

# **Non-verbal Communication across Cultures: Gestures and Facial Expressions at Business Meetings and Negotiations in China and Italy.**

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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Stanovte hlavní cíl, výzkumné otázky a metody práce.

Provedte primární výzkum metodou experimentu.

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- Ambler, Tim, and Morgen Witzel. 2004. *Doing Business in China*. 2nd ed. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Chaney, Lillian H., and Jeanette S. Martin. 2011. *Intercultural Business Communication*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
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- Trompenans, Fons, and Charles Hampden-Turner. 1998. *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Global Business*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá interkulturní komunikací a rolí neverbální komunikace mezi vybranými kulturami, během obchodních jednání a vyjednávání se zaměřením na tři aspekty neverbální komunikace. Těmito aspekty jsou oční kontakt, podání rukou a význam ticha. Cílem této práce je zjistit, zda tyto aspekty ovlivňují interkulturní komunikaci mezi představiteli z Itálie a Číny a co lze udělat pro odstranění problémů spojených s těmito aspekty. Na základě zjištění z výzkumu, vnímání těchto neverbálních aspektů se mezi těmito kulturami značně liší a může komunikaci výrazně ovlivnit. Nepochopení signálů může vést k nedorozuměním nebo k urážce obchodních partnerů a následně k obchodnímu selhání, a proto je znalost neverbálních aspektů nezbytná. Praktická část práce představuje údaje získané kvalitativním výzkumem. Zvolenou metodou pro výzkum byl experiment kombinovaný s pozorováním. Zástupci z Číny a Itálie byli pozorováni během jednání, která byla simulována pomocí předpřipravených rolí a během skutečného obchodního jednání. Na základě zjištění bylo vypracováno doporučení užití vybraných neverbálních aspektů v Číně a Itálii.

Klíčová slova: komunikace, neverbální komunikace, interkulturní obchodní komunikace, Čína, Itálie

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis explores the intercultural communication and the role of nonverbal communication between selected cultures in business meetings and negotiations, with the focus on three aspects of nonverbal communication. The studied nonverbal aspects are eye contact, handshake, and the use of silence. The goal of the thesis is to find out whether these elements affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China and what can be done to eliminate problems with these aspects. As it was found out from the research, perception of these nonverbal aspects differs vastly between these cultures and can significantly affect the communication. Since misreading the signals can lead to misunderstandings or offending the business partners and even to business failure, understanding the nonverbal cues is therefore crucial. The practical part of the thesis presents the data gathered through a qualitative research. The chosen method for the research was an experiment combined with observation. The representatives from China and Italy were being observed during negotiations which were simulated with a role-

playing game and a business meeting that was a real situation. Based on my findings, I postulated recommendations for the use of selected aspects of nonverbal communication skills in China and Italy.

Keywords: communication, nonverbal communication, intercultural business communication, China, Italy

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.



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## INTRODUCTION

With the growing Chinese economy and the overall globalization, western countries get in touch in businesses with Asian countries more and more. In order to communicate with potential business partners, it is necessary to give a good impression, especially when communicating with Chinese, since this culture put a strong emphasis on the relationship with their business partners. Nonverbal communication is an indivisible part of communication that should not be neglected in the sense of its importance, especially when communicating with countries having a so diverse way of nonverbal communication, which can lead to misunderstandings and business failures.

The purpose of this work is to study nonverbal communication during business meetings and negotiations between China and Italy with a focus on three nonverbal elements, handshake, eye contact and meaning of silence, and to give a recommendation how to approach the mentioned cultures in a sense of nonverbal communication.

The theory part of the thesis deals with the meaning of communication and communication models, it is followed by a brief mention of verbal communication and then it focuses in depth on non-verbal communication, on its roles and its types with the focus to the studied nonverbal aspects. This part is followed with defining the intercultural communication and a culture, and the role of nonverbal communication in business meetings and negotiations. Lastly, the theoretical part presents the comparison of selected countries based on Hofstede's culture comparison and compares the nonverbal communication between China and Italy.

The practical part firstly introduces the chosen methodology for the research, defines the main goal of the thesis, and states the research questions. This part is followed with the detailed analysis of the observation from the experiment. Lastly, the summary of the data gathered from the research are presented, followed by the given recommendations for doing business in China and Italy.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 COMMUNICATION

This part of the thesis defines the term communication and introduces basic communication models.

Communication is a means that carry the information that is going on between a sender and a receiver. The most known and noticeable is the verbal and spoken one, even though majority of communication is done in nonverbal way. Verbal communication can be either spoken or written. The Online Etymology dictionary (2020) defines the communication as “*act of communicating, act of imparting, debating, conferring,*” meanwhile William Newman and Charles Summer (1977) understands communication as “*an exchange of ideas, facts, opinions or emotions of two or more persons*”. (Shaik 2012, 64) Communication in general has a fundamental role. In order to establish any kind of communication two participants at least are needed, a sender and a receiver. A sender is someone who creates the message, encodes it and sends it to the receiver through a certain medium, either verbally or nonverbally and the receiver needs to notice this message, decode it and get the message from it. After this process follows a feedback. Communication can happen either intentionally or unintentionally. Verbal communication is almost always intentional meanwhile nonverbal communication happens almost always unintentionally.

Communication in general shares several characteristic which are mentioned in the book *Perspectives on Human Communication* by Wahlstrom (1992, 9-15), these shared characteristic, mentioned also by Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester (2006, 10-17) are that “*communication is a process, communication is symbolic, communication is contextual, communication is purposive and communication is two way*”.

### 1.1 Communication models

Communication is a complex process and to understand the communication in general, it is necessary to look at it from the base. Because the communication is so complex and it is not possible to express it in its fully complexity, the models represent simplified and general way of communication. There are many representations of communication as many authors understand the communication in slightly different ways. It is not possible to summarise communication process in only one way and each communication model has its own point. In general, there are two types of communication models, “*linear*” and “*non-linear*”. (Narula 2006, 13) Linear communication models represent one-way communication and see the communication as an act without considering its effect. Non-

linear communication models represent the communication as a process. Non-linear communication models represent multidirectional communication and focus on interactions among participants. (Narula 2006, 13)

### 1.1.1 Aristotle's Model

Aristotle's Model is one of the earliest communication models known. Aristotle gives us a simple representation of a process of communication and its variables involved during the process of communication. According to Aristotle, the communication process is not linear and all the variables in the communication process affect each other. (Wahlstrom 1992, 16-17) The process consists of a speaker creating a message, putting it into a certain form and sending it to a receiver. This is followed with a feedback. (Annan-Prah 2015)

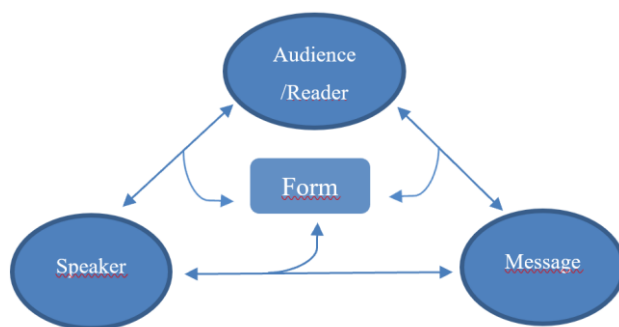


Fig. 1 Model of communication (Source: Wahlstrom 1992, 16)

### 1.1.2 Berlo's Model

Another communication model that should be mentioned is Berlo's Model, also known as the SMCR model which gives a very simple idea of communication. This model is similar to Aristotle's model and refers to his idea of communication. Berlo's communication model is based on six components, (source, encoder, message, channel, decoder, and receiver). This model presents communication in a linear way and therefore presents its own limitations. Berlo stresses the fact that communication is a process that is influenced by many means and therefore is unique and cannot be repeated in the exact same way twice. In the representation of the Berlo's model this is represented as a noise. The process of the communications can be summarized as follows; a message is created by a sender which has to decode the message in order to pass it to a receiver. The message is passed by to the receiver in decoded form through a certain channel and in order to understand the message the receiver has to decode the received message. (Wahlstrom 1992, 17) The

communication process is affected by many factors. Among these factors are the sender's "*communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system, and culture*", "*content, elements, treatment, structure, code*" of the message, form of the channel such as "*hearing, tasting, seeing, smelling, touching*", and lastly the receiver's "*communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system, and culture*". (Annan-Prah 2015)

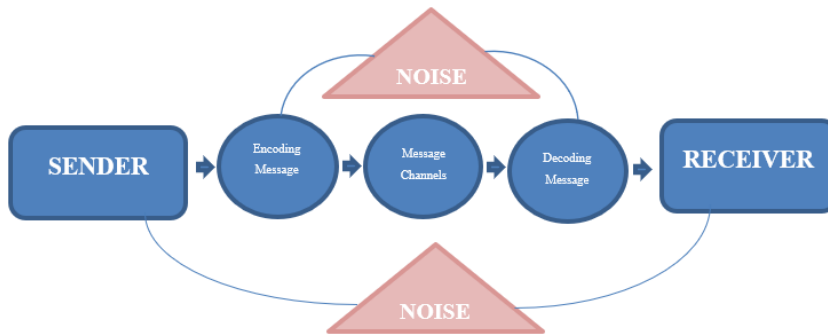


Fig. 2 Model of communication (Source: Wahlstrom 1992, 17)

### 1.1.3 Shannon and Weaver's Model

Another communication model mentioned is Shannon and Weaver's Model which is based on Berlo's idea especially regarding the influence of the noise in the communication process. Shannon and Weaver's Model was introduced in 1949 and brought new terminology in the communication area. Shannon and Weaver's Model comes from the study of the communication through the radio and telephone and the process of the communication through the different channels. (Wahlstrom 1992, 17-19) In Shannon and Weaver's Model is illustrated the problem of transmitting the message because of the noise in between. The noise represents any kind of distraction which causes that the message received is not the same as the message send.

Other terms introduced, that are important to mention, are "*entropy*" and "*redundancy*". These terms represent the unpredictability and predictability of the message. If the message contains a lot of entropy or in another words unpredictability this message contains more information than the "clean" message. The main idea of Shannon and Weaver's Model is, the simpler the message is, that means the more redundant the message is, the more luckily the message will deliver the original meaning of the message sent. (Wahlstrom 1992, 18-19)

Even though Shannon and Weaver's Model contributed to the study of the communication process and mentions the problem of the noise in the communication (Gibson and Michael 1992, 11), it focuses mostly on communication on the technological

level and has big limitations if applied to the human communication as such (Wahlstrom 1992, 18-19) but the rule, the simpler or more redundant the message is the more probably it will keep the original meaning of it, can be applied as well in the human communication process.

