

# Research on Sino-US Differences in Cross-cultural Business Communication from the Perspective of Cultural Dimension Theory: A Case Study of English Business Emails

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**Abstract:** From three dimensions of cultural dimension theory, namely Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, this paper aims to explore the differences in cross-cultural business communication between China and the U.S. mainly through case study, taking 1,357 English business emails as the research subjects. The results show that: (1) Under the perspective of Power Distance, Sino-US differences are mainly seen in decision-making. In Chinese companies, subordinates tend to obey the instructions and follow the suggestions of their superiors, while US companies are more lenient in decision making; (2) Sino-US differences under the Individualism vs. Collectivism dimension can be divided into two: value orientation of needs and speaking style, where the frequency of the value orientation of needs is reflected 70 times, while that of the speaking style is 57 times; (3) Under the dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, Sino-US differences in terms of long-term and short-term interests are reflected in the reward of collaboration, usage rights of social posts and duration of collaboration. In general, the Chinese tends to pursue long-term interests, while the U.S. side is more concerned about the short-term interests. It is hoped that this paper will be helpful in guiding cross-cultural communication using business emails, and provide some reference for the future research on Sino-US differences in cross-cultural business communication and exchange.

**Keywords:** cultural dimension theory; Sino-US cross-cultural business communication; differences; English business emails

## 1. Introduction

Culture is defined by Hofstede as “the collective planning of mind is the process that distinguishes members of a group or class from other people” (Carolina, 2019:220)<sup>[1]</sup>. Culture must be viewed as a process, rather than a completed product (Xu Xingyan, 2004)<sup>[2]</sup>. On the other hand, English business emails play a vital role in the cross-cultural business communication. Cultural differences directly or indirectly affect the process of communication because of the certain formatting requirements and specific ways of writing to express the writer’s intentions and ideas. Therefore, it has been critical to understand the culture of the other party before conducting cross-cultural business communication.

At present, cultural dimension theory is used by a number of scholars to explore differences in cultures. Under the influence of the continuous deepening of the global economic integration process, the phenomenon of cultural differences has thus become more complex and diverse, requiring different dimensions to be explained together (Wang Yue, 2012:35)<sup>[3]</sup>. The original model of Culture Dimension Theory was derived from an analysis of the results of a global survey of the value systems of IBM employees around 1974. Through an in-depth analysis of the vast amount of data, Hofstede et al. found that cultural values were closely related to management standards in business and classified socio-cultural differences into four categories, namely the relationship between people and groups, the degree of social injustice, the gender implication of attitudes to social life, and attitudes to dealing with uncertainty in socio-economic processes. Later, in 1980, four major value dimensions of comparative cultural differences, namely Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity vs. Femininity were summarized. In 1991, on the basis of their investigations and studies of Chinese values, the fifth dimension of cultural values, namely, Long-term vs. Short-term

Orientation was put forward. Then in 2010, the last dimension, Indulgence vs. Restraint, was proposed (Hofstede et al., 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. Briefly speaking, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is one of the first theories to be able to quantify cultural differences. It is established relatively late but has been continually updated and refined to a large extent, making it applicable to a wide range of culture-related studies and research. Ma Xingxiang, Wang Xinfang (2018:105) states that the application of cultural dimension theory is predominant in the field of cross-cultural communication<sup>[5]</sup>.

Based on Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, this article explores the Sino-US differences in cross-cultural communication with emails and for the purpose of this paper, a total of 1,357 English business emails were collected for this paper, with the frequency of reflecting the cultural dimension theory reaching to the high of 1,243 times. As shown in Figure 1, the frequency of reflecting the dimension of Power Distance is 117 times, accounting for 9.41%. There are 127 times reflecting the dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism in all, representing 10.22%. Comparatively speaking, the frequency of the dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation takes up the largest proportion, with 889 times, accounting for 71.52%. Lastly, the frequencies of the other three dimensions of Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity vs. Femininity, and Indulgence vs. Restraint are respectively 71 times, 29 times and 10 times, accounting for 5.71%, 2.33% and 0.81%. Based on the data presented above, it can be seen that a majority of emails surveyed reflect the above three dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and the emails reflecting the dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation accounts for the largest proportion. Therefore, only the three dimensions, namely Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, are principally discussed in this paper.

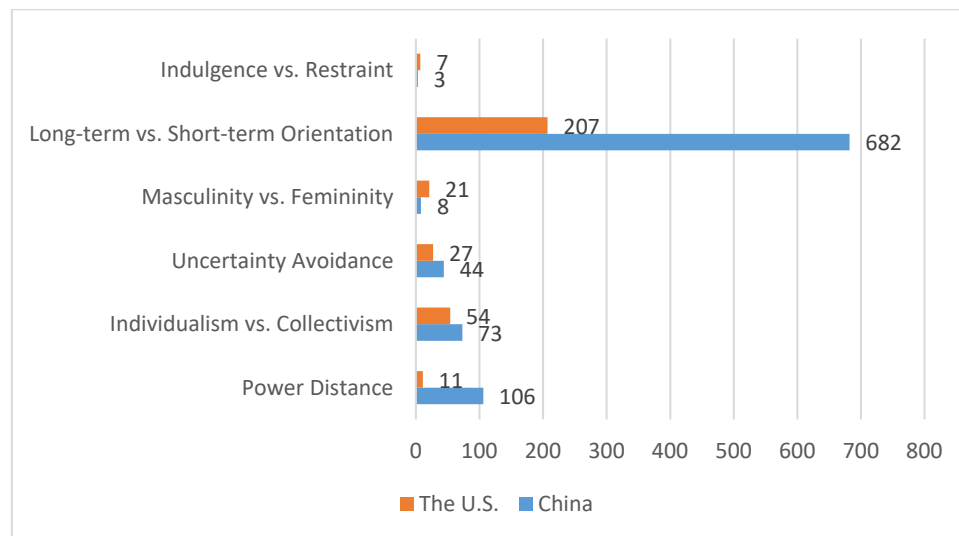


Figure 1 Proportion of English Business Emails in Different Dimensions

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Previous Studies on Cultural Dimension Theory

