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Appreciation of directness in salary negotiations, impact of accommodation and culture

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of culture and communication accommodation on speaker appreciation of directness in business negotiations. Based on Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973) the study sought to find differences in speaker appreciation between Dutch and French culture. The Netherlands and France were chosen as they differ in directness in communication (Le Pair & Van Mulken, 2008). A total of 59 participants took part in an experiment. Subjects were asked to listen to recordings of salary negotiations between an employee and their manager. Half of the participants listened to a recording in which the employee maintained an indirect communication style throughout the interview and half of the participants listened to a recording in which the employee started the negotiation using an indirect communication style but converged to a direct communication style at the end of the negotiation. Afterwards subjects filled out a questionnaire, evaluating the employee on success, efficiency, professionalism, pleasantness, and politeness. French participants rated the employee that converged their indirect communication to direct communication of the manager significantly lower on success, efficiency, and politeness than the employee that maintained an indirect communication style. Dutch participants did not show any significant differences between the maintaining and converging difference. These results indicate that accommodation plays a larger role in the French culture than the Dutch culture.

Keywords: CAT, negotiations, language, culture, politeness

Introduction

Cross-cultural interactions in a commercial setting have been occurring for millennia. One could think of the Romans purchasing wine from Egyptians (Cartwright & Amin, 2024), Dutch colonisers purchasing Manhattan Island from native Americans (Otto, 2015), or the British purchasing tea from the Chinese (Tsai, 2003). Despite the long history of cross-cultural interactions, cultural differences specifically in a business context were not thoroughly researched until the 1980's. Organisations are becoming increasingly international and have both more international partners as well as international employees. Consequently, it is vital to better understand cultural sensitivities in business communication. Adler (1986) described cross-cultural scholarship in organisations as "comparing organizational behaviour across countries and cultures", and by doing so trying "to understand and improve the interaction of coworkers, managers, executives, clients, suppliers, and alliance partners from countries and cultures around the world.". Much like their ancestors, Italian salespeople discuss prices of wines with Egyptian buyers, negotiating to reach the best outcome for both.

Understanding negotiations is especially important in this globalised day and age where governments and organisations increasingly operate across borders. Be it in politics, business, education, even in day-to-day life, many joint decisions are made through negotiations. Adler and Brett (2004) describe negotiations as "a communication process by which two or more interdependent parties resolve some matter over which they are in conflict". With a communication process is meant that the parties that are involved will try to reach a verbal or written agreement. The parties are interdependent because they both desire something from the other. A buyer, for example, wants to buy a product from the seller. The seller, on the other hand, wants the buyer to give a good price for the product. In this sense buyer and seller are in conflict, both aiming for an outcome that is most beneficial to them.

Understanding negotiations offers many difficulties, mainly because they are affected by many factors. In their overview of negotiations Brett and Thompson (2016) list multiple interdependent factors, including for example cognitive and motivational biases, personality, motivation, emotions and moods, trust, reputations and relationships, gender, power and status. Needless to say, negotiations are complex processes. Brett and Thompson also list culture as an influencing factor. Culture is notoriously difficult to define. This paper will use an adaption of the definition proposed by Hofstede (2011): "Culture is the combined values, rituals, heroes and symbols by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group."

Hofstede's work on cultural dimensions overlap and encompass many of the factors listed by Brett and Thompson (2016). He identified six cultural dimensions that help explain how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. These dimensions are Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. His dimensions provided a foothold to work with in cross-cultural research. The dimensions illustrate that culture highly influences biases, personal views and motivations, and the way one experiences the world around them.

Consequently, culture has a tremendous impact on one's behaviour in negotiations. People from different cultures might approach negotiations completely differently. To increase the likelihood of a successful negotiation it is wise to know about the cultural norms of all parties involved. Brett (2000) proposes that culture affects negotiator's strategy, interests and priorities. According to her, there are systematic differences between people from different national cultures in how they process and behave in negotiations. In some cultures, the goals of negotiations are dictated by what an individual can immediately gain from them. Negotiators from these cultures will try to negotiate for the best short-term outcome. Other cultures are more open to agree on a less optimal short-term solution if this increases the likelihood of securing a better long-term outcome.

