

Bachelor Thesis 2021

“Let us get straight to the point”

Accommodation of Communication with Chinese Co-Workers Based
on Professional Experience

Fritz Köster s1023xxx

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Supervisor: M.A. Aurora Troncoso Ruiz, PhD candidate
Second Reader: Dr. Julija Baranova

Abstract

In a world of advanced globalisation, large companies have to employ and cater to a multitude of people from different cultures. In multinational companies of today, employees regularly come into contact with people from all over the globe. Global and intercultural competence as well as "cultural programming" (e.g. the cultural upbringing in a certain background) are factors that should not be underestimated when working internationally. Adapting or accommodating one's communication to an interlocutor can be crucial in negotiations and discussions. Pre-emptive study of literature suggests that professional experience may help a communicator adapting their communication in intercultural interactions. This is why this study aims to determine whether the level of one's professional experience in business increases the likelihood of accommodating one's communication to an interlocutor from a differing cultural background. For this matter, an experiment has been conducted with US-Americans as participants responding to either a fellow US-American or a colleague from a Chinese cultural background. No significant findings that suggest a relation between professional experience and accommodation frequency have been found.

Keywords: *Global competence, communication accommodation, culture dimensions, professional experience, business communication*

Introduction

In a world of accelerating information exchange and the constant underlying motivation to expand and advance professionally, it is impossible to leave international and intercultural collaboration out of the question. An increasing number of people working in business and other domains is participating in intercultural and international interactions. They need to adapt their usual communication strategies to thrive in a still growing globalized environment (Cambalikova, 2021). Research conducted since the 1980s implies that culture is an underlying factor in almost all business or non-business-related interactions and should, thus, not be underestimated (Altan, 2018; Adler & Gundersen, 2001; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992; Mead, 2004).

Culture and communication

Recently, researchers have become increasingly aware of the importance of effective communication between cultures and nations. So far, great effort has been made to determine the role of culture in communication and how to avoid culturally induced misunderstandings,

failure of communication, and conflict (Varner & Beamer, 2011; Chen 2013; Hurn, 2007; Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). It can be argued that communicating with people of different cultures can lead to misunderstandings and that intercultural communication differs greatly from intracultural communication.

Failing communication can be critical or even detrimental for retaining social rank, saving face, or general outcomes of discourse (Han & Bing, 2010). Such failure of communication can be rooted in a multitude of variables e.g., social standing/class, preliminary misunderstandings, agreeableness, or opinions which can all be traced back to one's culture. In order to successfully engage in intercultural communication, one needs to be aware of cultural differences and be able to accommodate communication to cause a favorable outcome (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010).

Many variables must be considered when interacting with members of other nationalities and cultures such as someone's first language, different cultural sensitivities, or differences in business practices in the workspace (Hurn, 2007). Cultural sensitivities are also commonly referred to as *cultural dimensions* in other works of researchers such as Hall (1977) and Hofstede (1980).

Cultural dimensions

Hall (1977; 1985; 1990) and Hofstede (1980) pinpointed culture in multiple variables. These dimensions allow researchers to compare different cultures and describe them on the basis of dimensions. Dimensions would be named as uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism, masculinity, long term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010); or context, time, space, and information (Hall, 1977; 1985; 1990). These dimensions have so far been successfully employed in multiple cross-cultural communication scenarios and have been able to account for communication phenomena and processes rooted in culture (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). This thesis employs Hall's dimensional model, focusing on the cultural dimension which differentiates between high context cultures and low context cultures. This dimension is interconnected with several other dimension of Hall's model and will allow to make possible more holistic statements.

The high context vs. low context cultures dimension describes the degree of how explicit messages and content are conveyed and how important the given framework of the communication situation is. Members of a high context culture tend to put a lot of weight on the context in which the communication takes place rather than the actual message. They tend to rely less on verbal communication and more on non-verbal cues. Apart from context related

observations, other presumptions have been made such as that cultures of high context communication tend to be more collectivistic than individualistic, less confrontational, prefer long-lasting relationships, and require little explicit explanation (Gamsriegler, 2005). Examples of high context cultures reside in Japan, Arab countries, or China (Hall, 1977; Tung, 1995).

Low context cultures tend to do the opposite. They rely heavily on explicit, verbal information and tend to suppress stimuli of context and non-verbal cues in favor of things that are said. Observations that have been made are that they are more individualistic, rather confrontational, make shallower and more short-term relationships, and require more explicit explanation (Gamsriegler, 2005). Examples of low context cultures reside in Germany, Scandinavia, or the U.S. (Hall, 1977; Tung, 1995).

Intercultural competence in business

The first step towards developing intercultural communicative skills is to become aware of one's own culture, including pattern-recognition, rituals, beliefs, and expected behavior (Beamer & Varner, 2001; Caligiuri & Santo, 2001). Being aware of one's own culture can also be seen as a possible pitfall of the introduction to culture: every individual that is raised in society and one culture alone is taught that their particular culture is inherently the best way of dealing with things and living life. This can be the beginning of automatically projecting one's cultural norms and expectations on members of other cultures, also known as ethnocentrism. In order to communicate successfully in a globalized society and international environments, one must develop transcultural competence (Glover & Friedman, 2015). Trompenaars (in Brotherton, 2011) defines four crucial parts of true transcultural competence: *recognition* of possible cultural dilemma, *respect* that dilemma on both sides of the cross-cultural interaction is valid, *reconciliation* to be able to come to some sort of agreement despite dilemma, and the *realization* to be able to actually translate the findings into real life behavior.

Engaging in business communication with individuals from a similar cultural background differs greatly from doing so merely across borders. The business context adds new variables to communication like corporate rank, goal of interaction, or kind of interaction. The new complexity of intercultural communication in business shows that it should be treated as there are new factors that come into play that could influence possible outcomes like successful negotiations. Therefore, cultural sensitivity has gains new importance as a majority of individuals in professional senior positions deem awareness and sensitive interaction with culture at least as important as strategy for business success (Cambalikova, 2021).

