

Business Etiquette and Communication in France and China: An Intercultural Approach

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Abstract: In a world where business competition has become more and more intense, every single detail must be taken into account in order to be competitive. Business etiquettes have become the necessary standards in all the firms to optimize their business and administration efficiency. All the countries are developing their business strategies by creating different ways with certain diversity in terms of cultural development, etc., which can thus inevitably lead to different business etiquettes. Each individual plays a different role in business activities. The purpose of this study is to compare the difference of business etiquettes between China and France. To understand the difference between these two countries, we compared the difference of business etiquettes between China and France by referring to Chinese and French companies doing business in China. The data analysis may provide practical advice for us to be able to avoid causing any ambiguity or misunderstanding between the two countries. The study also revealed the importance of respect and the influence of different reflection habits in these two countries. Thus, it may reach the goal of helping both sides to form a better mutual understanding and providing practical recommendations to better strengthen Sino-French relationships.

Keywords: Business etiquette, differences, intercultural, China, France.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, with the increasingly closer global economic ties, the reform and open-door policy of China, and rapid economic development, trade cooperation between China and Western countries has intensified (Kobayashi *et al.*, 1999; Lardy, 2014, 2018). Sino-French economic and business relations have reached a new stage. In the framework of economic globalization, China and France have become close economic and commercial partners (Nicolas, 2021). Despite more and more important exchanges between both countries, many problems, such as business etiquettes, still arise. If we don't pay enough attention to the issues of business

etiquettes, this can easily cause misunderstandings or even conflicts (Friedman & Ariane, 2005; Turnage, 2008; Vetrinskaya & Dmitrenko, 2017); it may impose negative impact on the relations between the two countries. Whether it is in China or in France, although businessmen generally have a basic understanding about etiquettes in business, some offensive incidences to the partner's taboos can still happen, and the latter may find it rude and disrespectful towards their culture or cultural values. Consequently, this might have serious impacts on the cooperation and partnership between the two countries. So, we should develop a solid knowledge of business etiquettes and protocols between China and

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France (Tomalin, 2009). Facing the reality of having numerous differences between both business etiquettes, it is necessary that business partners should deal with the different rituals rationally, restrain their over enthusiasm of nationalism, respect the moral values and local customs to promote successful trade talks, and eventually strengthen Sino-French relations.

By definition etiquette refers to “a set of practices and forms which are followed in a wide variety of situations” and prevailing in business exchanges (Song, 2004; Zhuang, 2011). It takes place during trade activities. They are conventional methods in procedures for mutual respect. May it be the physical appearance or a rule to follow, etiquette is essential in order to offer clients a wonderful provision of a service. Our personal image therefore reflects the image of our work quality.

This study aims at exploring the business etiquettes and protocols differences between China and France so as to analyse their importance, understand their differences, learn to respect cultural differences from each other, and understand their reflection habits. Next, we will make suggestions to strengthen Sino-French relations. China and France have become strategic partners over the years. China and France will also keep collaborating to set up an open world economy, and promote an economic globalization which is more welcoming, inclusive, well-balanced and mutually beneficial. Thus, it is crucial to understand and learn the customs and business etiquettes from both sides in order to strengthen the economic and trade cooperation between China and France. Etiquette and protocols play an important role in socio-professional life (Delia & Mirela 2010). The first impression is the one that matters. All the experts agree on the fact that good manners and appropriate behaviours are the prelude to successful exchanges (Moran *et al.*, 2011). Ultimately, the understanding of the Sino-French culture can be realized. Otherwise, the cooperation between China and France won't be easy. In a globalized economy and the context of growing Sino-French trade cooperation, it is vital to explore these issues: How to understand the different customs and business etiquettes between the two countries? How to understand the importance of etiquettes? And how to treat differences between the two countries accordingly and appropriately? In business activities and interpersonal relations, is it really possible to avoid offending others? Why is it important to respect others in interpersonal relations? What is the influence of different reflection habits? How do the French find the quality of Chinese goods? How to strengthen Sino-French relations? How to elaborate strategies? These are the essential questions that are analysed in our study.

