

INTERCULTURAL CONFLICTS IN BRITISH-HUNGARIAN AND AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

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Introduction and Aims of the Research

The subject areas of Cross- and Intercultural Communication studies have been in the forefront of academic research in recent years. This is quite understandable if we consider the efforts made towards achieving a harmonised European Union and the globalisation of the world economy. As it has been pointed out by Brislin and others, research in cross-cultural studies can provide very helpful guidelines for people as they interact in a fast-changing world marked by increasing intercultural contact. (Brislin:1993) Meeting the intercultural challenge is of the utmost importance in regions which increasingly face conflicts of this type. Several countries have been included in the research process but there is little data or information on Hungarian cultural and business cultural characteristics and the intercultural communication problems and frictions that arise during daily interaction with members of other cultures. This is of special importance for Hungary, since due to the political changes in East Central Europe, the number of greenfield starts, foreign takeovers, foreign joint ventures and partial cooperations with foreign partners has been rapidly increasing over the last six years. According to information received from the

Commercial Sections of the British and the American Embassies in Budapest, there are 250 British-Hungarian and 350-400 American-Hungarian organisations operating in Hungary at present. (Registration is not compulsory with the embassies, therefore the figures are not complete.) This study aims to explore and analyse the main causes of intercultural communication gaps, conflicts and management problems in these Hungarian based British-Hungarian and American-Hungarian organisations, on the basis of two years of academic research and interviews conducted with 82 senior managers and employees of 19 organisations of varying types and sizes during the ten months to February 10, 1996. In addition to the above managers and employees, several British, American and Hungarian individuals, including my colleagues at the College of Foreign Trade, at the University of Humberside and the British and Hungarian students involved in the Student Exchange Programme of the University of Humberside-College of Foreign Trade Joint Awards Programme, contributed to this research. I am very grateful to all the interviewees for their kind help and especially to my colleague, Dr David Foster of the University of Humberside, for his support and useful advice.

Research Methods

Extensive desk research has been carried out on the subject before starting fieldwork. Using the image of culture as consisting of layers, this study is based on the premise that culture in this type of research does not refer to the outer layer, i.e. the explicit artefacts and products, of culture, but rather to the middle layer, i.e. norms and values and the core, i.e. basic assumptions about existence, the implicit layer (Trompenaars, 1995:22); or in other words, to 'The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (Hofstede, 1994:260). There has been a distinction made between the use of the terms 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural' in the study. 'Cross-cultural studies' is the broader term, referring to parallel studies of similar concepts and phenomena in different cultures. 'Intercultural research' refers to studies of people from different cultures interacting in face-to-face relationships on a daily basis. (Brislin:1993) The interviews conducted in the framework of this research, therefore, mainly provide data and information of the intercultural type, though it is obvious that the two terms overlap a great deal when analysing the data from different points of view. For example, when a respondent is a member of a Hungarian organisation in partial cooperation with a British or an American organisation, where face-to-face interactions between members of the different cultures are infrequent, data will be also, or maybe more, of a cross-cultural nature. Data were collected from 82 subjects, members of 19 organisations. The interviews consisted of two parts: a guided first part with questions pertaining to the respondents' earlier experience or expectations, prior to interacting with members of the host or the visitors' culture, and how these expectations compared with the actual experiences in their organisation. Questions were also asked concerning the length of time spent in the organisation, the position occupied in the organisational hierarchy and the

command of the language, taking into account that Hungarian is a minority language that is extremely difficult to master and English is the lingua franca of our age. In the second part of the interview the respondents were asked to mention cases of obvious miscommunication from their experience with members of the foreign culture, i.e. cases when they thought, on the basis of inadequate responses, that their messages had been misunderstood, not necessarily as a result of language problems, or when they felt they had misunderstood messages communicated to them.

Key Concepts

The level of culture examined in this study is the *national* cultures. Regional, societal (class), gender, generation, religion and individual differences were outside the scope of research. The organisations involved mainly operate in the capital city of Budapest, or in large provincial cities. The interviewees were mostly between the age of late twenties and early fifties, mainly white collar workers, middle or upper middle class intellectuals. The database was analysed along different dimensions of national culture, as identified by Hofstede: *power distance*, *collectivism* versus *individualism*, *femininity* versus *masculinity*, *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede:1994), by Trompenaars: *universalism* versus *particularism*, *neutral* or *emotional*, *specific* versus *diffuse*, *achievement* versus *ascription* (Trompenaars:1995) and by E.T.Hall: *high-context*, *low-context*, (E.T.Hall:1989/i) and *monochronic* versus *polychronic* time (E.T.Hall:1989/ii) cultures.

