To accommodate or not to accommodate

The impact of knowledge of culture and messenger nationality on the accommodation process: a cross cultural analysis from an American perspective.

Bachelor's Thesis

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Study program: International Business Communication

Academic year: 2020-2021

Submission date: 14-06-2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my thesis supervisor Ms. Aurora Troncoso Ruiz of the department of Language and Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen. During the establishment of this Bachelor's Thesis, M.A. Aurora Troncoso Ruiz was always open to answer any burning question that I came across and to setting a meeting whenever that was needed. In this process she provided me with valuable feedback that guided me in the right direction when needed, while consistently ensuring this paper to be my own work. The resulting academic and professional development I will take with me even after graduation.

I would also like to thank dr. Emily Felker, professor at the Department of Language and Communication at Radboud University, for the extra pair of eyes and useful feedback on the development of my research.

Lastly, I am very grateful for the support of friends, and most importantly, my family. They encouraged me to keep faith in myself during the sometimes-stressful process, trusting in the success of my work.

- If you can dream it, you can do it. -

Walt Disney

ABSTRACT

Cultural accommodation – the process in which individuals adapt to the values and beliefs of the conversation partner's culture in the public/business sphere, while in private spheres, the parent culture is maintained – is becoming more important in a world that is globalizing (Baden & Ahluwalia 2008). Nevertheless, adapting one's communication to the culture of someone else is not as simple as it seems. Although previous research has shown that having more knowledge of the conversation partner's language enhances accommodating behavior, little research has looked at the effect of cultural knowledge (Beebe & Giles, 2009; Romera & Elordieta, 2013). Through an experimental survey, this research closes that gap by investigating whether having more knowledge about the American and Chinese culture increases the chances of cultural accommodation in a business context. Findings indicated that messenger nationality indeed has a significant main effect on accommodation. The responses from participants exposed to an American condition showed they chose less Chinese-like responses than participants exposed to the Chinese conditions (accommodation). Even though cultural knowledge did not have a significant main effect on accommodation, further research into this effect showed that Chinese-like responses were chosen more frequently in the Chinese condition with context compared to participants exposed to a Chinese condition without context. This finding also explains the significant interaction effect between messenger nationality and cultural knowledge. These findings provide the field of business communication with new insights on communicational behavior considering the role of culture and nationality. Moreover, it will contribute to the improvement of internal business communication that is becoming more relevant in companies that are hiring more and more international employees.

Keywords: accommodation, culture, nationality, context, communication, America vs China

INTRODUCTION

With the continuous increase of globalization, communication is becoming more complicated. Imagine a conversation between a young female American sales employee and an elderly male IT employee of Chinese origin. Thinking about this dialogue, a variety of social dimensions introduced by Giles and Ogay (2007), such as gender, age, work status, culture, and ethnicity, are encountered. These are all factors that influence an individual's communication, indicating that people from different cultures communicate differently. For instance, Chinese people tend to communicate very indirectly and, therefore, reading between the lines is important, whereas in the American culture, communication tends to be very direct and straightforward (Lewis, 2018). Such differences may lead to misunderstandings and to avoid those, intercultural communication is becoming more and more important for globally oriented companies.

Avoiding intercultural interaction in the unprecedentedly dynamic world we live in today is unimaginable (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Not only do multinational organizations have international customers and suppliers, but they also have international staff with origins ranging from all over the world. Consequently, multinationals have to deal with the different languages that are present among the staff of the company (van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010). This implies that employees either have to learn each other's languages to communicate or hire a foreign language interpreter (Feely and Harzing, 2003). Another solution to this issue is communicating by means of a *lingua franca* – a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages differ from each other (Feely and Harzing, 2003). On the other hand, employees should take into account the cultural background of one another in order to communicate effectively. Therefore, a communication strategy is needed to enable fluent interaction between speakers of different origins.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communication Accommodation Theory

A strategy developed to solve this intercultural communication problem is *accommodation* which is further explained in the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as the idea that interlocutors adjust (or accommodate) their verbal communication to one another (Giles & Powesland, 1971). Here, interlocutor is used as a synonym for conversation partner. CAT is a framework that explains why, when, and how individuals adapt their communication during

interactions and what the social consequences are of these adaptations (Giles, 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2007). For example, being able to speak in different registers – levels of usage of a language as determined by factors such as the degree of formality and choice of vocabulary – is important. In a business context, applying a formal register will have more positive consequences as you might appear to be more professional, whereas in a private context with friends, informal communication might be more valued as friends expect to see your casual side. Furthermore, CAT provides an overview of both divergent and convergent moves, which can also be described as accommodative and nonaccommodative behavior (Bourhis, 1977; Giles, 2016). These terms will be discussed later in this section. Furthermore, CAT includes interpersonal communication, being the communication driven by the personal identities. This relates to the intergroup stakes of a meeting which causes words, nonverbal cues, and demeanor to be driven by the social identities as a member of a group, such as a cultural group.

The membership to a cultural group is one of the social dimensions that needs to be considered in the accommodation process (Giles & Powesland, 1971; Pardo, 2006). Nevertheless, Giles and Powesland (1971) did not pay specific attention to this single dimension of culture in particular. Therefore, the current study will do an in-depth investigation on the impact of only the dimension of culture on accommodational behavior in communication.

When zooming in on the reason for communication, CAT suggests that individuals communicate to demonstrate their attitude to each other and, as such, the attitude can be perceived as an indicator of the level of social distance between two speakers. Therefore, the term *accommodation* can be described as changing one's communicational behavior by means of constantly reducing and increasing the social distance between one another (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The core strategy to achieve this accommodation is *convergence,* in which individuals adjust their communication in such manner that one becomes more alike to the behavior of the interlocutor (Giles, 1973; Ho, Whittle & Eaves, 2020). For instance, an American employee avoids giving direct negative feedback to his Chinese colleagues, because in Chinese culture that is considered rude, even though it is accepted in American Culture (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010).

Conversely, *divergence* is the strategy accentuating the nonverbal and speech differences between interlocutors. Adjusting this term to the social dimension this study focusses on, the new definition of divergence is the strategy accentuating the cultural differences between interlocutors (Molinsky, 2013). Another strategy that can be considered

alike with divergence is *maintenance* in which a person continues using one's original communication style.

