

**COMMUNICATION PROCESS BETWEEN THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR OF
MEDELLÍN AND CHINA: IMPORTER-EXPORTER RELATIONSHIP IN TOY
STORES OF “EL HUECO” SECTOR.**



LUISA FERNANDA FLOREZ SANDOVAL

SARA LÓPEZ GUTIERREZ

UNIVERSIDAD ECCI

GRADUATE THESIS

MODERN LANGUAGES DEGREE

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Presented by:

LUISA FERNANDA FLOREZ SANDOVAL

SARA LÓPEZ GUTIERREZ

**Graduate thesis as a requirement to obtain a professional degree in modern
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Adviser:

LUCA TOMMASO CATULLO MACINTYRE

UNIVERSIDAD ECCI

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To God,

For guiding me on this academic path, for giving me the health to achieve my goals as a person and professional and putting in it, people who contributed and helped me in my study process.

To my mother, my dad, and my sister,

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- Sara López Gutierrez

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ABSTRACT

In this paper you will find a study about the communication process used in the commercial exchanges in Toy Stores of “El Hueco” sector of the city of Medellin with Chinese exporters. To accomplish this aim, the research was focused on a qualitative design, regarding that it was necessary the analysis of the persons and undertakings involved in a negotiation, analyzing the influence of protocols and etiquette when trading with China. Expecting to find a steady process within the companies but, instead of that, the result of the surveys was as diverse as the market itself.

KEYWORDS : COMMUNICATION – IMPORTS – MERCHANTS –
PROTOCOL – TOY STORES

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INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to recognize the importance of the communication process in commercial exchange, and to study and define this process, especially in the Toy's sector of "El Hueco" of Medellín. This work also aims to provide knowledge about the communication processes of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the toy sector and how trade takes place considering the language, the Chinese culture and those who can intervene.

Therefore, research like this will allow to establish a collaborative bridge between academia and the commercial sector, which need each other to implement development processes and research.

1. Problem Statement

In today's globalized world, where companies are in constant trade, it is essential to analyze both the culture and language diversity of each country involved in such exchanges. There is now a belief in a universal business language: English, as (i) is understood or spoken by 1 - 1.6 billion people (in addition to the 400 million English-speaking natives); ii) is the language used by companies to operate on an international scale as it drives their internationalization; and (iii) may be easy to learn; either because of its vocabulary or because of its grammar, which is much less complex compared to others such as Spanish, which has infinite verbal conjugations (Verbum language solutions, 2018).

However, it is possible to show that the world's largest exporters do not have English as their mother tongue, and yet most of their negotiations are actually taking place. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (n.d) "in 2018, China was the world's No. 2 economy in terms of GDP (current US\$), No. 1 in total exports, No. 2 in total imports and No. 78 economy in terms of GDP per capita (current US\$)".

In addition, figures from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (2019) show that between January and July of 2019 imports from Colombia to China amounted to \$3,236,246.25 million. That is why the potential of the Chinese market, and the number of opportunities it represents for Colombia and by which all possible aspects should be considered when conducting trade with this country, should not be underestimated, an example of this is that Colombia and China have a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), which facilitates trade and investment between these countries, and provides a safe environment to conduct business (SICEX, 2019).

The trade process used by companies to investigate is also a subject of study, since their business relationship is influenced by important aspects such as: (i) language; (ii) professionals, and (iii) culture. The first two aspects have been discussed by Franco, L, & Quiroz, G. (2011). who state that "Antioquia is the department with the largest number of translators (71%), followed by Bogotá (13.3%)" (p.50); the above indicates that if a company does not have the staff qualified to carry out such commercial exchange in the native language of the country from which it is required be imported, there are different professionals who are available to offer their service to companies in order to balance the

linguistic gap, and as a result achieve successful negotiations. As far as the cultural aspect is concerned, commercial relations with China, as stated by Today translations Consult Advise Translate. (n.d). “It is best to maintain composure when dealing with Chinese businesspeople, the most you can do is use kind words, politeness or a faint smile”. These trade relations are no longer simply a matter of language, but also of culture; as their social and cultural environment determines how Chinese partners conduct their negotiations, for instance, how they view interpersonal relations, since Orientals have a protocol stipulated when negotiating, as stated by Rashed & Nesha (2016) “Chinese society is heavily influenced by the traditional values associated with Confucianism which promotes a strict system of norms and propriety. These values determine how a person should act within a community, with hierarchy a central theme” (p.11). So, if a company is oriented towards the Chinese market, of course, the influence of Chinese culture will be significant.

In this way, it is important to consider the country with which the trade will take place and how it will take place, as cultures have a very significant impact on the way business are done. According to the above approach the following problem question is established: How is the communication process handled in trade by Toy Stores of the sector “El Hueco” of the city of Medellin with Chinese exporters?

2. Justification

This research is focus on studying and outlining the communication process used in commercial exchanges, especially in the imports made in the sector of “El Hueco”. After a thorough search for information about the types of intermediaries involved in the import, insufficient information was obtained. This search only allowed to find works that define the types of intermediaries in the export processes, like in Rodríguez, D (2006, p.10) who discusses two types of intermediaries: broker and distributor. In this way, the present work allowed to explore whether these export intermediaries are used among “El Hueco” traders in their import of products from China or which professionals or companies are involved in this exchange.

Another aspect to be taken into account in order to recognize the importance of the communication process in a commercial exchange is from the perspective of the future professional in modern languages, since the latter must know about these processes, and thus be prepared to venture into the labor market, as Equipo Editorial (2015) exposes "Translation is a profession that changes due to the globalization of markets and is nevertheless in all countries undervalued, although so far there is no technology that can do this work with quality".

However, although translation is not very well identified as a profession, it is necessary for successful negotiations, and the professionals must be competitive and effective not only as a translator or interpreter, but as a commercial mediator who knows his environment and are able to face negotiations in the best way, as also proposed by Rodríguez, D (2006, p.10) "Working with brokers is a desirable option for companies who are unfamiliar with the market which they want to enter", it should be taken into account is that, even though, choosing an intermediary is not something complicated, it requires time and effort, and it also requires to know the forms of intermediation propitious for the commercial activity to which each company is dedicated.

Because of the above, research like this one allows to establish a collaborative bridge between academia and the commercial sector, which are needed to implement research and development processes, failing which, companies would not project to international markets and would be limited to remaining in local market dynamics.

This project aims to bring knowledge about the communication processes of small and medium-sized enterprises in the toy sector and the way in which they run commercial exchanges in the language, in Chinese culture and by those involved, which makes it highly relevant, as this commercial exchanges involve not only the purchase and sale of products but also a cultural background, etiquette and use of verbal and non-verbal language, as suggested as well, by Rodríguez, D (2006, p.7) "One of the first decisions that small and medium agro-industry companies wanting to export must make is to figure out how they will enter a foreign market".

3. Objectives

1. General Objective:

Studying the communication process used in the commercial exchanges in Toy Stores of “El Hueco” sector of the city of Medellin with Chinese exporters.