The idea that cultures can differ in how they process information was introduced by Edward Hall in his book *Beyond* Culture (1976). He distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures. These dimensions have an influence on how people communicate. This in turn also affects behaviour in negotiations. High context cultures generally infer information from what is known already, information is not shared explicitly, rather deduced from the context. Nationalities that are typically associated with this cultural style are Japanese and Chinese. Contrarily, in low-context cultures information is shared explicitly. Middle eastern countries and the US are typically mentioned as low-context cultures. These differences can also be seen in the way one communicates. High-context cultures often use indirect language. The underlying value in high-context cultures is preserving harmony. Speakers want to maintain a positive image, also known as face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The use of very polite as well as ambiguous language prevents the other from taking offense. Contrarily, low-context cultures will often be to the point, using direct language. The underlying value in low-context cultures is transparency. Trust is gained by being honest, showing one's true intentions and not beating around the bush.

When these cultures come together, it creates a mixture of separate, different communication styles that gradually merge and come together in one unified style. Hall (1983, p.155) describes how he saw people from three different cultural backgrounds in a Mexican marketplace interact and described it as a "perpetual ballet" in which "Each culture (…) was choreographed in its own way with its own beat, tempo, and rhythm." Adair & Brett (2005) interpret this observation of a negotiation taking place and further expand the dancing metaphor and propose that negotiations between different cultures take on this dancing like form. Partners that do not know each other yet first awkwardly feel each other out and slowly get to know each other, to then dance in harmony. In this negotiation process, the role of communication is vital.

One of the main processes allowing to reduce markers of culture differences in communication is known as Communication Accommodation Theory or CAT (Giles, 1973). When Howard Giles first introduced CAT in 1973, he observed that speakers sometimes alter their language use to that of a conversation partner of a different cultural background. Language use includes many aspects of both verbal and non-verbal communication such as accents, word choice, foreign language use, speaking rate, pausing frequency and length. The underlying idea finds its foundation in social psycholinguistic research on similarity - attraction. Giles and Powesland (1997) suggest "an individual can induce another to evaluate him more favourably by reducing dissimilarities between them. The process of speech accommodation operates on this principle and as such may be a reflection of an individual's desire for social approval.". According to Giles and Powesland, if the listener perceives that the speaker is putting in effort to dissimulate cultural differences, this will likely be perceived positively.

CAT distinguished three possible approaches that a speaker can take. The first one is where the speaker adapts their communication to decrease cultural differences with the other, this is called convergence. Convergence can happen naturally, without the speaker noticing it. The second possibility is that the speaker deliberately changes their communication style to increase cultural differences with the other, this is called divergence. The third and final option is that the speaker does not change their communication style, so neither increases, nor decreases cultural differences. The speaker is actively trying to keep their natural communication style to preserve their identity. This is called maintenance. Because converging often occurs naturally, it is perceived as the norm. Consequently, a maintenance strategy is marked. Adopting a converging strategy can be an effective tactical decision if a

speaker wants to be positively evaluated by the recipient. Research has suggested that converging speakers can be seen as more competent, attractive, warm and cooperative (Street & Giles, 1982).

Investigating CAT in the context of negotiations is particularly interesting because of the opposing underlying visions of the interlocutors involved in a negotiation. On the one hand CAT thrives to diminish individual differences, distance between different parties is bridged and individual interests often become less important in order to reach common ground. On the contrary, in negotiations individuals actively try to hold their ground, trying to receive as much benefits as possible from the arrangement. These opposing factors make each negotiation unique.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been little empirical research on CAT in the context of negotiations. Adair et al. (2001) found evidence of adaption in U.S.-Japanese negotiations. Japanese negotiators in mixed-culture dyads showed more direct communication than Japanese negotiators in same-culture dyads. Thus, it seems that speakers are sensitive to communicative behaviours which are not in line with ones of their own culture, and that they are capable and willing to accommodate these traits. However, it is unclear whether converging on a trait that your culture does not share is perceived positively by the interlocutor. Most research on cross- cultural negotiations analyses real life occurrences. These are mostly observations of natural occurrences, without any manipulations from the researchers. Thus, more experimental research is needed to better understand the influence of communication style and communications accommodation theory in negotiations and how it is perceived by different cultures.

