

Negotiating with Great Britain

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Abstract

The article explores the British and Romanian negotiation styles. Using a twelve question questionnaire served to two respondents, one of each country, it aims at finding differences and similarities in the way they approach negotiation. The data collected are interpreted according to Lewis's model and the author concludes that multi-active cultures such as Romania are more influenced but other culture than active-linear culture such as Great Britain.

Keywords: *business negotiation, national culture, Lewis model, Great Britain, Romania*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the business negotiations have changed in last years and how the business world transformed from a competitive world into an interdependent one. We have been brought up to believe that negotiation is a game in which there are winners and losers and the measure of success is whether you can dominate your opponent and obtain what you want. There is no longer a cultural barrier that stops you from negotiating, every company, state, or country wants to trade and aspires to compete in the world economic system. It does not matter if you are a capitalist or a communist (or anything in between), a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, everybody negotiates. The key to success in an international negotiation is to understand the other party's culture and their negotiation style.

Consequently, the focus of this paper is to underline the negotiation style used by British and Romanian negotiators. Nevertheless, the cultural differences will reveal unique styles and techniques on which we will focus in order to establish how well these two cultures can negotiate and how we can ease the negotiation process.

The methodology used is a qualitative one based on two interviews of one Romanian businessman and a British businessman. The interviews consist of a set of thirty questions structured in three main subjects of interest: introduction- how they start the meeting, during the meeting and self-description. The goal is to analyse and interpret their responses and

outline the cultural differences between them as well as emphasizing the cultural influences they both have from the companies they work for. The process of analysing will be made on Lewis's model with personal observations as well as by consulting the literature review and citing Richard D. Lewis. The results of these interviews will hopefully help us understand the business behaviour of both businessmen and whether there are some similarities that can bridge the cultural gap in a negotiation.

In conclusion, the article will highlight the cultural differences between these two countries and will try to demonstrate that negotiators are not stereotypes of a culture and they can create their own business style unrelated to their cultural background. By analysing a British and Romanian negotiation will we get crucial information that will help us establish elements that strengthen the business relationship or make it more fragile. We hope that this case study will reveal new insights of the British Romanian business relationship that can represent a better business future for both countries.

The interviews

The interviews took place in different settings: the interview with the British businessman took place at his work place. The Romanian businessman was interviewed on Skype. Each of the interviewees had the same set of questions and probed to offer examples to sustain their answer.

The participants at this interview were the following: Mr. Gary Willis and Mr Marian Serban. On the one hand there is Mr. Gary Willis, a Technical Director at Ramboll UK Ltd, in Manchester. Ramboll is a leading engineering, design and consultancy company founded in Denmark in 1945. It is a company that provides multidisciplinary solutions that serve businesses, governments and communities around the world. Its team of specialists shares knowledge globally, bringing an unrivalled depth of experience to bear on each and every local project. This rich internal culture has attracted some of the best talents in the industry.

On the other hand, there is Mr Marian Serban, CEO at TÜV SÜD Romania. TÜV SÜD Romania is member of TÜV SÜD Group, sharing nearby the other 800 entities from its international level extended network the same rules, principles and values, and participating nearby these to accomplish the mutual mission and promise of value. This company offers services of system and product certification, inspection services – quantitative, visual, on flow inspection, witness inspection, NDT control, feasibility studies, projects

verification, performance evaluation, energetic audit and related technical consultancy, training and personnel certification services.

Lewis classified cultures in three main categories: task-oriented, highly organized planner- linear active cultures, people oriented- multi-active cultures and introvert, respect-oriented listeners –reactive cultures. Worldwide there are over 200 recognized countries or nation-states, and the number of cultures is very high due to strong regional variations. (Lewis, 2005, p. 27) The goal of this research is to establish in what category of culture we can include the British and the Romanian cultures, in terms of linear-active, multi-active or reactive cultures and analyse the respondents' answers regarding their behaviour in a negotiation. The framework of the interview consists of thirty questions, however we will choose only 12 that we considered as the most relevant and most significant for the model we have chosen. The questions will refer to their behaviour: when they start the meeting, during the meeting and how they describe themselves.

The findings

STARTING THE MEETING

The first step will be to establish what kind of introduction both businessmen use.

