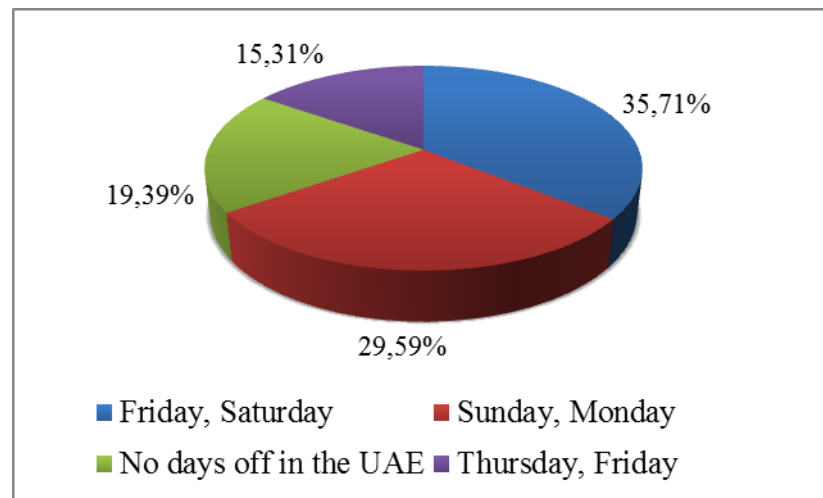
To mention some recommendations for business meetings in the United Arab Emirates, a businessman's attitude might be more essential for successful negotiating than they might think. If a businessman seems to be somehow irritated, impatient or too eager to finish the negotiation process, it could have a very negative impact on the final result of the meeting. The option which says that Arabs might be affronted by the fact that a foreign businessman is not able to communicate in Arabic, is not completely out of topic in the sense that Arab businessmen will not get literally offended by this deficiency in language skills, but on the other hand, it is recommended to know at least some basics of Arabic: not to avoid offending them, but to rise up in their eyes – this is something that they will appreciate. It is also recommended to hire an interpreter to avoid potential misunderstandings during the negotiation. The option connected with bargaining was included in the questionnaire on purpose, because Arabs' point of view on bargaining is positive. In fact, bargaining could be considered as a characteristic part of business meetings in the United Arab Emirates.<sup>50</sup>

According to the chosen answers to this question, it is also possible to state that Czech students are well familiarized with the main basics of business etiquette in the UAE and with the characteristic features of negotiating connected with this Arab country.

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<sup>50</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140-141.

#### 4.7 Q7: In Most Countries Saturday and Sunday Are Known As Days Off. Which Days Are Days Off In the UAE?



Graph 7 Q7: In Most Countries Saturday and Sunday Are Known As Days Off. Which Days Are Days Off In the UAE?

The purpose of this question was to separate people with a real knowledge background of the Arab countries from the respondents who were only trying to guess or estimate the correct question. All the answers have a similar percentage of the respondents, but the highest amount was won by the Friday and Saturday option with 35.71% of the respondents. The second most frequent option was the Sunday and Monday option with 29.59%. Paradoxically, the correct answer – Thursday and Friday – was marked by the lowest amount of the respondents, which is 15.31% of the respondents in percentage.

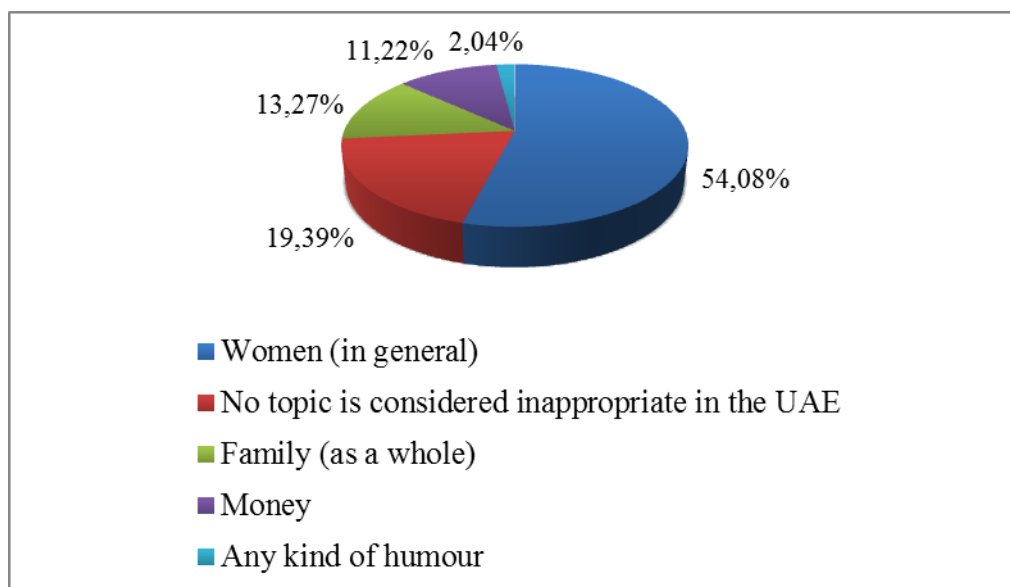
Talking in general about the days off in Muslim culture, it is quite a known fact that the day off for Muslims is Friday. It is because of their religion – Friday is the obligatory day of praying in mosques. This, of course, does not mean that Muslims pray only on Friday. They pray five times a day, every day. The main difference about Friday's prayers is the fact that on Friday, Muslims are supposed to pray jointly in the mosques. Muslims' prayers are known worldwide for their characteristic features. The essential need for their prayers is the fact that Muslims must face towards Mecca during praying. The prayer itself consists of several statements which are repeated during the act of praying. One of these statements is e.g. Allahu Akbar, which means God is Great. Religion leads Arabs through their whole life. Arabs start learning Islam in their very young age and this process continues literally till their death. An interesting fact, which should be mentioned, is that Arabs have no respect to atheists. They will respect you even if you are not Islamist, but you are Christian, for example. The fact that you believe in your God, even if your belief is

different from the Arabs', is more respectable than the fact that you have no faith and that you are an atheist.<sup>51</sup>

Focusing only the United Arab Emirates, Friday obviously has to be a day off, given the description of Islamic religion described above. The UAE differs in this way, because there is also Thursday considered as a day off for the local nationals as well.<sup>52</sup>

This question was not easy at all, and as stated in the introductory part of this question, the correct answer was chosen by the lowest amount of the respondents. However, after counting the options containing Friday as one of days off in the UAE together, the number of the respondents who know that Friday is one of the days off because of the Islam, will rise to 51.02% of the respondents. Taking this fact into the consideration, half the respondents at least deduced one correct Muslims' day off.

#### 4.8 Q8: Which Of These Topics Is Considered Inappropriate In the UAE?



Graph 8 Q8: Which Of These Topics Is Considered Inappropriate In the UAE?

