RESEARCH METHODS & DISSERTATION

Dissertation *2024*

Cultural Dynamics in International Bank Assurance Negotiations: A Comparative Study of France and China for a Theoretical Model of Business Expansion Strategies.

How do cultural variables influence the negotiation process within International Business Expansion Projects in Bank Assurance? A Theoretical Model Based on a Comparative Study between France and China.

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Abstract

This study explores how cultural variables affect negotiation processes in the insurance sector in France and China, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and adaptation (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). The literature review identifies gaps in understanding companies' responses to cultural differences, focusing on intercultural negotiation complexities within the insurance context. Through analyzing cultural dimensions proposed by scholars like Hofstede, Hall, and Trompenaars, the study identifies key cultural characteristics among French and Chinese negotiators.

Qualitative research, using semi-structured interviews, was chosen to comprehensively explore relevant areas. Ten participants, evenly split between Chinese and French negotiators, formed the sample.

Empirical findings highlight the significance of understanding counterpart profiles, effective cultural diversity management, and intercultural skills utilization in international negotiations. These factors positively influence negotiation success in diverse cultural contexts. The research offers insights into managing cultural diversity in international markets, enhancing understanding of cultural variables' impact on negotiation processes, particularly for French and Chinese negotiators.

Thesis Declaration Page

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of the research is to investigate the influence of cultural variables on the negotiation processes between two insurance companies with distinct cultural backgrounds. Indeed, since the 1980s, the growing impact of globalization on the social and economic environment (Chevrier, 2003a; Barmeyer et al., 2009) has forced companies to engage internationally, making cross-cultural interactions a daily norm. As companies strive to internationalize, particularly in the competitive landscape of the banking sector (Cox and Blake, 1991), it becomes imperative to adapt business practices due to interactions between individuals from different geographical, social and political contexts (Scotto, Loth and Tiffon, 2014). Despite this international push, companies often struggle to understand the obstacles to international development. Cultural diversity poses challenges in international exchanges, due to collaborations between individuals with distinct cultural backgrounds (Rahman, Uddin and Lodorfos, 2017).

Indeed, in an increasingly cosmopolitan world, interactions between cultures are multiplying, becoming an essential part of the daily life of companies on a global scale (Loth, 2009). This evolution, coupled with the increasing internationalization of companies, forces them and negotiators to adapt their strategies to remain competitive (Iribarne, 2020). This adaptation often results in increased collaboration with individuals from diverse cultures, whether customers, employees, suppliers or partners, including through international negotiations. However, this expansion presents a major challenge for businesses, faced with a lack of knowledge about potential barriers to their international development, including cultural barriers (Rahman, Uddin, & Lodorfos, 2017). Cultural diversity management, or intercultural management, then emerges as a solution to address these challenges, allowing companies to minimize the risks associated with cultural diversity through appropriate policies and practices (Schneider and Barsoux 2003; Chevrier 2003a)

Through this approach, according to Schneider and Barsoux (2003), organisations are able to anticipate the behaviours and needs of individuals from other cultures, thereby encouraging sharing and collaboration. The aim is to exploit cultural diversity judiciously in order to gain competitive advantages, a concept referred to as 'intelligent management of cultural

diversity' by Higgs (1996). This form of adaptation is concerned with the way in which cultural differences are organised and their impact. In addition, it enables companies to reduce the potential negative consequences of these relationships and to make the most of the resources offered by each culture (Chevrier, 2003a), thereby promoting the development of a competitive advantage on both national and international markets.

There is considerable research on the impact of cultural variables from the point of view of Chinese and French negotiators. However, none of these studies confront the differences and similarities of these two cultures in the specific context of insurance. Although the works of Hofstede and Trompenaars provide significant perspectives on each of these cultures, they do not place them in direct confrontation. Thus, the objective of this research is to establish a comparison in order to help managers better understand the specificities of each culture in this field.

This report aims to provide a projection of critical dimensions in a specific context by identifying the impact of cultural variables on the negotiation process in the context of companies engaged in international activities, as well as the responses of these companies to the cultural differences encountered. This analysis will help to understand the importance for negotiators to develop specific intercultural management skills for successful international collaborations.

Then the aim of this dissertation is to understand how negotiators involved in international activities react to the cultural differences they encounter. *How do they manage these differences? Do they take cultural diversity into account? Do they adapt their business practices? If so, what strategies are favored and why?*

This research project aims to contribute to a better understanding of how companies can successfully navigate a complex cross-cultural environment, taking advantage of expansion opportunities and maximizing the results of international projects.

To do this, the study focuses on two companies specializing in the insurance sector, both of which have internationalized their activities through foreign partnerships. The results highlight the influence of the negotiator's perception on the management of cultural

diversity and its impact on the success of international activities. The thesis begins with an analysis of the literature on the international context and obstacles to international development, followed by an exploration of intercultural management, including notions of culture, cultural diversity and its impacts, and elements that promote a multicultural approach within companies. Then, it proposes a comparison of the cultural characteristics of the Chinese and French negotiators, focusing on the companies CIB (Chinese) and CAA (French).

Finally, it draws up a conceptual framework from the literary journal and will present a detailed methodology, the results of the study and its implications, while highlighting its limitations and contributions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 - Negotiation And Its International Context

2.1.1 What is a negotiation?
2.1.1.1 The characteristics of a negotiation

It is difficult today to establish a universal definition of what negotiation is, since there are as many definitions as there are authors. Morel (1991) defines negotiation as, firstly, a process of interactive communication and, secondly, the exchange of concessions and quid pro quos (give and take). For a negotiator, negotiation consists of maximising the benefits to be gained from his interactions, while minimising the risks. There are several pillars in the fundamental process of negotiation. The first is communication (Ting-Toomey, 1999). This encompasses verbal and non-verbal exchanges, as well as the ability of the parties to express their needs and expectations clearly and comprehensibly (Fisher et al., 2011). Effective communication fosters the creation of trusting relationships and facilitates the search for mutually beneficial solutions (Adair and Brett, 2005). Then there is a second pillar that focuses on the divergent interests between the parties. This pillar is to some extent an inherent feature of any negotiation (Hofstede, 2001). Cultural differences can accentuate these divergences by influencing negotiators' priorities, values and objectives (Gelfand and Brett, 2004). Skilful management of these differences requires a thorough understanding of the cultural contexts involved and conflict resolution skills (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). Moreover, the search for compromise is another fundamental characteristic of negotiation (Lewicki et al., 2007). The parties generally seek to reconcile their positions and find solutions that are acceptable to all concerned (Mayer et al., 2004). This often requires mutual concessions and the ability to identify creative solutions that meet the interests of both parties (Fisher and Ury, 2011). Finally, the dynamics of interpersonal relations play a crucial role in the negotiation process (Brett and Okumura, 1998). The quality of the interactions between the parties, characterised by elements such as trust, mutual respect and cooperation, directly influences the probability of reaching an agreement. The parties generally seek to reconcile their positions and find solutions that are acceptable to all concerned (Mayer et al., 1995). This often requires mutual concessions and the ability to identify creative solutions that meet the interests of both parties (Fisher and Ury, 2011).

Finally, the dynamics of interpersonal relations play a crucial role in the negotiation process (Brett and Okumura, 1998). The quality of the interactions between the parties, characterised by elements such as trust, mutual respect and cooperation, directly influences the probability of reaching a satisfactory agreement (Bhawuk and Brislin, 2000).

Of course, negotiation is not limited to these four stages, because in negotiations between distinct cultures, each party adopts its own style. Graham (1989), in his analysis of intercultural negotiations, identifies four other phases in the negotiation process.

Figure 1: Graham's four stages in the negotiation process

Figure 1: Graham's Four-Stage Negotiation Framework (Graham, 1989)
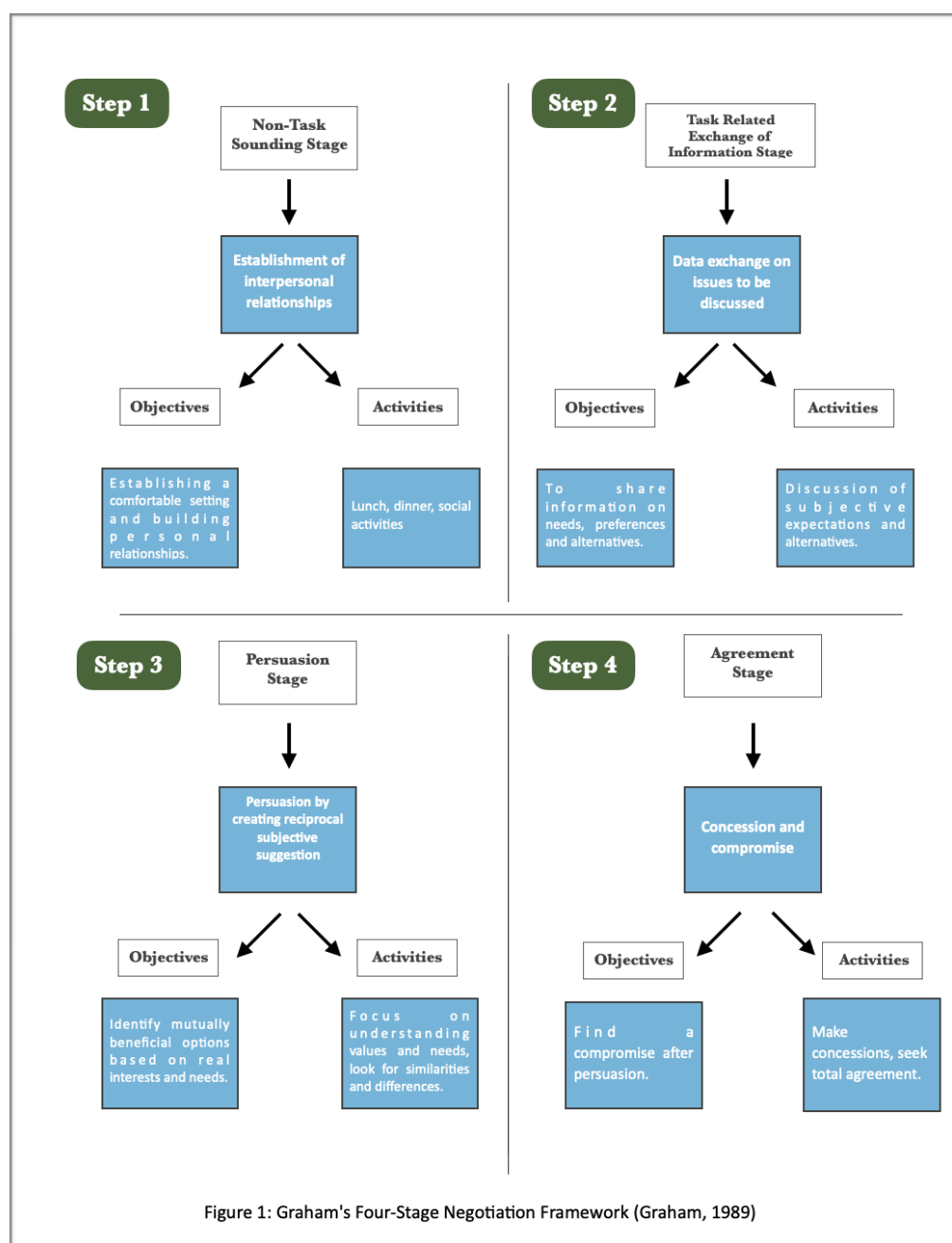
2.1.1.2 The different strategies of negotiation

Lee, Brett, and Park (2012) found that the outcome of a negotiation varies with a negotiator's strategy and role. Therefore, the adoption of an appropriate strategy during a negotiation is paramount. To better understand this concept, we draw on the model developed by Rahim & Bonoma, while taking into account other models and strategies.

Figure 2: The two-dimensional conflict management style model (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979)
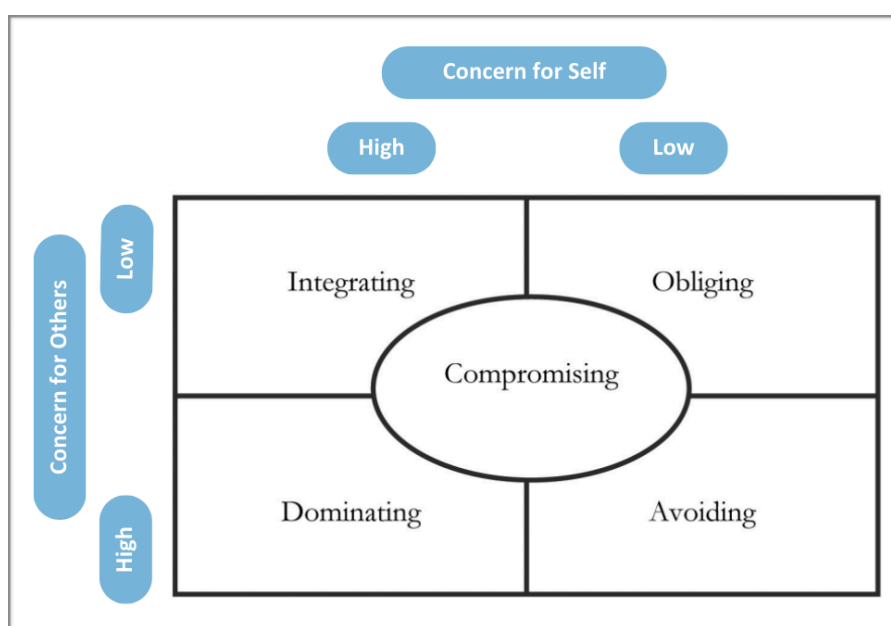
The figure above illustrates the negotiation strategy based on the effective management of interpersonal conflicts through two main dimensions: domination centred on one's own interests, and integration focused on the interests of the opposing party. It stresses understanding both parties' perspectives. However, critiques, like Burton (1969), suggest it might overlook contextual influences, particularly in international negotiations

At the same time, the collaborative approach advocated by Rahim (2001) encourages the parties to seek mutually beneficial solutions, thereby fostering cooperation and mutual understanding. This perspective is reinforced by the work of Adair and Brett (2005), who highlight the importance of open communication and intercultural cooperation in international negotiations.

However, this approach can be hampered in situations of intense conflict, where the interests of the parties can diverge significantly, as highlighted by Ting-Toomey (2000).

In contrast, the competitive approach, as described by Rahim (2002), focuses on seeking advantage and protecting the interests of the party initiating the negotiation. Research by Lewicki (2007) highlights the persuasion and pressure tactics used by negotiators adopting this strategy. However, this approach can also generate tensions and damage interpersonal relationships in the long term, as highlighted by Brett and Okumura (1998).

While Rahim and Bonoma (1979) made strides in negotiation strategy, Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011) introduced principled bargaining, advocating for mutually beneficial outcomes. Critics find it idealistic, especially in high-conflict scenarios. Kelman (1997) proposes an interactive problem-solving approach, aiding diplomatic negotiations by allowing parties to analyze and brainstorm solutions before deeper negotiations for a final agreement.

Dean, Pruitt and Camevale (1993) goes beyond in the analysis by identifying five main strategies that can be used during negotiation:

Figure 3: The five main negotiation strategies (Dean, Pruitt, and Carnevale, 1993).

Concession making	Contending	Problem solving	Inaction	Withdrawal
Reducing objectives, demands and offers.	Trying to persuade the other party in order to resist their efforts.	Aiming to satisfy everyone's objectives and preserve the relationship.	Doing nothing or as little as possible (adjourning the meeting etc).	Give up negotiating.
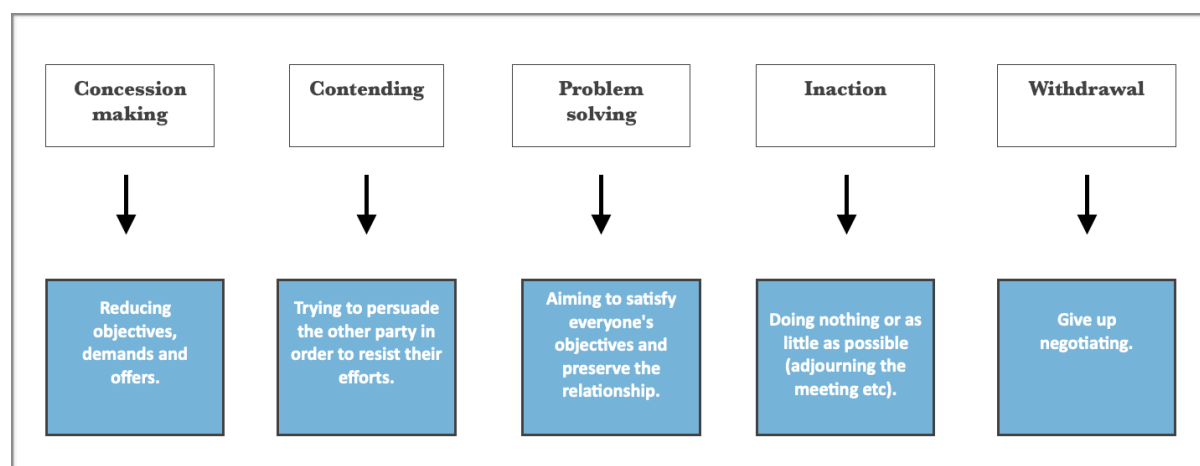
These strategies offer flexibility for companies to choose the most appropriate one for the negotiation context. For instance, confrontational or problem-solving approaches are chosen when negotiators are highly invested in their own outcomes (Magneau, 1998).

The win-win negotiation strategy, prioritizing mutual satisfaction over one-sided gains, is often favored (Ury, 1993). However, its implementation can be challenging in conflicts where interests clash significantly. While no one explicitly seeks a win-lose outcome, achieving a fair agreement satisfying all parties is tough, impacting long-term relationships (Dante, 1998). Recognizing these challenges is crucial when applying the win-win approach across various negotiation contexts. The diagram below depicts various negotiation scenarios, capturing the intricate dynamics among involved parties:

Figure 4: Negotiation outcomes according to Dante (1998)
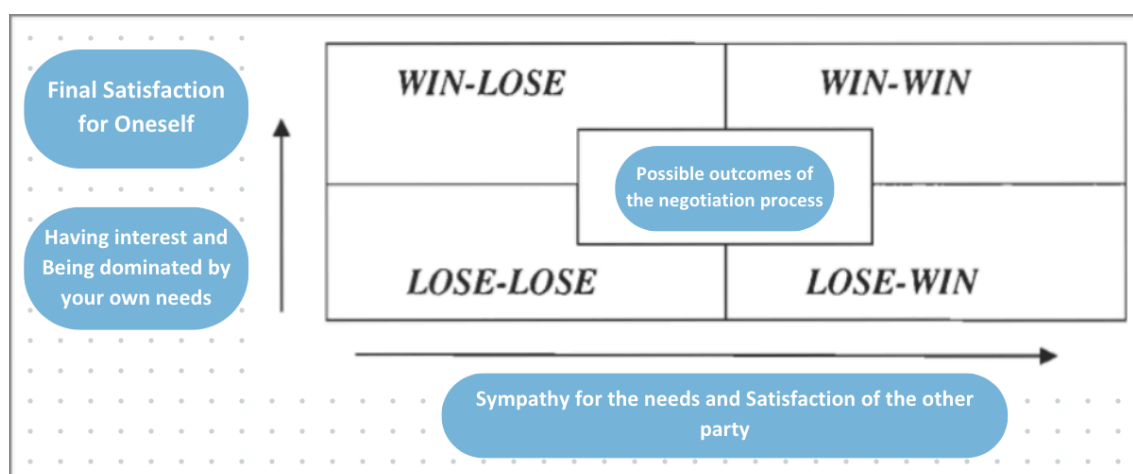
Negotiation strategies are influenced by cultural and systemic factors, like social and political contexts. For instance, in Asian cultures, negotiations often focus on either cooperation or competition (Vuillod, 2004). The integrative negotiation approach emphasizes complementary issues of both parties, evolving as negotiations proceed. It aims for win-win outcomes, where each party's fundamental interests are not only satisfied but also enhanced. The integration of reciprocal issues into a new, broader framework of cooperation, and the resulting synergy, should lead to the creation of value, which then only needs to be distributed equitably (Savage, Blair & Sorenson, 1989).

