"How do cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles influence meeting dynamics in Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies?"

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ABSTRACT,

This study explores how cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles influence meeting dynamics within Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies. Globalization leads to more cross-cultural business environments, understanding these dynamics becomes essential for effective international collaboration. Existing studies provide a solid foundation for understanding the cultural dynamics between Dutch and German professionals, but the specific context of meetings, and how leadership styles play out during these structured interactions, remains underexplored. Drawing on both etic and emic perspectives, this qualitative study examines how national culture and organizational behavior come together, based on five in-depth interviews with Dutch professionals working at a Dutch company with a German parent company. The study uses the Critical Incident Technique to reveal cultural standards that shape interactions in meetings. Findings reveal that German leadership is generally perceived as more formal, hierarchical, and directive, resulting in structured, punctual, and goal-oriented meetings. Dutch leadership, in contrast, emphasizes egalitarianism, openness, and participative decision-making, fostering informal and flexible meeting cultures. These cultural contrasts manifest in differing expectations regarding communication, decision-making, meeting discipline, and feedback during meetings. Notable challenges include misunderstandings over hierarchy, discomfort with directness or criticism, and differing levels of openness to input, especially from junior staff. However, the study also highlights how mutual adaptation, especially over time and across generations, can soften cultural friction during meetings. The study contributes to academic literature by filling a gap in research on cultural leadership style differences specifically in meeting contexts between Dutch and German professionals. Practically, it offers actionable insights for multinational organizations to enhance communication, inclusivity, and efficiency during meetings by promoting cultural awareness and hybrid leadership practices.
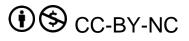
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Keywords

Cross-cultural Leadership, Meeting Dynamics, Leadership Styles, Dutch-German Business Relations, Cultural Adaption, Power Distance.

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to refine the text, check for grammar mistakes and translate transcriptions from Dutch interviews to English. After using this tool/ service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the work.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing globalization of businesses has led to a growing number of multinational companies operating in diverse cultural environments (Fitzgerald, 2015). One such scenario involves German parent companies managing Dutch subsidiaries, where cultural differences have the potential to significantly impact leadership styles and workplace interactions (Thesing, 2016). Effective leadership and communication are crucial for the success of any organization, but the influence of cultural backgrounds on leadership approaches may lead to differing expectations and behaviors in professional settings (House et al., 1999).

Academic literature has long explored the cultural contrasts between Germany and the Netherlands, particularly in business and management contexts. Barkema and Vermeulen (1997) examined how differences in national culture, measured through Hofstede's cultural dimensions, can disrupt international joint ventures, highlighting particularly the relevance of uncertainty avoidance from the Germans and that Dutch have lower power distance than Germans. Heerkens, Koster, and Ulijn (2010) demonstrated that Dutch professionals typically prioritize consensus and egalitarian decision-making, while their German counterparts emphasize efficiency, detailed planning, and structured execution. Thesing (2016) and Thesing, Gerritsen, and Van Mulken (2021) explored intercultural communication within German and Dutch business environments, noting that Dutch directness and informal tone may contrast with the more formal, hierarchical, and task-oriented communication style of German professionals. This study investigates what influence these cultural differences have on meetings and how to deal with these differences during meetings.

So, while these studies provide a solid foundation for understanding cultural dynamics between Dutch and German professionals, the specific context of meetings, and how leadership styles, gender and age play out during these structured interactions, remains underexplored. Recent research by de Jongste (2023) offers a valuable framework for understanding cross-cultural differences in meeting practices. His meeting-specific situational context model identifies key components such as time management, participant roles, communication norms, and structure. This framework emphasizes that meetings are not neutral, but culturally shaped environments where misunderstandings can easily occur (de Jongste, 2023). Additionally, Ybema and Byun (2005) provide ethnographic insight into Dutch-Japanese business interactions, illustrating how contrasting expectations around hierarchy, participation, and consensus create challenges in meetings (Ybema and Byun, 2005). Both studies highlight the importance of examining cultural variation in meeting behavior, but neither directly addresses the Dutch and German leadership dynamic within meetings.

Therefore, a clear research gap remains. Although prior studies explored cultural contrasts and general leadership behaviors, little is known about how Dutch and German leadership styles interact specifically during meetings, where formal decisions are made, and cross-cultural friction often surfaces, so it is important to research, because meetings are an important part of cross-cultural communication. This study addresses this gap by conducting qualitative research using five interviews focused on critical incidents with professionals working at a Dutch subsidiary of a German parent company. This study uses this

qualitative approach, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how culturally shaped perceptions, expectations, and communication styles influence the way Dutch and German professionals experience leadership during meetings (Fossey et al., 2003). The aim of this research is to explore how these leadership differences are experienced in meetings, how they affect communication and collaboration, and how employees and managers navigate or negotiate these cultural differences in practice. This leads to the research question this study aims to answer:

"*How do cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles influence meeting dynamics in Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies?*"

To address this research question, the following sub-questions will be examined: *1. How do employees in Dutch subsidiaries perceive and experience German leadership differences in meetings? 2. What specific frictions arise from these cultural differences in leadership styles? 3. How do employees and managers adapt to these cultural differences?*

1.1 Academic Relevance

This research contributes to the existing academic literature on cultural differences between German and Dutch leaders by providing empirical insights into how these differences impact leadership and meeting dynamics in multinational business settings. While previous studies have also examined German-Dutch business interactions, their theories are sometimes counterintuitive. By applying a qualitative emic approach and focusing specifically on the meeting process, this study aims to clarify these inconsistencies. It applies established theories within a practical corporate setting and places particular emphasis on leadership styles, age and gender differences and their influence on meetings, an area that has not yet been extensively explored in existing studies.

1.2 Practical Relevance

The findings of this study have significant implications for managers and employees working in multinational corporations. Understanding how cultural differences in leadership styles impact dynamics can help organizations develop strategies to enhance workplace communication and collaboration when they have a German parent company. By identifying key challenges and effective adaptation strategies, this research will provide practical recommendations for improving cross-cultural business interactions between Dutch and German leaders.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study builds upon established theories in cultural differences, intercultural communication and leadership to examine the influence of culture on leadership and meeting dynamics in Dutch companies that are a subsidiary of a German parent company. Below the most relevant scientific literature for this topic is discussed.

According to Spencer-Oatey (2012) is culture a set of basic assumptions and shared values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are

shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's thinking, communicating and
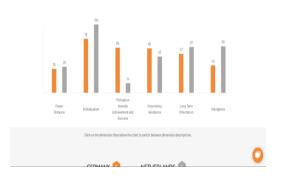
2.1 Intercultural Understanding and Conflict Prevention

Accurate cultural perception, especially the ability to correctly estimate the values and expectations of colleagues from different backgrounds, has been shown to reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and interpersonal conflict. This intercultural sensitivity supports more effective communication and decision-making in multinational environments (Thesing, Gerritsen, & Van Mulken, 2021).

Practical approaches to managing cultural differences, especially in leadership and team interaction, can improve collaboration across borders. Specific tools and strategies for improving communication and cooperation in German-Dutch business settings include cultural briefings, dialogue training, and reflective practices aimed at increasing awareness of one's own cultural lens. These strategies help bridge cultural gaps and strengthen leadership across multinational companies (Thesing, 2016).

2.2 Cultural Differences

There are two different approaches for research in cultural differences, an etic and an emic approach. An etic approach looks at behaviour from the outside of a given culture, and attempts to find patterns that can be generalised, using a universal framework for comparison. In contrast, an emic approach focuses on understanding behavior from within a specific culture, aiming to interpret actions and values based on that culture's own context and meanings (Berry, 1969). For etic research we look at a country comparison model of Hofstede (2025) and The GLOBE Study (House et al., 2004).
Hofstede's country comparison model:

(Hofstede's Country Comparison Tool, 2025)

According to Hofstede, (1980), national cultures vary systematically in dimensions such as power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance, which shape organizational structures and leadership behavior. Cultures with higher power distance tend to produce more hierarchical leadership systems, while lower power distance encourages participative decision-making and egalitarian interaction (Hofstede, 1980; Barkema & Vermeulen, 1997). Dutch organizations typically reflect a greater tolerance for power distance, while German organizations have less power distance tendency's (Hofstede, 1980; Barkema & Vermeulen, 1997). But

according to Thesing (2016), the Dutch people tend to distinguish actually less than Germans between a person and the role that person has in an organization and the Dutch want to avoid the impression that one person stands on a higher level than another, so the Dutch actually have a lower tolerance for power distance than the Germans (Thesing, 2016). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Germany is characterized by a relatively low power distance, suggesting a preference for egalitarianism and participative decision-making. However, Jimmink's (2022) qualitative research presents a contrasting view. The study reveals that Dutch professionals often perceive German workplaces as having a clear and formal hierarchy, where authority is respected, and decisions are typically made by those in higher positions without extensive consultation with subordinates (Jimmink, 2022). This perception indicates a higher power distance in practice than what Hofstede's model suggests.