Communication accommodation

All intercultural communication will always be influenced by subjective understandings and the cultural programming of the interlocutors, which can easily lead to misunderstandings or underlying resentments (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Individuals that are unaware of cultural dimension discrepancies can easily cause unwanted social distance with misunderstandings. To describe and analyze the avoidance of possible pitfalls of communication and reduce social distance, Howard Giles (1991) established the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). The theory describes behavioral and linguistic changes that interlocutors can make to accommodate their verbal and non-verbal communication to their interlocutor. These changes are made for various reasons that range from winning the approval of the interlocutor and conveying agreeableness to making oneself stand out as a member of a specific group (Giles, 2006; Giles & Powesland, 1997; Giles & Ogay, 2007). The CAT encompasses all channels of human communication, which include context, visual cues, identity, and language.

Giles et al. argue that there are three modes of accommodation: *convergence* to make one's own speech more similar to that of one's partner, win approval and convey mutual group membership; *divergence* to differentiate the own speech of that of a partner to stand out and convey membership to a different group; or *maintenance* to stick to one's own distinct speech without any accommodation which is commonly perceived as *divergence* (Giles and Coupland, 1991; Gallois et al., 1995). Further it is argued that these three modes can be enacted in three different dimensions either simultaneously or disproportional. The three dimensions that Giles et al. (1991) identified are: psychology (or motivation), linguistic behavior, and subjective versus objective behavior. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will lay on the dimension of a speaker's linguistic features and their accommodation to an interlocutor.

While the CAT was initially conceptualized with omission of cultural variables, the model has since been modified, adapted, and combined with various inclusions of intercultural communication theories and models (see Gallois, 1995; Gallois et al., 2016; Gudykunst, 2005; Weizheng, 2019). Less often, however, there is contemporary research that takes the cultural dimensions of both interlocutors into account. The majority of studies so far have been carried out from an ethnocentric standpoint and thus would only focus on the significant differences or global outliers in any given culture dimension (Badraoui et al., 2014; Livian, 2014). Other studies that take the culture of both interlocutors into account, tend to only look at the perception of a third person that would judge a pre-recorded conversation between either two

members of the same culture or between a member of their own culture and a member of a foreign culture (Hornsey & Gallois 1988).

Components that were initially missing from the CAT were possible relations to online communication and their applicability in instant-messaging and e-mail exchange. Riordan, Markman, and Stuart (2013) apply the CAT to online communication and conclude that the CAT can also be applied to written online communication.

This study focuses on two cultures differing greatly in one of Hall's (1977) cultural dimensions to see whether interlocutors would linguistically adapt to the interlocutor's culture in comparison to interactions in which they interacted with members of their own culture. For the purpose of this study, attention will be paid to the culture of US-Americans and the Chinese culture as they differ greatly in Hall's (1997) dimension of high versus low context culture.

In comparison to transcultural competence, which only describes the knowledge and sensitivity to handle cross-cultural encounters well, global competence also includes business-specific knowledge and skills. Besides the lack of global competence, certain socio-historical obstacles can compromise intercultural communication

With the above-mentioned skills and sensitivities of culture and communication, the last component missing from the skillset portfolio of intercultural business encounters is expertise in business. Combining all of these skillsets, one can speak of global competence that forms through longer exposure to aforementioned fields and gathering experience (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016; Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018).

In multinational organizations, workers are increasingly required to display global and transcultural competence with colleagues, clients, and international partners as it increases the likelihood of concluding a successful interaction (Gjerde, 2004, Sicilia, 2011). Over the course of one's professional career in international environments, it can thus be argued that one must develop or improve one's transcultural competence which would then be linked to professional experience. Previous research has offered little to no insight into the effect of experience on cross-cultural communication. It can be however argued that gathering experience in years of being immersed in the process of intercultural communication has an effect on intercultural communication competence. Thus, a connection can be drawn between professional experience in international organizations and knowledge and competence in the intercultural communication field (global competence or transcultural competence). Nonetheless, relevant information that covers a relationship between experience and communication could not be found. This is why the thesis resulting from this research aims to indicate an effect of

professional experience in years and nationality of a communication partner on performed accommodation in written communication.

Aim of this study

The plethora of found information and the information still missing from the picture results in the question to what extent professional experience affects the likelihood of a US-American accommodating their speech to a Chinese colleague in comparison to a fellow US-American colleague.

To find a possible effect of an individual's professional experience and the communication partner's nationality on communication accommodation, the research question for this particular thesis paper will be hence:

- (1) To what extent does professional experience influence converging their communication to an interlocutor with a different cultural background?

Preliminary research suggests that professional experience will increase the likelihood of an individual to converge in cross-cultural communication (Gjerde, 2004; Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018; Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). Possible reasons for non-accommodation could be found in lack of global competence, ideological resentments due to socio-economic history, non-awareness of particular cultural differences, or ignorance (Bjørge, 2007; Venaik & Brewer, 2016). It can be argued that professional experience counteracts non-awareness and effects of ethnocentrism like a culture's past with one another.

Insight into this particular subject may offer crucial information for the component of professional experience when it comes to employment in pivotal positions of cross-cultural communication, collaboration, and negotiation. Moreover, knowledge on this subject could influence the way that experience abroad would be weighed in an international workspace. Pre-emptive literature research has led to the following hypotheses:

H₁: US-Americans do not converge their responses to an interlocutor with a differing cultural background as much as to an interlocutor of the same cultural background.

H₂: The higher someone's professional experience, the higher is the likelihood of converging their communication to an interlocutor.

H₃: The higher someone's professional experience, the higher is the likelihood of converging their communication to an interlocutor with a differing cultural background.

