Cross-Cultural Negotiation between Dutch and Japanese Businesses: Adapting to Cultural Differences

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalized business economy, effective cross-cultural negotiation is essential for securing favorable outcomes and fostering sustainable partnerships. This study investigates the negotiation process between Dutch and Japanese companies, particularly focusing on how Dutch businesses can adapt their strategies to negotiate more effectively with Japanese firms. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with Dutch negotiators, this study identifies six key elements that are essential for successful negotiations in Japan: focus on details, respect, harmony, hierarchy, loyalty, and the challenges of translation. The study finds that Japanese companies emphasize long-term relationships, product quality, indirect communication, detailed discussions, seniority, collective decision-making, and high standards for preparation. It further highlights the need for Dutch companies to adapt to these Japanese business standards to avoid cultural friction that could harm negotiations. This research largely supports current literature on cross-cultural behavior, but also highlights the limitations of Hofstede's dimensions in explaining observed real-life behavior. In practice, this research offers actionable recommendations for Dutch companies to improve negotiations with Japanese partners. Future research should incorporate more Japanese perspectives and focus on specific industries.

Keywords
Dutch; Japan; Negotiation; Business Communication; Culture; Intercultural Business; Japanese Business Culture

1.   INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized economy, companies have expanded their operations across borders and are engaging in cross-cultural collaborations. As markets have become more interconnected and competition intensifies, the ability to negotiate effectively is more important than ever (Liu, 2024). Effective negotiation can be the difference between success and failure in securing favorable deals, forging strategic partnerships, and expanding market reach (Zhang, 2024). For effective negotiations, it is essential to recognize that negotiating styles vary significantly across different cultures, reflecting their unique societal norms, values, and communication styles (Zhang & Zhou, 2008). Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes and building relationships in the global marketplace (Chande, 2024).

Despite the growing importance of international business negotiations, there exists a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific negotiation practices employed between Dutch and Japanese companies. While research on cross-cultural negotiations is abundant, much of it tends to focus on the broader aspects of the negotiation process. There are also a significant number of studies that delve deeper into the nuances of the negotiation processes between two or more specific nationalities (Agndal et al., 2017). However, there are no existing studies focusing on negotiations between Dutch and Japanese companies. Agndal, Åge, and Eklinder-Frick (2017) call for more context-specific, qualitative studies that explore negotiations in real-world settings rather than simulations. Given the distinct cultural backgrounds and business traditions of the Netherlands and Japan, the comparison of these countries represents a meaningful research gap. Therefore, this research addresses this gap by examining how Dutch and Japanese businesses can improve the effectiveness of their negotiations.

The Netherlands and Japan share a long and unique business history. For over 200 years, the Netherlands was Japan's sole European trading partner, conducting trade on the artificial island of Dejima (Titsingh & Screech, 2006). Today, these countries remain important business partners, with trade between them continuing to grow. Despite their long economic histories, the Netherlands and Japan have completely different business cultures, making their interactions particularly interesting for cross-cultural negotiation research.

The objective of this study is to deepen the knowledge of negotiation practices between Dutch and Japanese companies, with a focus on understanding how cultural differences influence negotiation processes and outcomes. By examining the specific dynamics of intercultural negotiations between Dutch and Japanese companies, this research aims to identify effective strategies, communication approaches, and techniques that facilitate successful negotiations between companies from these two distinct cultural backgrounds. In particular, this study focuses on providing recommendations to Dutch companies to improve their negotiations with Japanese partners. This research draws on insights from Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework to compare Dutch and Japanese cultural values (Hofstede, 1980). This model is used because it is a widely applied framework that allows for country-to-country comparisons. Through a comprehensive analysis of cultural influences, organizational factors, and decision-making processes, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for both academic and practical application, ultimately contributing to enhanced cross-cultural negotiation effectiveness and fostering stronger business relationships between Dutch and Japanese companies.

Considering the lack of research conducted on negotiation practices between Dutch and Japanese companies, this paper will focus on answering the following research question:

"How can Dutch companies be more effective in negotiating with Japanese companies?"

To attain the needed information to answer this question, this research is divided into the following three sub-questions:

1. What are the typical elements that need attention in negotiations with the Japanese?

2. How do these cultural differences shape the negotiation process between Dutch and Japanese companies?

3. How can Dutch businesses act to address these typical Japanese negotiation elements?

The answers to the sub-questions are obtained through a qualitative analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews with Dutch sales managers and or negotiators who have experience in working with Japanese businesses.

The goal of this research is to deepen the understanding of the differences in business negotiation between Dutch and Japanese companies. It adds to current academic research on negotiation by taking a deeper dive into the negotiation practices between two specific countries that have very different cultures. In this way, new factors that influence negotiation practices can be found that will add to existing literature.

The practical relevance of this paper is to find and specify the cultural elements influencing negotiations between Dutch and Japanese companies, specifically focusing on how Dutch companies can negotiate most effectively with Japanese partners. Furthermore, this study aims to provide Dutch companies with hands-on recommendations for effective negotiations with Japanese companies. This way, these companies can use this article to improve business negotiations and foster better partnerships.

2.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1   Standard intercultural negotiation practices

Negotiation is a crucial part of conducting business (Sharland, 2001). It is a tool for companies and individuals that can be used to build partnerships with and reach agreements regarding the exchange of products, services, information, and other resources (Agndal et al., 2017). In today's globalized world, in which companies have to deal with diverse cultures and organizational structures, there is a growing importance of international business negotiations (Chaisrakeo & Speece, 2004).

Over the past couple of decades, a lot of research has been conducted on intercultural business negotiation practices. A lot of this research focuses on the interactions between two or more specific cultures, and what to do when interacting with someone from this specific culture (Agndal et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, there are studies that try and adopt a more one-size-fits-all approach. The Harvard negotiation theory, or principled negotiation theory, is one of these widely used general theories (Luecke, 2003). According to Fisher, Ury, and Patton, there are four key principles to negotiation. The first is to separate the person from the issue. The premise of this element is to understand that the other party is your friend and to separate emotions and personality from the business problem. The second is to focus on interests rather than

positions. Here, the idea is to try and understand the motivation and interests of the opposing party. The third principle is to invent options for mutual gain, in order to satisfy both parties. Lastly, insist on using objective criteria. The goal here is to avoid conflict about who is right or wrong about their statements by agreeing with the other party on the criteria for the facts they want to use (Fisher et al, 2011).

Another concept that was created by Fisher and Ury, and is also widely adopted, is the "Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement" BATNA (Fisher and Ury, 1981). The BATNA is part of the preparation phase of the negotiation process. Having a BATNA means understanding what options you have if the negotiations do not end favorably for you (Kim & Fragale, 2005). It also allows the negotiator to negotiate with more confidence, as it serves as a backup. Furthermore, research has shown that having a more attractive BATNA going into a negotiation leads to better results (Brett et al, 1996).

All of the above-mentioned techniques and strategies are about how to negotiate effectively. Yet, they do not take into account the nuances of different cultures, the effects of culture on negotiation style, and the perception of communication. These universal theories have useful aspects to consider when negotiating, but do not provide a concrete plan that can be used in every cultural setting. Perhaps that is why, as mentioned earlier, there have been so many other studies that do try to navigate the cultural differences between two or more specific countries (Agndal et al., 2017). However, no study has dealt with the nuances of negotiations between the Dutch and Japanese.

2.2 Cultural differences between the Netherlands and Japan

The field of cross-cultural management has been extensively studied, leading to the development of numerous different models to analyze and compare cultural differences. The most frequently used models include Hall's high- and low-context communication theory (Hall, 1976), Trompenaars' seven cultural dimensions (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2020), and Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980). Each of these models offers valuable insights into how cultures differ and influence international business practices. For this study, Hofstede's cultural dimensions model is used as it provides a widely applied and validated framework that allows for country-to-country comparisons. Despite Hofstede's work being widely used and validated, it also faces many criticisms. The work is criticized for relying on outdated data from one singular company and for assuming cultural homogeneity within countries (McSweeney, 2002). Furthermore, critics argue that Hofstede's model oversimplifies culture and has too few dimensions (Jones, 2007). Nevertheless, this study still uses Hofstede's framework due to its widespread use and because it allows for clear cultural comparisons between countries.

