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**A Cross-Cultural Perspective on the Differences in Business
Communication between Japan and the Central Eastern
European Countries**

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

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SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Over recent decades, extensive research has been conducted on business communication based on various comparisons between Japan and other countries from the so-called Global North (e.g., the United States, Canada, and Europe). However, most of these studies have been based on an analysis of differences between Japan and Western countries (e.g., Kobayashi, 2019; Lee et al., 2014; Omori, Stark, & Ota, 2023; Wahl & Hartley, 2008). However, central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is a region that is historically different from Western Europe in terms of ethnicity, religion, history, and geographical background. As the CEE region continues to grow and add social-economic complexity to the European Union, it is advantageous for both parties to develop a more appropriate and practical relationship between Japan and CEE countries, anticipating that business ties between Japan and CEE countries will be strengthened and human interaction will increase at both personal and organizational levels in the future.

The present thesis focuses on deepening the Analysis of cultural comparisons between Japan and CEE countries regarding business communication. Within the theoretical framework of Hofstede's (1991) six cultural dimensions and the conceptual approach of low and high-context cultures, the doctoral thesis focuses on outlining the business communication forms between Japan and CEE countries. This research area has not been highlighted in previous Japan-Europe studies, as most of these studies had been focused on the conventional understanding of Europe, primarily as "Western Europe." Besides, the World Value Survey (2021) showed differences between Eastern and Western European countries in terms of traditional opposed to secular values and survival opposed to self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Haerpfer et al., 2022).

A discussion about the specificity of the CEE countries should consider cultural aspects and historical content. The CEE countries included in the empirical part of the doctoral thesis,

Hungary, Poland, and Romania at that time, were a cluster of communist states aligned politically and economically with the Soviet Union. At that time, there was no Internet, and the information about Eastern Europe was limited to fragmentary news in international mass media and a few library books, which were sometimes featured on Western television and newspapers. Before 1989, many academics and business analysts compared Eastern and Western Europe regarding capitalist society's political systems and lifestyles with communist society.

In more than 30 years of recent history, the political and socio-economical context in the CEE countries has dramatically changed. The CEE countries became democracies, and Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania became members of the European Union. Moreover, in the last decade, businesses have faced challenges worldwide. The election of Donald Trump as a US president in 2016, followed by the economic policies of his governance and the United Kingdom leaving the European Union (Brexit) in 2020, are only some of the prominent examples (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Hence, nowadays, more than ever, it becomes relevant to revisit the question of how Japan should react to these international changes and whether Japan should take a different stance around business communication on the premise of globalization in a challenging world. With such background, globalization has progressed on a global scale, and while the exchange of people and information has become more active and cooperative than ever before (Conrad & Meyer-Ohle, 2019; Matsuo, 2014), one remarkable example of cooperation is the relationship between Japan and CEE countries.

In the current global economic context, the relevance of appropriate communication between Japan and CEE countries becomes clear. In the past, cross-cultural understanding and communication methods for multicultural coexistence have been discussed. However, mutual understanding is needed beyond stereotypes. According to the definition, cultural stereotypes are a set of cultural generalizations that define the mode of culture in a fixed manner. This cultural stereotype is often born from self-cultural centralism, and it cannot be denied that it is

a factor of discrimination or prejudice against different cultures. However, it is difficult in any society or group to eliminate the thinking patterns that cause them to consider people other than themselves using stereotypes. This observation is not meant to exclude cultural stereotypes or create a negative perspective on the subject, but to encourage addressing cultural stereotypes in a more realistic and appropriate way and to see how intercultural business communication can go beyond stereotypes (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

Mayer (2014) explains that "persuasion is one of the most important business skills, and that without the ability to persuade others to support your ideas, you will not be able to support your ideas" (Meyer, 2014, p. 89). How one tries to persuade, and the kind of arguments one feels are persuasive are deeply rooted in the philosophical, religious, and educational assumptions and in the consciousness of your own culture, which we believe are not universal, and it can be argued that the art of persuasion is very deeply connected with the culture. Therefore, the present doctoral thesis aims to better understand the relevant cultural elements of the CEE countries for effective business communication with Japan.