Consequently, there remains a scientific gap in understanding communication accommodation in the context of negotiations. The current work attempts to fill this gap by manipulating communication accommodation in directness in a controlled environment and measuring how this is perceived by different cultures. The researchers chose to investigate directness as Hall's cultural dimensions list this as one of the traits that might differ between cultures. For this work the researchers will restrict themselves to national culture. Previous research has linked cultural differences between the Netherlands and France. The Netherlands was described as a relatively low-context culture and France as a relatively high-context culture (Le Pair & Van Mulken, 2008). The research question that this paper will investigate is as follows:

RQ: To what extent do cultures that differ in directness appreciate accommodation on directness differently?

Previous research on CAT suggests higher appreciation when a speaker uses a converging strategy than when the speaker uses a maintenance strategy. Because of this the first hypothesis is formulated as:

H1: Accommodating to a more direct communication style will be appreciated more by both cultures than maintaining strategy.

Because direct language is used more frequently in The Netherlands than in France the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Accommodating to a more direct communication style will be appreciated more in the Dutch culture than in the French culture.

Reversely, in France the preferred communication style is indirect language. Therefor the third hypothesis is formulated as:

H3: Maintenance in indirect communication style will be appreciated more by the French culture than the Dutch culture.

Method

Materials

The current work used two independent variables, culture and accommodation. Culture is the nationality of the subjects, so Dutch and French. For accommodation the current work made use of two levels, namely convergence and maintenance. Divergence was not used as this form of communication is strongly marked and will most likely not lead to appreciation. To operationalise the independent variable accommodation, two scripts were

made of a salary negotiation between a manager and an employee. The negotiations are fictional and the scripts were inspired by and adapted from real life negotiations (Di Stasi et al., 2023). In the maintaining version of the script the employee used an indirect communication style throughout the entire negotiation, while the manager used a direct communication style. In the converging version of the script the employee started the negotiation while using an indirect communication style and changed to using a direct communication style at the end of the negotiation. The manager again used a direct communication style. Concrete examples of directness and indirectness in the scripts can be found in appendix 1. The direction of indirect to direct communication has been chosen as people from high context cultures have flexible use of both high-context and low-context communication (Adair & Brett, 2004). Both scripts were developed in English.

The scripts were played out by three voice actors and were recorded. The researchers sought to replicate an intercultural setting by using English as a lingua franca, as well as using voice actors for the employees that have a Dutch or French accent in English. The role of manager was played by a Dutch person whose accent could interpreted as neutral. Previous research on gender in negotiations suggest that gender roles play a part in accommodation (e.g., Cantrell & Butler, 1997; Stevens et al., 1993). Specifically, women tend to behave more accommodatively than men. Because of this, the manager was played by a male voice actor and the employees were played by a female voice actor.

Subjects

The subjects that took part in this experiment were recruited by means of snowballing method. The requirements were that they possess either the Dutch or French nationality and have sufficient knowledge of English. The researchers aimed to attract 30 participants per conditions for a total of 120 but were unable to do so. In total 59 participants took part in the experiment, of whom 32 were Dutch and 27 were French. The educational level of participants ranged from high school graduates to master's degree, most participants (75%) were either still attending or had already finished a university degree. Participant's age ranged from 18 to 86 (M = 36.98, SD = 18.61). Multiple chi-square tests indicated that gender, age, education level and working experience were not significantly different between groups (p values ranging from .169 to .686).

Design

The experiment followed a 2x2 design. Participants were divided into two groups according to their nationality. Per nationality, half of the participants were given a recording of a negotiation in which a speaker used a converging strategy and the other half were given a recording of a negotiation in which a speaker used a maintaining strategy.

Table 1. Distribution of subjects

Maintenance Dutch	Convergence Dutch
N = 14	*N* = 18
Maintenance French	Convergence French
N = 14	*N* = 13

Instruments

To control the independent variable of directness participants were asked to answer the statement "I found the employee to be" ranging from 0 "indirect" to 100 "direct.