The paper's purpose is to discuss about the differences in business etiquettes strictly between China and France. Other cultures and customs differences with other countries are not included in this study. The understanding of the differences in customs and etiquettes in Sino-French trade activities and the analysis of the differences between the two countries are the two main priorities of our study and concern. But this study remains open-minded to accept any possibility and critical comments from different perspectives. Finally, with the discovery of the limitations identified in the study, practical recommendations are reached and made for the purpose of mutual understanding and trust in enhancing the Sino-French cooperation.

In our study, we found that when we are compelled to work in teams, collaborate, do presentations, meet clients, lead or work with the hierarchy, having pure knowledge is not enough. As a true practitioner, we must try and internalize the business etiquettes so that we can be confident and get recognized, attract people's interest and gain their respect. Due to various factors, China and France have different etiquettes and protocols in their development processes (Okoro, 2012), not to mention their particular way of eating, speaking and socializing habits.

This study is divided into eight chapters. Besides the introduction in the first part, chapter two focus on literature review dealing with the importance of customs and etiquettes between China and France. Chapter three elaborates the different business Etiquette between China and France. Chapter four explains the research methodology which included data collection procedure, interview and observation. Chapter five shows the analysis of the collected data and discusses the obstacles found in the business etiquette in both countries, and the importance of respect in the interpersonal communication. Chapter six introduces the habit differences among French people and the judgment on Chinese made products by French counterpart. Chapter seven presents the suggestions for strengthening Sino-French Relations and enhancing economic ties between both countries. Finally, chapter eight concludes the study and presents directions for future research.

The Importance of Business Etiquettes and Protocols

In order to show mutual respect in commercial activities, it is necessary to adopt codes of good practice limiting the various aspects of people's commercial activities (United Nations, 2011; Weissbrodt & Kruger, 2003), including their speeches, behaviours, correspondences, phone communications and so on. These etiquettes can be

classified into office etiquette, dining practices, hosting etiquette, card exchanging, business dress, tipping etiquette, etc.

Good manners play an important role in socio-professional life. First impression always determines the success or failure in the business world. Etiquette has become one of the necessary norms in all the companies (Salvas, 2008). The mastery of business etiquettes is necessary to be successful in one's socio-professional advancement, as well as leading one's teams when relationships are getting more complex due to new technologies and diversity in our companies and institutions. Politeness is a conveyor of social cohesion, which is an important element in business environment and a key element in political spheres (Van Ham, 2008; Kavanagh, 2016). Business etiquette is a practical and beneficial social competence which is paramount to attaining a successful career by building better relationships and improving professionalism (Black *et al.*, 2020).

As far as the firms or companies concerned, the proper business etiquette is an intangible asset which shows the image and strength of the company, but also to a certain extent, will impact on the value and efficiency of the firm (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011; Carmeli & Cohen 2001). Not only can business etiquette shape the creativity of a company and improve clients' satisfaction, but they can also strengthen competitiveness of the firm and increase its efficiency. However, some may suggest that business etiquette in the firms is out of the fashion and it is considered as a banality. These comments are questionable. For instance, on December 17th, 2015, Paris Court of Appeal (decision No.13/04447), there was a report on an employee's regular refusal to say "Good morning" or shake his/her co-workers' hands at the beginning in his job. The same employee was accused of adopting a mutism, disrespectful and disdainful behaviour obliging some colleagues working with him wanting to resign. From this example, we can learn that in a highly competitive world while facing a tough competition, every single detail matters. Formality and etiquette must be respected and taken seriously.

