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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND LANGUAGES IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND GLOBAL TEAM MANAGEMENT

Final paper presented to the International Relations Course at the University of Santa Cruz do Sul - UNISC, as a requirement for obtaining a bachelor's degree in International Relations.

Santa Cruz do Sul
2023

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Abstract

This study endeavors to elucidate the significance of cultural and linguistic dimensions in shaping professional performance during international negotiations and, particularly, in the management of global teams. Employing qualitative and exploratory research methodologies, a bibliographic survey was conducted to identify fundamental concepts and their relevance as discussed by authors. Concurrently, interviews with professionals occupying management roles in global teams within Dell Technologies were held, aiming the validation of concepts explored in the literature review. The results demonstrate the critical role of cultural and linguistic considerations while also emphasizing the importance of individual personality traits. The study acknowledges that while certain aspects may cause challenges, they do not inherently inhibit the success of corporate endeavors.

Keywords: Negotiation, international business, team management.

O Impacto da Cultura e Idiomas em Negociações Internacionais e Gerenciamento de Times Globais

Resumo

Este estudo busca elucidar a importância das dimensões culturais e linguísticas na formação do desempenho profissional durante as negociações internacionais e, particularmente, na gestão de equipes globais. Empregando metodologias de pesquisa qualitativa e exploratória, foram realizados levantamentos bibliográficos para identificar conceitos fundamentais e sua relevância conforme discutidos pelos autores. Concomitantemente, foram realizadas entrevistas com profissionais que ocupam funções gerenciais em gestão de equipes globais da empresa Dell Technologies, visando à validação dos conceitos explorados na revisão da literatura. Os resultados demonstram o papel crítico das considerações culturais e linguísticas, ao mesmo tempo em que enfatizam a importância dos traços individuais de personalidade. O estudo reconhece que, embora certos aspectos possam causar desafios, eles não inibem inerentemente o sucesso das atribuições corporativas.

Palavras-chave: Negociação, negócios internacionais, gerenciamento de times.

Introduction

In today's interconnected global landscape, international negotiations and the management of diverse and global teams have become commonplace in the corporate world. However, beneath the surface of these interactions lie complex challenges that often go overlooked. The research focuses on the impact of language and culture in corporate approaches. We suggest that differences in language and culture can create significant obstacles, making it fundamental for businesses to comprehend and navigate these nuances effectively as they have profound relevance in business and corporate activities.

Multinational companies, with geographically dispersed teams, face a challenging scenario to communicate and collaborate effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries. This research aims to elucidate and comprehend the real world implication of these factors' impact on team dynamics and organizational performance, as the growing interconnectivity of the global economy has unveiled the relevance for businesses to navigate complex cultural and linguistic landscapes.

The study intends to explore the impact of language and culture as aspects of international interactions, their role in successful negotiations and the leadership of global teams. In addition, the comprehension of the influence and the enhancement of such expertise is relevant for achieving success in cooperative settings, in positions of either members or managers of global teams. To validate this research, cultural and linguistic approaches considering the literature from relevant authors are disclosed and interviews were conducted with managers at Dell Technologies to understand if they apply to real life's landscape.

Dell Technologies was strategically chosen for this research due to its multinational presence with leadership positions in large and expanding markets and the expertise of professionals with international exposure. To illustrate the company's magnitude, in the first quarter of 2022 one of the press releases stated the exceeding of market expectations regarding financial measures of fiscal year 2022. A revenue of $26.1 billion, up 16% and non-GAAP operating income, report which adjusts earnings to demonstrate the operational performance, of $2.1 billion, up 21% compared to previous results (Dell Technologies, 2022). The combined Dell EMC services customer base, resulting from the 2016 merger, encompasses over 180 countries and employs over 10,000 individuals, with expertise in digital

transformation, security transformation, IT transformation, and workforce transformation (Dell Technologies, 2016). Considering its substantial dimensions and global exposure of employees, interviews were conducted following the semi-structure process, focusing on qualitative research method with an exploratory focus, combining a deductive approach to analyze insights from participants, comprehending how language and culture influence corporate approaches and global team management and correlate to the theoretical framework presented by the authors. The study aims to address the influence of culture and language aspects, to ensure not only successful interactions but also the achievement of corporate goals in an increasingly interconnected world.

This article is divided into sections to facilitate the understanding of the ideas presented. The introduction briefly explains the topic, problem, and general objectives. The literature review explores the literature used to develop the knowledge base, presenting the theory with the authors' collaboration. Meyer (2014) and Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2010) are among the authors whose concepts were developed and displayed. The next chapter presents the interviews conducted and the connection between the theory studied and the responses obtained. Finally, the concluding remarks discuss the insights gained from the analysis of the findings and the connection between theories, concluding on the impact of language and culture on international negotiations and global team management.

The relevance of this research can be perceived in today's globalized world. With technology enabling constant contact between companies across borders, the ability to lead diverse global teams has become an integral part of everyday corporate life.

