



**Faculty of Legal Sciences**

**School of International Studies**

**Intercultural Communication in Multinational  
Companies: A Comparative Study between Teams  
from Ecuador and China**

**Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in  
International Studies**

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To my parents, Xavier and Sandra; my sister, Pafy; and  
my grandparents, Luis and María, who have guided me  
and supported me not only in my career but in life  
itself.

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## **Intercultural Communication in Multinational Companies: A Comparative Study between Teams from Ecuador and China**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the importance of intercultural understanding as a key tool for understanding the cultural differences between Ecuador and China when conducting negotiations, since these differences extend beyond language to include values, norms, verbal and nonverbal communication, rituals, and each culture's ways of interacting and interpreting situations, as well as the key concepts on which each country bases its negotiation strategies. In the case of Chinese culture, *guanxi* stands out, while in Ecuadorian culture, business relationships and ways of establishing connections are emphasized. To this end, a hermeneutic qualitative approach was used, based on an in-depth literature review and a comparison of the theoretical framework centered on key authors such as Edward Hall, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, and Geert Hofstede, who help elucidate the dynamics of each culture. In addition, interviews were conducted with experts on the subject, who provide a broader perspective to substantiate the points established by the authors in the theoretical section.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, China, culture, Ecuador, *guanxi*, interculturality, negotiation.

## **Comunicación Intercultural en Empresas Multinacionales: Estudio Comparado entre Equipos de Ecuador y China**

### **RESUMEN**

La presente investigación analiza la importancia de la interculturalidad como herramienta clave para entender las diferencias culturales entre Ecuador y China al momento de establecer negociaciones, ya que no solo recaen en el idioma, sino también en valores, normas, lenguaje verbal, no verbal, ritualidad, formas de interacción e interpretación de cada cultura, así como conceptos clave en los que se basa cada país para establecer negociaciones. En el caso de la cultura china, destaca el guanxi, mientras que en la cultura ecuatoriana las relaciones empresariales y maneras de establecer vínculos. Para ello se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo de corte hermenéutico que se basa en la revisión bibliográfica profunda y la comparación de la parte teórica centrada en autores base como Edward Hall, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner y Geert Hofstede, quienes ayudan a comprender el manejo de cada cultura. Además, se realizaron entrevistas a personas expertas en el tema, quienes aportan una visión más amplia para evidenciar aquello que establecen los autores en la parte teórica.

**Palabras clave:** Adaptación, China, cultura, Ecuador, guanxi, interculturalidad, negociación.

# INTRODUCTION

Globalization is one of the main reasons why intercultural understanding is essential. Culture is not a static factor; rather, it is constantly changing. Furthermore, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, leading to more frequent interactions between different countries, particularly in the realm of negotiations. However, this understanding is not always properly applied in practice, which can trigger various problems regarding teamwork. Therefore, intercultural dialogue becomes a fundamental tool for overcoming cultural barriers. According to UNESCO (2023), it is an opportunity for interaction that creates spaces where people can exchange ideas, experiences, and values. It involves conducting a deeper analysis to understand different identities and cultures, thereby fostering diverse perspectives and new learning through intercultural empathy.

Studies by authors such as Hofstede, Hall, and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner identify cultural dimensions and patterns of interaction that must be taken into account to ensure positive relationships between different teams, thereby fostering effective international communication and cooperation. These approaches help compare teams from countries with very different cultures, in this case Ecuador and China. In recent years, China has established itself as one of Ecuador's main trading partners, making it essential to understand the cultural dynamics of both countries. In Ecuador, relationships are established in a flexible manner and tend to be work-oriented; closeness is sought but developed over time, whereas in China, communication tends to be more indirect, hierarchical, and based on the concept of *guanxi* (personal trust networks), where the goal is to establish a relationship to initiate negotiations. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, affect teamwork, and complicate internal or external negotiations. However, by understanding the cultural nuances of each country, it is possible to find a balance that fosters successful negotiations (Abril & Toaquiza, 2024).

## **Research Question**

How do intercultural dynamics between Ecuador and China impact communication and cooperation within multinational teams, and how do these cultural differences influence the effectiveness of business management?

## **General Objective**

To analyze how cultural differences between Ecuador and China affect communication, negotiation, and cooperation in multinational teams, integrating the theoretical approaches of Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner to understand their impact on business management.

## **Specific Objectives**

1. Identify the main theories and approaches of key authors regarding how cultural differences in communication, values, and work styles influence negotiations between different cultures.
2. Analyze and compare negotiation logics between China and Ecuador based on various studies related to key authors, the concepts of guanxi, personal trust in international cooperation, as well as the way in which commercial markets interact with one another.
3. Analyze the results obtained from the comparison of cultural differences and negotiation logics between Ecuador and China, also considering how negotiations and trade relations have influenced certain aspects between the two countries.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ECUADOR AND CHINA, ACCORDING TO THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF EACH CULTURE**

### **1.1 State of the Art**

#### **1.1.1 Background and Current Relationship between Ecuador and China**

One of Ecuador's first engagements with China took place in 1980, during the presidency of Jaime Roldós Aguilera, when it formalized a statement based on the principle of "One China", with which Ecuador recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole representative of China and does not recognize Taiwan as an independent state. It was also established "One country, Two Systems," which was applied by China to mediate the different political and economic systems in territories such as Hong Kong and Macao, ensuring that this does not affect national sovereignty and leading to the establishment of diplomatic relations between both countries without affecting either of them. Years later, during Rafael Correa's presidency, the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" was established in 2016, representing a high level of permanent cooperation in political and financial spheres. Finally, in 2018, Ecuador joined the "New Silk Road," and in 2019, it became a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, thereby creating new economic and diplomatic approaches between the two countries (Embajada del Ecuador en China, n.d.)

The aforementioned demonstrates that China is one of Ecuador's longest-standing economic and political partners, which is why on January 2, 2025, 45 years of diplomatic and trade relations were commemorated. This major milestone was celebrated on January 14 of the same year in the city of Quito. On that occasion, Ecuador's Foreign Minister, Gabriela Sommerfeld, said:

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1980, Ecuador and China have moved forward together in building a strong and fruitful partnership. The evolution toward a comprehensive strategic partnership has been fundamental in consolidating fluid dialogue and effective cooperation in various areas (Xinhua, 2025, par. 6).

In the context, it is important to recognize that the relationship between Ecuador and China is not based solely on economic agreements, but also on cultural ones. Consider this option, to make it clear Consider this option, to make it clear: An example of this is the

program for the Common Development of Chinese and Latin American Artists, implemented in 2023, whose objectives were to promote cultural and academic exchange among the different countries. This milestone was a great opportunity to promote culture and industrial development in both countries (Embajada del Ecuador en China, 2023). An event that directly involves the relationships between Ecuador and China is the signing of the 2021-2024 Executive Program between the Ministry of Culture and Heritage of Ecuador and the Ministry of Education of China to the Cultural Cooperation Agreement, which aims to strengthen cooperation for the promotion, production, cultural and artist training, together with the protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of each country (Cancillería del Ecuador, 2021).

### **1.1.2 The Importance of Cultural Understanding in International Business**

Simon & Simon (2025), in their publication *How Cultural Differences Affect International Business*, discuss how cultural differences are essential for effective communication, which is fundamental for establishing good negotiation styles, how people relate to each other, and how these areas influence decision-making and the establishment of strategic alliances that foster innovation, creativity, and problem-solving through different perspectives. Understanding these differences is what allows companies or organizations to create inclusive environments and have a competitive advantage over other companies.

### **1.1.3 The Role of Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were proposed by the United Nations in 2015, based on the care and promotion of culture to advance all SDGs; they include combating poverty, promoting economic growth, protecting the environment, ending hunger, promoting gender equality, and building peaceful and inclusive societies by 2030. There are 17 SDGs in total, which seek to enable societies to prosper in a safe and sustainable manner (Hosagrahar, 2023).

UNESCO highlights the importance of culture in SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Specifically, goal 11.4 addresses the protection of cultural heritage. However, it is important to note that this objective began long before the 2030 Agenda was launched. In 2013, a meeting was held in Hangzhou (China) with the aim of placing culture at the center of sustainable development. This served as the basis for the United Nations New Urban Agenda, which was adopted at the Habitat III Conference in 2016 and promoted sustainable urban development at the international level,

encouraging the integration of culture into urban policies. An example of the influence of this was the conversion of demanded and abandoned buildings in Nablus, or the conservation and transformation of Jan Al-Wakala for cultural activities, strengthening the local economy, increasing tourism, and promoting national growth (Hosagrahar, 2023).

The University of Córdoba conducted a review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which establishes that culture is key to promoting sustainable development in the community. Furthermore, the right to culture is considered a major promoter of peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Although culture is not directly mentioned in the goals, it is a fundamental basis for their development. In particular, its participation is highlighted in SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 12 (Responsible consumption and production), and 17 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions), which also contribute to economic growth, decent work, and heritage protection, leading to growth in cultural tourism and making it a tool for achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda (Arellano Velázquez, 2021).

#### **1.1.4 Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power**

A key element to consider is cultural diplomacy and soft power, as in international business, which helps to understand how states influence decision-making within society. An analysis carried out in Brazil on this subject demonstrates its importance, stating that diplomacy refers to the actions of states to promote their culture and values to other countries. On the other hand, soft power is the way in which values are used to influence the decisions of others. The authors establish that the importance of identifying who is involved (these may be companies, governments, or different institutions). In this way, cultural diplomacy can be distinguished, as most diplomatic actors in this field are states, whereas soft power involves a more diverse range of actors. These factors complement each other, helping us to understand and enrich the culture of each society and how it presents itself to the world (Zanella et al., 2024).

#### **1.1.5 Cultural Diversity in Organizational Communication**

In a study on diversity in organizational communication conducted by Dustin Tahisin Gómez Rodríguez & Natalye Velasco Castañeda (2024), in which bibliometric techniques were used to analyze the categories on multiculturalism and organizational communications between 1990 and 2022. The results of this analysis show that these two factors increase creativity and innovation by providing different perspectives and cultural knowledge.

However, they also point out that they become a challenge when trying to apply them correctly, so it is necessary to establish strategies to overcome these barriers, facilitating transparent workplace relationships and environments. In addition, it should be noted that the authors have no conflicts of interest on the issues, but rather see them as related.

### **1.1.6 Culture in Educational and Professional Context**

Cooperation between Ecuador and China, commercial and cultural, demonstrates the needs for intercultural understanding, which has been extensively studied in recent years. If we focus on how it relates to 21st-century skills, we can say that it is based on how teaching is essential to understanding it. The key to deepening the subject is in schools, colleges, and universities, which help to understand how different cultures work, promote empathy, openness, and critical reflection, contributing to their development, as they help to understand how cultural differences work (Brandt, 2024). This demonstrates how intercultural understanding can be strengthened through educational programs.

Additionally, a study conducted on intercultural communication in the Chinese context between 2012 and 2022, which analyzed the behavior of a group of university students across the country, showed how students' level of English corresponded to their level of understanding of the other culture. They had a better ability to express themselves, communicate, and relate in different intercultural contexts. At the same time, it shows that it is important to have people from different cultures within one's social circle in order to achieve a better understanding of them. However, it can be observed that the most studies focus on students and their learning in relation to English and the culture from which it originates, which suggests that teachers work in certain educational institutions, making it easier to conduct studies in a specific environment, this indicates that a more in-depth analysis of the behavior of Chinese culture in relation to other cultures is necessary (Su, 2023).

In a professional context, cultural differences influence decision-making in international negotiations, which is understanding an organizational culture is relevant. In a literature review conducted at the Latin American level, Tamayo (2020) establishes that culture greatly influences the success or failure when establishing organizational strategies, making it important to understand their behavior. It was also evident that, despite its importance, the field of study is minimal; the strategic management of organizational culture is not deeply addressed. Making it clear that understanding cultural particularities is key and essential for establishing strong bonds in negotiations.

### **1.1.7 Emotional Intelligence in Culture**

The world is surrounded by different cultures, which means that certain obstacles can arise during negotiations, as each person operates according to their own cultural background. A study conducted in the city of Shandong province, China, focusing on cultural roles and emotional intelligence, establishes that Confucian values are the cornerstone of the country's culture, prioritizing hierarchy, harmony (resolving conflicts peacefully and avoiding confrontation), and indirect communication. The most notable aspect highlighted in the study is cultural intelligence, which is understood to comprise four dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational, each contributing to its formation. Shandong was chosen for the study due to its cultural richness and its origin as the birthplace of Confucian thought, the study concludes that understanding culture and cultural intelligence is fundamental for negotiation (Agyere & Nuhu Ahmed, 2025).

In relation to Ecuadorian culture, it can be said that it does not have a concept that defines how its culture unfolds in general spheres, much less in business; however, studies show that, for Ecuador, in general, frankness, harmony, avoiding confrontations, clarity, and verbal and bodily actions are considered important. In business, it is observed that dealing with hierarchy, respect for authority, and seniority is important. Punctuality for important meetings is taken into account; in this aspect, there can be a bit more flexibility. Gifts at the end of a deal or negotiation are not mandatory, but they can have a positive influence (Rivermate, 2025).

### **1.1.8 Influence of History on Chinese Culture**

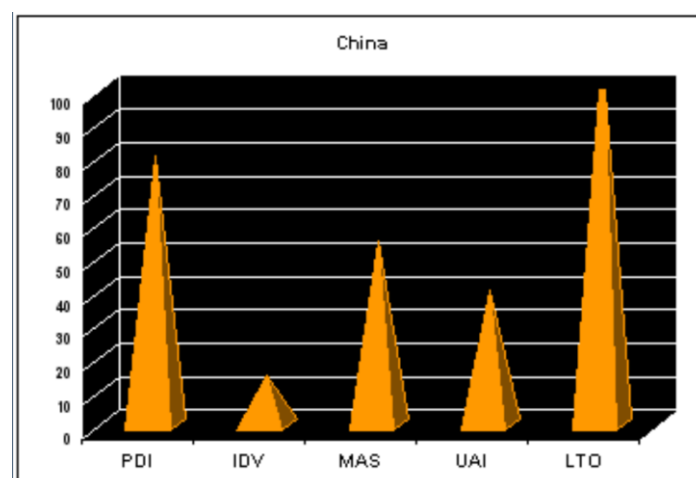
Historical processes have a significant impact on culture. Bracken (2019) states that while China did not undergo colonization processes like those in Latin America, during the Opium War era, colonialism and imperialism were evident. This occurred as more powerful countries attempted to impose their ideas economically, politically, socially, and culturally, leveraging their military and economic superiority. Consequently, these dominant nations succeeded in imposing the creation of Treaty Ports, which were designed to benefit Western countries. In this manner, they came to control trade, obtaining colonial privileges such as extraterritoriality, territorial concessions, and economic control, which diminished Chinese sovereignty.

### 1.1.9 Changes in Consumption Habits in Chinese Society: Approach of Hofstede's Theory

According to the compilation by the International Business Center, based on Hofstede's cultural dimension, it is demonstrated that China is characterized by having the lowest level of individualism compared to other Asian countries, due to its authoritarian communist regime and emphasis on a collectivist culture. With a higher ranking is long-term orientation, which is based on overcoming obstacles, not by focusing on how quickly they do it, but on the manner in which they accomplish it. They also have power distance, indicating the great inequality between wealth and poverty, which allows for identifying how people relate within the country's different social, economic, and organizational dynamics (International Business Center, 2019).

In a study conducted by Afzal et al. (2019) on how consumer behavior in China has been changing over the years, Hofstede's cultural dimensions were used as a basis for a deeper understanding of how culture influences preferences and decisions within an already globalized market. The dimensions addressed in the analysis were: power distance, long-term orientation, collectivism vs. individualism, and uncertainty avoidance, which are considered crucial for understanding consumer behavior. By relating these dimensions with the processes of globalization, it is possible to understand that societies as such undergo certain transformations; however, this does not lead to a complete change of the original values of each culture, but rather a mixture of the indigenous and the external.

**Figure 1**  
*Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in China*



*Note.* The figure shows the corresponding values of each of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory in Chinese culture: power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), and long-term orientation (LTO). From: International Business Center (2007). Retrieved from: [https://internationalbusinesscenter.org/geert-hofstede/hofstede\\_china.shtml](https://internationalbusinesscenter.org/geert-hofstede/hofstede_china.shtml)

The study reveals the cultural impact China has had, which is the increase in materialism. Whether this is due to genuine needs or insecurities among consumers, it can be influenced by factors such as cultural, economic, or personal values. When discussing how people make decisions, it can be said that they are influenced by broader groups, which reflects the influence of globalization, which is also present in the ideologies that become established within smaller groups. The analysis also demonstrates how certain dimensions proposed by Hofstede have changed over time, such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity. This demonstrates that culture is not static and influences consumers (Afzal et al., 2019).

The Chinese market has shown a significant shift in the consumption of certain products, such as alcohol (cocktails, beers, and wine), plant-based items, beverages like coffee or tea, and an increase in demand for meats, fish, poultry, and healthy snacks, which are driven by two reasons: 1. The taste of the products, and 2. The nutritional properties of certain foods. This creates a favorable outlook for imports, as consumers are open to trying new flavors and foods (PRO ECUADOR, 2024). If we turn to the Ecuadorian market, it presents an opportunity to introduce new products into a completely different market, it presents an opportunity to introduce new products into a completely different market, which is part of a process of cultural and commercial globalization.

#### **1.1.10 Changes in Ecuadorian Society and Its Consumption Habits: The Cultural Impact of the Chinese Community in Ecuador from a Hofstede Theory Perspective.**

In a study conducted by Baquero Zuñiga et al. (2025) in the city of Quito, applied to 124 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, it was evidenced that consumer behavior in Ecuadorian society underwent significant changes starting with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in purchasing habits. These habits are influenced by different marketing campaigns for decision-making, preferences, and buying patterns. It has been demonstrated that greater affinity with the consumer leads to higher sales, reflecting a cultural shift in consumption patterns within the Ecuadorian context.

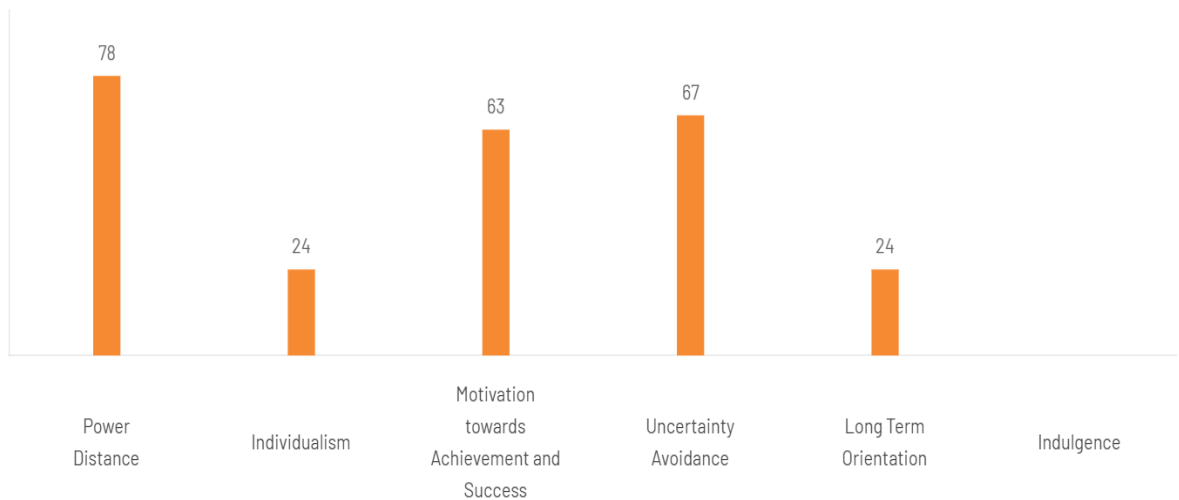
An analysis conducted on the impact of Chinese culture within Ecuador establishes that it began with migrations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, Chinese immigrants were brought in to be used as slaves. However, sometime later, Chinese migrants established roots within Ecuador. They began building their own business, which was successful due to

their trending methods, especially in rural areas. These methods involved offering credit during planting season and collecting payment during harvest season, which fostered a strong network of trust between producers and buyers, leading this approach to be adopted in various parts of the country. Even the gastronomic sphere was influenced by these migrations. Upon realizing that certain species cultivated in Ecuador were the same as those they were familiar with, people began preparing their traditional foods with a fusion of flavors, leading to the emergence of the well-known chifas, which combined elements of both national and foreign cuisine. These became particularly popular in cities such as Guayaquil and Cuenca (Trujillo Rivadeneira et al., 2025).

