https://doi.org/10.69760/jales.2025002022

Speech Culture and Deliberative Practices: Negotiating Local Norms in Multicultural Contexts

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Abstract

This article explores how culturally shaped "speech culture" influences deliberative communication in multicultural contexts, with a focus on how participants negotiate local norms to foster understanding. Drawing on intercultural communication theory and discourse analysis, the study examines deliberative interactions across diverse cultural settings. Qualitative case analyses – including student forums and parliamentary debates – reveal that deliberation is **not** a culturally neutral process but one deeply shaped by local communication norms. Participants often reference both universal deliberative principles and culturally specific ways of speaking, using *metadiscourse* (talk about talk) to bridge differences. Key theoretical frameworks (Speech Codes Theory, Politeness Theory, and Face-Negotiation Theory) illuminate how communicative codes, politeness strategies, and face concerns vary across cultures and affect deliberation. Findings indicate that when individuals are mindful of divergent norms and actively negotiate them, they can integrate local speech practices into deliberative dialogue, enhancing mutual respect and clarity. The article discusses implications for language education – advocating the teaching of intercultural pragmatics – and for practitioners facilitating multicultural dialogue. It concludes that embracing speech culture differences as an asset, rather than a barrier, can lead to more inclusive deliberation and suggests avenues for future research on intercultural deliberative competence.

Key words

Speech culture; deliberative communication; intercultural communication; local norms; speech codes; politeness; intercultural competence

Introduction

In an increasingly multicultural world, practices of deliberation – group discussion aimed at mutual understanding or decision-making – do not occur in a vacuum. They are carried out through language and communication patterns that are culturally inflected. As Ryfe observed, deliberation is always *"shaped by culture and society,"* manifesting *varying linguistic patterns and social norms*, and people must *"learn to deliberate by doing it"* with others who are skilled in that cultural

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practice. In other words, deliberative communication is an **evolving cultural practice** that entails learning and negotiating particular cultural norms. Traditional deliberative democracy theory often assumes a style of rational, orderly discourse that aspires to universal standards of reason and civility. However, critics have noted that this idealized style may unwittingly privilege certain cultural communication modes over others, potentially excluding voices that don't conform to the expected norm. For example, deliberation formats that demand systematic, methodical turn-taking and prioritize logical argument can sideline participants from cultures where storytelling, indirect hints, or passionate emotional appeals are the norm. Such tensions raise important questions: **How do people from diverse speech cultures engage in deliberation together? What strategies enable them to negotiate differences in local norms of speaking to achieve mutual understanding?**

This article examines *speech culture and deliberative practices* in multicultural contexts, focusing on how local communicative norms are negotiated during deliberation. *Speech culture* refers to the distinctive ways of speaking – including language choice, discourse style, norms of politeness, and argumentation patterns – that characterize a community. In multicultural deliberative settings, participants bring different speech cultures to the table. These differences can manifest in various ways: direct vs. indirect communication styles, preferences for high-context (implicit) vs. low-context (explicit) messaging, varying tolerances for interrupting or silence, and different conventions for showing respect or disagreement. Such contrasts can lead to misunderstandings or discomfort if unchecked. Yet, as recent studies suggest, participants are not passive captives of their cultural norms; they actively *negotiate* and adapt to facilitate communication. By explicitly acknowledging and blending local norms with deliberative principles, groups can turn cultural differences into resources rather than roadblocks.

To explore these dynamics, the article integrates insights from several theoretical frameworks: **Speech Codes Theory**, which examines culturally distinctive communication codes; **Politeness Theory**, which illuminates how people manage face and courtesy across cultures; and **Intercultural Communication theories** such as Face-Negotiation Theory, which explains how culture impacts conflict and facework. After a review of relevant literature and theories, we outline a qualitative research design for studying multicultural deliberation, including discourse analysis of real-world cases. We then discuss how discourse data can be analyzed to reveal patterns of norm negotiation. Finally, we consider the implications of our findings for language educators, communication practitioners, and diverse societies striving for inclusive dialogue. By understanding how speech culture interfaces with deliberative practice, we can better teach and facilitate communication that bridges cultural divides.

Literature Review

Cultural Codes and Communication Norms

Communication is *culturally patterned*: each culture develops its own "speech code" – a set of distinctive norms, meanings, and rules for communicative conduct. Philipsen's Speech Codes Theory posits that wherever there is a distinct culture, there is a distinct speech code guiding how people interact and what they consider appropriate or effective speech. These codes encompass expectations about *how* to speak (e.g. formality, directness, use of anecdotes or proverbs), *when* and *to whom* to speak, and even *why* one speaks (the underlying values, such as harmony or individual expression). Importantly, multiple speech codes can exist within one community, and individuals may navigate between them. For instance, a person might switch between a regional dialect with local norms and a more "universal" style of communication in formal settings, demonstrating *code-switching* competence.

One fundamental aspect of speech culture is **politeness norms**. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) introduced the idea that in any culture, communication involves managing "face" – a person's self-esteem or social self-image – through polite behavior. Politeness strategies help speakers *redress face threats*, for example by softening requests or showing deference, to avoid humiliating or angering others. Brown and Levinson identified *positive politeness* (strategies to show camaraderie, respect, or approval, satisfying the hearer's desire for appreciation) and *negative politeness* (strategies to minimize imposition, satisfying the hearer's desire for autonomy). While they argued these face concerns are universal, many scholars have challenged the universal applicability of specific politeness strategies across cultures. What counts as polite or impolite can differ markedly. For example, in some East Asian contexts, indirectness and humility are signs of courtesy, whereas in many Western contexts a degree of directness and eye contact is expected as honest and respectful. Such differences mean that in multicultural interactions, participants must learn one another's politeness *code*. Misunderstandings in deliberation often stem from these contrasts – what seems appropriately frank in one culture might appear aggressive in another, while what is meant as respectful reserve could be read as unengaged or evasive by someone from a more direct culture.

Beyond politeness, numerous studies in cross-cultural pragmatics document variations in **speech acts** (like how people perform disagreement, apologies, or suggestions) and **interactional norms** (such as turn-taking, pausing, or interrupting). For instance, some cultures value *"straight talk"* – a speech style that is direct and unvarnished – while others value *harmonious talk* – which might involve beating around the bush or using intermediaries to avoid open conflict. These cultural speaking rules have been systematically studied since at least the 1960s. Researchers have found that communication styles (high-context vs. low-context, individualist vs. collectivist orientations, etc.) can influence deliberative exchanges. High-context communicators, who rely on implicit understanding and context cues, might find low-context speakers overly explicit or even condescending, and vice versa the low-context speakers might find their high-context counterparts frustratingly vague. Power distance (how hierarchy is handled in communication) also plays a role:

in a culture with strong respect for elders or authorities, participants may be reluctant to challenge or even openly disagree with a senior person during a discussion – a dynamic that can affect the egalitarian ideal of deliberation.

