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Most dominant patterns in the use of distributive and integrative strategic adaptations that contribute to a win-win negotiation outcome for the dyad

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Abstract

Strategic adaptability skills for negotiating are critical to success in organizational contexts where employees interact with external parties or engage in internal resource allocation. Strategic adaptability is the ability to adapt the negotiation strategy from a cooperative, information-sharing, and honest *integrative* strategy to a more competitive, demanding, and persuasive *distributive* strategy (or vice versa) when needed. Despite the importance of this skill, the research on it remains very limited. Previous research highlights individual factors regarding strategic adaptability, that affect the outcome of the negotiation. What is missing, is research that considers these different factors together, and then proposes an inclusive adaptation pattern that leads to a win-win outcome. This study aims to address this gap, by further investigating how these different strategic adaptability factors together can contribute to finding a pattern that leads to a win-win negotiation outcome.

This study analysed negotiation transcripts from three datasets involving dyadic negotiations across various contexts. This was done by coding every instance where a negotiator switched from an integrative to a distributive approach (or vice versa) and then deciding what type of adaptation had taken place. The quantitative analysis considered the strategic approach that was being used, the total number of adaptations, the timing of these adaptations, and the reason for the adaptation. Statistical methods including correlation analysis, regression models, and rank-sum tests, examined how these factors influenced the dyads' ability to achieve a win-win outcome.

Based on the findings, this study can make four key contributions to the negotiation literature. Firstly, it showed that consistency in the use of integrative strategies is what most likely leads to win-win outcomes. Moreover, it revealed that to achieve win-win outcomes a negotiator should try to keep the total amount of adaptations low, especially in the last phase. Finally, it showed that most adaptations are part of a reciprocal sequence or are because of the priority of the issues under discussion.

The limitations of this study are that it makes use of three datasets with different negotiation simulations, contexts and scoring systems, which could reduce the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation is that the different coding methodologies and low r-squared values of the models limit the comparability and predictive power of the study. Furthermore, the low number of observations for some adaptation types made it not possible to properly test their effect.

Contents

1. Introduction

In various organizational contexts, negotiation skills are considered vital for both individual and organizational success, particularly in roles where employees frequently interact with external parties or engage in internal resource allocation (Grennan, 2014). An essential part of being a skilful negotiator is the ability to adapt the negotiation strategy from a cooperative, information-sharing, and honest *integrative* strategy to a more competitive, demanding, and persuasive *distributive* strategy (or vice versa) when needed (Heunis et al., 2023; Smolinski & Xiong, 2020). This is essential because the importance of combining both integrative and distributive strategies has been emphasized in the literature for many years (Walton and McKersie, 1965; Lax & Sebenius, 1987; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Most negotiations can therefore be characterized as "mixed-motive" negotiations, meaning a mix between the use of these integrative and distributive strategies (Chapman et al., 2017; Walton and McKersie, 1965). This implies, that if a negotiator seeks to get the most benefit out of a negotiation, recognizing when and for what reason the opposing party and/or themselves adapt their strategies could be very important. Despite the importance of this strategic adaptability skill for negotiating, there is a gap in the research on the topic (Heunis et al., 2023). Heunis et al. (2023) have made a first attempt in starting to address this gap by developing and testing a framework that includes seven different categories of strategic adaptations in a dyadic negotiation process (**Table 2**). This framework will be used as a foundation for this research.

Because of the framework proposed by Heunis et al. (2023), we are now better able to understand when a negotiator is adapting their strategy and what type of adaptation is taking place. Other fields of research have found how individual strategic adaptation factors influence the outcome of a negotiation. For instance, Abigail et al. (2018) argue that integrative behaviour should not be applied directly at the start, but that integrative behaviour would have to be incorporated as the negotiation progresses. Another example is that Taylor (2002) argues that if at a certain point in time, the negotiation reaches an extreme point of competitiveness, where no progress toward an agreement is being made, the negotiation then loses the ability to reach a successful outcome, regardless of whatever happens after this point. This argument is contradicted by Harinck & De Dreu (2004), who argue that these extreme points of competitiveness could actually be needed for negotiators to consider and switch to integrative strategies when they are currently employing distributive strategies. What is missing, is research that considers these different factors together, and then proposes an inclusive adaptation pattern that leads to a win-win outcome, referring to the Pareto-optimum agreement that maximizes the outcome for both parties, where the benefit for one party did not come at a cost of benefit of the other (Olekalns & Smith, 2003a; Tripp & Sondak, 1992). This study aims to address this gap, by further investigating how these different strategic adaptability factors together can contribute to finding a pattern that leads to a win-win negotiation outcome.

