

Inviting as Seen from Metapragmatic Perspective in American-Vietnamese Interaction

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Abstract: The article presents the procedure and results of Metapragmatic Questionnaires (MPQ) used in the cross-cultural study on Inviting made by American and Vietnamese people. The procedure of MPQ in the light of Kasper's light [9] and Nguyen Quang [15] and the analysis of the data synthesized has empirically unveiled some substantial aspects of the levels of inevitability evaluated by the American (AM) and Vietnamese (VN) informants.

Keywords: Cross-cultural, Metapragmatic Questionnaires, levels of inevitability, topic-advisability

1. Introduction

Vietnam, with its open-door policy, is becoming a great attraction to the world. This fact has recently been a motive for an increasing number of cross-cultural research, a great number of which have been carried out in relation to speech acts. In most of such studies, a certain number of typical situations and topics are used in Discourse Completion Test (DTC) to explicit the natural language employed by the speakers when performing the speech acts in the situations under investigation. However, because of the cultural differences, it is necessary to choose safe topics in cross-cultural communication, which must be based on the results of Metapragmatic Questionnaires (MPQ) with a complex procedure. The MPQ introduced in the article is the initial test of topic safety in a long procedure of the research method extracted from our cross-cultural research on „A Cross-cultural Study on the Use of Politeness Strategies in Inviting and Declining Invitations in American English and Vietnamese’. The article aims at not only introducing the results of the study but hopefully suggesting a model for cross-cultural assessment of the advisability and the compatibility of the investigated social situations as well.

2. Content

2.1. Theoretical background

2.1.1 Cross-cultural research

Our world is changing rapidly in the tendency to global development due to which the links between nations are gradually being shortened with variety of international economic and cultural activities. However, differences between cultures have inescapably resulted in „culture shock” in cross-cultural communication. For this reason, the last decade has witnessed growing importance placed on research into cross-cultural communication, especially into politeness, one of the crucial hidden parts of culture, to which there are many approaches by various linguists. Grice [6], Goffman [5], Lakoff [12], Leech [13], Brown's and Levinson's [2], Blum-kulka [1], Hornby [8], Thomas [18], Yule [19] etc. are the pioneers in this field. Together with general research in pragmatics inclusive of politeness and speech acts by Vietnamese linguists such as Do [2], Ha [7],

Luong [14] etc, the theory of politeness in communication and cross-cultural research methods have been significantly enriched by Kieu [10], Nguyen Quang [15], based on which a large body of empirical research works have been conducted. Simultaneously, a great number of studies into „politeness” have been carried out in relation to speech acts such as *making requests* by Ha [7], *advising* by Pham [17]), *apologizing* by Dang [3], *disagreeing* by Kieu [10]. Speech acts differ cross-culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the functions they serve.

2.1.2 Interactive Cross-Cultural Approach

There are two branches of Interactive Cross-Cultural Approach (fig.1). Different from the first branch where the language in the interaction between the members from different cultures (American people interact with Vietnamese people) is examined, the second one, which used to develop the study, is employed to investigate the language produced by two groups of native speakers in communication among the members of their own group (American people and American people >< Vietnamese people and Vietnamese people).

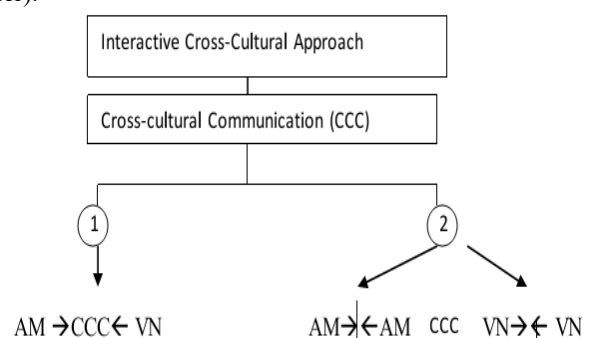


Figure 1: Interactive Cross-cultural Approach

2.1.3 Metapragmatic Questionnaires (MPQ)

MPQ is one of data collection instruments commonly used in scientific research. In the Kasper's light [9], it has been usefully employed to test validity and reliability of the situations under study. Accordingly, it is considered as the validity and reliability tests for data collection instruments, which is part of the methodology. However, in this cross-cultural study, the first goal is posed as one of research question to explore American-Vietnamese cross-cultural

characteristics of social contexts assessed by the speakers in the two cultures. For this reason, Metapragmatic Questionnaires are explored for the following dual goal:

- To make a cross-cultural comparison in the assessment of the situations under study in MPQ made by the informants from the two different cultures.
- To assure the compatibility of the situations under study in DCT. Only the situations evaluated to be applicable in both of the cultures under study are chosen for the candidates in DCT later.

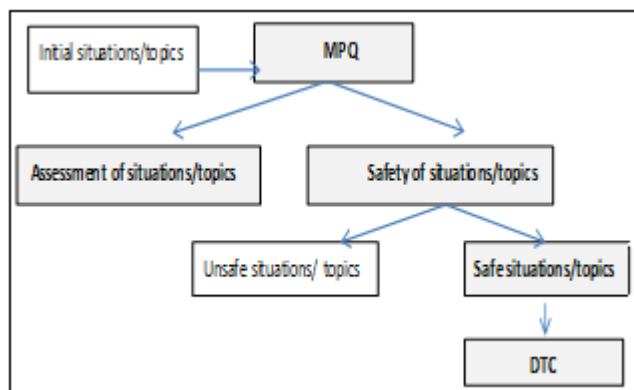


Figure 2: Dual Goals of MPQ in the study

2.2 Assessment of Topic-Advisability under Socio-Cultural Parameters In Inviting

2.2.1. Method

(a) **Subjects:** The assessment of advisability of the situations employed in Inviting varies from cultures to cultures, even there may be some situations available to this culture but may not to the other. For this reason, the terms of *invitability* used in this section refer to the degrees of availability of the situations investigated according to the two populations' assessment. To do survey on invitability in AM and VN, a MPQ with *multiple choice questions to five levels: highly advisable (HA), advisable (A), yes and no (Y/N), inadvisable (IA), and strongly advisable (SIA)*, modified from Nguyen Quang's written questionnaire [15], is manipulated with sixteen situations (S1->S16) which are grouped into four sets of activities as in table 1.

Table 1: Situations investigated in MPQ questionnaires

A1: Friendship activities	
S1:	to have a drink?
S2:	to have a dinner at your home?
S3:	to go to the cinema?
S4:	to go to a dancing club?
A2: Family activities	
S5:	to attend your birthday party?
S6:	to go to the anniversary of your grandmother's death?
S7:	to go to your daughter's wedding ceremony?
S8:	to join the house-warming party of your new house?

A3: Social activities

S9: to attend a professional workshop?

S10: to attend a business management seminar?

S11: to co-operate in running a restaurant?

S12: to be the Chairman of a public speaking contest for students?

A4: Professional activities

S13: to join a charitable artistic performance?

S14: to go to a local meeting?

S15: to support the local football team?

S16: to welcome an important foreign guest

Based on this MPQ, the frequency and the informants' assessment of Inviting in AM and VN is analyzed in order to discover the similarities and differences between the two cultures in assessing the advisability of these speech acts and to test the validity and reliability of the different situations given in the next part of the questionnaire. The MPQ is conducted on sixty AM speakers including the native speakers living in the United States, traveling in Vietnam and teaching English (English Language Institute teachers) in Vietnam, and sixty VN informants in Northern, Central and Southern parts in Vietnam.

(b) **Statistical test:** With the aim at testing the statistical significance of relationship in contingency tables, all items with $\chi^2 \leq \chi^2_{\alpha} = 3.84$ are considered not to be significant and those with $\chi^2 > \chi^2_{\alpha} = 3.84$ are considered to be significant. Thus, henceforth the *significant items (sig+)* are considered to reflect the *difference* between the AM and VN assessment and the *insignificant ones (sig-)* to reflect their *relative similarity* with the probability of 0.05.