At first sight, more than half of the respondents – 54,08% – agreed on the same answer which says that the inappropriate topic for conversation is the one of women. This question is one of those which are based on well known facts and on characteristic features of the Arab world, which leads us to the assumption that this option should be marked by the

<sup>51</sup> Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide For Modern Times*, 4th ed. (Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2006), 81-86.

absolute majority of the respondents. However, almost half of the respondents chose other options. The second most frequently marked option with 19.39% of respondents was the statement that there is no inappropriate topic for conversation in the United Arab Emirates. In my point of view, this option was mainly chosen on the basis of the fact the UAE are becoming more and more benevolent to influences from the Western world. However, this country is an Islamic state and this fact cannot be ignored for any reasons.

During a conversation with Arabs, you should avoid mentioning or discussing Arab businessman's wife or daughters or talking about women in general. This fact has religious background again and has to be respected by foreigners. In this case, it is recommended rather to ask about the businessman's family on the whole. The next topic which should be avoided in the United Arab Emirates is the problematic relation among the Middle East and Israel. The option with the least percentage of respondents was the fact that Arabs do not like any kind of humour. Respondents managed this option very well – only 2,04% marked this answer. In fact, businessmen in the United Arab Emirates have a very good sense of humour and it is a common part of their interaction.<sup>53</sup>

The option which was chosen by 11,22% of respondents was the fact that Arab businessmen do not like discussing money. The correct statement is that Arabs generally really like discussing money in any aspects. It is very common that local businessmen will ask you about your personal income, what you think about the goods' price changes or on the process of inflation.<sup>54</sup>

To sum up, the results of this question could have been predicted. On the other hand, in my personal expectations this issue should be more commonly known than only by half of the respondents.

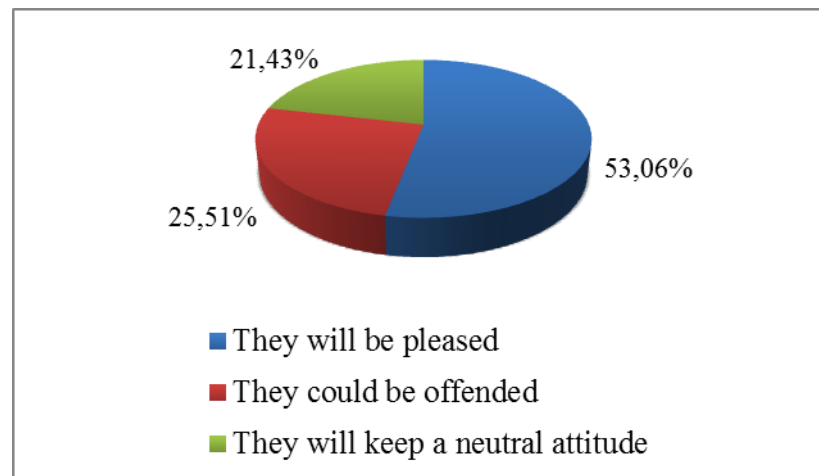
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<sup>52</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 141.

<sup>53</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 141.

<sup>54</sup> Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide For Modern Times*, 4th ed. (Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2006), 33.

#### 4.9 Q9: How Would Citizens Of the UAE React If You Put On Their Typical Local Clothing?



Graph 9 Q9: How Would Citizens Of the UAE React If You Put On Their Typical Local Clothing?

The Arabs' attitude and reactions connected with this question are, of course, highly personal. However, talking in general, locals could be offended while seeing visitors wearing their characteristic clothing and due to that, 25.51% of the respondents marked the correct answer.<sup>55</sup>

The highest amount of the respondents – 53,06% – gained the positive attitude; in other words that Arabs would be pleased seeing visitors wearing their clothing. The option which was chosen by the lowest amount of the respondents was that Arabs will keep a neutral attitude. This last option was marked by 21.43% of the answerers.

What should be mentioned while discussing the local clothing is the length of the characteristic clothes. Both – men's and women's – variations of their clothing cover the whole body. The exception is that men are able to show their face, whereas women are not. Men wear white habits called dishdasha. The headscarf which is worn by men is called ghutra and usually is white or red. The ghutra is secured on the head by a band – usually black coloured – called agal. The dress which is covering practically the whole body of Arab women is called the abaya and is usually black coloured. The next part of Arab women clothing is called burqa. Burqa is also black coloured and its function is to cover women's hair and faces. To avoid offending your business partners from the United Arab

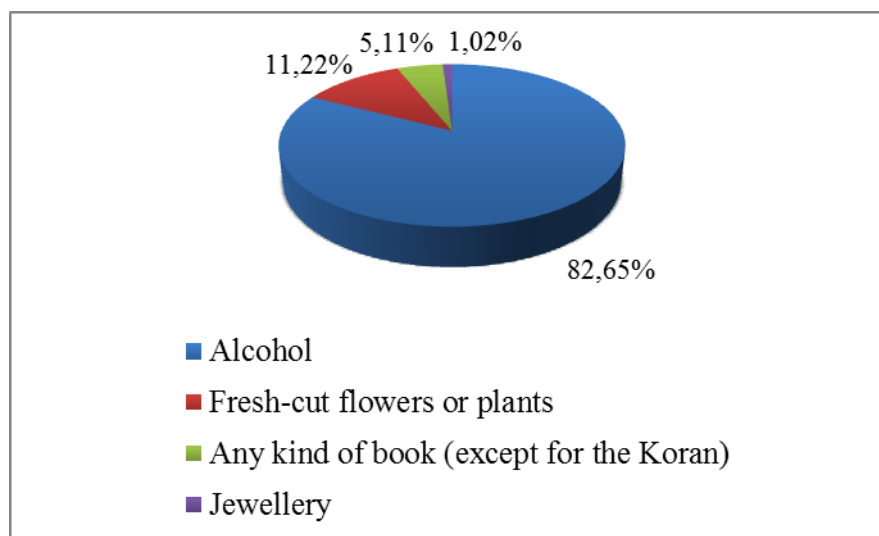
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<sup>55</sup> "United Arab Emirates Business Etiquette," Cyborlink - "The Web's leading resource for International Business Etiquette, Manners, & Culture," <http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/uae.htm> (accessed March 27, 2012).

Emirates, it is recommended for the foreigners to wear their natural business clothes and to avoid pretending anything.<sup>56</sup>

As stated above, the reaction to the fact that foreigners might wear local clothing may differ and it depends on each particular person. In general, however, it is better to avoid potential problems which might arise from the innocent idea of trying to adapt to local people.

#### 4.10 Q10: What Should You Not Use As a Gift For Your Business Partner In the UAE?



Graph 10 Q10: What Should You Not Use As a Gift For Your Business Partner In the UAE?

