

EIS 12/2018

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Intercultural
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Responsibility

Submitted
04/2018

Accepted for
publication
10/2018

Developing Intercultural Negotiations Skills to Meet Current Challenges of Diverse EU Business Environment as Part of University Social Responsibility

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.5755/j01.eis.0.12.21232>

Abstract

Rapid internationalization of the European business environment requires development of international project and team management, intercultural internal and external communications, conflict management skills, etc. These skills, in their turn, involve negotiation process (strategical, tactical and ethical aspects) and cross-cultural proficiency. Development of such skills could be regarded as responsibility of the university. The purpose of the present study is to research MBA students' attitude to different negotiation tactics depending on their cultural background. The tasks of the study are: (1) to establish the theoretical framework (theories, concepts, research paradigms); (2) to work out the research design and conduct the research; (3) to interpret empirical results and work out proposal – a free standing mini-module “Intercultural negotiation skills” for the university. The main research method applied is a survey using 5-point Likert scale. Using a questionnaire derived based on SINS scale (“Self-reported Inappropriate Negotiation Strategy Scale” created by R. J. Robinson, R. J. Lewicki and E. M. Donahue) 88 MBA students of the Latvian universities rated 16 negotiation tactics on a 5-point appropriate-inappropriate scale. Analyses of scale ratings yielded results that students' evaluation of negotiation tactics did not depend on cultural background (the research was conducted among international students) in statistically significant way, though there were differences in responses within evaluation of certain statements. The article works out suggestions how to incorporate issues of intercultural negotiation strategies within courses.

KEYWORDS: Negotiation strategy; negotiation tactics; intercultural negotiations; negotiator profile; university social responsibility, SINS scale.



Rapid internationalization of the European business environment requires development of international project and team management, intercultural internal and external communications, conflict management skills, etc. These skills, in their turn, involve negotiation process (strategical, tactical and ethical aspects) and cross-cultural proficiency in expanding their reach across international borders. Organizations have worked to enter new markets overseas, gain access to cheaper labor force, and take advantage of potential synergies and new ideas through merging with similar organizations in other nations. In doing so, they have encountered, and worked to solve, the variety of problems that stem from interacting and working across national and cultural boundaries. (Sykara et al., 2013) The intercultural negotiations can take place in everyday business practices, conducting job interviews, doing marketing research, solving complicated issues of the diplomatic nature, etc. Thus, Galluccio (2015) admits that the biggest challenge today in international negotiation is to encourage negotiators to emphasize cooperative motives as opposed to trying to get the best deal for oneself. This brings forth the question of intercultural negotiation skills training and the role of university in this process. According to Puukka (2008) conception of the triple bottom line of sustainability in a higher education institution, the negotiation skills development falls into the realm of the university social performance. The purpose of the present study is to research MBA students' attitude to different negotiation tactics depending on their cultural background. The tasks of the study are: (1) to establish the theoretical framework (theories, concepts, research paradigms); (2) to work out the research design and conduct the research; (3) to interpret empirical results and work out proposal – a free standing mini-module “Intercultural negotiation skills” for the university. This accounts for the structure of the current article, that consists of three main parts: the one of literature review, then methodology, results and discussions, and finally – conclusions and recommendations (a proposal of free-standing mini module on intercultural negotiation skills).

There is extensive research literature on different aspects of business negotiations: on the process, on the participants (actors), on the expected outcomes etc. Let us mention a few aspects relevant for the current research. The first and the most logical starting point is the definition that sets the stage for further investigation. Negotiation is a process where two parties with differences, which they need to resolve, are trying to reach agreement through exploring for options and exchanging offers – and an agreement. (Fells, 2009) This definitions pinpoints main aspects of negotiations, i.e., existence of at least two parties with differences in opinion, in final goal to be reached, in preliminary and strategical and tactical plans, etc. Moreover, the process of negotiation itself, give or take, consists of certain stages. In addition, finally, there is certain outcome than can be satisfactory or dissatisfactory to the parties involved. (Lewicki et al., 2003) The whole situation of negotiations can be characterized by the term interdependent relationship. That is, in negotiations, both parties need each other; there is no negotiation possible if there is just one side without opposition. Lewicki and others (2002) stress that one of the most important features of the interdependence is the existence of interlocking goals - within the negotiating team itself (different team members may have their personal interests that may comply with the team general strategy or may not comply with it), as well as outside the team (the goals of opponents). Each party can influence other party's decisions and actions, and the choice of the strategy. Theoreticians and practitioners distinguish among several styles (strategies) of negotiation. Thus, for example, Goldwich (2010) talks about five styles employed during the process of negotiation. In sum, they can be described in the following way: (1) avoiding – the negotiator tends to avoid any confrontation and is apt for putting off discussions, whenever encounters the opposition; (2) accommodating - the accommodating negotiator is primarily concerned with