2.2.2 Discussion and Findings

(a) Friendship Activities (A1)

(1) Inviting to have a drink (S1)

• **Similarities:** The corpus of A1-S1 exhibits that when assessing the advisability of the situations, the VN and AM informants both hold quite the same attitudes towards HA, IA and SIA. It is worth noting that most of them think that the topic is HA (AM: 41.7% & VN: 40%) while a very small percentage of the subjects choose IA (6.7% & 1.7%) and SIA (3.3% & 0%). Of interest here is that the majority of the subjects who tick in HA are urban men at the age of below 30 (AM: 23/44 - VN: 22/46). Three of the VN informants, when interviewed, said that they often invite their acquaintances to go out for a drink because it is a commonly communicative form thanks to which business is effectively expedited. Additionally, men, who have no strict ties of social gender-discrimination and family relationship, tend to consider it to be „catalysis“ for friendship and entertainment.

• **Differences:** It is noticeable that there is a great difference in the rates of informants choosing A and Y/N between the two groups. If over half of the VN informants (53.3%) think that the situation is A, only 31.7% of the AM shows the same opinion. The reason for this gap might be explained by the close look at the rate of the informants choosing Y/N. The AM, who do not choose A, opt Y/N far outnumbers the VN with the same attitude (16.7% vs 5.0%), which might be interpreted that the invitations with the topic seem to be

given by the former more deliberately. Interestingly, most of the informants support Y/N are married women above 50 (AM: 9/10 –VN: 2/3). Additionally, two of the VN female informants, who are my friends, state that their decision whether to make invitations or not much depends on the sex of the communicating partners.

In general, the common trend of assessing the situation A1-S1 in the two sources of data is that most of VN and AM informants choose HA and A. However, the rate of AM (HA+A=73.4%) is lower than the VN (HA+A=93.3%). This corpus may suggest that this situation seems to be more popular for the VN informants than the AM.

(2) Inviting to have dinner at your home (S2)

•**Similarities:** That there is no statistically significant difference found in all the levels of advisability in the row of S2 reveals that generally the AM and VN subjects have same attitude towards the topic. It is noted that that more than half of the VN and half of the AM informants choosing HA and A. However, a considerable number of the informants in the two groups inclined to Y/N results in the total percentage of HA and A is much lower than that in the first situation (S1). This result provides some support for the suggestion that compared with S1, this kind of invitation seems to be less frequently given in real life interaction. The observation might be explained that the informants tend to invite only the special person for a special purpose to have dinner at their home. More interestingly, the majority of the informants appreciate this topic are men at the age from 30 to 50 with social jobs (AM: 19/30 – VN:17/37). Many of interviewed women think that their husbands appear not to deliberate on whom (and when) should be invited for meals at home while the wives, who mainly prepare meals for guests, find it tiresome from preparation to washing-up.

(3) Inviting to go to the cinema (S3)

•**Similarities:** The corpus shows a statistically insignificant difference between the number of AM and VN subjects ticking in the level of Y/N. Over first to three of the informants (32/120) consider the topic as a sensitive one, much depending on who the communicating partners are. Noticeably, the majority is the married informants with European languages living in the city (AM: 9/13 – VN: 12/19).

•**Differences:** The informants in the two groups show very different opinions of whether or not making invitations to the familiar people at the levels of HA, A, IA and SIA. The percentages of the AM subjects approving of HA and A is much higher than those of the counterpart while there is a reverse result in IA and SIA.

The data and personal observation reveal that for the AM seeing the films in the cinema seem to be a widely-common form of entertainment so it is likely natural to invite the other people to go to the cinema. Different from the counterpart, many of the VN think that this kind of invitation seem to be uncommonly made and it should be very deliberately given to such special communicating partners as very close friends or sweet-partners. Additionally, in consideration with the

informants' background, we can see that the majority of the AM (24/27) who are favor with the topic are single men living in the urban areas. Meanwhile, most of the VN (16/29) avoiding this situation are married women living in the city. It might be explained that men, not women, are the people who often actively make this kind of invitation.