According to Giles (1973), the main reason why individuals adapt in general is the desire to be approved by others. This can be explained by the Similarity Attraction Model by Byrne (1971). This model shows that the more similar a person is to his or her interaction partner, the more the partner will approve of that person, which improves the effectiveness of communication. This, in turn, is associated with a decrease in uncertainty and an increase in mutual understanding (Gudykunst, 1995). By contrast, the Social Identity Theory illustrates that accommodation is a loss of social or personal identity withholding people to adjust (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Previous studies have analyzed the accommodation process, mainly focusing on syntactic convergence during conversational interaction (Giles & Powesland, Pardo, 2006; Pickering & Garrod, 2004). There is a longstanding research stream that discusses how individuals adjust their communication in terms of non-verbal (e.g., gazing, smiling), linguistic (e.g., accent, pitch), and paralinguistic (e.g., utterance length, pauses) features (Giles, 1973; Giles 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2007). Moreover, they are looking at linguistic alignment which is the change in word choice based on the interlocutor's choice (Doyle & Frank, 2016). Yet, the current study will explore the social dimension culture, introduced by Giles and Ogay (2007), through language. From this follows that linguistic alignment also plays a role in the current study besides the cultural accommodation.

Culture on the dimension of high vs low context.

There is a broad range of ways to define culture. One way to describe culture is as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 4). The way in which a person shares their ideas and feelings is, among others, shaped by culture. However, every culture can be separated into multiple dimensions as well. Researchers on culture like Hofstede (1991), Schwartz (1997) and Hall (1976) have introduced different categories. As Hall's (1976) category of context turns out to demonstrate one of the biggest discrepancies between Chinese and American culture, the current investigation will only consider the concept of context (Ray, 2011). The idea of this concept is the facilitation of understanding different cultural orientations. It is described as a continuum, with low and high context on either extreme, placing countries based on their

communication system. Moreover, it summarizes how members of a culture communicate (Gamsriegler, 2005).

For the current investigation, the focus will only be on one dimension, which is the dimension of context created by Hall (1976). In so-called "low-context" communication systems, people communicate a message into an explicit code. Thus, individuals explicitly mention what they want to say without talking about irrelevant things with the goal to give and get information by means of communication with others (Hall, 1976). As a result, most of the meaning is carried by the spoken word, and thus, by the verbal specifications and affirmations (Storti, 1999). High-context communication systems, on the other hand, are those where a great part of the meaning of a message resides in the physical context, which includes tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures. Consequently, less information is carried by the verbal message itself. In high-context communication, people tend to mention irrelevant things until the conversation partner has understood the message correctly (Kim, Pan & Park, 1998). For members of this type of system, the primary goal is not to get and give information, but to strengthen or preserve relationships by ensuring harmony (Hall, 1976). Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that no culture exclusively uses one of these communication styles (Gamsriegler, 2005).

Cultural awareness

Before going into detail on the cultures investigated in this study, an explanation is needed to describe what knowledge about a culture or cultural awareness means. According to Quappe and Cantatore (2007), a person is aware of a culture if they can answer the following questions for that culture: why do they respond in a certain way? Why do they do things in a particular way and how do they see the world? Moreover, cultural awareness is essential for communication, and it involves becoming aware of the cultural values, beliefs and perceptions by standing back from ourselves (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007). Therefore, when it comes to interacting with people from another culture, being aware of each other's culture can avoid misunderstandings. Besides, what is considered inappropriate in one's culture can be considered appropriate in another, because people from a different culture can have different meanings for the same activities. For example, whereas Americans would rather have a quick lunch to save time, Chinese generally value a long lunch, dinner, or coffee break to get to know each other better (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007). Thus, having more knowledge about a certain culture, including its cultural context, can avoid misunderstanding when people apply this

knowledge in their communication. As an extension to this theory, the current study investigates to what extent someone with or without cultural awareness of the interlocutor's culture, adapts their communication to that person.

As briefly mentioned before, this research will focus on the differences between the American and Chinese culture on Hall's (1976) cultural dimension of high versus low context. These differences have been studied by Kim et al. (1998) and Tian (2010) and the current study will build on these investigations. Here, the cultural differences encountered by Kim et al. (1998) and Tian (2010) are used to study whether having specific knowledge of these respective cultures enhances accommodating behavior. Furthermore, it has been found that having more knowledge about a second language enhances the chances that someone will accommodate their speech to a speaker of that language (Beebe & Giles, 2009). This finding could be similar for making the choice to adapt or not depending on the knowledge one has of the other speaker's culture. So, the current investigation combines the studies of Beebe and Giles (2009) and Kim et al. (1998) focusing on the knowledge of the American and Chinese culture and the accommodation process.

American and Chinese culture

In the current investigation, the American and Chinese culture have been selected as they are two opposite cultures on Hall's (1976) context continuum. America has a low-context culture that is task-centered, meaning that the main purpose of communication is to exchange facts, information, and opinions as explicit and direct as possible (Communicaid Group, 2021). On the contrary, China has a high-context culture in which messages tend to be indirect, giving importance to the interpretation of the message according to the context (Tang, 2019). The context dimension of Hall (1976) will be further explained by illustrating the American low-context culture and the Chinese high-context culture demonstrated in business settings.

A characteristic of the Chinese culture is that one has to read in between the lines to understand what a Chinese person means (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). When giving feedback, for example, Americans tend to tell the other in a direct way what is wrong and what needs to be improved, whereas Chinese are more likely to encourage the other to judge their own work or to ask them about their feelings with respect to a certain task (Bettles, 2012; Kim et al., 1998; Lewis, 2018; Tomalin & Nicks, 2010).

