The Role of National Culture and Cultural Conditioning in Business Communication

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Abstract

Under the conditions of intense competition resulting from the phenomenon of globalisation of businesses, development of ICT technologies and free trade as well as greater mobility of staff and operations, enterprises increasingly engage in business activity on an international and global scale. Individuals and business entities start to recognise the importance of cultural conditioning which may affect the effectiveness of business communication, and they try to widen their knowledge, increase their cultural awareness, and develop their international competence and intercultural skills. Realising that communication competence and the main assumptions of the interlocutors in business exchanges and transactions in this regard are specific to a culture, one needs to realise that it is impossible to communicate effectively without being aware of how culture and cultural factors influence human interaction. Thus, this paper, which takes the form of a literature review, discusses the influence of the environment, community and culture affecting the behaviour, perception and interpretations of the verbal and non-verbal communication between individuals involved in the international business exchange. The article presents the relevant research and literature output concerning the subject as well as the efforts of both scientists and business practitioners to construct tools which would help to present the conditionings, barriers and ways to overcome them in order

to facilitate mutual understanding, exchange of information and rapport among representatives of different national cultures.

Abstrakt

W warunkach intensywnej konkurencji wynikającej z globalizacji przedsiębiorstw, rozwoju technologii ICT oraz wolnego handlu, większej mobilności pracowników i działalności firmy, przedsiębiorstwa coraz częściej podejmują działania na skalę międzynarodową i globalną. Indywidualne osoby i podmioty gospodarcze również zaczynają dostrzegać istotne znaczenie uwarunkowań kulturowych, które mogą wpływać na skuteczność komunikacji, i starają się poszerzać swoją wiedzę, rozwijać swoje kompetencje i umiejętności międzykulturowe. Ponieważ kompetencje oraz główne założenia przyjęte przez interlokutorów w zakresie komunikacji są bezpośrednio związane z daną kulturą i przez nią uwarunkowane, możemy przyjąć założenie, że nie można skutecznie komunikować się bez świadomości, w jaki sposób kultura i uwarunkowania kulturowe oddziałują na procesy komunikacji między nimi. Niniejszy artykuł, który ma charakter przeglądowy, koncentruje się na tym, jak środowisko, społeczność i kultura wpływają na percepcję i interpretację komunikacji werbalnej i niewerbalnej przez osoby zaangażowane w międzynarodową wymianę handlową. Prezentuje wyniki badań oraz publikacje na ten temat, jak również próby podejmowane przez naukowców i praktyków mające na celu stworzenie narzędzi, które pomogłyby przedstawić uwarunkowania, kontekst, bariery w komunikacji oraz sposoby ich pokonywania, jak również narzędzia wspomagające wzajemne zrozumienie, wymianę informacji czy budowanie relacji między przedstawicielami różnych kultur narodowych.

Słowa kluczowe: uwarunkowania kulturowe, wymiary kultury, komunikacja w biznesie

Culture and Its Significance in Business Communication

One of the most popular definitions of culture presents it as the output of the entire society, material and immaterial, spiritual and symbolic products of people which are represented by common patterns of thinking, a system of values, a specific way of perceiving reality, other people or their behaviour (Zenderowski and Koziński 2016, 24). It comprises notions such as cultural beliefs, which are individuals' perception of what is true, acceptable, expected or desirable within a particular social group; cultural norms, which are understood as *shared understanding of what members of a society can and cannot do*; cultural symbols which are stories, rituals and other manifestations of culture as well as practices, customs, behaviours or habits which are passed on from generation to generation (Cullen and Parboteeah 2010, 180). It should be borne in mind that culture may be perceived as the "cause of actions" as well as "their effect" (Taranko 2015, 143). Thus, culture, similarly to language, may be regarded as the rules governing the production and use of cultural artefacts, expressions and manifestations.