(4) Inviting to go to a dancing club (S4)

•**Similarities:** From the contingency tables it looks as though AM is more likely to choose Y/N than VN. However, no statistically significant difference between the VN and AM subjects' assessment toward this situation is found at this level. Among the informants choosing Y/N, half of them (12/25) are married city-dwellers above 50 with European languages.

•**Differences:** A remarkable distinction between the two groups of informants is overtly revealed in their assessment at the levels of HA, A, IA and SIA. While the majority of AM subjects take HA and A (63.3%), only 6.6% of the VN chose the same levels. Conversely, there is up to 81% of the VN but only 27% of the AM opting IA and SIA in this situation. Of notice here is that 21 out of 38 AM informants appreciating the topic are single men below 30 who have social jobs and live in the city. Meanwhile, 19 among 48 VN subjects avoiding the topic are married women from 30 to 50, living in the urban areas and having social jobs. Two out of the AM subjects who are ELI teachers working in Qui nhon said that for them inviting someone to dance is a widely-common form of polite communication, which is contrasted with many VN people who consider it as one for the „smart“ set exclusively.

Thus, in general when assessing the situation of inviting the acquaintances to go to a dancing club, the AM informants are oriented to the positive side but the VN to the negative one.

(b) Family Activities (A2)

(1) Inviting to attend your birthday party (S5)

•**Similarities:** Despite some distinction between number of the AM and VN choice at HA, A, Y/N and SIA in the contingency tables, the chi-square test reveals no statistically significant differences at these levels inclusive of A. It is obviously seen that the majority of the two groups of informants support HA and A (AM: 70%, VN: 83.4%) while a very small number of the AM (1/60) and no VN subjects opt SIA. This would be interpreted that both the AM and VN informants under study have positive attitude toward this topic. With regard to the informants' background, the author finds that over half of the AM (22/42) and nearly half of the VN (21/50) choosing HA and A are single women below 30 living in the city. This observation might be explained that the young informants tend to hold their birthday party and share this happy time with the acquaintances more often than the old. Moreover, according to five out of 21 women who received MPQ given directly by the author, urban women seem to prefer sharing this happy occasion with their friends to men.

•**Differences:** There is a significant difference between the two groups of informants in choosing IA (AM: 11.7% vs

VN: 0.0%). An overlook at the entire corpus reveals that the unequal number, though showing no statistically significant difference, of the informants ticking A leads to the great distinction at IA (7 vs 0). Moreover, 4 out of 7 informants are married men, having European languages and living in the city.

In spite of this minor distinction, generally both the AM and VN informants have positive assessment of the advisability of the situation involving inviting the familiar people to their birthday party.

(2) Inviting to go to the anniversary of your grandmother's death (S6)

•**Similarities:** The similarities between the two groups of informant are reflected in statistically insignificant differences found at the levels of A and IA. Additionally, 4 out of 7 AM informants 4 out of 8 VN ones who approve A are women with Oriented languages. Meanwhile, 6/11 AM and 4/7 choosing IA are women.

•**Differences:** The two groups of informant have no coincident opinion of the advisability of the situation at HA, Y/N and SIA. If there is only 5.0% and 18.9% of the AM approval of HA and Y/N respectively, up to 18.3% and 46.7% of the VN inclined to HA and Y/N respectively. Conversely, the AM far outnumber the VN opting SIA in the ratio of approximately five to one (46.7% vs 10%). Many of the AM informants take notes in their responses in MPQ questionnaire that this situation is inapplicable in their culture because they think that it is a sad memory which should not be shared with the others. In contrast, for the VN, holding the anniversary of the relative's death is an important custom in which the alive people recall the memory of their beloved person who has gone. Accordingly, all the members of the family, though living far from the home country, gather on this occasion, and some acquaintances such as close friends, neighbors and colleagues are also invited to share the memory. This inference echoes the statistical results found in the questionnaire, which provides further information that due to the different perceptions of life, the AM seem to assess the situation more negatively while the VN tend to think highly of it, though much depending on the relationship between the inviters and invitees.

