



Fungai B. Chigwendere

Towards Intercultural Communication Congruence in Sino-African Organisational Contexts

Fungai B. Chigwendere

**Towards Intercultural
Communication
Congruence in Sino-
African Organisational
Contexts**

Fungai B. Chigwendere

Towards Intercultural Communication Congruence in Sino-African Organisational Contexts

Tectum Verlag

<https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828871212-1>

Generiert durch IP '3.129.67.244', am 19.05.2024, 01:07:26.

Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.

Fungai B. Chigwendere

Towards Intercultural Communication Congruence in Sino-African
Organisational Contexts

© Tectum – ein Verlag in der Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2018

Thesis from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa 2018

E-Book: 978-3-8288-7121-2

(Dieser Titel ist zugleich als gedrucktes Werk unter der ISBN
978-3-8288-4234-2 im Tectum Verlag erschienen.)

Umschlagabbildung: shutterstock.com © Likee68

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Besuchen Sie uns im Internet

www.tectum-verlag.de

Bibliografische Informationen der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der
Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Angaben sind
im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Abstract

Despite the prevalence of theories and research that could serve as guidelines for addressing intercultural communication challenges such as misunderstanding, ineffectiveness and inappropriateness in communication in Sino-African organisational contexts, the continued existence of these challenges suggests the inadequacy of such theories. Accordingly, in consideration of African and Chinese cultural perspectives, the aim of this study was to develop a *hybrid intercultural communication congruence (HICC) framework* in order to enhance intercultural communication and achieve intercultural communication congruence in Sino-African organisational contexts. In this study, intercultural communication congruence means effectiveness and appropriateness in intercultural communication. To achieve the study aim, an interpretive pragmatism paradigm was adopted, comprising a two-pronged approach of a synthesis of extant literature and theory as well as an empirical qualitative study, both underpinned by cross-cultural management theory. Based on the synthesis of literature and theory, a generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework underpinned by intercultural communication awareness – a state where communicants understand *communication orientation* and *manner of communication* in their own and their counterparts' culture – was developed. A further contribution was a theoretical contextualisation of the generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework, resulting in a theoretical framework for intercultural communication awareness in Western, African and Chinese cultures and a theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework *specific to Sino-African organisational contexts*. Thereafter, with the aim of validating the intercultural communication awareness dimension of the theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework *specific to Sino-African organisational contexts*, an empirical study was conducted with a sample of seven African and eight Chinese experts using in-depth interviews with open-ended and semi-structured questions. Based on qualitative content analysis, six intercultural communication awareness enablers or conditions that enable people to understand communication in different cultures and contexts for the purposes of attaining intercultural communication awareness emerged. These were *cultural orientation*, *manner of communication*, *orientation to rules and protocol*, *individual dispositions*, *intercultural communication influences* and *intercultural communication variations*. An integration of the intercultural communication awareness enablers into the generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework results in an updated generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework. Then, informed by the updated generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework, a further contribution of this study was an empirical verification of the intercultural communication awareness dimension of the

theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework *specific to Sino-African organisational contexts* to result in a final hybrid intercultural communication congruence framework for Sino-African organisational contexts supported by the perspectives of those involved in interaction, rather than predetermined standards of other cultures. Empirical findings suggest that both African and Chinese colleagues maintain a sense of collectivism in the Sino-African organisational context, although this is demonstrated differently. In addition, African colleagues display a blended manner of communication characterised by a mix of Western and African ways while the Chinese manner is contextual and governed by roles and relationships. In African culture, rules and protocol are negotiated, aimed at social maintenance, while strong cultural patriotism ensures strict adherence in Chinese culture. In respect of individual dispositions, African people are seen as open and accommodating while the Chinese disposition could be described as closed and ambiguous. Also evident in the findings is the existence of within-culture differences and influence of non-cultural factors on intercultural communication that should be addressed in order to achieve intercultural communication congruence. Finally, the frameworks developed and the methodological processes followed will stimulate academic debate and raise numerous questions for future research. Immediate future research could be geared towards refining the concepts of intercultural communication awareness, intercultural communication congruence and the hybrid intercultural communication congruence framework for Sino-African organisational contexts. At a management practice level, intercultural communication awareness insights provide a reference point for intercultural communication enhancement strategies and interventions in Sino-African organisational contexts.