Subjectively and in certain cases, the mastery of some etiquette can help improve people's general knowledge, make themselves more attractive as well as their lives (Schulz, 2008; Jawabri, 2017). Even a small gesture like a smile or a word of greeting can change everything because it moves the clients' emotions and wins their affection, and create a friendly atmosphere and also good mood. By paying attention to the etiquettes, one can make a stronger attachment with clients and eventually gain their

trust and friendship, as well as securing business ties and gain success.

Different individuals treat business etiquettes differently. Some people consider business etiquettes as a springboard for businessmen, and treat them as simple and insignificant principles while others believe that business etiquettes will determine the success or failure of business activities. In a nutshell, the role of business etiquettes cannot be treated lightly, and it has a vital function to improve the internal quality and develop the external image (Chen, 2016; Morgan & Pritchard, 2002; Ruzzier & Petek, 2012).

Business Etiquette Between China and France

Since 1964, the year when China and France established their diplomatic relations, trade between the two countries has significantly grown since then (Shambaugh, 2004; Wang, 1997; Sandschneide, 2002).

In the current process of globalization, Chinese and French companies are benefiting from the tremendous exchange opportunities. The economic complementarity between China and France offers great opportunities and promotes the advantage for both countries to strengthen and speed up their economic exchanges and cooperation (Védrine, 1998). In Sino-French economic and trade activities, business etiquettes must take French customs into account, so that Chinese counterparts can know how to socialize and feel at ease and get recognized during their different meetings with the French companies' representatives (Pirazzoli, 2014). It is important for the Chinese counterpart to know that the French concept of ceremonial care was integrated in life details, reflecting daily activities such as clothes and greetings.

In China, during guests' introductions, people who have the acquaintance of both partners must take the initiative to introduce them. When shaking people's hands, the handshake can only be done with the right hand, and the handshake between the younger generation and old people generally corresponds to the first contact between elders. When the superior and the subordinate shake hands, the superior generally holds out his/her hands first (Tomalin & Nicks, 2010). For the presenting of business cards, after exchanging them, people should recite the name on the business card without hesitation. The cards should not be put in the pockets of trousers or in bags directly (Adamczyk, 2017). When welcoming a client in our offices, tea must be served with two hands and put at the client's right-hand side. When the client is bidding his/her farewell, s/he must stay by the door and accompany

the elders leaving the premise, walk behind elders in the promenade, etc.

But in France, things are very different. In a French business context, introductions are always made by addressing both the first and last name (Suchanek *et al.*, 2007). During a professional or social meeting, shaking hands with each individual who is present at any time is an important element of social etiquette. When family members and close friends greet each other, they often kiss one another on both cheeks. French people dislike discussing their work while having dinner, because for them this is rather an opportunity to socialize and enjoy good food, wine and discussions (Rozin, 1996). For their way of welcoming people, there are golden rules: standing up whenever a visitor enters the office; showing the visitor his/her place and, if possible, sitting next to her/him, without staying behind one's desk, etc (De Menthon, 2007).

Business etiquettes are important links in the development of Sino-French relations. For the enhancement of a great cooperation plan between the two countries, we should pay extra attention to cooperation details. Because of the cultural differences between China and France, insisting on etiquettes and learning more about them is considered one of the strategies to reinforce the Sino-French trade cooperation (Banno, 1964). More importantly, the emphasis to the great importance about etiquettes is not exclusively meant for cooperation, but also for respecting others and cultural differences. Only will a civilized and an amiable cooperation ensure the bonding between the two countries. The future of the development of Sino-French relations will be anticipated.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Procedures

To better conduct our work, we managed to get in touch with the sales personnel of a company which cooperates with France in Guangzhou, because it often collaborates with French firms; it better understands French etiquettes and protocols and its cultural context besides having a lot of experiences in the domain. We have chosen this firm as the main participants in our study simply because we have very limited resources to visit other areas or go to France for data collection. As such, Guangzhou is one of the most important cities in terms of business and ranks third in terms of size in China. Guangzhou is an industrial and business centre in China where many French firms such as AEC specialized in trade between France (the West) and China, ALSTOM SA, NATIONAL BANK OF PARIS BRANCH OF CANTON, CARREFOUR, etc. are established. Second, we have also collected the main ten categories of imported goods in China from January 2015 to October 2018.