According to Sato (2015), previous research on cross-cultural comparison between Japan on one side and the United States and the European countries on the other side focused mainly on differences and highlighted normative aspects.

The EU has developed during the last decades through several enlargements. The first enlargement took place in 1973, with three new members, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, joining the initial European Union (EU) member countries (Belgium, former Federal Republic of Germany or the so-called West Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands). The second enlargement occurred in 1981, with Greece being added to the EU map, and the third in 1986, with Portugal and Spain as new member states. Next, Austria, Finland, and Sweden became part of the expanding EU in 1995 during its fourth round of enlargement. In 2004 Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta,

Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia became EU member-states. Romania and Bulgaria joined three years later, in 2007. Croatia became a member of the EU in 2013 (McCormick, 2020).

In other words, the EU had the present major Western countries within its territory as of 1995, and since 2004, it has added members of the CEE countries, which were mainly part of the former communist bloc. Another point to consider is which area is associated with the concept of Europe, commonly referred to in the business environment, or the concept of Europe, as academics describe it. During the last decades, the EU was confronted with several crises, such as the financial crisis, the eurozone crisis, and the migration crisis. Those crises showed differences between the member states that were often associated with the difference between the central regions of Europe such as Western Europe, Northern Europe, and Southern Europe (McCormick, 2020). Hence, regarding governmental spending, there are differences between Northern and Western European countries on one side (e.g., Germany, The Netherlands) and Southern European countries (e.g., Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal). While the first group of countries favored the limitation of the countries' debts, the second group tended to take state loans to finance a more significant budgetary deficit (Kutter, 2020; Pagoulatos, 2020). Furthermore, the migration crisis in 2015 split the EU countries again, with the CEE countries such as Hungary and Poland opposing mandatory migration quotas. (Dines, Montagna, & Vacchelli, 2018).

Hence, it is a limitation to apply cultural comparison in business communication such as the comparison between Japan and Europe, considering only Western Europe.

Europe appears to be a monolith for those outside the EU or Europe. However, it is not as simple as it is. It is a collection of diversity from political, economic, and cultural perspectives. When we focus on CEE, especially in Japan, and consider the essential and good relationship between business partners and markets, we can say that this has not been discussed since 2007, when the areas that form the EU, including the present Eastern Europe, were completed (McCormick, 2020). Even after almost two decades since Hungary and Poland

became EU-member states, intercultural communication between Japan and the CEE countries was not much researched. Furthermore, the Japanese governmental institutions emphasized the importance of intercultural communication as an element of global human resource development is required both from the academic point of view and the data from the field (Damaschin, Vlad, Tajiri, & Kaneko, 2019; Profiroiu et al., 2020).

Extensive research has been conducted on the differences in organizational structures and communications between Japan and European countries (Ho et al., 2020). However, it is still a challenge to identify, devise, and deploy effective communication strategies for CEE countries by comparing differences in communication practices between a country, Japan, and a conglomerate of multiple countries, which is the CEE region, from the perspective of business communication.

Previous studies addressing intercultural business communication between Japan and Eastern European countries included sometimes also Russia. The areas that were discussed were trade, investment, market development, human resources, and humanities, such as religion and history, and it is a division of industries such as manufacturing, IT, pharmaceutical, and education. Practitioners raised concerns that a limited understanding of the cultural context results in fewer opportunities for both sides in the business between Japan and CEE countries. Communication in business is different from everyday communication, regardless of being from the same culture or different cultures, starting with the early icebreaker stage of business. Cultural competencies are needed for successful negotiation. Propelled by the rapid globalization of markets and business opportunities, an increasing number of Japanese organizations are establishing overseas offices or new business units across the globe, including in some CEE countries (Yoshida, Yashiro, & Suzuki, 2013). Regardless of this trend, most previous research on communications practices between Japan and Europe has heavily leaned towards exploring communications in Western Europe; therefore, there needs to be more

appropriate resources for exploring sustainable leadership communications practices in CEE and the affinity with similar practices in Japan.

