Exploring the solutions for culture and language barriers affecting business between China and Morocco

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Abstract
Although what we hear about the globalization, differing business customs and practices indeed continue to be invisible barriers to global trade. This research aims at studying culture and language barriers that affect both Moroccans and Chinese conducting business with each other, it will provide tips and solutions for culture and language barriers, in order to maintain good business relationships between Moroccan and Chinese firms, companies, businessmen doing business with each other.

Keywords: language barriers, solutions, business, obstacle.

1 Introduction:
As China’s economy is rapidly growing, with improvements in the country’s infrastructure, work-force and regulatory environment, with a lower production cost, many Moroccan companies have decided to move their businesses to China, in order to harvest new competitive advantages. Others find the Chinese products more competitive. Meanwhile Chinese started to look for new markets especially in Africa, and Morocco is one of its targeted destinations.

Due to this growing need for expanding both countries’ businesses, trade relations between Morocco and China are growing as well. There are, however, several obstacles to successful business relationship formation, where language represents a big chasm for both business makers, businessmen sometimes lose a business opportunity just because of not speaking the customer’s language. Likewise, those who break a business relationship as a result of a misunderstanding caused by insufficient language skills.

This research will be as guideline for Moroccan and Chinese business makers, in order for them to overcome language barriers, and strengthen their business relations for a brighter and successful business future for both Morocco and China.

2 Literature review:
Gesteland (1996) claimed in his study that business culture differs in the way the business makers communicate. Negotiators on the deal-focused side of the great divide tend to value direct, frank, straightforward language while those on the relationship focus side often favor a more indirect, subtle, roundabout style. Gesteland (1996) believe that this communication gap is perhaps the largest single source of misunderstandings. And that confusion arises because the two cultures expect quite different things from the communication. He pointed out that today in the large world of business, more and more Chinese negotiators speak foreign languages, especially English. Nevertheless, you may find it advisable to employ an interpreter, if you are working on a major deal you may wish to hire your own interpreter rather than relying on one supplied by the other party.

When it comes to verbal communication, it's reserved and formal. Less reliance on written and telephone communication, more emphasis on meeting face to face. The Chinese at times employ indirect, vague, oblique language wherein the meaning is deliberately ambiguous and implicit rather than clear and explicit, they may use circumlocutions and evasive language to avoid offending the other party.
Gesteland (1996) gave this example: many Chinese see it offensive to reply to a question with a blunt ‘no’, so a negotiator might answer “that will require further study” or “that will be difficult” instead. He affirmed that the Chinese tend to rely on as much on preverbal and nonverbal as on verbal language.

Chinese speak more softly than people of some other cultures, they also try to avoid interrupting the other party, since this would be very rude, a laugh or a giggle sometimes signals stress, nervousness or embarrassment rather than amusement. When meeting and greeting, expect a gentle handshake and moderate eye contact, strong, direct eye contact may be misinterpreted as an attempt to intimidate or an indication of outright hostility.

3 Aim of the study:
In this study I propose to investigate language as a barriers affecting business between China and Morocco, language barriers in business are the main cause of misunderstanding, frustration, annoyance, and then business loss. I believe that Good initiation process of establishing a business relationship starts with correct communication, and mutual understanding is absolutely a key success factor for establishing a business relationship. Language also has a huge potential for expanding business opportunities for both Chinese and Moroccans, strengthening ties between the two countries, for longer and successful cooperation.

4 The importance of understanding culture difference and Language barriers: As everybody knows language is a vital element that is part of culture, not less important than culture, but cultural shock is easy to overcome than language gap. This research is with the objective of Providing Moroccan and Chinese governments with vital information about language barriers, that Moroccan and Chinese companies, firms, businessmen are facing when doing business with each other. I will illustrate the key differences between Moroccan and Chinese businessmen to make business conditions for business relations clearer and easier for both Moroccan and Chinese. I will provide as well tactics and methods to improve business relation between Morocco and China.

Businessmen from all over the world with different backgrounds, cultures, language, speaking different languages are coming to China to look for business opportunities, indeed plenty of them are starting their own business here in China, as well as many Chinese businessmen, companies and firms go to Morocco and set up their businesses there. But there are some difficulties and barriers that affect business relations, one of those barriers is language barriers, this communication gap is perhaps the largest single source of misunderstanding between business makers, which leads to confusion.

It’s a priority to be clearly understood when communicating or negotiating for business. In contrast most businessmen while negotiating assign top priority to maintaining harmony and promoting smooth interpersonal relations, since preserving harmony within the business partners and groups is so important, people tend to carefully watch what they say, in order to avoid embarrassing or offending others, which may lead to business loss and all that can be maintained through a good mastery of the language.

5.1 what can be done to overcome language barriers:
Mutual understanding is not only a key success factor for establishing a business relationship but also in maintaining a harmonious, strong, and long lasting relationship.
In order to prevent barriers from affecting business relations between Chinese and Moroccans in front of trade lines, there are some tips that might be helpful for a better, and mutual understanding.