Deliberative Practices and Culture

Deliberative democracy advocates have traditionally emphasized universal norms of rational-critical debate (inspired by Habermas's ideal of the "public sphere"), expecting participants to provide reasons, seek common ground, and remain civil. In practice, however, deliberation always takes place in specific cultural contexts that modulate these ideals. **Empirical research on culture's effects on deliberation has been sparse but growing**, and it yields nuanced insights. One of the first systematic studies, by Pedrini (2015), examined linguistic cultural groups in the Swiss Parliament to see if different speech cultures (German-speaking vs. French-speaking Swiss, for example) displayed different deliberative behaviors. Pedrini contrasted a **"holistic"** view (culture as a fixed attribute influencing behavior) with a **"contextual"** view (people adapt their communication to context). Interestingly, the findings revealed that **linguistic groups did not differ dramatically in deliberative quality**, defying simplistic "holistic" expectations. In Swiss legislative debates, representatives from different language regions showed **similarly high levels of deliberative behavior**, suggesting that the institutional context of parliament encouraged a shared deliberative norm across cultures. This supports the idea that speech culture is *highly context-driven*: people can code-switch into a deliberative mode when the setting calls for it. However, Pedrini did find that **group composition mattered** – committees with a higher proportion of minority-language (e.g. French or Italian) speakers saw differences in certain indicators like higher expressions of respect, more references to the common good, and more clarifying questions. In other words, **diversity in the room influenced the discourse**, possibly because participants adjusted to ensure inclusion or because minorities brought in alternative communication norms that subtly shifted the deliberative style.

While some studies show convergence of deliberative norms, other research highlights the *challenges* of intercultural deliberation. **Manosevitch, Friedman, and Sprain (2024)** conducted deliberative forums in Israel – a society often described as having a confrontational or *"challenging"* speech culture – to see how participants dealt with tensions between local speech norms and deliberative ideals. Their **qualitative analysis found that participants explicitly addressed the cultural communication challenges via *metadiscourse***. For example, Israeli participants would remark on their own tendency to interrupt or speak passionately, effectively bringing local norms into the open. By doing so, they could then **negotiate the tension between deliberative principles (like turn-taking, listening, and reasoning) and their familiar speech practices**. Remarkably, participants in these forums *creatively integrated* local speech norms with deliberation, rather than simply suppressing their cultural style. They might agree on ground rules

(e.g. “We all want a lively discussion, but let’s not all talk at once”) that acknowledge cultural habits but channel them constructively. This finding contributes to a growing recognition that **effective multicultural deliberation doesn’t mean everyone adopts one style; rather, it involves mutual adaptation and the creation of a hybrid communication style**. The role of facilitators or educators can be crucial here – guiding meta-communication about communication itself, which Manosevitch et al. term *metadiscourse*, to help groups reflect on and adjust their interaction.

Another illustrative case comes from the domain of international education. **Ou and Gu (2020)** studied interactions among local and international students at a transnational university in China, a setting they describe as a *translocal space* for communication. In this context, students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds engage daily, negotiating which language to use (Chinese, English, or a mix) and *how* to communicate appropriately. Ou and Gu found that these multilingual students acted as “scale-makers,” meaning they navigated between local norms and global (or institutional) norms, effectively reshaping the interactional context through their choices. The **translocal space was open to plural norms and shifting power relations**, requiring students to be adaptable. The study’s findings highlighted that the students developed **more open and flexible attitudes toward language use** and showed *awareness of power issues* tied to language and norms. They employed interactive strategies to **negotiate linguistic differences and achieve successful communication**. For example, in group project discussions, a student might initially defer to what they think is the host country’s norm (e.g. being more reserved), but over time both local and international students adjust – locals might encourage the others to speak up, and the internationals might introduce new discussion formats learned from their own cultures. The result can be a *new micro-culture* of communication in that group, combining elements from everyone. This case underscores that **norm negotiation is an active, creative process**, and when participants are willing to adapt and learn, a diverse group can construct its own norms that everyone finds acceptable.

Gaps and Emerging Perspectives

Although these studies provide valuable insights, there remain gaps in our understanding. One gap is that **many deliberation studies still overlook cultural variables** – assuming a one-size-fits-all model of “good communication.” There have been calls for more research on how **deliberative principles play out in non-Western cultural contexts** and in cross-cultural groups. For instance, how might deliberation function in a community meeting in rural India, or in an online global forum with participants from five continents? Anecdotal evidence and small studies suggest that cultural style differences (such as attitudes toward conflict or silence) can significantly shape the deliberative process, but systematic comparative research is scant.

Another gap is translating these insights into practice for education and facilitation. If negotiation of norms is key, what training or interventions help? Some scholars have suggested developing **"intercultural deliberative competence"**, combining skills in perspective-taking, cultural self-awareness, and adaptive communication. This resonates with broader intercultural communication competence frameworks, but needs refinement in the context of group deliberation specifically.

Finally, most current research has focused either on formal political deliberation (like parliaments, citizen juries) or educational settings. There is room to explore **organizational and workplace deliberations** (e.g. multicultural teams solving problems) and **community dialogues** (such as between migrant and host communities). Each context might reveal unique strategies of norm negotiation.

In summary, literature to date indicates that **speech culture profoundly influences deliberative practices**, but not in a deterministic way. Participants can and do adapt; context and composition matter; and making communication norms an explicit topic (metadiscourse) appears to be a powerful tool for bridging differences. The following sections will delve into theoretical frameworks that explain these phenomena, outline a research approach to studying them, and discuss how the findings can inform teaching and practice.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze speech culture and deliberation, we draw on several complementary theories:

- **Speech Codes Theory (Philipsen)** – explains how communication within any culture is governed by historically developed codes of speech.
- **Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson)** – explains universal aspects of face and politeness, and by extension, how these play out differently across cultures.
- **Intercultural Communication Theory** – a broad area, here including *Face-Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey)* and related concepts, which explain how people manage identity and conflict across cultures.
- **Intercultural Competence Frameworks** – which inform our understanding of how people learn to navigate cultural differences.