#### 2.1.1. Research on Power Distance

According to Hofstede et al. (2019), the term Power Distance refers to the emotional distance between superiors and subordinates, reflecting the answers from different countries or regions to the basic question of "How to deal with inequality between people"<sup>[4]</sup>. The Power Distance index measures the degree of social inequality. In countries and cultures with high Power Distance index, power is fairly centralized and subordinates are more dependent on superiors, while in those with a low Power Distance index, relationships within the organization are more pragmatic and problem solving is more likely to be through negotiation and discussion (Wang Jin & Zheng Li (2019:79)<sup>[6]</sup>. And countries with a culture of low Power Distance are more likely to expect and accept negotiable power relations (Xi Jing & Jiang Hao, 2015:97)<sup>[7]</sup>. Meanwhile, Chinese people's tendency toward Power Distance is inevitably influenced by the concept of inferiority and superiority in traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism's idea of ritual hierarchy (Liu Yannan & Wan Guilian (2017:70)<sup>[8]</sup>.

As for the dimension of Power Distance, many scholars in China focuses more on business management or organizational regulations and has provided professional guidance and suggestions for the discussion on Sino-US differences. Hu Zhongli and Chen Mo (2014:240-241) analyze the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in terms of the dimension of Power Distance, in order to help us understand correctly the words and deeds of westerners. In addition, they suggest that each society has different ways and means of dealing with power inequalities, resulting in differences in values<sup>[9]</sup>. Furthermore, Mao Changguo and Guo Lei (2020:28) delve into the interplay and longitudinal development of power distance tendencies between superiors and subordinates with respect to the power distance tendencies held by individuals and find that inconsistencies in the dimension of power distance between leaders and subordinates cause high emotional exhaustion and low work performance among employees<sup>[10]</sup>. Tang Yating, Wang Wei, and Li Yongxin (2021:52-58) use multiple questionnaires to do a survey on corporate managers and their direct reports to examine the boundary conditions of influence of inclusive leaders on employees' organizational identity and proactive behavior<sup>[11]</sup>.

### **2.1.2. Research on Individualism vs. Collectivism**

Individualism vs. Collectivism, redefined as one of the dimensions of cultural dimension theory, refers to the extent to which people care about group members and group goals (Collectivism) or themselves and their individual goals (Individualism) (Hofstede et al. , 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. Chinese people, more influenced by collectivist values, always speak from the perspective of other people, while Americans, with individualist values, pay more attention to their privacy and care a lot about their behaviors in public (Jiang Yan, 2013:77) <sup>[12]</sup>. In the process of maintaining culture, people gradually develop a balanced pattern of concern for others and for the self, and this formation of different patterns is also known as collectivism and individualism (Hofstede et al. , 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>.

Some research on Individualism vs. Collectivism state that in cross-cultural business communication, Chinese are inclined to think from the other side, and American pay more attention to personal interests and privacy. Zhang Buyuan and Gu Xin (2016:135) analyze the differences between individualism and collectivism in international business negotiations and suggest that both parties should fully understand cultural characteristics and sense of time of each other<sup>[13]</sup>. Yi (2021:62) uses cultural dimension theory as a perspective to analyze Sino-US cultural differences that emerge in American Factory, and emphasizes the high degree of independence of social members, and great concern for self-esteem in the U.S. society<sup>[14]</sup>. Fu Yuxia (2014:116-118) analyzes how the different concepts of privacy in China and the United States come to being from the dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism, and further explores the manifestations of them<sup>[15]</sup>.

### **2.1.3. Research on Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation**

Long-term Orientation means encouraging virtues oriented toward the pursuit of future rewards, such as "perseverance" and "frugality"; On the contrary, Short-term Orientation fosters and encourages past and present virtues, such as "respect for tradition" and "fulfillment of social obligations" (Hofstede et al., 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation reflects the expectations and concerns of the members of the society about the future (Tong, 2021:129)<sup>[16]</sup>. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation displays a national value of long-term and immediate interests, and indicates whether social decisions are more influenced by tradition and past events or by the present or future (Wang Yue, 2012:35-36)<sup>[3]</sup>.

In recent years, the research related to dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation is mainly in the areas of cross-cultural communication, and cultural differences. Su (2022:61) explores the application of cultural dimension theory in the field of second language acquisition and suggests that increasing the demand of foreign literary texts and creating a collaborative learning environment are key to strengthening second language learners' competence in cross-cultural communication<sup>[17]</sup>. Chen Jingwen (2021:107) finds that people are influenced by long-term oriented culture as a result of their different mastery of the concept of time, in other words, because of their concept of the dynamic change of things, they usually do not directly cut to the topic in communication, but spend time in understanding the background of the communication subject, and only after the relationship between the two parties has been expanded to start talking about serious matters; In a short-term oriented society, people's communication is characterized by giving priority to topics directly related to personal interests, expanding interpersonal relationships on the basis of ensuring individual benefits, and avoiding the consumption of time on secondary communication purposes<sup>[18]</sup>. From the three dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, Zhang Qiongyao (2021:118) clarifies the impact of the difference in people's behavior in different cultural backgrounds in China and the U.S., and indicates that in countries belong to

long-term oriented culture, people tend to build long-term trust and attachment through human feelings; the U.S. is a typical short-term oriented country, with a tendency to value immediate interests and be less interested in maintaining long-term cooperative relationships<sup>[19]</sup>. Thus, there are still relatively few studies on differences in cross-cultural business communication using English business emails.

## **2.2. Previous Studies on Cross-cultural Business Communication**

With the deepening of world economic and cultural integration, the number of cross-cultural business communication scenarios is gradually increasing, and having core English language skills is a must. English business emails, as one of the tools in cross-cultural business communication, play a crucial role of all time. In addition, in cross-cultural business communication, people from different historical and cultural backgrounds often have misunderstandings and conflicts due to cultural differences. Accordingly, it has been increasingly significant to understand and be able to recognize the cultural differences that are likely to occur in cross-cultural business communication, and Sino-US differences are no exception.