Bridging the Gap on the international landscape: the impact of culture and languages

The phenomenon of globalization is related to a macro-trend of intense economic interconnectivity between countries. It allowed many companies to internationalize and has increased the volume and variety of international trade and transactions in goods, services and capital flows. As a consequential point, it has also led to a faster and wider diffusion of products, technology and knowledge as

highlighted by Cavusgil; Knight and Riesenberger (2010). Given the growing interconnection across borders and the positioning of companies in international markets, the contact and negotiations with people from different cultures, nationalities, and native languages are constant. From this perspective, unless professionals know how to decode other cultures and avoid easy-to-fall-into cultural traps, misunderstanding, needless conflict, and failure might emerge (Meyer, 2014).

According to Minervini (2008), a lack of knowledge of the other person's culture can often lead to situations that have a negative impact on future negotiations, and it is necessary to understand the culture and context of a given society. The author emphasizes that as a result of globalization and the proliferation of cultural influences, there is a tendency towards homogenization. As highlighted by Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2010), homogenized cultures are emerging due to advanced technologies and the intensification of contact between nationalities, nevertheless, the dissemination of ideas also tends to cause resistance to homogenization. Prior to reaching this juncture, it becomes relevant to comprehend various social and cultural aspects, as this understanding plays a fundamental role in ensuring the success of negotiations, Cavusgil; Knight and Riesenberger (2010, p. 90) outline:

> [...] developing an appreciation of, and sensitivity for, cultural differences has become an imperative for any manager. Those with cross-cultural savvy hold various advantages in managing employees, [...]. Companies have much to gain from bridging the cultural divide.

Upon the disclosure of culture, it is often encouraged that individuals should be treated individually, considering their unique characteristics, and avoiding the pitfalls of pejorative stereotypes. However, as highlighted by Meyer, 2014, neglecting the significance of culture when participating in meetings and negotiations and solely focusing on personal characteristics, may lead to the standard human tendency, which is the mechanism to assess others through one's perspective, culture and upbringing, resulting in mistaken judgments and conclusions. It is crucial to recognize that personal characteristics are, in fact, significant, as they are also subject to change based on the environment, profession, company culture and various external factors. However, even with the complexity of personal characteristics being present, understanding the culture in which the individual is inserted and how it affects approaches, facilitates the handling of situations (Meyer, 2014).

Mapping the world's cultures

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch anthropologist, was one of the first scholars to introduce the concept of national cultural characteristics. His research, identified four independent cultural dimensions: 1) Individualism vs Collectivism, this dimension describes whether individuals act as part of a group or tend to think and act independently; 2) Power Distance: this dimension refers to how societies deal with power inequalities between individuals, the degree to which less powerful members of organizations or institutions accept and expect unequal distribution of power. Societies with high power distance tend to feel indifferent to inequality, while societies with low power distance do not; 3) Uncertainty Avoidance: which measures how tolerant individuals are of uncertainty, as Hofstede (1980, p. 20) explains "[...] the extent to which a culture programs its members to be comfortable or uncomfortable with uncertain situations", and 4) Masculinity vs Femininity, such dimension focuses on the values that a society emphasizes. Masculine societies tend to value assertiveness and competitiveness, while feminine societies tend to value interdependence and protection. Hofstede later introduced a fifth dimension, the Long vs Short Term Orientation, which measures how a culture influences its members to accept delayed gratification. Long-term-oriented cultures, such as those in East Asia, emphasize long-term planning and saving. Short-term-oriented cultures, such as those in North America and Western Europe, tend to embrace a short-term gratification and spending perspective (Hofstede, 1980).

Forasmuch as Hofstede introduced contributions and served as a catalyst for a multitude of subsequent research endeavors which aided authors expand such concepts, "the Hofstede framework should be viewed as only a general guide, useful for a deeper understanding in cross-national interactions with business partners, customers, and value-chain members" (Cavusgil; Knight; Riesenberger, 2010, p. 101).

Eight Scales

Meyer's (2014) research expands the understanding based on eight scales employed to delineate cultures. "Each of the eight scales represents one key area that managers must be aware of, showing how cultures vary along a spectrum from

one extreme to its opposite. The eight scales are: Communicating: low-context vs. high-context; Evaluating: direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback; Persuading: principles-first vs. applications-first; Leading: egalitarian vs. hierarchical; Deciding: consensual vs. top-down; Trusting: task-based vs. relationship-based; Disagreeing: confrontational vs. avoids confrontation; Scheduling: linear-time vs. flexible-time" (Meyer, 2014, p. 20). The figure 01 illustrates the eight scales mentioned comparing 2 illustrative countries, F and G. For this research, the concepts of communication, evaluation, decision-making and leading will be further explained.