Introduction

Literature review

preserving his relationship with the other party, ready to sidestep under certain circumstances; (3) competing – the negotiator is focused upon his/her personal goals primarily and is ready to play somewhat dirty, though within the limits of the game; (4) compromising – the accent is put on the fairness and ethical negotiation tactics; (5) collaborating – the negotiator tries to reach the optimal outcome. Whereas other authors (Lewicki et al., 2003, Fells, 2009) distinguish between competitive (distributive) and collaborative (integrative) styles. The first one is characterized by attempts to gain optimum value at the expense of the other party and is commonly referred to as the “win-lose” approach, when engaged in this style, the parties may use different tactics to win such as: persuasion, argument, power, or even threat. The latter or “win-win” style means the negotiating parties have reached an agreement after fully considering each other’s interests, such that the agreement cannot be improved upon further by any other agreement. The process of negotiations involves four phases: preparation, exchanging information, bargaining and closing commitment. (Shell, 2006) Apart from tactical matters, the important role in negotiations is assigned also the ethical considerations. Although none of the negotiation tactics is unethical per se, some of them are more apt for ethical transgressions, especially the ones of win-lose (or “dividing a pie”) type. (Veveře, 2017)

The contemporary multi-cultural, multi-dimensional, complex business environment adds dimension to the negotiation process, that is, necessity to develop culturally responsive negotiation tactics and strategies. Weiss (1994) speaks of five steps for choosing the appropriate strategy: 1) reflection on the personal negotiation script (considering the cultural idiosyncrasies); 2) gathering as much information as possible about the opposing party’s negotiation script; 3) consideration of relationship and additional circumstances; 4) predicting the counterpart’s approach (i.e., getting ahead by one step); 5) choice of the final strategy. (Ibid.) Without a doubt, the intercultural aspect has been extensively and intensively researched within last decades, let us mention such authors as Curry (2009), Lee (2007), Hofstede and others (2010), Galluccio (2015), Sykara (2013). These researchers have paid attention to cultural dimensions, negotiation contexts, conversation patterns, behavioral characteristics, etc. Thus, Salacuse (1998) defines ten ways that culture affects the negotiating style; the main factors during intercultural negotiations to be taken into account are the following: negotiating goals (contract or relationship); culturally conditioned preference for win/lose or win/win strategy; formal or informal interaction; direct or indirect communication; time sensitivity; displaying/not displaying emotions; form of agreement (general or specific); building an agreement (bottom up or top down); team organization (one leader or team consensus); risk taking (high or low). Gesteland (2005) developed the typology of negotiator profiles that is of a special importance for the present study (see Table 1). We can mention also research devoted to the specific features related to the negotiators’ country of origin (Akizhanova, 2013; Gardašević and Vapa-Tankosic, 2015; Rammal, 2005; Varner, 2013). Majority of theoreticians and practitioners agree in that knowledge and training (skills development) are basic factors for the successful intercultural negotiations. This could be regarded as a part of the university social responsibility; we believe that this particular aspect has not received the proper scholarly attention yet. Thus, our investigation brings forth some new dimensions to be researched.

The concept of university social responsibility is rather new; most of the universities try to incorporate it into their strategies and plans of development. Reiser defines the concept as a policy of ethical quality of the performance of the university community (students, faculty and administrative employees) via the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, labor and environmental impacts produced by the university, in an interactive dialogue with society to promote a sustainable human development. (Reiser, 2008) Overall, the USR can be perceived as a