Question: Do you use formal or informal introductions?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
Typically both. Normally in a meeting people introduce themselves when they walk into the room, but they are very informal and nobody hears the introduction so I found it very useful to let that happen and but then do a formal introduction around the table to make sure everyone understand who everyone is.	Even if I am representing a German company which is.... Germans are pretty formal generally speaking, I define myself as being pretty informal guy so yeah the need of structure is obviously there but I also prefer informal introductions and friendly atmosphere.

When it comes to starting a meeting, the British business man said that he uses both formal and informal introductions, however he added

that when the meeting actually begins the introduction is completely formal. The Romanian businessman clearly defines himself as being informal with a need for structure. Romanians are known to be quite formal at the beginning, at least until they establish a good relationship with the other party, hence the Romanian businessman's attitude towards the beginning of the meeting is rather unusual.

The next questions are focused on whether they prefer having small talk before starting the business and if they do, what subjects they prefer discussing.

Question: Do you prefer having small talk before starting the meeting or prefer going straight to business?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
I think most times with the constraints of time we are trying to go straight into business, and outline the agenda and the purpose of the meeting. And then let the meeting drive the actions discussed.	As mentioned before I prefer an informal introduction with a small talk before discussing business.

According to Lewis's (2005, p. 154) model, British people start their meetings formally, with a cup of tea and biscuits, and a formal small talk about weather or sports and then they casually begin the meeting. However, from our British respondent's answer, we understood that they often go past the small talk and begin the discussion following the agenda. Romanians are talkative individuals and they rarely go straight to business without trying to get to know the other party. Small talk is a good opportunity for them to gather some more information.

Question: What subjects do you prefer discussing with the other party? (e.g soccer, family, politics, economics, weather)

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
If the meeting involves people that you are familiar with, than the small talk is focused on subject matters that relate with those individuals. If it is with people	It is preferable to have some information concerning the negotiation partner in order to avoid some difficult or

<p>you never met before the subject matter can be as general as the weather or the condition of our market. It is very much driven by how much you know the meeting participants.</p>	<p>unpleasant situations to talk about family for example and it is a difficult subject for me.</p>
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From these answers we can observe that the British openness towards strangers is indeed limited. Being familiar to an individual is extremely important for the British culture in terms of what discussion subjects they approach. The Romanian businessman's answer demonstrates how Romanians are trying to understand and adapt more to the international business world by being aware of the cultural differences between negotiating parties and choosing carefully the subjects of discussion.

Both respondents mentioned that it is important to have a structure; therefore the next question will be focused on the importance of having an established agenda.

Question: How important is to have an established agenda for the meeting?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
<p>It is the best approach to have a considered agenda, to try and take you as logically as possible through the subject matter if you don't the meeting will sort to rumble around the subject, however, certain people are notorious in not following the agenda and want to talk about the things that are relevant to them, so you may have to deviate from the agenda, but the fact that you still got the agenda in front of you, gives you some framework to pull back to, to make sure that you covered all the points that you wanted to discuss. It is</p>	<p>Any meeting with a good prepared agenda is more effective. Generally speaking, for a negotiation I do not have to have an agenda so it is more or less the tactic you will adopt from your side and you will try to influence the other party. If we are talking about a negotiation and a meeting where we are supposed to negotiate the agenda it is important to negotiate the issue.</p>

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
very, very good to have one but you have to be prepared to deviate from it a little bit.	

British people are very fond of the idea of having an established agenda and doing things in a certain order as seen in the answer above; whereas Romanians do not reject the idea and they do not mind if there is not an agenda at all. We can clearly observe this trait in the Romanian respondent's answer. Nevertheless, we can also see that British people are trying to understand that some people are not very fond of agendas and they are trying to get accustomed to the idea of deviating from the agenda as long as they can always come back to.

DURING THE MEETING

For the next part of the research method we will try to observe the business behaviour of both respondents during the negotiation process.

Question: What is the level of trust that you develop with your prospective partners? (low, medium, high)

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
We would like to. I think we see the benefits of understanding their side of the argument and building respect and trust but that's a function of the feedback that you get and if you don't perceived them being honest or you can't accept their arguments, than you are not going to trust them, so it will vary.	I am very much oriented to establish trust in a win-win deal. I prefer to have a high level of trust established with my negotiation partners.