Power distance is 'the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.' (Hofstede,1994:28) Some key differences: in *small power distance* societies inequalities among people should be minimized; there is interdependence between less and more powerful people; parents treat children as equals; students treat teachers as equals; subordinates expect to be consulted, the ideal boss is a resourceful democrat; privileges and status symbols are frowned upon. In *large power distance* societies inequalities among people are both expected and desired; less powerful people should be dependent on the more powerful; parents teach children obedience; students treat teachers with respect; subordinates expect to be told what to do, the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat or good father; privileges and status symbols for managers are both expected and popular.(Hofstede,1994:37)

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose, everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. *Collectivism* pertains to societies in which people from birth are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout their lifetime protect them in exchange for loyalty.(Hofstede,1994:51) Some key differences: in *individualist* societies identity is based on the individual; children learn to think in terms of 'I'; speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person; low-context communication; employer-employee relationship is a contract supposed

to be based on mutual advantage; management is management of individuals; task prevails over relationship. In *collectivist* societies identity is based on the social network to which one belongs; children learn to think in terms of 'we'; harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided; high-context communication; employer-employee relationship is perceived in moral terms, like a family link; management is management of groups; relationship prevails over task.(Hofstede,1994:67)

Masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life); *femininity* pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life).(Hofstede,1994:82) Some key differences: in *masculine* societies dominant values are material success and progress; in the family, fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings, girls cry, boys don't; sympathy for the strong; best student is the norm, failing in school is a disaster; live in order to work; managers expected to be decisive and assertive; stress on competition among colleagues, and performance; resolution of conflicts by fighting them out. In *feminine* societies dominant values are caring for others and preservation; in the family, both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings; both girls and boys are allowed to cry but neither should fight; sympathy for the weak; average student is the norm, failing in school is a minor accident; work in order to live; managers use intuition and strive for consensus; stress on solidarity, and quality of work life; resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation.(Hofstede, 1994:96)

Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as 'the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.'(Hofstede, 1994:113) Some key differences: in *strong uncertainty avoidance* societies uncertainty is felt as a continuous threat which must be fought; high stress, subjective feeling of anxiety; acceptance of familiar risks, fear of ambiguous situations and of unfamiliar risks; what is different, is dangerous; students comfortable in structured learning situations and concerned with the right answers; teachers supposed to have all the answers; emotional need to be busy, inner urge to work hard; resistance to innovation. In *weak uncertainty avoidance* societies uncertainty is a normal feature of life; low stress, subjective feeling of well-being; comfortable in ambiguous situations and with unfamiliar risk; what is different, is curious; students comfortable with open-ended learning situations and concerned with good discussions; teachers may say 'I don't know'; comfortable feeling when lazy, hard-working only when needed; tolerance of innovative ideas. (Hofstede, 1994:123) These dichotomies describe the two opposite extremes; the country scores, calculated on the basis of a large body of survey data collected from employees of IBM in fifty countries, on the dimensions show that most national cultures are somewhere in between the extremes.

Universalism means : what is good and right can be defined and always applies. *Particularism* means that greater attention is given to obligations of relationships, friendship, and unique circumstances. In North America and north-west Europe business relationships are *neutral* and are all about achieving objectives, emotions are believed to confuse the issues. In many other cultures, business is a human affair and *emotions* are appropriate. This dichotomy to some extent corresponds to the *specific* versus *diffuse* one, which refers to the specific relationship prescribed by a contract, or when the whole person is involved in a business relationship and there is a real and personal contact, e.g. in South American countries.(Trompenaars,1995:9) While some societies accord status to people on the basis of their *achievements*, others *ascribe* it to them by virtue of age, class, gender, education, and so on.(Trompenaars,1995:92)

Context is the information that surrounds an event. The cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context.(E.T.Hall-M.R.Hall,1990:6) *High-context* people are well-informed, have extensive information networks, require a minimum of background information, 'A high-context communication...is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person,...very little is in the coded, explicit ...part of the message. A *low-context* communication is just the opposite;...the mass of information is in the code.'(E.T.Hall,1989/i:91) Low-context people are not well-informed outside their own special area of expertise. They are compartmentalized and require a lot of background information before they can make a decision. As regards attitudes to time, in North European countries we can talk about *monochronic*,M-time attitude, which means doing one thing at a time, events are scheduled as separate items, promptness is important in meeting obligations and appointments. The Mediterranean model is *polychronic*,P-time, which stresses involvement in several things at once. The two systems, like oil and water, don't mix.(E.T.Hall,1989/ii:46) In P cultures human relationships are valued over schedules and appointments, many things may occur at once, and interruptions are frequent.

