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Use of the Lewis Model to Analyse Multicultural Teams and Improve Performance by the World Bank: A Case Study

Michael John Gates, Richard Lewis Communications, Finland

Richard D. Lewis, Richard Lewis Communications, UK

Iouri P. Bairatchnyi, World Bank, USA

Mark Brown, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University, USA

Abstract: The session shows how the Lewis Model describes global cross-cultural behaviour in terms of linear-active, multi-active and reactive categories, placing it in the context of other cross-cultural models. It shows how the Model has been used in practical terms for teaching at Duke Fuqua and the World Bank, as well as a tool for research. The online cultural profiling tool CultureActive is presented as a means of profiling individual and group cultural characteristics, and there is a case study from the World Bank about their extensive organisational profiling as a means of analysing the national, regional and institutional culture of the organisation, and how the data has been integrated into all behavioural training.

Keywords: Culture, Organisations, Profiling, Teams, Behaviour, Lewis Model

Background: The Lewis Model

THE LEWIS MODEL is a model of and approach to describing national cultures outlined most fully by Richard D. Lewis in his book 'When Cultures Collide' (Nicholas Brealey 2006, 3rd edition). This colloquium at M08 presented the model and then went on to outline how it is used by

1. The Fuqua School of Business, Duke University
2. The World Bank

Lewis's model focuses on values and communication and how these affect behavior, particularly in working life. The model is applied by Lewis to areas such as presentation, meetings, leadership, the language of management, motivation, teams and trust. It was developed as a practical tool which could easily be applied, in order to help employees behave in more productive ways in multicultural situations rather than purely as a means of analysis.

Although the model, as any model, is a simplification of reality, it is always presented as such, in the

context of a description of the many and complex layers of culture – regional, educational, professional, gender, class, religious, generational, ethnic, corporate and personal.

The theory behind the model is currently at the heart of a research project being led by Duke University's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), as described in more detail in this paper in Case Study 1, which looks at both the teaching delivered using the model at Duke Fuqua Business School and at how it maps onto Hall's theory of culture. More detail can be found at <http://faculty.fuqua.duke.edu/ciber/ice/>

Through personal cultural profiling, done by a web-based self-assessment (CultureActive) developed by Lewis, use of the model in practice - in other words during training - starts from each individual's own profile, thus minimizing the dangers inherent in stereotyping.

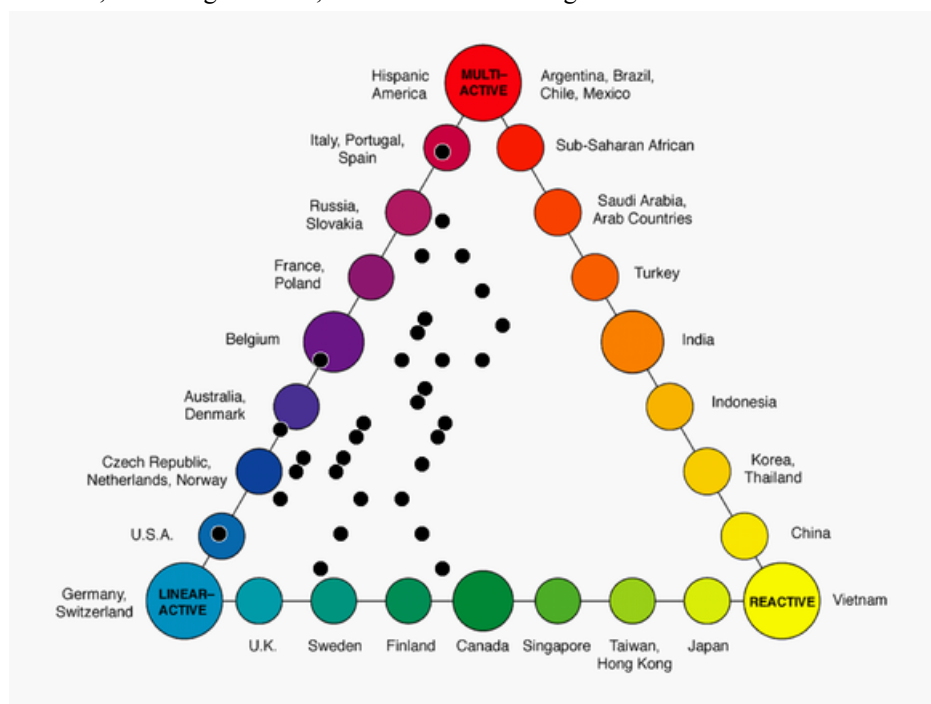
The model itself can be illustrated by the table below which outlines the three main cultural categories Lewis uses, and some major characteristics of each:



Cultural Categories		
LINEAR-ACTIVE	MULTI-ACTIVE	REACTIVE
Talks half the time	Talks most of the time	Listens most of the time
Does one thing at a time	Does several things at once	Reacts to partner's action
Plans ahead step by step	Plans grand outline only	Looks at general principles
Polite but direct	Emotional	Polite, indirect
Partly conceals feelings	Displays feelings	Conceals feelings
Confronts with logic	Confronts emotionally	Never confronts
Dislikes losing face	Has good excuses	Must not lose face
Rarely interrupts	Often interrupts	Doesn't interrupt
Job-oriented	People-oriented	Very people-oriented
Sticks to facts	Feelings before facts	Statements are promises
Truth before diplomacy	Flexible truth	Diplomacy over truth

Certain characteristics are more common in some cultures than others, according to Lewis, as one can

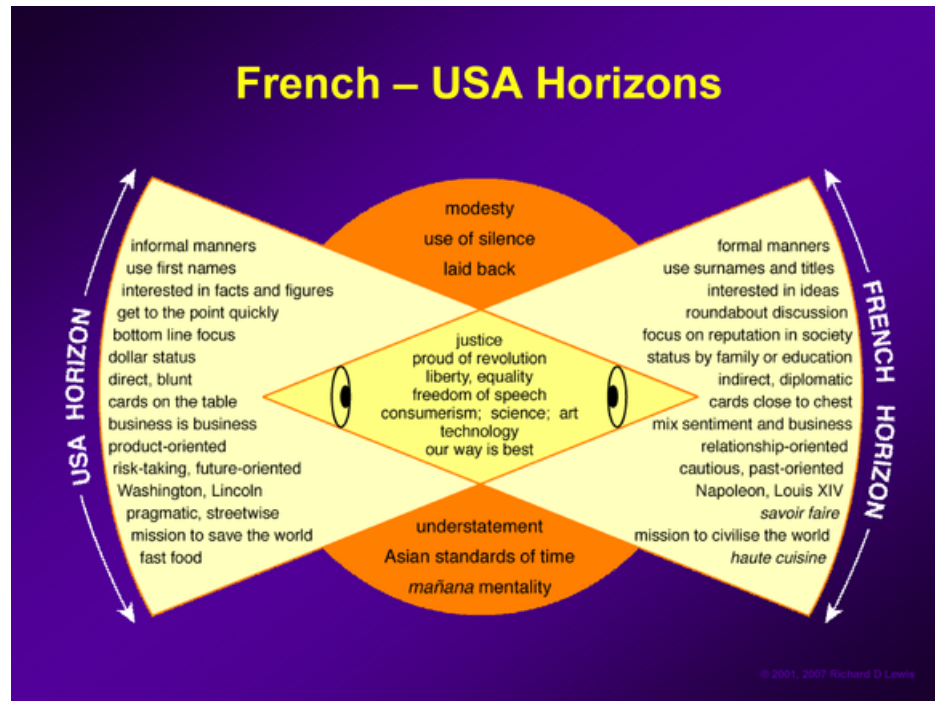
see from the placement of countries on the following triangle:



The dots on the triangle represent the positions of people who have taken the web-based assessment at www.cultureactive.com. Individuals' positions can be affected by any of the other layers of culture mentioned above, as well as by context. For example, one may be Korean, but if you are answering the CultureActive questionnaire in English at a USA business school, you may be primed by the language

and the expectations of your environment to come out more linear than a Korean answering at home, in Korean.

The Lewis model explores how different cultures are programmed to view the world differently and behave in diverse ways, as well as offering tools such as 'Cultural Horizons' to help trainees focus on common ground:



It posits that **communication** is central to getting results across cultures and analyzes different national communication styles and listening habits through diagrams which take one through the different phases of a business negotiation in different cultures. This helps trainees understand their own style, and see where they may need to adapt when trying to get their message across to people from cultures who have different purposes in communication. For instance, linear people tend to communicate to give and receive information. Multi-active people tend to communicate to express opinions and build relationships, whereas reactive people tend to communicate in order to create harmony.

