

## The Impact of the Culture on the International Negotiations: An Analysis Based on Contextual Comparisons

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**Abstract.** *The negotiation could be considered as critical part of the success within the international affaires. The participants' culture is one of the most powerful and influential factors that could give a stimulus or an obstacle to the negotiation process and outcome. The cultural differences prevalent in the international negotiations influence the most verbal and nonverbal language within negotiation. The culture distance has as a result the appearance of task and non-task related interactions. The cultural differences and similarities between the participants are shaping the negotiation styles too.*

*We are suggesting a single structure of the negotiation styles, which is capable of differentiating behavior of the negotiations, and benchmarks that could support the stimulation and efficiency of the negotiation process as a whole.*

**Keywords:** business negotiation; negotiation process; culture; cultural gap; negotiation style.

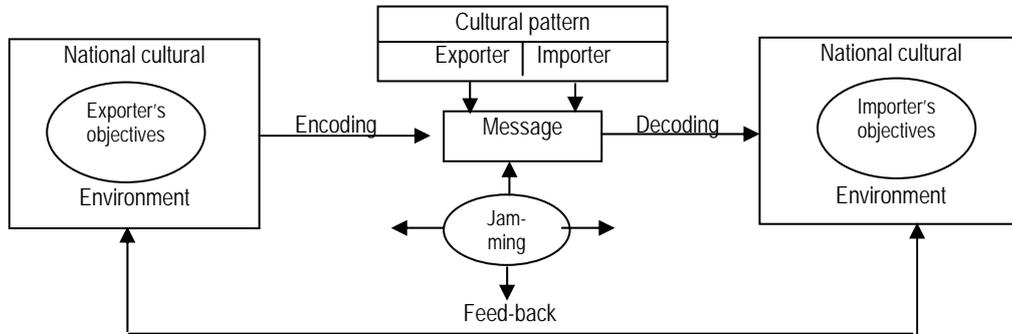
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### 1. Introduction: The negotiation as a communication process influenced by culture

In the XXI century, the competent businessmen should easily adjust to each circumstance that is the result of the cultural diversity of the markets. Who doesn't know the market rules of the business game has a competitive disadvantage. The international business has to derive advantage from the good knowledge of the markets culture and business partners. The negotiation is among the dimensions of the international business which requests and benefits by cultural knowledge. The importance of knowledge of business partners as part of the entire particular business and negotiation process becomes clear if Toffler's point of view according to which the business negotiations may be viewed as a constituent part of the integrated system of added value which "is more and more dependent on the data, information, and knowledge exchange" is accepted (Toffler, 1995, p. 239). First and foremost the negotiation is a way of communication. The communication is the essential link between the interested parts that are involved in business activities and operations. The negotiation has to be placed in the center of the international business process and content. This central place is a result of the definition of the negotiation. Hollensen (2008, p. 416) thinks "the negotiation is a process in which two or more entities come together to discuss common and conflicting interests in order to reach an agreement of mutual benefit". I. Popa (2001, p. 120) views the international business as an organized communication process between two or more partners from different countries. Beyond the differences all the definitions have two common elements, which are communication and process like characteristic of the negotiation. The distinctness and the effectiveness of the communication depend on the various influences of some favorable factors, and on the many sources of noise or jamming. The same influences are an impact on the chances of a correct and whole perception and understanding of the message by the addressee, which is the foreign customer. The sources of noise or jamming for example could begin by causing various distortions of the transmission and perception of the message and could end in the obstruction of the communication (Danciu, 2009). The culture of the participants is one of the most powerful and influential factors, which could stimulate or distort the communication as part of the business negotiation.

