

Portfolio of Students' Projects

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CULTURAL SHOCK

although neighbors still different

Culture shock is the feeling of confusion/disorientation experienced by individuals when encountering a new and unfamiliar social environment. It occurs when the customs, language, values, and social behaviors of the new environment differ from those of a person's home culture. People may struggle to understand local communication styles, social norms, or everyday practices. When it comes to communication, culture shock is mainly related to contact between people from different cultural backgrounds, where differences in values, behaviors and norms may cause misunderstandings. Over time, people usually adapt by learning new cultural patterns and improving their communication in the new environment.

Emotional expressiveness

In Romanian communication, emotional expressiveness is heavily influenced by the country's diverse regional temperaments. While the overarching Latin heritage encourages animation, the zone dictates the intensity. In Muntenia and Oltenia (the South), debates are characterized by high-energy gestures, a rapid pace, and a sharp rise in voice pitch. Here, smiling is frequent but often performative or social, and head nods are quick to signal constant agreement. In contrast, Transylvania and Banat exhibit a Central European influence, resulting in a more settled style. In these zones, voice pitch remains lower and more stable during debates, and gestures are far more controlled.



In Bulgaria, people are usually quite expressive when they speak. They often use hand gestures, facial expressions, and different voice tones to show emotions or make their point stronger. In debates or arguments, people may speak louder, but this does not always mean they are angry. Sometimes it just shows that they care about the topic and want to express their opinion clearly. Smiling is not used all the time, but when people smile, it is usually genuine.



Comparative Dynamics of Emotional Expressiveness in Romanian and Bulgarian communication

While both Romanian and Bulgarian communication styles are rooted in a high degree of emotional expressiveness and active non-verbal engagement, they differ significantly in their regional nuances and specific physical cues. Romanian expressiveness is highly fragmented by geography: the South (Muntenia and Oltenia) mirrors the Bulgarian tendency for high-energy gestures and rising voice pitch, whereas the West (Transylvania) adopts a more reserved, Central European composure. In contrast, Bulgarian communication is more uniform in its animation, frequently utilizing hand gestures and increased volume to signal passion rather than aggression. A fascinating point of divergence lies in head movements; while Romanians use quick nods to signal agreement or constant engagement, Bulgarians employ a unique system where the traditional "yes" and "no" movements can be reversed, often confusing outsiders. Furthermore, while both cultures value active participation—manifesting as a lack of silence in Romania and frequent interruptions in Bulgaria—Bulgarians place a distinct emphasis on the nuances of eye contact and physical touch to navigate the boundary between sincerity and personal space.

Possible interpretations by foreigners

what do others think about us?

In both cultures, the primary challenge is that outsiders often mistake high emotional engagement for hostility. Specifically, foreigners frequently misinterpret the Southern Romanian (Muntenia/Oltenia) high pitch and expansive gestures as genuine aggression or anger. Similarly, the Bulgarian passionate tone and vivid gestures can be perceived as aggression, conflict, or a loss of control, even when they actually reflect sincerity and enthusiasm. The Romanian context includes additional nuances where the "settled" Transylvanian stoicism might be misread as boredom or arrogance, and reflexive head-nodding is often misinterpreted as firm agreement rather than just polite listening.



Intercultural misunderstanding avoidance strategy

To bridge these gaps, the Romanian strategy emphasizes behavioral adaptation, suggesting that individuals mirror the regional energy—matching the deliberate pace of a Transylvanian or the spirited volume of a Southerner—while using clarifying questions to distinguish listening from firm commitment. In contrast, the Bulgarian approach focuses on proactive communication and education, recommending that locals explain that emotional intensity signals involvement rather than hostility. Additionally, Bulgarians encourage foreigners to develop cultural awareness, observe the context, and respond calmly without overinterpreting emotional cues.