When observing these official data, we can analyze the Chinese products which are preferred by the French.

Interview

Interviewing participants can reveal more insights about business etiquette, because it is an efficient and effective approach to collect data which are needed in this study. This study examines the collected data through interviews. To facilitate the data collection, consent letters were prepared earlier and sent through e-mail in which the purposes of our research were fully explained and presented. The assurance of not disclosing the content of the interview discussion to their colleagues or superiors has been made. As for this type of data collection, the privacy for the participant's interview is our main priority in order to secure an in-depth interview. Therefore, it is necessary to organize intensive interviews with a small number of key participants to explore their ideas or a program (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Observation

In the forty-eighth lesson of August Comte's lecture of positive philosophy, it is asserted for the first time the necessity of a rigorous observation of facts: "It is certainly incontestable today that the observation of the facts is the only solid basis for human knowledge. Always considering social facts not as subjects of admiration or criticism, but as subjects of observation" (Comte, 1998). In terms of methodology, observation seems to be consequently a means to get access to the field and information and thus differs from other ways of collecting information (Scouarnec, 2004). In this study, besides examining the main countries or regions where French products are imported, we observe French foreign trade data, specific trade data of French importations from China and trade data of both China and France. From these data and observation, we can analyse the trade situation of China and France so that we can make accurate and appropriate suggestions. The next chapter is about data analysis

DATA ANALYSIS

This part aims at presenting analysis results, obstacles and making suggestions on the basis of data included in this study.

Analysis of Obstacles to Business Etiquette between China and France

Cross-cultural business communication indicates the beginning of modern society development. With the rapid economic development in the third world, the cooperation between countries has grown stronger, the international economic integration quickened, and the cross-cultural cooperation has become an inevitable phenomenon

(Dong & Liu, 2015). Communication conflicts found in the process of cross-cultural trade cooperation were due to two main causes: first, a superficial reason including language, knowledge and non-verbal communication; second, a deeper reason which is related to cultural values.

In the context of China's policy "One Belt One Road Initiative", China and France constitute an intensive business and communication network. The mechanism of bilateral cooperation gradually has been improved. The cooperation sectors and methods between two countries were diversified (Clarke, 2018; Long, 2016; Kenderdine & Ling, 2017). In the early 2018, China and France signed 50 bilateral cooperation documents in the domains of agriculture, nuclear power, aviation, finances and trade, thus launching a good basis for their economic cooperation and bilateral trade (Zhang, 2019). However, the Sino-French bilateral trade cooperation is facing many challenges according to interviewees, when the latter talked about doing business with French people, they made lots of mistakes because of different business etiquettes, and consequently, they lost opportunities to cooperate with French companies. Therefore, the obstacles to communication in cross-cultural communication activities exist. It is an unavoidable phenomenon, so we should take it seriously and respect cultural differences between the two countries.

The Importance of Respect in Interpersonal Relations

Respect is an important principle in international business, and it is also the basis of friendly relationships (Samovar *et al.*, 2016). Respecting others means respecting oneself and respecting others and other culture can be beneficial because simultaneously it is likely to promote one own culture. If the mutual respect between people is established, mutual respect between countries can be secured. Thus, long term cooperation can be realized (Zhao 2008). Respect others so that one is respected, Martin Luther King is revered because he understands the importance of respecting others and he believes the equality of human race. He devoted all his efforts to fight against racial segregation (Cook, 1990). Since the beginning of human civilization, wars and conflicts have seemed to be ceaseless mostly due to lack of respect between each other. Therefore, each individual should understand that respecting others and their cultures is the most essential quality (Inglehart, 2021), which has nothing to do with people's colour, countries' size or strength.

