

The Influence of the Communication Context in Business Situations

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the importance of taking into account cultural differences when preparing and effecting an international business negotiation. The topic is illustrated with an in-depth analysis of an actual negotiation which took place between a Romanian representing Vodafone and a delegation from a company in Qatar while the multinational company was aiming at expanding in the Middle East country.

Keywords: *business negotiation, intercultural communication, Arab business culture, Qatar, negotiation styles*

Introduction

I have chosen to elaborate on an analysis of the impact of the communication context in our everyday lives, especially from the perspective of its influence on business situations, as the topic is highly relevant for today's new realities, defining the necessary conditions to develop and also to maintain relationships of any kind.

While extensive research in this field has been conducted before, the evidence is diverse and many questions remain still unanswered. Given the great impact of the effects of the communication context on both our personal and professional lives, a thorough analysis is required.

This paper focuses on a case study aiming at capturing the impact of the communication context in the professional work setting, the challenges international negotiators have to cope with, the different communication styles and cultural diversity in business. It consists of a real negotiation between a Romanian negotiator representing Vodafone, pursuing the company's intention to expand into the Middle East, and the representatives of the local companies, in Qatar, providing outsourcing services. It highlights the approaches of the parties involved in the negotiation, relating to their specific undertaken actions in each of the phases of the process, in the idea of emphasizing cultural differences.

Brief presentation of Vodafone Qatar

Vodafone takes care of the communication needs of *more than 430 million people from all over the world*, operating in *more than 150 countries*¹, both directly, and as well as through partnership agreements with other local companies (business divisions, joint ventures, associated undertakings and investments).² The company has a *significant global presence* in Europe, Africa and Central Europe, Asia Pacific, North and South America and last but not least in the Middle East.³

Operating worldwide, Vodafone aims to implement a uniform policy on work. Therefore, at a global level the company promotes the same vision, based on the specific core values defining the brand. However, in order to maintain sustainability and build on its growth, Vodafone adds to its basic values the particularities characterising the needs and the wants of the customers of each of the specific regions where it operates. By respecting cultural diversity and adapting to change, the company constantly improves itself, creating new products and services tailored on each region, for each segment of customers.

Vodafone presents itself as an *international family*, for which the core values to prevail are flexibility and diversity. On any occasion they have, officials representing the company state that the brand is focused on embracing difference – “Our people are as diverse as our customers. It’s a strength we take care to preserve.”⁴ In other words, officials suggest that for the company every personal variation in terms of gender, age, life stage, ethnicity, religion, thinking, lifestyle, working style⁵ is not only respected, but being taken advantage of. The brand promotes the idea that evolution (personal and consequently the evolution of the company) can only be ensured throughout innovation. And what makes the brand innovative and

¹ Vodafone – Overview, Who we are? date accessed 15th of February, <http://www.vodafone.com/business/who-we-are>.

² Vodafone Partner Markets, date accessed 15th of February 2016, <http://www.vodafone.com/content/index/what/partner-markets.html#>.

³ http://www.vodafone.com/content/annualreport/annual_report10/exec_summary/global_presence.html.

⁴ Embracing difference, date accessed 15th of February 2016, <https://www.vodafone.co.nz/careers/culture-values/diversity/>.

⁵ Embracing difference, date accessed 15th of February 2016, <https://www.vodafone.co.nz/careers/culture-values/diversity/>.

creative relies on its openness to new ideas and experiences, its sustainable determination and its intense commitment to excellence.

Vodafone Qatar is part of the largest mobile communications group worldwide, Vodafone Group, ranking second in the Middle East, in terms of mobile services and fixed telephony services. Moreover, Vodafone is listed on Qatar's Stock Exchange, the company being owned in a percentage of 73, by locals.⁶

The objective of Vodafone Qatar's mission was related to the intention of opening a call – centre, since in the area, there were no possibilities of communicational development with the customers. Consequently, Vodafone decided to invest in developing customer relationship, therefore the company located its main headquarter in the Middle East, in Qatar, in Doha. This is the place where terminals (final / end – state devices) for consumers are registered (mobile phones, tablets, TVs). Besides product related activities, the headquarter in Doha is also the place to gather services information and synthesis. In other words, there are being centralized call centre and IT (outsourcing) services, there is also the customer service and repair centre and what is more, the centre in Doha is also the logistics centre of Vodafone in the Middle East.