The goal of this study is therefore, to connect the current literature and to contribute insight into how certain patterns of adaptations in the sense of amount, timing, and order could increase the chance of a win-win negotiation outcome. To accomplish this, this study analyses negotiation transcripts using the framework and its cues developed by Heunis et al. (2023), such that it is clear

where strategic adaptations take place and for what reason. In addition to that, these analysed transcripts and the theories on negotiation outcomes together will be used to recognize patterns in the amount, timing and order of the strategic adaptations occurring during the negotiations, in relation to their outcomes. For this research the following research question has been formulated: *What are the most dominant patterns in the use of distributive and integrative strategic adaptations, and which contribute to a win-win outcome for the negotiation dyad?*

Besides the aforementioned literature, this study will draw upon a range of negotiation theories and perspectives, to understand how strategic adaptation affects negotiation outcomes. Starting with Heunis et al. (2023) (p. 247) who defined strategic adaptability as: "1) a reaction to an informational cue, 2) requiring change from a more distributive strategy to a more integrative strategy, or vice versa" and created a table with cues that indicate integrative or distributive behaviours that will be employed in this study. The other field of research that will be consulted are studies that researched the influence of strategic adaptation factors on the negotiation outcome in a dyadic context. This was done by systematically reviewing their theory, findings and conclusions, to identify factors influencing the outcome of the negotiation. The first examples are studies by Olekalns & Smith (2000, 1999, 2003a, 2003b, 2005) which will be used for their perspectives on the crucial role of reciprocation and consistency in negotiations, and for showing the importance of sharing information regarding the priorities under discussion concerning negotiation outcomes. In addition to that papers by Adair (2003), Abigail et al. (2018), Han et al. (2012) and Liu (2013) will also be useful, because of their standpoints on when and for what reason distributive and integrative strategies should be used, in relation to dyadic negotiation outcomes.

The findings of this study allow for four key contributions to the negotiation literature. Firstly, it demonstrated that consistency in the use of integrative strategies is what most likely leads to win-win outcomes. Furthermore, findings showed that a negotiator should aim to limit the overall number of adaptations, particularly in the last phase, to get win-win results. Finally, it showed that most adaptations are part of a reciprocal sequence or are because of the priority of the issues under discussion.

The structure of the upcoming chapters is as follows: The theoretical framework is addressed in chapter 2, chapter 3 presents the hypotheses that will be tested, the research methodology is described in chapter 4, the results of the study are covered in chapter 5, the discussion makes up chapter 6, and the limitations together with the future research directions are mentioned in chapter 7.

2. Theory

2.1 Strategic Adaptability

As stated in the introduction, Heunis et al. (2023) (p. 247) defined strategic adaptability as: "1) a reaction to an informational cue, 2) requiring change from a more distributive strategy to a more integrative strategy, or vice versa". In a negotiation, there are two overarching strategic approaches. One of them is to make use of distributive strategies, when a negotiator is using this type of

approach, he or she is trying to achieve a win-lose outcome, where their party wins at the expense of the other party (Abigail et al., 2018; Galinsky et al., 2005). Other characteristics of distributive strategies are that they are competitive in nature, often make use of threats, lack cooperation, lack consideration for the other party's success, focus on maximization of personal gain, use force, use assertive behaviour, and have a tendency to use power (Abigail et al., 2018; Liu, 2013; Walton and McKersie, 1965).

The other overarching strategic approach is the integrative strategy, when using this type of approach, the negotiator is trying to achieve a win-win outcome, where he or she cooperates with the other party to find a solution that is beneficial for both (Abigail et al., 2018; Galinsky et al., 2005). Other characteristics of integrative strategies are that they often address multiple issues, consideration of the other party's success, the maximization of mutual gain (expanding the "pie"), openly share information, solve the problem together, have a willingness to compromise, and a focus on the long term relationship (Galinsky et al., 2005; Heunis et al., 2023; Liu, 2013; Walton and McKersie, 1965). To be able to recognize where in a negotiation what strategic approach is being used, an overview presented in **Table 1** has been created by Heunis et al., (2023) with different informational cues which encompass strategic adaptability.

Table 1 Overview of integrative and distributive behaviour cues

Integrative behaviours	***Distributive behaviours***
Ask (open-ended) questions	Ask position-based questions
Active listening	Discuss one issue at a time
Share information	Make single-issue offers
Make integrative (multi-issue) offers	Substantiate position or refer to bottom line
Collaborative statements	Use of force/misrepresentation
Progress seeking statements	
Relationship building statements	

Source: (Heunis et al., 2023)

As stated in the introduction, most negotiations are "mixed-motive" negotiations where the negotiators are switching between strategies that fall under one of these two approaches. These "switches" are called strategic adaptations, where negotiators adapt their strategy as a result of picking up on an informational cue. Heunis et al. (2023) did a study researching what kind of strategic adaptations take place and established seven different categories. In **Table 2** these categories, together with their cues, are presented.

Table 2 Categories of strategic adaptations

Code	***Category***	***Explanation***	***Cue***
A	Adapt to external factors	Adapting strategy after external factors, such as policy or leadership changes or inclusion of third parties, change the negotiation context	Negotiators' perceptions or priorities change because of external factors. Such shifting perceptions or priorities may serve as a cue to strategically adapt
B	Adapt to deadlock	Adapting strategy after being stuck in the	Negotiators are in a distributive exchange, and A notices that the