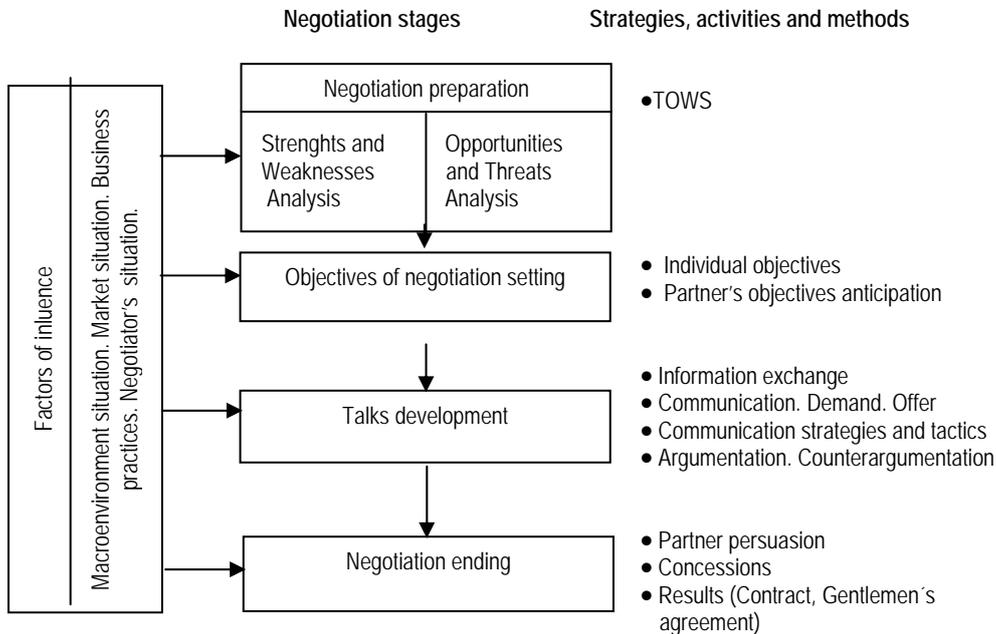
The cultural patterns of the negotiations have frequently more or less important differences. Every time when differences between the cultural patterns of the negotiators are present, the business issues have to be treated accordingly (Figure 1).



Source: author's design and execution.

Figure 1. The culture as influence factor of communication pattern in international business

The partners in any commercial negotiation have in mind to gradually harmonize their positions in order to achieve a mutually acceptable contractual agreement. The factors that could influence every stage of the negotiation have to be operatively and successfully identified, understand and used, in order to reach the agreement. Figure 2 shows out the stages, content and influence factors of the negotiation process.



Source: author's design and execution.

Figure 2. The negotiation process in international business

*Negotiation preparation* is the stage of analysis and evaluation. The general context of the talks development is now under analysis. The evaluation could be made using a characteristic research of the PEEST model of environment, the export market situation analysis and the firm's situation. Could be successfully utilized during the negotiation if they are in TOWS matrix that could suggest strategies (Gilligan, Wilson, 2005, Danciu, 2004). The opportunities and the trends have to be carefully used in order to achieve the objective of the negotiation. The strengths of every negotiator could be used in order to capitalize the identified opportunities or to reduce the existing threats. The weaknesses could be over passed if the opportunities are intelligently capitalized and the threats are moderated.

In order to increase the negotiation chances of success, the elaboration of a *negotiation plan* that could explain and support the efforts is needed. The plan should include a synthesis having as main elements a list of negotiation issues, the comparative evaluation of both partners agenda and the evaluation, classification and hierarchy of convergent and divergent themes of the negotiation (Popa, 2001).

*Objectives of negotiation setting* should be based on the focus principle. Each objective have to be precisely and in detail formulated and putted down having as content the issues the negotiator intends to solve; it should fulfill the SMART requirements of a good objective. The negotiation has to have characteristic, simple, measurable, adequate, relevant and tangible objectives. The price, volume of export, quality of commodity, conditions of delivery, financing and payment, potential risks and so on has to be taken into account as specific objectives if the object of the negotiation is an export.