To sustain this question and get more in-depth answers we will also ask the following questions: Do you tend to create interpersonal relationships with the people you negotiate with?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
Yes	Yes, I consider a good interpersonal relationship could be useful for a win-win negotiation

Question: Do you empathize? How important is the person you negotiate with?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
It is important and trying to understand the situation that they are in and why they may hold abuse of what they have.	I prefer an open person with an obtained win-win orientation and I prefer to empathize with such a person. I have to admit that there are situations when you have to be less empathic and to adopt a formal attitude, but in most cases I prefer to empathize.

First of all, these questions were asked at different moments of the interview so we can identify any changes in their answers, if there are any of course. Romanians usually focus more on building a relationship with their partner and less on getting the actual business deal. While, the British tend to create relationships, their process of building tends to be long because they analyse everything cautiously and every word or wrong feedback they get can easily damage their level of trust.

According to Lewis (2005, p. 145) the British trust level is medium, while the Romanian is low. We can clearly observe that in the answers we have, the Romanian businessman's trust depends greatly if he is in the win-win situation, then he is more focused on having a high level of trust. While the British would like to have a high level trust, yet due to their tendency to be cautious and at the same not to offend the other party, they try to be balanced, observe and wait, until deciding whether they should trust the other party or not.

Another dimension proposed by Lewis (2005, p. 48) is Data-Orientated, Dialogue-Oriented or Listening cultures. Hence the following question: From 1 to 10 how much do you rely on dialogue and how much on data?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
As engineers I think we are in the 7 or 8 category of relying on data, and sometimes depending on who we are negotiating with perhaps we should be more 7, 8 relying on dialogue	50-50

When discussing whether they use more data or more dialogue during their meetings, both businessmen gave interesting answers. On one hand, British people are more Data-Orientated and believe in the importance of having all the information gathered, especially in negotiation where it is considered that information is power. Our respondent rated his tendency to rely on data as seven or eight, due to his engineering background. Despite this, he believes that the British tendency of relying more on data should be sometimes replaced by a tendency to rely on dialogue.

On the other hand, Romanians are somewhere in between. They prefer presentations with a lot of information and facts, but at the same time dialogue is very important too. For them it is very important to have a balance between data and dialogue, a preference that can be observed in our Romanian respondent answer.

The last factor we will analyse from this section will be humour, meaning how often both respondents use it and whether they consider it as a technique against their negotiation partners.

Question: How often do you use humour in meetings? Do you use it as a technique to influence the other party?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
Personally, I use humour possibly too much. My own personal style is one to try to enjoy life, even if it is a very difficult meeting where people will try to be serious.	Yes, I do believe I am using humour and I think it is not because I am using it as a technique but it is to establish an opened and friendly atmosphere.

British people use humour very often and to certain extent they expect their partners in negotiation to use it too. Nonetheless, our respondent believes that he is using humour maybe too much in contrast to

other British people and does not consider it a technique, but as being something that could offend.

Moreover, as our Romanian respondent answered, he uses humour to maintain a relaxed atmosphere rather than using it as a technique that could upset the other party.

SELF DESCRIPTION

In this section we will analyse and compare how both respondents characterize themselves and if these characteristics are similar to those of a person who belongs to a liner-active, multi-active, or reactive culture.

The respondents were given a series of characteristics and were asked to choose eight that suits them best. Afterwards, they were asked some short questions with some traits and they had to choose again. Here are the questions and their answers:

Questions: 1. Introvert or extrovert? 2. Patient or impatient? 3. Quiet/talkative/silent? 4. Do you plan ahead methodically/plan generally/guide yourself by general principles? 5. Do one thing at a time/do multiple things at a time /react? 6. Work fixed hours/any hours/flexible hours? 7. Do you have a strict time table/unpredictable time table/follow partner time table? 8. Interrupt frequently/rarely/never? 9. Confront logically/emotionally/avoid confrontation?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
humorous, serious, well-mannered, diplomatic, honest, open, efficient, flexible	humorous, serious, diplomatic, honest, hard-working, efficient, flexible, polite
1. Introvert	1. Extrovert
2. Impatient	2. Impatient
3. Quiet	3. Talkative
4. Plan ahead methodically	4. Guide by general principles
5. Do one thing at a time	5. Do multiple things at a time
6. Flexible hours	6. Any hours
7. Strict time table	7. Strict time table
8. Interrupt frequently	8. Rarely
9. Confront logically	9. Confront logically

Lewis (2005, p. 115) described British managers as being diplomatic, tactful, laid back, casual, reasonable and that they consider themselves as conducting business with style, humour and wit. If we look at the British respondent self-description we cannot find any relevant differences.