The control variable realism was measured with the statement 'This negotiation could happen in real life' to which participants replied using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Participants seemed to perceive the negotiation as realistic (M = 4.97, SD = 1.67).

The dependent variable success was measured using the statement 'The employee was a successful negotiator', which participants rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. As a control question, participants were asked to indicate if they would give a raise to the employee, answering with an amount in euros. However, responding to an open question, many subjects failed to give an acceptable answer. Consequently, this control question was not used in the final analyses.

The dependent variable efficiency was measured with one single item. Participants were given the statement 'The employee was an efficient negotiator' and were asked to answer to which degree they agreed with it, using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from

‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’.

The dependent variable professionalism was measured by using a single item. Subjects were given the statement ‘The employee was professional’ and replied to it using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’.

The dependent variable pleasantness was measured by using three items inspired by Bellezza et al. (1986). Participants were asked how they perceived the employee on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from ‘very unpleasant’ to ‘very pleasant’. In addition, participants were asked to which extent they agreed with the statements ‘The employee was friendly’ and ‘The employee would be enjoyable to work with’, again using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’. The reliability of ‘pleasantness’ comprising three items was acceptable: $\alpha = .80$. Therefore, the mean of the three items was used to analyse the effect of the independent variables on pleasantness.

The dependent variable politeness was measured by using three items inspired by and adapted from Burke & Kraut (2008). Participants were asked to which extent they agreed with the statements ‘The employee was polite’, ‘The employee was well mannered’, and ‘The employee was respectful’ on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The reliability of ‘politeness’ comprising three items was acceptable: $\alpha = .91$. Therefore, the mean of the three items was used to analyse the effect of the independent variables on politeness.

The full questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

Procedure

Participants were approached via direct messaging via WhatsApp or via e-mail, in which they found a link to the survey. The recordings were introduced by a short instruction, explaining that the negotiation takes place between a manager and his employee. During the negotiation, the pair will discuss a salary increase of the employee. Participants were asked to listen to the recording as if they were present in an advisory role. After the recording was finished, participants were asked to indicate the amount that they would see fit for the raise. Afterwards, a series of statements were given and participants were asked how they would rate the negotiation in terms of success, pleasantness, politeness, efficiency and how realistic they found the interview. There was no compensation for participating in the experiment and it took approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Participants were invited to forward the survey to others.

Statistical treatment

An independent sample t-test was run to measure if directness was manipulated correctly. To answer the research question multiple two-way univariate analyses of variance using culture and accommodation as factors were applied to measure the effect on success, efficiency, professionalism, pleasantness, and politeness.

Results

An independent samples t-test on directness, with accommodation as between subjects factor, showed a significant difference between maintenance and convergence. This difference, −10.66, 95% CI [−19.33, -1.98], was significant (t (52.15) = -2.46, p = .017), and represented a strong effect d = -0.63. Participants listening to the converging version of the negotiation (M = 82.59, SD = 12.89) rated the employee higher on directness than participants listening to the maintaining version (M = 71.94, SD = 19.73).

A two-way analysis of variance with accommodation (maintenance/convergence) and culture (Dutch/French) as factors showed a significant main effect of accommodation on success (F (1,55) = 5.14, p = .027, η2 = .09). There was no main effect of culture on success (F (1,55) < 1). Accommodation and culture were found to have a significant interaction on success (F (1,55) = 12.31, p < .001, η2 = .18). To understand this interaction the data was first split on accommodation and then culture and multiple one-way analyses of variance were run.

After splitting on accommodation, a one-way analysis of variance on success revealed a significant main effect of culture for the maintenance version (F (1,29) = 12.52, p = .001, η2 = .30). French participants that heard the speaker maintaining indirect communication (M = 5.92, SD = .76) rated her a more successful negotiator than Dutch participants that heard the same version (M = 4.50, SD = 1.30). No significant main effect was found for the convergence version (F (1,26) = 3.04, p = .093, η2 = .105).