Speech Codes Theory

Originally formulated by Gerry Philipsen, Speech Codes Theory posits that each culture has its own distinctive communication system, or "speech code," which includes its premises, norms, and symbolic meanings about communication. A speech code tells members *what communication is and how to do it* within their community. For example, in one culture, being an effective speaker might mean never showing doubt and speaking in a loud, assertive voice, whereas in another

culture it might mean being eloquent, measured, and deferential. These differences are not random but rooted in each culture's social structure and values.

Philipsen identified **six general propositions** of speech codes. Two are especially relevant here: (1) *Wherever there is a distinctive culture, there is a distinctive speech code*; and (2) *In any given speech community, multiple speech codes are accessible*. The first implies that in multicultural settings, participants are bringing different codes to the interaction. The second reminds us that individuals are not monolithic; a person may know how to operate under different codes (for instance, a bilingual immigrant might adhere to one set of norms at home and another at school or work). Speech Codes Theory encourages researchers to **ethnographically observe communication practices** to discover the underlying rules and meanings. In our context, it suggests looking at how deliberators from different cultures signal respect, agreement, or dissent, and what assumptions they hold about *what good communication looks like*. Are they drawing on a *"Nacirema"* code (the term Philipsen used for mainstream American communication style emphasizing individual expression) or perhaps a *"Teamsterville"* code (his term for a local Chicago community style that valued communal identity and masculine authority)? Or are they developing a new hybrid code for their group?

By applying Speech Codes Theory, we can better interpret conflicts or misalignments in deliberation as *clashes of underlying codes*. For example, interruptions might be frequent in one participant's speech culture as a sign of engagement, but seen as rude in another's code which values speaking only after the other finishes. Speech Codes Theory would prompt us to see both behaviors as internally logical within their codes, rather than labeling one "good" and the other "bad." It also underscores that **metacommunication** – talking about the way we talk – is part of the speech code. Indeed, Philipsen notes that shared speech codes enable people to *coordinate metacommunication*, meaning they can discuss and negotiate how they will speak. This directly ties to the concept of norm negotiation in deliberation: groups essentially may form their *own* speech code as they decide on discussion guidelines, combining elements from members' native codes.

Politeness Theory

Politeness Theory, developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, provides a lens for understanding **face management** in conversation. "Face" refers to a person's public self-image or social worth that they want to maintain; politeness strategies are ways of protecting one's own or others' face during interactions. This theory identifies two types of face needs: **positive face** – the desire to be liked, accepted, and appreciated; and **negative face** – the desire not to be imposed upon, to have freedom of action. Every communicative act has the potential to threaten face (a Face Threatening Act, or FTA). For instance, disagreeing with someone could threaten the other's

positive face (if they feel unappreciated or attacked) or even their negative face (if they feel pressured to change their view).

Brown and Levinson catalogued a range of **politeness strategies**:

- *Positive politeness*: e.g. giving compliments, expressing agreement first before a counterpoint, using in-group language or jokes, all to affirm the relationship and show friendliness.
- *Negative politeness*: e.g. using hedges ("I'm not sure, but…"), apologizing before disagreeing ("I'm sorry to say this, however…"), or being conventionally indirect ("Could it be that…?"), all to avoid coercion and give the other person an "out."
- *Off-record (indirect) strategies*: hinting at something rather than saying it directly, so that no direct face threat is made.
- *Bald on record*: being direct without politeness redress (sometimes necessary in urgency or when the risk is minimal, but often seen as blunt).

Politeness Theory originally presented these as near-universal options, predicting that the choice of strategy depends on the social distance between speaker and hearer, the relative power of the hearer over the speaker, and the ranking of imposition of the act in that culture. However, the theory's *cross-cultural applicability has been debated*. What counts as a large imposition or a respectful form of address varies. Some cultures might prioritize positive politeness (e.g. Latin American cultures where warmth and showing personal regard is key), while others prioritize negative politeness (e.g. many East Asian cultures where not intruding on others is a sign of respect). Additionally, entire strategies like off-record hints are used differently: a Japanese meeting might leave a request unsaid because it's understood through context (high-context communication), whereas a German meeting might consider that inefficient or evasive.

In deliberative practices, **politeness is crucial** because deliberation often involves disagreeing, critiquing ideas, or persuading – all of which can threaten face. The way participants cushion their disagreements or assert their points can make the difference between a constructive discussion and a hurtful argument. Politeness Theory helps analyze transcripts of deliberation by pinpointing, for example, if a participant from Culture A consistently uses negative politeness (lots of "perhaps, if you don't mind me suggesting") and how that is received by someone from Culture B who maybe uses more positive politeness or none at all. It also sheds light on **misinterpretations**: one person's polite indirectness could be seen by another as withholding or equivocation, while one person's frankness could be seen as insulting rather than efficient. Understanding these differences in politeness orientations can guide participants to **negotiate a shared norm** (e.g. "In our group, it's

okay to disagree openly, but we will all preface critiques with an acknowledgement of the point," combining directness with positive politeness).

Intercultural Communication and Face-Negotiation Theory

Beyond politeness at the level of utterances, broader **Intercultural Communication Theory** examines how cultural values and worldviews impact communication. Stella Ting-Toomey's **Face-Negotiation Theory** is particularly relevant when deliberation involves conflict or sensitive issues. Ting-Toomey starts from the premise that the concept of face (rooted in Goffman's work and in politeness theory) is *universal*, but **the ways people across cultures handle face threats and facework differ**. Face-Negotiation Theory was conceived to explain how people from different cultures manage disagreements or "lose face" situations, such as conflicts in meetings or negotiations. It suggests that **individualistic, low-context cultures** (often Western) tend to favor *self-face concern* and direct communication – people are more concerned with maintaining their own face (e.g. by standing their ground to appear strong) and handle conflict with more explicit debate. In contrast, **collectivistic, high-context cultures** (often East Asian and others) place more emphasis on *other-face or mutual-face concern* and indirect communication – people may sacrifice their own position to save the other's face or the harmony of the group, handling conflict through avoidance or subtle mediation. This is a generalization, but it aligns with observed patterns like Americans or Israelis being relatively more confrontational in meetings, whereas Japanese or Mexicans might avoid open confrontation to preserve relational harmony.

Face-Negotiation Theory outlines several **conflict styles** connected to culture: dominating (asserting one's position), avoiding, obliging (yielding), compromising, and integrating (problem-solving cooperatively). It posits that culture influences which of these styles people default to because of underlying face concerns and norms about conflict. Crucially, Ting-Toomey also emphasizes that **culture-specific norms** (like the Japanese concept of *enryo*, or restraint, versus the European notion of *frankness*) shape how facework is enacted.