An interesting contribution is the speech given by Yuan Guisen, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Ecuador, who highlights the cultural cooperation between both countries, educational and cultural exchanges. These exchanges aim to strengthen the ties of each culture, which becomes a key element for reinforcing commercial economic relations (Avance, 2024).

In an analysis by the University of Peninsula of Santa Elena, Ecuador, on Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Ecuadorian society, all dimensions were considered. These demonstrated that the context of Ecuadorian culture when doing business is not based on values or behaviors established by the culture itself, but rather on those held by each of the founding members of companies. Certain indices influence this, such as economic and social power distance, individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity index, uncertainty avoidance index, indulgence/restraint index, and short-term/long-term orientation index. Although this study is based on 3 of its 6 dimensions, it is important to recognize the study in general to understand its behavior. In this analysis, the Hofstede Center website was used to describe each of the indices (Aguilar Rodríguez et al., 2018). On the website of the International Business Center (2019), in its analysis of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the most prominent dimensions highlighted are power distance, which is widely accepted by society and considered part of its cultural heritage. The avoidance of uncertainty is also emphasized as an important factor influencing how societies respond to ambiguous situations and structured environments. Lastly, individualism is low, showing a strong union and cooperativism within society.

**Figure 2**  
*Cultural Dimensions According to Hofstede*



*Note.* Cultural dimensions based on Hofstede’s model. From: Hofstede (2025). Country Comparison Tool – The Culture Factor. Retrieved from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com>.

### 1.1.11 Cultural Differences in Practice Between Ecuador and China

A study conducted by Rui Jie Peng on the Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric project, entitled “Gendered Space and Labor Control in a State-Sponsored Hydroelectric Project in Ecuador”(2022), highlights the cultural differences between China and Ecuador. Peng reports that, at the start of the project, the Chinese company Sinohydro had already planned how workers would be accommodated, both in dormitories and offices, establishing rigid boundaries based on professional status, nationality, and gender. A difference in hierarchy was noticeable between Chinese and Ecuadorian employees in the workplace: as China was the country providing the financing, its workers were located in better places, while Ecuador, as the recipient, had its employees located in less bright and less aesthetic places. In terms of distance, Chinese workers, with their very marked hierarchical space, hardly shared with others; in contrast, Ecuadorians calmly shared desks or activities, regardless of gender or position. Peng relates this to Lefebvre's theory of social space and the concepts of proxemics. The difference in relation to gender can be seen in the fact that women were assigned less comfortable places than men in the same position. In terms of flexibility, Ecuadorian workers had a little more freedom, while Chinese workers had to strictly follow the established routine.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **APPROACH TO THE THEORIES OF HOFSTEDE, HALL, AND TROMPENAARS & HAMPDEN-TURNER ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON BUSINESS**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 The Impact of Cultural Differences and Globalization on International Negotiations**

Cultural differences from an international business perspective. Daniels et al. (2013) establish that understanding culture is fundamental to creating a good business environment, as it influences the values, norms, and beliefs of a group of people who make up society within a country, and these factors are present in decision-making when negotiating. It should be noted that every culture has a certain degree of social stratification, where certain people occupy more important positions than others, and is conditioned by status, social class, and how it is managed within each society. Daniels et al. (2013) also present certain areas in which cultural differences may arise, namely: ethnic and racial groups, gender, age, and family (where a person's status depends on their individual achievements within the family).

It is therefore essential to take into account the theoretical framework of intercultural communication developed by authors such as Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, and Hampden-Turner, who analyze the dimensions and changing behavior in different cultures.

Globalization is one of the reasons why companies in recent years have sought to go into the local market, which has had an impact around the world. It can be defined as the process of exchange and integration of values, ideas, and customs worldwide, due to the increase in international trade, migration, and the development of new communication technologies. This can lead to the loss of local culture, causing them to adapt to more influential ones (Kiss, 2025). Friedman (2005) states that the world has gone through several stages of globalization; the third stage is one of the most relevant, as it was driven by technology, which helped reduce geographical barriers and connected different countries, as well as cultures around the world, causing a transformation in the way business is conducted.

However, we are currently in the fourth stage, which leans more toward digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the internet itself, making trade

more efficient and causing major changes in the world economy, positioning Asia as a major player. Likewise, this new wave of globalization seeks to raise awareness about social responsibility and cooperation, without ignoring the fact that, as something new, it still faces many challenges, such as inequality, lack of adequate regulations, cybersecurity risks, and job losses due to automation (Tang, 2024). In this way, in this way, we can see how the world is constantly changing and that culture is not static, regardless of its origin.

### **2.1.2 Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Dialogue**

It is important to consider the approach to intercultural dialogue promoted by UNESCO (2023), which states it is:

An opportunity for meaningful interaction for participants committed to global values and willing to consider different perspectives. As a form of transformative communication, it can contribute to greater acceptance of others, thus fulfilling the goal of peaceful coexistence between diverse cultures and identities.

In other words, it aims to overcome cultural barriers by fostering mutual understanding and building trust between different contexts. However, cultural dialogue should not be confused with intercultural dialogue; although they are similar terms, intercultural communication is based on the interaction of different members of cultural groups, in which each person's experiences vary according to the behaviors, language, and beliefs of each culture. While the former focuses on the form of interaction between cultures, the latter emphasizes interaction among cultures, seeking to explain, understand, and address cultural differences; therefore, it represents a deeper approach (Leeds Hurwitz, 2014).

As for the concept from a Latin American perspective, according to Walsh (2024) it is viewed from a more critical and political perspective inclined toward education; it is not based only on dialogue between cultures, but also on the way societies have been transformed by various reforms since the 1990s. In America, it is seen as a decolonization project that seeks to transform social and educational relationships.

### **2.1.3 Culture, Business, and Value Systems**

From an anthropological perspective, according to Hills (2002) compilation of Kluckhohn, original ideas, values are perceived as concepts shared within a society, which influence the behavior of its members. Human nature has different dimensions, good, bad, and mixed, meaning that values can change depending on the society in which they are

found, as they are learned through the actions of others, clarifying that mixed values are natural actions. Schwartz (2012) complements the importance of values in a business environment, establishing that values around the world differ depending on each culture. This determines whether actions are viewed favorably or not, so it is important to recognize their importance, as they are one of the main factors that influence negotiations. Schwartz establishes that values are the fundamental guide for human behavior and the organizations of each society; that is, each culture faces similar problems in different ways.

#### **2.1.4 Culture and Meaning of Guanxi**

When discussing culture, it is essential to recognize its meaning. According to UNESCO, the Declaration of Mexico (1982) defines culture as the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional traits that characterize a society. Later, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) was issued, in which the definition became broader, incorporating the importance of culture in relation to global challenges and the need to preserve it for the well-being of individuals and societies. It also establishes that the meaning is constantly changing because societies are constantly evolving (Stenou & Katérina, 2002). Geertz (1973), the idea of culture is universal and diverse; it encompasses religion, marriage, property, which can help to define what it means to be human. He states that concepts, when applied generally to encompass all cultures, can lose their meaning as such; that is why a specific meaning must be given so that there can be a certain cultural identification.

Based on the general meaning of culture, it is clear how important it is to understand cultural differences, especially in the context of international trade relations. In this case, China has what is known as guanxi; this concept originated in ancient times with Chinese merchants, who sought a mechanism to interact with each other and build trust in order to conduct transactions safely (Ho & Koh, 2012). According to Luo (1997) the word guanxi refers to the personal connections that are established in order to obtain favors for one's own benefit. In other words, interpersonal relationships are not superficial but rather involve mutual support and obligations that seek harmony in society. We apply this to the field of negotiation, we can say that the contracts that are established are formal, in which mutual trust is placed in each other.

#### **2.1.5 Key Authors and Theories/ Dimensions Addressed**

A When analyzing cultural differences around the world, various theoretical frameworks are used. In this case, we will use the most prominent theories of the following

authors: E. Hall (1966) presents proxemics, chronemics, as well as high-and low-context cultures, relational context, and hierarchy, which influence communication and forms of negotiation. For their part, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) point out dimensions such as universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. collectivism, and time orientation, with a more business-oriented and diplomatic approach. Hofstede et al. (2010) highlight power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, dimensions that allow us to identify how different cultures make decisions. This allows us to analyze how each society is structured, its interactions, and how, taken together, these dimensions allow us to identify tensions and improve cooperation between countries.

#### **2.1.5.1 Edward Hall: The Foundational Bases of Intercultural Communication**

Edward Hall (1914–2009) was an American anthropologist and a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication. He published several important works that served as a basis for academic and business research related to culture. It should be noted that these theories focus more on comparing American and French culture, as these served as examples for analysis; however, we will highlight those that will help us analyze Ecuador and China. Among them are *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) with the introduction to proxemics; *Beyond Culture* (1976), which conceptualizes high-and low-context cultures, inclined toward communication and negotiation, and, finally, *The Dance of Life*, in which chronemics was developed (Sheposh, 2025).

##### **2.1.5.1.1 Proxemics**

For Edward T. Hall, it is important to consider the role of personal space. To understand this, he wrote *The Hidden Dimension*, which lays the foundations and concepts of the subject, together with the previous research of Franz Boas. What is established in the book can be interpreted as the way in which personal space is understood and shaped in each culture through its sensory perceptions (sight, hearing, or touch), as well as other factors related to emotions, culture, relationships, and activities. It aims to demonstrate how what is correct for one culture may be the opposite for another, leading to misunderstandings in interpersonal communication (Hall, 1966).

##### **2.1.5.1.2 Chronemics**

E. Hall (1976), observed how the use of time in different cultures is changeable and can represent values and be symbolic. To this end, he created the concepts of chronemics, which refers to the nonverbal communication of each society. Hall classifies them as

monochronic, which lean toward values of punctuality, planning, and the time required to complete a task, such as a strict plan or organization that must be followed. In contrast, polychronic is more flexible; social relationships and activities that are achieved in common are prioritized.

**Table 1**  
*Monochronic and Polychronic Cultures*

<b>Monochromatic People</b>	<b>Polychromatic People</b>
They do one thing at a time, focusing on a single task.	They do several things at once and are prone to more distractions and interruptions.
They make time-based commitments (deadlines, schedules).	They consider commitments objectively to achieve them if possible
Low context.	High context.
They are committed to work	They are committed to people and human relationships.
They stick exclusively to plans, are careful not to bother others, and follow rules of privacy and consideration	They care about those who are closely related (family, friends, etc.).
Respect for private property (no borrowing).	Private property is more freely available, and borrowing is common.
They are accustomed to short-term relationships.	The relationships they establish can last a lifetime.

*Note:* This table summarizes the differences between monochromatic and polychromatic people or cultures for better understanding.  
From: Own work based on E. I. Hall & Reed Hall (1990)  
<https://teaching.up.edu/bus511/xculture/Hall%20and%20Hall%201990,%20ch1.pdf>

### 2.1.5.1.3 High and Low Context

In the low context, societies tend to be heavy and inflexible, and are conditioned to a dependence on norms (E. Hall, 1976). For a better reinterpretation of the theory, it could be said that everything seeks to be written, standardized, and regulated, in which individual achievements are above group achievements; the relationships that are established can be based on achieving objectives (Sheposh, 2025). As for the high context, it places more emphasis on the physical aspect, actions, and environment (E. Hall, 1976). Simply put, it is based on nonverbal communication and a strong emphasis on establishing relationships and social bonds (Sheposh, 2025) With these concepts clear, we can establish that China and Ecuador have a high context; on the one hand, China stands out for its culture based on the concept of guaxi, and Ecuador stands out for its communication traits and trust in the social sphere.

### 2.1.5.2. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner: Cultural Dimensions, Understanding, and Management in International Business

Fons Trompenaars (1953) is a Dutch organizational theorist and management consultant specializing in intercultural communication with a focus on understanding differences in business. Hampden-Turner, born in London in 1934, is a British researcher at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge. These two authors joined forces

to complement their ideas on cultural differences and succeeded in setting out the seven dimensions in their work, *Riding the Waves of Culture*. The first edition was published in 1993 and the latest in 1997. This work helps us understand how behavior in different cultures influences decision-making, moral dilemmas, and team management within the company. In addition, they establish that these differences should not be taken as barriers, but as an opportunity for intercultural learning (Trimiño, 2021).

#### **2.1.5.2.1 Universalism VS. Particularism**

Universalism is understood as the way in which we criticize a person for their behavior, the obligations or norms that must be met in order to be within universally accepted standards, regardless of personal relationships; in contrast, particularism is what adapts to circumstances; rules can be modified, the more personal the relationship is (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). A brief analysis shows that Ecuador and China have a greater focus on particularism, as these societies are based on establishing relationships of trust, and businesses grow according to their level of adaptation.

#### **2.1.5.2.2 Individualism Vs. Communitarianism**

Individualism, according to Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997), is considered a characteristic of modern society; it prioritizes one's own interests over those of the group; individual merits are given greater recognition and value. Communitarianism is more closely related to traditional societies (linked to communism), involves shared responsibility, and requires consensus on all matters; it seeks cooperation. Ecuador and China are collectivist societies due to their relationships of trust and cooperation.

#### **2.1.5.2.3 Time Orientation / Sequential Time vs. Synchronic Time**

In international relations, understanding time is fundamental; that is why Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) propose time orientation, in which they explain that each culture has a different perception of time, making it important for managers to coordinate activities. Cultures can be classified as sequential, when time is considered to have its own consequences; on the other hand, when events that happened in the past and are thought to happen in the future intervene with the present, it is known as synchronous. In this case, between China and Ecuador, it can be said that China has an asynchronous culture, as it adapts to change and measures consequences through the interaction of the past, present, and future. As for Ecuador, it can be said to be intermediate; its adaptability is not very rapid, and there may be a lack of evaluation of future consequences.

### **2.1.5.3 Geert Hofstede: Theory and Model of Cultural Dimensions**

Geert Hofstede (1928-2020) was a Dutch organizational psychologist and anthropologist, internationally recognized for his intercultural studies, which were carried out through a survey of several multinational companies, with a total of 100,000 employees in more than 70 countries, in order to compare their different values and behaviors prevalent among different cultures (Van Vliet, 2023). He even has a website where you can check the results of these accounts in relation to each dimension called The Culture Factor.

Hofstede's studies are based on scores from 1 to 100. Authors such as Abramson & Moran (2018) have studied these theories to provide a better explanation of how these scores are handled. In general, values from 1 to 40 indicate a low presence of the characteristic, values from 41 to 60 show moderate intensity, and values from 61 to 100 reflect a strong presence.

#### **2.1.5.3.1 The Power Distance Dimension**

This is defined as the relationship between the least powerful and most powerful members of a society, whether within institutions or organizations in a country. In other words, it is the way in which hierarchy or authority is distributed within different spheres, whether social or work-related (Hofstede et al., 2010)

On this scale, values close to 1 indicate less hierarchy, while values close to 100 reflect greater hierarchy within the country. In the comparative analysis, Ecuador scored 78 points and China 80 Hofstede et al. (2010), indicating a high distance from power, which implies that hierarchy carries great weight in international negotiations between the two countries.

#### **2.1.5.3.2 Individualism Vs. Collectivism**

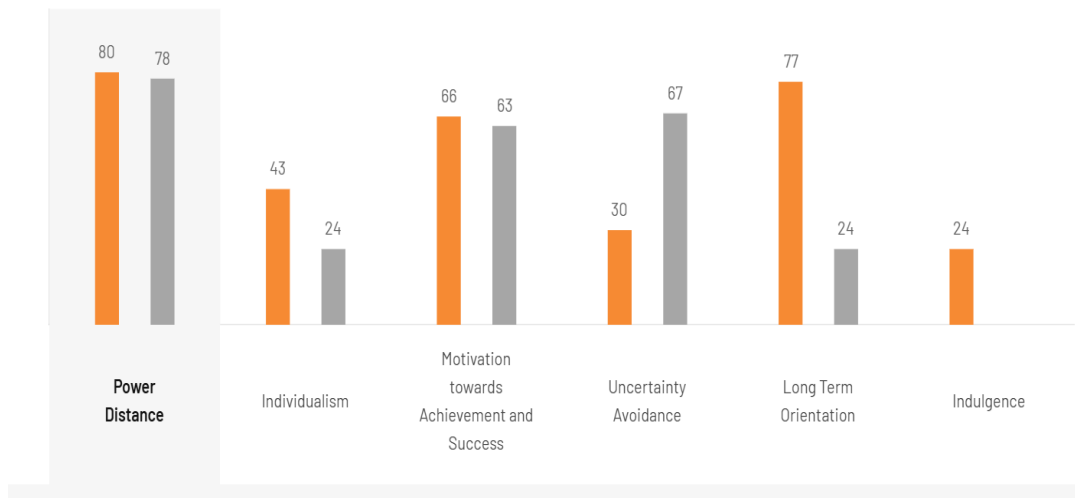
Hofstede et al. (2010) point out that individualism refers to the weak relationships that are established in certain societies, in which each person is expected to take care of themselves and their family. Collectivism, on the other hand, refers to societies that are integrated into groups from the beginning of life, protect the groups with which they establish relationships, and show strong loyalty to them. In this area, low values indicate collectivism and high values indicate individualism. According to Hofstede, Ecuador scored 8 points, and China scored 20, showing that both countries are collective societies, with Ecuador displaying more extreme collectivism.

### 2.1.5.3.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

This establishes that human beings have to face an uncertain future, that is, without knowing what will happen next; therefore, they have to learn to live with it (Hofstede et al., 2010). In order to identify a country's level of uncertainty, values close to 100 indicate high uncertainty avoidance and values close to 1 indicate low uncertainty avoidance. In this case, Ecuador scored 86 points, indicating that they prefer clear rules and planning, while China scored 30 points, indicating that there is more flexibility in confusing situations. This allows us to understand how cultures deal with risks, rules, and change, and how this influences international negotiation and cooperation.