The competitive negotiation approach aims for each party to gain the largest share of value, often at the expense of the other, known as "win-lose".

In contrast, the cooperative, or win-win, approach is ideal for project negotiations, fostering trust and understanding the benefits of collaboration to achieve the best possible outcome.

However, some research underlines the complexity of strategic situations in negotiation, highlighting a mixed character where cooperative and competitive approaches coexist (Adair & Brett, 2005; Hofstede, 2001). Complex business negotiations often blend cooperation and competition, aiming to maximize gains while maintaining long-term relationships (Lewicki et al., 2003). Cross-cultural negotiations exhibit similar complexity, with cooperative and competitive elements intertwining based on circumstances and interests (Brett & Okumura, 1998). Similarly, Hofstede (2001) underscores cultural influences on negotiation approaches, often resulting in mixed strategies blending cooperation and competition. This recognition of mixed strategies exposes a gap in current literature, which oversimplifies negotiations as purely cooperative or competitive. Addressing this gap is crucial for comprehending the complexity and impact of negotiation strategies on international outcomes

2.1.2 Negotiation and its international context
2.12.1 International Negotiation

International negotiation involves complex interactions between parties with divergent interests, navigating mutual interdependence. Despite this consensus, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent challenges in this process. On the one hand, the work of Philip (2004) shows how important it is to consider and analyze the cultural space of the other party in any international negotiation. However, it is necessary to go beyond the simple recognition of these cultural differences to fully understand their potential impact on the negotiation process. Cultural differences, including language barriers and implicit norms, can significantly influence negotiations, posing challenges to finding mutually satisfactory solutions. While negotiations typically aim for mutual gain through cooperation, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this approach. The work of Deutsch (1949) and Walton and McKersie (1965) highlighted the classic distinction between competitive or distributive bargaining and cooperative or integrative bargaining. However, this distinction does not always capture the complexity of the power dynamics and competing interests that can characterise international negotiations. Knowledge of the culture and values of the protagonists can have a positive impact on the negotiators' perception of the country and on their communication. However, a critical analysis reveals that this statement can be simplistic and does not fully account for the complexity of intercultural interactions in international negotiations (Gelfand and Brett, 2004).

According to Hofstede (1980), cultures differ along five dimensions (in blue):

Figure 5: Dimensions of Cultural Differences (Hofstede, 1980 and Hall, 1984)

Hofstede's five dimensions	Definition
Hierarchical distance	Hierarchical distance refers to the way in which power is perceived between different strata of society, such as between a superior and a subordinate, or within the parent-child relationship.
Individualism or collectivism	This is determined by the relationship individuals have with others in society."In individualism, value finds its source in the person who creates, feels, researches and discovers, who aims for personal fulfillment and who takes full responsibility for the choices and ideas that result" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2004, p. 63). Whereas, ''in a collective system, value finds its source in the overall discourse of the living society, which nurtures and shapes its members and assumes responsibility for the state of mind engendered" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2004, p. 63).
Masculinity or femininity	This corresponds to the importance of gender roles. According to Théry (2002), this dimension manifests itself in strong self-assertion, a lack of reserve, a valuing of success, wealth, outward appearance, ambition and personal fulfillment.
The ability to cope with uncertainty	This ability is defined by tolerance to ambiguity and the way in which individuals deal with new situations (Drummond, 2010).
Short-term versus long-term orientation	This dimension influences how individuals perceive time.

While helpful for grasping cultural differences, these dimensions might be too simplistic for international negotiations, often failing to capture the diversity and complexity of intercultural interactions. Furthermore, although theory may suggest the existence of a continuum of degrees of interculturality, the reality of intercultural interactions is often far more nuanced (Ting-Toomey (1993). Although cultural differences can contribute to breakdowns in international negotiations (Philip, 2004), this explanation oversimplifies the complexities involved. Cultural disparities extend beyond communication styles to encompass attitudes towards time, social norms, and professional behavior (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). However, attributing negotiation difficulties solely to cultural differences neglects other significant factors, such as divergent economic, political, and strategic interests of the involved parties.

2.1.2.2 Intercultural Negotiation

We have already seen that international negotiation is an important and frequently used strategy by companies, despite the fact that it is complex because it incorporates notions of culture. Prime and Usinier (2013) stress that negotiating internationally involves navigating cultural differences. Adler (1994) emphasizes the need to adjust behavior in cross-cultural negotiations, acknowledging differing mindsets and behaviors. However, adapting behavior can be challenging due to deep-rooted cultural differences and ingrained thinking patterns. Similarly, the idea that the objective of any intercultural negotiation must be common to all parties and that each seeks to emerge as a winner deserves critical reflection (Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat, 2008). This view assumes that the parties' objectives and motivations are the same, which may be unrealistic in many cases. In reality, the interests and priorities of the parties may diverge considerably, making the search for a common objective difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, persuasion in intercultural negotiations is not solely influenced by national culture. As Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat (2008) point out, other cultural spheres such as professional culture and generational culture can also play a crucial role in the negotiation process. Ignoring these cultural nuances can lead to misunderstandings and consequently, to conflict during negotiations. As a result, before negotiation, recognizing cultural differences is crucial to avoid misunderstandings (Meier, 2010) :

Figure 6: The three stages of negotiation (Meir, 2010).
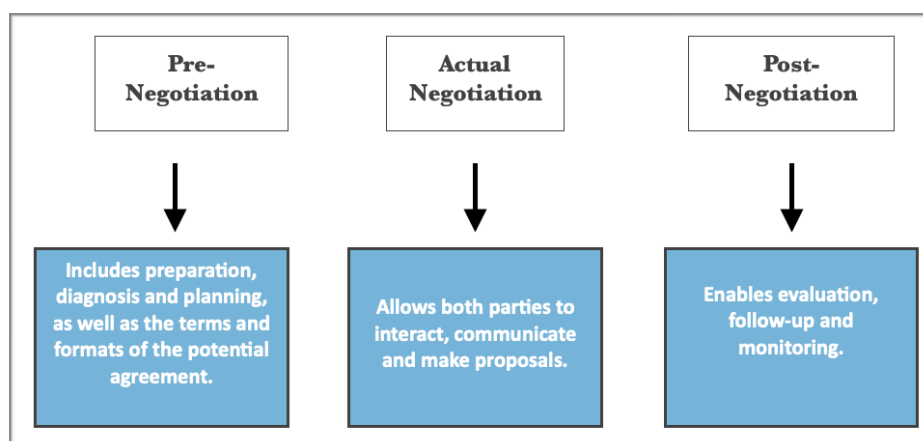
To fully understand the impact of culture on negotiations, it is essential to analyse its composition and the elements that influence it, as identified by researchers, to understand how they shape international negotiations.

2.2 - Intercultural Management

2.2.1 Culture and national culture

Understanding the corporate culture begins with understanding the concept and its connection to the national culture, as this is strongly related to the organizational culture. Then, it is crucial to study the theories on cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars, which provide an important analytical basis for understanding the cultural characteristics of countries and their influence on business management.

2.2.1.1. Geert Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions

Culture is a fundamental foundation that influences the behavior, social interactions and ways of thinking of individuals within that society (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Although the importance of culture in society is widely recognized, it is necessary to critically examine the theories underlying it. The work of Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) highlights the influence of culture on individuals' behaviour, social interactions and ways of thinking, but it should be noted that this perspective can sometimes simplify the complexity of cultural interactions. For example, Hosftede (1980) and Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) talk about traditional ideas and values associated with culture. While national culture is often defined by elements like language, history, and religion, such classifications can oversimplify and overlook diversity within countries (Hall, 1976). Generalizations associating cultures with certain traits, like French culture with freedom and Chinese culture with respect for authority (Hofstede, 1980), can obscure individual variations and intricate cultural dynamics. It is crucial to approach understanding national culture critically, acknowledging the limitations of generalizations and promoting sensitivity to cultural diversity and context (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). For this reason, it is important to distinguish between identity and culture. According to Hofstede (1980) , identity is more about knowing who we are, while culture is more about knowing to which group we belong. While theories of social belonging and cultural dynamics are relevant, it is crucial to critically examine them to fully understand their scope. Chevrier (2003a) describes the individual as part of a social group sharing common characteristics and ideologies around various activities, a notion also explored by Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat (2001). Salacuse (1999) compares culture to an

onion, where three distinct layers - behaviour, attitudes and values - directly influence intercultural negotiation by providing a basis for interpreting the situation and behaviour of the other party. While recognizing cultural differences is vital in intercultural negotiations, it's important to avoid oversimplifying complex interactions, considering individual variations and specific contexts (Salacuse, Jeswald, 1999). Moreover, these differences shouldn't solely be viewed negatively; they also present opportunities for mutual enrichment and deeper understanding between parties.

2.2.1.2 Limites of Hofstede theory

Hofstede's approach to culture often oversimplifies by rigidly defining it, disregarding the complexity, diversity, and evolution of social realities (Lyon, 1995; Friedman, 1994). Critics argue that his emphasis on quantifying and comparing cultural "values" among nations leads to standardization and overlooks nuanced cultural differences (Ailon, 2008). Additionally, studies like Hamada's (1995) suggest that cultural assumptions are fluid and context-dependent, challenging the static nature of Hofstede's model. Hamada emphasizes the need for contextualized intercultural studies, highlighting the temporal aspect in organizational theories (Hamada, 1995).

Hall develops the notion of time by adding two other variables : language of time and space (figure 5, in green). Indeed, Hall (1984) states that there is a gap between time as experienced and time as conceived. The first dimension of time divides cultures into monochronic and polychronic. Monochronic cultures prioritize sequential tasks and view time as concrete and controllable, while polychronic cultures embrace multitasking, prioritize relationships, and see time as shared and flexible. The second dimension involves spatial relationships. Individuals establish personal distances and boundaries based on territory and personal space. Territory denotes ownership and boundaries, while personal space reflects emotional states and relationships.
Cultural cues shape individuals' perceptions of space, but cross-cultural interactions can disrupt these perceptions and cause misunderstandings

2.2.1.3 Fons Trompenaars' theory of cultural dimensions

Fons Trompenaars aimed to delineate cultural dimensions shaping behavior across nations. Through a questionnaire survey, he identified three aspects: individuals' connections to nature, time, and others. From these, he derived seven cultural dimensions significantly impacting corporate management, negotiation, employee aspirations, and company organization and operations :

Table 7 : Trompenaars's seven dimensions

Trompenaars's seven dimensions	Definition
Universalism x Particularism	The universalist approach emphasizes strict adherence to rules and standards, believing that they take precedence over relationships between individuals. According to this vision, there is only one absolute truth, and it is crucial to rigorously follow agreements and contracts that are considered fixed (Jaroslav, 2003). In contrast, the particularist approach places greater emphasis on interpersonal relationships, valuing the personal and individual. This approach recognizes the diversity of perspectives on truth and reality. Contracts are often adjusted to suit the specific situation, and rules are adapted to meet individual needs and preferences.
Individualism x Collectivism	In individualist cultures, the emphasis is on the individual, who is considered responsible for himself. Decisions are made on an individual basis, emphasizing independence, self-motivation and tolerance of one's own opinions. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, the focus is on the group. Priority is given to the community, fostering constant cooperation, cohesion and solidarity between its members. Successes are generally the fruit of group work, and success is shared by all members.
Neutrality x Affectivity	In neutral cultures, people tend to keep their emotions under control and not openly show what they feel or think. Their behaviour is often perceived as rational and aloof, and they generally have control over gestures and facial expressions. In affective cultures, on the other hand, all emotions and thoughts are expressed openly (Jaroslav, 2003). Expressions of joy, sadness, enthusiasm or boredom, laughter or tears are frequently verbalised, accompanied by expressive gestures. Arguments are often dramatised and physical contact is common.

Trompenaars's seven dimensions	Definition
Specific x Diffuse	In certain cultures, individuals sharply separate their work and personal spheres, exhibiting openness and extroversion in their direct and formal communication. Such cultures warmly welcome newcomers. Conversely, in diffuse cultures, the distinction between professional and personal matters blurs (Ibid, 2003), resulting in indirect and rigid negotiation styles. People in these cultures tend to be introverted and inflexible, complicating the establishment of new relationships.
Status assigned x Status acquired	In some cultures, people distinctly differentiate between their work and personal lives, being open and outgoing in a direct and formal manner (Novy, 2007), which fosters a welcoming environment for new members. Conversely, in other cultures, such boundaries blur, negotiations are conducted indirectly and rigidly, and people are introverted and inflexible, hindering relationship-building.
Sequential x Synchronic	In sequential cultures, time is perceived as a series of consecutive events, focusing on detailed planning, time segmentation, and precise task execution within designated deadlines (Novy, 2007). In synchronic cultures, however, time is viewed as flexible and responsive to circumstances. People often engage in multiple activities simultaneously, without strict adherence to schedules or deadlines.
Internal orientation x external orientation	Internally oriented cultures prioritize independent individuals who exert control over their environment and destiny, often displaying dominant behavior to influence their surroundings (Schroll Machl, 2007). Conversely, externally oriented cultures value harmony with nature, acknowledging the influence of natural laws and avoiding conflict with them, while focusing on the needs and desires of others, like colleagues, business partners, or customers.

2.2.1.4 Limites of Trompenaars's theory

While Trompenaars' dimensions resemble Hofstede's, they are more readily identifiable, making them potentially useful for managers in understanding cultural differences within organizations (Schroll Machl, 2007).

However, Trompenaars' theory faces criticism for potentially oversimplifying complex cultural dynamics and reinforcing stereotypes if used without nuance and sensitivity. Individuals may not neatly align with a single dimension, and cultural traits can evolve over time.

The diversity of cultures and subcultures highlights the potential for uncertainty, as each operates according to its own norms and rules. This notion, known as cultural distance, will be explored further in the next section.

2.2.1.5 Cultural Distance

Cultural distance plays a central role in intercultural management, denoting the challenge of effectively transmitting ideas to individuals outside its cultural sphere, as defined by Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat (2008). Abdellatif (2013) develop this concept, characterizing cultural distance as the divergence of beliefs or values between entities covering different countries. Recent studies emphasize the significance of cultural distance in intercultural dynamics, particularly as disparities between parties widen, necessitating increased trust in rules and values (Carbone, 2013; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). While potential pitfalls are acknowledged, Schneider and Barsoux (2003) suggest that cultural distance can also foster cultural enrichment, fostering a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices. This diversity, stemming from cultural distance, will be further examined in the following section.

2.2.2 Cultural Diversity
2.2.2.1 Cultural diversity in the workplace

Cultural distance means variations between entities in different countries, whether they are organizations, teams or groups. These distinctions embody cultural diversity, a concept widely debated in academic and corporate circles. Diversity discourse permeates discussions on its various aspects, management in companies, and societal significance. Organizational diversity encompasses the heterogeneous workforce, including employee attributes and external interactions with suppliers and stakeholders (Meier, 2010).

Cox (1994) defines cultural diversity as a representation of individuals and groups with different cultural affiliations. Cultural diversity highlights differing systems for interpreting reality and reference standards among groups, leading to distinct ways of thinking, acting, and reacting. For instance, conflict might be viewed as either healthy and natural or destructive and to be avoided by different groups (Parkhe, 1991). Some view cultural diversity as an asset, fostering personal development and mutual understanding (Meier, 2010), while others see it as a barrier, leading to conflicts and misunderstandings detrimental to work teams (Loth, 2009). Several studies have highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity in a professional setting (Chevrier, 2000, Adler, 2002, Dupuis et al, 2008). Everyone agrees that cultural diversity can be a positive factor in the development of the company abroad, especially if it implements effective intercultural management, based on management strategies that identify and manage potential cultural conflicts (Adler, 2002). We will analyze the impact of cultural diversity in a professional setting where collaboration and interaction among people with varying beliefs and values are crucial (Chevrier, 2000).

2.2.2.2 Impacts of the cultural diversity within the workplace

Understanding the influence of cultural diversity in the workplace is crucial, as it directly impacts negotiations between countries. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2004) suggest that cultural differences can enhance company performance by improving problem-solving effectiveness through cultural openness. Studies by Amico and Rubinstein (1999) and Kopelman and Olekalns (1999) highlight the significance of language, cognition, trust, and

power dynamics in negotiation outcomes. Additionally, Ely and Thomas (2001) present various perspectives on cultural diversity in the workplace.

First of all, integration and learning are valuable assets. They are based on the observation that cultural differences enrich life experiences, knowledge and ideas, which in turn leads to better decision-making in negotiations. In addition, cultural diversity can provide a competitive advantage through new approaches to problem solving (technical, commercial, human, etc.) (Loth, 2006). With a better understanding of cultural factors, companies can more easily differentiate themselves from competitors and are therefore in a better position to negotiate. This is what is known as cultural intelligence (Drummond, 2010). While cultural diversity generally has a positive impact, it can also negatively affect companies, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts in the workplace, as noted by Bassett-Jones (2005). These conflicts, such as employee absenteeism, can diminish competitiveness (Bassett-Jones, 2005). To address these issues, companies should integrate cultural diversity into their business strategies, using cultural symbols to enhance communication and negotiation effectiveness (Meier, 2010).

Cox and Blake (1991) underscore the benefits of integrating cultural diversity into companies. Financially, it reduces staff turnover, cutting recruitment and training costs. From a business resource perspective, Ely and Thomas' (2001) approach suggests diverse cultures bring new knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, fostering mutual learning and market expansion. In terms of marketing and creativity, diverse teams facilitate exploration of new markets, aided by Cox and Blake's (1991) observation that cultural alignment enhances market penetration. Lastly, cultural diversity enriches problem-solving by offering varied viewpoints and analyses, leading to better decision-making, as highlighted by Ely and Thomas (2001). Thus, cultural diversity offers a competitive edge through informed decision-making.

Our dissertation analyzes cultural variables between China and France in the banking sector. The next section examines cultural diversity management between these two countries.

2.2.3 The impact of cultural diversity in the negotiation of an insurance product between China and France.

2.2.3.1 Analysis of the differences between France and China in the banking sector

Before exploring the cultural disparities between these two nations, it is essential to delve into the complexity of their respective banking systems. This quickly reveals the nuances that underpin the distinct banking strategies adopted by each country.

The two tables below describe the structure of China and France in the field of banking.