2. Specific Objectives:

- I.** Identifying the Toy companies of the sector “El Hueco” of the city of Medellin that import from China.
- II.** Discovering the communication processes carried out by small importers in the commercial sector “El Hueco” of Medellín in their trade with China.
- III.** Recognizing the types of commercial exchange used in the negotiations of toy companies in Medellin with China.
- IV.** Analyzing the influence of protocols and etiquette on Medellín’s trade with China.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter it is intended to display the basic concepts that make up this research:

1. Importation

Importation can be defined as the transfer of goods or services from abroad for internal distribution. Imports may be subject to different classifications according to their condition, purpose, or origin, regardless of the communication processes, protocols or guidelines granted in each country by the respective national customs legislation. There are two types of imports: direct and indirect (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2013, p.15).

2. Types of importation

Direct import is represented by any company engaged in the work of importing different types of products; it refers to a type of import between a retailer and a manufacturer abroad, i.e., the retailer does not purchase products from a local supplier but purchases them directly from the manufacturer. On the other hand, it is called indirect import “when a company uses the resources of another company to carry out the import of products” (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo, 2013, p.16).

2.1. Protocol

It is a direct relationship with the types of culture with which it relates, in this sense we distinguish cultures of low-context and cultures of high-context. The low context culture is the one where the speakers are clear about what they want to say; but, on the other hand, in the "high-context" cultures, the attitudes and circumstances are more important than what is actually said. A clear example of this low context culture is countries like the United States, Australia or the Netherlands and an example for the high context cultures are the Asian ones like Japan or China. (Llamazares, O., 2014, p.11)

2.2. Etiquette

"They are rules and customs that allow the adequate performance in different environments, whether they are ceremonial and solemn as observed in palaces and public places." (Gandur, J., y Di Marco, M., 2015, p.8)

3. Trading

According to the ILO (International Labour Organization) "trading is the introduction of goods or services to customers, offering them attractive promotions to increase sales... identify customer needs and meet them better than their competitors to make a profit." (ILO, 2015, p.3)

4. Internationalization

In the import of goods or services it is necessary to speak of internationalization of the companies that make these processes because it is the way in which its activities are projected to an international environment that allows to generate a commercial and financial movement for both parts.

According to Araya, A., (2009) "the internationalization of companies is the result of the adoption of a series of strategies in which both the resources and capacities of the company and the opportunities and threats of the environment are considered" (p.18).

5. Commercial exchange

Arenal, C., (2018) defines commercial exchange as follows: "is the activity that takes place by bringing together supply and demand, i.e., the manufacturers or producers

of the goods with consumers who wish to satisfy a need through the acquisition of those goods” (p.15).

6. Intermediary

This term is also known as distribution intermediary or marketing intermediary, Business Dictionary (n.d) defines this term as individuals or companies that help a company to promote, sell and make available a good or service. that links the companies to a business deal, investment decision, negotiation, etc.

According to Nuño, P., (2018) there are six types of intermediaries, from which each company will choose the one that is most appropriate for its trading:

6.1. Wholesaler

This intermediary is the one who buys all kinds and variety of products, usually these products are sold to retailers. (Nuño, P., 2018)

6.2. Retailer

A retailer is one who obtains products from market intermediaries, usually from wholesalers. These intermediaries sell their products at retail. (Nuño, P., 2018)

6.3. Distributor

Distributors are like wholesalers, but with one key difference. This intermediary will have only one line of products, in contrast the wholesaler. (Nuño, P., 2018)

6.4. Broker

This person works as a trusted agent or intermediary in commercial negotiations or exchanges. These intermediaries are usually specialized in some fields that are required, such as finance, insurance, and real estate. Their rate of compensation, also called brokerage or commission, is determined according to the trade or by law (Business Dictionary, n.d, b).

7. Participant observation

Participant observation is the process that empowers researchers to learn about the activities, rituals, interactions, and events of people in terms of learning some aspects of their routines and culture (DeWalt, K. and DeWalt, B., 2011, pp. 1-5). This method, in other words, is to learn about the activities of people who are under study in the natural setting through observation and participation. It provides the context for developing sampling guidelines and interview guides.

8. Commercial mediation

Rodriguez, L (2016) defines international commercial mediation as a method for resolving conflicts, where the parties to the conflict, which has arisen in an international commercial transaction, attempt to resolve it through a process of negotiation facilitated or directed by a third party (pp. 35-42).

9. Communicative processes

The communicative process is the set of activities linked to the exchange of data between two or more people. This process requires a sender and a receiver. As part of this process, the transmitter and receiver share a code, which is a combination of rules and signs that allow communication to take place; the signals are transmitted by means of a channel. (Pérez, J. and Gardey, A., 2015)

9.1. Elements of communication

The communication process is carried out considering some important elements that are involved in this process, if one of these elements is affected, the transmission of the message will therefore be affected. These elements are as follows:

9.1.1. Sender

It is the person who initiates the communication process, it is the person who encodes the message. The sender and the receiver may exchange their roles throughout the process (Raffino, E., 2020)

9.1.2. Receiver

The one to whom the sender addresses the message, in other words, who receives the message and interprets it, is responsible for extracting the

meaning of the message, considering the codes he shares with the sender (Raffino, E., 2020).

9.1.3. Channel

The sender is the person who chooses the communication channel, considering the message he wants to transmit and the receiver to whom it will be transmitted. In other words, the channel is the physical medium through which communication is established, and this in turn includes elements that facilitate or hinder communication (Raffino, E., 2020).

9.1.4. Code

The code is a combination of rules and signs that allow the concretion of the communication and allows the receiver to interpret the message of the sender, either through the use of a language, which are codes of each language, cultural values, or also the binary code of computers when sending an email (Raffino, E., 2020).

9.1.5. Message

The message is a fraction of the information that the sender sends to the receiver. In other words, it is the axis, content, and object of the communication. This is the most important element in the communication process (Raffino, E., 2020).

9.1.6. Context

The communication process happens in a context. That is, the context is the scenario that surrounds this process, whether it is a geographical location, a moment in time, an event, or an attitude on the part of the sender as well as the receiver (Mejia, T., n.d)

9.1.7. Noise

Noise is any external element that interferes with the transmission or reception of the message. If there are difficulties in the optimal implementation of the communication process, it can be said that there is a noise in the communication (Mejia, T., n.d).

5. State-of-the-art

3.1 Análisis de la cultura de negociación china para establecer parámetros y condiciones de negociación comercial entre Colombia y china.

Topics: Interculturality (protocol and etiquette)

Author: Gómez, G.