(3) Inviting to go to your daughter's wedding ceremony (S7)

•**Similarities:** There are interesting coincidences between the informants from the two different cultures when assessing the advisability of this situation at all the levels of HA, A, Y/N, IA and SIA. That well over half of the informants choosing HA and A, far outweighing the ones opting IA and SIA suggests that both the groups of informants have positive attitude towards this happy occasion. This result seems to be different from some ELI teachers' opinion working in Quinhon University who gave the comment that the VN wedding parties are much more crowded with guests than the AM ones. However, in consideration with the relatively considerable rates of the informants' choice at

Y/N, this difference might be explained that although thinking that this happy news should be informed and shared with the acquaintances, the VN people tend to deliberate on the number of guests in the party due to some economic reasons and their relationship.

(4) Inviting to join the house-warming party of your new house (S8)

•**Similarities:** The data exhibit that there is no meaningful difference at all the levels of the AM and VN informants' assessment in this situation. Well over half of the informants support HA and A while only one-tenths approves IA and SIA, which provides suggestion that the informants from both cultures have positive opinion of inviting the acquaintances in this situation. They probably think that this is a happy occasion which should be shared with the other people, especially relatives and close friends. However, similar to the situations discussed above, that there is a considerable number of the informants ticking Y/N might be due to some economic reasons and their relationship.

(c) Professional activities (A3)

(1) Inviting to attend a professional workshop (S9)

•**Similarities:** The investigation results show that in spite of some dissimilarities in the contingency tables, there is no statistically significant difference between the AM and VN assessment found at levels of HA, A, IA and SIA. That half of the informants in each group supporting HA and A far outnumbers the ones choosing Y/N, IA and SIA suggests that both groups of informants think that it is necessary to invite the acquaintances to attend a professional workshop. Additionally, most of the informants approving these levels are city-dwellers with social jobs and knowledge of foreign languages (AM: 21/30, VN: 23/38). Owing to their living area and kind of job, these people themselves probably understand the necessity of the professional workshop and get used to making this kind of invitation.

•**Differences:** With 38.3% and 20% of the informants inclined to Y/N respectively, the AM and VN significantly differ in their choice of this level. The reason for this might derive from their deliberation on whom are the communicating partners and how interest in the issue they show.

(2) Inviting to attend a business management seminar (S10)

•**Similarities:** With the $\chi^2 < 3.84$ in all the levels, the unequal numbers of informants in the two groups do not reflect statistically significant differences in this situation. About half of the informants of each group support HA and A while only one-fifths take IA and SIA, which would be interpreted that the AM and VN both assume the advisability of this situation. However, the high rates of informants who reckon that it is optional to invite the acquaintances to attend a business management seminar reflect the fact that this kind of invitations much depends on concrete conditions. At any rate, what can be concluded is that the topic is applicable in both cultures.

(3) Inviting to co-operate in running a restaurant (S11)

•**Similarities:** Similar to S10, no meaningful difference between the informants from the two different cultures is revealed at all levels in this situation. There is an interesting coincidence in one-thirds of informants (31.7%) in each group appreciating HA and A and only about one-fifths taking IA and SIA. Nevertheless, half of the informants choosing Y/N is considerable numbers. As the result, though the topic is applicable in the two cultures, both groups of subjects seem to show a neutral opinion to this situation. One possible explanation based on some informants' opinions is that it is rather difficult to decide whether or not to invite the familiar people to co-operate in running a restaurant because it much depends on particular communicating partners and concrete conditions.

(4) Inviting to be the chairman of a public speaking contest for students (S12)

•**Similarities:** The significance in the chi-square indicates that the difference between the two groups of informants at all the levels of assessment is not important ($\chi^2 < 3.84$). Approximately one-thirds of informants in each group think that the topics are at HA and A and one-fifths opt IA and SIA. It is worth considering that 43.3% and 58% of the AM and VN are inclined to Y/N respectively, based on which the interpretation would be consistent with their neutral opinion accompanied by the possible reasons discussed in the previous situations.