The correct answer for this question is very easily deducible if the respondents are familiar at least on a basic level with the rules given by the Koran. As visible from Graph 10, the absolute majority of the respondents (82.65%) fulfilled my expectations and chose the correct option, which is alcohol. The second most frequent option was flowers with 11.22%. They were followed by books which gained 5.11% of the respondents and the option with the lowest amount of the respondents was jewellery – 1.02%.

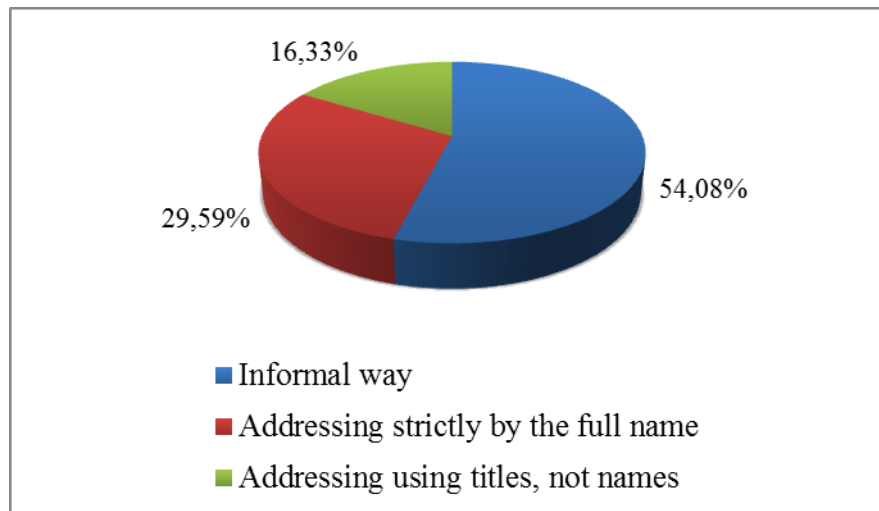
The well-known fact and rule given by the Koran is the ban on consumption of alcohol. Due to that, it would be a very unwelcome gift for your business partner from the Arab countries. But not only alcohol is forbidden for Muslims. The next thing which is banned for Islamic believers is pork products. Pork is forbidden for one simple reason – for the Muslims, pigs are unclean, dirty and dishonest animals full with bacteria which could

<sup>56</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 140.

desecrate Muslims' bodies. Except pork and alcohol, other forbidden items are those expressing and depicting other religions – e.g. the Bible itself, Christians' crosses or portrayals of Buddha. Any kind of pornography is strictly banned for Muslims too – no matter if the naked women are pictured thanks to statues, paintings or nude photographs.<sup>57</sup>

To sum up this question, the respondents' answers fulfilled my expectations. The overwhelming majority of respondents chose the correct option, which is a positive sign of the knowledge level of some basic rules for Muslims given by the Koran.

#### 4.11 Q11: What Is the Characteristic Feature Of Mutual Addressing In the United States of America?



Graph 11 Q11: What Is the Characteristic Feature Of Mutual Addressing In the United States of America?

This question seemed very easy from my point of view. Because of that, this question was chosen as the opening for the part of the questionnaire focused on the etiquette of the United States of America. But the results showed that this question was not so easy for the respondents. 54.08% of them chose the correct option, which is the informal way of mutual addressing. The rest of the options are practically nonsense and yet, they were marked almost by half of the respondents when counted together.

A very common feature of mutual addressing in the United States of America is its informality. The Americans are known for the fact that they approach the informal way of mutual addressing practically immediately after the mutual introducing, which means that

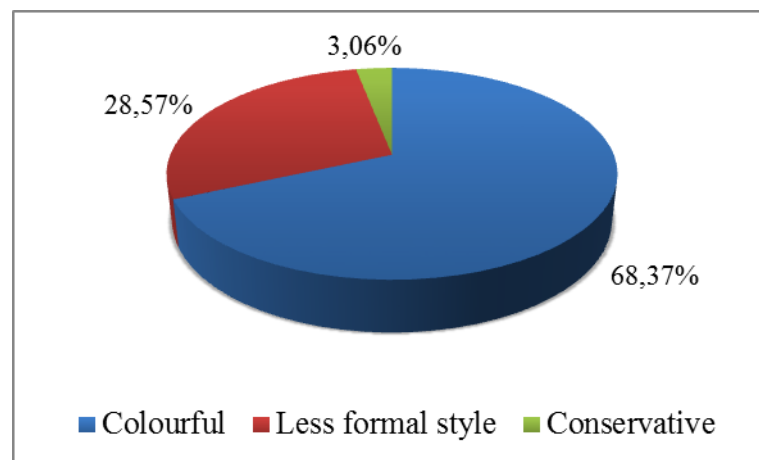
<sup>57</sup> Margaret K. Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide For Modern Times*, 4th ed. (Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2006), 176.

they call each other using their first names. On the other hand, this attitude cannot be applied to an interaction with a person with a very high social status.<sup>58</sup>

The process of greeting in the United States of America is quite similar to this process in Europe. Using handshakes is very frequent and common as well. If you want to show respect to a person, it is recommended to use titles such as Mrs, Mr, Dr. etc. After the first mutual encounter, it is very common that you will be offered to not to use these titles and you will be permitted to address that person in an informal way.<sup>59</sup>

To summarize this question honestly, my expectations of the percentage of the options were absolutely different. This question's purpose was to open the part of the questionnaire focused on the United States of America and because of that, an easy question with worldwide known background was chosen. However, only 54.08% of the respondents marked the correct option. This is very disappointing in my point of view.

#### 4.12 Q12: What Kind Of Clothing Is Unacceptable For Men In the USA During Business Meetings?



*Graph 12 Q12: What Kind Of Clothing Is Unacceptable For Men In the USA During Business Meetings?*

This question focuses on the knowledge of clothing wearable during business meetings in the United States of America. The type of clothing which is inappropriate for business meetings is colourful clothing. Regarding to Graph 12, 68.37% of respondents marked the correct answer. The rest of the respondents chose the less formal style option – 28.57% and the conservative style gained only 3.06% of respondents.

<sup>58</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 207.

<sup>59</sup> Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, 2nd ed. (Avon: Adams Media, 2006), 551-52.