Furthermore, politeness needs to be observed at all times in Chinese culture (Lewis, 2018). Therefore, saying no is not common practice and Chinese people rather hint at the

difficulties or say yes and figure it out themselves later. In American culture, just saying no is the right strategy when one wants to say no (Lewis, 2018). Furthermore, a guiding principle with regards to Chinese culture is that harmony should be preserved by saving face (avoiding humiliation and protecting one's public self-image) for everybody in all business occasions (Goffman, 1955; Mao, 1994). Telling others what they want to hear might therefore be evaluated better, whereas for Americans this can only be considered frustrating on the long-term as directness is valued over indirectness (Ma, 1996; Turturici, 2020). Another politeness strategy encountered in Chinese culture is not saying thank you, as accepting a compliment is considered rude (Ma, 1996). The latter is uncommon in American culture where it is common to accept a compliment (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010; Whitmore, 2016). Apologizing, however, is done very explicitly in Chinese culture, because saving face of the other speaker is of greater importance than saving one's own face. On the contrary, American people tend to describe the shortcoming of the circumstance or blame the other person for a problem rather than explicitly saying sorry (Han & Cai, 2010; Kim et al., 1998).

As Chinese people are very implicit in their communication, they tend to get to the point very slowly (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010; Turturici, 2020). In asking a favor, the Chinese person will first apologize for having to bother the other and then he or she will tell an entire story about things that are relatively unnecessary, before asking whether there might be a possibility for the other to do something. Americans, on the other hand, directly state their question after asking whether they can ask a favor (Bettles, 2012; Huang, 2018).

Thus, as portrayed, the Chinese and American culture are not alike when it comes to the culture continuum of Hall (1976) in business settings. The two cultures are extreme opposites with regards to directness, politeness, social relationships, and explicitness. Additionally, Chinese people tend to have specific knowledge about the other speaker's culture, but American people have only little knowledge of the other party's culture (Kim et al., 19998; Lewis, 2018).

The previous description of the American low-context culture and the Chinese high-context culture has put the focus on the business setting. This is done because effective communication within organizations is fundamental, especially since the presence of international staff, within companies that are becoming global, is increasing. Ross Brennan, Turnbell and Wilson (2003) have analyzed the adaptation demonstrated in the buyer-seller relationship, but have not closed the gap on internal communication. Ross Brennan et al. (2003) have found that building trust is an important factor for a speaker to adapt their communicational behavior to the interlocutor in a business context. This study contributes to

that by investigating the effect of yet another factor, namely having specific knowledge of the interlocutor's culture.

Messenger Nationality

As previously discussed, this thesis will focus on the Chinese and American culture. Therefore, the respective nationalities need to be considered as well. Nationality is the legal identification of a person according to the set of norms, standards, and rules that are accepted in the relation between nations which makes a person part, or a national, of a sovereign state (Boll, 2007). Accordingly, a national identity is the feeling of belonging to one nation or state. Sometimes nationality is used as a synonym for ethnicity (Oommen, 1997).

Ethnicity (or nationality) is one of the social dimensions that affects a person's communication according to Giles and Ogay (2007). More importantly, they claim that nationality also plays a role in the accommodation process. The question remains as to whether it enhances the cultural accommodation in particular and, therefore, this study aims to close that gap. Additionally, it puts emphasis on the accommodation of American natives towards Chinese messengers as Giles and Ogay (2007) have not looked at the accommodation process from the perspective of the American nationality in particular with regards to the Chinese nationality. Another study has shown that the majority of the American English speakers accommodates their communication linguistically to non-native speakers (Drljača Margić, 2017). However, there was no specific focus on the adaptation towards Chinese natives and culture was not considered.

In sum, the current study makes four contributions to existing literature. First, this thesis contributes to the well-established literature on CAT by providing insight in the weight of a single social dimension in the accommodation process by focusing on the impact of culture on accommodational behavior (Giles, 1973; Giles, 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2007). Specifically, the study investigates the American and Chinese culture as these are two cultures that have opposite scores with regards to the cultural dimension of high vs low context introduced by Hall (1976) on which the present study focusses (Ray, 2011). Second, this study will extend the research on the difference in communication between the American and Chinese culture by analyzing whether the amount of knowledge of one another's cultural background increases the tendency to accommodate during intercultural interactions (Giles & Powesland, 1997; Kim et al., 1998; Pardo, 2006; Tian, 2010). Third, contributing to the research on accommodation behavior in the business context, this study will provide insight into the internal accommodation behavior

in communication with respect to American and Chinese employees in particular. Lastly, in closing the gap on cultural accommodation with regards to the nationality of the interlocutor, this research provides insight in the effect of messenger nationality on cultural accommodation behavior. Specifically, it will show whether Americans adapt their communication culturally when the messenger is from the Chinese nationality. Figure 1 will show the conceptual model of this investigation. All in all, this study aims to answer the research question:

RQ: To what extent does the nationality of the interlocutor and having more knowledge of their culture enhance accommodation?

This has resulted in the following hypotheses:

H_1: Americans will choose more Chinese-like responses when the messenger is Chinese (accommodation) than when the messenger is American.

H_2: Americans will choose more Chinese-like responses when they have previous knowledge of the Chinese culture than when they do not have previous knowledge of the Chinese culture.

H_3: Cultural Knowledge will positively moderate the relationship between Messenger Nationality and Accommodation.

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows. First, the methodology is presented, followed by an analysis and a discussion of the results. After that, conclusions about the adaptation of American individuals are drawn and implications for theory and practice as well as limitations are presented.

Figure 1.   *The Conceptual Model*
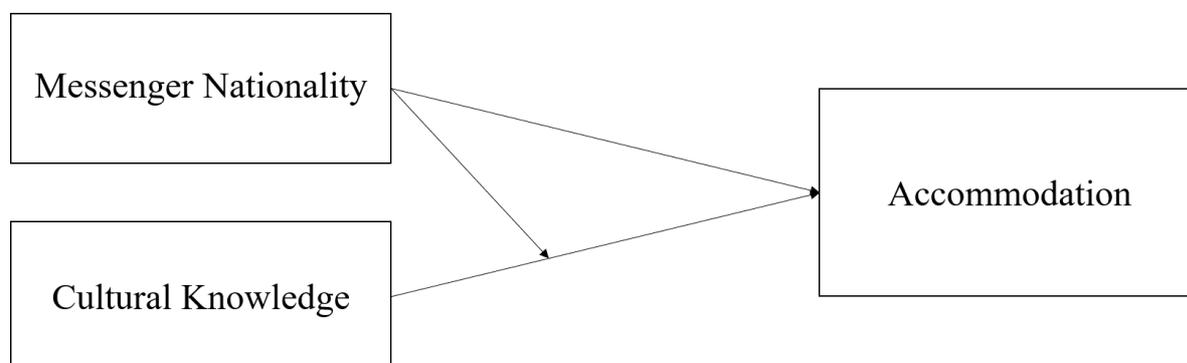
METHODOLOGY