Table 8 China's banking structure:

Aspect of China's Banking System	Description
Cultural and Political Influence	China's banking evolution is deeply influenced by its cultural and political heritage, with a financial tradition dating back millennia. Under the People's Republic of China, the financial sector was largely state-controlled, adhering to socialist principles. By 1978, a single-bank system prevailed, overseen by supervisory authorities. The People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) operated independently but under government control, aiming to align with international standards. Corruption persisted, with 1,272 cases uncovered in 2006.
Economic Policy and Development	The PBoC played a significant role in shaping economic policies but refrained from daily bank management. State-owned banks predominated, despite some arrangements with local authorities. China made considerable strides in technology and economics, bolstering its global standing. Opening the banking system to international markets and joining the WTO in 2001 spurred reforms unexpectedly, enhancing governance and restructuring.
Regulatory Challenges	China faces challenges in aligning with international regulatory standards, particularly in committing to Basel II agreements. Full adoption would require significant capital increases, disadvantaging Chinese banks abroad. The banking system continues to operate under the original Basel agreement post-2006, gradually incorporating Basel II elements. CBRC's independence remains contentious, with state dominance complicating operations.

Thus, china's banking landscape is extensive, comprising numerous institutions. Major state banks predominantly finance large-scale infrastructure projects and implement government economic policies. Regional banks are striving to establish themselves but remain heavily influenced by the state.

Table 9 French's banking structure:

Aspect of French Banking System	Description
Banking Model	France adopts the "universal banking" model, combining retail banking, corporate and investment banking, and specialized activities like asset management. Various types of banking institutions exist, including universal institutions, large network banks (e.g., Banque Nationale de Paris, Crédit Lyonnais, Société Générale), and special purpose institutions like leasing companies. The system encompasses diverse legal statuses, including public, non-profit, limited companies, and cooperatives.
Comparison with Chinese Banking System	Compared to China, the French banking system exhibits a double fragility of firms and banks. Self-financing rate of French firms (39%) during 1970-1987 was slightly lower than China's (45%).
Structural Changes and International Presence	The French banking sector underwent dynamic restructuring from the late 1980s, with the state reducing its role as a shareholder in favor of privatized public groups. France, like China, has a significant international presence, with around 60 French credit institutions operating in 99 countries abroad. These institutions strengthen their positions and support customers through subsidiaries, branches, or partnerships, especially in the context of the single European market, banking and financial development in emerging countries, and financial globalization.
Regulatory Framework	France benefits from Basel II and III agreements, enabling comprehensive coverage of banking risks and encouraging internal risk management improvements.

These differences between the French and Chinese banking systems lead us to think differently when negotiating insurance products. Indeed, apart from the fact that banking procedures are not the same, trading methods differ since insurance products do not have the same characteristics (Clarke et al., 2009).

2.2.3.2 Comparative analysis of banking products between France and China

While the Chinese banking system remains largely controlled by the State, unlike the French banking system, some similarities appear in particular with common values revolving around health. Indeed, banking systems in terms of Chinese and French health insurance for example are based on close foundations. The health insurance systems in China and France are similar. Both countries aim to provide equal access to health care. In China, a 2003 reform created three funding systems to cover rural, specific urban populations (children, elderly without pensions, long-term unemployed) and minimum-income people. These systems are based on voluntary membership with contributions from the state and local authorities (Ni Gao, 2022).

In China, health spending poses a significant issue, representing 12% of income losses. Medical costs rank as the second leading cause of poverty, largely due to inadequate reimbursement rates and income and geographical disparities (Hennock, 2007). Similar to France, the majority of healthcare funding relies on an insurance mechanism, funded by employee and employer contributions in urban areas, rather than direct state budget allocation

Chinese companies' investments in France are influenced by several factors. China's political and economic stability fosters a thriving banking sector, and the internationalization of the renminbi creates global expansion opportunities for Chinese banks (Hennock, 2007). Additionally, China's WTO accession in 2001 prompted banking reforms to align with international standards. France's attractiveness is further enhanced by Brexit, which led to the relocation of financial companies from London to Paris. Major institutions like JP Morgan, Goldman Sachs, and others consolidating in Paris create an ecosystem conducive to global expansion, particularly advantageous for Chinese banks.

In addition, France's dedication to the renminbi's internationalization positions it as the primary offshore center for this currency in the euro area, further enhancing its appeal to Chinese banks. Nearly half of transactions between France and China are in RMB, according to data from the Chinese Embassy in France in 2018. With over 70 central banks globally holding RMB in their foreign exchange reserves, Paris now leads the eurozone in the RMB market.

Thus, the French banking market attracts that of China, because both share strong similarities as to the principles that guide their action in the field of insurance, namely Equal access to care and the will to limit the financial impact on households. However, there are still disparities between these two systems.

However, there are also disparities between France and China in insurance products that reside in several aspects, reflecting distinct cultural differences, financial priorities and business practices. In France, insurance is often perceived as a risk management tool and extended protection, whereas in China, it's associated with family values, financial security, and future planning. French consumers prioritize risks related to civil liability, while Chinese consumers favor health coverage and family protection. Moreover, reimbursement policies and financing mechanisms vary, with France relying more on supplementary insurance and China on wage and employer contributions. These distinctions stem from the countries' socio-economic and political contexts, impacting social protection and public health significantly.

The similarities and differences between French and Chinese banking models significantly influence negotiation outcomes. Therefore, we will now delve into cultural distinctions that surface during negotiation stages. By comparing practices in France and China, this analysis aims to elucidate how cultural nuances shape dynamics and interactions within negotiation processes in these contexts.

2.4 - Comparison Of Cultural Distinctions In The Stages Of Negotiation Between France And China

We will use Geert Hofstede's cultural values model to understand negotiation styles in France and China, aiding in analyzing cultural differences and developing effective strategies for intercultural exchanges. To go further, we will also use Trompenaars's dimension.

2.4.1 The negotiation styles of France

2.4.1.1 The personality of French negotiators

French companies are often marked by rationality and logic where factual arguments and in-depth analysis are valued (Duchêne et al., 2016). Personal relationships have a crucial role in the negotiation process, especially because the French attach importance to building a base of trust (Pisani-Ferry, 2018). In addition, work-life balance is often considered, highlighting the particular sensitivity to the human aspects of professional relationships (Foriel-Destezet, 2008). The French attach importance to social status in industrial relations, which is reflected in a certain centralization of powers and a number of frameworks (Durand, 2017). French organizations often adopt a marked pyramid structure, which does not favour personal risk-taking (Mintzberg, 1980). They tend to favor the search for procedures avoiding hazards and show a preference for stable structures (Duchêne, 2016). However, this can lead to high levels of stress and insecurity with employees (Wang, Wen, Seifert, 2020). Behaviorally, the French are rather individualistic, and open confrontation is often considered salutary in the conflict resolution process (Pisani-Ferry, 2018). Nevertheless, high quality work is generally associated with real cooperation and pleasant working conditions (Foriel-Destezet, 2008).

2.4.1.2 French cultural characteristics according to the five-factor model of Geert Hostfede

In Chapter 2, we explored Geert Hofstede's model, which evaluates five cultural dimensions for each country, assigning indices to facilitate comparisons. A score of "0" signifies the lowest result, while "100" indicates the highest. The higher the index, the stronger the identification with the dimension's characteristics. Importantly, the score reflects a country's position relative to other.

First, the distance to power, also called hierarchical distance, refers to the acceptance of inequalities in relations between superiors and subordinates (Jaroslav, 2003):

Cultural Aspect	Description
Power Distance	France scores 68 on the power distance index, indicating high societal inequality within the European Union. The strong control of power in France, both in the State and in companies, contributes to this situation. Superiors and subordinates are not considered equal, and this inequality is widely accepted. Companies typically maintain a formal hierarchical structure, with significant disparities in pay based on position. Managers often adopt an authoritarian and paternalistic management style, treating employees with formality. They may enjoy privileges such as luxury cars or reserved parking spaces, displaying their status and wealth.

Secondly, the degree of acceptance of uncertainty is the willingness to control what is uncertain:

Cultural Aspect	Description	Authors
Uncertainty Avoidance	France scores 86 on the uncertainty avoidance index, the highest among the country's five indices. Punctuality is highly valued in the company, and all management systems are meticulously formalized to ensure certainty. Compliance with numerous rules, laws, and standards reinforces this certainty. French individuals often exhibit emotional behaviors in both professional and social interactions, openly expressing feelings and reacting sensitively to events. While this emotional propensity may be viewed as instability, it also signifies openness and sincerity in interpersonal relationships. Aggressive behavior may manifest in negotiation or confrontation situations, reflecting a desire to defend views and interests. However, this aggression can be channeled constructively when debate and dialogue rules are respected. Additionally, the French exhibit a strong inclination to structure institutions and human relations, seeking clear frameworks and well-defined social norms, evident in various aspects of daily life and international negotiations.	Hofstede (1980), Duchêne et al. (2016), Pisani-Ferry (2018), Hofstede Insights (n.d.), Durand (2017)

France is generally considered as a feminine culture:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Femininity	France is ranked among the more feminine countries. The French place great importance on quality of life, both in their family and professional lives. This can be attributed to the advantageous social security system, the 35-hour work week, and five weeks of annual leave. In the workplace, they prioritize values such as modesty, politeness, and positive relationships among colleagues. A calm and pleasant work environment is highly valued. However, competition is not well tolerated, and conflicts are typically resolved through compromise.

Moreover, the score of 71 shows that France is a highly individualistic country whose focus is on the opinions and skills of an individual:

Cultural Aspect	Description	Authors
Individualism	The French prioritize self-expression, independence, and personal fulfillment, valuing individual aspirations highly. Independence and personal freedoms take precedence over group dependency or loyalty in France, with individuals often prioritizing personal interests over those of the organization. This emphasis on individualism translates into a strong pursuit of personal performance in the professional realm. The employer/employee relationship is characterized by mutual benefit, emphasizing meritocracy. Interpersonal interactions are marked by openness and directness, with individuals openly expressing opinions and defending viewpoints. Additionally, privacy is highly valued, with a clear boundary maintained between professional commitments and personal activities to ensure balance and well-being.	Pisani-Ferry (2018), Durand (2017), Duchêne et al. (2016)

While Hofstede's dimensions are widely used, they don't fully capture the complexity of cultural differences (Jaroslav, 2003). Trompenaars' dimensions offer additional insights into specific cultural aspects crucial in intercultural situations. Trompenaars' seven dimensions complement Hofstede's study, addressing cultural aspects like conflict resolution and temporal orientation, which are significant in international negotiations but not covered by Hofstede's dimensions.

This is why we develop in the next part, the Trompenaars model applied to French culture.

2.4.1.3 French cultural characteristics according to the model of Trompenaars.

France exhibits characteristics of particularist cultures according to Trompenaars. French prioritize strong interpersonal relationships over rules and laws, often adapting them based on the situation, including contracts, which serve as a foundation for subsequent negotiations.

Trompenaars' classification aligns with Hofstede's, placing the French among individualistic cultures. French individuals prioritize personal freedom and often work independently in their professional endeavors, assuming full responsibility for their tasks.

As an affective culture, the French openly express their feelings and emotions, akin to their Italian neighbors. They display their emotions candidly through both words and body language, with their tone of voice transitioning swiftly from passionate to gentle. Gestures have a decisive role in their communication, improving the expression of emotions. In interactions, they exhibit openness, warmth, and friendliness, characterized by their "southern temperament" marked by passionate gesticulation, evident in both personal and professional relationships.

In French culture, there's a clear distinction between professional and personal matters. Professional relationships are focused on specific subjects, time, and space, with subordinates following precise instructions to achieve objectives. New members are typically well-received and adapt quickly to the team.

Status in French society is determined by factors like age, knowledge, profession, or qualifications. While diplomas and titles were once prevalent in French companies, functions are now commonly used. Respect is accorded to higher leaders, whose authority often stems from prestigious educational backgrounds, and to experienced individuals whose status is influenced by age.

At the work level, the French like to take care of several things at once which is very characteristic of synchronic cultures. The programs are modified according to the concrete situation and it is preferred to react to the current circumstances rather than follow the given schedule.

In the dimension of the will to dominate or follow nature, the French tend to believe they can control their destiny and nature itself, reflecting an internal orientation towards domination. This self-directed culture is evident in management, where the organization is often viewed as obedient to its leaders. Professional relations are focused on specific subjects and objectives, with subordinates following precise instructions. New members are typically warmly received and adapt quickly to the team.

2.4.2 The negotiation styles of China

2.4.2.1 The personality of Chinese negotiators

Chinese companies prioritize loyalty, affection between employers and employees, hierarchical structures, and trusting relationships among colleagues (Lee, Jong Hak, 1994). Asian managers are known for their negotiation skills, often perceived as tough negotiators due to cultural differences (Tung, 1984). They employ various tactics to reach agreements, making concessions even after deals are finalized. Chinese negotiators emphasize trust and mutual benefits, prioritizing group development over individual interests (Shen, Ling Da, Thi Kim, 2020). In Asia, negotiations differ from France, with contracts not marking the end and terms subject to change, reflecting the particularist and diffuse nature of Asian culture (Shen, Ling Da, Thi Kim, 2020). Chinese negotiators systematically anticipate and address unforeseen challenges during negotiations, relying on their network of relationships to resolve issues and prioritizing commitment and sincerity (Chen, 1995). Asian negotiators prioritize personal relationships, often preferring introductions by acquaintances when dealing with strangers. Establishing connections is crucial for reaching agreements, fostering personal relationships, and integrating the other party into their group. Regular contact with the Asian company helps maintain these relationships (Wang, 2016; Chen, 1995).

2.4.2.2 Chinese cultural characteristics according to the five-factor model of Geert Hostfede

China has a higher index of distance to power than France since according to the work done by Hofstede, respect for authority is often marked in Chinese culture:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Power Distance	China, with a score of 80, demonstrates a societal acceptance of inequalities and hierarchical structures. The ideal model is a benevolent autocrat, and subordinate-superior relationships tend to be polarized. There is little defense against abuse of power by superiors, as people are influenced by authority and formal sanctions. Leadership and initiative are typically viewed optimistically. Major decisions are often centralized, with significant authority vested in the founding manager in the private sector.

Then, China is a clearly collectivist society in which people act in the interest of the group rather than in their own:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Collectivism	In China, collectivism prevails, with the family as the central reference group. Individuals prioritize belonging within familial, clan, friendship, and geographical circles. Hiring and promotions are influenced by perceptions within these groups, often resulting in preferential treatment for close family members. However, organizational engagement, especially in the private sector, remains low, with limited identification with the company. Public sector employees experience a stronger sense of belonging. Internal group cooperation is common among colleagues, while interactions with external members may be distant or even hostile. Personal relationships hold greater importance than tasks or organizational loyalty.

Then, in terms of the uncertainty avoidance dimension, the avoidance action is quite low.:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Uncertainty Avoidance	In China, with a score of 30, truth and reality are perceived as relative, although truth is a concern in social contexts and ambiguity is prevalent. Adherence to laws and rules is flexible to accommodate real-life situations, reflecting a pragmatic approach to life.

Moreover, in terms of the Masculinity vs. Femininity Index, China is generally considered a moderately male society, meaning that it values success, ambition and wealth accumulation:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Masculinity	China scores 66 on the masculinity index, indicating a society where many individuals are willing to prioritize work over family and leisure. In this culture, free time is not highly valued.

Finally, China is often characterized by a long-term orientation, emphasizing perseverance, and preserving traditions:

Cultural Aspect	Description
Long-Term Orientation	China scores 87 on the long-term orientation index, reflecting a very pragmatic culture emphasizing perseverance and tradition preservation. In pragmatic societies, truth is perceived as context-dependent, and individuals demonstrate adaptability, a strong inclination toward saving and investing, a sense of thrift, and persistence in achieving results.

Thus, based on Hofstede's dimensions, Chinese culture is characterized as non-competitive, less aggressive in pursuing personal goals, and risk-averse. It exhibits high power distance, emphasizing hierarchical systems with centralized power and minimal subordinate participation in decision-making. Chinese culture prioritizes the group over the individual, with strong but limited collectivism. While Chinese are open and friendly within established relationships, they may display rivalry or distant behavior with unfamiliar individuals or those with divergent interests (Herbig & Hugh, Kramer, 1992).

In fact, in business negotiations, cultural and insurance system differences can lead to challenges as parties prioritize different stages. Chinese emphasize information exchange due to their consensual decision-making style, often blending it with persuasion. Conversely, French negotiations focus on persuasion as the key stage (Graham, 1987).

2.4.2.3 Chinese cultural characteristics according to the Trompenaars model

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2004), China strongly exhibits particularist characteristics, allowing for flexibility in contracts and the potential for promises to be broken. This reflects the diffuse aspect of Asian culture, influenced by Confucianism and reliant on personal relationships rather than legal systems. Business success in this context hinges not only on quantity but also on the quality of personal connections due to the particularist nature of the culture.

As for the second factor, objectivity or subjectivity, China has an objective culture. This means, among other things, that the Chinese do not express their emotions and maintain an indifferent attitude. This neutral attitude does not necessarily mean that individuals are cold or devoid of feelings. Feelings are simply not externalized, and this absence of emotion does not mean disinterestedness.

In addition, Asian culture is more important to the status assigned, although this varies greatly depending on the culture. In China, decisions are made by those with the highest position. A compliment from your superior can be very rewarding for a subordinate. Honorary titles naming the position of the employee are also widely used in China where people pay much attention to the social status that appears to be a recognition value. All these practices demonstrate the importance of the status assigned.

Asian culture is generally more diffuse compared to other countries. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Asian companies often involve themselves in employees' private matters, such as providing housing assistance, reflecting the diffuse nature of the culture. This involvement stems from viewing employees as part of the company's family, a hallmark of diffuse ideology. In diffuse-oriented companies, practices like lifetime employment and seniority are common, while specific-oriented companies focus on goal management. In diffuse interactions, building trust precedes addressing specific issues, whereas specific cultures may directly approach the main subject. Losing face in Asian culture is akin to piercing one's private sphere, as there's no clear separation between public and private realms. Criticism is more accepted in specific cultures since it

doesn't jeopardize the entire living space of the criticized individual. Therefore, communication must be carefully considered in Asian culture

Finally, given that the collectivist dimension joins the dimension developed by Hofstede and the two notions of time and space join the concepts of Hall, we will not dwell on exploring these concepts that have explained more previously.

2.5 - Conclusion Of The Literature Review

In our literature review, we extensively analyzed research papers to explore the impact of cultural variables on negotiation processes, particularly between China and France. Initially, we defined negotiation types, distinguishing between national and intercultural negotiation, highlighting challenges, especially adapting to cultural norms (Prime and Usunier, 2013, p. 63). Successful intercultural negotiation requires adapting behaviors to integrate cultural knowledge and codes (Davel, Dupuis, & Chanlat, 2008). Each negotiation is uniquely influenced by the cultures involved (Moran and Xardel, 1994), with factors like professional and generational culture impacting persuasion techniques (Davel, Dupuis, & Chanlat, 2008). Understanding cultural variables in foreign countries is crucial. Hofstede defines dimensions to comprehend societal governance, while Hall emphasizes the significance of time codes in intercultural communication (Hall, 1984). Trompenaars views cultural differences as a catalyst for long-term business performance. Identifying crucial cultural characteristics among French and Chinese negotiators was integral to our study (Arcand, 2007).