Figure 01: Countries F and G
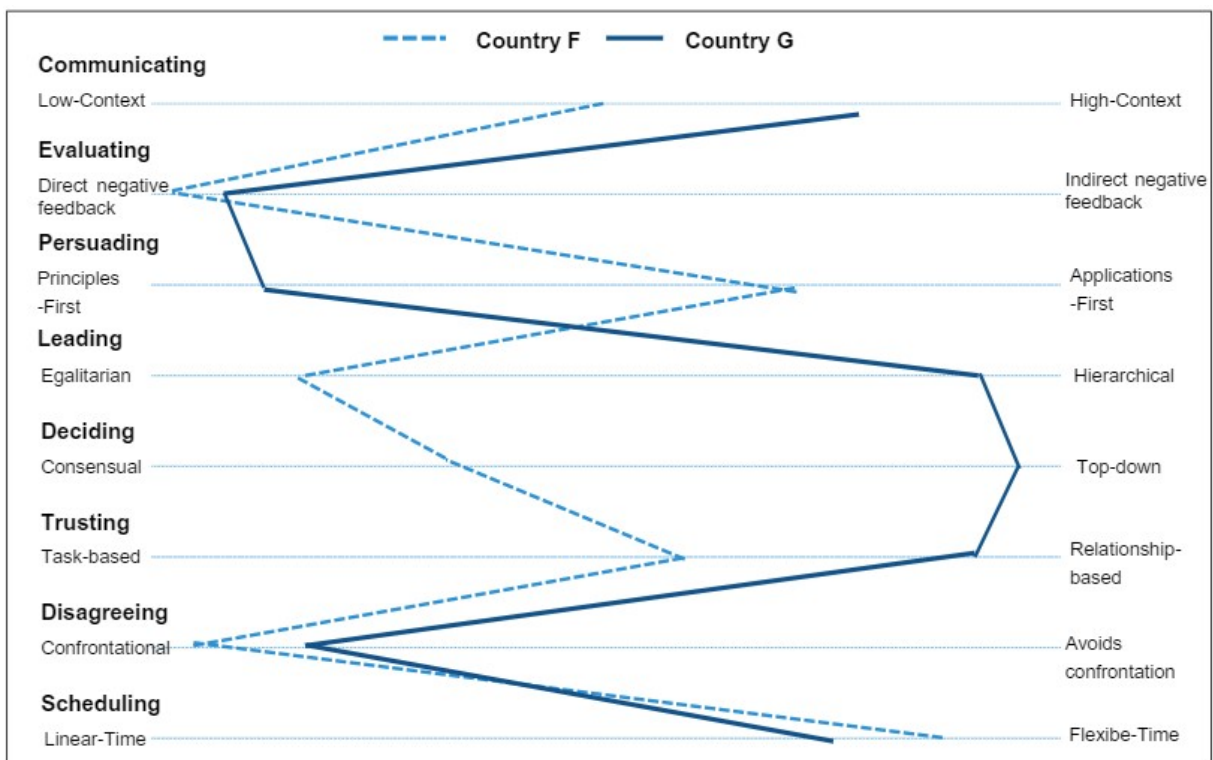
Source: Adapted from Meyer (2014)

Within the sphere of scales, cultural relativity takes profound significance. While evaluating how individuals from different cultures will relate to each other, it is not the country's exact position on the spectrum of scales that is relevant: instead, what matters is the relative positions of the two cultures being analyzed (Meyer, 2014). When building and managing global teams, or negotiating with companies in other countries, it is essential to "understand not just how people from his own culture

experience people from various international cultures, but also how those international cultures perceive one another" (Meyer, 2014, p. 27).

The impact of language: low and high context

According to Meyer (2014), language plays an essential role in defining thinking and communication style and culture. Language is characterized by its high or low level of context, as high context languages have several significant words which may be used differently depending on what contexts they are applicable. The author mentions that the English language has seven times more words than French, suggesting that the French rely much more on contextual cues to resolve semantic ambiguities, as the listener bears the responsibility of discerning the speaker's intention. Based on this concept, a manager may verbalize something explicitly, but only those with a shared context will understand what is implied and the secondary message that has been conveyed. The anthropologist Edward Hall (1976) introduced the concept, describing lower context culture as characterized by detailed language explanations and a strong emphasis on the spoken word, since the point of communication is to be direct and unambiguous, with a clear meaning. As for the higher context cultures, there is an emphasis on non-verbal messages, the point of the communication is to use it as a means of promoting harmonious relationships (Hall, 1976).

Figure 02: Hall's High and Low-Context Categorization of Cultures
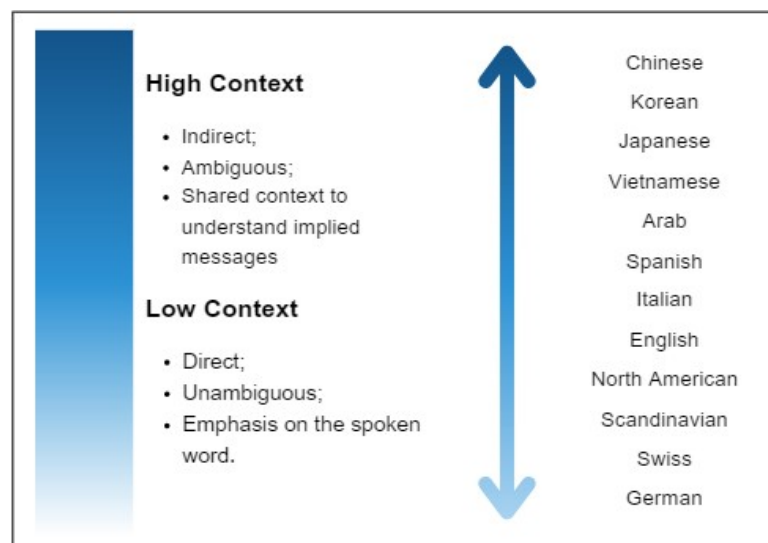
Source: Adapted from Hall (1976)

Apart from languages, history has a very important role to play in shaping the society concerned. According to Meyer (2014), high-context cultures typically share extensive historical background, and these societies are predominantly built upon relationships, with contact networks transcending generations and carrying forward shared contextual understandings, over the course of their extensive history.