For instance, many Western European countries, particularly Anglo-Saxon cultures, have developed, owned, and managed businesses and colonies across the globe since the beginning of the Modern era. These countries, including the United Kingdom, Spain, and France, have historically accepted many immigrants, accounting for approximately 20% of the total population of these countries today. On the contrary, modern immigrants into CEE countries still account for a tiny percentage of the total population of these countries. Given these circumstances, academic research on cross-cultural communications has focused mainly on Western Europe, while there has been a growth between Japan and Eastern Europe regarding business exchanges. Therefore, research on effective and genuine communication practices between Japan and CEE still needs to be made available.

Addressing business communication in a cross-cultural context should also consider technological development. Thus, the reality is that Human Resource (HR) talent operations in global companies such as Japan are operated by various package software and customized systems. The use and operation of IT is also the result of the accumulation of big data using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the flow of the accelerating automatic operation. The outline of the "trend" calculated by AI will become apparent as the results accumulate. On the other hand, the most crucial point in HR is "human to know human ."A central premise of IT/AI-based HR operations, apart from Western and Asian countries, which have already gained many years of business experience, is the relationship with CEE countries where the future relationship is essential without going through the stage of "understanding people." If mechanized IT and AI are entrusted with a mutual understanding of different cultures without going through that stage, it may result in a big problem in the future. As one of the leading economies worldwide, Japan is involved in technological development. Several countries from CEE, such as Romania, are also involved in developing the IT sector. Cross-cultural knowledge might foster the

development of the business relationship between Japan and the CEE countries and be relevant for joint projects in technological development. (Lichy & Stokes, 2018).

Japanese business must go beyond unilaterally categorizing all European countries under the undifferentiated label "Europe." They need to differentiate between Eastern and Western Europe and find relevant nuances for business communication. Therefore, the present research findings should benefit both Japanese corporations and their increasing business partners in the CEE countries. As the essential factors for businesses are human emotions and the smooth management of organizational practices, clarifying how to communicate with each other effectively will significantly contribute to enhanced corporate efficiencies, profit, and stress-free business environments. At the same time, it is crucial to look deeper into the communication between Japan and CEE academically and aim at practical use in the business field. They compare and explore the psychological, structural, and cultural differences between Japan and CEE countries as comparative areas in intercultural communication. From the viewpoint of the communication of cultural differences and their mutual understanding, the viewpoint of the application in the business scene should significantly contribute to the future business scene. At the same time, many studies on intercultural communication and cultural intelligence (CQ) are based on language, and many are aimed at education and international students (Lichy & Stokes, 2018; Ramsey & Lorentz, 2016).

This doctoral thesis provides a cross-cultural perspective on the differences between Japan and CEE countries in high-context business communication, focusing on cross-cultural business leadership communication. This thesis is structured into seven chapters to provide a broad perspective on the topic and to present different answers to the research questions.

As this research initially stemmed from the author's interest in international business and cultures, the chapter *Introduction* provides a general overview of the business sector to acquire knowledge about communicating with those from another culture. The author analyzed the intercultural context between Japan and CEE countries, identifying specific differences and

similarities. The chapter *Theoretical Background and Frameworks* presents relevant notions for the present doctoral thesis, starting with the notion of culture, corporate culture, intercultural communication, the role of language, the meaning of stereotypes, and the importance of leadership effective, intercultural business communication.

The chapter *Hofstede's Value Orientations - A Comparative Analysis* identifies differences in the national culture of the two geographical areas (Eastern Europe and Western Europe) based on Hofstede's (1991) six-dimensional model of national culture and also identifies differences and similarities in the relationship and understanding between Japan and CEE and Western Europe in terms of a different classification axis. This chapter also reviews previous literature and an analysis of previous institutional studies. Moreover, the thesis addressed the topic of low and high-context cultures (Hall, 1959; 1976).

The choice of methodology was aligned with the objectives of the doctoral thesis, which is to highlight relevant cultural aspects of business communication between Japan and CEE countries. Within the theoretical framework presented in the previous sections, the present doctoral research aims to provide a better understanding of the business environment of Japanese culture on one side and CEE cultures on the other. Moreover, we investigate intercultural communication practices in the professional environment. The present research seeks an answer to the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the relevant differences and similarities between Japan and CEE countries for intercultural business communication?