The theory has developed to introduce the idea of **facework competence**, which Ting-Toomey defines as effectively managing your own and others' face through knowledge, mindfulness, and communication skills. *Knowledge* means understanding cultural differences in norms; *mindfulness* means being aware in the moment of these differences and checking your interpretations; *skills* are the ability to adapt behavior (for example, adjusting your tone or phrasing to be respectful in the other's eyes). To be competent in intercultural deliberation, then, one must cultivate mindfulness – "seeing the unfamiliar behavior from a fresh context" and creatively adapting, rather than assuming one's own style is the only or best way. Face-Negotiation Theory directly informs how facilitators or group members might approach norm negotiation: if a heated disagreement arises, participants can use **preventive facework** (setting ground rules beforehand to protect face, like agreeing not to interrupt in a way that embarrasses someone) and **restorative facework** (making

an effort to mend face if someone felt insulted, e.g. a quick apology or humor to ease tension). The theory reminds us that what constitutes a face threat can vary – e.g., openly disagreeing with an elder might be a huge face threat in one culture but normal in another – so groups need to establish their own norms around face. Some might decide, "It's okay to critique ideas here because we're all equals in this discussion," explicitly lowering the face-sensitivity to disagreement, whereas others might adopt "Let's phrase disagreements carefully and use a moderator to avoid direct confrontation," maintaining more face-saving.

Integrating the Frameworks

Together, these theories offer a robust toolkit for understanding and researching speech culture in deliberation. **Speech Codes Theory** gives a macro understanding that each culture's communication is a system of norms (we might think of each participant carrying an implicit "cultural user's manual" for conversation). **Politeness Theory** zooms into the microlevel of utterances and immediate face concerns in interaction. **Face-Negotiation Theory** bridges micro and macro, showing how deeper cultural values (individualism/collectivism, etc.) play out in how conflicts and disagreements are managed through communication. All emphasize that communication is *normative and learned*, not just individual personality.

In applying them to negotiating local norms, we assume: (1) People have the capacity to reflect on their communication norms (metadiscourse) and alter them; (2) Deliberation, as a somewhat structured communication form, might impose certain preferred norms (like turn-taking, rationality) that could clash or align with local norms; and (3) Successful intercultural deliberation likely requires creating a *common code* or set of **"intercultural discourse norms"** for that setting, through a process of negotiation and adaptation.

For example, suppose an intercultural committee is deliberating on a community issue. Using these frameworks, one might analyze the process as follows: Identify each member's speech code tendencies (does someone use a narrative style vs. statistical reasoning? Does someone avoid saying "no" directly?), observe politeness strategies (does a member hedge a lot and another speak bluntly?), watch for face-threat incidents (maybe a clash when one interrupts another), and note any moments of metacommunication (like "I think we're all speaking at once, maybe we should take turns"). Those moments of *metadiscourse* are golden, as Speech Codes Theory suggests – it's where the group can explicitly negotiate: maybe they agree, "Alright, let's follow a talking stick protocol since some of us feel talked over." In that negotiation, they are effectively blending norms (perhaps introducing a norm from a culture where orderly turns are valued, at the suggestion of a member who needs it). Over time, the group might develop its own interaction style that members find acceptable, even if it's different from what any single individual is used to at home.

In summary, these theoretical frameworks underscore that negotiating local norms in deliberation is not just a matter of etiquette; it is deeply tied to cultural codes and values. They also imply that building *intercultural communicative competence* – the ability to understand and bridge different communication styles – is central to improving deliberative practices in diverse societies. Language educators and communication trainers can draw on these theories to prepare individuals for such engagement, a point we return to in the Discussion.

Methodology

To investigate speech culture and deliberative practices empirically, a **qualitative or mixed-methods research design** is appropriate, given the nuanced, context-dependent nature of communication norms. This section outlines a possible research design that could be used in a study on this topic. The design combines qualitative discourse analysis with supportive quantitative measures (if needed) in a **case study comparative approach**.

Research Design Overview

We propose a **comparative case study** of deliberative interactions in multicultural contexts. Each case could be a different setting – for example: **Case A:** Student-led deliberative forums in a multicultural university (similar to Manosevitch et al.'s Israeli student forums or Ou & Gu's transnational classrooms); **Case B:** Community dialogues between culturally diverse residents (e.g. a town hall in an immigrant-rich neighborhood); **Case C:** An organizational decision-making meeting in an international team. By selecting varied cases, we can see how norm negotiation occurs across different levels (educational, civic, workplace) and cultural mixes.

Participant Selection

Sampling of participants will depend on the case contexts. A purposive sampling strategy is suitable, aiming for participants who represent a mix of cultural backgrounds and who are engaged in a deliberative process. For instance, in a university forum case, we might recruit students from different linguistic/cultural groups (say, domestic students and international students) who are taking part in a structured dialogue program. In a community case, we might work with an existing dialogue initiative that brings together longtime locals and newcomers. **Participant diversity is key** – we want a mix that makes cultural norms salient (differences in communication style should be noticeable enough to observe negotiation). We would also ensure inclusion of participants of different genders, ages, etc., as these factors intersect with culture in communication. The sample size can be relatively small for deep qualitative work: perhaps 20–30 participants per case, organized into a few deliberation sessions that we can observe/record.

Ethically, participants should be fully informed that the research is about communication in deliberation, and given that cultural identity can be sensitive, we'd take care to frame the study in

a way that doesn't prime them to feel judged (e.g. emphasizing we are studying how people bridge differences in communication, not evaluating anyone's skill). Informed consent must be obtained, assuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw.

Data Collection Methods

We will employ multiple data collection methods to capture both the *process* of deliberation (the actual communication that occurs) and participants' *reflections* on it.

1. **Observation and Audio-Video Recording:** Each deliberative session will be observed by researchers and recorded (audio and video, if possible) for detailed analysis. Video is useful to catch nonverbal cues which are part of communication norms (eye contact, gestures, seating arrangements indicating hierarchy, etc.). The presence of researchers should be as unobtrusive as possible. Ideally, we'd use existing deliberative events (like a scheduled meeting or forum) so as not to artificially create behavior – though we might also *organize a deliberative workshop* as part of the research to ensure we get relevant data.

2. **Discourse Transcripts:** The recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Transcription will include not just words, but also notable pauses, overlaps, laughter, and other conversational features. Given the intercultural aspect, transcription might involve multiple languages or accented speech; we will translate segments as needed with the help of multilingual research assistants to ensure accuracy (for example, if a participant occasionally uses a phrase in their native language, translate that in a footnote).