		negotiation process, e.g., due to different opinions/ positions	negotiation is not moving forward (referring to a "gap" or "distance" from an agreement) and adapts to an integrative strategy
C	Adapt to priority of the issue under discussion	Adapting the strategy depending on the importance of the topic under discussion (e.g., when making offers or changing topics)	Negotiator A changes the topic of the discussion and moves to another issue with a different priority level. Because of this, negotiator A adapts its strategy
D	Adapt to new information on issue	Adapting the strategy new contextual information	Negotiator A shares information that is new to negotiator B. Negotiator B responds to the new information by adapting its strategy
E	Follow adaptation by opponent	Directly following the opponent's strategy change to synchronize strategy	Negotiators A and B are using similar strategies. When negotiator A changes to an integrative or distributive strategy, negotiator B synchronizes the chosen strategy
F	Delayed adaptation to opponent	Adapting to an opponent's change in strategy with a delay or adapting to the opponent's resistance to follow a change in strategy	Negotiators A and B are using similar strategies. When negotiator A changes to an integrative or distributive strategy, negotiator B does not directly synchronize the chosen strategy but instead delays its adaptation. Alternatively, Negotiator B does not follow, and A changes back to the initial strategic orientation to synchronize the strategy
G	Adapt to understand opponent	Adapting the strategy to understand or clarify the opponent's interests, concerns, feelings, motivation or thoughts	Negotiators A and B can have (a) synchronized strategies. Negotiator A shares feelings, concerns or makes an offer, and negotiator B responds by adapting its strategy to understand A's concerns (e.g., active listening, acknowledging feelings or summarizing information)

Source: (Heunis et al. 2023)

Table 2 in combination with **Table 1** will be used in the coding process of the research to recognize where what kind of strategic adaptation is taking place.

2.2 Towards a win-win outcome

This study will focus on a win-win outcome in the case of a dyadic negotiation. This refers to the Pareto-optimum outcome, which maximizes the outcome for both parties, where the benefit for one party does not come at the cost of the benefit of the other (Olekalns & Smith, 2003a; Tripp & Sondak, 1992). This outcome is in line with integrative negotiation strategies, but this does not mean that simply implementing these types of strategies will result in a win-win outcome, especially when the opponent is using distributive strategies. Solely using distributive strategies will also not lead to a win-win outcome since it aims at obtaining as much benefit as possible,

leaving the other party with nothing (Abigail et al., 2018). As stated, before negotiators need to use a mix of both types of strategic approaches to reach a win-win outcome.

Liu (2013) states that integrative sequences before the negotiation reaches the middle point might harm the dyads' ability to achieve joint gains. Put differently, negotiators who start out attempting to establish a relationship by building trust, signalling good faith intentions or sharing priority information could end up with less joint gain if they were unable to maintain integrative reciprocity and instead took a distributive strategy in the second half of the negotiation (Liu, 2013). Abigail et al. (2018) also argue that achieving a mutually beneficial agreement in a negotiation is less likely when integrative behaviour is applied directly at the start. To reach a win-win outcome, integrative behaviour would have to be incorporated as the negotiation progresses (Abigail et al., 2018). According to Han et al. (2012), negotiators should utilize firm distributive strategies to not give in on targets that are crucial to them in the negotiation, and they should use more flexible integrative strategies with how they aim to achieve the collective goals of the dyad. "The initial open exchange of positional information helps to ensure they fully exploit the existing resources" (Liu, 2013, p. 355). The use of this firm distributive approach for negotiating on the topics that encompass these crucial targets/positions is important for negotiators because if their level of cooperation surpasses that of the opposing side, this would not lead to a win-win outcome (Neale & Bazerman, 1992).

Taylor (2002) argues that if at a certain point in time, the negotiation reaches an extreme point of competitiveness, where no progress towards an agreement is being made (deadlock), the negotiation then loses the ability to reach a successful and therefore win-win outcome, regardless of whatever happens after this point. This perspective is supported by Olekalns & Smith (2003b) who state that sequences of competitive reciprocity (back-and-forth competitive discussion) are associated with poor outcomes. To prevent this from happening, negotiators could try to not show their distributive goal-oriented emotions (Morris & Keltner, 2000; Van Kleef et al., 2004), focus more on sharing direct information regarding the importance of the priority under discussion and the underlying interests, and they could build trust through the signalling of good faith intentions (Druckman, 2001; Olekalns & Smith, 2000, 2005; L. L. Putnam & Fuller, 2014). This approach could also be useful when it seems like the negotiation is starting to be unproductive (approaching a deadlock). It could be useful, because a strategic adaptation will be only beneficial to the outcome, if it arises because a new offer/insight has been presented regarding the priority under discussion, not if it was the result of a deadlock (Olekalns & Smith, 2005). This argument by Taylor (2002), supported by perspectives from Olekalns & Smith, is contradicted by Harinck & De Dreu (2004), who state that these deadlock situations are actually necessary for negotiators to consider and switch to integrative strategies when they are currently making use of distributive strategies.

Existing research has shown that the focus of negotiation naturally moves from distributive to integrative over time (Adair & Brett, 2005; L. Putnam & Jones, 1982). This natural progression from distributive to integrative also seems to be crucial to reaching a win-win outcome, because if the negotiation is not yet focused on sharing substantive (direct insights regarding the issues) information instead of positional (demands, threats and argumentation) information by the

midpoint, then a win-win outcome cannot be reached (Adair & Brett, 2005; Olekalns & Smith, 2000; Taylor et al., 2012). In line with this perspective, Liu (2013), found that if negotiators remain competitive and aim to maximize solely their own profits by using assertive and forceful behaviour and don't introduce cooperative integrative strategies, they will end up with less joint gain. Liu (2013) also found that integrative behaviours in the second half of the negotiations predicted joint profit. All the reasons above indicate that in the second half of the negotiation, integrative strategies are to be used, since "distributive tactics used in the second half of negotiation, therefore, may function to only split an unexpanded pie" (Liu, 2013, p. 355). In addition to that, during the stage of the negotiation where the settlement is to be made, negotiation dyads could try to not focus on coming to an agreement as fast as possible. This for the reason that dyads with win-win outcomes emphasize the points still under discussion and therefore delay the agreement until they find a solution that maximizes the benefit for both parties (Olekalns & Smith, 2000).