The term "culture" may be broadly defined as the knowledge created and transmitted by people as well as the relevant skills which they "use" in their actions (Grucza 1989; Grucza 2006, 36). In addition, culture is often regarded as a set of rules, the ignorance of which causes failure in communication or business cooperation (Thomas 2003), and thus considerable losses for companies, end even failure of the entire business undertaking. It may serve as a specific "orientation system," which is indispensable to all human beings enabling them to properly understand and interpret the surrounding reality. It is the culture and language which allow for "appropriate categorisation of the world, thinking about the world, interpreting and experiencing the world" (Grucza 1992, 17). Therefore, as Lustig and Koester claim, "cultures provide their members with a set of interpretations which they then use as filters to make sense of messages and experiences" (1999, 32).

The traditional ideas and shared values constitute the core of culture. They form a network of interconnected meanings and set behavioural patterns characteristic of a particular group. Culture is manifested in the form of practices and customs that are learned and historically selected elements of human behaviour (Magala 2011; Zenderowski and Koziński 2016). Thus, it emerges that culture builds and shapes the behaviour and communication between people engaged in business activity as well as relationships between them. In any culture, behavioural patterns and value systems are like the actions of the "invisible hand" which governs human activity (Hampden-Turner and

Trompenaars 1998). Our approach or perception of problems, situations or other individuals is a direct consequence of the habits and predispositions learned and imposed by the environment, which condition our reactions in specific situations (Rozkwitalska 2011; Rozwitalska 2012,).

As indicated in the first part of the article, due to increased sensitivity to cultural differences, economic interdependence, advances in ICT and greater awareness of the fact that communication competence is specific to a culture, more and more business people realise that the knowledge of the cultural background of their counterparts is a crucial aspect of effective communication (DeVito 2013, 31). While good will and good intentions are no doubt prerequisites for effective communication to take place in the international business environment, they are by no means enough. To be effective, one needs to know how cultures differ and how these differences influence communication and interaction among representatives of different social groups. Being able to devise sound strategies based on knowledge is seen as a prerequisite for succeeding in the global marketplace (Craig and Douglas 2001; Pabian 2004; Pabian 2017; Wiktor 2008; Wiktor 2013).

The National Culture as the Prism in the Perception and Interpretation of Verbal and Non-Verbal Behaviour of Interlocutors

The definition of culture adopted in this article assumes the occurrence of certain features, shared by representatives of a community or a particular nation, which are seen as significant determinants of the individuals' perception of phenomena, events, circumstances, or people. The value system and conduct of individuals, representatives of a particular nation, tend to be adapted to the needs or expectations of their immediate social group. The common features, which can be collectively referred to as culture, significantly affect the behaviour, motivations and activities of the community and its members. In addition, cultural aspects are seen as a very important factor shaping the value system professed by a given group, and it is cultural aspects that are believed to largely determine the method of communication and interaction, the approach to cooperation or the general behaviour of people in an international business environment.

National culture is a specific kind of culture that includes norms, value systems, beliefs, and traditions, which are specific to a given nation and distinguish it from other societies. It is the nation, as Zenderowski and Koziński claim, which constitutes a basic category of thinking and interpreting the surrounding reality and the basis for defining

one's identity (2016, 15). According to Magala, individuals are inadvertently driven by their commitment to values and norms and adjust their behaviour and conduct accordingly (2011, 121). Geert Hofstede described national culture as "mind programming" (1980, 2010). The culture may also be perceived as a "way of life" or "patterns of thinking passed down from generation to generation" (Onkvisit and Shaw 2004, 155) or the way in which people, representatives of a particular social or national group, "solve problems and reconcile dilemmas" (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 1998, 22).