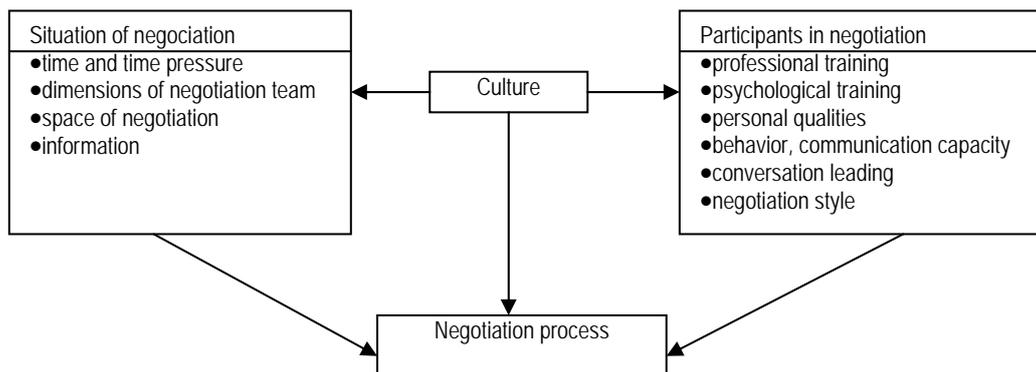
*Talks development* is the stage of a proper negotiation. Each part intends to act in such a manner so that the own objective could be achieved, without neglecting the partner's objective. In order to be successful, the negotiators involve themselves in verbal a nonverbal communication. They use commercial letters, demand and offer as methods of information exchange. When the partners have a face/to/face meeting, they resort to the strategies and tactics, arguments and counterarguments in order to persuade the opponent.

The success of the talks largely depends on the training and personal qualities of the negotiator. The professional and psychological background and the personality of each partners is important because it decides the methods of attack and defense, supports the flexibility and could secure the advantages needed for the achievement of the negotiation objective. The cultural profile of each negotiation isn't less important, for it could have an impact over all communication components and over particularly the methods used for the transmission, reception and understanding of information.

*Negotiation ending* is possible when the partners obtain a tangible, agreed result. The result of the international commercial negotiation is the contract as a rule. The Asian negotiators hold sometime enough one's word, particularly when they trust the person.

### 3. The international negotiation process under the influence of different cultural patterns

The environment to that each partner belongs could mark every aspect and stage of the negotiation. The impact of the culture could be found either, in the case of business contacts, the establishment of friendly or representation relations, business talks with the technical and commercial characteristic, at export and import or in the case of direct sale. The culture could play a role in every stage beginning with the negotiation preparation, influencing the vision and approach of the situation but also the strategic approach and the entire negotiation process, the rivalry and cooperation included (Figure 3).



**Source:** author's design and execution.

**Figure 3.** *The influence of the culture on negotiation*

Many cultural variables are influencing the expectations, actions and response of the member of a culture. A particular attitude, behaviour and negotiation style should be observed throughout the entire negotiation. The clothing, bearing, expression, gesture, punctuality and many others are transmitting signals about the attitude and behaviour. The way the talks are leading depends on the importance given both to the issue and the partner, negotiation style, the easiness to express one self. All these factors depending on the cultural partner are mirrored in the negotiation details. The language of

negotiation is important because it allows or not a certain balance between the partners. The language of one partner could be chosen depending on the ratio of forces, but in most of the cases a modern language is used. A significant language dimension that could be changeable depending on the culture pattern is the implicit or explicit characteristic. In the low context cultures the things that are communicated should have a clear and precise meaning. The speaker is supposing to be responsible for the effective communication in an explicit manner. The speaker and the listener are sharing the responsibility of effective communication in the high context culture as China and Japan, where the language is more implicit.

As a powerful mean of communication, the nonverbal language is more important in the high context cultures. The individuals are more sensitive to various nonverbal messages in high context cultures, while in the low context cultures as Anglo-Saxon cultures many nonverbal messages are not noticed. The significance of nonverbal language has an importance in negotiation because it could influence the conversation and result during the talks. In the Table 1 are included the most important factors of the nonverbal language and their way of expression in various countries from different cultural models.