Year: 2012

Autónoma De Occidente University

International Business and Marketing Program

ABSTRACT

“In this degree work, a series of elements are exposed, which are considered important to understand the Chinese negotiation culture and how, through the succession and construction of negotiation mechanisms and parameters, an optimization of the commercial relationship between Colombia and China, in the constant search to be a more competitive country through the learning and preparation of Colombians.” (Gómez, G., 2012)

KEYWORDS

Chinese Trading Culture, Guanxi, Trading Strategies, Protocol

INTRODUCTION

This publication aims to analyze China’s negotiating culture in order to establish parameters and conditions for trade negotiations between Colombia and China. For this, throughout the research multiple aspects that are important at the time of doing business with China are mentioned; aspects such as the historical context and evolution of Chinese culture, the Chinese negotiating culture, the Colombian negotiating culture, among others.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this research lead to give validity and importance to one of the stated objectives; to analyze the influence of protocols and labels on Medellin's trade with China. As the author recounts on the paper, the two countries manage two totally opposite cultures, the Colombian being more informal and the Chinese being more rigorous

CONCLUSION

The linguistic and sociocultural gap in this specific case, with the Chinese, is common in relationships between people who are not part of their culture, which mainly affects merchants who want to venture into this market by looking for opportunities for their business. Therefore, Gomez's research, is an important guide to understanding these negotiation processes with the Popular Republic of China (PRC).

SOURCE

Gómez, G., (2012). Análisis De La Cultura De Negociación China Para Establecer Parámetros Y Condiciones De Negociación Comercial Entre Colombia Y China. International Business and Marketing Program. Autónoma De Occidente University

3.2 Do languages barriers affect trade?

Topic: Language barriers

Author: Lohman, J.

Year: 2010

Dartmouth College

ABSTRACT

“Language barriers may be more important to international trade than previously thought. The Language Barrier Index, a newly constructed variable that uses detailed linguistic data, is used to show that language barriers are significantly negatively correlated with bilateral trade” (Lohmann, J., 2010)

KEYWORDS

Bilateral trade, Gravity equation, Language barriers

INTRODUCTION

This publication aims to highlight the importance of language gaps in commerce. These language barriers refer to language gaps in communication, that is to say difficulties experienced by the parties involved who speak a different language. Language differences between countries may inhibit trade for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being the cost of communication in foreign languages.

DISCUSSION

The results of this article establish the close relationship between linguistic similarity and cultural or historical ties. By including historical variables in recent regressions, it attempts to account for some of these factors and explain the importance of language barriers in international trade.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this theme is found that the Language Barriers Index has recently built a more complete measure of the linguistic factors that affect trade. Moreover, the estimation of the severity model of trade shows that language barriers are an important deterrent to bilateral trade.

SOURCE

Lohmann, J. (2011). Do language barriers affect trade? *Economic Letters*, 110(2). pp. 159 - 162

3.3 How to choose and negotiate with an intermediary in another country.

Topic: Intermediaries

Author: Rodríguez, D.

Year: 2006

Agrobusiness Specialist, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

ABSTRACT

“This handbook, titled How to Choose and Negotiate with an Intermediary in Another Country, provides information about the different types of intermediaries, how to contact them, how to choose among them and how to successfully conclude the negotiating process. We are confident that this publication will become an enduring reference tool for small and medium-sized agribusinesses. And at the IICA we hope to play a role in strengthening your competitiveness and improving your living conditions” (Rodríguez, D., 2006).

KEYWORDS

SMEs, intermediaries, agribusiness, internationalization

INTRODUCTION

Through this document, the author seeks to guide SMEs, especially agri-entrepreneurs, through their process of selecting intermediaries, in order to strengthen competitiveness and improve their living conditions.

DISCUSSION

In this document, the author develops some steps to follow when choosing an intermediary. The step to highlight is the first one, as it explains how to identify the most appropriate type of intermediary for

a company. This issue is closely related to one of the specific objectives: to recognize the types of intermediaries used in the negotiations of toy stores in Medellin with China. In this way, the document will guide the project through its proposed steps, in order to understand deeply the way in which the merchants of Medellín choose an expert person on the subject.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this publication is that choosing an intermediary requires time and effort, as well as analyzing the figure that best suits the objectives, needs and characteristics of the exporting company.

Likewise, before sitting at the negotiating table, objectives of the negotiation must be clear. The personal image is as important as that of the company and the products. In addition, it is necessary to make every effort to comply with commitments, to be available to customers and to ensure that the business partner also complies with the commitments made.

With the above can be highlighted a good basis for a solid and long-term business relationship.

SOURCE

Rodriguez, D. (2006). How to Choose and Negotiate with an Intermediary in Another Country. Agribusiness Series: Export Handbooks. Miami, p.24.

3.4 El ABC del comercio exterior guía práctica del importador.

Topic: Commerce

Author: Ministerio de comercio Exterior y Turismo

Year: 2013

Vice-Ministry of Foreign Trade. University

National Directorate for the Development of foreign Trade.

ABSTRACT

This Guide promotes the knowledge, procedures, and practices necessary for users of foreign trade in general to acquire goods from abroad, to be intended for consumption or for processing to third parties, the final destination of which is either the domestic market or the export market.

The main purpose of importing goods or services is to provide residents of a given country with one or more additional supply alternatives than they would find in their local market. This will allow you to meet your consumption needs in a more efficient, economical, and safe way. These alternatives offer diverse opportunities in terms of price, quality, and quantity, encouraging local producers to seek efficiency, modernization, and the competitiveness of their processes, both in terms of quality and opportunity, therefore, consumers will become more demanding in these aspects.

KEYWORDS

Imports, foreign trade, types of imports.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (MINCETUR) has as one of its main responsibilities, helping to promote the competitiveness of the country, promoting the permanent and aggressive development of Foreign Trade.

Since 2003, MINCETUR, together with representatives of the private sector and the public sector involved in international trade, has been implementing the National Strategic Export Plan (PENX), which proposes to turn Peru into an exporting country with a competitive, modern, diversified, and high value-added offer of goods and services.

To achieve the PENX vision, four strategic objectives have been defined:

1. Development of exportable supply.
2. Facilitation of Foreign Trade.
3. Development of new markets and consolidation of existing ones.
4. Development of an export culture.

DISCUSSION

The conceptualization found in this guide for the import allows to define and explain some terms necessary for the structuring of the content and the instrument used, which after being exposed will be analyzed within the communicative process.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this guide, we have the theoretical, conceptual, and legal tools to exercise imports and to work in foreign trade, whether it applies to a company in its importing work or represents only a navigational chart to understand foreign trade.

SOURCE

Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo., (2013). EL ABC DEL
COMERCIO EXTERIOR GUÍA PRÁCTICA DEL IMPORTADOR. (2).
Lima.

6. Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives, set out in this research, the methodology used is presented, including the type of study, scope, and information management techniques as well as team participants and the tools needed to develop the research process based on observation and surveys.

6.1 Research design

The present research was focused on a qualitative design, since for describing the process of commercial communication in Toy stores of the sector “El Hueco” of the city on Medellin with Chinese exporters, it was necessary a constant observation, the analysis of each situation relating to the behavior of the persons and undertakings involved in a negotiation. It was also necessary to analyze the influence of protocols and etiquette when trading with China; as well as the gathering of information based on the observation of natural behaviors, discourses and open responses for interpretation, and thus recognize the type of intermediation required in the negotiation between the companies of Medellín and China; in this way participatory observation is a technique that made the researcher be involved in the problem or situation that was analyzed, to finally identify the communication processes carried out by small importers in the commercial sector “El Hueco” of Medellín in their imports with China.