Combining Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions with E.T.Hall's concepts we can provide a useful framework to prepare for intercultural interactions.

A Warning against Stereotyping

'The usefulness of the country scores is not for describing individuals, but for describing the social systems these individuals are likely to have built.'(Hofstede,1994:253) If we say 'Mr Jones is American, therefore he holds individualist, and masculine values', we are stereotyping. Chances are that Mr Jones is exceptional in this respect. Stereotypes are half-truths and are undesirable in intercultural communication. We should make our judgement of Mr Jones after we have met and got to know him. These dimensions and the country scores can be helpful tools if we do not judge individuals on their basis. They should rather serve as guidelines in preparing for intercultural interactions.

'Stereotypes can be helpful or harmful depending on how we use them. Effective stereotyping allows people to understand and act appropriately in new situations.' (N.J.Adler,1991:72) It should also be pointed out that culture strongly influences our interpretations. Both the dimensions, categories and the meanings we attach to them, are based on our cultural background, and to some extent this applies to the researcher as well no matter how objective and neutral he or she wishes to be.

Fieldwork Findings and Analysis

What the British and the Americans think of the Hungarians

a) A Hungarian employee of a large British-Hungarian company, who earlier worked for three different American-Hungarian organisations as well, had this to say on the subject 'Az egyetlen különbség az amerikaiak és az angolok között az, hogy az amerikaiak azt hiszik, még le sem jöttünk a fáról, az angolok meg azt hiszik, hogy épp most jöttünk le onnan.' (The only difference between the Americans and the British is that the Americans think we haven't yet come down from the trees, the British think we have just done so.) Of course what the employee, in his early forties, said does not show what the British and the Americans really think about the Hungarians, but it sums up briefly how a great number of Hungarian employees, and also managers, especially of this age group, perceive the British and the American way of thinking about Hungarians. The question is what makes them think the British and the Americans are of this opinion.

Some of the most often mentioned characteristics:

Hungarians are slow to get things done. Reluctance in taking responsibility, inefficiency.

b) The British Chairman of a British-Hungarian company said 'I'm fairly aggressive in terms of getting things done quickly. In England there is a much greater feeling of responsibility that people will accept, they'll make sure the subject matter is exhaustively dealt with before the file is put back in the drawer. The attitude here [i.e.Hungary] is that we must get over the immediate problem and as long as we can get over it, we put the file back in the drawer until the problem comes back again rather than deal exhaustively with it until it is resolved.'

There are marked differences between age groups.

c) A British junior manager of a British organisation operating in Hungary commented on the subject as follows: 'There's a big difference between older Hungarians and younger ones. Under the age of 30-35 people are pretty ambitious, and will take responsibility but older people I find less willing to take responsibility; they wouldn't go outside what they feel is their responsibility. Older people are more rigid and inflexible, they have a set routine in their day, e.g. they don't like to stay beyond working hours.'

There is not enough planning, keeping deadlines is difficult.

d) Comment from the senior executive of a British organisation operating in Hungary 'A general problem in many places is that there doesn't seem to be the same detailed level of planning in people's work in Hungary. We have a plan for the whole operation. We have set standards of our job descriptions, e.g. that mail should get to people's desks within two hours of arrival. We agree these standards with the people concerned, which helps us set realistic targets and gives feedback on their performance. We've tried to introduce these agreed targets and reviewing processes in Hungary but the initial reaction was: "we just got away from this, this is communism. This is big brother watching us telling us what to do." We've tried to persuade them that this is not meant to be a critical tool but a constructive tool on both sides.'

e) A similar opinion was expressed by a senior manager of the same organisation: 'There is great pride in institutional autonomy in Hungary and lack of central control. There was central control 6 years ago but not now. Now there's great resistance to something imposed from the outside...I think Hungarians in general have the reputation of being intellectual and very thoughtful and concerned about perspectives, and about the macroshape of what they're doing; but I am also concerned with the constituent details of every element. E.g. when planning a conference or a workshop, I'm very concerned about details like venue, speaker, participants for the workshop, should be set up in good time. The Hungarian attitude is spending quite a long time on the subject area covered, the intellectual framework of the event, and *then* settling the details.'