KEY WORDS: intercultural communication congruence, intercultural communication awareness, awareness enablers, Chinese, African, communication, culture.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people who made the completion of this thesis possible through their encouragement and support. Particularly, I would like to thank:

- My mom and late father for planting the seed, and instilling the belief that nothing is impossible.
- My supervisors, Professor Lynette Louw and Professor Terence Jackson, for their patience, guidance and support throughout the study.
- My daughter, Tanya for the little notes of encouragement when I was weary, *“mom, when you wake up please read your books, I know you can do it!”*
- My husband Mark, for your patience and ‘playing mommy’ when I could not be there.
- My siblings, Kudzai, Tinashe, Tatenda, Tandizani and late Gamuchiral for the prayers and encouragement when it was difficult to carry on.
- The men and women who took time to participate in the study.
- Li Yue and Angelique for the insights into Chinese culture and being reliable and dedicated research assistants.
- Judy and Naomi for all the administrative assistance and encouragement.
- Ruth Coetzee for the language and technical editing.
- The Lord Almighty, the author and finisher of my life, the giver of all things good.
- The Rhodes University Sandisa Imbewu Fund.
- Finally the financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF. This work is based on the research supported in part by the National Research Foundation of South Africa for the Grant No. 93636.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation	23
Introduction	23
1.1 Context and Background	24
1.1.1 Significance of the Sino-African context	24
1.2 The Research Problem	25
1.2.1 Contemporary approaches to and theories of intercultural communication	26
1.2.2 Intercultural communication congruence in Sino-African organisational contexts: the state of research	27
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives	30
1.3.1 Main study aim	30
1.3.2 Study of theory (literature study) aim	30
1.3.2.1 Objectives of the study of theory (literature study)	31
1.3.2.2 Theoretical (literature study) research questions	32
1.3.3 Empirical aims	32
1.3.3.1 Empirical objectives	33
1.3.3.2 Empirical research questions	33
1.4 Significance of the Study	34
1.5 Research Design and Methodology	35
1.5.1 Study of theory	35
1.5.2 Empirical study	36
1.6 Demarcation of Study	38
1.7 Definition of Terms	39
1.8 Structure of Thesis	40
Chapter 2: Conceptualising Intercultural Communication Congruence	45
Introduction	45
2.1 Defining Intercultural Communication	45
2.2 The Study of Intercultural Communication	46
2.2.1 History of the study of intercultural communication	46

2.2.2	Contemporary approaches to intercultural communication	47
2.2.2.1	The social science approaches	48
a.	The psychosocial approach	48
b.	The skills approach	48
c.	Behavioural approach	49
d.	Knowledge of the “other” approach	49
e.	Common ground and acceptance of differences approach	49
2.2.2.2	The interpretive approaches	50
2.2.2.3	The critical approaches	51
2.2.2.4	Summary	51
2.2.3	Theories for enhancing intercultural communication	52
2.2.3.1	Cultural convergence theory	52
2.2.3.2	Anxiety uncertainty management theory	53
2.2.3.3	Face negotiation theory	53
2.3	Barriers and Challenges in Intercultural Communication	54
2.3.1	Language differences	54
2.3.2	Non-verbal communication	55
2.3.3	Culture and value differences	56
2.3.4	Ethnocentrism	57
2.3.5	Stereotyping and prejudice	57
2.3.6	Anxiety felt by the “strangers” in communication	58
2.4	Considerations for Intercultural Communication Congruence	58
2.4.1	Intercultural communication awareness	58
2.4.1.1	Communication orientation	59
2.4.1.2	Manner of communication	59
2.4.2	Effectiveness in communication	59
2.4.3	Appropriateness in communication	60
2.5.	Intercultural Communication Congruence	60
2.5.1	A cross-cultural approach to enhanced intercultural communication	61
2.5.2	Cultural, cross-cultural and intercultural communication	61
2.6	Summary	62
Chapter 3: Conceptualising Intercultural Communication Awareness		63
Introduction		63
3.1	Themes Underlying Intercultural Communication (IC)	63
3.1.1	Culture and values	63
3.1.1.1	Self-perceptions	64
3.1.2	Worldview	65