As emphasised by Onkvisit and Shaw, the nature of culture is prescriptive in the sense that it sets boundaries, presents patterns of conduct, provides guidance, and, as a consequence, largely determines the decision-making process, limiting the choice to those behavioural patterns which are considered to be socially acceptable (2004, 155). Also, culture facilitates communication and imposes common habits of thinking and feeling among people proceeding from the same country or region. On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that culture can also make communication between groups representing different nationalities more difficult or even impossible due to the lack of shared cultural values. The same message can be interpreted differently when communicated in a foreign language and received or interpreted in a foreign culture. As Bartosik-Purgat writes, areas of international business are largely determined by cultural factors (2010, 33). It is essential that, in addition to the general economic, legal, financial and social conditions of functioning on a foreign or international market, businesses planning to expand into a foreign market take into account the general cultural context as one of the relevant determinants (Zenderowski and Koziński 2016, 24).

According to Hoffmann and Śnierzyński, knowledge of cultural conditions can facilitate reaching an agreement, establishing cooperation, and it can provide a much needed competitive advantage (2010). However, the abovementioned factors can also create problems which hinder mutual understanding, agreement and cooperation (Hofstede 2000). In addition, cultural diversity may lead to the interpretations of messages in a way that is incompatible or even contrary to the intentions of the sender (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka et al. 2016, 53).

The analysis carried out for the purpose of this study focuses on the issue of cultural differences, cultural distances and cultural conditioning as well as related barriers appearing in the course of the business communication process among representatives of various national groups. The presented findings highlight the main problems identified by the researchers, their consequences and implications for business practitioners, entrepreneurs and enterprises as such. These implications and recommendations may

be used by companies already operating on foreign and international markets, business entities planning to enter new markets, as well as business practitioners who work with foreign business partners or need to function effectively in an international environment.

Cultural Barriers and Misunderstandings

Social context and structure may be perceived as "the final, and perhaps the most significant, mediator of meaning" (McCall and Stone 2004, 23). As the authors further claim, "People brought up in a national culture unconsciously absorb the commitments and strictures that the social structure imposes on them" (23). They tend to do it unconsciously, making assumptions and drawing inferences from the way the language classifies and labels the phenomena and individuals they encounter or interact with. These hidden, preconceived assumptions are important aspects of non-verbal communication (ibid). They can hardly ever be consciously identified, and the interlocutors are frequently unaware of their existence since they are taken for granted. They have been exposed to them and have learnt to adopt them since early childhood, interacting with their immediate family, friends, relatives or community.

The value system or socially accepted behaviours shape communication, build relationships and interpersonal relations between individuals. The awareness that people perceive, evaluate and feel in a similar way gives them the feeling of safety and confidence when functioning in a well-known environment, within a family, a circle of friends, a close-knit community or our own national group. However, the sense of commonly shared values and the specific feeling of 'obviousness' and 'implication', while strengthening the sense of affiliation and belonging to a particular social group, may also have a negative impact on our behaviour towards those who do not fit the 'standard'.

The abovementioned conviction whereby certain phenomena are taken for granted, and as such never challenged or disputed, can lead to serious problems in business communication since "false assumptions frequently cause expensive blunders (Ricks 2006, 135). "One of the most common assumptions", as Ricks (2006, 135) claims, "is that conditions that exist at home also exist abroad". Another typically assumed idea is that "[whatever] works well at home will also work well overseas." The author adds that "it should be abundantly clear that these are two of the most dangerous assumptions that can be made by managers" due to the fact that "few things are the same everywhere, and almost no strategy works well everywhere" (2006, 135). Assuming that only our patterns of thinking

or behaviour are right when dealing with the 'alien' or the 'unknown', we may be in danger of simplifications, stereotypes, prejudices or even hostility towards the phenomena which cannot be easily explained. Unaware of cultural differences between nations or other ethnic or social groups, people may fall prey to a potentially harmful tendency: whatever is inconsistent with our culturally conditioned patterns will be rejected or considered inferior. This specific way of perceiving other cultures is closely associated with ethnocentricity, which, may be defined as a specific way of seeing the world, where the individual's own group is perceived as the centre or a point of reference, i.e. individuals use their own culture as a prism and interpret the surrounding reality according to their knowledge, experience and system of values. everything around is evaluated and classified in relation to it.