After splitting on culture, a one-way analysis of variance on success revealed a significant main effect of accommodation for French participants (F (1,25) = 19.80, p <.001, η2 = .44). French participants that listened to the maintenance version (M = 5.92, SD = .76) rated the speaker more as more successful than French participants that listened to the convergence version (M = 3.93, SD = 1.44). A one-way analysis of variance for Dutch participants showed no main effect of accommodation on success (F (1,30) < 1).

For efficiency another two-way analysis of variance was run with accommodation and culture as factors. Both accommodation ($F(1,55) = 2.57$, $p = .115$, $\eta 2 = .05$). and culture ($F(1,55) = 2.90$, $p = .094$, $\eta 2 = .05$) did not show a main effect on efficiency. The interaction between culture and accommodation was statistically significant ($F(1,55) = 5.10$, $p = 0.28$, $\eta 2 = .09$). To understand this interaction the data was first split on accommodation and then on culture and multiple one-way analyses of variance were run.

After splitting the data on accommodation, a one-way analysis of variance on efficiency showed a significant main effect of culture among participants that listened to the maintenance version ($F(1,29) = 10.47$, $p = .003$, $\eta 2 = .27$). French participants that heard the speaker maintaining indirect communication ($M = 5.92$, $SD = .76$) rated her a more efficient negotiator than Dutch participants that heard the same version ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.58$). No effect was found among participants that heard the convergence version ($F(1,26) < 1$).

After splitting the data on culture, a one-way analysis of variance on efficiency revealed a main effect of accommodation for French participants ($F(1,25) = 8.89$, $p = .006$, $\eta 2 = .26$). French participants that heard the speaker maintaining indirect communication ($M = 5.92$, $SD = .76$) rated her a more efficient negotiator than French participants that heard the speaker converging to direct communication ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.65$). A one-way analysis of variance showed no significant difference for Dutch participants ($F(1,26) <1$).

A two-way analysis of variance with accommodation (maintenance/convergence) and culture (Dutch/French) as factors showed no main effect of culture on professionalism ($F(1,55) = 1.32$, $p = .255$, $\eta 2 =.02$). There was no main effect of accommodation on professionalism ($F(1,55) < 1$). Accommodation and culture were found to have a significant interaction on success ($F(1,55) = 5.81$, $p = .019$, $\eta 2 = .10$). To understand this interaction the data was first split on accommodation and then on culture and multiple one-way analyses of variance were run.

After splitting the data on accommodation, a one-way analysis of variance on professionalism showed a significant main effect of culture among participants that listened to the maintenance version ($F(1,29) = 6.08$, $p = .020$, $\eta 2 = .17$): professionalism was higher for French participants ($M = 6.15$, $SD = .80$) than for Dutch participants ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.63$). There was no difference between cultures for the convergence version ($F(1,26) < 1$).

After splitting the data on culture, a one-way analysis of variance on professionalism showed no significant main effect of accommodation for Dutch ($F(1,30) = 2.73$, $p = .109$, $\eta 2 = .08$) or French ($F(1,25) = 3.46$, $p = .075$, $\eta 2 = .12$) subjects.

A two-way analysis of variance on pleasantness with accommodation (maintenance/convergence) and culture (Dutch/French) as factors showed no main effect of culture ($F(1,55) < 1$), no main effect of accommodation ($F(1,55) = 1.66$, $p = .202$, $\eta 2 = .03$), and the interaction between culture and accommodation was also not statistically significant ($F(1,55) = 1.88$, $p = .176$, $\eta 2 = .03$).

A two-way analysis of variance with accommodation (maintenance/convergence) and culture (Dutch/French) as factors showed no main effect of culture on politeness ($F(1,54) < 1$). There was no main effect of accommodation on politeness ($F(1,54) = 2.35$, $p = .131$, $\eta 2 = .04$). Accommodation and culture were found to have significant interaction on politeness ($F(1,54) = 5.87$, $p = .019$, $\eta 2 = .03$). To understand this interaction the data was first split on accommodation then on culture and multiple one-way analyses of variance were run.