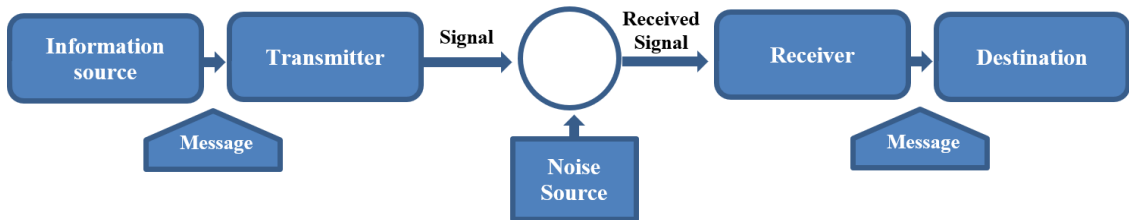


Fig. 3 Model of communication (Source: Wahlstrom 1992, 18)

#### 1.1.4 Lasswell's Model

Another communication model that significantly contributed to the study of communication is Harold Lasswell's model (1948) which explains the communication process by asking the following questions.



Fig. 4 Model of communication (Source: Wahlstrom 1992, 19)

Lasswell's model introduced in the study of communication the issue of the effect of a received message, in the sense of what impact the message has on the receiver. (Wahlstrom 1992, 18-19) The Lasswell model's limitations are that the model does not focus on the matter of noise, which is present in any communication and the feedback. Lasswell understood communication as a linear process. This model was further developed by Braddock (1958) which added at the end two more questions, which are "*Under what circumstances?*" and "*For what purpose?*". (McQuail and Windahl 1993, 14)



## 2 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

This part of the thesis defines the term nonverbal communication and explains its function in communication. This part is followed by presenting the types of nonverbal communication with detailed explanation of the individual types with the detailed focus on eye contact, handshake and silence.

The definition of nonverbal communication or in other words the body language is communication without the words. Jerold L. Hale (2003) defined nonverbal communication as *“the study of behaviours other than words that create shared meaning between people who are interacting with one another”*. (Burgoon Guerrero and Manusov 2010, 11) Nonverbal communication creates a vast amount of communication as such. According to Reynolds Sana and Deborah Valentine (2011, 75) up to 90 % of overall communication is being done nonverbally. Sometimes nonverbal communication reveals so much information that people wish to avoid it.

### 2.1 Role of nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication has many roles, it can replace the words completely, it can go alongside with them, emphasize verbal communication, but it can even contradict it, as we may be saying one thing but nonverbal language can reveal the hidden message behind the words. In general, there are six essential divisions of the function of nonverbal communication which go along with verbal communication and influence the understanding of overall communication and what one understands. The division is following:

1. Repetition
2. Contradiction
3. Substitution
4. Accentuation
5. Supplementation/modification
6. Regulation

Repetition emphasize the verbal message. Repetition happens when the same message is emphasized through different channels. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99) As an example can be used a situation when someone praises someone else’s performance and at the same moment shows the thumb up in order to emphasize the message or in which someone says a number and shows the number with the fingers.

Contradiction as oppose to the repetition is the situation when the nonverbal message contradicts to the verbal one. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99) James W. Gibson and Hanna Michael (1992, 99) use as an example the use of sarcasm in someone's speech and therefore speaking about intentional use of the contradiction. However, contradiction can be used also unintentionally.

Substitution has a function to substitute the verbal message with the nonverbal message. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99) It is the situation when the gestures are used in such a way that the message we try to convey through the gesture is clear enough to be understood and therefore there is no need for words.

Accentuation is another way of emphasizing the verbal message. It is a combination of words and use of a certain gesture in order to strengthen the meaning. Among accentuation we can include the raising of the voice to emphasize the importance of the message. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99)

Supplementation/modification is a situation when the nonverbal message adds or little changes the verbal message. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99) James W. Gibson and Hanna Michael (1992, 99) use as an example a person crying when apologising.

Lastly nonverbal communication has a function of a regulation which means it helps to regulate the flow of the conversation. It is the use of an eye contact, touch, body position or a vocal pitch together with the utterance. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99)

All these six roles of communication can appear either separately or together in the combination or even altogether. These roles can be carried out by different elements of nonverbal communication. These roles of nonverbal communication can help the understanding of the verbal message but can be also the reason for misunderstanding. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 99-100)

## 2.2 Types of nonverbal communication

There are several types of nonverbal communication in general. Speaking about face to face communication, these types of nonverbal communication are mostly used together at once or in combinations. James W. Gibson and Hanna Michael (1992, 100) divide them into '*tonal cues, gross body cues, and discrete physical movements.*' But mentions also the use of space, the use of time and the use of artifacts. Judee K. Burgoon, Guerrero, and Manusov (2010) classify the types of nonverbal communication into:

1. Kinesics – the study of gestures, movements and facial expressions
2. Proxemics – the study of space that people use to communicate

3. Haptic – the study of touch
4. Paralanguage – the study of the use of the voice
5. Personal appearance – the study of how people communicate through the appearance
6. Chronemics – the study of the use of the time
7. Use of objects – the study of how people use artifacts to communicate

### 2.2.1 Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of the body movements such as postures, gestures and facial expressions, (Wahlstrom 1992, 89) excluding a real physical contact. (Burgoon Guerrero and Manusov 2016, 112) Some aspects of kinesics are done unconsciously some are done intentionally or learned and some are culturally determined. James W. Gibson and Michael (1992, 102-105) divides the kinesics into five groups, “*general physical movements, posture and gestures, discrete physical movements, facial reactions, and slight body responses*”.

1. General physical movements can either support the message or distract from the message. When people are nervous, they tend to move more, and the listeners focus more on the body movements than the original message the person tries to convey. If the movements are used in the correct way, they can support the message. Therefore, body movements constantly send a nonverbal message about the person’s feelings whether they intend so or not. (Gibson 1992, 102-103)
2. Posture and gestures can convey how we feel. They can show if people feel nervous, angry, afraid, happy, or surprised. Some of the postures and gestures are done unconsciously some are done intentionally and many of them are culturally determined. In some cultures, holding the body straight can show the interest of the person, in the other case it can have a negative interpretation of not caring or lack of interest. However, in other cultures straight position can be understood as aggressive gesture. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 103)

There are several types of gestures. James W. Gibson (1992, 103-104) and (Hans 2015, 47-48) divide them into three groups. First are “*illustrators*”, those are gestures that support or illustrate our speech, such as gesturing with hands in the air while describing something, or those used when showing the directions. Illustrators do not have meaning on their own and are mostly used unconsciously. Second are “*regulators*”, those are gestures that tell when someone should start or

stop to speak, such as waving, nodding with head or handshaking. Third are “*emblems*”, those are gestures that carry the meaning in themselves and can stand for a verbal meaning, such as a wave of a hand while greeting. Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 92-93) adds to this division also gestures that helps to release our tension. Anjali Hans (2015, 47) calls these gestures “*adaptors*”. These gestures occur mostly during anxiety or nervousness, such as increased touching of ourselves or nervous shaking of the leg. (Hans 2015, 47) The meaning and the intensity of many gestures can differ based on the context of the situation.

3. Discrete physical movements are those that are easily to be overlooked for their low intensity or little movement, but which carry a significant meaning. These movements occur mainly during a conversation, such as movement of a brow or a half-closed eye. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 104)
4. Facial reactions include those movements that appear in the face such as movements and the position of the mouth or an eye contact. Facial reactions can reveal the person’s emotions. They can reveal whether the person is nervous or happy, interested or bored, angry, sad, or surprised. Facial expressions differ based on the culture and can have multiple meanings. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 81) Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 92) describes the facial reactions as “*affect displays*” as they are connected to peoples’ emotions. Therefore, people need to control their facial expressions in order to hide their real emotions.
5. Slight body movements are those little movements that people do while communicating, such as hesitating gesture or shrugging of the shoulders. They support the message people try to convey. J. W. Gibson and Hanna Michael (1992, 105-106) defined them as “*additional nonverbal activities that suggest particular mental state*”. These movements may be hardly noticeable but can have a significant meaning in the listeners understanding of the message because people listen not only to what they hear but also to what they see and the nonverbal message affects the overall feeling from the message much more than words. These slight body movements can be understood in various ways also based on the context and the culture. As any other nonverbal communication, these body movements may be done either intentionally or unconsciously. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 105-106)

While communicating interculturally, even small gestures that may appear insignificant can send an important nonverbal message. Given an example of the slight body movement,

shrugging of the shoulders, a neutral gesture, that in one culture people may use even unconsciously as an expression of not knowing, in another culture this gesture can have a completely different meaning. In some cultures, shrugging of the shoulders is an expression of not caring.

### 2.2.2 Eye contact

The study of eye contact, also called calledoculesics, (Hans 2015, 48) studies the way people use their eyes in the communication. Main aspects studied are the intensity of eye contact, its intervals, intensity, direction, where the gaze is pointed, dilatation of the pupil, and the angle and openness of the eyelids. Eye contact is the crucial communication means, through which are not only send nonverbal messages but most of them are decode through them. The eye contact is inseparable part of communication which can reveal a lot about the person's emotions. Through the eye contact people initiate the communication. Before people start to communicate with someone, they begin with the eye contact. Mostly they look at the person shortly and resume the eye contact when they approach the person. (Černý 2007, 118) According to Dr. Anjali Hans and Emmanuel Hans (2015, 48) eye contact has many functions *“from regulating interaction to monitoring interaction, to conveying information, to establishing interpersonal connections”*.