The above-described ethnocentricity and stereotyping, which consists in assuming that all people within a particular group behave, believe, feel and act the same, and cultural paradoxes, which refer to situations that contradict cultural expectations, may be considered as the main barriers in international communication and cooperation, frequently indicated by the individuals engaged in interactions in a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse environment (Cullen and Parboteeah 2010, 200).

Encountering the phenomena which are difficult to interpret, conceive of or account for, individuals experience mental discomfort associated with a sense of uncertainty in specific situations that would not occur in a culturally homogeneous environment (Sikorski 2002). To deal with this anxiety and uncertainty, individuals resort to stereotyping as a way of simplifying the process of decoding. Some values, beliefs and assumptions that have a significant impact on the culture and activities of the organisation are often invisible, or at least difficult to notice. These are often concepts or behaviours that are considered obvious to people from a particular culture; they are not debatable, and they are not subject to change or negotiation (Hammerich and Lewis 2013). They affect motivation and guide our actions in a way that we do not fully realise.

The different behaviour of people originating from various cultural backgrounds is defined as cultural dissonance. It can be a source of cognitive dissonance because the general perception is not objective but culturally determined. This results in the perception of reality in a slightly distorted form resulting, on the one hand, from observation blockades, errors in reasoning and interpretation and, on the other hand, from the creation of false images or simplifications consistent with their own cultural patterns (Sikorski 2002).

The dimensions relevant to the discussion on intercultural aspects of communication presented in this article are perception, interpretation and attribution; verbal communication; non-verbal communication; communication styles and cultural adaptation and

those indirectly associated with intercultural communication and cooperation such as values, assumptions and identity (Bennett 1998; Jackson 2014, 27). Factors like verbal and non-verbal communication and behaviour, correct interpretation, understanding, communication and motivations deserve special attention in the multinational and intercultural environment since they can be the main source of cultural misunderstandings (Adler and Gundersen 2008, 90–91).

Apart from general lack of ability to use a foreign language or generally poor language skills or difficulty in understanding the speaker (different accents, dialects, pronunciation, jargon), both the researchers and the respondents participating in the studies of phenomena related to interlinguistic and intercultural aspects of business or specialist communication frequently point to a number of problems connected with misunderstanding someone's utterances or intentions. Such a situation may be the result of incorrect interpretation of gestures and body language, different behaviours or standards in the work environment or cultural differences such as customs, tradition, religion, which are deeply rooted and determine individuals' behaviour, frequently without their conscious knowledge (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka et al. 2016, Szymura-Tyc 2006).

Cultural Dimensions, Distinctions and Categorisation Tools as a Way of Dealing with Cultural Diversity

I. Gesteland's Typology as a Way of Dealing with Problems Related to Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Analyzing the phenomenon of cultural differences and barriers in the context of communication, it is worth quoting a typology created by Gesteland, based on four dimensions of culture, which distinguishes pro-transaction and pro-partner, monochronic and polychronic, ceremonial and non-ceremonial, expressive and reserved cultures (2000, 17).

Gesteland's typology may prove to be a very effective tool in determining the conditions and context of cultural communication. Due to different expectations, models and communication styles, business partners may find it difficult to establish a common ground. An additional difficulty when transferring a message is that behaviours, which are culturally conditioned, can be perceived and interpreted by the recipient through the prism of the system of values functioning in his or her culture.

