

国际商务系列教材

中国商务文化沟通

Communications in Chinese Business Culture

◎ 主 编 黄蕙萍 单元媛 魏 龙

 武汉理工大学出版社
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· 武 汉 ·

内 容 提 要

本书在跨文化沟通理论和分析框架下对中国商务文化的背景、现象、渊源、具体表现进行解读和分析,对在中国进行商务活动中所遇到的文化问题提供实务操作的讲解和指导。主要内容包括中国文化概要、跨文化沟通理论和实践、中国商务文化解读、中国商务礼仪和规范、在中国进行商务活动的背景和模式等。

本书的使用对象为:来华学习的外国留学生,来华工作的外籍人士,国际商务、国际经济与贸易专业的本科生,也可供广大从事跨国企业经营、国际投资、国际营销等国际商务实际工作者参考。

Short Description

This text book is designed to be considered as an introduction to major topics on Chinese business culture with an emphasis on the influences of Chinese culture on business activities. It will focus on the analytical background of Chinese traditional culture and how to conduct business in China or with Chinese colleagues. The students will gain a deeper understanding of Chinese business culture and the behavior pattern of Chinese businessmen, standardize their practice in cross-cultural communications, and be able to adjust their own style accordingly.

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前 言

在全球化程度日益加深的当今,文化对国际商务活动的影响越来越不容忽视,马里昂·德布鲁内博士的“文化是全球化的真正动力”这句话经常被人们引用。同时,随着互联网、移动终端等相关技术在全球范围内的发展和应用,国际沟通成为平常的事情。因此,在国际商务中,是否能进行有效的跨文化沟通成为国际商务活动能否成功的一个基础性因素。

随着中国经济的快速发展,越来越多的外国跨国公司进入中国,中国企业开始“走出去”,外国人与中国人有了更多的沟通和交流,他们或者来到中国,或者进入中国的跨国公司,或者与中国人直接做生意,“汉语热”的形成正是这种交流急剧增多的反映。但是,中国商务文化的独特性使得不少外籍人士产生困惑,他们很快发现,这种文化障碍不是单纯的学习汉语能够克服的,也不是仅仅凭着对诸如名胜古迹、功夫、京剧等中国文化符号的热爱和了解就能消除的。他们更需要的是理解中国人,也就是包括价值观念、行为准则、思维方式、审美观念、礼仪规范、表达方式等内容的中国人的行为模式,尤其是这种行为模式在国际商务活动中的具体表现。只有了解了这些,才能最大限度避免因为文化冲突而导致的国际商务活动的失败。

这本《中国商务文化沟通》就是为来华学习的外国留学生、来华工作的外籍人士、国际经济与贸易专业的本科生,以及广大从事国际商务的工作者编写的,以期在跨文化沟通理论和分析框架下对中国商务文化的背景、现象、渊源、具体表现进行解读和分析,对在中国进行商务活动中所遇到的文化问题提供实务操作的讲解和指导。主要内容包括中国文化概要、跨文化沟通理论和实践、中国商务文化解读、中国商务礼仪和规范、在中国进行商务活动的背景和模式等。

编者从2003年起至今,十多年来一直为国际经济与贸易专业本科生和来华外国留学生讲授“国际商务”和“中国商业文化”课程,自编了英文版讲义,引起了学生的强烈兴趣,受到广泛好评。鉴于在国内一直没有一本由中国人写的、针对外国留学生和商务人士的介绍中国商务文化的书,编者在积累多年教案、资料的基础上,加入了最新的跨文化沟通理论和方法的介绍,也收纳了中外学生的合理建议,编写了这本教程。

全书由黄蕙萍设计框架和统稿。各部分分工如下:

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本书的出版得到了武汉理工大学经济学院的领导和教师的大力支持,也得到了武汉理工大学出版社崔庆喜老师和雷蕾老师的热忱帮助,在此表示衷心感谢!我们在本书的编写中也参阅了大量国内外论著和资料,谨向作者表示衷心感谢!由于编著者水平局限,又是以非母语写作,错误及不足之处在所难免,敬请各位专家和广大读者批评指正。

黄蕙萍

2018年3月18日

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Part I Theories and Practices in Cross-cultural Communication

1 Culture and Communication

Learning Objective

- (1) Understand the concept of culture, determinants of culture, and characteristics of culture.
- (2) Understand the concept of communication and its characteristics.
- (3) Learn how verbal and nonverbal communication affects intercultural business communication.
- (4) Identify the different communication styles.
- (5) Enumerate the communication barriers that affect intercultural communication.