In order to answer the research question, an experiment has been conducted. In this experiment, participants will be asked to respond to messages of a fictional colleague from

either their own or a varying cultural background. In different trials describing different situations of written communications, participants will be asked to choose one out of two pre-scripted responses to written communication. Results of this research will be deduced from whether participants choose the culturally accommodated and converged response to a colleague with Chinese cultural background.

Method

To be able to provide suggestions regarding the relationship between professional experience and presence of converging accommodation, an experimental survey was conducted. In the two-part experiment, respondents filled out a questionnaire concerning personal information. Secondly, respondents first read messages of a fictional colleague and then picked a pre-scripted message as response.

Materials

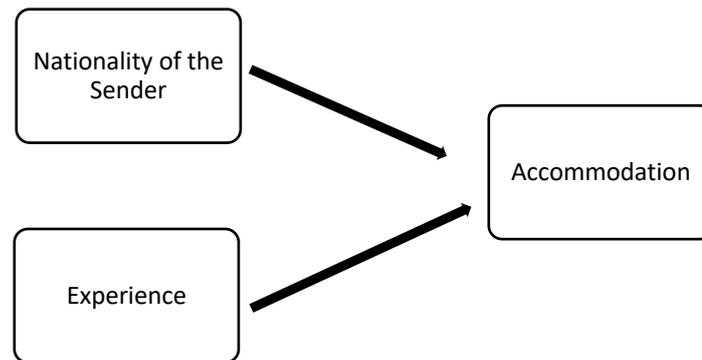
For this thesis, the relevant independent variables were *nationality of the sender* and *professional experience*. The first independent variable has been determined by the nationality of the fictional colleagues *Li Wei* and *David Cooper*. This variable has been manipulated by which colleague (US-American or Chinese) the participants were presented with. To make it clear who that colleague is and where he is from, a small introduction was set before the trials. The introductions each told the participant where the colleague was born and raised and what their corporate relation is. The fictional colleague functioned as the sender of the message. The colleagues' nationality corresponded with the variable *nationality of the sender* (e.g., American or Chinese). The level of measurement is *categorical*.

The second independent variable for this research is *professional experience* which has been deduced from the questionnaire of this study. The data for this variable has been collected in a continuous format (e.g., numbers like 1, 2.5, 11, 15.5 etc.) which then underwent categorization into *low*, *intermediate*, and *high experience*. The categories have been determined by entry-level and mid-level job requirements inspired by Chakrabarti (2018) and have then been modified into equal sample sizes. The different groups have been categorized as follows: *low* (<4 years of experience), *intermediate* (4-15 years of experience), and *high* (15+ years of experience). The level of measurement for this variable is *categorical*.

Due to the experiment containing a 2x3 design analyzing the influence of *nationality of the sender* and *professional experience* on *accommodation*, it resulted in 6 distinct conditions.

The conditions were named 1. ChineseLowExp, 2. AmericanLowExp, 3. ChineseIntermediateExp, 4. AmericanIntermediateExp, 5. ChineseHighExp, and 6. AmericanHighExp.

Fig. 1 – Conceptual Model



Participants

The population that was examined is described as US-Americans aged 18 or older with professional experience working in business or corporate contexts. The participants have been recruited through the researchers' professional (online) network. A call to participate with an attached link has been posted and encouraged to share. The sampling method has thus been a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Eligible participants had the US-American cultural background and were native speakers of the US-American native dialect continuum. The participation was voluntary and did not result in monetary compensation. The final count resulted in 66 eligible participants for the purpose of this research paper, 59 of which were currently employed (89.4%). Of the 66 participants, 33 were female and 33 were male which represents an equal distribution of the genders. The majority of the participants belonged to the age category of 25-35 with 27 people (*Table. 2*). A chi-square test showed that there is no significant relationship between age category and assigned nationality of sender ($X^2(5) = 1.75, p = .883$). It can be assumed that the age categories are equally distributed between the conditions.

Table 1. – Age categories of the participants

Age	N	% of total N
< 25	6	9.1%
25 - 35	27	40.9%
36 - 45	6	9.1%
46 - 55	13	19.7%
56 - 65	9	13.6%
66 - 75	5	7.6%
Total	66	100.0%

The majority of the participants have concluded a bachelor’s degree with 30 people and the second most concluded education has been a master’s degree with 19 people (*Table. 2*). A chi-square test showed that there is no significant relationship between level of education and assigned nationality of sender ($\chi^2 (7) = 5.37, p = .615$). It can be assumed that the level of education completed is equally distributed between the conditions.

Table 2 – Highest level of education completed of the participants

Level of education	N	% of total N
High school or equal	5	7.6%
Associate degree	3	4.5%
Bachelor’s degree	30	45.5%
First professional degree	2	3.0%
Master’s degree	19	28.8%
PhD	5	7.6%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	1	1.5%
Professional degree	1	1.5%
Total	66	100.0%

The average professional experience in years among the participants was 13.3 years ($SD=12.23$) with a range of 40 years (*Table. 3*). To determine whether there has been a significant difference in professional experience between the two conditions of nationality, an independent samples t-test has been run between the two conditions in regard to the pre-

categorized continuous variable of professional experience in years. The test did not show a significant difference between the groups ($t(62.78) = .25, p = .804$).

In the final categorization of the variable, the distribution resulted in *low* (<5 years of experience, 20 people), *intermediate* (5-15 years of experience, 23 people), and *high* (15+ years of experience, 23 people). A chi-square test that there is no significant relationship between experience level and assigned nationality of sender ($X^2(2) = .24, p = .887$). It can be assumed that the level of experience is equally distributed between the conditions.

Table 3 – Level of professional of the participants

Experience level	N	% of total N
Low	20	32.4%
Intermediate	23	35.2%
High	23	35.2%
Total	66	100.0%

Design

The design of the research contained a 2x3 between-subjects design. This experiment was part of a larger experiment which provided different subsets of data for the respective research interests of the researchers. The independent variable to which participants were assigned randomly was *nationality of the sender* (2 levels: Chinese – American). The independent variable that categorized by the researcher according to experience in years was *professional experience* (3 levels: low – intermediate – high). Participants that responded to *David Cooper* as a fellow US-American colleague were considered the control group for this experiment.