The CultureActive programme is in three main sections:

1. an assessment and feedback section where individuals fill in a 40 minute personal questionnaire, and have access to a large number of quizzes on different countries' cultural characteristics, in general and in business.
2. an interactive database on 80 world cultures
3. an administration area that allows administrators and trainers to consolidate the data for groups and sub-groups and create graphs and charts containing data which may be useful both for analysis and in training

The programme is used as an introduction to the Lewis model for people being trained, and is the starting-point and basis for use by the Fuqua School of Business and the World Bank, outlined in the following two case studies.

Case Study 1: Using the Lewis Model at the Fuqua School of Business, Duke University

Duke University's Fuqua School of Business has been teaching the Lewis model of cultures to MBA and Executive MBA students for eight years. The school wants every graduate of its programs to achieve global competence and understand the nuances of global leadership. Global leadership is a mindset and the result of a process, not a single competency added to a domestic leader's skills portfolio. Global leaders should be able to see many different perspectives and views at once - even contradictory ones. Rather than having a single interpretation of an event and an immediate response, a global leader chooses from a broader behavioral repertoire than a domestic leader. The focus of Fuqua's use of the Lewis model in its curriculum is in team-based learning about global leadership. The population of international students at the Fuqua School comprises 40% of the total student population, and this presents opportunities for students to learn a great deal from each other about managing and leading in different cultures.

Since multicultural teams are the vehicle through which much of the learning takes place at the Fuqua School, students must first learn about various cultural traits and behaviors. To facilitate learning about different cultures, students are required to take the CultureActive survey as part of their initial unit on team dynamics. Students are urged to develop a multicultural perspective and to look beyond national culture to explain teammates' behavior and attitudes.

Individual students receive their survey results, and then teams discuss these results as part of a larger discussion of conflict, communication, and modes of leadership. Instructors introduce the three broad categories of cultural behavior -- Linear, Multiactive, and Reactive - and then compare and contrast concepts of time, importance of relationships, and implications for teamwork among the three categories.

Students learn that teams comprised wholly of one cultural type might have limited perspectives and insights. They are urged to use the diversity on their team as a source of innovation and learning rather than conflict and dysfunctional behavior. A Linear team might have too much reliance on facts without paying sufficient attention to relationships. A Multiactive team might lose focus and waste time in digressions, and a wholly Reactive team might spend so much effort on face considerations, harmony, and gradualist solutions that little can be accomplished. A multicultural team would allow for a much broader perspective and a more balanced and interesting approach to teamwork, but time is needed for members with different assumptions about behavior to learn from each other. Therefore, students are given the opportunity to learn about each other as individuals, not members of one culture or another.

Instructors are careful not to create caricatures of national cultures or to rely on stereotypes in explaining aggregate behaviors or attitudes among members of the same national culture. Even though there are characteristics of national cultures, any given individual from a specific nation or region might not exhibit all or even any of the traits one might expect from a member of that culture. The Lewis model and the CultureActive survey tool that accompanies use of the model at Fuqua have the advantage of allowing individuals to see how their typical behavior might differ from the norm for their national culture. This allows teammates to break down barriers and avoid broad assumptions about each other's behavior. Indeed, students are surprised to see that most of their fellow students are Linear, even the ones from countries whose national culture is reactive or Multiactive. Students are also surprised that classmates from the United States, who they would assume to be strongly Linear, often have more Multiactive or Reactive traits than one would guess.

By introducing the Lewis model to MBA and Executive MBA students, the instructors at the Fuqua School begin the dialogue between and among teammates and classmates that lead to a deeper understanding of global leadership. The key takeaways for the sessions on culture and team dynamics are:

- Certain behaviors can be attributed to certain cultures
- No one is a perfect representative of a national culture

- Stereotypes are convenient lies
- National culture is not a determinant of individual behavior
- Diversity must be managed so that it produces creativity, innovation, and sound decisions.

Having deepened their knowledge of cultural norms and the variety of potential influences on business in different regions of the world, students are urged to participate in Global Academic Travel Experiences (GATE) or spend a semester as an exchange student in a different country. The cultureactive survey and its related country tests are useful tools as students prepare to travel to new cultures with different behaviors and norms.