According to another framework, The GLOBE Project (2004), German culture tends to be more performance driven, assertive and direct in communication. Expressing opinions clearly and confidently is seen as normal. In contrast, assertiveness is lower in Dutch culture, where people often favor a more modest, consensus-oriented style of interaction (House et al., 2004). But Jimmink (2022) found that Dutch professionals working in Germany often perceive Germans as less verbally expressive or hesitant to speak directly (Jimmink, 2022). So those two are in conflict with each other.

When it comes to hierarchy, Germany accepts moderate levels of structured authority within organizations. Roles and responsibilities are respected but not rigidly enforced. The Netherlands, on the other hand, prefers egalitarian structures, where leadership is more participative and informal (House et al., 2004). This is more in line with Thesing than with Hofstede, so this is interesting to research.

In terms of dealing with uncertainty, Germans show a high preference for structure, rules, and planning in order to avoid uncertainty. Dutch professionals are generally more tolerant of uncertainty, showing greater flexibility and openness to changing circumstances (House et al., 2004). This is in line with Hofstede's claim that the Dutch score lower on uncertainty avoidance.

Dutch culture also leans more toward institutional collectivism, favoring shared responsibility and group-oriented goals. In contrast, German culture shows a lower preference for collective resource distribution, focusing more on individual accountability (House et al., 2004). This is not in line with Hofstede, because, as showed in the diagram above, Hofstede claims that individualism is higher in The Netherlands than in Germany.

Communication styles vary depending on whether a culture relies on explicit (low-context approach) or implicit (high-context approach) cues. According to Hall in some cultures, such as those of Scandinavians, Germans, and the Swiss, communication occurs predominantly through explicit statements in text and speech, and they are thus categorized as low-context cultures, so Germany is a low-context culture (Hall, 1976,2000). And The Netherlands also clearly have a low-context communication style (van Rompay-Bartels and Watkins, 2025).

The etic models sometimes present conflicting views. For instance, Hofstede's model identifies Germany as having lower power distance than the Netherlands, suggesting a more

egalitarian organizational structure. However, in practice, Thesing (2016) and Jimmink (2022) report that Dutch professionals often experience German workplaces as more hierarchical and formal. Similarly, while the GLOBE Study portrays Germans as more assertive in communication than the Dutch, Jimmink (2022) found that some Dutch employees describe their German colleagues as more reserved or hesitant during meetings, which contradicts the theoretical model. These conflicts between etic models like Hofstede and GLOBE, and the practical insights offered by emic studies such as those by Thesing and Jimmink, are not shortcomings. Instead, they underline the complexity of intercultural dynamics. Etic models provide broad, generalizable patterns, but they may overlook the situational subtleties that professionals encounter in real-life settings. Emic research complements this by offering a grounded, insider perspective that reveals how cultural expectations are truly experienced and interpreted in context (Morris et al., 1999). That's why etic approach only is not enough for this research, so we will also focus on the emic approach, for this we will mainly look at Thesing (2016), Heerkens, Koster, & Ulijn, (2010), Jimmink (2022) and Rosemann (2021).

A significant contribution to the understanding of cultural differences between Dutch and German professionals is offered by Thesing (2016), who conducted an in-depth study on intercultural communication within German-Dutch business contexts. Thesing identifies several fundamental differences in communication styles, leadership expectations, and professional behaviors that influence collaboration between the two cultures.

One of the primary differences Thesing (2016) highlights is the level of formality in professional interactions. German professionals tend to maintain a more formal style of communication, using titles and surnames longer and placing clear emphasis on hierarchical structures. In contrast, Dutch professionals typically adopt a more informal approach, quickly moving to first-name basis and treating hierarchies with more flexibility and equality. Another important distinction lies in the approach to hierarchy and leadership. In Germany, leadership tends to be authoritative and role-based; managers are expected to give clear instructions, and subordinates are expected to follow them without extensive debate. Leadership is closely associated with expertise and responsibility, and deviation from hierarchical norms is less common. In the Netherlands, leadership is characterized by consensus-building and egalitarianism. Dutch employees expect leaders to facilitate discussion, invite input from all team members, and involve employees in the decision-making process. Authority is often questioned openly and critically, which is seen as a sign of engagement rather than disrespect.

Thesing (2016) also observes differences in communication directness and criticism. While both cultures are known for their relatively direct communication styles compared to other cultural groups, the Dutch tend to be even more straightforward, openly expressing disagreement or criticism during meetings. German communication, although direct, often retains a more cautious and structured tone, particularly when it comes to criticism directed at superiors or colleagues.

Additionally, attitudes towards planning and structure differ. German professionals typically emphasize detailed planning, precision, and adherence to agreed processes. Meetings are expected to follow structured agendas closely, and thorough preparation is highly valued. Dutch professionals, although appreciating planning, often demonstrate more flexibility and

pragmatism, adjusting meeting outcomes according to emerging discussions and valuing improvisation when needed (Thesing, 2016).

According to Heerkens et al. Dutch professionals tend to show more attention to detail in their decision-making processes. They prioritize attributes like passenger comfort and safety, indicating a leadership style that values thoroughness, careful consideration, and the impact of decisions on end users. German professionals, in contrast, appear to be more efficiency-oriented. While they do not ignore details, their decisions reflect a more streamlined and result-driven approach. This can be interpreted as a leadership preference for pragmatism, structure, and task efficiency over exhaustive analysis. Importantly, they note that the difference is not due to one group being more or less competent, but rather reflects different cultural priorities. The Dutch are not more precise, and the Germans are not less careful, their leadership styles simply focus on different outcomes (Heerkens, Koster, & Ulijn, 2010). This contrasts with Thesing, because according to that research safety and risk avoidance are things that Germans are sharp on (Thesing, 2016).

Jimmink (2022) investigated how Dutch professionals experience and interpret German work culture and used the Critical Incident Technique for this, so this is also useful for our research. The study employs the Critical Incident Technique to collect specific, real-life narratives where cultural misunderstandings or tensions arose. Participants were asked to describe incidents that stood out as culturally significant, moments. By analyzing these incidents, the study identifies sixteen German cultural standards, such as a high regard for rules, structured decision-making, and formality in communication. These standards are then linked to deeper German cultural values, including order, hierarchy, and professionalism.

Rosemann (2021) explores the reverse scenario by examining how German professionals perceive the Dutch work culture while working in the Netherlands. The study also uses the Critical Incident Technique to uncover specific moments that highlight cultural friction or misalignment. Through the collected narratives, the study identifies fourteen cultural standards: Flexibility, collective decision- making, (technological) innovativeness, friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid), flat hierarchy, freedom of action, work-life-balance, informality, directness, approximate planning, anti-authoritarianism, pragmatism, solution orientation, job opportunity.

2.3 Focus on Meetings

In this research we will focus on the differences between the Dutch and German leadership styles in meetings, for this there are two important research by de Jongste and Ybema and Byun's.

Recent research by de Jongste (2023) offers a valuable addition to the understanding of cultural differences in meeting behavior specifically, which is central to this study. In his article "Towards a Survey of Differences in Preferred Meeting Styles Across Cultures", de Jongste conceptualizes meetings as "strong situations" (Gelfand et al., 2011), contexts that are highly structured and governed by shared cultural norms and expectations. Because of their regulated nature, meetings offer an ideal setting for examining how leadership styles manifest across different cultures. De Jongste proposes a meeting-specific situational context model, which outlines seven key dimensions

in which meeting practices vary culturally: time, place, interactants, social roles, purpose, structure, and normative behavior. These dimensions provide a framework for identifying and analyzing how culturally rooted leadership behaviors influence meeting dynamics. Particularly relevant to this study is de Jongste's insight into the German preference for hierarchical clarity, structured agendas, and role-specific contributions (de Jongste, 2023).