After researching the possibilities of development in the Middle East, Vodafone launched a new expansion project in Qatar. Prior to starting up the actual organization in Qatar, the general manager of the company selected 25 *regional market managers* to engage in the new project, inviting all of them to an official meeting, at the main headquarter of the company, located in London. The representative of Vodafone Romania, Alexandra Pascu, has been delegated to carry out the training activities developed there.

The negotiation process

The first step to ensure a proper and an efficient development for the setting up of the project Vodafone Qatar was represented by the shaping of the **programme of activities**. Being in charge of coordinating the program of activities specific to the launching of the new project, the Romanian official started by working on its key aspects in terms of the methodology and organization. For this reason, it is fundamental to

⁶ Vodafone Qatar, About Us, date accessed 14th of February 2016, <https://www.vodafone.qa/en/investor-relations/about-us/about-vodafone-qatar>.

mention the fact that the plan Vodafone Qatar has been designed as a partnership between Vodafone and a local operator from the region. Therefore, for the programme of activities to be feasible and real, one essential condition was related to the partnership agreement between Vodafone and a local company, providing specialized outsourcing services in call – centre and IT. Based on that, after severe research on the market and a detailed analysis throughout a great number of filters, Vodafone's representative decided to approach *three local operators Zain Company, Abdali General Contracting and Aaamal Company.*

In an attempt of a further analysis of the opportunities available on the Arab market, Alexandra decided to contact each of the three local operators, explaining them Vodafone's planning in Qatar, in the perspective of setting future business meetings. According to the information I have from our official, all of the three potential business partners were very interested in the project, demanding additional information. In less than three days after her conversation with the representatives of the local companies, they all confirmed their willingness to participate in negotiations.

The approach of the Middle East represented a key phase for Vodafone. Although the decision of the company's expansion involved prior critical and careful analysis, at the end of all three negotiation meetings, none of the local operators accepted the terms and the conditions of the partnership proposed to them. Given the circumstances, Romanians could not understand the reasoning behind the Arabs' decisions. Actually, our representative told me she did not expect for a second that any of them would deny the offer, as besides their considerable benefits in terms of profit, local operators would have also enjoyed intense promotion, from the image building of a project of such a magnitude. She also confessed that she was rather concerned on how to choose one of the local operators and which filters she should apply to them so that in the end she chooses the best. At that very moment, her conclusion was limited to finding that none of the potential partners could identify specific concluding business opportunities.

A few days after the end of the negotiations, Alexandra met an Arab colleague she used to work with before. While having an informal meeting, she complained to him about the unforeseen turn of the conduct of her activities. She was strongly affected by the denial of the Arab companies, as she felt she failed in fulfilling the responsibility that has been given to her.

Her judgement was indeed reasonable, as she explained me that the others had to respect the schedule attached to the programme of activities, however their activities were depending on her organization. Therefore, the start of the project was for her a lack of success, as Vodafone Qatar could have not been launched on the settled date, as she did not know how to approach the situation, nor she knew which the right explanation of what she did wrong was.

Her colleague was aware of the state of the project as he was also working for Vodafone, therefore they decided to discuss the programme of activities in detail and also to try to analyse and interpret her activities related to it - the way she made the offer to the local operators, her communication style, her approach in negotiation and also their reactions to each of her actions.