To examine the hypothesized impact of having specific knowledge of the interlocutor's culture and their nationality on accommodational communication, an experimental survey was executed. This was done by means of the *Qualtrics tool*. The participants were asked to read some messages from fictional colleagues to which they could respond, choosing one of the two offered answer options, one being high-context (Chinese response) and one being low-context (American response). The instruments section will go into more detail about this, and all the trials of the experiment can be found in **Appendix C.**

Design. Accordingly, the study contained a 2x2 between-subjects design with the independent variable *messenger nationality* consisting of two groups: American and Chinese, and with the independent variable *cultural knowledge* being divided into two groups: no context and context. Consequently, the experiment had four conditions and participants would only take part in one of these. Based on gender and age, participants were assigned to a condition making sure they were equally distributed among the four conditions.

Subjects. The subjects were recruited by means of sending the link of the online experimental questionnaire to members of the target group via email and LinkedIn, meaning that they were approached using a convenience sampling method. These members, in turn, were asked to spread the experimental questionnaire in their network causing a snowball sampling effect. Due to the limited number of responses, the requirement of age was adapted from being older than 25 years old to being 18+ years old. A total of 255 participants took part in the experimental survey. After filtering out the participants, who did not finish the survey, were not US-Americans, did not have experience in a business context and did not reply correctly to the comprehension question, 105 valid responses were left. A total of 49 of those participants were male and 56 were female with an age ranging from 18 to 76 years from which most were between 25 and 35 years old. Furthermore, the level of education completed by the participants ranged from high school graduate to a professional degree. For most of the participants, the highest education completed was a bachelor's degree. A total of 36 participants responded to the Chinese condition without context, 30 participants responded to the American condition without context, 23 participants responded to the Chinese condition with context and 16 participants responded to the American condition with context.

To test whether these characteristics were different for the group of subjects exposed to the different conditions, a variety of *t*-tests and Chi-square tests were executed. First, a Chi-

square test showed no significant relation between nationality and gender ($\chi^2(1) = .04$, $p = .833$). This means that, significantly, there were not more male respondents exposed to the American conditions (44,9%) than to the Chinese conditions (55,1%). There were also not significantly more female respondents exposed to the American conditions (42,9%) than to the Chinese conditions (57,1%). An independent samples *t*-test showed no significant difference between the exposure to the Chinese ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.43$) and American ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.51$) condition with regards to age ($t(103) = .43$, $p = .670$). Besides that, a second Chi-square test showed no significant relation between nationality and education ($\chi^2(7) = 7.11$, $p = .417$). This indicates that the respondents, based on their educational level, were equally divided over the American and Chinese conditions.

Secondly, a third Chi-square test showed no significant relation between context and gender ($\chi^2(1) = .79$, $p = .373$). This means that, significantly, there were not more male respondents exposed to the condition without context (67,3%) than to the condition with context (32,7%). Furthermore, it indicates that there were also not significantly more female respondents exposed to the condition without context (58,9%) than to the condition with context (41,1%). An independent samples *t*-test showed no significant difference between the exposure to the condition with ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.43$) and without context ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.49$) with regards to age ($t(103) = .01$, $p = .991$). Furthermore, a last Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between context and education ($\chi^2(7) = 3.88$, $p = .793$). This indicates that the respondents, based on their educational level, were equally divided over the condition with and without context.

Materials. As elaborated above, the experiment featured a 2x2 design combining the presence or absence of cultural knowledge with the Chinese or American nationality of the messenger. This design resulted in four different conditions. Moreover, the conditions were named: 1. ChineseNoContext, 2. AmericanNoContext, 3, ChineseContext and 4. AmericanContext. Subsequently, the stimulus material consisted of American English messages posted on the communication platform *Intranet* used by businesses for easy internal communication. Furthermore, each condition consisted out of six trials (i.e., messages; compliment, feedback, favor, deadline, social relationship, apology).

The first group, consisting of 36 participants, was randomly assigned to the ChineseNoContext condition. They were exposed to six messages posted by a fictional Chinese colleague and the participants had not been provided with knowledge about the interlocutor's cultural background (i.e., context). There was no possibility to return to any previous question.

The second group (30 participants) was randomly assigned to the AmericanNoContext condition which was entirely the same as the condition of the first group except for the nationality of the sender, which was American. The ChineseContext condition was shown to a third group consisting of 23 participants. First, they were asked to read a brief description of the fictional Chinese colleague which included information about the Chinese culture (with the focus on the context continuum of Hall, 1976; see **Appendix C**). Then, the participants were exposed to six messages posted by this fictional Chinese colleague. The fourth group of 16 participants was randomly assigned to the AmericanConext condition. The participants were asked to read a brief description of the fictional American colleague which included information about the American culture (with the focus on the context continuum of Hall, 1976; see **Appendix C**). Then, the participants were exposed to six messages posted by the fictional American colleague. Hence, the main differences between the four conditions to which the four groups of participants were exposed, 1. ChineseNoContext, 2. AmericanNoContext, 3. ChineseContext and 4. AmericanContext, were the absence or presence of the cultural context and the nationality of the messenger. However, the participants exposed to the condition without cultural context did get a short introductory text that briefly introduced who the messenger was.

Table 1. *Condition Descriptions*

	No context	Context
American messenger	- No cultural knowledge - American messenger 6 trials	- Cultural knowledge - American messenger 6 trials
Chinese messenger	- No cultural knowledge - Chinese messenger 6 trials	- Cultural knowledge - Chinese messenger 6 trials

Instruments. By means of the experimental questionnaire, participants were tested on the extent to which they adapted their communication to the messenger's culture. As described, participants exposed to the third and fourth condition received a short description of the Chinese or American interlocutors' cultural background, respectively. This description informed the participants on how the respective cultures act communicatively with regards to complimenting, giving feedback, asking favors, meeting deadline, maintaining social relationships, and apologizing. The Chinese description, for example, informed the participant that in China it is considered very rude to say 'no' when someone asks you a favor. On the

contrary, the American description informed the participant that saying 'no' when someone is asking you a favor you cannot fulfill, is appropriate. Accordingly, these concepts were integrated in the messages sent by the fictional employees in each condition.