Another relevant study for this research is Ybema and Byun's (2005) ethnographic investigation titled Japanese Business in the Dutch Polder: The Experience of Cultural Differences in Asymmetric Power Relations. Although this research isn't about German and Dutch leaders in meetings, it still gains valuable insights about cultural differences during meetings, because this study explores how cultural differences between Japanese and Dutch professionals are constructed and interpreted within organizational settings, particularly in contexts where asymmetric power relations are at play. Unlike static, dimension-based models of culture, Ybema and Byun emphasize the contextual and dynamic nature of cultural interaction, suggesting that cultural meanings are continuously negotiated and shaped by local organizational circumstances.

The authors found that Japanese managers, often occupying higher hierarchical roles in Dutch subsidiaries, brought with them expectations for indirect communication, hierarchical respect, and a preference for harmony and consensus. In contrast, Dutch employees typically favored more egalitarian, direct, and participative modes of communication. These conflicting expectations became especially visible during meetings, where differences in leadership style, turn-taking, and the perceived appropriateness of speaking up created moments of misunderstanding and friction. Such situations highlight thus the importance of meetings as sites where cultural norms and leadership expectations are both revealed and challenged (Ybema and Byun's, 2005).

In addition to the established cultural frameworks, this research also draws on the theory developed by Thomas (2008), which emphasizes the analysis of critical incidents to uncover underlying cultural standards, this theory will be used to analyze the critical incidents that the interviewees will (hopefully) mention. These cultural standards are defined as "all those values, norms and attitudes that the majority of members of a culture regard as typical and binding for themselves and others" (Thomas, 2008). In practice, they reflect the implicit rules and expectations that guide behavior within a specific cultural group. Thomas argues that moments of misunderstanding, friction, or conflict in intercultural interactions, so-called critical incidents, are particularly valuable for identifying these norms. Such incidents often reveal the underlying cultural assumptions that may go unnoticed in routine communication. In this research, the focus thus will be on analyzing the critical incidents that are shared by the interviewees. Rather than examining all aspects of the interviews, only the critical incidents will be coded and analyzed in depth, allowing for a targeted understanding of how and where intercultural challenges occur.

2.4 Research Gap

Although meetings are central to international business communication, there is a lack of research specifically examining leadership differences between Dutch and German professionals in meeting contexts. Existing studies provide

valuable insights into cultural differences between Germany and The Netherlands and their leadership styles (e.g., Barkema & Vermeulen, 1997; Heerkens, Koster, & Ulijn, 2010; Thesing, 2016; Thesing et al., 2021), but they do not directly focus on how these differences unfold during meetings.

Previous research highlights general contrasts such as the Dutch emphasis on egalitarianism, consensus, and directness, versus the German preference for structure, hierarchy, and task orientation (Thesing, 2016). De Jongste (2023) offers a model for analyzing cultural differences in meeting practices across countries, identifying key variables like time management, structure, and participation. Similarly, Ybema and Byun (2005) provide rich ethnographic insights into meetings between Dutch and Japanese leaders, emphasizing how cultural norms and power relations shape communication and leadership. However, neither study directly addresses the Dutch-German context.

Thus, there remains a clear gap in the literature concerning how Dutch and German leadership styles interact during meetings. This study aims to address that gap by investigating how leadership styles are experienced and negotiated during meetings within Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies, using qualitative interviews focused on critical incidents as its primary method.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

In order to collect data, this study applied an emic, inductive qualitative research approach to explore the cultural differences in leadership styles between German and Dutch professionals, specifically during meetings within Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies. A qualitative research strategy was most suitable here, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of behaviors, perceptions, and experiences that are often influenced by culture (Tenny et al., 2022; Fossey et al., 2003). An emic perspective was emphasized to gain authentic, detailed and context-specific insights from participants themselves.

This design enabled to capture the nuances of intercultural interactions, especially through the focus on critical incidents, moments where cultural misunderstanding or friction arises (Thomas, 2008). These incidents are particularly valuable in uncovering underlying cultural standards that shape leadership behavior and perceptions during meetings.

3.2 Data Collection

The data is collected through semi-structured interviews with five employees of a Dutch subsidiary of a German company. The semi-structured format offers a balance between guiding the interview with key themes and allowing space for participants to express their thoughts and experiences freely (Adams, 2015).

A semi-structured interview guide has been developed, incorporating open-ended questions designed to invite participants to share and tell their experiences around intercultural interactions, particularly focusing on critical incidents that occurred during meetings. The interview guide is included in appendix I and covers themes such as leadership

expectations, meeting behavior, perceived communication styles, and responses to cultural friction.

The interviews are conducted in Dutch and are audio-recorded with prior consent. The interviews were held one-on-one to mitigate the potential inhibition of respondents and to minimize the influence of the participants on the formulation of responses (Acocella, 2012). Each interview lasts approximately 30-40 minutes. Interviews are transcribed manually to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the data. During the interviews, special attention was given to collecting critical incidents, and stories about situations that gave clues about the influence of cultural differences between The Netherlands and Germany in leadership during meetings.

3.2.1 Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was used to select five employees from the Dutch company that has a German parent company, who regularly participates in meetings with German managers. This sampling method ensured that information-rich cases were selected for an in-depth exploration of the phenomena under study (Suri, 2011). All participants were required to have at least six months of experience in their current roles to ensure they are sufficiently familiar with both German and Dutch leadership styles and they are frequently in contact with German managers. All five employees were Dutch, so the interviews were conducted in Dutch, also so participants could speak in their native language, which enhanced the quality of responses by avoiding language barriers.

The participants work in different departments but are exposed to regular cross-cultural interactions, which made them well-positioned to reflect on how these cultural differences manifest in real-world settings.

Table 1: Overview of leaders interviewed

Participant	Age	Function Title	Years of Service	Gender
P1	60	Manager	38	Male
P2	55	Head Finance	16	Male
P3	43	Team leader	7	Male
P4	58	Sale leader	2	Male
P5	55	Sales manager	17	Male

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data in this study is centered on the concept of critical incidents, as introduced by Thomas (2008). Rather than coding all aspects of the interview data, the analysis focuses specifically on those situations described by participants that reflect intercultural friction, misunderstanding, or tension between Dutch and German professionals during meetings. These moments are particularly valuable because they often reveal the underlying cultural assumptions and standards that shape professional interactions (Thomas, 2008).

Critical incidents are defined as events that stand out to the interviewee because they deviated from the norm, caused confusion, led to conflict, or required special attention or adaptation. These incidents are considered windows into deeper cultural values, such as different expectations of leadership, communication, or hierarchy (Thomas, 2008). By exploring these incidents in detail, this study aimed to identify recurring patterns and underlying cultural standards that influenced the way meetings were experienced and conducted.

The process of analysis followed several iterative steps:

1. Identification of Critical Incidents: During the transcription and review of the interview data, all segments in which participants described specific, real-life incidents involving German and Dutch leadership interactions were extracted and highlighted.
2. Contextual Interpretation: Each incident was analyzed in its situational and cultural context. This included identifying the nature of the conflict or misunderstanding.
3. Comparison Across Cases: Once the incidents were identified, they were compared across the interviews to detect recurring types of incidents, reactions, and interpretations. This comparison helped to recognize common cultural patterns in how the leadership styles are experienced.
4. Deriving Cultural Standards: From these comparisons, cultural standards were inferred, these are the norms, values, or behaviors that are seen as typical and binding within a particular cultural group (Thomas, 2008). These standards were used to explain the root of each incident and the friction that emerged from it.
5. Link to Leadership and Meeting Dynamics: Finally, the incidents and corresponding cultural standards were interpreted in light of the central research question, which focuses on how leadership differences influence meeting dynamics. The incidents were categorized according to the aspect of leadership or meeting interaction they relate to and checked with the data from the theoretical chapter.

4. RESULTS

The following chapter discusses the results obtained through the five interviews. The aim of conducting interviews with Dutch supervisors that are often in meetings with Germans was to find out the cultural differences that they experience with German supervisors during meetings and how they handle certain situations where the cultural differences appear. The results will be discussed per aggregated dimension and the associated 2nd order themes, 1st order concepts and quotes (Appendix II) (Gioia, 2013). When referring to statements made by interview participants, (Interview and the right number of the interview) is used.