Representatives of cultures which profess different values and show dissimilar traits may find it difficult to reach an understanding due to very different expectations regarding communication or building relationships. As Budzyński emphasises, when negotiating with a foreign partner, one should take into account the cultural identity of the partner and the specific nature of the trade talks (2014, 165). From the point of view of a **pro-transaction culture**, conversations on the topics which are not connected to the deal which is being currently negotiated can be seen as unprofessional behaviour. In turn, for a representative of a **pro-partner culture**, concentrating solely on issues related to cooperation or contract will be perceived as tepid and reserved. The distance created by a person focused only on transactions will prevent further cooperation with his or her counterpart, who, by contrast, hopes to be on friendly terms and learn more about the person they wish to cooperate with. Thus, in the case of **pro-transaction cultures**, we deal with a direct way of communication, focusing on the activity which both parties to the communication process are engaged in and a clear message whose main intention is the verbalisation of expectations, desires and needs. In the case of **pro-partner cultures**, business-related arrangements, details of the commissioned assignments or provisions of the mutually binding contracts seem to be of less significance than the wish to build relationships with other people and the general interest in the issues that go beyond business issues.

Unpunctuality can be seen as evidence of disrespect in the case of **monochronic** cultures where individuals pay attention to meeting the deadlines, punctuality, prioritising tasks and time management. Among business people who proceed from these cultures, not following the agenda or failure to carry out tasks within specified timeframes is seen as unprofessional behaviour. Their motto is: "Time is money", and they believe that there are certain time limits set for particular tasks or events: all arrangements should be made and all tasks ought to be completed within those boundaries. People belonging to **polychronic** cultures, by contrast, perceive friendly relations with other people as more significant than keeping to deadlines. Their approach results from the fact that from their perspective, the timeframe, agenda and term for completing a particular project are of secondary importance.

The direct way of addressing people with a higher status in the social hierarchy or professional environment can be perceived as inappropriate by representatives of **ceremonial cultures**. Even after many years of friendly business relations, the representatives of these cultures still use titles and scientific degrees when addressing their colleagues. Gesture, touch, or intense eye contact, which are typical behaviour for **non-ceremonial**

cultures, will be considered rude by their counterparts proceeding from countries representing the features of **ceremonial cultures**. This kind of non-verbal behaviour is bound to be interpreted as a specific violation of personal space if we deal with business persons originating from nationalities with a greater need for physical distance.

Another cause of misunderstanding may emerge due to clear differences between **expressive** and **reserved cultures**. Representatives of **expressive cultures** show their feelings and emotions; they often speak very loudly, interrupt each other and feel uncomfortable when there is silence. The spatial distance between people is small, gestures and touch are part of the non-verbal communication process. Direct and intense eye contact during negotiations is evidence of interest and sincerity. In the case of people representing these cultures, one should also expect expressive facial expressions and lively gestures, while more reserved business partners may see such behaviour as unprofessional, excessive, threatening or causing discomfort.

Groups	Main characteristics of cultures belonging to the group	Countries
Group 1	pro-partner, ceremonial, polychromic, reserved	India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines
Group 2	pro-partner, ceremonial, monochromic, reserved	Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore
Group 3	pro-partner, ceremonial, polychronic, expressive	Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Brazil, Mexico
Group 4	moderately pro-partner, ceremonial, polychromic, changing expressiveness	Russia, Poland, Romania
Group 5	moderately pro-transaction, ceremonial, differing approach towards time and expressive	France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Hungary
Group 6	moderately pro-transaction, ceremonial, relatively monochronic, reserved	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
Group 7	pro-transaction, relatively ceremonial, monochronic, reserved	Great Britain, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Czech Republic
Group 8	pro-transaction, non-ceremonial, monochromic, differing expressiveness	Australia, Canada, USA

Fig. 1. Characteristics of culturally-conditioned business behaviours according to Gesteland's typology (Gesteland 2000).

II. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Research supports several other major cultural distinctions which may be seen as factors influencing communication and collaboration between individuals and business entities representing various national groups. One of the most popular and best known external typologies, which is a tool applied to facilitate communication and cooperation between individuals who are representatives of different nations is the tool referred to as cultural dimensions index devised by Geert Hofstede. The Hofstede model (Hofstede 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010) differentiates cultures according to five dimensions: **power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-/short-term orientation as well as indulgence/restraint (the last index has been introduced relatively recently**). Each of these dimensions has a significant impact on all forms of communication and cooperation between businesses in a culturally diverse environment (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010; DeVito 2013, 34).