2.2.1 Cultural comparison between Japan and the Netherlands using Hofstede's dimensions

The country comparison tool from Hofstede consists of the following six dimensions: power distance, individualism, motivation towards achievement and success, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. For each of the six dimensions, the countries get scored on a scale of 0 to 100 (The Culture Factor, 2023). These scores were assigned to each country by using the average values that IBM employees gave on surveys (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022). In Figure 1, the scores of Japan and the Netherlands on each of the six dimensions are illustrated (The Culture Factor, 2023). In the

first dimension of Power Distance, Japan scores 54, which indicates that it just about qualifies as a hierarchical society. The Netherlands scores a 38, which means that the Netherlands has a more egalitarian society in which control is disliked and conversations with higher-ranking people are informal. On the dimension of individualism, the Netherlands has the highest score of 100. This means that the Netherlands is one of the most individualistic countries, reflecting a society where individuals value independence, autonomy, and personal achievement. Japan scores a 62, which means it does show the characteristics of an individualistic country, but not as extreme as the Netherlands. On the dimension of Motivation Towards Achievement and Success, there is a stark contrast in the scores between Japan (95) and the Netherlands (14). This dimension assesses the importance placed on ambition, assertiveness, and competitiveness in society. In the Netherlands, a good work-life balance is valued highly. Furthermore, equality, solidarity, and quality are also important in people's work lives. On the contrary, in Japan, there is a strong drive for perfection and greatness, expressed in all aspects of the Japanese everyday life. Japan also has a strong group competitiveness compared to the Netherlands. For the next dimension of uncertainty avoidance, Japan scores a high 92. This indicates that Japan is concerned with minimizing uncertainty through rules, regulations, and structured frameworks. The Netherlands scores a 53, meaning that it is just about an uncertainty-avoiding country, but it does not have as strong an emphasis on uncertainty avoidance as Japan. For the dimension of Long Term Orientation, Japan gets a score of 100, meaning it is one of the most long-term oriented societies. The Netherlands scores 67, which can be interpreted as the Netherlands being a pragmatic country. Lastly, the Netherlands has a score of 68 on indulgence and Japan a score of 42. This shows that the Dutch are more likely to actualize their impulses and desires compared to the Japanese, who are more restrained. This is also reflected in the Japanese work society, in which the Japanese work longer days than the Dutch and have less leisure time (The Culture Factor, 2023). The differences in the cultural dimensions between Japan and the Netherlands highlight the contrasting societal values, norms, and behaviors that may influence negotiation practices in business interactions between the two countries.
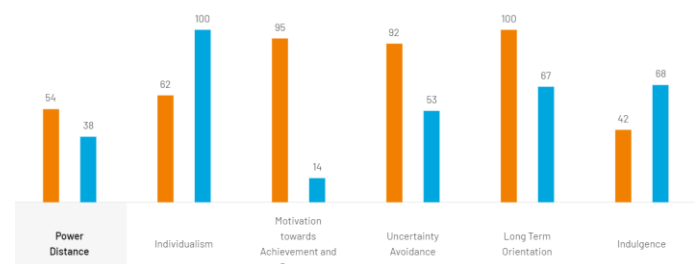
Figure 1: Index Scores of Japan (Orange) and the Netherlands (Blue) on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (The Culture Factor, 2023)

2.2.2 Japanese business negotiation practices

The Japanese negotiation style is built upon a very traditional and unique culture and varies from Western approaches. In Japanese business negotiations, there is a strong emphasis on respect and trust (Graham, 1993). The Japanese are more keen on building long-term relationships than countries from the West. They prioritize mutual trust and long-term commitment (Tung, 1984). Furthermore, Faure (1998) highlights that for the Japanese, trust and the quality of relationships are viewed as key parts of the outcome of negotiations.

Graham (1993) describes Japanese negotiation tactics as less confrontational than American negotiation styles. Tung (1984) highlights the Japanese emphasis on avoiding confrontation and saving face. Furthermore, the Japanese are found to rely on indirect communication. This can make it hard for Western counterparts to read the intentions and expressions of the Japanese (Faure, 1998).

Hierarchy plays a big role in Japanese businesses, and even when negotiating with other businesses, the final decisions are made by senior executives after a consensus has been formed with other individuals within the organization (Graham, 1993). Gelfand and Dyer (2000) further emphasize that Japanese business negotiation is shaped by collectivism and hierarchical structures based on seniority. According to Noorderhaven, Benders, and Keizer (2007), Japanese consensus is highly horizontal, where each individual affected by a decision has to agree before consensus is reached and a decision can be finalized. Many Japanese companies still use the traditional Ringi system (Biçer, 2023). The Ringi system is a consensus-based decision-making process widely adopted by Japanese firms that ensures each individual affected by a decision has the chance to voice their opinion without confrontation (Sagi, 2015). The Ringi system has four stages and a preliminary step called *"Nemawashi"*, which refers to informal meetings about the details of a proposed decision before the formal process starts (Sagi, 2015). In the Ringi system, a proposal or so-called *"Ringi-Sho"* is created and then circulated to other relevant departments of the organization for their feedback and approval (Biçer, 2023). Each manager can indicate their support for the proposal by stamping the document with their personal seal. Lastly, the proposal is circulated to top management for their approval, and if accepted, then it is implemented (Sagi, 2015). The Ringi system allows for a structured consensus-based decision-making process, but it is time-consuming because it requires group participation, circulation, and internal consensus (Biçer, 2023).

2.2.3 *Dutch business negotiation practices*
Dutch people are internationally viewed as direct people who do not like to beat around the bush. In business negotiations, the Dutch are known to prefer direct communication and openness regarding any issues faced by the parties involved (Ybema & Byun, 2009). These characteristics reflect the Dutch focus on effectiveness and pragmatism. It is also interesting to note that to Dutch people, it can be perceived as sneaky not to voice opinions about issues. Because this way, possible issues cannot be solved, and the business could be negatively affected. The Dutch also prefer to have an egalitarian workspace in which there is no need for a strict hierarchy (Ybema & Byun, 2009).

Noorderhaven, Benders, and Keizer explain that both Japan and the Netherlands are consensus-based countries, but their idea of consensus differs significantly. As mentioned earlier, Japanese consensus in decision making is horizontal, meaning everyone involved has to agree. In contrast, Dutch decision-making remains based on consensus, but the Dutch are more pragmatic and time-efficient. In Dutch companies, decisions can still be made if full consensus is not reached, as long as it saves time or there is a majority agreement (Noorderhaven et al., 2007).

Although a considerable amount of literature covers Japanese and Dutch negotiation practices separately or in comparison with other countries, there is no literature covering the negotiations between Japan and the Netherlands directly.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1 Research design
This research adopts a qualitative research method by using semi-structured interviews in order to figure out how Dutch companies can be more effective at negotiating with Japanese companies. In order to best answer the research question, this research follows an exploratory design (Sallis et al, 2021). This design allows for a flexible approach to gain new insights into the lived experiences of the participants (Sallis et al, 2021). Furthermore, an inductive research approach was applied to identify themes and patterns emerging from the data.

3.2 Data collection
After completing the initial literature review, the insights gained from the desk research were used to create an interview guide to help conduct the interviews. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A. It contains informed questions related to the research topic to ensure all relevant topics are discussed. The insights and experiences shared by these experts provided a deeper and richer understanding of negotiation practices between Dutch and Japanese companies (Maxwell, 2012).