Table 1

<b>National differences in negotiation due to cultural factors</b>		
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Way of expression</b>
Attitude against time	Germany	The country of time awareness. The time is a valuable commodity and an important unit of measure for the human activities. The lack of punctuality is a sign of poor organization and of bad manners.
	Spain	The country of time waste. The time has little value and is excessively available; the interest in punctuality is missing. The lack of punctuality is a sign of prestige in business.
Mimicry	Germany	The absence of mimicry of mind. The most important form of mimicry means lack of attention, lack of interest, lack of presence is the smile accompanied by occasional movements of the head.
	United Kingdom	The correct behaviour needs emotion hiding and a serious expression of the face. The smile is judged as a sign of weakness and lack of self-control.
Expression of eyes. Sight	West Europe United Kingdom	The elusive sight or the avoidance of partner's sight is a sign of lack of respect, lack of politeness, lack of friendship and attention.
	Japan	Looking down in front of the superior is a sign of respect.
	Countries of Mediterranean Sea Zone	Zone of intense sight. The sight is a mean of control of influence against others and of taking distance against strangers.
	Central East and North Europe Countries	This is a zone where sight has little importance. The persistent sight is taboo. Staring at the conversation partner more than ten seconds could bring him to lack his self-control and begin to fear.

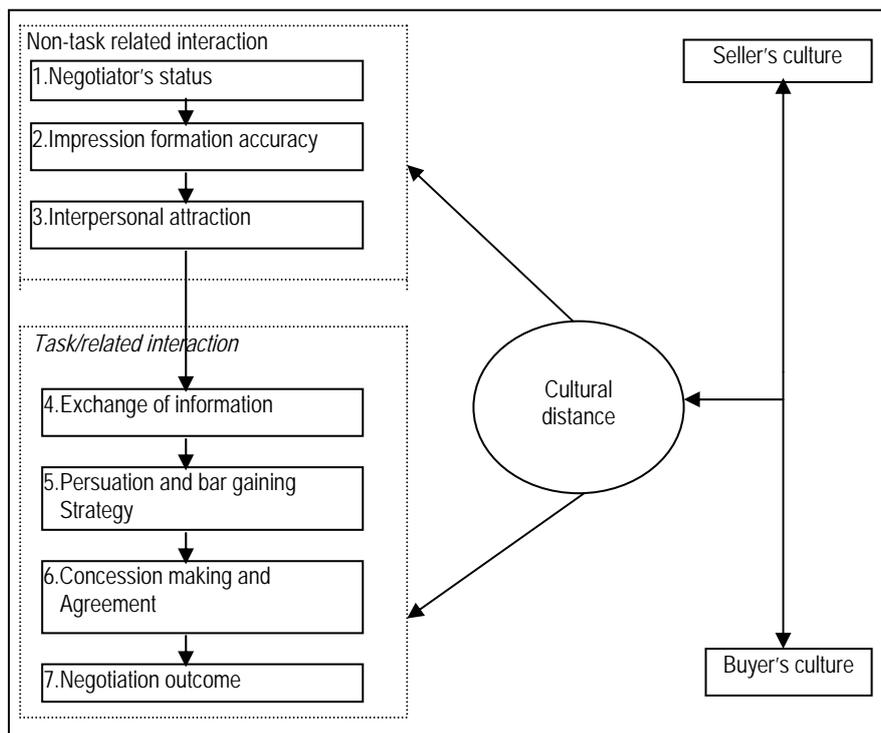
Body language Gesture	Italy, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal	The body is a mean of expression and communication. The gesture is the manifestation of melodramatic behaviour. People are using gladly his hands and arms in order to underline the ideas. They salute at the beginning and end of talks by shaking hands.
	Germany, United Kingdom, Nederland, Belgium	Giving his word is more important than gesture could bring tensioned atmosphere and cause and adverse response to the partner.
Language	France	The French is the favourite language in negotiation; even the majority of French-people speak English and German. The text should be written in French too.
	Italy	The business letters should be writing in Italian. The talk's language could be English.
	Spain	The Spanish language is used only if foreign partner faultlessly masters it.
	United Kingdom	English is the preferred language in during negotiation. Few English people speaks a foreign language well enough for business negotiation.
Hierarchy and Status	United Kingdom	The status depends on origin, social class and status of family and accent.
	France	The status depends on the level of education, the social status of the family and wellness.
First contact	France	Relationships are very important. The French people wish having much information about partners, before the beginning of talks. The conversation about French art, history and literature could support the relations' establishment. The formal clothing that is stylish and elegantly wearing is the standard.
	United Kingdom	Certificates and recommendations are very necessary. Men and women should wear cloths and shoes having a formal and conservative style. The negotiation partner has time and place to make proposals and counter proposal.