philosophy of a university as an ethical approach to develop and engage with the local and global community to sustain the social, ecological, environmental, technical, and economic development. (Jorge and Pena, 2017; Mehta, 2011; Muijen, 2004) The researchers have summarized the desired outcomes of USR, such as, (1) community of learners and scholars who value the pursuit of new knowledge in a society of learning and are valued members and leaders of society, and global citizens effective in diverse setting; (2) graduates who have well-balanced knowledge and wisdom, and good character; intelligent, think rationally, behave morally and ethically; possess life and leadership skills; conscious of public and common good; practice good governance and are socially responsible, able to compete in an international job market, socially responsible global leader. (Schneller and Thöni, 2011) Puukka (2008) proposed the conception of the triple bottom line of sustainability in higher education institutions. According to him, the triple bottom line structure (economic performance, environmental performance and social performance) is applicable also to higher education institutions due to three reasons: firstly, higher education institutions have considerable direct and indirect impacts on the local and regional economies; secondly, the social responsibility of universities refers to wellbeing of staff and students, and good relations with stakeholders; thirdly, higher education institutions are both consumers of non-renewable energy and sources of technological and organizational expertise to tackle these challenges. Our interest lies precisely with the social performance aspect, since it can and must involve the intercultural communication (including negotiation) skills training via case-studies, multi-national projects, free-standing mini modules. (Arakelian, 2009, Jack, 2009, Tomalin, 2009) According to our previous research (Vevere, 2016; Vevere, 2017; Vevere and Steinbergs, 2017) of the university annual reports, the social performance of the higher education institutions comprise such areas as promotion of well-being that includes development of living (student hotels), learning and teaching environment and material technical basis enrichment; promotion of know-how (professional development of the staff, working out strategical directions in learning and science (specific directions of research), involvement of students in the research, organizing methodological seminars, etc.; ownership of staff and students (introduction and implementation of quality control system, internal audit of quality, development of good governance principles, cooperation between staff, administration and students); community involvement (involvement of industry and potential employers in evaluation of the study programs and in the study process (as guest lecturers); cooperation with professional organizations; cooperation with secondary schools and professional schools with aim to attract prospective students, offering paid and free of charge courses to the community. Intercultural training then, considering the international learning and working environment today, we conclude, is an integral part of all these activities (well-being, know-how, ownership, community involvement) and of the social responsibility policy of the higher education establishment.

Research design. To investigate MBA students' preferences negotiation tactics depending on their nationality (culture type), we chose a quantitative research design – the formalized survey of participants. Approaching the students involved in the graduate global marketing and international negotiation courses (the academic years of 2016/2017 and 2017/2018) provided a first-hand account of what negotiation tactics they felt to be appropriate or inappropriate. Students were approached with the request to be questioned about their opinion during the class, they were given certain time to fill out the questionnaire without any interruption and control of the professor. The respondents received all necessary information about the purpose and procedure of the research, as well as their anonymity was guaranteed. The questionnaire was developed based on the literature study; it consisted of 16 questions divided into five groups according to

Methodology

5 negotiation tactics as presented in the SINS scale (“Self-reported Inappropriate Negotiation Strategy Scale”). (Robinson et al., 2000) The following tactics were put forward: (1) traditional competitive bargaining; (2) attacking opponent’s network; (3) false promises; (4) misrepresentation; (5) inappropriate information gathering. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Bargaining tactics and statements included into the questionnaire

No	Tactics	Statements according to SINS scale
1	Traditional competitive bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Make an opening demand that is far greater than what you really hope to settle for – Convey a false impression that you are in no hurry to come to a negotiated agreement, thereby trying to put time pressure on your opponent to concede quickly – Make an opening demand so high/low that it seriously undermines your opponent’s confidence in his/her ability to negotiate a satisfactory settlement
2	Attacking opponents network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attempt to get your opponent fired from his/her position so that a new person will take his/her place – Threaten to make your opponent look weak or foolish in front of a boss or others to whom he/she is accountable, even if you know that you won’t carry out the threat – Talk directly to the people who your opponent reports to, or is accountable to, and tell them things that will undermine their confidence in your opponent as negotiator
3	False promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promise that good things will happen to your opponent if he/she gives what you want, even if you know that you can’t (or won’t) deliver these things when the other’s cooperation is obtained – In return for concessions from your opponent now, offer to make future concessions which you know you will not follow through on – Guarantee that your constituency will uphold the settlement reached, although you know that they will likely violate the agreement later
4	Misrepresentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intentionally misrepresent information to your opponent in order strengthen your negotiation arguments or position – Intentionally represent the nature of negotiations to your constituency to protect delicate discussions that have occurred – Deny the validity of information which you opponent has that weakens your negotiating position, even though this information is true and valid – Intentionally represent the progress of negotiations to your constituency to make your own position to appear stronger
5	Inappropriate information gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gain information about an opponent’s negotiating position by paying your friends, associates, and contacts to get this information for you – Gain information about opponent’s negotiation position by cultivating his/her friendship through expensive gifts, entertaining and personal favors – Gain information about an opponent’s negotiation position by trying to recruit or hire one of your opponent’s teammates

Source: Authors’ according to Robinson et al., 2000

The questions were presented in the mixed order to get truthful responses. Each statement had five-point value varying from the answer “not at all appropriate” (value – 1) to “very appropriate” (value – 5). The design of the questionnaire was asked also open-ended questions regarding their gender, age, nationality and work experience. In the view of the current topic the indicator

of nationality was of a special importance – all respondents were divided into seven groups (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) according to the negotiator profile typology developed by Gesteland (2005) (see Table 2).