To find out whether participants would accommodate to these messages, participants were offered two answer options: accommodating response and a non-accommodating response. These two answer options were either related to the high-context culture or to the low-context culture. As China has a high-context culture, the high-context response options were based on theories on how a Chinese person would typically respond to the six introduced types of messages (Bettles, 2012; Lewis, 2018; Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). An example message is illustrated below, which can also be found in **appendix C** just as the rest of the messages (i.e., trials). As the example message was sent from the Chinese fictional colleague Li Wei, the first response was the non-accommodative response as in Chinese culture a compliment is not accepted. The second response was the accommodative response as here the compliment was downgraded which is in line with how Chinese people tend to respond to compliments.

Experimental message 1:

*Message from **Li Wei**: compliment*

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 do you respond? [Acceptance of compliment]

- 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.

These messages and responses were validated by three people who were born and raised in Chinese culture. Accordingly, the low-context response options were formed in a similar way, basing the responses on theories on how an American person would typically react to the six types of messages (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010; Whitmore, 2016). These messages and responses were checked by two individuals, who were born and raised in America. Moreover, accommodation was evaluated by analyzing in how many of the six messages participants accommodated or not accommodated. The mean of the number Chinese-like responses would indicate to what extent they would or would not accommodate their communication.

To check the internal validity of all four conditions a Cronbach's Alpha was executed. Moreover, this test showed how closely related the sets of items in the experiment were as a

group (Cronbach et al., 1972). The reliability of the variable 'accommodation' comprising six items was satisfactory: α = .58 (Taber, 2018). Considering that the experiment was not based on an existing academic experiment, but created by the experimenters and never used before, this is considered a high Cronbach's Alpha. This is relevant, as it shows that even though it is a new experiment, the validity is still confirmed.

Procedure. After opening the link, participants were first exposed to a welcome screen, followed by a consent form giving the experimenters permission to use their responses. Subsequently, a short questionnaire followed for obtaining insights into the participants' age, level of schooling, native language, status of employment, and international business experience (see **Appendix C**). Once the participant continued to the experiment, they were asked to respond to one of the four conditions to which they were assigned based on their gender and age. The ones assigned to a condition without context, were exposed to six randomized messages from their fictional Chinese colleague Li Wei or from their fictional American colleague David Cooper without obtaining further information. However, the ones being assigned to a condition with context were first given a brief cultural description of the Chinese or the American colleague followed by two comprehension questions to test whether the participants had actually read the descriptions. After that, they were also asked to read six randomized messages from their fictional Chinese colleague Li Wei or their American fictional colleague David Cooper. For all four conditions, participants had the opportunity to choose between the two answer options for responding to the given message, one being a high-context (Chinese) response and one being low-context (American) response.

As this study was part of a bigger experiment some extra questions were asked in the experimental questionnaire. However, the data that was gathered with regards to these questions was not used in this investigation. These were questions concerning the perceived friendliness of the fictional American and Chinese messengers, the participants' willingness to adapt and the extent to which the participants had prior knowledge of the Chinese culture. The specific questions can be found in **Appendix C.**

Statistical treatment. In order to check to what extent having more knowledge of the interlocutor's culture enhances accommodation, the following variables were introduced: Messenger Nationality, Cultural Knowledge and Accommodation. Messenger Nationality is an independent nominal variable with two levels (1. American and 2. Chinese), Cultural Knowledge is a nominal independent variable with also two levels (1. NoContext and 2.

Context) and Accommodation is a dependent ratio variable ranging from 'not accommodating' to 'accommodating'.

To examine whether Americans adapt their communication to a Chinese person depending on their knowledge of this person's cultural background, a quantitative analysis was done by means of SPSS, using a two-way independent measures ANOVA (between-subjects ANOVA) (IBM Corp, 2021).

RESULTS

A two-way analysis of variance with Cultural Knowledge (NoContext and Context) and Messenger Nationality (Chinese and American) as factors showed a significant interaction effect between Messenger Nationality and Cultural Knowledge (F (1, 101) = 6.24 p = .014; see figure 2; see table 3). Here, accommodation is the number of chosen Chinese-like responses. This result will be interpreted by means of a t-test later in this chapter. The two-way analysis of variance also showed a significant main effect of Messenger Nationality on Accommodation (F (1, 101) = 78.15 p < 001; see table 3), meaning that participants exposed to an American condition (M = 2.04, SD = .19) chose less Chinese-like responses then participants exposed to a Chinese condition (M = 4.24, SD = .16). Moreover, Americans accommodate their responses to the Chinese culture when they receive messages from a Chinese messenger. This significant effect also shows that the control group (participants exposed to the American conditions) behaves as Americans would typically behave, choosing more American-like responses when responding to an American messenger. However, the analysis did not show a significant main effect of Cultural Knowledge on Accommodation (F (1, 101) = 1.42, p = .236; see table 3). The descriptive statistics of this test can be found in table 2.

Figure 2. *The Influence of Cultural Knowledge and Messenger Nationality on Accommodation*
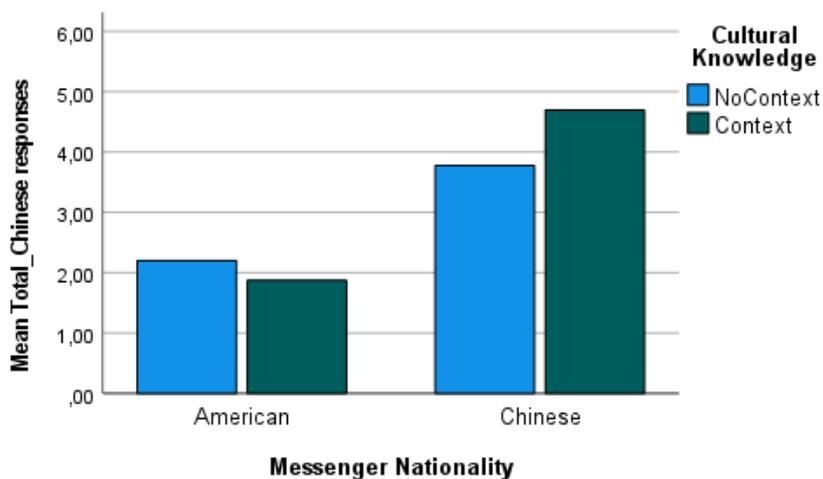
Table 2: *Descriptive statistics of the impact of Cultural Knowledge and Messenger Nationality on Accommodation*