How to effectively communicate across cultures and achieve successful business negotiations has been a central concern. In the process of cross-cultural business communication, cultural differences occur mainly in the form of language expression, business cooperation, problem-solving mindset and customs of different countries and regions, which affect the final outcome of the future cooperation (Huang Haixia, 2022:32-34)<sup>[20]</sup>. By analyzing emails in cross-cultural communication, Wu Jihong (2019:88-103) explores the influence of contextual, social and individual factors on the management of harmonious relationships and the application of their strategies in cross-cultural communication<sup>[21]</sup>. Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Ying (2016:99-118) proposes to make a clear identification about which leadership style can be appropriate and effective for foreign leaders in China, and suggests that good cross-cultural management communication between foreign leaders and local workers is one of the basic factors leading to successful management<sup>[22]</sup>. Wang Chuchu and Wang Yang (2021:64-66) analyze the current situation and influence of cross-cultural communication ability of college students, and the importance of language competence, communicative skills and cultural capacity in cross-cultural business communication is emphasized<sup>[23]</sup>.

To put it briefly, the above studies on cross-cultural business communication refer to cultural differences to a greater or lesser extent. This paper will provide new perspectives on research relevant to cross-cultural communication and cultural dimension theory in order to provide Sino-US cross-cultural business communicators with a new understanding of cultural differences between China and the U.S.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Questions**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the business emails of X company, explore the manifestations of cultural differences between China and the U.S., and compare and contrast the characteristics of these cultural differences. This paper will address the following questions:

- (1) What is the difference in cross-cultural business communication between Chinese and the U.S. companies under the dimension of Power Distance?
- (2) What differences exist in cross-cultural business communication between Chinese and the U.S. companies under the dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism?
- (3) From the dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, what differences do Chinese and the U.S. negotiators show in the pursuit of long-term and short-term interests?

### **3.2. Subjects**

The paper is conducted on business emails from X company in Shenzhen. Only emails from China and the U.S. were counted for the statistics and selected for analysis in this paper. For the sake of privacy, email addresses, company names, and other information that is not relevant for this paper will be removed or omitted. All of the emails collected are sent by clients in the U.S. and salespeople in China via Google Mail (Gmail). Of the 1,357 texts from the English business emails collected, some of those sent from the U.S. were answered by the clients themselves, while others were answered by the

clients' managers or assistants.

### **3.3. Methods**

Comparative analysis approach and case analysis method are mainly adopted in this paper. Through these two methods, it is intended to find out how the three dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation of the cultural dimension theory are reflected in cross-cultural business communication via English business emails. Comparative analysis approach refers to comparing two or more data and analyzing their differences, so as to reveal the developmental changes and regularity of things represented by these data. Through the collection of texts of emails, statistics and classification of texts has been conducted in order to explore the differences on cross-cultural business communication between Chinese and Americans. Because of its in-depth and objectivity, case analysis method is often utilized to compare and contrast cultures, not only to provide an informative description of the phenomenon, but also to analyze the reasons behind it profoundly. After the comparison of data was presented, the text of emails from all the sessions of the business communication were combined with theoretical guidelines for the further analysis.

### **3.4. Procedure**

Data collection for the purpose of this paper falls into three periods. The first period is from October 1, 2022, to November 3, 2022. The author read and made notes on what was learned from the literature on cultural dimension theory and cross-cultural business communication. Then, the literature on the three dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism and Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation and that on cross-cultural business communication was reviewed in detail, and gaps and limitations in recent research were identified. The second period began approximately from November 2, 2022 to December 11, 2022. After the sufficient literature review in the last period, the collection of texts from English business emails for the study was started. Next, the emails were classified according to the three dimensions and were input in the Excel tables. This was followed by the organization and analysis of the data collected above. The third period was from December 13, 2022 to January 5, 2023. All the texts of English business emails were collected and sorted out. In addition, the useful text of emails was carefully read and the necessary information was selected to continue analyzing. The needed information was then categorized and marked. Subsequently, the acquired data were made into statistical tables, with the help of which the data were analyzed and presented in tables and graphs for the paper. Finally, the results were worked out.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

### **4.1. Sino-US Differences on Power Distance**

To begin with, Sino-US differences under the dimension of Power Distance can be found in decision-making and detailed statements will be discussed in the following. Power is more centralized and subordinates are more dependent on their superiors in countries and cultures with a high power distance index (Wang jin, Zheng Li, 2019:79)<sup>[6]</sup>. Statements like “My manager needs to check them out for a little bit. / ...is the highest budget my manager allows to offer. / Unfortunately, that’s the highest budget that my manager allows to give. / Unfortunately, my manager doesn’t accept this. / Unfortunately, according to my manager, only when the budget lands at..., can we move to the next step. / This decision is made based on our manager, I hope you understand. / Unfortunately, after our manager checked out your account, he wanted to cancel this collaboration.” and more are generally used to explain that the power on deciding collaboration details is basically made by superiors in China.

There is scarce evidence that proves the leniency of making decisions in the U.S., with low frequencies of reflecting, only 11 times, which can be identified by the words such as “You are saying your manager doesn’t accept those prices. What is your budget? / I’m sure she doesn’t mind the price goes lower. / I represented all our creators. / I’ve been given the rights to...”. It can be drawn that there are fewer cases that reflect the characteristics of how U.S. business communicators make decisions. The following examples provide realistic cases of this. And “Client” represents the U.S. communicator; “Salesperson”, represents Chinese communicator.

Example (1)

Client 1: ...Thank you for getting in touch. Unfortunately, your budget is far too low a fee for her to consider. Is there any way you could match her rates?

Salesperson 1: ...We have discussed this with our manager. Unfortunately, the highest budget our manager allows giving is...

Client 1: ...You are saying your manager doesn't accept those prices. What is your budget?