6.2 Level or type of research

This research is presented in an exploratory way, since there was not much information and a little is known at the moment of this research about the processes of intermediation in toy stores of the sector “El Hueco” of the city of Medellin with Chinese exporters, this is why it was sought to understand the variables that are involved and that make such trade possible. In this way it is presented as a basic research, whose purpose is to understand the communication processes necessary for the commercialization of toy products between Medellin and China. It was also considered that this analysis was longitudinal, since it is hoped that it could be able to contribute to the good practices of internationalization of companies in a given time and also as an element study for students of Modern Languages of the University

ECCI Medellín. In addition, it should be mentioned that small groups were selected for the study of this phenomenon, that means, the variables that were explored in a micro-sociological manner with mixed research sources and field studies for greater effectiveness and approach to the phenomenon to be treated; finally, it is clarified that this document and the empirical studies had been made to start from possible immersions that have been carried out on the topic.

6.3 Population and sample

According to the information gathered by the DANE in Medellín (2020), specifically in “El Hueco”, there would be around 100 or more toy stores located in this sector, of which only 10 companies were chosen to be interviewed and collect information for the use of this research.

Population: For the population of this research 29 companies located in Medellín were gathered.

Sample: Only 10 of the total population met the specifications needed for this research and accepted to cooperate.

6.3.1 Type of Sampling

- **The sample of experts:** “In certain studies, the opinion of experts on a specific subject is necessary. These samples are frequent in qualitative and exploratory studies to generate more precise hypotheses or the raw material of questionnaire design” (Hernández, R., Fernández, C. and Baptista, P., 2014, p.387). In order to carry out this research it is necessary to acquire references that serve as a guide to achieve the general objective. This type of sample collaborates in the construction of the thoughts and activities that have been proposed to evaluate the results of the work itself.

6.3.2 Procedure for selecting the sample

Firstly, a search was made of the companies located in the “Hueco” sector, then the streets of this place were walked, communicating to the companies the objectives of the research and

those companies that accepted, they were asked to fill out a database with their email or contact number and respond whether they imported from China or not. After selecting the companies that met the requirements, they were contacted by email or WhatsApp, sending them a presentation document (Annex 1), and requesting an interview with them on a voluntary basis, but, due to the lack of response, we had to go directly to these companies in order to request the interviews¹.

6.4 Techniques

This research was based on a qualitative method such as participatory observation, which is understood as a technique that involves the researcher in the problem or situation analyzed. The techniques used in each of the activities proposed in the schedule of activities are defined below:

- **Compiling databases of companies in the toy sector:** For the collection of this information, bases such as Dane, Cámara de comercio of Medellín, Legis Comex and others were used.
- **Classifying companies according to relevant characteristics:** A database was created with the companies researched, which were selected by size, choosing mainly small and medium-sized enterprises, which carry out toy trade with China and eventually are located in “El Hueco” sector. (Annex 2)
- **Selection of companies:** 10 companies were chosen, considering the previous database, to schedule the necessary interviews.
- **Designing the interview:** Questions that may lead to know the communication process used in the commercial exchanges in Toy Stores of the sector “El Hueco” of the city of Medellín with Chinese exporters were formulated.

¹ Considering the restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic, these processes was carried out with the proper safety protocols: mask, hand sanitizer and social distance.

- **Setting up appointments with companies:** Appointments were scheduled through Meet and Google Calendar having in that way a better control and management of dating scheduling.
- **Applying the interview:** Some previous information was given during the interviews about the type of intermediation, in order to know if whether or not the company's representatives had some previous knowledge about it. In case that they did not, they could tell us how the brokering strategy was made. Then the interview was done based on questions of Annex 3.
- **Data treatment:** The information was tabulated in Excel cells and was represented by pie charts.
- **Results analysis:** It was carried out by a quantitative technique by which the data was presented numerically, then present a qualitative analysis in which the data was presented in a verbal (or graphical) way.
- **Preparation of final report:** The entire research team met to analyze and socialize the results of the study and write a conclusion.

6.5 Instruments

The development of this research has applied the necessary tools to collect information from the selected sample. A combination of methods was used, such as conducting interviews, reading documents, and visiting companies² to understand the negotiation process examined, relying on the participants' own perspectives to provide insight on how the communication process is carried out on each company by their representatives on the international market.

- **Observation Guide:** This tool was used for managing and monitoring the fulfillment of activities by the members of the research team, this guide was made considering a number of elements such as the

² Considering the restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic, these processes were carried out through virtual meetings.

title and the date of the activities, the names of the persons in charge of them and of the representatives of the companies, the column of observations and results. (Annex 4)

- **Interview script:** The present interview script was thought to be more familiar than a normal questionnaire as there is not much documented knowledge on the field in question, so the approach could be closer. This presented the list of points to be dealt with and the questions that the interviewer asked the companies, which pointed to generate coherent answers according to the investigation purpose.

8. Presentation and analysis of results

The results of the present research look forward to answer how the communication process is handled in trade by Toy Stores of the sector “El Hueco” of the city of Medellin with Chinese exporters, understanding that the communication process includes protocol and etiquette. This with the purpose to establish a collaborative bridge between the academia and the commercial sector, which are needed to implement development processes and research.

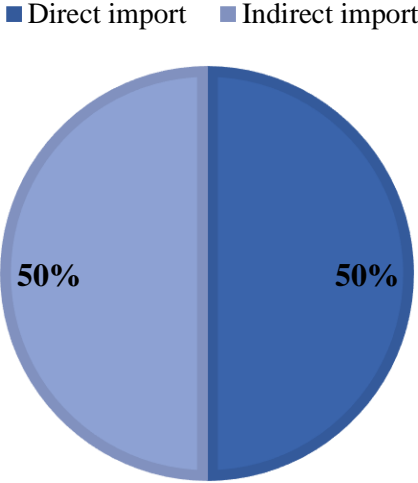
The analysis of the interview responses and the observations made by the research team are presented as follows:

8.1 Interview analysis

The interview was applied from November 18th to December 2nd. The surveys were applied to 10 companies located in El Hueco, Medellin. The template of the survey can be found in Annex 3.

Question 1: Your company makes purchases through...

PIE CHART 1: TYPE OF IMPORTATION

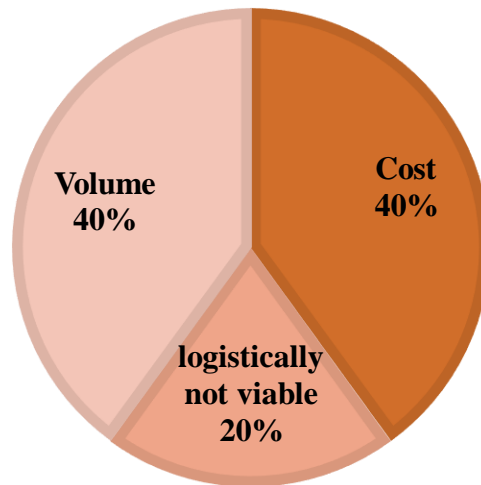


The way to communicate and make business could be already determined by the company, however it may change depending on the demands of the local market and the volume of product that need to be imported. In this way, for more volume, direct import

is used, whereas for fewer volumes there is more need of considering third party companies and indirect import.