RQ2. What are the differences between Japan and CEE regarding CQ?

RQ3. How are CEE countries positioned in the high versus low-context culture framework?

RQ4. What is the outline of business communication between Japan and CEE based on intercultural knowledge and cross-cultural elements?

Our comparative approach aims at

1. positioning of both the context and the culture
2. evaluating the interest in different cultures and degree of information collection
3. highlighting intercultural knowledge.

First, this study does not assume the homogeneity between Japan and CEE countries. As mentioned above, while previously focused on Western Europe, the present research focuses on countries from CEE, new member-states of the EU such as Hungary, Poland, and Romania. Although the comparison between countries exists in various forms, including Hofstede's (2021) recent work, there is limited research that can help us understand the tendency in the group viewpoint, for example, area and category, to some extent related to communication and organization in the business in the globalization progress.

The starting points of the study are as follows:

1. While Western Europe and Western culture are generally considered to belong to the low-context culture, Japan and CEE are assumed to belong to the high-context cultural sphere. According to Hall (1959; 1976), some basic assumptions apply to both Japan and CEE countries. This is because the background of high-context culture is necessary in a society of more single and identical ethnic groups, religions, and languages, as well as the experience of Japan and CEE countries. We assume that the degree of context needed for the co
2. The degree of interest in different cultures and the information gathering tend to have a clear division between Japan and the rest of the world, perhaps in the case of Japan, both in the historical and geographical background and in the business scene. Therefore, "knowing the difference" and "knowing the other party's culture" are significant factors for Japan in promoting smooth business progress. There are essential business fields in CEE countries, and many global businesspeople are also in the EU to seek their work, so much information gathering and interest in the same EU region will likely be high. In this sense,

although there is a common point between Japan and CEE, there is always a difference in the system and consciousness of proactive information collection.

3. Regarding cross-cultural knowledge, the Japanese economy and its business field are always oriented to the world in all directions, and foreign companies expanding in Japan are based in countries from the UE, USA, Australia, or other Asian countries. Japanese companies that operate in Japan put their employees at the center of their approach. While Japan has a habit of watching the world independently, CEE has a substantial business point of view in the EU, and many foreign companies are operating in the area. Therefore, we are interested in cross-cultural knowledge in Japan and the CEE countries.

In addition, it investigates the contrast between the general organizational behavior and the decision-making scene in both Japan and CEE countries.

To answer our research questions about the relevance of CQ and the high and low context cultures (RQ1., RQ2., and RQ3.), we conducted a survey, followed by two group discussions. The survey method represents a part of the methodological approach, and the focus groups represent the qualitative approach. The two methodological approaches are complementary (Tuchman, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Hence, in-depth interviews have been used as they can also encourage the articulation of ideas. Moreover, some standardized questions answered in the survey were addressed as open questions during the group interviews.

Regarding questionnaires, the collected answers were statistically analyzed, and in addition to the questions that provided YES/NO answers, open questions in the group interviews unveiled values, attitudes, and beliefs. Robust scholarship highlighted the advantages of using quantitative and qualitative communication research methods (Daymon & Holloway, 2010; Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

The purpose of this research is to obtain knowledge about CQ, as sensitive data that can be used in actual business in a text-based manner rather than a digitized or visualized concept such as the Hofstede (1991) model is another reason for adding to the results of the

questionnaire data collected during the application of the quantitative research method. In addition, from the viewpoint of the quantitative research method, careful examination is necessary. Results must be analyzed from the perspective of society and culture. Researchers must consider sensitive aspects when setting the purpose of comparative cultural research and creating question items (Ishii et al., 2014). The actual condition of sensitivity to cultural intelligence, immeasurable in numerical and statistical results, is to be investigated. The examples of the Hofstede (1991) model and Lewis's (2006) are separate from the CQ model. However, their research offered a theoretical framework for the CQ research. The CQ survey was intended for people who are working in the field of intercultural business communication.