Instruments

The data for the dependent variable of this experiment was *accommodation frequency* which has been collected in a continuous manner (items 0-6) from the responses of the participants. Every response given resulted in a variable with the value 0 or 1. The value of 1 would mean they accommodated to their interlocutor and 0 meant that they did not accommodate. To determine the frequency of total accommodations per participant, the sum of the response variable values was calculated which resulted in the variable of *accommodation frequency* (0-6). The stimulus material in form of messages of the fictional colleagues as well as the respective low vs. high context answers (see example below; full set of trials in **Appendix 1**)

have been reviewed by a US-American to verify validity and whether the low-context responses were representative for US-American culture dimensions. Several more reviews were carried out by Chinese reviewers that helped to better represent the high-context responses in regard to Chinese culture.

Message from Li Wei:

I have seen your speech on communication improvement you gave to the board and you really hit the nail on the head with it. You can be very proud and I hope you can teach me about those speaking skills sometime.

How would you respond?

- *Thank you, I agree. I hope the speech will be useful for the company and of course I would like to help you.*
- *There is always room for improvement. I hope the speech will be useful for the company and of course I would like to help you.*

Procedure

Participants that chose to take part in the experiment encountered an introductory text upon clicking the link. The text informed the participant about the estimated duration of the experiment in addition to information on the outline of the experiment with further instructions. In this part, the participants have also been asked to give consent to the use of their responses for this research, confirm that they are 18 years of age, and that they took part voluntarily. In order to not prime the participants and cause noise in the data, they have not been introduced to the purpose of the research at this stage.

Participants have been asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of 6 questions regarding general information about themselves (age, gender, status of employment), further personal information and professional experience (Questionnaire in **Appendix 1**). The data for the second independent variable of *professional experience* has been deducted from the questionnaire in which respondents filled in the corresponding number of years to the question “*Do you have experience in business/corporate? If yes, please indicate how many years in a number. (eg., 6)* “. The responses then have been categorized into three categories of low, intermediate, and high experience.

After the questionnaire, participants have been assigned to read a work-related message of a fictional colleague of either US-American or Chinese cultural background and have been asked to choose between two possible and pre-scripted and messages as responses that had been validated by native speakers of that cultural background. The participants picked an

answer as if their fictional interlocutor were their real colleague. During the experiment, the participants did not know which of the responses would be the accommodated one as they also appeared in a randomized order per trial. The six trials were conceptualized based on six situations: giving a compliment, asking for a favor, denying a deadline, asking for feedback, personal relations, and apology. The messages the respondents picked an answer to, were either from *Li Wei* (Chinese Nationality) or *David Cooper* (US Nationality). To which nationality of the colleagues the respondents had to pick an answer, had been randomized.

After having given consent to the procedure and the processing of the data, they have been randomly assigned to one out of two. The two conditions were either six scenarios with the imaginary Chinese colleague *Li Wei* or the imaginary American Colleague *David Cooper*. After having passed 6 trials with either of the two colleagues, the participants were directed to end-screen of the experiment which indicated that the experiment is concluded.

Statistical Treatment

To determine a possible effect of the nationality of the interlocutor and professional experience on the likelihood of converging accommodation to an interlocutor, a two-way-ANOVA and multiple t-tests have been carried out.

Results

The experiment has been conducted to find an answer to the research question (1) and to whether confirm or disprove H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 . Subject of this experiment and subsequent analyses of its results were meant to determine to what extent professional experience would have an effect on communication accommodation in interactions with a colleague from a different culture.

A two-way analysis of variance with the categorical variable professional experience (experience) and nationality of the sender (nationality) as factors showed no significant effect of professional experience on accommodation frequency ($F(1,60) = 1.10, p = .339$). The results, thus, do not suggest an effect of an individual's professional experience on the likelihood of accommodation to a foreign culture. Nationality of the sender was not found to have a significant effect on frequency of accommodation ($F(1, 60) = .009, p = .925$). US-Americans overall accommodated similarly to the American colleague and the Chinese colleague. The interaction effect of professional experience and nationality of the sender has had no significant effect on accommodation frequency ($F(1,60) = 1.63, p = .204$). This study did not find a significant difference between the conditions. It can be said that experience in years does not

influence communication accommodation to an individual of different cultural background. The report on the general descriptives of all six resulting conditions (1. ChineseLowExp, 2. AmericanLowExp, 3. ChineseIntermediateExp, 4. AmericanIntermediateExp, 5. ChineseHighExp, and 6. AmericanHighExp.) can be seen in *Table 4*.

Table 4 – Means and Standard Deviations of experience level per condition in regard to accommodation frequency (0 no accommodation – 6 complete accommodation)

	Chinese		American	
	Mean ¹	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Experience	4.53	1.02	3.56	1.03
Intermediate Experience	4.05	1.27	4.08	1.44
High Experience	3.85	1.42	4.18	1.42

¹Note: Accommodation frequency has been measured from 0 to 6. The value 0 represents the entire lack of accommodation and 6 a full score on accommodation.

Conclusion & Discussion

Conclusion

This thesis was targeted at presenting findings that could suggest a significant relationship between an individual's level of professional experience and their likelihood to accommodate their communication to an interlocutor of differing cultural background.

The results of the conducted experiment suggest no relationship between professional experience and a tendency to accommodate. Tests run to prove a possible relationship did not show significant enough results that would prove any of the three hypotheses (H₁, H₂, H₃). Neither could the tests show a difference of accommodation between the conditions of nationality. This would suggest that overall, participants responded to *David Cooper* and *Li Wei* in a similar manner.

To answer the initial research question, a relationship between professional experience and likelihood of accommodation could not be found.