3.1.3	Communication	66
3.1.4	The relationship between culture and communication.....	67
3.1.5	Cultural differences and similarities in communication	67
3.1.5.1	Dimensions of cultural variation in communication	67
a.	The individualism vs collectivism dimension in communication.....	68
b.	Low and high context communication	69
c.	High versus low face needs.....	70
3.1.5.2	Summary.....	70
3.2	Intercultural Communication Awareness.....	70
3.2.1	Criteria for conceptualising communication orientation and manner of communication (IC awareness enablers).....	71
3.2.1.1	Criterion 1: Values, guiding philosophies (<i>incorporating self-perceptions</i>)	74
3.2.1.2	Criterion 2: The nature of communication.....	74
3.2.1.3	Criterion 3: The objective of communication	74
3.2.1.4	Criterion 4: Degree of interaction in communication	75
3.2.1.5	Criterion 5: Thinking process and communication	76
3.2.2	Relationship between IC awareness enablers, communication orientation, manner of communication and intercultural communication awareness	77
3.2.3	Framework for comparing the manner of communication	78
3.3	Summary	79
Chapter 4: A Generic Theoretical Intercultural Communication Congruence Framework ..		81
Introduction		81
4.1	Presenting the Generic Theoretical Intercultural Communication Congruence Framework	81
4.1.1	Reading the figure	81
4.1.1.1	Developing IC awareness through understanding communication orientation and the manner of communication	83
4.1.1.2	Intercultural communication awareness-engendered consequences and possibilities	84
4.1.1.3	Enhanced intercultural communication	84
4.2	The Generic Theoretical Intercultural Communication Congruence Framework in the Context of the Present Study.....	85
4.3	Summary	86
Chapter 5: Intercultural Communication Awareness		87
Introduction		87
5.1	Western, African and Chinese Cultures.....	88
5.1.1.	Western culture	88
5.1.2	African culture.....	89
5.1.2.1	Communalism	89

a.	The supremacy of the community	89
b.	The utility of the individual	89
c.	The sanctity of authority	90
d.	Respect for old age	90
e.	Religion as a way of life	90
5.1.2.2	Ubuntu	91
5.1.2.3	Humanism	91
5.1.3	Chinese culture	91
5.1.3.1	Confucianism	92
a.	Jen (benevolence and humanness)	92
b.	Influence of family and insiders (zi-jiren) versus outsiders	92
c.	Hierarchy and role relationships	93
d.	Bao (reciprocity)	93
e.	Guanxi (relationships/connections)	93
f.	Mianzi (face)	94
5.1.4	Summary	94
5.2	Communication Orientation and Manner of Communication in Western, African and Chinese Cultures ..	94
5.2.1	Values and guiding philosophies (<i>incorporating self-perceptions</i>)	96
5.2.1.1	Self-perceptions	96
5.2.2	Nature of communication	99
5.2.3	Objective of communication	100
5.2.4	Degree of interaction	102
5.2.5	Thinking process	105
5.2.6	Summary	107
5.3	The Manner of Communication in Western, African and Chinese Cultural Contexts	107
5.4	Theoretical IC Congruence (TICC) Framework Specific to Sino-African Organisational Contexts	108
5.5	Summary	110
	Chapter 6: Research Design and Methodology	111
	Introduction	111
6.1	The Philosophy of Research	111
6.1.1	Research paradigm	112
6.2	Research Design	114
6.3	A: Study of Theory	115
6.3.1	Traditional literature review and synthesis	115
6.3.2	Quasi-systematic review	116
6.3.2.1	Planning the quasi-systematic review	117
6.3.2.2	Literature search and selection	117