Salesperson 1: Unfortunately, the decision about the budget is on our manager, I hope you understand.

Client 1: Totally understand, are you able to meet us at...?

Salesperson 1: Unfortunately, he doesn't accept this offer and wants to decline on this. Thank you for your time!

As shown in the case above, the two parties from China and the U.S. are conducting the negotiation on collaboration fee. Salesperson 1 has to consult with his superior in terms of budget or price by "We have discussed this with our manager.", and Client 1 suppose that there will be opportunity to know the thoughts about the budget from Salesperson 1 since U.S. companies are not too strict about giving the rights on decision-making by replying "You are saying your manager doesn't accept those prices. What is your budget?", which is coordinated with what Xi Jing and Jiang Hao (2015:97) state that countries with a culture of low Power Distance are more likely to expect and accept negotiable power relations<sup>[7]</sup>. Besides, Salesperson 1 repeatedly shows the centralization of decision-making by "...the decision about the budget is on our manager," and "Unfortunately, he doesn't accept this offer and wants to decline on this."

In these three rounds of conversations above, Chinese business communicators respond to the other party mainly according to what his / her superior has in mind. Comparatively speaking, communicators in the U.S. are more flexible on making decision with fewer restriction. Eventually, the conflict on decision-making led to the early end of communications.

In the next case, the centralization of the decision-making can be reflected more clearly.

Example (2)

Salesperson 2: Thank you for those rates. Unfortunately, our manager doesn't accept those rates, can we do something to meet the rates? Or they are not negotiable? We would like to provide one or two more products to you as we usually only give two to our creators.

Client 2: So what's your budget? I can talk to her on a lower budget. Also, I believe... would be willing to proceed if she loves the products.

Salesperson 2: That's great! Could you please meet us at... on working on another platform? Our manager thinks that posting content on... may be not effective...

In this example, the two parties show whether they obey their supervisor's opinion or express themselves with regard to bargaining. It can be drawn that Salesperson 2 conveys the view of the superior to the other party without adding their own opinion, which can be found in "...our manager doesn't accept those rates" and "Our manager thinks that posting content on... may be not effective...", showing a basic characteristic of companies in China as a country with high power distance. In contrast, Client 2 from the U.S. states some comments or understanding without discussing with the others who are also involved. This manifests itself in "I believe... would be willing to proceed if she loves the products".

#### **4.2. Sino-US Differences on Individualism vs. Collectivism**

Guo Zongyao (2016:158) emphasizes that in negotiations, Americans will try to achieve individual goals first, rather than collective goals. For them, judgments are made from their personal point of view, and decisions are made with their individual interests in mind<sup>[24]</sup>. Besides, Chinese and American cultures have different perceptions of time and ways of communication. When it comes to ways people communicate, Chinese people like to express themselves implicitly, while Americans are more in favor of getting right to the point (Zhang Buyuan, Gu Xin, 2016:135)<sup>[13]</sup>. Consequently, Sino-US differences under Individualism vs. Collectivism can be found in two primary aspects: value orientation of needs and speaking style, which will be separately discussed below. As can be seen from Figure 2, the frequency of reflection of the two aspects is significantly different between China and the U.S. In the

aspect of value orientation of needs, the frequency of the U.S. is 41 times, while that of China, is 29 times; in the aspect of speaking style, the frequency of China is 44 times, noticeably higher than the U.S.'s 13 times.

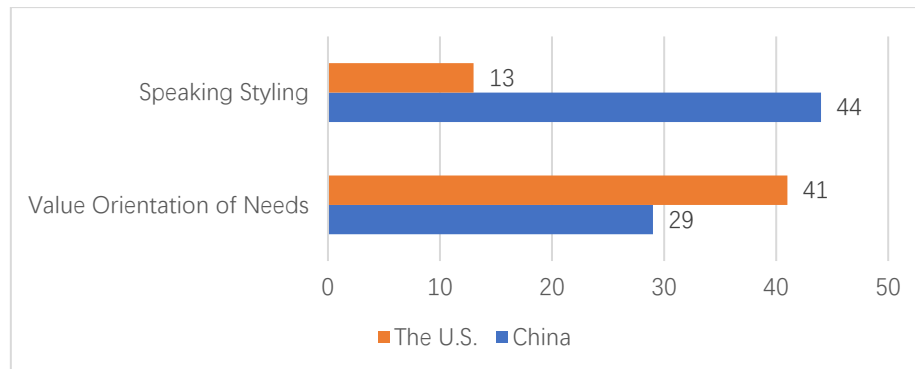


Figure 2 Frequency of Two Aspects in Individualism vs. Collectivism

#### 4.2.1. Value Orientation of Needs

Table 1 Expressions Reflecting Sino-US Differences in Value Orientation of Needs

<b>China</b>	Your thoughts / for your convenience / both of us / we hope we can / win-win collaboration / Let's... / to meet your needs / for you
<b>The U.S.</b>	My time / my schedule / paid collaboration / compensation / I think... / I want... / I feel kinda offended...

According to Table 1, the Sino-US differences in value orientation of needs can be seen in some phrases used by Chinese and Americans which will be interpreted in details. In business transactions or collaborations, it is rational for people in individualist societies to favor companies that offer higher benefits related to them (Hofstede et al., 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. This manifests itself in some statements, such as “I am prioritizing paid collaboration with higher budget / I’m making content for another brand (paid)”.