**Sources:** S. Hollensen, 2008, p. 146; Keegan, Schlegelmilch, Stöttinger, 2002, pp.123-125; R. Hünerberg, 1994, pp. 274-275; Mühlbacher, Leih, Dahringer, 2006, p. 191.

Cultural differences prevalent in the international sales negotiation that could influence the verbal and nonverbal language can have a tremendous impact upon the process itself and its outcome. These cultural differences are the “cultural distance” between seller and buyer. Figure 4 show the modified cross-cultural negotiation process that emphasizes the interactions is the first category. They could appear rather in the negotiation preparation stage. The motives could be found within the emotional component of the negotiation process. The emotional elements which can't be measures as impression formation accuracy, interpersonal attraction and even the negotiator status can increase the flexibility or rigidity during talks, even if the parts are professionally very well trained and have enough and valid information. The task related interactions are the other category and they are more important (Hollensen, 2008, pp. 416-419).

*Negotiator's status* is defined by interpersonal rank, age, gender, education, the position of individual in the company and the market relative position of the company.

The high-context cultures as those of Asia and Middle East are status-oriented. As a result, the words used by the negotiators in high-context cultures are not as important as the negotiator's status. The status distinction of negotiators between high and low-context culture are sources of potential problems. A seller from a high-context culture negotiation with a buyer from a low-context culture is likely to attach importance to the status of the buyer. The seller expects the buyer to reciprocate this respect, but this will rarely take place. The trust and respect are essential in many high-context cultures as the Japanese, Chinese, Mexican and most of the Latin America. The Japanese people could request more meeting before the talks about negotiation issues begin (Le Baron, 2003).



Source: author's adaptation according Hollensen, 2008, p. 417.

**Figure 4.** *The influence of cultural distance on negotiation process*

*Interpersonal attraction accuracy* is the stage of initial contact between negotiators. Meeting someone for the first time, individuals have immediate feelings that precede rationalized thought process. These feelings lead to the formation of instant opinions. As the perceptions of the individuals from dissimilar cultures differ, the likelihood of a negotiator forming accurate impression based on an inaccurate impression formation may also have negative effects on subsequent stages of negotiation.

*Interpersonal attraction* takes place when the negotiators are face-to-face. Interpersonal attraction can have either positive or negative influence on the negotiation. Individuals who are attracted are likely to make concessions in the bargaining process except those who are not separating the business relationships from personal relationships because each cultural pattern.

*Exchange of information* becomes more important for a clear understanding of negotiator's needs and expectations as a point of departure for an effective communication flow between the partners. Communication in cross-cultural negotiations through verbal means is complex and difficult with the extra complexity of several languages and local dialects in the world. The exchange of information becomes efficient if the meaning of information exchanged is fully understood. The meaning of information must be exactly understood by both partners. The cross-cultural sales negotiations are subject to non-verbal problems such as body language and the negotiators should accurately understand its differences and similarities.

*Persuasion and bargaining strategy* is the phase of the negotiation process, which refers to a negotiator's attempt to modify the performance expectations of the other part through the use of various persuasive strategies and tactics in order to get concessions. The various styles and instruments of persuasions across cultures can be found in two basic strategies used in the negotiation process. *The representational strategies* use communication based on identification of problems, a search for solutions and the selection of the most appropriate course of action. The partners can exchange information, share points of view and easily select the most appropriate solution. *The instrumental strategies* have as main goal affecting the other party's behavior and attitudes. They may use persuasive promises, commitments, rewards and punishments in order to influence the buyer's position. This kind of strategies is more manipulator and can cause tensions and incertitude. The strategy of persuasion each negotiator can use depends on his culture. The people in high-cultures are more willing to use strategies and tactics being apparently based on an inconsistent behavior. One says about Arab people that if they are not a long time bargaining are not content and about Japanese people that are afraid not losing their "honor". The negotiators do not take offence dominating and