Interviewees were found through purposeful sampling to ensure that they had the right knowledge and expertise about negotiation strategies between Dutch and Japanese organizations. By selecting interviewees who met specific criteria, this approach ensures to gather more relevant and useful data will be gathered, thereby enhancing the overall reliability of the research. The selection criteria for the interviewees were as follows: the interviewee is Dutch, has at least one year of experience working with the Japanese, and has held or is currently in a position involving negotiations. Lastly, to ensure a more diverse group with varied experiences, all five interviewees came from different companies that had little to no interaction with one another.

The interviewees were contacted through personal connections and/or LinkedIn. Upon receiving their consent to participate, a mutually convenient time was scheduled for the interview, which was conducted either in person or through a video call on Microsoft Teams. In both scenarios, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Lastly, careful attention was given to data management, ensuring that all data collected during the interviews were stored securely and used solely for this research.

In total, only five interviews were conducted. While each interviewee offered valuable insights and perspectives based on their individual experiences as negotiators in an intercultural context, the limited sample size likely restricted the breadth of perspectives and insights gathered. According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, a minimum of 12 interviews needs to be conducted in order to have data saturation. Saturation is reached when there is no benefit in conducting extra interviews, because all the reemerging themes and information have already been found (Guest et al, 2006). In this research, it is unlikely that saturation was reached due to the small sample size. Therefore, the validity of the findings of this research is limited, and the results of this study should be interpreted with caution.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, using open-ended questions. This flexible approach did not follow a fixed order for addressing the questions, which allowed for greater freedom and created a naturally flowing conversation where interviewees could reflect on their personal experiences. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into subjects that interviewees brought up, which were deemed interesting. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Topics that were discussed during the interviews include:

common challenges that negotiators experience in the Dutch-Japanese interaction, personal mistakes made in past negotiations, the most challenging cultural differences, what the interviewee believes are effective negotiation strategies for Dutch-Japanese negotiations, and the interviewee's recommendations for improving Dutch-Japanese business negotiations..

Figure 2: Interviewee Characteristics

Nr.	Gender	Age	Years of working experience with the Japanese	Company industry	Position
1	M	60	7	Defense/Tech	Sales/Service
2	M	41	10	Beer/Tech	Sales
3.1	M	35	6	Powerplants	Sales
3.2	M	45	15	Powerplants	Sales
4	M	32	2	Tech	Trade
5	F	32	7	Government	Trade official

3.3 Data analysis

All interviews have been recorded and transcribed in order to safely and accurately document all of the responses. The data collected from the interviews were then analyzed and compared with one another to find patterns and discrepancies, using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis is an approach to analyzing qualitative data to identify themes and patterns. It is a flexible process in which the researcher can move back and forth between the six different phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) define the six phases of Thematic Analysis as follows:

1. Transcribe and read the data in order to familiarize yourself with the data.

2. Code the data systematically.

3. Search for themes by collecting codes with similar features.

4. Review the themes by checking if they work in relation to the extracted codes and the entire data set.

5. Generate clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Produce the report based on the analysis.

This research also adopts the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012), which was used to bring qualitative rigor to the Thematic Analysis process. By using the Gioia method, this research enhances the scholarly rigor of the data analysis (Magnani & Gioia, 2023). Using the Gioia method, a model was created consisting of First Order Concepts, Second Order Themes, and aggregate dimensions. Important terms, phrases, and expressions from the interviewees form the First Order Concepts. These concepts are then interpreted and abstracted by the researcher to identify Second Order Themes. These themes are then further abstracted into aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). These dimensions represent the overarching theoretical constructs that emerged from the data.

These stages align with Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of Thematic Analysis. The First Order Concepts described by Gioia (2012) can be viewed as the second phase of Thematic Analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006). The forming of Second Order Themes aligns with phase three of Thematic Analysis, and the creation of aggregate dimensions can be seen

as the fifth phase of Thematic Analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The aggregate dimensions helped to identify the main insights and key areas Dutch businesses should consider in order to improve the effectiveness of their negotiations with Japanese firms.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the qualitative data analysis, focusing on the First Order concepts and Second Order Themes derived from the semi-structured interviews. These concepts and themes are systematically organized into third-order aggregate dimensions, providing a structured framework for understanding the findings. A visual representation of the full data model can be found in Appendix B. To clarify, all interview participants are referred to as "I" followed by their corresponding number, for example, "I1" or "I5". For interview three, two participants from the same company were interviewed together; therefore, they will be referred to as either "I3.1" or "I3.2".

4.1 Focus on Details

When Dutch businesses want to negotiate with Japanese firms, thorough preparation and detailed quality assurance play a big role in achieving effective and successful negotiations. From the interviews, it was established that the Japanese are extremely diligent workers, leading to lengthy negotiations lasting several meetings. The lengthy in in-depth meetings are tough for the pragmatic time time-efficient Dutch negotiators to adapt to. In this dimension, several themes were uncovered that led to this conclusion.

The Japanese **demand detailed preparation** from their negotiating partners. Japanese firms like to go into the smallest of details during negotiations. Therefore, when doing business with the Japanese, it is important to come well prepared and have all your details ready. During the interviews, I1 stated: *"This requires, even if I did a contract in Japan, it requires… Weeks of preparation, working everything out in detail. At every level, technical, legal, and commercial, make sure you always have that document physically with you. So you can look things up, so that it is verifiable."*. This statement emphasizes the importance of coming well-prepared to negotiations with Japanese businesses. The interviewee stresses how they sometimes take weeks to prepare for a negotiation with their Japanese partners.

Another important theme under this dimension is the Japanese emphasis on **detailed quality control**. Japanese firms hold extremely high standards when it comes to product reliability, precision, and avoiding mistakes. Several interviewees highlighted how the Japanese approach to quality is often "failure-driven". This means that any identified mistake or error triggers the development of new procedures, safeguards, and checks to ensure it does not happen again. I3.1 mentioned: *"But they work very Failure-driven. So every problem should, in principle, not occur in the future. So based on an error, they will revise a procedure and rewrite it, really failure-driven.".* This attitude places significant demands on Dutch businesses, which must not only be well prepared but also be able to show proactiveness in error prevention. As I3.2 explained: *"Look at the moment, when we in our work have to submit documentation, then those are hundreds of pages, sometimes more than 1000 pages of documents that you have to submit. At the moment that you continuously get a whole bunch of comments on that, then that is of course enormously labor-intensive to process those comments again every time."* This

showcases how it can be difficult for Dutch businesses to deal with the Japanese focus on detail, as it can create labor-intensive work on the Dutch side.

Next, in negotiations, the Japanese will go into **detailed discussions.** This theme emphasizes the thoroughness that the Japanese apply at every stage of the negotiation process. I1 described how each proposal is carefully broken down and examined: *"They go through a proposal in great detail, through an offer and then they start asking everything: 'And why is that so? And how many hours do you need for that? And why do you need so many hours for that? And can't that be done with a few less hours? Because if we estimate it, then I don't come to 100 hours, but then I come to 50 hours.' Those are typical conversations that you have with them. And in that way the complete negotiation. It is heavily dissected by them and challenged."* This theme also shows again how there is a need for thorough preparation, as the Japanese will go into every little detail to challenge what is thrown at them and create a better offer for themselves.

In accordance with their habits of prioritizing error prevention, another theme that emerged is **risk avoidance**. The Japanese are not keen on taking risks. As mentioned, the Japanese go into depth in negotiations, and the reason why they do this is that they want to avoid risks. As I5 mentioned: *"The Japanese are not really into taking risks, so they want to be very careful and get a lot of information and discuss a lot internally. So it all takes a bit longer."*. This quote stresses the Japanese tendency of risk avoidance and also how this can cause meetings and negotiations to take longer because of their thoroughness. Furthermore, the Japanese also prefer to buy proven technologies. They are generally reluctant to experiment with untested products or take risks on innovations that have not yet demonstrated consistent success. In the interviews, this preference was clearly expressed. As I2 stated: *"What I learned, you should always use proven technology there. Do the trial and error somewhere in Europe or America or in Africa. But if you deliver something in Japan, it just has to be good, idiot-proof. We are often when we develop something, we are the cowboys, then you quickly sell things, you make sure it goes well, and then it often goes well. But in Japan if you want to go there, then it just has to be really proven technology."*. This quote highlights that Japanese businesses opt for a more risk-free approach, wanting proven technologies that are more error-free. Also mentioning how Dutch businesses are more likely to experiment with new technologies and want to quickly sell new products before ensuring absolute perfection. In contrast to the Japanese, who prefer certainty.