The United States, a country that holds relevance for our research due to its representation in three of our interviews, has a relatively short history when compared to many nations. Its formation was shaped by a significant influx of immigrants from different parts of the world, each bringing distinct references and historical backgrounds. Due to the limited shared context within these originating societies, it became necessary for messages to be conveyed with precision, and it was soon realized that communication had to be as explicit as possible, leaving little room for ambiguity. This principle and logic can also be applied to Brazil, which is the country with the lowest context culture within the cluster of middle to high context countries.

In examining the communication scale, Anglo-Saxon countries are situated on the left, followed by Latin-speaking countries and at the far-right end, Asian-speaking countries. Within the Anglo-Saxon group, the United States, positioned on the left of the spectrum, stands out as the country with the greatest cultural diversity and the least shared historical context. In contrast, the United Kingdom, characterized by a richer contextual background, occupies the rightmost end of the communication spectrum, while still occupying the Anglo-Saxon group situated on the left. This example evidentiates the logic between historical background and usage of language as a significant aspect of culture and societies' behaviors.

How to evaluate: Direct vs Indirect Negative Feedback

Meyer (2014) introduces the Evaluating aspect of the scale which refers to whether a culture will consider it better to give direct or indirect negative feedback. Cultures with a direct feedback style provide feedback in a straightforward approach, often without positive comments in order to soften the message. They rely on upgraders, words preceding or following the negative feedback, used to amplify the meaning, such as "totally", "completely", as found in expressions such as "totally inappropriate", "completely unprofessional" even when in a group surrounding. In

contrast, cultures with an indirect style tend to provide feedback softly, regularly using positive messages to diminish negative remarks. In this context, downgraders such as "sort of", "a little", "kind of", are often used, in order to result in tender criticisms, as in "sort of inappropriate", "slightly unprofessional", typically in private interactions.

Figure 03: Direct vs Indirect Negative Feedback in Scale of Countries

Source: Adapted from Meyer (2014)

As the figure illustrates, it is a relevant point to consider that the positioning of each nation on the Communication scale does not necessarily reflect on their position on the Evaluation scale, in other words, low-context language cultures may reveal indirect feedback approach, and vice-versa. As Meyer (2014) highlights, "Americans are stereotyped as direct by most of the world, yet when they give negative feedback they are less direct than many European cultures" (Meyer, 2014, p. 63).

Decision-making and Leading

Hofstede introduced the concept of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance as previously explained in this chapter, establishing a firm foundation for subsequent researchers to further refine such concepts. Meyer (2014) introduces similar conceptions to explain how the process of decision-making works in each culture. It could be consensual, usually made as a group, where each individual shares their thoughts and opinions before agreeing to a conclusion, or hierarchical, where decisions are top-down, made by managers or other authority figures. Also, the author emphasizes a correlation between a manager's leadership style, addressed by the Leading Scale, and the decision-making process used on their team. Managers with an egalitarian leadership style are more likely to use consensual based decision-making, while managers with a hierarchical leadership style are more likely to use hierarchical decision-making, "most cultures that fall as

egalitarian on the Leading scale also believe in consensual decision-making" (Meyer, 2014, p. 120). However, the United States of America diverges the logic, since the leading is consensual while decision-making is usually top-down.

In consensual based cultures, decision-making can be time consuming, as it involves gathering feedback and insights from everyone involved. This process ensures that various scenarios, aspects, and solutions are carefully and previously considered. However, once a decision is made, it is typically implemented quickly and effectively, as all aspects and solutions have been considered upfront, and it is considered final, with no further discussion, Meyer refers to the scenario as a Decision with a "capital D" in contrast to "lowercase d" in hierarchical cultures, where decisions are typically made by managers or other authority figures. These decisions may be implemented quickly, but during the implementation, the group may identify issues and opportunities for improvement. This flexibility allows adjustments, changes, and refinement as problems and enhancements are identified, or even a complete pivot in the decision (Meyer, 2014).