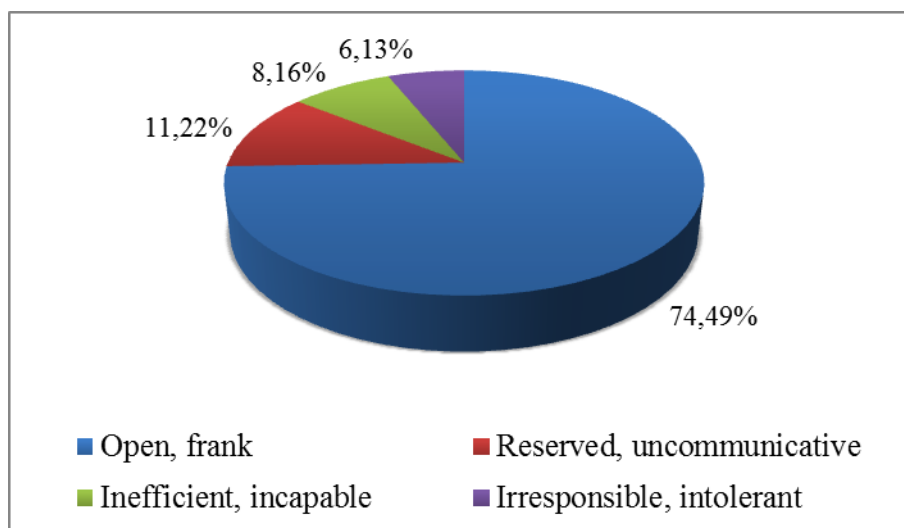


There are various options of wearable clothing for business meetings in the USA. Some particular companies still strictly demand the conservative style. Some companies even have rules for what particular types of clothing can be wearable. However, these rules mainly depend on the prestige and size of the company. In smaller companies it is allowed to wear a less formal style of clothing, also known as casual business clothing. On the other hand, prestigious companies generally demand to strictly obey the rules connected with the company's dress code. Another aspect which has to be taken into consideration is the worker's position. Someone who does not come in touch with clients is allowed to wear comfortable and casual clothing, whereas a manager who negotiates with business partners daily should wear conservative and impressing clothes.<sup>60</sup>

According to the previous paragraph, the only unacceptable type of clothing is colourful. The only allowed colours are the bright pastel colours, not flashy or jazzy colours.<sup>61</sup>

To sum up the results of this question, there is not any surprising outcome. More than half of the respondents chose the correct answer and due to that, the level of knowledge of etiquette of the United States of America is on the increase – according to this questionnaire.

#### 4.13 Q13: How Would You Characterize the Americans In General?



Graph 13 Q13: How Would You Characterize the Americans In General?

<sup>60</sup> Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, 2nd ed. (Avon: Adams Media, 2006), 554.

<sup>61</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 208.

As visible from the graph, a really high amount of respondents – 76.49% – agreed on the option saying that the Americans are open and frank in general with their behaviour. The rest of the options were chosen by similar amounts of the respondents; 11.22% of the respondents think that the Americans are reserved and uncommunicative; for 8.16% of the respondents the Americans are inefficient and incapable; and the rest – 6.13% – chose the option saying that the Americans are irresponsible and intolerant. The correct answer is, of course, the option saying that they are open and frank.

In general, the Americans are considered very open and frank people. They are also very hardworking and efficient in their workplace. Purposefulness is also one of the characteristic aspects for people living in the USA. They are able to sacrifice practically anything to fulfil their demands and their personal goals. The Americans are also very proud of their nation. Their nation means everything to them. They honour their national symbols as frequently as possible and they are truly identified with the principles of the Constitution of the United States of America.<sup>62</sup>

One of the most appreciated values in the USA is individualism, followed by gender and social equivalence and nationalism. The Americans also have a very good sense of humour. They use humour as frequently as possible on any occasion.<sup>63</sup>

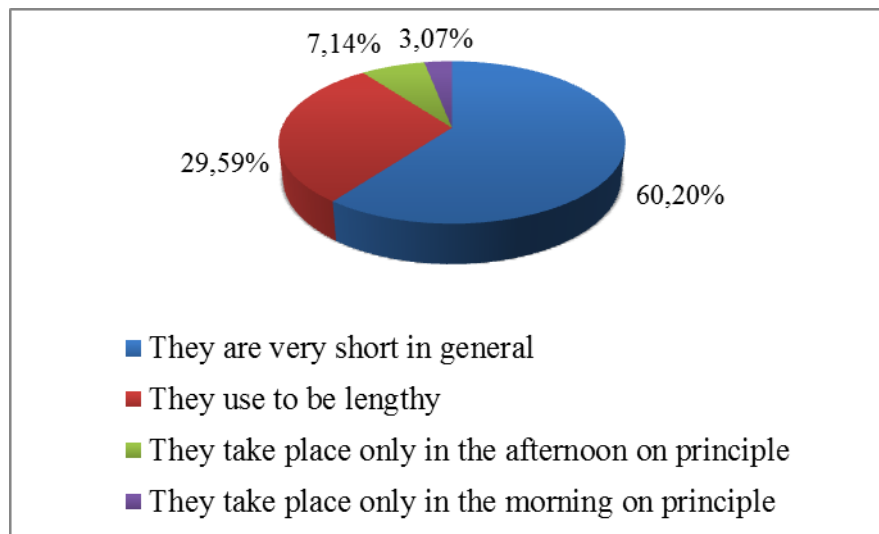
According to the answers to this question, which were chosen by the respondents, it is visible that the respondents have come into touch with the Americans – it does not matter if only passively or actively. The respondents could have answered on the basis of their personal experience or on the basis of passive information which they gained. But what really matters is the fact that 74.49% of the respondents chose the correct option and due to that it is apparent that the respondents know the main characteristics of the Americans.

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<sup>62</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 208.

<sup>63</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 67-69.

#### 4.14 Q14: What Are Characteristic Features Of Business Meetings In the USA?



*Graph 14 Q14: What Are Characteristic Features Of Business Meetings In the USA?*

According to the graph above, 60.20% of respondents chose the statement that business meetings in the United States of America are generally short, which is the correct answer. The second most frequent answer is practically the opposite of the most selected option and it gained 29.59% of the respondents. The other options were the statements that business meetings take place only in the afternoon (7.14% of the respondents) and the opposite – that they take place only in the morning (3.07% of the respondents).