**Figure 3**

*Comparison of Cultural Dimensions between Ecuador and China*



*Note:* The figure analyzes Hofstede's six dimensions between Ecuador and China; however, in this case, only three will be used: power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. All dimensions are presented for a better understanding of cultural differences. From: Hofstede (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com>

## 2.2 Synopsis of the Theoretical Framework

The aforementioned authors allow us to understand the concept of culture from multiple perspectives. In the field of international business, Daniels argues that it is important to recognize cultural differences, as they can be used as a strategic factor to influence decision-making within different societies. On the other hand, from a more social perspective, UNESCO emphasizes that culture refers to the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional traits that characterize a society, adding global challenges and the preservation of individuals. From a more general perspective, Geertz expands culture to include religion, marriage, and property, factors that help define human beings. As we can see, culture is

changing and can be said to develop according to the environment in which we find ourselves. In this analysis, we are talking about China, so it is essential to understand the guanxi system, which is basically the way in which Chinese society relates to each other. This is based on Confucian values and prevails to this day. The idea is that the more affinity or closeness you have with a person, the easier it is to establish relationships and create bonds that are considered fundamental for business.

It should be noted that perspectives on the concept of culture are constantly changing due to globalization, that is, changes within society caused by various factors such as migration and the development of new communication technologies, which lead to a mix of cultures around the world. There are different stages, and we are currently in the fourth stage, which refers to digital technologies and everything related to artificial intelligence.

It is important to consider how different societies communicate with each other, which is why understanding cultural dialogue and intercultural dialogue is so important. Although they may seem similar, they are not the same. On the one hand, cultural dialogue encompasses the relationship within a culture or similar cultures that may exist within the same country, sharing values and traditions. On the other hand, intercultural dialogue refers to the relationship between different cultures. It is broader and, for a greater understanding, involves several countries. There is a greater cultural difference, and it is essential to understand this in order to establish successful business relationships.

Regarding the values that each Hills culture expresses about Kluckhohn's ideas, which are perceived as conceptions shared by a society, which can be good, bad, or mixed, Schwartz complements these with values inclined toward business, since each is interpreted with those with whom people relate. In this way, certain actions are considered positive or negative, adding that values are the way in which societies relate, make decisions, and solve problems.

For a greater understanding of culture and its relationship to negotiations, the study focuses on three key authors who help us understand social, organizational, and commercial dynamics. The first author, Edward Hall, an anthropologist specializing in the area of intercultural communication, helps us understand the communication patterns of different cultures with his three major theoretical contributions: proxemics, chronemics, and high and low context. These tools are key to interpreting how different societies operate and facilitating negotiation processes with an understanding of this.

On the other hand, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner contribute an organizational perspective; to this end, they propose seven dimensions, of which the study covers three: universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, and time orientation. As this is directly related to negotiations, it helps to better understand business behavior.

Finally, Geert Hofstede takes a social approach, leaning towards the values of each society, and establishes six dimensions, three of which are covered in the research: power dimension, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions are important for explaining cultural differences in consumption habits and proposing negotiation strategies based on them, in this case between Ecuador and China. An important guide for this is the graphs found on Hofstede's website, presented in the theoretical framework, which explain the similarities and differences between the countries under analysis.

The authors mentioned in the theoretical framework facilitate the understanding of the different cultural aspects of each country under analysis. They also help to fill in the gaps in cultural understanding and the relationship between Ecuador and China, which is fundamental since China is Ecuador's main strategic partner.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this research is qualitative in nature, which allows for a better understanding of the subject matter. It is based on an interpretive and naturalistic process that allows for the implementation of different points of view within the same case (Denzin, 1994). To complement this method, Sautu et al. (2005) establish that the qualitative approach facilitates the understanding of a social reality through different perceptions and experiences of the different actors related to the topic, in order to achieve a better understanding of it.

Therefore, the primary method is based on a bibliographic and documentary review, which contains analyses of scientific articles, institutional reports, and statements from international organizations. The research is hermeneutic in nature, as it aids in a deep interpretation of cultural differences (Aguilar, 2004), which allowed for a well-founded and supported study, as it seeks to analyze and understand cultural differences and how they intervene in negotiation from the perspective of theoretical authors who explain their influence, leaning toward the countries under analysis, Ecuador and China.

The scope of the study is exploratory and descriptive because it seeks to define the cultural characteristics that influence trade or cooperation ties, as this is a topic that needs to be addressed more thoroughly and is of general interest, given that China is Ecuador's main trading partner.

To complement the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with experts on the subject of negotiations with China. The questions are open-ended and semi-structured to obtain qualitative information that will facilitate analysis. For Sautu et al. (2005), interviews are key because they help to gain an in-depth understanding of the different perspectives of social actors and provide a better interpretation, as their objective is to obtain, recover, and record people's experiences. At the same time, they allow the researcher to evaluate the areas necessary for the study in a flexible and personalized manner.

To strengthen the research, methodological triangulation is applied, allowing for a deeper understanding and stronger validity through the use of different methods, empirical materials, interpretations from multiple perspectives, and expert observers in the research field. For this analysis, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and the results derived from the information obtained will be combined (Denzin, 1994).

### 3.1. Participants

The selection of interview participants is based on their level of knowledge and experience within the field. This allows the research to address potential gaps in the understanding of each culture, which is essential for gaining a better understanding of how communication and relationships have been established from the different perspectives of each culture, in this case, between Ecuador and China.

**Table 2**  
*Participant Information*

Name of Participants	Professional Profile	Area of Expertise	Relevance to the Study	Years of Experience
Mario Brazzero Oña	Anthropologist and cultural researcher	Cultural anthropology and ethnographic studies	Provides theoretical and analytical contributions on culture, identity, and sociocultural dynamics.	20 years
Antonio Torres Dávila	Foreign trade expert	Academic and researcher in international trade	Provides expertise in international trade, regional integration, and export competitiveness.	16 years
Nicole Cabrera	Foreign trade expert	Import and export specialist, master's degree in supply chain and logistics	Provides expertise in import and export management and foreign trade operations.	5 years
María Cristina Gárate	Foreign trade expert	Import specialist with experience in international negotiation and sales	Provides in-depth insight into how negotiations are conducted with Chinese companies that have established long-term relationships.	12 years
Daniela Gálvez	Intern	International studies student	Direct interaction with individuals from Chinese culture during their internship.	-
Aire Zaou Yao	Sales manager	Sales and international business expert	Commercial management and client relations.	12 years
InstrumentsCha Ching	Restaurant owner	Restaurant management and customer service	How to adapt to other cultures and perspectives on the behavior of Chinese culture.	8 years

The aim is for the participants' contributions to enrich the research through their diverse experiences, thereby highlighting certain similarities or differences across cultures.

### 3.2. Instruments

The present study is conducted thru qualitative methods, with the aim of analyzing how culture influences communication when establishing negotiations.

For an initial analysis, a documentary review is conducted with academic and scientific articles related to culture, its behavior, international trade, and the current relations between Ecuador and China; it is complemented by studies conducted by foundational authors such as Edward Hall, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, and Geert Hofstede, which established insights on culture in the international sphere and how they relate within societies.

Data collection is carried out through semi-structured interviews with experts on the subject: an anthropologist, trade experts, an intern, and individuals from Chinese culture. This method allows for obtaining various points of view, experiences, and meanings from each of the interviewees to better interpret how people from different cultures (Sautu et al., 2005).

Each thematic block of the interview aims to delve much deeper into those concepts that are understood theoretically and to analyze whether they are fulfilled or not in practice. It aids in the analysis to observe cultural areas, communication methods, how studies on these relate or are carried out in practice, whether a cultural adaptation is presented to reach an agreement, or how the differences that arise influence practice. The thematic axes have been tailored according to the particular characteristics of each interviewee's profile.

The interview guide was structured around five thematic axes that help achieve the research objectives.

**Table 3**  
*General Research Themes*

<b>Thematic Axis</b>	<b>Purpose of the Axis</b>	<b>Example Questions</b>
Concept of Culture	To understand participants' perceptions and interpretations of culture.	How does culture influence people's behavior? What does culture mean to you?
Cultural Differences	To identify differences in perceptions between Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures.	What cultural differences have you observed between Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures?
Intercultural Interaction	To understand participants' experiences in intercultural contexts	Have you experienced any cultural misunderstandings?
Business Context	To examine cultural differences in international business.	¿Do you think culture influences business negotiations?
Intercultural Adaptation	To identify how cultures adapt in order to coexist and negotiate effectively.	Have you adopted any aspects of Chinese culture in your daily life? Have you adopted any aspects of Ecuadorian culture in your daily life? Have there been adaptation processes during negotiations?

Each interviewee was presented with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the objective of the research, and that the interview would be used for academic purposes. The form also guaranteed the confidentiality of the responses and that participation was entirely voluntary.

Finally, methodological triangulation was applied to the information obtained from both the document review and the interviews to conduct an in-depth analysis, gain a greater understanding, and fill in any academic gaps that may be found when discussing culture in negotiations. In this way, in accordance with what Denzin (1994) establish regarding triangulation, it is a method that allows us to gain a greater understanding from different

perspectives in order to reach a conclusion on the subject, with greater depth and a correct interpretation.

### **3.3 Procedure**

To explain the procedure applied to conduct the analysis, it is presented in stages. In this way, a better understanding of the topic and the fulfillment of the proposed objectives are achieved.

#### **Phase 1. Literature Review**

The theoretical review is considered the first phase because it helps establish foundational concepts, together with contributions from experts in the field of culture who facilitate the understanding of how societies interact according to the cultural context in which they are situated, particularly regarding the behaviors that emerge in the relationship between Ecuador and China.

#### **Phase 2. Interview Design**

In this phase, the theoretical research previously conducted was used as a basis to develop semi-structured questions for the interview participants from different academic and professional fields. The objective is to analyze how culture is managed in practice, which allows for the identification of similarities and differences between cultures, as well as the examination of whether the theoretical framework supports the arguments proposed by the key authors.

#### **Phase 3. Conducting the Interviews.**

The profiles selected for the interviews include: anthropologists, foreign trade experts, international studies interns, and individuals connected to Chinese culture. Before conducting the interviews, permission was requested through an informed consent form, which was accepted and signed by each participant. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

#### **Phase 4. Data Analysis.**

In the final phase, triangulation is applied, which consists of combining information from the theoretical framework and the interviews in order to obtain a clearer perspective on how communication is carried out between two different cultures. In addition, an in-depth analysis is conducted to examine whether the theoretical approaches proposed by the key authors, as well as previous studies on each culture, are reflected in practice.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OBTAINED ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON NEGOTIATIONS IN EACH COUNTRY**

This section presents the main findings obtained from the interviews conducted with an anthropologist, foreign trade experts, an intern, and members of the Chinese community.

### **4.1 Interview 1. Professor, Anthropologist. Mario Brazzero Oña**

#### **4.1.1 Profile**

The anthropologist Mario Brazzero Oña is an academic lecturer at the Universidad del Azuay, specializing in the field of anthropology. He has a background in social sciences and experience in the analysis of cultural processes, as well as social and intercultural dynamics.

His academic and professional career has focused on the study of culture as a system of meanings, practices, and forms of interpretation that influence communication and social relationships. Through his work as a lecturer and researcher, he has addressed topics related to identity, diversity, intercultural relations, and social construction. This perspective makes his contribution particularly relevant to the analysis, as it helps to understand cultural differences and the challenges that may arise in communication between different social groups.

The participation of Mario Brazzero Oña is relevant to this research, as it provides a theoretical and analytical perspective that helps to understand how different cultural elements function and how they influence practices from an anthropological point of view.

#### **4.1.2 Narrative**

The interview with the anthropologist Mario Brazzero Oña helps to understand how broad the concept of culture can be. He points out that there is no single or specific definition: “The term culture is too broad; there is no unanimity.” However, he explains that culture can be understood as “an environment where you build your life” and that it “constantly shapes us.” This perspective is fundamental for the research, as it helps explain that negotiation styles are not solely individual decisions, but are also influenced by culture, interpretations, and the forms of communication that may emerge (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Regarding communication, the interviewee draws on the ideas of Clifford Geertz to explain that human beings operate within symbolic systems. Mario Brazzero Oña complements this perspective by stating that society is based on shared symbolic codes. He argues that human beings operate through “symbolic thinking” and a “series of symbolic codes to communicate.” He emphasizes that communication is not limited only by language, but also by the system of meanings embedded in the actions carried out within each culture. This is key to the analysis, since even when a common language for dialogue exists—such as English—differences may still arise in the interpretation of gestures, silences, hierarchies, or ways of expressing ideas (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

He also mentions that in Asian contexts, greetings are “quite ritualized” and involve limited physical contact. He emphasizes the presence of strongly marked hierarchies, where it is difficult to find equal treatment across all levels of society, which can become a distinctive factor in negotiation processes or decision-making, particularly regarding formal ranks. In contrast, when referring to the Ecuadorian context, he draws on the ideas of Bolívar Echeverría and his characterization of Latin American societies as “baroque.” Building on this idea, he explains that “we communicate in many ways” and refers to “the body of communication,” emphasizing physical closeness, contact, and facial expressions as central elements in Ecuadorian interaction. Through these elements, relationships of trust can be established, which may facilitate future interactions or negotiations (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Finally, it establishes the concept of acculturation, stating that “you cannot integrate if you do not adapt.” That is to say, anyone who interacts in a different social context must acquire certain codes of behavior to avoid exclusion and be accepted within that society. What is key to understand is that it demonstrates that adaptation is important both for achieving coexistence in a society and for establishing business, in this case between Ecuador and China, which have different cultures and can be affected by the same, showing that human beings are adaptable and the benefit is for both parties (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

#### **4.1.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Culture can determine the way of negotiating; it is influenced not only by the economic aspect but also by the cultural structures that affect decision-making.

- b) Intercultural communication is related to shared symbolic codes; even with the same language, differences are still present. Intercultural communication is related to shared symbolic codes; even with the same language, differences are present.
- c) The communication style between cultures is changing; in the Asian context, body language is almost non-existent, while in Latin America, it is very common.
- d) Cultural adaptation is key to being able to relate correctly with others; the goal is to seek acceptance in the society we live in and to fit within what is considered correct for it.

#### 4.1.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 4**

*Results of Thematic Areas by Anthropologist Mario Brazzero Oña*

Thematic Axis	Interpretative Description	Interviewee's Contributions
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	M. Brazzero explains that culture is a construction created by human beings that changes over time and influences societies in different ways, including how people think, act, and relate to one another.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	M. Brazzero mentions that in Asian contexts hierarchies are strongly marked, physical contact is limited, and respect plays an essential role in social interactions.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	The interviewee explains that communication is conditioned by a series of codes that enable a deeper understanding among members of society, highlighting the complexity of interactions between different cultures.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	M. Brazzero highlights the formality that may exist even in a simple greeting, which can vary from one culture to another. This aspect is essential for understanding how different cultures operate and how relationships of trust can be established during negotiation processes.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	M. Brazzero states that adapting to the culture in which a person finds themselves is key for successful integration into society, since what is acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another.

#### 4.1.5 Analysis

The interview with M. Brazzero Oña allows us to understand that culture should not be seen as a static set of traditions, but as a constant social construction that influences the way members of a society perceive the world and relate to it. By stating that culture is an environment where each person creates their life through decision-making, it refers to the idea that individuals are constantly constructing themselves. It shows that behaviors in negotiation contexts are not spontaneous, but rather respond to symbolic structures (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

His contribution allows us to recognize that the cultural differences between Ecuador and China are not merely superficial factors, but something much deeper that is related to the value systems dependent on each culture. The interviewee emphasizes that communication depends on "a series of shared codes." What is key to understanding is that misunderstandings in communication do not only arise from not sharing the same language, but are much deeper, inclined toward the cultural interpretations of each country, to factors such as hierarchy, respect, time, and formality (M. Brazzero Oña, personal communication, February 20, 2026). Likewise, establishing that adaptation between cultures is key to finding a place in the society in which they find themselves, if we tilt this perspective toward negotiation, it is interpreted that not only economic exchanges occur, but also cultural exchanges along with the values of each society, with which a bond is established.

## **4.2 Interview 2. Professor Antonio Torres Dávila, P.E.**

### **4.2.1 Profile**

Antonio Torres Dávila is a professor and researcher at the University of Azuay, with a master's degree in business administration specializing in international business. His academic trajectory focuses on competitiveness, foreign trade, regional integration, and business internationalization, with extensive experience in the Chinese market and various publications in the field of international trade.

His contribution is relevant to this research due to his direct experience in international negotiations, especially in the Chinese market, as well as his specialized training in international trade. His testimony provides a practical insight into how negotiations are handled and the cultural differences or clashes that may arise in the countries under analysis.

The interview addresses the influence of culture on international negotiations and emphasizes the cultural, linguistic, and operational difficulties between Ecuadorian and Chinese businesspeople. The interviewee highlights that misunderstandings mainly arise from different cultural patterns, communication styles, and ways of establishing business agreements. The importance of intercultural adaptation, constant information verification, and understanding the ideas that are established to achieve a successful negotiation is also emphasized.

#### 4.2.2 Narrative

Antonio Torres Dávila suggests that "culture completely influences negotiations," as it determines "the way of seeing and understanding things." From his experience, he establishes that cultural differences are not limited to language alone, but also to the cultural interpretation of expressions and behaviors (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

Regarding communication, he points out that, in negotiations, people do not always speak the same language, as in Ecuador and China, there can be misunderstandings since there is no direct translation. Therefore, in most cases, a third language is sought to communicate correctly between the parties, which is commonly English. Therefore, he states that when conveying an idea, it becomes extremely difficult, as a triple translation is required; the ideas are translated from Spanish to English and then to Chinese. One of the most notable points shared by the interviewee is that "the Chinese, when negotiating, say yes to everything," which can cause future conflicts since it is not clear whether the message is truly understood. A clear example provided by the interviewee is a situation with shoe sizes; here, a size 34 is considered, which in China can be a size 40, and the Chinese, not understanding this reference, provide different sizes. The same goes for colors; since there is no direct translation for some of them, they also present future conflicts. Therefore, it is crucial to "ask more or as necessary to confirm that the message was understood." Regarding Ecuadorian culture, the phrase "we'll see" can be misinterpreted, as for us it signifies a future action; however, for Chinese culture, it can be taken as an action that will be forgotten. We must also consider the differences when it comes to expressing emotions. Chinese culture is characterized by being very neutral and not revealing what they are truly feeling, so it is not known whether they agree or disagree with the topic of conversation; in contrast, Ecuadorian culture is very expressive, "which helps us facilitate communication" (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

Regarding the commercial dynamics, it is mentioned that for many Chinese suppliers, "the deal is finalized when the goods are on board." If there is no clear authorization, the product can be shipped without definitive confirmation, which causes conflicts. This provided a key experience for understanding this, where he traveled to China to a fair in search of suppliers; upon finding a promising supplier, they went to visit the factory, and he pointed out that "at the fair everything appears polished." They realized that the conditions in which the chosen factory operated were not the most suitable, so they had to halt the

negotiation and look for a new one (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

The interviewee highlights that Chinese business culture has evolved over time and has gained greater commercial strength. In the past, Latin American entrepreneurs had to fully adapt to them, whereas nowadays they have adopted them. To us (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

#### **4.2.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Culture directly influences the interpretation of business agreements. Culture directly influences the interpretation of trade agreements.
- b) The "yes" in Chinese culture does not always mean understanding or acceptance of the proposed idea. The "yes" in Chinese culture does not always mean understanding or acceptance of the proposed idea.
- c) Indirect communication and language differences can lead to technical misunderstandings. Indirect communication and idiomatic differences can lead to technical misunderstandings.
- d) For Chinese suppliers, it is essential that the goods are shipped to consider the negotiation closed. For Chinese suppliers, it is essential that the goods are shipped to consider the negotiation closed.
- e) The Chinese culture has evolved and adapted to Latin American markets. Chinese culture has evolved and has managed to adapt to Latin American markets.

