

TORYS

Cultural Nuances of International Negotiation

Source: The ABA Guide to International Business Negotiations (3rd Edition, 2009). Chapter 7

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Lost in Translation ?



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- Language
 - Environment and technology
 - Social organization
 - Contexting
 - Authority conception
 - Non-verbal behavior
 - Temporal conception

International Business Communication, David Victor (1992)

Language

- Biggest barrier to understanding, even if a common working language is present
- Words can denote concepts lacking in the other language
- Use of other party's native language

Environment and Technology

- Location of negotiation (Boardroom or office, microphones, white boards, etc.) (formal vs. informal)
- Access to communication technology (telephone/internet) may affect:
 - negotiator's access to information
 - negotiator's ability to caucus with client
 - timing of response

- Social Organization
 - Common institutions/collective activities shared by the members of a culture:
 - family or friendship ties
 - tribal/ethnic ties
 - education
 - class
 - perception of lawyers
 - gender differences

“Contexting”

- Measure of directness of the negotiation.
- Are statements explicitly explained or implied from the context?

Face Saving

- Preserving prestige/outward dignity
- May be more important than the negotiating position itself

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	High Context	Low Context
Reliance of Verbal Communication	Low	High
Reliance on Non-Verbal Communication	Low	High
View of Silence	Respectful	Anxiety Producing
Communication Style	Indirect Inferential	Direct Explicit
View of Directness	Uncivil/Rude	Honest/Inoffensive
View of Indirectness	Cordial/Considerate	Evasive/Untrustworthy

Authority Conception

- How much authority does the negotiator have?
- Connection with face saving
- Token appearances by senior leadership
- Is the boardroom where the agreement is negotiated OR where pre-agreed principles are tabled?

Non-Verbal Behaviour

- body movement/facial gestures
- eye movement/eye contact
- touching (!)
- tone of voice
- silence
- dress/grooming

Conception of Time

- Inflexible (schedules kept)
- Flexible (Your doctor's office!)
- Inherent disadvantage when the inflexible meets the flexible

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