According to the data collected from our interviews, all the interviewees admitted that French people give much importance to respect. They also confessed that due to cultural differences between

the two countries, they did not understand French business etiquette. They made many mistakes at the beginning, which immediately irritated French counterparts and consequently caused them to lose the cooperation opportunities with French people. Of course, they also asserted that although their French collaborators had some difficulties to understand Chinese etiquettes, but they tried to understand and showed their respect to Chinese business etiquettes.

Habit Difference and Judgement on Chinese Products

Different social cultures shape different reflection habits. Chinese and French, each shows different reflection habits, and these differences have a deep impact on their current behaviour. From the French perspective, it has definitely an impact on their attitude towards Chinese products. The following section analyses the influence of different reflection habits and French judgments on the quality of Chinese products.

The Influence of Different Reflection Habits

The different reflection habits first stimulate the difference in terms of speaking and expressing oneself. In other words, Chinese people always use exaggerating words, a great number of adjectives and rich metaphors. They often use many decorative words to describe in great length before tackling the topic (Hsiao & Su, 2010; Wang, 1997, 2008). But the French apply humour when speaking, they always make gestures when speaking, but the meaning of their gestures is different from the Chinese's. They insist on using French to express their ideas and intention, whether in a discussion or conversation, even if they speak English or other languages very well.

The main difference in the social values between Chinese and French is that the Chinese adopt collectivism while the French practice individualism (Hofstede, & Minkov, 2005; Hofstede, 2007; Huang *et al.*, 2019). Owing to uphold the organization or institution priority and having the sense of belonging to a certain group, the Chinese have opted for collectivism: everyone treats oneself as a part or a member of a group; each relies on the collective and obeys it (Trubisky *et al.*, 1991). However, the French people in general enhance individual strength. The collective decisions among them are very rare. Most of the trade talks are conducted by individuals. These results correspond with our interviews results.

Apart from this, there are undoubtedly differences of regimes, styles in clothing etc. between them. It is only by paying attention to the existing habit differences that we can narrow the

misunderstandings and make mutual trust stronger in cross-cultural communication.

French People’s Judgment on the Quality of Chinese Products

The emergence of “Made in China” products in the international market is no longer fortuitous (Yang & Stoltenberg, 2014). The promotion of Chinese made products is the first and foremost policy of the Chinese government political will (Zhan, 2010). The opening-up policy for the exploration of foreign countries is another key element of the Chinese ideological reorientation (Zhao & Belk, 2008; Zhang, 2000). Nowadays, Chinese traditional products are getting more and more popular. French businessmen and retailers start taking a keen interest in Chinese products because Chinese products are renowned for their cost prices (Zhang, 2000) which are by far inferior to those of products from other countries. There are various types of goods which can be imported from China (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2011). The profitability criterion will depend on the product specificity, the purchase price and the cost management. Clothing products, textile, foodstuffs and Chinese computer or electronic accessories provide great profit margins (from 7 to 10 times more), these products can only be sold to an affordable value or price. Electronic products or sports equipment can be sold to a high price, but have a quite weak profit margin (Ghosh, 1998). On the other hand, the importation of Chinese bikes and bike

spare parts is very profitable because the market is not saturated yet.

In 2007, the quantity of Chinese goods imported by the French was essentially made up of products having weak local added value (textile, mechanical and domestic equipment, furniture, etc.) but the beginning of the rise in the range of Chinese exports is remarkable as shown, for example, by the dynamism of computer or pharmaceutical products imports from China. The French importations of Chinese goods, after a slight fall in 2016, went up in 2017 (+6%), thus following the resumption trajectory of French imports in the year. The Chinese quota in French imports has been stabilized to 9% (Palpacuer, 2006). Although the Chinese authorities have pursued for many years their aim of facilitating the rise in the range of their exports, the French imports of Chinese products are in their great majority which made up of consumer goods having a local weak added value. With the symbolic image “of world factory”, China keeps on symbolizing: they are the essential manufacturer of textile products, clothes, leather and shoes (20%), electric and domestic fittings (12%), industrial and agricultural machines (7%), as well as games, toys and furniture-related products (5%) (Chan, 2020).