## 4.2.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 5**

*Results of the Thematic Areas for Engineer Antonio Torres Dávila*

Thematic Axis	Interpretative Description	Interviewee's Contributions
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	A. Torres Dávila suggests that culture is a way of interpreting reality and that it shapes communication and behavior in business contexts
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	For the interviewee, the interpretation of language use is one of the major differences; how a “yes” is understood across different cultures, as well as facial expressions, also creates significant distinctions.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	The interviewee points out that the need for translation, continuous feedback, and verification of proper understanding is key to avoiding future conflicts.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	A. Torres Dávila states that, in business practice, one of the differences lies in the concept of closing a negotiation. For Chinese merchants, a shipment is often considered a successful closing, whereas for Ecuadorians, success is marked by the signing of a formal agreement.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	The interviewee emphasizes the importance of asking, confirming, and re-asking to ensure that the intended idea is clear, since each culture has its own interpretation of certain matters—for example, shoe sizes or colors needed for production.

## 4.2.5 Analysis

The interview conducted with Antonio Torres Dávila highlights that cultural differences between Ecuador and China can be quite profound, particularly in terms of communication. He considers communication to be the main point of tension, as a single word can have multiple interpretations depending on the context. As the interviewee illustrates, the word “yes” does not necessarily indicate understanding or acceptance of a definitive agreement, which underscores that comprehension of communication within each culture is essential to avoid future conflicts (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

The conclusion of negotiations depends on several factors, especially on what each culture considers the end of a fruitful negotiation, as they are marked by different cultural patterns that influence decision-making.

Regarding adaptability, he points out that it is a dynamic process. In the past, it was the Latin American culture that had to adapt to Chinese culture in order to establish strong ties and long-term negotiations. However, over time, the opposite has occurred: China has

had to adapt to Latin American culture, demonstrating how adaptability has allowed for international openness, making cultures flexible for mutual benefit (A. Torres Dávila, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

### **4.3 Interview 3. Foreign Trade Expert, M.Sc. Nicole Cabrera**

#### **4.3.1 Profile**

Nicole Cabrera is a master's degree holder and an expert in foreign trade, graduated from the International Studies program with a bilingual mention. She has extensive experience in import processes from China, negotiation with Asian suppliers, and logistical and operational management. His professional career is based on advising companies in the search for suppliers, reviewing proformas, payment terms, and quality control. Additionally, he gives talks on import processes and international negotiation.

Nicole Cabrera holds a master's degree in supply chain and logistics, is an expert in foreign trade, and graduated with a bilingual mention in International Studies. She has extensive experience in import processes from China, negotiation with Asian suppliers, and logistical and operational management. Her professional career is based on advising companies in the search for suppliers, reviewing proformas, payment terms, and quality control. Additionally, she gives talks on import processes and international negotiation.

Her participation in the research is of utmost relevance due to his direct experience in negotiations with Chinese suppliers, which allows for a deep analysis and the presentation of a perspective on the cultural differences that arise in the countries under analysis in the practical, operational, and business spheres.

The interview highlights the cultural differences between Ecuador and China, specifically how these differences influence decision-making during commercial negotiations, with the main point being the immediacy with which Chinese culture seeks to close negotiations, the fulfillment of established agreements, and agreed-upon platforms. Likewise, factors such as the time difference, the impact of Chinese holidays and festivals, as well as the interpretation of the agreements made, are highlighted.

#### **4.3.2 Narrative**

The M.Sc. Nicole Cabrera states that culture is "100%" in negotiations, especially with China, noting that cultural differences are not only present in language but also in the way

agreements established in the negotiation are interpreted (N. Cabrera, personal communication, February 23, 2026).

One of the main differences that the interviewee was able to identify is the level of informality that Ecuadorians have compared to the immediacy of the Chinese, as for Ecuadorian culture, "it is very common to have a deadline or to take time to conduct a complete analysis" of the activity or purchase to be made. However, in Chinese culture, everything is sought to be done quickly and formally; "they prefer to have a clear decision-making date", and they are not accustomed to having deadlines for a thorough analysis. She also highlights that: "When you negotiate with the Chinese and ask for a quote today, they already want to move forward and close the deal by tomorrow" (N. Cabrera, personal communication, February 23, 2026).

Regarding the area of communication, she explains that there can be several misunderstandings since it is common for Ecuadorians to ask for discounts on certain products, and the Chinese, wanting to close the deal, agree to change the prices; however, the Ecuadorians do not realize that they are compromising the quality of the product. "If you want to pay 10 dollars for a product, they will give you what costs 10, which compromises the quality." At the same time, she emphasizes the importance of written commitment: "The written word is law"; everything proposed in a meeting must be put in writing and must be followed exactly as explained (N. Cabrera, business knowledge, February 23, 2026).

With respect to work, the interviewee emphasizes that commemorative holidays are very important and can be extremely long. "China literally shuts down; you can't even go shopping," she says. Holidays like the New Year usually last two weeks and are among the most special, unlike in Ecuador, where there are frequent holidays, but they are short, and most companies and commercial places operate as usual (N. Cabrera, business knowledge, February 23, 2026).

N. Cabrera, having worked with Chinese culture for several years, has managed to adapt certain cultural aspects, such as absolute sincerity, as for them, sincerity is essential because everything is linked to it, along with cordiality, as it is the foundation for establishing a good trusting relationship with Chinese culture (N. Cabrera, business knowledge, February 23, 2026).

#### **4.3.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Chinese culture prioritizes clarity and immediate response in negotiation.

- b) The importance of interpreting established agreements in negotiation.
- c) Seeking price reductions does not always indicate that the quality will be the same as the initial price.
- d) Sincerity, accuracy, and cordiality are important for building trust.

#### 4.3.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 6**

*Key Findings from the Thematic Areas presented to Foreign Trade Expert Nicole Cabrera*

Thematic Axis	Interpretative Description	Interviewee's Contributions
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	For Nicole Cabrera, understanding culture is of utmost importance because it determines the success of a negotiation, as cultural differences are not limited to language but also affect interpretation.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	The main differences noted by the interviewee include immediacy, temporal flexibility, contextual interpretation, quality proportional to price, and Latin-style bargaining.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	The interviewee states that direct, clear, and explanatory communication is required, as it helps prevent misunderstandings between suppliers. Communicative comprehension is a key element that contributes to improving business relationships.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	N. Cabrera states that, based on her commercial experience, a negotiation does not end with a verbal agreement but must be formalized and carried out with strict compliance.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	The interviewee clarifies that cultural adaptation is key to achieving a clear understanding. She emphasizes that for successful negotiations, greater frankness and punctuality must be developed to avoid conflicts.

#### 4.3.5 Analysis

The interview highlights the cultural differences that arise when negotiating between Ecuador and China, clarifying that it is not only based on the communicative difference of the language but also on the interpretation that is reached when conducting a negotiation. Chinese culture is characterized by the rigidity with which they conduct negotiations, the importance of literalness, timing, and planning, which contrasts with the flexibility and extension given to finalize an agreement in Ecuadorian culture.

Moreover, it is presented that the conflicts that may arise are not due to a lack of interest in understanding the other culture, but rather to the difficulty of comprehending the behavior of the other culture regarding the importance of order, the literalness of what was agreed upon, hierarchies that may arise, and punctuality. One of the factors that can be most

highlighted is the time difference, the intensity of the workdays, and the planning during special festivities.

With this, it can be understood that negotiating with China requires certain preparation and willingness to establish a fruitful relationship and negotiation, as the assumed commitment must be taken on with utmost responsibility, since failure to do so can cause distrust.

#### **4.4 Interview 4. Foreign Trade Expert, M.Sc. María Cristina Gárate**

##### **4.4.1 Profile**

María Cristina Gárate holds a Master's degree in International Trade. She is currently working in the imports and sales department at Indurama, a company specializing in home appliances that conducts negotiations with China. She has over ten years of experience in international procurement management, negotiation with Asian suppliers, and business relations.

Throughout her career, she has participated in multiple import processes and quality verification of imported products. Her experience provides the study with a deeper perspective on cultural differences in negotiation, both from an operational and strategic standpoint, and illustrates the evolution that can occur within corporate culture when a company has had Chinese suppliers as its main business partners for many years.

The interview highlights a business-oriented perspective focused on the evolution of the Chinese market and its positioning in production, innovation, and technology. Unlike other experiences that point to evident cultural differences, this case shows the adaptation of Chinese suppliers to Ecuadorian culture and vice versa. This has been possible due to the long-standing relationship between the two parties, resulting in a stable commercial relationship with minimal differences during negotiations.

##### **4.4.2 Narrative**

The interviewee, María Cristina Gárate, considers that culture has a strong influence on international business. Based on her experience in the imports and sales area, she emphasizes that the Chinese market has evolved significantly and “provides great support to the Ecuadorian market with quality, innovation, and productive capacity, thereby establishing itself as a main business partner” (M. Cristina Gárate, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

Regarding the differences between Ecuador and China, she notes that one of the aspects that drew her attention the most is the “availability and speed of service from the Chinese,” as they can be considered workaholic, always available for contact; although they respect holidays, most continue to work consistently. In contrast, in Ecuador, negotiators show great availability; however, not with the same “rigidity,” as they are more flexible. Concerning holidays, Ecuador has a greater number of public holidays; however, activities are not completely halted as they are in China (M. Cristina Gárate, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

It is also emphasized that, when negotiating prices, unlike in other countries, it is very important to communicate clearly and express what is being sought. It is crucial to document everything and maintain formality in negotiations with clear breakdowns, as misunderstandings can arise without this level of formality. She points out that “Ecuadorian culture commonly seeks discounts and expects the same product quality”; however, in the Chinese culture, this is not the case, as “lowering prices also compromises product quality.” Without a clear understanding of this, conflicts between negotiators may occur (M. Cristina Gárate, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

In terms of adaptability, the interviewee stated that, personally, she has not directly observed a change in the way work is conducted, “but this may be because they have been working with the same suppliers for years, so a trust-based relationship already exists.” Nevertheless, she explains that reaching this point required previous adjustments from the negotiators: “the Ecuadorian side adapted more formal processes and improved their communication for better interpretation” of the needed products, and the “Chinese culture adapted with greater flexibility regarding schedules, as the Ecuadorian work pace is slower than that of the Chinese” (M. Cristina Gárate, personal communication, February 19, 2026).

#### **4.4.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Culture has a significant influence in the commercial sphere, particularly in the organization of work practices.
- b) Efficiency and speed are essential when negotiating with the Chinese market.
- c) Formality and clarification of discussion points during meetings are key for the Chinese.
- d) The Chinese market has achieved a certain level of adaptability to facilitate long-term negotiations.

#### 4.4.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 7**

*Key Takeaways from the Interview with Foreign Trade Expert María Cristina Gárate*

<b>Thematic Axis</b>	<b>Interpretative Description</b>	<b>Interviewee's Contributions</b>
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	The interviewee states that culture is a factor that influences the way international business is conducted. Several elements can be observed, such as organization, formality, and the way commercial agreements are structured.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	M. Gárate points out that the main differences have been the work pace, availability, and flexibility when negotiating and setting prices. She emphasizes that offering lower prices to the Chinese market entails lower quality.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	According to M. Gárate, the clarity and detail of agreements must be documented in writing and properly recorded, which is essential to prevent misunderstandings.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	M. Gárate highlights the development of Chinese factories, their productivity, and constant innovation as a key pillar for maintaining a strategic partnership. Negotiations are not only related to price but also to quality, technical aspects, and quantity.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	The interviewee states that evolution and adaptation are crucial for establishing closer business relationships. She explains that the Chinese market, particularly in her area of work, has adapted just as the Ecuadorian side has, which has been fruitful for the company.

#### 4.4.5 Analysis

The interview provides a deeper perspective on Chinese culture in the context of business. While other experiences clearly highlight cultural differences between Ecuador and China, in this case, these differences are not as noticeable. This is mainly because Indurama, as a large company that maintains long-standing commercial relationships with the same suppliers in China, has already adapted to each other's working methods. It is important to note that this perspective is based on the imports sector; depending on the industry, experiences may vary.

The differences that stand out most in a general comparison between the two cultures are time adaptation and formality in negotiations. However, as previously mentioned, after working for many years with the same individuals and companies, these factors have become routine and are no longer perceived as something new within the work environment.

On the other hand, adaptation to the context in which each negotiator operates can be considered key to establishing strong and lasting relationships. In this way, it becomes possible to overcome cultural barriers that go beyond language.

## **4.5 Interview 5. Intern in International Trade, Daniela Gálvez**

### **4.5.1 Profile**

Daniela Gálvez is a student in the International Studies program and is currently completing her pre-professional internship at Indurama, a company dedicated to the commercialization of home appliances and that maintains commercial relations with the Chinese market.

Her direct experience in the business environment, as well as her interaction with Chinese entrepreneurs and negotiations with several Asian countries, provides a broad and insightful perspective on how work is carried out between two different cultural teams.

The interview reflects her experience working as an intern with Chinese businesspeople, where she was able to observe several differences in communication, both verbal and non-verbal, the level of formality present in Chinese culture compared to Ecuadorian culture, and the strictness in complying with established agreements. At the same time, certain processes of cultural adaptation were identified, which allowed for better interaction between the two cultures analyzed.

### **4.5.2 Narrative**

Daniela Gálvez explained that having a general understanding of culture is extremely important, especially in the field of International Studies. She expressed that from the moment she began working with individuals from the Chinese culture, she realized that “formality is a very important aspect,” since everything is recorded through email and, whenever a meeting takes place, a formal record is produced outlining the points to be discussed.

One of the aspects that caught her attention the most was emotional neutrality. She stated that “their faces always carry an absolutely neutral expression, making it very difficult to interpret their thoughts,” which can make it challenging to determine whether there is disagreement during a negotiation (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Regarding trust, she highlights that it must be built progressively and that “a small mistake can seriously affect the relationship of trust.” She also mentions a strong sense of honor, where everything must be fulfilled “exactly as established from the beginning,” showing a certain discomfort when sudden changes occur (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

The interviewee expressed that after spending time with individuals from Chinese culture, she gradually adopted certain cultural aspects from them. Although this is not directly related to business practices, it influenced some aspects of her daily life. One example is removing shoes when entering the house, a habit she adopted due to the perception of hygiene present in Chinese culture (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026). Finally, she states that despite the cultural differences on both sides, “they have managed to adapt, and we have also learned to adapt to them, seeking to do things in a more appropriate and transparent manner” (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

### 4.5.3 Preliminary Findings

- a) Chinese business culture is characterized by a high level of formality.
- b) A distinctive feature of Chinese culture is the tendency toward neutral facial expressions, which can make emotional interpretation more complex.
- c) Trust plays a crucial role in Chinese culture, and misunderstandings can significantly affect it.
- d) Cultural adaptation occurs mutually between the Ecuadorian and Chinese teams.

### 4.5.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 8**

*Key Takeaways from the Interview with Intern Daniela Gálvez*

Thematic Axis	Interpretative Description	Interviewee's Contributions
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	The interviewee understands culture as something dynamic and essential to comprehend, as it is based on different values such as respect, honor, and formality.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	She emphasizes the importance of non-verbal communication, particularly facial expressions, the management of agreements, and the existence of clear norms that may or may not be adaptable depending on the context.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	Through her interaction with Chinese culture, the interviewee was able to observe the importance of building trust and managing codes of respect in order to achieve an appropriate cultural adaptation between both sides.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	In practice, she highlights that during negotiations or important meetings, formalization through meeting minutes, emails, and the proper fulfillment of agreements is extremely important.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	Finally, the interviewee states that both Ecuadorian and Chinese teams have managed to adapt to one another, allowing them to work in a collective and productive manner.

#### **4.5.5 Analysis**

The interview with Daniela Gálvez shows that the cultural differences between Ecuador and China are evident, not only at the verbal level due to language barriers, but also in non-verbal communication. In this regard, the neutral expressiveness commonly observed in Chinese culture contrasts with Ecuadorian culture, where individuals tend to be more expressive and flexible, which can facilitate negotiation processes compared to the more reserved communication style found in Chinese culture (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Likewise, it is important to highlight the strong sense of honor and the importance placed on following agreements exactly as they were initially established. This acquires significant moral value and helps explain the possible discomfort that may arise when unforeseen changes occur (D. Gálvez, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

The interview also illustrates how, despite their differences, cultures can adapt to one another in order to coexist and work together. While Chinese businesspeople may show greater flexibility in certain aspects of their working methods, Ecuadorian businesspeople tend to adopt more structured practices and establish clearer organization for each activity.

### **4.6 Interview 6. Foreign Trade Expert, Belén Egas**

#### **4.6.1 Profile**

Belén Egas, a graduate of the International Studies and Foreign Trade program at the University of Azuay, earned a master's degree in China in the field of international studies and negotiation. She worked for five years in Shanghai at BMF (a consulting and logistics services firm) and at companies specializing in the import and export of goods from China to Latin America. She is currently the founder of her own international trade company, specializing in imports and exports between Ecuador and China, which focuses on facilitating import processes from China; her approach is to conduct trade with a purpose.

#### **4.6.2 Narrative**

The interviewee states that cultural understanding is of the utmost importance, especially when it comes to China and Ecuador, since each country has its own established norms of behavior. "Our culture is a bit more charismatic, a bit more informal, and a bit more open in some ways; in contrast, Chinese culture is a bit more formal in the sense that

there is a specific protocol for doing business.” She explains that for the Chinese, respect is evident even in the smallest details, such as handing out a business card; she notes that:

“When you go to introduce your company to another Chinese businessperson, they usually give you a card; you always have to have your business card with you that says my name, my company, and my number. They don’t hand it to you with one hand; it’s always presented with two hands, because that symbolizes respect. They also examine it and do so with a bow. These kinds of experiences are acquired through practice, since in Ecuadorian culture, the norm is to take the card and put it away without looking at it” (B. Egas, personal communication, March 23, 2026).

This illustrates that cultural understanding is key and that, in Chinese culture, protocols are of the utmost importance. Building trust is a highly significant factor, since, in order to enter into a negotiation—no matter how simple it may be—there must be a pre-existing bond, unlike in Ecuadorian culture, where such bonds may be purely commercial in nature. Chinese culture has a very specific concept for negotiations, which is *guanxi*—understood as “I am part of a shared goal; we both have this shared goal, and that is why you will buy from me and I will grow my business; conversely, you will too, and that will also benefit you.” (B. Egas, personal communication, March 23, 2026).

When it comes to communication, one of the most significant differences is how ideas are presented during negotiations. “We Ecuadorians communicate more directly—we get right to the point in negotiations.” In contrast, the Chinese “are a bit more diplomatic.” Language can also become a barrier, since translations aren’t always accurate and certain important details can get lost when conveying an idea in another language, especially when a third language is used—which is the case most of the time—where English is used to ensure a good understanding. Therefore, it is important to have documentation of the negotiations that will take place and to ensure that everything agreed upon is put in writing (B. Egas, personal communication, March 23, 2026).