Discussing Hofstede's model, DeMooij observes:

> The model provides scales from 0 to 100 for 76 countries for each dimension, and each country has a position on each scale or index, relative to other countries. Although the country scores were originally produced in the 1970s, many replications of Hofstede's study on different samples have proved that the country ranking and particular cultural dimensions indexes appear to be still valid. Hofstede describes over 200 external comparative studies and replications that have supported his indexes (2010, 88).

Hofstede managed to construct a tool which enabled him to create *a specific measurable point of reference where he assigned values to specific cultural dimensions for each of the examined countries*. The tool is useful in two ways. First of all, it allows one to assess certain tendencies occurring within a particular national culture. Of course, this does not apply to all representatives of a culture in the same degree. However, due to the importance of certain common elements within one national group, a similar way of perceiving and interpreting phenomena around us, the people and reality around us, a similar system of values and learned patterns of acceptable behavior, this tool can be very useful and offer much-needed support for people who deal with representatives of a different culture. Secondly, it allows estimating how big a cultural distance can be between two countries, how great the similarities are and how important the differences between particular dimensions of culture appear to be (DeMooij and Hofstede 2010; Hofstede 1980; 2001; 2010). The analysis

below is based on the data presented in Tables 3.1–8.1 in *Cultures and Organizations: Soft-ware of the Mind*, published by Geert Hofstede, Geert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010, 57–59; 95–97; 141–143; 192–194; 255–257; 282–285). Definitions are based on *Hofstede's 5 Cultural Dimensions* (2017).
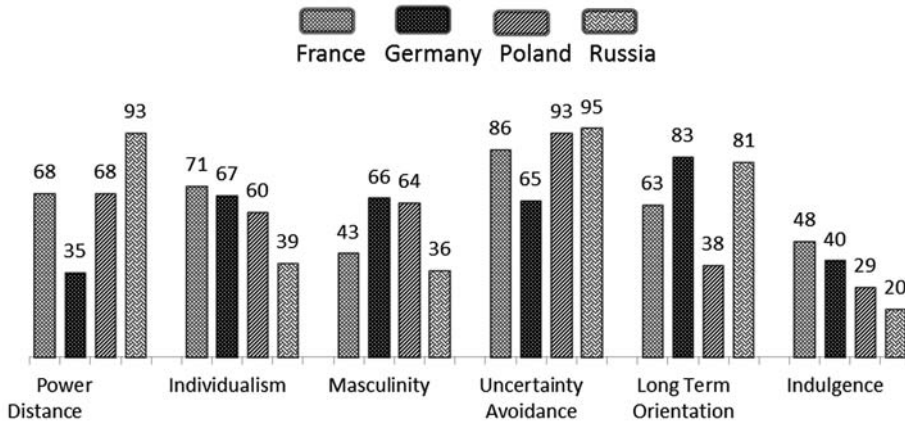

Fig. 2. Hofstede's culture dimensions for France, Germany, Poland and Russia
Source: Based on Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, Tables 3.1–8.1.

The **distance of power** in the case of Poland may be seen as relatively high which means that Poles *tend to accept social hierarchy and perceive it as a natural phenomenon*. However, social advancement is possible, and more ambitious individuals are aware of the opportunities that society offers. In comparison with Germany, Poland may be regarded as a country with a strict hierarchical structure, while their approach towards power is seen from the perspective of greater egalitarianism. In Russia, by way of contrast, social inequalities are seen as a way of life, they tend to be accepted and sustained.

Another aspect which is being considered is the **individualism and collectivism** index, where countries are diversified on the basis of their preferences with regard to individual or group activities. Russia is a country where *group activities or collectivism are valued*, while France is *more oriented towards individual activity*, independence and self-fulfilment of particular members of the society, not necessarily the well-being of the society as a group.