However, notable gaps remain, particularly the lack of research on cultural differences between China and France in an insurance context. Additionally, no study has examined the impacts of these differences on the negotiation process within the insurance sector.

Then, our review emphasizes the critical importance of considering cultural variables in international negotiations, shaping negotiators' behaviors and outcomes. Integrating a nuanced understanding of cultural dimensions and negotiation styles can enhance performance in international contexts, fostering mutually beneficial outcomes.

The next step of our work will be to present the problematic and the methodology of our research, as well as the results of our qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Research Question

3.1 Research Title

Cultural Dynamics in International Bank Assurance Negotiations: A Comparative Study of France and China for a Theoretical Model of Business Expansion Strategies.

3.2 Research Aim

This study analyzes cultural dynamics in international bank assurance negotiations between France and China, aiming to develop a theoretical model on culture's impact on negotiation processes and inform cross-cultural business expansion strategies (Bartel-Radic, 2014). Additionally, it seeks to uncover contextualized strategies, enhance negotiators' understanding, refine approaches, and fill literature gaps.

3.3 Research Objectives

The dissertation aims to answer the research question through interviews with ten participants, complementing a literature review. This analysis places the results within a broader theoretical framework, guided by three research questions.

Q1: To what extent do cultural variables influence the negotiation process in the specific context of insurance product negotiation between China and France?

Sub-objectives :
- To examine the impact of cultural differences between China and France on the negotiation strategies of international bank insurance companies.
- Analyse how French and Chinese negotiators adapt their negotiation styles to manage cultural diversity in international negotiations.
- To identify the disparities in insurance product offerings as a strategy for navigating cultural diversity in international negotiations.

Q2: How does the effectiveness of the intercultural management strategies implemented by CIB and CAA companies in the context of their international activities have a positive impact on the outcome of their negotiations?

Sub-objectives :

- To examine the intercultural management practices implemented by CIB and CAA companies, such as establishing interpersonal relationships, exchanging information on the issues to be discussed, persuasion, concessions and compromises, and reaching an agreement.
- Analyse how these intercultural management practices have contributed to the success of CIB and CAA's international negotiations, particularly in the context of the bank insurance negotiations between China and France.

Q3: What are the main strategies for international negotiations in China and France?

Sub-objective:

- Identify appropriate strategies to facilitate negotiations between these two cultures.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter, we will describe the methodological aspects of the research. First, the conceptual framework will be discussed. Second, the chapter will outline the research objectives as well as the choice of methods and procedures used. We will also describe the source of the data: the sampling process, the interview guide and the interview process.

4.1 Conceptual Framework

This study is to investigate how Chinese and French companies react to cultural differences in their international negotiations, and to identify the impacts of these differences on their respective business practices between China and France. Then, the study attempts to answer three main research questions and, through the deduction and analysis of relevant data, to provide answers to these questions.

After consulting the literature, we have found that managing cultural diversity significantly affects the negotiation process for companies offering banking-insurance products. Developing intercultural skills and navigating various stages of adaptation are crucial for effective diversity management. This fosters trust and cultural synergy, enhancing competitive advantage. Despite this, there is a lack of studies analyzing these impacts in negotiations between China and France. Our work aims to address this gap by examining how Chinese and French companies engaged in international negotiations navigate cultural differences and the resulting impacts on practices between the two countries.

The figure 10 below shows the conceptual framework of the research highlighting the important aspects of the literature review. Indeed, the Chinese or French negotiator who is engaged in an international market encounters a cultural distance more or less large, depending on the geographical location chosen for the international development of its activities (Carbone *et al.,* 2013). By interacting internationally, negotiators are confronted with a different culture : the cultural diversity (Moral, 2007; Scotto, Loth et Tiffon, 2014). All the cultural differences encountered refer to cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can positively or negatively impact an organization. Indeed, everything depends on how it is perceived and approached.

Intercultural management is an ongoing process that involves several stages (Bird et Osland, 2005). Firstly, you need to understand different cultures by gathering relevant information about the foreign market. Secondly, it is essential to train and inform staff about these cultural differences to avoid negative reactions (Chevrier et Segal, 2011). Thirdly, these differences need to be integrated into management practices to better respond to international needs. Finally, it is crucial to monitor and adapt the internationalisation process to ensure its effectiveness (Cox et Blake, 1999).

After taking cultural diversity into account and establishing trusting relationships, cultural synergy can develop. This constant adaptation and integration of different business practices, lead to relationships of trust and cultural synergy, therefore, to the success of international activities and then to competitive advantages.

Figure 10: First conceptual framework: Conceptual framework: Intercultural management in an international negotiation context.
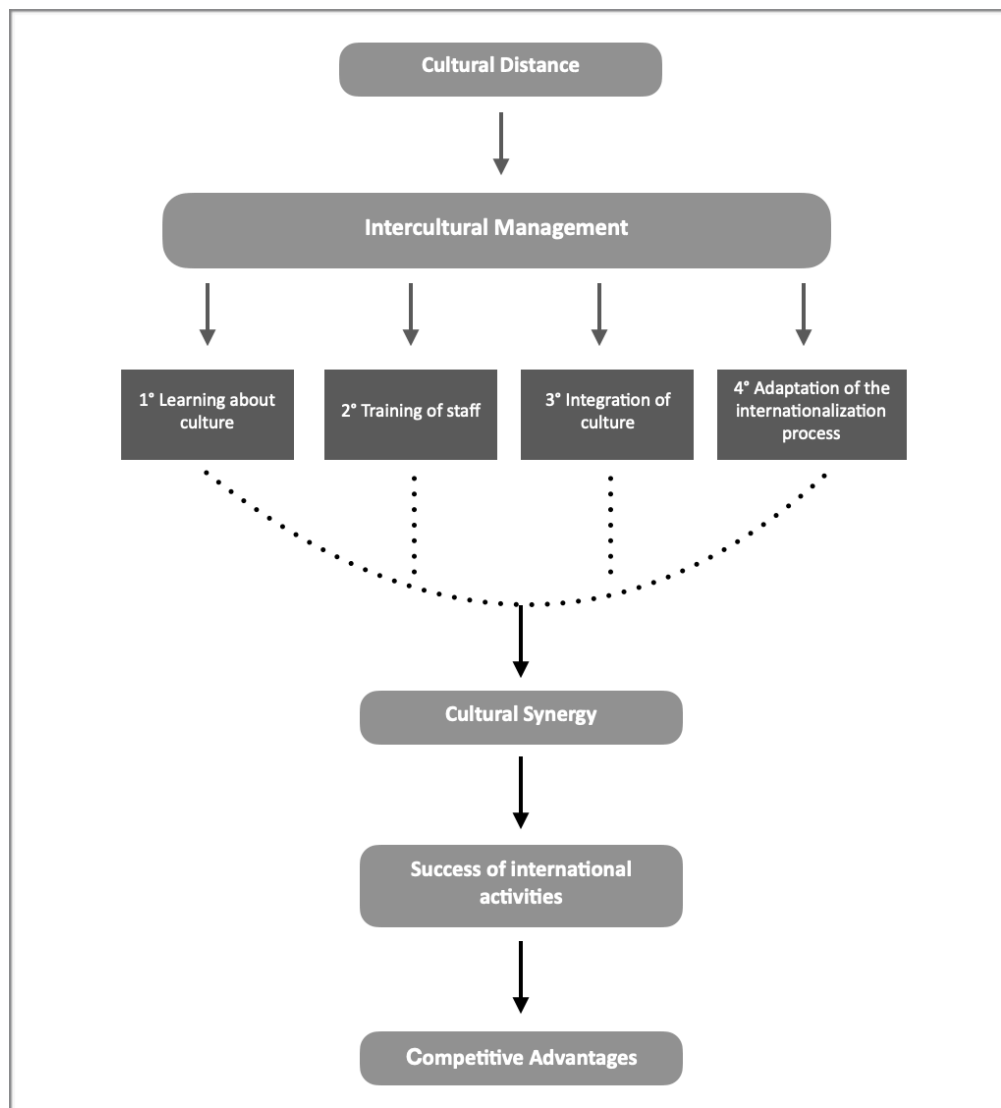
4.2 Constructivist Interpretive Research

Given our aim to gather insights from participants, a constructivist interpretive approach appears suitable, particularly as we seek to understand aspects of human experience (Cohen, 2007). The researcher also consider other philosophy such as the post-positivist (Henderson, 2011). Whereas the post-positivist approach focuses on understanding phenomena using empirical methods and on reducing bias, the constructivist interpretive approach emphasises the way in which reality is socially constructed and the meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences (Henderson, 2011). Our research prioritizes grasping social phenomena through diverse perspectives and the interpretation of meaning within specific social contexts. For this reason, a constructivist approach aligns well with our study's objectives, which aim to uncover the impacts of cultural variables on negotiation processes between France and China. The interpretive design of our study will aid researchers in making sense of the data and subsequently situating the findings within a broader theoretical framework (Cohen, 2007).

4.3 Qualitative Analysis Method

The quantitative method was considered as an alternative, but we chose the qualitative method because research is an exploration aimed at deepening our understanding of a phenomenon, as Richards and Morse (2007) suggest. Its objective is to support existing theories and develop conceptual links that, although intuitive, have not yet been clearly established. This approach adopts an inductive approach that focuses on the observation and analysis of a specific situation in order to understand it more deeply.

Then the study adopted will be qualitative, since it addresses the impact of cultural variables during an international negotiation process between two countries with entirely different cultures. According to Bryman (2004) and Deshpande (1983), qualitative research follows a mainly inductive approach based on a vision of social reality as a constantly evolving property of individual perceptions and aiming to obtain an "internal" perspective on the phenomena studied. This inductive approach allows us to start from specific cases and then generalize the results. We look for similarities and links that merit further exploration.

The qualitative method simplifies the collection of rich narratives from participants and offers the opportunity to deepen and interpret the data collected.

In comparison, we choose to not go with the quantitative methods as some limitations applied. Indeed, the quantitative method often tends to reduce the complexity of the phenomena studied by reducing them to measurable variables (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, it can have difficulty in capturing the context in which the phenomena studied occur. As our research is concerned with theories, themes or concepts emanating from participants, we could not opt for a qualitative approach, as this tends to limit participants' response options, which may not fully reflect the diversity of experiences and opinions (Patton, 2015).

4.4 Semi Structured Interviews Process

Before starting the semi-structured interviews with the ten participants, a pilot test was carried out with five negotiators so that the questions could be adjusted if necessary (appendix number 1). For this pilot, semi-structured interviews were conducted online using the Teams application. Open and closed questions were asked in order to gather as many responses as possible and to obtain detailed information on the participants' profiles. Questions on demographic aspects were crucial for assessing the relevance of the sample. In addition, questions on specific concepts or theories allowed us to determine whether it was necessary to add definitions or explanations before asking the questions. The pilot test was useful for exploring new ideas for the research and also confirmed the choice of data collection method, which subsequently influenced the direction of the research.

Kvale (2006), states that the qualitative research interview has become a sensitive and powerful method for investigating subjects. For this reason, we choose to conduct semi-structured interviews to obtain detailed answers (Richards and Morse, 2007) while leaving some freedom to the interviewee (Gagnon, 2012). Another justification for using qualitative analysis lies in the collection of personal testimonies and the exploration of new ideas/ concepts. Indeed, during verbal or non-verbal interactions, negotiators can provide information that is not necessarily covered in the literature review. In this way, the participants' perspectives are authentic, unlike in quantitative analysis.

To decide which interview technique to use, we studied the four proposals offered by Patton's (1980), namely: informal conversation interview, interview guide approach, standardized open-ended and closed quantitative interviews. Given our literature, we analyze two main areas: the cultural elements and the course of the negotiations, as well as their interconnections and their potential impacts on the outcome of the negotiations.It is for this reason that we used the second interview guide approach, where all the participants were asked the same questions in the same order, so as not to influence their responses. This technique was the best option, as it allowed us to maintain a certain flexibility in the responses, but also from the researcher's point of view, as the researcher could delve deeper into certain subjects that emerged during the interview, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the relevant themes.

The interview guide was developed following the literature review and the development of the conceptual framework. (appendix number 2). The main elements retained in the literature made it possible to define themes and then analysis factors. The analysis factors include several points to be addressed that refer to the company, the negotiation strategy used for internationalization, cultural distance, diversity management, the impact of diversity management on the negotiation strategy used.

4.5 Data Collection

Prior to interviews:

We will initiate contact via email with five negotiators from the Chinese company CIB and five negotiators from the French company CAA. The participants will be selected based on professional connections. They are male and female negotiators with at least five years' experience in the insurance industry. The email will serve as an opportunity to discuss the study's intentions and outline the subsequent steps (appendix number 3). Following this, we will conduct research on the companies and their insurance products by visiting their respective websites. It will take approximately three weeks to coordinate schedules and arrange meetings. Once this period elapses, we will schedule meetings at mutually convenient times and dates.

On the day of the interviews:

Each interview will be conducted online via Teams and will occur between February and March. Prior to commencing the interviews, participants will be provided with a document outlining the confidentiality of the data, as well as the research objectives and benefits. This document will be signed electronically. Participants will also be informed of our intent to record the interviews for data analysis purposes, to which all will agree. The interviews will be recorded using Teams' recording feature and will proceed naturally for approximately 35 to 40 minutes.

After the interviews:

Following the interviews, the audio recordings will be promptly saved on a personal computer and secured with a password. Subsequently, the data will be reviewed and analyzed to derive insights and present the results. Transcription of all interviews will be completed by the end of March (appendix number 4).

4.6 Sampling Process

In this part, we will present the companies recruited for our study, the method of data collection and their collection. The research project focuses on insurance and banking companies that already have international activities. This strategy was favoured because it requires frequent interactions between companies and a negotiation process in order to reach satisfactory agreements. It therefore implies a real collaboration leading individuals to confront their cultural differences.

In the participant selection process for this thesis, we opted to use the non-probability sampling technique (Pace, 2020). This approach allowed us to select a specific group of participants with characteristics relevant to our research topic. Unlike probability sampling, which involves random selection of participants, non-probability sampling offered us the flexibility to target specific individuals who had expertise, experience or perspectives relevant to our study. By identifying and selecting key individuals or experts in the field, we were able to gain diverse and in-depth perspectives that enriched our analysis and conclusions. For this reason, companies were identified from two sources of information. Initially, benefiting from a contact in one of the companies, we were able to have the

contact details of the people in charge of the international development of the company CAA France. The contact was made by email directly. The leaders were informed of the process, so the approach was easier. This first approach was carried out in February 2024, with the five contacts given in the French company.

Wishing to meet a higher number of negotiators, another contact was made by telephone, in order to collect five other negotiators in the Chinese company CIB. It is important to emphasize that it is much more difficult to present and approach a company for such a contactless project. Also, in most cases, people replied that it was better to expose the project by email for lack of time or the person concerned was not present. All these steps were carried out from January to February. Some inclusions criteria were necessary to be part of the study. We chose to have a sample composed of experienced negotiators and decision-makers from the banking and insurance sector, in France and China. The sample consists of ten interviews, which were conducted online via Teams. We interview professionals, men and women, with at least five years of experience, addressing issues specifically focused on the subject, such as: Can you identify specific challenges related to cultural differences in the negotiations between France and China? Have you encountered situations where cultural misunderstandings have had an impact on the progress of the negotiations? A group of ten participants was deemed suitable, considering the limited time constraints within the scope and timeframe of the study.

Ethnically, collecting data from international negotiators can pose a threat to the companies concerned, in particular because certain negotiation strategies can be revealed. Therefore, we ensure confidentiality, especially anonymity of respondents. There is no conflict of interest related to this study. We chose to assign pseudonyms to each company as a precautionary measure to preserve the confidentiality of participants throughout the study.

For data analysis, thematic analysis is used to identify patterns, themes and categories in qualitative data. As mentioned earlier, this inductive approach will allow themes to emerge directly from participants' narratives. Rigorous coding and constant comparison techniques will be applied to ensure both internal and external reliability and validity of the analysis (Gagnon, 2012).

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics involves safeguarding the welfare and rights of human participants involved in a study. As we planned to as humans, we had to ensure compliance with ethical standards, a formal document issued by NCI was put in place to obtain verbal consent and written authorisation from all participants prior to their involvement in the research. This involved distributing a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, the nature of participation and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, ethical considerations were built into the research methodology to take account of any potential risks or harm to participants. These include measures to protect sensitive information, preserve data confidentiality and minimise any potential psychological or emotional distress. Through these ethical considerations and procedures, the research aims to maintain the principles of integrity, respect and beneficence in its conduct and outcomes.

4.8 Analysis Of The Data

We conducted interviews with ten participants after obtaining consent, using audio recording for data capture. Thematic analysis was then employed, with careful review of notes and transcripts before coding and theme extraction to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant information.

Thematic analysis was chosen for its detailed representation of data and ability to uncover implicit relationships between responses. An inductive approach was adopted, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data without predetermined frameworks. This approach provided space for participant expression beyond literature review concepts, although our analysis was inevitably influenced by theoretical perspectives.

This approach requires careful scrutiny of the participants' responses, as well as methodical preparation by the researcher, following the different phases defined by Braune and Clarke (2006):

- Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data

Before delving into data exploration, we transcribed the information manually to facilitate thematic analysis, a crucial phase in interpretive qualitative methodology (Bird, 2005: 227). This transcription aimed to retain relevant information from verbal narratives and adapt them to our analysis objectives (Edwards, 1993). Repeated readings familiarized us with the data's depth and breadth, allowing us to detect emerging patterns early on. These patterns, influenced by participant responses and guided by literature theories, formed the analysis foundation. Due to the time-intensive nature of data reading, we limited the sample size to ten participants, aiding in idea organization and laying the groundwork for formal coding. The dynamic coding process evolved based on patterns identified during data familiarization

- Phase 2: Generation of initial codes

Phase 1 yielded preliminary schemas, helping us identify key ideas in the data pertinent to our research question. This led us to generate initial codes, which serve as markers identifying data features—whether semantic or latent—that are relevant to our analysis. As illustrated below, we organized our data into meaningful clusters, adopting a theory-driven approach to coding. Thus, we approached the data with specific questions in mind around which we wished to code.

Table 11: Example of initial coding table

Code	Data Excerpt
Competitive Advantages	"Our wide range of insurance products and well-established global network are part of the company's competitive advantages."
Technical Competitive Advantages	"It is the expertise in risk management and customer services, and also the ability to innovate by developing unique digital offers in the insurance market that allow us to generate competitive advantages."
Market Identification Techniques	"There are several ways to identify target markets, but at CAA we prefer a combination of market research, analysis of economic, demographic and regulatory trends, but also feasibility studies that we carry out in parallel with an external firm."
Consideration of Specific Needs	"Even before identifying target markets, it was essential for them to take into account the specific needs for financial protection and insurance in each country, as well as local competition."
Overcoming Barriers	"CAA had to adapt its organizational structures, operational processes and human resources to meet the requirements of the Spanish market."
Tolerance for Risk	"We at CAA have a high tolerance for risk and these challenges are part of the process of opening up internationally."