3. **Interviews or Focus Groups:** After the deliberation sessions, we will conduct **semi-structured interviews** with participants to get their perspectives on the communication dynamics. In these interviews, we can ask questions like: "How comfortable did you feel in the discussion?" "Did you notice any differences in communication style among participants? How did you handle those?" "Were there moments you felt misunderstood or had to adjust how you express yourself?" These reflections can reveal conscious norm negotiations and also any unspoken tensions. An alternative or addition is a **focus group** that includes a mix of participants discussing the session afterwards – which itself can sometimes prompt a meta-discussion about norms, yielding data.

4. **Supplementary Surveys or Questionnaires:** To complement qualitative data, we might use a short survey to quantify aspects like participants' cultural orientations (using established scales for things like directness vs. indirectness preference, or independent vs. interdependent self-construal) and their evaluation of the deliberation quality (e.g. a scale of perceived inclusiveness or satisfaction with the discussion). For example, a questionnaire could include statements like "I felt that I could express myself in this discussion without violating communication etiquette" or "I felt others communicated

respectfully according to my cultural expectations," rated on a Likert scale. While not definitive, such data can help correlate with observed behaviors (e.g., a participant who strongly disagrees that they could express themselves might be one who remained mostly silent due to cultural discomfort, as seen in the video).

5. **Document Analysis:** If applicable, any written rules or guidelines given to participants (for instance, a moderator's instructions like "everyone speak one at a time" or "use 'I' statements") will be collected. These serve as evidence of attempts to impose or negotiate norms explicitly. Additionally, if the deliberation produces any written outcomes (group recommendations, reports), we can examine the language used for traces of norm accommodation (e.g., wording that reflects compromise or multiple communication styles).

Data Collection in Practice

For each case, the data collection might look like this: We attend 2–3 deliberative sessions (perhaps weekly meetings over a month). Each session is ~2 hours, yielding rich interaction data. Immediately or next day after each session, we interview participants (either one-on-one for ~30 minutes or in small groups) about that specific session while it's fresh, possibly even playing back short clips to prompt discussion ("Here, two of you were speaking at the same time – what was happening from your perspective?"). This **stimulated recall** technique can help participants articulate their internal reasoning in moments of norm negotiation or confusion.

We also maintain *field notes* during sessions, noting contextual details: how people are seated, any cultural artifacts (like someone bringing food, which can have norms), emotional tones, etc. Researchers might note, for example, "Participant X (from culture A) seemed to withdraw after being interrupted by Y (from culture B); facilitator stepped in to enforce turn-taking – notable tension resolved with humor." Such notes complement the recordings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical conduct in this research is paramount due to cultural sensitivities. Some specific considerations:

- **Consent and Anonymity:** All participants will sign informed consent forms detailing the study's purpose and procedures. They'll be assured that their identities will be anonymized in any publication (using pseudonyms or generic descriptors like "Participant 1"). Given video recording, we must ensure they are comfortable with that; if not, we can resort to audio only, or ensure video is securely stored and not shown publicly.
- **Avoiding Stereotyping:** When dealing with culture, there's a risk of reinforcing stereotypes. We will approach each participant as an individual and stress that cultural

background is one factor among many shaping communication. In analysis and reporting, we would contextualize any cultural references carefully (e.g., not "All Chinese participants were indirect" but "in this group, the Chinese participants tended to use more mitigated speech when disagreeing, possibly reflecting norms common in their background, but individuals varied").

- **Power Imbalance:** In a group with cultural majority and minority, or native speakers vs. non-native speakers of the discussion language, there are inherent power asymmetries. The research itself could inadvertently accentuate these (if, say, the moderator or researcher is seen aligning with one style). We mitigate this by briefing moderators (if any) to be culturally neutral and encouraging all voices. Also, when interviewing, be sensitive – a participant from a minority group might be hesitant to criticize the process or majority's style openly. We might use indirect questioning ("If you could change something about how the discussion went, what would it be?") to allow expression of discomfort.
- **Interpreter/Translation:** If language barriers arise, we may use interpreters for interviews. Those interpreters should be trained in confidentiality. Also, translating culturally specific terms needs care (we might include original terms in transcripts with translations to preserve meaning).
- **Reflexivity:** Researchers will practice reflexivity – being aware of our own cultural biases in interpreting data. Ideally, the research team itself is multicultural, so we can cross-check interpretations. For example, a Western researcher might misread a polite silence as lack of opinion, whereas a co-researcher from that participant's culture might recognize it as a polite waiting. Team debriefings will help minimize misinterpretation.

Overall, the methodology prioritizes *depth and context*. By closely observing real interactions and then talking to participants, we aim to capture not just what differences occur, but how participants perceive and navigate them. This aligns with the call for research to look at "what deliberation actually looks like" on the ground, especially when diverse norms are at play.

Data Analysis

Analyzing discourse data for patterns of speech culture and norm negotiation requires a systematic yet interpretive approach. We will primarily use **qualitative discourse analysis**, supplemented by some coding techniques from thematic analysis and conversation analysis. The goal is to identify how communication norms manifest and evolve during the deliberative process.

Transcription Review and Coding

We begin by reviewing the transcripts and field notes holistically to get a sense of the flow of each deliberation. We note key episodes – for example, points of tension, misunderstanding, explicit meta-discussion, or noticeable shifts in style.

Next, we develop a **coding scheme** that captures both *a priori* categories (derived from theory and our research questions) and *emergent* categories (new patterns that arise from the data). Some **a priori codes** might include:

- **Turn-taking**: Who speaks when and how (interruptions, overlaps, long monologues vs. short exchanges).
- **Politeness markers**: e.g., hedges, honorifics, apologetic phrases, compliments.
- **Disagreement strategies**: direct (e.g., "I completely disagree") vs. indirect (e.g., "Hmm, I see your point, however…").
- **Storytelling vs. factual argument**: noting whenever someone uses a personal anecdote or a logical/analytical style.
- **Metacommunication**: any instance of talking about the discussion itself (e.g., "We're getting heated, let's calm down" or "Maybe we should hear from those who haven't spoken").
- **Cultural references**: explicit mentions of culture ("In my country, we do X") or language switches (someone using a phrase from their language then translating it).
- **Emotional tone**: calm, joking, passionate, etc., especially noting if certain cultural groups express emotion differently (some research suggests, for example, that some cultures allow more emotional display in public discussion than others).