Lastly, another factor that is relevant for bringing the negotiation to a win-win outcome, is that negotiators could focus on trying to be consistent on an intra- and interindividual level, by way of reciprocal sequences. This means that they should stay consistent with their strategic approach, and that of the opposing party (especially in the last parts of the negotiation), to reach the win-win outcome (Olekalns & Smith, 2000). To achieve this interindividual consistency, a negotiator should first adapt to synchronize their strategy with the other party (or vice-versa). They do this by way of reciprocating the other party's behaviour. Patterns of reciprocation are a crucial part of negotiating, and increase the predictability and consistency of the negotiation (Olekalns & Smith, 2000). Reciprocation is a natural behaviour of human beings, people reciprocate behaviours (friendly or hostile) even when they have nothing to gain from it (Fehr & Gächter, 2000). Reciprocating positive behaviours builds trust and shows a willingness to cooperate (Liu, 2013; McCabe et al., 1996). Cooperative reciprocating sequences are critical to successful negotiations and they are associated with high joint gain for the dyad (Liu, 2013; Olekalns & Smith, 2000, 2003b). The above-mentioned standpoints regarding consistency and reciprocating are also in line with results found by Heunis et al. (2023). The results showed that negotiation dyads who reached the Pareto optimum (most beneficial win-win outcome) adapted their strategy the least, in other words, they stayed the most consistent. In addition to that, the results also showed that most adaptations took place in the last phase, but higher-scoring dyads used only 43% of adaptations in this phase while lower-scoring dyads used 80%.

This section made clear that several individual factors increase the chance of a win-win negotiation outcome for the dyad. Many other factors could increase the chance of this outcome, but looking at all these factors is too broad and not feasible. This research will therefore only focus on the factors that are relevant for strategic adaptations in the negotiation process. Within this context, an adaptation pattern that incorporates the above-stated individual factors together and that maximizes the change of coming to this win-win outcome is still missing. This study will attempt to find this missing strategic adaptation pattern.

3. Hypotheses

The first hypothesis suggests that negotiators should start the negotiations with predominantly distributive strategies. A reason for this is that achieving a mutually beneficial agreement in a negotiation is less likely when integrative behaviour is applied directly at the start (Abigail et al., 2018; Liu, 2013). Integrative strategies would have to be incorporated as the negotiation progresses (Abigail et al., 2018). Liu (2013) argues that starting the negotiation with integrative strategies, where they are both considering the other party's success and start compromising towards each other's positions in search of a mutual agreement, could result in a sub-optimal agreement. This resulting in a sub-optimal agreement could be because Olekalns & Smith (2000) propose that negotiators should not rush towards an agreement, instead they should put more emphasis on the points that are still open for discussion, and delay the agreement until they find a solution that maximizes the benefit for both parties.

By using a distributive strategy, negotiators can define towards the other party their most crucial positions and priorities (Han et al., 2012). Starting the negotiation with a focus on their interest and gains and not that of the other party could allow them to not give in too much too soon (Neale & Bazerman, 1992). In addition to that, "The initial open exchange of positional information helps to ensure they fully exploit the existing resources" (Liu, 2013, p. 355). This distributive firmness at the start could remove the ambiguity around the core needs and positions of both parties and it could emphasize what is and what is not negotiable. This indirect and positional information exchange could function as a foundation from which the negotiators later explore where they can compromise and/or create mutual value. Hence:

H1. *Starting a negotiation with predominantly distributive strategies will more likely result in a win-win outcome, regardless of the adaptation pattern following it.*

The second hypothesis is in line with the theory that argues that adapting towards substantive information-sharing (integrative) strategies before reaching the midpoint of negotiations is critical and that otherwise, a win-win outcome is highly unlikely. The reasoning behind this is that the use of integrative strategies stimulates open communication, creates trust, and encourages the identification of mutual interests, which are crucial for solving possible problems and collaborating towards a mutually beneficial solution. If the negotiators do not already use predominantly integrative strategies, but the negotiation remains competitive until after the midpoint, where the negotiators are focusing on their positions and maximizing their own outcomes, then there is no time left for the creative brainstorming aspect where the solutions are to be created or found (Olekalns & Smith, 2000). In addition to that, with the use of integrative strategies at the midpoint, negotiators could also possibly prevent the negotiation reaches a point of extreme competition, a situation from which the negotiation cannot result in a win-win outcome regardless of what happens in the rest of the negotiation (Adair & Brett, 2005; Taylor, 2002). In line with these perspectives, Liu (2013) found that if negotiators remain competitive and aim to maximize only their own profits by using assertive and forceful behaviour and don't introduce cooperative integrative strategies they will end up with less joint gain. Liu (2013) also found that integrative

behaviours in the second half of the negotiation predicted joint profit. All the reasons above indicate that in the second half of the negotiation, integrative strategies are to be used, since "distributive tactics used in the second half of negotiation, therefore, may function to only split an unexpanded pie" (Liu, 2013, p. 355). Hence:

H2. *Using predominantly integrative strategies from the middle phase onwards, will more likely result in a win-win outcome, regardless of the initial strategy.*

According to the third hypothesis it is expected that there is a sweet spot in the number of total adaptations, that will more likely result in a win-win outcome. This hypothesis is in line with the following results found by Heunis et al. (2023) "Interestingly, negotiators able to attain a Pareto-optimum outcome used strategic adaptations the least, while negotiators who scored worse relative to the other side (the low-high group) used them the most" (p.258). A possible explanation for these results could be a statement made by Olekalns & Smith (2000) who argue that negotiators could have a higher chance of reaching a win-win outcome if they stay consistent with their own strategies and that of the opposing party. They do this by way of reciprocating the other party's behaviour, patterns of reciprocation are a crucial part of negotiating, and increase the predictability and consistency of the negotiation (Olekalns & Smith, 2000). Reciprocating positive behaviours builds trust and shows a willingness to cooperate (Liu, 2013; McCabe et al., 1996). Cooperative reciprocating sequences are critical to successful negotiations and they are associated with high joint gain for the dyad (Liu, 2013; Olekalns & Smith, 2000, 2003b). In other words, if the goal is to reach a win-win outcome, a negotiation dyad could try to be aware of not adapting their strategy too many times by way of being consistent.

In addition to that, Olekalns & Smith (2000) found that next to consistency, predictability is also an important aspect of negotiations within high-outcome dyads. If both parties were to frequently adapt their strategies, by constantly going back and forth between integrative and distributive behaviours, then it would seem hard to make any real progress towards a win-win outcome. This would be hard because it would result in an unpredictable, inconsistent negotiation where the positions and motives of both parties are unclear. This perspective is supported by another insight from the Heunis et al. (2023) study, stating that a negotiation dyad could try to avoid adapting too many times since this is linked to negotiation instability and low outcomes. Not adapting their strategy at all will also not result in a win-win outcome, due to the mixed-motive nature of negotiations. The abovementioned literature reveals that the number of adaptations in a negotiation influences the outcome. Based on that, it is expected that somewhere in this amount there is a sweet spot that would more likely result in a win-win outcome for the dyad. Hence:

H3. *There is a sweet spot in the total number of adaptations that will more likely result in a win-win outcome.*

Other interesting results from the Heunis et al. (2023) study, were that adaptations because of a deadlock were most used by low-scoring dyads and that high-scoring dyads (win-win and win-lose) used the least amount of adaptations due to deadlock, instead, they used more adaptations to

priority issues under discussion. This means, that low outcome dyads experience more points in negotiations where no progress seems possible, and where one of the negotiators switches towards an integrative strategy for this reason, and that win-win dyads would more likely try to prevent the deadlock adaptations, by presenting information on the issue and/or adapting their strategy because of the priority issues under discussion. This perspective is supported by Olekalns & Smith (2000), who found that high levels of priority information sharing are associated with high joint gain. It is therefore expected, that win-win dyads would use a low amount of deadlock adaptations, and a high number of adaptations because of the presentation of new information or to address the priority under discussion. In addition to that, reciprocation is a crucial part of negotiating, which increases the predictability and consistency of the negotiation (Olekalns & Smith, 2000). Results by Heunis et al. (2023) showed that this consistency is linked to win-win outcomes for the negotiation dyad. For these reasons, it would be expected that reciprocal adaptations (E and F) to follow the opponent's strategy will occur often in negotiations with a win-win outcome.

Olekalns & Smith (2000) also argue that internal consistency (not adapting your strategic approach) in the second half of the negotiation, is especially critical to achieving joint gain. This finding is again supported by results from Heunis et al. (2023) whose results showed that even though most adaptations took place in the third phase of the negotiation, higher-scoring dyads used only 43% of adaptations in the third phase of the negotiation while lower scoring dyads used 80%.

All these perspectives together, imply that for the sweet spot in the total number of adaptations, it is expected that the type and the timing of the adaptation have an effect, but it remains unclear what kind of effect this would be. An additional adaptation due to a deadlock would probably have a different effect on the outcome than an additional adaptation for other reasons like an adaptation to follow the opponent, because of new information, the priority under discussion, or to understand the opposing party. Hence:

H4. *The sweet spot in the total number of adaptations depends on the type and timing of the adaptations that take place.*

4. Methodology - Left out due to confidentiality

Due to the confidential nature of this section, it has been excluded from the publicly available thesis and submitted as a confidential annex to the repository of the University of Twente.

5. Results - Left out due to confidentiality

Due to the confidential nature of this section, it has been excluded from the publicly available thesis and submitted as a confidential annex to the repository of the University of Twente.

