

JAPANESE NEGOTIATION STYLES IN BUSINESS

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Abstract

Culture has a significant role in communication styles. In recent years, more and more Japanese companies are expanding into the international market. When negotiating with other parties from different perspectives, values, and beliefs, the knowledge of the other parties would determine the outcome of the negotiation. This article introduces the fundamental elements of cultural behaviors or attitudes observed in business negotiations, especially by the Japanese.

Keywords: intercultural communication, negotiation styles, Japanese

Introduction

In developing economic relations between Russia and Japan, intercultural communication in business is one of the crucial issues to deal with [3]. In 2012, approximately 270 Japanese companies did business in Russia, while it may seem insignificant that Russian operates in Japan. However, with the globalization of the world economy, many Japanese companies, including small and medium-sized enterprises, have sought a way to expand into the international market [1]. Furthermore, in order to retain capable candidates for future employees from foreign countries and make the educational environment in Japan more international, the Japanese Government has declared a plan to increase the number of international students up to 30,000 enrollments by 2020 [2]. Under those conditions, more and more people could have an opportunity to face cross-cultural dialogs with Japanese people. Although cultural behaviors, attitudes, and norms in one group may vary depending on contextual factors [4], cultural values do not change rapidly [7]. Therefore, it is essential to begin with understanding the elements of culture: behaviors, attitudes, norms, and values of other party [12] to avoid misunderstanding or resolve conflicts effectively in negotiations. Thus, in this paper, various factors related to cross-cultural business negotiations by the Japanese are discussed: traditional business manners such as business cards and gifts exchanging, Japanese negotiation styles, and language roles in negotiations.

Japanese Business Manners

When people first meet before negotiations, an appropriate greeting is able to show a serious interest in building business relationship with a foreign counterpart [5]. In Japan, business starts with the exchanging of business cards. In general, two businessmen stand up and both offer business cards with their two hands. In doing so, they need to turn it for the receivers to see the information of the card easily [6]. Furthermore, it would be slightly rude if you put away a received card before you find out the name and title of the other businessman. Since the hierarchy system which is still based on seniority and merit is still alive, it is obvious to assume each

person's responsibility by knowing his or her administrative status [6]. Finding out who has the higher social status is very important for the Japanese to identify themselves in the right spot by means of relative power [8]. They respect status and titles of their own group as well as counterparts. Thus, it is the first step for them to read through a business card to make themselves comfortable in business contexts.

In addition to card excising manners, gift-giving is an interesting custom in Japanese business. Exchanging gifts usually occurs at the first meeting and symbolizes the deep and strong business relationship to the Japanese [5]. As courtesy, the Japanese would never open a gift in front of the giver since the process of giving and receiving gifts is more important than the actual gift [6]. In consideration of international business negotiations, Japanese businessmen also tend to bring a gift, which usually indicates the form of greeting. It does not mean that Japanese businessmen expect a foreign counterpart to do the same or even expect business favors in return [6]. Furthermore, it is acceptable for foreigners to open their gifts in the presence of the givers since the Japanese know it is the way to receive a gift in some cultures. By considering these traditional business manners, it is also of considerable importance to learn communication strategies conducted by the Japanese.

Japanese Negotiation Styles

A general negotiation framework has four stages: "1) nontask sounding; 2) task-related exchange of information; 3) persuasion; and 4) concessions and agreement" [5]. The Japanese tend to spend much time on the stage one and two before actually getting to the start a business. Since Japanese culture is known as high context culture, their identity is strongly influenced by the relationship with others [11]. Additionally, the Japanese have an island psychology [3], so that they are eager to know about their neighborhoods and establish social relationships. For the Japanese, it is more valuable to build a reliable rapport than to merely have a business contract. [5] Thus, as a pre-negotiation stage, it is essential to build relationships with other parties for doing business [4]. It is why the Japanese tend to talk in the form of questions in negotiations to reveal the information of the other parties [8]. Moreover, if the agreement of the negotiation is very important for the Japanese, they are likely to spend more time to get to know the other parties because they seek for maintaining long-term relationship in the future, and they must be sure the other parties are trustworthy after a contract is signed [11]. This maintaining of relationships also indicates the notion to the Japanese that current business benefits lead to the long-term benefits [8]. That is the reason the Japanese are more flexible about time regard to building a true relationship [5]. Therefore, even though it may take time to proceed to negotiations with the Japanese, a high priority should be given to getting to know other parties [8].

Another factor of Japanese negotiation styles is they are more group-oriented in decision-making [8]. In other words, when the Japanese make decision or even bargain, consensus from the group members is always necessary [9, 12]. Additionally, since Japan is a bureaucratic society with a lot of procedures, regulations, and rules, negotiators need to get approval from the management [8],

which is other factor why the Japanese takes longer to make a decision. However, the Japanese focus on group goals rather than individual wants or needs [8], which causes less unexpected issues later because everyone is in the same boat [11]. In addition, the Japanese sets high values on an equal membership of the other bargaining group [5]. In other words, the Japanese prefers “a win/win process” in business negotiations [12]. Therefore, they may feel uncomfortable when the negotiations become adversarial bargaining [11].