4.1 General Differences

The general differences were the most dominant factor in shaping perception and attitudes in the Dutch-German working relations during meetings. The interviews

revealed consistent patterns in communication style, perceptions of leadership, generational differences, and openness to input, all of which influence collaboration and the dynamics between the people in a meeting.

One of the most prominent differences participants observed was the contrast in communication style during the meetings. German communication was described as more formal, directive, and serious, whereas Dutch communication was experienced as informal, open, and often humorous. Several interviewees mentioned the absence of humor in professional German contexts. One participant noted, "They don't understand our humour, but mainly because they are so serious, they don't think it's appropriate to make jokes." (Interview 1). This difference sometimes led to misunderstandings or perceptions of coldness.

Further, Dutch directness during meetings was seen as constructive, but not always well received by German colleagues. As one interviewee reflected, "During meetings, Dutch people are often direct, sometimes to the point of being rude [...] Germans are more sensitive to hierarchy and are quicker to take criticism personally." (Interview 4). These contrasting norms indicate a fundamental gap in how feedback and discussions are managed across the two cultures.

Cultural attitudes toward hierarchy affected leadership perceptions. German leaders were commonly seen as more authoritative, formal, and less approachable in meetings compared to Dutch leaders. As a participant shared, "In Germany, leadership is much more hierarchical. There is a different kind of authority there: as a leader, you are really the leader, not a colleague. In the Netherlands, it is often more informal." (Interview 2). Another added, "The hierarchical relationship is more pronounced in Germany. Whereas in the Netherlands, managers often act as one of the colleagues, in Germany the manager is really the boss." (Interview 5). This hierarchical framing influenced the communication flow during meetings.

This formal structure is also reflected in how German supervisors communicate during meetings, but also outside of meetings. One respondent noted, "The tone in which a German manager says something often comes across as an order, even if it is not intended as such." (Interview 4). This directive tone could lead to Dutch employees hesitating to ask clarifying questions or challenge decisions during meetings, especially when compared to the more informal and dialogic Dutch leadership style which they are used to.

In contrast to the formal structure, Dutch leadership during meetings was described as more collaborative and open, with employees encouraged to speak up, contribute ideas, and challenge authority when necessary. These cultural contrasts in leadership expectations align with de Jongste (2022), who emphasizes the higher power distance and preference for hierarchical clarity of the Germans.

Several respondents highlighted that generational shifts were softening traditional cultural boundaries. Younger German employees were perceived as less rigid and more open to informal interactions during meetings. One participant explained, "Among younger generations, this hierarchy is becoming somewhat blurred [...] younger Germans in general also communicate in a more equal manner, but among older

Germans, you still notice that formal style." (Interview 5). However, not every participant mentioned this, but some consistently distinguished between older and younger professionals, especially in terms of language use and formality.

A recurring theme was the Dutch preference for early and broad inclusion of perspectives in meetings versus the German tendency to reserve input for those with established credibility. One Dutch participant remarked, "In the Netherlands, we value new perspectives [...] In Germany, it works differently. There, you first have to prove yourself before anyone will listen to you." (Interview 1). This impacted the perceived psychological safety in meetings, particularly for junior or new team members.

Another interviewee reflected on a shift in German openness over time in a meeting, because of Dutch influence, saying, "At first, the Germans were somewhat distant, but when the others contributed, they joined in [...] They often appear to be arrogant, but that is their culture and not arrogance." (Interview 1). These experiences show that it takes time for trust to develop in cross-cultural teams, but that it is not impossible.

4.2 Leadership Differences

Leadership differences between Dutch and German leaders emerged as a central theme in all interviews. Participants consistently described contrasting expectations, behaviors, and communication styles during meetings between the two. One major subtheme arose: Decision-Making.

Decision-making processes highlighted cultural contrasts between Dutch and German leaders. In German contexts, decisions in general were described as top-down, structured, and formal, with a strong emphasis on preparation. A participant explained, "German leaders are more conservative and formal in their communication. They take their time to form their judgment, write things down, think about it overnight, and only then come to a decision." (Interview 2).

German managers are often expected to come into meetings already having formed their conclusions, with minimal room for discussion. Another interviewee shared, "In Germany you can't just say anything in a meeting. Everything must be well thought out." (Interview 2). This culture of thorough preparation contrasts with the Dutch approach, which emphasizes joint discussion and flexibility. It is in line with Thesing (2016) though, who stated that thorough preparation is highly valued by Germans.

Dutch professionals, according to several interviewees, are more inclined to use meetings as a space to co-create solutions. One respondent stated, "In the Netherlands you often bring a problem up for discussion and ask: 'What do you think about it?', after which a lively exchange follows. In Germany this remains more superficial." (Interview 1).

Another insight was the differing roles of junior employees in decision-making. In Dutch settings, newer employees are encouraged to share opinions during meetings, while in Germany they are expected to gain experience before contributing to key decisions. As one participant put it, "You have to prove yourself first, only then will you be listened to." (Interview 1).

4.3 Organizational Approach

The organizational approaches observed in Dutch and German work environments revealed clear distinctions in how meetings are structured, how time and discipline are managed, and how formal processes are maintained. The interviews consistently pointed to differences in meeting culture, meeting discipline, and time/task management, often highlighting the efficiency and inflexibility of German systems compared to the more flexible and informal Dutch approach.

German meetings were unanimously described by every interviewee as highly structured, formal, and purpose-driven. Interviewees emphasized the clear agendas, defined time slots, and goal-oriented nature of German meetings. One participant explained, "German meetings are generally structured. The agenda is adhered to more strictly, time limits are observed and the meeting is tightly controlled." (Interview 3).

Another noted, "German meetings are much more structured than Dutch ones. In the Netherlands, you usually have several points to discuss, but there is plenty of room for discussion. In Germany, the agenda is strictly followed." (Interview 1). This strict adherence to structure creates efficiency but can limit spontaneous discussion or creativity during meetings, particularly in complex or ambiguous problem-solving situations.

In contrast, Dutch meetings were often seen as more dynamic and dialogical, but also likely to drift off-topic. "The structure of Dutch meetings allows for digressions, which means that relevant points are sometimes not discussed." (Interview 2). While this can promote innovation, it sometimes comes at the cost of efficiency.

This is in line with Thesing (2016), who emphasizes that German professionals often prefer detailed planning, precision, and adherence to agreed processes. Meetings are expected to follow structured agendas closely, Dutch professionals, although appreciating planning, often demonstrate more flexibility and pragmatism, adjusting meeting outcomes according to emerging discussions and valuing improvisation when needed (Thesing, 2016).

Closely related to culture during meetings is the discipline shown during meetings. In the German context, punctuality and formality are central. One interviewee shared: "You notice that everything is strictly regulated. The meeting starts at eight o'clock and ends at five o'clock, and then it's really over." (Interview 1). Even minor deviations from schedule or agenda are generally not supported.

Some participants noted how strict German managers are with time management. According to one interviewee: "When people are late for a meeting, you get responses such as: "I was on the phone with a customer, is that so bad?" [...] Under German management, even that is not accepted as a valid excuse." (Interview 1). This discipline was perceived as effective for productivity but at times stiff.

Dutch leaders, on the other hand, described a more relaxed attitude toward meeting times and content. While this allows flexibility, it may lead to inefficiencies. As noted by an interviewee: "In the Netherlands, it is more common for meetings to run over time." (Interview 5). In mixed teams, Dutch colleagues often adapted to the stricter German structure, sometimes it improved their own meeting efficiency as a result.

During meetings, but also beyond meetings, German's organizational structure reflected a strong focus on preparation, clarity of roles, and task ownership. One participant described, "In Germany, everyone has a specific task. And there is always an agenda, clear action points, minutes" (Interview 4). This contrasts with the more flexible and sometimes overlapping responsibilities found in Dutch teams.

Another participant highlighted the German preference for detailed preparation before a meeting, "Prepare well and make sure you know what is expected of you." (Interview 4). The German emphasis on planning, preparation and role-specific contributions is in line with de Jongste's research, who gave the insights that Germans have a preference for structured agendas and role-specific contributions (de Jongste, 2023).

The contrasts suggest that German's organizational environments favor efficiency and predictability, while Dutch systems prioritize inclusivity and adaptability. As several interviewees noted, both ways work, so combining the strengths of both can lead to improved outcomes in cross-cultural collaboration.