After splitting the data on accommodation, a one-way analysis of variance on politeness revealed a significant main effect of culture among participants that heard the maintenance version ($F(1,29) = 9.18$, $p = .005$, $\eta 2 = .24$): politeness was higher for French participants ($M = 6.28$, $SD = .65$) than for Dutch participants ($M = 5.43$, $SD = .85$). There was no difference between cultures for the convergence version ($F(1,25) = 1.16$, $p = .292$, $\eta 2 = .04$).

After splitting the data on culture, a one-way analysis of variance on politeness revealed a significant main effect of accommodation among French participants ($F(1,25) = 5.70$, $p = .025$, $\eta 2 = .19$). French participants that heard the maintenance version ($M = 6.28$, $SD = .65$) rated the employee as more polite than French participants that heard the convergence version ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.68$). There were no significant differences between Dutch participants ($F(1,29) < 1$).

Table 2. Means (and Standard Deviations) and p values of appreciation of accommodation in direct communication in cultures (1 = very negative attitude, 7 = very positive attitude) for hypothesis 1

	Dutch			French		
	Maintenance (N = 18)	Convergence (N = 14)		Maintenance (N =13)	Convergence (N = 14)	
Dependent variable	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*p*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*p*
Success	4.50 (1.30)	4.93 (1.59)	.421	5.92 (.76)	3.93 (1.44)	<.001*
Efficiency	4.39 (1.58)	4.64 (1.65)	.663	5.92 (.76)	4.43 (1.65)	.007*
Professionalism	4.94 (1.63)	5.79 (1.12)	.094	6.15 (.80)	5.36 (1.34)	.072
Pleasantness	4.67 (1.20)	4.69 (1.10)	.954	4.95 (.80)	4.18 (1.21)	.062
Politeness	5.43 (.85)	5.69 (1.12)	.481	6.28 (.65)	5.10 (1.68)	.025*

** significant difference between maintenance and convergence*

Table 3. Means (and Standard Deviations) and p values of appreciation of accommodation in direct communication in cultures (1 = very negative attitude, 7 = very positive attitude) for hypothesis 2.

	Dutch convergence (N = 14)	French convergence (N = 13)	
Dependent variable	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*p*
Success	4.93 (1.59)	3.93 (1.44)	.093
Efficiency	4.64 (1.65)	4.43 (1.65)	.734
Professionalism	5.79 (1.12)	5.36 (1.34)	.367
Pleasantness	4.69 (1.10)	4.18 (1.21)	.252
Politeness	5.69 (1.12)	5.10 (1.68)	.286

Table 4. Means (and Standard Deviations) and p values of appreciation of accommodation in direct communication in cultures (1 = very negative attitude, 7 = very positive attitude) for hypothesis 3.

	Dutch maintenance (N = 18)	French maintenance (N = 13)	
Dependent variable	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*p*
Success	4.50 (1.30)	5.92 (.76)	<.001*
Efficiency	4.39 (1.58)	5.92 (.76)	.001*
Professionalism	4.94 (1.63)	6.15 (.80)	.011*
Pleasantness	4.67 (1.20)	4.95 (.80)	.440
Politeness	5.43 (.85)	6.28 (.65)	.004

**significant difference between Dutch and French participants*

Conclusions

The outcome of the current work shows that there was indeed a difference in appreciation of accommodation in directness between cultures that differ in directness. Specifically, French participants perceived accommodating from an indirect communication style to a direct communication style as less successful, less efficient, and less polite than maintaining an indirect communication style.

The findings showed no significant differences between convergence or maintenance among Dutch participants. Moreover, French participants that listened to the convergence version actually scored significantly lower success, efficiency and politeness than French participants that listened to the maintenance version. Convergence to direct communication was not appreciated more by both cultures and thus the first hypothesis must be rejected.

There were no statistically significant differences between Dutch participants that heard the converging version of the negotiation and the French participants that heard the converging version. Consequently, the second hypothesis that convergence to direct communication is appreciated more in the Dutch culture than in the French culture has to be rejected.

Lastly, the third hypothesis can be partially accepted. French participants that heard the maintenance version of the negotiation rated the employee significantly higher than Dutch participants that heard the same version on all the dependent variables except pleasantness. Thus, maintenance in indirect communication is appreciated more in French culture than in Dutch Culture.