		Accommodation		
Nationality	Context	M	S	N
American	NoContext	2,20	1,13	30
	Context	1,86	1,45	16
	Total	2,09	1,24	46
Chinese	NoContext	3,78	1,10	36
	Context	4,70	1,33	23
	Total	4,14	1,27	59
Total	NoContext	3,06	1,36	66
	Context	3,54	1,96	39
	Total	3,24	1,61	105

To interpret the lack of a significant main effect of Cultural Knowledge on Accommodation and the significant interaction effect between Messenger Nationality and Cultural Knowledge, a *t*-test was executed. An independent samples *t*- test showed no significant difference between the context and no context condition with regards to American nationality (*t* (24.81) = .78, *p* = .444; see figure 2). Nonetheless, it did show a significant difference between the context and no context condition with regards to the Chinese nationality (*t* (40.53) = -2.76, *p* = .009; see figure 2). More specifically, participants who were exposed to the Chinese condition, chose more Chinese-like responses in the condition with context (*M* = 4.70, *SD* = 1.33) than in the condition without context (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.10). The descriptive statistics can be found in table 2. As Cultural Knowledge (context) only seems to play a significant role for the Chinese conditions, it explains the lack of a main effect between Cultural Knowledge and Accommodation.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Hypothesized direction	*p*-value	Results
H1	MC → AC	Positive	<001	Supported
H2	CK → AC	Positive	.236	Not significant[1]
H3	CK → MN	Positive	.014	Supported

[1] The main effect of Cultural Context on Accommodation was not significant, but the difference between context and no context for the Chinese conditions was significant (i.e., *p* = .009)
MN = Messenger Nationality
AC = Accommodation
CK = Cultural Knowledge

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Discussion and Implications

The current research makes four main theoretical contributions. First, it extends the research on The Communication Accommodation Theory. Rather than focusing on the impact of a combination of social dimensions of Giles (1973) on the accommodation process, this study provides insight in the weight of a single social dimension, namely, culture (Giles, 1973; Giles, 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2007). Moreover, the focus was on the American and Chinese culture

which have opposite scores with regards to the cultural dimension of context introduced by Hall (1976). Second, this investigation contributes to research on the difference in communication between the American and Chinese culture by analyzing whether the amount of knowledge of one another's cultural background increases the chances that one will accommodate during intercultural interactions (Giles & Powesland, 1997; Kim et al., 1998). Third, in contributing to the research on adaptation behavior in the business context, this study provides insight into the internal accommodation behavior in communication with respect to American and Chinese employees in particular. Lastly, in closing the gap on cultural accommodation and nationality, this research provides insight in the effect of messenger nationality on cultural accommodation behavior. Specifically, it shows whether Americans adapt their communication culturally when the messenger is from the Chinese nationality. Through an experimental study, this research answers the question to what extent the nationality of the messenger an having more knowledge of the interlocutor's cultural background impact accommodating behavior in internal business communication.

Messenger Nationality x Cultural Knowledge. When looking at the interaction between messenger nationality and cultural knowledge, the results were in line with the expectations, confirming H_3. The analysis showed that cultural knowledge positively moderates the relation between messenger nationality and the level of accommodation. Moreover, Americans choose more Chinese-like responses when the messenger is Chinese (accommodation), and they have previous knowledge of the Chinese culture.

Messenger Nationality. A number of exploratory studies (e.g., Giles, 1973; Giles and Ogay, 2007; Ho, Whittle & Eaves, 2020) proposed that accommodating in general, and especially accommodating to the cultural background of the interlocutor is essential for effective communication. This indicates that it is expected that regardless of one's nationality, one will attempt to adapt their communication to someone from a different culture. However, it is also expected that people who have the same nationality and culture do not need to accommodate as they tend to have similar responses due to their shared set of norms, standards, rules and beliefs (Boll, 2007; Giles & Powesland, 1971). Accordingly, the results show that there was a significant effect of messenger nationality on accommodation. This means that Americans do accommodate their communication to the (Chinese) interlocutor. As the American conditions are a control group, the lower number of Chinese-like responses confirmed that the Americans behaved as American typically behave. Besides, to an American messenger, participants do not have to accommodate. These finding are not only in line with

the theories of Giles (1973) and Giles and Powesland (1971), but they also confirm H_1. Moreover, the current investigation has contributed to existing literature by demonstrating that people with an American nationality in particular, accommodate their communication to the Chinese culture when communicating with a Chinese person. This closes the gap of previous studies that have not studied these nationalities in particular.

Cultural Knowledge. The value cultural knowledge derived from the level of knowledge a person has from a certain culture has been proven to be useful for effective communication (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007). Moreover, several studies have demonstrated that being aware of each other's language enhances the chances that someone will accommodate their speech to a speaker of that language (Beebe & Giles, 2009) which implies that this could be the same for knowledge about culture as culture is related to a language (Romera & Elordieta, 2013). However, the results demonstrated no significant effect of cultural knowledge on accommodation. This can be explained by the fact that the American conditions were a control group. Instead of choosing more Chinese-like responses, Americans were expected to choose more American-like responses, which confirms that they respond to an American messenger in a typically American way. Besides, Americans do not have to accommodate to Americans as they are already from the same culture. Nonetheless, after zooming in on the results for the Chinese conditions in particular, it was found that Americans do indeed accommodate more to the Chinese culture when they have more knowledge of that culture. This is in line with the expectations, indicating that H_2 is partially confirmed. Moreover, the current investigation has provided an extension to the existing literature, demonstrating that besides knowledge of another language, knowledge of another culture does also enhance one's level of accommodation.

Managerial Implications

Complementary to the theoretical contributions, this study also provides clear directions for successful improvement of internal business communication that is becoming more relevant in companies that are hiring more and more international employees. All in all, based on the current investigation it can be concluded that the nationality of the messenger has a relation with the level of accommodation in internal communication. Furthermore, having more knowledge of the Chinese culture, with regards to context, enhances accommodation. Therefore, international businesses should encourage their staff to learn about the cultural background of colleagues as this will increase the effectiveness of the internal communication.