People in individualistic societies think from their own standpoint, and are more conscious of their personal time and interests (Zhi Lijie, 2018:115)<sup>[23]</sup>. In this paper, communicators from U.S. usually use “My time is very valuable / No, it is not feasible to work like this. We can negotiate the fee but not at cost 0 only per product. / I have read over the contract and these are really strict guidelines for a product-post exchange. I cannot agree that I will reshoot any material should your team not agree with the content. / I’m using my Gmail account because it more comfortable send file like that.”, and more to indicate their pursuits for personal needs. Moreover, the statements such as “I’m not willing to give you the information above since it’s a bit private. / Kinda offended you think I need shape wear. / Giving my phone number may be not safe and I’m afraid it will leak out.”, and others are often used to express their concern for privacy and personal image. Conversely, as a result of the strong tendency of collectivism, Chinese often expect that the negotiations will be the beginning of a long-term cordial business partnership (Wang Lizhuo, 2015:59)<sup>[26]</sup>. Chinese communicators frequently show their efforts to meet the needs of the other party for a mutual cooperation by using “what kind of economic offer would you like and we would try our best to meet the needs... / That’s definitely ok for us, just please do it when you are available. / If you don’t want to sign the details, it’s still ok as you agree to the details included:) / Is there anything we can do to help?”, etc.

The following example shows how Chinese communicators give the best offer so as to both parties can reach collaboration and how firmly the U.S. communicators adhere to their own interests as their primary concern, especially the management of time.

Example (3)

Salesperson 3: ...We would try to persuade our manager to allow us to ship as many products as you want, and if this collaboration turn out to be satisfactory, we would like provide new products to you, as well as the exclusive discounts and giveaway. Let’s make it a win-win partnership! Hope this finds you well.

Client 3: Thank you for your kind words. However, I don’t think this fit me if you guys can’t give a higher budget and I have a tight schedule.

Salesperson 3: We totally understand! We appreciate your work but we have to make the best choice

for our team. We always give the best offer to our creators, please think about it.

Client 3: I just think your management team has not taken the time to understand what I do as a creator. I spend a lot of time and energy creating...

Salesperson 3: We do admire your creativity and the highest budget we are allowed giving is... Please kindly let us know how this sounds to you.

Client 3: Great! I confirm! But I want to postpone the delivery of content cause I'm having a trip and won't be back until... Just keep that in mind, talk soon!

Salesperson 3: No problem! And we think that it would be great if you can come back with deliverables before due day:) Have a nice trip!

...

(Salesperson 3 followed up by the due day for the collaboration)

Salesperson 3: How are you? We hope everything going well! Could you please tell us have you finished the content? If so, please kindly send it to us to take a look at, thank you.

Client 3: OK! I'll get on it.

(Five days past)

Salesperson 3: Hi dear, could you please let us know when you can send the content? The due time past for couple of days. If you are too busy that's OK for us, and please make sure that all the products have been included in the content, thank you so much!

We would like to hear from you early.

(Two days past)

Client 3: Hi, I just back from my crazy weekend. I will do it. Appreciate your patience!

In this procedure of communication, Salesperson 3 strive his hardest to meet the interests of the both parties, which is called "collective needs" by using "We would try to persuade our manager to allow us to ship as many products as you want... / Let's make it a win-win partnership! / We always give the best offer to our creators...". And the best request has been offered to reach a potential mutually beneficial cooperation.

Client 3, on the other hand, are apt to devote themselves to the interests closely related to them, which is embodied in the words like "I want to postpone the delivery of content cause I'm having a trip". This corresponds to Hofstede's view that members in individualistic society tend to prioritize on personal needs. In addition, Client 3 didn't fulfill obligations within due day even though Salesperson 3 has reminded, which mirrored the propensity of Americans managing their time loosely.

All in all, Chinese communicators' inclination of achieving interests of both sides and the American's focusing on personal time, which contributes to individualist interests, are discussed above. At the same time, Americans' concern about personal privacy can be seen in the next example, which is not reflected in the previous one.

Example (4)

Salesperson 4: ...We offer two free products and an 8% commission, and give your fans a 15% discount, and we are sure that both of us can benefit from this collaboration. Will this work for you? Please kindly let us know. Thank you so much!

Client 4: ...However, I charge around...

Salesperson 4: Could you please tell us if there is any way we can meet your budget? And we would love to send you more products if this partnership is satisfying. Please kindly share us your opinion:)

Client 4: The lowest I can accept is \$400. Let me know your thoughts.

Salesperson 4: We told our manager about this, and he agree on this offer. Now we can get to the point. Would you mind us sending a form to your email? If not, please kindly fill it out and submit it to move to the next step.

Client 4: Hey, I submitted the form, but I didn't want to give you my measurement, nor my own



number. Tell me if that is OK.

Salesperson 4: Sorry for that situation. That's definitely OK for us, don't worry! And please check out the agreement attached below and send us a signature. Thank you!

Client 4: I have read over the contract and these are really strict guidelines for a product-post exchange. I can't give that away.

Salesperson 4: The contract is made to protect the whole procedure of our collaboration, please don't worry about it. Only when you sign the agreement can we ship for you.

(One day past)

Salesperson 4: How have you been? Could you please give us your thoughts? The requirements seem strict but we would like to give us creators an extension on finishing the content. Please do give it some thought, thank you!

(Three days past)

Salesperson 4: We hope that everything is going well, are you still interested in this collaboration? According to our manager, he can increase the budget for you if you agree with the requirements. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you change your mind. We wish you the best.

In this informative business communication, the pursuits and aspirations for the realization of collective interests of the communicators in China are invariably alluded to the use of these words such as: "...we are sure that both of us can benefit from this collaboration. / Could you please tell us if there is any way we can meet your budget? / ...we would love to send you more products if this partnership is satisfying.". And words like "Could you please tell us... / Please kindly share us your opinion:) / Would you mind... / Sorry for that situation. That's definitely OK for us, don't worry! / How have you been? Could you please... / We hope that everything is going well." can thoroughly reflected the characteristics that Chinese business communicators often use words in a euphemistic and thoughtful tone during the communication. In the rest of discourse, the flexibility and smooth manner in doing things of Chinese communicators can be found in "The contract is made to protect the whole procedure of our collaboration, please don't worry about it. / ... but we would like to give us creators an extension on finishing the content. Please do give it some thought. / According to our manager, he can increase the budget for you if you agree with the requirements. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you change your mind."

The statements like "...these are really strict guidelines for a product-post exchange. I can't give that away." indicates the U.S communicators' preference of pursuing personal interests. In addition, "I didn't want to give you my measurement, nor my own number." expresses Americans' concern for personal privacy and confidentiality, and it is in line with that American attach more importance on their privacy.