4.2   Respect

In negotiations with Japanese businesses, respect and cultural norms play an important role in having successful negotiations. **Formality** is one of the key themes here. Dutch people are quick to speak informally to one another and even use humor in business meetings, as emphasized by I4 stating: *"I think the Netherlands is quite clumsy and the Dutch often think that what we do is normal everywhere. And so I think certainly in the beginning, being too jovial and making jokes, that kind of thing. That is not appreciated. You just have to behave properly and act professionally. While the Dutch like to start chatting fun right away"* The quote also stresses that Japanese businesses, on the other hand, value formal meetings with careful communication. This shows how Dutch negotiators need to be aware of their communication style and avoid being too blunt or informal, as the Japanese would view such communication styles as disrespectful. Interviewee 1 mentioned: *"Raising your voice… Expressions of emotions. You shouldn't do that in Japan. It's completely pointless. It's counterproductive, it's not appreciated. They're very friendly people. They also expect a friendly conversation."*. This quote emphasizes how Japanese people always stay polite and emotionless in negotiations. They value politeness, will never raise their voice in negotiations, and expect the same from their negotiating partners.

Another important theme under this dimension is **politeness**. This goes beyond just communication through words and includes things like greetings and gestures. One such example is the appreciation of small gifts. When asked about what Japanese people think of gifts, I3.1 responded: *"They really appreciate it and they really show it. They say: "Woooh aaah". With something as simple as stroopwafels."* In Japanese culture it giving small gifts is seen as polite and respectful. Dutch people however, are not used to giving and receiving gifts from other businesses. I1 even mentioned: *"If you look at giving presents. In Japan it is very much appreciated. In the Netherlands it is seen as bribery. It is not done."*. This highlights a key difference in how giving small gifts is perceived in these two cultures. What is seen as bribery or unethical in the Netherlands is a polite gesture in Japan. For Dutch businesses, it is important to recognize that small gifts are a way to show appreciation and respect. Another good example of Japanese norms of respect and politeness is how business cards are exchanged. I4 mentioned: *"You give a business card and then you take it with both hands read it and then you put it away quietly. You don't put it in your jacket pocket or something. You have to be a little more respectful."*. Small actions like this also matter in Japanese business culture because they show that you understand and respect their way of working. For Dutch businesses, paying attention to these details can help set the right tone for the negotiation.

The last theme under this dimension is **adaptation to local norms and etiquette.** To negotiate effectively, Dutch businesses need to adapt to Japanese customs and expectations. In the interviews, it was mentioned multiple times that it would be more effective for Dutch businesses to adapt to Japanese standards than the other way around. As I5 said: *"I think it is easier for a Dutch person to get used to a Japanese person than for a Japanese person to get used to a Dutch person."* Adapting to Japanese norms shows respect and understanding. This makes it easier to build a good relationship, which is key for successful negotiations.

4.3   Harmony

In order to successfully negotiate with the Japanese, it is important to understand that the Japanese are indirect and tend to avoid conflict. This dimension is divided into two themes, the first of which is **indirect communication**. This is especially important to consider for the Dutch, who are known for being one of the most direct people in the world. When talking with the Japanese, Dutch negotiators should be wary not to take all words at face value. In the interview, I1 expressed: *"You don't hear the word 'no' either. Then it's more. "Hai, Hai, Hai" And then bow. Which by the way doesn't mean that they agree. Some people think that a Japanese person says: "They agree with your message" But that's not the case. What they're saying is: "I understand what you're saying" Without there being any value judgment in it."*. The respondent mentioned an occurrence of a Japanese man saying "Hai" which translates to "yes" in English, but it does not mean "yes" in its literal sense. Instead, the Japanese person simply means they understand what is being said, without necessarily agreeing. A Dutch person could easily take the words at face value and wrongly interpret the meaning of the Japanese person's words in this scenario. By considering the difference in communication,

these types of misunderstandings can be avoided, improving the effectiveness of negotiations.

The second theme is **saving face**. In Japanese culture, it is very important to avoid situations where someone might feel embarrassed or lose respect in front of others. I1 explained: *"What is very important in Japan and very, very sensitive is losing face. That is one of the things you have to take into account. You always have to make sure that the other side you are talking to also has a story to tell their superior."* This statement emphasizes how Dutch negotiators need to be careful not to push too hard or create a situation where their Japanese counterparts feel they cannot explain themselves to their superiors. Such situations can lead to internal discomfort, disrupting harmony on the Japanese side. If this happens, it could harm the relationship and thus negatively affect the negotiations. The Japanese are also conflict-avoidant, which is important to realize. When asked how the Japanese would react if they disagree or get angry, I4 said: *"Then they remain very polite. Only then you just don't hear from them anymore. That's when you know I've messed up.".* The respondent emphasizes that the Japanese rarely show visible anger or openly express frustration. Instead, they withdraw and stop engaging where negotiations between two Dutch businesses might escalate. It is important for Dutch negotiators to realize that silence can signal that the negotiations have effectively broken down. Dutch businesses need to give the Japanese side space to communicate disagreement indirectly, by reading between the lines, and creating a respectful atmosphere where both parties feel safe and valued. Understanding this is crucial for avoiding misunderstandings and improving the effectiveness of negotiations.

4.4   Hierarchy

In Japanese firms, hierarchy and authority play a key role when doing business. Unlike the Dutch work space, which is more flat and egalitarian, the Japanese follow a strict hierarchy. The first theme in this dimension is **seniority**. In Japanese business culture, seniority plays a big role. As I1 put it: *"In Japan they have respect for gray hair."*. Another interviewee, I3.2 mentioned: *"Hierarchy is not really about what someone can do and in terms of knowledge or something, it is also very, really about age. So an older person simply has more hierarchy, more status than a younger engineer who may be better or more highly educated."*. Age is clearly important for the Japanese, even more so than skills in certain firms. In negotiations, Dutch businesses should consider this hierarchy on the Japanese side, but also consider seniority on their side. As I4 stressed: *"If you have a meeting with someone who is 50, then yes, you better bring someone who is about the same age, because otherwise, they will feel a bit disrespected."* The interviewee mentions how the Japanese emphasis on seniority also affects the Dutch side in negotiations. Stressing that it is better to match the Japanese in terms of seniority at the table. Understanding this hierarchy and having senior figures present at negotiations can help Dutch businesses gain more respect and authority at the table.

In negotiations, it is crucial to understand the thought process of your counterpart to effectively navigate the negotiations and avoid misunderstandings. The second theme under the dimension of hierarchy that emerged from the data analysis is the **Ringi system**. From the interviews, it became clear that Japanese companies tend to make cohesive group decisions after thorough discussions. I3.1 stated: *"It's huge, it's hugely collective."*. And further explained: *"When really important things have to be decided, then it is parked. Then they are indeed coordinating with higher up or they come back to it later. So that all of them can go over it again in a committee."*. The interviewee stresses how Japanese companies are collective and have a consensus-based decision-making process. The interviewee is likely referring to the Ringi system, by which many Japanese companies operate. I5 stressed: *"And if that manager thinks that it is a good product or company, then he goes back to his manager and then it becomes again. It really keeps going up."* This quote shows how, in Japanese firms, decisions are made through consulting with managers at higher levels of authority before a final decision is made. Dutch negotiators must understand that it is not just one person at the negotiation table whom they need to convince. It is important to be patient and understand that decision-making follows the ringi system, which takes time due to its consensus-based nature. Furthermore, I3.2 stressed: *"You have the idea that you have discussed everything and that you have agreed, and then you hear later that there have been internal meetings and that they still come back to some points."* This quote illustrates how the consensus-building process from the Ringi system can be difficult to understand for Dutch negotiators and lead to miscommunications. Dutch negotiators may perceive an agreement as complete, but the Japanese might still need internal consultations in order to reach internal alignment.