Limitations & Further Research

The current research's development of a theoretical framework provides a first foundation for further research on accommodation behavior in relation to culture. As for the majority of studies, this research contains limitations that could serve as a starting point for future research.

First, the number of participants in the experiment from whom the responses were valid was only 105, meaning that not all conditions consisted of minimally 30 participants. Despite the attempt to broaden the target group based on age, only few new valid responses were obtained within the constrained time frame. This means that statistically seen, the analysis may be underpowered. One of the reasons for the difficulties in obtaining valid responses was the lack of American network among the researchers. Another important reason is that there were many requirements that the target group needed to meet, making it hard to find suitable candidates. Further research should intent to achieve a larger sample size to increase the power of the experiment. Moreover, larger samples represent the characteristics of the population more accurately (Cohen, 1990; Cohen, 1992; Cronbach, Gleser, Nanda & Rajaratnam, 1972). In order to do so, it is recommended to make the target group as broad as possible, aiming for a minimum of 30 respondents per group.

Secondly, the current investigation has only looked at the effect of cultural knowledge and messenger nationality on accommodation. Nonetheless, it does not control for the effect of external factors such as prior knowledge. In the experiment of this study, conditions were distinguished in groups with and without cultural context. Moreover, one group received some cultural context before responding to the experimental trials, whereas the other group did not. However, it has not been checked whether the participants had prior knowledge of the Chinese culture. This means that even the participants in the no context conditions could have had some relevant knowledge, affecting the results of this study, and possibly resulting in a less significant result. Another external factor that may have had an effect on the results of this investigation is the participants' willingness to adapt. If there have been participants in the study whose willingness to adapt is low, then it could have been the case that the results would have been more significant when their responses would have been subtracted from the data. Therefore, future research should look into the effects of external factors on the accommodation process.

Third, it could be case that the offered responses in the experiment were not accurate enough. After receiving feedback from participants on the survey via e-mail, word-of-mouth, and comments on the platform Research Gate, it was discovered that the American participants feel like the American response options are not aggressive enough. Even though the responses used in the experiment were checked by US-Americans, they could have been more accurate. Future research might repeat the current investigation making the American response options more representative for Americans by confirming the response options with a wider group of Americans for accuracy.

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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: Sanne van Lieshout

Student number: s1019956

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: Aarle-Rixtel, 14-06-2021

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST EACH (VERSION 1.6, NOVEMBER 2020)

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 28 recognized 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 → Standard experimental research into linguistic judgement of language fragments = 4 → 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 regards 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

APPENDIX C : EXPERIMENTAL SURVEY

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

You have taken note of and you understand this information.

◯ Yes

◯ No

You voluntarily agree to participate.

◯ Yes

◯ No

You are at least 18 years of age.

◯ Yes

◯ No

By clicking the arrow in the bottom right corner you will proceed to the survey.

End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: Background Variables Start

Please indicate your age category (e.g., 36 - 45).

○ < 25

○ 25 - 35

○ 36 - 45

○ 46 - 55

○ 56 - 65

○ 66 - 75

○ 76 - 85

○ > 85

Please indicate your gender.

○ Male

○ Female

○ Non-binary

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

Is American English your native language?

○ Yes

○ No

Are you currently employed?

○ Yes

○ No

Do you have experience in business/corporate? If yes, please indicate how many years in a number. (e.g., 6)

○ Yes _____

○ No

Start of Block: Production - Chinese/No context

In this part of the survey, you will read some messages to which you will be asked to respond. Imagine that you work for an international company with colleagues such as Li Wei. He was born and raised in China. You are currently working on the same project together.

Read the following messages from your colleague and choose the response you find most appropriate for the situation.

Page Break

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.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
I am sorry to bother you, but last week I started a new project, and it seems like this project is not in line with my expertise. However, it is related to a project you are working on. I know you are busy, but it would be amazing if you could help me out.

How would you respond?

○ Unfortunately, I cannot help you because I have a deadline coming up. I do not have the time, but I hope you will manage.

○ Unfortunately, I cannot help you because I have a deadline coming up. I will try my hardest to see if I can make some time for you.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
It is my brother's birthday party tomorrow. I have to go because family is really important to me. I will work on the conference later this week instead of tomorrow.

How would you respond?

○ Thank you for informing me. 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.

○ Thank you for informing me. Enjoy your time with your family. I hope to receive the notes as soon as possible.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
Last week, I finished the banners for the business fair, and it would be perfect if you could check the content. Now I finally have time to finish other tasks.

How would you respond?

○ I will step by your office when you are available.

○ I will step by your office when it is convenient for you.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
I am sorry to bother you, but I think it is time to make some final decisions with regard to the division of our department's budget. I am sure we can figure it out quickly, so I propose we go out for dinner tonight. Then we can also talk about how your weekend was.

How would you respond?

○ That sounds good. I already have some ideas about the budget division. Let's discuss that tonight.

○ That sounds good. I already have some ideas about the budget division. I would love to hear about your weekend too.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
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.

How would you respond?

○ I did not realize the meeting was supposed to be today. What a shame... This will not happen again.

○ I did not realize the meeting was supposed to be today. I am really sorry… This will not happen again.

Page Break

I have adapted the way I respond to Li Wei.

○ Yes

○ No

Page Break

Please respond to the following statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think Li Wei is a friendly person.							

In this part of the survey, you will read some messages to which you will be asked to respond. Imagine that you work for an international company with colleagues such as David Cooper. He was born and raised in the USA. You are currently working on the same project together.

Read the following messages from your colleague and choose the response you find most appropriate for the situation.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
Wow, I have never heard someone speak so well as you did during the press conference last night.

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I really appreciate your feedback. It would not have been such a success without the speechwriter.

○ You are so kind, I really appreciate your feedback. It would not have been such a success without the speechwriter.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
I have a favor to ask you. Could you send me the paperwork regarding the business deal we closed last week?

How would you respond?

○ Sure, but I unfortunately do not have access to the paperwork today. Can I send it to you when I am back in the office?