(d) Social activities (A4)

(1) Inviting to join a charitable artistic performance (S13)

•**Similarities:** It is clear from the column sig. in the corpus of S13 that the differences of the number of AM and VN informants ticking all the levels of assessment are not statistically significant. Over 70% of the informants in each group think that this situation is HA and A, which dominates the ones approving Y/N, IA and SIA. There is no doubt that most of informants from the two different cultures assume the applicability of the situation. Of interest here is that majority of the informants appreciating HA and A have social jobs (AM: 25/42, VN: 24/44) and knowledge of foreign languages (AM: 36/42, VN: 40/42).

(2) Inviting to go to a local meeting (S14)

•**Similarities:** As exhibited in the corpus, the dissimilarities between the numbers of informants in the two groups are not coincident with the statistically insignificant differences at all the levels of assessment the chi-square values give. With approximately 60% and 10% of the informants in each group support HA + A and IA+SIA respectively, the two groups show their assumption of the applicability of the situation in their cultures. However, that one-thirds of informants left choose Y/N is a further clue for the optional assessment depending on concrete conditions in real life.

(3) Inviting to support the local football team (S15)

•**Similarities:** Similar to the other situations in this activity, all the chi-square values found are lower than χ^2_{α} , which means there is a relative coincidence in the AM and VN informants' assessment of the situation at all levels. Up to 70% of subjects in the two group believe that the situation is HA and A and approximately 3-4% taking IA and SIA. This result is an evidence for the applicability of the situation admitted in the two cultures. It is certain that however, the dependence of the optional assessment on concrete conditions is reflected by over one-fifths of informants ticking Y/N.

(4) Inviting to welcome an important foreign guest (S16)

•**Similarities:** There is no meaningful difference between the AM and VN informants in their attitude towards this situation at the levels of A, Y/N, IA and SIA. It is worth noting that the rates of subjects opting Y/N in both groups are higher than the others (AM: 35%, VN: 46%) and the ones taking IA and SIA is the lowest. This might be interpreted that though the informants think that it is optional to decide whether or not to invite the acquaintances in this situation, the situation is not considered to be inapplicable in the two cultures.

•**Differences:** A great difference between the two groups of informants is found in their choice of HA in this situation. While up to 23.3% of the AM think that it is highly advisable to invite the acquaintances in this situation, only 5% of the VN share the same opinion. A comparison between this result and the proportion of the proportion of the informants ticking Y/N might give one possible reason that this situation does not appear familiar with many of the VN informants, even three among the VN interviewees said that they had never seen any foreigners in their living area.

2.3 Safety of the situations in AM-VN interaction in Inviting

As discussed in the above-mentioned sections, the data examined provide consistent support for the point that there apparently exist both similarities and differences in the invitability assessed by the two groups of informants from the two different cultures of AM and VN. In this section, the five levels of advisability grouped in three main groups based on the model developed by Nguyen Quang [15] are employed to draw final comments on what should and should not be invited in VN and AM cross-cultural communication. The first group includes HA and A opinions, the second-Y/N, and the last-IA and SIA:

Table 2: The five levels of advisability

1	2	3
Positive group	Neutral group	Negative group
-HA	-Y/N	-IA
-A		-SIA

Some noteworthy features of levels of advisability assessed by the VN informants can be drawn from the data collected and analyzed above as follows:

- Most of the situations, at different degrees, belong to the positive group (4 situations at HA and 4 at A level). Six situations belong to the neutral, two to the negative (1 at IA and 1 at SIA).

- The four situations at the *positive group* are equally distributed into the first and second groups of activities (Friendship and Family activities), i.e there are two situations at the positive in each set of activities (A1: S1, S2 – A2: S5, S8). Two among these four situations are negatively oriented and the other two are positively oriented. However, there is only one situation with positive orientation in the third set of activity (Professional activities – S9) and three situations, two of which are negatively oriented and one of which has no orientation, found in the fourth (Social activities – S13, S14, S15).