Question 2.a: Why do you prefer this type of import? (Indirect)

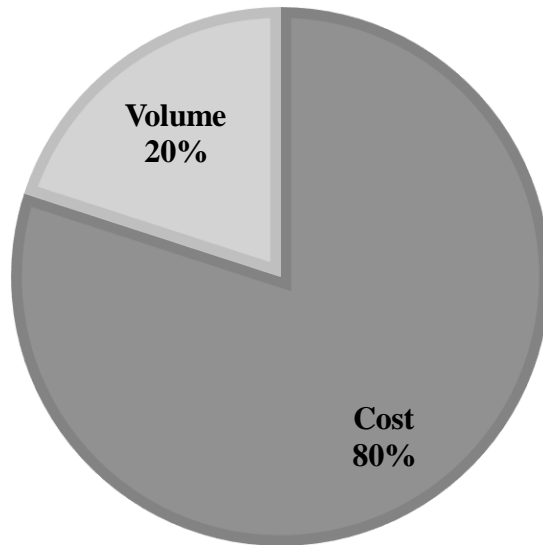
PIE CHART 2: INDIRECT IMPORT



The logistic costs highly depend on the volume of the imports, so most of the merchants prefer direct importation since it more economic but they are subordinated to the amount of product that the company needs to buy. That's why the companies that use indirect importation usually prefer to buy from the wholesalers rather than the Chinese companies themselves.

Question 2.b: Why do you prefer this type of import? (Direct)

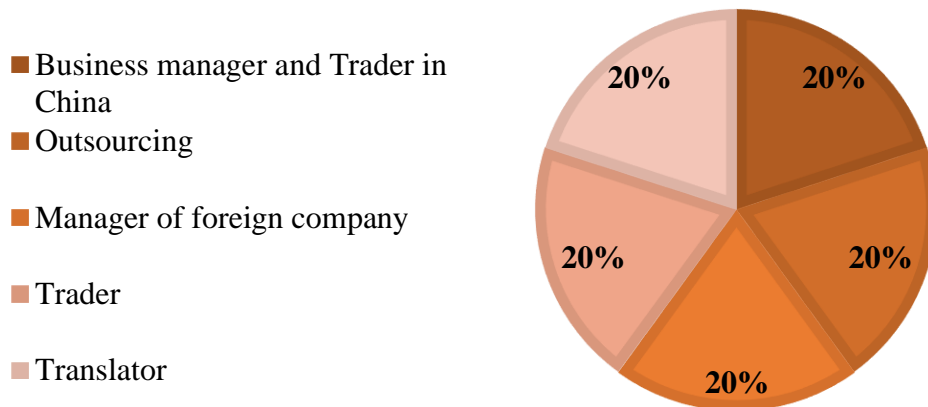
PIE CHART 3: DIRECT IMPORT



For those merchants that prefer direct importation the cost is the main reason to proceed in this way. They reported that buying directly from the company allows them to access the multilingual personal from the company without the need of spending their own money on paying for brokers or translator.

Question 3.a: What kind of companies or professionals are hired to carry out the commercial processes? (Direct)

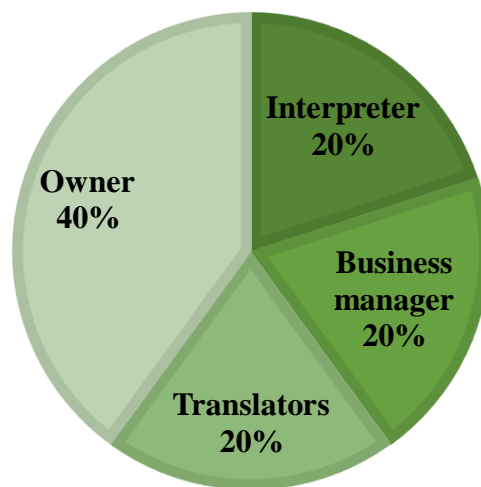
PIE CHART 4: PROFESSIONALS AND COMPANIES INVOLVED IN DIRECT IMPORT



There is a wide variety of ways to select the professionals that are hired to carry out the commercial process for direct import. Each of the companies that were interviewed explain which one they use based on his reality and needs. Some of them told us that there are people within the company on China that receive the Colombian buyers on their native language, thus there is no need to hire external people because the company provides all that is needed to break the linguistic gap and make the commercial process directly between each company representative. As another strategy, merchants hire people from Colombia who can speak both, English and Spanish and send them to China to learn Mandarin and have them prepared to make the business process for them. Translators are also hired by the Colombian companies, so they can negotiate themselves and the translator just break the linguist gap. This model is mostly used by company owners that even though they have knowledge and experience on the market, they do not speak any foreign language.

Question 3.b: What kind of companies or professionals are hired to carry out the commercial processes? (Indirect)

PIE CHART 5: PROFESSIONALS AND COMPANIES INVOLVED IN INDIRECT IMPORT

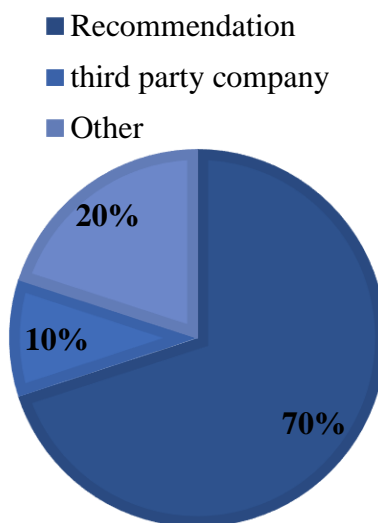


For indirect negotiation, the professionals who are hired to carry out the commercial process are more standardized. Most of them are carried by the company

owners who have so much experience that they do not need to hire any external people, usually these merchants have inherited the market knowledge for family generations. Another 20% is carry it out through business managers from the Colombian companies. But when there are not people within the company that can do it by themselves, the need for translators and interpreters emerges which is represented on 20% respectively.

Question 4: At the time of entering the Chinese market for the first time it was done...

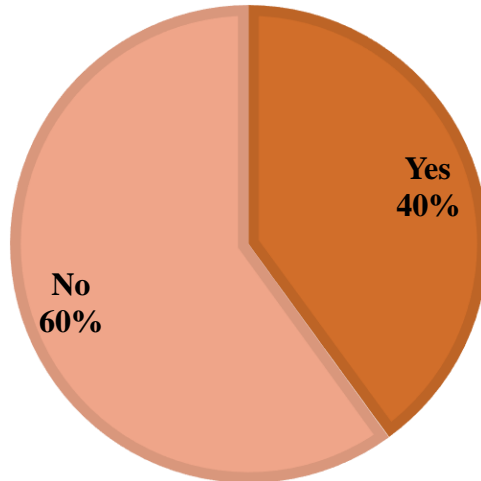
PIE CHART 6: ENTERING CHINESE MARKET



To the question of how to enter the Chinese market for the first time most of the participants agreed that it was through the recommendations of other merchants. Followed by other 20% who said that they did it independently as a way to roll the dice, after knowing the process of import backwards and forwards. And lastly, only 10% answer that it was through third party companies.