a.	Timeframe for literature sourcing	117
b.	Inclusion and exclusion of articles	118
6.3.3	Meta-synthesis	119
6.3.3.1	Meta-synthesis in the context of the present study	119
6.3.4	Quality assessment and ethical issues: study of theory.....	121
6.4	B: Empirical Qualitative Study	121
6.4.1	Overview	121
6.4.1.1	Qualitative study interviewing experts	122
a.	Definition of an "expert"	122
6.4.2	Data collection	123
6.4.2.1	Sample and sampling procedure	124
6.4.2.2	Data collection methods	125
a.	In-depth interviews	125
b.	Interview structure and intention	126
6.4.3	Validity and reliability	129
6.4.3.1	Confirmability	129
6.4.3.2	Transferability	130
6.4.3.3	Dependability	130
6.4.3.4	Credibility	130
6.4.3.5	Triangulation	131
6.4.4	Ethical considerations	132
6.4.5	Qualitative data analysis	132
6.4.5.1	Level of analysis	132
6.4.5.2	Procedures of analysis	133
6.5	Summary	138
Chapter 7: Empirical Research Findings		139
Introduction		139
7.1	Biographical Information of the Sample	140
7.1.1	Distribution of cultural grouping	142
7.1.2	Distribution of gender	142
7.1.3	Distribution of age	142
7.1.4	Distribution of ethnic group	143
7.1.5	Distribution of position and education	143
7.1.6	Distribution of industry sector	144
7.1.7	Distribution of experience in months	144
7.2	Presentation of Findings	145
7.3	Perspectives of Intercultural Communication Awareness – African Culture	146

7.3.1	Own perspectives: African experts	146
7.3.1.1	Human centredness	149
7.3.1.2	Consensus-seeking	150
7.3.1.3	Respectful	151
7.3.1.4	Humble	151
7.3.1.5	Speaking in a direct manner	152
7.3.1.6	Showing emotions	153
7.3.1.7	Communalistic	153
7.3.1.8	Following rules and protocol	153
7.3.1.9	Family orientation	154
7.3.1.10	Etiquette	154
7.3.1.11	Summary	154
7.3.2	Intercultural communication awareness of African culture: Chinese experts' perspectives	155
7.3.2.1	African people are human-centred	157
7.3.2.2	African people are arrogant	157
7.3.2.3	African people are direct	158
7.3.2.4	African people are humble	158
7.3.2.5	African people are family-orientated	159
7.3.2.6	African people talk a lot	159
7.3.2.7	African people are curious	160
7.3.2.8	African people show emotions	160
7.3.2.9	Summary	160
7.3.3	Intercultural communication awareness in African culture – own and other perspectives	161
7.3.3.1	Discussion	164
7.4	Perspectives of Intercultural Communication Awareness – Chinese Culture	166
7.4.1	Own perspectives: Chinese experts	166
7.4.1.1	Follow rules and protocol	169
7.4.1.2	Face-giving and face-saving – mianzi	169
7.4.1.3	In-group focus	170
7.4.1.4	Indirect manner	171
7.4.1.5	Pursuit of harmony	171
7.4.1.6	Hierarchical	172
7.4.1.7	Little talk	172
7.4.1.8	Nonverbal communication	173
7.4.1.9	Respect	173
7.4.1.10	Relationships – guanxi	174
7.4.1.11	Showing emotions	174
7.4.1.12	Summary	174
7.4.2	Intercultural communication awareness of Chinese culture: African experts' perspectives	175