4.4 Interpersonal Dynamics

Interpersonal dynamics between Dutch and German professionals were shaped by factors such as openness to relationships, cultural sensitivity, feedback style, and behavior in meetings. While initial contact was often marked by caution or distance, many participants noted that mutual respect and adaptability led to improved collaboration over time. The four main themes identified were Relationship Development, Cultural Sensitivity, Interaction Behavior, and Interaction with Feedback.

Participants often noted a clear difference in how quickly interpersonal bonds are formed during meetings. Dutch professionals tended to seek informal, direct relationships early, while German colleagues were perceived as more distant initially. As one participant shared: "At first, the Germans were somewhat distant, but when the others contributed, they joined in. Then you see them become more open and their attitude change." (Interview 1). This "cautious openness" was interpreted not as arrogance, but as their cultural norms.

Another interviewee described, "If you show that you are new but open to learning, Germans will respond positively. Then you will click more quickly." (Interview 1). This suggests that showing humility and a willingness to engage in meetings can facilitate faster relationship building with Germans.

Cultural awareness and the ability to adapt to the German cultural norms during meetings were critical for successful collaboration. Participants highlighted the importance of observing norms, particularly in formal settings. One said: "Respect for cultural differences is seen as a sign of professionalism, especially by Germans." (Interview 5). Others stressed the value of adjusting one's communication style

without losing authenticity: "You get more out of a conversation if you adapt to your conversation partner without losing yourself." (Interview 1). Overall, Germans really appreciate it when you adapt to their culture, this is confirmed by all five interviewees.

Behavior in meetings, especially around authority figures, showed distinct patterns. Several Dutch participants noticed that German professionals, particularly in group settings, were more formal and cautious when managers were present. According to one of them: "Germans are more formal and cautious, especially when their manager is present. One-on-one, they are sometimes more open, but in groups I often see them holding back." (Interview 4).

Others reported that hierarchy influenced who felt confident to speak up during a meeting. "If someone is lower in rank than the German, restraint and politeness are more often chosen. If people are on the same level, they are more likely to take control of the conversation. The degree of adaptation therefore varies depending on the situation." (Interview 3). This hierarchy-sensitive dynamic contrasted with the Dutch expectation of open dialogue, regardless of your position.

Additionally, unresolved questions or uncertainties were sometimes met with silence, which causes frustrations and eventually tensions during upcoming meetings. A participant describes such a situation: "When I repeatedly received no response to an email and then brought it up in a meeting, it led to tension. Germans often don't respond if they don't know the answer, whereas I would rather have someone say 'I don't know' than nothing at all." (Interview 4). Such differences in responsiveness were interpreted as avoidance behavior by Dutch colleagues, though they may stem from differing standards of communication.

Feedback was another area where interpersonal friction emerged. Dutch professionals generally valued direct criticism during meetings, while German colleagues were seen as more sensitive to critique, particularly in group settings. One participant shared an experience where feedback was given to a German colleague, in a meeting surrounded by others, according to the participant: "The Dutch are used to direct feedback, whereas Germans are more likely to perceive this as a personal attack, especially in a group setting." (Interview 5). The participant also added, "The tension arose mainly due to the loss of face in a group context. In the Netherlands, such feedback is more readily accepted and seen as advice rather than criticism, but this is not the case in Germany." (Interview 5).

This cultural difference in giving and receiving feedback has implications for team dynamics and psychological safety during meetings, especially in multicultural teams. It suggests that feedback strategies may need to be adapted to the context and audience to avoid unintended tensions.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of Results

In the following section, the results of this research are interpreted and explained. Also, will the results be compared to the findings of the literature review.

This research aimed to understand how cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles affect meeting dynamics in Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies. Five interviews with Dutch employees who regularly meet with German supervisors were conducted. Through this process, we identified several key incidents that highlighted patterns in leadership perception, behavior, and intercultural interaction during meetings. Our findings support many theoretical assumptions from Chapter 2, especially those from de Jongste (2023), Thesing (2016), and GLOBE (House et al., 2004).

5.1.1 Communication Style

The interviews highlighted a clear contrast between German and Dutch communication styles during meetings. German managers were seen as formal, structured, and directive. In contrast, Dutch professionals favored openness, humor, and informality. This aligns with findings by Thesing (2016) and GLOBE (House et al., 2004), which show that German culture features a higher degree of assertiveness and structured interaction. Interestingly, despite both cultures being known for their directness, the Dutch approach during meetings was often viewed as confrontational by their German colleagues. This tension reflects the notion that "directness" has different social meanings in various cultures (Thesing et al., 2021). The Dutch habit of interrupting or openly given your opinion was not always welcomed by Germans, particularly in hierarchical settings. This points to a need for sensitivity in providing feedback across cultures.

5.1.2 Perception of Leadership

Leadership expectations varied greatly between the two cultures. German leaders were consistently seen as more hierarchical, maintaining a clear separation between themselves and their teams during meetings. This view aligns with findings from Thesing (2016), who noted that Germans tend to uphold role distinctions and expect respect for authority. On the other hand, Dutch employees look for egalitarian leadership that emphasizes consultation and inclusion, as supported by Thesings (2016) findings on low power distance in Dutch culture. These conflicting norms sometimes led to tension during meetings, particularly when Dutch employees do give their opinions and Germans interpreted openness as a lack of professionalism.

5.1.3 Decision-Making

The decision-making process stood out as one of the most notable differences. German managers were described as thorough, formal, and often prepared with conclusions before meetings, reflecting a preference for structure and planning. This supports the description of high uncertainty avoidance and planning orientation found in the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). In contrast, Dutch participants viewed meetings as chances for collaborative problem-solving. They preferred co-creation, open discussions, and iterative input, which sometimes clashed with the structured expectations of their German counterparts.

5.1.4 Meeting Structure and Discipline

German meeting culture was described as highly structured, punctual, and formal. In contrast, Dutch meetings were seen as flexible, open-ended, and less discipline-focused. These observations support de Jongste's (2023) framework, where Germany scores high in areas like agenda structure and role-specific contributions, while Dutch meeting styles favor informality and equal participation. The interviews indicated that Dutch professionals frequently adjusted to the German structure. While this sometimes enhanced efficiency, it could also stifle creativity and spontaneity. This suggests that combining flexibility with structure might be the most effective approach in multi-cultural teams.

5.1.5 Openness and Input Dynamics

Another common theme was the openness towards contributions from junior staff. In Dutch meetings, new employees are encouraged to participate from day one, reflecting high institutional collectivism (House et al., 2004). In contrast, Germans often expect newcomers to first "prove themselves,". This difference can impact psychological safety during meetings. Dutch employees can feel like German settings restrict open dialogue, particularly for those without seniority. However, over time, increased familiarity will lead to more inclusive behavior, showing cultural flexibility in long-term collaboration.

5.1.6 Feedback and Interpersonal Sensitivity

Direct feedback proved to be a challenging area. Dutch participants noted that while feedback is common in the Netherlands, German colleagues often viewed direct criticism, especially in group settings during meetings, as personal attacks. This highlights the significance of "face" in German group dynamics. Dutch professionals often had to modify their approach to feedback to maintain harmony in their interactions.

5.1.7 Adaptability and Relationship Building

One important insight from the interviews is that cultural adaptation tends to improve over time. Several participants observed that German colleagues, who initially came across as distant or formal, gradually became more open and collaborative during meetings as mutual respect developed and as they became more familiar with Dutch communication norms. This evolving interaction style was particularly visible in mixed Dutch and German team meetings, where longer collaboration encouraged more flexible behavior from both sides.

The interviewees emphasized the importance of adapting to the German communication and leadership style while remaining true to themselves. This balance between cultural flexibility and authenticity was seen as essential for smooth collaboration, particularly in more hierarchical or formal German settings, where it is viewed as a sign of professionalism. The importance of this behavior is further supported by the observation that "respect for cultural differences is seen as a sign of professionalism, especially by Germans" (Interview 5). This is in line with Jimmink, because according to Jimmink (2022) a key German cultural standard is formality in communication, which the Dutch do when they adapt to their German conversation partner, which is linked to deeper German values including professionalism. Demonstrating cultural awareness and professionalism within the norms is not only respectful but

also reinforces trust and effectiveness in intercultural collaboration.