4.5   Loyalty

Building trust is always an important factor in negotiations, but with Japanese companies, it is even more crucial. As explained, the Japanese are risk-averse and thus want to trust someone before doing business with them. I2 explained: *"Dutch people are much more open, you get much more out of it. With Japanese people it is much harder to get to the point. So you have to first build relationship and create trust."* This statement highlights how Dutch and Japanese mentalities differ. Dutch people are more open to strangers. In negotiations, they are more open to closing deals with unfamiliar companies as long as there is money to be made. The Japanese, on the other hand, prefer certainty, and for that, they need to trust their business partner. When asked how best to build a relationship with a Japanese company, I5 responded: *"First of all, trust. Yes, building trust. And you do that from my experience in Japan by either finding a partner who represents you or registering your company there yourself."* This again emphasizes how entering the Japanese market requires not just a good product, but also proven reliability. This statement also touches upon the possibility of creating trust through a partner company in Japan or by registering the company in Japan. Two means Dutch companies can use to gain trust from Japanese partners.

Once trust is built up, the Japanese are usually keen on maintaining **long-term relationships**. This theme is also built on the Japanese emphasis on trust. The Japanese have a preference for long-term relationships where they know the partner company well and are thus able to trust it. I2 made the point: *"If you are a reliable partner, you can do a lot more business, Because then they trust your products and they don't look everywhere. If it is good once, then you can sell a lot.".* This highlights how Japanese businesses are keen on dependable and reliable partners, further emphasizing the need for trust. On the flipside, the interviewee also mentions how once a relationship of trust is established, the Japanese are likely to do business again. I5 even went as far as stating: *"even if the company they are already in contact with has higher prices than another company they are not yet in contact with, they will still choose the company they are already in contact with, because they find the reputation important and because they also expect a certain level of service."* This statement shows an even stronger sign, showcasing how the Japanese are loyal partners as soon as trust is established. For Dutch

businesses, this can be an important aspect of consideration in negotiations. Through patience and focusing not just on quick deals, Dutch companies can gain a loyal partner for long-term relationships built upon trust. Not taking quick deals with better outcomes right now can result in better opportunities in the future.

4.6   Translations

When doing business with partners from other countries, translations play an important role in shaping the negotiations. Especially with the Japanese, as they can often only speak their language. Therefore, it is common to have interpreters or third-party companies present when negotiating with Japanese firms. **Translation loss** can affect negotiations. It is necessary to understand that despite the presence of interpreters, a sense of feeling is lost during the translation process. I1 explained: *"we as Dutch people already translate it to English, so then you already lose a part of the feeling in that you already lose. Then it goes from English to Japanese... there again a part is missing, because you don't get everything. Then it goes from Japanese back to English and from English to Dutch."*. Furthermore, they also mention it is a *"cumbersome process"*. If neither side speaks both languages and there is a need for interpreters, misunderstandings will likely form due to excessive translations.

Another important consideration is **communication problems due to cultural differences**. This is closely tied to the Japanese indirect communication style mentioned earlier. Even when the interpreters use the correct words, the underlying meaning can greatly differ between the cultures. This difference in communication can lead to misunderstandings during negotiations, ultimately negatively affecting the effectiveness of the negotiation process. I4 stressed: *"Sometimes what we might see as lying is seen as a kind of polite. For example, we had: Can we agree on this or that or can we receive this and that information? And what often happened is that they said: yes, maybe. But 'maybe' in Japan simply means 'no'."*. The interviewee points out how even when correct translations are made, words are interpreted differently in both countries, which can cause misunderstandings. What Dutch people might view as an agreement being reached might have been the Japanese politely declining. Dutch negotiators need to recognize the possibility of differences in interpretation. Being aware of these differences can help prevent misunderstandings and false assumptions, improving the overall effectiveness of negotiations.

5.   DISCUSSION

5.1   Interpretation of Results

This section compares the findings from the semi-structured interviews to the existing literature to figure out to what extent the findings align with, diverge from, or add new insights to the current literature. The research question guiding this research is:

"How can Dutch companies be more effective in negotiating with Japanese companies?"

The results section used the Gioia method to identify second-order themes and aggregated dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). To following table provides a clear overview of the themes and dimensions discussed in the results.

Aggregated Dimensions	Second-Order themes
Focus on detail	Detailed preparation
	Detailed quality control
	Detailed discussions
	Risk avoidance
Respect	Formality
	Politeness
	Adaptation to Japanese norms
Harmony	Indirect communication
	Saving face
Hierarchy	Seniority
	Ringi system
Loyalty	Trust
	Long-term relationships
Translations	Translation loss
	Interpretation problems

Figure 3: Gioia figure Second-Order themes and Aggregated dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012)

Hofstede (1980) identifies six dimensions to compare national cultures: power distance, individualism, motivation towards achievement and success, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Not all, but several of these dimensions were reflected in the findings of this study.

This study identified the Japanese emphasis on thorough preparation and careful planning in order to have in-depth discussions about everything, ranging from product quality to technical specifications and pricing. Moreover, the interviews specified the Japanese failure-driven approach to error prevention, where every mistake is treated as an opportunity to refine processes in order to avoid future imperfections. These actions perfectly align with Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, where Japan scores a very high 92 on uncertainty avoidance.

The findings of this study also align with Hofstede's dimension of long-term orientation, for which Japan scores a full 100. The interviewees deemed trust as a necessary foundation for doing business with the Japanese. Furthermore, it was deemed that once trust has been built up, the Japanese are loyal partners keen on preserving long-term relationships.

Hofstede gives Japan a moderate score of 54 on power distance, indicating a slightly hierarchical society. The findings of this research partially support this score. The results indicate that the Japanese have a strict hierarchy based on seniority. Age is a big deal for the Japanese and can determine someone's position and power during negotiations. This would suggest Japan should have a higher score on hierarchy in Hofstede's model. However, the findings also indicate that Japanese decision-making is strongly consensus-based. Where ultimately, decisions are made once internal alignment is reached. This suggests Japan also shows more egalitarian characteristics, and thus a moderate score of 54 is still supported by the findings.

Besides consensus-based decision making, this research also identified the Japanese emphasis on harmony. This preference for harmony on the work floor became apparent in their tendency to avoid putting others in uncomfortable situations. Looking at Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Japan scores a 62

on individualism, suggesting that Japan is a slightly individualistic society. This research, on the other hand, outlines the Japanese practice of group harmony, saving face, and consensus-based decision making. Characteristics more befitting of a collectivist society. This discrepancy could mean that the model of Hofstede does not fully capture the intricacies of this dimension in practice. In practice, Japan might be more collectivist than shown in the model due to its emphasis on saving face, maintaining group harmony, and consensus-based decision making.

Beyond Hofstede's cultural dimensions, other literature also delves into Japanese negotiation practices. Existing literature highlights the Japanese emphasis on avoiding confrontation and saving face (Tung, 1984), formal and polite negotiations (Graham, 1993), and indirect communication (Faure, 1998). This is strongly reflected in the findings from the interviews, which touched upon the same topics.

The Japanese emphasis on trust and long-term relationship building, which was emphasized by the interviewees, is also extensively covered in the existing literature (Graham, 1993; Tung, 1984; Faure, 1998). However, this research highlights the possibility of either partnering with an established Japanese firm or registering a company locally in order to establish trust. This is not yet mentioned in existing literature, but can be used as a practical recommendation to foreign companies seeking to do business with the Japanese.