- Among the six situations found in the neutral group, three belong to the third set of activities (S10, S11, S12), two to the second set of activities (S6, S7), and one to the last set of activities (S16). The situations are all neutral with positive orientation.
- The two situations belonging to the negative group are both in the first set of activities (Friendship – S3: *go to the cinema*, S4: *go to a dancing club*) and positively oriented.
- Equivalent to the VN, below are some considerable points summarized from the data of the AM informants' assessment afore-analyzed:
- Similar to the results data in the VN group, the number of situations belonging to the positive group outweighs the others. Eight situations in this group are found with three at HA and 5 at A. Seven other situations are in the neutral group, and one (with one at SIA and zero at IA) in the negative group.
- Three among eight situations of the positive group are distributed in the first set of activities (Friendship activities: S1, S3, S4), two others in the second (Family activities: S5, S7), three in the fourth (Social activities: S13, S14, S15). No situation is found in the third set of activities (Professional activities). Half the situations in this group are negatively oriented (S1, S5, S7, S15), and the half left positively oriented (S3, S4, S13, S14).
- In the neutral group, the dominant number of situation is at the third set of activities with four situations of Y/N (Professional activities: S9, S10, S11, S12). Each of the three set of activities left receives one neutral situation (Friendship activities: S2, Family activities: S8, Social activities: S13). It is noticeable that similar to the neutral situations in the VN group, all of the situations are oriented positively.
- At the second set of activities, the only one situation of the negative group is S2 (go to the anniversary of your grandmother's death)
- The results discussed above indicate that beside the great similarities, the two groups of AM and VN respondents also express some considerable differences in assessing the advisability of the situations given. Some situations should be invited in this culture, but should not in the

other. Additionally, even as for the situations which seem to be assessed equivalently by the two cultures are actually at different degrees. This may lead to culture shock in AM and VN interaction. For this reason, the potentiality of culture shock or the safety of the topics must be taken into consideration to get success in cross-cultural communication. Based on the scale of safety suggested by Nguyen Quang [15], each of the situations of inviting is divided into five groups: highly safe (HS), safe (S), relatively safe (RS), unsafe (US), and highly unsafe (HUS). In the range of the data of the informants' assessment (HA, A, Y/N, IA, SIA), the highest percentage is chosen as the informant's major choice. Additionally, the orientation of the group depends on the second percentage.

Table 3: The scale of topic safety in the light of Nguyen Quang [15]

Level of advisability			HA		A			VN			IA			SIA		
Nationality			AM		VN			AM			VN			AM		
Activities	Situations															
A1	S1	Count	25	24	19	32	10	3	4	1	2	0				
		%	41.7	40.0	31.7	53.3	16.7	5.0	6.7	1.7	3.3	.0				

Positively oriented ← Major choice
 Major choice → Negatively oriented

The classification of the situations into the five grades is based on the following principle:

Grade 5- highly safe (HS): At this grade, both VN and AM informant's major choice of levels of invitability must belong to the *positive group* and they must be completely similar.

Grade 4- safe (S): This is the level at which the VN and AM subjects' assessment must belong to the *positive group*, and:

- One of them belongs to HA oriented negatively and the other to A oriented positively, or
- Both of them belong to A but one of which oriented positively.

Grade 3- relatively safe (RS): At this level, the two groups of informants' choice must belong to the *positive group* and the *neutral group*, and:

- They must be completely similar if both being the *neutral group*, or
- One of them belongs to the *positive group* and the other to the *neutral* oriented positively.

Grade 2- unsafe (US): At this level, both the VN and AM subjects' choice must belong to the *neutral* and *negative groups*, and

- If belonging to the *neutral*, one of them is positively oriented and the other negative oriented, or
- One belongs to the *neutral* and the other to the *negative*.

Grade 1- highly unsafe (HUS): This is the level where one of the two populations' assessment must belong to the

positive and the other to the negative or the neutral oriented negatively.

Based on this five-grade scale of measurement, the potentiality of AM and VN culture shock in making invitations in the given situations is discovered as in **table 4**. The situations belonging to RS dominate the others. There are nine situations are found at this grade: S2, S3, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S16. It is easily seen that the third set of activities takes the highest number of situation at this grade (four out of nine). Meanwhile, three out of investigated sixteen situations (S1, S13, S14) belong to S, two to HS, (S5, S15), one to US (S4) and one to HUS (S6).