What is interesting about both respondents' answers is that if we look at both answers we cannot find any distinctive differences; both respondents described themselves very similar. Despite these similarities, the latter set of questions clearly showed the differences between them.

At this point we can clearly establish which of the respondent is linear-active and which is multi-active. The traits of a typical linear-active culture are: introvert, patient, quiet, plans ahead methodically, confronts logically, whereas the traits for multi-active cultures are: extrovert, talkative, impatient, flexible hours, interrupts frequently. Hence, we can establish that the British culture is a linear-active one and the Romanian one is multi-active.

We stated that the purpose of this dissertation is to highlight the cultural differences between the negotiation style of British and Romanian businessmen and to establish whether it is possible that the culture of the company the negotiators work for can influence their business behaviour and negotiation style. Thus we asked our respondents the following question: Do you consider that the values that your company promotes have an impact over your negotiation style?

British Nationality	Romanian Nationality
I am not too sure whether the Danish background at Ramboll has had enough time to sort of adjust my business ethics, but I think historically the various companies that comprise Ramboll in the UK have similar ethics that's why we ended up together. There are ones of trying to make sure that we understand what our objects of the negotiations were, make sure that we understand the liabilities and the risks of what we are trying to achieve in a negotiation and	Definitely yes, the company has one of the biggest reputations in the world and also the business we are developing is related to certifications so trust and quality of our services is even more that in other business key issues. So promoting the values of my company is very important during a negotiation

because of we are trying to do it in a quite considered way it may show a negotiation style perhaps a little bit careful and cautious.	
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The British respondent believes that the Danish values are similar to the British one; hence he does not feel a notable change in his business behaviour. Well, according to Lewis' research he has a point. The Danish culture is a linear-active culture too with some reactive influences; they need humour as much as the British and they are cautious individuals, just as our respondent describes them. The British negotiation style cannot be influenced in any way by the Danish one due to their almost perfect compatibility, after all this the reason they "ended up together" as stated by the British respondent.

In contrast to the British answer, the Romanian declared that he relates himself to the company's values and try to implement them as much as possible during negotiations. This statement can be supported by his self-description which is very similar to a typical German businessman.

Conclusions

Apart from the obvious differences in terms on how both respondents approach the beginning of the meeting or during the meeting, we also found some traits in the British respondent's behaviour that contrast the typical British ones. One was the respondent's statement that he interrupts frequently, a trait which is not common among British people due to their tendency to avoid confrontation or any action that could upset the other party. Another trait chosen by the Brit was impatience which is also rather unusual for a British individual. Nonetheless, this could only be due to the individual's personality and not related to his culture.

We have also discovered that the Romanian respondent described his confrontation style as being logical, which is uncommon for a Romanian due to their tendency to use emotions frequently during their negotiations.

In my view, after assessing the information gathered from interviewing these two managers, I believe that if a negotiation was about to take place between them, the cultural differences would not represent an obstacle for the success of the negotiation. In support of my statement I had

asked the interviewees if they could mention three factors that they believe it would have a positive influence in a negotiation between them. From their answers we can understand that both of them expect their partners to be open to any proposals and open to any arguments related to the subject of negotiation. Most important, they both proved knowledge about one's culture and even though there can be some difficult moments, they both demonstrated that they would confront logically, in a polite manner and prove to be flexible to one's requirements and overcome possible conflicts.

Moreover, this research also reveals that linear-active cultures like Great Britain fusion well with other linear-active cultures, thus there is no influence. Even so, multi-active cultures like Romania, especially those which are transiting from a communist era tend to be influenced by other cultures and those influences can be easily observed.

In conclusion, this paper demonstrated that both British and Romanians are culturally aware of the differences between countries and understand the importance of being culturally informed on how to act in intercultural negotiations. Insights such as the British understanding that some cultures do not need an agenda or that Romanians are aware that some intercultural business partners need more privacy, represent just a few of the changes that could bridge the cultural gaps and strengthen future British Romanian negotiations.

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