Moreover, several participants noted a clear generational effect in meetings: younger German professionals were described as more informal, collaborative, and open to dialog, which shows greater similarity to their Dutch counterparts. While generational differences were not the central focus of this research, this recurring observation across multiple interviews suggests a gradual cultural shift that may influence leadership dynamics in international organizations over time.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study confirms existing ideas in the literature about cultural differences in leadership, but also adds new insights, especially about how these differences appear in meetings. It focuses on Dutch subsidiaries with German parent companies and shows that national culture strongly shapes how people behave in meetings.

Firstly, the findings confirm the established view that German leadership tends to have higher power distance, structured communication, and formality during meetings, whereas Dutch leadership favors egalitarianism and participative communication (Thesing, 2016; House et al., 2004). The structured, top-down nature of German meetings and the informal, collaborative approach of Dutch meetings correspond with known cultural differences in hierarchy and uncertainty avoidance (House et al., 2004). However, this study also provides new theoretical insights. One notable contribution is the observation of a generational shift in German leadership behavior during meetings. Younger German professionals appear more flexible, open, and inclined to adopt informal communication styles, resembling their Dutch counterparts. This suggests that cultural norms can change over time and may be influenced by generational factors.

Another important contribution is the identification of adaptive strategies employed by Dutch professionals to navigate the more formal German meeting culture. These adjustments, such as a more moderating tone in meetings or increasing preparation before meetings, can be viewed as cultural bridging strategies.

In conclusion, this study confirms several established cultural theories, but also contributes new insights regarding generational differences and the development of adaptive strategies employed by the Dutch professionals during meetings. These findings add depth to current theoretical frameworks and enhance their applicability to real-world organizational meeting settings.

5.3 Practical Implications

Besides the contributions of this paper to research in the field of cultural differences between Dutch and German leaders in Dutch companies that have a German parent company, it also contributes to the practical field. The findings show how different leadership expectations during meetings, especially regarding hierarchy, communication style, and structure, can cause misunderstandings and inefficiencies, if not addressed. This study also highlights how to prevent those situations, for example by adapting more to the Germans. Managers can use

these insights to improve internal communication, set clear expectations across teams, and adopt hybrid leadership practices that respect both cultural norms. For example, hold cultural briefings before meetings, all five interviewees inform their employees on cultural differences before their first meeting with Germans. HR departments could also include cultural awareness in onboarding programs. By identifying key areas of friction and successful adaptation strategies, this study helps multinational corporations create more effective, inclusive, and culturally aware work environments during meetings.

5.4 Limitations

Despite offering valuable insights, the study has limitations. The sample size was small, with only five interviewees from one company, this potentially limits the generalizability of the findings. The research is rich in detail, but the results represent one specific organizational and cultural context and might not fully reflect experiences in other sectors and companies. Furthermore, only the Dutch perspective was captured. Including interviews with German managers could have revealed contrasting interpretations of the same incidents, providing a more balanced view. Also, while generational differences were mentioned, they were not explored systematically. Future studies could explicitly investigate how age and professional experience mediate cultural differences. Future studies could also investigate whether there is a difference in how males and females look at meetings, because this study contains only interviews with males.

5.5 Future Directions

While this study offers new insights into the influence of cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles in business meetings, several opportunities remain for future research to improve and deepen the understanding of this topic.

First, future studies could use a comparative design that also includes German subsidiaries of Dutch companies. This approach would allow exploration of how leadership dynamics differ when the cultural hierarchy is reversed and whether similar patterns of adaptation or friction appear. Such a comparative view would give a better picture of German-Dutch intercultural interactions.

Future studies could also investigate the role of individual factors, such as gender, past intercultural experience, language skills, or personal adaptability, in shaping how employees handle cross-cultural leadership dynamics. This could help distinguish between organizational and personal factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful intercultural collaboration.

By addressing these gaps, future research can improve the theoretical understanding of cross-cultural leadership and offer practical insights for managing the cultural diversity in a multi-cultural business environment.

5.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

"How do cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles influence meeting dynamics in Dutch subsidiaries of German parent companies?"

The results of five semi-structured interviews with Dutch professionals working for a Dutch company with a German parent company and the theories demonstrate how these cultural differences significantly influence the planning, execution, and experience of meetings.

German leadership was consistently perceived as more hierarchical, formal, and directive during meetings, which contributes to structured meetings with a clear agenda, strict time management, and limited room for spontaneous input. In contrast, Dutch leadership during meetings was experienced as egalitarian, informal, and participative, fostering more open discussions, and encouraging input from all levels. These contrasting leadership styles directly influenced meeting dynamics by affecting communication flow, decision-making processes, and interpersonal behavior.

Meetings under German leadership were often efficient but perceived by Dutch employees as rigid and less inclusive. Conversely, Dutch-led meetings were experienced as flexible and democratic but at times inefficient, by the five interviewees. Sometimes, the tension between the German and Dutch approaches created friction in cross-cultural meetings, particularly in areas such as feedback exchange, authority dynamics, and openness to input. However, the study also found that cultural adaptation and hybrid leadership practices emerged as key mechanisms for overcoming these challenges. Dutch employees reported that adjusting to the German preference for formality and structure, without losing their own authenticity, was viewed positively and increased professional respect. Over time, mutual adaptation and German generational shifts appeared to soften rigid cultural boundaries, leading to more collaborative and effective intercultural meetings.

In answer to the research question, cultural differences between Dutch and German leadership styles clearly shape how meetings unfold. These differences are especially visible in how people communicate, make decisions, and relate to hierarchy. Despite these challenges, successful collaboration is possible. With cultural awareness, willingness to adapt, and a balanced mix of both leadership styles, it is possible to bridge these gaps and work together more effectively.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX

Appendix I – Interview Questions

Important to note: Before every interview, respondents were first asked for their consent regarding the processing of data and recording of the interview, they are also informed that everything will be used anonymously. This was done via a consent form.
Every interview starts with an introduction of the research and an explanation is given about how the interview will proceed.

Eight interview questions to guide the semi-structured interviews:

1. You have a German supervisor, what are the differences with a Dutch supervisor?
2. What are the differences between those two related to communication or giving orders?
3. Are there also differences during meetings? If so, can you describe a meeting with a German manager where you felt there was a misunderstanding or a different approach to leadership for example? What happened?
4. Have you ever experienced tension or friction during a meeting due to cultural differences? Can you walk me through that incident?
5. In your experience, how do German managers typically structure meetings, and how does that compare to Dutch norms?
6. What kind of communication style do you notice from your German counterparts in meetings? How does that influence the meeting dynamics?
7. Can you share an example of a meeting that went particularly well (or poorly) due to cultural alignment (or misalignment)?
8. How do you or your colleagues usually adapt when cultural differences become apparent during meetings?
9. What advice would you give to a new employee at Sika Nederland who is about to attend their first meeting with German managers?

Appendix II – Analysis of the Interviews

Interview:	Quotes:	1st Order Concept:	2nd Order Themes:	Aggregate Dimensions:
Interview 1	"In Duitsland zijn ze veel hiërarchischer, veel zakelijker."	Hierarchical leadership	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 1	"Het is in de loop der jaren wel minder geworden, maar je ziet nog steeds duidelijk de hiërarchie, de baas-werknemerstructuur."	Hierarchical leadership	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 1	"Ze begrijpen onze humor niet, maar vooral omdat ze zo serieus zijn, vinden ze het niet gepast om een grap te maken."	Little room for humor	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 1	"Het grootste verschil is dat een Duitser gewoon een opdracht geeft; dit is wat ik verwacht en dit is wat je moet doen. In Nederland is het meer dat je samen kijkt of je het misschien op deze of op deze manier kunt doen."	Direct instructions vs consultation	Decision-making	Leadership differences
Interview 1	"Wat me echt opviel, en dan heb ik het specifiek over fysieke vergaderingen, is hoe gestructureerd Duitsers zijn."	Meeting structure	Meeting culture	Organizational approach
Interview 1	"Je merkt dat alles strak gereguleerd is. De vergadering begint om acht uur en eindigt om	Strict time scheduling	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach

	vijf uur, en dan is het echt afgelopen. In Nederland is dat anders: discussies slepen zich vaak voort, of je blijft nog even hangen. Onder Duits leiderschap gebeurt dat zelden."			
Interview 1	"Ik heb wel eens meegemaakt dat collega's, vaak uit andere landen, te laat kwamen. Ze worden dan echt op hun plaats gezet, door de voorzitter of manager."	Strict punctuality	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 1	"Als mensen te laat zijn voor een meeting dan krijg je reacties als: 'Ik was aan het bellen met een klant, is dat zo erg?' In Nederland zou je dan zeggen: 'Prima, goed dat je even de klant hebt geholpen.' Maar onder Duits management wordt zelfs dat niet als een geldig excuus geaccepteerd. Daarom zeggen Duitse mensen vaak: 'We hebben pauzes ingepland, gebruik die om klanten te bellen."	Strict time management	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 1	"Duitse vergaderingen zijn veel gestructureerder dan Nederlandse. In Nederland heb je meestal een aantal punten, maar is er veel ruimte voor discussie. In Duitsland wordt de agenda strikt gevolgd, zonder veel af te wijken."	Strict agenda	Meeting culture	Organizational approach
Interview 1	"In Nederland is er meestal een moderator, maar iedereen voelt zich vrij om input te geven. Als een onderwerp inhoudelijk belangrijk is, wordt er ruimte gemaakt voor discussie, ook al staat het niet op de agenda. In Duitsland is dat anders: als iets niet op de agenda staat, moet je er een aparte vergadering voor plannen. Daardoor durven mensen minder snel hun mening te geven. Nederlanders zijn veel opener."	Limited input outside agenda	Meeting culture	Organizational approach
Interview 1	"In Duitsland zijn mensen die 'op de werkvloer' staan, zoals in het laboratorium ons geval, vaak minder betrokken bij de besluitvorming."	Less involvement of operational staff	Decision-making	Leadership differences
Interview 1	"Duitse collega's brengen vooral een boodschap over: 'Dit is het probleem, dit is mijn oplossing.' Er is weinig ruimte voor discussie. In Nederland breng je een probleem vaker ter discussie en vraag je: 'Wat vind jij ervan?', waarna een levendige uitwisseling volgt. In Duitsland blijft dit meer oppervlakkig."	Solution-focused without discussion	Communication style	Leadership differences
Interview 1	"In Nederland waarderen we juist nieuwe perspectieven. Nieuwe medewerkers worden juist aangemoedigd om hun mening te geven, ook al zijn ze er nog maar een paar weken; mensen die van buiten komen, kunnen soms juist een frisse blik geven, omdat ze nog niet echt in het bedrijf zitten. In Duitsland werkt het anders. Daar moet je je eerst bewijzen, pas dan wordt er naar je geluisterd."	Newcomers must prove themselves	Openness to input	Cultural differences
Interview 1	"In het begin waren de Duitsers wat afstandelijk, maar toen de anderen input gaven, deden ze mee. Dan zie je dat ze opener	Cautious openness	Relationship development	Interpersonal dynamics

	worden en hun houding verandert. Het lijkt vaak alsof ze arrogant zijn, maar dat is hun cultuur en geen arrogantie."			
Interview 1	"Je haalt meer uit een gesprek als je je aanpast aan je gesprekspartner zonder jezelf te verliezen."	Adaptability	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 1	"Luister eerst, reageer later per e-mail. Dat werkt vaak beter dan meteen tijdens de vergadering je punt te maken."	Indirect communication	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 1	"Als je laat zien dat je nieuw bent, maar openstaat om te leren, reageren Duitsers positief. Dan klikt het ook sneller."	Open attitude to learning is positive	Relationship development	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 2	"In Duitsland is het leiderschap veel hiërarchischer. Daar is een andere autoriteit aanwezig: als leider ben je daar echt de leider, niet de collega. In Nederland is het vaak informeler."	Hierarchical leadership	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 2	"In Duitsland is er meer respect en discipline richting de leider."	Respect and discipline for leaders	Perception of leadership	Cultural differences
Interview 2	"Duitse leiders zijn conservatiever en formeler in hun communicatie. Ze nemen de tijd om hun oordeel te vormen, schrijven zaken op, denken er een nacht over na, en komen pas dan tot een standpunt. In Nederland wordt veel sneller besloten, vaak gehaast, wat vervolgens weer tijd kost om te corrigeren. De Duitse stijl is 'gründlicher', grondiger en beter doordacht. Dit resulteert in minder ondoordachte acties."	Formal and thoughtful decision-making	Decision-making	Leadership differences
Interview 2	"In Duitsland kun je je niet veroorloven zomaar iets te roepen in een vergadering. Alles moet goed doordacht zijn, anders word je daar meteen op aangesproken. In Nederland is het eerder geaccepteerd dat mensen onvoorbereid iets roepen, maar dat werkt vaak vertragend."	Preparation and thoroughness required	Meeting culture	Organizational approach
Interview 2	"De structuur van Nederlandse vergaderingen laat afdwalen toe, waardoor relevante punten soms niet besproken worden. In Duitsland is dat anders: tijd en agenda worden strikt bewaakt. Als je iets wilt inbrengen, moet je dat vooraf schriftelijk aanmelden. Anders komt het niet aan bod, doe je dit tijdens een meeting, zonder het vooraf aan te hebben gegeven, kan dit leiden tot frictie."	Input in meetings	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 2	"Duitse managers houden zich zeer consequent aan de agendapunten. Er is een duidelijke structuur, en als het geen brainstormsessie is, dan blijft het ook strikt bij de afgesproken onderwerpen. In Nederland daarentegen wordt er vaak tijdens gewone vergaderingen spontaan gebrainstormd, wat niet altijd effectief is."	Strict adherence to the agenda	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 2	"De communicatiestijl is formeel en autoritair. Mensen in lagere functies durven	Formal authoritarian	Communication style	Cultural differences

	vaak geen commentaar te geven uit respect. In Nederland zegt iedereen gewoon wat hij of zij denkt. Dat kan goed zijn, maar moet ook gemanaged worden door de leider, wat soms ontbreekt."	communicatio n			
Interview 2	"Een goed voorbeeld van een vergadering die goed verloopt is wanneer Nederlanders en Duitsers samen in een vergadering zitten en de Nederlandse informele toon ("je" in plaats van "u") zorgt voor meer openheid. In Duitsland duurt het vaak veel langer voor die afstand verdwijnt. Maar in een gemengde groep van Duitsers en Nederlanders samen gebeurt dat sneller, wat de samenwerking ten goede komt."	Informal tone enhances cooperation	Cultural interaction	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 2	"Over het algemeen past men zich aan aan de Duitse manier van vergaderen. Men wordt gedisciplineerder, wat goed is voor de voortgang van de vergaderingen."	Adjustment to German meeting style	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 2	"Neem de tijd om goed te luisteren. Ga serieus om met wat gezegd wordt. Duitse leidinggevenden hebben meestal goed nagedacht over wat ze zeggen en verwachten ook dat je daar iets mee doet."	Listening and taking seriously	Interaction behavior	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 2	"Bereid je goed voor: weet waar het over gaat en wees klaar om inhoudelijk bij te dragen. Dat wordt zeer gewaardeerd."	Preparation and substantive knowledge	Preparation	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 3	"In Duitsland is de 'chef' nog steeds meer echt de "chef" dan in Nederland, waar vaker wordt gezocht naar compromissen."	The boss is truly the boss	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 3	"In Nederland is de omgang doorgaans directer, terwijl in Duitsland beleefdheidsvormen en structuur iets belangrijker blijven."	Netherlands direct, Germany formal	Communicat ion style	Cultural differences
Interview 3	"De Nederlandse werknemer is meer gewend om mee te denken en input te geven, terwijl in Duitsland het accepteren van de instructie meer vanzelfsprekend is."	Dutch employee gives input, German follows orders	Decision- making	Leadership differences
Interview 3	"Duitse vergaderingen zijn over het algemeen gestructureerde. Er wordt beter vastgehouden aan de agenda, tijdslimieten worden nageleefd en de vergadering wordt strak geleid. In Nederland is de vergadering vaak meer een discussie waarin ruimte is om uit te wijken."	Structured meetings	Meeting culture	Organizational approach
Interview 3	"Er is vaak een duidelijke agenda aanwezig in Duitsland, met niet alleen onderwerpen, maar ook tijdsindicaties."	Agenda with time indications	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 3	"De voorzitter is duidelijker aanwezig in Duitsland in het gesprek en durft gesprekken die afdwalen af te kappen. In Nederland is er vaker ruimte voor degenen met de grootste mond, terwijl in Duitse vergaderingen het gesprek meer wordt geleid door (vaak) één persoon en iedereen gevraagd wordt naar zijn of haar mening."	Chairperson leads strictly	Meeting culture	Organizational approach