Figure 04: Decision with lowercase "d" and capital "D"
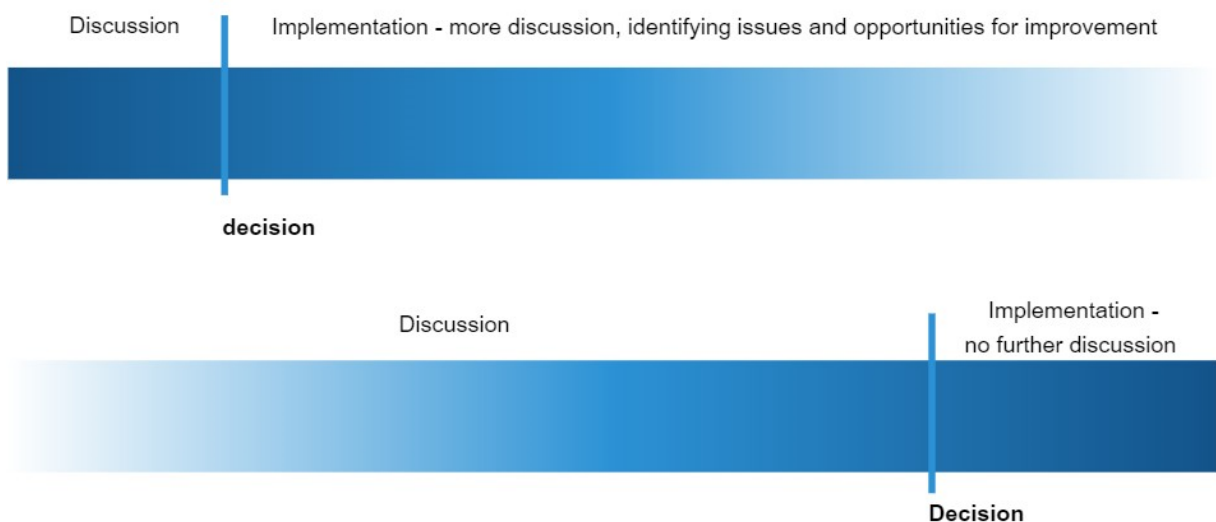
Source: Adapted from Meyer (2014)

Figure 05: Process of Decision-Making: Consensual vs Top-down

Source: Adapted from Meyer (2014)

Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2010, p. 102) also allude to the fact that a society's behavior is impacted by manners and costumes, as they encompass behavioral norms and ways of conduct expected in both public and professional settings. When mentioning customs, the most accentuated ones are related to holidays, work hours and nutritional patterns. Considering the many cultural aspects that influence people's behaviors and, consequently, their impacts on international business, it is identifiable that "managers not only need to develop empathy and tolerance toward cultural differences but also must acquire a sufficient degree of factual knowledge about the beliefs and values of foreign counterparts" (Cavusgil; Knight; Riesenberger, 2010, p. 94).

Methodology

This study adopts a deductive research approach to explore the impact of language and culture on corporate environments, international negotiations, and global team management. The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of existing literature regarding the topics which combine aspects of culture. Additionally to the literature review, this study also incorporates primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with managers at Dell Technologies.

The choice of Dell Technologies as a research site was made strategically, as its global presence as a multinational corporation and experienced professionals with international exposure (Dell Technologies, 2023). Considering the different locations of those involved, the interviews were performed online, following the semi-structured format to ensure that the questions were designed to address the specific objectives of this research, such interviews "involve unstructured and generally open-ended

questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell, J. W.; Creswell, J. D., 2017, p. 265). The interview was recorded and transcribed for the analysis to be as precise as possible, and informed consent was obtained from all interviewees. In order to learn more about how they perceive cultural differences within their roles, the participants have been asked to speak of their experiences leading global teams and negotiating internationally, providing insights into how they interpreted and navigated cultural differences in their roles. From their perspectives, this paper intends to validate the relevance of the literature introduced by the authors mentioned in this research in real-world corporate scenarios.

The data collected through interviews was analyzed using qualitative research methods, as highlighted by Creswell J. W. and Creswell, J. D. (2017, p. 69) "one of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory [...] the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard". After identifying recurring themes and patterns in the responses of the interviewees, these topics were then compared and contrasted with the theoretical framework established by the authors studied. This research ensures the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and focuses on participant's experiences and perceptions about their professional experiences, without involving any specific information regarding Dell Technologies and their operations. Qualitative research often utilizes open-ended questions to encourage participants to provide responses that reflect their thoughts, perspectives, feelings and experiences on the subject. This approach aims to gather data regarding the participants' perspectives and motivations (Cateora; Philip; Gilly; Graham, 2013).

By employing a deductive approach and combining qualitative analysis of existing literature with insights from interviews conducted at Dell Technologies, this research seeks to provide an understanding of how language and culture impact corporate approaches, international negotiations, and global team leadership in the contemporary business landscape.

Presentation, analysis and discussion of results

The research was performed by conducting interviews with 5 managers of global teams at Dell Technologies. The questions, available in Annex A, were

carefully crafted to gain a deeper understanding of how culture and language influence the professional experiences of each interviewee. The interviewees are located in the United States, Ireland and China, while performances are focused in the area of Supply Chain, as they contact and manage teams with cultural differences, since team members are from many different nationalities and locations. The managers interviewed will be referred to as letters, from A to E, in order to maintain their anonymity. Relevant information as the positions' descriptions and time in the company are displayed in the image below for a better understanding of the following analyses. Due to the global exposition of team members at Dell Technologies, besides the role description, the information considered was time in the company, not specifically in the respective role.

Figure 06: Role Description and Approximate Company Time

	ROLE DESCRIPTION	COMPANY TIME (APPROX.)
A	Senior Manager Demand Planning (Americas)	10 years
B	Vice President Global Operations & Supply Chain Planning	19 years
C	Senior Manager Demand Planning (Europe, Middle East & Africa)	20 years
D	Senior Manager Demand Planning (Asia Pacific Japan & China)	12 years
E	Senior Manager Supply Chain Procurement	11 years

Source: Elaborated by the author (2023)

The questions were designed to gather information about their experiences as managers and their perspectives on culture, language and corporate aspects during their many years of experience in a company with global exposure. The formalized guideline can be found in Annex A. Some main ideas gathered from the conversations will be further displayed.