Existing literature already identifies the consensus-driven decision-making process in Japan, in which each individual affected by a decision must align for a decision to be finalized (Noorderhaven et al., 2007). This was also identified in this research, where interviewees stressed the importance of internal alignment on the Japanese side. Additionally, the data from this research supports the idea that Japanese decision-making is structured and consensus-based, in line with the description of the Ringi system by Sagi (2015) and Biçer (2023). It may be useful for Dutch negotiators to familiarize themselves with the Ringi system, as the data suggests that it can be difficult to understand for Dutch negotiators and lead to miscommunications. Understanding the Ringi system can help Dutch negotiators understand why Japanese negotiators revisit seemingly agreed-upon decisions and why the Japanese take considerable time. Furthermore, it can help Dutch negotiators understand that it is not just one person at the negotiation table whom they need to convince, but rather the whole company. Recognizing this could help Dutch negotiators remain patient and avoid miscommunications.

Besides this, this research identified seniority-driven hierarchies, in line with the literature from Graham (1993), Gelfand & Dyer (2000), and Ybema & Byun (2009). However, this research also specifies the importance of mirroring the Japanese side based on seniority during negotiations, and how this can help Dutch businesses gain authority and respect at the negotiation table. Existing literature does not cover the implications of how the Japanese emphasis on seniority affects the opposing side at the negotiation table.

5.2   Theoretical implications
This research contributes to existing literature on cross-cultural behavior, more specifically on negotiation theory between Dutch and Japanese businesses. The findings of this research largely support the framework outlined by Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, but also highlight areas where Hofstede's scores may not fully explain behaviors observed in practice. This may be due to the model's oversimplification of culture, as mentioned by Jones (2007). Hofstede's dimensions of long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance were strongly supported by the findings. Furthermore, the dimension of power distance does align with the findings, but there is some evidence supporting a higher score on this dimension. However, the insights from this research deviate from Hofstede's score of 62 on individualism for Japan. This research highlights the Japanese practice of group harmony, saving face, and consensus-based decision making. Suggesting Japan is more collectivistic than outlined in Hofstede's framework. This discrepancy suggests that the model of Hofstede, while helpful, may not fully explain observed behavior in practice.

Besides Hofstede's framework, this research also reinforces the findings from other literature regarding Japanese business characteristics. The insights of this research confirmed the Japanese emphasis on trust, long-term relationships, saving face, avoiding confrontation, and indirect communication as described in current literature (Tung, 1984; Graham, 1993; Faure, 1998). Furthermore, this research also highlights consensus-based decision making and seniority-driven hierarchies as typically Japanese (Graham, 1993; Gelfand & Dyer, 2000; Noorderhaven et al., 2007).

However, this study also adds practical insights not previously emphasized in the literature. Specifically, this research recommends that Dutch negotiators mirror Japanese seniority during negotiations in order to gain authority and respect. Furthermore, this research also recommends partnering with an established Japanese firm or registering a local entity in Japan to establish trust.

5.3   Practical implications
In practice, this research can help Dutch negotiators improve the effectiveness of their negotiations with their Japanese counterparts. Furthermore, it can help Dutch businesses to increase their relationships with Japanese firms. By outlining several key factors that influence negotiations between Dutch and Japanese businesses, this study highlights important considerations for Dutch firms and offers practical recommendations to Dutch negotiators in an effort to help improve the effectiveness of their negotiations with Japanese firms.

Dutch companies need to increase their level of preparation prior to entering negotiations. Japanese companies are risk-averse, and they tend to enter highly detailed discussions. Thus, Dutch negotiators need to be thoroughly prepared with documentation covering the legal, technical, and commercial aspects of their products.

Furthermore, Dutch companies need to understand and adapt to Japanese business etiquette. Japanese business culture places high value on formality, respectful communication, and established etiquette such as bowing, the careful exchange of business cards with two hands, and the giving of small gifts. A common pitfall for Dutch negotiators is the use of humor to ease the talks, but this can conflict with the Japanese expectation of a professional and formal setting.

The research suggests that Dutch companies may benefit from including senior representatives in negotiations, as this can help establish authority and respect at the negotiating table with Japanese companies.

Trust and loyalty are key values in Japanese business culture; the Japanese prefer long-term collaboration over seeking alternative partners even if others offer more favorable pricing. Therefore, Dutch companies should demonstrate reliability and long-term commitment in order to build a long-term relationship with a loyal partner. The findings further suggest that registering a local entity in Japan or partnering with a

Japanese firm that can negotiate on their behalf can help Dutch companies build trust and form long-term relationships.

Dutch companies must also be prepared for long, multiple-day negotiation sessions. Besides in-depth discussions, the Japanese also have a collective decision-making process built on internal alignment. Dutch negotiators should familiarize themselves with the Japanese Ringi system, as it could help prevent miscommunication. Negotiations are lengthy and usually consist of several meetings over multiple days. Patience and flexibility are, therefore, crucial for Dutch businesses.

Finally, communication and translations remain a crucial aspect of the negotiations. Dutch negotiators need to be wary of miscommunication and misinterpretation due to translations.

5.4 Limitations

This study contains several limitations that must be acknowledged. To begin with, this study is based on qualitative data gathered from interviews and is therefore subject to researcher bias. For this study, the Gioia method was used, and despite being systematic, it still relies on interpretations from the researcher when identifying second-order themes and aggregated dimensions. Despite efforts to reduce researcher bias, the research could still be biased and subjective.

Secondly, this study heavily relies on the insights gained from a very limited number of interviews. Only five Dutch experts with experience in negotiating with Japanese businesses were interviewed. Due to the small sample size, data saturation was likely not reached. This limits the generalizability of the findings of this research. Therefore, the results of this research should be interpreted with caution.

Furthermore, this research only provides data from the Dutch perspective. All the interviewees were Dutch. This means the data only reflects how Dutch negotiators perceive the negotiation process, communication challenges, and cultural differences between Dutch and Japanese companies. The lack of input from the Japanese side means that some insights might be missing or incomplete. Including insights from the Japanese side in future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Lastly, this research does not take sector-specific differences into account. Negotiations can vary significantly between sectors, depending on the product or service. For example, sectors like defense may be more old-fashioned and stiff, which can influence the negotiation process between Dutch and Japanese businesses. Taking sector-specific differences into account could provide more insights and a deeper understanding of the negotiation process between Dutch and Japanese businesses.

5.5 Future research

Future studies should aim to overcome these limitations. Future research should expand the sample size and include a broader group of participants. Interviewing more Dutch professionals would help to achieve data saturation and improve the generalizability of the findings. A more diverse and bigger dataset would make it possible to identify more patterns and draw better conclusions.

Furthermore, Future studies should also include Japanese participants to include their perspectives on Dutch negotiation practices. Comparing these perspectives could reveal new insights that are not available when only looking at one side. Including the insights from Japanese negotiators could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Dutch negotiators can improve the effectiveness of negotiations with Japanese businesses.

Future research could benefit from combining qualitative insights with quantitative approaches, which would enhance the strength of the findings and increase their generalizability. Approaches such as surveys, statistical analyses, or case studies could be used alongside interviews to offer a more detailed understanding of how Dutch companies can improve the effectiveness of their negotiations with Japanese firms. Incorporating quantitative data would also help validate the qualitative results.

Finally, future research should explore the sector-specific differences in negotiations between Dutch and Japanese firms in greater depth. Studying the sector-specific differences in negotiations between Dutch and Japanese firms could reveal important differences in negotiation practices between industries. As a result, future research could create sector-specific strategies that help Dutch companies negotiate more effectively with Japanese businesses across different industries.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides recommendations for Dutch companies aiming to improve their negotiation effectiveness with Japanese firms. By focusing on six key dimensions that were found to influence the negotiation process: Focus on details, respect, harmony, hierarchy, loyalty, and translations. Furthermore, this research offers insights into how Japanese business culture shapes negotiation behavior, communication, and decision-making. Dutch businesses can improve their effectiveness in negotiating with Japanese firms by preparing thoroughly, adapting to Japanese etiquette and communication styles, including senior representatives, remaining patient, building trust, and focusing on long-term relationships.