Alexandra started by presenting her colleague her vision of the programme of the activities. In order to achieve the target set by the company, she structured the programme into different sections of activities, for which she appointed specific periods of time. Subsequent to the partnership agreement with one of the local operators, the first activity to ensure the ongoing process of the new project was related to **the training activities**. Considering the importance of the project in the area, but also the variety of topics to be approached, learnt and tested, she assigned a period of an year for the training activities, the planning being **mandatory for all participants** – and what is more, not only for Vodafone`s employees and for the employees of the outsourcing company, but also for its representatives.

The plan designed by the Romanian delegate was very well organized and structured from the perspective of the economic opportunity of the company, focusing on the benefits of the collaboration between Vodafone and one of the local operators. However, the format conceived did not respect any of the specific principles defining the Arab culture, therefore its implementation was perceived by the local operators as being offensive.

One of the most relevant aspects of a successful negotiation is preparation. Findings reveal that “A negotiation can be won or lost in the preparation phase”⁷, as it has been proven that inadequate planning can

⁷ International Negotiations Handbook, Chaper 2: Preparation, http://www.bakermckenzie.com/files/Uploads/Documents/Supporting%20Your%20Business/Featured%20Services/bk_internationalnegotiations_preparation2.pdf.

cause uncompromising damages to the relationship between the parties and consequently leads to the failure of the negotiation.

Our concrete example illustrates a faulty preparation, as the Romanian delegation considered it has a superior position in negotiation and elaborated the negotiation strategy complying with its own interests, as a decision maker. Following the story of our representative, the planning of Vodafone was very accurate, structure and schedule wise, however such a rigorous programme critically limited the possibilities of negotiation from a different perspective. In other words, even if in terms of content and also from a financial point of view the offer was advantageous for both parties, the exclusion of the other party's interests and consequently the lack of respect for their position in negotiation is what lead to the negative feedback from all of the three local operators.

As illustrated in our concrete example, even if our delegation was very well prepared for the conduct of the negotiation process, in terms of content and organization, the factual approach of our representative was perceived to be disrespectful, as a consequence of a deficit preparation. Respectively to the cultural impact, her communication was misinterpreted, as well, and therefore wrongly perceived.

The programme describing the activities and also its planning – schedule and content – have been realized according to the interests of the company and corresponding to the specific regulations of the Occidental negotiation style. Thus, as a consequence of the omission of the intercultural factors and of their impact on the negotiation, the programme of activities could have not been accepted. Considering the given circumstances, the Arab colleague explained to our representative the reasoning behind the attitude of the local operators and the impossibility of an eventual collaboration, from their perspective.

Besides the fact that the programme has been realized without any consideration towards the potential partner, its approach in the negotiation has also been inappropriate. One of the main reasons to explain the lack of success of the negotiation is related to the specific requirements of the Islamic countries regarding **discrepancy among sexes**, which have been also omitted.

First of all, as I have pointed out above the programme of activities involved *the development of training courses for the employees*, the courses *being taught by the Romanian delegate* in Qatar. The problem was that, by accepting the partnership, not only the employees of the local operators, but also their

representatives would accept to be trained by a woman. *Moreover, the training was supposed to be developed according to their **position in the negotiation**, therefore the rapport was employer (Vodafone – Romanian representative, woman) – employees (local operators).* In the given context, the employees would have been supposed to respect the conditions imposed by Vodafone's official and obviously, respect her, meaning no excess of superiority, quite the contrary. As the representatives of the local companies were also supposed to attend the training courses, at least in the beginning phase, the conditions of the negotiation were unacceptable. Arabs felt disrespected and I would eventually even say offended, as considering their social status and what is more, their specific mentality such a project cannot even be conceived, hence definitely not accepted or understood.

*Second of all, unlike Romanians who often might not properly manifest their **spirit of unity**, national spirit in the Islamic countries is very well developed.* The representatives of the local companies would have probably been more open to negotiating the training courses, if only they would have been taught by a person of the same nationality as theirs. From the perspective of the Arab colleague of our representative, besides being trained by a woman, which was already quite much for them to understand and handle, they were also supposed to be under the pressure of constantly being organized and supervised by Europeans. The Arab colleague explained to Alexandra, that from his perspective, the programme would have been more likely to be accepted by them, under these given conditions, if only she would have given them the impression their opinions matter.