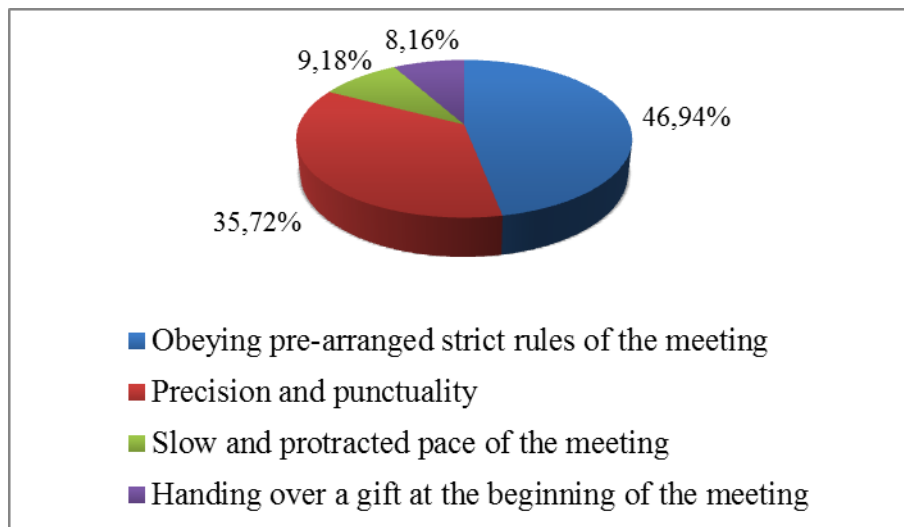
When comparing the pace of business meetings in the United States with many other countries, the negotiating process is much faster than anywhere else. Contracts which contain small amount of money could be even made during only one meeting. Business appointments are usually arranged via electronic correspondence and it is also very frequent that management's conferences are done via online video tools. What could be uncommon for foreign businessmen may be the fact that it is very ordinary to accept other phone calls during business meetings by American businessmen.<sup>64</sup>

There are not any uncommon and strict rules about making business appointments in the United States. Practically all that a foreign businessman needs to know is the basics of etiquette and ordinary proper behaviour. What is really essential for meetings in the USA is punctuality and precision. A very common feature of negotiating in the USA is the fact that

local businessmen very frequently take pre-arranged contracts with them to the very first meeting and if everything goes according to the plan, they are ready to make a contract immediately.<sup>65</sup>

In this question the respondents showed knowledge of business etiquette of the United States again, because more than half (60.20%) of them answered the asked question correctly.

#### 4.15 Q15: Your Business Partners From the USA Will Appreciate:



Graph 15 Q15: Your Business Partners From the USA Will Appreciate:

To describe the results of Graph 15, most of the respondents (46.94%) agreed on the option which says that businessmen from the United States will appreciate if the foreign manager will strictly obey pre-arranged rules stated before the first meeting. Unfortunately, this option is incorrect. The correct answer was the second most frequent (35.72% of the respondents) and states that local businessmen will appreciate punctuality and precision of the other person. The rest of the answers are incorrect; 9.18% of the respondents chose the option of slow and protracted pace of the business meeting and the rest of the respondents (8.16%) chose the option of handing over a gift before the meeting starts.

As described in the previous subchapter, businessmen from the United States of America will highly appreciate precision and punctuality with their counterpart. The pace of meetings in the USA has already been described too – actually, the option in this

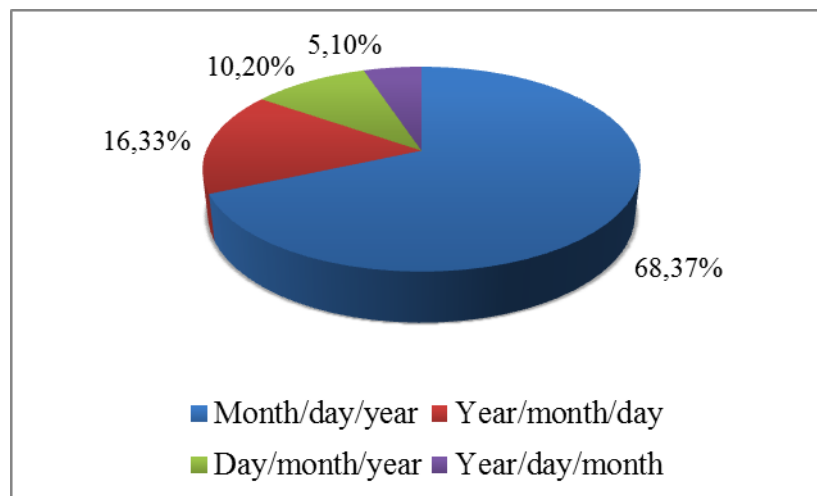
<sup>64</sup> Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, 2nd ed. (Avon: Adams Media, 2006), 549-550.

<sup>65</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 208.

question was made as the opposite of the correct situation on purpose. The pace of meetings is very fast; no delays would be appreciated at all. To disprove the opinion of most of the respondents that the American businessmen would appreciate obeying strict rules during the meeting – local businessmen do not demand any kind of rules at all. There are not any pre-arranged rules which have to be obeyed during the process of negotiation. As stated in the previous subchapter; the only thing which should be obeyed is proper behaviour during negotiating with the American businessmen. To give reasons for the last option – the feature of handing over gifts during business meetings is not very common and frequent in the United States. The only situation when gifts are handed over is a personal visit at the business partner's home.<sup>66</sup>

To summarize the results of this question, the correct answer has the second highest amount of respondents (35.72%) and this fact could indicate that the respondents do not have sufficient knowledge to be able to answer this question correctly.

#### 4.16 Q16: In What Format Is the Date In the USA Written?



Graph 16 Q16: In What Format Is the Date In the USA Written?

This question is based, in my opinion, on a very common and internationally known fact. And most of the respondents of my questionnaire answered correctly; the proper format of writing date is the option month/day/year. This option was marked by 68.37% of all the respondents, which is not as high number as could be expected. The second most frequent answer was the year/month/day option with 16.33% of the respondents. The third place

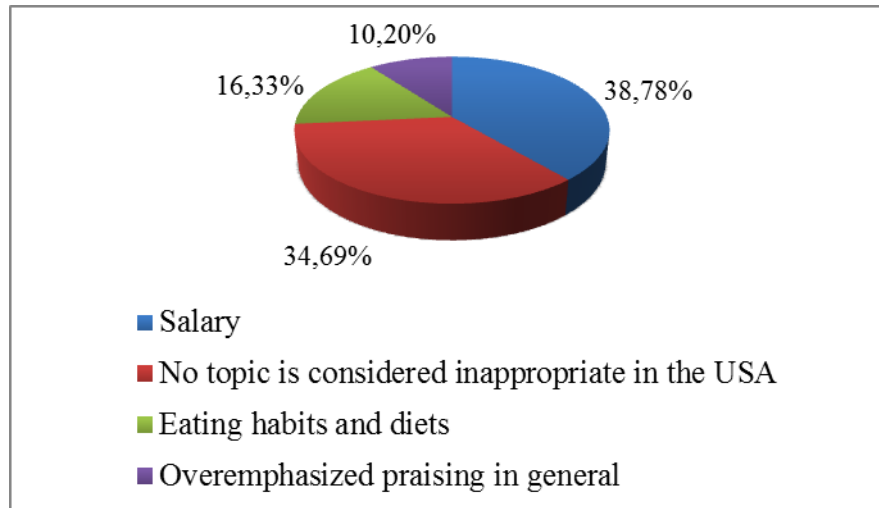
<sup>66</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 208.

belongs to the option of day/month/year which was marked by 10.20% of the answerers. And the least frequent is the year/day/month option – 5.10% of the respondents.