7.4.2.1	Chinese people follow rules and protocol	178
7.4.2.2	Chinese people have an in-group focus	179
7.4.2.3	Chinese people keep their own culture	180
7.4.2.4	Chinese people communicate nonverbally	181
7.4.2.5	Chinese people are abrupt	182
7.4.2.6	Chinese people are insincere	182
7.4.2.7	Chinese people are authoritative	183
7.4.2.8	Chinese people do not show emotions	183
7.4.2.9	Status-driven communication	184
7.4.2.10	Chinese people are calm in manner	184
7.4.2.11	Chinese people do not say "no"	185
7.4.2.12	Strong concern for face-giving and face-saving – mianzi	185
7.4.2.13	Communication is hierarchical	186
7.4.2.14	Chinese people are honourable	186
7.4.2.15	Chinese people do not talk much	187
7.4.2.16	Chinese people are rude	187
7.4.2.17	Chinese people value relationships – guanxi	188
7.4.2.18	Chinese people are indirect	188
7.4.2.19	Summary	189
7.4.3	Intercultural communication awareness in Chinese culture – own and other perspectives	189
7.4.3.1	Discussion	193
7.5	Intercultural Communication Awareness: African Own and Chinese Own Perspectives Compared	194
7.5.1	Summary	197
7.6	Intercultural Communication Awareness: African and Chinese Perspectives of "Other" Compared	198
7.6.1	Summary	201
7.7	Emerging Intercultural Communication Awareness Perspectives (African and Chinese Experts)	201
7.7.1	Variations	204
7.7.1.1	Business and social contexts	204
7.7.1.2	Organisational typology	205
7.7.1.3	Race	205
7.7.1.4	Level of education	206
7.7.1.5	Class	206
7.7.2	Expert observations	206
7.7.2.1	Mix of Western and African ways	207
7.7.2.2	Similarity between Chinese and African ways	207
7.7.3	Influences	208
7.7.3.1	Stereotypes	208
7.7.3.2	Differences in work ethic	209
7.7.3.3	Ethnocentrism	210

7.7.3.4	Motives for interaction	210
7.7.3.5	Preconceptions	211
7.7.3.6	Personal circumstances	211
7.7.3.7	Prejudice	212
7.7.3.8	No communication occurs	212
7.7.4	Summary	213
7.8	Intercultural Communication Awareness Categories – Sino-African Organisational Contexts	214
7.8.1	Categories of intercultural communication awareness	214
7.8.2	Linking intercultural communication awareness perspectives to intercultural communication awareness categories	215
7.8.2.1	Cultural orientation	218
7.8.2.2	Manner of communication	219
7.8.2.3	Orientation to rules and protocol	220
7.8.2.4	Individual dispositions	220
7.8.2.5	Within-culture variations	221
7.8.2.6	Intercultural communication awareness influences	221
7.9	Summary	222
Chapter 8: Summary, Conclusion And Recommendations		225
Brief Synopsis of the Research		225
8.1	Conclusions and Recommendations	227
8.1.1	Updated generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence framework	228
8.1.1.1	Cultural orientation	230
8.1.1.2	Manner of communication	230
8.1.1.3	Orientation to rules and protocol	230
8.1.1.4	Individual dispositions	231
8.1.1.5	Intercultural communication influences	231
8.1.1.6	Intercultural communication variations	231
8.1.2	Hybrid intercultural communication congruence framework (HICC) for Sino-African organisational contexts	232
8.1.2.1	Cultural orientation in Sino-African organisational contexts	234
8.1.2.2	Manner of communication in Sino-African organisational contexts	234
8.1.2.3	Orientation to rules and protocol in Sino-African organisational contexts	235
8.1.2.4	Individual dispositions in Sino-African organisational contexts	235
8.1.2.5	Intercultural communication influences in Sino-African organisational contexts	236
8.1.2.6	Intercultural communication variations in Sino-African organisational contexts	236
8.2	Significance and Contributions of this Research	236
8.2.1	Main contribution	236
8.2.2	Study of theory	236

8.2.3.	Empirical qualitative study	237
8.2.4	Methodology	238
8.3	Limitations of this Research.....	238
8.3.1	Study of theory.....	238
8.3.2	Empirical qualitative study	239
8.4	Recommendations for Future Research	240
8.5	Conclusion	240
9	References.....	241
10	Annexures	265