The intensity of direct eye contact is the result between the power of looking in the eyes and the power of avoiding the direct eye contact. (Černý 2007, 121) Direct eye contact can indicate either to a friendliness or to negative relations, through the intensity can be sent the signal of interest, friendliness, or a threat. The intensity of direct eye contact affects the dominance and the social status. The more is the person dominant or self-confident the longer keeps the direct eye contact. Long lasting and intense eye contact refers to the strong emotions, it can be seen as an aggressive gesture or as s strong interest in the other person. Direct eye contact is crucial for the communication, it signaled that the person is listening. Duration of an eye contact differs also based on the fact if the person is speaking or listening. A person that is speaking tends to keep less eye contact than a person that is listening. People tend to look more at the people they like than at those with negative relations. Also, people prefer to look more on the people they know. (Černý 2007, 121)

Another aspect of eye contact is the direction where the eyes are pointed. The aim where a person is looking while communicating with someone can also reveal information. While communicating, mostly the eyes are looking into the speaker/listener's eyes or

mouth, but it can be some object or some specific detail. (Černý 2007, 124) People are mostly unaware of their eye's placement. Direction in which are eyes are pointed while communicating is generally culturally determined. (Sana and Valentine 2011, 77)

Another aspect of eye contact is dilatation of the pupil. Eckhard Hess (1975) has in his work, *The Role of Pupil Size in Communication*, pointed out that through the size of the pupils can be revealed the person's emotions. When is not considered the natural reaction of the pupils to the light, it can be noticed that in the positive situation the pupils tend to get wider whereas in the negative situations the pupils tend to get more narrow. The more the person likes the other person the wider the pupils get. The size of the pupils cannot be changed intentionally and therefore it can reveal the real emotions of the person. (Černý 2007, 122)

The angle and the openness of the eyelids can also reveal the information. Half-closed eyelids can signal that a person is thinking, this is usually in combination with looking away and avoiding direct eye contact. Half-closed eyelids while looking directly into the eyes of the speaker signalize high focus. Fully open eyes can indicate to a surprise. People are able to distinguish several angles of the eyelids and connect them with the message behind them, but there are several more angels that people usually do not notice while communicating. (Černý 2007, 124-125)

The appropriate length and intensity of eye contact differ based on the culture. In Asian cultures, long lasting and intense eye contact is considered as inappropriate or rude, meanwhile avoiding the eye contact is a sign of a respect. In western cultures on the other hand, avoiding eye contact is a sign of shyness, or dishonesty. In western cultures eye contact is crucial, it is important to keep eye contact to show the ether person interest and as a proof of listening.

### **2.2.3 Proxemics**

Proxemics is the study of the use of space that people use to communicate. James W. Gibson and Hanna Michael (1992, 106-107) divide the distance we keep while communicating with other people into public space, personal space and the private space. Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 94) adds to this division also social space.

Public space is approximately from 370 cm further. This distance is usually kept while communicating with group of people or in public. People communicate in public space during public conversation such as at school or during a public speech. The border of the distance is limited by the understanding of the speech.

Social space is approximately from 120 – 370 cm. This distance is usually kept while communicating with strangers.

Personal space is approximately from 45 – 120 cm. This distance is usually kept while communicating with a person what we know or trust. In this distance people communicate with friends or family members.

Private or intimate space is approximately up to 45 cm. This distance is usually kept while communicating with a partner or close family members.

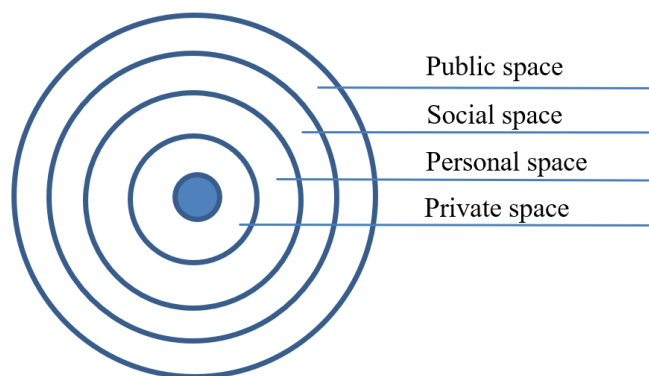


Fig. 5 Use of space (Source: Wahlstrom 1992, 94)

The distance people choose to communicate with the person can convey how they feel about the person, if they trust them or like them or the opposite. The more people like or trust the person, the closer they will let them come. Although the distance can be affected by the noise or space. If the noise is too loud people tend to come closer in order to hear the message of the other person, or if the space is limited such as the space of an elevator or a public transport in the crowded place, in such a case people involuntarily enter other people's personal or private space. The distance of the space areas differs also culturally, in some cultures the distance is much shorter than in other cultures. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 106-107)

Breaking the space distance can make people feel uncomfortable. If someone breaks the personal space the other person may back away until they reach again the distance, they feel comfortable to talk to that person. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 107) Not understanding the cultural difference in terms of the use of space can send a negative message to both participants of the communication. Those from the culture that tend to keep a shorter distance may understand the escaping of the other person as an expression of dislike, meanwhile the person from the culture that tend to keep a bigger distance can have a feeling of violation of their personal space. Beside the distance in which people

communicate, chronemic also include the possession of the things or places. Breaking the personal space such as entering the office by the executive officer can send the message of the mistrust. (Wahlstrom 1992, 94)

#### 2.2.4 Haptic

Haptic is the study of touch in human communication. John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett (2011, 111) defined haptic as “*the study of significance of touch*”. Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 95) points out that “*touch appears to be the first communication channel available to human beings*”. Therefore, it has a significant role in human communication. Haptic studies the meaning of the touch, the intentions behind it, and what message the concrete touches tries to convey. Their meaning differs based on the context of the situation, and also differs based on the culture. The same touch can have completely different meaning based on who touches who and in what situation and therefore the same touch can be viewed as pleasant or positive but also as negative or inappropriate. (Wahlstrom 1992, 95) There are many types of touches such as handshaking, hugging, patting etc. Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 95) mentions in his book the division made by researchers R. Heslin and T. Alper which divided the types of touches based on their function such as “*functional, social, friendship, love and sexual*” touches.

1. Functional or professional touches which occur in the work environment such as hospitals when doctors or nurses touch their patients or instructing courses while showing how to hold or work with a certain instrument.
2. Social or polite touches, which occur while greeting, such as shaking hands or in some cultures kissing on the cheek.
3. Friendship or warmth touches occur among people that are close enough to each other, but the touches are taking place in the public environment.
4. Love or intimate touches are those that happen between people that are close enough to allow the person to touch them, these are usually family members or partners.
5. Sexual touches are the most intimate touches.

As any other nonverbal communication haptic is culturally determined. In general, it is more unpleasant for the person from the culture in which the touch is used less to cope with a person from the culture that uses the touch more widely. For example, people from countries such as Italy or Spain touch much more in general, it is not uncommon when meeting the person for the first time, that the person constantly touches the other person's



arm while speaking. For the people from the countries that use the touch less this behaviour will appear as violating their personal space and may make them feel uncomfortable. (Wahlstrom 1992, 95)

### 2.2.5 Handshake

Handshake is a part of a haptic study. As any nonverbal communication, the style of the handshake can reveal a lot of information about the person. In the business environment, shaking hands is the only acceptable touch. According Vojtěch Černý (2008, 110) there are three main types of the handshake, such as dominant style, friendly or even style, and submissive style.

Dominant style of handshaking signaled that the person is trying to dominate over the other person. This type of handshake is usually used by confident and dominant people. While using the dominant style of handshake the palm is pointed down, forcing the other person turn their palm up. Dominant style of handshake is usually combined with a firm grip. When two dominant people meet, usually it results in a vertical hold of hands signalling equality. (Černý 2008, 110)

Friendly or even style of handshake is done with the even grip intensity. Palms are pointing downwards or slightly vertically. During friendly handshake it is possible to express dominance or confidence by prolonging the lasting of handshaking or putting more strength into the grip. If the other person accepts this sign of dominance this indicates that the person is willing to succumb. In other case, if the person does not agree, it can result in prolonging the handshake or putting more strength in the grip from their side. Another way of showing disagreement with such a gesture is when the person pulls their hand away. If the person pulls their hand away energetically, this can indicate to a further open conflict. If the person pulls their hand away with uncertainty, this indicates to the further hidden offence. (Černý 2008, 110)

Submissive style of handshake signaled the person is willing to accept the other person's dominance. When the submissive style of handshake is used the palm is pointed up, letting the other person keep their palm pointing down. This gesture can be used to give the other person a feeling of dominance and showing the respect to their status. In order not to be seen as weak or submissive person, or unimportant person, this type of handshake can be combined with the firmer grip of the hands. By initiating with the firm grip followed with the submission, person is showing agreement with the other person's dominance but also showing their own self confidence. (Černý 2008, 111)

All the styles of handshake can be done consciously or unconsciously. There are many factors affecting the handshake. Women have naturally weaker grip than men, but also facts such as health issues can affect the intensity of the grip. Another factor is the cultural difference. In some cultures, a weak grip is common and does not signalize a weakness or submission of the person. (Černý 2008, 111)

Beside the three main types of the handshakes there are other ways of handshaking. Another type is when a person takes the other person's hand in their both hands, so the second hand is covering the upper part of the other person's hand. This gesture so called "glove" is a sign of friendliness and is used to intensify the feelings. This gesture is usually used after the relationship or the deal is done. In general, this gesture should be rather avoided during the first contact with the person. (Černý 2008, 111-112)

Another way of intensifying the positive emotions through the handshake is done by putting the second hand on the other person's arm. The higher is the hand put on the arm the stronger and more intimate the gesture becomes. This gesture should be used in the positive situations such as while promoting someone or while praising someone. This gesture should be used carefully as it borders with the validating the other person's personal space and could cause more harm than have positive effects. (Černý 2008, 111-112)

In non-business environment the gesture of taking someone's wrist in the hands or holding the person's shoulder can be used. These gestures are used only among people with a closer relationship and in business environment should be avoided. (Černý 2008, 112)

The lasting of the handshake can be perceived according to its length either positively or negatively based on the strength of the grip used with it. The lasting of the handshake can be either too short, appropriate, or too long. If the handshake lasts shorter than expected it can give the feeling of lack of interest or negative feelings toward the person. A slightly longer handshake evokes the feeling of interest in the cooperation. If the handshake lasts longer than expected it can evoke strongly negative feelings. The person can feel to be locked and unable to escape. These negative feelings can be even intensified if the handshake is done in a combination with the firm grip or done with the dominant style of the handshake. In order to assure the positive effect of the long-lasting handshake it is necessary to use it in a combination with other nonverbal aspects such as smile, direct eye contact, appropriate strength of the grip, and appropriate posture of the body. (Černý 2008, 112) Vojtěch Černý (2008, 113-114) in his experiment, of people handshaking in

combination with different styles and different lasting of the handshake, evaluated their feelings, analysed the feelings given by it and summarised them into nine different groups based on the feeling of the people.

A weak grip lasting too short gave strongly negative feelings. It has been seen as passive and unpleasant. A weak grip lasting long enough was perceived even more negatively. A weak grip lasting too long was perceived as well negatively. An appropriately strong grip lasting too short was perceived as an unfriendly gesture. A strong grip lasting appropriately long was perceived as the most positive one. A strong grip lasting too long was perceived rather negatively and as dominant gesture. A very strong grip lasting too short was perceived as impatient, energetic, or cold. A very strong grip lasting appropriately long was perceived positively and more confident. A very strong grip lasting too long was perceived again negatively and as aggressive gesture. (Černý 2008, 113-114)

In business meetings and negotiations as the handshake is a standard part of the greeting and therefore is always present, an attention should be given to the aspects and approach of the way the other person uses it since it can convey a lot of information about the person as well as about the person's further approach to the negotiation. As is already mentioned above, the way of greeting differs culturally. In some cultures, approach to the handshake differs and in some cultures the handshake is not present at all but a different way greeting is used, such as bowing which is a standard of greeting in Asian cultures. In order to avoid intercultural misunderstandings, in the intercultural negotiations and business meetings before making any assumptions, it is necessary to understand the culture's way of greeting first.