The format in which the date is written in the United States of America is different from most other countries. For example, the date format in European countries is written in the day/month/year format and this format is based on the hierarchy of length of the particular elements. While using imagination, we will get a hierarchical pyramid after placing these time elements in order of the particular element's length. This is absolutely different in the USA. Local standards of writing the date have a deep-rooted format which is different in the fact that the first time element which is written is the month. The second time element according to US date standards is the day; the last is the year.<sup>67</sup>

As for the conclusion of this question – most of the respondents (68.37%) answered correctly. On the other hand, my personal expectations were that the number of respondents who would chose the correct answer will be higher.

#### 4.17 Q17: Which Of These Topics Is Considered Inappropriate In the USA?



Graph 17 Q17: Which Of These Topics Is Considered Inappropriate In the USA?

This question focuses on the respondents' knowledge of the possible topics which can or cannot be discussed with the Americans. The most frequent option, which is also correct, says that the amount of salary is inappropriate to be discussed in the USA; it gained

<sup>67</sup> Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, 2nd ed. (Avon: Adams Media, 2006), 549.

38,78%. The second most frequent has a similar percentage amount of the respondents – 34.69%. This option states that there is no topic which could be considered inappropriate in the United States of America. The rest of the respondents chose the topic connected with eating habits (16.33%) and the statement that the Americans do not appreciate overemphasized praising of anything.

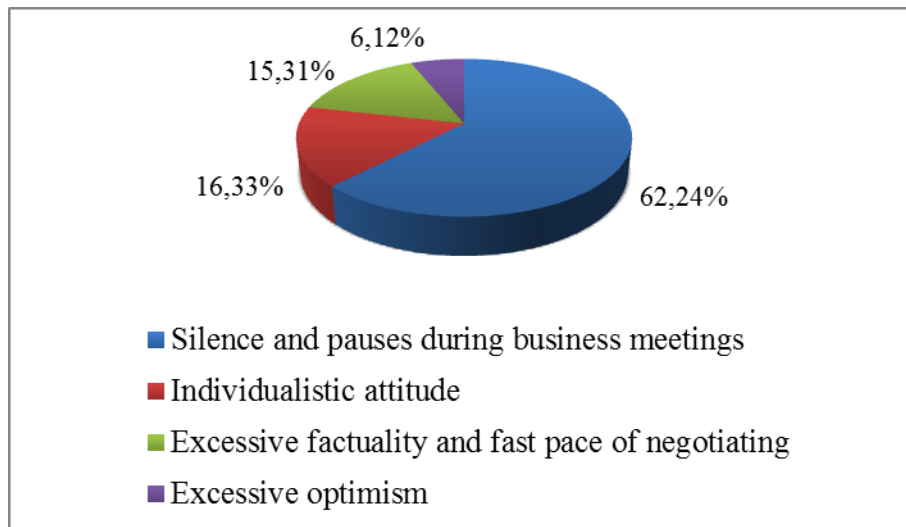
There are several inappropriate topics which a foreign manager should avoid discussing. Taking into consideration the options given in the question, the correct answer is the fact that the discussion of salary should be avoided. Talking about religion with the person who we do not know very well could have catastrophic impact on further mutual negotiating as well. The recommended topics to start the conversation with could be discussing mutual job duties. Talking about travelling is also very suitable at the beginning of a meeting. The Americans have a very good sense of humour, but a foreign businessman should take into consideration the inappropriate topics and not make jokes based on these topics.<sup>68</sup>

The respondents' knowledge background connected with suitable and inappropriate potential topics for discussion in the USA could be considered as sufficient. The correct answer was not chosen by the majority of the respondents but still it was the most frequent answer (38.78%). The opinion that there are no taboo topics in the United States was, in my opinion, mainly because of the wide spread liberality across the USA.

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<sup>68</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 209.

#### 4.18 Q18: American Businessmen Will Not Appreciate:



Graph 18 Q18: American Businessmen Will Not Appreciate:

This question focuses on the respondents' knowledge of features connected with the process of negotiating in the United States. Resulting from the graph above, more than half (62.24%) of the respondents agreed on the fact that businessmen from the USA will not appreciate silence and pauses during the process of negotiating, which is the correct answer. The fact that American businessmen will not appreciate an individualistic attitude is completely wrong; however, this option was marked by 16.33% of the respondents. The third most frequent answer was a fact pace of negotiating and the businessman's excessive factuality. This option was chosen by 15.31% of the answerers. And the answer with the lowest amount of the respondents (6.12%) was the option saying that excessive optimism could be considered as inappropriate during negotiating with a partner from the USA.

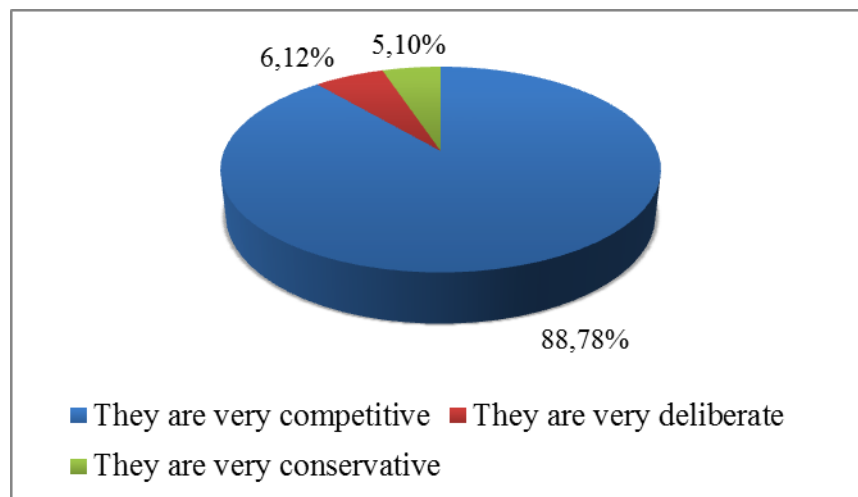
The correct answer, which says that silence during meetings is inappropriate, is based on American businessmen's nature. As already described in the previous subchapters, the pace of business meetings in the United States is really fast and due to that, there is no time for pauses of silence during the meetings. There is also one apt saying which states that time is money. This saying fits American businessmen completely. The option of the businessman's individualistic attitude is completely wrong, because American culture highly appreciates individualism. Excessive factuality and a fast pace of meetings is also very welcome by local managers, because as written in previous subchapters, it is very common that business meetings in the USA are very factual with an uncommonly fast pace. And the last option is also wrong for one simple reason – Americans are very enduring, tenacious and in general, they remain very optimistic in any case. They always



see some other opportunity or option how the problem could be solved and they do not resign easily.<sup>69</sup>

Summarizing this question, the respondents of my questionnaire again fulfilled my expectations and more than half of them chose the correct answer to this question. It is again visible that the respondents have a very good level of knowledge of business etiquette in the United States.

