



These Diagrams Reveal How To Negotiate With People Around The World



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You can't expect negotiations with French to be like negotiations with Americans, and the same holds true for cultures around the world.

British linguist [Richard D. Lewis](#) charted communication patterns as well as [leadership styles](#) and [cultural identities](#) in his book, "[When Cultures Collide](#)," now in a 2005 third edition. His organization offers classes in cross-cultural communication for big clients ranging from Unilever to BMW.

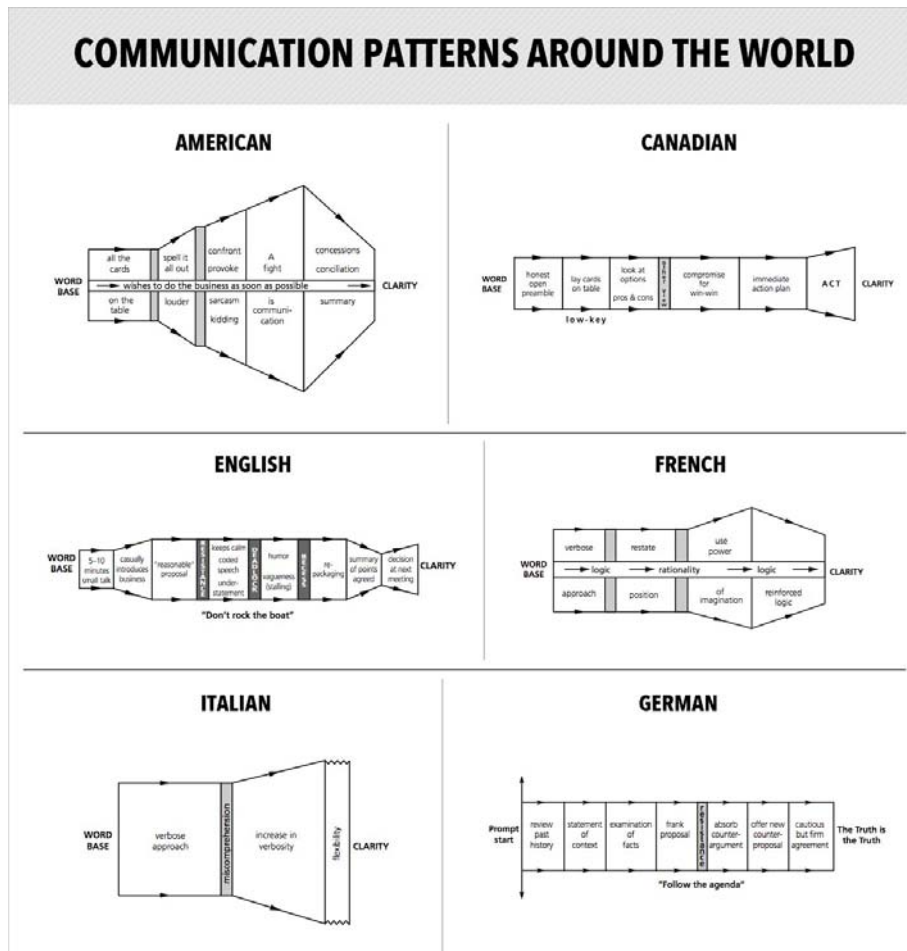
In support of cultural studies, he writes: "By focusing on the cultural roots of national behavior, both in society and business, we can foresee and calculate with a surprising degree of accuracy how others will react to our plans for them, and we can make certain assumptions as to how they will approach us. A working knowledge of the basic traits of other cultures (as well as our own) will minimize unpleasant surprises (culture shock), give us insights in advance, and enable us to interact successfully with nationalities with whom we previously had difficulty."

Although cultural generalizations can be overly reductive, Lewis, who speaks ten languages, insists it can be done fairly, writing: "Determining national characteristics is treading a minefield of inaccurate assessment and surprising exception. There is, however, such a thing as a national norm."

When meeting with French, be prepared for a vigorous logical debate.

When meeting with Americans, expect them to lay all their cards on the table, get upset when there's a disagreement, and resolve as fast as possible with one or both sides making concessions.

We'll go over the rest in brief after a selection of communication charts taken with permission from "[When Cultures Collide](#)." Below, conversational range is shown with increasing width, obstacles are marked in gray, and cultural traits are noted as well.