### **2.2.6 Paralinguistics**

Paralinguistics is the study of the use of the voice aspects such as tone, pitch, or rate. (Warren and Fassett 2011, 112-113) It is a "*complex nonverbal message system*" that helps us to understand the meaning of the message, it is the way how we utter the words and what feeling the message give. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 101) It sends the nonverbal message if we are interested in talking or not, if we are excited or anxious or if we speak sarcastic or serious. Paralinguistics is on the border between verbal and nonverbal communication because it studies the speech but not the meaning of words or what is said but the way how they are spoken. These aspects include if the words are spoken loud or quiet, fast or slow, or in a high or low pitch. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 101)

The pitch can be either high or low. High pitch refers to the feeling of excitement, fear, or happiness. The higher the intensity of the pitch of the voice is the more emphasis is given to words. Low pitch refers to seriousness. One aspect of pitch is inflection. Inflection refers to how the voice is modulated during the speech. Inflection can rise or fall. Through the speech we have rising and falling inflection and give certain words importance. Without the inflection the speech would be monotonous or flat and it would refer to all words as having the same importance. Second aspect of the speech is tone. Without changing the pattern of the tone, the speech would be again monotonous. A flat tone can refer to disinterest, fear, or boredom. (Gibson and Michael 1992, 101-102)

The changes in paralinguistic aspects therefore influence the way the message is understood by the listener but also the quality of the speech. Another aspect that paralinguistics include are the rhythm and flow of the speech, the pauses and the silence.

### **2.2.7 Silence**

The silence and the rhythm of the speech differs based on the culture, therefore appropriate length of the pause in the utterance between two people may differ based on the cultural background. In some cultures, the pauses are longer in some speech overlaps and therefore the silence is lack. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 89) Not giving enough space and speaking over the other person can be considered rude or inappropriate in some cultures, therefore understanding the cultural differences in the matter of silence can prevent misunderstandings. Lack of knowledge in the cultural differences can cause someone to not have enough space to express themselves or can give the feeling that the other person is not interested in their opinion therefore the other person may see this person as not communicative and quiet. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 89)

Silence is seen as a negative aspect and can cause an uneasiness. In some cultures, in business negotiation the silence is considered as one of the manipulation tactics. While keeping a long pause the opponent starts to feel uncomfortable because of the silence and in order to break the silence they can say something or agree on the deal that they did not want to. Meanwhile in some cultures it is common that during the business meeting or negotiations the silence is kept much longer than in other cultures in order to carefully think through the words or the deal. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 89)

Silence is seen as a positive aspect and can express respect towards the other person. To show respect through the silence is used mainly in the Asian cultures. Keeping a long silence and considering the offer or the idea of the opposition shows that the person

considers the other person important and wants to give the correct response. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 89)

In some cultures, the silence is viewed as a rejection and during business meetings when the person keeps silent for too long, the other person can change the initial offer or submit better offer, which can cause confusion or general misunderstanding. (Reynolds and Valentine 2011, 89-90)

### **2.2.8 Chronemics**

Chronemics is the study of the use and meaning of time in human communication. The perception of time differs based on the culture, age/generation, social groups and the situation. (Warren and Fassett 2011, 110-111) When comparing cultures, some are tied to the time and the punctuality more than others. The punctuality has different significance in a meeting of two friends and a business meeting. Being late for a meeting with friends will most likely not have the same impact as being late for an interview. By punctuality or unpunctuality we send nonverbal message to the others. Being punctual shows that the person waiting for us is important, in the opposite case we send a negative message of not caring. The more important the person or the event is the more people try to be on time. As Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 99) shows in his work *Perspectives on Human Communication*, there is a difference of the time perception and its importance based on the social status. He uses an example of the difference between a student waiting for the professor and the professor waiting for the student. Another example by Billie J. Wahlstrom (1992, 99) is sending a nonverbal message by giving people our time is a situation when someone goes to the shop to buy a car and the sales representative continues doing other things without paying attention to us, this will make us feel irritated and we will feel not valued.

The fact how much on time people are can differ also culturally. Mostly in the Latin countries the late arrival is tolerated more than in the north or western countries, but the time perception can differ even within a country, as an example we can take south and north of Italy. The time perception depends also on the lifestyle of the area people live in, in the cities people tend to be more punctual than in the small villages.

### **2.2.9 Use of objects**

Use of objects or artifacts is the study of how people use objects to express themselves. Through the objects such as clothing, jewellery or personal belongings, people send a nonverbal message about themselves. The objects can tell about person's identity, their social status, how they want to be perceived. (Warren and Fassett 2011, 112) The meaning,

how is the use of artifacts perceived is determined culturally. Some distinguish between the communication by using objects and communication through physical appearance. How you dress is another area through which people send a nonverbal message about themselves. In business environment people are expected to have a certain dress code. Not being properly dressed can have a negative impact as the person appears to not be taking the other person or the event seriously. By being properly dressed it shows not only the general knowledge of the expected dress code but is also shown that the person or the event is important to them and therefore they took an effort to dress properly. Each culture has its own rules about the proper dress code. In Asian cultures women are not allowed to wear trousers in a business environment whereas in Europe it is completely acceptable and therefore people should inform themselves about the culture before attending any business event in order not to give a bad impression about themselves.

#### **2.2.10 Olfactics**

Another aspect of nonverbal communication is communication through the smell. Olfactics studies the relation of smell to human communication. Even though the importance of smell in nonverbal communication is rather insignificant there are some differences among cultures in its perception. Through the usage of perfumes people try to reach a certain level of attractiveness. Some cultures prefer to cover body odours with perfumes some cultures find the natural body odours pleasing and natural. For some cultures, strong use of perfumes can be unpleasant, therefore an adequate intensity of use of perfumes should be considered when communicating interculturally. (Burgoon Guerrero and Manusov 2010, 101-107)

Nonverbal communication has a significant role in communication. The differences in meaning the gestures convey are very diverse. In order to avoid misunderstandings in nonverbal communication, it is recommended to limit the use of gestures while communication interculturally unless their meaning in the other culture is fully understood.

### 3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

This part of the thesis explains the term intercultural communication and gives the brief explanation of the intercultural communication process, followed by defining the term culture and its role in the intercultural communication based on the Trompenan's and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Another part of this chapter is focused on the comparison of China and Italy based on the Hofstede's culture dimension. The final part explains the role of nonverbal communication in business meetings and negotiations with the focus on intercultural communicating competence and lastly compares the nonverbal communication between China and Italy.

Intercultural communication is a process of a communication in which there are at least two participants from different cultures and they differ in their “*value orientations, preferred communication codes, role expectations, and perceived rules of social relationship*”. (Lustig and Koester 2006, 52) Myron W. Lusting and Jolene Koester (2006, 46) defines the intercultural communication as “*a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings.*” Jane Jackson (2014, 2) mentions in her work definition given by (Zhu Hua 2011) which defines intercultural communication as “*a situation where people from different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other; or a subject of study that is concerned with interactions among people of different cultural and ethnic groups and comparative studies of communication patterns across cultures*”. (Jackson 2014, 2)

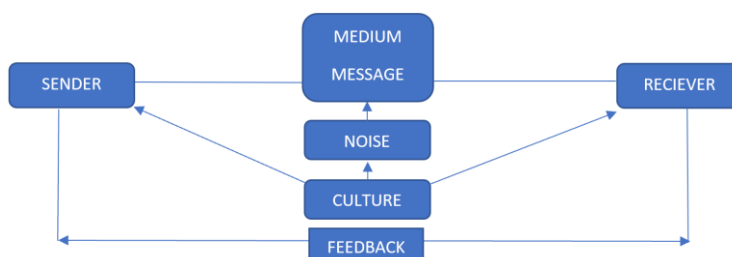


Fig. 6 Intercultural communication: A Process Model (Source: Deresky and Christopher 2011)

The interpretation of the intercultural communication process given by (Deresky and Christopher 2011) illustrates the noise and culture as an obstacle in the communication, that affect the message being transferred, and illustrates the influence of a culture or “*cultural noise*” on both participants, which influence the comprehension of the message.

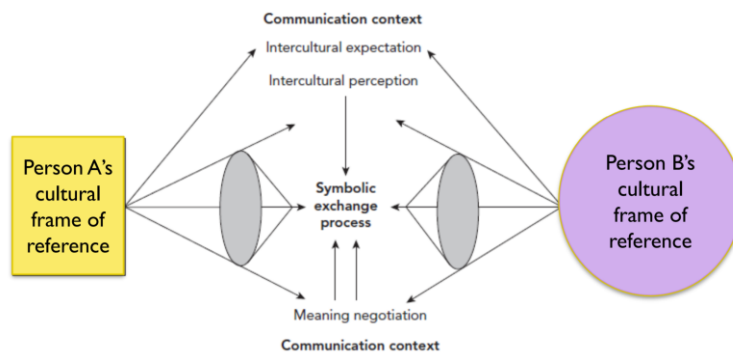


Fig. 7 Intercultural communication (Source: Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012)

The interpretation of the intercultural communication process given by (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012) illustrates the complexity and variation of factors affecting communication in the intercultural environment. Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung (2012) illustrate how intercultural expectations and perceptions diffuse the real information being conveyed.

To understand intercultural communication, it is necessary to look into its core which is culture itself, as culture reflects the way in which people tend to solve problems and make strategies which affect the way in which they approach to the business. Myron W. Lusting and Jolene Koester (2006, 25) defines culture as “*Culture is learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people*”. Trompenans Fons, and Charles Hampden-Turner (1998) define culture as “*shared system of meanings*” they point out that culture “*dictates what we pay attention to, how we react and what we value*”. According Lilian Chaney and Jeanette Martin (2011, 51) values are essential components that “*form a core of a culture*” and defines them as “*social principles, goals, or standards accepted by persons in a culture*”, in other words values tell what is right and what is wrong, what people desire, from values reflect the way in which people tend to act and solve problems.