Hungarians do not have a customer orientated attitude.

f) The American general manager of the Hungarian subsidiary of an American company had this to say 'When you just go to a supermarket, they make you feel as though they were doing you a favour. They're not doing you a favour, you're paying for that, they should be very grateful that you're going to that supermarket, you could go to another supermarket. If you behave like that in the States, you'll be out of business.'

g)) The senior executive in example b) told me the following story: 'About 3 years ago a friend of mine in England who dealt in textiles knew that here in Hungary there was a company which was very skilled in producing a certain type of cloth. They located the company and asked me if I would go and talk to them, get samples, etc. I attempted to ring them up and when the phone was answered and I spoke in English unfortunately, the phone immediately was put down. It still happens but not as much as it used to happen. I decided to go there. I managed to get into the building and managed to find where the sales office was. I opened the door and a sea of faces looked at me. I made it clear that I would like to speak to somebody about sales. I got an extremely frosty reception and I was told if I wanted to talk about sales I would have to ring up and make an appointment. Nobody would see me unless I had an appointment. This was a state-owned company and it has changed hands since then.'

h) An American senior manager of an American-Hungarian company commented 'If you're working for a customer, you've got to be the servant of that customer. Hungarians don't realize this to the extent they should.'

i) Comment from the senior executive in example d) 'In 1991 there was an attitude among our Hungarian staff that they thought what they did gave them a sort of power over their clients. I tried to instill into them that their job is justified by *helping* the client.'

Bureaucracy, hierarchical attitude, titles, formality.

j) The junior manager in example c) said 'Hungarians have quite a hierarchical attitude to the way that a company is organised. I was a little bit surprised by how they treat sort of drivers and cleaners, people at the bottom of the pile; not in a cruel way of course, but they made them feel..., British people would go out of their way to be polite to these people.'

k) The American manager in example f) said 'In Hungary people are more formal, the language itself tends to be more formal, of course not between friends, but at the workplace; and they use titles a lot.'

l) The same manager also pointed out 'In the States the head of the division, the Vice President would go out and make coffee himself, here this is not the way of thinking, here it would definitely be the secretary.'

Inexperience.

m) The British owner-manager of a small British-Hungarian company commented 'These young ones here have been on courses and want to do everything by the book, but in reality it is not practical. Many younger clients will not listen to experience. They want to show the boss that they are good business people. To them good is aggressive, driving the supplier hard.'

What is wrong at the workplace.

n) The manager in example c) said 'The use of the telephone and the fax for private purposes is not considered wrong here....Hungarians are supportive of their colleagues, which is nice,... they may know a lot about each other's personal lives, they chat together quite a lot.'

The importance of personal relationships.

o) A British manager in the British subsidiary of an American company who conducts business in Hungary on a regular basis had this to say 'This is a different territory here, it's all about emotional contacts and personal relationships here. Keeping deadlines is difficult...but American companies are aggressive, they can even lose business.'

What the Hungarians think of the Americans and the British

(The examples quoted below are as near as possible translations of what the Hungarian respondents said.)

Some of the most often mentioned characteristics:

Inequalities; they think they know everything better.

p) A Hungarian employee of a British-Hungarian organisation said the following 'They still don't understand how hurtful and insulting it can be if they don't treat us equally with the British. E.g. they advertise for a job and if the position is filled by a British person, he or she will get a three times higher salary than the Hungarian person holding the same position.'

q) A Hungarian manager of a British-Hungarian organisation had this to say 'No matter how right you are, a British manager will never say so against a British employee. You can see it in his eyes that he agrees with you but you can't be right. He'll smooth it out... They are nice, call you by your first name but they don't really care how you feel, what your problems are outside the workplace... There is *us* and *them*, it's somehow in the air.'

r) The Hungarian general manager of a British-Hungarian company commented 'A British manager explained to me that the western attitude is, what we were learning and teaching in the 40 years of the communist era was totally irrelevant to real life, as regards business. If we express an opinion, they ask at least for a second opinion. They can't imagine that we might be right and what they think would be right may not be valid for this country.'

s) The employee in example a) said the following 'They think everybody is an idiot who is not American, and if in addition the person happens to come from behind the former iron curtain, he probably can't either read or write. Perhaps the British don't think so but even for them we are a different category. We are the *natives*... I remember when some years ago Americans with high school diplomas came and told Hungarian engineers in a world famous Hungarian company of very long standing how to make a certain product. It was ridiculous.... but even the British explain to us quite obvious things sometimes.'

t) The senior manager in example r) also had this to say 'Dear madam, all of us know that this is a colony,....we are a cheap source of labour.'

u) A senior Hungarian manager of a British-Hungarian company said 'A technician comes from England and dictates to the Hungarian general manager of a factory. They sort of talk down to us. This is appalling.'