6. Discussion

6.1 Discussion of Findings

While existing literature had already found individual factors that influence the outcome of a dyadic negotiation, an understanding of how these factors interact and could be combined into a pattern that aims to increase the chances of a win-win outcome remained lacking. This study aims to address this gap by finding what the most used pattern of distributive and integrative strategic adaptation is, examining how different factors influence the Pareto efficiency of the negotiated outcome, and identifying an actionable pattern that maximizes this Pareto efficiency, seeking to answer the following research question: *What are the most used patterns of distributive and integrative strategic adaptations, and which contribute to a win-win outcome for the negotiation dyad?*

6.1.1 Hypothesis 1

First, we found that dyads employing predominantly distributive strategies in phase one had Pareto efficiency scores that on average were lower than those who did not. Because of this, the first hypothesis is rejected, according to which beginning negotiations with predominantly distributive strategies would more likely result in a win-win outcome (higher Pareto efficiency). This finding suggests that an overemphasis on distributive strategies in the initial phase of negotiation hinders the dyad in coming to a win-win outcome. The finding contradicts the perspective that starting a negotiation with integrative strategies makes it less likely to achieve a mutually beneficial agreement (Abigail et al., 2018; Liu, 2013). The finding indirectly also contradicts the idea that starting the negotiation with a focus on a negotiator's own interests and gains and not that of the other party could allow them to not give in too much too soon (Neale & Bazerman, 1992). **Table 7** shows that the four most Pareto-efficient patterns start with predominantly integrative strategies and that the four least Pareto-efficient patterns start with predominantly distributive ones. This suggests that if negotiators aim to achieve a win-win outcome, they should not use predominantly distributive strategies in the starting phase.

6.1.2 Hypothesis 2

Second, we found that the strategy pattern that was most observed is "int-int-int" and this pattern was also associated with the highest average Pareto efficiency. This finding technically supports the second hypothesis since it uses predominantly integrative from the middle point onwards. This finding also aligns with the literature that states that the open communication, trust building, and the identification of mutual interests that come with the use of integrative strategies are crucial for solving possible problems and collaborating towards a mutually beneficial solution (Adair & Brett, 2005; Olekalns & Smith, 2000; Taylor, 2002). In addition to that, it supports the findings by Liu (2013), that if negotiators remain competitive and aim to maximize only their own profits by using assertive and forceful behaviour and don't introduce cooperative integrative strategies they will end up with less joint gain and that integrative behaviours in the second half of the negotiations predicted joint profit.

The other strategy pattern that used predominantly integrative strategies from the middle point on (dis-int-int) performed much worse on the Pareto efficiency scale. This is interesting because it could be interpreted in a way that it is not the use of integrative strategies before the end of the middle phase that is the deciding factor in achieving a win-win outcome, if this were the case then it would be expected that this pattern would also have scored relatively high compared to the other patterns, that made use of distributive strategies beyond the middle phase. Consistency in integrative strategies across all the phases appears to be more crucial for achieving win-win outcomes (Heunis et al., 2023; Olekalns & Smith, 2000).

6.1.3 Hypothesis 3

Third, we found a significant correlation between adaptation rates and Pareto efficiency, this indicated that higher adaptation rates are associated with lower Pareto efficiency. Additionally, regression analysis showed that an increase in adaptation rate is associated with a decrease in Pareto efficiency. For finding the sweet spot two ranges of adaptation rates for top-performing dyads were found. The first range was 0,0 to 0,4182 for the top 25% of the dyads, and for the top 10%, the range of 0,0 to 0,2571 was found. These findings are in line with the literature, because a low adaptation rate is a reflection of greater consistency, and according to Olekalns & Smith (2000) and Heunis et al. (2023) this is important for reaching a win-win outcome. The findings also support the third hypothesis, arguing that there is a "sweet spot" in the total number of adaptations that would more likely result in a win-win outcome. According to these findings, the sweet spot for the total number of adaptations is to adopt a low to slightly moderate amount.

6.1.4 Hypothesis 4

Timing of adaptation

Fourth, we found that phase-specific adaptation rates showed significant negative effects in all phases. The effect was the largest in Phase 3, relatively smaller in Phase 2, and phase 1 was approximately in between. These findings support one part of the final hypothesis, the part proposing that the sweet spot in adaptations in relation to achieving Pareto efficiency depends on the timing of the adaptations since the effect differs depending on in which phase the adaptation took place. The findings also support the literature by Olekalns & Smith (2000), who argued that limiting the number of adaptations later in the negotiation is critical for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes and the results from Heunis et al. (2023) who found that high-scoring negotiators adapted far less in the last negotiation phase compared to low scoring dyads.

Type of adaptation

Finally, we found that adaptation type C, adapting to priority of issue under discussion was observed most often, making up more than half of all adaptations, together with the also often observed, reciprocal adaptation types E and F made up almost all the adaptations (96,6%). The D adaptation (new information on the issue) was the only predictor that was significant in a multiple regression model, this suggests that frequent adaptation in response to new information hinders a

dyad in their ability to find a win-win outcome. However, only 13 D adaptations were observed in the data, which in comparison to the other types, is exceptionally low (as seen in **Table 4**). The robustness and broader applicability of this finding are limited, because the number of observations was very low and because of the low adjusted r-squared, which could be because this type of adaptation simply has little effect on the Pareto efficiency. Similarly, according to Taylor (2002), deadlock adaptations are expected to have a negative impact on the dyad's ability to reach a win-win outcome, but only seven of these types of adaptations were observed in the dataset. This observation size hindered statistical testing, and no significant effects were found. Because of these reasons, the effect of adaptation B could not be properly tested, so it remains unclear if the perspective by Taylor (2002) that is supported by Olekalns & Smith (2000) is more likely true, or that of Harinck & De Dreu (2004) who argued against this, stating that these deadlocks are necessary. These findings partially support the final hypothesis, while adaptation type D significantly influenced Pareto efficiency, the low number of observations limits the robustness of this finding.