- Phase 3: Searching for themes

After initial coding and data compilation, we moved to phase 3: transitioning from code-based to theme-based analysis. Our goal was to cluster codes into potential themes, such as the overarching theme of international activity. We facilitated this process using tables with brief code descriptions, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 12: Description of codes

Code	Description
Competitive Advantages	Competitive advantages refer to the distinctive aspects or assets of the company that give it a competitive edge in the market.
Technical Competitive Advantages	Technical competitive advantages refer to the company's specific expertise in areas such as risk management, customer service, and technological innovation, which contribute to its competitiveness in the market.
Market Identification Techniques	Market identification techniques refer to the methods or approaches used by the company to identify potential target markets and assess their attractiveness.

Once completed, we derived main themes and sub-themes. At this point, we had an indication of the significance of individual themes, as depicted in Table 3:

Table 13: Example thematic coding table

Theme	Sub Theme	Code	Data Extract
The influence of culture on negotiation process	Perceived Cultural Differences	Preparation and Planning	"In our day-to-day work, the perceived cultural differences in the target markets significantly influence the preparation and planning of our international negotiations. We have to constantly adapt so that we can synchronize with the culture across the way."
The influence of culture on negotiation process	Cultural Understanding	Thorough Analysis	"We thoroughly analyze the norms, values and social behaviors prevailing in each target market."
The influence of culture on negotiation process	Adaptation Strategy	Time Management	"This understanding directly influences the negotiation strategy used, since it systematically changes the way French negotiators manage their time and time pressure, adapting the negotiation space."
The influence of culture on negotiation process	Integration of Cultural Expertise	Inclusion of Expertise	"It is therefore essential for negotiators to know how to adapt and to ensure that they include members who have specific cultural expertise or language skills relevant to each target market."

- Phase 4: Reviewing of themes

After developing themes, we refined them to ensure quality and avoid redundancy, using Patton's criteria (Patton, 1990). This process involved two stages: initially reviewing coherence within coded data extracts, then evaluating relevance across the entire dataset. We aimed to maintain consistency and clarity within themes.

Table 14: Refinement of themes

Sub-Theme	Theme	Proposed New Theme
Preparation and Planning	Perceived Cultural Differences	Cultural Awareness
In-depth Analysis	Perceived Cultural Differences	Cultural Awareness
Integration of Cultural Expertise	Perceived Cultural Differences	Cultural Communication
In-depth Analysis	Cultural Understanding	Cultural Awareness
Adaptation Strategy	Cultural Understanding	Intercultural Adaptation
Integration of Cultural Expertise	Adaptation Strategy	Cultural Communication
Preparation and Planning	Cultural Communication Styles	Cultural Communication
In-depth Analysis	Cultural Communication Styles	Cultural Awareness
Adaptation Strategy	Cultural Communication Styles	Intercultural Adaptation

- Phase 5: Defining and naming theme

For each individual theme, we analyzed them, delving into the story it conveyed and its pivotal role in our research. This step allowed us to draft working titles for the themes:

- International Activity

- The influence of the language on negotiation process (Bergeron, 2001)

- The influence of the culture on negotiation process (Hofstede, 1980, 2001)

- The influence of cultural distance on negotiation process (Schneider et Barsoux, 2003)

- The influence of the strategy used during the negotiation process (Lemaire, 2013)

- Phase 6: Writing the report

The final step entails crafting a concise, coherent narrative is the final step, seamlessly integrating identified themes to present a compelling story that demonstrates the analysis's significance and credibility, supported by relevant data extracts.

4.9 Reliability And Validity Of The Research

We first made sure that, among the selected cases, we can find possible variations relating to the key elements of the interview guide. The fonction of the researcher is important when collecting and interpreting data (Gagnon, 2012). It can effectively influence the reliability and validity of the research.

Reliability can be internal and external. The former ensures the transferability of results to other researchers. Indeed, for Lincoln and Guba (1986), the narrative data around a context allow to obtain similarities with other researchers. In our study, the narrative was used to describe the behaviour of negotiators and their techniques used without aiming at generalization (Gagnon, 2012). External reliability allows independent researchers to achieve the same results if they adopted the same approach (Gagnon, 2012). Given the time constraints imposed by the research and the lack of availability of negotiators, we were unable to demonstrate this external reliability.

Validity in research encompasses three elements: internal validity, external validity, and construct validity (Gagnon, 2012). Internal validity ensures the strength of the case study by accurately describing and identifying the phenomenon studied (Gagnon, 2012). We ensured this through clarification, precision of terms, and detailed case descriptions. External validity concerns the generalization of results (Gagnon, 2012), which is a weakness in case studies. According to Yin (2003), it's crucial for cases to represent reality in relation to the elements studied. Our research addresses this by ensuring data sources and respondent identification align with our research objectives. Study subjects and data collection procedures are elaborated in subsequent sections.

4.10 Limitations

However, it is important to note that collecting qualitative data can be challenging. Access to information may be limited due to data confidentiality or contact availability. Moreover, the reliability of the data collected will largely depend on the transparency and honesty of the respondents. It is important to consider these challenges when designing the study and collecting data to ensure the validity of the results.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

As mentioned earlier, it becomes clear that knowledge of trading partners is an essential part of the overall negotiation process, in line with Toffler's view that trade negotiations play a central role in an integrated system of value creation, dependent on the growing exchange of data, information and knowledge (Toffler, 1994). Negotiation, fundamentally a form of communication, involves entities discussing common and conflicting interests to achieve mutually beneficial agreements (Hollensen, 2008; Danciu, 2010). International affairs, according to Popa (2001), are communication processes between partners from different countries, with negotiation and communication being common elements in various definitions. Culture significantly influences communication in trade negotiations, impacting every aspect from preparation to execution, including commercial discussions, relationships, and strategic approaches (Popa, 2001; Hollensen, 2008; Danciu, 2010). Comme nous utilisons une approche constructive, les findings were directed by the data. This is why we made the choice to organise the results according by the research question.

We will analyze the results through the use of figures present in the conceptual framework, through which the impact of cultural differences that French and Chinese companies encounter during their international business practices are studied. As our memoir focuses on the world of insurance, we will mainly study the impact of two selected companies that we will call CAA (French company) and CIB (Chinese company).

5.1 - Results Presentation C A A

5.1.1 Presentation of CAA

The table below contains information from the interviewees' responses, outlining the demographics of the CAA business.

Table 15: Table of participant demographics - CAA company

Aspect	Description
Company Name	CAA (Founded in 2006)
Industry	Insurance
Core Values	Solidarity and customer service
Product Offerings	- Vital insurance products for individuals and businesses - Life insurance (including savings and family protection) - Property and casualty insurance (covering housing, cars, and health) - Creditor insurance (ensuring loan repayment in unexpected events)
Strategic Focus	- Life insurance as a pillar, providing long-term financial security and supporting client goals - Property and casualty insurance for comprehensive protection - Creditor insurance for peace of mind to borrowers and families
International Expansion	- Ambitious expansion leveraging CA Group's global network and partnerships - Firm presence in Europe, expansion into North America and Asia through alliances and acquisitions
Innovation	- Continuous innovation integrating latest technologies - Development of digital solutions - Investment in connected insurance, artificial intelligence, and data analytics for enhanced customer experience and to meet 21st-century challenges
Company Philosophy	Combining tradition and innovation to deliver insurance excellence and tailored financial solutions to customers worldwide

5.1.2 Key findings and Peripheral findings of CAA

The presentation of the results concerning the company CAA allowed to scrutinize the behavior of the French negotiators during the international negotiations, highlighting the influence of certain key factors.

The table below provides a summary of the main conclusions drawn from participants' responses. A detailed version is presented in the following section.

Table 16: Summary of the main results highlighted by participants' responses

Themes Identified	Behaviour of French negotiators at CAA	Researcher Comments
Profil of French negotiators	- Thorough preparation and understanding of cultural specificities to navigate multicultural environments.	- Important role of negotiators in promoting the management of cultural diversity. The international experience of CAA, the open-mindedness of employees and the vision of diversity are assets.
Barriers encountered	- Adapting organizational structures, business processes and human resources to meet the requirements of foreign markets.	- Important role of external socio-cultural barriers. The information barrier also influences the process of managing cultural diversity. - Link existing between barriers, sociocultural, informational, functional and international success.
Necessary Resources	- Importance of financial resources for international development, especially for frequent travel and collaborations. - Entrepreneurial skills, ability to convince and solid reputation as assets for international expansion.	- Factor with no real impact.
Negotitation	- Integration of cultural codes and different practices. - Tendency to argue rationally and to highlight facts, figures or tangible data to justify positions and concessions.	- There are several practices and the integration of cultural codes positively influences the negotiation of both parties. - Code integration plays a role in international success.
Cultural Influence	- Recognition of cultural differences when planning international negotiations. - Adaptation of the trading strategy according to the standards and social behaviours of each target market. - The importance of understanding and respecting the cultural perceptions of business partners in order to build trust.	- Positively impacts the company thanks to the multicultural team - There is a link between cultural diversity and international success.

Themes Identified	Behaviour of French negotiators at CAA	Researcher Comments
Language Influence	- Use of French as the preferred language during negotiations, although the majority of French also speak English and German. - Adaptation of verbal and non-verbal communication style according to the linguistic specificities of the cultures involved in international negotiations. - Recognition of the importance of gestures, facial expressions and posture in intercultural communication.	- The predominant use of the French language in meetings can potentially negatively influence the outcome of negotiations, mainly because of the risks of misunderstandings that may arise. - On the other hand, the gestures and subtleties of body language can sometimes be misinterpreted by the interlocutor, especially if they do not agree with their own cultural norms, which can lead to friction or misunderstandings in the negotiation process.
Cultural Distance Influence	- Significant impact on flexibility and rigidity of discussions and compromises in intercultural negotiations. - Differences in approaches to making concessions based on cultural expectations. - Need to adapt negotiation strategies and business practices to succeed in multicultural environments.	- French negotiators are aware that they have intercultural skills. This is a key element of managing cultural diversity. - The French want to take advantage of the richness of cultural diversity and have more or less cultural empathy.
Strategy Influence	- Adaptation strategy based on sensitivity to cultural aspects such as emotional mood and body language. - Use of different strategies according to business partners, such as compromise or competition, according to cultural expectations. - Strategic adjustments to avoid misunderstandings and promote effective communication with foreign partners.	- Adopting an adaptable strategy, taking into account cultural aspects such as emotional mood and body language, promotes mutual understanding in international negotiations. - The use of different negotiation strategies according to the cultural expectations of trading partners, such as compromise or competition, improves the chances of success in international negotiations. - Strategic adjustments to avoid misunderstandings and promote effective communication with foreign partners reduce intercultural conflicts and strengthen opportunities for collaboration in international negotiations.

Elements considered peripheral are generally those that do not contribute directly to the specific research question (Johnson, R.B. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J., 2004). The following points are taken from the participants' responses following the interviews.

Table 17: Summary of the main peripheral findings highlighted by participants' responses

Peripheral findings	Explanation
Size of the company	- The size of the company, although important, does not have a significant impact on the negotiation process in international bank-insurance expansion projects.
Perception of the effectiveness of communication tools	- Although cultural differences have an impact on the negotiation process, participants from both countries have a similar perception of the effectiveness of communication tools used in international bank-insurance expansion projects. This observation, although interesting, is therefore considered peripheral to the main objective of understanding the influence of cultural variables.
Attitudes towards risk	-Attitudes towards risk are relatively similar between French and Chinese negotiators in the specific context of international bank-insurance expansion projects.

5.1.3 International Activity

The data underscored the significance of negotiation strategies in international activities, making international activity a key finding from the data analysis. Indeed, as the research focuses on negotiation strategies in the context of firms' international expansion, international activity itself is a central element of our study. Indeed, many companies have to develop their activities abroad (Cox and Blake, 1991), which leads to changes in business practices given the contacts between individuals located in different spaces (Scotto, Loth and Tiffon, 2014). The idea is to understand how negotiators turn a foreign market into a business opportunity. In order to offer a quality assurance product at a competitive price, the company, not only with a presence in France, has decided to open internationally with a presence through several subsidiaries in more than ten European countries. According to the negotiators, opening up to the international market allows the company to differentiate itself from its competitors but also to diversify its offer to meet the needs of the target population even more. In other words, its development allows it to win as many contracts as possible, and develop several competitive advantages. Some CAA negotiators say:

"Our wide range of insurance products and well-established global network are part of the company's competitive advantages."

''International expansion goes beyond merely extending geographical reach; it necessitates strategic negotiation to secure contracts, cultivate competitive advantages, and flourish in a global terrain. Just as nature adapts and evolves to thrive in diverse ecosystems, businesses must negotiate adeptly to navigate the complexities of international markets, leveraging their strengths to seize opportunities and sustain growth''

Others even talk about more technical competitive advantages:

''It is the expertise in risk management and customer services, and also the ability to innovate by developing unique digital offers in the insurance market that allow us to generate competitive advantages''.

According to Higgs (1996), prior to developing competitive advantages, businesses must effectively identify their market, enabling them to mitigate potential negative outcomes in international relations and leverage the value created by the resources inherent in each culture (Chevrier, 2003a). For CAA, this market identification is indispensable. The CEO in charge of CAA's international development, as well as one of the negotiators present at the talks, told us that he had used several techniques to identify the target markets:

> "There are several ways to identify target markets, but at CAA we prefer a combination of market research, analysis of economic, demographic and regulatory trends, but also feasibility studies that we carry out in parallel with an external firm."

Two other negotiators also agreed that even before identifying target markets, it was essential for them to take into account the specific needs for financial protection and insurance in each country, as well as local competition. The integration of cultural codes is another key finding as part of the study (Hall, 1984). Indeed, gradually, CAA gained international presence and then strategically distributed to meet the needs of customers in different geographic and cultural markets.

> "One of my colleagues and I have encountered internal and external barriers. Among the internal obstacles, CAA had to adapt its organizational structures, operational processes and human resources to meet the requirements of the Spanish market. Externally, CAA has faced complex regulations, cultural differences, and language barriers."

While barriers may pose a threat to a company's growth, it is noteworthy that opinions on the subject are mixed. Indeed, other French negotiators argue that the difficulties encountered during CAA's international development cannot be qualified as barriers.

> "We at CAA have a high tolerance for risk and these challenges are part of the process of opening up internationally. We are also aware that barriers in most of the time, socio-cultural, can easily be managed since first of all CAA ensures that employees speak good English."

Everyone agrees that when negotiating in an intercultural context, it is important to adapt behaviour to incorporate knowledge of other cultures, customs and the cultural codes used (Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat, 2008). As one participant put it :

''While attending a professional training session, I found Hall's insights on cultural codes to be highly relatable. Adapting to cultural nuances has been invaluable in navigating intricate international negotiations, helping us identify market opportunities more effectively and establish mutually beneficial agreements''.

Similar to the other participant's observation, it appears that cultural codes hold significance throughout the negotiation process, with dimensions such as Higgs' and Hofstede's still evident even during work training sessions.

"As a negotiator, I've learned that incorporating cultural codes into our approach is crucial for international success. Understanding cultural nuances, as emphasized by Higgs, helps us mitigate risks and leverage diverse cultural resources."

The offer of training within the company contributes to enrich its human capital, thus strengthening its long-term presence in its international expansion (Kamanzi, 2006). The resources given to employees in the form of training, workshops, etc., facilitate the opening to new foreign markets. This is another key finding highlighting the necessity to organise training within the company. A participant mentions the fact that having taken a training course helped him to take account of his cultural codes and therefore to overcome his barriers more easily:

"As someone who negotiates regularly in international business, I can confirm the importance of cultural codes in negotiation settings. Incorporating cultural understanding into our negotiation strategies has been essential for establishing effective communication and fostering trust with our international counterparts''

Other factors, facilitated their opening. For example, CAA's solid reputation as a trusted financial institution, and insurance expertise, as well as its ability to adapt to the local specificities of each market, have been key success factors for its development. However, cultural differences, changing regulations and increased competition have also posed challenges throughout the international expansion as previously mentioned for the Spanish partner Abanca.

5.1.4 Cultural influences encountered during international activity

5.1.4.1 The influence of the culture on negotiation process

The role of culture appears as a recurring concept in all the responses of French negotiators. We observe that this influence is manifested in various contexts such as business contacts, friendly or professional relationships, as well as in business discussions involving technical and commercial aspects. The results presented here closely match the classical definition of culture proposed by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), which highlights the way of thinking, feeling and collective reaction within a human group. Moreover, their claim that traditional ideas and values form the essence of culture, reinforced by Hofstede's research (1980, 2001), fits perfectly with our observations. Thus, culture is a key finding of data analysis. One negotiator say:

> *"In our day-to-day work, the perceived cultural differences in the target markets significantly influence the preparation and planning of our international negotiations. We have to constantly adapt so that we can synchronize with the culture across the way."*

Another participant emphasized the importance of culture as a key element, saying:

> *"My experience as a negotiator confirms the crucial importance of culture in the negotiation process. In fact, culture shapes the way of thinking, I have noticed throughout my work that each culture has its own values and beliefs that influence the way business is conducted."*

To integrate the culture of the other party, several of them focus on very specific aspects:

> *"We thoroughly analyze the norms, values and social behaviours prevailing in each target market."*

This understanding directly influences the negotiation strategy used, since it systematically changes the way French negotiators manage their time and time pressure, adapting the negotiation space. For example, one negotiator spoke of his experience with two partners in two different countries: Abanca in Spain and Credit Agricole CIB in Germany.

> *"To give you an example, in Spain, the time approach is flexible, so we are necessarily adopting a more flexible approach regarding negotiation deadlines etc. Whereas in Germany, there is a rigorous approach to punctuality. Moreover, the Germans attach great importance to punctuality and expect meetings and negotiations to begin exactly at the agreed time."*

According to each culture, there remain concrete distinctions produced by the group of individuals (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952). Family, education, politics, legislation, norms of behaviour are elements that influence culture (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Chevrier, 2003a). As we can see in the results below, negotiators know how essential it is to adapt and to ensure that they include members who have specific cultural expertise or language skills relevant to each target market. There is a distinctive culture in France:

> *"At CAA, we value people-to-people relationships and are once again open to adapting the rules to the situation."*

> *'"In my job as a negotiator, I see concrete differences in each culture almost every day. We see things differently because aspects such as family, education, or social norms play a major role in the formation of culture, and differ greatly from one country to another."*

Finally, regarding the influence of culture on the negotiation process, all the participants affirm that cultural perceptions of trading partners have a significant impact on the dynamics of negotiations in the context of international banking insurance. The negotiating situation, including elements such as time and time pressure, the dimensions of the negotiating team, the negotiating space and available information, are real key findings from data analysis as they are all influenced by cultural perceptions (Hall, 1990). For example, in cultures where decisions are made collectively, the decision-making process may take longer and involve extensive consultation with various stakeholders. For some negotiators:

"Time is not counted, it is a benchmark and it is shared. Spontaneity is appreciated and work is focused on people."

"In France, we adopted an individualistic approach, where our personal interests take precedence over those of the organization. At CAA, employees are more encouraged to make decisions independently and follow their own vision."

The results above support the literature in which the recognition of cultural differences are determinant to establish a relationship of trust (Meier, 2010). French negotiators show the importance of personal relationships, saying :

"Relationships are based on trust and they integrate the personal sphere into the professional setting".