To sum up, with respect to value orientation of needs, Chinese usually try to bring benefits for both parties, and U.S. communicators are essentially inclined to dedicate their time and efforts to the interests greater than others. As will be seen, Sino-US differences in speaking style is illustrated below.

#### 4.2.2. Speaking Style

Table 2 Expressions Reflecting Sino-US Differences in Speaking Style

<b>China</b>	Could you please... / would you mind... / don't worry / please kindly let us know... / for your convenience / we are terribly sorry about...
<b>The U.S.</b>	Nope / No / I'm a professional... / I've been earned... / my followers / I have a high engagement / I have worked with... / I can only...

As demonstrated in Table 2, some expressions showing Sino-US differences in speaking style are demonstrated. The statements begin with "could you please" or "would you" show that Chinese's using euphemistic language while "No" "Yes, no problem" which are rather short show the directness of Americans.

When it comes to speaking style, the tactfulness of Chinese can be usually showed through words like "Sorry for this situation. What about... / For your convenience, we sent you a... / Don't worry, we always give our creators an extension on ... / We are terribly sorry that... / It's been a while, how have you been? Could you please kindly let us know your thoughts? And you can feel free to ask us any question about this campaign:) / This is so sad to hear the news, please accept our sympathy.", and so

on.

People under the influence of individualistic culture are adept to using facts and data collected when intending to accomplish their purpose (Chen Jingwen, 2021:106)<sup>[18]</sup>. By the use of “I have 100k plus followers and my amazon storefront already gets 3k clicks a day. / Everyday brand I have worked with has paid me \$500+ I’m already taking such a low cut. / I have high quality content that is shot on professional equipment and have a typical engagement rate for my following. / I have almost 20k followers and over 1 million monthly impressions. / I also have a high engagement stat of 3% on average and provide extremely high-quality content using professional equipment. / She currently has 4 million followers, primarily women based in the U.S. between the ages of 18-40 years old.”, etc., the communicators in the U.S. regularly persuade the other party with concrete data and facts. On the contrary, Chinese business communicators have a tendency to adjust their plan with flexibility according to various situations. Discourse below manifests this feature: “Would you like us switch to other platform for a potential collaboration? / Due to this situation, what about you set up... / We would like to... for a time-saving partnership for you.”

#### Example (5)

Client 5: Can you tell me how long will this collaboration be? I have a tight time schedule and pre-existing commitments.

Salesperson 5: First off, the parcel takes 2-3 days to arrive, and due time of finishing the content is within 10 days... Eventually, the waiting for the discount code and link usually last almost 1 day. Kindly let us know your thoughts. Thank you!

Client 5: Got it. Let me know the next step.

...

Salesperson 5: Hi... Unfortunately, our manager decided to decline this collaboration. We are terribly sorry about this situation, but please accept our admiration for your creativity. Thank you so much for you time! However, if anything changes in the future, we would love to connect to you as soon as possible. Sorry again for the inconvenience.

Client 5: I’ve made time for this collaboration, and I just think your management team has not taken the time to understand what I do as a creator. I spend a lot of time and energy creating eye catching content for the brands I choose to work with. Now I have to rearrange my schedule... Can you tell me what your manager says?

In the case above, the two parties are discussing about the length of time in the cooperating process. As Zhi Yujie (2018:115) states, personal time is prioritized in individualist society<sup>[25]</sup>, and at the cancellation of the cooperation in this conversation, personal time is emphasized by stating “I’ve made time for this collaboration...” and “Now I have to rearrange my schedule...”, in accordance with Zhi Yujie’s notion. Also, by stating “Got it. Let me know the next step.” Client 5 expresses the strong intention to proceed, showing the forthrightness of American’s speaking style.

On the other hand, despite the abrupt termination of this cooperation, Salesperson 5 informs the other party that there may still be potential opportunities for cooperation in the future by saying “if anything changes in the future, we would love to connect to you as soon as possible.” Besides, the mild words “We are terribly sorry about this situation, but please accept our admiration for your creativity.” shows the considerate speaking style in collectivist society.

The characteristic that American communicators generally use facts and statistics for the purpose of persuasion is expatiated below, as well as the flexibility and euphemistic tone of Chinese communicators.

#### Example (6)

Salesperson 6: Our manager wants to do a free collaboration since this is the first time...

Client 6: I’m not interested.

Salesperson 6: That’s OK, we understand. Would you like give us your rates and we will try to discuss with our manager.

Client 6: My amazon storefront already gets 3k clicks a day. So I charge...

Salesperson 6: Thank you for your offer. But we can’t move forward unless the rate lands at... This

is the highest budget we can give. Please let us know how you think about it. And if you have any questions please kindly tell us. We always adjust for our creators.

Client 6: Why did he cut it so low? Does he know that I have built an engaged audience on... with 1.9M total followers with a 17.6% overall engagement level? Then what about...

Salesperson 6: We are sad to inform you that that is higher than our estimate budget:( Would you mind us switch to work on another platform with a lower rate? Besides, if you do content with our new products the sales incentives would be 15%! Please think about it, darling.

In this communication, the two communicators are budging on the fee. Client 6 put an emphasis on the well performance of his / her social platform. Also, data and facts are presented by “My amazon storefront already gets 3k clicks a day. / I have built an engaged audience on... with 1.9M total followers with a 17.6% overall engagement level”. On the other hand, Salesperson 6 discusses with the other party with using many euphemistic expressions such as “We always adjust for our creators. / We are sad to... / Would you mind... / Please think about it, darling.” in order to advance a potential collaboration.

In short, Chinese are likely to communicate in a less aggressive way by the use of euphemism and show their flexibility to meet the needs of each other to have a collaboration accomplished. Contrarily, Americans tend to answer the other party in rather blunt manner and like to go straight to the point with using data.