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Theoretical research questions	32
Table 1.2: Empirical analytical research questions	34
Table 2.1: Approaches to intercultural communication	47
Table 3.1: Criteria for conceptualising communication orientation and manner of communication	72
Table 3.2: Framework for comparing the manner of communication in different cultures	79
Table 5.1: Values and guiding philosophies in Western, African and Chinese cultures	98
Table 5.2: Nature of communication in Western, African and Chinese cultures	100
Table 5.3: Objective of communication in Western, African and Chinese cultures	102
Table 5.4: Degree of interaction in communication in Western, African and Chinese cultures	104
Table 5.5: Thinking process in communication in Western, African and Chinese cultures	106
Table 7.1: Biographical information of respondents	141
Table 7.2: IC awareness of African culture – African experts’ perspectives	147
Table 7.3: IC awareness of African culture – Chinese experts’ perspectives	155
Table 7.4: IC awareness in African culture – own and other perspectives	162
Table 7.5: IC awareness of Chinese culture – Chinese experts’ perspectives	167
Table 7.6: IC awareness of Chinese culture – African experts’ perspectives	176
Table 7.7: IC awareness in Chinese culture – own and other perspectives	191
Table 7.8: IC awareness – African own and Chinese own perspectives	195
Table 7.9: IC awareness – African and Chinese perspectives of “other”	199

Table 7.10: Emerging IC awareness perspectives – African and Chinese..... 202

Table 7.11: Categories and perspectives..... 216

Table 7.11 (continued): Categories and perspectives 217

Table 7.11 (continued): Categories and perspectives 218

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1: Hypothetical view of poor and enhanced IC congruence	30
Fig. 1.2: Structure of the thesis	41
Fig. 2.1: Culture hierarchies in communication	62
Fig. 3.1: Relationship between IC awareness enablers, communication orientation, manner of communication and IC awareness	77
Fig. 4.1: Generic theoretical intercultural communication congruence (TICC) framework	82
Fig. 5.1: Theoretical framework for intercultural communication awareness (TFICA) in Western, African and Chinese cultures	95
Fig. 5.2: Excerpt from the TFICA – nature of communication	99
Fig. 5.3: Excerpt from the TFICA – objective of communication	100
Fig. 5.4: Excerpt from the TFICA – degree of interaction	102
Fig. 5.5: Excerpt from the TFICA – thinking process	105
Fig. 5.6: Comparing manner of communication in Western, African and Chinese cultures	107
Fig. 5.7: Theoretical IC congruence (TICC) framework specific to Sino-African organisational contexts	109
Fig. 6.1: Excerpt of coded material using a Microsoft Word macro	136
Fig. 7.1: Distribution of cultural grouping	142
Fig. 7.2: Distribution of gender	142
Fig. 7.3: Distribution of age	143
Fig. 7.4: Distribution of ethnic group	143
Fig. 7.5: Distribution of industry sector	144

Fig. 7.6: Distribution of experience in months 144

Fig. 7.7: IC awareness of African culture – African experts’ perspectives..... 148

Fig. 7.8: IC awareness of African culture – Chinese experts’ perspectives..... 156

Fig. 7.9: IC awareness in African culture – own and other perspectives (African and Chinese experts’ perspectives compared) 163

Fig. 7.10 IC awareness of Chinese culture – Chinese experts’ perspectives 168

Fig. 7.11 IC awareness of Chinese culture – African experts’ perspectives..... 177

Fig. 7.12 IC awareness in Chinese culture – own and other perspectives 192

Fig. 7.13 IC awareness – African own and Chinese own perspectives compared 196

Fig. 7.14 IC awareness – African and Chinese perspectives of other compared 200

Fig. 7.15 Emerging IC awareness perspectives – African and Chinese experts 203

Fig. 8.1: Updated generic theoretical IC congruence (TICC) framework..... 229

Fig. 8.2: Hybrid IC congruence (HICC) framework for Sino-African organisational contexts – the multi-view approach 233