"In fact it is simple, by creating a climate of trust, a cooperative relationship can last over the long term and this reaction over the long term is what is called ultimately long-term synergy".

The term cultural synergy is also a key element in research.

5.1.4.2 The influence of the language on negotiation process

It is important to note that the results obtained suggest that behavior and expectations in negotiations are strongly influenced by cultural variables such as attitudes, communication styles and non-verbal expressions. For the French, verbal language is only part of the message but it still represents a key finding as part of the research (Walker,2003). One of the negotiators told us about his experience in China:

"China and Japan are countries with a culture with a strong context, which is why they promote implicit and often contextual communication. For example, the non-verbal aspects of communication, like gestures etc., are very important there."

These cultural differences affect the way negotiations are conducted and their outcome. A communicator who has a high degree of relationship dependency may respond "Yes" to a request, but the tone of their voice, attitude or non-verbal language may suggest that their response is "Maybe" or "No". According to Walker (2003), French people generally rely on explicit facts rather than implicit facts to communicate information. To understand the overall impact of the wording on the negotiation process, we interviewed the negotiators using various questions. First, all agree that linguistic differences between low- and high-context cultures can have a significant impact on how messages are interpreted and perceived in international negotiations in the field of banking insurance:

"French is still the negotiators' preferred language, but here the majority speak English and German."

"It is well known that in France we favour a fairly direct communication and an instrumental style''.

We tried to better understand what the negotiator meant by direct communication and instrumental style. This one answers us in this type of communication, we focus on the problem, we are pragmatic, impersonal and oriented towards a solution. Thus, the 'what' takes over the 'how'. In other words, the content of the message is more important than how it is delivered.

Like it before, language is a small part of communication. French tends to use many expressions or metaphors to express itself, which can sometimes be perceived as too indirect or evasive by the counterpart. Regarding non-verbal language variations, such as gestures, facial expressions and posture, all are aware that this can significantly affect the dynamics of negotiations between partners from linguistically different cultures in the field of international banking insurance. For example, one of the negotiators recounted his experience in China during the visit of a financial partner.

> *"It is true that the French express their emotions openly, often manifested by a warm temperament in our interactions. Chinese culture, for example, places great importance on non-verbal signals to express their emotions and intentions. So we must remain vigilant on this point. For example, a nod or smile can be interpreted differently depending on the culture, which can lead to misunderstandings etc."*

To avoid these misunderstandings, CAA adopts a verbal and non-verbal communication strategy based on the linguistic specificities of the cultures involved in international negotiations to optimize the chances of success and reduce cultural misunderstandings.

> *"In terms of strategy, and negotiation with China, we are adopting a more implicit language by putting more emphasis on non-verbal signals to convey information. It is important to note that a good negotiator chooses strategies and tactics based on the actors and the context."*

5.1.4.3 The influence of cultural distance on negotiation process

The literature support that predominant cultural differences in international sales negotiation, which could influence verbal and non-verbal language, can have a considerable impact on the process itself and its outcome (Davel, Dupuis et Chanlat, 2008). First, differences in cultural distance are a key finding from data analysis as they can have a significant impact on flexibility and rigidity in discussions, in particular with regard to business decisions and trade-offs in the context of international banking insurance. Two negotiators says:

"When we negotiate with the Chinese partner, we must give great importance to status and personal relationship since China has a high context culture and France, a low context culture, it is important to adapt so as not to make discussions more rigid in terms of concessions and compromises, for example.

"Our director often reminds us to highlight our cultural competencies, which is a key element of managing cultural diversity and to feel cultural empathy in every negotiation."

Another key element is to take into account the context of the country in which we are negotiating. Low-context crop negotiators can take a more pragmatic and logical approach to making business decisions, which can lead to more flexible discussions and faster compromises. Mintu-Wimsatt (2002) argues that although studies of the relationship of personality traits to bargaining patterns have produced non-homogeneous results, the incorporation of cultural context might provide some interesting results. Indeed, as the results moderate the effect of the cultural context is a key finding from data analysis where the conclusion suggests that the context moderates the relationship between the nature of the negotiator and the resolution of conciliation problems. Concessions and agreements therefore depend on the influence of cultural factors. Negotiators from different cultures have different approaches to making concessions. Negotiators from low context cultures are likely to use logic, while individuals from high context cultures are more likely to use custom arguments.

"We have noticed that from a professional experience perspective in China, Chinese negotiators place great importance on interpersonal relationships and the preservation of harmony. During our discussions, several Chinese negotiators used personalized arguments and took a more indirect approach to express their needs and concessions."

On the other hand, France, which has a culture with a low context, favours a more direct and logical approach.

''We emphasize the ability to adapt because in France, we are more inclined to argue rationally by highlighting facts, figures or tangible data to justify our positions and concessions''.

The outcome of the negotiation can take various forms. The final agreement may be in the form of an informal agreement, typical of high context cultures, or more formal contracts, prevailing in countries with a low cultural context. In addition, other negotiators are addressing cultural diversity as a challenge at CAA's international opening. Cultural differences have created difficulties, particularly in mutual understanding, communication and building trust with international partners:

"To be honest, we have sometimes had misunderstandings or friction during negotiations because we did not take enough into account the differences in perception of time, and social norms of other parties."

In addition, we observe that in most cases cultural expectations of professional behavior and interpersonal relationships require an adaptation of negotiation strategies and business practices to ensure the success of operations to the international. This adaptation of strategy is a key finding from data analysis. According to Graham, Kim, Lin et Robinson (1988), negotiators who put a lot of emphasis on persuasion will develop a "win-win" strategy. On the other hand, negotiators who do not attach importance to this step establish a winning losing strategy'':

'"At CAA, we attach great importance to the persuasion stage when developing our strategy. We see that the win-win strategy is the one that brings us the most success"

According to some negotiators, to deal with cultural diversity, several skills are required.

"When we talk about cultural diversity, we are talking about the ability to demonstrate intercultural intelligence. It is even essential to understand and appreciate cultural differences."

Finally, effective and empathetic communication is necessary to establish trusting relationships with partners from diverse cultures. They are key findings because they have

the ability to quickly adapt to local standards and business practices which is important for success in diverse international markets.

5.1.4.4 The influence of the strategy used during the negotiation process

There are cultural differences in all elements of international negotiation. Negotiation style is an invariable element of the negotiation process as it represents also a key finding from data analysis. It is influenced by cultural similarities and differences, since individuals with a certain style of negotiation come from a particular cultural model (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

"We favour the adaptation strategy of taking into account the national culture of the foreign country in the exchanges. For this, we make sure to take into account the sensitivity of the other, emotional mood, body language and verbal signals etc."

By adapting to these cultural aspects, negotiators seek to build trust and facilitate communication throughout the negotiation process. However, other French negotiators say they use a compromise strategy in some cases.

"The compromise strategy was used in our discussions with our German partner because they attach particular importance to justice and equality in the agreements concluded."

With regard to national negotiations, the strategies used differ considerably, which highlights the profound impact of culture on a country's governance, the values of its inhabitants, their principles and behaviours.

"Our strategy differs depending on where we negotiate. If we negotiate between French, we use a competitive strategy where the negotiation rounds are often less structured, with prolonged discussions compared to the German approach, where final decisions are made more quickly."

We observe in the way to respond that there is a strong desire among French stakeholders to control their environment, and that is inevitably reflected in the way the French approach management and professional relations. This characteristic can also influence the negotiation process when it involves countries with different cultures, often requiring adjustments and adaptations. As mentioned earlier, international negotiations require careful preparation and a thorough understanding of each country's cultural specificities. Negotiators adjust their strategic approach to these differences to avoid misunderstandings and promote effective communication with our foreign partners. However, these adjustments present in some cases specific challenges in the field of banking insurance. Indeed, when it comes to managing negotiation styles such as avoidance, cooperation, competition and compromise, it is essential to take into account cultural variations and the impact of these styles on the international negotiation process. For example, negotiators need to be aware that in certain cultures, such as those that favour competition, the focus is on seeking personal gains, which can lead to tensions in discussions. On the other hand, in cooperative cultures it is important to foster an environment conducive to finding mutually beneficial solutions. Finally, avoidance and compromise styles can also present challenges, as they require delicate management of expectations and concessions. In short, the ability to navigate these trading styles while taking into account cultural differences is essential to ensure the success of international negotiations in the banking insurance sector.

5.2 - Results Presentation C I B

5.2.1 Presentation of CIB

The table below contains information from the participants' interview responses that present the demographic aspects of the CIB company.

Table 18 : Table of participant demographics - CIB company

Aspect	Description
Company Name	CIB (Founded in China)
Industry	Banking and financial services
Core Expertise	- Corporate finance - Capital markets - Derivatives - Risk management solutions
Strategic Focus	- Corporate finance: Tailored financing solutions for Chinese companies in growth projects, M&A transactions, structured finance, and IPOs - Capital markets: Access to global markets for fundraising and risk management - Derivatives: Protection against fluctuations in interest rates, currencies, and commodities
International Expansion	- Expanded presence in leading financial centres like New York, London, and Paris - Coverage of US and European markets from dedicated offices
Innovation	- Commitment to innovation and technology integration - Investment in cutting-edge technologies and digital solutions - Implementation of process automation and advanced trading platforms for enhanced client experience
Company Philosophy	Combining Crédit Agricole Group's expertise with extensive international presence to support clients globally in achieving their financial goals, wherever they are in the world

5.2.2 Key Findings and Peripheral Findings of CIB

The table below provides a summary of the main conclusions drawn from participants' responses. A detailed version is presented in the following section.

Table 19 : Summary of the main key findings highlighted by participants' responses

Themes identified	Behaviour of Chinese negotiators at CIB	Researcher Comments
Profile of Chinese negotiators.	- Emotional sensitivity, body language, and verbal cues. Chinese negotiators place great importance on emotional sensitivity and non-verbal cues during negotiations. - Status orientation and relationship respect. Chinese negotiators prioritize maintaining status and relationships during negotiations. - Preference for a holistic and thorough negotiation style (haragei). Chinese negotiators tend to favor a detailed and comprehensive approach during discussions, where all aspects of the subject are thoroughly examined.	- This emotional sensitivity can be perceived as an advantage in cross-cultural negotiations, as it enables Chinese negotiators to better understand and respond to the expectations of their foreign business partners. - This orientation can influence how Chinese negotiators approach discussions and the concessions they are willing to make to preserve long-term relationships. - This negotiation style can be seen as patient and thoughtful, often contrasting with the faster and more direct approach of Western negotiators.
Barriers Encountered	- Internal Barriers - Cultural Differences - External Barriers - Language Differences - External Barriers - Fierce Competition - External Barriers - Consequences of Brexit	- Adjustments to meet the expectations of US clients highlight the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural nuances in international business. - The need for translators or language skills underlines the challenges of intercultural communication in an international context. - The need to adopt aggressive strategies to stand out in the US financial market underscores the intensity of international competition. - The challenges of post-Brexit regulatory uncertainty illustrate the concrete impact on international companies, forcing them to adapt quickly to changing regulatory environments. - Important role of external socio-cultural barriers that can influence the process of managing cultural diversity.

Themes identified	Behaviour of Chinese negotiators at CIB	Researcher Comments
Necessary Resources	- Time	- Significant impact: Effective time management is crucial for Chinese negotiators. They value patience and building long-term relationships, which can make them less sensitive to immediate time pressures. Moreover, these differences in time perception can pose challenges in negotiations with Western partners, underscoring the importance of increased cultural sensitivity and strategic adaptation to ensure the success of international negotiations.
Negotiation	- Little negotiation, development of long-term relationships.	- The Chinese are reliable partners. They focus on building interpersonal relationships and maintaining social harmony, resulting in a patient approach focused on building long-term relationships rather than immediate outcomes.
Cultural Influence	- Part of the international commitment. - Wealth for the company, multicultural team. - Acceptance of cultural differences as a wealth - Management of cultural diversity for a positive influence on negotiation results. - Cultural sensitivity and adaptation to the cultural norms and expectations of business partners.	- Positively impacts the company thanks to the multicultural team. - Positive link between cultural diversity and international success. - High cultural sensitivity.
Influence of the Cultural Distance	- Differences in cultural distance between the parties involved have a significant impact on the flexibility and rigidity of discussions. - Ability to adapt, communicate and deal with other cultures. - Respect for authority is important and this can have a significant impact in the relations between the two stakeholders - The first impression is influenced by factors such as respect for hierarchy and social norms, which can favorably affect the opinion of the other party.	- Chinese negotiators can selectively present information to preserve their image, thus influencing the dynamics of the negotiation. - Strong cultural empathy that positively influences intercultural management and, consequently, the success of international activities. - Adaptation to respect for authority may be necessary to facilitate better mutual understanding and effective communication between the parties. - Managing first impressions is crucial to building effective working relationships and fostering a constructive negotiating atmosphere from the start.

Language Influence	- Mimicry is seen as a sign of respect and social harmony. - Adoption of gestures and facial expressions of the interlocutor to strengthen the relationship. - Prolonged eye contact perceived as modest and respectful, adapted to the American context where eye contact expresses interest and attention. - Body language is subtle and reserved, gestures discreet and controlled, facial expressions less expressive.	- Mimicry is important for building relationships and trust, both for Chinese and US negotiators. This shows that sincerity and authenticity are essential in communication between different cultures. - Differences in eye expression and eye contact underscore the need for a thorough understanding of cultural norms to avoid misunderstandings and facilitate intercultural communication. - The body language of Chinese negotiators is often more subtle and reserved, which may differ from the more expressive style of their American counterparts. This difference requires adaptation to facilitate mutual understanding.

Strategy Influence	- Use of persuasion strategy based on emotional appeal and reciprocity to positively influence negotiators in the opposing party. - Use of concessions often seen as a sign of flexibility and goodwill. - Use of the adaptation strategy to meet the cultural expectations of foreign trading partners.	- The use of emotional and reciprocity techniques can be effective in gaining an advantage in negotiations with American negotiators. - Concessions can play a crucial role in building lasting relationships and creating a climate of cooperation, especially in negotiations between Chinese and Americans. - Adaptation is an important strategy in international negotiations, especially when cultures differ considerably.

The table below shows the peripheral results from the participants' responses during the interviews.

Table 20 : Summary of the main peripheral findings highlighted by participants' responses

Peripheral findings	Explanation
Impact of Technology on Negotiations	- The increasing use of technologies such as videoconferencing or online communication platforms could have indirect repercussions on the negotiations between China and France in the field of bank insurance. While this may facilitate transnational exchanges by reducing language barriers, it may not directly contribute to the exploration of the influence of cultural variables on the negotiation process. However, this raises important considerations about how technological advances can influence the overall context of international bank insurance negotiations, thus providing additional insight into the overall business landscape.
The increased presence of consultants	- These consultants are often hired to help companies navigate cultural differences and adapt their negotiation strategies accordingly. Although this may not directly contribute to the exploration of the influence of cultural variables on the negotiation process, This highlights a common practice in international affairs that may be relevant to understanding the broader context of the bancassurance negotiations between these two countries.

5.2.3 International Activity

Chinese insurers have a particularly crucial role to play in the face of the major changes currently taking place in the country: an ageing population, increasing healthcare needs, galloping urbanisation and, last but not least, a growing aversion to risk on the part of households. In a personalised approach, digital tools and resources are exploited comprehensively after the consultant has reviewed the client's business model to understand the client's needs, research objectives and available resources (Brown and Tannenbaum 2019). To identify target markets, Chinese negotiators, unlike French negotiators, used an external consulting firm to conduct competitive analysis. This difference is a key finding from data analysis.

> *"It's very common in China to use a consulting firm. This gives us real-time information and, above all, more detailed information about the local market than if we did it ourselves."*

Indeed, Chinese negotiators attach great importance to accurate data collection and in-depth analysis before making strategic decisions. In addition, the involvement of an external consulting firm enhances the credibility and legitimacy of the company in the Chinese market, which can facilitate relations with local business partners and regulatory authorities. This approach reflects another key outcome of the data analysis, namely that China's preference is oriented towards a methodical and data-driven approach for strategic decision-making in international expansion. This international expansion has obviously been slowed down several times because of various barriers encountered during the development of CIB.

> *"It is always interesting to develop internationally, but we must remain vigilant to barriers that may arise. For example, during our development on the European market, we faced internal barriers related to the adaptation of organizational structures. It was necessary to meet the specific requirements of the English market, particularly in terms of local regulations and business practices."*

Rognes (1994) identified that the most important factors in conflict management style are the cultural factor and the systemic (political) factor. Thus, the Chinese must constantly adapt. The systemic factor is a key finding as the results from the data highlight the importance of adapting internal policies. CIB had to review its internal policies, business processes and governance systems to comply with US legal and regulatory requirements. These same two negotiators also gave us other examples of internal barriers this time focused on cultural differences. These barriers are a key outcome of the research as they provide a basis for finding solutions or developing practical recommendations. The initiatives proposed by the Chinese negotiators enrich the existing literature on this subject.

> *''The English business culture is very different from ours, since it is focused on speed and flexibility, which may require adjustments in the way we approach transactions and business relations with the English''.*

Externally, two other Chinese negotiators cite language differences as external barriers, which is another key finding from data analysis.

> *"To deal with language barriers are also external barriers to consider, we use translators especially when negotiating in the French market. In some cases, it can make things easier."*

The socio-cultural environment also plays an important role as a key finding from data analysis (Bergeron, 2001). Indeed, Chinese negotiators insist that greetings are of great importance and are often accompanied by respectful gestures, such as greetings with hands clasped in front of the chest (the gesture of Chinese "namaste") or the inclinations of the head. In contrast, in France, greetings are generally more informal, with a firm handshake and direct eye contact.

> *''It's important to highlight these cultural differences because it helps us better understand each other and build trust. This trust is key for successful negotiations on the international stage, as it paves the way for open communication and teamwork, leading to positive results for all involved''*

In terms of external barriers, Chinese negotiators talk about barriers to entry into fierce competition in the English or French financial market, where many local and international financial institutions are already well established. They say that their English counterparts often have a long history and a strong presence in the financial market, which gives them a significant competitive advantage. Faced with this intense competition, Chinese negotiators had to adopt aggressive and innovative strategies to stand out in the English market (targeted marketing campaigns, development of differentiated products and services, etc.).

"The English market is a bit problematic now as we have to deal with Brexit and adapt accordingly. It is this regulatory uncertainty but also this loss of access to the single market that we are facing today, making it difficult for us to provide financial services to EU clients."

Chinese negotiators point to the fact that external and internal barriers remain a minority as several factors facilitate openness abroad. If we go back to the examples of the English market, CIB's solid global reputation as a leading financial institution has facilitated the opening on English soil.

"In contrast to the difficulties we have in the English market, our specialized expertise in certain areas, such as capital markets, derivatives and risk management, are in high demand in the French and American financial markets, which allows us to strengthen our international presence."

Furthermore, CIB possesses numerous competitive advantages identified as key findings in our data analysis. These advantages enable CIB to excel internationally, particularly in the United States, where the company diligently offers localized support to American, French, and English clients. This strategic approach positions CIB as the preferred partner for Chinese firms aiming to globalize and for foreign enterprises seeking opportunities in China.