Question 5: Is it necessary for the management or administrative positions of the companies to know each other and establish a relationship between them?

PIE CHART 7: COMPANIES LEADERSHIPS RELATIONSHIP

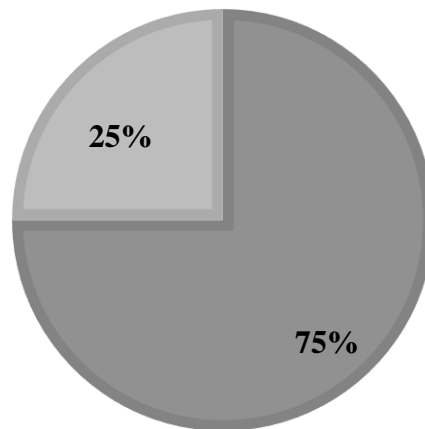


To the question, if it is necessary for the high positions of a company to know each other or have a close relationship for the business to succeed, 60% of the participants agreed that it is not necessary claiming that the only thing that really matters is having the enough money. On the other hand, 40% said that it is necessary as a way to boost the commercial relationship.

Question 6: If so, how is the language barrier handled during such meetings?

PIE CHART 8: LANGUAGE BARRIER SOLUTIONS

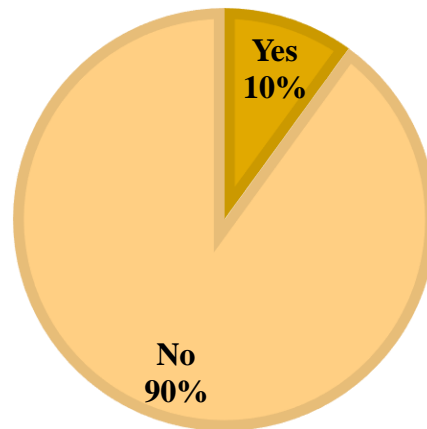
- Through interpreters/translators
- Bilingual staff from the same company



Aiming to know how the language barrier is handled when the high positions of the company meet to know each other before making businesses. They aimed that 75% of the meetings had interpreters and translators and only 25% was handled by bilingual staff from the companies.

Question 7: Have you ever found it difficult or impossible to do business with China because of the language difference?

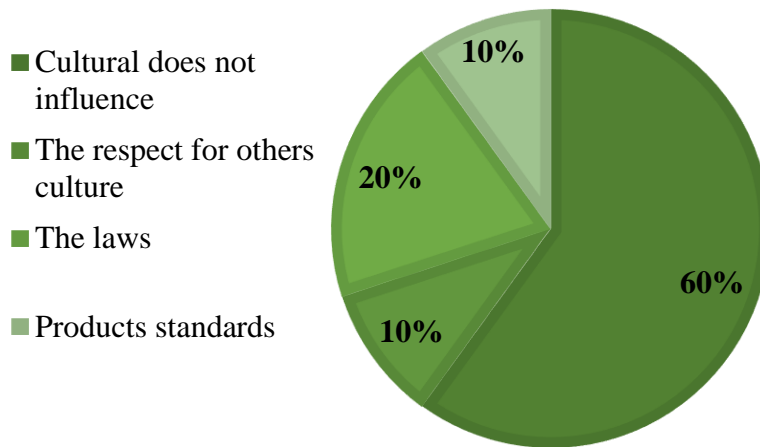
PIE CHART 9: LANGUAGE BARRIERS PROBLEMS



Language differences are not an obstacle when making businesses for most of the participants. The 90% of them expressed that the language of business is more powerful than the language itself. Whereas 10% of them stated that there were times on which it was impossible for them to have a commercial relationship due to language barriers. An interesting anecdote in which some merchants agreed is that one does not need to speak, just using a calculator and body language, a business can be made.

Question 8: How do you think that cultural differences between Medellín and China influence trade?

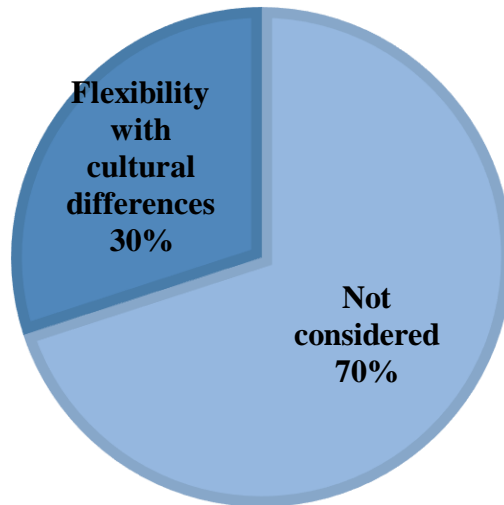
PIE CHART 10: CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN TRADE



Pointing to know how the cultural differences influence trade, 60% of the participants affirmed that culture does not have to be considered as something that may influence a commercial relationship. 20% stated that one cultural aspect to consider is showing respect on others believes, traditions and practices. 10% of participant mention that the product standards are influenced by cultural aspect, so that the products are design based on their own reality, which could be disruptive for exporting them to other cultures. On the other hand, 10% of the participants claimed that the biggest influence of culture is reflected on the other country laws, which directly influence on the regulations that had to complied.

Question 9: How does a company handle or take into consideration sociocultural aspects to start or maintain a business relationship?

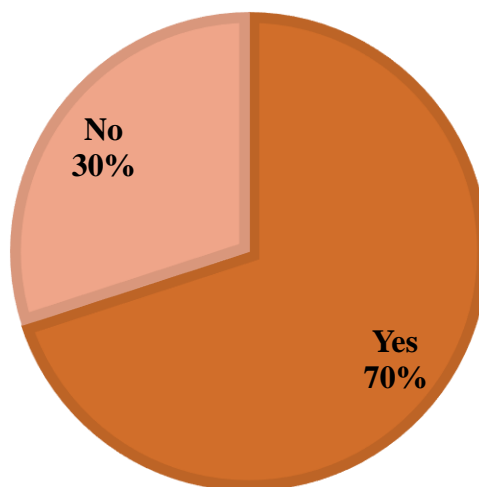
PIE CHART 11: SOCIALCULTURAL ASPECTS



Maintaining a business relationship is not related to sociocultural aspects under the perspective of 70% of the participants. For the other 30% being flexible to their culture, helps to maintain a good business relationship, for instance avoiding physical contact, trying their typical food, and sharing their typical greetings.

Question 10: Do you take commercial intermediary into consideration when negotiating?

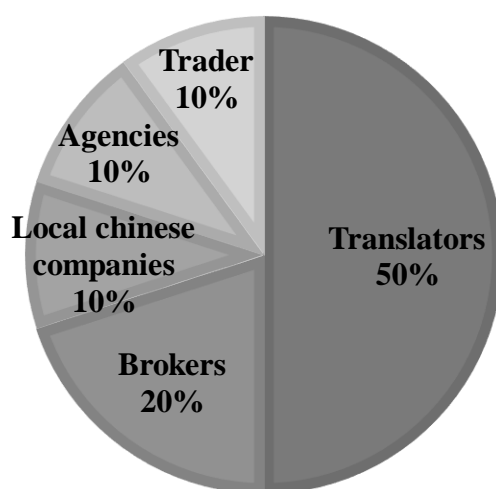
PIE CHART 12: COMMERCIAL INTERMEDIARY



Commercial intermediaries are known for all the merchants, however only 70% of them consider the possibility to hired them when negotiating. The other 30% do not considered them.