#### 4.3. Sino-US Differences on Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation

Members in long-term orientation society pay more attention to the future, and those in short-term orientation society focus more on the present (Tong, 2021:129)<sup>[16]</sup>. Zhang Qiongyao (2021:118) says that the U.S. is a typical short-term oriented country, with a tendency to value immediate interests<sup>[19]</sup>. Oppositely, according to Ying (2016:103), people in China make a point of working for group goals rather than self-interests<sup>[22]</sup>. More precisely, the business communication between China and the U.S. in the emails collected is mainly about the discussion of collaboration details. Figure 3 displays how the frequency of Chinese and of Americans differ from each other in the three main aspects of details in communication concerning long-term and short-term interests. Apparently, the frequency of Chinese reflecting long-term and short-term interests is more than that of the U.S.

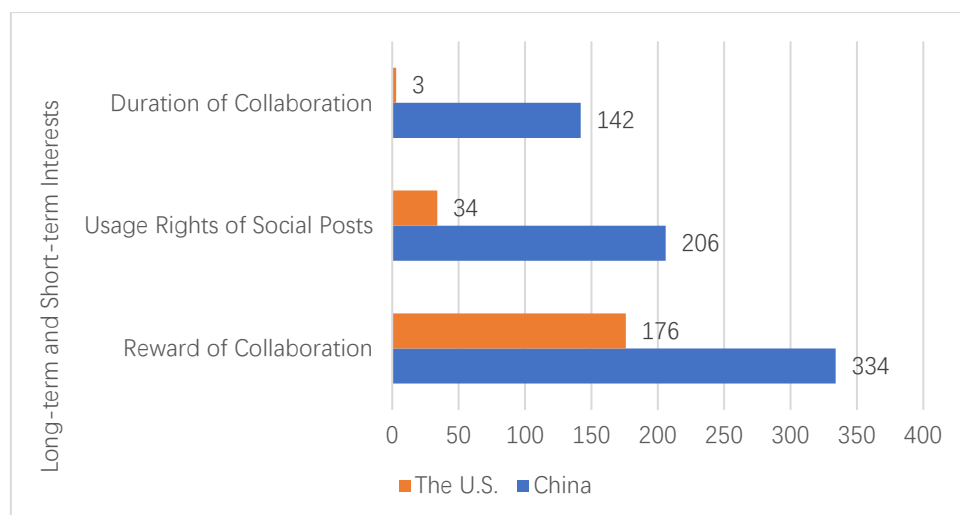


Figure 3 Frequency of Different Aspects in Long-term and Short-term Interests

As stated by Liu Yannan and Wan Guilian (2017:71), in a culture, countries, societies, organizations, and individuals of long-term orientation lean towards setting long-term goals for various things and show persistence and perseverance to achieve them<sup>[8]</sup>. Furthermore, companies in long-term oriented countries focus on establishing and developing a long-term partnership with each other (Shen Yao, 2018:91)<sup>[27]</sup>. What has been presented above can be reflected in the following words: How were your days? Do you still want a collaboration? Please let us know:) / We would like to send you other products if this collaboration is satisfying. / If you have any questions about this campaign, please don't hesitate to contact us. / Our products have been selling well and I am sure this will bring you considerable income. Will this work for you? Besides, we are going to give you sales incentives (based

on the sales rates), please think about it. / Could you please tell us the reason? Is it because of... If so, please kindly tell us and we would try our best to..., etc.

In the short-term cultures, instead, people's communication is characterized by talking about topics that are directly related to their personal interests (Chen Jingwen, 2021:107)<sup>[18]</sup>. A great deal of discourse from the U.S. communicators corroborates the above: "We don't give perpetual usage. / I typically never offer complete usage rights, due to the multitude of ways content can be used. / Payment must be paid before any content is made. / If you want complete usage rights I can offer it to you as an additional fee. / Please note we only work on a paid per post basis. / Do you have any budget? I'm no interested in sales incentives. Could you please tell me more about payment before I fill in the rest of the form?" etc.

#### **4.3.1. Reward of Collaboration**

The inclination that American communicators place emphasis on the benefits can be gained in a short period can be seen in Example (7).

Example (7)

Salesperson 7: Our current main approach to offer two free products worth \$200, give exclusive discounts for your followers, and then give you sales incentives. We would like to do a free collaboration with you. If that is something you are interested in please check out...

Client 7: Thank you so much for considering me for a collaboration! I would absolutely love to be a part of this! However, at this moment I'm only prioritizing paid collaborations. Is there a budget for this campaign?

Salesperson 7: Yes, we would like to pay you for this partnership. We need content with permanent usage rights, and the content needs to be reviewed by us. Please kindly let us know your rates and we always do adjustments for our creators.

Client 7: \$600 per post due to the permanent usage rights.

Salesperson 7: Could you please let us know if we can cut down the budget for a bit with higher sales incentives? What about \$220 for...

Client 7: I am open to negotiate my rate slightly, but I'm afraid \$220 is too low of an offer and would not be worth taking on this project, as well as giving permanent usage rights to the content, and I'm not interested in the sales incentives.

Salesperson 7: Thank you for giving us your opinion. Would you mind doing this collaboration for \$300? Please let us know your thoughts, thank you so much!

Client 7: That's still much lower than my usual rates, but considering this is our first collaboration I will accept your offer. Payment must be paid before any content is made.

The procedure of this communication focuses on the details in the collaboration that includes budget, contributing to long-term and short-term interests. Words like "We need content with permanent usage rights. / Could you please let us know if we change cut down the budget for a bit with higher sales incentives? / We would like to do a long-term collaboration with you, and we always provide new products to our creators when they are available." We are used by Chinese communicators as a result of their devotion to exploring a potential possibility to reach a cooperation, especially a long-term partnership, which reflects an apparent long-term orientation.

Things in the U.S. distinctly differ from what is in China. Communicators in the U.S. usually emphasize their own interests and benefits they can obtain in a short period with "I typically never offer complete usage rights, due to the multitude of ways content can be used. / ...I'm not interested in the sales incentives. / Payment must be paid before any content is made."