5.2.4 Cultural influences encountered during international activity

5.2.4.1 The influence of cultural on negotiation process

When we review the responses of Chinese negotiators on the impact of culture, the perceived cultural differences in the target markets have a significant impact on the preparation and planning of negotiations for the international expansion of a banking insurance company. Some research refers to a positive influence in negotiation, characterized by the ability to promote constructive and mutually beneficial interactions despite cultural differences. In other words, it means accepting the diversities of the other party and turning them into assets for collaboration (Brett and Gelfand, 2010). This positive influence is a key finding from data analysis and one of the participant tells more about it :

> *"We are aware in China that cultural diversity is a richness that is part of our daily lives and that it is therefore normal and essential to work in the international market, accepting the differences of each to make it a strength".*

In addition, Chinese teams are multicultural, which is a key competitive advantage. Two other Chinese negotiators bounce back on the fact that good management of this cultural diversity is necessary for its influence to be positive on the outcome of the negotiation. One of the participants support this key finding.

> *"It's well known that a company that adapts quickly to change, especially when it comes to working with other countries abroad, is a company that can more easily overcome the external and internal barriers".*

> *"We favour a more flexible and consensus-oriented approach, which allows us to take the time necessary to reach mutually beneficial agreements".*

Taking into account the culture of the other goes first of all by understanding it. In addition, it is important to study whether the culture of the other party is rather individualistic or collectivist. Naturally, its concepts appeared as key findings from data analysis.

"If we take the example of our culture, we are oriented towards a collectivist culture where everyone has a social role within a group".

In a collective system, value finds its source in the global discourse of living society, which nourishes and trains its members and assumes responsibility for the generated state of mind" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2004). According to Drummond (2010), collectivist cultures are more faithful to their businesses. In the context of negotiations, this can result in a more patient and relationship-building approach rather than immediate outcomes. Two Chinese negotiators allude to these concepts based on their own experience.

''French negotiators, as individualists, privilege their own personal interests and objectives, seeking to maximize individual gain in negotiation. This divergence in priorities has made it difficult, for example, to find common ground and reach mutually satisfactory agreements.''

Thus, it is essential to take into account and respect these cultural differences in order to cultivate a relationship of trust, encourage decisions beneficial to all parties and lead to lasting compromises in the field of international banking insurance. This notion of trust, which we observed to be significant for French negotiators, holds similar importance for the Chinese. It serves as a catalyst for fostering cultural synergy grounded in enduring relationships. Finally, regarding the attitude of the negotiating participants, the Chinese negotiators testify that the cultural perceptions of the trading partners have a significant impact on the dynamics of the negotiations in the context of international banking insurance. For example, differences in high- and low-context communication styles are both key findings from data analysis as it can lead to misunderstandings and friction during negotiations.

"For most of our international negotiations, we mostly adopt indirect communication, that is, communication based on non-verbal signals, facial expressions and social contexts to convey messages."

Finally, differences in standards of politeness, attitudes towards time and fundamental values such as trust and integrity can also influence how negotiations are conducted and decisions are made. As a result, cultural sensitivity and the ability to adapt to the cultural norms and expectations of trading partners are essential to establishing successful relationships and concluding beneficial agreements in the field of international banking insurance.

5.2.4.2 The influence of the language on negotiation process

All Chinese speakers mentioned that attitude towards time, mimicry, eye contact, body language, and language itself are cultural variables that can influence the negotiation process. All of them represent key findings within the language theme as they allow to fill gaps of the literature by providing details in them. According to Chinese negotiators, time is often seen flexibly, and cyclically.

"We are less sensitive to strict deadlines because, as we said before, we prefer a more patient and long-term approach."

Some participants elaborated on the distinctions observed in the United States, where time is regarded as a valuable and linear asset. Negotiators tend to prioritize outcomes and place significant emphasis on adherence to schedules and efficiency. Concerning mimicry, Chinese respondents emphasized that it symbolizes respect and fosters social harmony.

"We very easily adopt gestures, facial expressions to create ties and strengthen relationships, it is part of our DNA I would say. This cultural variable is equally important among the French who consider mimicry as a form of sincerity and authenticity."

Some negotiators mimic their counterparts to build rapport and trust. Chinese negotiators emphasize prolonged eye contact, which may be seen as intrusive or impolite in some contexts.

"We are often asked how we look, observe, etc. But it is important to know that this direct eye contact actually shows a certain modesty and respect towards the interlocutors. This contact is also present in the United States to express interest and attention."

Finally, if we talk about the first contact, a decisive step during the negotiation process, Chinese negotiators like when the first contact is formal and reserved.

''We have had to adapt especially in France since it is common to see that the first contact is often informal and open''.

To adapt to this language and ensure that this cultural variable positively influences the final outcome of the negotiation, companies put several strategies in place and we discussed some with the five Chinese respondents present. First of all, everyone is unanimous in saying that it is necessary to adapt the verbal and non-verbal communication strategy to optimize the chances of success and reduce cultural misunderstanding.

"I noticed several times in a meeting with our US partner, differences in communication styles. American negotiators are more direct and expressive in their body language and gestures, while we Chinese negotiators tend to be more reserved and subtle in our expression and in our way of acting. Our gestures are more discreet and controlled."

Similar to the answer of this respondent, another one shared measures to adapt the communication strategy.

''Adjusting your language is likely one of the most effective strategies, as it enhances clarity and directness in communication, steering clear of metaphors or ambiguous expressions that might lead to misunderstanding in certain cultural contexts''.

Another key finding, echoing the sentiments of the previous respondent, underscores the significance of adapting body language when required. This involves being more expressive through dynamic gestures, alongside maintaining direct eye contact to convey dedication and engagement in negotiations.

Finally, another respondent tells us about active listening, which we thought was important to note because it was not mentioned by the literature.

"We attach great importance to actively listening and understanding the needs and expectations of our interlocutors, whether American or otherwise. That's why we generally ask open-ended questions and take the time to listen carefully to the answers to better understand perspectives and find common ground more easily."

This section on the cultural variable of language emphasizes the importance of adaptability and cultural sensitivity in intercultural communication in international affairs.

5.2.4.3 The influence of cultural distance on negotiation process

To study the influence of cultural distance on the negotiation process, we rely on the participant's responses. According to Schneider and Barsoux (2003), cultural distance can allow individuals to enrich themselves culturally especially if it is large. Indeed, cultural distance is a key finding of data analysis where all participants agree that this concept is everywhere in their daily work.

"Yes, cultural distance has a major impact on our interactions, so it can promote cultural richness, especially when it is significant, but it is also an omnipresent element in our daily professional activities, which influences our negotiations at all levels".

Moreover, they all agree that differences in cultural distance between the parties involved in the intercultural negotiation process have a significant impact on flexibility and rigidity in discussions, in particular with regard to trade decisions and trade-offs.

"We had to deal with significant cultural differences, which influenced our approach to the negotiation. For example, Americans have a high-context culture, and respect for authority is important. This observation demonstrates that there is a strong bargaining status that can influence the perception of credibility in negotiations."

It is thus common for the Chinese to take a pinch when negotiating with the Americans, to ensure that the messages are clear and understood appropriately. In addition, another participant, bounced back from the previous remarks by adding that the first impression is often influenced by factors such as respect for hierarchy and social norms. In other words, he says that when any negotiation must be done, the importance of projecting a positive and respectful image is crucial, since it can positively influence the opinion of the other party.

There is also another notion that was addressed by one of the Chinese speakers, namely the notion of interpersonal attraction, which also plays an important role because this may be interpreted and addressed differently by each party due to cultural differences.

"Our reactions in China are based on strong personal ties where we take the time to discuss topics unrelated to the business transaction before any long-term cooperation. This is different, for example, for French or American counterparts who place more importance on aspects related to the transaction itself, such as the quality of the product or service and commercial conditions, rather than building personal relationships."

Cultural diversity is therefore another key finding from data analysis as it represents a challenge when opening up internationally. Two participants agreed that cultural differences between China and the United States, for example, have led to difficulties in mutual understanding and effective communication. Misunderstandings may have arisen due to differences in social norms, expectations and communication styles. These difficulties have sometimes slowed down the negotiation process and required additional effort to build trusting relationships and overcome cultural obstacles.

''In China, we are inclined to present information selectively to protect our image and maintain our reputation. For example, when negotiating a contract, we highlight the positive aspects of the product or service while minimizing or omitting the less favorable aspects. This practice is not accepted by Americans, for example, who want specific details on product characteristics, trade conditions and comparative advantages over competition.''

Key findings from participants shed light on the significance of cultural diversity in the corporate landscape. One participant emphasizes the importance of certain skills.

"To integrate cultural diversity into the company, it's essential to prioritize specific abilities. For instance, cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in comprehending and honoring the norms, values, and expectations of trading partners from diverse cultures''.

Another participant underscores the multifaceted nature of cultural diversity.

"Effective communication across various languages and communication styles is paramount for establishing clear communication channels and averting misunderstandings''.

Moreover, another participant highlights the necessity for adaptability and an open mindset in negotiation strategies.

"Adapting negotiation strategies according to cultural nuances requires an open mind and adaptability. In Chinese culture, persuasion is a cornerstone, often relying on emotional appeal or reciprocity to sway the opinions of our counterparts positively."

It is clear to see that in the culture of the seller, like that of the Chinese negotiators, making concessions can be seen as a sign of flexibility and goodwill to reach an agreement. Chinese negotiators may be willing to make concessions during negotiations to maintain good relations and foster a climate of cooperation.

''In terms of strategy, it is obvious that we consider an agreement mutually as a satisfactory final result, even if it involves compromises, which is not always the case with our French counterparts''.

5.2.4.4 The influence of the strategy used during the negotiation process

It is clear that cultural differences exist in all aspects of international negotiation. The negotiation style, in particular, remains a constant element of the negotiation process and so a key finding as part of the research. It is influenced by both commonalities and cultural differences, as individuals tend to adopt a negotiating style that reflects the norms and values of their own culture (Salacuse, 1999). The adaptation strategy is the most widely used strategy in China.

"We attach great importance to the emotional sensitivity, body language and verbal signals of our interlocutors. The adaptation strategy is the one that suits us best, because we know how to adapt to the behaviour of the other party, in order to meet the cultural expectations of foreign trading partners."

In addition, the focus of the negotiation in China is on status and respect for their relationship. Moreover, it is generally accepted that these negotiators attach less importance to time than their counterparts in Western countries. For example, all of the negotiators recalled.

''We lean towards a negotiating approach known as haragei, which involves thoroughly examining all facets of a topic and discussing it multiple times to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the matter at hand''.

In contrast, North Americans and other Westerners tend to be short-term oriented and prefer a faster approach, aimed at conducting negotiations in a systematic and effective manner. Regarding the role of the parties in the negotiation, Chinese negotiators agree that they are using various strategies to influence the situation favorably, while their NorthUS give equal rights to parties and promote the best offer. This distinction is notable because it highlights the differences in behaviour between the Chinese and French negotiators, the

latter preferring control of the situation. Finally, conflict management is also an important variable to consider in the company's strategy.

> *"We have observed that the French and American negotiators do not hesitate to face differences of interest directly. On the other hand, our approach favours direct language in our exchanges, which demonstrates our willingness to treat potential conflicts with modesty and respect, rather than through indirect communication."*

These excerpts offer valuable insights into the research, illuminating several specific challenges encountered by negotiators in the banking insurance sector when navigating various negotiation styles, including avoidance, cooperation, competition, and compromise. For example, when a Chinese negotiator meets with a foreign partner using a competitive negotiating style, this can create tensions and misunderstandings, as Chinese values often favor harmony and cooperation, that is, the adaptation strategy.

In addition, emotion can also be an additional challenge since culture itself can influence social perceptions, which in turn could affect the way emotion is expressed.

> *''We tend to adjust our emotions because we are often said to be rather cold. We are used to long periods of silence and reflection, which can be difficult to accept for negotiators in developed Western countries, especially those from cultures with a weak context, who plan for every poverty''.*

For another participant, it seems that the concept of personal trust is another specific challenge to take into account, which depends on the cultural characteristics of the negotiators and can thus gradually influence the course of the negotiations.

> *"In our field, personal trust is critical to the success of trade negotiations. That is why we are committed to building lasting relationships based on a solid long-term foundation. For example, since the United States is considered an individualistic country, the creation and development of personal trust during negotiation was more complex."*

Finally, a further challenge comes to light: avoidance. This challenge can be seen as a lack of commitment or seriousness in Chinese culture, while in other cultures it can be seen as a strategy for preserving the relationship. Thus, by integrating cultural differences into the negotiation process, Chinese negotiators can overcome these challenges and achieve mutually satisfactory agreements that preserve relationships and foster long-term collaboration.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

In this part, we will discuss the results of the two companies studied following exchanges with the ten negotiators. Finally, the last section will allow us to propose an improvement of the conceptual framework thanks to the additional information collected during the exchanges.

First, the profiles of the French and Chinese negotiators are different, which highlighted the importance of gathering information on the culture of the other party before any negotiation. French negotiators favour careful preparation, cultural understanding and a factual approach in international negotiations, while their Chinese counterparts attach more importance to emotional sensitivity, non-verbal signals and the preservation of long-term relationships, taking a holistic and patient approach focused on building personal relationships. This observation makes it possible to establish a certain conformity with the literature where according to Schneider and Barsoux (2003), organizations must anticipate the actions and needs of individuals from other cultures in order to be able to share and collaborate together. Indeed, we observe through the evidence gathered that this use of cultural diversity and its relevant use leads to competitive advantages, what is called «intelligent management of cultural diversity» Higgs (1996). However, there are some similarities between the two profiles when it comes to their international experiences and their vision of cultural diversity. Through their international experiences, they have broadened their horizons and integrated cultural differences into their daily lives. This strategy refer to the research objective number 3. By identifying the differences in negotiation approaches between French and Chinese negotiators, we contribute to the understanding of cross-cultural interactions in international business, as emphasized by Bartel-Radic (2014).

In addition, another important factor to consider is cultural distance, which is a factor representing the inability to communicate effectively with people from other cultures (Davel, Dupuis and Chanlat, 2008).

Moreover, diversity can destabilize negotiators during international exchanges (Moral, 2007; Scotto, Lot, and Tiffon, 2014). In the case of Chinese negotiators, the cultural differences between Chinese and American negotiators have widened a gap in the negotiation related to this cultural distance. Indeed, Chinese negotiators said they had to change their way of doing things because of a culture of high context, marked by a strong respect for authority. This adaptation from the Chinese side highlight the importance of the research objective 1 where the main goal is to analyse how French and Chinese negotiators adapt their negotiation styles to manage cultural diversity in international negotiations. Moreover, we saw that literature presented cultural distance as an international opportunity if companies had the necessary resources. In reality, the testimony of the French suggests that too great a cultural difference can cause complications for the company, sometimes insurmountable, even if they have the financial resources.

In addition, we also note the presence of several barriers related to internationalization and may represent difficulties when negotiating business internationally. Theses barriers highlight some disparities that exist in the banking field between France and China answering the research question 1 in some way. Indeed, we note that French negotiators face external socio-cultural barriers, particularly in adapting to the requirements of foreign markets and in managing cultural diversity. While for Chinese negotiators, the challenges include internal barriers such as cultural and linguistic differences, as well as external barriers such as intense competition and the consequences of Brexit. These barriers must be taken into account, as the lack of knowledge about markets, business practices, cultural differences in the target countries have a significant influence on the international success of the negotiations (AI-Hyari, 2012; Abdellatif, 2013; Wright, Westhead and Ucbasaran, 2015). These barriers are linked to the orientation of the company and the profile of the negotiator marked more or less by the will to overcome its barriers or on the contrary to take more risks (Baum, Schwens and Kabst, 2013).

Another characteristic is the influence of international experience and its activity on the development of companies abroad. Indeed, we note that previous experiences at CAA or CIB, have contributed strongly to their success on the international scene and that for French negotiators, work experience is more conducive to international success than life

experience in foreign countries, which reinforces the comments of some authors (Coeurderoy., 2009). These findings allows us to examine the different practices that have contributed to the success of CIB and CAA.

The results also illustrated the importance of intercultural management as a determining factor in international success (De Jong and Van Houten, 2014). Indeed, as stated previously in the literature, it aims to improve relations with international collaborators (Chevrier, 2003a and 2003b). For both French and Chinese negotiators, this acceptance of various cultures is part of their DNA but also their strategy. This success of international activities is induced by the understanding of cultures and constant adaptation which related again to the research objective number 2.

The exchanges also allowed us to highlight the relationship of trust. For example, international markets require a greater degree of confidence than domestic markets (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). The Chinese favour long-term relations while the French orient their relationship in the short term. Thus, trust makes it possible to develop lasting relationships with employees and thus lead to situations of cultural synergy (Moran and Xardel, 1994). Theses differences in relationship explains the intercultural management practices implemented by CIB and CAA.

We have observed that intercultural skills are necessary to manage cultural diversity. They refer to the core competencies for a manager: strategic, operational, interpersonal and linguistic competencies (Brière, 2015; Pantin, 2006, 2010; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003) as well as an aspect related to the personality of each individual. Strategic skills are important and we also noted a slight difference on the most used strategies of each party. The French are moving more towards an adaptation strategy while the Chinese are moving towards a persuasion strategy. This difference can be explained by the different needs of the new target markets and the different characteristics of the national markets. The internationalization strategy of a company involves the choice of location, the objectives to be achieved, the priorities and the vision of the negotiator (Lemaire, 2013). This point is related to the research objective number 3 where the main mission is to identify strategies that facilitate negotiation between two cultures.

The results of interviews with French and Chinese negotiators reveal significant differences in their approaches, attitudes and negotiation strategies, mainly due to the deep cultural differences between the two groups. One thing is certain: in order to meet these many challenges, it is essential that Chinese and French insurers focus their efforts on developing a broader range of products, on implementing multi-distribution strategies and, lastly, on better controlling the costs and risks they underwrite. The following section will present a new conceptual framework developed following the qualitative study.

6.1 - Proposed New Conceptual Framework

In order to better understand the results of our study, it is interesting to propose a new conceptual framework. The figure below outlines and highlights the important aspects arising from the analysis of the French negotiators at CAA and the Chinese negotiators at CIB.