According to theoretical knowledge, one of the most relevant aspects when negotiating with Arabs is represented by gaining their *trust*. As revealed above, it was almost impossible in the given situation to gain the trust of the local operators, as not only Romanians critically limited their possibilities of expression in negotiation, but also deeply ignored their cultural customs. In other words, on top of disregarding the organizations Arabs were representing, as Vodafone rather imposed its vision – principles and rules, our delegation behaved irrespective of essential aspects defining the limits of acceptance characteristic for the Arab culture. In order to gain the trust of the local operators, it was not enough to reveal to them a rigorous planning and organization displaying attractive business opportunities, throughout specific numbers and figures.

Undoubtedly, the business opportunity drew their attention, however promises and offers were not presented in the right way. As it is known, in Arab countries cultural customs and traditions prevail, therefore once they feel disrespected, negotiators will certainly step back.

Looking at the negotiation process from a different perspective, I would like to highlight the aspects related to **time perception**. Researchers emphasize the fact that Arabs belong to a flexible culture, rather oriented on building relationships than on accomplishing objectives. In others words, Arabs do not define time efficiency from the view of profitability. They do not have the drive of taking advantage of time, as they belong to a “polychronic culture, punctuality and timing not having the major significance describing them into the western world”⁸.

For this reason, Arabs have the tendency to interrupt the negotiation any time they feel the need to, even in critical moments, they also tend to engage in conversations with different people, at the same, no matter if the discussion concerns the main topic of the conversation or a side topic. Moreover, findings outline the fact that no matter the stage of the negotiation, when they have a better alternative to negotiate with, Arabs are willing to discuss even with a third party. Furthermore, I find it relevant to mention that Arabs often exhibit some unreasonable behaviour, mostly exposed in a careless way, throughout some contradictory or inconsistent statements, on which they eventually insist later on, if they want to avoid some particular topics of the negotiation or when they expect a certain kind of reaction from their negotiation partners.

According to the interpretation given by the Arab colleague to our representative, the officials of the local companies felt that Vodafone was mainly focused on achieving its objectives, rather than on giving time to the negotiation to flow, so that the parties can get to know each other better. From the Arab perspective, the negotiation felt a bit rushed, as our delegate tried to stick to her agenda, as if she had a specific amount of time given to each topic of discussion. From the story she told her colleague, he drew the conclusion that Arabs might have even felt offended, when at a certain point they started to talk between them, disturbing the presentation made by our official. At that moment, she paused her demonstration, telling them she would rather prefer to take the questions at the end of the power point

⁸ Time in different cultures, date accessed 17th of March 2016, <http://www.exactlywhatistime.com/time-in-different-cultures/>.

presentation and she would kindly ask them to keep their focus on the objective of their meeting. Contrary to her expectations, they kept on bothering her speech, loudly discussing side topics while she was trying to explain to them the development of the proposed programme of activities.

If time is not essential when negotiating with Arabs, **politeness** plays a vital role. Most of the Arabs are Muslims, the role of religion having a notable impact on the development of their lives, as it dictates their behaviour complying with the rules written in the Koran.⁹ Greetings, good wishes or references appealing to Allah represent forms of politeness manifested by Arabs, all along the negotiation time. In fact, greeting, especially welcoming greetings represent a whole ceremony in the Arab world, as findings reveal the ritual is that following the specific greeting expressions, negotiators have to ask their counterparts about their health state or about his/hers professional activity. The specific salute is "Salaam Alaykum"¹⁰, meaning "may peace be with you", the greeting is usually joined by a handshake.

In the actual case study, the Romanian delegate in Qatar was taken by surprise, when at the very beginning of the negotiation, right after the greetings, the representatives of the local companies were following their usual ritual, asking her about her professional activity. From the Romanian perspective, their questions were inopportune.