Duke University's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) has led efforts to develop the Inter Cultural Edge inventory designed to validate and establish the social psychological foundations for Lewis model. The results are reported in Adair, Buchan and Chen (2008). The Adair et al builds on Hall (1959) who noted that certain cultures rely on indirect communication and contextual information to convey meaning, and that without context, the linguistic code is incomplete since "it encompasses only part of the message," (1976, p. 86). Adair et al argue that in contrast to high context cultures, low context cultures rely more on direct communication and words to convey meaning. As Hall notes, Eastern cultures such as Japan and China, tend to be more high context and Western cultures (e.g. the U.S. and Germany) tend to be more low context. Adair et al have developed a new framework that three integrates communication styles (direct, expressive and indirect) and four social interaction styles (communication style, relationships, time, and space). Adair et al report that new ICE inventory consists of 78 survey items and are in the process of completing the confirmatory factor analyses.

Case Study 2: What is the World Bank and Why it is Concerned with Culture?

The World Bank is an international organization initially created to rebuild Europe after World War II. In the following years, though, it was redefined as a development agency with a mission to alleviate poverty and deprivation in the developing parts of the world, currently in more than 100 countries (for more detailed/technical description go to <http://web.worldbank.org>). It is structured like a co-operative that is owned and operated for the benefit of its 185 member countries .

By purpose and design, the institution with such global aspirations faces the uttermost challenge to contextualize its efforts (de-contextualized technology transfer has failed in earlier years and valuable lessons were learnt) both socially and culturally. Ef-

fective development processes toward poverty reduction can not afford not to take culture into account, for two reasons:

1. culture influences what is valued in a society; in particular, it shapes the 'ends' of development that are valuable to the poor;
2. culture influences how individuals, communities, informal and formal institutions respond to developmental changes, so knowledge of culture(s) is a means to effective poverty reduction". (Culture and Public Action Edited by Vijayendra Rao, Michael Walton,

The challenge of bringing cultural knowledge into operational work itself is quite significant, mainly because it assumes well defined and designed knowledge management in place, where tacit knowledge is as important as facts and numbers. It becomes more significant though when the other side of the cultural coin comes in play - the workforce of the institution. Is it up to the task?

Culturally Competent Workforce - What are the Challenges?

Most of the WB staff are hired in their mid career, both in head quarters in Washington DC and more than 100 country offices. It is not a stretch to state that by and large the institution has a highly diverse, educated and internationally experienced workforce. Most, if not all, teams are multinational to the extent possible. It is not unusual that, let's say, 15 members of a team would represent 10-15 countries, speak at least two languages, and had quite a bit of international experience. Would that guarantee success across cultures, while interacting with colleagues, counterparts, and, most importantly, clients? Not necessarily, as practice shows, at least not to the extent needed.

In this context, the WB has been facing two apparently interrelated challenges: (1) to find the optimal way for developmental changes in various parts of the world (so that knowledge of culture is a means to effective poverty reduction) and (2) to make it happen effectively (so that knowledge of culture(s) is a means to effective communication, appropriate interaction, and collaborative team work). In other words, our staff have to be equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to interact better externally - with clients and counterparts throughout the globe (see the scope at geo.worldbank.org) and internally - between colleagues from all continents.

The former challenge is country (or region) specific and, therefore, appears to be more tangible, durable, and falls into the overlap of anthropology, intercultural communication, and international development. The latter challenge is idiosyncratic (almost

esoteric), fluid and ever changing. Although it largely comes from the same study areas, it relates to the context of organizational effectiveness (OE) and organizational development (OD). Traditionally, challenges of the former type would reside in the academic context, and, in case of practical needs, would result in training events of various types (lectures, workshops, etc.) with an intent to increase awareness and knowledge. Challenges of the latter type would result in OE interventions with an intent to change behavior, in some cases through experiential learning.

The complementarity of both challenges calls for one approach to be used in attempts to meet them. The practical nature of both needs would require the chosen approach to be concrete, tangible and lasting. This entails developing one framework for (1) self-paced cultural learning, (2) formal cultural training and (2) culturally contextualized OE/OD interventions and team building activities. Moreover, using one approach/model creates an opportunity to learn *about self* and their *team members* and *clients* within the same paradigm and through the same source of reference.

The Lewis Model and Cultureactive.com - A Practical Approach

To meet the above mentioned challenges and to promote an organizational environment where cultural differences are valued and cross-cultural communication with colleague, counterparts, and clients is facilitated, the World Bank in collaboration with Richard Lewis Communications has developed a cross-cultural framework which aims to raise cross-cultural and inter-cultural awareness of Bank staff, to provide knowledge on various cultures, and to build a foundation for continuous learning.