The survey was conducted with $N=968$ participants. Among them, we included in our sample $n=490$ Japanese and $n=478$ participants from CEE countries (Hungary, Poland, and Romania). Participants were selected based on the following criteria: they had to work for corporations with over 1,000 employees. We questioned Japanese who work in multicultural environments and interacted in the professional field with people from the CEE countries from our country sample. Moreover, the people from Hungary, Poland, and Romania have a history of working together with the Japanese in Japanese-led businesses.

Participants were 30 to 50 years old, and gender distribution included approximately half of the respondents being female and half male. The questionnaire was distributed via a link. Data was collected with the help of a market research company from Japan. Participants were randomly extracted from the data basis of the market research company.

The strength of the survey lies in the standardized answers that are generated. This offers the ideal condition for the comparison between the cultures. When developing the survey and considering the way to collect the data we considered the advantages of applying online questionnaires in terms of saving resources (Ang et al., 2007; De Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). To measure CQ, we employed questions that were validated by previous research (Miyamori & Miyabayashi, 2019). The measurement method

of cultural intelligence is complex to conclude with a numerical scheme because it addresses some aspects, such as sensitivity and values. Therefore, it is vital to set original measurement items (Damaschin, Vlad, Tajiri, Lim, & Chua, 2019; Damaschin et al., 2020).

After informed consent, questions about CQ and the interaction with different cultures in business environments were asked. Besides the content questions, socio-demographics were asked at the end of the survey.

The second method that was applied was two focus groups. Based on the contents of the unstructured interview, we will explore the common points and differences between Japan and CEE, and in the difference. With the help of focus groups, it is an effort to understand the reality of interacting with different cultures in a comprehensive way. Qualitative methods are seen as tools to capture insights into the communication process (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Since culture is significantly related to the communication processes, qualitative methods such as focus groups allow data collection within the societal ecosystem. Participants can reflect on social realities and express values and beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The group interviews were conducted with overall $N=29$ participants. Among them, we included 15 Japanese, 4 Hungarians, 6 Romanians, and 4 Polish people who worked in several business fields. Like the participants from the survey, they were aged 30 to 50 years and had previous work experience in culturally diverse business environments. The CEE participants we spoke to had experience working in Japanese-led businesses. The Japanese we interviewed had experience working with employees from CEE. We talked to 14 men and 15 women. The two group discussions were held online in two ZOOM meetings. Each lasts approximately 180 minutes. The platform ZOOM became a relevant communication tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducting research with the help of these tools has some advantages concerning the possibility of connecting individuals separated by geographical distance and saving time and resources (Hall, Gaved, & Sargent, 2021). The COVID-19

pandemic forced researchers to adapt to the new realities (Adom, Osei, & Adu-Agyem, 2020; Dodds & Hess, 2020).

We conducted one group discussion with the Japanese participants in the Japanese language and the other group discussion with the CEE participants in English. The content of the group discussions was written, and content analysis was applied to the text. Table 6 shows the sample of participants. Names were anonymized. The interview guide was developed to serve the present research objectives and answer the research questions.

The chapter *on qualitative and quantitative analysis* presents the baseline and total results of the cultural intelligence survey and focus group interview (Livermore, 2015; Ramsey and Lorenz, 2013). The chapter *Findings and Discussion* examines the study's results, and the chapter *Conclusions* contain the precise answers to the research questions, measures, and future issues of this study.

In the present doctoral thesis, we investigated the differences and similarities between the Japanese and CEE cultures (RQ1). We also discussed low versus high-context cultures as reflected by the Japanese and the CEE cultures (RQ3.). In general, CEE and Japan showed features of high-context culture as defined by Hall (1959;1976). Moreover, while generally and broadly, Europe and the US are low context cultural areas, it was demonstrated by the data gathered in the present research that CEE is closer to a high context culture, closer to Japan than WE countries. However, this so-called high and low context - distribution of culture and values - is a gradient, not an absolute polarity. If we assume that WE and Japan are at their poles, then the position of CEE is closer to the high context than the center of the gradation. Despite the high context cultural sphere, it is undoubtedly a different position from Japan. Where are the differences in this high-context cultural sphere? In the original assumption, the positioning was different from the shading of the left and right by the gradient between the high-context and the low-context, as described in the whole statement. This conclusion is

supported by the data from the survey and focus groups and the results of the analysis of the six dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 2021) in Chapter 3.