Discussion

In order to reflect on the results of the experiment and the subsequent analyses, reasons for the lack of significance must be considered. In this paper, it has been argued that years of working in business and/or corporate solidifies professional experience. It has further been argued that,

in order to function well in an international company, one has to exhibit a certain degree of global competence (Caligiuri & Santo, 2001) since one may have to interact with people from a different cultural background who may have a different way of nuancing their communication. While it probably holds true that global competence can be a key competence in intercultural communication, this experiment found that global competence is not automatically formed in years of experience. The results can be interpreted as such that participants were not aware that they needed to apply their global competence or do not display it regardless of experience. To justify the experiment, it has been assumed that years of working in business develops global competence and intercultural competence (Varner & Beamer, 2011). One possible explanation for the results not suggesting development of global competence over the course of working years could be that participants were not aware that, when responding to *Li Wei*, intercultural competence is required. This would imply that, according to Trompenaars (in Brotherton, 2011), participants failed at the first stage or multiple stages of transcultural competence. Given that working in an internationally working company does not inherently form global competence, companies should offer designated training and education in that matter. Global scale companies profit from interculturally apt communicators and should, thus, encourage and facilitate their education in that matter.

An additional possible reason for the results could be that a number of participants did not obtain their professional experience in international companies which would render their experience somewhat inutile for the experiment. However, in the introductory text to every condition it explicitly instructed: “*Imagine that you work for an international company with colleagues such as [colleague]. He was born and raised in [country]. You are currently working on the same project together.*”. Of course, working or having obtained some professional experience in an global-scale company could have been made a requirement for participation, but that would have decreased the research group’s reach significantly and time restrictions would not have allowed it. On top of that, the researchers did not know the specifics of what the participants’ working experience entails.

Overall, participants with the highest level of professional experience scored lower than participants with intermediate or low experience. This phenomenon could be attributed to the difference of generations. If assumed that people with 20+ years of professional experience did not grow up during a stage of digitalization, interconnectedness, and globalization, this would have an effect on their way of thinking today. People that are just entering the work force and thus belong to the “digital natives” were exposed to the quick growth of new technologies and may evaluate situations differently than older peers (Chen, 2007; Prensky, 2009). One could

argue that people that have not been exposed to social media, instant-messaging, and other international online platforms during early to semi-early development, are lacking a certain degree of pattern recognition when it comes to foreign cultures (Varner & Beamer, 2011; Caligiuri & Santo, 2001; Chen, 2007; Chen, 2013). Another study would have to be carried out to test an effect of age of individuals and social media consumption on accommodation likelihood.

Another possible explanation for the results could be the influence of power-distance, the unwillingness to accommodate, or even ignorance (Bjørge, 2007; Venaik & Brewer, 2016). The United States of America and China are widely perceived as economic adversaries on the economic playfield and their relationship has been more often flawed than not. This has especially been the case since the communist victory in China 1949 and the Korean War which extended the Cold war into the Far East (Cai, 2010). Today, we face an even larger issue in the global rise of Covid-19 (nCoV-2019) based anti-Chinese racism (Zatira & Prakoso, 2020). Since its appearance and backtracking to the Chinese city Wuhan in the Hubei province (CDC, 2020), Chinese and Chinese-looking people are confronted with a stark rise in racism and xenophobia due to the pandemic. This is also reflected especially in the United States where Covid-2019 has initially been referred to by officials as the “Chinese virus” resulting in acts and displays of open anti-Chinese racism (Edara, 2020). Formerly, most of the latent conflict and resentments usually took place in higher ranking positions of corporations and governments invisible from the public eye. Due to the global situation today, resentments are even more explicit and visible (Zatira & Prakoso, 2020). It is known that both countries usually do not hesitate and have not hesitated in the past to antagonize each other in their respective media and propaganda (Kone, 2019). Especially in professional contexts, cultural programming that roots in ideology can result in resentments that are detrimental to successful collaboration (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). As a reinforcing factor of already possible inherent resentments, frustration, or irritation towards the Chinese colleague could have also taken place. This is due to the six trials asking for favors, deadline extensions, and other causes for inconvenience. This could have resulted in an underlying unwillingness to accommodate. To counter such hindrances in intercultural communication, employees need to be properly trained and educated about different cultures and logical fallacies that create unsubstantiated racism.

Lastly, the culture dimensions of Hall (1977; 1985; 99) and Hofstede (1980; 2011) have undergone some valid critique in recent times. Culture is a variable that is not easily quantifiable. Critique towards Hofstede’s (1980; 2001) research methods include for example

underlying western European ethnocentrism in interpreting the data, or the concept of culture being fragile and overused (Badraoui et al., 2014; Livian, 2011). Hall's (1977; 1985; 99) dimensions underwent similar criticism but mostly Cardon (2008) argues that even though the dimension of high vs. low context is the most widely cited framework for intercultural communication in business, there is definitely a need for a more adapted conceptualization for business and management. Furthermore, when it comes pinpointing characteristics of national culture, regional differences are often overlooked. With countries of larger geographical surface, it is especially risky to generalize the entire population under characteristics of one national culture. Group characteristics and habits form due to experiences in history in addition to a multitude of other factors like gender, economy, or education system (Livian, 2011). It can be argued that countries like China or the USA have, thus, more culturally different regional groups from the hypothetical individual that is described by Hall's or Hofstede's dimensions.

Limitations

As there is no research that would not exhibit any kind of limitation in the way it analyzed its data, this paper, too, faces limitations that future research could overcome with more time at the disposal. Due to a limited time frame for this research, a relatively restricted original population, and non-ideal geographical and social positioning for the population sampling, the number of participants at the time of the analyses was meager. The researchers encountered multiple issues when it came to reach US-American business professionals as the network and snowball recruitment alone failed in recruiting enough participants quickly enough. In addition, the algorithm used to exclude people from the data collection on Qualtrics was too strict. The algorithm not only excluded everyone that was not a US-American English native speaker or people that were younger than 25 at first and then younger than 18, but also people that stated they did not have professional experience.