manipulating the other part, even if they belong to low context cultures. The French negotiators have a competitive negotiation style and confrontation oriented, when German negotiators reprove no significant aspects of the partner's behavior. The north-American negotiators talks on equal position with other part and the best can win (see Table 1).

*Concession making and agreement* are upon the influence of cultural factors too. Negotiators from different cultures have different approaches to concession making. Negotiators from low/context cultures are likely to use logic, while individuals from high-context cultures are more likely to use personalized arguments.

*Negotiation outcome* can take different forms. The final agreement of a negotiation process may take the form of a gentleman's agreement, which is common in high-context cultures, are more formal contracts, which are more prevalent in low-culture countries.

#### 4. Negotiation style as a result of cultural influences

As the previous analysis shows there are cultural differences within all constituent parts of the international negotiation. The negotiation style is one invariable constituent of the negotiation process. It is influenced by cultural similarities and differences, since the individuals having a certain negotiation style come from a particular cultural pattern. Shell (2006) has identified five-negotiation style as follows:

- *Adaptation*. The negotiators who are able to adapt are sensitive to emotional mood, body language and verbal signals of the counterparts.
- *Avoidance*. The negotiators who avoid are willing to discuss only if they get warranties. They are inclined to postpone and avoiding the issues which could be subject to confrontation.
- *Cooperation* is the style of negotiators who like to discuss cases entailing various solutions trough creative methods.
- *Competition*. This is the negotiation style of people who think having the opportunity to obtain something. The competitive negotiators have powerful instincts and strategic vision. Such individuals may ignore the importance of relationships and this may create obstacle if the counterpart has a cultural pattern inside which the relationships are important.
- *Compromise* is a style used by the negotiators who wish to conclude the agreement by doing what is proper and equal for each part. These negotiators are very useful particularly when the time for concluding the agreement is limited. They can accelerate the process of concluding

an agreement even when is not necessarily and can too soon make concessions.

Within a culture there is a reference framework concerning the meaning of verbal and non-verbal arguments through out the negotiation process. The international negotiation has not such a common framework and this may create confusions and inexact interpretations, even wrong reactions. Therefore, the international business negotiations have to be very carefully prepared and planned. They should at the same time take into account and include the cultural differences influencing the negotiation behavior.

In order to contribute to the enhancement of the general framework of the negotiation theory, we propose a possible structure of the negotiation process, cultural differences and similarities included. This structure includes the following elements:

- *The sense of the negotiation goal;*
- *The nature of the negotiation objective;*
- *The characteristics of the talks;*
- *The formality within negotiation;*
- *The role of the parts within negotiation;*
- *The propensity to compromise;*
- *The conflict management;*
- *The emotion and emotional expression;*
- *The personal thrust.*

*The sense of the negotiation goal* varies depending on the cultural background of the participants. The negotiators originated in high-context cultures, such as those of Japan, China or South Korea, are insistent, status oriented and respect the relationships they have.

As a result, the time has a small importance for such negotiators comparing with the importance given by the partners from West countries. The Japanese people like better a negotiation style called *haragei* according to what all the aspects of a subject are in detail and repeatedly discuss in order to get a holistic image of the negotiated issue (Mühlbacher, Dahringer, 2006, p. 193). The Chinese people act very similar as they give great importance to the detailed questions and take advantage of time shortage of the negotiation partner at the same time. The North American and generally west people are short time oriented and like better to come rapidly to the point, because they are aiming to negotiate systematically and efficiently. This propensity for efficiency is many times considered by the negotiators belonging to other cultures as a punishment and makes the west people to negotiate inside a small margin. By contrast, negotiators from Brazil, China and Arab countries begin the negotiation from an exaggerated position (great market potential, high

prices) in order to have repeatedly negotiation rounds about the same subject until they come to the real dimensions (Hollensen, 2008).