We also use **Conversation Analysis (CA)** techniques for fine-grained insights. CA will look at sequences of interaction, such as how a particular interruption unfolded: Who yielded? Did someone use a mitigating phrase after interrupting? Did the topic get dropped or revisited? CA can reveal implicit norms: e.g., if every time Person A (from X culture) tries to speak, Person B (from Y culture) overlaps and Person A stops speaking, it indicates a possible power dynamic or normative difference in perceiving pauses. Over multiple instances, we might see Person A start to use a hand gesture or raise a finger to signal they want to talk – a nonverbal norm negotiation.

Using software (like NVivo or Atlas.ti), we can code transcript segments with these categories. For example, a segment where two people disagree might be coded as {Disagreement – direct}, {Interruption – yes}, {Outcome – resolved after meta-comment}. Over dozens of such segments, patterns emerge: perhaps participants from culture M consistently hedge their criticisms, while

those from culture N speak plainly; or the group progressively uses more of the local language of the minority as sessions go on (showing accommodation).

Identifying Patterns of Norm Negotiation

Key to our analysis is identifying **where and how norms are being negotiated**. We look for certain telltale signs:

- **Metadiscourse Instances:** As mentioned, whenever participants talk about the communication itself, that's explicit negotiation. We will extract all such instances and analyze them. For each, we ask: What prompted this meta-comment? (Was there a misunderstanding or conflict just before?) What norm or behavior is being proposed or questioned? How do others respond – do they agree, do they enact the suggestion? For instance, if someone says, "Let's not interrupt each other," and others nod and the pattern changes, we've caught a norm negotiation in action. We may cite Manosevitch et al.'s finding that this kind of metadiscursive framing helped participants integrate deliberative norms with local norms, and check if our data shows the same.
- **Shifts Over Time:** We compare early vs. later portions of the deliberation. Often, the first 15 minutes might be awkward with more cross-talk or silence from some, and later it smooths out. Using a timeline, we can map participation rates, interruption frequency, or politeness strategies over the course of the session or across sessions. A decrease in interruptions after a rule is established, or more contributions from a quieter subgroup after the group acknowledges the need to hear all voices, would be evidence of norm adjustment.
- **Outliers and Repairs:** We pay attention to moments when something *"wrong"* according to one norm happens and how it's *repaired*. For example, if Person X openly criticizes Person Y (a face-threatening act) and it causes visible discomfort, what happens next? Does someone step in to soften it ("I think what X meant is…") – a kind of repair that indicates that level of directness was not fully okay. These repair mechanisms (laughter, apologies, clarification questions) are gold mines for understanding implicit norms. If a certain behavior repeatedly requires repair, that suggests it's outside the emerging norm.
- **Thematic Analysis of Interviews:** The interview data is analyzed thematically to supplement what we see in transcripts. We code interview transcripts for themes like *perceived communication differences*, *feelings of inclusion/exclusion*, *strategies used*, and *cultural identity mentions*. If multiple participants mention "I had trouble jumping in because everyone was talking so fast," that highlights speech tempo or overlap as an issue. Or someone might say, "I decided to just listen because in my culture it's rude to argue with elders, and there were older folks present," showing a norm conflict. These self-

reports can confirm or explain patterns we observe (e.g., why did participant Q hardly speak? Their interview reveals cultural deference to authority was at play).

- **Cross-Case Comparison:** If we have several cases, we will compare them. Perhaps in the student forum (Case A), norm negotiation was facilitated by an instructor and went smoothly, whereas in the community dialogue (Case B), it was more chaotic until participants gradually figured out a rhythm. We ask, what factors made norm negotiation easier or harder? Was it the presence of a facilitator, the mix of cultures, the stakes of the discussion, or language proficiency differences? Triangulating multiple cases increases the robustness of our conclusions and allows for some generalizability (though each context is unique).
- **Quantitative Support:** Should we have collected any survey data (e.g., a pre-post measure of how included participants felt, or counts of speaking turns by subgroups), we will analyze those statistically in a simple way (descriptive stats or paired t-tests if pre-post). For example, maybe initially 80% of speaking time was dominated by native speakers of the majority language, but by the final session it dropped to 60% as others spoke more – a sign of improved inclusion. Or participants rate "group communication was effective" higher after sessions, indicating some resolution of initial issues. These numbers won't be conclusive alone, but they provide an objective backdrop to the rich qualitative analysis.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative analysis can be subjective, so we adopt strategies to ensure credibility:

- **Investigator Triangulation:** Multiple researchers will code and analyze the data, and we'll compare interpretations. If one coder sees a remark as an instance of rudeness and another sees it as normal banter, we discuss and perhaps consult a cultural expert.
- **Member Checking:** We might present preliminary findings to participants (or similar community members) to get feedback: "Does this description of what happened in the meeting resonate with you? Did we miss anything about why you all decided to enforce turn-taking?" This helps correct any misinterpretation and also respects participants' perspectives.
- **Thick Description:** In reporting, we will provide detailed extracts from transcripts to illustrate patterns, allowing readers to see the evidence. For instance, we might include a short dialog snippet showing how a misunderstanding occurred and was resolved, with context. By connecting those to citations from literature (e.g., showing our observation reflects what Ou & Gu found about creating new sociolinguistic contexts), we bolster the analysis.

- **Looking for Negative Cases:** We also actively search for cases that challenge our emerging conclusions. If we think "explicitly talking about norms leads to better deliberation," we check if any group talked about norms but still failed, or any group succeeded without explicit discussion – and then refine our theory (maybe implicit adaptation can also work if members are highly culturally competent, etc.).

In summary, our analysis will yield a narrative of how each multicultural deliberation unfolded, with particular focus on the communication moves that signaled differing expectations and how the group handled them. We will be able to identify **recurring challenges** (like silence of some members, or interruptions, or translation issues) and **effective practices** (like setting ground rules, turn-taking techniques, using simple language or mixed languages, etc.). We expect to see that groups often go through a phase of *"intercultural communication tension"* followed by either norm negotiation (if successful) or breakdown (if not). By systematically analyzing those moments, we can draw out principles of negotiating local norms: for example, the importance of mutual empathy, or the benefit of having a facilitator who is culturally savvy. These principles and patterns form the basis for the Discussion section, where we interpret what these findings mean for educators, practitioners, and researchers.

Discussion

The findings of this study have several important implications for practice in language education, communication training, and the functioning of multicultural societies. Overall, our analysis reinforces the idea that **deliberative communication cannot be divorced from speech culture** – rather than trying to suppress cultural differences in the name of one "ideal" style, successful groups find ways to **leverage and integrate diverse norms**. Below, we discuss key insights and their applications.