Figure 21 : New Conceptual Framework based on findings
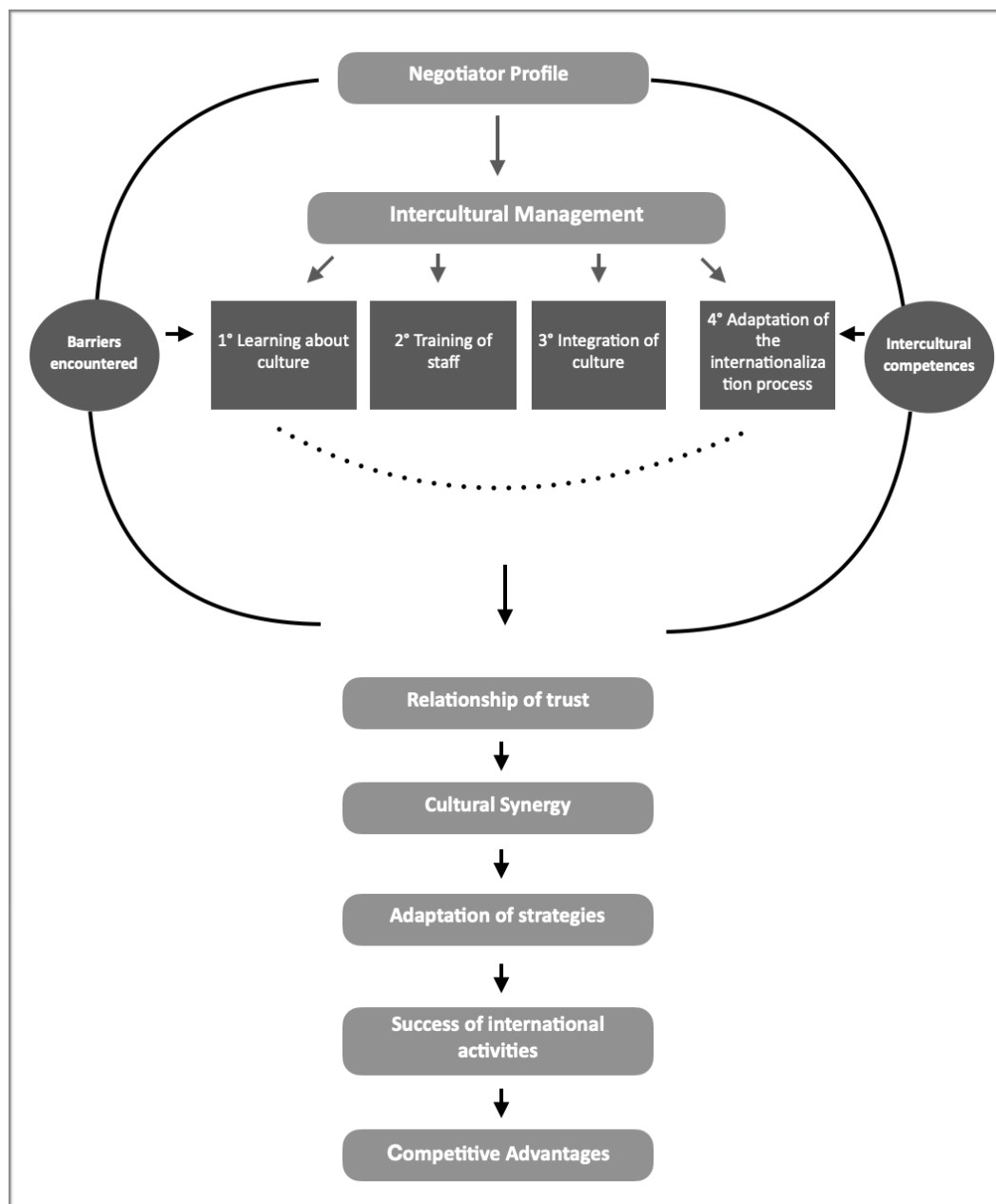
Firstly, the profile of the negotiator has a central role in the international business process. We have seen it before, it has an influence on the perception of the barriers that the company can encounter during internationalization. Indeed, depending on his experience, professional skills and seniority in the company, the negotiator can remove potential obstacles during the development of international activities. In addition, it refers to the perception of cultural diversity and how to proceed in an intercultural situation. Finally, the profile of the negotiator is related to the intercultural skills that make it possible to apprehend cultural diversity. Among the ten negotiators interviewed, all consider intercultural skills to be indispensable in their profession. In other words, negotiators must have an interest in other cultures, curiosity, openness and a taste for encounters (Drummond, 2010; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

The company's international experience is also seen as a factor that can facilitate a company's international expansion. A company that has already carried out international activities can take a step back and learn from its mistakes but also make other decisions to improve the expected result. Companies also need to integrate intercultural management strategies into their business model to facilitate the negotiation process.

The process of intercultural management remains identical to that presented in the conceptual framework proposed earlier in this thesis. It is a continuous management method that takes several steps to give meaning to cultural differences. Moreover, intercultural management is influenced by the barriers that are encountered during the internationalization process. It also mitigates barriers and counteracts these barriers through intercultural skills.

At the same time, barriers to internationalization and intercultural skills can have a link to the development of the relationship of trust with the employee.

Trust is facilitated by managing cultural diversity. Indeed, the adaptation and integration of cultural codes allows to establish relationships of trust and long term, to develop situations of cultural synergies and therefore competitive advantages that positively affect the company's international success.

6.2 - Conclusion & Response To Research Query

After analyzing exchanges with ten negotiators, this study addressed a specific query: to comprehend how French and Chinese negotiators navigate cultural diversity, spotlighting key differences between these two cultures. CAA and CIB companies, with existing international relations, were studied to glean insights into their strategies.

Additionally, this research underscored the significance of specific factors for success in international endeavors. For instance, it's vital for French and Chinese negotiators to embrace behaviors fostering intercultural management. The analysis also emphasized the importance of considering cultural diversity in international relations, thereby enhancing overall success. Comprehending the management of cultural disparities is pivotal for gaining competitive advantages, necessitating intercultural skills tailored to negotiators' profiles.

Finally, the study identified barriers to internationalization, especially from socio-cultural factors in host countries and gaps in understanding foreign business practices. These obstacles can be overcome with intercultural competencies, highlighting their crucial role in managing cultural diversity.

Additionally, the research illuminated negotiators' perceptions of cultural diversity, revealing its impact on intercultural management strategies in companies. Cultural differences can be seen as obstacles, advantages, or integral aspects of international development. Negotiators' diverse experiences, knowledge, and ideologies influence their approach to managing cultural diversity, ranging from proactive to reactive. Nevertheless, there's a widespread acknowledgment of the importance of integrating cultural differences for success in international collaborations.

The next chapter will present the limitations of this study and the conclusion addressing the following problem:

6.3 - Limitations Of The Study

Our study has limitations concerning both the reliability and validity of the collected data. The primary constraint is the limited number of participants interviewed. The small sample size restricts the generalizability of the conclusions drawn from their remarks

Furthermore, although we chose to focus on companies in the same economic sector, namely the banking sector, our sample could have been more diversified. Indeed, we have not managed to include a significant number of French or Chinese companies with substantial management experience in a multicultural context. The diversification of our sample would have enriched our analysis by allowing us, for example, to compare the evolution of cultural variables over several years. Furthermore, the time constraints faced by respondents made it impossible to implement a triangulation of the data to confirm its external validity. However, despite this limitation, the convergence of participants' responses can partially mitigate this gap by enhancing coherence of results.

Cultural diversity is increasingly found in the daily life of companies. However, there is little research on the understanding of the management of the phenomenon for companies in the field of banking insurance and its implication on their international success.

Therefore, it would be interesting to reproduce this study with a larger number of companies and why not with companies operating in different sectors of activity. This would confirm the importance of the various factors identified in this study and distinguish those that are generalizable and those that are considered specific to each company, each country. In addition, it would be beneficial to better understand the role of the negotiator's profile in the target country, in the intercultural management of his company.

This role appeared to us to be dominant in the two companies studied, but is it due to our research protocol or were the interviews planned only with the negotiators? Thus, interviews with other team members, for example, with leaders, could be enlightening.

Chapter 7: General Conclusion

7.1 - Conclusion

This final section of the work aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of the approach taken in this study, starting with the initial question and leading to the results of the interview analysis. The main objective of this research was to explore the influence of cultural variables on the negotiation process, specifically in the context of an insurance product negotiation between two countries with distinct cultures: China and France.

The companies CIB and CAA, already operating internationally, offered us a unique opportunity to seize their ability to adapt to the cultural diversity that characterizes the international context. To this end, we wanted to check how the French and Chinese negotiators manage this diversity and consequently, if each of them adapts some of their business practices. From this question, we found several elements of answers.

The literature review allowed us to identify several key factors that seem to play a crucial role in managing cultural diversity in international collaborations. These elements include cultural distance, cultural diversity, intercultural management practices (such as cultural understanding, staff training, integration and learning, and monitoring and adaptation), the creation of cultural synergy, international achievement and competitive advantages. The ten interviews allowed us to highlight more precisely three factors, determining to conduct business internationally: an understanding of the profile of the negotiator of the other party, adopt sound management of cultural diversity and use intercultural skills. Although the other elements showed a more or less strong link, these three factors are predominant and played a central role in the interviews. In our view, they are crucial in explaining the behaviour of the two companies involved on the international scene in the face of cultural diversity.

However, the identification of these factors is not a complete explanation of the behaviour of these two companies. The identification of certain links has led to a more precise understanding of the management of cultural diversity in international markets.

Thus, the general objective of this study, which was to better understand the impact of cultural variables on the behavior of French and Chinese negotiators in the face of cultural diversity, was achieved.

Finally, our study, which identifies the most influential cultural factors in negotiation, represents information that could be used in the operational definition of an effective negotiation strategy. The managerial implications of our study are developed in the following section.

7.2 - Managerial Implications

This work is a reflection on the behaviour of French and Chinese negotiators when faced with cultural diversity in international negotiation situations. Its interest lies in its ability to provide guidance to entrepreneurs considering their first steps on the international scene, particularly by focusing on the French or Chinese markets. Analysis of the data indicates that possessing intercultural skills is crucial for negotiators, and the way in which they manage cultural diversity depends on their profile. Thus, adapting business practices is essential for success in international business.

Obstacles encountered in the international development process include language differences and business practices, highlighting a lack of understanding of cultural diversity among negotiators. To overcome these obstacles, an effective solution is cultural empathy, involving understanding, respect, lack of prejudice, adaptability and experience of living in other cultures.

Furthermore, as highlighted by several studies, including Bird and Osland (2005) and Ferro Cortes, Skander and Prefontaine (2017), international success is fostered by trusting relationships. Trust encourages long-term commitment between the parties, thereby promoting beneficial cultural synergies.

7.3 - Future Research

To go further, several suggestions are open to this study including developing strategies based on the behaviors of negotiators but also to go further in research by taking into account the historical rating of the targeted culture. In other words, would it not be interesting to look at the historical past of each country, in order to better understand and identify the negotiating characteristics of the Chinese and the French.

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Appendices

Appendix number 1 : Pilot Questionnaire

Pilot Questionnaire
Let's get started

This pilot questionnaire aims to gather information on the experience and practices of companies in the banking insurance sector in relation to international expansion and cross-cultural negotiations. Your participation is essential to help us understand the challenges and strategies associated with these crucial aspects of international business.

1. **Personal information** : Gender / How many years' experience do you have with the company? / Nationality.

2. **What is the company's core business? What is its field of activity?**

3. **After how many years has the company decided to expand internationally?**

4. **How many countries are you present in?**

5. **What means have you used to identify target markets?**

6. **Have any factors facilitated (or hindered) your international expansion?**

7. **Is the outsourcing of your international business the result of a specific intention or strategy?**

8. **Do you have competitive advantages abroad? If so, what are they?**

9. **How do cultural differences in target markets influence the preparation and planning of your company's international negotiations in the banking insurance sector?**

10. **How do language differences between cultures affect communication during international negotiations in the banking insurance sector, and how can companies deal with them to optimise their chances of success?**

11 **What skills do you think are needed to deal with cultural diversity? How does your company integrate the culture of foreign countries into its business practices?**

12 **What means have you used to identify target markets?**

13. **What challenges do bank insurance negotiators face in managing different negotiating styles in a culturally diverse context?**

Thank you very much for taking part in this pilot questionnaire. Your responses are invaluable and will contribute to our understanding of the challenges and practices associated with international expansion and cross-cultural negotiations in the banking insurance sector. Your input is essential in helping us to develop effective strategies in an increasingly globalised business environment.
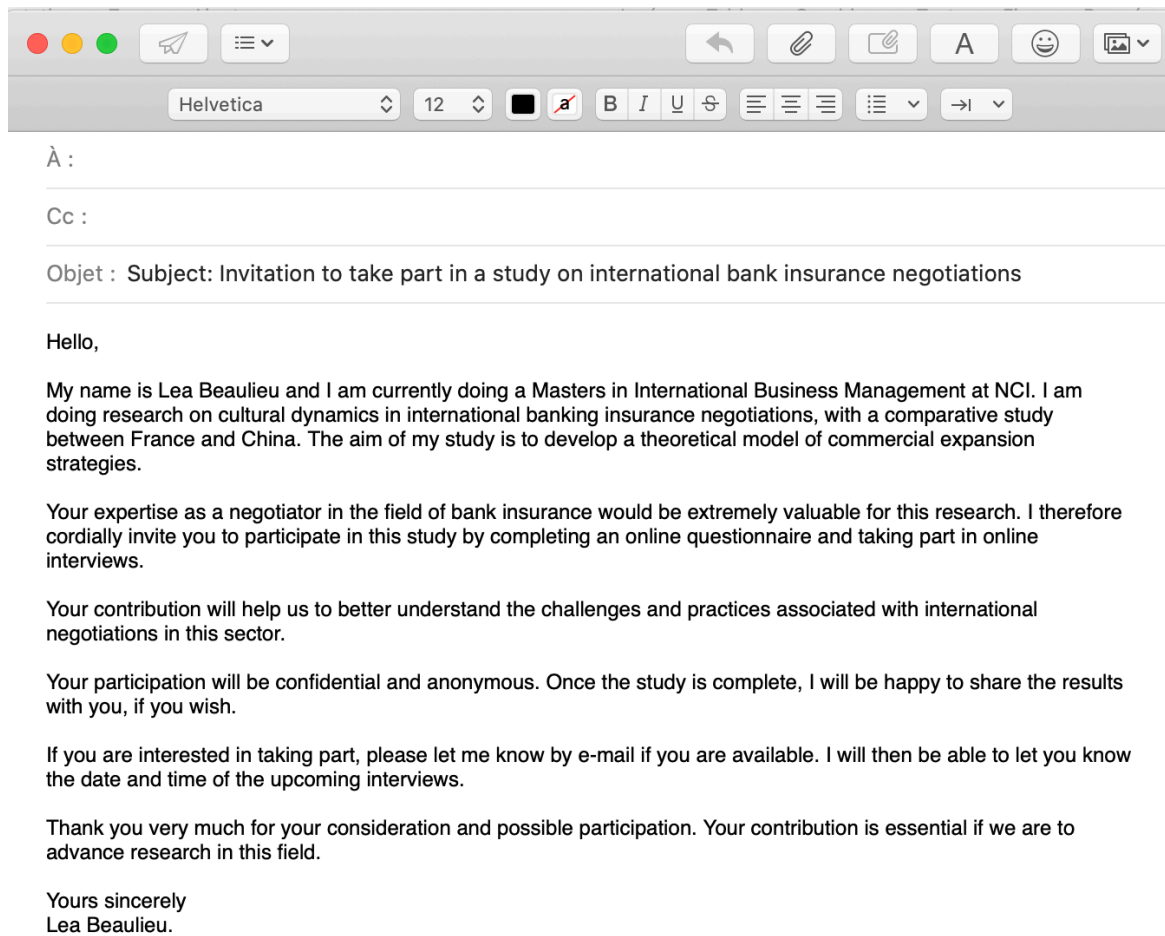
Appendix number 2 : Interviews Guide

We are conducting these interviews to learn more about your company's experiences and practices within the banking insurance sector regarding international expansion and cross-cultural negotiations. Your insights are invaluable in helping us grasp the challenges and strategies involved in these critical aspects of global business.

1. Can tou tell me about yourself and your background in the company?
2. Do you know when the company has been created and what are the main activities/ sector of activity?
3. Did the company plan for this from the outset, or did it develop over time?
4. What type of business does the company conduct on foreign markets?
5. Who are your key partners today?
6. How did you identify your target markets?
7. Have you encountered any barriers to international expansion?
8. Have any factors made it easier (or more difficult) for you to expand abroad?
9. What are your competitive advantages?
10. How do cultural differences in target markets affect the way your company prepares and plans its negotiations for international expansion in bank insurance?
11. To what extent do the cultural perceptions of your business partners affect the dynamics of international negotiations in bank insurance, particularly in terms of trust, decision-making and compromise?
12. How do linguistic differences between cultures affect communication in international banking insurance negotiations?
13. To what extent do differences in non-verbal language affect the dynamics of negotiations between partners from linguistically different cultures in the field of international banking insurance?
14. How can companies in banking insurance adjust their communication according to linguistic differences to improve their chances of success and avoid cultural misunderstandings during international negotiations?
15. To what extent do cultural differences between the parties influence the flexibility and rigidity of discussions during cross-cultural negotiations in international bank insurance?
16. Has cultural diversity posed difficulties for the internationalisation of your company? If so, which ones?
17. What skills do you think are needed to manage cultural diversity effectively?
18. Do you use a specific strategy to take into account the culture of foreign countries in your business?
19. Have you had to change the way you negotiate because of cultural differences?
20. What problems do bank insurance negotiators face when managing different negotiation styles in a culturally diverse context?

Thank you sincerely for your participation in this face-to-face interview. Your insights have been invaluable and will greatly contribute to our understanding of international expansion and cross-cultural negotiations in the banking insurance sector. Your input is crucial in shaping effective strategies for navigating the complexities of today's global business environment.

Appendix number 3: Recruitment e-mail template for interview participation

À :

Cc :

Objet : Subject: Invitation to take part in a study on international bank insurance negotiations

Hello,

My name is Lea Beaulieu and I am currently doing a Masters in International Business Management at NCI. I am doing research on cultural dynamics in international banking insurance negotiations, with a comparative study between France and China. The aim of my study is to develop a theoretical model of commercial expansion strategies.

Your expertise as a negotiator in the field of bank insurance would be extremely valuable for this research. I therefore cordially invite you to participate in this study by completing an online questionnaire and taking part in online interviews.

Your contribution will help us to better understand the challenges and practices associated with international negotiations in this sector.

Your participation will be confidential and anonymous. Once the study is complete, I will be happy to share the results with you, if you wish.

If you are interested in taking part, please let me know by e-mail if you are available. I will then be able to let you know the date and time of the upcoming interviews.

Thank you very much for your consideration and possible participation. Your contribution is essential if we are to advance research in this field.

Yours sincerely
Lea Beaulieu.

Appendix number 4: Transcript interview example

Interviewer : Lea Beaulieu
Participant : name removed
Date : 12th of February 2024
Time: 4:15pm
Interview number: one

LB: Hello [name removed], thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We'll be discussing your experience in international development and intercultural negotiations in the banking insurance sector.

Participant 1: Hi, it's nice to be here. I'm glad to share my experience with you.

LB: To start, could you please introduce yourself?

Participant 1: Sure thing. I'm a negotiator at CAA, a banking insurance company, and I've been with them for 10 years now. I'm happy to participate because my work is closely related to international development and intercultural negotiations, which aligns perfectly with your thesis (laughs).

LB: Thanks again for being here.

LB: Now, let's talk about CAA. When was the company established? And what is its area of activity?

Participant 1: Oh yeah, sure. Credit Agricole Assurances started in 2000. And the main thing is insurance in various fields, like life, damage, and health. As a negotiator at CAA, I mainly handle negotiations on insurance products, especially when we're expanding our business abroad.

LB: Ok, does this sector evolve a lot? Is there a lot of competition?

Participant 1: Oh yeah, definitely. The banking insurance sector is always changing, and the competition is really strong. With all the new technologies coming in, customers always want more, so we have to adapt and find new ways to stay on top.