6.1.5 Final Proposed Pattern

Based on all the findings the following strategy pattern is proposed as an answer to the research question:

1. *Most dominant and effective pattern:*

The "int-int-int" pattern, is the one that was observed most often and associated with the highest average Pareto efficiency. This means that attempting to maintain predominantly integrative strategies throughout all the phases of the negotiation will contribute most to achieving a "win-win" outcome

2. *Frequency of adaptations:*

For achieving a win-win outcome, focusing on being consistent and maintaining a low adaptation rate is ideal, since the top performers in the data showed low adaptation rates.

3. *Timing of adaptations:*

If adaptations are needed, doing so in phase 2 has the smallest negative effect on the Pareto efficiency. Adaptations in phase 3 of the negotiation should be minimized because they have the largest negative effect on Pareto efficiency. Adaptations in phase 1, while having less negative effect than phase 3 should also minimized.

4. *Type of adaptations:*

As for the type of adaptations, based on the results, adapting the strategy because of new contextual information should be avoided since this was the only predictor that could significantly affect the Pareto efficiency model in the multiple regression model. The low count of adaptation D in the dataset together with the low r-squared, however, should be taken into consideration. Based on the

literature adaptation type B (deadlock) should also be avoided, but due to low observations in the dataset, this perspective could not be properly tested.

6.2 Implications for Literature

The present study attempts to address a gap in the negotiation strategy literature and in doing so makes four important contributions. Firstly, this study provides evidence that even though negotiations are "mixed-motive" in nature, and that the use of both kinds of strategic approaches is necessary in a negotiation (on a speaking turn level), when looking at the predominant strategy used per phase, the most effective and most used pattern, is integrative across all phases. This finding strengthens the understanding that the timing of the use of strategies, such as starting with predominantly distributive strategies or using predominantly integrative strategies before the end of the middle phase is not the essential factor. Beginning negotiations with predominantly distributive strategies can significantly hinder a dyad's ability to reach a win-win outcome, contradicting prior literature from Abigail et al. (2018) and Liu (2013), who argued that it was integrative strategies at the beginning of the negotiation that would have this effect. What appears to be essential is the consistency in the use of predominantly integrative strategies. These findings therefore contribute to the prior literature by Olekalns & Smith (2000) and Heunis et al. (2023) who found that consistency is important for achieving win-win outcomes, by increasing the validity of this perspective empirically.

Secondly, this study makes another contribution to the negotiation strategy literature based on the combination of prior literature by Olekalns & Smith (2000) and Heunis et al. (2023). Olekalns & Smith (2000) found that consistency and predictability are important aspects of achieving high outcomes as a dyad, and Heunis et al. (2023) warned against adapting too many times since this is linked to instability and low outcomes. This study contributes by quantifying and testing if there exists a sweet spot in the number of adaptations that increases the chance of a win-win outcome. A significant negative correlation was found between adaptation rate and Pareto efficiency and a significant regression model revealed that an increase in adaptation rate is associated with a decrease in Pareto efficiency. In addition to that, the adaptation rate thresholds for top-performing dyads ranged from 0,0 to 0,4182 for the top quartile and 0,0 to 0,2571 for the top 10%. By identifying these thresholds and showing in what way adaptation rates are associated with Pareto efficiency, this study provided more actionable metrics that can support these theoretical claims. The findings indirectly also contribute to the literature arguing that cooperative reciprocating sequences are critical to successful negotiations and associated with high joint gain for the dyad (Liu, 2013; Olekalns & Smith, 2000, 2003b). It contributes to this because the findings support the argument that consistency is crucial in negotiations, and this consistency can be achieved through reciprocating each other's behaviours instead of adapting.

Thirdly, this study advances the understanding of how the timing of the adaptations impacts negotiation outcomes, emphasizing the negative effects of adaptations in the last phase. Regression models revealed significant negative relationships between adaptation rate and Pareto efficiency for all three phases, with the largest negative effect for phase three. This finding aligns with

Olekalns & Smith (2000), who argued that when attempting to achieve joint gains, staying interpersonally consistent is especially important after the middle phase. This argument by Olekalns & Smith (2000), was again supported by a finding from Heunis et al. (2023), who found that high-scoring dyads adapted far less in the last phase than low-scoring ones. Adaptations in the middle phase had the smallest negative effect, suggesting that the middle phase is a safer window for performing strategic adaptations in relation to Pareto efficiency. These findings contribute to the literature by offering more insight into when adaptations are relatively effective and when they should be avoided if possible, showing that the effects of adaptations are not equal, and that timing is important.

Finally, this study provides new insights into the frequency of use and the effects of adaptation types on negotiation outcomes, finding that adapting to new information is possibly detrimental to achieving win-win outcomes. Adaptation type D (new information on the issue) was the only significant predictor of the six types that were examined in the multiple regression model. However, the low count of D adaptations (13 times), in combination with the low adjusted r-squared, limits the robustness and broader applicability of this finding. Similarly, the deadlock adaptation type B was also observed exceptionally little (7 times), which made testing the contradicting perspectives by Taylor (2002), who argues it is a predictor of Pareto inefficiency, and Harinck & De Dreu (2004), who see deadlocks as a necessity, not possible. The contribution that this study makes is that by applying the adaptation model by Heunis et al. (2023) on a large dataset with different coding schemes, it showed that most adaptations are part of a reciprocal sequence or are because the priority of the issues under discussion (96,6 %).