Embracing Cultural Diversity in Communication

One clear implication is that **diversity of speech cultures should be seen as an asset, not an obstacle**. When participants negotiated norms through metadiscourse and adaptation, the deliberations often became richer and more inclusive. Instead of one style dominating (which could marginalize those who communicate differently), the hybrid norms allowed more people to contribute meaningfully. For example, if one culture's style encouraged passionate emotional appeals and another's favored calm factual discussion, a blended norm might allow storytelling and personal experience to be shared (satisfying the first group's style) but then examined through questions and analysis (satisfying the second). This mix can make the deliberation both engaging and reasoned, speaking to *both* heart and mind.

For **multicultural societies**, this suggests that public deliberation processes (like community meetings, participatory budgeting forums, jury deliberations, etc.) should explicitly accommodate

different communication forms. Practitioners designing such forums could take proactive steps: provide *interpretation services* (not just language translation but also cultural "translation" – someone who can explain, for instance, "In this culture, silence can mean agreement, so don't mistake quiet for lack of opinion"), establish *ground rules collaboratively* with participants (so everyone has input on how they'd like to communicate), and legitimize various forms of expression (acknowledge that *"telling a story"* or *"showing emotion"* are valid ways to make a point, alongside giving statistics or logical arguments). This aligns with arguments by deliberative democrats like Iris M. Young, who advocated for including *"greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling"* as legitimate communicative acts in democratic discussion, to avoid privileging a narrow rationalist Western norm. Our findings provide empirical support for that view: other styles *did* contribute constructively when allowed into the deliberation.

Implications for Language Educators

For **language and communication educators**, one takeaway is the importance of teaching *intercultural communicative competence* and *pragmatic flexibility*. In second language instruction, for instance, it's not enough to teach grammar and vocabulary; learners also need to understand the *pragmatic norms* of the target language culture(s) – and critically, how those might differ from their own norms. At the same time, given global English as a lingua franca, many interactions involve non-native speakers from diverse backgrounds communicating with each other. Educators should prepare students to expect different communication styles and not automatically interpret through their own cultural lens (e.g., a direct request from a German speaker may seem rude to a Japanese listener unless they know that directness is culturally normal for the German, and vice versa, a Japanese speaker's indirectness might seem evasive unless one recognizes it as politeness).

One concrete application is incorporating **deliberative activities in the classroom** (like debates, group problem-solving tasks) and using them as opportunities to highlight cultural communication differences. Teachers can facilitate reflection sessions: *"How did you feel when your classmate said X? Did anyone interpret that differently?"* – these conversations, much like our study's meta-discussions, raise awareness. They also tie into **Speech Codes Theory** by encouraging students to articulate their own cultural speech norms and learn those of others. For example, a teacher might present a scenario: "In Culture A, it's polite to refuse an offer the first time; in Culture B, it's polite to accept graciously immediately. How might that play out if A and B are negotiating or deliberating something?" Such discussions make students more adept at *norm negotiation* in real life.

Moreover, our findings highlight the value of **metapragmatic awareness** – the ability to talk about and adjust one's language use. Language curricula can include activities on *politeness strategies* (practicing different ways to disagree or make requests, and discussing how they might be perceived) and on *facework* (role-playing conflicts and experimenting with more/less direct

approaches). Research like Munezane (2021) has called for bridging the language classroom with intercultural contexts to truly develop competence, and our study underscores that. Language educators should encourage students not only to *adapt to target norms* but also to *negotiate a middle ground* when communication is intercultural. For instance, international students in an English-medium university might be taught how to politely interrupt a discussion (since in some cultures interrupting is taboo but in many Western classrooms it's expected to jump in). Simultaneously, domestic students can be taught to slow down and allow pauses. Educators effectively become facilitators of **intercultural dialogue** skills – something likely to benefit students far beyond language use, in all forms of collaboration and deliberation.

Guidance for Communication Practitioners and Facilitators

For those who regularly facilitate meetings, workshops, or dialogues in multicultural settings, the study's insights can improve practice. A key recommendation is to adopt what we might call a **"culturally adaptive facilitation style."** This involves:

- **Setting Norms Explicitly:** At the outset, acknowledge that people may have different expectations. For example: *"Some of us are used to very direct discussions, others more indirect – today, let's be patient and give space for both styles. If something upsets you or confuses you, let's talk about it."* This simple framing legitimizes norm negotiation from the start and invites participants to be conscious of it. Our research saw that once participants had the license to discuss the communication itself, they became more effective at integrating norms.

- **Use of Ground Rules and Metadiscourse:** Facilitators can introduce ground rules but also be open to adjusting them as the group desires. It's even better to co-create them with input from participants (e.g. ask, "What rules would make everyone feel comfortable contributing?"). This process often brings cultural differences to light (someone might say, "I'd like if we don't raise voices, in my experience that shuts me down" whereas another might say, "Passion is okay but no personal attacks," etc.). Periodically, a facilitator can pause the deliberation to ask *"Do we feel like our conversation style is working for everyone? Anyone find it hard to jump in or follow?"* These check-ins echo the metacommunication that participants themselves did in successful cases.

- **Encouraging Equal Participation:** One common pattern is that individuals from cultures emphasizing assertiveness will dominate talk time unless checks are in place. Facilitators should tactfully balance the floor – by explicitly inviting quieter members to speak ("I'd love to hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet") without putting them on the spot in a face-threatening way. Using round-robin speaking turns or smaller breakouts can help mitigate high-power distance effects (where some might not challenge others in a big

group). The presence of **structured deliberation formats** – like using a talking stick, or giving everyone 2 minutes uninterrupted to state their view – can level the field when cultural habits differ. Manosevitch et al.'s study noted how structured forums allowed Israeli students to practice deliberation even though open free-for-all talk was the local norm; structure gave them a way to overcome cultural habits while still acknowledging them.

- **Conflict Mediation and Face-Saving:** If a cross-cultural miscommunication leads to conflict (e.g., someone feels offended), a skilled practitioner will recognize that and intervene to repair face. This could involve rephrasing a harsh statement in more neutral terms, or explicitly pointing out multiple interpretations. For instance, "I think what A is saying is very direct, which is common in their work culture – A, correct me if I'm wrong – they likely don't mean it personally." By mediating in this way, the facilitator educates both sides and prevents escalation. Our analysis of face-negotiation suggests that such interventions, promoting empathy and understanding of intent, can transform what might have been a breakdown into a learning moment.
- **Recognizing Success and Learning:** Practitioners should highlight when the group is doing well in bridging differences – e.g., "I noticed we've gotten better at not interrupting and we're hearing more varied ideas now. Great job adapting, everyone." This positive reinforcement can consolidate the new norms and encourage continued intercultural learning within the group.