Question 11: What is the first communicative instance when entering the Chinese market to buy, considering that the languages spoken in both countries are different?

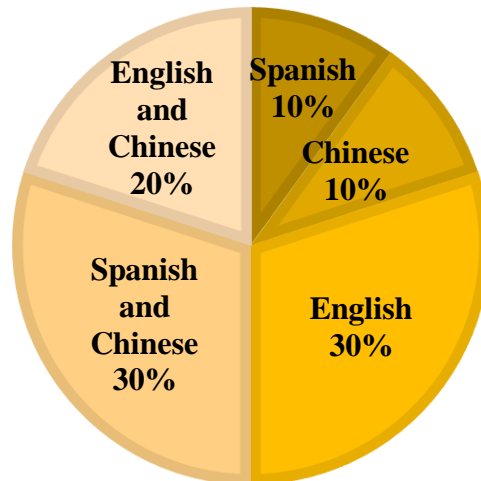
PIE CHART 13: FIRST COMMUNICATIVE INSTANCE



With a predominant tendency of 50%, translators are the most preferred to enter the Chinese market for the first time. Followed by the brokers with a 20% of preference of brokers. With the same primacy of 10%, traders, agencies and local Chinese companies are optioned to be the first communicative instance to start making business between Medellín and China.

Question 12: In which language have been handle the negotiations that you have done with the Chinese market?

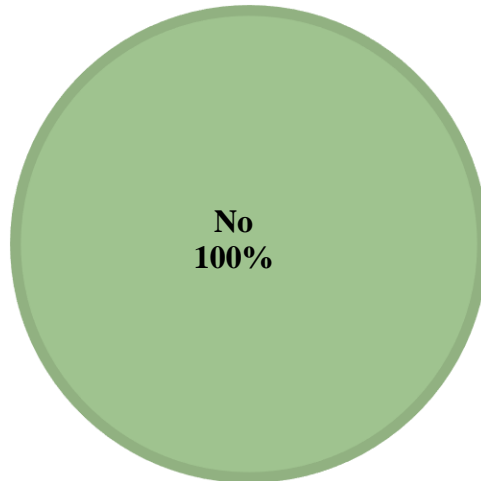
PIE CHART 14: LANGUAGE USED



Regarding the preferred language to handle negotiations, the merchants expressed that English or a flexible combination of Spanish and Chinese is the preferred language, represented on 30% respectively. When there is an intermediary, most of the Colombian companies speak in Spanish with the intermediary who will pass the needs to the language in which the negotiation will be handled. A combination between English and Chinese, is done by other 20% of the participants. Finally, also with 10%, claimed that the negotiation process is fully handled in Spanish or Chinese. According to the merchants, until 2015, the commercial process was handled in English, but nowadays Spanish and Chinese are more normally used than before.

Question 13: Have you ever heard about the Modern Languages Professional degree at ECCI University in Medellin?

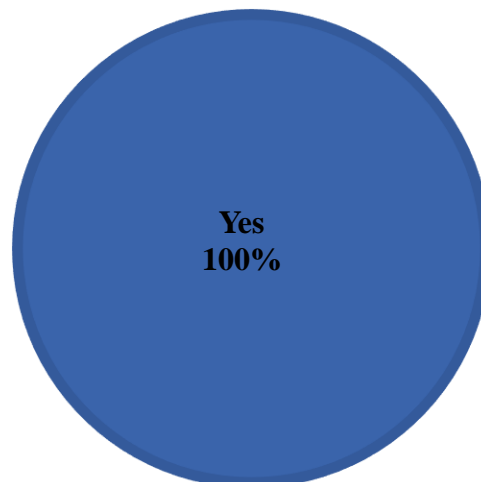
PIE CHART 15: MODERN LANGUAGES DEGREE



In order to know how easy, it would be for modern languages graduates from EECI university to find a job in the local market it was asked if they know the program or the university. All of the participants claimed that they never had heard about the program nor the university.

Question 14: Do you think this professional could be the bridge to expand your business processes with China?

PIE CHART 16: MODERN LANGUAGES DEGREE



After making a presentation of the Modern languages program and the profile of the graduates to each of the merchants, they were asked if they think that those

professionals could work as a bridge to expand their businesses with China. 100% percent of the participants agreed that graduates of the Modern languages could be valuable to expand businesses between Medellín and China. However, most of them gave some suggestions to improve the profile and making it more suitable to the global market need. "It will be great if you could learn Mandarin".

9. Limitations

The scope of this research project is to understand the communicative processes carried out during the commercial exchanges between small and medium size importing companies from “el Hueco sector” in Medellín and the suppliers in China. It is certain that there are many other sectors in Medellín that have commercial relationships with China as well as there are many big sized importing toy stores. But the aim of this project is to recognize how is it performed by those small companies that are particularly abundant in the Hueco sector of Medellín, which little by little contribute to make Medellín an appealing market with wide availability of these products. There is not any aim to know the legal or custom process to bring that merchandise, but only acquire knowledge about the communication process needed.

10. Conclusion

The present research aimed to know the whole communicative process, beginning from the first instances to start a relationship between SMEs from “el Hueco” sector in Medellín and companies from China, as well as the way to maintain it on time, and how the languages involved can affect the final objective that is bringing merchandises from China to be sold in the Colombian market.

The communication process handled by merchants from “el Hueco” sector in Medellín to make possible the commercial relations with China are as diverse as the market itself.

There was an expectation to find out technical or structured processes that involved professionals and positions already established within the companies but, instead of that it was found that most of the companies’ owners and representatives do not have tertiary education. And even those who nowadays have hired business professionals, they started as family businesses.

Important aspects of the Colombian culture were prominent. For instance, there is a tendency for the merchants to break into new markets even though there was not much previous knowledge, only based on Colombian jargon “berrquera” (terminology known as the ability to accomplish great tasks due to innate courage and determination), which they described as the main motivation to start doing businesses with China, this along with some family inheritance and some experience in local or Latin American markets.

Regarding the influence of protocols and etiquette on Medellín’s trade with China, most of the merchants agreed that for this segment of the market that provides product for toy stores, there is not much need of protocols because there is an inner culture of business where the most important aspect to consider is having the money to buy. However, respect is a must, and this includes not showing unsteadiness, respecting the personal space, and not criticizing each other in terms of culture.

There is a wide variety of ways to select the professionals that are hired to carry out the commercial process, and it is also different for direct and indirect import. Which influence directly on the way that the companies have to establish communication among them. Each of the companies that were interviewed explained which one they use based on his reality and needs.