Understanding the business environment

The topic of decision-making was introduced during the interview process through structured questions, and all managers acknowledged the existence of both high-level decisions and those requiring careful consideration of the company's

culture and business implications, hence the importance of deliberate efforts becomes essential to ensure that decisions made permeate across all regions, recognizing the responsibility of leaders to foster clear communication. If anything, when making team decisions, they give emphasis to the value of considering everyone's input. Also, encouraging open dialogue becomes imperative, particularly in a global environment. As stated by interviewee C: "It's very important to get people included in the decision-making because they'll feel more a part of it". Participant A sympathized to the same approach: "I do not like to command and tell people what to do, I would rather get their opinion, because I always feel when somebody is invested and they know that they are part of the decision, people are more inclined to do it", the necessity to follow top-down orders was referred to, although, regarding team decisions the input from every team member is appreciated according to interviewee A.

An intriguing observation emerged when discussing disagreement, as managers noted that individuals from oriental cultures tend to be more retained in expressing disagreement, particularly when addressing superiors or those in positions of authority, whereas individuals from western cultures are more likely to openly voice their opinions. There exists a cultural nuance in Asian societies where disagreement is communicated more indirectly, with an emphasis on maintaining harmony within the organizational hierarchy. Hence, participant E mentioned: "Understanding the hierarchy in Asia, the decision makers are a lot higher up the chain. It shows you that the hierarchy is a lot more stringent when the decision makers are right high up the chain. If there is anything to approve in the US, the lower down the chain can approve, for equivalent issue".

During prior interactions with Western teams, the manager responsible for the Asia Pacific, Japan, and China region observed that: "US team members were asking very challenging questions to their leaders, sometimes before they agreed with the managers. They will not purely follow the action set, so this is one of the different aspects we see from our Oriental culture". Similarly, one of the managers located in the US expressed a similar opinion, stating that "The Asian would probably be the most likely culture to not want to disagree. Usually the Indian cultures are pretty vocal. American US cultures are vocal, UK they tend to be polite and nice, but they also are willing to speak. Some of it is individual, some of it is just

cultural, they don't or won't speak up in disagreement with their boss. So you have to encourage it, especially in a global environment".

During the discussion on the decision-making processes, the diverse approaches within oriental cultures were highlighted by the Interviewee D: "People from the South of China are more detail oriented. They bring every detail, then they will make a decision based on the details. In the North, they try to understand the leadership's direction first. Based on that direction, they collect information, so it's similar to the Korean style". From this perspective, Meyer (2014) alludes to the scale of Persuasiading, which combines the principles-first and applications-first logics. The differences of team members regarding this approach could cause conflict and difficulties within the team, as western team members may understand that Chinese are focusing on all key points without intentionally addressing them, while East Asians would notice westerns as isolating a single topic and ignoring important connections. From the Asian perspective it could lead to an understanding that European and American executives tend to not consider further implications of their decisions (Meyer, 2014). Although, during the discussion, this difference was noted and mentioned within the same country and directly correlated to the decision-making process. As a manager, interviewee D highlights: "You need to sit in their shoes to make sure you understand the background behind why they are making such a decision".

Overall, language did not emerge as a substantive concern among our interviewees. Challenges were acknowledged in relation to accents and idiomatic expressions, as participant B highlighted, which may present difficulties when translated to the team members' respective local languages, followed by a noteworthy level of comprehension demonstrated as a pragmatic understanding of these linguistic nuances were mentioned by the respondents. Enclosed by the replies, there is a consistent consensus to seek clarification through additional questions, as potential misunderstandings can come to surface when English might not be their primary language. "You have to be patient. You let them communicate and then pause and ask questions. Giving them respect for being able to communicate in a second language or third language" says participant B. Meyer (2014) highlights strategies to encourage debate considering low and high context languages and the use of upgraders and downgraders, although such correlation regarding context of native languages from team members did not emerge as a topic.

Interviewee C highlights: "Some people's English is very strong written, but verbally it may not be as strong. That is when you need to know the development of your team members. Somebody may be quiet, shy or not comfortable speaking English because it's their second language and would prefer to send an email [...] so it's very important to know your team". Also, to mitigate potential misinterpretations, it is imperative to prioritize written communication in environments engaging with international teams. It entails utilizing emails to clarify ideas that may still be ambiguous and explicitly state the main conclusions from previous discussions (Meyer, 2014). "So it's very important when you're dealing with international teams to put it in writing" states interviewee C. Interviewee D also had a similar perspective when mentioning the contact with different nationalities and the impact on work activities: "[...] unless it's a firm commitment, I don't want to go make a commitment to the business. So we've learned that, to make sure we're very clear and it is really what I've asked for, is to have everything in writing."