Vodafone's official was impressed by the strong impact of the **religious norms** on the behaviour of Arab negotiators. The practice of their religious rituals can be illustrated for instance by the "3 special breaking times a day or the fact that the training activities had to be discussed in detail as they have to strictly follow Arab rules and regulations – for example, entertainment activities during the training period were strictly forbidden, as it was unacceptable that men and women are involved in such ice breaking activities, normally used in trainings developed by Vodafone, trainings which involve movement - could eventually involve touching each other."¹¹

⁹ „*Codul bunelor maniere la arabi*”, autor Mihaela Dumitrache, ultima modificare a fost realizat în data de 15 noiembrie 2012, accesat la data de 20 Aprilie 2014, ora 18:00, <http://bunele-maniere.com/tag/manierele-la-arabi/>.

¹⁰ David F. Robinson, "Business Etiquette: Your Complete Guide to Correct Behaviour in Business", editia a II-a, Editura Kogan Page, 2000, pp. 88-89.

¹¹ „România la Vodafone Qatar”, date accessed 20th of March, <http://www.dailybusiness.ro/stiri-it-c/romanca-la-vodafone-qatar-aici-faci-business-fara->

When asked what happens to the other participants at the negotiation while Arabs take their praying breaks, Alexandra revealed to me an interesting aspect, by explaining that to her surprise as well during the praying breaks there are no rules imposed to the other partners belonging to different religions. According to the theory it is advisable that, when negotiating with Arabs, negotiation breaks are set from the very beginning, praying hours being known by all the participants in advance. This being said, there can still happen unpleasant situations, like it actually was the case of the negotiation between our representative and the local operators, as the Romanian official did not take into consideration, the influence of the religious regulations. According to her initial planning, the negotiation was supposed to develop differently than it actually did. Our official had her own programme, with a rigorous schedule to ensure an efficient development of the negotiation. However, even if she knew about the rituals Arabs have, she did not anticipate such an impact of their religious rules on the process of negotiation. As a result, while trying to stick to her agenda, she approached a subject of great importance, right before Arabs stood up in order to take their praying break. For this reason, it is important to consider religious aspects when structuring the information, in order to avoid the disturbance of the rhythm of the negotiation, otherwise negotiators will feel obliged to take additional breaks in important moments.

Another aspect having a strong impact on the planning of the programme of activities, which apparently has been disregarded as well, is related to the **working schedule** of the local companies in Qatar. The working week in Qatar is generally from Sunday to Thursday, with Friday and Saturday being off. This aspect represented a major challenge for the activity of the company, in terms of planning of expansion, as when realizing the training programme Romanian officials related to the common policy applied for the European business partners, following the "normal" working conditions from Monday to Friday. Moreover, it is known that outsourcing companies usually follow the schedule of their clients. Therefore, even after finding out the normal working style in Qatar, Romanians still did not change their planning, thinking that maybe Arabs will understand and will make an exception, following the "universal"

sa-dai-mana-cu-barbatii-printre-pauze-de-rugaciune-si-cu-investitii-fabuloase-in-ego-37172/.

rules of the company, at least concerning the training period. Nevertheless, this condition was unacceptable.

While relating to me her first negotiation experience in Qatar, our official also emphasized on the importance of **the physical organization** of the negotiation. She said that there were no specific seats according to the position participants at the negotiation have in the company. She also mentioned the fact that not even the general manager of the company had a special seat placed at the negotiation table.

As for daily working hours, but also in meetings, apparently they follow the unwritten rules, therefore the first to arrive, the first to choose a seat. Though, a remarkable aspect to consider regarding physical organization refers to the order in which participants at the negotiation enter the meeting room. The Romanian representative did not know the importance of entering the room, therefore she was between the first ones to enter, as from her perspective it was polite and a way of showing respect towards her potential partners, especially in the conditions in which she was the one who will conduct the activities. However, in Arab countries, the ones who will enter the room the last, are more likely to be "decision points" in the negotiation.