Population sampling. Once the research design was established, it was necessary to decide about the sampling unit (a unit of population chosen during the sampling process; the unit should contain one or more elements describing the population). Participants of the survey were

Group	Negotiator's characteristics	Nationality	
A	Relationship-Focused Formal Polychronic Reserved	Indian Pakistani	
B	Relationship-Focused Formal Monochronic Reserved	Chinese	
C	Relationship-Focused Formal Polychronic Expressive	Arabic Turkish Greek Uzbek	Kzakh Kyrgyz Armenian Azerbaijani
D	Relationship-Focused Formal Polychronic Variably Expressive	Russian Polish Ukrainian	
E	Moderately Deal-Focused Formal Variably Monochronic Emotionally Expressive	French Dutch	
F	Moderately Deal-Focused Formal Variably Monochronic Reserved	Baltic	
G	Deal-Focused Moderately Formal Monochronic Reserved	Finnish Norwegian Swedish German	

Table 2

Negotiator profiles (including only those nationalities represented in the survey)

Source: Authors' according to Gesteland, 2005.

chosen according to the principle to include the international MBA students taking the courses in global marketing and negotiations in the intercultural business environment in three (public and private) universities during the study year of 2017/2018; the language of instruction – English. This sampling approach can be described as a non-probability convenience sampling. Convenience sampling differs from purposive sampling in that expert judgment is not used to select a representative sample of elements. Rather, the primary selection criterion relates to the ease of obtaining a sample. Ease of obtaining the sample relates to the cost of locating elements of the population, the geographic distribution of the sample, and obtaining the interview data from the selected elements. (Lavrakas, 2008) The respondents have several characteristics in common–

enrollment in the MBA program in Latvia's public/private university (during academic year of 2017/2018), taking a course in global marketing or in negotiations in the intercultural business environment, studying in English (this includes both local and international students). Altogether 88 MBA students were surveyed.

Data processing. For data processing the SPSS statistics 21 program was used to carry out the medial comparison (Me) and the frequency calculation, as well as series of non-parametric tests, such as Kruskal-Wallis H Test, Mann -Whitney U test, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test since the data obtained corresponded to the ordinal scale (ranking scale). (Doane and Seward, 2011; Field, 2009; Massey, 1951)

Limitations of the research. The study was carried out during the academic years of 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 in one public university and two private universities, it comprised MBA students involved in two specific courses – global marketing and negotiations in the intercultural business environment because these courses included topics on intercultural communication within business environment. According to Gesteland's (2005) typology of negotiator profiles, all students fell into eight groups (see Table 2) with different number of students (from 1 to 33); since it is virtually impossible to detect any tendency if the group consisted on only 1 member, the group H American negotiator) was excluded leaving the minimum of participants to 3 members (Group B – Chinese negotiators). Despite the varying number of group members, the authors of the current research believe that the obtained results can demonstrate some tendencies that could be helpful in planning MBA curriculum.

Research hypotheses. Based on the theoretical literature the authors put forward two hypotheses:

H_0 : There exists statistically significant relation between negotiator's cultural background and preference for certain negotiation tactics/statement valuation.

H_1 : There is no statistically significant relation between negotiator's cultural background and preference for certain negotiation tactics/statement valuation.

Results

To prove or reject hypotheses, we conducted the medial comparison and frequency division calculation. After that, we conducted a series of nonparametric tests. The first one was the Kruskal Wallis H test to determine (1) if there is relation between belonging to the certain group (see table 3) and choice of the negotiation tactic; (2) if there exists relation between valuation of the statements and belonging to the group.

The test results demonstrate that $p=1.00>0.05$, it follows that there is no statistically significant relation between belonging to the certain group (according to the negotiator typology) and the choice of bargaining tactic. Thus, the null hypothesis is being proved. The next step of the research was performing the Kruskal Wallis test to determine the relation between the statement evaluations and belonging to the negotiators' group. (see Tables 4 and 5).

The Kruskal Wallis H test show that there exists statistically significant relation (with probability of 95%) between the valuation of the statements and belonging to the certain negotiator's type ($p=0.00<0.05$).

The next nonparametric, i.e., the Mann -Whitney U test was performed to determine, if there is the statistically significant relation between the group F (the Baltic negotiators) and

Table 3
Kruskal Wallis test statistics (choice of tactics)

	Tactics
Chi-Square	0,000
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	1,000

Source: Authors'

other groups in the choice of tactic (see table 6) and valuation of the statements (see table 7).