#### 4.19 Q19: How Do Americans Compete With Challenges and Chances In General?



Graph 19 Q19: How Do Americans Compete With Challenges and Chances In General?

This question is focused on knowledge of general overview of American culture among the respondents. And as obvious from the graph, the absolute majority of respondents (88.78%) are familiar with the high level of competitiveness and with the positive attitude towards risk taking among Americans. The other two options gained similar percentage amounts of the respondents; the option that Americans are deliberate gained 6.12% of the respondents and the rest (5.10%) of the respondents marked the option which says that Americans are very conservative about the potential challenges and chances.

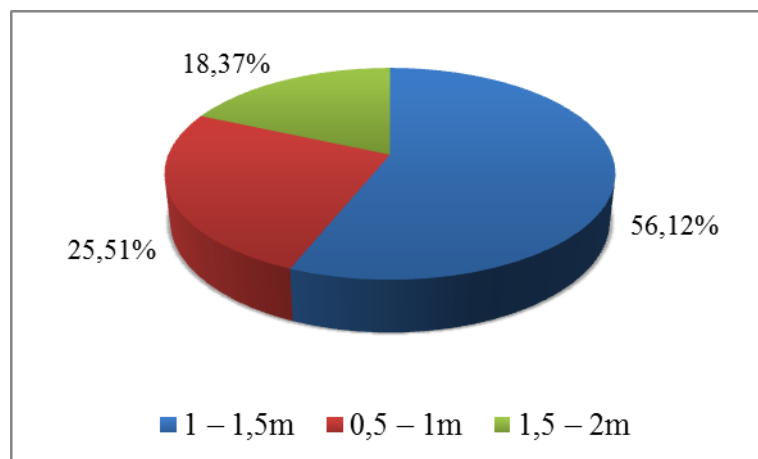
The correct answer to this question is in fact a very commonly known characteristic of Americans. It is well known that they are very competitive and that every new opportunity is a challenge for them with new potential experience for their further life. They are

<sup>69</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 67-69.

considered very opportunistic and they are not afraid of taking any chance. They are also able to decide very quickly whether to accept the challenge or not. This is because of the fact that Americans are able to see opportunities in a broader picture. They are familiar with the fact that even if one particular chance may seem very risky at first sight, it could be very beneficial for them in the final result. Of course they do think these opportunities over very carefully, but they are not afraid to avail themselves these challenges, which is based on their inborn nature.<sup>70</sup>

To sum up, the respondents dealt with this question very well. It is evident that most of the respondents have at least some basic knowledge background of American culture.

#### 4.20 Q20: What Is the Ideal Distance Between Two People During the Process Of Negotiation In the USA?



Graph 20 Q20: What Is the Ideal Distance Between Two People During the Process Of Negotiation In the USA?

It is important to respect the personal space among the people who are participating in a business meeting. The purpose of this question was to find if the respondents have an idea of the recommended distance between two people in the United States. 56.12% of the respondents correctly chose the option of 1 meter to 1.5 meters. The second most frequent option was the distance of 0.5 meter to 1 meter (25.51%). The option which gained the lowest amount of respondents (18.37%) was the distance of 1.5 meters to 2 meters.

In the United States of America, it is important to take into consideration the fact that Americans have a need for their personal space, which should not be violated by other

<sup>70</sup> Milena Bočánková et al., *Intercultural Communication* (Prague: OECONOMICA, 2006), 67-69.

people. Talking in figures, this space represents the distance of approximately 1 meter as the bottom line to 1.5 meters. A larger distance between people could bring undesirable consequences, such as inaccurate communication.<sup>71</sup>

This personal distance is also known as the proxemics and it is unwittingly demanded by every single person. There are four personal zones where each of these zones represents a particular distance between people. The zone with the largest distance between people is called public zone and in figures, it represents the distance of approximately 3.5 meters. The second zone, also known as the social zone, stands for the distance of about 1 meter to 3.5 meters. The third zone is called the personal zone and in figures it represents free space between persons of 0.5 meter to 1 meter. And the last zone is known as the intimate zone, which is less than 0.5 meter.<sup>72</sup>

To sum up this question, the distances of these personal zones are the same for most countries, but still, there are of course some exceptions. Talking about the USA, most of the respondents (56.12%) chose the correct option for this question and they proved their knowledge of social etiquette in the United States of America.

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<sup>71</sup> Božena Buchtová and Jiří Pokorný, *Podnikání a Kulturní Odlišnosti* (Brno: Olprint, 2004), 209.

<sup>72</sup> Lillian H. Chaney and Jeanette S. Martin, *Intercultural Business Communication*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 121.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to sum up generally known etiquette principles, which are applicable all over the world. The next purpose was to point out the main distinctions of etiquette in the United States of America and in the United Arab Emirates and to find the level of knowledge of these differences among Czech students.

The main goal of the theoretical part was to provide readers with basic principles of social and business interaction. This goal was fulfilled via theoretical knowledge gained from books focusing on social and business etiquette and on mutual interaction in society. Situations which might look trivial were intentionally pointed out for this part. On the other hand, these elementary circumstances are not always solved properly. Because of that, I decided to focus the theoretical part only on the basics of decent behaviour, because nobody can improve their social interaction skills if they have no etiquette basis.

The practical part had two goals. Firstly, I wanted to point out main differences of cultural background in the two selected countries. This goal was fulfilled thanks to the theoretical findings. Furthermore, not only a list of distinctions between these two states was given, but I also provided readers with the origins and roots of these cultural differences.

The other purpose of the practical part was to find the knowledge level of etiquette and decent behaviour in the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates among Czech students. This research was done via my own questionnaire. Generally speaking, I was pleasantly surprised by the questionnaire results. In most questions, the majority of respondents marked the correct options. Only in three questions focused on the United Arab Emirates and only in one question about the USA incorrect options were marked by the general majority. According to this, problematic questions for the respondents were Questions 2, 7, 9 and 15. The fact that the more successful part of the questionnaire was the part about the USA is because culture in the United States of America is more similar to Czech culture, whereas culture in the United Arab Emirates, as a representative of Islamic countries, is completely different from Czech culture.

According to the facts written above, I can honestly say that all goals of my bachelor thesis were fulfilled. To take into consideration the potential usage of this thesis in real life, it can serve as a handbook of general decent behaviour and it can provide its readers with distinctions between the USA and the UAE and with their explanations as well.

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## APPENDICES

P I      Questionnaire

## APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dobrý den,

chtěl bych Vás poprosit o vyplnění tohoto krátkého dotazníku, jehož vyhodnocení bude poté sloužit jako část mé bakalářské práce.