Table 4: Summary of situations and their levels of inevitability assessed by American and Vietnamese informants and safety of situations

Level of advisability		GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF ADVISABILITY OF SITUATIONS					SAFETY OF SITUATIONS				
Nationality		VN: ○ AE: □									
Activities	Situations	HA	A	Y/N	IA	SIA	HS	S	RS	US	HUS
A1	S1	■	○					✓			
	S2	●		□					✓		
	S3		□		○				✓		
	S4		□			○					✓
A2	S5	■●					✓				
	S6			○		□					✓
	S7	■		○					✓		
	S8		○	□					✓		
A3	S9		○	□					✓		
	S10			○□					✓		
	S11			○□					✓		
	S12			○□					✓		
A4	S13	●	□					✓			
	S14		○□						✓		
	S15	●	■				✓				
	S16			○□					✓		

HA: highly advisable – A: advisable – Y/N: yes and no – IA: inadvisable – SIA: strongly inadvisable
 HS: highly safe – S: safe – RS: Relatively safe – US unsafe – HUS: highly safe
 Positive oriented: VN: ○ AE: □ Negative oriented: VN: ● AE: ■

From the results found above, it is worth noting that the two situations (S4: *go to a dancing club* and S6: *to the anniversary of your grandmother's death*) belonging to US and HUS should be taken in very careful consideration in AM and VN communication. The former (S4) seems to be popular in AM culture and the latter (S6) in VN culture due to many different reasons. However, in general, the very high number of situations found at HS, S and RS reveals the safety of the majority of the investigated topics. This is remarkably advantageous to AM and VN cross-cultural interaction involving the act of inviting.

2.4 Concluding remarks

Based on the combination of statistical results analyzed in section 3 and the measurement of five-scale (HS-S-RS-US-HUS), the four typical candidates for DCT questionnaire taken from the four activities in the MPQ are as flows:

A-Inviting situations:

A1- : S3 and S4 are not the candidates for DCT questionnaire because the two groups of informants show two reverse trends in assessing the advisability of the situation. Meanwhile, they both tend to be oriented to the positive side of S1 and S2. However, due to that S1 (*inviting*

the acquaintances to have a drink) seems to be more widely used than S2 and it is found at the level of S, which is safer than the other situations, it is chosen as the first topic for DCT questionnaire later.

A2: Being the only one out of four situations in this activity is assessed differently by the AM and VN, S2 (*inviting the acquaintances to the anniversary of the grandmother's death*) is ruled out as a possible candidate for DCT questionnaire. The opportunity of option is given to the three situations left which are S5, S6 and S8 because they are appreciated positively by both the groups of informants. However, since S5 (*inviting the acquaintances to attend your birthday party*) seems to receive more favor than the others and its degree of safety is at HS, it is chosen as the second situation in DCT later.

A3: All the situations in this activity are applicable at the degree of RS in the two cultures. However, S9 (*inviting the acquaintances to attend a professional workshop*) is chosen for DCT questionnaire because it receives the highest high rates of the informants' choice of HA and A.

A4: In general, the very high rate of optional choice is reflected in all the situations. All the situations in the social activities, however, are assessed to be applicable and reach the degree at RS in the two cultures. For the highest rates of informants in the two cultures approving HA and A, S14 (*inviting the acquaintances to the local meeting*) is used as one of the typical situation of the social activity in DCT questionnaire.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the data synthesized has empirically unveiled some substantial aspects of the levels of inevitability evaluated by the AM and VN informants. The first is that the results in the study reveal the overall point that the two groups' assessment of the advisability of the investigated social situations is under the impact of not only social context but also social attributes. The second, the two groups of subject's evaluation on this issue simultaneously varies from culture to culture. More importantly, this result of cross-cultural analysis will be the basis for the choice of situations employed in DCT questionnaire which is intended for the elicitation of linguistic forms of inviting later. It is hopefully seen as a model for cross-cultural assessment of the advisability, the safety and compatibility of the investigated social situations in cross-cultural studies.

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