Combined with what is shown in Figure 1, the frequency of the emails reflecting the dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation occupies more than 71.52%, which means that the business communications between China and the U.S. are majorly about the negotiation on the reward of collaboration, highlighting the differences in the various inclination of interests and goals between Chinese and American companies. What the Sino-US differences would be in another aspect is discussed below.

#### 4.3.2. Usage Rights of Social Posts

##### Example (8)

Salesperson 8: ...Our current main approach to collaboration is to offer two free products worth... , give exclusive discounts to your followers, and then give you sales incentives. We need content with permanent usage rights. Our products have been selling well and I am sure this will bring you considerable income and popularity. Will this work for you? Could you please kindly let us know your rates? Thank you!

Client 8: I typically never offer complete usage rights, due to the multitude of ways content can be used. And my typical rate is...

Salesperson 8: ...However, we only work with those who grant us perpetual usage rights, we hope you understand. Could you please kindly let us know if you can open to discuss the exclusive rights? We love your creativity and do want to work something out with you!

Client 8: My current budget for promoting is \$5,000. Since you're asking for full usage rights and that works for both of us, but with a higher price. Let me know what you think and we can get started.

In this example, both communicating parties from China and the U.S. are primarily discussing the duration of the use of deliverables. First, Salesperson 8 intends to persuade the other party granting him complete usage rights by saying “we only work with those who grant us perpetual usage rights...”, and indicates the will to make Client 8 budget further by “Could you please kindly let us know if you can open to discuss the exclusive rights? We love your creativity and do want to work something out with you!”, which represents the pursuit of long-term interests of Chinese communicators. On the other hand, Client 8 is open to give the use of deliverables as the Salesperson 8 requires but charge extra fee, “Since you're asking for full usage rights and that works for both of us, but with a higher price”.

#### 4.3.3. Duration of Collaboration

##### Example (9)

Salesperson 9: That's great to hear that. We are flexible and creative in payment options. We would like to be in a long-term partnership with you if this collaboration turns out to be satisfactory.

Client 9: ... My Paypal is... Please let me know what information you need. And yes, I'm only looking to build long-term partnerships for paid promotional content, and I also have some ideas on how to share your products to my followers in the future, so I'll be happy to be involved in. Thanks!

Salesperson 9 adds that his side is preferring long-term collaboration with “We would like to be in a long-term partnership with you if this collaboration turns out to be satisfactory.” Unexpectedly similar, Client 9 also conveys the willingness on a long-term partnership by stating “I'm only looking to build long-term partnerships for paid promotional content, and I also have some ideas on how to share your products to my followers in the future...”. This is at variance with what Chen Jingwen (2021:107) has stated: People in short-term oriented country do not formulate plans and think too much about the future<sup>[18]</sup>.

##### Example (10)

Salesperson 10: Thank you so much for the prompt reply with detailed information. We offer... And we would like to do a long-term collaboration with you. Please tell us if you are interested. Can't wait to send you details about this collaboration.

Client 10: I would love to discuss moving forward with you on a long-term campaign. Can I choose the products myself? If so, I'll be happy to be involved in. Thanks!

We can easily find in Example (10) that both negotiators expressed their interests in long-term collaboration. Salesperson 10 offers to establish a long-term partnership with the other party by “we would like to do a long-term collaboration with you.” which is compatible with Chinese long-term orientation. In much the same way, Client 10 gives a response identical to that of Salesperson 10: “I would love to discuss moving forward with you on a long-term campaign.”, which is inconsistent with what Shen Yao (2018:91) asserts that those in long-term oriented countries focus on establishing and developing a long-term partnership with each other<sup>[27]</sup>. This implies that some Americans may appear a bit long-term oriented in some circumstances in spite of the fact that they are short-term oriented.

## 5. Summary

This article is aimed at exploring the Sino-US differences in cross-cultural business communication on three different dimensions. To sum up, as for the perspective of Power Distance, U.S. companies don't show much restriction in decision-making. While in a Chinese company, an employee often defers to their superior. In other words, if there is a difference of opinion with their supervisor on certain issues, they often have to follow what their supervisor has requested. Under the dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism, Sino-US differences basically manifest in value orientation of needs and speaking style. In terms of value orientation of needs, Chinese communicators tend to ensure both parties benefit from exchange while U.S. communicators usually prioritize their interests. As for speaking style, Chinese use more euphemism with consideration of the other party's feelings, however, the U.S. communicators are self-focused, and only contribute their time on matters that are of direct benefit to them. With regard to Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, the Sino-US differences fall into three aspects in the details of communication, namely, reward of collaboration, usage rights of social posts and duration of collaboration. First, Chinese would rather work for interests can be made in a long run, but Americans lay stress on instant earnings. Second, Chinese ask for perpetual licenses in a way that many the U.S. communicators would be uncomfortable with. Third, as for duration of collaboration, Chinese generally offer the best deal for a long-term relationship, interesting enough, the U.S. communicators may also be willing to cooperate for the long haul.

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions

Some deficiencies can be found in this paper. First of all, more data should be collected so that the data on dimension of Power Distance and Individualism vs. Collectivism become more adequate for the detailed analysis, and there are insufficient representative cases in the data collected so far. Secondly, since the research subjects are only English business emails, other differences in Sino-US cross-cultural business communication in the mentioned three dimensions cannot be explored. Thirdly, this paper only elaborates the differences between Chinese and American cross-cultural business communication solely, without exploring the causes of their differences. Last but not least, given the limitations of the author's own time, research experience and academic skills, some conclusions and recommendations may not be insightful. In light of the above limitations, the following are some suggestions for further research. First, it is hoped that the research subjects can be expanded by the other researchers to make the sample more representative and the data more convincing. Second, it is possible to conduct a survey on Sino-US differences in face-to-face cross-cultural business communication to find more possible differences. Third, other researchers can also try to explore the causes for the Sino-US differences in cross-cultural business communication in the three dimensions.

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