Another limitation would be that the researchers do not know what the participants interpreted to be business or corporate. It could very well be that some participants interpreted their professional experience to be in business when in fact, it was not. This could have led to confusion as this would be a context the study did not take into account. Furthermore, the positions the employees participating in this study may have differed widely among the same and different experience levels. It cannot be verified if people with 20+ years of experience have actually gotten the chance to come into contact with international colleagues and/or clients to obtain and improve global competence.

Recommendations

Future research should have more time and its disposal in order to find a sample size that is representative of the population to be examined. In case, research also wants to operationalize Hall's variable of high and low context, researchers need to be explicit about how high and low context should be represented in order to make them viable options for participants. With enough time and possible reach, future research should more closely specify the population they want to examine in what kind of positions they should work and what their exposure to international business should be. Unfortunately, this has not been possible with limited time and resources.

In case future research wants to repeat the experiment, this paper recommends a closer look at the variable of experience. This paper categorized experience by time (in years). Interesting would be to see if a different or maybe a similar result can be found if another study modified the categorization to be ordered by corporate rank, or years of working in the same position while taking into account, that participants should be working in a multi- or international company. It is recommended to possibly operationalize a different culture than the Chinese culture to draw conclusions and possibly verify the results of this study. The unfortunate current global situation might have had an effect on the participants due to above discussed reasons. To see whether the same or similar results can be drawn from such an experiment, this paper suggests employing another culture that still differs in one or several cultural dimensions from the US-American one(s). To avoid possible racial and xenophobic biases, future research could look into referring to a generally positively viewed culture from the USA point of view.

In terms of further examination of the findings, it would be interesting to see whether an effect of age/generation in combination with possible social media exposure on the likelihood of accommodation to a foreign interlocutor can be measured.

This research was dedicated to finding a possible effect of professional experience in business on the likelihood to accommodate one's communication to an interlocutor of differing cultural background. Results and analyses suggest no noteworthy relationship between these two factors. The hypotheses can be rejected, and it can be stated that no correlation has been found.

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Appendix 1

In this part of the survey, you will be asked to read some work-related situations to which you have to respond. You work for an international company with both Chinese colleagues such as Li Wei who was born and grew up in China, but also with some American colleagues such as David Cooper who was born and grew up in America. Both colleagues are fluent in English and your communication also takes place in this language.

Read the following business-related messages posted on the internal communication platform Intranet used by the company and choose how you would respond.

*1. Message from **Li Wei**: compliment*

I am happy with the result of the project we completed last week. Your marketing skills surprised me and I would not have been able to accomplish this success without you. I hope you are willing to work together again.

How do you respond?

- I am proud of our performance. The project was a team effort and I would like to work with you again.
- Thank you, I am happy too. The project was a team effort and I would like to work with you again.

*2. Message from **Li Wei**: favour*

I am sorry to bother you, but last week I started a new project, but it seems like the project is not in line with my expertise. However it is in relation with a project you are working on. I know you are busy, but it would be amazing if you can take this project from me.

How do you respond?

- I would like to help you, but I cannot do it
- I would like to help you, so I will think it over

*3. Message from **Li Wei**: denying the deadline*

My brother is giving his birthday party tomorrow and I have to go because family is really important to me. I will work out the conference later this week instead of tomorrow.

How do you respond?

- It is a shame that you cannot meet the agreed deadline, but family is important. I hope to receive the notes as soon as possible.
- It is a shame that you cannot meet the agreed deadline, because we planned this long before. I hope to receive the notes as soon as possible.

*4. Message from **Li Wei**: feedback*

Do you remember I had to create a presentation for a group of colleagues about the research I conducted last year? Well, I think you also took a look at the presentation and as I have to do a new presentation this year I like to know what more I can do this time. Would you mind telling me what struck you?

How do you respond?

- I think the visuals were excellent, but the problem was that you were not able to answer all the questions. You might want to prepare some more for questions next time to get an even better result.
- I think the visuals were excellent, just like the inclusion of the references. You might want to prepare some more for questions next time to get an even better result.

5. *Message from Li Wei: personal relations*

Next week we will have to present our marketing strategy for our new product to the board, but I still do not agree on some proposals of yours. It would be perfect if we can have dinner tonight to go over this.

How do you respond?

- I accept your invitation. I would love to discuss your weekend plans over a nice dinner.
- That sounds good. I would love to discuss those proposals with you over a nice dinner.

6. *Message from Li Wei: apology*

This morning we had a meeting about our project where we talked about next week's deadline. Our manager expected everyone to attend and I assumed you would be there, too.

- Oh, I didn't realize the meeting was supposed to be today, this won't happen again. Thank you for reminding me.
- I didn't realize the meeting was supposed to be today, I am really sorry. Thank you for reminding me.

1. *Message from David Cooper: compliment*

Congratulations on the promotion. The roadshow you organised was perfect so you deserve it.

How do you respond?

- Thank you very much, the team will be happy to hear this.
- I could not have done it without the team that I was a part of.

2. *Message from David Cooper: favour*

Hi there, could you do me a favour? Could you possibly accompany me to the business conference in Shanghai next month?

How do you respond?

- I love to come along, but I do not know if I will already be back from Beijing, so that is not going to work for me.
- I love to come along, but I do not know if I will already be back from Beijing, so I will see what I can do for you.

3. *Message from David Cooper: deadline*

I just received an email from the boss, giving us a new task with regards to the design of the new office in Beijing. Therefore, I want to inform you that it is best to start planning already as there is a lot to take care of before the deadline.

How do you respond?

- I will start planning as soon as possible and I will make sure we meet the deadline
- I will take care of it and I will make sure we meet the boss's wishes.