✳ Opening Case

An Embarrassing Surprise

David is a new manager in a small department in which all of 5 employees are Chinese;

Lao Wang, 48, who has been in the company for 10 years, is a very nice person;

Mr. Liu, 35, a very popular person who has two master degrees;

Xiao Li, 29, who came six months ago from their competitor company;

Mrs. Lin, 32, an expert in accounting, a warm-hearted lady, she often hosts parties within the group;

Miss Fang, 23, General Manager's sister.

In order to improve the business performance, he made some small adjustments, including appointing a young man Xiao Li to be in charge of sale. A month later, the sales volume has greatly increased. So at the monthly meeting, he called his crew together, expressed his satisfaction to the sale. Then he stood behind Xiao Li, announced a decision about Xiao Li's promotion and an extra bonus. When he was saying this, he put his hands on Xiao Li's shoulder and rubbed his shoulder sometimes. Not as he expected, instead of being cheerful, Xiao Li got a blushing, seemed very embarrassing and uncomfortable, and his Chinese staffs seemed embarrassing too, they looked at each other, and kept silence.

The sales volume of next month decreased.

✳ Introduction

It has been said that without a culture we cannot see, but with a culture we are forever blind. In other words, each of us is born into a culture that teaches us a number of shared meanings and expectations. We usually learn our own culture's ways of doing, speaking, and

thinking so well that it becomes difficult to think, feel, and act as people in other cultures do. In this chapter we will explore the meaning and difference of culture and communication and how it affects our life.

In the opening case, the company's sales volume decreased after the promotion of Xiao Li. What went wrong? From this case, we can see the importance of understanding other cultures. In doing business one should have a deep understanding of communication, which includes verbal and nonverbal. David put his hands on Xiao Li's shoulder and rubbed it sometimes; is that appropriate in Chinese culture? Along this chapter we will explore the different types of gestures and how it influences people from different countries.

Later in this chapter we will focus on the different types of communication styles and intercultural communication. Communication styles is one way of examining how individuals convey a message and in intercultural communication we will explore the different types of barriers to communication.

1.1 Culture

1.1.1 The definition of culture

The word culture comes from the Latin *cultura*, which is related to cult or worship. In its broadest sense, the term refers to the result of human interaction.

In their book *Intercultural Communication Skills*, the authors (何维湘等, 2004) collected various authors key defining characteristics which we can review below:

Herskovits (1955): culture is the man-made part of the environment.

Parsons and Shils (1951): on cultural level we review the organized set of rules or standards as such, abstracted, so to speak, from the actor who is committed to them by his own value-orientations and in whom they exist as need-dispositions to observe these rules. Thus a culture includes a set of standard. An individual's value-orientation is his commitment to these standards.

C. Kluckhohn (1954): culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.

Hofstede (1980): culture consists of a set of mental programs that control an individual's responses in a given context.

Triandis (1972): culture is a subjective perception of the human-made part of the environment. The subjective aspects of culture include the categories of social stimuli, associations, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values, and roles that individual share.

D' Andrade (1984) and Geertz (1973): a culture is viewed as a pattern of symbolic dis-

courses and shared meaning that needs interpreting and deciphering in order to be fully understood.

Many authors and researchers have given the definitions to culture in different ways also such as:

Luthans et al. (2008) defined culture as an acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior. This knowledge forms values, creates attitudes, and influences behavior.

Samovar et al. (2004) defined culture according to Marsella's definition: culture is shared learned behavior which is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of promoting individual and social survival, adaptation and growth and development. Culture has both external (e.g., artifacts, roles, and institutions) and internal representations (e.g., values, attitudes, beliefs, cognitive/affective/sensory styles, consciousness patterns, and epistemologies).

1.1.2 The basic function of culture

Culture is a complex, abstract, and pervasive matrix of social elements that functions as an all-encompassing form or pattern for living by laying out a predictable world in which an individual is firmly oriented. Culture enables us to make sense of our surroundings, aiding the transaction from the womb to this new life.