The main idea was to create a scalable, versatile learning and team building resource that could be deployed in various ways. It consists of 3 integral parts (not necessarily in a sequential order):

- web-based self-assessment/learning/evaluation tools (multimedia intro; cultureactive.com)
- face-to-face experiential learning exercise (a two-hour multi-group simulation)
- face-to-face team profile analysis/action planning session (a four-hour team building session)

All three components of the framework are based on the Lewis model and the respective data collected through individual and group assessments in cultureactive.com.

The versatility of the framework allowed us to use it in three different modes:

1. as an *on-line self-paced learning program*, with learning assistance provided as a follow-up by a qualified coach (usually two hours); this option contains three sequential steps: a multimedia introduction to the basics of intercultural communication, (b) an on-line assessment tool for individuals and teams, (c) an interactive database of national and regional profiles with quizzes and tests.

The benefit of this learning opportunity is not just that one has adequate and validated information at one's fingertips, which in itself is rarely available, especially on African and Asian cultures. The main, and lasting, benefit is that when a need of learning about a new culture comes up in the future, the same paradigm will be used.

2. as a *customized blended module* (on-line self-assessment, a two-hour session) embedded into various behavioral training activities (organizational team work, change and management courses).

This practice created a common denominator for previously very differently approached courses (i.e. Leading Strategic Change and Foundations of Team Work contain the same cultural module with a different accent).

3. as a stand-alone blended *cultural workshop* offered either through open enrollment or to intact teams (on-line self-assessment, a two-hour simulation, a four-hour team building session).

Over the last five years, this offering has become one of the most requested types of training or team building; less so in open enrollment but much more in intact teams and groups.

Over the last five years, the Lewis model and related cross-cultural framework provided more than 3,000 of World Bank staff with a unique opportunity

to examine cultural preferences in the work environment and suggest how to work with others in a diverse cultural setting capitalizing on others' values and beliefs while gaining better insight into others' behavior patterns. It helped distinguish between appearance and reality in team members' behavior, identify commonalities and strengthen synergies. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to learn about various cultures and to compare one's cultural style with a "national cultural profile" of a country or region of interest.

In other words, the Lewis framework provides a learner with a comprehensive paradigm and enough content to ensure a fluid progression from increased cultural awareness to tangible knowledge, and, ultimately, to fully-fledged skills and a refined mindset to be effective and appropriate while communicating and interacting across cultures.

You can see the impact of the framework in a Level 3 evaluation study conducted in 2005-2007. <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/239787/EG07-124%20Developing%20Multicultural%20Perspectives-An%20Evaluation%20of%20the%20World%20Bank%27s%20Cross-Cultural%20Training.pdf>

Conclusion

The model was developed in order to provide a framework for organisations needing to guide their members towards practical change in the way in which they deal with multicultural situations, specifically in a work-related context.

Usage by both Duke Fuqua and the World Bank has indicated that it serves its purpose through using personal cultural type and individual value and belief assessments - rather than national stereotypes - as its starting-point.

Ongoing research by Duke CIBER is refining the model in order to give it a more robust theoretical validity. Initial results are promising.

About the Authors

Michael John Gates

Managing Director of Richard Lewis Communications since 1990, delivering training in cross-cultural communication to organisations such as Nokia, Microsoft, Rolls-Royce, the World Bank, Duke Fuqua, the Central Eurasian Leadership Academy et al. Co-developer with Richard Lewis of the CultureActive tool for cultural profiling and assisted with development and especially application of the Lewis Model to training. Scholar of St. Catherine's College, Oxford. Board member of Finnish-British Trade Association.

Richard D. Lewis

Richard D. Lewis is one of the world's leading cross-culturalists. His books on the topic include *When Cultures Collide*, *The Cultural Imperative*, *Cross-Cultural Communication - A Visual Approach*, *Humour Across Frontiers* and *Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf*. He is currently completing a new book on cross-cultural teams.

Iouri P. Bairatchnyi

MA in Philology from Kaliningrad State University, Russia PhD. in Germanic Linguistics from Moscow state Linguistic University, Russia. Over twenty years of academic and applied experience in foreign language and cultural competence acquisition. Areas of professional interests: anthropology; sociolinguistics; inter-, and cross-cultural studies; organizational culture and development.

Mark Brown

Undergraduate of Georgetown University and postgraduate of University of North Carolina. At Duke since 1989 teaching cultural diversity, communication, leadership, multicultural team collaboration. Also teaches and coaches at Fortune 100 companies and on the Executive MBA programme. Uses the Lewis Model extensively in teaching and coaching.

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