Trompenans Fons and Charles Hampden-Turner (1998) point out in their book, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, seven dimensions of culture. Culture can be either “*universally*” or “*particular*” oriented. People from universally oriented cultures tend to apply universal rules to problems and divide things in what is right and what is wrong. People from particular oriented cultures put more emphasis on relationships and particular situations, therefore each problem requires unique solution. Other dimensions are “*individualism*” and “*communitarianism*”. People from individualist cultures tend to focus on individuals meanwhile cultures that prefer communitarianism put focus on group of people or



communities that are composed from individuals. Another dimension is whether the culture is “*neutral*” or “*emotional*”. More neutrally oriented cultures, such as north-west Europe tends to be more objective, whether emotionally oriented cultures put emphasis on emotions. Another dimension is whether the culture is “*specific*” or “*diffuse*”. Specific cultures focus on facts, in business they simply present the product without trying to build any personal relationship, meanwhile, the diffuse cultures put emphasis on building a relationship and getting to know the partner before making a business. Another dimension is whether the culture is ‘achievement’ or ‘ascription’ oriented. In the achievement-oriented cultures people put emphasis on people’s past achievements meanwhile in ascription-oriented cultures people are treated by their status in the society, prestigious names of the institutions they have studied at or important people they know. Cultures differ based on the time orientation, whether it is “*past*”, “*present*”, or “*future*” oriented and whether the time is perceived as ‘*linear*’ or ‘*cyclical*’. The time orientation affects the ways in which the culture tends to make plans and strategies. The final major difference in the culture is its relation towards the environment. Culture can hold the opinion either that the environment is controlled by the individuals, thus the individuals are able to affect the environment in order to reach their aims or the second view is that the individuals are controlled by the environment, and their aims are reached by cooperating and interacting with the environment in harmony.

Differences among cultures are one of the main causes of misunderstanding in intercultural communication. Geert Hofstede (2020) points out the main differences and divides six dimensions of culture that affect the values and therefore affect the way in which people do business. The dimensions are “*power distance index, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long term orientation versus short term normative orientation, indulgence versus restrained*”. (Hofstede 2020) Power distance represents the amount of power given to the leaders as opposed to the employees and to what extent the people accept the power and the hierarchy. In a high-power distance country, employees are less independent, and any crucial decision is to be discussed with the bosses. In the low-power distance countries employees are more independent and tend to do the decisions by themselves. Individualism versus collectivism represents the view of the person, whether they see themselves more as independent individuals or rather as a part of the group. In the collectivist countries employees tend to be more loyal and act in the prosperity of community or the company rather than themselves as the individualists, who put emphasis on their rights, and they

value their free time. Masculinity and femininity refer to the motivation of the people, whether the achievements or the quality of life. Uncertainty avoidance represents the way in which cultures tend to deal with the uncertainty of the future and to what extent they try to avoid it. Long-term and short-term orientation describes how cultures tend to deal with the present and future, to which extent they accept the changes and challenges or tend to stick to their traditions. The last dimension is indulgence, which refer to what extent people tend to give emphasis on their free time and their happiness or in contrast as in restrained cultures to what extent people believe that their desires are restrained by societies. (Hofstede 2020)

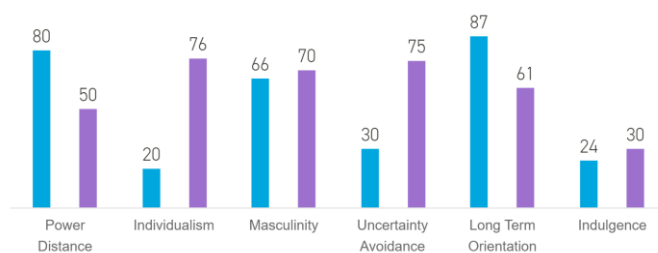


Fig. 8 Country comparison (Source: Hofstede 2020)

According to Geert Hofstede (2020) China has high power distance index which refers to acceptance of inequalities and leadership. Italy on the contrary prefers the equality and teamwork. China has a low score of individualism that signals that they refer to themselves as collective ‘we’, the group is more important than the individual. Northern Italy is on the contrary highly individualist, but Southern Italy score is much lower as they give an importance to the family and other social aspects. High score in masculinity in both countries refers to the high success orientation. Low uncertainty avoidance in China means they are highly ambiguous. Italy on the contrary has a high score of uncertainty avoidance. Italians do not feel comfortable in ambiguous situations, they prefer detailed planning and changes can be stressful. Italian culture has many rules and restrictions, but what is surprising is a contradictory fact that they do not always follow them. Meanwhile the Chinese are more flexible in relations to rules, they tend to follow rules, but they also often adjust them according to situation. Both countries, China with slightly higher score, have a relatively high score of long-term orientation which means both are very pragmatic cultures. Both cultures tend to adapt to the future, changing traditions is not an obstacle, both countries favour saving and investing to future. The last dimension of indulgence

refers to “*the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses*” (Hofstede 2020) both countries’ score is quite low therefore they are both restraint cultures.

Some cultures are deal oriented some on the other hand relationship oriented. In china negotiations are “*both formal and personal*” (Ambler and Witzel 2004, 152) with the emphasis given to the relationship with the business partners. Therefore, making a good impression on a Chinese businessman can be more important than offering a good deal. In china so called ‘Face’ is really important matter. Chinese businessman tries to avoid any situations that would make them loose their face and Italian should be aware of this and act carefully in verbal communication as well as in nonverbal communication in order not to violate this Chinese value.

Besides the cultures, the negotiation in intercultural communication is affected by two additional aspects, “*the situational aspects*”, such as time pressure, power, location etc. and the “*characteristics of the negotiator*” such as personality, or cultural variables. (Ghauri and Usunier 2003, 107) For successful international communication it is necessary to have a certain level of intercultural communication competence. According to (Jiang 2013) there are three levels of acculturation, low, medium, and high. In low acculturation, people do not consider each other’s cultures and values, but use their language to communicate and their negotiating style. In a medium acculturation people are aware of each other’s cultures, values, and are able to use the language fluently and understand some of the nonverbal communication of the other culture. High acculturation refers to the negotiating style when people fully understand the other culture, their values, the language and nonverbal communication, and use the other culture’s negotiating style. China has a low acculturation level, and it is rather difficult for Chinese to adapt to the Italian way of negotiation. (Jiang 2013, 110)

For successful intercultural communication it is necessary to have a good knowledge about the culture. People should be aware of the specific standards, beliefs and values of the culture and about the differences and similarities in order to avoid misunderstandings or to “*save one’s face*”. (Blahova 2015, 12) What must be mentioned is the common factors causing misunderstanding in intercultural communication. Those are prejudices and stereotyping. When assuming similarities, people usually “*overestimate negative trends and expectations on some phenomena, events or people [...]*” but most of the time the assumptions are not true. (Blahova 2015, 13) Another factor is ethnocentrism, assuming that only one culture is right and is superior to others and therefore ignoring the other cultures, which creates a barrier in the intercultural communication. (Blahova 2015, 13)

Assuming too many differences or similarities is both wrong. Each culture is unique but also similar to other cultures to some extent. Other aspects that should be avoided are overgeneralization and oversimplification. Oversimplification cause that people have tendency ignore “*the subtleties*” which are present in every culture. (Hall 2005) Overgeneralization is an assumption that all people from a certain country will act according the countries’ culture, but each person is unique, and it cannot be expected that all rules and behaviour patterns about ones’ culture will apply on its every citizen. Last aspect that Bradford Hall (2005) mentions is exaggeration. The differences among cultures are natural and although there are the differences, there are also many similarities. (Hall 2005)

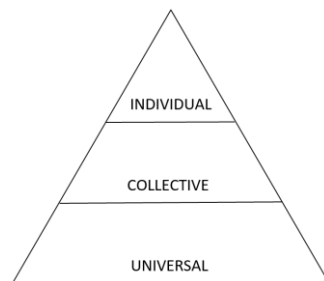


Fig. 9 Mental programming (Source: Hofstede 2007, 16)

Even though there are many studies and guides for successful intercultural communication, it is necessary to consider the uniqueness of every person. As Geert Hofstede (2007, 16) illustrates the three part of uniqueness of the mental programming. Mental programming “*can be inherited, transferred in our genes, or learned.*” The individual part illustrates the complete uniqueness of a person and its personality, as no two people are completely the same, it is impossible to assume that two different people will understand or react to the same situation in the same way, therefore it is possible to create certain assumptions in the behaviour pattern of a person based on the culture. The second collective part illustrates the collective behaviour patterns that are specific for the culture, these patterns are learned. The last area illustrates the universal part of the mental programming which is inherited and is the same for all. (Hofstede 2007, 16) In general when communicating inter-culturally, the universal part is the same for everyone, and the similarities can be expected, the collective part represents the culture, and cultural differences can be expected, but can be studied and therefore it is possible to prepare for the differences in behaviour. The last part illustrates the complete uniqueness and stresses the fact that any negotiation or

business meeting is affected by the individuals and their unique approach given by their personalities.

### **3.1 Role of nonverbal communication in business meetings and negotiations in intercultural communication**

As nonverbal communication is an integral part of communication in general and cannot be avoided, and as Ma Tiechuan (2016, 1) points out in his work, according to (Mehrabian 2007) around 55% of communication is done nonverbally, even though the percentage differs, some authors claim its influence in communication is even higher, its importance is obvious. Through nonverbal communication, either intentionally or unconsciously, people send a certain message, besides that people send a message about themselves, nonverbal communication can also either emphasize, accompany, or contradict a verbal message. When considering role of nonverbal communication in business meetings and negotiations, it is always necessary to look at the context in which the gesture occurred. It is necessary, because the same gesture can have several meanings based on the already mentioned context, this multi-meaning is even multiplied by the culture differences. The meaning of nonverbal cues is generally culturally determined. The usage of them, the frequency and situations in which they occur or are acceptable differ culturally. (Tiechuan 2016, 2) This fact of how broad the area of meanings of a single gesture can be is the reason for many intercultural misunderstandings and therefore it is important to give the focus on nonverbal communication as well as verbal one while communicating intercultural because these misunderstandings can negatively affect the business.. If the nonverbal behaviour is controlled, it can on the other hand positively affect the negotiation process and give a negotiation advantage. Therefore, businessmen should be aware of their own nonverbal communication as well as of the other participants'. Having certain intercultural communication competence can help to understand the meaning of nonverbal communication of another culture and help to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings.

#### **3.1.1 Comparison of nonverbal communication in China and Italy**

China and Italy are very contradictory countries regarding nonverbal communication. Italy is very expressive based culture, the gestures and body language in Italy may seem exaggerated to Chinese which on the other hand are quite reserved regarding gestures and showing emotions. The lack of expressions in Chinese culture is rooted in their culture, as

they value harmony and self-control. Because Chinese are reserved regarding nonverbal communication it might be difficult for Italians to read in their nonverbal messages.