*The nature of the negotiation objective* is in connection with the relationship between the negotiator and his firm or himself. The negotiators from US, Japan, Europe feel they have to reach the goal of the firm. The negotiators from India are inclined to pursue their own objectives such as power, prestige and personal satisfaction.

*The characteristics of talks and argumentation* are to be found between two significant extremes. The negotiators who belong to complex, high-context cultures have the ability to adjust to the negotiation style of the partner. The Japanese and Chinese people are more flexible in this respect. The negotiators who belong to low-context cultures fail to be flexible enough because these cultures are more egocentric. The French people are considered arrogant and self-important. They are also very proud of their logical way of thinking and are pleased to question other people logic. The negotiation rounds are relatively little organized, and the time period in which the issues are discussed is longer than in Anglo-Saxon space (Hünerberg, 1994, p. 276). The French like negotiation style can be considered as competitive and confronting oriented (Graham Mintu-Wimsatt, 1994). The British people like better to start the negotiation by leaving place for future concessions. As in German cultures, they take the final decision in shorter time.

*The formality within negotiation* can be analyzed on two co-ordinates, which are the formality of relationships and formality of outcome. The formality of relationships varies between formal and informal. The US negotiators are more informal and leveling in human relationships. The negotiation partners are sooner called on their first names, the titles having no importance. The Asian and European negotiators are very formal calling the other part with first name they think that the individual try to “soften” them, in order to make unjustified concessions. The communication between partners depends on the social status of everyone in Japan, while in Arab culture strict rules are to be observed. Many times, the formality could be a mode of hiding the feelings, which could negatively influence the negotiation.

The outcome formality refers to the precise way the partners express the negotiated agreement. Within low context cultures, the high formality is to be found in written, signed and sealed documents. The German, Britain, North American and European people think that the agreements and conventions need a written conformation having many information and signatures. The outcome of international commercial negotiation is the contract agreed on according to national and international rules. Within the high context cultures the given word is very important and it could be enough for concluding an agreement.

The gentlemen's agreements are often viewed as serious and trustful as a written contract, even they became formal contracts.

*The role of the parts within negotiation* is aiming at the equilibrium of forces. The North-American negotiators give the seller and the buyer equal rights and the best can win. The French people are making sure they have all under control, while the Japanese and Chinese negotiators use various tricks in order to handle the situation in their favor (Mühlbacher, Dahringer, 2006).

*The propensity to compromise* depends on its importance within different cultures. Within US it is viewed as a signal of democratic attitude, goodwill and fair/play. Within many Latin America's countries the concessions made to the business partner are highly respected because they are considered as a sign of honor, integrity and sometimes greatness. Within East Europe's countries and particularly in the case of Russia the concessions are perceived as weakness. Who complies with somebody's request lose control of self-determination and self-esteem in Russia (en wikipedia.org/wiki/Negotiations).

*The conflict management* has a wide range of approaches, cultural differences included. French, German, North American negotiators don't avoid the direct confrontation in the cases when the interests of parts are diverging. The transparent attitude, probity and integrity are highly appreciate by North Americans negotiators who use the without turning style of communication. Within high context cultures such as Japanese and Chinese the negotiator is under the pressure of "losing face". Therefore, the potential conflict of interests is negotiated with modesty and respect rather using an indirect language. All dissimilar approaches are indirectly solved in the Middle-East. The negotiation team never tackles a disputed subject. Both parts agree a trusted go between wrangler and he negotiates until a solution is agreed upon.

An influence on the various aspects of the negotiation could have the *emotion*. The culture may influence the social percepts, which in turn could affect the way the emotion is shown. The negotiators organizing in Southeast Asian cultures prefer to be cold and respectful. The Chinese negotiators even agree relatively long periods of silence and thinking during negotiation, a situation hardly accepted by the west-developed countries negotiators, particularly by those originated in low context cultures, which plan every pause. The people originating in Latin America and Mediterranean countries are more expansive and show his emotions during negotiation. Many Brazilian individuals talk all at the same time and touch the partner, while the Arab people raises the voice.