5.1.1 Good listening:
Listening carefully and actively is a characteristic that very few people. Paraphrase the message to be sure you understand, be sure that there is nothing wrong in asking for clarity or repetition.

1 Paraverbal: refers to the messages that we transmit through the tone, pitch, and pacing of our voices. It is how we say something, not what we say.
5.1.2 Good Preparation:
Before meeting with the customer or the supplier who speaks different language, it’s helpful to prepare in advance all technical terms that might be useful in the negotiation. If you have to give a speech, prepare what you’ll say beforehand in order to prevent talking in circles or long pauses.

5.1.3 Make it simple:
When speaking to non-native speakers who don’t master well your language, whether it’s Arabic or Chinese, avoid speaking louder so that they’ll understand you. Instead, try to speak simpler language, at a slower pace so that they can have a full understanding of your meaning.

5.1.4 Never correct:
Refrain from correcting your business counterpart who is attempting to communicate with you, it can be embarrassing for him. Instead, use the correct term or format in your response. Make an effort: keep in mind that the person is making a big effort speaking your language, which is not his mother tongue. Then it’s your turn to do an equal effort to understand him.

5.1.5 Sign up for language classes:
If you don’t speak the language of your business counterpart, remember that it’s never late to learn a new language, that help you bridge the gap between you and him, in case you feel having a lack of language skills, or bad mastery of it. Taking language classes will help you to improve your level of the foreign language. Moreover that will make you able to personalize your messages to your business partner, without using a third party (interpreters...).

5.1.6 Use written communication:
If one of the two parties doesn’t have a good mastery of the spoken foreign language, it’s preferable to use written communication, as its more complete and understandable, then spoken communication, because the person has all the time to choose the most appropriate words or structure of his sentences, unlike the oral communication (phone calls, software calls...), which needs an immediate feedback. In case both parties have a good oral language, it’s advisable to maintain a paced and clear phone conversation.

5.1.7 Body language:
Body language can be a good tool, to help express oneself, and then overcome language barriers between Moroccans and Chinese, it can turn as well to a main source of conflict that may cause some sorts of misunderstanding, especially, as both parties have different cultural background, their interpretations of body gestures may differ as well. Finally, Moroccans and Chinese communicate differently. Certain messages might be motivating for one person and intensive for another. Understanding your business counterpart differences is key factor, to keep your business communication effective and barrier-free.

5.2 - Hiring interpreters:
5.2.1 Tips for hiring an interpreter:
Confidentiality is one of the fundamental principles for choosing a professional interpreter. In general, good interpreter is someone who is first trustworthy, trust is the main criteria for choosing an interpreter. Its also important to ask for his experiences, background, knowledge in the field, his diplomas and certificates. When hiring an interpreter it is highly advised to hire somebody recommended by a friend or a company whom he worked with before.

5.2.2 How to work effectively with the interpreter:
Familiarity with the subject matters, it enhances the quality of the interpreted message, the interpreter should be given enough information about his task, as he should be given enough time as well, in order to check the terminology and technical vocabulary. And also to prepare some basic knowledge about his task and the subject he is intended to work on. This will give the interpreter a clear idea about the client’s needs.

It’s very important for both Moroccans and Chinese using interpreters, to bare in mind that they should do their best to speak a clear language, and not the dialect, for example Moroccan should specify the language they are willing to use with the interpreter, Moroccan dialect, Arabic, French or English, and not mix them, moreover Chinese should also pay attention to their accents, some Chinese can’t
manage to speak a standard Chinese mandarin, instead they speak their local dialect believing that the interpreter understands, which brings ambiguity to the interpretations process, as it prevent a successful transfer of meaning.

Keeping eye contact with the customer or supplier while talking to him is very important, while in a meeting, conference its important to make sure chairs’ height are equal, that might be regarded as lack of respect. It’s well recommended to look and speak to customer and not to the interpreter, both parties should address each other directly ‘I’ and ‘you’ and it’s the role of the interpreter to maintain this form of address. Its important that the interpreter doesn’t stand between the two parties, in order not to block them from seeing each other.

Good introduction for yourself or your interpreter will surely pave the way for an easy and successful communication across language barriers. Jumping into the business directly may have many bad consequences not only on the communication process but also on the business, especially for Moroccan dealing with their Chinese counterparts, it is important to bear in mind that Chinese always prefer to do business with someone they know. Building a relationship before talking business is strongly appreciated, to start with some friendly warm up, if the two parties didn’t have the chance to know each other before, then it’s preferable that they start a friendly conversation in order to break the ice.

Conclusion:
The reason of this study was to gather knowledge of how Chinese and Moroccans behave, interact, and communicate with each other in the field of business.

This research came also with some insights, into the importance of realizing the existence of language barriers that affect business between the two parties; especially both of them come from the opposite sides of the globe, and speak different languages.

According to his modest investigation, this research comes as pioneering work. In the subject of solutions to the language barriers affecting business between Morocco and China. It provides Moroccans and Chinese with tactics and methods to be adapted in order to avoid the language chasm, and improve business relations between the two countries.

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