While presenting to me the development of the negotiation process, our representative also insisted on **the attitude** manifested in negotiations with Arabs. According to her practical knowledge, attitude should be carefully displayed as it is thoroughly analysed, having a considerable importance on the outcome of the negotiation process. Arabs consider that during negotiations, business partners should be very dedicated, committed to their tasks, involved personally wise. In other words, they should speak clearly, using powerful voice and what is also important, they should try to make eye contact, as apparently these are considered to be concrete proves of honesty. Such acts can be explained by the high degree of emotionality characterizing Arabs. Theoretical knowledge indicates that in business, Arabs rather reveal a restrained behaviour, approaching a pragmatic attitude. Nevertheless, there are situations when they tend to get very impulsive, though such acts are avoided, direct encounters being rare.

In the case study describing the negotiation, a concrete example of a wrong interpretation could be the one of Arabs perceiving the attitude of Vodafone's representative to be superior to them, as a consequence of the business rapport between the two parties. The officials of the local companies considered that because the Romanian representative came with

the idea of the partnership and with a detailed programme of activities, the discussion is one of employer (Vodafone) – employees (representatives of the local companies).

Actually, when sensing this approach, Arabs manifested their discontentment. Having the intention to ameliorate the situation, the Romanian official insisted in convincing the representatives of the local companies of their wrong interpretation. As they were already unsatisfied and even frustrated, they got more annoyed when in the attempt of convincing them to reconsider her approach, the Romanian representative contradicted one of them. As a consequence, they decided that the negotiation is done and politely declined Vodafone's offer, thanking our representative for her presentation and also for her time.

According to the theory, Arabs will never decline a negotiation sharply, being rather focused on their own interests and on eventually making compromises and consequently on reaching consensus. However, this does not mean that there are not situations contradicting the theory, in which dignity is above interests or moments in which they tend to exaggerate blatantly the bargains characterizing them.

In an attempt to find out more about the Arab version of the negotiations, Alexandra also told her colleague how **the break times** went - how they have been approached, topics that have been discussed and events that happened. Given the circumstances, she told me that even before letting her reveal the story, the Arab colleague felt the need to point out that Arabs do not like to talk about unpleasant events, accidents and not even about bad endings / outcomes of the negotiations during break times.

The so – called **taboo subjects** are represented by the gestures or by the verbal expressions considered to be unacceptable for a certain culture. They have their origins in people's beliefs, being transmitted generation by generation. These aspects have been found out by the Romanian delegate during the discussion she had with her colleague, who advised her about all the topics that she should not have approached or that she should at least take into consideration in the perspective of future negotiations with Arabs.

In that moment, Alexandra realised she had made another mistake, while during the lunch break she took together with one of the representatives of the local companies, she launched a discussion related to the importance of their religious beliefs and its impact on their professional

activity. She told me she thought this would be a proper subject to approach as it was right after their praying time, therefore she asked them a few questions, being interested in the development of their specific rituals. In fact, she confessed me she sensed their reticence on the topic right at that moment.

Last but not least, the Arab colleague approached **the dressing code** subject. When asked if she respected the clothing norms in the negotiation, especially because she is woman, the Romanian official was again quite confused, as firstly she did not understand the reasoning of such a question. She told her colleague that she always respects the formal code of dressing, especially in business negotiations, therefore she dressed accordingly, like she usually does for any other negotiation. On the other side, the Arab colleague explained to her that especially in the context of international business with Arabs, the dressing code requires higher attention, since Arabs are particularly careful regarding the attire of their business partners. Apparently, this is an important criterion for them, in order to judge if their counterpart is interested in a partnership with them, respecting and complying to the rules of their culture. After a detailed description of the clothes she wore at the negotiations, the Arab colleague explained to our representative that even if her attire was decent and formal, it was not a proper one, considering the partners of negotiation. He told her that she should have not worn a skirt, even if its length was decent. The only accepted skirts are the long ones, the ones completely covering the legs. In what concerns the upper body, blouses or shirts should not be revealing at all. In Qatar, it is considered that a woman is properly dressed when her clothes cover her in such a way, so that the parts of her body are hard to be distinguished.