Even a gesture so natural to human beings as a smile or a frown have different appropriate situations for their usage based on the culture. Meanwhile in Italy smile represent positive emotions, in China beside using a smile to express positive emotions, such as happiness or approval, the smile is used also in negative situations which can be confusing for Italians and even considered inappropriate. (Zhou and Zhang 2008, 93)

Regarding the chronemics, in China the emphasis is given to punctuality, not being punctual is viewed as a rude and impolite gesture (Ambler and Witzel 2004, 33). In Italy time and punctuality is taken less seriously than in China. Although a huge difference is possible to see throughout the country, in the north the punctuality is taken more seriously than in the south. In both countries the negotiations and the business meetings are a long process. In China it is more due to the fact, that the relationship is the most important feature in the business, and to build a relationship takes time. (Ambler and Witzel 2004, 151) In Italy long negotiations are common but more due to their way of negotiation than building a relationship, Italians perceive negotiations and business meetings more from a business point of view.

When greeting Chinese bow, the depth of the bowing depends on the relationship and the importance of the persons. When greeting Italians shake hands. Even though, in the intercultural communication Chinese acquired the western way of the greeting, of shaking the hands, it is recommended to slightly nod or bow when greeting Chinese. (Axtell 1998, 177) When Chinese shaking hands a light grip of the hands is expected. In Italy the touching is common and more intense, although in the business environment, especially in the north, it is rather uncommon. Touching in China is generally uncommon. (Axtell 1998, 177)

In the business environment the distance used to communicate generally takes place in a social distance, but the preferred distance can differ based on the culture. In china as their personal space is limited due to the mostly overcrowded places, also the distance use to communicate is much smaller, especially compare to the western Europe. (Khlystov 2020) Italians tend to keep a short distance as well but also with much physical contact included, whereas Chinese are very reserved in the physical contact. Keeping distance in Italian culture is viewed negatively as hostility or unfriendliness.

In china the turn-taking of the speech is much more balanced whereas in Italy talking over each other is common. (Trompenans and Hampden-Turner 1998) When

communicating Chinese and Italians together, besides the speaking over a person is considered rude in China, the energetic way of Italian speech can be seen slightly aggressive, but also this can cause that Chinese do not have enough space for expressing themselves and cause the Italians leading the speech. Chinese way of communication is rather slow, with a high use of silence, which is a sign of respect. Italians perceive silence in negative way, and therefore have tendency fill the silence. These facts can lead in a difficult communication between Chinese and Italians. (Khlystov 2020)

Direct eye contact is considered impolite in China, avoiding eye contact is a sign of a respect. (Tiechuan 2016) Italians on the other hand consider avoiding the eye contact as a sign of dishonesty, shyness or nervousness. In Italian culture eye contact is very important, as it is a sign of an interest, or openness.

## **II. ANALYSIS**



## 4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will define the main goal of the thesis, introduce the research problem and present the research methods used in the practical part of this work.

### 4.1 The goal of the thesis

The main goal of the thesis is to determine whether elements of non-verbal communication such as eye contact, handshake and silence have an impact on intercultural communication among the representatives coming from Italy and China.

#### 4.1.1 Research questions

To meet the main goal of this thesis, two research questions were set:

RQ1: Do non-verbal elements such as eye contact, handshake and silence affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China?

RQ2: What can be done to eliminate problems with eye contact, handshake and silence in communication among the representatives from Italy and China?

### 4.2 Research Methods

Choosing the right method for collecting the data is an essential part of a research. There are two main groups of data collection, qualitative and quantitative. For the purpose of this work will be used the qualitative research. There are three main ways of gathering qualitative data that is observation, dialogue and experiment. (Strauss and Corbin 1999) The methods are sometimes tightly accompanied and can be even combined.

#### 4.2.1 Experiment

There are many types of experiment but in general it can be defined as a trial or attempt. Experiment can be primary used to prove whether something is true or not, secondary to explore credibility of some presumption or theory and lastly it can be used for discovering an undiscovered data. (Berger 2014) According to A. Schellenberg (1974) the definition of an experiment is: “*the observation of phenomena under controlled conditions*”. (Berger 2014)

Among the advantages of an experiment belong the flexibility and allowance of creativity of approach that can lead to a new discovery thanks to new or different ways of approaches. Another advantage is the fact that experiment can be repeated so the same strong evidence can be made.

Experiment also has disadvantages, one of them is the fact that it takes place in non-natural environment which affects the natural behaviour and can loose on the validity of results or it can slightly influence the results. (Berger 2014) Experiment may sometimes face the ethical problems.

#### 4.2.2 Observation

Observation is seen as a qualitative method but in certain circumstances even the qualitative data can be quantified or as it is defined in Concise Oxford English dictionary (2011) observation is: “1 the action or process of closely observing or monitoring. 2 the ability to notice significant details., ...”. In general, it is used to find out the information about the studied object, usually in its natural environment, and understand the behaviour and trying to discover something new or prove already known facts. There are many kinds of observation, the main division of observation is whether it is covert or overt, participant or non-participant and structured or unstructured. In observation we speak about participants also as an informant. (Monahan and Fisher 2010) Disadvantage of observation is that observer has to rely on his own skills too much instead of collecting primary data from other sources. (Shukla 2008, 52-54)

Overt observation is a type of observation during which participants are aware of being observed, meanwhile during covert observation participants are not aware of being observed by an observer. Disadvantage of an overt observation is that when participants are aware of a presence of an observer, they can change their behaviour and do not behave naturally, which can affect the reliability of the data. (Eger and Egerová 2017, 156) Overt observation often faces the ethical issues.

Another division of observation is whether the observer is participant in the situation being observed or not and to which extend. Participant observation is the one during which the observer is a part of a members being observed or as defined by Denzin (1989) “*a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection*” and non-participant where the observer is not a part of a group being observed (Hendl 2005, 191-192) and the interaction is almost none. In practice we can find also combination and different levels of participation as distinguish (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016, 358-359), or (Gold 1958): “*the complete participant; the participant-as-observer; the observer-as-participant; the complete observer.*”.

Observation can be also divided into structured and unstructured. Structured observation is with already given structure and tries to quantify the gathered data and tells how frequently something occurred. Contrary to structured observation is unstructured or participant observation where the research is concerned with qualifying data.

In observation it is being distinguished also between observation in natural situation or environment and in simulated situation that is closely knit with an experiment.

As any research methods, observing has its pros and cons. Disadvantage of observation method is the fact that during observation more actions take place and that might cause issue in focusing and possibly of missing the key elements. This problem can be partially solved by using a video recorder in order to have a possibility to examine the situation as many times as needed.

It is necessary to somehow record or make notes of the observational study in a detailed way. The record should be as much unbiased and without personal judgements as possible. (Marshall and Rossman 2016, 143)

For the purpose of analysing the gestures and interactions of the subject, the representatives of two distinct countries, after a consideration of possible research methods and their advantages and disadvantages, as a most suitable one was chosen the experiment research done by observation method. Experiment research was chosen, because the study would have taken the place in a fictional situation imitating the real meetings and negotiations, with pre-prepared scenarios of the roles of the participants. In order to be able to catch the important factors in the nonverbal communication of the representatives of the countries, it was necessary to choose the observation, which allows the observer to record the important data, which would not be possible through other research method.

## 5 PRIMARY RESEARCH

This part of the thesis is focused on observing the nonverbal communication of the representatives of the chosen countries during business meetings and negotiations. These business meetings and negotiations were constructed in the form of role-playing games, in order to create similar conditions to the real situations and the suitable environment for the study. In these role-playing games the participants were given pre-prepared roles that were given on the paper to help them in the simulation of a possible real situation. Participants had time to get familiar with their roles before the role-played negotiations took place. Several role-played games took place during which detailed notes were taken regarding nonverbal communication developed by the two participants. The whole experiment was as well recorded on the video for the purpose of a more detailed and precise analysis that in the real time would not be possible to make in such detailed matter. The three aspects studied during the experiment were eye contact, handshake and the silence.

The experiment took place in a public place in Zlín, particularly in a café, in December 2019. Two participants and one observer were present. The participants were representatives of the studied cultures, China and Italy. The representatives have both a business education background, owning consequently a general overview of a business meeting and negotiation. The negotiations were fully role-played meanwhile the business meeting was a part of real discussion about the business. The scenarios were made in a way that in a first case one representative was put into a situation that he did not want to agree with its conditions and in the second case opposite scenario was proposed, so both participants were put in a stressful or negative situation in order to create more variables. Both participants communicated in English, therefore there was a certain language barrier present, as in the intercultural communication would be.

### 5.1 Direct eye contact

In this experiment an eye contact of the two participants was studied. One representative of Italy and the second one representing China. In this experiment the focus was given to study the length and the intervals of the eye contact, and situations when the participants tend to avoid it or in contrary to maintain it. Lastly the reactions of the participants to the behaviour of the opponents were being observed.

According to Peggy Kenna and Lacy Sondra (1994, 21) Chinese tend to avoid direct eye contact because long lasting eye contact is considered in China inappropriate or even

rude. Kenna and Lacy Sondra (1994, 21) also mention that in a business, Chinese prefer keeping the distance more in general.

According to Peggy Kenna and Lacy Sondra (1994, 15) Chinese prefer the silence over speaking. Chinese do not feel uncomfortable with the long-lasting silence, indeed the other side negotiating should not be surprised if the Chinese stop talking and takes their time to think the thing through. On the contrary Italians can feel uncomfortable if the silence is lasting too long.

### 5.1.1 Direct eye contact analysis

During initial greeting the Chinese representative approached the Italian representative with the direct eye contact, but during the handshaking his eyes were pointing down. Italian representative kept direct eye contact since the approaching of the Chinese representative until the end of the handshake.



Fig. 10 Eye contact 1 (Source: own research)

As shown in the pictures above, while speaking, even though the Chinese representative started to speak as a first one, he remained avoiding eye contact for almost his whole utterance. The Chinese representative was pointing his eyes everywhere around the room. Pointing his eyes down, pointing them on the left or right side of the Italian representative, or simply watching the wall behind him. This avoidance of an eye contact was being interrupted with regular short meeting of the opponent's eyes followed with another

avoidance. The Italian representative was watching him the whole time, without avoiding eye contact.



Fig. 11 Eye contact 2 (Source: own research)



Fig. 12 Eye contact 3 (Source: own research)

While observing Italian representative, it was possible notice more frequent and intense direct eye contact during all negotiation and business meeting. The Italian participant was avoiding eye contact naturally. But this avoidance was taking place only when the participant was thinking about something and needed time to think it through, or while remembering something, a short avoidance with the eyes pointing up was present. The avoidance was therefore natural and no avoiding and pointing eyes around the room while speaking was present. The Italian representative tended to keep the direct eye contact, as well as the Chinese representative, more while listening that while speaking but the difference of the volume and intervals differed enormously.