The **masculinity and femininity** index indicates differences between countries where the *focus on results and competition prevail* as is the case in more masculine socie-ties, and countries with more feminine cultures which *attach more importance to building*

relationships, creating a good atmosphere, caring for others or for the general comfort and prosperity of particular members of community, society or nation. Thus, in Germany and Poland, as it emerges based on Hofstede's findings, individual efforts and ambitions are more important, and in the case of France and Russia, familial relations and mutual support of members of the society are more valued. Even though the indexes for both countries may oscillate around similar values, we may observe specific cultural paradoxes. In France, seeking pleasure may be the main drive behind the actions of individuals whereas in Russia everyday struggle to support the family may underpin the need to look for closer relations and support.

Tolerance of uncertainty refers to the degree to which people are ready to easily *accept significant changes as regards culture*, or, by contrast, tend to *try to avoid risk associated with them*. The Russians, for instance, seem to strive for more stability and fewer changes in their daily lives. Germany may present a different approach, being more likely to accept risk as an inherent element of life as well as business operations.

Long-term orientation dimension, as Hofstede sees it, describes "*how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future*" as well as "*how societies prioritise these two existential goals differently*". The nations whose scores are high in the case of this dimension tend to take a more pragmatic approach, which, for instance, consists in *saving money and focusing on education in order to prepare for the future*. The Germans tend to engage in long-term planning and strategies; the Poles, on the other hand, exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively low propensity to save for the future and a tendency to focus on achieving quick results.

Indulgence is the dimension which examines *the ways and the degree to which individuals attempt to control their desires*, which is, to a large extent, rooted in their upbringing. In the case of this particular index, all countries obtain relatively low scores. In the case of Russia, we may note that its relatively very low score in this dimension can be explained in terms of the fact that the Russians, restrained by social norms, feel that *self-indulgence is seen as inapproriate behaviour* (Hofstede 1980; 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010. see: Hofstede's 5 Cultural Dimensions. Adapted from Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions website, http://www.geert-hofstede.com/ Available at: http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Gr-Int/International-Management.html) .

III. The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness Research) Index

The cultural dimensions created by Hofstede, which are described above, form the basis for categorising nations into the country clusters (Cullen and Parboteeah 2010, 190). The GLOBE project used Hofstede's original 1980 research findings (Hofstede 1980), collected data from 17,300 middle managers in 951 organisations, and identified nine distinct cultural competences: **1. Performance Orientation, 2. Assertiveness, 3. Future Orientation, 4. Humane Orientation, 5. Institutional Collectivism, 6. In-Group Collectivism, 7. Gender Egalitarianism, 8. Power Distance** and **9. Uncertainty Avoidance** and grouped the 62 countries into ten convenient societal clusters.

The GLOBE project researchers used the acquired data to classify and categorise the representatives of nations into cultural clusters which are grouped based upon cultural similarities, taking into account shared geographical locations and climate conditions, which all influence perceptions, way of life and behaviour. The GLOBE Country Clusters are as follows: Anglo, Latin Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Confucian Asia, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, South Asia.

There are clear similarities visible in the case of typologies devised by Gesteland, Hofstede and the GLOBE project. There are similarities between Performance Orientation and the pro-transaction cultures described by Gesteland or the Masculinity index created by Hofstede. Also, Future Orientation index bears some similarity to the long-term orientation index. Humane Orientation focuses, to some extent, on the human aspect and on building relationships between people, just like the Femininity index does. Hofstede's Collectivism category in the case of the GLOBE was divided into Institutional Collectivism and In-Group Collectivism. The Assertiveness and Gender Egalitarianism index appear to have arisen as new categories, although also, in this case, there are clear links between the tools devised by Trompenaars, Hofstede and the typology of the GLOBE ranking.