When it comes to adapting to each culture, learning rituals such as “the tea ceremony—which is of utmost importance to them—is key to achieving proper understanding and successful negotiations; in fact, they always include this ritual when holding a business meeting.” Adaptation also involves changes; the interviewee mentions that: “What I changed was understanding that, for them, doing business requires time to build relationships—to establish what is known as *guanxi*.” Chinese culture also emphasizes doing things the right

way, so it may take time to complete all the necessary steps to reach the goal of any negotiation. Companies contribute to every area of work to achieve their goals. Similarly, the beliefs of Chinese culture hold that: “Men must always be in charge; however, they have adapted to the fact that in other cultures women can also represent companies, so they have adapted to different scenarios” (B. Egas, personal communication, March 23, 2026).

Finally, it should be noted that the concept of haggling is also present in Chinese culture, as they do not take “no” for an answer; however, this must be done with great care because lowering prices affects the quality of a product, so it is important to be specific and keep a written record of everything. It is also important to respect and understand the proper handling of each of their negotiation rituals, as failing to follow them correctly can be seen as disrespectful (B. Egas, personal communication, March 23, 2026).

#### **4.6.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Language barriers are one of the main obstacles.
- b) The concept of guanxi is key to understanding Chinese culture.
- c) Trust is a crucial element in Chinese culture and plays a special role in negotiations.
- d) It is important to understand negotiation rituals in order for negotiations to be successful.

#### 4.6.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 9**

*Key Takeaways from the Interview with Belén Egas, Who Holds a Master’s Degree in International Relations*

<b>Thematic Axis</b>	<b>Interpretative Description</b>	<b>Interviewee’s Contributions</b>
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	The interviewee emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding, as it is a key factor in grasping cultural protocols and norms.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	B. Egas highlights the differences in communication between cultures in this case, between Ecuador and China which range from direct to indirect communication and the speed at which deals are closed.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	The interviewee emphasizes the importance of understanding guanxi when interacting with people from Chinese culture, as it is essential to the success of any negotiation
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	The interviewee emphasizes that in both cultures, haggling is viewed as normal; however, in Chinese culture, it is very important to clearly establish the price, as this can vary, and to avoid misunderstandings, a transcript must be prepared as evidence of the negotiation.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	B. Egas mentions that when conducting negotiations, it is important to adapt and understand the other culture; there may even be a shift in mindset regarding certain aspects that allows us to immerse ourselves in it.

#### 4.6.5 Analysis

The interview highlights how teams from different countries interact to conduct negotiations on the international stage, as well as the importance of understanding how each culture interacts—especially when that culture relies on rituals for every occasion. In the case of Ecuadorian culture, an immediate connection is sought; while it is clear that trust is key, it does not reach a great depth. However, in Chinese culture, interactions tend to be guided by guanxi, which allows for the establishment of much deeper relationships of trust. Furthermore, one of the greatest challenges is language, as the original meaning can be lost in translation and lead to misunderstandings.

Ultimately, cultural clashes can be understood not as a barrier but as a learning opportunity, with the aim of establishing strategies to engage in negotiations that benefit each team, achieving a win-win outcome for both parties in a long-term relationship.

## **4.7 Interview 7. Sales and International Trade Expert, Manager. Aire Zaou Yao**

### **4.7.1 Profile**

Aire Zaou Yao is a Sales Manager at Hinse Group, an international company dedicated to the production and commercialization of home appliances and household technology. In this role, she is responsible for commercialization and negotiation processes in different international markets, which provides her with a direct perspective on the dynamics of international trade.

Her perspective is crucial for this study due to the insight she provides from the standpoint of Chinese business culture, particularly regarding how commercial relationships are developed, how foreign partners are established, and the differences that may arise in different cultural contexts.

Her experience contributes to a better understanding of how factors such as communication, trust, planning, and the development of long-term relationships influence negotiation processes between Chinese and Ecuadorian companies.

The interview highlights the crucial role that culture plays in international business, particularly in communication and in the way, messages are interpreted within each culture. The interviewee emphasizes that Chinese business culture tends to prioritize planning, stability, long-term relationships, and trust before reaching agreements.

### **4.7.2 Narrative**

The interviewee, Aire Zaou Yao, considers that culture has a strong influence when conducting negotiations, as it “determines how cultures communicate, negotiate, and make decisions.” In her experience, one of the main differences that can be observed in Chinese culture is the emphasis on harmony and courtesy during negotiations. This involves preserving “face” and maintaining minimal emotional expressions in comparison with Latin American countries, such as Ecuador, where communication tends to be more expressive and flexible. These differences may lead to misunderstandings if the communication styles of each culture are not properly understood (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026).

One of the fundamental aspects she highlights is the way in which business is planned. According to Aire Zaou Yao, Chinese businesspeople tend to prioritize “cooperation and long-term relationships.” However, when making decisions, they also consider systematic

factors that could affect future cooperation and potentially compromise the sustainability of the project. In contrast, Ecuadorian businesspeople tend to focus more on the immediate development of the business (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026).

One of the points emphasized by the interviewee is the following: “Chinese businesspeople tend to be more patient during negotiations and place great importance on relationships and long-term cooperation, trying in every possible way to reach our objectives. In contrast, Ecuadorians tend to be more direct, and negotiations may be more flexible” (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026).

The interviewee also points out that within the Ecuadorian team, there is “a high sensitivity to price,” which can influence commercial decisions. Regarding hierarchy within the company, she explains that it is very marked and somewhat similar to the Ecuadorian structure, as there are different levels through which authority and decision-making power are distributed. Another important aspect in Chinese culture is trust: “A significant amount of time is dedicated to getting to know the other party and building relationships with them, ensuring that there is mutual commitment” before establishing a negotiation. Likewise, decision-making processes must be approved collectively by the team, particularly by higher-level management (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026).

Regarding adaptability, A. Zaou Yao explains that she has had to adjust her way of communicating: “I have had to be more flexible and place greater value on personal relationships. In addition, I prefer to confirm things in writing in order to verify the details of the cooperation.” She also clarifies that Ecuadorians have adopted certain aspects of the Chinese way of working, particularly in terms of “organization and planning” (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026). With regard to punctuality, she states:

“Yes, we have a schedule for all our projects. I am not saying that Ecuadorians are not punctual; that is not the case. It is simply that we need to communicate clearly before starting a project in order to reach an agreement. In this way, we can mutually encourage each other to achieve our objectives” (A. Zaou Yao, personal communication, February 24, 2026).

#### **4.7.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) Chinese business culture prioritizes planning and long-term commercial relationships.

- b) In Chinese culture, harmony and courtesy are reflected in facial expressions, which is why individuals often maintain a neutral expression and show limited emotional expressiveness.
- c) Trust is fundamental for establishing agreements within Chinese business culture.
- d) Hierarchical structures in Chinese and Ecuadorian cultures are relatively similar.

#### 4.7.4 Thematic Axes of the Research

**Table 10**

*Key Takeaways from the Interview with Sales Manager and Foreign Trade Expert Aire Zaou Yao*

Thematic Axis	Interpretative Description	Interviewee's Contributions
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	The interviewee highlights the importance of culture and its understanding in order to achieve effective communication and build long-term relationships.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	A. Zaou Yao states that the main differences arise in the ways of communicating, as well as in planning, organization, and the timeframes in which activities are carried out.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	She explains that adaptation is essential in order to establish successful negotiations, as it helps improve communication between the parties involved.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	From a commercial perspective, the interviewee emphasizes the importance of strategic planning and clear communication to avoid misunderstandings.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	Finally, A. Zaou Yao notes that she herself has been part of this cultural adaptation process, explaining that when individuals interact with another culture, they tend to adopt certain cultural aspects from one another.

#### 4.7.5 Analysis

The interview made it possible to better understand the differences between Ecuador and China in terms of negotiation practices in each country. Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that within Chinese culture, strategic planning, business stability for establishing long-term negotiations, organization, and respect for others are fundamental aspects. These elements also help explain the neutral facial expressions often observed during conversations.

In contrast, Ecuadorian culture is described as more flexible and less formal than Chinese culture. However, one similarity shared by both cultures is the presence of hierarchical structures, where certain decisions or procedures require prior authorization from higher-level management.

The interview also highlights that misunderstandings in communication are always possible, since each culture may interpret the same issue differently. For this reason, it is essential to confirm information so that both parties reach the same understanding regarding a project or negotiation, ensuring its successful development.

Finally, it is important to consider that adapting to each culture is essential, as it helps to understand how each operates. This, in turn, facilitates more efficient communication and stronger cooperation between both parties.

## **4.8 Interview 8. Chinese Merchant, Cha Ching**

### **4.8.1 Profile**

Cha Ching is a native Chinese citizen who has been living in Ecuador for eight years. Before migrating, he worked in the food service industry at restaurants serving traditional cuisine. He moved to Ecuador with his entire family in 2018 and continued working in the same field at Chinese restaurants. In 2021, he decided to start his own family business and open his own restaurant.

Cha Ching's participation is relevant to the research, as it provides an in-depth understanding of the Chinese cultural perspective and how a Chinese migrant adapts to Ecuadorian culture, thereby allowing for an analysis of cultural differences from a different perspective. The interview helps us understand how a Chinese migrant adapts to Ecuadorian culture, the differences they have encountered between the two countries, and the adjustments they have had to make to live within a completely different culture.

### **4.8.2 Narrative**

During the interview, Cha Ching notes that one of the main differences she noticed upon arriving in Ecuador was the pace of life and how time is managed. From her perspective, she notes that "Ecuadorians are not very punctual" compared to Chinese culture, in which arriving late to any kind of occasion can be seen as a very serious lack of respect (Cha Ching, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

One of the aspects that caught her attention the most is the pace of work; Cha Ching states that:

"Ecuadorians have more days off and don't work as much as the Chinese; businesses stay open until 1 a.m. In contrast, over their people work all the time, there are very few

holidays, and businesses are open around the clock” (Cha Ching, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

As for physical contact, there is a clear difference, especially between men and women, since “here it’s normal for men and women to greet each other with a hug, but in China it’s very different; that also struck me as very surprising; in China, there isn’t that level of physical closeness” (Cha Ching, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

During the adaptation process, language was one of the biggest challenges, since in China, English is taught as a second language in schools, so “Spanish was something completely new to me.” However, despite this, it wasn’t difficult to adapt and interact well with customers, and that made it easier for him to learn the language better. Regarding the business, he notes that he has managed to maintain its tradition to preserve the essence of Chinese cuisine; the only thing they’ve had to adjust is the level of spiciness, since, compared to Chinese culture, Ecuadorian culture isn’t as tolerant of it (Cha Ching, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

The interviewee also shared that he has adopted certain characteristics of Ecuadorian culture, such as time management, so he now applies the same flexibility to his daily activities; he has also managed to build better rapport and closeness with customers.

#### **4.8.3 Preliminary Findings**

- a) The perception of time in both cultures is highly significant; in Chinese culture, tardiness can be seen as a major sign of disrespect.
- b) The adaptation process is very difficult due to language and social interactions.
- c) Business settings can become spaces for cultural exchange, with adaptations to accommodate the functioning of each culture.

#### 4.8.4 Research Themes

**Table 11**

*Key Takeaways from the Interview with Shop Owner Cha Ching*

<b>Thematic Axis</b>	<b>Interpretative Description</b>	<b>Interviewee's Contributions</b>
Culture as a Social Construction	Culture is understood as a dynamic system that shapes identity, social behaviors, and the ways in which people interact. It is not static; rather, it is constantly constructed within a specific context.	Although the interviewee does not directly mention the concept of culture, it can be inferred that punctuality and communication play a role in society.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	Cultural differences begin to manifest during communication, particularly through hierarchical structures and the ways in which trust is established, which directly impacts negotiation processes.	Cha Ching, drawing on his experience as a restaurant owner, points out that the main differences lie in language and interpersonal interaction, particularly between men and women, since in China, interaction between the two genders is virtually nonexistent.
Intercultural Interaction Dynamics	Intercultural interaction involves the encounter between different symbolic systems, where tensions, misunderstandings, or learning processes may emerge.	In this context, the interviewee establishes cross-cultural interaction with customers. He notes that one of the greatest challenges is language and how to interact socially.
Intercultural Business Practices	In the commercial sphere, practices go beyond simple economic exchanges, as they are influenced by cultural values such as trust, formality, and respect for hierarchies.	As for business, he focuses on his restaurant, where he specifies that he has not made any radical changes aside from the spiciness of the food; he also mentions that ingredients are very easy to obtain, so his recipes remain the same.
Intercultural Adaptation	Intercultural adaptation involves incorporating foreign cultural codes to facilitate integration and avoid exclusion or conflicts within a group.	Cha Ching stated that, as she adapted to Ecuadorian culture, she adopted the habit of managing her time and showing greater warmth and expressiveness when interacting with her customers.

#### 4.8.5 Analysis

The interview with Cha Ching shows that the differences between Ecuador and China are clear; in her case, one of the main differences was the language, time management, and the way Ecuadorians handle the pace of work, which is very relaxed compared to China. He also emphasizes that China's population is much larger, so stress levels regarding work are higher since people there work all the time, unlike in Ecuadorian culture.

The interviewee notes that adapting to Ecuadorian culture has not been difficult for him; he has been well-received. As for his business, he has made no changes other than adjusting the menu to be less spicy than in his home country, though he keeps certain dishes to represent his culture, which helps others gain a deeper understanding of it.

## 4.9. General Analysis Matrix

**Table 12**

*An Interpretive Analysis of Similarities and Differences Among the Cultures Under Study*

<b>Thematic axis</b>	<b>Similarities among interviewees</b>	<b>Differences among interviewees</b>	<b>General interpretation</b>
Culture as a social construct	The interviewees agree on the importance of understanding culture, as it significantly influences the way people interact and communicate, particularly in the context of international business.	Some interviewees highlight the cultural impact on daily life, while others emphasize its influence on business and work.	Culture is understood as a changing and dynamic system that influences people's behavior and how they interpret one another during interactions.
Cultural Differences in Negotiation	The interviewees acknowledge that cultural differences are evident and are not based solely on language differences, but also on the behavior and norms of each culture; some interviewees have noticed these differences more strongly than others.	Most interviewees suggest that these differences can pose a challenge when conducting business and require cultural adaptation. Another group of interviewee's states that these differences do not pose a major difficulty. This group mentions having had the same business partners for a long	Cultural differences influence the way negotiations are conducted, so mutual understanding is necessary to carry them out successfully.
Dynamics of Cultural Interaction	The interviewees agree that language, cultural values, communication, and nonverbal cues such as facial expressions directly influence cross-cultural negotiations.	Although the interviewees agree that cultural differences influence behavior, not all of them have experienced these cultural clashes in a particularly abrupt manner.	Cultural interaction involves processes of learning and adaptation between cultures toward a shared common goal.
Cross-Cultural Business Practices	Several interviewees note that personal relationships, trust, and respect for Chinese culture are important in the business world, as they help foster lasting relationships.	Not applicable (complete agreement).	In practice, the influence of cultural values and the ways in which people interact and conduct negotiations is crucial to successful negotiations and personal relationships.
Cross-cultural adaptation	All interviewees agree that adaptation is key, whether it involves living in a new country or conducting negotiations, since without it, misunderstandings can increase.	Not applicable (complete agreement).	Cross-cultural adaptation helps overcome cultural barriers and facilitates interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds.

The interviewees agree that language is one of the biggest barriers, as it can interfere with the interpretation of the original idea during negotiations. However, they do not overlook factors such as values and nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, which influence communication and behavior between people from different cultures. The interviewees emphasize that adaptation is key to overcoming these differences, as it allows them to establish long-term and fruitful relationships.

## 4.10 Analysis of Results in Relation to Theory

The results highlight the importance of intercultural understanding and how it influences multinational teams when it comes to establishing strong and productive negotiations and relationships. While it is noted that certain conflicts may arise, these do not always have to be viewed negatively; as Stella Ting-Toomey and John G. Oetzel rightly point out, conflicts are not inherently negative as long as they are managed appropriately,

since they can become a key opportunity to strengthen communication, clarify misunderstandings, and foster growth both individually and as a group. Likewise, in an intercultural context, it is not merely about resolving conflicts, but about creating solutions that are innovative and adaptable to each context, in accordance with different ways of thinking and interpreting various situations.

The results presented below are based on an interpretive analysis of the information obtained through an in-depth literature review and interviews conducted with various focus groups, which helps to fill certain gaps that may exist in this area. For a better understanding, the analysis is divided into two sections; the first will present the findings related to the theoretical framework regarding the Ecuador-China case and previous studies on each culture. As for the second section, it will focus on presenting findings from the interviews conducted in light of the most relevant authors in the field of study.

### **1. Theoretical Section: Ecuador and China.**

While the strong alliance between Ecuador and China is acknowledged, the importance each country holds for the other within the market is also highlighted. We have identified certain key points that can be crucial for cultural understanding. Starting with cultural understanding—which has been identified as a fundamental component for effective communication between different teams during negotiations—this allows for a proper understanding of how other countries' cultures function. This can serve as a tool for persuasion in decision-making; diplomacy and soft power also influence this process, as they are the means by which certain values or ideas are promoted, and how society comes to make decisions based on them, as well as the way decisions are made regarding matters that have already been influenced.

It is also important to highlight cultural emotional intelligence, as it is what paves the way for developing one's own cultural identity, recognizing values established over several generations that have persisted to the present day with various modifications. This is essential for understanding the two cultures under analysis, Ecuador and China, since Chinese culture is governed by Confucian values, which prioritize hierarchy, harmony, and communication. One could say that this is closely linked to the concept of *guanxi*, as it embodies those values in the context of negotiation; it can be viewed as a mechanism adopted by the Chinese in ancient times to strengthen trust and reciprocity with individuals with whom they intended to establish long-term business relationships.

As for Ecuadorian culture, it could be said that it lacks a set of predefined values or a single concept that defines it, as it is more of a blend in which frankness, harmony, and the avoidance of confrontation, both in facial expressions and body language, are considered important. In the workplace, the environment is flexible, moves at a slow pace, and relies on trust to close deals; there is a high degree of respect for those in higher positions or older individuals, meaning that hierarchy is clearly defined. This suggests that certain values are shared by both Chinese and Ecuadorian cultures. To specify what these are, we can highlight aspects such as a clear hierarchy, the need to build trust to close negotiations, maintaining harmony, and avoiding problems within the workplace.

## **2. Section on the Theoretical Application to Interviews**

To provide a more solid foundation, the dimensions and theories of the key authors discussed in the theoretical framework were used as a reference. To ensure a clear understanding, this section follows the same order as the theoretical framework, along with the specific theories and dimensions of each author.

### **A) Edward T. Hall**

Edward T. Hall introduced the concept of proxemics, which refers to personal space in different cultures. The interviewees noted that there is indeed a significant difference between Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures in this regard, as Chinese culture prioritizes designated workspaces and physical contact is very rare. One experience shared by one of the interviewees was that, when finalizing an agreement, people from the Chinese culture concluded the transaction with a slight bow, without any physical contact. Upon noticing this gesture, which is quite uncommon in Ecuadorian culture, she also gave a slight bow. She was later told that if she had offered a handshake or a hug, which is common in our culture, they might have interpreted it as a lack of respect or as overstepping the trust she had placed in them.

Hall also suggests that cultures can be divided into monochromatic and polychromatic types. Based on the interviews and an understanding of each culture's perspective, it can be concluded that the monochromatic Chinese culture emphasizes a very strict work ethic; they prioritize following the steps of any procedure, are not very flexible when plans change, and place great importance on punctuality both in payments and schedules. In contrast, Ecuadorian culture is polychromatic; it does not require such rigor in negotiation processes,

and when producing a product, they are much more flexible regarding changes, as well as regarding punctuality in payments or schedules.