The results pointed out the existence of a strong cultural identity among Japanese participants. Furthermore, Japanese participants were willing to share this identity. On the other hand, in the case of the CEE people, the subject of the answer to the question is the same as the Japanese, but the background is only sometimes expressed in terms of their nationality. The way participants defined cultural identity is different. Japanese are referred to primarily as nationality, while CEE participants see differences also in terms of religion, generation, etc. Hence, they speak as a native speaker, sometimes as a "Central Eastern European," "European," or "member of the Christian cultural sphere." While there are many possible factors, the "soft identity" of Eastern Europe and its flexibility will be beneficial in a world in which globalization is increasingly progressing. Our findings align with previous research (Damaschin et al., 2020).

The differences between Japanese and CEE participants were examined from the perspective of the attitudes toward privacy, the point of contact with new friends, the point of view on their own cultural bias on cultural intolerance, and the way of thinking and managing cultural differences. While Japan aspired to confront, dialogue, and understand different cultures in terms of spirituality and culture, the CEE side showed interest and understanding of material aspects of the culture. In other words, in the data, for example, in the case of Japanese, motivation for interest and understanding of different cultures is generally high, and the amount of information is also significant. However, despite such high motivation and information, the Japanese cannot be called cosmopolitan.

This is influenced by the historical and geographical peculiarities of Japan in various aspects, and it can be seen in the peculiarities of the Japanese language and the high level of masculinity (MAS) index, which is the 6-dimensional element of Hofstede (2021), in the discussion of intercultural communication on many Japanese. The high value of the MAS index

is the awareness that it pursues the value of the utmost and the specialty, etc., and this also leads to negative behavior, such as rejection of conversation using a foreign language in the case of the level that does not reach this degree, since it is perfect grammar and pronunciation that does not take away from the native language, for example. Furthermore, in the case of Japan, the tendency to think from a comparative cultural viewpoint to a different culture was confirmed, given that the Japanese showed great enthusiasm for self-explanation and sharing their values.

On the other hand, CEE participants showed an introverted aspect in a certain sense. First, the tendency of interest to be "myself than others" is mentioned. It may be called a stance such as thinking of the world through oneself. This is likely because the economic growth phase after the transition from communism to capitalism continues, and there is a strong desire to pursue Western Europe economically. This idea is reflected in our data by the prevalence of materialistic attitudes in the case of CEE participants. This means that people are in a phase of economic or physical affluence in their lives and work.

CEE participants reflected upon minority status. In the EU, there are still country differences from the wealth perspective. CEE countries looked up to WE countries. As redeleted in the group discussions, CEE countries continue to crave their growth. We observed a high tendency to rise in the personal and economic aspects regarding job change and the profession's view. This can be seen from responses that confirm the importance of wealth.

We looked at CQ (RQ2.) in the present doctoral research. We define CQ as the ability to function effectively across diverse cultural contexts. In that case, the height of CQ means that CQ positively impacts organizational control, directives, smooth human relations, and decision-making in a multicultural society. The higher the CQ, the better the performance of the business (Damaschin et al., 2020; Newport, 2015). The foundation of this is thoughtful and sensitive communication in diverse cultural backgrounds. CQ can be said to be a higher-level concept that includes intelligence (IQ), which measures the ability to memorize things and

solve problems as knowledge, and emotional intelligence (EQ), which is the power to guide the problem through the understanding and use of emotions, proper thinking and action in the problem acupuncture points, and EQ, which includes IQ and EQ. In other words, even if a person has a high IQ and EQ if the CQ is low, this may likely be a case of failure in the global business (Newport, 2015).