Interview 3	"Intern zijn Duitse collega's minder formeel, maar met externen, zeker als ze die nog niet goed kennen, is er wel meer formele afstand. Nederlanders zijn sneller geneigd om het informele op te zoeken."	Formal vs. informal	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 3	"De Duitse stijl is iets minder creatief, maar wel efficiënter is."	German is less creative, more efficient	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 3	"Een positief effect van samenwerking is dat Nederlandse collega's zich vaak laten beïnvloeden door de gestructureerde aanpak van Duitsers. Hierdoor worden ook Nederlandse vergaderingen, wanneer Duitsers aanwezig zijn, soms strakker geleid en beter gepland, wat ten goede komt aan de efficiëntie en het behalen van resultaten."	Dutch are influenced by Germans	Cultural interaction	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 3	"Als iemand lager in rang is dan de Duitser, wordt er vaker gekozen voor terughoudendheid en beleefdheid. Zit men op gelijk niveau, dan trekt men het gesprek eerder naar zich toe. De mate van aanpassing verschilt dus per situatie."	Behavior depends on hierarchy	Relationship to authority	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 3	"Duitsers zijn niet altijd formeel, maar het hangt sterk af van de setting en met wie je te maken hebt."	Formality depends on setting	Cultural flexibility	Cultural differences
Interview 3	"Vraag van tevoren hoe formeel een vergadering zal zijn, kleed je netjes (liever overdressed dan underdressed) en pas je ter plekke aan op gebied van gedrag. Observeer hoe anderen zich gedragen en pas je aan zonder je eigenheid te verliezen. Goede voorbereiding en het inschatten van de context zijn essentieel."	Tailor to formal behavior	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 4	"Ik merk dat Duitse supervisors doorgaans veel formeler zijn dan Nederlandse."	More formal supervisors	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 4	"Ik zie een kentering: sommige Duitse collega's proberen barrières te doorbreken door zich voor te stellen met hun voornaam, zodat er sneller een informele band ontstaat."	Trying to reduce distance	Cultural interaction	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 4	"De toon waarop een Duitse leidinggevende iets zegt, komt vaak over als een bevel, ook al is het niet zo bedoeld. Daardoor merk ik dat mensen terughoudender zijn om door te vragen."	Directive tone leads to reticence	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 4	"In Duitsland is het geven van opdrachten vaak directiever, terwijl in Nederland meer ruimte is om zelfstandig in te vullen hoe je iets aanpakt."	Giving orders is more directive	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 4	"Tijdens vergaderingen zijn Nederlanders vaak direct, soms op het lompe af, en onderbreken snel. Duitsers vinden dat lastig, zeker als je hun denkproces verstoort. Ik heb wel meegemaakt dat ik kritiek gaf vanuit de intentie om te verbeteren, maar dat werd persoonlijk opgevat. Duitsers zijn gevoeliger voor hiërarchie en trekken kritiek sneller persoonlijk aan."	Dutch directness and interruptions	Interaction behavior	Interpersonal dynamics

Interview 4	"Toen ik herhaaldelijk geen reactie kreeg op een e-mail en dat dan vervolgens in een vergadering aankaartte, leidde dat tot spanningen. Duitsers reageren vaak niet als ze het antwoord niet weten, terwijl ik liever heb dat iemand zegt "ik weet het niet" dan helemaal niets."	No response leads to tension	Interaction behavior	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 4	"Duitse vergaderingen zijn veel strakker georganiseerd en heeft iedereen echt een eigen taak. Er is altijd een agenda, duidelijke actiepunten, notulen en vaak zelfs een secretaresse die alles netjes bijhoudt. In Nederland is het veel vrijblijvender, en ik heb ook vaak meegemaakt dat ik in een vergadering zat waar ik eigenlijk niets te zoeken had. In Duitsland gebeurt dat minder snel. Daar is het doelgerichter en functioneler."	Tightly organized meetings	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 4	"Duitsers zijn formeler en voorzichtiger, zeker als de leidinggevende erbij is. Een-op-een zijn ze soms opener, maar in groepsverband zie ik vaak dat ze zich inhouden."	Formal in group, more open one-on-one	Relationship to authority	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 4	"Door actief mee te denken over andere onderwerpen en kritische vragen te stellen, werd ik serieus genomen door mijn Duitse collega's."	Active participation is appreciated	Openness to input	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 4	"Bereid je goed voor en zorg dat je weet wat er van je verwacht wordt. Als je geen Duits spreekt, geef dat dan van tevoren aan en laat bijvoorbeeld iemand anders je presentatie presenteren als je de taal niet goed genoeg spreekt. Kom uitgerust en netjes gekleed, en wees op tijd. De eerste indruk telt zwaar."	Preparation and clear expectations	Preparation	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 5	"De hiërarchische verhouding is in Duitsland duidelijker aanwezig. Waar in Nederland de leidinggevende zich vaker opstelt als een van de collega's, is in Duitsland de manager echt de baas."	Hierarchy is clearly there	Leadership style	Cultural differences
Interview 5	"Binnen de jongere generaties is die hiërarchie wel wat aan het vervagen, maar met oudere Duitsers is dat nog altijd meer aanwezig. In Nederland ga je sneller over op een informele 'je-vorm', terwijl in Duitsland het 'u' langer behouden blijft, zeker bij oudere generaties (ongeveer vanaf 60+)."	Younger generations more informal	Generational differences	Cultural differences
Interview 5	"In Duitsland is de communicatie over het algemeen directiever, terwijl het in Nederland constructiever is. Er wordt in Nederland meer overlegd, men praat op een gelijker niveau. In Duitsland wordt vaker gewoon gezegd wat er moet gebeuren. Jongere Duitsers communiceren ook al op een meer gelijkwaardige manier, maar bij oudere Duitsers merk je nog steeds die formele stijl."	Directive communication	Communication style	Cultural differences
Interview 5	"De spanning ontstond dus vooral door het gezichtsverlies in een groepscontext. In Nederland wordt dergelijke feedback eerder	Sensitivity to criticism	Interaction with feedback	Interpersonal dynamics

	geaccepteerd en gezien als advies in plaats van als kritiek, bij Duitsers niet."			
Interview 5	"Nederlanders zijn gewend aan directe feedback, Duitsers ervaren dat sneller als persoonlijke aanval, zeker in een groep."	Direct feedback perceived as personal	Interaction with feedback	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 5	"Duitsers zijn doorgaans punctueler; zij willen de vergadering binnen de geplande tijd afronden. In Nederland is het gebruikelijker dat een vergadering uitloopt."	Punctuality	Meeting discipline	Organizational approach
Interview 5	"De communicatiestijl hangt sterk af van de leeftijd. Oudere Duitsers zijn formeler en directiever. Jongere Duitsers communiceren opener en gelijkwaardiger. Die stijl zorgt voor meer ruimte tot inbreng en samenwerking. In formele situaties, met oudere Duitsers, is de ruimte voor inbreng beperkter en de dynamiek meer hiërarchisch."	Formality in older generations	Generational differences	Cultural differences
Interview 5	"Een goed verlopende vergadering hangt sterk af het doel. Als het doel gezamenlijk een nieuw product op de markt brengen is, dan is de sfeer meestal constructiever en positiever. Samenwerking leidt in zulke gevallen tot een dynamiek waarin culturen elkaar aanvullen. Wanneer het daarentegen om een probleem gaat dat opgelost moet worden, is de toon vaak formeler, directiever en spanningsgevoeliger."	Purpose determines meeting style	Meeting culture	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 5	"Wanneer je als gast bij een Duitse vergadering aanwezig bent, pas je je aan aan de cultuur van het gastland. Respect tonen voor gewoontes en omgangsvormen is essentieel en wordt gewaardeerd."	Adapting to host culture	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 5	"Respect voor cultuurverschillen wordt gezien als een teken van professionaliteit, vooral door Duitsers."	Respect for cultural differences	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics
Interview 5	"Het belangrijkste advies is: wees beleefd en toon respect. Spreek mensen in eerste instantie met 'u' aan, zeker als je hun leeftijd of stijl niet goed kent. Wees je bewust van de formele omgangsvormen in Duitsland. Respect tonen voor cultuur en gewoontes zorgt voor een betere verstandhouding en wordt zeer gewaardeerd door Duitse collega's."	Showing politeness and respect	Cultural sensitivity	Interpersonal dynamics