7. Limitations and Future Research

7.1 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be taken into consideration. Firstly, three independent datasets, from different previous studies were used for this research, each of these has a unique negotiation simulation and way of scoring the points to be divided. These contextual differences might add inconsistencies to the data, which could have an impact on the generalizability of the findings. Variability in the effect of strategic adaptations on Pareto efficiency could therefore also be influenced by the variability in negotiation cases and scoring systems.

Secondly, the datasets that were used, were already coded on their integrative and distributive strategies by the researchers. Each of these studies applied its own coding schemes, methods, and frameworks. **Table 3** shows that there are substantial differences between the datasets, this could be because of many reasons, but more than likely these differences in the coding methodology also play a role in this. While performing the second part of the coding process, it became clear that the way in which the separate researchers coded their data on whether a speaking turn is integrative or distributive was very different. Since re-coding the whole dataset in a unified way was not feasible within the timeline of this research, there was no choice but to

use the data and their codes in the way in which they were provided to us. While this research (where possible) attempted to integrate these differences in coding methodology, the validity and comparability could be impacted by this. In addition to that, the second layer of adaptability coding that was performed as a part of this research did make use of one consistent coding scheme across the whole dataset, possibly making the overall data more valid and comparable.

Thirdly, while a variety of Pareto efficiency-influencing factors were examined, the models generally showed relatively low r-squared values. Phase-specific adaptation rates and the adaptation types, for instance, had regression models that explained a small portion of the variance in Pareto efficiency. While this reflects the complex nature of the dynamics within a negotiation, in which multiple unmeasured factors likely come into play, it also implies that the predictive power of the examined variables is limited. However, researching a broad range of factors is still valuable for building a more comprehensive understanding of what affects negotiation outcomes.

Fourthly, it was difficult to conclude the effects of several adaptation types since they were not frequently observed in the dataset. Adaptation B was observed seven times (0.14%), adaptation D was observed just thirteen times (0.26%) and adaptation type A was not observed. This lack of observations limited the generalizability of the findings relating to these adaptations and made proper statistical testing not always possible. The limited amount of D adaptations should be considered when interpreting its generalizability, even though it was found to be a significant negative predictor of Pareto efficiency.

Fifthly, the participants from the datasets came from diverse cultural backgrounds. This could have impacted their use of integrative or distributive strategies and their overall adaptability during the negotiations. As noted in the introduction, examining all the factors that influence strategic adaptability was not feasible for this study. Even though culture plays a role, it was not the focus of this study.

Finally, regarding the second hypothesis, the findings showed significant differences in Pareto efficiency between some strategic patterns but not between others. For example, the “int-int-int” pattern significantly differed from “dis-dis-dis,” but no significant differences were found between some other patterns, such as “int-dis-int” and “int-dis-dis.” This made it harder to identify what aspect of the pattern is responsible for the difference in Pareto efficiency.

7.2 Future Research

One limitation of this study is that adaptation type A (adapting to external factors) was not observed in the dataset. The negotiation cases that were used for the dataset did not include external factors such as the involvement of a third party or sudden changes in the negotiation environment, for this reason, it was not possible to study the impact of such adaptations. Future research could design and make use of negotiation scenarios that incorporate external factors into the case so that it is certain that they will influence the negotiation. For example, a third party could shortly interfere, or the negotiation case could include leadership changes. If these factors are included, forcing negotiators to adapt their strategy, then this would enable the researchers to study how negotiators respond to external factors and the potential effects of these adaptations on Pareto

efficiency.

In this study, B adaptations (adapt to deadlock) occurred very little, because of this their effects could not be tested properly. Contradicting perspectives from the literature suggest that deadlocks can have a big effect on the negotiation and its outcome. Future research could design negotiation cases where deadlocks are hard to prevent, by making certain discussion points of high importance to both parties, forcing participants to actively address and overcome them. This would then allow the testing of its effects, showing whether deadlocks are preventing dyads from reaching Pareto efficiency, as suggested by Taylor, (2002), or if they are a necessary step in the process that makes negotiators consider the other party and rethink other possibilities (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004).

Another limitation of this study was that datasets with different coding methodologies for the integrative and distributive strategies were used. For this study additional coding had to be carried out requiring all the available time, there was no time to recode the strategic coding with a consistent coding scheme across all transcripts. Future research could aim to achieve this consistency by creating a unified data set of the same size (or larger) and coding it all in the same manner. This approach would then reduce possible biases or variability, that are the result of the different coding methodologies.

This study used negotiation transcripts as data to research strategic adaptations. This meant negotiations were only seen in its written-out form, in some cases this made it hard to decide what was meant with certain words/sentences. Future research could perhaps not only look at the transcripts of negotiations but also use tools like video recordings or make use of devices that measure things like trust, stress or perceived fairness. This would increase the understanding of the coder and would also make it possible to test how certain emotional factors affect strategic adaptations.

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