CQ, the ability to effectively respond to diverse cultural contexts, encompasses motivation to learn about other cultures, knowledge about other cultures, strategy to make use of that knowledge, and action in the form of communicating with individuals from different cultures (Brancu, Munteanu, & Golet, 2016; Livermore, 2015).

The analysis of the data gathered with the help of the survey and focus groups allowed us to examine the differences between Japan and the CEE countries regarding CQ, in contrast to Japan's high-context culture and Western Europe's low-context culture. Given the four elements of CQ, motivation, knowledge, strategy, and action, Japan should communicate with CEE based on its sensitivity. This perspective is closer to Japan than it is to Western European countries.

We demonstrated that within the framework of the low versus high-context culture, CEE is closer to Japan than WE countries; there are also differences when it comes to CQ, as reflected by our data. CEE participants proved that they were motivated to learn about different cultures. Both Japanese and CEE participants demonstrated knowledge about different cultures. In terms of strategy, there are still differences that were highlighted in our research, such as the different strategies to approach different cultures, make friends from different cultures, and embrace diversity.

In the case of Japan, we observed a tendency to gather information widely from different cultures because each company and industry had close ties to foreign countries within global businesses. On the other hand, during group discussions, participants highlighted that they are strongly related to the EU. Their views are related to the fact that their country belongs to the

EU. Therefore, while Japanese businesspersons' cross-cultural awareness is directly related to the world, CEE participants and events taught from distinctive countries reflect the perspective of an EU member state.

CEE participants described a hard-edge gap between countries and cities that had been learned through travel and business trips. This fact means that although information can be easily reached daily through various news, news reports, internet searches, etc., there is much cross-cultural recognition to know as an experience rather than information gathering.

This is a great mistake if we consider CEE to overlap the relationship between Japan and Western Europe, which is similar in the business form. Even if they communicate with each other on the premise that they are facing each other with the same viewpoint, they are indirectly viewed by the CEE side through the intermediary of the EU or the European as a whole.

The present doctoral thesis delved into the uniqueness of CEE from the viewpoint of business-relevant cultural aspects and elaborated on the relationship with Japanese cultures.

From the comparative cultural perspective, the study addressed relevant aspects such as cultural dimensions and low versus high-context cultures applied for CEE and Japan. We captured relevant knowledge to outline effective business communication between Japan and CEE based on mutual knowledge and understanding.

The study showed that Central Eastern Europe is a region that is closer to Japan from a cultural perspective than Western Europe, as the context of the communication is less often verbalized. In the present research, historical and economic particularities of CEE cultures were emphasized. They are reflected in the values, attitudes, and beliefs the CEE respondents unveiled. People from the CEE countries are strongly related to the EU, as they are new member states.

Furthermore, even though the EU is not a monolith, each country has its own political and economic differences, and of course, the culture and national characteristics are very

different. Even if the EU itself appears to be a similar or comparable entity to a third party, the EU itself forms one big world, where not only the organization but also the decision-making is different from the WE one, and even if one focuses on the uniqueness of CEE, there will be mistakes. Understanding the difference between the two cultures means that the depth of communication and the necessary information can be predicted in advance, effectively preventing conventional misreading.

In the theoretical sections of this thesis, it was highlighted that research on intercultural business communication between Japan and CEE countries is scarce. However, as highlighted in the introduction, several studies focus on cultural interactions between Western cultures in business, such as the US, Western Europe, and Japan. In this work, we assumed that there would be some significant cultural differences between CEE and WE, differences that would diminish the cultural distance between Japan and CEE. In the second and third chapters of the present doctoral thesis, significant theories and also significant empirical work concerning the topic of the present research were discussed.

We interpreted the results of the 2021 Six Dimensions of the Culture survey (Hofstede, 2021) in the third chapter. It was highlighted and proven that there are some differences between central and CEE on one side and between Japan and WE on the other. There are differences across all six dimensions of the culture. Regarding the power distance, CEE cultures scored higher in the power distance, being closer to the values of Japan than Western European countries. In the CEE cultures, collectivism is valued rather than individualism. In terms of uncertainty avoidance, the survey results showed that, for instance, countries such as Romania have a low uncertainty avoidance compared to WE countries and Japan. CEE countries tend not to plan and predict outcomes of events and activities as much as Western European countries or Japan does, and therefore, scored lower when it comes to long-term orientation.