The findings of this research largely support existing literature on Japanese business culture. The research reinforces existing literature regarding trust, long-term relationships, saving face, indirect communication, consensus-based decision making, and seniority-driven hierarchies as typical features of Japanese business culture. Furthermore, the results strongly support Hofstede's dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. The findings do partially align with the dimension of power distance, but there is some evidence suggesting that a higher score on this dimension better reflects the role of hierarchy observed in practice. However, this research deviates from Hofstede's score on individualism, suggesting Japan is more collectivistic than outlined in Hofstede's framework. This discrepancy suggests that the model of Hofstede, while helpful, may not fully explain observed behavior in practice.

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8. AI STATEMENT

Grammarly was used to ensure that the grammar and spelling in this thesis are up to academic standards. No generative AI functions have been used for this thesis.

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10.   APPENDIX
10.1   Appendix A-Interview guide
10.1.1   Dutch

Voordat we beginnen, wil ik mezelf en het doel van dit onderzoek voorstellen. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te bepalen hoe Nederlanders hun onderhandelingen met de Japanners kunnen verbeteren. De inhoud van dit interview is privé en wordt met niemand anders dan de interviewer gedeeld. Ik zorg ervoor dat uw naam niet genoemd wordt in het onderzoek en zorg ervoor dat uitspraken niet naar u herleidbaar zijn. U hoeft niet te reageren op vragen als deze u ongemak bezorgen. Daarnaast bent u vrij om het interview op elk gewenst moment te beëindigen. Geeft u toestemming dat het interview wordt opgenomen en getranscribeerd? Als dat zo is, kunnen we beginnen.

Ten eerste: Waar werkt u:

- Firma
- Leeftijd

Wat doet u voor werk?

En hoe lang doet u dit al?

Ervaring met het werken met Japanners

• Hoe lang werkt u al met de Japanners in een zakelijke omgeving?

• Hoe vaak heeft u contact met uw Japanse partners?

• Waaruit bestaat het contact? (Telefoongesprekken, e-mail, persoonlijke ontmoetingen)

• In welke taal communiceert u met de Japanners? Verloopt dit goed voor beide partijen?

• Is de samenwerking volgens u goed of kan deze verbeterd worden?

• Denkt u dat de persoonlijke relaties goed zijn, of kunnen deze beter?

Laten we het hebben over de onderhandelingsaspecten

• Wat zijn volgens u belangrijke aspecten om over na te denken bij onderhandelingen met de Japanners?

• Heeft u strategieën die u gebruikt bij de Japanse onderhandelaars?

• Wat zijn veelvoorkomende uitdagingen bij de onderhandelingen met de Japanners?

• Hoe belangrijk zijn prijs, productkwaliteit en het aangaan van lange termijn relaties in de onderhandelingen met de Japanners?

• Wanneer weet u dat u een deal heeft?

Heeft u weleens meegemaakt dat je niet tot een deal kon komen, en zo ja waarom/ hoe werd dit opgelost

• Hoe ziet het besluitvormingsproces bij het sluiten van deals eruit bij een Japans bedrijf?

o Wie neemt de beslissingen en hoe werkt dat?

o Worden de beslissingen door iedereen gerespecteerd?

• Wat moet u doen om langdurige relaties op te bouwen en te onderhouden?

• Wat doen jullie voor elkaar?

• Zijn er bepaalde grenzen bij de onderhandelingen met de Japanners? (Wat kun je wel of niet doen)

• Bluffen de Japanners ook?

• Hoe verschillen de onderhandelingen met de Japanners van de onderhandelingen met landgenoten?

Wat is het beste aan onderhandelen met Japanners?

Wat is het minst fijne van het onderhandelen met Japanners?

Ik wil graag praten over uw ervaringen met de Japanners.

• Heeft u misverstanden ervaren tussen Japanners en uzelf of een andere Nederlander?

• Bent u verrast door het gedrag van de Japanners?

• Heeft u conflicten gehad met een van uw Japanse collega's?

• Heeft u andere werk gerelateerde problemen gehad met de Japanners?

Stellingen:

Met een Nederlander samenwerken is makkelijker dan met een Japanner

Wat is uw mening hierover, en waarom?

Het is gemakkelijk om deals en overeenkomsten te sluiten met de Japanners

Wat is uw mening hierover, en waarom?

Bij onderhandelingen houden de Japanners graag informatie achter

Wat is uw mening hierover, en waarom?

Japanners zijn terughoudender in de onderhandelingen dan Nederlanders

Wat is uw mening hierover, en waarom?

Wanneer ik onderhandel met een Japanner pas ik mijn onderhandelingstactiek aan?

Resterende vragen:

• Wat maakt volgens jou een goede onderhandelaar?

    o Verschilt dit bij onderhandelen met Nederlanders of Japanners? Zo ja, hoe?

• Hoe zouden Nederlandse onderhandelaars volgens jou de onderhandelingen met hun Japanse tegenhangers kunnen verbeteren?

• Welke tips zou je geven aan een Nederlandse onderhandelaar die geen ervaring heeft met het onderhandelen met zijn Japanse tegenhanger?

Wilt u nog wat meer vertellen over uw ervaringen met de Japanners? Is er iets dat volgens u nog niet besproken is?

Stuur mij gerust een e-mail als er nog iets naar voren komt over de verschillen tussen de Nederlandse en Japanse onderhandelingsstrategieën. De bevindingen uit dit interview zal ik meenemen in mijn bachelor scriptie. Als u geïnteresseerd bent, kan ik de definitieve scriptie na voltooiing naar u e-mailen.

Bedankt voor uw tijd en medewerking.

10.1.2 *English*

Before we start, I would like to introduce myself and the purpose of this research. The goal of this study is to determine how the Dutch can improve their negotiations with the Japanese. The content of this interview is private, and will not be shared with anyone other than the interviewer. I will ensure that your name will not be mentioned in the research and make sure that statements can't be linked back to you. You are not required to respond to any questions if they give you discomfort. Additionally, you are free to end the interview at any time. Do you consent to the interview being recorded and transcribed? If so, then we can start.

First, can you introduce yourself?

Experience in working with the Japanese

• What is your job, and what does your job require you to do?

• How long have you been working with the Japanese in a business environment?

• How often do you have contact with your Japanese partners?

• What does the contact consist of? (Phone calls, e-mail, in-person meetings)

• In which language do you communicate with the Japanese? Does this boast well for both parties

- Is the collaboration good according to you, or can it be improved?

- Do you think that the personal relations are good, or could they be better?

I would like to talk about your experiences with the Japanese.

- How are your experiences with the Japanese in general?

- What do you think are the most striking differences between the Dutch and Japanese in terms of culture and in terms of business?

- What has been your most positive experience in working with the Japanese?

- What made this such a positive experience for you?

- How did this event contribute to a successful collaboration?
    - o Do you have more of these experiences?

- Can you also mention a less pleasant experience which you have had with the Japanese?

- Why is this a less pleasant experience?

- How did this even obstruct a successful collaboration?

- What was your reaction?

- How did this end?
    - o Do you have more of these experiences?

Let's talk about the negotiation aspects

- What do you think are important aspects to think about when negotiating with the Japanese?

- Do you have any strategies you use with the Japanese negotiators?

- What are common challenges in negotiating with the Japanese?

- How important are price, product quality and establishing long term relationships in the negotiations with the Japanese?

- When do you now you have a deal?

- What is the decision-making process for making deals like in a Japanese company?
    - o Who makes the decisions and how does that work?
    - o Are the decisions respected by everyone?