CHINA

WORD BASE moderate moralistic → louder → negotiations behind the scenes → tough talk → harmonize → CLARITY

semi-confrontational | using position & power

HONG KONG

WORD BASE rather verbose → restate position → increased eloquence → quick concessions to achieve deal → CLARITY

← negotiations compressed to save time →

ISRAELI

WORD BASE bold clear → openly tactful → rationality mixed with some emotion → horse → pragmatic conclusions → CLARITY

direct proposals | manipulative underlay | not without humor | trading

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INDIAN

WORD BASE long verbose socialize prearrange → ask for other side's view → favorable, flexible reaction → some modifications proposed → repackaging → agreement usually reached → CLARITY

courtious, adaptable | risk-taking, entrepreneurial

SWISS

WORD BASE reserved but friendly preliminaries → give their version of the deal → calmly resist bargaining → you get what you pay for → Swiss does not come cheap → they extract good deal for them → deliver quality on time → CLARITY

you get what you pay for | nonaggressive

SINGAPOREAN

WORD BASE entertaining (behaves) → golf, business etc. → personal (social, family, money) → precise (other side) → sees other side to repeat first → offers options when responding is OK → agreed negotiating → CLARITY

"softening up" phase | looking for harmony and trust

TACTICS

mention competitors | see angle | hinting you they fail | last minute demands | stating inflated initial price | pretend they do not care about outcome

AUSTRALIAN

WORD BASE cups of tea coffee first names → general outlines of deal → frank Australian proposal → popular cynicism → little → frank exchanges → compromise method → cozy, many engines → CLARITY

very | little | reserved

KOREAN

WORD BASE creative flashes of humor → serious → intense → relative truth → only good news → what they think you want to hear → what they think you want to hear → what they would like to be true → what they think has a chance to be true → what is temporarily true → CLARITY

DOWN ELASTIC TALK

INDONESIAN

WORD BASE asks other side → to speak fact → modifies own proposal → says what you want to hear → adds → ends in → CLARITY

respect language, especially for older people | ambiguity

HUNGARIAN

WORD BASE verbose start → show will to cooperate → remain critical → raise problems → don't offer solutions → everybody talks → at once → sudden agreement on many points → factual shrewdness → CLARITY

unpredictable style

SERBIAN & MONTENEGRIN

WORD BASE examine the facts → examine the facts → want to hear → WEAPONS: charisma, speedy repairs, try or black humor, anecdotes, exaggeration, invention, right/business as facts, contradictions → BEWARE → CLARITY

use threats | examine the facts | want to hear

BULGARIAN

WORD BASE initial period of reserve and reticence → use tactics → formal → sounds out and sizes up opponents → makes requests in cautious manner → uses charm → hedges options → tries for win win → reaches pragmatic conclusion → CLARITY

difficult to extract | hedges options

NORWEGIAN

WORD BASE good humored → get to the point → discuss with colleagues → look for the whole picture → entrenched position → CLARITY

DANISH

WORD BASE examination of facts → makes proposal → apparent agreement → skillful modification or repackaging → concludes by leaving door open → CLARITY

or

TURKISH

MEDIUM WORD BASE courteous exploratory → reactive calm → lively often explosive → passive periods → get what they can → control disappointment → LEAVE DOOR OPEN → CLARITY