Zároveň bych Vás chtěl také poprosit, abyste si v případě neznalosti odpovědi na otázku odpověď nevyhledával/a, ale odpovídal/a pouze dle svého uvážení.

Moc Vám děkuji za Váš čas strávený vyplňováním tohoto dotazníku.

Martin Dvořáček,

*student 3. ročníku Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně,*

*obor - Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi*

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**1. Který z následujících jevů při setkání dvou mužů považujete za charakteristický ve Spojených arabských emirátech?**

- a. Uzavřenost. Muži se letmo pozdraví, maximálně je možné potřást si rukou
- b. Otevřenost. Muži se vřele pozdraví, obejmou se a mohou se i políbit na tvář
- c. Neutrálnost. Zdravení zde probíhá na podobné úrovni, jako např. v zemích EU

**2. Jak se zachováte, pokud ve Spojených arabských emirátech vstane od stolu při jídle nejváženější osoba?**

- a. Vstanete, rozloučíte se a popřejete mu/jí hezký zbytek dne. Poté se opět usadíte
- b. Nevstanete, jelikož by to dotyčná osoba brala jako urážku. Pouze se s ním/ní od stolu rozloučíte
- c. Vstanete a spolu s dotyčnou osobou odejdete

**3. Smí žena ve Spojených arabských emirátech přijmout podání ruky od jiné ženy?**

- a. Ano
- b. Ne

**4. Kterou z následujících věcí bude Váš partner ze Spojených arabských emirátů považovat za urážku?**

- a. Hlasitý smích v jeho přítomnosti
- b. Dotýkání se vlastního obličeje rukou
- c. Sezení s „nohou přes nohu“ tak, že Vaše podrážka bude mířit jeho směrem
- d. Jednání jiným jazykem, než arabštinou



- 5. Čím jsou charakteristická obchodní jednání ve Spojených arabských emirátech?**
- a. Jsou obecně velmi krátká. Většinou již za jedno setkání proberete vše potřebné
  - b. Bývají zdlouhavá. Můžete se setkat s nespočetným počtem setkání, než se doberete k závěru
  - c. Zásadně se konají pouze v dopoledních hodinách
  - d. Zásadně se konají pouze v odpoledních hodinách
- 6. Čím si zcela jistě u partnerů ze Spojených arabských emirátů vyvoláte negativní postoj?**
- a. Jste až příliš konkrétní
  - b. Vykazujete známky podrážděnosti a netrpělivosti
  - c. Snažíte se smlouvat
  - d. Nejste schopni/schopna jednat v arabštině
- 7. Většina států má zažitý fakt, že nepracovní dny jsou sobota a neděle. Které dny jsou nepracovní ve Spojených arabských emirátech?**
- a. Neděle, pondělí
  - b. Pátek, sobota
  - c. Čtvrtek, pátek
  - d. Žádné, ve Spojených arabských emirátech jsou všechny dny pracovní
- 8. Jaké téma se považuje ve Spojených arabských emirátech za nevhodné?**
- a. Ženy (všeobecně)
  - b. Peníze
  - c. Rodina (jako celek)
  - d. Jakýkoli druh humoru
  - e. V SAE není žádné téma považováno za tabu
- 9. Jak se na Vás budou ve Spojených arabských emirátech dívat místní lidé, pokud si jakožto cizinec oblečete jejich charakteristické oblečení?**
- a. Mohou se cítit uraženě
  - b. Budou k Vám vstřícní, jelikož se snažíte sžít s jejich kulturou
  - c. Zachovají se neutrálně
- 10. Pokud ve Spojených arabských emirátech chcete vašeho partnera obdarovat dárkem, co byste mu rozhodně neměli dávat?**
- a. Knihu (pokud se nejedná o Korán)

- b. Láhev alkoholu
  - c. Šperk
  - d. Řezanou či rostlou květinu
- 11. Čím je charakteristické vzájemné oslovování ve Spojených státech amerických?**
- a. Upřednostňuje se oslovování tituly, ne jmény
  - b. Prakticky hned po představení se se přechází k neformálnímu oslovování – tykání (kromě vysoce postavených osob)
  - c. Oslovuje se výhradně celým jménem, tzn. pokaždé jménem i příjmením
- 12. Jaké oblečení bývá u mužů v USA při jednáních nežádoucí?**
- a. Konzervativní
  - b. Barevné
  - c. Tzv. méně formální styl
- 13. Jak byste jednoduše Američany charakterizoval (v obecném měřítku)?**
- a. Uzavření, nekomunikativní, sebestřední
  - b. Otevření, upřímní
  - c. Všeobecně nevýkonní, nepracovití
  - d. Nezodpovědní, netolerantní
- 14. S čím se můžete při jednáních ve Spojených státech amerických často setkat?**
- a. Jsou obecně velmi krátká. Většinou již za jedno setkání proberete vše potřebné
  - b. Bývají zdlouhavá. Můžete se setkat s nespočetným počtem setkání, než se doberete k závěru
  - c. Zásadně se konají pouze v dopoledních hodinách
  - d. Zásadně se konají pouze v odpoledních hodinách
- 15. Vaši partneři ze Spojených států amerických na Vás velmi ocení:**
- a. Pokud jim před začátkem jednání předáte malý dar na důkaz toho, že si jich vážíte
  - b. Přesnost, dochvilnost
  - c. Pokud se během jednání budete řídit dle přesně domluvených pravidel a dle harmonogramu jednání
  - d. Pomalejší a rozvážné tempo jednání
- 16. V jakém formátu se ve Spojených státech amerických píše datum?**
- a. Den/měsíc/rok
  - b. Měsíc/den/rok

- c. Rok/měsíc/den
- d. Rok/den/měsíc

**17. Jakým tématům konverzace bychom se měli ve Spojených státech amerických vyvarovat?**

- a. V USA není žádné téma tabu
- b. Stravovací návyky a diety
- c. Výše platu
- d. Přehnané vychvalování čehokoli

**18. Američané při jednáních rozhodně neocení:**

- a. Individualistický přístup
- b. „Tiché pauzy“ během jednání
- c. Přílišnou konkrétnost a rychlost jednání
- d. Přílišný optimismus

**19. Jak se Američané v obecném měřítku staví k výzvám a šancím?**

- a. Jsou spíše konzervativní, neradi se do něčeho pouští
- b. Jsou velmi soutěživí a snaží se využít každé šance
- c. Jsou zdrženliví, nejdříve si musí vše velmi důkladně promyslet a poté Vám odpoví

**20. Jaká by ideálně měla být vzdálenost během jednání mezi Vámi a Vaším partnerem ze Spojených států amerických?**

- a. 0,5 – 1m
- b. 1 – 1,5m
- c. 1,5 – 2m