At the beginning of the meeting the Chinese representative was meeting the opponent's eyes more frequently but with the time he started to avoid them more and this pattern increased towards the end. From the observation was visible that Chinese representative tended to avoid direct eye contact more while speaking. Meanwhile during listening direct eye contact was more intense. This could be caused by the language barrier as the Chinese representative was trying to catch the meaning of words of an Italian representative which required higher focus.

During the business meeting the Italian representative was keeping much less direct eye contact, as the speech was more relaxed, and the ideas of the business were being

presented from both participants. It was possible to notice that the Italian participant was pointing his eye down more, watching the table, with still quite frequent re-establishing of direct eye contact. From the Chinese participant was possible to see similar pattern as during the negotiations, the avoidance was still present, with less avoidance during the listening than during speaking. Overall, the eye contact was highly unbalanced.

The general impression regarding eye contact on the participants was that Chinese one seemed to feel more uncomfortable looking at the Italian participant as well as being looked on than Italian participant, that did not seem to feel uncomfortable in either way. The Italian participant did not show a visible sign of unease derived from the Chinese participant's eye avoidance.

## 5.2 Handshake

In this experiment the approach to the handshake of the selected representatives was studied. The focus was given to the observation of the intensity of the grip, the length of its lasting, the intervals when and how often it took place and lastly participant's reactions to it.

Wayne and Dauwalder (1994, 656-657) points out in his work the differences among cultures in a use of handshake. Meanwhile in some cultures people like to shake just once, in Italy the handshake takes longer time with several shakes. In China the handshake is not used at all, but instead bowing is used for a greeting. During business meetings it is common for Italians to shake hands with each participant. In the case of closer relationship, a kiss on the cheek, that consist in simply pressing the cheeks to each other is not uncommon, but mostly only the handshake is present. The handshake is firm and brief, with several shakes, not lasting too long. Handshake takes place both, at the beginning and at the end of the meetings. At the end of the meeting, if the deal is done, a handshake so called glove can take place in order to intensify and express the positive relationship.

In China, the greeting is done by bowing. The depth of the bow differs based on the respect towards the person or its importance. The lower the bow toward a person is the more important or valued the person is. Bowing takes place as a greeting at the beginning of the meeting as well as in the end. During the bowing the arms are placed in front of the body with hands shaped into a fist.

### 5.2.1 Handshake analysis



Fig. 13 Handshake 1 (Source: own research)

During greeting the first handshake took place. It was very firm and lasting from three to four seconds and the frequency was approximately one second per handshake. The Italian participant had his arm closer to the body meanwhile Chinese participant leaned over the table and had his arm more extended from his body. The grip was lasting through the introducing and greeting themselves. The Italian participant had his hand straighten with only slightly visible shaking, meanwhile the Chinese participant had tendency to shake his hand up and down more visibly. During the handshake the Chinese participant tended to bow slightly.

In both scenarios, while approaching, before the handshake took place, the Chinese representative was looking at the Italian's hands, that indicates the awareness of the western way of greeting but also points out the fact that this gesture is learned. While approaching, the Italian participant's eyes were pointing in the face of the Chinese participant. When approached a short look on the hands was present followed with again watching the face. This shows that for the Italian participant the gesture is natural, done without thinking about it, meanwhile for the Chinese this does not appear to be natural therefore it was visible as the Chinese was preparing for this gesture.

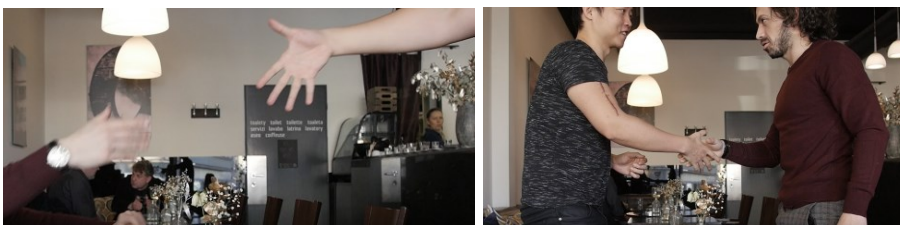


Fig. 14 Handshake 2 (Source: own research)

While approaching each other's hands, the Italian participant had his fingers closed together in the proper shape for handshake meanwhile the Chinese representative approached with his hand fully open with the fingers extended. This gesture reflects as the



Chinese have learnt and adapted to the European way of greeting, but it is possible to see that this gesture is not fully natural but acquired.



Fig. 15 Handshake 3 (Source: own research)

In the picture above it is possible to notice bowing of a Chinese representative while greeting together with the handshake meanwhile Italian representative kept his posture straight. This picture represents the two distinct ways of greeting between these two cultures.



Fig. 16 Handshake 4 (Source: own research)

In the picture above (handshake 4), after the negotiation, during saying goodbye, once the agreement was made and during handshaking, the Italian representative took the opponent's hand with his both hands. This gesture symbolises friendliness and shows that the person values the relationship and wants to cooperate.

In the second picture (handshake 4), it is shown the Chinese representative copying the gesture made by the Italian one previously, but performing it along with bowing.

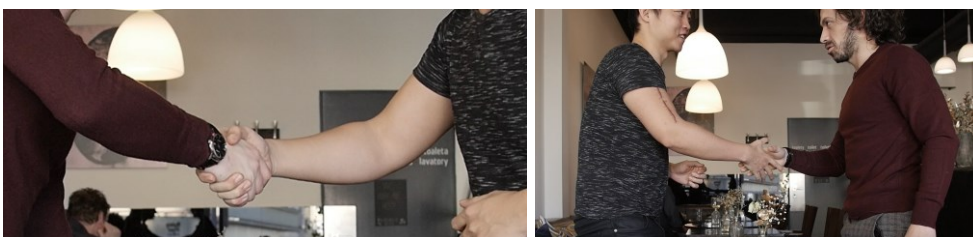


Fig. 17 Handshake 5 (Source: own research)

In the first picture we can see the firm grip of the hands. Both participants used slightly too much strength. In the second picture, it is possible to see that the Italian participant had tendency to turn his palm downwards, which significate dominant style of the handshake which made the Chinese participant to turn his palm upwards, and therefore use the submissive style of the handshake. In the first picture the hands are in equal position but is it possible to see again the raised arm of the Italian participant in an attempt to dominate. The attempt for the dominance from the Italian participant did not seem to bother the Chinese participant as hi might not understand the hidden message of the gesture or simply not pay attention to it.

In order to sum up the handshake analysis, firstly it is important to mention its duration. The first handshake was short and was lasting three to four seconds. The handshake at the end of the meeting lasted much longer that the initial one, lasting almost ten seconds with six shakes. Secondly, the focus was given to the intervals of the handshake. During one handshake three to four shaking took place. The Chinese representative adapted to the length of the handshake without problem and was holding Italian representative's hand till the opponent released the grip. Handshake took place two times, at the beginning of the meeting and at the end of it. Regarding the intensity, it is important to say that a very firm grip was possible to observe on both participants. In addition, it is important to mention that the handshake looked natural on both participants. Meanwhile Chinese representative was combining it with bowing, the Italian representative used only the handshake without adding body movements.

### **5.3 The use of silence**

Another aspect studied in this experiment was the usage of silence. In this experiment the focus was given to study the fluency of the speech based on the usage of the silence, the frequency of the silence moments and the impression given by the silence between the two participants. According to Peggy Kenna and Lacy Sondra (1994, 15) Chinese prefer the silence over speaking. Another thing Peggy Kenna and Lacy Sondra (1994, 15) mention is that Chinese like to think through what they say in order to stay consistent and therefore they may keep silent for a long time before they speak again. The silence in China is perceived in a slightly different way than in western Europe or particularly in Italy. Chinese do not feel uncomfortable with the long-lasting silence so the other side negotiating should not be surprised if the Chinese stop talking and takes their time to think

their decision through. On the contrary Italians could feel uncomfortable if the silence is lasting too long.

### 5.3.1 Silence analysis

During the first negotiation Chinese representative took over the speech as the first one. The Italian representative was listening without interruption until the time of responding. The Chinese representative was in regular intervals approving opponent's speech with words like 'yes' or 'ehm' showing the understanding of the speech. Italian representative did not have the need to show the understanding of the opponent's speech and was simply listening. The silence was therefore used by both participants with the similar lengths and intervals even though Chinese representative took longer time for considering his answers, the length of the silence was still in the natural level and did not make feel the opponent uncomfortable. Overall, the exchange of speech and the silence of both participants was slightly unbalanced.

During the second negotiation when the roles changed, where the Chinese representative was in the role of a person who needed to make a deal more, the Italian representative took over the speech as a first one. The overall usage of the silence and the fluency of the speech was much less balanced. The Italian representative was speaking most of the time meanwhile the Chinese representative was using the silence much more, even when he was speaking, he was taking much more time before he decided to answer or how to answer.

In relation to the context, it was possible to notice that in the first scenario, when the Chinese participant was in the less stressful position, the speech was more balanced with less complete silence present. In the second scenario, when the Chinese participant was in more stressful position, the silence from his side was present more. The Italian participant's utterance and the use of silence was in both scenarios similar and more dynamic.



Fig. 18 Negotiation no. 1 - Speech turn-taking and silence (Source: own research)



## Negotiation no. 2



Fig. 19 Negotiation no. 2 - Speech turn-taking and silence (Source: own research)

In the two tables above, it is possible to see the turn-taking of the speech between the participants and the use of silence during the speech. During the first negotiation, even though the Italian participant was speaking slightly more, the speech was moreover balanced. The dark green colour indicates the raise of the voice of the Italian participant. During the speech when the Chinese participant tried to speak but the Italian have not finished yet, he raised his voice and finished what he wanted to convey, then he gave a space for the Chinese participant to express himself. Overall, the Chinese participant was much more quiet and was giving to the Italian the space to speak. Chinese participant always waited until the Italian one finished his speech, and sometimes he even waited for a while, so the silence was present before he got to speak again. During the utterance of the Chinese representative, it was possible to see longer pauses. The silence was therefore present mostly before the Chinese utterance and during the utterance. During the utterance of the Italian participant the Chinese participant was patiently listening, meanwhile the Italian participant did not have a problem to speak over the Chinese participant's utterance and had tendency start the speech before the Chinese participant finished his utterance. The interruption over the Italian participant's utterance from the Chinese participant were only reassuring words, in order to show understanding. The Italian participant had a tendency to fill the silence, in contrary to the Chinese participant. Overall utterance of the Chinese participant was slower with many pauses, where complete silence was present. Meanwhile Italian participant's speech was much more dynamic, with interrupting the opponent's utterance and silence was present to a very limited extend. In relation to the context, the Chinese participant was talking more in the first negotiation, when he was more confident, and did not need the deal as much as in the second scenario when the silence was much more present. It is possible to say, the more stressful, or important the speech was the more silence was present from the Chinese participant.