From the instant of birth, a child is formally and informally taught how to behave. Children, regardless of their culture, quickly learn how to behave in a manner that is acceptable to adults. Within each culture, therefore, there is no need to expend energy deciding what an event means or how to respond to it. There is no universal culture. All cultures are relative to particular countries or groups.

Culture does not transplant. We cannot take a country A culture to country B and lead a comfortable life. The only way to have a comfortable life there is to adapt to the commonsense of country B. (Robert March, 2008, developed this idea of commonsense behavior in a country that enables a person to get along with everyone without friction.)

According to Hofstede, Nimenwirth and Weber, culture is a system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people and that when taken together constitute a design for living. This knowledge creates attitudes and influences behavior.

Values: abstract ideas about a group believes to be good, right and desirable.

Norms: social rules and guidelines that prescribe appropriate behavior.

1.1.3 The characteristics of culture

There are six very important characteristics of culture:

(1) Culture is learned: culture is not inherited or biologically based; it is acquired by learning, imitation, observation and experience. From infancy on, members of a culture learn their patterns of behavior and ways of thinking until they have become internalized.

The power and influences of these behaviors and perceptions can be seen in the ways in which we acquire culture. For example, a little boy in North America whose father tells him to shake hands when he is introduced to a friend of the family is learning culture.

(2) Culture is transmissible; people as members of a group, organization, or society share culture; it is not specific to single individuals. The symbols of a culture enable us to pass on the content and patterns of a culture. We can spread our culture through the spoken words, written words and nonverbal actions such as showing others that we usually shake hands to greet one another. The use of symbols is at the core of culture. For example the use of flags, demonstrate our loyalty to our country. The portability of symbols allows us to package and store them as well as transmit. The books, pictures, films, videos, and the like enable a culture to preserve what it deems to be important and worthy of transmission.

(3) Culture is dynamic; as with communication, culture is ongoing and subject to fluctuation; cultures seldom remain constant. As ideas and products evolve within a culture, they can produce change through the mechanisms of invention (discovery of new practices, tools or concepts), e. g. the invention of television in North America is a good example how an idea and a product can reshape a culture; diffusion (borrowing from another culture, which accelerates how culture come into direct contact with each other), e. g. as Japan and North America share more commerce, we can see Americans assimilating Japanese business management practices and the Japanese incorporating American marketing tactics; cultural calamity (the effects of war and revolution in a country), e. g. the invention of television in North America is a good example how an idea and a product can reshape a culture. Although cultures do change, most changes affect only the surface structure of the culture. The deep structure resists major alterations. Changes in dress, food, transportation, housing, and the like are simply attached to the existing cultural value system. Elements associated with deep structure of a culture such as values, ethics and morals, work and leisure, definitions of freedom, the importance of the past, religious practices, the pace of life, and attitudes towards gender and age are so very deep in the structure of a culture that they tend to persist generation after generation.

(4) Culture is selective; every country represents a limited choice of behavior patterns from the infinite patterns of human experience. What culture selects to tell each succeeding generation is a reflection of what culture deems important. In the United States, for example, being healthy is highly valued, and therefore messages related to that idea are selected. The notion of selectivity also suggests that cultures tend to separate one group from another. If one culture selects work as an end (Japan), while another emphasizes work as a means to an end (Mexico), we have a cultural separation.

(5) Facets of culture are interrelated; culture is a complex system. As Hall (*Beyond Culture*, Doubleday, 1977) clearly states, You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected. The women's movement in the United States may be but two words, but the movement has brought about changes in gender roles, sexual practices, educational opportu-

nities, the legal system, career opportunities, and even female-male interaction.

(6) Culture is ethnocentric: ethnocentrism is the perceptual window through which a culture interprets and judges all other cultures. It leads to a subjective evaluation of how another culture conducts its daily business. Most discussions of ethnocentrism even enlarge the concept to include feelings of superiority (庄恩平, 2004; Samovar & Porter, 1994).

1.1.4 The determinants of culture

The values and norms of a culture do not emerge fully formed. They are the evolutionary product of a number of factors, including the prevailing political and economic philosophies, the social structure of a society, and the dominant religion, language and education (Figure 1.1).