Managers' approaches to feedback delivery exhibit variations. Chinese managers are typically averse to criticism in public settings, opting for private and indirect communication. In contrast, Dutch managers value directness and honesty, delivering feedback in a straightforward manner. Americans often employ a 'sandwich' approach, embedding negative feedback within a layer of positive statements. Conversely, French managers tend to offer strong criticism, while providing positive feedback more sparingly (Meyer, 2014). Upon inquiry regarding feedback mechanisms within the team and the managers' approach to delivering negative feedback, a spectrum of viewpoints was evident.

Interviewee D mentioned that: "Same criteria, we are not considering nationality or gender. And when we deal with those communications, and we will, I think we're using the same approach: transparency and also consider how they are feeling. We don't want to break the relationships between each other because all our team members treasure the relationship a lot". The interviewee also mentions that they tend to communicate in a soft way to make sure they feel comfortable and acceptable. Interviewee C mentioned the same point of view: "I don't think I would bring somebody's nationality into the conversation. That should not make any difference to anybody. But you might speak to somebody differently on how the personality is and how to take feedback. Some people might like to get the feedback straight up. If you know your team members, and you should as a manager, you

should know the best way to give the feedback to make sure they will receive it in a positive way and understand what you want them to do. If you go in with the same paintbrush for all team members, you're probably only going to get 40 to 50% of the message across, because everybody takes it in a different way. It could be cultural or language or communication, but the biggest one obviously is personality".

While participant B also agreed to the feedback and team member's reaction not being culturally driven, Interviewee A shared an opposite perspective: "Yes, there is a different approach 100% and that has to do a lot with the culture too. So for instance, personality comes together as well, but certain cultures like to hear something positive about them and then the negative feedback. It's called the sandwich technique [...]. When you are a leader, it is very important to know that it is not about you anymore [...]. The leader will have to understand and put the people up front to know their culture, upbringing and background. Understand where they are coming from without talking in a way that will match with everybody."

Effective managers seek to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the values, attitudes, and lifestyles inherent in the cultures with which they engage. This knowledge serves as a valuable tool for interpreting the partner's mindset, organizational structures and objectives, causing decisions and events to become more interpretable. By demonstrating genuine interest in the target culture, managers establish trust and mutual respect, establishing the foundation to productive relationships in the business environment (Cavusgil; Knight; Riesenberger, 2010).

In the context of feedback delivery, it is observed that American managers' approach tends to deliver feedback in a direct manner, while oriental cultures often preface the feedback delivery with positive remarks, reflecting the emphasis on maintaining relationship dynamics. Regardless of cultural orientation, however, all managers concurred on the importance of providing feedback in a polite and supportive manner, highlighting positive aspects to ensure the message is well received, manifesting support.

While relationships are acknowledged as significant independent of culture, their prominence is notably heightened in Eastern cultures. Such relevance is noticeable as interviewee E highlights the tendency of individuals from Asian cultures to avoid expressing disagreement or causing disappointment to their superiors, creating an additional barrier, beyond geographical distance, to assessing team members' workloads. The importance of personal relationships enables Interviewee

E to access this information through his closer interactions with other team members, whose personality trait of approachability further facilitates open communication with the leader. The colleague will not tell the leader, but the team member will notice and care for such information, discussing the concerns. "The team member tells me. Which is great, because otherwise I probably won't know. I am aware that the other individual will not tell me when he's having a hard time. He will do everything he can to not tell me [...] So I try to make sure everyone knows that I want to open channels of communication, and again, I'm here to be an advocate for them and to help".

During the course of the interviews, an unanticipated topic, not initially incorporated to the interview guideline, emerged. Although not initially perceived, it assumed relevance to the overall scope of the research discourse. The interviewee D presented situations from the planning sector where accuracy is not always possible, considering the constant change in the international environment, although such information regarding demand is relevant for work procedures. In Japan, there is a resistance to sharing such information if it is not entirely accurate. As said: "For example, demand is not accurate and can always change. However, in Japan, they try to make sure the demand is 100% sure. In that case, we can hardly get early demand information unless you have a very close relationship with Japan."

It has become a topic of attention that the information will not be sent unless there is consistency that such reply will be maintained. Following Hofstede's study (1980) Japan is among the countries that score high on uncertainty avoidance.

A recurring theme among all interviewees centered on the necessity of cultivating empathy and cross-cultural understanding. Interviewee A emphasized the relevance for managers to embody empathy and strive to comprehend the perspectives of their team members. They advocated for dedicating time to gaining insights into the individuals' cultural backgrounds, traditions, culinary preferences, leisure pursuits, educational experiences, and upbringing experiences. Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2010, p.110) highlight "successful managers acquire a base of knowledge about the values, attitudes, and lifestyles of the cultures with which they interact".

Participant C called attention to: "When you get into cultures of countries, it's probably more around traditions, so you know we'll just say: Polish people love to cook fabulous food, Irish people are known for going out to the pub on the weekends, in Slovakia they are very big into Christmas markets and music, and along with

Poland celebrate Christmas on the 24th of December [...] there are traditions [...]. That's the culture of those people, so I would be fully engrossed in all that and in making sure that I'm aware. Even though you might have four or five people from Poland in the team, those four people are different. So again, it goes down to the personalities". Such speech was commonly stated during the interviews among all participants.

