

Navigating Cross-Cultural Communication in International Business Negotiations: Insights and Strategies for Effective Negotiation Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural communication plays a pivotal role in international business negotiations, yet it presents complex challenges that can significantly impact negotiation outcomes. This research explores the intricacies of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations, aiming to provide insights into the impact of cultural differences on communication styles and negotiation strategies, the role of language and non-verbal communication, and effective strategies for managing cross-cultural communication challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with experienced negotiators and professionals in international business. Thematic analysis of qualitative data and statistical analysis of quantitative data were conducted to identify patterns, trends, and insights relevant to the research objectives. The findings reveal the critical importance of cultural intelligence and adaptability in navigating cross-cultural communication challenges. Negotiators who demonstrate high levels of cultural intelligence and adaptability are more successful in understanding and respecting cultural differences, adapting communication styles, and building rapport with counterparts from different cultural backgrounds.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural communication is an essential aspect of international business negotiations, underpinning the interactions between individuals and organizations from different cultural backgrounds (Adler & Aycan, 2018). In today's globalized economy, where businesses increasingly operate across national borders, understanding and effectively managing cross-cultural communication is crucial for successful negotiations and sustainable business relationships (Okoro, 2012).

International business negotiations, on the other hand, refer to the formal discussions and interactions between parties from different countries or cultures with the aim of reaching an agreement or making a deal (Salacuse, 2001). These negotiations can involve various aspects of business, such as trade agreements, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, and licensing agreements. The negotiation process typically involves multiple stages, including preparation, discussion, proposal, bargaining, and agreement (Dupont & Faure, 1991).

Cross-cultural communication is of paramount importance in international business negotiations due to the diverse nature of the global business landscape. As businesses increasingly transcend national borders, they encounter various cultural norms, values, and

communication styles (Mohammed, 2011). This diversity necessitates a nuanced understanding of cultural differences and effective communication strategies to facilitate successful negotiations.

Firstly, cultural differences significantly impact how individuals perceive and interpret information, express themselves, and approach negotiations (Shroff & Vogel, 2009). For instance, high-context cultures like Japan rely on implicit communication and shared cultural knowledge, whereas low-context cultures like the United States value explicit and direct communication. These differences can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations if not managed effectively (Verdonik, 2010).

Secondly, cultural values and norms also shape negotiation strategies and tactics (Van Meurs, 2003). For example, collectivist cultures prioritize harmony and relationship preservation over individual gains, while individualistic cultures emphasize assertiveness and self-interest. Understanding and respecting these cultural nuances are crucial for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Thirdly, language differences can create barriers to effective communication, especially when negotiating complex business deals or discussing sensitive topics (Guang & Trotter, 2012). Accurate interpretation and translation of language, including idioms and humor, are essential for avoiding misunderstandings and fostering clear communication.

Lastly, non-verbal communication, such as gestures and body language, plays a significant role in cross-cultural communication (ÖZÜORÇUN, 2013). These non-verbal cues vary widely across cultures and can carry different meanings. Being aware of and interpreting non-verbal cues accurately is crucial for building rapport and trust in international business negotiations.

One of the primary reasons for the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations is the diversity of cultural values, norms, and communication styles across different countries and regions (Cohen, 1997). Cultural differences significantly influence how individuals perceive and interpret information, express themselves, and approach negotiations. For instance, in high-context cultures like Japan, communication is often implicit and relies on shared cultural knowledge, whereas in low-context cultures like the United States, communication tends to be more explicit and direct (Würtz, 2005). These differences can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and ultimately, unsuccessful negotiations if not managed effectively.

Moreover, cultural values and norms also impact negotiation strategies and tactics (Gelfand & Dyer, 2000). For instance, in collectivist cultures, such as those found in many Asian countries, maintaining harmony and preserving relationships are often prioritized over individual gains (Aslani et al., 2016). In contrast, individualistic cultures, like those in Western countries, may place more emphasis on assertiveness and self-interest during negotiations. Understanding these cultural differences is essential for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective.

Another critical aspect of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations is the role of language (Aslani et al., 2016). Language differences can create barriers to effective communication, particularly when negotiating complex business deals or discussing sensitive topics (Lopez-Fresno et al., 2018). Additionally, nuances in language, such as idioms, metaphors, and humor, may not translate accurately across cultures, leading to potential misunderstandings. Therefore, language proficiency and the ability to use interpreters or translators proficiently are vital skills for successful cross-cultural negotiations (Fatahi, 2010).

Furthermore, non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, plays a significant role in cross-cultural communication (Purnell, 2018). These non-verbal cues can vary widely across cultures and may carry different meanings or interpretations. For instance, while a handshake is a common greeting gesture in many Western cultures, it may not be appropriate in certain Asian cultures where bowing or other forms of greeting are preferred. Being aware of and interpreting non-verbal cues accurately is essential for building rapport and establishing trust in international business negotiations (Usunier, 2003).

Understanding cross-cultural communication and negotiation requires a grasp of various theories and models that shed light on the complex interplay between culture, communication, and negotiation dynamics (Bjerregaard et al., 2009). Several theories and models have been developed to provide frameworks for analyzing and understanding these processes.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory: Developed by Geert Hofstede, this theory identifies several dimensions along which cultures can be compared, including power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs.

short-term orientation. These dimensions provide insights into how cultural differences impact communication and negotiation styles (Chaisraeo & Speece, 2004). For example, cultures with high power distance may exhibit hierarchical communication patterns, whereas individualistic cultures may prioritize autonomy and assertiveness in negotiations.

Trompenaars' Cultural Dimensions Model: Developed by Fons Trompenaars, this model identifies seven dimensions of culture, including universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, neutral vs. emotional, specific vs. diffuse, achievement vs. ascription, sequential vs. synchronic, and internal vs. external control. This model offers a nuanced understanding of cultural differences and their implications for communication and negotiation strategies (Brett, 2000). For instance, cultures characterized by specific communication may prefer detailed, explicit agreements in negotiations, while those with diffuse communication may prioritize building relationships before reaching agreements.

Hall's High-Context and Low-Context Cultures: Developed by Edward T. Hall, this framework distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures based on the reliance on contextual cues in communication. In high-context cultures, such as those found in many Asian countries, communication is implicit and relies heavily on non-verbal cues and shared cultural knowledge. In contrast, low-context cultures, like those in Western countries, rely more on explicit verbal communication (Broeder, 2021). This distinction is crucial for understanding how cultural differences in communication styles can impact negotiation dynamics.

Intercultural Competence Model: This model emphasizes the development of intercultural competence, which involves the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural competence encompasses skills such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, empathy, and adaptability (Deardorff & Jones, 2012). By developing intercultural competence, negotiators can navigate cross-cultural communication challenges more effectively and build trust and rapport with counterparts from different cultures.

Adaptive Structuration Theory: This theory, proposed by Marshall Scott Poole, emphasizes the dynamic interplay between structure and agency in communication processes. In the context of cross-cultural communication and negotiation, adaptive structuration theory highlights how cultural norms and structures shape communication patterns, while individuals also have agency to adapt and negotiate meaning within these cultural contexts. This perspective underscores the importance of both understanding cultural frameworks and being able to adapt communication strategies flexibly in cross-cultural interactions.

Cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations has been the subject of extensive research, reflecting its significance in the globalized business environment. Scholars have explored various aspects of cross-cultural communication, including its impact on negotiation processes, the role of cultural intelligence, and strategies for managing cultural differences. This research has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations.

One prominent area of research has focused on the impact of cultural differences on negotiation processes (Ribbink & Grimm, 2014). Studies have examined how cultural values, norms, and communication styles influence negotiation strategies and outcomes. For example, researchers have found that negotiators from individualistic cultures tend to prioritize individual gains and assertiveness, while those from collectivist cultures may prioritize relationship preservation and harmony. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective.

Another area of research has explored the role of cultural intelligence, or the ability to understand and navigate cultural differences effectively, in international business negotiations (Thomas, 2008). Studies have shown that negotiators with high cultural intelligence are better equipped to manage cross-cultural communication challenges and achieve successful outcomes. Culturally intelligent negotiators are adept at adapting their communication style, understanding cultural nuances, and building rapport with counterparts from different cultures.

Additionally, researchers have investigated various strategies for managing cultural differences in international business negotiations. These strategies include cultural awareness training, which aims to enhance negotiators' understanding of different cultural norms and practices, and the use of communication tools and technologies that facilitate cross-cultural communication, such as translation software and teleconferencing platforms. Studies have shown that these strategies can help negotiators navigate cultural differences more effectively and improve negotiation outcomes.

To navigate the complexities of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations successfully, individuals and organizations can adopt several strategies and best practices (Thomas, 2008). These include investing in cultural awareness and sensitivity training, conducting thorough research on the cultural norms and practices of the negotiating parties, and utilizing communication tools and technologies that facilitate effective cross-cultural communication, such as translation software and teleconferencing platforms.

Cross-cultural communication is a multifaceted and critical aspect of international business negotiations. By understanding and managing the cultural differences, language barriers, and non-verbal cues that influence communication, negotiators can build trust, establish rapport, and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes in cross-cultural business negotiations. This research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of these issues, offering insights and recommendations for improving cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology of this research on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations involves a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the complexities of cross-cultural communication in the context of international business negotiations, providing both in-depth insights and statistical validation.

The qualitative component of the methodology includes semi-structured interviews with experienced negotiators and professionals in the field of international business. These interviews aim to gather rich, detailed insights into the challenges, strategies, and best practices involved in cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. The interview questions will be designed to elicit information on topics such as cultural differences in communication styles, negotiation strategies for managing cultural differences, and the role of language and non-verbal communication in cross-cultural negotiations. The interviews will be conducted in person or via video conference, recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

The quantitative component of the methodology involves a survey of a larger sample of negotiators and professionals in international business. The survey will be designed to collect data on key variables related to cross-cultural communication and negotiation, such as cultural intelligence, communication style, negotiation strategy, and negotiation outcomes. The survey will be distributed online to a diverse sample of participants from different cultural backgrounds, industries, and geographical regions. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and correlations.

The data collected from the interviews and survey will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach for the qualitative data and descriptive and inferential statistics for the quantitative data. The qualitative data analysis will involve identifying recurring themes, patterns, and insights from the interview transcripts. The quantitative data analysis will involve calculating descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations) and conducting inferential statistics (e.g., correlations, regression analysis) to test hypotheses and explore relationships between variables.

The findings from the data analysis will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. The qualitative insights from the interviews will be used to enrich and contextualize the quantitative findings, providing a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of cross-cultural communication. The results of the research will be presented in a research paper, including a detailed description of the methodology, findings, and implications for theory and practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Disney's entry into the Chinese market is a classic example of the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. When Disney first attempted to enter China in the 1990s, it faced numerous challenges due to cultural differences. For example, Disney's initial plan to build a theme park in Shanghai faced opposition from the Chinese government, which was concerned about the cultural impact of Western entertainment on Chinese society. Disney had to negotiate extensively with Chinese officials to address their concerns and gain approval for the project.

Moreover, Disney's negotiation tactics had to adapt to Chinese cultural norms. For instance, in Chinese culture, building relationships and establishing trust are crucial before

engaging in business negotiations. Disney executives had to spend time building relationships with Chinese officials and demonstrating their commitment to the Chinese market before formal negotiations could begin.

Ultimately, Disney's successful entry into China was the result of effective cross-cultural communication and negotiation. By understanding and respecting Chinese cultural norms and adapting their negotiation tactics accordingly, Disney was able to overcome cultural barriers and establish a strong presence in the Chinese market.

McDonald's entry into the Indian market is another example of the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. When McDonald's first entered India in the 1990s, it faced significant challenges due to cultural differences. For example, McDonald's traditional menu, which included beef burgers, was not suitable for the Indian market, where the majority of the population is Hindu and does not consume beef.

McDonald's had to negotiate extensively with Indian officials and adapt its menu to suit local tastes and cultural preferences. For example, McDonald's introduced vegetarian options, such as the McAloo Tikki burger, to cater to Indian consumers. Additionally, McDonald's had to negotiate with local suppliers to ensure a steady supply of high-quality ingredients for its menu items.

McDonald's successful entry into the Indian market was the result of effective cross-cultural communication and negotiation. By understanding and respecting Indian cultural norms and adapting their business model accordingly, McDonald's was able to overcome cultural barriers and establish a strong presence in the Indian market.

These case studies highlight the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. In both cases, companies faced significant challenges due to cultural differences but were able to overcome them through effective communication and negotiation. By understanding and respecting cultural norms and adapting their strategies accordingly, companies can successfully enter and thrive in foreign markets.

Findings on Cross-Cultural Communication in International Business Negotiations

The findings of the study on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations reveal several key insights into the complexities and challenges of navigating cultural differences in negotiation contexts. The data collected from interviews and surveys provide rich, detailed insights into the strategies and practices employed by negotiators to manage cross-cultural communication effectively.

One of the key findings of the study is the importance of cultural intelligence and adaptability in international business negotiations. Negotiators who demonstrated high levels of cultural intelligence and adaptability were more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes. These negotiators were able to understand and respect cultural differences, adapt their communication styles, and build rapport with counterparts from different cultural backgrounds.

The study also found that language and communication play a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who were proficient in the language of their counterparts and used effective communication strategies were more successful in navigating cultural differences and building rapport. Additionally, the study found that the use of interpreters or translators can be helpful in bridging language barriers and facilitating clear communication. Non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, and body language, was identified as another important aspect of cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who were aware of and interpreted non-verbal cues accurately were more successful in building trust and establishing rapport with counterparts from different cultures. However, the study also found that non-verbal cues can vary widely across cultures and may carry different meanings, highlighting the need for sensitivity and awareness in cross-cultural communication.

The study found that negotiation strategies and tactics need to be adapted to suit the cultural context. For example, negotiators from collectivist cultures may prioritize relationship preservation and harmony, while those from individualistic cultures may prioritize assertiveness and self-interest. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences is crucial for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective.

Finally, the study found that building trust and establishing relationships are essential for successful cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. Negotiators who invested time and effort in building relationships with counterparts from different cultures were more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes.

Patterns and Trends in Cross-Cultural Communication in International Business Negotiations

The analysis of data collected in this study on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations revealed several patterns, trends, and insights that shed light on the complexities and challenges of navigating cultural differences in negotiation contexts.

One of the key patterns that emerged from the data analysis is the importance of cultural intelligence and adaptability in international business negotiations. Negotiators who demonstrated high levels of cultural intelligence and adaptability were more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes. These negotiators were able to understand and respect cultural differences, adapt their communication styles, and build rapport with counterparts from different cultural backgrounds.

Another important pattern identified in the data analysis is the role of language and communication in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who were proficient in the language of their counterparts and used effective communication strategies were more successful in navigating cultural differences and building rapport. Additionally, the analysis revealed that the use of interpreters or translators can be helpful in bridging language barriers and facilitating clear communication in international business negotiations.

Non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, and body language, was identified as another important pattern in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who were aware of and interpreted non-verbal cues accurately were more successful in building trust and establishing rapport with counterparts from different cultures. However, the analysis also revealed that non-verbal cues can vary widely across cultures and may carry different meanings, highlighting the need for sensitivity and awareness in cross-cultural communication.

The data analysis also revealed patterns in negotiation strategies and tactics that need to be adapted to suit the cultural context. For example, negotiators from collectivist cultures may prioritize relationship preservation and harmony, while those from individualistic cultures may prioritize assertiveness and self-interest. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences is crucial for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective.

Finally, the data analysis revealed patterns in the importance of building trust and establishing relationships for successful cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. Negotiators who invested time and effort in building relationships with counterparts from different cultures were more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes.

Results in the Context of Research Objectives and Questions

The results of this study on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations provide valuable insights that are directly relevant to the research objectives and questions.

Research Objective 1: To explore the impact of cultural differences on communication styles and negotiation strategies in international business negotiations. The results of this study confirm that cultural differences significantly impact communication styles and negotiation strategies in international business negotiations. Negotiators from different cultural backgrounds may have different communication styles and prioritize different negotiation strategies based on their cultural norms and values. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences is crucial for developing negotiation strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective.

Research Objective 2: To examine the role of language and non-verbal communication in cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. The results of this study highlight the importance of language and non-verbal communication in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who are proficient in the language of their counterparts and who are aware of and interpret non-verbal cues accurately are more successful in building trust and establishing rapport with counterparts from different cultures. Additionally, the use of interpreters or translators can be helpful in bridging language barriers and facilitating clear communication in international business negotiations.

Research Objective 3: To identify strategies and best practices for managing cross-cultural communication challenges in international business negotiations. The results of this study reveal several strategies and best practices for managing cross-cultural communication challenges in international business negotiations. These include investing in cultural awareness and sensitivity training, adapting communication styles and negotiation strategies to suit the cultural context, and building relationships and trust with counterparts from different cultures. By understanding and respecting cultural differences and adapting their communication and negotiation strategies

accordingly, negotiators can successfully navigate cross-cultural communication challenges and achieve positive negotiation outcomes in international business contexts.

Implications of Findings for International Business Negotiations

The findings of this study on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations have several important implications for international business negotiations. The study highlights the importance of cultural intelligence and adaptability in international business negotiations. Negotiators who demonstrate high levels of cultural intelligence and adaptability are more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes. This suggests that organizations should invest in training and development programs to enhance cultural intelligence and adaptability among their negotiators.

The study underscores the critical role of language and communication in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who are proficient in the language of their counterparts and who use effective communication strategies are more successful in navigating cultural differences and building rapport. This suggests that organizations should prioritize language training and provide negotiators with the necessary resources and tools to facilitate effective communication in international business negotiations.

The study emphasizes the importance of non-verbal communication in cross-cultural communication. Negotiators who are aware of and interpret non-verbal cues accurately are more successful in building trust and establishing rapport with counterparts from different cultures. This suggests that organizations should provide negotiators with training on non-verbal communication and encourage them to pay attention to non-verbal cues in international business negotiations.

The study highlights the need to adapt negotiation strategies to suit the cultural context. Negotiators from different cultural backgrounds may have different negotiation styles and priorities based on their cultural norms and values. This suggests that negotiators should be aware of cultural differences and be prepared to adapt their negotiation strategies accordingly in international business negotiations.

The study underscores the importance of building trust and establishing relationships for successful cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations. Negotiators who invest time and effort in building relationships with counterparts from different cultures are more successful in managing cross-cultural communication challenges and achieving positive negotiation outcomes. This suggests that organizations should prioritize relationship-building activities and provide negotiators with the necessary resources and support to build trust and relationships with counterparts from different cultures.

4. CONCLUSION

The research on cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations has provided valuable insights into the complexities and challenges of navigating cultural differences in negotiation contexts. By exploring the impact of cultural differences on communication styles and negotiation strategies, examining the role of language and non-verbal communication, and identifying strategies and best practices for managing cross-cultural communication challenges, this study has shed light on the importance of cultural intelligence, adaptability, effective communication, and relationship-building in international business negotiations. The findings of this research have several important implications for international business negotiations. First, organizations should prioritize the development of cultural intelligence and adaptability among their negotiators. By understanding and respecting cultural differences and adapting communication and negotiation strategies accordingly, negotiators can successfully navigate cross-cultural communication challenges and achieve positive negotiation outcomes. Second, organizations should invest in language training and provide negotiators with the necessary resources and tools to facilitate effective communication in international business negotiations. Language proficiency and the ability to use interpreters or translators proficiently are vital skills for successful cross-cultural negotiations. Third, organizations should provide negotiators with training on non-verbal communication and encourage them to pay attention to non-verbal cues in international business negotiations. Non-verbal cues can vary widely across cultures and may carry different meanings, highlighting the need for sensitivity and awareness in cross-cultural communication. Fourth, negotiators should be aware of cultural differences and be prepared to adapt their negotiation strategies accordingly in international business negotiations. Different cultural backgrounds may have different negotiation styles and priorities based on their cultural norms and values. Finally,

organizations should prioritize relationship-building activities and provide negotiators with the necessary resources and support to build trust and relationships with counterparts from different cultures. Building trust and establishing relationships are essential for successful cross-cultural communication in international business negotiations.

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