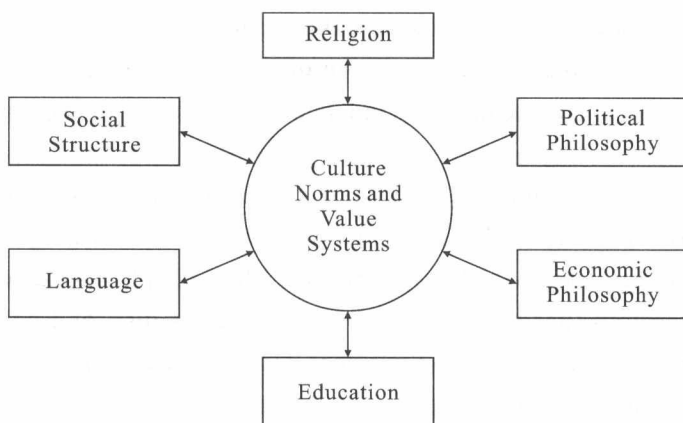


Figure 1.1 Determinants of culture

Social structure: refers to its basic social organization. Two dimensions are particularly important when explaining differences between cultures. The first is the degree to which the basic unit of social organization is the individual, as opposed to the group. In general, Western societies tend to emphasize the primacy of individual, whereas groups tend to figure much larger in many other societies. The second dimension is the degree to which a society is stratified into classes or castes. Some societies are characterized by a relatively high degree of social stratification and relatively low mobility between strata (e. g. , India); other societies are characterized by a low degree of social stratification and relatively high mobility between strata (e. g. , American) (Hill, 2008).

Religious and ethical systems: religion can be defined as a system of shared beliefs and rituals that are concerned with the realm of the sacred. Ethical systems refer to a set of moral principles, or values, that are used to guide and shape behavior. Most of the world's ethical systems are the product of religions.

The relationship among religion, ethics and society is subtle and complex. Among the thousand of religions in the world today, five dominate in terms of numbers of adherents: Christianity with 1.7 billion adherents, Islam with around 1 billion adherents, Hinduism

with 750 million adherents (primarily in India), and Buddhism with 350 million adherents, Judaism (18 million adherents). Confucianism although not a religion with 200 million people (primarily in China, Korea and Japan), it teaches the importance of attaining personal salvation through right action. A research made by economists Roberto Barro and Rachel McCleary suggests strong religious beliefs, and particularly beliefs in heaven, hell and after-life, have a positive impact on economic growth rates, irrespective of a particular religion (Hill, 2008).

Language: countries differ in language. By language it is understood both the spoken and unspoken.

Spoken language; the nature of language structures the way we perceive the world and also defines culture. Countries with more than one language often have more than one culture. For example, Canada has an English-speaking culture and a French-speaking culture, meaning that tensions between the two can run quite high with a substantial proportion of the French-speaking minority demanding independence from Canada “dominated by English speakers”.

Chinese is the mother tongue of the largest number of people, followed by English and Hindi, which is spoken in India. However, the most widely spoken language in the world is English, followed by French, Spanish and Chinese. When people visit a country or travel in business, is almost certain that they will communicate in English, as English is increasingly becoming the language of international business. However English is widely used, learning the local language is advantageous, which may be very important to a business deal (Hill, 2008).

Unspoken language; refers to nonverbal communication. The raising of eyebrows, for example, is a sign of recognition in most cultures, while a smile is a sign of joy. Many non-verbal cues, are culturally bound. A failure to understand the nonverbal cues of another culture can lead to a communication failure. For example, most Americans and Europeans use the thumbs-up gesture to indicate that “it’s all right”, in Greece the gesture is obscene.

Another aspect of nonverbal communication is personal space, which is the comfortable amount of distance between two people when they are talking to each other. In the United States for example, the distance adopted in a business discussion is five to eight feet. In Latin America it is three to five feet. If a person does not understand personal space, the result can be disastrous when trying to do business with people from different culture (Hill, 2008).

Education: formal education plays a key role in a society and is the medium through which individuals learn many of the language, conceptual and mathematical skills that are indispensable in a modern society. It also supplements the family’s role in socializing the young into the values and norms of a society. Schools generally teach basic facts about the social and political nature of a society, fundamental obligations of citizenship, cultural norms, respect for others, obedience to authority, honesty, neatness, being on time and so