Hungary is the end of the world.

v) A senior executive in a British-Hungarian organisation told me the following story: 'We were in a hotel in San Diego. In the elevator an American businessman asked us where we were from. We said, 'from Hungary'. 'Ah,' he said, 'I know, it's somewhere in the Caucasus, isn't it?'

w) I heard a somewhat similar story from a Hungarian senior executive of the Hungarian subsidiary of an American firm: 'An American manager of an international company told his wife that she could come with him to Hungary. The wife's first question was "Do they have lavatories in Hungary?"'

x) A Hungarian employee of the Hungarian subsidiary of an American company said 'We were considered to be bordering Asia. Two-three years ago they just didn't regard Hungary important enough. Perhaps by now it has changed.'

Tense working tempo.

y) An employee in a British-Hungarian organisation commented 'It was very difficult to get used to these tight work schedules. They expect us to stay after working hours and there's no extra payment.' z) An employee in a British-Hungarian company said 'It's difficult to get used to giving your whole life to a company. You can forget about your personal life, but you also have a family. You can't go on holiday when you want to. Very often you have to stay after working hours. It's not your individual interest now, it's the company's interest which matters. Earlier where I worked in a state owned Hungarian company it wasn't like this. This is new. Of course I have a higher salary now, but not that much higher.'

Language problems.

zs) The manager in example q) commented on the subject as follows: 'When you are on the phone and you talk to someone with a broad local accent, you are expected to understand it. They wouldn't slow down, they don't care whether you understand it.'

ty) The senior executive in example w) had this to say 'When you go for a week's training, you're with people whose mother tongue is mostly English. You're expected to follow everything and when you come home you're expected to know everything. It's taken for granted that your English is like a native's. Of course they can hardly say 'Good morning' in any other language than English. We are always at a disadvantage as regards language. The translations of materials are awful. Not the grammar, the content. The translators are not engineers, I understand the English version better than the Hungarian translation. Sometimes there isn't any Hungarian terminology either. I think the failure of some projects is partly due to these translations.'

Empirical evidence seems to support the hypothesis put forward in this study that Hungary can be identified on the dimensions earlier presented as follows: In terms of power distance a much higher score is to be expected in contrast with Britain and the US, both tending towards lower scores. This may lead to frictions, as in examples j), k), and l), also u). As regards the formality of language (example k), it is interesting to mention how many debates there are in the Hungarian press on the informal 'tu' forms reporters tend to use on television with some interviewees, instead of using the more formal 'vous' form. The same applies to the Swedish IKEA company, which uses the informal forms in its Hungarian sales material, initially causing quite a public outcry in Hungary. The use of the informal forms is probably due to the fact that in the Swedish language the formal forms tend to be obsolete, reflecting the very small power

distance culture. The interesting thing is that the same IKEA uses the formal 'sie' in German advertising. (Polyák, 1995:43) Probably the Swedish are more familiar with the characteristic formality of the Germans.

In terms of *individualism vs collectivism* we can say that Hungarian culture tends more towards collectivism, as demonstrated by examples n), o) and q), though there are individualistic tendencies as well, more so in the cities and with the younger generation. One of the characteristics of individualist cultures is *low-context* communication, while collectivist societies are characterised by *high-context* communication. This may also lead to clashes in an organisation where Americans and British, both low-context cultures, work with Hungarians who are much higher contexted. It must be noted though that the British tend towards a higher context level than the Americans, think of the British tendency to 'understate' and 'reading between the lines'. In example s) the employee thinks he gets too detailed explanations as to what to do, which is typical of low context communication and irritating to a higher contexted person. This coincides with what Hall found: "Talking down " to someone is low-contexting him, telling him more than he needs to know." (E.T.Hall, 1989/i:92) Of course this clash between high and low-contexted people occurs in many other cultures, e.g. the senior executive in example d) said it was much more difficult for him to communicate with the Japanese, than with the Hungarians. It is understandable if we consider that e.g. Japanese culture is much higher context than Hungarian culture. (There are interesting examples of this type in Hidasi, 1995.)