For big volume importers, usually the company in China provides an employee that receive the Colombian buyers on their native language, thus there is no need to hire external people because the host company provides all that is needed to break the linguistic gap and make the commercial process directly between each company representative.

For few volumes and indirect imports, it is more common that Colombian merchants hire people from Colombia who can speak both, English and Spanish and send them to China to learn Mandarin in order to have them prepared to make this kind of business processes. Translators are also hired by Colombian companies, so they can negotiate themselves and the translator just break the linguist gap. In any case, translators, interpreters, and brokers are hired by the buyer.

For the interviewed companies, English, Spanish or Chinese, are the languages used to talk either to the companies in China or to translators, interpreters, and brokers, this will be based on each company’s demand.

11. Recommendation

Multilingual communication within organizations is highlighted on the professional profile of the ECCI University, and as it is well known for every supply there should be a demand, that was why, in order to find out if there is any correspondence between the local

market needs and the professionals that the academia offering, the participants we asked if they know about the existence of the degree “Modern languages degree” and if they knew the ECCI university. Every single participant expressed that they did not know anything about the university nor the program.

At the end of the interview, an introductory document was given to each company representative which introduced the university, the program, and the professional profile. Then they were asked if under their perception and experience on the market this type of graduates could be useful to be part and to improve their communication on commercial processes with China. Most of them expressed that the profile looks promissory but, there is a need to let the market know about the availability of such us professionals and also to expand the offer to Chinese language, which is proved to be necessary since China is a country that has been growing economically and that is becoming the most important global provider.

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ANNEX 1: PRESENTATION LETTER

Medellín 20 septiembre 2020

Señores

XXXXXX



Cordial Saludo.

Por medio de la presente nos permitimos presentar el grupo de investigación conformado por las estudiantes Manuela Betancur, Sara López y Fernanda Flórez del programa Profesional en Lenguas Modernas de la universidad EECI Medellín.

Nos gustaría hacerles partícipes del proyecto de investigación *“Proceso de comunicación entre el sector comercial de Medellín y China: relación importador- exportador en Jugueterías del sector el Hueco”*, por medio del cual se pretende hacer un enlace entre la academia y el sector productivo de la ciudad de Medellín, para investigar a fondo los procesos comunicativos que hacen posible la comercialización de productos de juguetería entre Medellín y China; creemos firmemente que ambos sectores se complementan y que el trabajo conjunto de estos puede traer muy buenos resultados para el desarrollo económico de la ciudad.

Habiendo aclarado lo anterior nos permitimos solicitar amablemente una reunión con el encargado de las importaciones de la empresa e invitarlos a formar parte de este proyecto.

Agradecemos de ante mano su respuesta y valoramos enormemente la oportunidad que nos puedan brindar.

Muchos éxitos.

ANNEX 2: DATA BASE TABLE

Company's name	Sector	Size	Address	Phone	Email	Representative's name	Import YES/NO	Country
		MEDIUM					YES	CHINA
		LARGE					NO	ITALY
		SMALL					YES	FRANCE

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please answer this question based on the fact that when you import, you can do it directly, i.e., your company does not buy the products from a local supplier but buys them directly from the manufacturer abroad, or indirectly, i.e., your company uses the resources of another company to import products.

- Your company makes purchases through:
 - a) Direct import
 - b) Indirect import

- Why do you prefer this type of import?
 - a) Linguistic gap
 - b) Cost
 - c) Few or much experience on the market
 - d) Other: _____.

- In case an indirect import is used, what kind of companies or professionals are hired to carry out the commercial processes?

- In the case of direct imports, which professionals are available within the company to carry out the commercial processes?

- Are you familiar with the following terms, check yes or no. Which ones make part of your negotiation process?

- a) Agents
- b) Wholesalers

- c) Distributors
- d) Retailers

- At the time of entering the Chinese market for the first time it was done:
 - a) By recommendation of other traders.
 - b) Through professionals.
 - c) Through a third-party company
 - d) Other: _____.

- In order for a commercial process of buying and selling to take place between your company in Medellin and the company selling to you from China, is it necessary for the management or administrative positions of the companies to know each other and establish a relationship between them?

- If so, how is the language barrier handled during such meetings?
 - a) Through interpreters/translators
 - b) Bilingual staff from the same company.
 - c) Bilingual commercial agents.

- Have you ever found it difficult or impossible to do business with China because of the language difference?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

- How do you think that cultural differences between Medellín and China influence trade?

- Regarding etiquette and protocol, how does a company handle or take into consideration sociocultural aspects to start or maintain a business relationship?

- Do you know the role of a commercial intermediary?

- a) Yes
- b) No

- Do you take them into consideration when negotiating?

- a) Yes
- b) No

- What is the first communicative instance when entering the Chinese market to buy, considering that the languages spoken in both countries are different?

- In which language have been handle the negotiations that you have done with the Chinese market?

- Have you ever heard about the Modern Languages Professional degree at ECCI University in Medellin?

- a) Yes
- b) No

(In case the interviewed had not heard about it, the following professional profile will be given)

The professional in Modern Languages of the ECCI University, is qualified to communicate by means of the use of the mother tongue, in addition to languages like French, English and German. In order to project at an international level to interact in any area that the organization requires, make proposals, and develop projects to facilitate communication in the business, social or cultural environment when required, and also design strategies aimed at solving problems in the field of communication and linguistics, within organizations to optimize the exchange of information.

- Do you think this professional could be the bridge to expand your business processes with China?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

ANNEX 5: HABEAS DATA

Medellín

___/___/2020

Yo _____ representante de la empresa _____ con numero de cedula de ciudadanía _____ autorizo el tratamiento y uso de datos personales para el trabajo de investigación realizado por las estudiantes; Luisa Fernanda Flórez Sandoval con cedula de ciudadanía 1039464942 y Sara López Gutierrez con cedula de _____ ciudadanía 1039471993.

De conformidad con lo previsto en la Ley 1581 de 2012 “por la cual se dictan las disposiciones generales para la protección de datos personales” y el Decreto 1377 de 2013, que la reglamentan parcialmente, manifiesto que otorgo mi autorización expresa y clara para que el equipo a cargo del proyecto *“Proceso de comunicación entre el sector comercial de Medellín y China: relación importador - exportador en jugueterías del sector el Hueco”*, pueda hacer tratamiento y uso de mis datos personales, los cuales estarán reportados en la base de datos de la que es responsable dicha organización y que han sido recolectados en las relaciones contractuales que esta realiza en desarrollo de su objeto social.

De acuerdo con la normatividad citada, el equipo a cargo del proyecto *“Proceso de comunicación entre el sector comercial de Medellín y China: relación importador - exportador en jugueterías del sector el Hueco”* queda autorizado de manera expresa e inequívoca para mantener y manejar la información suministrada, solo para aquellas finalidades para las que se encuentra facultado y respetando en todo caso, la normatividad vigente sobre protección de datos personales.

No obstante, la presente autorización, me reservo el derecho a ejercer en cualquier momento la posibilidad de conocer, actualizar, rectificar y solicitar la supresión de mis datos personales en la base de datos de la organización, cuando así lo estime conveniente.

Atentamente,

Firma:
Nombre:
C.C.: