

Research on the Influence of Different Cultures on Business Communication

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Abstract

The purpose of this report is to explain intercultural communication in the business context, to give examples about business protocols in China and the United States, and to provide recommendations for preventing intercultural misunderstandings in these two countries. The reason why we focus on China and the United States is that these two countries are good examples on behalf of high-context culture and low context culture, we can make a conclusion more directly and easily through the comparison.

Keywords

Communication, avoidance behavior, and characteristics.

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication is a phenomenon in which individuals from different culture communicate both verbally and nonverbally. This includes communication with individuals expressing their needs to each other within international organizations with distinct cultural perceptions and symbol systems. Intercultural communication not only involves purely linguistic exchanges but also cultural ones such as values and attitudes, manners and customs, esthetics; education, material elements and social organization. As for the form of intercultural communication, it includes some basic communication forms such as business emails, proposals, claim letters, and it also has verbal, written, and nonverbal communication forms which plays an important part in communicating with others from different cultures [1].

From the perspective of different organizations, successful intercultural communication can help avoid cultural shock, which is so terrible that it leads to the failure of the negotiations even before you begin [2]. When business professionals venture to make their way overseas, he often loses in a track of not paying enough attention to repair the cultural issue because he tends to concerned more with other aspects that play a crucial role during its cross-border negotiations, for example, the economic type. And the way of not paying enough attention to culture or intercultural communication may be result in a bad negotiation. From the perspective of individuals in multicultural organizations, smooth intercultural communication contributes to an environment with a favorable rapport. With the development of globalization, there emerges more and more multinational enterprises which employ both native speakers and foreigners. A successful intercultural communication among people with different national identities in the professional sphere is vitally important for relationship management and good co-operation among colleagues and the work efficiency.

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2. Business Culture and Protocols in China

China is a typical country to represent high context culture for thousands years of history. They attach importance to the three factors in communication: relationship, hierarchy and reputation.

The high context cultural in China is displayed in various ways. First, the response style of Chinese people when they are doing business. It is rare for Chinese people to reject the others since it makes the atmosphere awkward and embarrassing. As the result, they are likely to compromise rather than saying 'no'. In most of the time, they use the phrases such as 'Yes, probably' or 'Yes but it might be difficult' to express their rejection.[3]

Second, the relationship building between people. Chinese people tend to seek for long-term business cooperation and the connection is likely to be built in a very slow pace. Trust and credibility are the keys for them to decide whether to cooperate or not. In addition to that, the special relationship could award bonus point when initiate a partnership, for instance relative and close friend etc. Furthermore, build a close relationship to the Communist Party is very significant for a business as government plays a role of supervisor, who tends to influence the operation of businesses.[4]

Third, the nonverbal elements shown in communication. For example, voice tone, facial expression, and gesture etc. For the first time greeting, it will be polite for you to give a handshake and make sure keep your eyesight low. [3] Chinese people tend to use less body language than the Western people. They held the opinion that it is impolite to show large movement in official occasions.

The last but not least, the strict classification in terms of age. Most of the communication rules in China is derived from Confucianism. The younger should display absolute respect to the older people. Thus no matter how abundant a younger has experienced, they will absolutely follow the instructions from the older. As a result, it is uncommon to see young people sitting a position with high authority.

Overall, the Chinese high context culture is mainly shown by their response style, relationship building, nonverbal elements in communication and the strict classification in terms of age.

Apart from being high context culture. Chinese people also have different protocols for business communication than the United States. Mr. Gu believed that there are four aspects of the Chinese conception of politeness (we call in Chinese limao): respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement. Respectfulness is self's positive appreciation or admiration of others concerning the latter's face, social status, and so on. Modesty can be seen as another way of saying "self-denigration." Attitudinal warmth is self's demonstration of kindness, consideration, and hospitality to others, and refinement refers to self's behavior to others that meets certain standards.[5] - First of all, the Chinese pay attention to the golden mean, and 3 Harmony brings wealth. Therefore, when negotiating with customers, it will be more euphemistic, good at using rights and status, and not easily quarrel openly, the ultimate goal is to conclude a transaction.

Second, the wine is also an essential part of the business place. China has a long history of wine culture, profoundly affected domestic business activities, and deeply impressed us in Chinese business behavior. For example, when we are stuck with a part in negotiations, we often say:

So, let's put this problem down and go to dinner first; it is already twelve o'clock. The winery is a unique business reception place in China. Therefore, the knowledge of the winery has also become the knowledge of the business. For table placement, chopsticks order, etc. are all knowledge. Not only wineries, but also coffee shops, tea houses, mahogany courts, and KTV are all places for business negotiations. There is a primary mode of a company to make business negotiations. Suppose there is a company that negotiates with a customer. First, they went to a restaurant near the company to eat at a restaurant at noon. Then they drank from 12 noon to 6 pm, went to the tea house to drink tea, and finally went to KTV to sing. Therefore, the Chinese will say that work is tiring. It is not only the reason for work but also the reason for socializing. Even though most Chinese do not want to go to such occasions in many cases, it is traditionally easier for such events to make business deals.

Thirdly, the focus of communication in China is not only to know profound knowledge and participate in social practice. Business negotiation is not only a business negotiation but also a fusion of human relations and life. There used to be a classic example: a company and a customer talked about cooperation, but after a long time passed, the two sides failed to negotiate a price. The company insisted on its original price, but the customer did not agree, and the two parties have been in a deadlock. Later, the company learned that the customer had just given birth to a son and brought a gift to congratulate him. The customer was very happy and agreed to the company's previous conditions. We can see from this that in Chinese-style business negotiations, this matter is not a very simple business transaction, and it will also be linked to the lives and relationships of both parties in the negotiation. When Chinese people talk about business, they will not discuss prices or contracts at the beginning. They are more about mutual understanding, background life, finding common ground between two people, and narrowing the distance between the two. In particular, the relationships between fellows, relatives, alumni, and comrades-in-arms are the factors that most affect the psychological distance between the two sides. This is a formal bargaining advantage in Western negotiating theory.

3. Business Culture and Protocols in USA

There are many differences between American and Chinese business cultures. In the environment where people live, the different personalities they come into contact with gradually lead to the unique culture and communication habits of people in each region. Therefore, in business communication, protocol on both sides is also very important.

Conversation in china may make the American think that is too directly. Even though the American like to find common ground in conversation, but talking directly about age or family is a little too direct for American. Having said this, when Chinese tourists come to the united states, they find the tone Americans use in the workplace uncomfortable. For Chinese, the tone of voice is important to someone who is more senior to them. Communication style is indirect and Americans doing business with Chinese counterparts will need to learn to read between the lines. [6] Sometimes a sentence may imply a different meaning. Therefore, when doing business with Chinese people, one should learn to understand the meaning of the other party, sometimes in a positive sense and sometimes in a negative sense. Non-verbal code is also closely related to culture. In intercultural communication, it is a language supplement that helps people interact and convey meaning to each other. As Edward Hall suggests, "high context" cultures employ implicit methods such as facial expression, body language or symbolic objects to interpret messages as opposed to more explicit "low context" cultures [7] . In anthropology, high-context culture and low-context culture are two ends of a continuum that reflects how specific information is exchanged within a culture and how important context is in communication. The continuum describes how a person communicates with others through

their range of communication abilities: using gestures, relationships, body language, verbal or non-verbal information. Sometimes body language or eye contact can make people feeling difference. It can make the conversation more clearly. "High" and "low" context cultures typically refer to language groups, nationalities, or regional communities. High and low context culture also can be applied to different groups such as different companies or employees. High-context cultures often derive from less direct verbal and non-verbal communication, using small communication gestures and reading more meaning from less direct information. Low-context cultures are the opposite; In order to understand the message correctly, direct verbal communication is required and this relies heavily on explicit language oral skill. High context and low context culture is a framework of transnational cultural exchanges, but has been criticized as lacking empirical validation.[8] China and the united states are two types of countries. For example, Chinese women may give a negative impression to American negotiators because they are not good at making eye contact and being firm in shaking hands because the women follow three rules and four virtues. According to the code of conduct stipulated in feudal society, Chinese women must obey their fathers before marriage, their husbands after marriage, and their sons when widowed. Four virtues: honest virtue, speech, tolerance, line. Though somewhat outdated, these guidelines have the potential to influence the behavior of Working Women in China, giving them a docile personality and a negative view of female aggression. As a result, Chinese businesswomen subconsciously avoid direct eye contact. Thus, even before the negotiations had begun, an atmosphere of suspicion and suspicion had developed. The outcome and the interests of the two parties is very likely to be further jeopardized because American often think of eye contact as a sign of honesty and confidence.[9] Therefore, the culture difference between the united states and china is still very big. The two peoples should understand each other's culture before the negotiation. This can make their communication or cooperation more pleasant.

3.1. Low-context Culture Is the Opposite; to Understand the Message Correctly Requires Direct Verbal Communication, and Doing So Relies Heavily on Explicit Verbal Skills

In America, people prefer to direct and specific communication. High-context and low-context cultures need to communicate, tend to business communication and pay little attention to relationship building. High-context cultures believe that the context of Shared historical nonverbal signals and information is more meaningful than what is being said. Many of the stimuli are ignored by contextual cultures because they focus too much on verbal information and body language. For example, American tend to speak more directly than Chinese and therefore may make Chinese feel uncomfortable in the process of communication. Americans and Chinese should be tolerant to each other and understand each other's culture during the conversation. In this way, the probability of successful cooperation will be greater.[10]

As for the United States, Americans are good at presenting their own views. No matter what the occasion is, Americans will try to put forward their own ideas or the wrong points of the leader, in order to speed up the progress of the meeting and improve the accuracy of the meeting information. In addition, Americans do not resist the emergence of ideas that are contrary to their beliefs. For example, Americans often choose to accept ideas and Suggestions that disagree with them in a meeting rather than reject them on the spot.

In addition, Americans tend to communicate more directly and quickly get into the conversation. For many American businessmen, time is money. Time can be materialized, and one's success is, to a large extent, affected by one's ability to arrange time. As a result, when American businessmen date their clients, they tend to get straight to the point and do not waste precious time with them. [11]

Third, Americans don't have much manners in business meetings. Many Meetings between American businessmen and their clients are uneventful. Businessmen and clients can always get into the subject quickly without spending much time in the life of the problem client. In addition, meetings between clients and business people are really formal. Businessmen and clients often have conversations in quiet, serious places like the office rather than in noisy places like shopping malls and restaurants. In addition, gifts are not involved in American business meetings.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Prepare a little gift that is less than \$25 for your partner. When communicating with China and the United States, the two sides will generally prepare some small gifts to communicate better. But it is worth noting that too expensive gifts will make the whole conversation heavy and may violate the company's rules and regulations. For a more friendly conversation environment, the generally recommended gifts tend to be souvenirs with company logos or handmade products with historical characteristics.

4.2 Adapting to different business cultures is difficult for both China and the US. Not only because of the different living environment, cultures and communication methods of different regions, each country's business culture will be unique.

4.3 Set some one-hour training courses about culturally specific business protocols in the workplaces for the employees that must be completed before each international business project. To know more about the culture from different countries, such as what to do at your first contact, how to greet, what to wear, how to give gift and what should be attention when you take a conversation with them, all of these can make your company better adapt to globalization and increasing diversity. Without the training, people may be unaware of the words or action which makes clients from other countries feel uncomfortable. Take care of more details can make your company have more chance to succeed in intercultural business negotiations.

4.4 Make a claim that you will commit errors in the communication process. It will be hard for a foreigner to learn the culture from an another country in a very short period of time. And it is forgivable, thus make the apology ahead of time is very useful

4.5 Have a general understanding of their culture ahead of time in order to avoid misunderstandings. This can make business conversations run more smoothly. We can led the employees have training course and prepare the gift the gift.

5. Conclusion

There are many differences in business culture between China and the United States. China belongs to the high-context country, and the United States belongs to the low-context country, different communication habits lead to communication inefficiencies, and various social etiquette leads to a mutual misunderstanding. Therefore, this essay summarizes many problems in the culture and protocols agreement between the two sides. However, even though there displays huge disparity between cultures and protocols, it is convincing that the distinctions will be shrunk in the future as the advanced technology integrates the worldwide economy, which gives a rise to the frequency of intercultural communications. This is known as globalization. As a result, people are likely to accept various cultures and construct a more diversified economy entity.

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