- What do you need to do in order to establish and maintain long term relationships?

- What is it that you do for each other?

- Are there certain boundaries when negotiating with the Japanese? (What can or can you not do)

- Do the Japanese also bluff?

- How do negotiations with the Japanese differ from negotiations with fellow Dutch people?

More questions regarding experiences with the Japanese.

- Have you experienced misunderstandings between the Japanese and yourself or other Dutchman?

- Have you been surprised by the behaviour of the Japanese?

- Were there instances where you did not understand the Japanese?

- Were there instances where you disagreed with your Japanese colleague?

- Have you had conflicts with any of your Japanese colleagues?

- Have you experienced other issues with the Japanese?

Propositions:

It is easier to collaborate with a Dutchman than with a Japanese person.

What is your opinion on this, and why?

It is easy to make deals and agreements with the Japanese

What is your opinion on this, and why?

When negotiating, the Japanese like to hold back information

What is your opinion on this, and why?

The Japanese are more reserved when negotiating than the Dutch

What is your opinion on this, and why?

Some remaining questions:

- What makes a good negotiator according to you?
    - o Does this differ when negotiating with the Dutch or Japanese? If so, How?

- How would you think Dutch negotiators can improve negotiations with their Japanese counterparts?

- What tips would you give to a Dutch negotiator who has no experience in negotiating with their Japanese counterpart?

Would you like to talk some more about your experiences with the Japanese? Is there anything you feel we have not yet discussed?

Please feel free to email me if anything regarding the differences between the Dutch and Japanese negotiation strategies still comes up. I will include the findings of this interview in my bachelor thesis. If you are interested, I can email the finalized thesis to you upon completion.
Thank you for your time and cooperation.

10.2 Appendix B Gioia model

First-Order Themes	Second-Order Themes	Aggregated Dimensions
"This really requires, even if I did a contract in Japan, it really requires… Weeks of preparation, working everything out in detail. At every level, technical, legal, commercial and make sure you always have that document physically with you. So you can look things up, that it is verifiable."	Detailed preparation	Focus on Details
"They come very prepared. Before there is even a negotiation meeting, they ask a lot of questions and they really want to gather as much information as possible."		
"But nowadays it is just good preparation because that is what the Japanese do and when the Japanese do something, they do it well. And they prepare very well and they put a lot of time into it. They also work harder than we Dutch people always do."		
"But they work very Failure-driven. So every problem should in principle not occur in the future. So based on an error they will revise a procedure and rewrite it, really failure-driven"	Detailed quality control	
"If you have a good track record, it already creates a lot of trust, especially when it comes to things that involve safety. Indeed, it is about whether a product or a technique is safe and good."		
"Look at the moment, when we in our work have to submit documentation, then those are hundreds of pages, sometimes more than 1000 pages of documents that you have to submit. At the moment that you continuously get a whole bunch of comments on that, then that is of course enormously labor-intensive to process those comments again every time."		
"They go through a proposal in great detail, through an offer and then they start asking everything: 'And why is that so? And how many hours do you need for that? And why do you need so many hours for that? And can't that be done with a few less hours? Because if we estimate it, then I don't come to 100 hours, but then I come to 50 hours.' Those are typical conversations that you have with them. And in that way the complete negotiation. It is heavily dissected by them and challenged."	Detailed discussions	
"If something happens, if something is going on, it is extremely labor-		

intensive. People go into great detail, dig deep and bring in all sorts of things."		
"What I learned, you should always use proven technology there. Do the trial and error somewhere in Europe or America or in Africa."	Risk avoidance	
"The Japanese are not really into taking risks, so they want to be very careful and get a lot of information and discuss a lot internally. So it all takes a bit longer."		
"I think the Netherlands is quite clumsy and the Dutch often think that what we do is normal everywhere. And so I think certainly in the beginning, being too jovial and making jokes, that kind of thing. That is not appreciated. You just have to behave properly and act professionally. While the Dutch like to start chatting fun right away"	Formality	Respect
"But always remain polite and friendly. And that is more, it is more formal than in the Netherlands."		
"Raising your voice… Expressions of emotions. You shouldn't do that in Japan. It's completely pointless. It's counterproductive, it's not appreciated. They're very friendly people. They also expect a friendly conversation."	Politeness	
"They really appreciate it and they really show it. They say: 'Woooh aaah'. With something as simple as stroopwafels."		
"If you look at giving presents. In Japan it is very much appreciated. In the Netherlands it is seen as bribery. It is not done."		
"You give a business card and then you take it with both hands read it and then you put it away quietly."		
"I think it is easier for a Dutch person to get used to a Japanese person than for a Japanese person to get used to a Dutch person."	Adaptation to Japanese norms	
"You don't hear the word 'no' either. Then it's more. "Hai, Hai, Hai" And then bow. Which by the way doesn't mean that they agree. Some people think that a Japanese person says: "They agree with your message" But that's not the case. What they're saying is: "I understand what you're saying" Without there being any value judgment in it."	Indirect communication	Harmony
"What you often hear is 'yes, maybe'. But 'maybe' in Japan actually just means 'no'. They will never say it directly like that; they		

just indicate that they need to discuss it internally first."		
"What is very important in Japan and very, very sensitive is losing face. That is one of the things you have to take into account. You always have to make sure that the other side you are talking to also has a story to tell their superior."	Saving face	
"Then they remain very polite. Only then you just don't hear from them anymore. That's when you know I've messed up."		
"In Japan they have respect for gray hair."	Seniority matters	Hierarchy
"Hierarchy is not really about what someone can do and in terms of knowledge or something, it is also very, really about age. So an older person simply has more hierarchy, more status than a younger engineer who may be better or more highly educated."		
"If you have a meeting with someone who is 50, then yes, you better bring someone who is about the same age, because otherwise, they will feel a bit disrespected."		
"It's huge, it's hugely collective."	Ringi system	
"when really important things have to be decided, then it is parked. Then they are indeed coordinating with higher up or they come back to it later. So that all of them can go over it again in a committee."		
"You have the idea that you have discussed everything and that you have agreed, and then you hear later that there have been internal meetings and that they still come back to some points."		
"And if that manager thinks that it is a good product or company, then he goes back to his manager and then it becomes again. It really keeps going up."		
"Then you have to realize when you have two people sitting in front of you, you're not talking to those two people, you're talking to the company... that's behind it. And that's actually never an individual who decides."		
"Dutch people are much more open, you get much more out of it. With Japanese people it is much harder to get to the point. So you have to first build relationship and create trust."	Trust	Loyalty

"First of all, trust. Yes, building trust. And you do that from my experience in Japan by either finding a partner who represents you or registering your company there yourself."		
"If you are a reliable partner, you can do a lot more business. Because then they trust your products and they don't look everywhere. If it is good once, then you can sell a lot."	Long term relationships	
"even if the company they are already in contact with has higher prices than another company they are not yet in contact with, they will still choose the company they are already in contact with, because they find the reputation important and because they also expect a certain level of service."		
"we as Dutch people already translate it to English, so then you already lose a part of the feeling in that you already lose. Then it goes from English to Japanese... there again a part is missing, because you don't get everything. Then it goes from Japanese back to English and from English to Dutch."	Translation loss	Translations
"In all the official meetings, everything goes to Japanese. I'm going to talk to our third party company office in English and they're going to translate it."		
"Sometimes what we might see as lying is seen as a kind of polite. For example, we had: Can we agree on this or that or can we receive this and that information? And what often happened is that they said: yes, maybe. But 'maybe' in Japan simply means 'no'."	Interpretation problems	
"You don't hear the word 'no' either. Then it's more. "Hai, Hai, Hai" And then bow. Which by the way doesn't mean that they agree. Some people think that a Japanese person says: "They agree with your message" But that's not the case. What they're saying is: "I understand what you're saying" Without there being any value judgment in it."		