Performance Orientation index focuses on the importance of the success of individuals in all aspects of life, which is associated with competitiveness, rivalry, more masculine and individual approach towards achieving goals and motivations. Some of the characteristics may be seen as a reflection of the features used to describe Hofstede's Masculinity index. **Assertiveness** relates to asserting one's position and setting personal boundaries which we do not wish other people to violate. This dimension may also refer to communicating the need for independence and individualism. **Future Orientation**

Globe Country Clusters and Cultural Dimensions

Cluster	Performance Orientation	Assertiveness	Future Orientation	Humane Orientation	Institutional Collectivism	In-group Collectivism	Gender Egalitarianism	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance
Comparison with Hofstede	Unique	Masculinity	Long-term orientation	Unique	Collectivism	Collectivism	Femininity	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance
Anglo	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Confucian Asia	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Eastern Europe	Low	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Low
Germanic Europe	High	High	High	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Latin America	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Latin Europe	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Middle East	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Low
Nordic Europe	Medium	Low	High	Medium	High	Low	High	Low	High
Southern Asia	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Sub-Saharan Africa	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

Figure 3. Globe Country Clusters and Cultural Dimensions (Cullen and Parboteeah 2010, 95).

may be seen as a specific reflection and variation of the previously described Hofstede's Long-Term Orientation index. **Humane Orientation** focuses on the relationships rather than on projects to be completed or tasks to be carried out. It may be interpreted as the factor which bears some similarity to the characteristic features of Femininity index where the main focus are people, family, relationships with others or the sense of togetherness. **Institutional Collectivism** is a specific type of Collectivism-related tendency, previously described in Hofstede's typology, where the representatives of a particular group sacrifice their own individual needs for the sake of the community they belong to. They adhere to the rules set by the decision-makers and representatives of a particular community. **In-Group Collectivism** may be seen as representing similar conditionings of behaviours; however, it is related to a smaller social group. The feeling of togetherness and relationships, which are referred to in this case, concerns equals and members of a particular social unit. **Gender Egalitarianism** may be seen in relation to Hofstede's Femininity-Masculinity index where in the case of high Femininity ratio the differences between the genders may be seen as less demarcated. There appears to be no need to provide additional explanation in the case of two last indexes **Power Distance** and **Uncertainty Avoidance** since they have been discussed in more detail in the section devoted to the presentation of Hofstede's typology.

Conclusions

As indicated above, the issues and conflicts which emerge in communication between representatives of different nations may result from cultural misunderstandings. The greater the cultural differences, the so-called cultural distance or dissonance, the more difficult and problematic communication or collaboration prove to be. The problems may be related to the fact that messages can be translated incorrectly, inappropriate media may be used for their transfer, communication standards and style may be neglected, and differences in needs and expectations ignored. As Ricks (2006, 10) states, sometimes the recipient never receives the message and at other times the message arrives but is of little value because of its ineffectiveness. At times, the recipient receives the message but the message sent may be incorrect, generate confusion or connotations which are different from those intended by the sender.

Understanding the cultural diversity among countries and cultures enables business partners to engage in communication and collaboration which would be effective and in line with the intentions of interlocutors. Cultural differences and the unique ways of life or interaction that accompany them, as Katsioloudes and Hadjidakis (2007) claim, should induce company managers to develop the relevant expertise that would enable them to successfully manage international and global operations adapting to different environments.

Cultural factors have a significant impact on the results achieved by individuals engaged in business operations, communication and collaboration between individuals and business entities from culturally and linguistically diverse environments. Therefore, they should be considered in the same way as other conditions affecting the activity and performance of enterprises. The multicultural environment must be perceived as a challenge, as ignoring cultural differences when embarking on an international undertaking can potentially lead to failures in local markets and even failure of the entire organisation as such. At the same time, appropriate management taking into account the specificity of cultural diversity may turn out to be a significant competitive advantage leading to the organisation's success.

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