○ Sure, but I unfortunately do not have access to the paperwork today. I will take care of it.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
I am sorry to inform you that I have not been able to finish the presentation for the board of partners due to some personal circumstances.

How would you respond?

○ I hope all is well and thanks for letting me know. How do you suggest we get this finished? The partners are coming tomorrow, but we can postpone the meeting. Things come up in our lives, but please let me know as soon as possible in the future if you cannot meet a deadline.

○ I hope all is well and thanks for letting me know. How do you suggest we get this finished? The partners are coming tomorrow, but we can postpone the meeting. Let's set another deadline.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
As you know, I had my first product presentation today for the board and colleagues. I was wondering whether you could give me some feedback.

How would you respond?

○ Sure, I will send you my feedback after today's sales meeting.

○ Sure, I will come by your office after today's sales meeting.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
The deadline for the security plan is coming up soon. I think it is a good idea if we have dinner to plan the last tasks that need to be finished.

How would you respond?

○ I agree. Also, I have some questions that I would like to discuss.

○ I agree. Also, I am curious to know how you and your family are doing.

Page Break

Message from David Cooper:
I have unfortunately not yet received the details of the brochures for the business fair next month that you had promised to deliver. Can you send them to me as soon as possible?

How would you respond?

◯ Sorry, it slipped my mind. Here are the details on the brochure. Looking forward to your feedback and I will get this done in time for the business fair.

◯ I am so sorry. I must have missed your email. Here are the details on the brochure. Looking forward to your feedback and I will get this done in time for the business fair.

Page Break

Please respond to the following statement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think David Cooper is a friendly person.							

End of Block: Production: American/No Context

Start of Block: Production: Chinese/Context

In this part of the survey, you will read some messages to which you will be asked to respond. Imagine that you work for an international company with colleagues such as Li Wei. He was born and raised in China. You are currently working on the same project together.

- Since Li Wei has a Chinese background, his way of communicating is different from how Americans tend to communicate.
- Modesty is important in the Chinese culture, which results in compliments being played down. Agreeing with questions can be perceived as arrogance.
- Li Wei is used to not asking for favors, as the Chinese culture requires members to seek answers for themselves.
- In Chinese culture, deadlines are flexible. They tend to be discussed in an implicit way resulting in room for their own interpretation.
- Indirect communication is common in China. They prefer discussing things face-to-face personally, which takes more time.
- Feedback is given implicitly and in a positive manner. Suggestions are preferred over negative feedback.
- Personal relations are formed over dinner with colleagues. Not only business is discussed, but also personal topics like family, hobbies, dreams, and wishes. Personal relations are fundamental to creating a successful business relationship.
- Apologies are giving very explicitly. People from a Chinese culture tend to blame themselves instead of others.

Read the following messages from your colleague and choose the response you find most appropriate for the situation.

Communication in China is preferably done in an indirect manner.

○ True

○ Neither true nor false

○ False

Page Break

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.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
I am sorry to bother you, but last week I started a new project, and it seems like this project is not in line with my expertise. However, it is related to a project you are working on. I know you are busy, but it would be amazing if you could help me out.

How would you respond?

○ Unfortunately, I cannot help you because I have a deadline coming up. I do not have the time, but I hope you will manage.

○ Unfortunately, I cannot help you because I have a deadline coming up. I will try my hardest to see if I can make some time for you.

Page Break

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
It is my brother's birthday party tomorrow. I have to go because family is really important to me. I will work on the conference later this week instead of tomorrow.

How would you respond?

○ Thank you for informing me. 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.

○ Thank you for informing me. Enjoy your time with your family. I hope to receive the notes as soon as possible.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
Last week, I finished the banners for the business fair, and it would be perfect if you could check the content. Now I finally have time to finish other tasks.

How would you respond?

○ I will step by your office when you are available.

○ I will step by your office when it is convenient for you.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
I am sorry to bother you, but I think it is time to make some final decisions with regards to the division of our department's budget. I am sure we can figure it out quickly, so I propose we go out for dinner tonight. Then we can also talk about how your weekend was.

How would you respond?

○ That sounds good. I already have some ideas about the budget division. Let's discuss that tonight.

○ That sounds good. I already have some ideas about the budget division. I would love to hear about your weekend too.

Page Break

Message from Li Wei:
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.

How would you respond?

○ I did not realize the meeting was supposed to be today. What a shame... This will not happen again.

○ I did not realize the meeting was supposed to be today. I am really sorry… This will not happen again.

Page Break

I have adapted the way I respond to Li Wei.

○ Yes

○ No

Please respond to the following statement.

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I think Li Wei is a friendly person.							

End of Block: Production: Chinese/Context

Start of Block: Production: American/Context

In this part of the survey, you will read some messages to which you will be asked to respond. Imagine that you work for an international company with colleagues such as David Cooper. He was born and raised in the USA. You are currently working on the same project together.

- Compliments are accepted as a sign of gratitude and shared with the rest of the team.
- Deadlines are met on time and planned ahead. There is little room for flexibility.
- Explicit communication is preferred. This results in very direct replies in order to be clear when asked for a favor or feedback.
- Feedback is given explicitly by mentioning both positive and negative elements and including tips. Opinions are not perceived as bad because honesty is appreciated.
- Business meals are mainly used for business purposes and include little chit-chat.
- Apologies are given implicitly in American culture. They tend to describe the circumstances of their

shortcoming rather than explicitly saying sorry.

In the following section, you will be asked to respond to some emails that David sent you in a way you think most appropriate for the situation.

Directness and honesty are appreciated when giving feedback in American culture.

○ True

○ Neither true nor false

○ False

Page Break

⤭

Message from David Cooper:
Wow, I have never heard someone speak so well as you did during the press conference last night.

How would you respond?

○ Thank you, I really appreciate your feedback. It would not have been such a success without the speechwriter.

○ You are so kind, I really appreciate your feedback. It would not have been such a success without the speechwriter.

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End of Block: Production: American/Context

Start of Block: Final Questionnaire

In the following section, you will be asked some background information about your own experience and working environment. Choose the option that applies the most.

Please respond to the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have contact with people from a Chinese background outside of a work environment.							
I have contact with people from a Chinese background in a work environment.							
I tend to take the other person's cultural background into account when I am communicating with them.							

End of Block: Final Questionnaire