4. *Message from David Cooper: feedback*

Would you do me a favour and give me some feedback on the promo video of our open day I just sent you?

How do you respond?

- Sure. I loved your design, but there were some editing errors. Maybe you could consult IT to make it even better, but the content was great.
- Sure, I loved your design and the use of adequate terminology in the video. Maybe you could consult IT to make it even better. The content was great.

5. *Message from David Cooper: personal relations*

The conference call this morning raised some questions for me and therefore I was wondering whether we could talk about it over lunch.

How do you respond?

- I am happy to have lunch with you. It is a good opportunity to clarify the questions you have.
- I am happy to have lunch with you. It is a good opportunity to have a good conversation together.

6. *Message from David Cooper: apology*

I noticed you weren't at our meeting this morning. We discussed important points that involve your work, too. Where were you?

- Yes, I had personal circumstances that interfered with work today. This won't happen again and thank you for reminding me.

Yes, I am incredibly sorry that I was missing today. This won't happen again and thank you for reminding me.

Appendix 2

Dear participant,

Thank you for wanting to participate in this experiment that improves our knowledge about communication in international business settings. This experiment is conducted by a group of Bachelor's thesis students of International Business Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen (NL).

The experiment consists of three parts and will overall take approximately 5 minutes.

The research data will be made anonymous and safely stored according to the research data management guidelines of Radboud University and conform to General Data Protection Regulation. As soon as possible, any personal data will be deleted. The researchers involved in this study will use the research data for academic publications and presentations. The data will not be used for other studies.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. This means that you can withdraw your participation and consent at any time during the data collection period without giving a reason.

Should you have any complaints regarding this research, please contact the m.troncosoruiz@let.ru.nl or contact the confidential Advisors Academic Integrity via email vertrouwenspersonen@ru.nl

Thank you again,
Anna Bos, Amelia Gilardi Tenés, Fritz Köster, Sanne van Lieshout, Julia Strooper & Andrea Vivas Aguilar

Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your age category (e.g., 36-45).
 - <25
 - 25-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - 56-65
 - 66-74
 - 76-85
 - >85

2. Please indicate your gender.
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - High school graduate or equivalent
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - First-professional degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctorate/PhD degree
 - Trade/Technical/Vocational training
 - Professional degree

4. Is American English your native language?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Are you currently employed?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Do you have experience in business/corporate? If yes, please indicate how many years in a number. (e.g., 6)
 - Yes, namely:
 - No

Appendix 3

Checklist EACH (version 1.6, november 2020)

You fill in the questions by clicking on the square next to the chosen answer

After clicking, a cross will appear in this square

1. Is a health care institution involved in the research?

Explanation: A health care institution is involved if one of the following (A/B/C) is the case:

- A. One or more employees of a health care institution is/are involved in the research as principle or in the carrying out or execution of the research.
- B. The research takes place within the walls of the health care institution and should, following the nature of the research, generally not be carried out outside the institution.
- C. Patients / clients of the health care institution participate in the research (in the form of treatment).
 - No → continue with questionnaire
 - Yes → Did a Dutch Medical Institutional Review Board (MIRB) decide that the Wet Medisch Onderzoek (Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act) is not applicable?
 - Yes → continue with questionnaire
 - No → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

2. Do grant providers wish the protocol to be assessed by a recognised MIRB?

- No → continue with questionnaire
- Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

3. Does the research include [medical-scientific research](#) that might carry risks for the participant?

- No → continue with questionnaire
- Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

Standard research method

4. Does this research fall under one of the stated [standard research methods](#) of the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies?

- Yes → 4. Standard experimental research into linguistic judgement of language fragments → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist

Participants

5. Is the participant population a healthy one?

- Yes → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)

6. Will the research be conducted amongst minors (<16 years of age) or amongst (legally) incapable persons?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

Method

7. Is a method used that makes it possible to produce a coincidental finding that the participant should be informed of?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

8. Will participants undergo treatment or are they asked to perform certain behaviours that can lead to discomfort?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

9. Are the estimated risks connected to the research minimal?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

10. Are the participants offered a different compensation than the usual one?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

11. Should [deception](#) take place, does the procedure meet the standard requirements?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

12. Are the standard regulations regarding [anonymity and privacy](#) met?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

Conducting the research

13. Will the research be carried out at an external location (such as a school, hospital)?

- No → continue with questionnaire
- Yes → Do you have/will you receive written permission from this institution?
 - No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
 - Yes → continue with questionnaire

14. Is there a contact person to whom participants can turn to with questions regarding the research and are they informed of this?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

15. Is it clear for participants where they can file complaints with regard to participating in the research and how these complaints will be dealt with?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

16. Are the participants free to participate in the research, and to stop at any given point, whenever and for whatever reason they should wish to do so?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

17. Before participating, are participants informed by means of an information document about the aim, nature and risks and objections of the study? (zie [explanation on informed consent](#) and [sample documents](#)).

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

18. Do participants and/or their representatives sign a consent form? (zie [explanation on informed consent](#) and [sample documents](#)).

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → checklist finished

If you want to record the results of this checklist, please save the completed file.

If you need approval from the EACH due to the requirement of a publisher or research grant provider, you will have to follow the formal assessment procedure of the EACH.