As regards *uncertainty avoidance* it can be stated that Hungary would have a much higher score than Britain and the US, both having a low score. The Hungarian educational system, based on the German-Prussian model, also the very high suicide rate in Hungary, which shows a very high anxiety level, indicate this tendency. Of course with a geographical position, being at the crossroads between east and west, and a historical background that we have, Turkish rule for 150 years, then Austrian rule for 230 years and recently 40 years of Russian rule, it is understandable that there is a great deal of uncertainty in a country which is 'at present reconciling a disappointing past with a developing future, both economically and culturally.' (USA and Europe in Business 1996:144) Hungarians are very sensitive, for example, to being called 'Eastern European', Hungary is in Central Europe. A colleague of mine, who went to a conference recently held in Graz, Austria, 40 miles west of the Hungarian border, told me that when they were greeted as 'our Eastern European friends', they all resented it. This happened just next door to the Hungarian border.

In terms of *masculinity*, there seems to be no difference between the cultures in question. Having lived all my life in Hungary leads me to say that Hungary would score just as high, if not higher, on this dimension. As regards Trompenaars' dichotomies, Hungarian culture tends to be more *particularist*, as examples n) and o) demonstrate, more *emotional*, as all the Hungarian examples, especially p), q) and s) show, and more *diffuse*, as in examples n), o) and q), than British and American cultures, which tend to be more *universalist*, *neutral* and

specific. In terms of according status, Hungarians seem to be more *ascription* than *achievement* orientated. To support this statement David Wheatley of British-based Employment Conditions Abroad is quoted as saying in the August 17th, 1990 issue of 'The European': [research evidence suggests that] 'Nine out of ten Hungarians will expect to be judged on the basis of who they are, rather than what they do.'

As regards *monochronic*, M-time, vs *polychronic*, P-time models, Hungarian culture tends to be *polychronic*, while British and American cultures are *monochronic*. This difference seems to cause several problems, as examples b), d) and e) demonstrate.

Along the *short-term orientation vs long-term orientation* dimension, which was recently added to Hofstede's original four dimensions, (Hofstede, 1994:14), there is one more difference between the cultures concerned. Hungarian culture in general, and business culture in particular, is long-term orientated, as opposed to British and American short-term orientation. Especially Americans want quick results and profit. 'Time is money.' It might be mentioned though, that there are some Hungarian, especially small, businesses, which try, not very successfully, to follow suit.

The aim of this research was to explore the causes of conflicts in these organisations, thus the examples have been selected accordingly. Nevertheless, in most of the organisations, especially greenfield sites, there are examples of very good cooperation between members of these quite different cultures. The western influence on Hungarian business culture is advantageous for the country. 'An important benefit is the impact foreign investors have had on Hungary's human resources and corporate culture. "Five years ago, if I asked one of my staff to order supplies, he would have forgotten to check prices," says Peter Kraft, head of American Express in Budapest. "Now he's telling me where I can cut costs." (Business Central Europe, December 1995/January 1996) On the other hand, as regards examples r) and s), i.e. the Hungarian opinion is not considered credible in the current market economic environment, here is a quotation from Trompenaars '...I started wondering if any of the American management techniques and philosophy I was brainwashed with in eight years of the best business education money could buy would apply in the Netherlands, where I came from, or indeed in the rest of the world.' (Trompenaars, 1995:1) Furthermore, some of the examples also show that there are issues of power and status between different cultures that need to be addressed. This can also be related to the use of language. During negotiations British and American managers cannot be called to account or challenged because of the language barrier. Hungarians, however good their English may be, speak a learnt, not their native language.

A possible solution to most of these problems could be perhaps to have training in effective communication skills across cultures, to raise the intercultural awareness of all managers and employees in these, or rather in all organisations which wish to do business with members of foreign cultures.

Summary

The empirical findings presented in this paper seem to support the hypothesis that Hungarian culture can be identified on Hofstede, Hall, and Trompenaars' dimensions as follows. In contrast with British and American cultures, Hungarian culture tends to be higher power distance, collectivist, particularist, emotional, diffuse, high-context, polychronic, ascription and long-term orientated, and can be characterized by a higher uncertainty avoidance level. The only dimension is that of masculinity where there is no real difference to be found. It is understandable that with so many differences between these cultures, there are frictions and conflicts in most of the 19 British-Hungarian and American-Hungarian organisations involved in the research process. A possible solution could be intensive communication training with a view to raising an awareness of and sensitivity to other cultures.

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