Building Multicultural Deliberative Capacity

At a societal level, the findings feed into a broader goal: **creating a deliberative culture that is inclusive of multiple cultures**. In pluralistic societies, democratic deliberation must adapt to citizens' varied communication styles. This could influence the design of public forums, the training of moderators, even the translation of deliberative materials (ensuring concepts like "agree to disagree" are conveyed appropriately in other languages where the idea might not be common). Policymakers and community leaders might invest in **dialogue training programs** where participants from different backgrounds deliberately practice norm negotiation. This not only improves specific meetings but builds trust and intercultural friendship. People begin to see that someone speaking or arguing differently isn't *"irrational"* or *"uncooperative"* – just operating from a different playbook.

Our findings also suggest a need to **update theoretical models of deliberation**. Normative theories often assume a homogeneous public where one set of deliberative norms prevails. In reality, as one source put it, deliberation is *"shaped by culture and society"* and citizens *"learn to deliberate by doing it"* with others who have different norms. Incorporating insights from

communication research, as we have done, leads to a more flexible vision of deliberative democracy – one that values *communicative diversity* similarly to how biodiversity is valued in ecosystems. Different styles can check and balance each other (too much confrontational talk can be tempered by those who insist on civility; overly deferential silence can be offset by those who push for clarity and directness).

Finally, for research and future practice, a takeaway is that **one-size-fits-all metrics of "good deliberation" might be inadequate**. For example, some deliberation quality measures value "no interrupting" as a positive indicator. But in some cultures, cooperative overlapping talk is a sign of engagement, not disrespect. Should we always discourage it? Perhaps not – perhaps we refine what "good" looks like depending on context, or emphasize meta-deliberation (deliberation about how to deliberate) as a component of quality.

Challenges and Future Directions

While negotiating norms is beneficial, it's not without challenges. It requires time and goodwill – deliberations might initially slow down or feel awkward as people adjust. There may be power dynamics where one group's norms still end up dominating (especially if one group has higher status or confidence in their style). Recognizing these realities, practitioners must be patient and possibly provide *intercultural training or orientations* before deep deliberations. In classrooms, this means building intercultural communication modules; in workplaces, doing workshops on cultural communication differences; in public forums, having a pre-dialogue session to surface cultural expectations.

Future research could explore tools to facilitate norm negotiation – for instance, could **technology** help? Maybe a real-time feedback app where participants signal if they feel lost or unheard, which moderators can monitor. Also, studies might experiment with different sequences: what if you explicitly teach participants about each other's communication styles *before* deliberation? Would that shortcut the adaptation phase? Or compare homogeneous vs. heterogeneous deliberation groups to see the creative outcomes of diversity. Our current study lays the groundwork by showing *what* happens; the next step is testing interventions to enhance the positives and mitigate the difficulties.

In essence, the discussion points to a paradigm shift: **from seeking a universal deliberative norm to fostering deliberative dialogue about norms.** Groups that can talk about and agree on *how* to talk are more likely to have productive, respectful deliberations across cultural divides. This meta-level competence is something that can be taught, learned, and practiced. Language teachers, communication coaches, facilitators, and diverse communities all have a role in cultivating it. The outcome we strive for is not eliminating our differences, but rather achieving what one might call

intercultural communicative synergy – where the combination of styles yields better understanding and solutions than any single style alone could.

Conclusion

In multicultural settings, deliberation is not just an exchange of ideas – it is also a negotiation of how to communicate. This research has underscored that **speech culture and deliberative practice are deeply intertwined**. Local norms of speaking – from turn-taking rules to politeness rituals – shape how deliberation unfolds, and when people from different backgrounds come together, these norms must be actively navigated. Far from being a hindrance, such navigation can be transformative. We found that when participants recognize cultural communication differences and address them openly, they can create a *shared conversational code* that honors multiple ways of speaking. In effect, they co-author a new micro-culture for their group, one that enables everyone to contribute.

Key insights from our study include: (1) **Deliberative principles (like equality, reason-giving, listening) can be met through diverse communicative behaviors.** For example, storytelling can provide reasons, passionate speech can coexist with respect – once we expand our view of acceptable discourse. (2) **Norm negotiation – often via metadiscourse – is the linchpin of success in diverse groups.** It is the process through which potential cultural friction turns into understanding and synergy. (3) **Intercultural competence is crucial for deliberation.** Skills in perspective-taking, adjusting one's communication, and managing face concerns are as important as skills in logical argument or issue knowledge.

The implications for practice are significant. Educational institutions should integrate intercultural communication training into curricula to prepare future citizens for productive dialogue in diversity. Organizations and governments should design deliberative forums with cultural sensitivity in mind – possibly drawing on trained facilitators who can bridge norms. Rather than expecting participants to intuitively "behave," we should provide the tools and environment for them to *learn from each other's communicative styles*. Over time, this can build a more inclusive public sphere, where people don't fear being misunderstood or disrespected simply because they converse differently.

For future research, many avenues remain. Studies could examine norm negotiation in online deliberations, where cues are fewer and misunderstandings may be amplified. Investigating cultural norm negotiation in **crisis deliberations** (e.g., international diplomatic talks, or emergency community meetings) could yield insights into how urgency impacts the willingness to adapt. There is also room to quantify the benefits: do decisions made by culturally diverse, norm-negotiating groups show any differences in creativity, legitimacy, or participant satisfaction

compared to homogeneous or norm-monopoly groups? Initial evidence and theory would suggest yes – diversity, when harnessed, can improve outcomes – but more data would solidify the case.

In concluding, we return to the fundamental idea: **effective deliberation in multicultural contexts is a dialogue *about* dialogue**. It requires reflexivity – stepping outside one's cultural comfort zone and observing the conversation process itself. This meta-dialogue was once perhaps seen as a distraction ("stick to the topic!"), but our work shows it is part and parcel of the topic when the topic is solving problems together across difference. As communities and institutions become ever more diverse, developing this reflexive, adaptive communicative ethos will be critical. Negotiating local norms is not a one-time hurdle to clear, but an ongoing practice of democratic life in a plural world.

By fostering environments where people can say, "Let's figure out how we should talk to each other," we set the stage for deeper understanding and more genuine collaboration. In sum, speech culture matters in deliberation – and if we consciously negotiate the meeting of cultures in conversation, we can transform potential Babel into a richer symphony of voices, each heard and valued on its own terms, yet harmonizing towards common understanding.

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Received: 21.05.2025
Revised: 01.06.2025
Accepted: 05.06.2025
Published: 07.06.2025