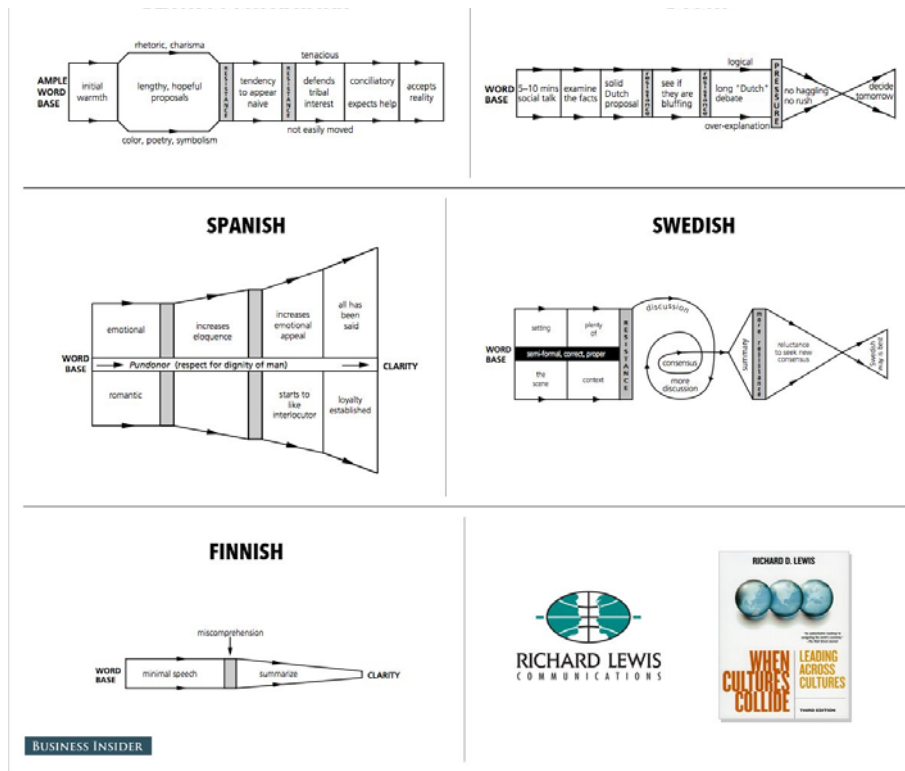
leave door open

POLISH

WORD BASE medium-large → factual → theatrical emotional → factual → aggressive when under pressure → pragmatic conclusion

BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN

DUTCH



crossculture.com

As you may surmise, "When Cultures Collide" spends relatively little time on today's emerging markets, which is unfortunate but not surprising since it was originally published in 1996. The book does offer some commentary on Africa, South America, and other places not mentioned here, however, as well as much further commentary on these 25 countries — and we advise anyone interested in international communication to check it out.

Let's go over the other diagrams in brief, paraphrasing and quoting from Lewis:

Canadians, compared to Americans, tend to be more low-key and inclined to seek harmony, though they are similarly direct.

English tend to avoid confrontation in an understated, mannered, and humorous style that can be powerful or inefficient.

Germans rely on logic but "tend to amass more evidence and labor their points more than either the British or the French."

Spanish and Italians "regard their languages as instruments of eloquence and they will go up and down the scale at will, pulling out every stop if need be to achieve greater expressiveness."

The Nordic countries often have entrenched opinions that they have formulated "in the long dark nights," though they are reasonable conversationalists. Swedes often have the most wide-ranging discussions, Finns tend to value concision, and most Norwegians fall somewhere in between.

Swiss tend to be straightforward and unaggressive negotiators, who obtain concessions by expressing confidence in the quality and value of their goods and services.

Hungarians value eloquence over logic and are unafraid to talk over each other.

Bulgarians may take a circuitous approach to negotiations before seeking a mutually beneficial resolution, which will often be screwed up by bureaucracy.

Poles often have a communication style that is "enigmatic, ranging from a matter-of-fact pragmatic style to a wordy, sentimental, romantic approach to any given subject."

The Dutch are focused on facts and figures but "are also great talkers and rarely make final decisions without a long 'Dutch' debate, sometimes approaching the danger zone of overanalysis."

Chinese tend to be more direct than the Japanese and some other East Asians; however, meetings are principally for information gathering, with the real decisions made elsewhere. Hong Kongers negotiate much more briskly to achieve quick results.

Indian English "excels in ambiguity, and such things as truth and appearances are often subject to negotiation."

Australians tend to have a loose and frank conversational style.

Singaporeans generally take time to build a relationship, after which they can be shrewd negotiators.

Koreans tend to be energetic conversationalists who seek to close deals quickly, occasionally stretching the truth.

Indonesians tend to be very deferential conversationalists, sometimes to the point of ambiguity.

Israelis tend to proceed logically on most issues but emotionally on some.

And that's how one respected, well-traveled, and highly multilingual linguist sees the world.

NOW WATCH: [What the Chinese saying 'The ugly wife is a treasure at home' actually means](#)

More: [Communication Negotiation Globalization Richard Lewis](#)
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