Fig. 20 Business Meeting - Speech turn-taking and silence (Source: own research)

During the business meeting the Italian participant was the one who broke the silence if the silence occurred. The Chinese participant was taking time to answer, and the silence occurred even within his utterance. The longest silence occurred always after the Italian participant made a question and gave the Chinese participant space to express his opinion. Overall, the pattern of use of silence was similar as during the negotiations but with even more unbalanced speech. The Italian participant was speaking most of the time, sometimes speaking over the Chinese participant and was breaking the silence. The Chinese participant started the communication by presenting his idea for the business, but the rest of the meeting it was the Italian participant leading the speech and leaving the Chinese participant listening. As during the negotiations, interruptions of the speech from the Chinese participant were confined to confirming words, in order to show understanding or agreement.

#### **5.4 Summary of the observed findings**

Before making a final assumption from the observed findings, it is necessary to consider the limitations of the experiment. First factor that must be considered is the diversity of people among the countries itself. Each individual is different. Factors that must be taken into account, when studying a business meeting between participants from different countries, are the level of relationship between them, the context, and the situation in which two individuals from different countries meet. Considering the fact that the experiment took place in Europe, the Chinese expect certain differences and acquired the European ways, namely, they got used to the handshaking. Meanwhile in China they may stick to their way and simply bow without offering the hand for the greeting. Another significant limitation is the role-playing game, that for definition, is an approximation of reality, therefore it can affect the participant's behaviour. Another limitation is the lack in the number of experiments that would either confirm or disprove the findings. Another limitation is the fact that the experiment was more negotiation based and the meeting was made only with two participants and therefore it is impossible to made an assumption and conclusions that can be applied to a business meeting of a larger group of people. This limitation affected mainly the study of eye contact and the use of silence in the group of people during business meetings.

In summary, regarding the length of the eye contact, the Italian participant kept direct eye contact most of the time. The Chinese participant was avoiding eye contact almost

through his whole utterance. The eye contact from the Chinese participant was present mostly when he was listening. The Italian participant was avoiding eye contact to a much smaller extent. Regarding the intervals the short avoidance was present during thinking, longer avoidance was present during listening of the longer utterance of the Chinese participant. Regarding the situations of the avoidance of eye contact, it is possible to assume that the avoidance from the Italian participant was present mostly because of the avoidance from the opponent's side. During the avoidance of the Italian participant the eyes were pointing either up when thinking or down on the table during the longer utterance of the opponent. From the Chinese participant was possible to see unpleasant avoidance of direct eye contact, as the eyes were pointing everywhere around the room, and was giving an impression of nervousness. The more complex the speech of the Italian participant was or the bigger noise in the room occurred the more intense direct eye contact from the Chinese participants was possible to observe, as was already mentioned, it is possible to assume this occurred due to the need for the higher focus required for the understanding. On the contrary, during the speech of the Chinese participant, the more serious or stressful the situation was, the higher avoidance was possible to observe. As for the Italian participant, the intensity and the intervals of direct eye contact was most of the time the same. Regarding the handshake, although, as it is in Asian countries common, a light handshake is a sign of respect and therefore the firm grip is not to be expected from Chinese, some might acquire the western ways and use the firm grip as well. In addition, a bow alongside the handshake is a standard way of Chinese assimilation to the western ways of greeting.

From the observation was possible to see the diversity of nonverbal communication between the studied cultures. From the observation was also found that the Chinese representative acquired the local ways of nonverbal communication, namely shaking the hands. The Italian participant was simply doing his own way, and the Chinese participant had a slight tendency to assimilate, copying and stick with the western manners of nonverbal communication.

## 6 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### **RQ1: Do non-verbal elements such as eye contact, handshake and silence affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China?**

As the nonverbal communication is an integral part of any form of communication, it is even more present in the intercultural environment, where the differences among cultures are so essential. Therefore, nonverbal communication can significantly help in understanding the verbal message over the language barrier but, at the same time, it can lead to the misreading of the nonverbal signs and create misunderstandings. It is safe to say that the elements such as eye contact, handshake and silence affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China. As for the greeting, the handshake is, after making an eye contact while approaching, the first contact made, it gives the first impression about the persons, and the first impression can affect the following approach towards the person.

### **RQ2: What can be done to eliminate problems with eye contact, handshake and silence in communication among the representatives from Italy and China?**

It is recommended for Chinese to meet the eyes with the Italians regularly in order to slightly eliminate the avoidance. For the Italians it is recommended occasionally to point down the eyes or watch the mouth instead of keeping direct eye contact in order to eliminate it and create a more comfortable environment for both participants. As for the silence it is recommended for the Chinese to avoid a long silence. For the Italians it is recommended not to speak over the Chinese but wait until they finish expressing themselves, as speaking over Chinese can be perceived as offensive. Also, it is recommended for the Italians to occasionally stop the flow of the speech in order to give to Chinese the space to express themselves. Regarding the greeting it is recommended for Chinese to offer the hand and for Italians to nod with their heads during handshaking. Regarding the silence it is recommended that Italians give a space to Chinese to express themselves and for the eye contact, Italians should eliminate the intensity of direct eye contact meanwhile Chinese should eliminate the avoidance. Following the recommendations, both representatives can create a more comfortable environment for communication and prevent offending each other.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BUSINESS PRACTICE

In order to establish more friendly environment and prevent from intercultural communication misunderstandings, it is recommended to learn some basic communication codes of the culture of the country doing business with. Assuming that the meaning of the gesture in their culture is the same as in ours is a big misconception. Even a small and for us positive or unimportant gesture can be highly offensive in another culture. Understanding the differences in nonverbal communication in intercultural environment can prevent from unnecessary business failures. Regarding the greeting, if the Chinese do not offer the hand for the handshake, it is not necessary to bow as well but a slight nod with the head is a polite gesture to do while doing business in China. But, even if the handshake became a standard way of greeting with foreigners also in China, the handshake might not feel natural, or firm, it might last unnaturally too long but this should not send a negative message to Italians, considering that it is not natural for Chinese to shake hands at all. Understanding should be made from the both parts Chinese and Italians, but it is more luckily that Chinese will offer the hand.

Regarding eye contact, a direct intense one is recommend being avoided by Italians, as it is considered inappropriate in China and might put the Chinese person in unease. Therefore, eye contact can be kept but too intense one should be avoided. As for the Chinese, their avoidance should not be considered in a negative way, Italians should not look for a hidden meaning behind this avoidance, even though avoidance might feel uncomfortable as it can send the negative impression, despite the fact knowing this is simply their way of communicating. Italians should eliminate intense direct eye contact and occasionally look away and give the Chinese space, but it is not necessary to avoid direct eye contact from their side completely. Chinese should be as well aware of the importance of eye contact in Italy and in western countries in general, and therefore do not understand it as an offence or disrespect, even though it may make them feel uncomfortable.

Regarding the silence, it is recommended for Italians to give a space to Chinese to express themselves as they are not used to speaking over each other. The interrupting the speech from Chinese people is therefore rather uncommon. Italians should be prepared that the long or longer pauses between the speech can take place, in general, they are going to



be longer than what they accustomed with during a meeting within people coming from western countries.

The most important advice is to understand the differences in nonverbal communication of the culture doing business with and not assume the nonverbal signs have the same meaning in their culture as they have in ours. Another advice is to try to avoid gestures that are considered rude in the other culture. It is advisable to be aware of nonverbal communication we use and eliminate the use of nonverbal gestures to a minimum, if not knowing the meaning of the certain gesture, since this can be considered offensive in the other country. When knowing the differences, it is advisable to avoid the nonverbal communication that is perceived in a negative way in the other culture. Lastly when aware of the differences, it is recommended to use the other culture's way of nonverbal communication, as showing an effort is always viewed in a positive way.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was firstly to find out whether the elements such as eye contact, handshake and silence affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China and secondly to give the recommendations for intercultural communication between the chosen countries. Based on the qualitative analysis, which were carried out through the experiment, done by the observation of the representatives during the business meetings and negotiations, with the focus of the observation on the studied nonverbal elements. Aware of the limitations of this experiment, it can be concluded that the studied nonverbal elements such as eye contact, handshake and silence affect intercultural communication among the representatives from Italy and China. Therefore, both countries should be aware of the differences of other culture, but also of their own nonverbal communication, in order to be respectful toward each other, and prevent from unnecessary misunderstandings that could lead to a business failure. The goal of the thesis was met.

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## APPENDIX

### ROLE PLAYING SCENARIOS FOR BUSINESS NEGOTIATION

#### **Scenario 1: Chinese company is looking for a delivery company to deliver their products on Italian market. (China)**

You are a company's distributor. Your responsibility is to take care of distributing the product to your customers from China to Italy. The current delivery company you are cooperating with has many issues, they deliver the goods with delay and have no warehouse, but it is relatively cheap. You are looking for more reliable company with fast delivery and its own warehouse. You want to stay in the limit of maximum **30 days** for delivery, but you would prefer up to **15 days**. Your shipping method is a sea freight. The **maximum** price you would like to pay is **18 – 50 euro per package** based on the weight of the package, but you are willing to agree up to **18 - 70 euro per package** if you cannot make the deal at the lower price.

#### **Scenario 1: Chinese company is looking for a delivery company to deliver their products on Italian market. (Italy)**

You are a representant of an Italian delivery company trying to agree on cooperation with the Chinese company. Getting this customer can mean a long-term cooperation, if they expand more in your country the business for you could even grow. You are able to deliver the goods counting the reserve for some delays within **30 days**, but if everything goes smoothly the delivery time can be shorter such as **20 days**. Your shipping method is a sea freight. You would like to charge **18 – 70 euro per package** base on its weight. But you are willing to accept the deal on **18 – 60 euro per package** based on its weight.

#### **Scenario 2: Italian company is looking for a Chinese producer of the car components to use in their production. (Italy)**

You are a company's representant looking for a producer of car components needed for your company's production. Your current Italian partner is too expensive and it is planning to raise the prices even more, therefore you have decided to look for another one. You found this Chinese producer of the electronic components offering the them for a lower price than your current partenr. You will try to make a deal with as low price as possible.

For the electronic components you would like to buy you are willing to pay between **300 – 400 (450) euro** per vehicle.

**Scenario 2: Italian company is looking for a Chinese producer of the car components to use in their production.** (China)

You are a representant of your company in China that produces the car components. You have a meeting with a representant of an Italian company that produces cars. You are trying to make a deal that will be convenient for you but will meet their price requirements. Therefore, you will try to start with a high price, so you have a space for negotiation. For the electronic components you produce you would like to charge between **(400) 450 – 500 euro** per vehicle.