It is possible to conclude that there is no statistically significant (with probability of 95%) difference between overall choice of tactics among negotiator type F (the Baltic negotiator) and other types (A, B, C, D, E, G). Thus, we can accept the null hypothesis.

Table 7, in its turn shows the Mann-Whitney U test results regarding differences in statement valuation between the group F (the Baltic negotiator) and other groups (A, B, C, D, E, G).

The results of the test show that with a probability of 95% there exists statistically significant difference between statement evaluations of the group F (Baltic negotiators) and the groups A (Indian and Pakistani negotiators), C (Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Armenian, Azerbaijani negotiators) and E (French and Dutch negotiators). Although the results are not conclusive due to the highly varying number of group members, they still open the line of future research of the main influence factors. Therefore, it follows, that hypothesis (H_1) is being partly proved.

No	Group	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1	A	96	305,47	24669,0	-0,094	0,925
	F	517	307,28			
2	B	32	273,47	8223,0	-0,57	0,954
	F	517	275,09			
3	C	295	405,12	75851,5	-0,129	0,897
	F	517	407,29			
4	D	160	337,47	41115,0	-0,116	0,908
	F	517	339,47			
5	E	128	321,47	32892,0	-0,106	0,916
	F	517	323,38			
6	G	161	339,28	41582,5	-0,017	0,986
	F	517	339,57			

Source: Authors'

To calculate the empirical data distribution overall and within each group we conducted the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (see table 8).

The test results show that empirical data corresponds to the normal distribution overall and in all groups but one – B (Chinese negotiators); it could be explained by the fact that this was the smallest group among others.

Group	N	Mean Rank
A	96	355,91
B	32	355,91
C	295	356,13
D	160	355,91
E	128	355,91
Total	711	

Source: Authors'

	Tactics
Chi-Square	57,934
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	0,000

Source: Authors'

Table 4

Ranks

Table 5

Kruskal Wallis test statistics (valuation of the statement)

Table 6

Mann-Whitney U test statistics (choice of tactics)

Table 7

Mann-Whitney U test statistics (statement valuation)

No	Group	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1	F	517	344,99	38779,5	-1,358	0,000
	G	161	321,87			
2	F	517	290,05	16052,0	-5,661	0,954
	A		398,29			
3	F	517	278,17	6634,0	-1,949	0,051
	B		223,81			
4	F	517	393,12	69339,0	-2,225	0,026
	C		429,95			
5	F	517	344,65	38441,0	-1,400	0,161
	D		320,76			
6	F	517	330,45	29234,5	-2,116	0,034
	E		292,89			

Source: *Authors'*

Table 8

Empirical data distribution (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test statistics)

Group	N	Mean	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed).	Correspondence/non-correspondence
All groups	1389	2,42	7,495	0,000	cor.
A	96	3,7	1,925	0,01	cor.
B	32	1,88	1,358	0,050	non-cor.
C	295	2,62	3,393	0,000	cor.
D	160	2,23	3,274	0,000	cor.
E	128	2,12	2,568	0,000	cor.
F	517	2,38	4,405	0,000	cor.
G	161	2,21	2,860	0,000	cor.

Source: *Authors'*

Conclusions

- In the contemporary business environment international negotiations play ever-growing role, negotiators should exhibit rather high level of intercultural competence and practical negotiation skills. Thus, in the view of the university significance in the society as educational and research center, the development of cultural sensitivity, of adaptability to changing business environment, of cooperation with industry and local community can be regarded as integral part of its social responsibility strategy. Thus, university can offer courses and training programs in the field of intercultural negotiations involving the academic staff and students. The courses can take different forms – be it the freestanding or integrated mini-modules (8-12 academic hours) or a part of part of continuous or lifelong education program offered by the university to the local community.
- The results of the current investigation, that consisted of the international MBA students survey using the SINS scale and R. Gesteland's negotiators' typology can be used for development of the mini-module on intercultural negotiations that includes both basic theoretical instruction and

- Although the data of our research were not conclusive because of the high variability of the number of respondents in each group, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant relation between belonging to the certain group of negotiators and the choice of negotiation (bargaining) tactic. Thus, all international students can be offered the same theoretical background and practical training (exercises, tests, simulations, etc.)
- Nonetheless, the series on nonparametric tests (the ones of the Kruskal Wallis H and the Mann-Whitney) demonstrate that there exist differences in statement valuation within each tactic, and this will be the subject of our further investigation. In other words, it is very important to know what are the main factors influencing the valuation process.

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