We borrowed French trade data (see Table 1 below). According to these data, we observed that the French still trust Chinese products and are ready to import them.

Table 1: Statistics on Sino-French Economic and Trade Relations

China seen from France (French customs)				
	Value	2017	2018	Evolution 17-18 (%)
Total French exports	Mds EUR	473	492	+4%
Exports to China	Mds EUR	18,8	20.8	+11%
Share in total French exports	%	4%	4.2%	
Customer	rank	7	7	
France seen from China (Chinese customs)				
	Value	2017	2018	Evolution 17-18 (%)
Total French imports	Mds EUR	531	551	+4%
Imports of Chinese goods	Mds EUR	49.2	49.9	+1.5%
Share in total French imports	%	9.3%	9.1%	
Supplier	rank	2	2	
France seen from China (Chinese customs)				
	Value	2017	2018	Evolution 17-18 (%)
Total Chinese exports	Mds EUR	2 279	2 491	+9%
Exports to France	Mds EUR	27.2	30.7	+11%
Share in total Chinese exports	%	1.2	1,2	
Supplier	rank	23	22	
China seen from France (French customs)				
	Value	2017	2018	Evolution 17-18 (%)
Total Chinese imports	Mds EUR	1 790	2 109	+18%
Imports of French goods	Mds EUR	27.2	32.3	+19%
Share in total Chinese imports	%	1.5%	1.5%	
Supplier	rank	14	15	

Source: Bortolini and Jacques (2021)

Suggestions to Strengthen Sino-French Relations and Boost Economies

Sino-French relations have deepened and strengthened in all the domains, showing more visible strategic value. The strengthening of Sino-French relations is beneficial to citizens from both countries (Wellons, 1994). Moreover, it also plays an exceptional role in the promotion of world economy sustainable development, peacekeeping and stability in the world. Frequent top-level contacts and exchanges are the basis for mutual trust promotion between both countries and advancement of continuous bilateral relationships development (Ramachandran, 1980; Fukuda, 2012). From late 2015, visits made in both countries by the leaders and heads of governments have never ceased and have always taken place in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Cultural Exchange Strategies between China and France

Generally people from both countries carry out cultural exchange via radio, TV, or cinema. Sometimes these exchanges were being engaged by conflicting forces that rather encourage universalism or local identity promotion. Although TV dramas and programs, electronic games and films are promoted by the “new technologies” wave, they go through very difficult processes (Pedler, 2002).

Cultural and educational exchanges which are real key points in the building of Sino-French relations are always opening-up in several domains (Eastman, 1967). According to data, the number of individuals learning Chinese in France has increased sixteen times in a decade. 44,000 middle and high school students have chosen to learn Chinese, whereas more than 6,000 schoolboys and schoolgirls started learning Chinese at primary schools (Yu, 2010; Ding & Saunders, 2006). Every year, exchanges in the domain of cinema rank at a higher position in Sino-French cultural exchanges.

The cooperation and cultural exchanges between both countries will extend further with the continuity of admiration for mutual cultures and tolerance from both countries. The Chinese President Xi Jinping said he was very confident about the prospect of Sino-French relations (Weiliang *et al*, 2020). Cultural exchanges have become the basic principle and consensus of economic and political cooperation for both countries (Glaser & Murphy, 2009). First, it is necessary to promote the strengthening of Sino-French cultural exchanges, especially in the domain of education or art exchange or others. All the people are encouraged to become the participants while the government should act as a pioneer that is able to set up an international exchange platform and organizes international