Discussion

The current work investigated cultural differences in appreciating communication accommodation in negotiations. In line with the researcher's expectations, cultural differences were found between French and Dutch participants, in particular the appreciation of maintenance differed between both cultures. French participants appreciated maintaining an indirect communication style more than Dutch participants. One possible explanation for this is similarity attraction (Giles and Powesland, 1997). French subjects could have appreciated maintaining an indirect communication style more, as this is also most used in their culture.

Contrarily, Dutch participants did not have a preference for converging to a direct communication style. This contradicts the communication accommodation theory that converging to bridge cultural differences will lead to a higher appreciation of the interlocutor (Street & Giles, 1982). One possible explanation could be that Dutch participants did not see the indirect language use as bothersome. In high-context cultures direct language can be interpreted as offensive or rude (Hall, 1976). However, in low-context cultures, though indirect language may be marked, it is generally not seen as offensive or rude.

Another possible explanation could be that the maintenance version (M = 71.94, SD = 19.73) was still seen as sufficiently transparent to infer the employee was honest and that she showed her true intentions, which is valued in low-context cultures (Hall, 1976). The relatively high mean for the maintenance version, which was nearer to the 'direct' end of the scale than the 'indirect' end of the scale, could be seen a limitation of this study. Future research could replicate this study, adapting the script so the language of the maintenance version is seen more as indirect than direct. This could lead to Dutch participants being unable to infer the employee is honest and showing her true intentions, which in turn could lead to a lower appreciation of maintaining indirect language.

The current work also suggests that convergence is not always appreciated more than maintenance. There was no difference in appreciation for Dutch participants and French participants that heard the employee maintaining indirect communication rated her as more successful, efficient, professional, and polite. This is not in line with the first hypothesis. One could also attribute this contradiction to the nature of negotiations. One of the premises of negotiations is that neither of the parties involved completely succumbs to the other. A negotiation is a show of identity and that could be the reason why converging to the other is not appreciated more than maintaining identity.

One of the limitations of the current work is the low number of participants. Though the aim was to attract at least 30 participants per condition, the researchers experienced difficulties finding subjects, leading to less data to analyse. This data already shows an effect culture and accommodation on speaker appreciation, but this data ought to be interpreted with caution. To better understand the larger population, future research should make use of a larger sample size than the current work.

For this study the researchers chose to converge from indirect to direct language. This seemed most realistic as people from high-context cultures have flexible use of both high-context and low-context communication. The current work suggests that the Dutch do not appreciate converging to their direct language more than maintaining indirect language. However, they could be more sensitive to adapt to the behavioural norms of another culture. Future research could expand on the topic of accommodation in business negotiations by investigating accommodation from direct to indirect communication. As direct language use could be seen as offensive or rude in high context cultures, French participants will likely appreciate converging to indirect language more than maintaining direct language. Future research could confirm the findings of this work that suggest the Dutch are insensitive to

accommodation to language use or could show that the Dutch appreciate converging to another culture more than maintaining the own identity.

Lastly, the current work did not investigate the influence of gender on appreciation of accommodation. The genders were chosen as it could be interpreted as more realistic for women to accommodate than men, but gender roles could also affect appreciation of accommodation. Future research should also investigate using a similar design but including male employees and female managers. This would create a better understanding of the influence of gender. Male employees that accommodate could be seen as marked behaviour as they are more likely to be competitive in negotiations. In turn this markedness could lead to higher appreciation of accommodation because the perceived effort is higher (Giles & Powesland, 1997).

In conclusion, this research has given some new insights on appreciation of accommodation in intercultural business negotiations. Though these early findings should be interpreted with caution, the current work found differences in appreciation between French and Dutch culture. When negotiating with a Dutch person, one need not worry about switching from indirect language to direct language, as the Dutch person will likely not perceive large differences. However, when negotiating with a French person it is advisable to maintain an indirect communication style, as this will likely be perceived as more successful, efficient, professional and polite.