Face and face-saving is another important factor for the Japanese to communicate [4]. It is inappropriate to critique or humiliate others in public. In order for someone to lose face in front of another, Japanese tries to avoid any conflicts [8] and assume an attitude of politeness to maintain harmony in negotiations [4]. This is why the Japanese often feel uncomfortable disagreeing with other parties. Furthermore, at a negotiation, silence is a common tactic for Japanese to consider and reflect on the content of the negotiation [8].

Taking those cultural attitudes and values into consideration, negotiators should observe how their counterparts behave or conduct negotiations and show understanding or respect to them. However, because negotiations derived from language, it is essential for negotiators to consider how language affects the negotiations styles.

Language factors in Japanese negotiation styles

Negotiations between two countries are usually conducted in one of the negotiating side’s mother tongue or in English as a lingua franca. Although two people use the same language, it could cause some misunderstanding as they have different connotations of the same expressions. For instance, the English word, “difficult” could be translated into a Japanese word “muzukashi,” which could mean “out of question,” in business settings [9]. Thus, even though two parties are using English as a lingua franca, their first language may affect how they express their thought. Additionally, using the concept of “amae,” dependency in English, could get concession from the Japanese. It has characterized Japanese mentality, and this idea appears in how they use the language. For instance, it is better to say “I cannot make any money unless you do...” instead of saying “I can make more money if you do...” since the Japanese are not good at facing aggressive mode of communication [5]. Utilizing the tactic may lead to an effective flow of negotiation.

Another factor in Japanese negotiation styles is ambiguity in their language usage [5]. For instance, when they are using English as lingua franca in business meeting, their frequent use of “yes” is observed. However, it does not mean the proposal offered in a negotiation is accepted, but their understanding is showed with nods [5]. Furthermore, it is well known that the Japanese rarely say no to the others. Ueda found that in Japanese there were sixteen ways to express “no” without saying an actual word “no” [9]. This is because the Japanese try to be polite [10] and keep harmony in any situation [9]. To some extent, this tendency is observed when the Japanese use English, so one should be cautious in understanding what they actually meant [9]. Nevertheless, in recent years, more Japanese are learning how to speak

and disagree in direct ways in everyday life and the international arena [10]. Thus, it may be possible for foreigners to encounter the Japanese negotiators who are absolutely clear in their speech.

Conclusion

In Japanese negotiation styles, it is certain that the Japanese value creating a trusted rapport with their counterparts as a pre-requirement before negotiations. In addition to the negotiation styles, there is traditional etiquette such as business cards and gift exchanging. Finally, indirectness of communication styles is evident in Japanese negotiation styles. It is true that negotiators may encounter conflicts or misassumptions in intercultural communication. However, researching other party's cultural behaviors, attitudes, norms, and values could help preceding a negotiation in effective ways. Furthermore, learning other cultural aspects would provide people with an opportunity to reflect their own culture and customs as well, which would make them more flexible and respect to others. This paper only discusses the limited information of negotiations among the Japanese. Nevertheless, this would be a good start for learning other cultural behaviors in business negotiations.

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НОРМАТИВНО-ПРАВОВАЯ ПОДДЕРЖКА НЕОБХОДИМОСТИ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ТОЛЕРАНТНОГО СОЗНАНИЯ И ОБУЧЕНИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОМУ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВУ

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Бекетова А.П.

Аннотация: В данной статье подчеркивается необходимость сохранения культуры толерантности в сфере межкультурных отношений. На основе анализа международных и российских нормативно-правовых документов делаются выводы относительно прав человека и роли глобализации, информатизации и интернационализации в развитии толерантности, а также относительно применения в процессе социализации и межкультурных коммуникаций принципов толерантности, которые становятся необходимым условием формирования толерантного сознания.

Ключевые слова: толерантное сознание; межкультурное сотрудничество; культура мира.

Межкультурное сотрудничество является важным ресурсом в деле формирования культуры мира и толерантности. В условиях глобализации, резко усилившей динамику миграционных потоков и международного культурного обмена, особую значимость приобретает задача сохранения культуры толерантности в сфере межкультурных отношений. На выработке стабильных и продуктивно действующих социальных и правовых механизмов предотвращения и пресечения межкультурной вражды, а также поощрения толерантности сосредоточены усилия многих стран, в частности многих международных организаций.

Благодаря усилиям ЮНЕСКО в последние десятилетия толерантность, став международным термином, является также и важнейшим ключевым словом в проблематике мира. Принципы толерантности как основные права и свободы формировались на протяжении веков и закрепились во многих международных нормативно-правовых документах.

Всеобщая декларация прав человека (1948г.) провозглашает такие человеческие ценности как свобода, включая свободу мысли, совести, религии, убеждений, и равенство каждого человека в его достоинствах и правах [1].