Appendix 4

	Question and embedding		Method	Analysis		Form		Process
	Subject and question (1)	Literature and theoretical perspective (2)	Research method and empirical foundation(3)	Analysis and results (4)	Conclusions and discussion (5)	Overall composition, structure, argumentation (6)	Style (7)	(Supervisor only): Independence (8)
Weight	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1
	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus not sufficiently delineated and/or RQ not sufficiently clear - Focus/central concepts insufficiently defined and/or insufficiently embedded in relevant literature 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Framework largely lacking and/or literature review only indirectly relevant to topic - Review based in too few (relevant) sources discussed - RQ insufficiently introduced and embedded in the literature - RQ not made sufficiently relevant through discussion of the literature 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient description of method - Insufficient motivation for choices - Not replicable based on information in Method 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorrect or inaccurate presentation of statistical testing - Unsuitable or insufficient analysis - Presentation of results insufficiently clear in text and tables, etc. 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub(questions) not answered/hypotheses not addressed - Minimal discussion - No or minimal link to introduction - No to little reflection on own research (limitations) and/or implications 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing insufficiently cohesive and/or coherent - Argumentation and reasoning insufficiently logical and hard to follow - Too many inaccuracies in information 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many language (usage) errors - Academic style is not used consistently (e.g. objective, formal, impersonal style) 	<p>Poor to insufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient contribution to the work in the group - Insufficient contribution to decision-making within the group - Too little personal initiative/contribution - Progress too slow - Much feedback (not always incorporated successfully) - Planning problems
	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus delineated sufficiently - RQ is sufficiently clearly formulated - Limited, but sufficient embedding in the literature - Relevance (practical and scientific) superficially mentioned or implicit 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature review sufficiently embeds and introduces RQ - Sufficiently coherent review, on the whole, but only summarizes sources - Sufficient number of relevant publication 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Method presented sufficiently clear - (some) Choices only (minimally) motivated - Design presented sufficiently clearly - Replicable to some extent, based on information in the 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sufficient and suitable analysis - Sufficiently clear presentation of results in text and tables, etc. 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sub(questions) sufficiently answered/hypotheses addressed and overall conclusions and findings summarised - RQ/ hypotheses answered/addressed - Sufficient link to introduction - Some degree of reflection on own research and theoretical 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing sufficiently cohesive and/or coherent - Sufficiently clear argumentation and reasoning insufficiently logical and hard to follow - On the whole, information is sufficiently accurate 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quite a few language (usage) errors still - But text sufficiently reflects use of academic style 	<p>Sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sufficient contribution to the work in the group - Sufficient contribution to decision-making within the group - Own initiative taken, but limited - Overall progress sufficient - Considerable amount of feedback required - Some

	s discussed	method section		and practical implications			planning problems along the way
More than sufficient to good - Explicit/clearly formulated RQ - Concepts clearly introduced and defined - Practical and scientific relevance of question/hypotheses is explicitly made clear	More than sufficient to good - Relevant literature cohesively dealt with - Overview reflects more than sufficient insight into the literature and field - Provides more than sufficient to good overview of relevant literature review - Gaps and relevance explicitly and more than sufficiently made clear	More than sufficient to good - Clearly presented method - Clearly motivated choices - Mostly replicable, based on information in the method section	More than sufficient to good - Analysis and results clearly presented in text and tables, etc. - Analysis of background variables included and clearly presented	More than sufficient to good - Effectively linked back to theory and earlier research in Introduction - Contribution and practical and theoretical implications of own study/findings more than sufficiently discussed in the context of the existing literature - More than sufficient reflection on own research (limitations) - Suggestions for further research provided	More than sufficient to good - Writing mostly clear and logical - Good reasoning, easy to follow on the whole - Most of the information is accurate	More than sufficient to good - Few language (usage) errors - Text mostly reflects academic style - Overall, a more than sufficient example of academic writing	More than sufficient to good - More than sufficient contribution to the work in the group - More than sufficient contribution to decision-making within the group - Worked independently, on the whole - Sufficient own initiative taken - Realistic planning along the way - Some degree of feedback required - On schedule overall
Very good - Largely original focus (RQ/hypotheses) - Study clearly fills important gaps in the literature and goes beyond a mere replication	Very good - Very well-embedded in literature - Nuanced discussion, e.g. reflecting a considerable degree of insight and awareness of scientific issues or debate - (almost) all directly relevant literature coherently dealt with	Very good - Critical reflection on method chosen based on relevant literature - Method and/or materials to some extent innovative and original - Replicable, based on Method	Very good - Analysis and results very clearly presented in text and tables, etc. - Additional analysis to clarify emerging issues	Very good - Importance of research clearly demonstrated - Practical and theoretical implications are clearly and explicitly discussed in the context of the existing literature - Critical about own research (limitations) - Useful, specific suggestions for improvements and follow-up research	Very good - Very good reasoning and argumentation throughout - Very easy to follow - All information is accurate	Very good - No language (usage) errors - Text sufficiently reflects academic style throughout - Overall, a good example of academic writing	(Very) good - (very) good contribution to the work in the group - (very) good contribution to decision-making within the group - Worked very independently - Little feedback required - Own initiative throughout - On schedule, realistic planning throughout - Competent in all respects

	Excellent - Innovative and/or relatively complex focus - Highly relevant to the field - Important contribution to existing body of work	Excellent - Highly insightful and novel perspective on the literature - Highly coherent and extensive, yet concise overview - Reflects the state of the art on the topic being researched	Excellent - Highly innovative and/or original materials and methodology	Excellent - Complex and/or extensive analyses reflecting excellent insight into data analysis and statistics	Excellent - Discussion reflects innovative insights from own study for the field (theory and practice) - Innovative and original suggestions for further research	Excellent - Excellent text with regard to all form criteria	Excellent - Very good to excellent with regard to all language and style criteria - Overall, a very good to excellent example of academic writing	Excellent - Excellent contribution to the work in the group - Excellent contribution to decision-making within the group - Excellent performance with regard to all criteria - Very little to no feedback required - Highly competent in all respects
Grade times 10:	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

Appendix 5

Appendix A. Statement of own work

Sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as to the first supervisor.

Student name: Fitze Kates
Student number: s1023

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

DECLARATION:

- a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<https://www.ru.nl/facultyofarts/stip/rules-guidelines/rules/fraud-plagiarism/>) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programme of Communication and Information Studies.
- b. I also declare that I have only submitted text written in my own words
- c. I certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

Signature:

Place and date: Nijmegen, 14.06.21