Achieving success in the sphere of international business requires the cultivation of cross-cultural proficiency, established on the development of four key personality traits, tolerance for ambiguity, indicating the capacity to endure uncertainty and possible lack of clarity in the thoughts and actions of others. Perceptiveness as it involves the ability to observe and appreciate cues immersed in the speech and behavior of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Valuing personal relationships and lastly, flexibility and adaptability, requiring a creative mindset to compose innovative solutions, open-minded approach towards outcomes, and the ability to face challenging circumstances. (Cavusgil; Knight; Riesenberger, 2010).

Upon inquiry concerning the three principal points in the management of global teams, the following topics enclosed the responses. Participant A mentioned the values of empathy, patience and keeping a broad and open mindset. Moreover, participant D alluded to empathy, transparency and inclusiveness, assuring trust and attention to background and cultures. Participant E mentions the importance of ensuring everyone has equal opportunities, consciousness considering time zones in order to organize activities and foster an environment of inclusion, where everyone is free to be their true selves. Time zone management was also stated by Participant B along with communication and being respectful of people's local customs, cultures and nuances.

Team bonding and trust, creating an open door policy communication and awareness regarding work and personal life balance of team members were highlighted by Interviewee C. As stated by Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2010, p. 110) "sincere interest in the target culture helps establish trust and respect, laying the foundation for open and productive relationships".

Conclusion

In the era of globalization and the constant diffusion of products, technology and knowledge, interconnection across borders and the positioning of companies in international markets is consequential, as is the contact and negotiations with people from different cultures, nationalities, and native languages. Facing such reality, the importance of decoding other cultures and understanding different cultural perspectives is decisive to mitigate the risk of failure in international settings entailing negotiations and the management of global teams. The research is centered on how language and culture influence corporate sites, emphasizing that disparities in these elements can create substantial challenges. It accentuates the necessity for businesses to comprehend and navigate these nuances due to their profound relevance in corporate activities. In order to achieve the understanding of such applicability in a real corporate environment, interviews were conducted to validate the authors' statements and gain insights to understand the practical application of these topics in actual business environments.

Throughout this research, it was observed the prominence of the discourse regarding high and low-context language, feedback delivery, and cultural customs and traits featured in literature, as authors consistently emphasized the significance of these themes. However, diverging from such standpoint, interviewees, not entirely but in majority, did not identify feedback as inherently culturally driven. Furthermore, language was not perceived as a prominent issue, except for idiomatic expressions that face translation issues. Regarding language, the importance of patience when engaging in English communication with non-native speakers, accompanying the preference to always assure and prioritize the written communication were also considered, as challenges can be faced to guarantee assertiveness. Nevertheless, the management of teams and conversation with colleagues in regards to the low and high context from each team member native language was not evident. Whereas the hesitation exhibited by certain cultures to provide information without absolute certainty also indicates difficulties pursuing various activities and validates the uncertainty avoidance theory.

Notably, values of empathy, inclusiveness, patience, consciousness of time zones and acknowledgement of communication were recognizable as pertinent elements in the effective management of global teams, as cultural backgrounds play

a significant role in molding each individual's personality traits and the cultivation of a profound understanding is determinant for ensuring the success of operational corporate endeavors. Moreover, the participants' emphasis on personality traits as paramount significance in cross-cultural management, particularly in teams where there is close team communication, exhibits the importance of considering individual nuances beyond cultural backgrounds. It was agreed that while culture establishes a foundational background, it is not a deterministic influence on individual characteristics. In international negotiations between different companies, where there is a lack of constant ongoing team interactions, culture may influence and outstand personality. During this research we had a perspective of one participant with external contact, which constrains conclusions, yet presents an avenue for future research endeavors to explore the interplay of cultural and individual factors within the sphere of international negotiations between different companies.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to highlight that, although the limited number of participants prevents the support of a broader and comprehensive study, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the valuable insights gained from the interviews. Unexpected themes during the interviews were introduced, which emphasizes the need for further research, opening avenues to explore deeper into these emergent themes. Additionally, investigating the cultural dynamics within a company of smaller scale and/or different industries, while simultaneously broadening the literature research on cultural aspects, would provide a complementary perspective, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding and insights of how cultural factors permeate in an environment where routine exposure to diverse cultures is not inherent, enabling the perspective on both large-scale and smaller-scale organizational settings.

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Annex A - Formalized Interview Guideline

Formalized Interview Guideline

1. How has been your experience leading an international team with different cultures?

2. How are team related decisions taken? Follow up: When there is a decision to be made, is everyone comfortable to agree/disagree or is there any pattern you notice for each culture?

3. How do you perceive the different nationalities in your team? Follow up: When leading an international team, is it possible to notice the difference regarding the different cultures and their communication/approach? If yes, what are those differences?

4. Have you ever experienced a situation that impacted the team's dynamic due to different cultures?

5. When it comes to giving feedback to your team members, is there any difference on the approach you use due to each individual's nationality? Or is it the same approach to everyone?

6. How precise is the communication of team members from different countries?

7. What are the 3 most important aspects to lead an international team?

If this team has contact with other companies:

1. When negotiating with other nationalities, is there anything you notice regarding their culture that impacts the negotiation? - (Online contact, language barrier)...