exchange activities. In this case, the financial assistance which comes from the government is necessary (Dewen, 2017). Secondly, it is important to respect cultural diversity, it does not exist between cultures, but inherent to the very idea of culture, and therefore, it forms cultures (Mingjiang, 2008). Cultural diversity is “a key development force” and an “essential asset to reduce poverty and get to sustainable development” (Hosagrahar *et al*, 2016). Therefore it can develop creativity and improve productivity. In cultural exchanges, we should respect differences, understand individuality in order to live in peace (Robert *et al*, 2005). Moreover, it is important that all should particularly respect business etiquette rules and cultural practices in the framework of cooperation between firms. Finally, China should learn more about French culture and make exceptions in the cultural exchange while using different communication means to disseminate Chinese culture and correspondently it also applies to French counterpart.

Intergovernmental Communication Strategies

In the era of economic globalization, international cooperation and exchange have become more intensified, both are essential elements of national construction. With the continuous strengthening of international trade trends, the issues of cultural differences between countries have become more and more conspicuous (Hofstede, 2011). So, multinational corporations must seize the opportunities to emphasize intercultural exchange importance and give new motivation to the development of firms.

Based on the abovementioned analysis, we can conclude that having the mutual respect and the understanding of the local culture, and also maintaining the confidence of our own cultural value are essential to promote and develop international exchanges (Mok, 2007). Both counterparts have to take note that improving cooperation in great projects and promoting the integration and development of nuclear energy industries, aerospace science and other technologies, and also deepening the Sino-French cooperation in emerging sectors such as innovation, artificial intelligence, and digital economy, strengthening strategic communication and cooperation between the two countries in climate and environment domains can be done under the principle of mutual respect.

China has prepared to work with France to deepen their pragmatic cooperation in various domains, strengthen human and cultural exchanges, and develop their communication and coordination in international affairs, so that they can develop their bilateral relations rapidly (Zuokui, 2013). As the industrial development level rises and “One Belt, One

Road” initiative progresses, the Sino-French cooperation in economic, trade, technical and scientific domains has shown a trend going from bottom-of-the-range to top-of-the-range.

CONCLUSION

This study essentially introduces some advanced reflections on cultural differences in business etiquette and practices between China and France. The results obtained have shown that the influence of business etiquette has made an impact on commercial cooperation between China and France, it also helped us identify the obstacles to the Sino-French trade. Therefore we have suggested some proposals to improve them.

Good business etiquette is an incorporeal asset that shows both the image and strength of the firm (Vasapollo, 1994). However, every country has its own specific business etiquette. When etiquettes are different, mutual respect is of paramount importance in international affairs. It is particularly important in interpersonal communication. Apart from that, the difference of reflection habits between the Chinese and the French are also considered to be a source of influence, it can have an impact on their cooperation to a certain extent.

In order to understand deeply the business etiquette and foreign culture, the Chinese and the French need to learn actively one another’s culture to develop their economic and education cooperation (Wang, 2008; Paschalidis, 2009). This will promote both trade and cultural exchange. If both societies deepen their mutual understanding, intergovernmental understanding of communication and cooperation can be established, the administration and management in the respective governments will develop eventually. From the research perspective, even though this study has its own limitation, it can still serve as a reference and the analysed results can still provide some valuable contribution to the development of trade and exchanges between China and France.

According to current studies and surveys, strategic trust and pragmatic cooperation between China and France are stronger than those existing between China and other EU countries. China plans to improve the cooperation with France especially in the domain of business and trade at a higher level (Zhongping & Jing, 2014). Thus, this research study has a purpose to put the importance to know and understand the influences of Sino-French cultural differences on international business etiquette in the limelight, so that it may facilitate a harmonious development between Chinese and French business activities and to better accommodate Chinese and other cultures in a global cultural diversity

environment, and gradually create a favourable condition for development where the people can achieve success in their careers, trade and languages promotion for both countries.

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