Despite the several mistakes she did, as a consequence of the omission of the impact cultural factors have on the outcome of a negotiation, throughout the discussion, the Arab colleague noticed the involvement of our delegate in the project and also felt her disappointment caused by the failure. However, the failure did not determine her to quite, but motivated her to achieve her objective. Therefore, the Romanian official insisted on the potential of the project and its benefits for the locals in the area, being convinced that with the right approach her programme can turn into a very successful collaboration.

The Arab colleague was very convinced the local operators would not miss such a business opportunity, as the partnership would

undoubtedly bring several important advantages for both sides. Hence, after analysing together with our representative all of the phases of the negotiation, explaining her what she did wrong and how she could improve her approach from the Arab perspective (attitude, rhythm of the negotiation, tone of voice, eye contact and body language, dress code), he decided he can at least try to help her and take the process a step further. Due to the determination and the perseverance proved by the Romanian, at the end of the discussion, the Arab colleague tried to get in touch with the representatives of the local companies.

As expected, it was not easy to get in touch with them from the very first try. However, after several attempts the Arab colleague managed to explain the situation to all of the three directors of the local companies and eventually after a very persuasive discussion, he convinced one of them to accept a new round of negotiations. Therefore, few days after the phone call, the Romanian delegate set a meeting with the representative of Zain. From the beginning of the new round of negotiations, the Arabs felt the change in the attitude of Vodafone's representative. As a consequence, they decided to give her a real chance of exposing her ideas to them and to their surprise they realized she really invested time and energy in approaching them the way they expected her to. She took into consideration their preferences and the values they believe in, proving more flexibility in her attitude and in her approach. The Arabs appreciated her devotion for the project and the respect she proved towards them, and as the opportunity was very tempting for their own business as well, they decided to agree on collaborating with Vodafone.

The closing phase of the negotiation does not only involve closing the agreement between the parts, but also highlights on their commitment. Following the confessions of our representative, the Arabs took great responsibility in fulfilling the tasks they have assigned for, respecting the terms and the conditions of the negotiations. The collaboration between Vodafone and Zain, the Arab company providing outsourcing services, developed according to the scheduled planning.

Conclusions

The main conclusions which I have drawn from the case study are structured as follows:

-The importance of knowing and understanding cultural differences. „When operating on the international scene, relating with people belonging to different cultures, there will most certainly be a difference, of a kind or another, between the perceptions and the values defining each of the companies.”¹² The main condition to ensure the development of a successful negotiation on the international scene is based on the existence of the prerequisites of an efficient communication, in which intercultural barriers are used for the purpose of maximizing the results and not from the perspective of the difficulties they impose.

-The importance of adaptability in an international context. Irrespective of the specific phase of the negotiation process, negotiators should have an overview of the process, from the perspective of their own interests and objectives, but also from the viewpoint describing the interests expressed by their negotiation partners.

-The influence of non – verbal communication has an outstanding impact in the analysis of the process of negotiation, especially in the context of international business situations. Consequently, only throughout the correct interpretation of the role of the communication factors, present at an international level, but also by adjusting them according to the specific characteristics of each negotiation, the transmission of the intended messages, their understanding by the partners and ultimately, business success are ensured.”¹³

The synthesis of the conclusions and the summary of my personal assumptions concerning the chosen topic lead me to affirm that international business negotiations represent a complex process, for which participants do not only need to be naturally gifted with excellent communication skills, but also need to have a thorough preparation in order to express and to expose messages, in such a way so that the outcome of the negotiation to be successful.

¹² Carté Penny, Fox Chris, *op.cit*, p. 20

¹³ “*Cross-Cultural/ International Communication*”, accessed on June 20, 2014, at 8 p.m, <http://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/cross-cultural-international-communication.html>

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