Finally, regarding high- and low-context cultures, as proposed by Hall, both Chinese and Ecuadorian cultures are considered high-context; however, they manifest themselves in different ways in each country. In Chinese culture, in the context of negotiations, clarity in established terms is required, but interpersonal communication during the process is not always direct, as they seek to build a relationship while negotiating. The interviewees agreed that it is difficult to determine whether the agreements they are reaching are positive or negative due to the lack of expression on their part; everything is conveyed in a neutral manner. This makes understanding difficult due to a lack of clear statements. In the case of Ecuadorian culture, interpreting what people are feeling—whether they are for or against the ideas being proposed in a negotiation or in general is much easier to understand because of facial expressions. As Stella Ting-Toomey & John G. Oetzel (2012) note, when seeking a third language to facilitate communication, which is often English as a neutral language, it can lead to different interpretations. Therefore, nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, and body language accompany verbal comprehension, and each of these actions is defined by the culture of the society in question. It cannot be said that Chinese culture is entirely neutral or lacks expressiveness; rather, its expressions are more subtle, which can lead to misunderstandings on the part of Ecuadorian culture and vice versa.

## **2) Fons Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner**

In one of their models, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner distinguishes between universalism and particularism. Through interviews, it was found that Chinese culture is a blend of the two; it tends to be universalistic, as the rules established in contracts must apply to everyone, are highly important and respected, and must be strictly adhered to as stipulated. On the other hand, it has traits of particularism, as trust is essential for establishing negotiations and ensuring they are fruitful. In contrast, Ecuadorian culture tends to be more particularistic, as interpersonal relationships influence decision-making; rules can be flexible and adaptable.

With regard to the individualism versus collectivism dimension, it is recognized that Chinese and Ecuadorian cultures are very similar, as both tend to be collectivist. This is because they prioritize long-term relationships and teamwork. The interviewees noted the presence of hierarchies in both cultures, as important decisions are always discussed with

superiors or with the team in charge of a particular activity for approval before moving forward. However, it is noted that Ecuadorian culture is slightly more flexible; yet, respect for the importance of reaching a collective decision to move forward with any project or activity is always maintained.

As a final dimension, time orientation was analyzed, which is divided into sequential and synchronous. Based on the interviewees' accounts, it can be inferred that Chinese culture leans toward sequential time orientation, since, when initiating a negotiation or activity, advance planning is carried out, an established order is followed, and punctuality is considered key both in payment schedules and in meeting times. One interviewee commented that, upon closing a negotiation, it was agreed to make two payments: one before the inspection of the white goods and another after it. However, what was not anticipated was that during the process, the second payment could not be made on time, so the Chinese suppliers began calling to request payment, since without it they could not proceed with the next step. As a result, production entered a crisis and is still in the process of being resolved.

In contrast, the Ecuadorian approach tends to favor a synchronous timeline; while activities are planned, they may change as the process unfolds. Regarding payments, there is a bit more flexibility; although deadlines are set, failure to meet them does not lead to a crisis. However, while payment deadlines must be met as specified in contracts, it can be said that they are somewhat stricter regarding work schedules than the timing of payments.

### **C) Geert Hofstede**

In conducting Hofstede's analysis, his research on the countries under study in each dimension served as a reference. Therefore, we begin with the dimension of power distance; Hofstede rates Ecuador at 78 points and China at 80 points, demonstrating that, in theory, they are very similar in terms of hierarchy. The interviewees confirmed Hofstede's findings, noting that in both Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures this aspect can be very pronounced, both in general settings and in negotiations, where one seeks the consent or approval of the highest-ranking official in order to give the green light to a project.

However, in Chinese society, this can be even more pronounced. One interviewee noted that, for them, the seat they occupy also reflects hierarchy not only in the workplace, but also in social and family settings. One example she gave and in which she participated occurred when she went out to eat with her Chinese colleagues and observed how everyone sat at a round table according to their age and level of wisdom or knowledge. In the center

of the table was a small rotating platter holding the food, which she participated in, and to serve themselves, they began with the oldest or most knowledgeable people and ended with the youngest or least knowledgeable. From this, we can conclude that, while both countries have a very distinct hierarchy, Chinese culture is more rigid in this regard.

In his individualism vs. collectivism dimension, Hofstede rates Ecuador at 8 points and China at 20 points, establishing that, from a theoretical standpoint, both countries are considered collectivist. The interviewees agreed, noting that in both cultures, decisions are made collectively and the benefits accrue to everyone involved; although in most cases, ultimately, there is a single representative for the decision, that point is reached through collaborative effort.

To conclude the discussion of Hofstede's dimensions, uncertainty avoidance scores Ecuador at 86 points, indicating a high level of uncertainty avoidance, and China at 30 points, indicating a low level of uncertainty avoidance. When relating this to the respondents' answers, they explained that in practice, Chinese culture is very rigorous and structured, which may sound contradictory; however, Chinese culture has been one of the most adaptable to the market, as well as socially, and exhibits greater cultural tolerance. The interviewees also noted that the Chinese have adapted to Ecuadorian culture, have found ways to communicate effectively, and, in most cases, use English as an intermediary language for negotiations. In contrast, Ecuador prefers greater stability, and adapting to other cultures on the international stage is somewhat complicated, since, as a smaller country, its perspectives are somewhat more insular compared to China; this does not mean that Ecuadorian culture cannot adapt to others. Reviewing this section helps us understand a little better how theory can sometimes contradict practice, since in this case, the two cultures end up adapting to one another in order to successfully conduct negotiations.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the intercultural dynamics between Ecuador and China in communication and cooperation within multinational teams are evident, as each culture exhibits differences in how people interact; however, despite these differences, a mutual understanding is reached for decision-making during negotiations. The results show that cultural factors play a fundamental role in negotiations.

By making the relevant comparisons, one can understand the core authors' arguments regarding their previously mentioned and reviewed theories, which demonstrate how Chinese culture tends to prioritize order, respect, hierarchy, clarity, and direct communication in terms of speaking style and specifying what they want during negotiations. Another relevant aspect concerns the importance of building trust to ensure long-lasting business relationships, as well as time management in terms of punctuality and neutral facial expressions—factors closely linked to respect, which make the culture somewhat more rigid in certain areas. As for Ecuadorian culture, it is considered more approachable; there is a marked hierarchy, communication tends to be somewhat more indirect and roundabout when specifying what is sought in negotiations, trust and punctuality are essential for negotiations, and facial expressions are very expressive; Ecuadorian culture is viewed as flexible and warm. Likewise, it is important to note that factors such as punctuality and nonverbal expressions are not as strictly enforced as in Chinese culture, which does not necessarily imply a lack of respect.

It can also be argued that theory and practice go hand in hand; it is further suggested that cultural knowledge is key to understanding how other countries operate, not only in negotiations but also in everyday life, as this allows one to comprehend their behavior toward different members of each society. In this case, an understanding of *guanxi* in Chinese culture helps explain the desire to establish long-term relationships, as it is based on creating a connection that goes beyond self-interest; the goal is to conduct negotiations quickly but also effectively, and trust is essential for this.

While Chinese culture is direct meaning they make it clear what they want in a negotiation—there isn't much embellishment when presenting ideas. However, the process can take time, as they seek to establish a prior connection to ensure that these negotiation ties are long-lasting. In contrast, Ecuadorian culture is considered indirect because there are detours and embellishments when presenting a negotiation idea; while they seek to build

trust for negotiations, this trust is not as strong as in Chinese culture. They seek a good relationship, but without insisting that it be established in a specific way. Quick negotiation is key to Ecuadorian culture, so they do not focus on building relationships beyond the negotiations themselves.

Based on the results of the interviews, a difference in gender relations is evident: physical closeness between men and women is minimal in Chinese culture, whereas in Ecuadorian culture, such closeness is very common. Similarly, in Chinese culture, negotiations are often viewed through the lens that the most important positions are held by men, whereas in Ecuadorian culture, this gender difference is not as heavily scrutinized. However, it must be emphasized that Chinese culture has been adapting to the hierarchical structures of each culture, which highlights the importance of adaptability. This allows for adjusting behaviors to improve communication among multinational teams—a process that involves not only language but also understanding and respecting the rituals specific to each culture, especially Chinese culture, as it is a culture rich in rituals for every occasion, and knowledge of these can demonstrate respect and build a bond of trust, which is important to them.

Thus, it can be concluded that intercultural dynamics have a direct influence on negotiations within multinational teams, since barriers arise not only in language but also in the interpretation of nonverbal behavior; furthermore, this adaptability has led multinational teams to adopt working styles from each culture in order to successfully conclude negotiations; therefore, effective business management is based not only on technical knowledge but also on a deeper cultural understanding. In the case of Chinese culture, they adapt to be more flexible and a bit more approachable; conversely, in Ecuadorian culture, they become more formal, punctual, and rigid in certain aspects, thereby enabling each culture to align with the other toward a common goal.

The following section will present recommendations based on the results of the analysis, with the aim of facilitating communication and cultural relations among multinational companies.

1. Implement cultural awareness training programs for multinational teams through theoretical and practical workshops, with the goal of helping them identify cultural differences and gain an understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate in each culture with which they will be conducting business.

2. In the context of Ecuador-China relations, it is suggested that Ecuadorians be introduced to the concept of guanxi, highlighting its importance and explaining how to apply it to build strong relationships with multinational teams in China.
3. Raise awareness among multinational teams about the importance of cultural adaptation to facilitate communication and develop strategies aimed at preventing misunderstandings caused by unfamiliar behaviors or expressions.
4. Involve key government agencies, such as the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, to promote and participate in intercultural dialogue at the international level. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and the Council for Higher Education can serve as a starting point, since cultural awareness must be instilled from the very foundations of education. At the professional level, support from the National Secretariat for Human Rights is required, as it helps foster respect for cultural identity, prevents discrimination and violations of cultural rights, and thereby strengthens inclusion in every sense. Together, by implementing intercultural integration policies, these agencies promote greater cooperation among countries and facilitate negotiations and understanding among multinational teams.

The purpose of these recommendations is to foster a broader understanding of the diverse cultures around us, particularly during negotiations, and to learn how to leverage these differences as strategic assets rather than barriers; in this way, we can strengthen our relationships.

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## APPENDICES

This section includes the questions posed to each group of interviewees based on their area of expertise, which helps analyze the cultural differences between Ecuador and China that may arise in multinational teams during negotiations. Similarly, attached is a sample of the consent form provided to each interviewee, clearly outlining how their responses would be used, specifically for academic purposes.

### Appendix A

*Key Topics and Sections for the Semi-Structured Interview, Tailored to Each Interviewee*

<b>Fact Sheet: Interview</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEAMS FROM ECUADOR AND CHINA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to analyze the cultural differences and similarities that may arise between multinational teams from Ecuador and China during the negotiation process, taking into account aspects such as communication, cultural values, and negotiation strategies. This analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how cultural factors influence negotiations, contributing to a better understanding of intercultural relations in international contexts.</p> <p>Part of the study is supplemented by interviews as a data collection technique, through which we seek to identify gaps and the importance of cultural knowledge in negotiation processes, in this case between Ecuador and China. The questions posed to participants are open-ended and semi-structured to obtain a much deeper insight into the topic.</p> <p>The compiled documentary research will then be reviewed to conclude with the drafting and editing of the thesis “INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TEAMS FROM ECUADOR AND CHINA” A través de este documento, extendemos a usted la invitación a participar en una entrevista que se llevará a cabo el día ..... de manera presencial/ virtual a las ..... horas respectivamente.</p> <p>We guarantee that the information obtained through this process will be collected confidentially. The data will be carefully analyzed and published only with the interviewee’s consent; the interviewee will have the opportunity to review the data prior to the thesis’s publication to confirm their approval of the material to be published. Participants in the research will have the opportunity to review drafts of the research outputs containing any conclusions drawn from the data they have</p>

provided. Upon reviewing these drafts, they will have the opportunity to request modifications to their contributions.

If the interviewee does not agree with parts or all of the interview or the data to be published, they may choose not to participate, and the corresponding portion of the collected data and information will be removed from the publication. Similarly, the interviewee may choose not to answer any question or request the removal of information at any time during the course of this research. A copy of the collected data and findings, if any, will be available for review by the interviewee upon their express request, and the final results will be made available upon publication of the research.

The interview is expected to last approximately 20 minutes.

Regarding the devices to be used for the interview, we will use Zoom's recording feature and an additional recording device via cell phone to ensure an accurate transcription of the data. In addition, key points from the interview will be noted.

The interviewee may request that the recording devices be turned off at any time during the interview, if they deem it appropriate.

The collected data will be analyzed subsequently through transcription. The collected data will be reviewed, and relevant information will be selected for inclusion in the forthcoming research publication.

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### Hoja de Consentimiento Informado

We, Lesly Cazorla and Mg. Mónica Martínez Sojos, want to ensure that the individuals interviewed as part of the thesis project “Intercultural Communication in Multinational Companies: A Comparative Study of Teams in Ecuador and China” are fully informed about the implications of participating. Please check the boxes below if you believe you have all the relevant information. If not, please let us know.

- I have read and understood the project information sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- I agree to participate in an interview.
- I understand that the interview will take approximately 45 minutes, but may be longer or shorter depending on my availability.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any question, for any reason.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the interview at any time, for any reason.
- I agree to have my interview audio recorded.
- I agree to have the researcher take notes during the interview.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in academic papers, research reports, and other research outputs.
- I understand that the information provided will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

The participant's name	Signature

Date:

### ***Appendix B***

#### *Thematic Areas and Sections for the Semi-Structured Interview, Tailored to Each Interviewee*

<b>Thematic Axis</b>	<b>Purpose of the Axis</b>	<b>Example Questions</b>
Concept of Culture	To understand participants' perceptions and interpretations of culture.	How does culture influence people's behavior? What does culture mean to you?
Cultural Differences	To identify differences in perceptions between Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures.	What cultural differences have you observed between Ecuadorian and Chinese cultures?
Intercultural Interaction	To understand participants' experiences in intercultural contexts	Have you experienced any cultural misunderstandings?

Business Context	To examine cultural differences in international business.	¿Do you think culture influences business negotiations?
Intercultural Adaptation	To identify how cultures adapt in order to coexist and negotiate effectively.	Have you adopted any aspects of Chinese culture in your daily life? Have you adopted any aspects of Ecuadorian culture in your daily life? Have there been adaptation processes during negotiations?

#### ANTHROPOLOGIST

1. What does culture mean to you?
2. Based on your experience, how do you think culture influences the way people communicate?
3. How would you describe the way Ecuadorians communicate?
4. What differences can you point out between the ways people communicate in Ecuador and in China?
5. Have you experienced or witnessed any misunderstandings or culture clashes at work? What happened?
6. When people from different cultures work together, how do you think they adapt to one another?
7. Do you think that commercial exchanges can also become opportunities for cultural exchange? Why?

#### TRADE EXPERTS

1. Do you believe that culture influences business dealings with other countries? If so, in what way?
2. What differences have you noticed between the negotiating styles of Ecuadorians and Chinese?
3. What aspects of communication tend to cause the most misunderstandings between businesspeople in Ecuador and China?
4. When you started working with Chinese people, did you have to change anything about the way you communicate or negotiate?
5. Do you feel that doing business also involves an exchange of ways of thinking or customs between cultures?
6. Can you recall any experience that made you notice a significant cultural difference?

#### INTERN

1. How did you feel when you started working with them? Was there anything that surprised you at first?
2. Have you noticed any differences in work style between the Chinese team and the local team? Which ones stood out to you the most?

3. Do you think the experience of working with Chinese businesspeople has changed your perception of their culture? Why?
4. Is there any anecdote you remember?

#### PEOPLE FROM CHINESE CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

1. What differences have you noticed between communication styles in China and Ecuador?
2. What aspects of Ecuadorian culture did you find most difficult to understand when working with Ecuadorians?
3. When misunderstandings arise, what do you think usually causes them: language or culture?
4. Based on your experience, what do you think could improve communication between Ecuadorians and Chinese people?
5. Has your way of communicating or working changed since you've been living in Ecuador? In what way?
6. Is there any anecdote you remember that made you think about these differences?

### **Appendix C**

#### *Transcripts of the Interviews Conducted*

#### ENGINEER AND PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

##### 1. ANTONIO TORRES DÁVILA

###### **Do you believe that culture plays a role in negotiations with other countries? If so, in what way?**

Culture definitely influences negotiations, because culture is a way of seeing things, a way of understanding things. I might be explaining things in a certain way, and from my cultural perspective, of course, it's understood that way, but not all cultures understand things the same way. For example, saying "I'll look into it" means, in Latin America, for instance, that I'll review it in a moment, I'll look into it later, but I'll take it into account. In other cultures, that phrase might even be forgotten in other words, "I'll look into it" is a much broader, much more flexible concept. So, of course, expressions, understanding, behavior, the way one sits, facial expressions all of that influences a negotiation, and these vary around the world.

###### **What differences have you noticed in the way Ecuadorians and Chinese people negotiate?**

Let's see how we were talking earlier. I think there's a big difference when it comes to language. I mean, the emphasis, for example, with the Chinese when you're talking to the Chinese first of all, a direct Spanish-to-Chinese translation is very difficult to manage during a video conference call; you have to hire a translator. When a translator isn't available, you have to do a three-way translation: Spanish to English, then English to Chinese, because not everyone knows Spanish. What the Chinese do handle better is the English language. So, conveying the same idea across three languages is quite difficult extremely difficult. So, for example, when you explain certain things, without the Latin American person asking questions, commenting, or analyzing, the Chinese don't ask many questions; they just say yes to everything. The problem is whether they've understood what you're trying to say. The Chinese say yes to everything, but then when they send you the products or samples, they're not what you asked for. So, you don't know if they're understanding you or not. That's the difficulty.

###### **And what would be the most common misunderstandings?**

That not being clear. I mean, they say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes," as if to say, "We're definitely against the product." But when it comes to, say, footwear specifically sizes, styles, and colors those factors play a big role. So, for example, the differences. They have differences when it comes to sizes. No, they're very good with shoe sizes. You mention, for example, size 40, and they're interpreting something completely different. As for colors, there are certain colors that are universal for example, navy blue; here and in China, navy blue is the same. But there are certain colors they don't understand very well; for example, the color "Old Mouse" that's the name for a color they don't quite

grasp it's a leaden shade, a leaden color. And they don't really understand the concept of "Old Mouse." Yes, to them it's just "mouse." So, there are differences in terms of color names and so on.

**And when working with Chinese people, did you have to change anything in the way you communicate or negotiate?**

Yes, ask more questions in other words, don't assume they understand you. Yes, you still have to ask for feedback. So when you say, "Did I explain that clearly?" please ask them to clarify things for you so you can verify certain points. And to explain things more clearly, I mean, when it comes to foreign trade, you have to explain things clearly, for example, the issue of shipping. Don't ship until you give authorization, and the authorization has to be clear, right? Because what sellers and, for example, the Chinese guys want most is to ship. For them, the deal is sealed with the shipment. And if you don't stop them in time, they'll ship it right away. And that's when we don't make a fuss. Sure.

**Do you feel that, in doing this kind of business, your way of thinking has changed?**

Yes, of course. I mean, when it comes to the initial idea, some people start with a plan yes, they intend to make exactly the product you want but when you talk business, the product starts to change; it transforms according to the other person's possibilities, and sometimes the products end up changing drastically—in design, color, quantity, and so on.