The state of mind of those who are part in negotiation influences various stages of the negotiation process such as the strategies to be used, strategies already used, the way the presence and intentions of the other part are

perceived, which for an agreement, and even the final outcome of the negotiation.

The emotion has a great potential to play a positive and a negative part within negotiation. The negative emotions may cause a strong and even irrational behavior and may contribute to conflict escalation and stop the negotiation, but it could be an instrument of getting conclusion too. The furious and angry negotiations may propose to themselves to rather use competitive, confrontation based strategies and to less cooperate (Forgas, 1998).

The fury affects talks by lowering the thrust level, negatively influencing the parts judgment, reducing the focusing capability, and even starting retaliation in some cases. The angry negotiators pay less attention to the other part, could reject advantageous offers. Such a behavior affects the outcome of negotiation by not taking care of the objectives and gaining less. The negative emotions may sometimes be advantageous too. The justified fury may show the commitment sincerity and needs of an individual.

The positive emotions begin to work still before the negotiation process starts. People who are in high spirits are more confident and inclined to use cooperation strategies. The negotiators being high-spirited appreciate more the interaction between partners; use less aggressive and more cooperative tactics during the talks. All these increase the probability of reaching the negotiation objectives, enhancing the chances of integrative outcomes and observing the agreements. These favorable effects are the result of better decisional processes such as those based on flexible thinking, creative problems solving, respect the partner, wish of taking risks and increased confidence (Fulmer, Van Kleef, 2004). The positive influences could be found even within the post-negotiation stage as a favorable commitment in needed actions for the agreement achievement.

*The personal thrust* depends on the negotiators characteristics of the culture, which could gradually affect the negotiation. Within countries such as Brazil, Malaysia and Thailand that have a high collectivism, the personal relationships are important for the business negotiation. The personal thrust is a requirement for successful business negotiation in China or Mexico, where the legal system is viewed having very little effectiveness and being to little socially acceptable. Therefore, good relationships are viewed as something that lasts. Within individualist countries such as US, Great Britain or Nederland, the personal thrust has a great importance for initiating business negotiation, and is presumed creating and extending during negotiation. Even in Germany the emotions and friendship take a back seat.

## 5. Conclusions

The international theory and practice establish the negotiation as a multidimensional concept having the communication the central point.

This characteristic give the negotiation a complex substance and do it depending on numerous and different factors. The culture is one of these factors for the success of negotiation. The influence of cultural factors increases the complexity of the negotiation and adds a new dimension to the substance of international negotiations.

The culture has various and multiple influences on the negotiation as a whole and particularly on business talks. The cultural influences have as a distinct characteristic the distance between cultural models and this gives many forms. All these cultural influences in the form of verbal and nonverbal language are to be found in the negotiating styles. The five negotiation styles based on adjusting, avoiding, cooperation and compromise are the result of negotiators models of behavior originating in different cultures. The distinct negotiation behavior and styles influence the whole negotiation process. In order to achieve their objectives, the negotiation parts rarely have the same approach about the talk issues and use different strategies and tactics. Therefore, in order to obtain and improve the aimed outcome of the international business negotiation sustained efforts, which could eliminate the diverging, issues of the cultural distance are to be made. The particular efforts have to be made at the individual level and by the firms, which are interested in the international negotiation success. At the individual level, cultural knowledge and sensitivity, adjusting capability, flexibility and personality are key efforts. The essential part of the international business negotiator profile and personality has to be the international adjustment capability and cultural conscience. People who negotiate have to have a high cultural sensitivity, easiness in communication, and great adjusting capability.

In their turn, the firms have to have cultural knowledge and particularly to insist for cultural training of the negotiation staff, in order to complete their professional profile. Among the possibilities, methods and instruments for human intercultural resources training are to be found the research of cultural differences for cultural distance identification between business partners, use of negotiation games based on talks simulations, and foreign languages.

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