Emotional expressiveness in communication

ROMANIA VS BULGARIA



ROMANIA

- Communication is expressive, but varies by region
- South (Muntenia & Oltenia): energetic, fast, louder voice
- West (Transylvania & Banat): calm, controlled, reserved
- Moldavia: emotional but soft and melodic
- Frequent gestures and head nodding
- Smiling can be social, not always genuine
- Silence is rarely used

BULGARIA

- Expressive and animated communication
- Gestures, facial expressions, and tone are important
- Louder voice = passion, not anger
- Interruptions are normal in conversations
- Smiles are usually genuine
- Unique head movements for “yes” and “no”

ROMANIA vs BULGARIA

Similarities:

- Emotional and expressive communication
- Active participation in conversations
- Use of gestures

Differences:

- Romania = strong regional differences
- Bulgaria = more consistent style
- Different meanings of head movements
- Bulgaria emphasizes eye contact more

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- Emotional tone seen as aggression
- Loud voice mistaken for anger
- Transylvanian calmness seen as cold
- Head nodding misunderstood

HOW TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- Adapt to the communication style
- Observe gestures and tone
- Ask questions for clarity
- Stay calm and open-minded
- Learn cultural differences

Humour

Romania

- Humour is important in Romanian communication, especially in everyday conversations.
- It often relies on irony and self-irony as expressive tools.
- Irony allows people to suggest meaning indirectly, adding subtlety and refinement to conversations.
- Self-irony shows modesty and openness by joking about one's own flaws.
- Humour is mainly used in informal contexts (friends, colleagues, family) to strengthen relationships and ease tension.
- In formal situations, humour becomes more restrained and carefully adapted to the context.

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- Humour is more subtle, indirect, and nuanced.
 - Irony is used to suggest meaning, not state it openly.
 - Conversations gain a sense of refinement and diplomacy.
 - Clear distinction between informal (more humour) and formal (more restrained) contexts.

Similarities

- Humour is important in both cultures for creating closeness and easing tension.
- Irony and self-irony are central elements in both Bulgaria and Romania.
- Both cultures appreciate self-irony as a sign of modesty, openness, and not taking oneself too seriously.
- Humour is commonly used in informal settings to strengthen relationships.

Bulgaria

- Bulgarian humour is direct, ironic, and often sarcastic.
- It is used to break the ice and create a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.
- Self-irony and teasing are common and usually not meant seriously.
- Foreigners may struggle with it because it relies heavily on context and cultural background.
- To people from more formal cultures, Bulgarian jokes may seem rude or offensive.
- Humour is often spontaneous and situation-based, making it unpredictable.
- This can lead to misinterpretations or discomfort for those unfamiliar with the style.

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- Humour is more direct, spontaneous, and sometimes sarcastic.
 - Teasing can be harsher and may sound offensive to outsiders.
 - Strongly context-dependent, making it harder for foreigners to interpret.
 - Jokes appear quickly and are often situation-based.

Conversational distance, physical touch and eye contact



Romania

- People usually stand close when talking (about an arm's length).
- Physical touch is common: handshakes, hugs, cheek kisses with friends.
- Direct eye contact shows honesty and confidence.

Bulgaria

- People keep a comfortable conversational distance.
- Physical touch is more common with people they know.
- Eye contact shows respect, but too much can feel aggressive.

Comparison & Possible Misunderstandings

Similarities

- Both cultures are warm and expressive.
- Eye contact is important for trust and respect.

Differences

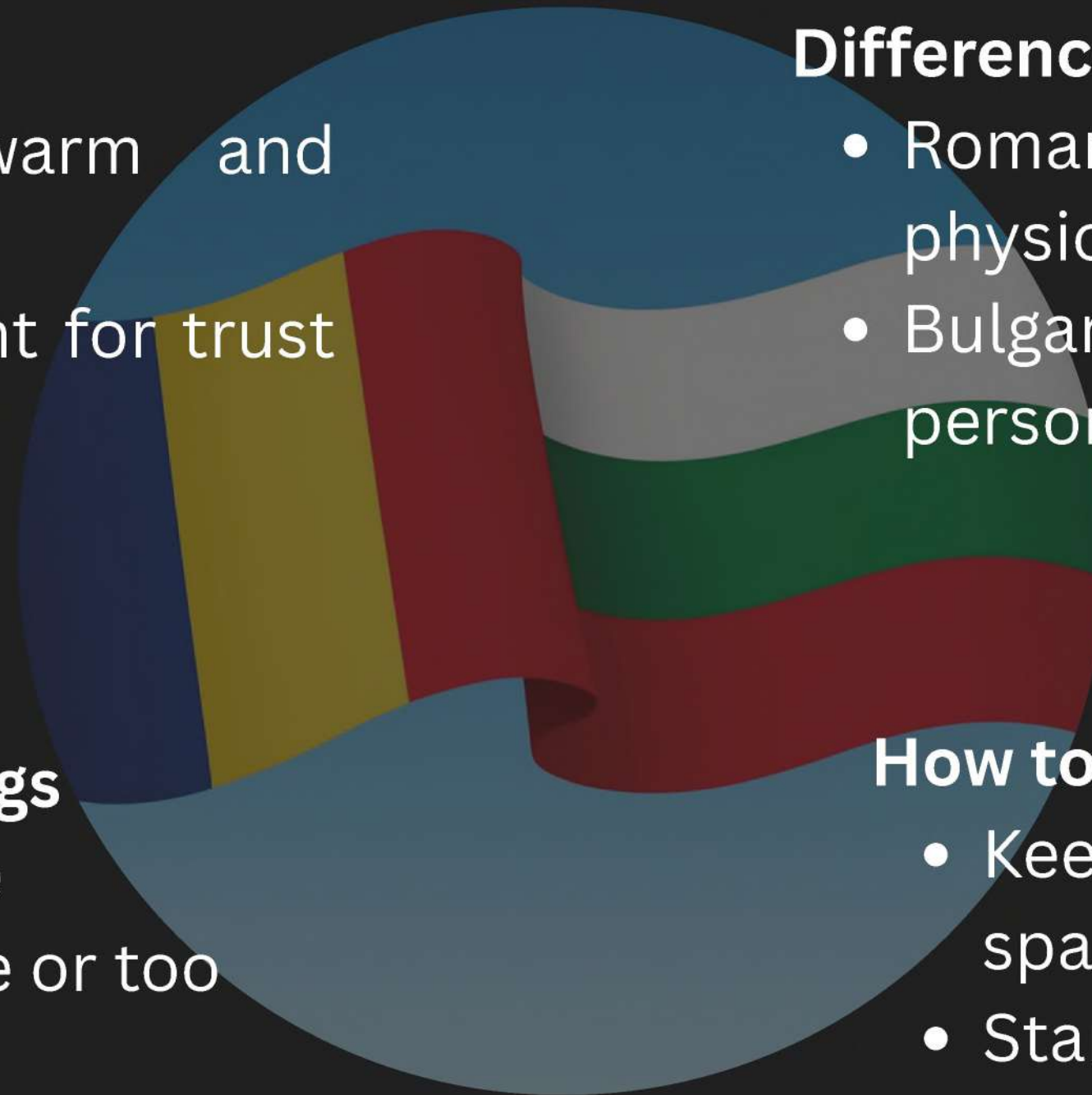
- Romania tends to be more physically close and tactile.
- Bulgaria keeps slightly more personal space.

Possible misunderstandings

- Foreigners may see the behavior as too intense or too personal.

How to avoid misunderstandings

- Keep a bit more personal space.
- Start with formal greetings like handshakes.



DIRECTNESS AND BLUNTNESS VERSUS INDIRECTNESS AND HEDGING

When comparing Bulgarian and Romanian communication styles, both cultures exhibit a similar contextual duality where directness is a marker of intimacy and formality is a shield for respect. In both nations, informal interactions—such as those with family and friends—are characterized by a high degree of "moderate directness," where honesty, sincerity, and efficiency are prioritized over social cushioning. However, the two texts differ in their specific nuances: the Bulgarian analysis emphasizes the role of nonverbal cues and "mitigating expressions" to navigate social hierarchies, while the Romanian description highlights how speech styles can vary by geographic region and the specific use of "chosen replies" to avoid conflict. Ultimately, both cultures view bluntness not as rudeness, but as a sign of authenticity among equals, shifting toward a more guarded, indirect politeness only when facing authority or strangers.

Intercultural misunderstanding avoidance strategy

For a better experience we can say that we both cultures need to adapt our style of communication by the social context but especially considering who are we talking to. We are good at observing people and their tips so we can say that is not hard for both of us to adapt on different situations and different people. More than that this world is so big and everyone is traveling so much in our days that we saw different cultures every day, we can study them and how they talk to other people so when it comes to interact with us we know how to talk and what to say.

Possible interpretation by foreigners

When comparing the Romanian and Bulgarian communication from foreigners' perspective, we can say that Romanians are said to be direct and clear and maybe some people are not understood, they are admired for their politeness and flexibility, for the way they study people before approaching them, about Bulgarians we can say that they have the same opinion, the differences between these two cultures from this point of view of communication we can say that it is not that big, about them say that some people are tough for some cultures this being a very important factor, they are flexible and tend to call things by their names, they adapt their speech depending on the person, we can say that they are equally cautious and good observers.