**And when it comes to negotiating with the Chinese, did you perhaps adapt some aspects of their culture to your daily life?**

Yes, the issue of dates, for example—negotiating during the New Year is impossible because no one is at work, so it's a 15-day break. Yes, the issue of time zones, for example. Yes, with standard time, there isn't much of a difference here in the Americas. If you're talking to the United States, there's a one- or two-hour difference, right? That's no problem. But, for example, with China. If you want to talk, you have to do it at night because for them it's morning. Yes, sometimes they answer—they do answer when they're on the train or the subway or something like that. So, around 6 or 7 p.m. here is early morning for them. Yes, they usually respond. But otherwise, for example, when you send an email, yes, sometimes it takes half a day or even a full day. Sometimes there's that delay, that waiting time, and sometimes business slows down a bit.

**Do you have any memories from your experience with this?**

Yeah, well, the thing is... The thing is that they say "yes" to everyone. I mean, you ask them about colors, sizes, and they're like, "Yes, yes," and they close the deal really fast. They never say no to you, but once they close the deal, whether they actually follow through is another matter. Sure. Yeah, so sometimes they send different sizes, different colors, even different models. I mean, you're left with uncertainty did I explain myself well? Did I explain it clearly enough? Yeah, the issue of certifications, for example things are improving and changing in China, because business culture isn't static; it's dynamic. When we first started doing business with China in the footwear sector, there was no exporter certification. Now there is exporter certification; it's the code. If they don't have a code, I don't know who I'm buying from. So, you always have to ask for the exporter code, which means they're a recognized exporter. Back then, however, there were no codes, and business wasn't taken very seriously; it was quite difficult especially communication. Now things flow much more smoothly. Chinese culture has opened up significantly to other countries and cultures; they've become quite internationalized and much more dynamic in business. Before, we had to adapt much more to them. Now they've adapted quite a bit to us.

Well, the issue of communication, the issue of communication. There's a problema for example, an anecdote from when we went to visit a factory in China. I've been to China twice, just twice. Once we went during the Canton Fair, and people always recommend that you try to visit the factory to see if it's legitimate or not. We went to check out the factory, and that factory was, wow, absolutely filthy trash all over the floor. The person who met us wasn't friendly at all; the workbenches were set up in tandem, meaning one person worked on the top, another on the bottom. So, that doesn't inspire confidence in doing business. It was terrible. We didn't do business with that person. We did business with another company well, things didn't go well for us initially either but, I mean, trying to understand the reality is very different from exchanging emails, talking on the phone, or visiting trade shows. At the trade show, everything looks polished; everything seems nice; everything seems perfect but it's a whole different story when you go to see the factory.

**Do you think the issue of culture is given the attention it deserves?**

Yes, yes, I think so, because, I mean, we're not negotiating with machines yet. I mean, even with artificial intelligence and all that—at some point, we'll be negotiating with machines. But we're still negotiating with people, right? And people are a product of the culture they come from. They are a product of the education they've received. So, understanding and empathizing with another culture opens up many possibilities in business. It's not about imposing something, but rather about empathy and finding common ground.

**INTERN**

**1. DANIELA GALVIZ**

**How did you feel when you started working with Chinese people? What surprised you the most?**

At first, when I started working with them, I realized that formality is very important. Everything is very serious; everything has to be documented. Everything discussed in a meeting is always recorded in minutes after the discussion and agreements are finalized, and all

meetings are very formal that is, everything is conducted with the formality they maintain at all times, especially since they are very serious. I mean, they don't use facial expressions as much as others do where often you don't speak, but you can tell from their face what they're feeling, whether they want to express something or say something they're serious. Neutral, a neutral face, completely so. You don't know what's going through their minds, and that really caught my attention because they're always so serious that when it comes to negotiating, you don't know if they agree or disagree often based on their expression because that helps a lot in knowing if you're pushing too hard. So that makes it complicated.

**Have you noticed any differences when working with them?**

The differences I've noticed, as you mentioned, are their facial expressions it's very difficult to tell if what you're saying is correct or not. On the other hand, when we talk to people from our own culture, it's much easier to tell if they agree or if they think something isn't right, and that gives us the chance to improve what we're saying.

**Do you think that working with Chinese businesspeople has broadened your understanding of the culture or taken you beyond that?**

Yes, I think so. I think it's not just about Chinese businesspeople—they, too, come from a culture that's quite different in some ways—so it's really interesting to see how to interact with them because you have to approach them with a deep sense of respect and trust. So trust for them always has to be mutual and has to be built up, so the moment you're building trust with them and you end up making a mistake like that—I mean, saying the wrong thing—it's over. It's all over. It's really complicated because of that, but I feel it's not just with Chinese businesspeople—Koreans have been there too, and Asians in general, especially when it comes to office management in Asia. It's a bit tricky to understand them all, because everyone has a different sense of respect. For example, the Koreans did this to me once—we gave them a tour, and they bowed to me, and I didn't know what to do because I'm not used to that. So I thought about it for a few seconds and bowed back. And that's why, for them, it's necessary to show their gratitude with a bow, which is like saying "thank you." Yeah, if the other person doesn't return that bow, that "you're welcome," it's kind of rude. Yeah, it's like, "What's wrong with you?" I'm thanking you, so just say "you're welcome."

**And did working with them perhaps lead you to adopt some aspects of their culture?**

I feel like something we talked about a lot with them—because sometimes we also talked about things that weren't necessarily work-related—is the fact that they change their shoes at the entrance to their homes. And I started doing that at my own home for hygiene reasons, because they made me feel so unhygienic that I started doing it. So I come home, take off my shoes, leave them on a mat, and put on slippers to go inside.

**Was there perhaps an experience that really left a mark on you from working with them?**

I think that a lot of the time they have a very strong sense of honor, so for them, everything has to be exactly as we agreed. I mean, everything is very strict very, so to speak I mean, everything is just as we said it would be, and it has to be that way because that's what we decided. But sometimes, well, the work doesn't allow for that rigidity; there are times when plans change and there are times when things have to be different, and they have a hard time adapting to that change because, well, they were told it had to be done that way I mean, I can't just come in and do this differently because I was told it had to be that way. So they have a pretty hard time adapting to sudden changes.

**Is there anything else you'd like to mention or that you think might be relevant?**

I believe that beyond all the cultural differences between China, Ecuador, and Colombia, it's important that we—despite our differences—be able to sit down together at the same table and understand one another. Because the Chinese aren't that kind of culture—unlike, for example, what I've experienced with the French, where if you don't speak French they reject you immediately—but rather they're a culture that's very accepting of others, even though there's a clash with them because they believe Chinese culture is superior, due to the issue of honor, and they believe they're superior because they always prioritize dignity and honor above others. I think we've been able to communicate and understand each other, and say, "You handle this in this way, and I respect that. But I don't have that perspective, and I respect that." So they've managed, through communicating with us, to learn to adapt and move faster. And we've learned to do things more straightforwardly, more verifiably, more transparently.

**Do you think teaching about culture is important in the workplace?**

Yes, very much so. Cross-cultural communication, in particular, helps guide us in that regard—helping us adapt to other cultures or understand them. It's a subject that, more than any other we've covered, has helped me communicate with others and try to understand cultural differences. International relations has also been very important, for example. Because it helps us understand China's perspective and its history. And based on its history, Confucianism, and everything else, that's how they've developed their current sense of honor, which allows us to understand their background. But for cross-cultural communication itself, that's the most important thing.

**ANTHROPOLOGIST**

**4. MARIO BRAZZERO**

**What does “culture” mean to you?**

Well, “culture” is such a broad term, but in very general terms, there are actually more than a thousand different definitions of culture. There’s no consensus on this—and I’m speaking from an anthropological perspective. But in all these definitions, you can see that culture is the environment in which you shape your life, and this context in which you develop provides you with cultural elements, such as language. The Chinese speak Chinese, don’t they? We speak Spanish. And within language, there are also a number of symbolic elements that only we can understand depending on the language we speak. Isn’t that right? There’s also the influence of the society in which we live. In anthropology, we talk about social morality—that is, the behavior we’re expected to exhibit in society. There are societies where certain human attitudes or actions are accepted and others where they are not. For example, among the Wauranis, it is normal to walk around naked; in our society, that would be an immoral act. The behavioral patterns imposed on us by society, but also the choices we make within that society—for example, music, clothing, and the aesthetic we apply to our bodies—are also choices, shaped by the influences we experience. In other words, culture is the environment in which we develop, but it also offers us certain possibilities for choosing specific elements within that environment. In very general terms, we could say that culture is what shapes us, what makes us who we are, think the way we do, and speak the way we do. But also, as I said, within these choices, you’re choosing a career; you’re making decisions. So, the choices that society itself allows you to make. You can’t choose everything. Choices are actually limited in society, but it is true that it is constantly shaping us. That is culture.

**Based on your experience, how do you think culture influences the way people communicate?**

There is an anthropologist named Clifford Geertz who argues that human beings have not only thoughts, but symbolic thoughts. So, we have a set of codes for communicating with others. What is communication? To put it simply, it is the act of sending and receiving messages. The messages we send and receive are embedded within all these contextual elements we discussed in the first question. Language. I can’t speak with a Chinese person if they don’t know Spanish. Or if I don’t know Chinese. I have to communicate with someone who understands the linguistic codes I use. That is, they speak Spanish with the syntax and subject-predicate communication systems we use, which differ from how language is constructed in other contexts. Environments are also important; we know that with social media, you can now communicate with someone in China. But there must be those connecting elements that allow us to send and receive messages and to understand those messages.

**How would you describe the way Ecuadorians communicate?**

Here I’m referring more to an author named Bolívar Echeverría, who argues that Latin American peoples—and I believe Ecuador is part of that—are very baroque. What do I mean by this? That we communicate in many ways and have many ways of expressing any idea. Language is fundamental, obviously, but there’s also the relationship through our bodies. For example, there’s a lot of physical closeness here: we can touch each other, hug each other—something that doesn’t happen in other countries. In Japan, for instance, I understand that touching another person isn’t well-regarded, and that could even lead to moral judgment within their society.

So, we communicate in different ways, and the body is an important part of that communication. It’s not just language, sight, or sound, but also physical interaction, which is very interesting. Throughout Latin America, and especially in Ecuador, this is quite evident. That physical contact isn’t frowned upon when it comes to communication: hugging, for example, allows us to express emotions and feelings. Now, that might be one of the main differences between us and China. I’d say so, although there are nuances as well. In Ecuador, we are very diverse, with different ethnic groups, and this kind of interaction doesn’t always happen with everyone. It often happens more with those we identify as part of our own culture. For example, in Cuenca, if you get on a bus and an Indigenous woman sits down, there are people who prefer not to sit next to her. That shows there are perceptions of exclusion within society. And in China, I think this is also evident. From what I understand, there are strong social hierarchies, with first-, second-, and third-class citizens. Unlike in Ecuador, where these differences aren’t as explicit, in China there seems to be a more marked separation. For example, people considered third-class rarely interact on an equal footing with first-class citizens; they’re perceived as inferior. From an anthropological perspective, one would not claim this is “natural,” but within its social and cultural structure, these divisions do exist. In that sense, there are groups with whom one simply does not interact or establish contact. This is seen, for example, between people in cities and those living in very remote or isolated areas.

**Have you perhaps experienced any of these cultural distinctions?**

I’ve traveled to the Amazon with a group of Asians—mostly Japanese—but not with Chinese people. My understanding of China comes mainly from the media and the messages it conveys. On the one hand, many media outlets portray China as a rising superpower. On the other hand, I’ve also seen documentaries that show very old, even ancestral, practices that are still maintained in certain areas. China is a huge country, and there are cultures that have endured practically as they did a thousand years ago. These communities are quite remote from the major centers, the big cities, and technology, and they maintain very different ways of life. That is something I have learned about through documentaries, news, and other content.

**Do you think people from different cultures can adapt to one another in order to work together?**

I believe so. As we mentioned earlier, it all comes down to our ability to communicate. In today's world, within a capitalist system, China has gone from being viewed as a peripheral society compared to powers like the United States or Europe to becoming a major player within that same system. Today, it also has economic interests and a global presence. So, if a project is proposed in which, for example, Chinese and Ecuadorians participate, and there is a common goal such as trade or organizing an event it is entirely possible to work together. When there are shared interests and a willingness to engage in dialogue, collaboration becomes viable. Even the use of a language like English, which functions as a neutral language, greatly facilitates communication. In the end, that is the key: having common goals and communication tools that allow us to understand one another.

**And do you think that, when these cultural exchanges take place, a culture might end up adapting?**

For profound changes to occur, there would have to be a tremendous amount of influence. However, when a person travels to another place, a key concept in anthropology comes into play: acculturation. What does this mean? It means that one must adapt to the culture of the place where they are. As we mentioned earlier, culture involves certain codes and norms that society expects you to follow, and that also entails social judgment. If you don't follow them, you may face criticism or even rejection. That's why, in a way, you have to adapt in order to fit in. It doesn't mean you'll completely lose who you are there are personal aspects, like your values, that remain but you do need to adopt certain cultural norms of your surroundings.

Otherwise, it can be difficult to be accepted, precisely because you are not using those behavioral codes that are important in that context. This not only happens between countries but also within Ecuador itself. For example, in the cities, where the mestizo population predominates, there are certain cultural codes. But if you go to live in a place like Zaraguro, you will have to adapt to different ways of life and behavior to integrate. The same happens if you travel to China. You can't generalize the entire country, but if, for example, you go to Beijing, you will have to adapt to certain social norms: from the way of greeting more ritualistic and with less physical contact to other everyday behaviors. In that sense, each culture has its own rules, and adapting to them is key to being able to coexist and integrate.

**MASTER IN FOREIGN TRADE**

**5. NICOLE CABRERA**

**Do you believe that culture influences negotiations? What differences have you noticed between the negotiation styles of Ecuadorians and Chinese?**

I would say that something key is punctuality. For example, I had to make many payments, and they organize themselves based on very specific dates. If they expect a payment on Friday, by Monday they have already planned to start the machinery to begin producing your order. So, if you promised to pay on Friday and didn't, there's already a problem on Monday. Not only for the salesperson, who has already placed the order, but also for the production area, which starts asking what happened. That's why it's so important to be honest. If you see that you won't be able to meet the deadline, it's better to notify in advance, for example, from Thursday, and clearly state that there will be a delay. Sometimes you want to please everyone, be nice, or avoid conflicts, but in this case, they value sincerity much more. Everything is so organized and interconnected that a small problem at the beginning can lead to many more later on.

**When working with them, did you perhaps adopt something from Chinese culture?**

I would say yes, especially the cordiality. It may sound strange, because one tends to think that in China everything is more serious, but in daily life they are very cordial. They provide constant follow-up, are efficient, and are very attentive to what you need. It has happened to me that a negotiation closes even at night because the person I am dealing with does everything possible to help you, understand you, and build a relationship to finalize the purchase. I would also highlight the formality: everything must be in writing and there always has to be a record of what is agreed upon.

**Any experience that made you notice these cultural clashes?**

Yes, right now we are having a problem with a supplier. We had agreed on specific payment dates: first a 50% advance and then the rest after the inspection of the products. But when it was time to make the advance payment, a holiday started and we couldn't make the payment. That caused a conflict because production depended on that advance payment and the supplier needed to ensure that we were indeed going to pay. So he started to pressure the end customer directly, saying that they weren't responding and that he didn't have confirmation of the payment. That caused discomfort because the client also didn't want to proceed with something they weren't fully in agreement with. That's where the cultural clash became evident: for us, certain things can be adjusted or discussed, but for them, if you have already accepted a quote, even if it's in the fine print, they expect it to be fulfilled exactly as stated. That's why it's super important to review everything in detail when working with them, because they take what's written very seriously. During the holiday, even, the supplier kept insisting on the payment, even though we had already explained the situation. Now we are waiting for everything to be resolved.

**Are there differences in terms of hierarchy?**

In that aspect, I would say we are quite similar. I have been in meetings where they don't participate alone, but rather include their bosses or superiors. They seek to introduce you to the entire team, either as a form of support or formality. And here something similar happens:

decisions are usually not made without consulting a superior. Approval or a green light is always sought before proceeding. In that sense, I feel that both cultures operate in a quite similar manner.

#### **EXPORT TRADE EXPERT**

##### **6. MARIA CRISTINA GÁRATE**

###### **Do you believe that culture influences doing business with other countries? In what way?**

Culture significantly influences international business, as it determines how commercial relationships are built, how agreements are interpreted, and how expectations are managed. In the case of China, it is considered a strategic hub of global trade due to its great productive capacity, the variety of its offerings, and the evolution of its quality standards. Over time, the Chinese market has shifted from being perceived solely as price-competitive to also establishing itself in quality, which has strengthened its relationship with Ecuadorian companies. This evolution also reflects a transformation in their business culture, increasingly oriented toward efficiency and the satisfaction of international customers.

###### **What differences have you noticed between the negotiation styles of Ecuadorians and Chinese?**

One of the most obvious differences is the work pace and availability. Despite there being approximately thirteen hours of time difference, Chinese companies tend to maintain constant attention and respond quickly, demonstrating a quite efficient organizational structure. In contrast, in Ecuador, more flexible timeframes are managed.

Moreover, unlike European markets where prices tend to be more fixed, in China there is greater room for negotiation. However, it is important to keep in mind that any change in price may also imply variations in the quality or technical characteristics of the product, so everything must be handled with great clarity.

###### **What things in communication usually cause the most misunderstandings between businesspeople from Ecuador and China?**

More than direct cultural clashes, misunderstandings usually arise when the terms of the agreement are not clearly specified. It is essential to put everything in writing and detail aspects such as product characteristics, deadlines, and payment terms. When there is no precision, different interpretations can arise, especially on sensitive issues like prices or technical specifications. That's why clarity and a formal register are key to avoiding conflicts.

###### **When you started working with Chinese people, did you have to change anything in your way of communicating or negotiating?**

It wasn't necessarily required to change the way of negotiating radically. Rather, it is perceived that Chinese companies have undergone a process of modernization and have adapted to the international customer. Currently, they seek long-term business relationships, conduct in-person visits, and strengthen ties beyond virtual contact. This has greatly facilitated interaction and reduced various cultural barriers.

###### **Do you feel that when doing business, ways of thinking or customs are also exchanged between cultures?**

Yes, especially when business relationships are maintained over time. Constant contact allows for building trust, better understanding the market, and adapting to the needs of each context. In that process, there is mutual learning, which not only strengthens business relationships but also opens up space for greater cultural understanding.

###### **Do you remember any experience that made you notice an important cultural difference?**

More than a specific cultural shock, the technological advancement of Chinese factories stands out. The magnitude of their infrastructure, constant innovation, and ability to adapt to the international market reflect a highly competitive and growth-focused business culture. Moreover, when there are long-standing business relationships, proximity and trust make those cultural differences increasingly less noticeable.

###### **Do you believe that the adaptability of cultures is important or necessary?**

Yes, definitely. Adapting to the environment allows for better business and building trust. For example, in long-term business relationships like the case of Indurama with its suppliers it is evident that, to reach that level of trust, both parties have had to make certain adjustments. On one hand, formality and clarity in negotiations have increased to avoid misunderstandings. And on the other hand, Chinese companies have shown greater flexibility, even in matters such as work schedules, considering that the Ecuadorian pace is different. In that sense, adaptability is key for the relationship to work and endure over time.