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Appendix 1. Scripts

Maintenance

Manager: *Please take a seat. Alright, let's get started. I would like to discuss your future within the company. Is there any particular matter you would like to discuss first?*

S: *Honestly, I don't really have a preference.*

M: *In this case, we will first discuss your potential future salary. Have you thought of an appropriate amount considering your position?*

S: *I did some research about what's the average salary for my position and I discovered that an HR coordinator, in this country can earn between forty eight and seventy two thousand euro per year The amount depends of course on the skills and responsibilities of the employee…*

M: *In my opinion, around fifty four thousand would be applicable considering your brief working experience with us. Do you agree?*

S: *It is surely a reasonable offer… Personally, I believe my position requires a lot of responsibility for the effective functioning of this department and more in general of the company… In addition, I believe that, despite being new in the Human Resources (HR) field, I have been successful in performing my duties and responsibilities within past… Allow me, therefore, to ask you if the raise could be a little bit higher..*

M: *How much would you consider appropriate then?*

S: *Considering the elements I previously mentioned, as well as the caliber of the position and the enterprise, I would say around sixty six thousand per year is a fair request…*

M: *I'm taking into account what you did just mention… Can we agree on sixty thousand per year? With the inclusion of holidays and overtime.*

S*:* I would not want to sound ungrateful but I am not sure I agree. I would have expected a higher amount considering the skills I have presented as well as my vast past experience.

Convergence

Manager: *Please take a seat. Alright, let's get started. I would like to discuss your future within the company. Is there any particular matter you would like to discuss first?*

S: *Honestly, I don't really have a preference.*

M: *In this case, we will first discuss your potential future salary. Have you thought of an appropriate amount considering your position?*

S: *I did some research about what's the average salary for my position and I discovered that an HR coordinator, in this country can earn between forty eight and seventy two thousand euro per year The amount depends of course on the skills and responsibilities of the employee…*

M: *In my opinion, around fifty four thousand would be applicable considering your brief working experience with us. Do you agree?*

S: *It is surely a reasonable offer… Personally, I believe my position requires a lot of responsibility for the effective functioning of this department and more in general of the company… In addition, I believe that, despite being new in the Human Resources (HR) field, I have been successful in performing my duties and responsibilities within past… Allow me, therefore, to ask you if the raise could be a little bit higher..*

M: *How much would you consider appropriate then?*

S: *I would say sixty-six thousand per year is a fair request.*

M: *I'm taking into account what you did just mention… Can we agree on sixty-thousand per year? With the inclusion of holidays and overtime.*

S: I disagree. My expectations are for a higher amount considering the skills I have presented as well as my vast past experience.

Appendix 2 questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHICS

[AGE] How old are you?

[GENDER] What is your

gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

[NATIVE_LANGUAGE] What is your country of origin?

- The Netherlands
- France
- Other

[EDUCATION] What is your current or highest completed level of education?

Dutch	French
• VWO • MBO • HBO/WO	• Collège • Lycée • Licence/Master

[FIRST_IMPRESSION] What is your first impression of the employee?

DV MEASUREMENT SCALES

[REALISM] Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree).

This negotiation could happen in real life.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[SUCCESS/NEGOCIATION SKILLS] Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statement (1
= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree).

The employee was a successful negotiator.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[EFFICIENCY] Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree, 7

= strongly disagree).

The employee was an efficient negotiator						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[PROFESSIONALISM]

The employee was professional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[PLEASANTNESS] Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree).

The employee was friendly.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The employee would be enjoyable to work with.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I find the employee very (1= unpleasant, 7 = pleasant)						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

[POLITENESS] Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly disagree).

The employee was polite.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The employee was well-mannered.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The employee was respectful.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

CONTROL QUESTIONS

[ADVICE] What salary in euro per year would you give the employee?

_____

[COMMUNICATION_STYLE] Did you find the employee to be?

- Indirect / / / / / / / /

  /Direct [WORK_EXPERIENCE] Do you have any work experience?

- No.
- Yes, namely [x] years.
  [POSITION (Voluntary)] _____

[NEGOCIATION EXPERIENCE]

Have you ever negotiated your

salary? Yes

No