The masculinity versus femininity dimension results show significant differences between Japan on the one hand and CEE countries on the other. This dimension was originally named masculinity versus femininity. However, the 2021 survey was renamed to reflect the meaning of this dimension, the achievement-oriented culture, a culture based on the result of a specific performance. Japan is an achievement-driven culture. As for the dimension indulgence, CEE countries and Japan had similar scores.

Besides this secondary data analysis shown in the third chapter, the primary methodological approach of the present doctoral thesis consisted of a survey, followed by two focus groups with CEE and Japanese participants who had experience working in foreign countries, working in companies that are foreign-based have a particular experience of cultural interaction: The survey and the group discussion one of them with Japanese participants and another separate focus group with CEE participants enable opportunity for the participants to reflect on how they define culture, on how they see their cultural knowledge with regard of foreign countries, to the motivation to learn and to interact with different cultures, and of course to the strategies to effectively interact with different cultures. The results of both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches show that our original assumption is that the CEE cultures are closer to the Japanese culture from the perspective of a high context. Thus, our research contributes to the nuance of knowledge about the CEE cultures and Japan from the business communication perspective: Our results show common points and differences.

The doctoral research has theoretical and practical implications. From the theoretical perspective, the present research contributes to the existing literature on intercultural business communication and fills in the research gap that was highlighted in the introduction. Hence, alongside a few other studies that focused on central and eastern Europe and Japan (e.g., Damaschin, Vlad, Tajiri, Lim, & Chua, 2019; Damaschin et al., 2020; Profiroiu et al., 2020), from the perspective of intercultural business communication, the present research contributes to the knowledge and in this field, we showed that there are significant differences between

CEE, and WE from the perspective of the sixth cultural dimensions more over from the perspective of Hall (1959; 1976)'s high versus low context cultures. Our research highlighted that CEE cultures are closer to low-context cultures than WE countries. Furthermore, our research contributes to the literature on cultural intelligence (Livermore, 2015) and gathered data about cultural intelligence in the case of two groups, Japan and CEE countries.

Our research has practical implications for managers,, educators, and the general public. The empirical data that we collected and analysed allowed us to depict in a comprehensive way how CEE cultures, on one side, and Japanese culture, on the other side, can effectively be understood and considered within effective business communication. Our results pointed out the particularities of the CEE the Japanese culture we highlighted, relevant motivations and beliefs that are culturally embedded, and the way a a multicultural business environment can work. Managers aiming to increase their business performances in culturally diverse working environments can benefit from the present research results. Furthermore, for educators working in business schools across Japan and CEE countries,, our findings can offer support to share knowledge about differences in values, motivations, and beliefsbeliefs that might help students enhance their knowledge. Nevertheless, our research can be attractive to the large public in Japan and the CEE countries because there is a particular interest in knowing each other's cultures.

From an epistemological perspective, every research comes with limitations. The first limitation is related to the survey sample. Even though data was gathered with the help of a specialized company that worked in market research, our survey was conducted on a convenience sample. Therefore, our results must be seen from that perspective. For the CEE participants, the survey was conducted in English and not in their native language. However, they were fluent in English. Another limitation is related to the fact that group discussion was conducted online. This data collection strategy has its advantages that were highlighted in the

methodology section. However, non-verbal communication is difficult to capture with the help of this approach.

While the progress of globalization has the side that deepens the relationship between countries, the exchange of information with people is also becoming more sophisticated. It is also a natural feeling of business as well that people who consider the subject by dividing it from a cultural and economic sense of unity depending on the situation are in line with the actual situation. In that regard, the study was also a step forward in the research aimed at the conventional comparative theory of countries and the big concept of Europe, apart from the research aimed at the countries with considerable influence in WE and the study of business communication in the relationship of CEE and Japan. As local and regional elements of the culture become more and more relevant within the so-called "glocalization," future research should continue to focus on CEE and Japan and look at countries from the region.

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