#### **SALES MANAGER SPECIALIZED IN FOREIGN TRADE**

##### **6. Aire Zaou Yao**

###### **Do you think culture is important and influences business?**

Yes, I believe that culture has a significant impact on international business. First of all, it influences communication styles. For example, in China, communication tends to be more indirect and is oriented toward maintaining harmony and courtesy, which is related to the idea of "saving face." In contrast, in Latin American countries like Ecuador, communication tends to be more flexible and expressive. These differences can lead to misunderstandings or inadequate comprehension during negotiations.

Secondly, I have observed that there is a significant difference in strategic orientation. Chinese entrepreneurs tend to prioritize long-term cooperation and planning, placing great importance on stability and the building of lasting relationships. When making decisions, they

systematically consider various factors, such as the market environment, exchange rate trends, potential risks, and the sustainability of the project. On the contrary, Ecuadorian entrepreneurs tend to focus more on the immediate results of the business, such as the current sales level, market share growth, or short-term financial results. These aspects become priorities because they directly influence the viability and credibility of the business in the present. However, in some cases, this may imply less long-term planning.

**For you, what would be the main differences between Ecuadorians and Chinese?**

One of the main differences has to do with the concept of "face," which is related to maintaining harmony and reputation in interactions. There is also a difference in the way of planning: Chinese businessmen tend to be more strategic and patient during negotiations, and they place great importance on long-term relationships.

In contrast, Ecuadorians tend to be more direct and flexible. In some cases, it is observed that ideas or proposals arise more spontaneously, as an immediate response to market opportunities. This can be positive because it allows for a quick reaction, but it can also cause some initiatives to fail if there is not enough planning.

Moreover, the context has a significant influence. The business environment in China is more developed, which facilitates project execution. In Ecuador, on the other hand, there may be more limitations to carrying out certain ideas. Also within companies, there can be differences in criteria between management or departments, which can hinder decision-making. On the other hand, I believe that in Ecuador there is a high price sensitivity, which means that many business decisions depend heavily on costs. Sometimes this can affect the long-term vision. Finally, the decision-making process can be slower, as it usually involves multiple levels of approval within the company. This also influences the dynamics of the negotiations.

**I understand that for Chinese culture, hierarchy is very important, and you could say it is much more pronounced among you than among Ecuadorians. Maybe. But I could repeat it. Yes, hierarchy, for example, in Chinese culture, I understand that the boss always has much greater respect. I don't know if that's different from Ecuadorian culture. Have you noticed anything like that?**

I understand that it is very similar to Chinese companies, where there are also different levels and we also have to discuss it, but it seems to me that Chinese entrepreneurs can pay more attention to long-term cooperation.

**When you started working with the Ecuadorians, did you perhaps change something in your way of communicating?**

Yes, yes. I had to adjust my way of communicating and negotiating because with Ecuadorians I have to be more flexible, and also I prefer to confirm things in writing to confirm the details of cooperation. And this seems to me that it can reduce misunderstandings and leaves a clear record between the two parties, ensuring that everything is clear. He feels that when negotiating, ways of thinking are exchanged between cultures. Yes, definitely. Doing business with people from another culture is not just an exchange of products or services, but also an exchange of ideas, ways of thinking, customs, or culture. For example, working with Ecuadorians, I have learned to be more flexible and to value personal relationships more, while I understand that Ecuadorians have also learned the negotiation style from us Chinese. For example, regarding organization and planning, and I coming to see that this is an exchange that benefits both parties. Of course.

**How important is trust before closing a deal in Chinese culture?**

In Chinese culture, trust is very important because before signing a contract or making a decision, a lot of time is spent getting to know the other party and building relationships with them, and ensuring that there is mutual commitment. As we discussed earlier, both Chinese and Ecuadorian companies have different levels of management, and during this negotiation, I believe that all actions must be approved by different management levels, and it is not possible to change decisions spontaneously. Therefore, I think that trust is very important in negotiations, as it can guaranty the commitments, the words we discuss, can be executed until the end. Maybe I have adopted something from Ecuadorian culture in my daily life. Yes, I have adopted some aspects of Ecuadorian culture, and for example, I have learned to place more importance on personal relationships with different clients and also to communicate in a more direct and close manner. And that, for example, in China, at the negotiation table, it is not very common for us to have many talks before the negotiation, but here it seems very common to me, and that's why we are learning because it is a way that can strengthen the relationship between us and the client.

**Maybe you have some experience you would like to share about this cultural clash?**

Yes, as I mentioned before, Ecuadorian entrepreneurs tend to be more flexible and in some cases act spontaneously and sometimes do not strictly adhere to the established schedules or deadlines. It can change depending on the current market situation, and for this reason, written agreements are used to clearly stipulate the aspects or agreements we have discussed and to ensure that there is a clear idea and a common framework for the business.

**What do you think about punctuality between the two cultures?**

I don't think it's very different or that Ecuadorians are super late, but of course, for China, punctuality is very important because we need to have a schedule for all projects and as I said, I'm not saying that Ecuadorians are not punctual, that's not the case. It's just that we need to communicate clearly before a project to reach an agreement. And in this aspect, we can encourage each other mutually to reach our goal.

**MERCHANT**

## 7. CHA CHING

### **How many years have you lived in Ecuador and since when have you had your restaurant?**

I have lived in Ecuador for 8 years and I have had my restaurant since 2021.

### **Since you have been living in Ecuador, what have been the main differences you have noticed?**

I have noticed that Ecuador is much more peaceful, there are fewer people since in China there are too many, I have also noticed that Ecuadorians are not very punctual, in most cases there is always a delay, whereas with the Chinese everything is very punctual, sometimes they arrive early to meetings to show more respect. Ecuadorians have more days off and don't work as much as the Chinese do; businesses open until 1 in the morning, whereas there they always work and there are very few breaks for holidays, and businesses are open all the time.

### **What do you think has been the most difficult thing for you to adapt to?**

Well, for me, the language is very difficult; maybe English feels more familiar because that's what they teach in schools in China, but Spanish was something completely new for me, and people are a bit friendlier and more expressive compared to China.

### **Did you maybe have to adjust something in the business for it to run efficiently?**

Not much, to be honest. We still have the presentation of Chinese food and the place with the same essence as back there. The only thing we've changed is the recipes, but very little in relation to the spiciness since I don't know how it is equally spicy here, but we maintain the Chinese tradition.

### **Maybe since you have been living in Ecuador, have you adopted any cultural aspects?**

Yes, I have gotten used to people not being so punctual, so now I apply that too. It's much more relaxed and there aren't as many problems if someone doesn't arrive on time for an occasion, at least in my experience. I have also learned to be more expressive and to have a closer approach with clients.

### **Maybe you remember an occasion where I can find these cultural differences?**

First, I noticed the number of people; here today there are fewer people than in China. When I lived in China, it took two hours to get from work to home, and also the schedule we follow here is less work and the hours are flexible. Also, in terms of affection, here it is normal for a man and a woman to greet each other with a hug, but in China, that is very marked, which also impressed me a lot. In China, there is not that level of closeness.

### **In your case, has it been difficult to find products to make your traditional dishes?**

Actually, I haven't found any difficulties; I can find all the ingredients. Maybe a few years ago it could have been difficult, but now it's very easy to get them.

## MASTER'S IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 8. BELÉN EGAS

I graduated from the University of Azuay in international studies and foreign trade. After that, I started working for the JEP cooperative. I worked there for about two years, and then I got a scholarship to study in China, right in Shanghai. But I had already been studying Chinese for three years and I applied, thank God I had the opportunity to go to China to study. I already studied my major, which was in international studies and negotiation. After completing my two-year master's degree, I started working for a foreign company called BMF Shanghai, which literally was a company that handled all imports and exports. So we exported avocados from Mexico to China, and also what went from China to Mexico, Chile, Peru were all kinds of accessories for mining, accessories for auto parts, fabrics primarily for the textile factory in Chile. Some products, whatever could be sent, to all of Latin America. So, that's where I started gaining experience working with the Chinese.

### **How many years did you live in China, when did you return, and what is your current job?**

I stayed for five years, continued working there, then I worked for a company in the United States that deals with the buying and selling of diamonds and jewelry in general. I returned when my contract ended and now I founded my import and export company. So now I am dedicated to everything related to imports from China to Ecuador, and I am helping entrepreneurs because many times we see it as very distant, something that scares us, something that makes us feel insecure. So that is the foundation and the reason why we created this company, to give them the security that maybe they don't know, the people here don't know, but that can bring something good and do something fair and above all have a purpose. It's like doing commerce with a purpose, not doing commerce just to attract anything and make it something that can benefit both the entrepreneur here and the Chinese entrepreneur, but that is fair and purposeful.

### **Do you think culture influences business between different countries?**

Yes, culture completely influences, especially when we talk about China and Ecuador, because our culture is a bit more charismatic, a bit more familial, a bit more open in some senses. However, Chinese culture is a bit more reserved in the sense that there is a protocol for doing business. For example, one of the examples I always like to give is when you go to introduce your company to another Chinese

businessman, generally, they give you a card, you always have to have your business card that says my name, my company, my number. So they don't hand it to you with one hand, it's always given with both hands, because that's a symbol of respect. So they also receive it with a bow. So, it's those little things that you might not learn in the subjects, but you learn when you start working with them. And in the same way, you receive the card, you read it, it's not just that you receive it and put it away like we often do here. Thank you for giving me the card and I took it. If you don't read it, you don't give it the importance it deserves. So I firmly believe that culture can have a huge influence, especially in business, and that it is important to know how to navigate the realm of the culture we are talking about, because the Chinese are a bit more. They take their time to analyze things, there is always a protocol and the bureaucracy is different, it's also more about paperwork, Ecuadorians, on the other hand, we want to close the deal much faster. So, yes, I firmly believe that culture matters a lot for making negotiations.

**What differences have you noticed in the way Ecuadorians and Chinese negotiate?**

One of the main differences is that the Chinese are much more methodical, for example, if you are going to make a purchase, for instance, if you want to buy little bottles. At the beginning, they will say to you, okay, ready, how many bottles do you want? and this is the price. But before that, they try to get to know you. So, in the Ecuadorian market, we are like, okay, each bottle costs this much and we don't need to be friends, we don't need to know each other or anything like that to do business. While the Chinese have a specific word for it, which is guanxi. What is guanxi? Guanxi is where one strengthens a relationship over time. So they try to make it so that it's not just like I'm selling you the bottles, but I'm part of a common goal, we both have this common goal and that's why you're going to buy from me and I'm going to grow my business because of you as well, and that's also going to benefit you. We have a common goal, and that's why it feels like we have a purpose. This guanxi, at the beginning, they will say to you, Belén, how are you? How have you been today? Do you have children maybe, don't you have children, you know that today I went to such and such place and they start making conversation with you? And they ask you, how have you been? and they write to you every day until they can build that relationship so that even when you buy from them or even if you don't buy from them and you have built a good relationship, they believe that the foundation for any successful business is the relationship they create first. So, sometimes they even send you flowers on your birthday or the suppliers send you a little gift, a notebook, something like that. They really believe that guanxi is the foundation for building this relationship, a relationship that you don't just create by buying a bottle and that's it, but one that stays for the future. You realize that this company treated me this way and I will recommend it to someone else. So they believe that the relationship you create now is based for the future.

**What differences have you noticed in the way Chinese and Ecuadorian businesspeople negotiate?**

It is one of the differences that has been most noticeable in the communication between the businesspeople. The communication. We, the Ecuadorians, have a more direct communication style, getting straight to the point in the negotiations we want, while the communication with the Chinese is a bit more diplomatic. Many times we can lose a lot of information in translation, just as information can be lost when they tell you they don't want to give in on something. They might not say no directly, but will be a bit ambiguous, saying, "At the moment, we don't have this, we don't have that," but they will never say it directly. So I believe that communication is extremely important, especially if you are going to do business with Chinese culture. It's essential to have someone who is proficient, if not in Chinese, then in English, because even when you send them documents in English, the translation can get lost since they translate it into Chinese, and often something gets lost in the process. Not many of them speak English, however, well, nowadays there are so many applications, there are translators and everything. But I would recommend that when you go to do business, always try to do everything on paper, everything signed or by email or leave some record, not by a call, not by a video call, but always have a record, and that way, you will avoid misunderstandings in communication with the Chinese.

It would be more about what gets lost in translation, right? From Spanish to English, English to Chinese, and vice versa. Exactly. We have the language. We have a lot of embellishments in our language, however, in Chinese, it is much more direct.

**When you started working with Chinese people, did you have to change anything in your way, maybe in communication or negotiation?**

Yes, at the beginning I felt a bit of frustration because I liked things to be quick, for everything to flow smoothly, and for them to give me the correct information. However, what I changed is that for them, doing business requires time, it is necessary to create these relationships that I mentioned, which is guanxi, and sometimes you feel a bit like your privacy is being invaded because you say, why are they asking me about my family? Why are they asking me about my personal life if we're just going to do business and that's it? Business, right, but no. I mean, I understood that I have to change that and that I also have to receive from them and I also have to give. So, first that. Second, be a little more patient. For them, let's say, doing things right takes time. It's not quick. As I told you, they are more methodical and if they need something from you, sometimes you end up saying, oh, why not just do it better.

**And basically, there the ways of thinking and customs will also be exchanged, right? Each company's, the Chinese adapt to our companies and we to the Chinese companies.**

We adapted to them, and something very nice that I got to do was that the company I worked for was dedicated to bringing avocados, but in containers, and we brought three or four containers from Mexico to Shanghai. In Shanghai, there is a market that distributes to Beijing and the rest of the nearby cities. So, I had to visit each of the people in that market, because we call it a market because there are fruits coming from different countries like Chile, Peru, Mexico, from everywhere, but there are the companies, it's like a big mall where all the companies that distribute the fruits are. So we went, and there are two super important things here. One, it's the fact that you are a woman when you go to negotiate with the Chinese, or the fact that you are a man, okay? So, if you are a woman and you are a businesswoman, for example, or you are a boss, many times the Chinese have a culture that is a bit more macho, you know? The man always has to be at the top, however, well, now many positions are being opened up to give more prominence to women, but the head is always a man. So when I first arrived, they would ask me, "And your boss?" And I would tell them, my boss is not here, my boss is in Mexico, I am the representative here in China, like that. So they would tell me, well, we were around a tea table and we did the tea ceremony, because generally, they always invite you and they observe very closely how you drink the tea. So these are things one has to learn. They also used to offer me to smoke because they love smoking. And it was like, no, I don't smoke, and they would smoke in front of you while we talked about business and all that, and I didn't have to put up with it there.

**In relation to the hierarchy, how is it managed?**

If it is quite marked, especially with the client portfolio you have. So, it's like first, you're a woman or a man, and if you're a man, you get treated like it's a man-to-man business deal where we smoke, have a drink of wine, or drink Joe, which is a very strong alcohol. And while they drink, they conduct their business. However, when you are a woman, they do offer you those things, and there are many times when you can't refuse, for example, if they invite you to lunch, they generally invite you to lunch and you close the deal in the middle of the meal. I mean, for us, on the other hand, it's like we first do business or Ecuadorians and then invite them to eat, and during the meal, we get to know each other better and all. However, in China, it's not like that; while you are eating, you talk about business. How much do you want to bring? How many containers do you have? Who do you want to sell to? At what price, what quality? So, I feel that you have to be very alert with these protocols, because it's also disrespectful to say, no, let's not talk about business now, we're eating. Or no, let's not have tea, I don't want to. It's also a way to appreciate their culture; the time taken for the tea ceremony is also a ritual. So I believe that Chinese culture has many rituals in many things, and in negotiations, it also has its rituals. So it's all about the time, the respect, and the purpose you want to have with this. If you, a Chinese businessman, and the Ecuadorian businessman have the same purpose, I believe that the Chinese are the people, the world has painted them as being of poor quality, all the things that the Chinese bring are bad. However, I believe that the Chinese are now the power they are literally because they have come from being slaves to a millennia-old culture that has literally developed in technology, where they now have robots that can imitate all the actions that people do. Living in Shanghai is literally a trip to the future, which I hope, I don't know, I mean, not even the United States can compare to the technology they have. And they are very methodical, they have, for example, goals, for instance, if they tell you by 2030, we are going to have, we are going to strengthen the yuan. So they have several objectives, and they dedicate all this time to doing what they need to do to achieve that goal. So, many times, I mean, that's what I like, their way of thinking is sometimes like a hive mentality, like that. It's more communal in that if I help my own, it's like we can all grow together, it's always like I pick up the trash so that the rest can also live in the same conditions I'm living in a place, in safety too, I mean, that's what I'm telling you, and it has a lot to do with business too, it's like if you win, I win, I mean, it's the win-win, it's cooperation, so it's key.

**Maybe some experience where these cultural differences were very striking.**

Let's see, at the beginning, something that bothered me a lot is that the Chinese, for example, are very, I mean, it's not that I was bothered by the fact that they are natural, but honestly, it's the fact that they think everything that comes out of the body is something natural and something that has to flow. So, sometimes in a meeting or something, someone would burp or use a case or something like that. I was red and it was like, how embarrassing, but it happened more with smaller suppliers like that. The bigger ones are no longer like that, it's like they have also gone abroad, they see that they don't do it. However, in the market, you always have to be open to the culture you are going to be in. So, at first, I would say, like, how rude, but well, sometimes you see it in the subway, sometimes you see it on the street or they spit and everything, and I would say, like, why do they spit on the street, how awful, but no, I mean, these are things you get used to because in their mindset it's like, if the body needs it, why, in fact, we are doing it wrong because we hold it in, they think that way. So I think that's what shocked me at first.

**And from there, is there anything else that has impacted me and made me notice these differences?**

I don't think so, I consider myself a very open person because there's a saying that goes, either you love China or you don't, so there's no middle ground. And I believe that China is currently developing very strongly. We, as businesspeople, should be bringing, let's say, high-quality items; over there, they offer high, medium, and low quality. And unfortunately, we are used to buying the cheapest, and obviously, something accustomed to haggling will come. In China, the final price is never the final price. If you always have to ask for a little more discount, what benefits can you offer, or if in the next container I can bring, I don't know, you give me some discount on the next container

or the next order I place. So, that's already part of the culture. If you don't negotiate, it will also be like, how strange, they accepted the price right away, like that. So bargaining is also part of that culture. But there, when it comes to bargaining, maybe they don't lower the quality either, and there might be some misunderstandings.

You know, one might think that something worth 50 can be gotten for 30, but they give us the quality of a 30 product, not the same as the 50 one. That's why I'm telling you, you have to have everything in writing and they ask you, okay, what quality do you have and what is your budget? If we say, we are negotiating for the medium quality, let's say. I want the medium cost, alright. Give me a discount on that one while maintaining that quality. And the same Chinese vendor will tell you, I can give you a discount up to this point, but if you want something more, I can offer you this other type of product. So, there are many times when we, as Ecuadorians, think, oh, he's going to give me, he's going to give me a good product, but I'm paying less or something. And that's where the communication problems arise, because people, I mean, later or surprise, they get what they didn't want, they get something that breaks, they get something that wasn't well negotiated. People think that one can just go to the Alibaba, Crash, whatever apps and take whatever they want. And that's it, it's not like that, I mean, everything is a process and it's so rich in culture that yes, I mean, I do say, I mean, at some point in my life I would love for everyone to go to China because before I went, I had one thought, after I went I said, wow, I mean, it's another world. This is another world, and this is something I used to say I would never surpass in my life, I mean, even if I go somewhere else, to Europe, to the United States or whatever, to this day I say, the Chinese are living in the future.

like this.